An Analysis of Short Drama Video Narration

Li Yingyue
School of management, Communication University of China, China
Corresponding author E-mail:1416689392@qq.com

Abstract: With the advent of the post-epidemic era, traditional cinemas and theater venues are seeing a resurgence while also facing the impact and competition from the incoming short video industry. In the contemporary fast-paced social rhythm, short videos with large conflicts, many reversals and dense plot information have attracted a large number of audiences. This study aims to make use of content analysis method to compare the popular film The Wandering Earth 2 in early 2023 with popular short video works, and explore how short video plots are constructed by using reversal and conflict to attract audiences.
Key words: post-epidemic era, content analysis, Douyin short video, plot

1 Introduction

In early 2023, with the end of the COVID-19, theaters and theater venues that had been hit hard are gradually recovering. However, the consumption downgrade brings more intense competitive pressure. Under the influence of this epidemic background, people's attention gradually shifted from theaters to cell phones. Many people began to pay attention to short drama videos, which led to the explosive growth of the short drama video industry. We observed that, unlike traditional movie narrative rhythm, the narrative rhythm of short drama videos is extremely fast, and the plot conflicts and reversals are so exciting that the audience's attention is attracted to a large number of people, and users "can't feel the passage of time". In this regard, we are curious about how short video plots are constructed and use reversals and conflicts to attract audiences.

2 Literature review

2.1 Literature review of short videos

The phenomenon of short video explosion has caused the academic research from many perspectives. Australian scholar Mizi Su Chun wrote an article titled Contingency, Uncertainty and Short Video Creativity: The Analysis of Chinese screen Industry based on Platform conducted an industry analysis of serendipity, foresight and short video creativity based on platforming China's net screen, and points out that in the Chinese context, creators have moved from traditional streaming media services to new creative forms of short video and live streaming.In his article "Assessing the Accuracy, User Engagement, and Subject Matter of Eating Disorder Content in Social Media Short Videos," Columbia scholar Valer Mohammadi argues that social media serves as a community for users who promote eating disorders as a lifestyle and for users who advocate

recovery. The content subject, information accuracy, user engagement, and associations among these factors were analyzed in a sample of eating disorder videos on a short video social media platform.

Domestic scholars Zhao Yuehua and Sheng Yuxin have made an overall analysis of the differences in user interaction behaviors of short video platforms in their article Differences in User Interaction Behaviors of Short Video Platforms, pointing out that the differences in user behaviors of short video platforms reflect the differences in needs and values of different classes, and platforms cater to and strengthen their characteristics through the construction of their own tonality. Scholar Xin Aofeng in the Context of financial media in Sports short video risk and development strategy analysis - - A Case Study of a short sports video related to the CBA League on China's representative Douyin short video platform, this paper conducts a case study of a short sports video themed on the CBA League, and discusses the opportunities, challenges and future development paths brought by the features of short sports videos under the background of financial media, in order to serve as a response to the new media report form in the field of sports communication Gain some experience with and wider dissemination.Scholar Tang Chenxin analyzed the narrative logic and content production characteristics of short video news in Analysis of Content Production Characteristics and Narrative Logic of Short Video News, and pointed out that short video news has concise logic and uses popular narration to improve the communication efficiency. Scholar Fan Feiyan conducted a more detailed study on the dissemination of short intangible cultural heritage videos based on narration of life Scenes in her Research on the Dissemination of short intangible cultural heritage videos based on narration of life scenes. The research shows that short intangible cultural heritage videos use the narrative space of traditional life scenes. These videos adopt a diversified narrative perspective of mainly external narrative, supplemented by internal narrative, and a "fast but slow" narrative rhythm to enhance people's identification with traditional culture.

However, although these researches are conducted from the perspectives of short video platform users, short video narrative methods, short video narrative perspectives, etc. There is still no overall study on narrative analysis of short drama videos.

2.2 Literature review of narrative analysis

Since the theory of narrative analysis was put forward by scholar Todorov in 1969, it has been highly concerned by scholars at home and abroad and has achieved a lot of research results.

