

Analysis of Broadcasting Theory and Communication Practice: Taking Podcasts as an Example

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the connection between podcasting and broadcasting theory. In podcasting, sound transmission breaks free from traditional norms, allowing for more flexible language expression. Hosts span both professional and non-professional groups, and technology enriches soundscapes, enabling the dissemination of subcultural elements. This prompts broadcasting theory to address practical issues: clarifying the value assessment and ethical boundaries of sound data, expanding the scope of its discipline, and exploring the impact of soundscapes on the digital industry. This is not a simple adaptation of theory to practice, but rather a process of mutual interaction and co-development between the two.

KEYWORDS

Broadcasting theory; Podcast application; Sound transmission

1 Introduction

Podcasts, as a new audio format, have always been shaped by the interaction between broadcasting theory and communication practice. They build on the fundamentals of broadcasting theory—such as vocal expression and storytelling—while also leveraging new communication practices—such as audience interaction and flexible dissemination—to drive theoretical innovation. This relationship is not one of theory unilaterally guiding practice, but rather one of mutual influence and mutual promotion. This dynamic interplay makes the relationship between broadcasting and communication in podcasts particularly illustrative.

2 The cross-logic of broadcasting theory and podcast content

2.1 Standards and effectiveness based on sound propagation

In the early days of podcasting in China in 2000, the lack of alignment with broadcasting theory and the absence of standardized guidelines led to low transmission efficiency. At the time, content was often recorded casually by non-professionals, without employing “articulation and pronunciation” to ensure clear speech or “narrative pacing control” to establish auditory logic. As a result, audio quality was frequently compromised by unclear pronunciation and disorganized pauses, reducing information density. Even as a novelty, podcasting struggled to break out of its niche audience—the core principle of broadcasting theory that “sound is the carrier of information, and standards are the guarantee of transmission” failed to take hold, leaving podcasting as an inefficient “marginal medium.”

From 2010 to 2019, the rise of short videos further marginalized podcasts, which were already on the periphery, making the need for standardized guidelines even more urgent. Some creators experimented with techniques like “objectivity” to adjust their tone in simulated dialogue contexts, or used “chest-abdominal breathing techniques” to enhance vocal endurance. Though these methods did not form a systematic approach, a few podcasts (such as early cultural programs) leveraged their “clear and memorable” advantages to build a core audience, demonstrating the foundational role of theoretical frameworks in enhancing communication effectiveness.

After 2020, the integration of broadcasting theory and podcasting deepened, leading to a qualitative leap in communication effectiveness. Leading platforms transformed theory into practical standards: using “dynamic range control” technology to reduce noise, allowing sound to penetrate environmental interference; and employing a “three-part structure” (opening with a thesis statement—developing the middle section—concluding with a summary) to standardize narrative structure and improve completion rates. Non-professional hosts have also actively integrated theory into their work: “Daily Talk Park” uses “pause and connection” to emphasize the rhythm of humor, while knowledge-based podcasts employ “stress processing” to highlight core viewpoints. These approaches have improved both the efficiency of information transmission and emotional resonance, ultimately propelling podcasts from niche to mainstream audiences.

This timeline shows that broadcasting theory provides podcasts with a normative “methodology,” while podcasts enable the theory to undergo “creative transformation” in new media contexts through feedback on effectiveness. The combination of the two represents the common practice of sound communication patterns across different eras.

2.2 Meaning construction based on language practice

Traditional broadcasting theory classifies language styles (such as the rigor of news and the lyricism of literature) specifically to suit different communication scenarios. This logic is further emphasized in podcasts: commuting-scenario news podcasts draw on the “conciseness” of news language, using short sentences and a fast pace to accommodate the distracted listening needs of commuters; late-night emotional podcasts, on the other hand, adopt the “lyrical quality” of literary language, using a soothing tone and detailed descriptions to create an intimate atmosphere.

