Technology and Narrative: A Study on the narrative structure and Rhythm of network mini-plays

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Abstract:With the development of intelligent information technology, short video keeps developing, and micro-short drama comes into being, which even has a certain impact on the TV drama market. In the post-epidemic era, with the gradual recovery of the economy and the gradual acceleration of people's pace of life as the background, this paper uses questionnaire survey and interview as the main research methods, supplemented by "Propp's narrative theory" to carry out a detailed study on "the internal factors of the impact of miniseries on the TV series market", "the relationship between the two", "how to better develop the TV series and miniseries". Through research, we find that the reason why "micro short drama" can have an impact on the TV drama market is that it greatly reduces the duration and speeds up the pace, in line with the current fast pace of life, under the condition that it also has a complete narrative structure. At the same time, it is found that there is no mutual substitution between the two, but mutual promotion relationship.
Key words: "network mini-drama"; "Narrative characteristics"; "The relationship between TV series and miniseries"; "Propp"

1. Introduction

With the development of intelligent information, short video is developing. Its unique media language full of trend "web sense" quickly captured the market. Miniseries (short videos that are less than three minutes long for a single episode, but which follow each episode in succession) have also come into being, which has had a certain impact on the TV market. "TV drama water serious, even as a short play" was once a period of time common sentence. Although affected by the epidemic and the policy of controlling the number of TV series in recent years, the TV series market has recovered somewhat. For example, slow rhythm light comedies such as Qing Qing Daily exactly meet the needs of people watching dramas in the post-epidemic era. Now that the epidemic policy has been fully relaxed, the pace of people's life has gradually returned to the right track. Short video has a certain impact on TV series. For example, the short drama video Donglan Snow has been viewed 530 million times since it was released on February 24, 2023. It was identified as a "hot" short video by Kuaishou platform.

It has been observed that short drama videos are different from the mixed clip of drama clips on Station b, which generally creates the existing film and television materials again or achieves a cooperative effect by stitching the characters of different artists in multiple film and television dramas. First and second creation based on the understanding of the original film and a certain amount of film reading. On the other hand, excellent second video can arouse the audience's

interest in the original film and TV drama. Generally speaking, the plot of b station can promote the development of TV drama industry. However, short drama videos are competitive with TV series, and watching short drama videos in leisure time has been the choice of many people.

This raises the following questions: Why can short drama videos hit the TV market? What is the cause of this phenomenon?

2. Literature review

2.1 Literature review of "micro short plays"

For the research on the popularity of short drama videos, domestic scholars mostly study the phenomenon out of its development and audience. For example, in 2020, scholar Zhao Lirong studied the development of mini-plays based on the theory of use and satisfaction; in 2022, scholar Wu Anyang analyzed the audience's aesthetic trend through online mini-plays; in 2022, scholar Gu Xiaoxuan explored user psychology through the narrative plot features of mini-plays... So far, there are few researches on the impact of short drama videos on the TV drama market.

2.2 Literature review of Propp's narrative Theory

Propp's narrative theory has attracted much attention since it was put forward, and has obtained abundant research results. Recently, most of the researches on Propp's narrative theory are aimed at film and television or literary works. For example, scholars Rong Yu and Tang Haidong used this theory to analyze the narrative characteristics of Legend of Zhen Huan in 2018, and scholars Du Jiayue explored the narrative characteristics of Beauty and the Beast through this theory in 2020... It can be seen that the above studies are analyzed from the perspective of written or regular movies and TV plays. At present, this theory is rarely used in the study of short plays.

2.3 Problem Raising

This theory is the story morphological narrative theory summarized by Propp, the pioneer of narrative structuralism, which is not only applicable to the study of literature, but also has a certain ability to summarize the plot mode of short plays.

In this paper, Propp's narrative structure analysis theory will be used to analyze the micro short play. To study the narrative characteristics of short plays. The purpose is to study the internal factors of the impact of miniseries on the TV drama market, and to explore the relationship between the miniseries and the miniseries, in order to get a healthy development between them.

3. Research methods.

In this paper, questionnaire survey and interview methods are used to try to answer the above questions.