In The Construction of Peace Building Narratives in Media Talk -- Methodological Discussion, the German scholar Santos analyzed the methodological discussion by studying the structure of peace building narratives in media talk, and made a detailed discussion on the analytical framework of media narrative. In Stories Side-by-Side: A Comparative Narrative Analysis of Stories About End-of-Life Care, Canadian scholar Melo conducts a comparative narrative analysis of Tracy Moniz's Stories About End-of-Life Care for Mount Saint Vincent University, Canada, to inform health professional education, communication, and compassionate, personalized, and participatory practice.

Li Hezhen, a Chinese scholar, made a narrative analysis of the meta-film in As Good as You

Can Be in Real Acting and the Suturing of Internal Reference -- Meta-film Narrative Analysis in" As Good as You Can Be ", pointed out the internal reference and ontological consciousness in the narrative structure, and explored the reflexive meaning in the narrative theme. In the Video expression and Narrative Analysis of Sportsmanship -- A Case Study of the Winter Olympics documentary Flying Over the Ice and Snow Line, scholars Zhang Yize and Wu Xuan carried out the video expression and narrative analysis of sportsmanship from the aspects of narrative montage, interspersed interviews and background music. In The Aesthetics and Narrative Analysis of the Japanese Drama "Quartet", Gong Xiangda analyzes the aesthetics and narrative of the Japanese drama Quartet and analyzes its dramatic narrative strategy and suspense performance from the narrative perspective, pointing out that the use of multiple shifts in narrative perspective, dramatic suspense performance, characterization of long dialogues, and fractured presentation of thematic logic in Quartet is of high value in terms of narrative strategy. Scholar Zhai Zhijiang, in A Cloud Made of Rain in the Wind from the Perspective of Film Narratology, analyzes the suspense crime film A Cloud Made of Rain in the Wind with realistic themes from three aspects: narrative structure, narrative perspective and narrative grammar, arguing that it not only shows the social environment of the drama and deciphers the logic of the story, but also focuses on the inner emotional world of the characters, and also tries to explore the complexity of human nature.

2.3 Question Raising

To sum up, these studies did not make a narrative perspective analysis from the perspective of conflict and reversal of short drama videos. Therefore, this paper will use content analysis method and interview method to analyze how short video plots use reversal and conflict to construct story and attract audiences.

3. Research methods

3.1 Content analysis method

3.1.1 Hypothesis establishment

Based on the above questions, corresponding hypotheses are proposed here:

The larger the amount of information per unit time in a short video, the higher the degree of audience attention.

In order to prove the hypothesis, the content analysis method was adopted in this study.

Firstly, we conducted a representative sample of this type of media, and chose Douyin platform for its global influence. The number of downloads of Douyin /TikTok on Apple and Google's official app stores alone exceeded 2 billion times in April 2022. Some scholars estimate that nearly half of the world's Internet users have downloaded Douyin /TikTok. It ranks among the top 10 most downloaded apps in the world, so it has strong representativeness.

Secondly, the method of random sampling was adopted to analyze the content of Douyin

works released in early 2023 when the epidemic basically ended. Considering the periodic change of time in the unit of week, in order to better reflect the overall situation, this study planned to adopt the structural week sampling method, selecting the content in January 2023 as the whole, and forming a tectonic week with a 6-day cycle. In order to ensure the balance of sampling distribution, tectonic week sampling was carried out to summarize the reversal and conflict in Douyin short videos and the extent to which they attract viewers.

Thirdly, the author carries out representative sampling of works of different media based on the principle of popularity. Therefore, the author first selected the works of Dong Yuxin, the creator of Douyin, released on January 6, 2023 (with 28.8w likes and 1 minute 43 seconds) as the target video. Secondly, the author compared the films in the Spring Festival and finally selected The Wandering Earth 2 as the comparison according to the box office ranking. According to the target video length, the clips with the most searches on the topic of " The Wandering Earth 2" on each video website (from 2:11:02 to 2:12:40) are selected as the comparison object, and the coding table is drawn.