What is even more special is the podcast's “cross-scenario switching” —cultural interview programs use rigorous explanatory language (following the logic of broadcasting) when analyzing concepts, and switch to lively colloquial language (retaining natural tone words) when discussing personal experiences. This flexible adjustment allows the language form to dynamically adapt to the needs of the scenario, ensuring both the efficiency of information transmission and emotional resonance, ultimately achieving a three-dimensional landing of meaning.

3 The functional reconstruction of broadcasting theory in podcasts

3.1 Identity translation: multidimensional reshaping of the role of communicators

The “authoritative identity” of traditional broadcasting is undergoing a subtle “identity translation” in the podcast era—not a simple role replacement, but rather a flexible application of broadcasting theory and technological empowerment that allows the core values of the original identity to be reborn in a new context.

In the past, the identity label of “broadcaster” was firmly tied to the fixed perception of “standardized speech” and “information dominator,” as if it were confined within a precise mold. However, podcasts have redefined this stereotype through “identity translation”: the ‘objectivity’ required in broadcasting theory is no longer about delivering a clear, unidirectional message. Instead, it has been reimagined as whispers in headphones or the gentle clinking of a coffee cup—everyday sounds. When a host asks, “Have you noticed more noise-canceling headphones on the subway?” it transforms the core of “engaging with the audience” into the authentic companionship of a casual conversation among friends; The “pause and connection” technique also breaks free from textbook norms, leveraging AI-curated trending topics to intentionally leave gaps during policy interpretations, allowing perspectives like “changes in ordinary people's commutes” to naturally emerge. This transforms the essence of “guiding attention” into a more relaxed form of expression.

AI here is not a substitute for identity, but a “catalyst” for translation: it helps hosts organize interview outlines, but hosts will smile and rewrite stiff questions, turning economic topics into everyday conversations like “the convenience store downstairs raised prices by 50 cents”; voice analysis alerts hosts when speaking too quickly, prompting them to add, “Is that a bit confusing? Let me explain it more clearly”—such adjustments are a vivid example of transforming the role of “information disseminator” into that of an “equal communicator.”

Ultimately, the professional core of traditional broadcasting has not disappeared; it has merely undergone a transformation through “identity translation.” It has shifted from pursuing a “perfect image” with perfect pronunciation and intonation to becoming a “friend next door” with a down-to-earth feel. This allows the identity of the communicator to be rooted in the soil of broadcasting theory while also sprouting vibrant branches and leaves in the new communication context.

3.2 Soundscape reconstruction: scene upgrades enabled by technology

At the gym, on your commute, or while traveling for work... During these fragmented moments, listening is the most enjoyable thing to do. It frees your hands and eyes, and even when you close your eyes to relax, you can use your ears to open up a whole new world of possibilities^[1]. Podcasts have established a firm foothold in the “audio economy” because they have innovated with sound, using “soundscape reconstruction” to make listening both effortless and immersive. Broadcasting theory serves as the “invisible framework.” For example, basic broadcasting techniques like “pauses” and ‘emphasis’ are amplified in podcasts through technology—by adjusting pause lengths and amplifying keyword volumes via editing software, information is conveyed more precisely. This essentially combines the theory of “guiding listeners' attention” from broadcasting with technical tools. There is also the theory of “objectivity.” Traditional broadcasting emphasizes “having the audience in mind,” while podcasts use technology to achieve more concrete implementation: for example, the intimacy of listening with headphones, combined with the host's “whisper-like” delivery close to the microphone, maximizes the sense of a one-on-one conversation; Additionally, post-production reverb processing simulates the acoustic effects of different spaces like cafes or study rooms, giving the “scene construction” theory in broadcasting a richer technical medium.

