

Exploring the Development Path of Radio Drama in the Internet Era (Postprint)

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Abstract

Radio drama possesses a long-standing developmental history, having constituted a primary means for information acquisition and entertainment even prior to the advent of new media forms such as television and the internet. Through sound alone, it accurately conveys content to fulfill audience listening requirements. The internet era has exponentially expanded information sources while accelerating information turnover, which has not only significantly transformed spiritual and cultural demands within the context of accelerated modern lifestyles, but also presented both opportunities and challenges for radio drama development. Consequently, strategies for expanding market share, improving listenership ratings, and cultivating a favorable reputation have become critical considerations for the radio drama industry in the internet age. This paper provides a concise analysis of radio drama, clarifies the impact of the internet era on its development and the current developmental status, proposes pathways for radio drama development under internet conditions, and offers references for better adaptation to the rapid advancement of internet technology in the new era. This enables the medium to maintain pace with contemporary developments, accurately seize opportune moments for growth, and thereby promote the sustained development of radio drama.

Full Text

Preamble

Exploring the Development Path of Radio Drama in the Internet Era
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Abstract: Radio drama boasts a long developmental history, having served as a primary means for people to access information and entertainment long before the emergence of television and other new media forms. Through sound alone, radio drama accurately conveys content to meet audience listening needs.

In the internet era, information sources have proliferated and information cycles have accelerated, significantly transforming spiritual and cultural demands within the context of fast-paced lifestyles while presenting both opportunities and challenges for radio drama development. Consequently, how to expand market share, increase listenership, and build a positive reputation has become a critical issue for the radio drama industry. This paper provides a brief analysis of radio drama, clarifies the impact of the internet era on its development and current status, and proposes developmental pathways for radio drama in the internet age. The aim is to provide references for radio drama to better adapt to rapid internet technology development, seize development opportunities, and achieve sustainable growth.

Keywords: Internet era; radio drama; diverse forms; rich themes; channel expansion

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Radio drama has evolved gradually throughout history, adapting to the needs of radio broadcasting. Its simple and convenient appreciation method, coupled with voice acting and plots that align with public aesthetics and spiritual-cultural demands, has made it deeply popular with audiences. In the internet era, radio drama genres have enriched considerably, encompassing serialized dramas based on novels and comics, sitcom-style radio dramas, and original productions, among other forms. The rapid development of internet technology in the new era has further optimized data capacity, loading platforms, and transmission speed. Particularly against the backdrop of fast-paced modern life, audiences increasingly demand diversity, interactivity, and timeliness in media content [1]. Therefore, to achieve sustained, healthy, and stable development in the internet era, radio drama must strengthen its integration with internet technology. By leveraging its own communication advantages and combining them with the internet's characteristics of fast information loading, wide dissemination range, and diverse audiences, radio drama can continuously explore new development territories, seize opportunities within the tide of rapid information technology development, reverse its current sluggish growth trend, and ultimately foster an innovative and excellence-driven development landscape.

1. Brief Analysis of Radio Drama

Radio drama possesses a long history, combining characteristics of both drama and radio broadcasting. It is a dramatic art form that uses language, music, and other sounds as transmission carriers, recorded mechanically after voice actors perform according to predetermined themes and content. With concentrated characters and clear narrative threads, radio drama fully adapts to radio

broadcasting needs [2]. Its broadcast nature endows it with certain news timeliness, while its dramatic elements enrich its connotation and create well-rounded characters. Operating solely through auditory means, high-quality radio drama can fully mobilize listeners' imagination by shaping characters, creating atmosphere, and developing plots, enabling audiences to engage in association and imagination based on existing storylines. Through fantasy, recollection, and dream sequences, it immerses listeners and evokes emotional resonance. Thus, radio drama is a “linear imaginative art” that effectively fulfills functions of propaganda, education, and guidance.

2.1 Diversification of Broadcast Forms

The internet offers advantages including rapid transmission, extensive coverage, and freedom from temporal and spatial constraints. Effectively integrating internet technology into radio drama development can transform traditional limitations of limited local radio and television resources, slow transmission speeds, and small coverage areas, truly leveraging the functional value of mass aggregation effects. In the converged media era, rapid information technology development has further propelled the diversification of radio drama forms. Currently, everyone can become a creator of online video resources. Online radio drama features fast transmission speeds, broad dissemination ranges, and rapid content updates, along with characteristics of non-professionalism, multiple distribution platforms, and low production thresholds. This provides more users with opportunities for radio drama creation and dissemination, effectively controlling production costs while shortening production cycles, thereby attracting large numbers of potential users. This expansion of influence and recognition helps drive the sustained development of the radio drama industry.

2.2 Enrichment of Creative Themes

Radio drama has gradually formed throughout historical development, and its rise and fall can reflect historical changes to a certain extent. Traditional radio drama, based on historical era characteristics and artistic backgrounds, produced works reflecting contemporary events, such as *The Red Army Returns* and *Ten Thousand Splints*, which commemorated the founding of the Communist Party of China and the “February 7th” railway strike. With rapid social and historical development and the enrichment of people's living standards and spiritual-cultural lives in the internet era, radio drama creative themes have also diversified. To meet new-era consumer market demands, adaptations of best-selling novels in genres like martial arts, romance, and science fiction have emerged, along with micro-dramas, column dramas, serial dramas, and news dramas composed of news stories and figures—all beloved for their unique artistic charm [3].

