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Developing the Post-Print Economic Value of Digital Audiobooks Based on User Needs

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Abstract

Mobile audiobooks have become the third publishing force following print books and e-books, with users' demands for digital audiobooks encompassing cognitive needs for knowledge acquisition, entertainment needs for immersive experiences, emotional needs for solace, and all-scenario needs for liberating visual attention. Through pathways such as content mining of audiobooks, expansion of carrier forms, optimization of voice interaction, and market demand segmentation, the economic value of audiobooks can be further unleashed, fostering the long-term healthy development of the industry.

Full Text

Preamble

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Economic Value Development of Digital Audiobooks Based on User Needs

Abstract: Mobile audiobooks have emerged as the third major publishing force following print books and e-books. User demand for digital audiobooks encompasses cognitive needs for knowledge acquisition, entertainment needs for immersive experiences, emotional appeals for comfort, and all-scenario demands for visual relief. By exploring content mining, carrier form expansion, voice interaction optimization, and market demand segmentation, the economic value of audiobooks can be further unleashed, enabling long-term healthy development of the industry.

Keywords: audiobooks; all-scenario; economic value; user needs

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With the development of mobile internet technology, digital audiobooks based on mobile terminals have become the mainstream product form in the audiobook reading market. According to the definition of the American Audiobook Publishers Association, audiobooks refer to audio products that contain no less than 51% text content, copied and packaged as cassette tapes, compact discs, or digital files for sale. Based on different carriers, they can be divided into physical audiobooks and digital audiobooks.

In 2018, China's audiobook market size reached 4.54 billion yuan, with the user base reaching 383 million people, establishing audiobooks as the "third publishing force" following print books and e-books. This booming market reflects significant changes in reading habits in the mobile internet era. Currently, the audiobook market has essentially formed a competitive landscape with Ximalaya and Lazy Audio as the leading platforms. However, compared with developed countries in Europe and America, the domestic audiobook market still has considerable room for growth, and its economic value remains to be fully developed.

1.1 Cognitive Needs for Knowledge Acquisition

Cognitive needs represent individuals' tendency to participate in and enjoy thinking activities, reflecting users' careful consideration of content during information processing and the experiences derived from such thinking. The rise of knowledge-payment-based audio publications demonstrates users' pursuit of knowledge sharing and efficiency-oriented lifestyles. Digital audiobook platforms curate high-quality and refined content for people to efficiently obtain information within short time frames. Users regard audiobooks as trustworthy and reliable channels for expanding their knowledge scope. As society becomes increasingly open and diversified, and the pace of technological updates and industry transformations accelerates, users hope to strengthen themselves and consolidate their status by purchasing knowledge products or services. The desire and anxiety for self-improvement have become reasons why users choose to pay for knowledge.

1.2 Entertainment Needs for Immersive Experiences

Audiobook consumption is not necessarily for personal action guides, knowledge tips, or behavioral codes. The purposelessness of content has become a prominent characteristic of information consumption in the mobile internet era. With the assistance of internet technology and smartphone terminals, audio publications provide users with entertainment experiences through all-scenario companionship, satisfying their needs for mental relaxation and pleasure through

this non-purposeful content consumption. Sound possesses the functions of attracting attention, conveying emotions, and shaping imagination. During the audiobook listening process, users develop a sense of immersion, and various narrative twists and turns pave the way for listeners to release their desires, allowing their desires to obtain imaginative satisfaction during the listening process. This enables the real self, filled with deficient experiences, to grow into a complete and unified self through fantastical scenarios in online audio reading.

1.3 Emotional Needs for Comfort

“Sound is a medium that transforms external factors into human internal feelings,” possessing unique emotional transmission power that can trigger personalized user experiences through media and reach individual psychology in a distinctive manner. Digital audiobooks provide coping strategies and spiritual comfort through advisory and encouraging words, offering healing and comforting emotional strength while guiding individuals to establish healthy and creative thinking. Sound also has a companionship function. Music and human voices rich in emotional power and imagination can dispel inner loneliness and provide comfort. A close emotional connection is formed between users and anchors through the medium of sound.

1.4 All-Scenario Needs for Visual Relief

Mobile digital audiobooks feature all-scenario reading applicability and broad user demographics, emphasizing scenario perception and audio content adaptation. Audiobooks possess the advantage of being companion media. In scenarios where visual fatigue or obstruction occurs, the value of audiobooks can be more fully realized. Scenario development depends on the advancement of the “five forces of scenario” : mobile devices, social media, big data, sensors, and positioning systems. In audiobook platforms, the application of big data, mobile terminals, and positioning systems creates audio content suitable for different scenarios, providing rich and immersive participatory auditory experiences while liberating vision.

