


Article

Research on Community Construction Mechanism and Interaction Ecology of Chinese Music Podcast “Vibration”

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Abstract: Background: With the development of digital media and mobile audio technologies, music podcasts have become integral to low-attention scenarios, and their communities foster interpersonal connection and interaction. However, empirical case studies on the formation, maintenance and interactive mechanisms of Chinese music podcast communities remain insufficient. **Objective:** Using the Chinese music podcast “Vibration” as a case study, this paper explores how music podcasts attract enthusiasts, establish connections, and create relatively stable community structures through continuous interaction. The analyses focus on the framework of “content entry—emotional mechanism—technical support.” **Methods:** It adopts literature review and text analysis, focusing on program texts and comment section interactions to analyze topic selection, narrative expression, interactive prompts and audience responses, and uses word frequency to identify interactive themes and emotional expression features. **Results:** Vibration builds community entry points through targeted topics, personalized storytelling and immersive sound; emotional bonds are strengthened via interactive discussions and feedback mechanisms; platform functions, membership systems and community activities drive interaction from content consumption to identity and community construction. **Conclusion:** This podcast has evolved from a content delivery platform to a community linking shared interests, emotional ties and social identity, proving Chinese music podcast community development relies on the synergy of content curation, emotional engagement and platform interaction rather than single content appeal.

Keywords: Music podcast; Online community; Participatory culture; Emotional public sphere; Relational communication

1. Introduction

Media forms have evolved continuously with social changes. From wired broadcasting to wireless transmission, media, with information carriers as their fundamental attribute, adapt to changing user needs through morphological transformations. The term “podcast” originates from the combination of Apple’s portable player, “iPod,” and the word “broadcasting,” referring to downloadable audio files published online using technologies like simple information aggregation (Xia &

Zhou, 2022). Podcasts have rapidly developed in the mobile internet era due to their features like “convenience of access, sensory release, and high-density information.”(Xia & Zhou, 2022) In 2024, China’s podcast market size reached 67.007 billion yuan (RMB), while the global podcast market size was 297.676 billion yuan. It is projected that the global podcast market will grow at a compound annual growth rate of 30.0% during the forecast period and reach 1,437.109 billion yuan by 2030 (Bezerris Consulting, 2025). Similar to the diverse content categories on visual platforms, podcasts also show diverse genres. Music podcasts, as an important vertical branch, exemplify this trend. Taking the top program “Vibration” on the Xiaoyuzhou platform as an example, its subscription count reached 262,000, with the highest single episode receiving over a thousand comments (as of February 7, 2026), highlighting the large-scale listener base and frequent interactions within specific platforms. This has formed a content-sharing circle linked by hosts and connected by musical interests (Ma, 2024).

The success of music podcasts in capturing significant market share amid fierce competition stems from their tripartite approach: using content as a gateway, building emotional connections as a bond, and technology as the foundation. This strategy effectively transforms transient users into highly engaged community members. While existing research has focused on content creation or media formats, there is a lack of systematic explanations regarding how community-driven operations foster long-term retention and value co-creation. Particularly within the Chinese context, the logic behind community formation, interaction patterns, and the cultural significance of music podcasts requires deeper exploration. This study, therefore, addresses three key questions: How do music podcasts create resonance entry points through topic selection and song curation? How do narrative storytelling and companion mechanisms enhance relational engagement? How do platform interactions solidify community boundaries to establish a sustainable interactive ecosystem? These insights aim to provide new perspectives on the mechanisms driving the evolution of niche interest communities in the digital age.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Research Status at Home and Abroad

The evolution of digital audio media has enabled podcasts to seamlessly integrate into daily routines like commutes, household chores, and leisure activities with minimal cognitive load, establishing stable and repeatable listening habits (McClung & Johnson, 2010; Gao & Wang, 2022). This foundational development has laid the groundwork for the widespread adoption of online audio practices such as podcasts. Research consensus indicates that the rise of the “ear economy” and the development of mobile internet technologies have propelled podcasts beyond their peripheral media status. Their contextual adaptability, auditory companionship, and content specialization precisely align with contemporary users’ core needs for quick information access and emotional comfort (Fan & Lin, 2021). As a crucial vertical branch within podcasting, music podcasts not only preserve the essential sound-based medium but also deeply integrate musical emotional expression and cultural significance, emerging as a key medium connecting musical content, creators, and audiences (Hamilton & Barber, 2022).

In examining media forms and communication dynamics, research on platforms highlights that podcasts—as a new audio medium—demonstrate distinctive characteristics that contribute to their survival. The democratization of content creators and interactive communication between producers and audiences has fundamentally broken down the one-way transmission barriers present in traditional broadcasting (Gao, 2022). Music podcasts, in particular, enhance this communicative advantage by combining “audio narration + musical presentation.” This combination creates a multifaceted communication scenario that integrates information delivery, aesthetic experience, and emotional engagement (Li et al., 2020). Studies on audiences reveal that

music podcast listeners have various motivations, including music knowledge acquisition, emotional connections, and fan culture identification. These motivations transform listeners from passive receivers to active participants (Hamilton & Barber, 2022). Consequently, research on podcast communities must consider two key aspects: the influence of platform mechanisms on interactive structures and the impact of these interactive behaviors on community boundaries and member identity.

This study focuses on Chinese music podcasts, drawing from existing music communication research, which provides crucial theoretical foundations for understanding community construction. Key discussions surrounding music curation, aesthetic taste communities, and aesthetic practices are particularly valuable. Research indicates that music applications have transitioned from mere “user aggregation” to active “community building.” They create social scenarios through personalized recommendations and participatory reviews. The emotional attributes of music itself have become the core bond for community cohesion (Yin & Chen, 2021). Building on this foundation, music podcasts leverage programmatic communication advantages. Through targeted topic planning, professional song analysis, and personalized storytelling, hosts gather scattered music enthusiasts to form communities based on shared aesthetic preferences (Radjagukguk & Pradana, 2020). Accordingly, music podcasts can be defined as a form of “programmatic music curation.” They create pathways for audience engagement through topic selection and song curation, enhancing music’s clarity and discussion via storytelling and interpretation. This approach provides stable topic resources and interpretive frameworks for community interaction.