3.1 Questionnaire survey method

3.1.1 Hypothesis Establishment:

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

H1: The more reversals and conflicts, the more intensive, the higher the audience's interest.

H2: The audience's praise for the miniseries is a kind of pressure on the quality of the TV series.

In order to prove the hypothesis, questionnaire survey method was adopted in this study to sample the population and make questionnaires.

3.1.2 Sampling Method

The corresponding research objects of this hypothesis are fans of TV series and miniseries.

First, we conducted a representative sample of this group. A total of 202 questionnaires were collected in this questionnaire

With 95% confidence interval and 3% sampling error, a questionnaire was collected from 210 TV drama lovers on Weibo for 24 hours. If they refused to fill out the questionnaire, another TV drama fan was sent by Big v in private.

Data collection, sorting and analysis were completed on April 20, 2023. The main contents of the survey are as follows: (1) Confirmation of basic information, including age, gender and job. (2) Dimension reduction sentence of the argument variable X. (3) Dimension reduction sentence of dependent variable Y. This questionnaire contains 15 questions. There are 8 single choice questions, 6 multiple choice questions and 1 scale question. The star design questionnaire was published online to the fans of TV series bloggers and entertainment star bloggers.

3.2 In-depth interview method

3.2.1 Interview outline making

The interview questions are mainly divided into three parts. The first part mainly involves the basic information of the interviewee, including its gender, age and occupation. In the second part, the dimensions of the research questions are reduced to interview questions, including their views on the development of TV series, their views on short video videos, their advantages and disadvantages compared with short TV series, and whether they think short TV series have certain influence on TV series. The third part, preparation mainly deals with possible deep digging problems.

In the course of interviews and research, researchers tried to avoid the four-fold ethical issues and deviant behavior highlighted by scholar Alan Bryman :(1) harm to the participants; (2) No use of informed consent license documents or materials; (3) violating the privacy of study participants; (4) Deceiving study participants. In addition, if the interviewees have any unwilling questions or

dissatisfaction during the interview, they can keep silent or quit midway. The interview materials that the respondents declared that they did not want to be published were not included and quoted in this study.

3.2.2 Selection of interviewees:

This study conducted 12 minutes of semi-structured in-depth interviews with 15 TV drama lovers aged from 16 to 45. The interviews began on April 15, 2023 and ended on April 20, 2023. The respondents first included screenwriters, students, teachers and other professionals, and then more research samples were collected through the Internet. According to the principle of maximum sampling of qualitative research method, all the interview contents were enough to answer the research questions when the 10th respondent was collected, and the collection of samples was limited. The respondents had differences in age, occupation, education level, location and other aspects, and the degree of homogeneity was low.

Interviews were conducted by telephone. The interview results were compiled into a verbatim manuscript with a total of 9,818 words. Interview content

Table 1 Basic information of interviewees

Serial number	Gender	Age	Ooccupation
1	Woman	29	scriptwriter
3	Woman	19	student
4	Man	34	We-Media
5	Woman	45	teacher
6	Man	22	student
7	Woman	22	student
8	Woman	27	graduate student
9	Woman	24	graduate student
10	Man	25	We-Media
11	Man	33	accountant
12	Woman	27	teacher
13	Woman	26	civil servant
14	Woman	21	Student
15	Woman	23	graduate student

4. Research findings and discussion points

4.1 Description of questionnaire sample characteristics:

[Audience preference survey for short drama videos] More than 80% of the samples are girls and 10.4% of the samples are boys; More than 30 percent of those under the age of 22, more than 60 percent of those between the ages of 22 and 45, and less than 10 percent of those over the age of 45 watch one or two TV shows a year. Another 104 said they were unable to watch a show in its entirety most of the time, and that it was common to drop a show or watch only a few episodes that interested them; When asked about the regular watching habits of the sample, 51.49% of respondents would choose to watch the whole series, and the remaining 48.51% would only watch

cut, commentary and second video. This kind of people will be the inherent potential audience of micro short plays; 73.27% of the respondents said they chose TV series because they were attracted to stars or IP, while 15.35% said they simply preferred the presentation of TV series. In this question, 11.39 percent said they do not like watching TV dramas;

