

Creating the cool point: an analysis of the narrative strategy of romance new media vertical screen short dramas

Wenqiang Chen¹ Shuyuan Lin²

1.University of Sanya, Sanya 572022, China.

2.Hainan Normal University, Haikou 571158, China.

Abstract: In recent years, the production of new media short dramas has continued to grow, and under the premise of increasing audience for short dramas, more and more shaped text creation, and gradually standardised market regulation, new media short dramas continue to eat into the market share of traditional film and television with textual performance characteristics such as fast-paced, fragmented and sensory-heavy. From the current development situation, new media short drama is not a brand new art form presented in front of the audience, but is a flow-type storytelling product derived from network dramas and online IPs in order to adapt to the sudden change of the new media environment. Based on the perspective of short drama storytelling products of the love category, this paper discusses the textual narrative strategy from the perspective of the selection of the topic, the characters and the structure of the short drama on the vertical screen.

Keywords: Vertical Screen Short Drama; Textual Narrative; Cool Point Making

With the continuous innovation of new media technology, new media short drama, as a kind of art form after the fusion of network drama series and online IP film and television, has eaten up the original market share of film and TV by outputting a large number of short drama products catering to the needs of the audience, the reason for which the outbreak of short dramas is a result of the double strength of the product advantages and the short drama platform. New media short drama in the cost of investment, production cycle and cost recovery compared to traditional film and television has obvious product advantages, which also makes the long video platform and short video platforms both into the game. In the long video platform, Youku, Mango TV, Tencent video, iQiyi and other platforms use their audience, resources and other advantages to enter the production of short drama products, produced by the sugar-free culture of pure love short drama “Yakarta” in the Tencent video after the broadcast of the share of 20 million, Youku on the new “lock love three lifetimes” share of the account has broken ten million, Mango TV and iQiyi’s short drama “wind and moon” “prefer to spoil” in the share of the data is also outstanding performance. Mango TV and QiYiYi’s short dramas Based on the social attributes of the audience, the production, operation and consumption of short dramas on short video platforms have already formed a mature closed loop, and Jitterbug has produced explosive short dramas such as Twenty Nine and Escape from the British Museum through its creative support strategies such as the New Plan and the Drama Gravity Plan. The British Museum” and other popular short drama products. Fast hand in the “star plan” “drama star plan” and other creative plan support, output of the “Rapunzel on”, “a thousand paper cranes”, “the hero is a little cold” and other explosive products.

The short drama products on the market are mainly divided into two types: horizontal screen short drama and vertical screen short drama. Horizontal screen short drama is mainly a form of content streamlined according to the network episodes, and the duration of each episode of short drama on Youku platform is about ten minutes. Vertical screen short dramas are mainly short dramas on platforms such as Jittery Voice, Shutterbug and WeChat apps, with a length of about three minutes. Such storytelling products can be broadly classified into romance, costume, drama, urban, comedy, fantasy, suspense and other types. According to the statistics of the 2023 Micro Short Drama Industry Report produced by the Capital Radio and Television Programme Production Industry Association’s Net Generation Content Innovation Committee, the production of short dramas with the theme of romance accounted for 31% of the output during the period between October 2022 and August 2023, and it still occupies an absolutely dominant position.

Between 2020 and 2023, behind the continuous growth in the production of short dramas, the increasing number of audiences, the shaping of text creation, and the increasing regulation of the market, it is the result of the combined effect of changes in Internet technology, audience viewing habits, and the widening of the market scope. After the rise of mobile Internet, content dissemination has gradually shifted from PC to mobile terminals such as mobile phones and tablets, and mobile terminals have gradually changed the audience’s behavioural

habits of receiving information while facilitating the audience's access to information. Fast-paced, fragmented, sensory-heavy and highly interactive information processing methods call for the emergence of a new form of narrative in order to satisfy the audience's experience of obtaining entertainment on information. In this paper, we will discuss the narrative strategy of vertical screen short drama from the aspects of topic selection, characters and structure under the core of vertical screen short drama created by Sharp Point.

1. Selection of topics to create resonance

The full popularity of mobile terminals has quietly changed the information receiving habits of Chinese Internet users, who use mobile terminals to maximise sensory stimulation in fragmented time. The main marketing battlefield of vertical screen short drama comes from short video platforms, in order to cater to the audience's viewing psychology and viewing habits, the text narrative strategy adopted by vertical screen short drama is to create sensory pleasure on the basis of weakening aesthetics and ignoring the meaning, in order to achieve the ultimate goal of pressure release and payment, so the vertical screen short drama is a storytelling product hostage to the flow, and then a "new" film and television art form. So the vertical screen short drama is first a story product held hostage by traffic, and then a "new" form of film and television art.

