

The Integration Innovation and Breakthrough Strategy of Radio Drama in the New Media Context

Wu Yutong

School of Journalism and Communication, Beijing Sport University, Beijing, China
wyteassy@163.com

Abstract: *With the continuous development of new media technology, the art of "radio drama", which is based on radio broadcasting, has undergone important changes. Traditional media to the Internet mobile platform, for the presentation of radio drama form provides more possibilities, but also let the sound art in the new era shine brightly. This paper will start from the development status of radio drama, integrate and compare radio drama and network radio drama, talk about the impact of changes in communication media, mode and content on the development of radio drama, and explore the integration and innovation path of radio drama with practical and technological means, as well as find breakout strategies in form, content and emotion.*

Keywords: *New media; radio drama; web radio drama; radio drama*

1. Introduction

Media turnover has led to the gradual replacement of radio's weight by television and internet platforms, and the art form of broadcasting, which is primarily aural, has gradually faded from people's lives, with only a few specific areas, such as in-car broadcasting, where it is still represented. In the wave of new media, the traditional art form of radio drama is facing unprecedented opportunities and challenges. With the rapid development of Internet technology, especially the popularity of social media, mobile applications, portals and other new media platforms, as well as the interactivity, immediacy and personalization of the Internet have led to profound changes in the dissemination, creation, acceptance and ideological kernel of radio dramas. Similarly, it also gives the radio drama, which relies on broadcasting, a chance to change its life again. With the support of the Internet, the art of radio drama has come back to the public's view. In such a context, exploring how radio dramas can integrate and innovate and break out in the new media context is crucial. It is not only related to the survival and development of this art form but also provides an important insight for the innovation and transformation of the whole cultural industry.

2. The Development Status of Radio Drama in the Context of New Media

The emergence of television media has impacted and influenced the art of radio drama. The vivid visual forms of expression have attracted more audience choices, leading to a period of depression for radio drama art. The advent of Internet technology has equally provided opportunities for all art forms in the new media era to showcase themselves. It has offered a new platform and possibilities for the development of radio drama, enabling it to re-enter the public's field of vision. Similarly, to adapt to the distinct characteristics of the new era, the medium, form, and content of radio dramas have undergone changes.

2.1. Medium of communication: breaking with tradition to connectivity

Back in the late 19th century, the invention of the radio laid the foundation for the emergence of broadcasting. In the 1920s, KDKA radio station in the United States began broadcasting, marking the beginning of commercial radio. Meanwhile, the world's first radio drama, "Danger", was created by Richard Hughes and broadcast by the BBC in 1924, successfully brought the radio drama art form into people's lives. Early radio dramas were mostly based on literary adaptations, focusing on the expression of language and the listener's imagination of the voice. After the Second World War, radio developed rapidly in Europe and the United States, and the process also gave rise to a variety of genres, such as

suspense, science fiction, and historical dramas. The art form of radio drama appeared late in China, emerging only in the 1930s and later becoming an important part of the country's cultural life. With the continuous development of mass media, television replaces radio as the most contacted medium, and radio drama, as one of the forms of broadcasting content, encountered an unprecedented impact. The influence of radio drama is fading, and even people born after the 1990s are completely immersed in the infection of television, and seldom come into contact with the unfamiliar form of media, radio drama.^[1] Until the continuous development of Internet technology brought new opportunities for the traditional radio drama art, the data shows that by the end of 2020, the size of China's Internet users has been close to one billion people, a good network ecological environment also promotes the art of radio drama change and innovation, in this era of interconnection of the masses, radio drama also has a new opportunity for development.

2.2. Modes of communication: from unidirectional to interactive

In the era of traditional media with radio and television as the mainstream, the communication media was characterized by unidirectional linear communication, and it was impossible to achieve immediate feedback and interactive communication. In this context, it shaped the central monopoly of traditional media, and listeners and viewers could only receive programs with specific contents produced by radio and television stations, which were subject to certain limitations in both time and space. However, the emergence of the Internet has broken the traditional one-way communication model. Whether it is social media or mobile applications, they create more such as live broadcasts, pop-up interactions, comments and messages as forms of participation, so that the audience has a richer access to information channels. At any time and any place, you can search and discuss the content of interest. The lowering of the communication threshold has led to the formation of a communication environment in which "everyone is a medium", changing the mass communication of the radio and television era, which was handled by professional media personnel, to a communication pattern in which all people participate.^[2]

For the production of radio drama, many people still remain at the stage of imagination, wondering how sound becomes a work of art, a kind of art that seems very distant for ordinary listeners. The emergence of the Internet has allowed these efforts that were previously hidden behind the scenes to be brought in front of the audience. The auditory art now uses visual images for performance, which helps to narrow the psychological distance between the art and the audience. The China Central Radio and Television Administration (CCTV) has invited the audience to act as cloud supervisors, launching a series of slow live broadcasts. These broadcasts range from the introduction of equipment, the recording process in detail, to crew visits and interviews, decrypting the production process of radio dramas and allowing viewers to witness the birth of a sound work together.