The development of content curation is accompanied by research on emotional mechanisms. Studies confirm that podcasts, through personalized expression via new media discourse, can build communities based on emotional connections. The emotional interaction between hosts and listeners serves as the core bond sustaining these communities (Xu, 2021). Music podcasts exhibit unique emotional mechanisms in which the inherent emotional power of music overlaps with the auditory companionship of podcasts, creating a dual effect of “auditory experience-emotional resonance” (Li et al., 2020). Music is not merely an aesthetic object but also a social resource. Individuals confirm their identity and seek “similar others” through their music preferences, which they share and discuss, thereby forming communities based on aesthetic orientation (DeNora, 2000). Listeners share listening experiences and emotional insights in comment sections, while hosts respond to listener needs through their program content. This closed loop of “expressible emotions—responsive reactions—reaffirmed connections” constitutes the key mechanism for generating emotional cohesion in communities. This explains why music podcast communities often demonstrate strong companionship attributes and effective relationship-building capabilities.

Meanwhile, research on technical presentation and auditory experience highlights how audio platform design significantly influences user engagement and community dynamics. The development of streaming platforms such as Podify demonstrates that features like subtitles and full-text transcription significantly enhance information accessibility and listening satisfaction, while creating diverse participation channels for community interaction (Meggetto, 2024). In music podcasts, technological advancements in sound quality optimization and personalized recommendation algorithms not only directly improve listening experiences but also facilitate precise community clustering and efficient interaction by aligning with users’ musical preferences (Li et al., 2020). Thus, “technical presentation” is not a minor factor but a vital foundation supporting the sustainable development of music podcast communities.

Furthermore, community studies and participatory cultural research provide crucial theoretical perspectives and organizational frameworks for interpreting the “interactive ecosystem” of music podcasts. Research indicates that within participatory cultural contexts, users contribute to community building through content creation, comment

interactions, and topic dissemination, gradually forming unique community rules and identity mechanisms (Wu, 2016). The participatory practices in music podcast communities exhibit multi-layered and diversified characteristics, encompassing both host-led topic discussions and listener-initiated content re-creation and sharing. These interactive behaviors continuously reinforce community boundaries and enhance members' sense of belonging (Zhang, 2019). Additional studies reveal that virtual music communities contain distinct roles such as active producers, low-profile sharers, and passive participants. The complementary interactions among these roles collectively form a pluralistic and symbiotic community interaction ecosystem (Ma, 2024). This demonstrates that "community construction" and "interactive mechanisms" must be integrated into a unified analytical framework, rather than measuring community development solely through interaction frequency or user scale.

In summary, existing research has provided theoretical foundations and reference frameworks for studies of the Chinese music podcast community across multiple dimensions. These include media accessibility of digital audio, platform-based interaction and relational communication, music curation and aesthetic communities, auditory intimacy and emotional companionship, technological presentation and immersive experiences, and participatory culture and community boundaries. However, in light of this study's research focus, three main limitations remain: First, current studies predominantly concentrate on the broader podcast industry or music application communities, with limited specialized research on Chinese music podcasts. As a result, they fail to fully explore the unique social structures arising from their "music + podcast" dual attributes. Second, analyses of community interaction mechanisms often remain at the level of phenomenological descriptions, lacking systematic examination and discussion of the three-way interaction between "content-emotion-technology." Third, research methodologies primarily rely on literature analysis and single-case studies, lacking detailed platform-specific analyses and mechanistic explanations. To address these limitations, this study uses the "Vibration" platform as a case study, proposing an analytical framework based on "content entry points (topic resonance) -emotional mechanisms (emotional companionship) -technological mechanisms (technological presentation)." Using three dimensions— "cultural belonging and identity-emotional connections-participatory interactions"—the study systematically explores the interactive mechanisms and ecological structures of Chinese music podcasts, aiming to fill theoretical gaps in mechanistic analysis of music podcast communities and refine the related research system.

2.2 The Context and Theoretical Basis of the Chinese Music Podcast Community

1) *Technological Evolution: The Logic of Community Construction in Digital Audio Media*

The rise and development of Chinese music podcasts are deeply rooted in the evolution of digital technology and the transformation of communication methods. The continuous advancement of digital audio technology and the growth of platform ecosystems have provided foundational support for the formation and stability of music podcast communities. From traditional radio to streaming media and today's on-demand audio services, technological progress has enhanced content reach and added value for community engagement. According to industry research firm Canalys (2025), global shipments of personal smart audio devices (including wireless earbuds and smart speakers) are projected to exceed 533 million units by 2025. The widespread adoption of smart audio devices has facilitated their seamless integration into daily life, transforming them from symbolic consumption symbols into foundational content products that systematically reshape how music is perceived and consumed.

Innovations such as high-resolution audio formats, lossless compression, and 3D audio have significantly improved the quality of music reproduction and the immersive experience for listeners. Additionally, audio devices now prioritize personalized sound

customization, allowing users to tailor acoustic parameters based on individual preferences and usage scenarios, ultimately creating highly personalized listening experiences. The evolution of terminal devices and audio technology innovations collectively form a content ecosystem supported by digital audio. The everyday integration of devices (Gao & Wang, 2022) enables the formation of community-based listening groups through shared listening habits. Additionally, platform features such as comments, likes, and subscriptions further facilitate real-time interaction and identity recognition among listeners (Yin & Chen, 2021).