3.1.3 Coding table

Table 1 Coding table

	Number of scene characters		Number of scene shots		Number of scene lines		Number of characters conflicts in the scene		The number of plot twists in the scene	
	Comparison video		Comparison video	Target video	Comparison video	Target video	Comparison video	Target video	**Comparison video**	**Target video**
seconds										
0-9.99	50	2	4	5	5	6	1	1	0	0
10-19.99	50	3	2	4	3	5	0	2	0	1
20-29.99	50	3	2	9	2	7	1	2	0	1
30-39.99	50	1	3	10	3	0	1	0	1	2
40-49.99	50	3	6	9	4	4	1	0	0	1
50-59.99	50	3	9	4	4	7	0	2	0	2
60-69.99	50	2	7	7	10	8	0	1	0	1
70-79.99	50	2	5	4	3	8	1	1	0	1
80-89.99	80	3	4	5	1	6	0	2	0	1

90-99.99	/	2	7	/	8	2	/	3		

4 Research findings and discussion points

4.1 The larger the amount of information per unit time in short videos, the higher the degree of user attention

The fast-paced and multi-scene narration of short videos can better stimulate the audience's vision and psychology. Through research, the author found that the average number of scene characters in the Wandering Earth 2 was 53.33, while that in Douyin short videos was 2.40. The average number of scene shots in Wandering Earth 2 is 4.67, and that in Douyin short videos is 6.40. The average number of scene lines in Wandering Earth 2 was 3.89, while that in Douyin short videos was 5.90. The average of scene character conflict in Wandering Earth 2 was 0.56, and that in Douyin short videos was 1.30. The average of scene plot reversal of Wandering Earth 2 was 0.11, and that of Douyin short videos was 1.30.

Judging by the scoring criteria of this code, the average number of scene characters of Wandering Earth 2 is significantly higher than that of Douyin short videos, which indicates that compared with movies, short videos are mostly small scenes to focus on the relationship and conflict between main characters. The average scene shot of Wandering Earth 2 is significantly less than that of Douyin short videos, which indicates that short videos prefer fast-paced, multi-scene narration during creation, which can better stimulate the visual and psychological of the audience, meet the audience's demand for pleasure in a short period of time, and better adapt to the lifestyle and habits of contemporary people. The number of scene lines of Wandering Earth 2 is less than that of Douyin short videos, which indicates that Douyin short videos have dense character lines and high information content, so as to meet the fast pace of short videos. The scene character conflicts and plot reversals of the Wandering Earth 2 are significantly less than those of the short videos of Douyin, which indicates that the short videos have large plot fluctuations, more reversals and dense information, and are easy to produce "reasonable and unexpected" effects. To sum up, we can know that compared with traditional movies, Douyin short videos have dense and large information content, which can meet the aesthetic needs of the current audience and also meet the psychological needs of the audience in the era of fragmented reading. Therefore, the more information per unit time in short videos, the higher the attention of the audience.

4.2 The contradictions and conflicts in the plots of short videos arouse users' attention

The contradictions and conflicts in film and television plots can be roughly divided into two categories: the contradictions with the same goals and inconsistent goals. Conflicts between people and between people and themselves. The target video of this paper (the work of Dong Yuxin, the creator of Douyin, released on January 6, 2023, with 28.8w likes) is taken as an example for analysis.