The hard facts that might have been buried in reports or academic papers, or the somewhat dry in-depth news

coverage, come to life in podcasts—the host delivers the information in a casual, conversational tone, accompanied by appropriate background music, and occasionally interjects ambient sounds from the scene. For example, when discussing the transformation of a city, they might add a few street vendors' cries, or when telling an adventure story, they might mix in some wind sounds. Before you know it, you're immersed in the scene—who has time to feel bored? Behind this is the power of technology. From “being able to hear” to “enjoying the listen,” the experience keeps getting better. In the past, creating audio required professional equipment, but now a smartphone and basic editing software are enough, allowing ordinary people to become podcast hosts. This has made content incredibly diverse, whether it's niche hobbies or hard-core knowledge, there's a podcast for everyone. Compared to Himalaya, podcasts are more like “light cavalry,” not overly concerned with traffic logic but focusing on genuine human connections. Hosts and listeners can engage in lively discussions in the comments section, even collaborating on topic selection. This sense of participation is something many platforms can't match.

Moreover, the “down-to-earth” vibe of podcasts is also quite appealing. Without flashy visuals, they rely solely on sound to captivate listeners—anyone can speak, and anyone can listen. It's like sitting at the corner of an alley listening to a neighbor tell a story—natural and warm. Professional podcasters know how to use rhythm, tone, and interaction to capture listeners' attention, yet they maintain a relaxed vibe, avoiding the feeling of being “lectured to.” This open and equal atmosphere transforms podcasts from mere tools for listening into a small world where people exchange ideas and find like-minded individuals—no wonder they've become so popular.

3.3 Breaking the circle of discourse: the common activation of subcultural elements

In the “decentralized” content sharing mechanism formed by podcasts using RSS technology, both the sender and receiver are given equal power. At this point, the medium is like a “tool” in a relatively hidden position, quietly playing its role^[2]. Chinese podcasts are breaking through cultural barriers and quietly gaining popularity overseas through the commonalities of local subcultures. Compared to “grand narratives” that require crossing cultural divides, niche interests rooted in everyday life have become the most natural bridge.

For example, podcasts focused on Hanfu culture demonstrate this potential. In such programs, hosts rarely engage in abstract discussions about the concept of “traditional clothing.” Instead, they take listeners on a virtual tour of Hanfu stores—they deeply understand the essence of “objectivity” in broadcasting theory, using a casual, neighborhood-chat tone to explain how to iron the pleats of a ma-mian skirt to make them crisp, and deliberately slowing down their speech and emphasizing key words when discussing the symbolic meanings of patterns, transforming the weighty concept of “a nation of fine attire” into the vivid expression, “This garment holds the ingenuity of our ancestors.” Even when inviting overseas students to share amusing stories about “wearing Hanfu on campus,” they enhance the natural pauses in dialogue through editing, allowing cross-cultural resonance to gradually unfold in the relaxed flow of conversation. This down-to-earth sharing resonates deeply with global enthusiasts of “retro trends” and “niche fashion.” Overseas listeners may not understand the allusions in classical texts, but they are moved by the idea that “a single garment can carry so much ingenuity.” Some ask in the comments section, “Where can I buy the same fabric?” Others voluntarily explain, “The difference between European medieval dresses and Hanfu in terms of waistlines.” Cultural exchange occurs through these small interactions.

Some podcasts delve into the “urban stroll” subculture, taking listeners on an auditory journey through China's streets and alleys. The host walks along the cobblestone paths of old Beijing hutongs, recording the sounds of pigeon whistles and street vendors, and uses the “scene reenactment” technique from broadcasting to create auditory layers between environmental sounds and pauses in speech—for example, when mentioning “the old men in the hutongs who love to play chess under the locust trees,” there is a two-second pause to let listeners “hear” the distant clinking of chess pieces, then continues with a tone tinged with laughter, as if truly standing at the alley entrance chatting idly. This “sound travel” format resonates with overseas trends like “urban sound collection” and “slow-life podcasts.” Some overseas listeners have said that hearing the cicadas chirping and mahjong tiles clacking in Shanghai's alleys makes them imagine sitting on a wicker chair with neighbors, fanning themselves with palm leaves—those shared emotions about “home” and “life” make unfamiliar cultural scenes feel tangible and relatable.