3.1 Creative Concepts Require Optimization

In the internet era, the exponential growth of massive information resources and accelerated information cycles, combined with faster-paced lifestyles, have posed challenges to radio drama production and broadcasting. Particularly, China's radio drama industry lacks systematic, standardized development planning and theoretical support, and continues to focus on typical representative figures and national political narratives as creative themes. Compared with other programs closer to mass life, this limits market competitiveness and restricts development prospects. In the new media era, neglecting market and user research during production and relying solely on past experience, or having creative concepts requiring optimization, results in programs lacking innovation, single-genre works, and video editing and post-production that fails to meet current user spiritual-cultural needs. This leads to declining click-through rates and listenership, affecting the sustained development of radio drama in the internet era.

3.2 Restrictions from Platform Broadcast Times

Radio drama relies on radio and television platforms for broadcasting. Due to insufficient platform management awareness, programs face restrictions from platform funding, technology, and permissions, and cannot freely choose broadcast times. This makes it difficult to obtain corresponding user traffic import, reducing bargaining power and increasing the risk of marginalization. In the internet era, coupled with fast-paced lifestyles, new entertainment-oriented, popular, and life-oriented program formats occupy prime broadcast slots. Radio drama's insufficient creative theory leads to the loss of outstanding creative personnel, resulting in a lack of distinctive features and reduced listenership. Insufficient listenership directly impacts the economic benefits of radio and television stations, causing staff to schedule radio dramas during midday, late-night, and fragmented time slots, which in turn further affects listenership [4].

4.1 Improving Program Formats and Diversifying Funding Solutions

A complete radio drama program requires coordination among directors, artists, and voice actors through stages including pre-planning, scriptwriting, post-production planning, and promotional campaigns, resulting in high production costs. Particularly in the internet era, the shrinking audience range has reduced listenership and click-through rates, lowering economic benefits and making many radio stations reluctant to produce radio dramas, thereby limiting liquid capital within the industry. Although the radio drama industry has matured with social development, its teams remain small with limited influence, and normal program operations largely depend on government funding. This lack of necessary social capital investment restricts long-term development.

Therefore, to address limited funding in radio drama production during the

internet era, establishing special development funds and leveraging the “crowd-funding production” concept derived from internet culture can be effective. By utilizing the internet platform’s fast information transmission and extensive coverage to promote and collect audience preferences and expectations for radio drama content and formats, social groups can be attracted to pay attention to and invest in radio drama. In the converged media era, radio drama must follow trending topics, effectively integrating content from situational dramas, musical dramas, and other formats to transform program structures, bringing audiences entirely new experiences. Producing low-cost, high-efficiency works and strengthening cooperation and mutual benefit with radio drama organizations across regions can diversify funding solutions. For instance, *Searching for Diao Aiqing* is a crowdfunded case-following drama that embraced the concept of “listeners as creators,” inviting netizens to participate in plot development, evidence reasoning, and sequel production. This transforms audiences into program participants, stimulating curiosity and creating social hot topics that generate excellent promotional effects.

4.2 Integrating New Media Technology to Expand Communication Channels

The internet era has driven the development of various new media technologies, providing a technical foundation for radio drama dissemination. However, the rapid update of program content and accelerated lifestyles have also placed higher demands on radio drama production. Particularly in the new media environment of live broadcasting, traditional radio drama struggles to achieve normal operation and transformation relying solely on its own technology, funding, content, and dissemination capabilities. This requires radio drama production to effectively integrate new media technology, continuously innovating forms, connotations, and applications according to the new “Radio Drama +” paradigm formed during its development. This enables innovation and reshaping of its physical form and structure, ensuring program content becomes more popular, market-oriented, and entertaining while expanding communication channels [5].

For example, with internet technology support, China National Radio has strengthened development of online radio dramas, micro radio dramas, and daily broadcast dramas. To overcome the weakness of traditional radio drama supporting only real-time listening and radio playback, it utilizes advanced digital technologies such as computer technology and big data to create online listening platforms. These platforms support both real-time listening and playback functions while storing and intelligently categorizing massive radio drama materials. This effectively overcomes the temporary nature of traditional radio drama content, enabling listeners to selectively listen to programs anytime and anywhere according to their preferences and needs, thereby invisibly expanding the audience base. Using micro-digital technology and leveraging short video platforms like Douyin in terms of content production models, dissemination methods, and profit forms, broadcast time can be strictly controlled to ensure

content actively meets public spiritual-cultural needs. This adapts to the current reality of limited and fragmented listening time in the fast-paced era, while offering advantages of low production costs, fast cycles, and mass production capabilities that can drive sustained radio drama development.