From a platform development perspective, podcast platforms like Xiaoyuzhou and Himalaya integrate features such as comments, likes, and subscriptions, thereby encouraging real-time audience interaction and identity formation. The embedded algorithms and tagging systems further drive the creation and consolidation of interest communities. This demonstrates that the community-building logic of digital audio media manifests through the dual evolution of audio technology and platform technology, collectively supporting the emergence of Chinese music podcast communities.

2) Communication Transformation: Paradigm Shift from Unidirectional Distribution to Relational Communication

In his influential work *“Ideology in Advanced Industrial Society,”* Herbert Marcuse, a leading figure of the Frankfurt School, introduced the groundbreaking concept of “one-dimensional man.” (Marcuse, 2013) Through this framework, Marcuse demonstrated how technological rationality erodes human agency, turning audiences into passive recipients (Sun, 2025). This theory reveals how technological rationality, consumerism, and industrial culture together suppress human agency, transforming individuals into “one-dimensional man” who conform to existing norms and lose their capacity for critical thinking. The concept emphasizes the passive reception state of audiences while neglecting their agency in communication processes and their central role in mass media. Beyond the narrow interpretation of content producers, the past era’s limited device options further reinforced this one-dimensional nature. During the traditional broadcasting era, music consumption centered on passive listening with minimal interaction. Audiences received music unidirectionally from creators through limited devices like radios, CD players, and broadcast systems. This situation manifested in two ways: the lack of interactive devices and the creators’ absence of interactive awareness due to device monopolies. To address these issues, this paper adopts the concept of “linear content transmission” from communication scholar Marshall Riesel to illustrate the one-dimensional nature of traditional audio content. The shift from “one-dimensional” to “two-way interactive” communication paradigms thus provides both theoretical foundations and practical opportunities for community-driven practices in music podcasting.

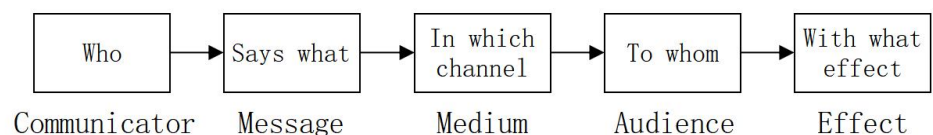


Figure 1. Lasswell's (1948) linear propagation model

Source: <https://marketing-course.ru/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Lasswell.pdf>

In today’s digital era, the widespread adoption of communication tools and decentralized power distribution has elevated user participation to a crucial role in information dissemination. User engagement has become the key driver of viral content propagation, transforming the traditional “one-way listening” paradigm into an immersive ecosystem characterized by interactivity, community building, and scenario

integration. This study introduces a bidirectional cyclical communication model inspired by the Osgilvy-Schramm framework that overcomes the limitations of linear communication patterns to reveal contemporary community-driven podcast content dissemination. The core of this transformation lies in shifting listeners from passive recipients to active participants, elevating music consumption from individual behavior to collective practice. Ultimately, this evolution transforms music from a pure artistic medium into a social platform that connects diverse scenarios.

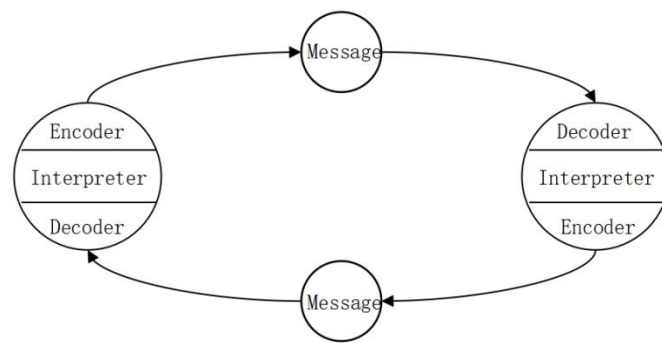


Figure 2. Osgood-Schramm (1954) transmission model
Source: <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/1955-03971-000>

Although the Lasswell model and the Schramm model emerged in the early days of mass communication research, their fundamental definitions of communication subjects, content, and feedback relationships still offer valuable insights into understanding how music podcasts evolved from one-way distribution to interactive communication. This article does not view them as rigid explanatory frameworks, but rather as contextual tools for analyzing shifts in communication dynamics. Lasswell's (1948) "5W model" provides an analytical framework through its structured questions—"Who, What, Through, To, What Effect"—to identify communication elements and processes. Meanwhile, Schramm's (1954) cyclical model emphasizes feedback and interaction in communication, offering a crucial theoretical foundation for understanding the changing nature of communication relationships. In today's platform-based media environment, where communication structures are increasingly networked, these classic models remain essential starting points for analyzing communication subjects, content, and interactive feedback systems.

In the context of a transformative landscape, the music podcast "Vibration" has emerged as a prime example of observing music communities. Firstly, the host Shiyi approaches the conversation with humility, adopting a listener's perspective and engaging in equal dialogue with the audience. By analyzing music genres, recommendation rationale, and personal preferences, Shiyi creates an interactive content-sharing dialogue scenario. Secondly, the program's content positioning covers diverse life scenarios, fostering deep connections with listeners through high levels of engagement and immersion. It also encourages user participation and co-creation. The evolution of communication methods has led to content growth and enhanced interactivity. Under the principle of interactive progression, digital audio has successfully built a unique community bound by the shared experience of sound.

3. Research Methods

3.1 Research Design and Methods

This study employs a research design that combines single-case analysis with mixed-text analysis, focusing on the music podcast "Vibration" on the Xiaoyuzhou platform. It provides a detailed explanation of how music podcasts form and sustain

communities, while facilitating interactions among listeners. Methodologically, the study integrates qualitative content analysis with word-frequency and high-frequency semantic clue extraction. It involves dimensional coding of program texts, including elements such as the logic behind topic or song selection, narrative structure, interaction prompts, and sound scene descriptions." Additionally, the study cleans and statistically analyzes comment sections to extract recurring interaction keywords and high-frequency expressions, which are then used to validate and reinforce qualitative assessments.