2.1 Supply of Professional and High-Quality Content

Audiobook production involves multiple stages including text creation, translation, narration, and recording. High-quality audiobooks require meticulous craftsmanship at each production stage. Professional narrators can provide users with a strong sense of presence through voice, allowing listeners to envision scenes that match the story and distinctive characters through intonation variations combined with professional sound effects. Narrators play multiple roles: beyond delivering content, they must edit it, adding or removing material, while possessing good artistic literacy. Digital audiobook creation is no longer limited to simply reading text aloud but involves reorganizing the text during production through single or multiple narrators, making modifications to

characters and dialogues based on role personalities to form specific performance styles. For audio users, production standards and narrator professionalism are the most important factors when selecting content. However, current audiobooks have not yet established standardized production processes. To compete for market share, various platforms prioritize quantity over quality control at each production stage, resulting in uneven quality of released audiobooks and increasing users' time costs in obtaining high-quality content.

2.2 Development of Audio Content Social Attributes

With the mobility of audiobook publication carriers, audiobook reading behavior is placed within an internet social environment. In social network environments, audiobook reading emphasizes not only platform-user connections but also the construction of user-user relationships and the socialization of content sharing. Audiobook reading can facilitate the acquisition of common topics, help find circles of people with similar interests, allow for self-expression, and maintain social relationships. Through mobile audio platforms, users' reading behaviors and social behaviors can be synchronized, simultaneously satisfying cognitive, emotional, and social needs. Endowing audiobook production and dissemination with more social characteristics can uncover potential users and retain existing ones, constructing a multi-layered communication system through sharing, interaction, and personalized recommendations.

2.3 Utilization of Media Technology

From an information dissemination perspective, media technology development influences information product forms, communication channels, and dissemination methods. As an information product, audiobook production methods and dissemination paths are affected by various media technology developments. Currently, information technologies represented by 5G and artificial intelligence are influencing all aspects of audiobooks, including content production, copyright operation, and platform distribution. Users' all-scenario personalized needs for audiobooks are being met with the assistance of big data and algorithmic recommendation technologies. In the future, mobile sensing technologies may also enable the matching of audiobooks with emotional perception, opening new spaces for audiobook production.

2.4 Content Copyright Protection

The audiobook industry chain involves content producers, audio producers, and network operation platforms, making content copyright protection a crucial factor constraining the healthy development of the audiobook industry. Copyright subjects involved in audiobooks include literary work authors, literary work rights assignees, sound recording producers, sound recording disseminators, narrators, and distribution platforms. Production involves not only the copyright of literary works but also the performance rights of narrators, adaptation rights

of literary works, and copyrights of background music works. Due to the numerous authorization links involved, infringement issues are highly likely to occur. Currently, audiobook reading platforms cooperate with publishers to introduce high-quality copyrighted works in PGC content production. However, the UGC portion lacks supervision, and a comprehensive copyright monitoring system has not yet been formed. Additionally, the insufficient legal awareness of ordinary anchors regarding audiobook copyrights has exacerbated infringement occurrences to a large extent.

3.1 Realizing IP-ification of Audio Products

As copyright protection awareness strengthens and market competition intensifies, IP-ification will become a development trend for audiobook platforms. IP appears not only in film, television, and online gaming industries but will also become a means for audiobook platforms to enhance professional productivity and strengthen core competitiveness. The IP-ification of audio content means that valuable audio content must carry unique values, form recognizability, and gather specific audiences. Users value not only the audio content itself but also the emotional connection and identity behind it. Therefore, audio IP operation lies in creating the personal charm of voice, harvesting user loyalty through emotional identification.

3.3 Optimizing Voice Interaction Experience

Voice interaction is a convenient method for users to exchange information with smart devices. Combined with big data analysis, through user voice recognition and semantic parsing, audio platforms will provide users with more accurate and personalized content recommendations. The voice technology of smart terminals lies not only in speech recognition but more importantly in semantic recognition. The complexity of Chinese grammar and semantics, as well as diverse accents, have become difficult challenges for technological breakthroughs. Therefore, there remains considerable room for improvement at the semantic recognition level. For human-computer voice interaction to become an important interaction method, it must break the existing “multiple-choice” approach, allowing users to issue scene-appropriate commands freely rather than having machines tell users what they can understand. Consequently, it is necessary to more deeply understand human cognitive models of language from a cognitive science perspective, optimize voice interaction experiences, achieve natural interaction between humans and voice products, and realize innovations in audio-video product application scenarios.

3.4 Mining Segmented Market Demands

Currently, mainstream audiobook platforms include various audio content such as audiobooks, radio dramas, and talk shows. However, different user groups have different reading needs for audiobooks, requiring the improvement of con-

tent product forms based on their specific needs and the exploration of new voice expression methods. For example, in the children' s audiobook market, considering that children' s reading materials possess both entertainment and educational attributes, and that parents have strong willingness to purchase high-quality content for their children, the children' s audiobook market will have broad prospects. In the future, children' s audiobooks will have richer expression forms and applicable scenarios under AI interactive contexts, enabling more friendly connections between children and audiobooks.

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

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