4.3 Enhancing the Overall Level of Radio Drama Creation Teams

First, competition among enterprises across industries in the 21st century centers on talent, especially in the internet era where social talent market structure demands have changed significantly. As a highly comprehensive sound art form, radio drama covers extensive content and involves numerous departments and personnel. To maintain competitive advantages in the new media era, it is essential to prioritize the recruitment of innovative and creative talent with unique logical thinking and aesthetic consciousness. By improving salary and benefits levels for radio drama positions and emphasizing corporate culture development, fresh blood can be introduced to the team to continuously broaden existing creative forms, enabling innovative radio drama creators to encounter more “Radio Drama +” products.

Second, strengthening the cultivation of comprehensive qualities among existing radio drama creation team members can change the current situation of single-skill talent and focus on developing versatile personnel adaptable to multiple positions, thereby enhancing the overall team level. For instance, complete radio drama production requires coordinated cooperation among planners, screenwriters, directors, voice actors, and post-production staff. To improve team cohesion, it is necessary to help all team members expand their horizons and cultivate innovative consciousness, enabling them to timely understand and fully demonstrate planning concepts and directorial intentions during production. This improves production efficiency, shortens production cycles, and keeps pace with the fast-paced era.

Finally, establishing a comprehensive training system based on radio drama’s development status and trends in the internet era can strengthen digital education for all personnel. This enables organic integration with multiple information platform development models, reserves innovative technological advantages and creative capabilities, and ensures mastery of advanced network technology operations and radio drama promotion methods. Ultimately, this achieves effective integration between radio drama programs and new media resources, ensuring radio drama keeps pace with the times and develops in a positive direction.

4.4 Following Trending Topics and Innovating Content and Form

Against the backdrop of the information age, radio drama has maintained its presence in people’s vision in fragmented form through its inherent advantages. However, in the new era, massive data information and program content have

grown exponentially, with continuously accelerating optimization and update speeds, while audiences have limited energy and time. This reality means that audience attention is largely captured by trending topics and social hot issues. Therefore, to enhance radio drama's dissemination power and influence in the internet era, it is necessary to follow digital broadcasting trends, actively utilize diversified information platforms, integrate quality resources, and achieve matrix-style cross-domain integration of radio drama. This transforms traditional linear dissemination and fleeting audio characteristics, continuously expanding the influence of radio drama in the new era and building new peaks of achievement.

Audio programs serve as important platforms for radio drama presentation. China's current audio market remains in its early stages of development, with major platforms including "Ximalaya FM," "Qingting FM," and "Lazy Audio Books." As people's fragmented time has increased in recent years, the audio market has developed rapidly. Radio drama must seize this development opportunity, effectively connect with audio markets and listening platforms for brand promotion, and thereby expand market space. Under the development of various promotion platforms such as Douyin, WeChat public accounts, and Weibo articles, radio drama must leverage platform advantages of extensive audience coverage to actively innovate its content and forms. By closely following new-era user spiritual-cultural needs, deeply exploring the noble values contained in ordinary life, integrating current popular culture and elements, embracing diverse themes, and enriching connotative values to ensure concentrated characters, prominent conflicts, and clear narrative threads, radio drama can create works beloved by the masses. Only by pushing diverse radio dramas to the mass market through internet platforms can it effectively leverage networks to expand its audience.

4.5 Aligning with Value Orientation to Enhance Influence

The inherent nature of radio drama determines its value orientation function. In the new media era where everyone can be a news creator, the low threshold of information dissemination platforms allows various information resources to spread widely. However, negative and undesirable program content can significantly influence the formation of correct public values and hinder the construction of a harmonious socialist society. Therefore, as a form of artistic expression, radio drama must adhere to its creative stance, clarify its people-centered core concept, align with correct value orientation, maintain cultural confidence, uphold mainstream creative themes, and ensure effective functioning of its guidance and credibility values. This creates a clean and upright cultural space that meets people's expectations for a better life [7].

Radio drama reflects historical information through its unique expressive form. It is a serious drama that positively guides public spiritual culture and values—a form of educational drama. Portraying great eras remains the unchanging pursuit of radio drama development. Although radio drama forms have achieved

diversified development and innovative optimization in the internet era, creators must still align with correct value orientation, consolidate mainstream themes of quality radio drama, effectively integrate new-era social-historical development backgrounds and contemporary spiritual-cultural needs, and innovate expressive forms. By emphasizing detailed construction and emotional development, radio drama can enhance its quality, taste, and style, thereby powerfully exerting artistic appeal and achieving thought-provoking educational significance [8].

In the internet era, radio drama's original development model can no longer fully satisfy the growing aesthetic and spiritual-cultural demands of new-era audiences. This requires radio drama to actively integrate new media technology while deeply exploring its own communication advantages, effectively improving original program formats, diversifying solutions to funding shortages, and continuously expanding communication channels to further increase audience coverage. By enhancing the overall level of creation teams to keep pace with trending topics, aligning with its own value orientation, and innovating content and forms, radio drama can provide better auditory experiences for new-era audiences, effectively enhance its influence, build a positive reputation, regain market and audience favor, and continuously promote sustained, healthy, and stable development.

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Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

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