In the past, promoting Chinese culture abroad was fraught with challenges, primarily due to cultural differences that created barriers to understanding. However, the decentralized nature of podcasts has transformed this landscape. No longer is content produced and disseminated by a specific central institution; instead, everyone can participate in creation and dissemination. Ordinary podcast hosts, driven by their passion for culture, apply the principle from broadcasting theory that “tone and rhythm should align with the essence of the content.” They break down traditional customs into relatable phrases like “the old saying my grandmother always used when teaching me how to wrap zongzi,” making it easier for overseas listeners to connect with the content. Just as Li Ziqi gained popularity overseas with her rural life short videos, some Chinese podcasts tell Chinese stories from a unique perspective, from traditional festival customs

to the inheritance of folk crafts, sparking overseas listeners' keen interest in Chinese culture. This has truly achieved cross-cultural dissemination of culture across different countries, making Chinese podcasts a new bridge for cross-cultural exchange.

4 The dissolution of boundaries and value elevation of broadcasting theory through podcasting practices

4.1 Data alchemy: the value development and ethical dilemmas of sound assets

The rise of podcasting is steadily eroding the boundaries of traditional broadcasting theory, opening up new avenues for the development of the value of audio assets while also entangling itself in the complex web of data ethics. These dual dimensions constitute the practical challenges facing broadcasting theory in the digital age.

In the realm of audio assets, podcasts break free from the linear logic of traditional broadcasting, where a single broadcast marks the end of its lifecycle, allowing audio content to be transformed into a sustainable, transferable asset. Traditional theories focus on "immediate effects," while podcasts break down individual episodes into fragmented materials: hosts' casual expressions, ambient sounds with a touch of everyday life, and highlights of audience interaction. These can be edited into short video soundtracks, knowledge-pay modules, or personalized products created using AI. This "audio assetization" expands the value landscape, extending from an "information carrier" to a "scenario tool" and an "emotional bond." For example, the "original audio + scene sound effects" material library of historical podcasts not only serves program narratives but can also be licensed to educational institutions, aligning commercial and social value into a cohesive whole.

However, as boundaries blur, concerns about data ethics quietly emerge. Podcasts rely on user data far more than traditional "listening rate statistics": AI analyzes listening duration, pause points, and comments to make precise recommendations and even create "virtual hosts" with voices identical to those of real hosts. This blurs the line between "real and synthetic voices" —when AI can perfectly replicate tone and piece together unpublished segments, the "ownership of voices" becomes a murky issue; whether listeners have the right to know the source of the voice also becomes an ethical hurdle.

Ultimately, this is a microcosm of how digital technology is reshaping the "sound-human-society" network. It frees sound from the shackles of linear transmission and forces broadcasting theory to incorporate "data and technological ethics" —upholding the bottom line of truth, balancing precision and privacy. Only when boundaries are dissolved can this become a springboard for theoretical advancement, rather than a breach leading to disorder.

4.2 Disciplinary boundaries: the theoretical crisis and value expansion of broadcasting studies

In the podcast era, where everyone can have a voice, the value of broadcasting studies has not been diminished. Instead, it has welcomed an opportunity for theoretical expansion through interdisciplinary integration and cross-border collaboration. Its core significance lies in upgrading from "standardized voice techniques" to "systematic voice communication wisdom," responding to the deep-seated needs of the times.

The foundation of broadcasting studies has never been about "being able to speak well," but rather a systematic study of "effective communication." As an overwhelming amount of sound floods the public domain, theories from broadcasting studies such as "objectivity" and "speech flow phonetic changes" have evolved into the core ability to "be heard amidst the noise." When discussing workplace topics, creators who understand these theories use "stress design" to highlight key points and "pause and rhythm" to create pauses, ensuring that content reaches audiences precisely in various scenarios. This is a professional mastery of the principles of sound.