2.3. Dissemination of content: breaking the monolith to pluralism

In the new media context, the content of radio drama creation itself has changed, and the symbiotic pattern of diversity keeps the art of radio drama moving forward. The production camp of radio dramas is divided into two main directions: radio dramas and web dramas, both of which are created in different directions. Radio dramas are mostly based on melodramatic selections, with the deeds of heroic models as the main object of creation. web radio dramas are mainly based on Internet literature IPs, and derive audience categories of male and female frequencies; male frequency categories include suspense and thriller, officialdom, urban modernity, and metaphysical supernatural, while female frequency categories include ancient romance and modern romance; there are more than 300 labels for each category, which expands the range of topics for radio dramas.^[3] For example, a radio drama produced by the China Central Radio and Television Administration (CCTV), which recounts every step of the development of China's manned spaceflight industry from its beginnings to its glory, invited astronauts to play roles in the drama during the production process, successfully creating a shocking documentary radio drama.

At the same time, the wide application of social media also allows listeners to instantly express their opinions and attitudes on the Internet, and even personalize the content clips of interest to generate diversified derivative creations such as images, videos, text, and audio. In the Radio Drama Super Talk on Microblog, more than 4.5 million posts have now been posted, among which there are not only radio drama enthusiasts, but also voice actors and radio drama production studios. This has become a new ecological community with multi-voice exchanges and multi-perspective comments.

3. Convergence and Innovation of Radio Drama in New Media Context

The continuous empowerment of new media technology has brought the creation of radio dramas to a new stage. Accompanied by the changes in communication media, communication methods and content, both radio dramas and web radio dramas have begun to explore the integration and innovation with new media to adapt to the characteristics of the era of digitization and networking. This kind of integration not only brings new communication channels and forms of expression for radio drama, but also provides a broader space for its content creation and audience interaction.

3.1. Dissemination of content: breaking the monolith to pluralism

The emergence of cross-media communication has allowed the art of traditional radio drama to gradually move from auditory communication to a diverse symbiotic pattern combining audio and visual. This mode of communication not only enhances its interactivity and experience, but also broadens the audience of radio drama. Taking web radio drama as an example, part of its script comes from web novels, which have already accumulated a certain fan base during the period of spreading by words. As the fame and popularity continue to rise, web writers will also cooperate with comics and animation production studios to derive various forms of dissemination. Similarly, dubbing studios will also cooperate with web writers to vocalize the textual works. The communication cycle is formed by the three main participants: audience - creator - producer. By combining the content of radio dramas with other media forms such as video, image and text, and even launching offline food and beverage co-branding, cultural and creative co-branding, peripheral products, and fan meetings, different modes fully expand the boundaries of the art of radio dramas.

At the same time, the traditional media, represented by CCTV, are also exploring media integration in the new media environment. CCTV's radio dramas have all adopted a multi-platform release, in addition to launching audio-only versions in CCTV's radio station and Cloud Listening, slow live recording and visualization versions in Central Video, and graphic plus video in the CCTV news client, while on MicroBlog, WeChat, TikTok, KuaiShou and other platforms featuring short, flat and fast broadcasts, we have focused on condensing the topics with the potential to go out of the circle, with short videos of the actors or guests during the recording. The video will be accompanied by a short video of the actor or guest during the recording to spread the message and attract wide attention and discussion.^[4]

3.2. Production model to create a new content ecosystem

The broad inclusiveness of the Internet provides every audience with the right to participate in it on an equal footing. Since the gradual emergence of web portals and mobile platforms, a large number of voice enthusiasts have spontaneously recruited companions on the Internet to form associations and produce non-profit radio dramas. At the same time, there are also a lot of individuals and groups who operate accounts on the Internet and publish their own voice works on self-media platforms. However, relatively speaking, although the UGC production model provides a broad communication platform for the majority of enthusiasts, a series of problems such as limited audience, insufficient funds and technology, and infringement of copyrights can also arise under this model.