When asking the audience whether they are satisfied with the current TV drama market, only 3.47% of the audience chose to be satisfied, and the rest put forward suggestions on the plot, acting, modeling and the degree of attention. 94.06% of respondents think that the most important thing in a good work is the plot; When respondents were asked to rate the overall TV series in the current market, the average score was only 2.68 out of 5. 60% of the audience gave a score of 3, and the number of full marks was 0. It can be seen that the audience had long been dissatisfied with the current TV series products, which also promoted the generation and development of micro short series.

70% of the audience believe that miniseries have a certain impact on the TV series market or force the effect, and 15.35% believe that the TV series has always been superior in the market, and the miniseries cannot have an impact on the TV series market;87.62% of people think that the disadvantages of TV series and short dramas are slow pace and too long plot. Only 3.96% of the respondents think that TV dramas have no disadvantages compared with mini-dramas;When answering the question about the advantages of short dramas, more than 80% of the people chose "short videos are short and concise, and the fragmented time can be made full use of". "More inversion, more laughter and tears" was the secondary reason for the short videos being favored by the audience;When choosing video apps, more than half of the people choose Douyin, Kuaishou and other apps. Short video apps occupy a large proportion in the minds of the audience;In the question of the average time spent watching videos, most people spend less than two hours watching videos;Thus it can be seen that micro short plays have won the audience's favorite by virtue of their compact plot, small volume and less time consuming.

4.2 Interview Findings:

When we conducted in-depth interviews and tried to get answers to questions such as the proportion of TV plays and mini-dramas watched by interviewees, whether they think mini-dramas have a certain impact on film and TV plays, and what advantages mini-dramas have compared with traditional ones, we were surprised to find that respondents uniformly believe that mini-dramas have a certain impact on the TV play market.In addition, two-thirds of the interviewees believed that the characteristics of short, concise and frequent orgasm were the main advantages of short dramas. As for my opinion on the short play, the interviewee's answers confirm my idea:

"Because of the relevance of occupation, as an insider, my opinion is that miniseries have a certain impact on the TV drama market, but it is more of a backhand effect. Because miniseries never have the same integrity as dramas." (S1)

"Because I am the main Hanfu producer, I pay special attention to the costume culture. The current TV series has the same style, and there are even many obvious mistakes that do not conform to the background of the time of the drama. In contrast, some mini-dramas pay more

attention to this problem, and some of them are even shot by Hanfu lovers." (S2)

"Usually work is more tired, rest time is not enough, micro play it not only meet my heart to read the story and save my time.(S3)

"In recent years, TV dramas have become routine and simplified, like seizing a certain traffic password and then copying it in bulk. Take Xianxia dramas as an example, eight out of ten are in love with their master and the other two are in love with demons." Early two years of fairy drama is the lead group all the way to upgrade the monster, friendship love family justice, look at all is in love now. These are the same routines. Since they are all the same routines, why don't I watch them to save time? "(S4)

"I usually watch both miniseries and TV series. The miniseries are more like entertainment and relaxation, while watching TV series is the pursuit of story integrity. They have different purposes before opening the two kinds of videos. Watching TV dramas is more for the sense of experience, while watching mini-dramas is often based on providing instant emotional value to achieve the purpose of relaxation "(S5)

4.2.1 Short drama videos are relatively complete in a length far lower than that of TV plays. Although short plays are not as elaborate as TV plays, they also have a relatively complete narrative structure. Therefore, it is similar to the TV series, so it can meet the starting point of the interview that "miniseries also satisfy my heart for watching TV series". Thus the TV play market formed a certain impact.

Taking the short play "Donglan Snow" as an example, through Propp's theory of narrative structure analysis, the view that "short play also has a relatively complete narrative structure" is assisted to explain.