In the coding and analysis process, this study employs a hierarchical coding system with cross-verification mechanisms. The coding framework is structured around three primary dimensions: "content entry points," "emotional mechanisms," and "technical mechanisms," which are further refined into 12 secondary coding items. These include such as "topic type," "personification of narrative," "frequency of interactive prompts," "types of emotional expression," "knowledge supplementation behavior," and "co-creation behavior." among others.

The coding was independently performed by two researchers, with consistency checks conducted after the initial coding. Samples were randomly selected for cross-validation, and the coding consistency rate was calculated. For entries with discrepancies, consensus was reached through discussion, and the coding manual was revised before re-examining the entire sample.

The word frequency analysis employs the Python text segmentation tool Jieba for Chinese word segmentation, with stop words filtered using the Harbin Institute of Technology (HIT) stop word list. Synonyms and near-synonyms are merged, such as grouping "like", "really like", and "love" into "love". The word frequency statistics serve only as an auxiliary tool for identifying interaction themes and are not used as a standalone criterion for statistical significance.

Building on the theoretical foundations and research gaps outlined earlier, this study establishes its analytical framework through three interconnected dimensions: "Content Gateway (Topic Resonance) → Emotional Mechanism (Companionship & Empathy) → Technological Mechanism (Platform & Audio Presentation). The findings are systematically organized into three key observation dimensions— Cultural Belonging & Identity → Emotional Connection → Participatory Interaction—ensuring a clear progression from data analysis to conclusions. These dimensions correspond to the "Mechanism Level" and "Outcome Presentation Level," respectively, with the former explaining the underlying logic and the latter demonstrating interactive outcomes.

3.2 Case Selection and Basic Information of the "Vibration Distortion Chamber"

"Vibration" is a music podcast launched in July 2019, primarily hosted on the Xiaoyuzhou APP and also available on platforms like Himalaya, NetEase Cloud Music, and Bilibili. The program was hosted by "Shi Yi", who takes on the role of a "music enthusiast/shareholder" rather than a professional music critic. This narrative features a conversational tone that enhances the immersive listening experience. Its content framework combines "music sharing + cultural interpretation + auditory companionship", covering new song/album recommendations, artist profiles and interviews, genre explanations, and scenario-based playlists. Through curated themes, the program transforms music into an interactive, discussable, and replayable experience. According to Xiaoyuzhou's public data, as of February 7, 2026, the show has accumulated approximately 262,000 subscribers, over 10 million cumulative plays, with individual episodes reaching peak views of 800,000+ and highly active comment sections—some episodes even garnering thousands of comments.

The selection of "Vibration" as the case study is based on three reasons. Firstly, its early launch and sustained operation provide an ideal platform for tracing the development of music podcasts—from initial "music sharing" to later stable formats with scenario-based or therapeutic themes. Secondly, as of February 7, 2026, the

Xiaoyuzhou app has approximately 262,000 subscribers and over 10 million cumulative plays, with episode views and comments consistently ranking among the highest in music podcasts, ensuring a high level of interactivity. Thirdly, the program's hybrid format—combining music curation, conversational storytelling, and audio production—has created a lively feedback cycle in the comment section: “playback → feedback → playlist updates → re-listening,” making it particularly suitable for exploring community building and interactive ecosystems in music podcasts.

3.3 Sample Scope, Data Sources, and Analysis Procedures

This study primarily examines the microcosmic universe as its research domain, supplemented by data from Himalaya and Apple Podcasts. We selected 35 episodes based on chronological order, ranging from “Love is the Only Gravity” released on December 6, 2024, to “Re-listen to Qiong Yao's Golden Melodies: Back to the Romantic Era of Unextinguished Sparks” released on February 2, 2026. Data collection and recording were completed by February 7, 2026. During this period, the research first identified core analytical materials based on episode ranking information on program homepages: using “episode-by-episode playback volume ranking” as the entry point, we prioritized episodes with outstanding playback performance as foundational samples. On this basis, we conducted thematic type coverage correction to avoid type concentration bias caused by playback-based sorting. The correction was based on the primary content formats presented in the programs (such as review compilations, special/interviews, science popularization, scene-based playlists, sleep/comfort special episodes, etc.). When a particular category showed significant underrepresentation in the foundational sample, we supplemented it with representative episodes that performed well in playback volume, making minor adjustments to the sample structure.

This study employs a single-case analysis approach, focusing on the podcast “Vibration,” which serves as a representative example within the China's podcast ecosystem. Firstly, Xiaoyuzhou (Little Universe) is one of the most prominent platforms in this landscape, attracting a dedicated user base concentrated among core podcast listeners. The platform's interactive features such as comment sections and listener communities, have created a stable environment for the formation of podcast community, enabling a concentrated representation of dynamics within the Chinese podcast community. Secondly, as a music-focused podcast, “Vibration” has developed a vibrant listener community over time. Its content extends beyond music recommendations to include emotional expression and life experience sharing, reflecting the typical evolution of music podcasts from merely providing content to promoting community interaction. Based on these observations, this study does not aim to make general statistical inferences but rather it explores the potential mechanisms behind community interaction and identity construction in music podcasts through a detailed analysis of this representative case.

The data sources consist of two components: program textual materials (including titles, summaries, content scripts, host narratives, and interaction prompts) and interactive textual materials primarily taken from the comment sections of corresponding episodes on Xiaoyuzhou (covering emotional responses, on-demand requests, playlist additions, knowledge-based discussions, reposts, and replies to other comments). Information from platforms like Himalaya, NetEase Cloud Music, and Bilibili is only used to verify consistency between cross-platform distribution and user-generated narratives, without directly comparing playback volumes across platforms.