Love, costume, drama, urban, comedy, fantasy, suspense short drama works in the current stage of the jittery voice, fast hand and other platforms can be said to be commonplace, these types of works by the influence of new media novels of the nature of the heavy pay, and will be transplanted into the short drama of the selection of network novels logic, and the formation of a set of mature "net article IP +" short drama production mode, it can be said that rooted in the cool point of manufacturing for vertical screen short drama selection has become the usual thinking of the practitioners of the short drama.

In the reading experience of online paid novels, the cool points can be summarised as gender attraction, violent conquest, absolute superiority, creation of belonging, return of order and aesthetic cognition. From gender attraction to aesthetic cognition, the hierarchical relationship of pleasure points increases, and the higher the hierarchy matches different aesthetic needs of the audience. There is no such thing as falling in love" and "Wake Up! My Love" and "Wake Up! My Love" and other short dramas on vertical screen in the love category follow the experience of sense-making in selecting topics. Short dramas in the love category firstly focus on the attraction between the two genders and make use of the romance between the two genders to bring in the characters. Secondly, the main characters use violence and money to create a sense of conquest and psychological advantage for the audience, so as to make up for the unhappiness and disappointment in reality. Again, the main characters' love lines develop through certain difficulties or twists and turns, eventually returning to order and expectation. Finally, the audience is aroused to a higher level of aesthetic perception and is rewarded. This is the crossover effect of different levels of coolness on romantic vertical screen short dramas, and it is worth noting that different levels of coolness need to be targeted to different audience needs, just as different genders, aesthetics, and education levels of the audience need to be set at different levels of coolness to fit their content needs. Overall, vertical screen short drama is a storytelling product based on a short video platform, and different storytelling products need to be matched to audience needs in order to fulfil the real needs of product consumption and reproduction.

2. Polarised characterisation

Characters are the core elements that traditional film and television creators consider when creating texts, and some film creators even regard characterisation as a key element in judging the success or failure of a film text, which also makes the same two-hour-long film text and the new media vertical screen short drama different in the characterisation of the character shaping strategy adopted. In the traditional film and television work *I Am Not the God of Medicine*, Cheng Yong's character metamorphosis goes through several different stages, and even the screenwriters give a three-dimensional presentation of characters such as *Yellow Hair* and *Lv Beneficiary*. In traditional film and television works, the writer hopes that the three-dimensional presentation of the characters will trigger the audience's perception of the theme and realistic thinking.

For the new media vertical screen short drama, vertical screen short drama is a story product after the grafting of "cool culture" of online literature and the integration of online drama, aiming to achieve the audience's emotional and stress relief through the weakening of social values and realistic thinking. This also makes the character setting of new media vertical screen short dramas revolve around the core

principle of creating a sense of coolness. In the main character setting of romantic vertical screen short dramas, “the author creates a ‘fantasy’ for the main character through plain and straightforward language, builds a ‘protagonist aura’, and completes a life reversal. The readers, in the process of reading, role-play themselves in order to gain a sense of pleasure and resonance. The ‘cool article’ ignores the trials and tribulations that need to be experienced to achieve success in the traditional sense, and the effect of the ‘cool’ reading experience becomes the fundamental starting point and landing point of the net article author’s creation, and the protagonist’s life of lying down and winning satisfies the reader’s ‘daydream’. The ‘daydream’ type of life of the main character satisfies the readers’ ‘daydream’ type of imagination”. In the new media vertical screen short drama, the author’s strategy of presenting the protagonist is to appropriate the characterisation method of network novels, for example, Xiao Yan in the novel “Dou Broker’s Dome” achieves a life reversal by upgrading and fighting monsters step by step from a wasted teenager, and readers are brought into the role of the novel to get a sense of pleasure in the protagonist’s course of fighting through thick and thin to make up for the reality of all kinds of disappointment. In the short drama Romance is Full, the audience realises their alternative imagination of the open-ended life through the fantasy experience of Aden’s promotion, pay rise and true love.