The characters in short drama videos have complete circles of action. In Story Morphology, Propp explained relevant theories about the arrangement of functional items according to roles. Propp believed that most functional items were connected according to a certain range based on logic, which was the circle of action. On the other hand, in short plays, although the duration is limited, the behaviors and motivations of the characters can be connected to form a complete narrative. Character functions are not limited by the reduction of space. In this paper, the characters in Donglan Snow will be taken as examples to analyze their narrative roles, as shown in Table 2.

Propp summed up six narrative stages in Story Morphology, namely, preparation stage, deepening stage, dispatching stage, struggle stage, return stage and admission stage. It is divided into 31 function items. Using it to retell Donglan Snow, it is found that it basically conforms to the narrative unit proposed by Propp. The specific correspondence is shown in Table 3. Propp's morphological narrative theory is simple and profound, which has a strong guiding significance for the creation and appreciation of today's film and television works. Without a relatively complete narrative structure, no matter how many plot points it has, it can only play a temporary effect in the end, and only the coherence of the next episode can form the "long tail effect" of following mini-dramas.

Table 2 Narrative role analysis

Narrative role	The corresponding characters in the short drama video "Donglan Snow"
Enemy (perpetrator)	Chu Shenzhi (Wolf ambition, ruthless, arrogant, arrogant, bullying the weak. With the hero is the prince, rely on the status of prince from childhood began to oppress the hero, and because of the "broken bridge injustice" massacre of all the people in the know indirectly caused the heroine's sad life); Sima Zhao (the king's uncle, but also the prince's uncle. He was the absolute kingmaker of the princeling party and assassinated the seven princes several times)
Donor (provider)	Shen Yan (a blood feud, cold, intelligent, delicate mind, martial arts in order to achieve the end by all means. Through the use of the seven emperors to achieve the purpose of revenge, the use of the process is responsible for teaching the seven emperors martial arts strategy, become the seven emperors right-hand man, so it is a donor);Lin Feifei (who is considered a donor because her previous manipulations of shadow games and Rubik's cube provided the Seven Emperors with the means to steal secrets and the clues to explore them)
helper	Qing Yu (and "broken bridge unjust case" informed officials friendship is shallow, indirectly the key clue of the case to the seven emperors); Shangguan Miaoyi (kind-hearted good at medicine of the house daughter, once for the seven emperor and Shen Yan healing. Later the use of identity for the crown prince house under the guard of ecstasy makes the crown prince alone and helpless, to ensure the implementation of the seven prince plan. And in the seven prince expose prince Wolf son ambition acted as a bridge between the prime minister and the seven prince, to defeat the prince played a final role.) ; Prime Minister (leading troops to capture Chu Shenzhi)
Hero	Chu Ningyuan (son of the Seventh Emperor), Shen Yan (concubine, daughter of a craftsman)

Table 3 Analysis of narrative structure of the whole play

The number of episodes corresponding to the plot	Propp's functional item	The corresponding plot in “Donglan Snow”
Episode1	The hero is tested, interrogated, attacked, etc., in order to prepare him for the acquisition of magic or helper (the giver's first function).	Chu Ningyuan, the son of the Seventh Emperor, was insulted by his servants when he was young, and his personality was trampled on countless times. Perhaps what awaits him in the future is to die without dignity. On a snowy night, Shen Yan saved him when he was surrounded and about to be subjected to violence. Shen Yan bearing a blood feud, martial arts, she like Chu Ningyuan issued an invitation to cooperate. She taught him the arts and protected him from being deceived; He helped her get to the bottom of the bridge case, make everyone who planted it pay.