The editorial curation adheres to the principle of “representative expressions + discussion processes” with balanced consideration: For high-traffic issues, priority is given to platform-visible high-impact comments (e.g., those with top-like rankings, pinned, or multiple replies), supplemented by contextually relevant comments from time series. For low-traffic issues, full inclusion is prioritized. During processing,

comment texts are filtered to remove purely emoticons, meaningless symbols, repetitive content, and very short irrelevant texts, while user nicknames are anonymized.

The analytical process comprises three phases: First, the program transcript undergoes multi-dimensional coding based on the research framework outlined in Section 3.1. Second, the commentary texts are cleaned and processed, utilizing word frequency patterns and semantic clustering to identify stable interaction patterns and emotional expression conventions (with word frequency serving only as a tool for discovering clues, not for statistical inference). Third, the program-side coding is cross-verified with commentary evidence to establish the “interaction initiation → audience response → interaction cycle/boundary reinforcement” mechanism chain, while cross-material validation mitigates interpretive biases from single-source data. Platform metrics (play counts and subscriptions) are based on publicly available data as of February 7, 2026, with potential temporal fluctuations. This study uniformly adopts the specified timeframe as the baseline.

4. The Construction Path of the “Vibration Distortion Chamber” Community

Building on Lasswell’s (1948) communication structure framework, we can systematically analyze how music podcasts are disseminated through an element-based approach. First, at the “Who” level, podcast hosts serve not only as a source of information but also as curators and cultural interpreters of musical content. Second, regarding “What” content, these programs not only present music itself but also add cultural significance through storytelling. Third, concerning “Channel” distribution, podcast platforms provide the technical infrastructure for audio distribution and interactive commentary. Finally, in terms of “Effect”, listeners gradually develop stable emotional connections through comments, sharing, and discussions, thereby helping the development of music interest communities. This element-based analysis of podcasts further explores the comprehensive pathways of community building.

4.1 Content Construction: Topic Resonance, Narrative Expression and Sound Scene Creation

The community-building of the music podcast “Vibration” originated from cultivating a distinctive content atmosphere, where the combination of topic selection, storytelling, and audio environments shaped its unique programming style. Table 1 presents the playback volume and comment data for 10 representative episodes of “Vibration”. From the perspective of who disseminates, the hosts serve as communicators, using topics as a catalyst for interaction and community cohesion. This approach enables users to form emotional expectations about the topics before listening, establishing initial emotional connections. The research reveals that while the top-performing episodes didn’t track real-time trending topics, they often resonated with emerging cultural concerns.

Table 1. Listening statistics of “Vibration” (compiled by the author based on data from the Xiaoyuzhou platform)

Program Name	Views (10,000)	Effective comments	Program Name	Views (10,000)	Effective comments
Listen to Chen Qizhen: Back to the Era of Literature and Art	81.3	548	Sleeping music in autumn, a soft golden dream	17.6	319
Goodbye, Fang Datong Farewell, The Dreamer	43.5	1528	The egg-shaped fortress you don't recognize... Soft Lipa.	17.4	361
The Past and Present of the Popular Music in Taiwan:1980s-2000s	42.9	2262	Melody in Time: Classical Music from Zero	17.1	412
Mayday, a band you don't know	36.7	722	Top 10 of the God-level Stage of Singers	14.7	362

Program Name	Views (10,000)	Effective comments	Program Name	Views (10,000)	Effective comments
Five Songs to Comfort You	20.8	487	The smallest unit of chance is a song	13.9	254

The “Vibration” project avoids pursuing viral trends. Instead, it focuses on niche genres like indie rock, electronic music, and Mandarin City Pop, or cultural movements such as bedroom musicians and retro revival. This vertical strategy precisely targets potential users with shared musical tastes or cultural identities, building an initial community of shared interests.

“In a dimly lit room with the air conditioning on, listening to her songs, it feels as though my ability to grasp my emotions becomes exceptionally sharp, leaving me deeply moved.”
This commentary is from the July 3, 2023, episode of the Xiaoyuzhou platform program “Listening to Chen Qizhen Again: Back to the Era When Art and Literature Still Matter.”

Furthermore, in the content dissemination aspect (Says What) of podcast hosts, the primary mode of expression is personalized narrative. The host of “Vibration” does not merely play tracks but engages in storytelling through a conversational approach: he weaves personal listening experiences, creative backgrounds, and emotional threads into his narration, interspersed with relatable life snippets. This transforms music reviews from simply being “informational explanations” into “empathetic oral narratives.” Such a presentation centered on “concrete individuals” helps listeners develop stable recognition of the host’s image, tone, and stance through long-term listening, thereby reducing media distance, enhancing intimacy, and providing entry points for community emotional attachment (Gao & Qu, 2024). Meanwhile, the “accompanying use” of audio media enables hosts’ narratives to seamlessly integrate with listeners’ daily rhythms. Without altering existing routines, listeners can cultivate familiarity with program soundscapes and narrative styles through continuous listening, while reserving space for subsequent “emotional connections” (Gao & Ding, 2021). Related studies also indicate that music podcasts often employ “accompanying listening” analysis and more inclusive narrative approaches, guiding listeners to understand and reinterpret music meanings within everyday contexts. This makes music reviews more accessible as shared and participatory discussion resources (Skjerseth, 2022). On platform-based web structures, the host’s persona and expression tags are continuously reinforced through audience interactions in comment sections. Core users participate in the program’s meaning reproduction through responses, supplements, and emotional resonance, gradually transforming individual listening experiences into shareable community emotions and relational networks (Xue & Gao, 2025). Concerning the communication channel, “Vibration” strategically leverages the “Xiao Yu Zi” podcast platform. Given its highly specialized content and concentration on premium users, the program positions itself as a sharing and communication space for “music enthusiasts/fans” in its platform self-introduction. By targeting niche platforms and precise user demographics, it integrates into listeners’ daily experiences through relatable approaches, thereby strengthening the host’s image as a perceptible communicative entity.