The work is 1 minute 43 seconds long, tells the story of Dong Yuxin, a general nurse, who finally can't stand the oppression of the head nurse Li Guixiang, speak out harsh words and quit bravely, and through continuous efforts to become the director of the hospital and complete the status change with Li Guixiang, only to find out that it was just a dream. In the first 10 seconds of the work, Dong Yuxin confronts Li Guixiang directly. Dong Yuxin, a junior nurse, directly criticizes her "superior" Li Guixiang and threatens to tell her to "wait and see". In terms of conflict settings, Dong Yuxin and Li Guixiang belong to the same identity group, the goal is the same, that is, promotion in the hospital. But the two people with the same goal are not evenly matched, and obviously are the "villain" -- head nurse Li Guixiang has the upper hand, so naturally arouses the audience's interest and curiosity about how the "weak power" Dong Yuxin pursues the goal. Within 11 to 27 seconds, the film tells how Dong Yuxin's colleagues react when she is about to leave, contrasting the friendliness of male colleagues with the acrimony of female colleagues, reflecting the harsh and unpleasant working environment of Dong Yuxin, and creating conflicts between characters. From 27 to 36 seconds, the conflict between characters is emphasized again by his father's incomprehension and refusal to accept Dong Yuxin's resignation. From 36 seconds to 46 seconds, the author uses the method of lens connection to quickly explain the story of Dong Yuxin's struggle and successful landing and transformation. Only ten seconds of the picture tells the transformation of Dong Yuxin's ten years of hard work, and simply and clearly shows the process of Dong Yuxin's "completion of the goal". To meet the audience in the fast-paced, high-pressure social life of short video to meet the spirit and release pressure needs. From 47 seconds to 1 minute 30 seconds, Dong Yuxin completes her counterattack: she succeeds in becoming the director of the hospital and has a magnificent life. In a gesture of "adults don't remember the wrongs of the villains", Dong Yuxin finishes her "revenge" against the domineer Li Guixiang with a high profile. This part will push the conflict between people to the peak, the two hostile forces, because of the transformation of identity status and now a war without smoke, Dong Yuxin with the tone of caring subordinates to visit Li Guixiang, seemingly friendly attitude actually carried out a silent counterattack, Li Guixiang's emotions change from shock at first, to panic, to finally being moved to tears by Dong Yuxin's "understanding", and this series of changes can't help but make people feel happy. From 1:30 to 1:39, the nurse Dong Yuxin, who accidentally fell asleep on the table, was woken up by the head nurse Li Guixiang, followed by some humiliation and scolding. Dong Yuxin silently thought in her heart "Li Guixiang you remember, wait for me Dong Yuxin one day success", just like she fought back in her dream. Dong Yuxin was interrupted by Li Guixiang's sudden words while she was having a generous inner monologue. This is the end of the play. The last 9 seconds of time completed three reversals, but also Dong Yuxin's inner conflict of longing for a turnaround and only in reality to tolerate the anger of the inner conflict is shown to the fullest.

The creator of this work, Ren Zhida, is a medical worker with 2.54 million followers and 55.078 million likes on the Douyin platform. His work focuses on the experience of young nurse Dong Yuxin in the hospital and her own transformation. Take the target video as an example, the creator starts from the reality of life, and chooses the audience's visible and perceptible deeds in daily life, and even experiences them personally, which makes the audience quite immersive, easy to generate empathy and attract them. Secondly, the work is about the transformation and

fightback of a young nurse Dong Yuxin, which is a "cool drama" and gives spiritual satisfaction and encouragement to numerous freshmen who have been unfairly treated in the workplace, catering to the needs of contemporary young people. At the same time, the reversal and conflict of the work are intensive, the plot is cleverly set and relaxed, and the length of the work follows the rhythm of social life, thus gaining a large number of fans' love.

5 Summary and Reflection

Through the method of content analysis, this study studied how to use reversal and conflict to construct the story of Douyin short videos and attract audiences in the post-epidemic era. This study found that the more dense and informative the lines, characters, scenes, shots, conflicts and contradictions in the short videos, the higher the degree of audience attraction. This study shows the importance of unit information in short videos and reflects the development trend of short video industry in the post-COVID-19 era. On the other hand, it also provides the direction for the development and innovation of short video creators in the post-epidemic era of modern China.

However, it is worth noting that this study also found that the mixed nature of short video industry and the uneven quality of works may blindly pursue traffic, cater to and guide the audience, which has brought negative effects of excessive entertainment to the society, which is worthy of vigilance and reflection. Because this study only focused on short videos and films in the first and second months after the end of the epidemic, there are also deficiencies in data diversity and universality. In future studies, researchers in the field of short video may need to pay more attention to the plot and information content of popular short video works, and expand the research and practice of short video.

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