Episode2	The hero reacts to the future donor's actions (the hero's reaction)	Reached out and decided to start a new life. Save him in fire and water Shen Yan is young Chu Ningyuan heart light, so he agreed to Shen Yan's invitation to cooperate. And under the guidance of Shen Yan, he became a man of strong martial arts and good at strategy.
Episodes 3 through 8	The treasure falls into the hands of the hero	Chu Ningyuan that prince secret letter where, the main line to promote the plot.
Episodes 9 through 12(Episodes 13 to 15 are advertisements and memories of the main character, so skip)	The main character transfers: he is sent or led to the place where the desired thing is (to move in the space between two countries, lead the way)	Chu Ningyuan came to the secret letter hiding place, in an attempt to obtain the secret letter, encountered an ambush. Subsequent transfer to the south wind pavilion, clear plume pressed, in order to further access to secrets.
Episode 16	The hero goes head-to-head with his opponent (clash)	Chu Ningyuan met Chu Shenzhi in the imperial garden. Chu Ningyuan for the prime minister's daughter to fight injustice. At the same time, the two people are full of gunpowder, the fight is imminent; Shen Yan in order to protect the reputation of Shang Guan Miao Yi is not damaged, and then kill into the prince house.
Episodes 17through 18	Mark the hero	Shen Yan was imprisoned by the crown prince and sentenced to death. He burned Shen Yan's chest with a red-hot iron in order to obtain favorable information for himself.
Episodes 19 through 29	The opponent was defeated (defeated).	Shen Yan and Chu Ningyuan cooperated with Shangguan Miaoyi to capture Chu Shenzhi.
Episode 30	The elimination of an initial disaster or absence.	"Broken bridge injustice" to be cleared, Shen Yan's relatives and then the victim of the injustice to wash.
Episode 30	The enemy is punished (punished)	Chu Shenzhi was abandoned and assassinated by Shen Yan in Zong Ren Fu.
Episode 31	The hero is married and crowned king.	Shen Yan this yearning for freedom, after the completion of the long-cherished wish of this want to walk away, rivers and lakes for home. But I still chose to face the ups and downs of the future together with Chu Ningyuan. At the end of the video, Chu Ningyuan and Shen Yan hug. It is also a kind of "having a wedding".

(the micro skits, a total of 31 sets, each set length is 2 to 3 minutes)

4.2.2 fast rhythm, high intensive as one of the main advantages of micro skits.

In questionnaire and interview, mentioned have manyshortages micro short than traditional TV play the biggest advantage is the fast rhythm, high dense. With the recovery and development

of the economy, people's life speed is accelerating, and the time for leisure and entertainment is becoming less and less. In some cases, the fatigue brought by work cannot support the acceptance of the complete story. In the questionnaire, more than 80% of people choose the option of "short videos are short and concise, and the fragmented time can be made full use of. Even more interviewees said that sometimes they fall asleep in the middle of the show. On the contrary, short videos can just fill in the gaps. They can also catch the attention of workers tired from work, which is a good pastime." Now through the cross-section of the general theory of micro short narrative "east bar snow" 14 sets analysis (see table 4), can be found, in just 2 minutes and 25 seconds story happened 7 times feature of progressive, average every 20 seconds or so that can reach the next plot points. From this, we can make clear that the miniseries do have the characteristics of fast pace and dense climax. Focusing on the climax plot is one of the internal factors that impact the TV drama market.

Table 4 Narrative role analysis

The time it takes to advance the story	Propp's functional item	The corresponding plot in the short play Donglan Snow
Between seconds 0 and 30 of the video	To cause harm or loss to a family member.	Shen Yan and sister because of misjustice was pretended to be an official prostitute, Shen Yan refused to slave Yan mei, sister in order to protect her, instead of her to serve the Lord Li, the result was tortured to death.
Between 31 seconds and one minute and 20 seconds into the video	One of the family members is missing something, he wants something (missing)	In order to give her sister revenge, Shen Yan needs to become a flower kui to gain fame and wealth, in the hands of the guests to obtain martial arts secrets and court secrets
Between 1 minute 21 and 1 minute 33 seconds into the video	The treasure falls into the hands of the hero	Shen Yan acquired the secret of martial arts.
Between 1 minute 34 and 1 minute 47 seconds into the video	The hero goes head-to-head with his opponent (clash)	Shen Yan in the case of learning kung fu, to receive the elder sister died of Li.
Between 1 minute 47 and 1 minute 57 seconds into the video	The opponent was defeated (defeated).	Shen Yan killed Lord Li and succeeded in avenging her sister.
Between 1 minute 58 and 2 minutes 11 seconds into the video	The elimination of an initial disaster or absence.	Shen Yan killed the owner of the brothel and set it on fire. Got out of there.