“Vibration is a podcast that shares music through the lens of music lovers and enthusiasts. I want to use my influence to help you discover richer musical experiences.”

The “Vibration Distortion Chamber” masterfully utilizes the dual nature of audio media—its ability to both accompany and disrupt. Through meticulously curated playlists, carefully designed sound effects, and the host’s nuanced tone and rhythmic control, it creates immersive auditory environments ranging from intimate to expansive and nostalgic. This approach goes beyond mere information delivery, creating a

personalized, emotionally charged listening space that transforms auditory engagement into a ritualistic, deeply connected daily practice.

4.2 Emotional Connection: Companion Communication and Two-way Emotional Interaction

Since the start of the 21st century, the emergence of decentralized Web2.0 technologies has driven social media platforms like WeChat and Weibo to capture public attention, making social interaction an inevitable trend in digital media. Music, as a medium for emotional and intellectual expression, naturally combines social and entertainment dimensions (Ma, 2024). The content structure of “Vibration” (a music platform) enhances user-program engagement. At a deeper level, empowered by technological advancements, “Vibration” transforms traditional one-way broadcasting into sustained emotional cultivation. This reflects the contrast between Lasswell’s (1948) linear model and Schramm’s (1954) cyclical model, demonstrating the platform’s practice of companion-style communication under two-way interactive dissemination. New media not only reshape music distribution formats but also redefine methods of podcast content, encouraging multi-dimensional audience participation across cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions. Such media-driven connectivity facilitates community building and interactive mechanisms, creating a self-reinforcing cycle of content satisfaction and repeated listening behaviors.

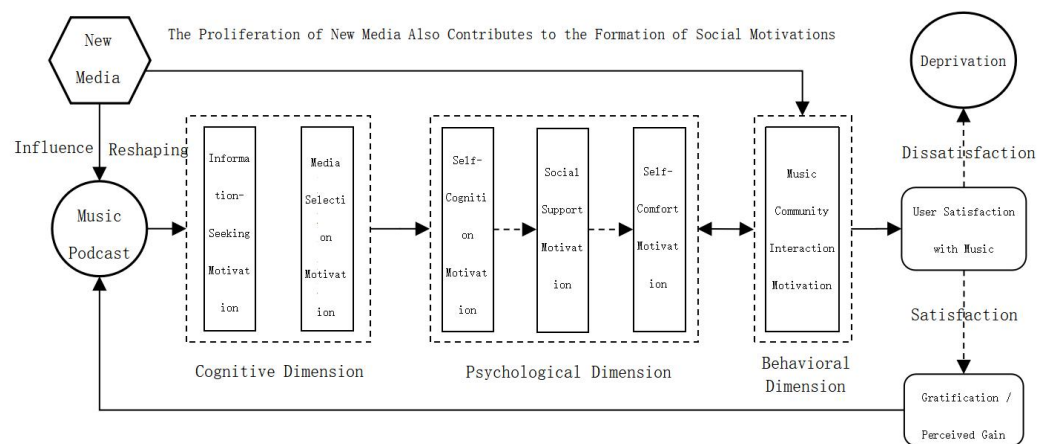


Figure 3. User Cognitive Flowchart
Source: Feng et al. (2023)

The program’s consistent update frequency and rhythm create a stable expectation of companionship. In fragmented, private scenarios like commutes, late nights, and solitude, the podcast’s voice becomes a persistent, subtle emotional companion, establishing long-term habitual emotional dependence between users and the program, thereby laying the foundation for community engagement. Furthermore, “Vibration” (Wai Bo Sound Room) builds two-way emotional interaction channels through social media platforms (WeChat Official Accounts, listener groups, Weibo, etc.). The host not only shares the program but also actively reveals exclusive backstage content, guiding listeners to explore and provide feedback. This interaction goes beyond mere information exchange—it revolves around emotional expression and resonance confirmation, transforming individual listening experiences into collective emotional validation, ultimately building an online network linked by shared emotional experiences. As the host of “Vibration” states: “If a musician can ‘honestly face themselves and their audience,’ revealing their delicate inner world, their sincerity will surely be recognized. “

4.3 Identity Shaping: Membership System and Exclusive Rights

Unlike television broadcasts that are typically fixed in one location, podcasts operate as open platforms accessible to all internet users without predefined concepts or formats. Their production process remains flexible, featuring personalized, individualized, and free-form characteristics that unleash tremendous creativity and imagination under the user-generated content (UGC) model. This approach caters to listeners' diverse needs, curiosity, and desire for exploration, making podcast dissemination more accurately described as "media for the masses" rather than "mass media" (Gao, 2022). The freedom inherent in podcasts grants users a sense of control, with digital devices serving as crucial connectors between hosts and audiences. To strengthen emotional bonds, a podcast platform implemented institutionalized identity-building mechanisms, exemplified by its membership system. By setting payment thresholds, the system offers tiered exclusive benefits—such as "reporting the code" to customer service to obtain a dedicated purchase link. (In collaborations with AWWNL brands, specific "codes" verify listener identities, granting exclusive discounts and reinforcing a sense of belonging as "insiders"). This design achieves multiple effects: financial support ensures continuous content production; exclusive content and benefits create a distinction between "insiders" and "outsiders," enhancing members' unique identity and sense of belonging; offline activities (like listener meetups) translate virtual online relationships into real-world interactions, further strengthening identity recognition and community affiliation. The membership system serves not only as a business model but also as a sophisticated tool for community mobilization and identity reinforcement, elevating "fan" status to that of "community members" with rights and obligations.