Diversified production modes are also facilitating the professional transformation of the content production ecosystem. PUGC, which combines the features of UGC and PGC, has now become an important production mode in the web drama market. Compared to the UGC model, professional user production is a good way to circumvent the above problems. In the case of MaoEr FM, for example, the IP adaptation of selected popular online literary works ensures a solid script foundation for radio drama production, and the excellent written works bring a certain amount of fans to provide assistance for the subsequent operation and promotion of the platform. Voice actors from professional dubbing studios have solid abilities and rich experience in the field, their creative and acting abilities are far better than amateurs, and the secondary creation after post-production editing can better stimulate the artistic charm of the work. At the same time, MaoEr FM, as a professional audio platform, has also joined hands with online video platforms and offline local TV stations to launch a new type of dubbing talent selection and training mechanism, which promotes the active participation of "users" in the production, and continuously empowers the benign development of broadcasting dramas and the sound industry.

3.3. Audience Demand Inspires Multiple Individualized Experiences

With the widespread increase in personalized needs, the channels and ways for audiences to obtain

information have also changed greatly, and the expectations for the content of radio dramas have also changed from the traditional media to formulate content to a richer, more interesting and appealing all-round work of art. In the MaoEr FM radio drama interface, it covers different search tabs for schedule, index, finished, unfinished, and complete series. Within the index, it is even subdivided into update time, genre, duration, and whether it is paid or not. Similarly, in order to meet the personalized needs of our listeners, MaoEr FM's radio dramas will also offer different versions created by different voice actors, allowing listeners to choose independently.

With the convenience provided by media technology in the mobile Internet era, some audio platforms use pop-ups, subtitles, cartoons, Vlogs and other forms to meet the multifaceted needs of the audience and strengthen the interactive effect.^[5] For example, before the official broadcast of certain web radio dramas, the production studio will take the lead in launching preview broadcasts, inviting voice actors and authors to share their creative stories with listeners, and also interspersing bloopers, short comics and mid-credits scene to alleviate the listeners' anxiety during the waiting period for the official episodes. The interactive radio drama format even gives the listener the right to choose the development of the plot, and the experience is greatly enhanced by deeper integration into the plot. Pop-ups, comments and other forms also provide the same enthusiasts behind the screen with an opportunity to intersect across time and space, where both book fans and drama fans can find a sense of belonging and identity in the virtual world.

4. Breakout Strategies for Radio Drama in the New Media Context

The constant changes in the new media environment not only provide richer forms of integration and innovation for the art of radio drama, but also bring new challenges to it. How web radio dramas can break out of the rut of content entertainment and consumerism, and how traditional radio dramas can be digitally transformed is an important question that has to be explored today. In the process of continuous exploration, it is necessary to innovate the form of language expression, enhance the artistic experience; deep plowing story content, in line with the public's preferences; strengthen the emotional link and the integration of the spirit of the times, in order to realize the breakthrough of the plot of radio drama.

4.1. Creative expression: the art of auditory language

Sound is a living art, and radio drama is more like a movie enjoyed with the ears. As an art form in which the auditory image is the first element, audiences have a very high demand for audio quality, and its excellence is likely a key factor in audience retention. For web radio dramas, its expression is much more complex than traditional radio dramas. The extreme realistic interpretation of different types of scripts and gorgeous special effects background sound have become the competitive foundation for web radio dramas, such as superb soundtracks, detailed background sound effects, etc. Whether they can accurately convey the audience's expected effects requires effort in the early stages of production.

To adapt to new media communications, traditional radio drama should continue to innovate in form. An example of this innovation by CCTV is evident in the launch of a radio drama that allows the audience to not only listen to the drama but also visualize the interpretation process of the voice actors. For example, in radio drama, sound effects fully simulate reality. The lively bustling voices in the drama are recorded by a group of people standing in front of a microphone, and part of the background sounds such as chopsticks and dishes colliding and walking on masonry are synchronized and realistically interpreted in a specific area. For example, an integrated media radio drama digitizes the ancient Chinese art of painting during the video broadcasting process, giving life to the characters, flowing water and trees in the paintings, and at the same time combines textual popularization with poetic interpretation during the narration process, integrating various art forms and vividly displaying the far-reaching charms of Chinese culture.