In the romantic vertical screen short drama, the protagonist relies on life reversal to create a sense of enjoyment for the audience, and the functionality of the supporting role setting is more obvious - through the face, polarisation to amplify the protagonist to create a sense of enjoyment, so that the protagonist’s open setting and the functional interpretation of the supporting role to widen the audience’s emotional fallout, the audience’s emotions are suppressed to a certain critical point and then released, which in turn, the audience in the release of the emotions of the audience to obtain the greatest possible sensory stimulation.

3. Fast-paced one-line narrative

“Micro-drama is usually implanted in the volume of “short, concise and fast”, so it puts higher requirements on the pace and frequency of reversal, if the traditional narrative structure is still retained, it will inevitably weaken the expression of the tension of the storyline due to the limit of the duration. Therefore, micro-short dramas cut down the complexity and improve the form, and in the plot line of the story, it is not necessary to stick to the traditional narrative structure of ‘beginning-development-climax-ending’, but chooses to remove the complex character relationships and cumbersome plot settings”. Vertical screen short drama works on the platform of Shake Shine Racer, the time of each episode is controlled at about three minutes, and the creators intentionally go to frequently create cool points and laughs within three minutes, and a whole vertical screen short drama works are controlled at about two hours to complete the storytelling.

In traditional film and television narratives, it takes a certain amount of time to complete the characterisation and plot development, which also allows TV dramas and films to have enough space to develop the corresponding passages and perfect the characters in stages. In the context of information overload and increasing social pressure, the vertical screen short drama product lightens the narrative of short drama according to the audience’s viewing psychology and viewing scene - compressing the plot of traditional film and television and requiring the author to complete the task of laying out the cool points, creating laughs, and completing the drama of the tears in each episode, thus matching the audience’s fragmented consumption scene. match the audience’s fragmented consumption scene. For example, in the short drama “Master Qin’s Little Mute”, the protagonist needs to experience intensive events such as life and death, falling in love, and getting married in one hour, which also makes the new media vertical screen short drama without delicate scene presentation, three-dimensional characterisation, and edifying thematic cognition, so that the audience of the short drama can enjoy the sensory enjoyment brought by the plot without any burdens.

Meanwhile, in order to ensure the effectiveness of the cool points and the audience’s content stickiness, under the premise of fast-paced narrative strategy, the romance vertical screen short dramas structure the whole love story from the characters, goals, dilemmas, encounters, and other story orientations - according to the established story orientations to do a good job of the whole drama’s framework, the framework consists of one episode by one episode of the cool points of the intensive plot, Within the framework, the whole short drama is composed of an episode-by-episode plot, bipolar settings of main and secondary characters, frequent plot reversals and suspenseful retention at the end of the episode, and the audience is guided to complete the consumption of the whole drama step by step with the thinking of text creation. As a romance drama with over 100 million plays on the fast-food website, “Spreading the Wild” takes the emotions of the last princess Rongyan

and the young master Lu Tianyou as a clue to link up the elements of gender, violence, belonging, etc., and then manages and even controls the curiosity and anticipation of the audience by controlling the rhythm of the story, reversing the plot, suspense, etc., and immersing the audience in the story as the story unfolds, and then fulfilling the “cool point making” promise to the audience at the end of the story. At the end of the story, it fulfils its promise to the audience of “creating cool points”, which makes the audience complete the release of pressure under a series of stimulation, and at the same time, the vertical screen short drama product also completes the fulfilment of its product function.

In today’s extremely rapid change of new media technology, information overload has become an indisputable fact, the audience’s position is becoming more and more important, and the right to make their own choices is also increasing. When the audience is faced with a huge amount of information, they tend to choose the fastest and most energy-saving way to get enough information and maximise the sensory satisfaction of the experience. Romantic vertical screen dramas appear as “fast food” storytelling products to meet the audience’s emotional needs for new media short drama products.

As a storytelling product held hostage by the flow, in addition to the strong selling point of the story itself, the explosive romantic short drama product also needs a large amount of capital intervention to continuously push the flow to cover the corresponding potential user groups in order to complete the consumption purpose. At this stage, more and more companies are entering the market for short drama products, and the market share continues to widen, but the principle of short drama product production is affected by the profit mechanism of short drama products, and it is going into the predicament of providing continuous and strong sensory stimulation to gain profit, which will shorten the life of its products.

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Author:

1.Wenqiang Chen (1994.08—), Male, Han nationality, Danzhou, Hainan, Title: Assistant Professor, Research Direction: Film and Television Narrative

2.Shuyuan Lin (1995.05—), Male, Han nationality, Danzhou, Hainan, Title: Assistant Professor, Research Direction: Media Communication

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