5. The Interaction Mechanism of the Community of "Vibration"

Unlike linear communication structures, Schramm's (1954) cyclic communication model emphasizes feedback mechanisms in the dissemination process. In music podcast communities, listeners are not passive recipients but actively participate through comment interactions, program recommendations, and music sharing. A continuous feedback loop between hosts and listeners transforms one-way information transmission into interactive community engagement. To examine the emotional characteristics of the "Vibration" community's interactions, this study conducted a word frequency analysis of comment texts. The results revealed high-frequency terms such as "companionship," "music," and "healing," with "companionship" (1,078 occurrences), "music" (897 occurrences), and "healing" (654 occurrences) standing out prominently. Additionally, emotionally experiential expressions like "feeling," "pleasant," "relaxing," and "liking," along with interactive phrases such as "thank you" and "emotions," also showed high frequency. Further analysis identified three semantic dimensions: First, the emotional companionship dimension (e.g., "companionship," "healing," "relaxing") reflects listeners' perception of podcasts as crucial emotional support and psychological comfort. Second, the musical aesthetic dimension (e.g., "music," "pleasant," "liking") indicates that listener interactions remain centered on musical experiences and aesthetic evaluations. Third, the interactive feedback dimension (e.g., "thank you," "feelings") demonstrates how listeners share personal experiences and emotional feedback through comments, thereby establishing interactive connections with hosts. The analysis of high-frequency words in the comments section reveals that the podcast's user engagement extends beyond music content, serving as a platform for emotional support and connection. This demonstrates the community's interaction patterns rooted in shared emotional experiences.

Table 2. Frequency Distribution of the Term 'Vibration Distortion Chamber' (Compiled and analyzed by the author using data from the Xiaoyuzhou platform)

Commonly used words	Word frequency	Commonly used words	Word frequency	Commonly used words	Word frequency
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Accompany	1078	Be affected by	311	Like	221
Music	897	Pleasant to hear	289	Thanks	199
Cure	654	Relax	221	Mood	167

5.1 Interactive Subjects: A Multi-Party Interaction Network of Hosts, Core Users, and Ordinary Users

Osgood-Schramm's circular communication model operates not as a one-way information flow, but as a continuous cycle of encoding, decoding, feedback, and re-encoding. In this framework, participants don't remain fixed in the roles of "senders" or "receivers" but dynamically switch roles through interactions to form a self-reinforcing information loop. Within the community of "Vibration" this cyclical structure appears as a multi-node network connecting hosts, core users, and regular members. Unlike traditional mass communication's centralized hierarchy, information circulation here goes beyond host-listener interactions, instead spreading through multiple engagement points. Hosts, serving as community architects and cultural ambassadors, encode music content through creative output and direct engagement, sharing it via podcasts and social platforms. Beyond just sharing musical insights, they subtly influence the community's emotional tone and cultural spirit, setting the tone for interactions and community norms. The core users of "Vibration" –typically early listeners, dedicated members, or highly active contributors—act as key "re-encoders." These users initiate discussions, answer questions, maintain community dynamics, and even spontaneously create derivative content like playlist collections and program notes in comment sections and listener groups, becoming secondary content disseminators and grassroots guardians of community norms. Ordinary users primarily engage in light community participation through listening, liking, and sharing. While decoding program content, they contribute to information circulation through simple feedback. However, at times, during specific topics or events, they may become more engaged participants. In the three-tiered interaction among hosts, core users, and ordinary users, core users serve as key intermediaries. They effectively expand the host's reach while lowering participation barriers for ordinary users. Thus, in the "Vibration" community structure, communication isn't limited to a simple "host-listener" relationship. Instead, it forms a multi-layered network of information circulation with core users as intermediary nodes. Core users not only extend the host's content coverage but also reduce interaction thresholds for ordinary users, creating a distinct multi-node circular communication pattern within the community.

5.2 Interactive Content: Emotional Sharing, Knowledge Exchange, and Collaborative Creation

From the perspective of the Oschard-Strum communication model, the essence of communication lies not merely in information transmission, but in the co-construction of meaning through participants' continuous process of decoding and re-encoding. The interactive content of "Vibration" transcends discussions about the program itself, expanding into broader dimensions of meaning production. At the emotional sharing level, program content often triggers listeners to express personal experiences and emotional states. For instance, in comment sections of episodes like "Insomnia Together" and "Facing the Bad World," many listeners share personal experiences and emotional states related to the music or topics featured in the program. In this process, the music narratives initially encoded by the host are reinterpreted by listeners and combined with their personal life experiences, forming new emotional expressions. These expressions are then read and responded to by other members, creating a continuous emotional feedback loop within the community that gradually transforms the comment section into an emotional communication space with "treehole" attributes.

Additionally, at the knowledge exchange level, user interactions further demonstrate the knowledge reproduction mechanism in circular communication. The program's established "Music Genre Series" – such as blues, self-appreciation, and new urban pop – provides clear discussion themes for the community, while listeners continuously supplement new knowledge through interactions. For example, some users recommend related tracks, add musical historical context, or share technical equipment experiences in the comment section, expanding the music knowledge originally provided by the host within the community. This listener-driven knowledge supplementation enables the program content to be continuously re-encoded within the community, gradually forming an interactive atmosphere of collective learning. Ultimately, in the realm of secondary creation and co-creation, viral circulation evolves into a UGC production process. Community members create artworks, articles, or videos centered around the show's theme, while others collaboratively curate online playlist themes. These creations not only reinterpret the program's content but also generate new viral material. When hosts integrate these user-generated works into the show or share them on social media, the originally listener-created content becomes part of the program's dissemination system. This establishes a cyclical structure of "program content → user re-creation → program re-dissemination," thereby continuously expanding the program's communicative significance.