Between 2 minutes 12 seconds and 2 minutes 55 seconds into the video	The main character returns home or arrives in another country unrecognizable (undetected arrival)	Shen Yan change the identity, to stay in the seven prince's side with the identity of maid, in order to overturn the case of the unjust, step by step, to prepare for exoneration.

(Episode 14 of “Donglan Snow” runs 2 minutes and 25 seconds)

4.2.3 Micro short plays promote the further development of TV industry.

The development of micro short about promote the development of TV series. TV plays always have their irreplaceability, the audience's negative evaluation of the current average level of TV plays and exaggerated praise for the micro short plays, mostly to stimulate the improvement of the quality of TV plays. Of the respondents, two-thirds said they understood there was no reciprocity between TV dramas and short drama videos. Even if people praise miniseries, they still go back to watch dramas that interest them, which can also promote the TV industry.

5. Summarize and reflect

Nowadays, TV shows and closely coordinate the relationship between the development of micro sketch is in. Both TV plays and mini-plays develop on the basis of film aesthetics. TV dramas are more like the elder statesmen, while mini-dramas are a new force. In today's fast-paced social environment, audiences tend to choose mini-dramas with a faster narrative pace than traditional films and TV dramas. At the same time, it is also a kind of compensatory existence for the shortage caused by the current social environment. The relationship is not antagonistic, but rather grows along with each other's development. That is, the "Reverse promotion of development" mentioned above. When one partner does well, it stimulates the other to do better. Audience selection is not completely opposite, there is still a large crossover between the two forms of audience groups.

Even if the emergence of new forces will inevitably diverge, but there is a certain difference between the two so there is no substitution. So what really determines the market share is whether they can maintain their own characteristics. For example, TV dramas should continue to dig deep in connotation, plot and texture. Mini-dramas should dig deep for plot points and emotional value.

It is worth mentioning that the further development of TV series must be against the "low intelligence routine hollowing out". Now the TV series blindly seek stability, after making a hit drama, in the comfort zone blindly copy. After several copies of the subject matter and people have been boring. It will even decompose the multi-core rich pop drama and extract its most attractive features for divergent replication. This kind of play mixed with water, often make the core of the play lost, become boring. And most of the current TV plays are opportunistic. In order to capture the most active TV play audience group between the ages of 15 and 30, more copies of some mindless love dramas are made, and infinite "cookies" are distributed to meet the "sugar" needs of this group. There is often a case of "selling dog meat with a sheep's head", saying that it

is a case investigation and suspense. Finally, the plot of the whole drama is to serve for love. This kind of empty skin drama cannot retain the audience.

Different from short plays, TV plays have longer narrative space. If the proper plot cannot be provided in the narrative space, but choose to dilute the plot, abuse lines, repeat editing, insert advertisements and other means to expand the plot "water", then it is bound to cause the loss of audience. Therefore, in order to stabilize the TV drama market, domestic dramas must go on the road from "water injection" to "dehydration".

Usually, TV plays can meet some needs of people at the spiritual and cultural level, but TV plays are not the source of all people's spiritual world. When the values of TV plays are lower than the average aesthetic appreciation of the audience, they are doomed to fail to make the audience buy. The vision and aesthetic appreciation of the people are improving day by day, and they have a higher demand for literary and artistic works. This means that routine plays are doomed to fail to meet the increasing cultural needs of the masses, and only by ruthless innovation and honing can they win the favor of the audience.

The further development of micro short plays should not only be limited to the plot, but also be combined with its own characteristics and adhere to the principle of "content is king" for multi-field cooperation. Take Zhizhu zZ, a Kuaishou creator, for example, which runs an account of ancient romance stories. After determining its audience group, it will expand step by step. Hanfu brand, beauty makeup, shopping APP and so on can become part of its account content, and even attract po owners related to the fields mentioned in the above words to cooperate. This can help form a content matrix, create a continuous flow of novelty and broaden the audience. At present, micro short plays are faced with problems such as the content of the simple, vulgar, need to make timely response, so that micro short plays can have a better development.

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