4.2. Deepening the story: rejuvenating communication content

The world is evolving in a more youthful manner, and the art of language as a sense of hearing has to evolve with the times in order to better adapt to the changing tides of the times. For web radio dramas, novel production methods and IP-based topics, as well as voice actors with a fan base and an overwhelming marketing model have captured the ears of today's young people. Compared with traditional agriculture, aviation, poverty alleviation and other subjects, mystery, romance, suspense and other subjects with ups and downs are definitely more popular, but the business model of web radio

dramas has been gradually oriented to the attribute of "profit", overly pursuing the popularity, IP, fans, profit and so on. In this context, web radio dramas need to break free from the commercial vortex, leveraging their own developmental strengths to grasp the correct ideological direction. This ensures that the network radio drama is not only entertaining and artistic but also educational.

Similarly, traditional radio dramas need to absorb the advantages of Internet radio dramas and inject new-generation vitality into traditional radio dramas in a form that is enjoyable to listeners. In short video platforms, second creation works are released, creatively combining the art of radio drama with the art of sand painting, interpreting the ultimate audio-visual art as smooth as flowing clouds and water. CCTV's English-language integrated media radio drama is based on the true story of an American physics professor, and focuses on the interactions between two families and two generations in China and the United States, presenting the folk friendship between China and the United States that spans over a hundred years, and the story will be turned into an animation with fresh colors and beautiful strokes at the same time as the radio drama is aired, so that the Chinese story and art can be shared with the world.

4.3. Strengthening the links: the narrative kernel is contemporary

Radio drama, as an art form of the people, must not be detached from real life during its creative process. In the process of creation, it is necessary to strengthen the excavation and elaboration of the excellent traditional Chinese culture, so as to make the most basic cultural genes of the Chinese nation compatible with contemporary culture and in harmony with modern society, and to strive to realize the creative transformation and innovative development of the excellent traditional Chinese culture. The narrative core of the art of broadcasting drama has the social mission of telling China's story and spreading China's voice, and CCTV has practiced the integration of the creative concept of "ideology+art+technology" to create a large number of profound, well-produced works that are in line with the development of the times.

One of the radio dramas on the subject of ancient culture tells the legendary story of two generations of archaeologists who continue their legacy of exploration, leading the listeners to historical periods of thousands of years ago, unraveling the mysteries of cultural sites, allowing the knowledge presented in textbooks and on screens to come vividly to life once again. The aim of the story is to discover the origins of our people and the soul of our homeland through archaeology, and to guide the general public to delve into the ancient Chinese civilization, contributing to the revitalization of the excellent traditional Chinese culture and cultural identity.

Another agricultural-themed radio drama, inspired by a real couple, artistically portrays new farmers who rely on technological wisdom and scientific knowledge to explore and solve the challenges of large-scale cultivation in digital agriculture. It calls on young people with emotional intelligence and skills to pursue their dreams together in the fields of youth. Land, being the root of people's livelihood, beckons the return and commitment to rural areas, where an increasing number of young people with innovative methods, fresh ideas, advanced technology, and modern wisdom are bringing the power of youth to the development of agriculture in the new era.

5. Conclusions

The continuous development of new media technology has brought unprecedented changes to the art of radio drama, but the trend of the new era has also led the once depressed art to be active again in people's lives, which is a new exploration of the traditional art forms in the context of new media, and a bridge connecting the past and the future, tradition and the present. Radio drama is an art form rooted in China's local community, on the way to development, which needs to be refined and integrated. web radio dramas need to plough deep into the core content, drawing on and accommodating the roots of excellent traditional Chinese culture to bring spiritual roots to the online art form; traditional media should draw on the strengths of web radio dramas, innovate the digital transformation of radio dramas, and create works that are more in line with the times and serve the people.

References

- [1] Gao Tiantian. (2018). *The Awakening and Development of Radio Drama in the Mobile Internet Era*. *China Radio & TV Academic Journal*, (11), 107-108.
- [2] Peng Lan. (2018). *New Media Communication: New Pictures and New Mechanisms*. *News and*

Writing, (07), 5-11.

[3] Du Yuanzhi & Li Liwei. (2022). *Paradoxical Drivers of Radio Drama Creation and Development Prospects. Media, (09), 40-42.*

[4] Bao Xijing. (2024). *Strategies and Paths of Integration and Innovation of Mainstream Media Radio Drama--Taking CCTV 2022 Radio Drama as an Example. China Radio & TV Academic Journal, (01), 117-121.*

[5] Song Yang. (2022). *Convergence Innovation and Development Path of Webcast Drama. Media, (04), 48-50*