5.3 Interactive Effects: The Formation and Reinforcement Path of Community Identity

From the perspective of cyclical communication, community identity is not formed once but is continuously accumulated and reinforced through ongoing interactions. Through multiple rounds of information feedback and meaning reproduction, the community of "Vibration" gradually develops a stable identity structure, which can be broadly summarized as a cyclical path of gradual deepening.

First, fostering value alignment: The "Vibration" cultivates sustained content consumption and engagement. Through long-term listening and interaction, audiences continually engage with the hosts' musical aesthetics and value orientations, gradually internalizing these cultural judgments through repeated decoding and feedback. When users share music opinions or recommend tracks in comment sections, they actively participate in re-encoding the value system, thereby reinforcing the community's shared aesthetic. Next, building emotional connections: As interaction frequency increases, members develop emotional bonds. By sharing personal experiences and receiving responses in comment sections and communities, the program evolves from a music platform into a vital medium for emotional exchange. This continuous cycle of emotional expression and feedback gradually transforms the community into a source of emotional support and companionship. Third, establishing identity recognition: Through shared rituals like membership tags, specific memes, community slang, collective updates, and annual playlist activities, members distinctly perceive the difference between "us" and "them," forming a clear social identity as "Wai Bo Yin Room listeners." Ultimately, this recognition evolves into behavioral alignment. When members achieve strong emotional and identity alignment with the community, they often express support through sustained listening, paid subscriptions, content sharing, or collaborative creation. Meanwhile, core members actively maintain community norms to ensure long-term stability in interactions. Through this continuous interaction process, community identity is continuously reinforced and reproduced in practice.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Research Conclusions

Through case analysis of the "Vibration Distortion Chamber" project, this study identifies four key conclusions: First, the music podcast community demonstrates a three-stage development pattern: content entry → emotional connection → identity

solidification. Programs establish resonance through niche topics, create companionship via personalized storytelling and immersive soundscapes, and institutionalize emotional bonds through membership systems. Second, community sustainability relies on a multi-tiered network connecting hosts, core users, and casual participants. Core users act as intermediaries for content sharing, topic initiation, and atmosphere maintenance, lowering participation barriers to form a pyramid-shaped interaction structure. Third, interactions occur across three dimensions: emotional sharing, knowledge exchange, and collaborative creation. Emotional sharing forms the community's "confessional space" attribute, while knowledge exchange enhances aesthetic expertise. User-generated content and host recruitment programs facilitate the transition from passive consumers to active co-creators. Fourth, community identity develops through progressive value, emotional, and identity reinforcement, ultimately resulting in sustained support behaviors. Regular interactions and rituals (e.g., update waiting lists, annual playlist events) help members perceive the "us vs. them" divide, translating into concrete actions like subscriptions, promotions, and community maintenance.

While this study highlights the positive role of music podcast communities in emotional support, knowledge exchange, and collaborative creation, we must recognize that highly engaged interest-based communities may carry structural risks. First, vertical communities formed around shared aesthetics and interests often reinforce existing value orientations through prolonged interactions. This creates echo chambers where members mainly encounter information and perspectives aligned with their preferences, which can hinder broader information dissemination. Second, as engagement deepens, active members may dominate conversations, forming stable core user groups. Although this helps maintain community order, it can unintentionally create barriers for new members, potentially fostering exclusivity that impedes the spread of Chinese music podcast content and creates invisible obstacles to community expansion. Furthermore, when emotional connections become overly concentrated between hosts and programs, some interactions may resemble fan culture dynamics, emphasizing collective identity. Therefore, while acknowledging the unifying power and cultural richness of music podcast communities, it is crucial to address their potential cultural boundaries and interactive exclusivity issues.

6.2 Research Limitations

While this study has conducted a preliminary exploration of the community ecosystem within the "Vibration" distorted sound chamber, several limitations remain. Firstly, in terms of research samples, the study primarily focuses on a single case and specific platforms. Although in-depth analysis is possible, the generalizability of the conclusions requires validation through additional case studies. Secondly, methodologically, the research relies heavily on content and text analysis without conducting in-depth interviews with streamers or core audiences, which results in insufficient exploration of community members' subjective motivations and emotional experiences. Lastly, as a snapshot study of a rapidly developing phenomenon, it does not track the community's evolution over time.

Future research could focus on the following directions: First, conduct cross-platform and cross-genre comparative studies, such as comparing knowledge-based and emotional music podcast communities, to identify more universal community operation models. Second, use qualitative methods like in-depth interviews and ethnography to gather firsthand narratives from community members, enabling a detailed understanding of identity formation processes. Third, apply longitudinal tracking perspectives to observe music communities throughout their lifecycle—from formation and activity to transformation or decline—exploring the internal drivers and external challenges of sustainable development. Fourth, examine the significant impact of technological advancements (e.g., AIGC, spatial audio) on interactive patterns in

music communities, exploring new forms of emotional connections through human-machine interaction.

6.3 Future Outlook

As the platform-based media environment continues to develop, podcasts are gradually transforming from simply being a medium for audio content into a space for cultural exchange with communal attributes. Using Vibration Podcast Studio as a case study, this paper uncovers the interactive structure involving hosts, core users, and ordinary users within music podcast communities, as well as the community interaction mechanisms formed around emotional exchange, knowledge sharing, and user co-creation. This finding indicates that the development of podcast communities relies not only on content production but also on the interactive ecosystem driven by user participation. Future research can further investigate the formation paths and interaction modes of podcast communities across a wider spectrum of platforms and program types—for example, by comparing the differences in community structures among various categories of podcasts (knowledge-based, entertainment-based, and music-based), or analyzing how podcast communities expand and evolve across diverse media environments from a cross-platform perspective. This approach will help attain a more comprehensive understanding of the social impacts of podcast culture.

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