Interdisciplinary collaboration has added new depth to broadcasting studies. In podcasting practice, it integrates with communication studies, psychology, and data science: optimizing narratives through user data (data science), adjusting language based on audience profiles (psychology), and designing interactions to enhance engagement (communication studies)... The in-depth exploration at the graduate level is precisely aimed at cultivating this "cross-disciplinary integration capability," enabling one to deconstruct the logic of podcasting while preserving the core of "humanistic expression" in the face of AI-driven challenges.

The phenomenon of "de-hosting" further highlights its value. In podcasts, the term 'host' is gradually being replaced by "sharer," which appears to dissolve professional identities but actually demands a higher level of "invisible control." The traditional broadcasting theories of "sequential narrative" and "rhythm control" have transformed into an invisible "communication framework": when multiple people are chatting and the conversation becomes scattered, a phrase like "The earlier mention of XX is related to what we discussed earlier" naturally brings the conversation back on track; when an interview becomes awkward, asking "Could you elaborate on the XX you mentioned earlier?" is actually a guiding

technique. This “professionalism without professionalism” is precisely the advanced manifestation of broadcasting studies in a decentralized context.

Broadcasting studies have always focused on human needs. In an era of information overload, “understanding” is more important than “hearing,” and ‘empathy’ is more critical than “communication.” Hosts need to walk on two legs. On the one hand, they need to hone their spoken language skills, both in terms of reading aloud and conversational ability. On the other hand, they need to cultivate their core competitiveness and focus on building up their knowledge base, knowing as much as possible about a small niche area, so that they become irreplaceable^[3]. “Making opinions warm and knowledge substantial” is precisely the key to breaking the dilemma of fragmentation—this is not a question of “whether to study broadcasting,” but rather an inevitable choice of “how to use professional skills to master voice communication.”

4.3 Soundscape economy: driving paradigm shifts in digital industries through soundscape design

It is not merely a technical or formal innovation, but rather a profound response to the question of “how people connect with the world.” It transforms sound from background noise into a bond that connects emotions and anchors culture, perfectly capturing the current desire for “warm connections.”

Instead of using flashy techniques to mask the emptiness of content, let those down-to-earth expressions and voices tinged with the passage of time become living carriers of cultural heritage: The stories of everyday life told in dialect by old neighbors, the memories of hardships recounted in a hometown accent by veterans—these voices may not be perfect, but they are authentic. They serve as a key to unlocking the collective memories of a generation, transforming scattered individual experiences into a powerful collective resonance. Digital technology is not meant to replace human warmth, but to break down the walls of time and space: AI editing allows migrant workers to listen to a complete folk tale on the subway, and big data recommendations enable children in mountainous areas to hear artifacts in museums “speak.” Here, technology acts as a thoughtful assistant, delivering voices worth hearing to those who wish to listen, connecting niche passions with like-minded individuals, and bringing marginalized stories to a broader audience.

The deeper meaning of “painting a mirror with sound” lies in ensuring that culture in the digital age is not merely a cold stream of data, but rather a tangible sense of life's texture. When the street vendors' cries in the alleys, the shouts on the fields, and the rhythmic sounds of reading in the classrooms can all be preserved and widely shared through podcasts, what we are preserving is not just sound, but the spiritual imprint of an era—this is precisely the tangible power it can bring to social and cultural development, allowing everyone to find their connection to the world amidst the waves of sound.

5 Conclusion

The development of podcasting is a mutually reinforcing process between broadcasting theory and communication practice: practice provides new content for theory, while theory gives practice greater structure. This dynamic interplay closely aligns with the core relationship between broadcasting and communication, enriching the disciplinary content of broadcasting studies. It also clarifies the path for theoretical and practical collaboration in the context of media transformation, offering insights into the future of audio communication.

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