

Content Characteristics of Explosive Internet Short Web Series

-- Taking Escape from the British Museum as an Example

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ABSTRACT

With the arrival of the self-media era, everyone has the possibility to become a short video content creator, and only by doing a good job with the content can the work go farther. The content problem has become the main problem faced by the Short web series on the road of development. At this stage, the literature on the content characteristics of explosive short web series is still incomplete, and most of the literature focuses on the narrative strategy and communication value of the short drama, while the analysis of hot marketing is not perfect. This paper provides a theoretical analysis of hot marketing and emotional strategy, and analyses the content characteristics of the explosive short web series - Escape from the British Museum as a specific case study at the end of last year, in order to provide references and suggestions for the development of short web series and short web series creators.

KEYWORDS

Short Web Series; Emotional Strategy; Hot Marketing.

1. INTRODUCTION

In August 2020, the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (SARFT) added short web series to the filing system, and short web series has been formally included in the regulation since then. According to the public data of the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (SARFT), from 1 October 2022 to 31 August 2023, the number of short web series filed for record amounted to 2,932, and the overall number of short web series has shown a significant growth trend, with a large number of short dramas entering the market. For the time being, the short web series presents a diversified, large-scale, standardised trend, but few short web series can really make itself known outside of fixed circle, and the short drama Escape from the British Museum, which burst into flames in August last year, is loved by the audience and has become a model for short web series to make itself known outside of fixed circle. Based on existing research, this paper conducts a comprehensive and in-depth study on the use of emotional strategy and hot marketing in the content characteristics of short web series. Through the case study method, this paper summarises the existing literature, combines the specific analysis of Escape from the British Museum, and summarises the application of hot marketing and emotional strategy in the content characteristics of the explosive short web series. Compared with the existing literature, there has been a certain research on the content, presentation form and theme selection of the explosive short web series, but the analysis of hot marketing is

shallow, this paper focuses on adding emotional strategy on the basis of narrative strategy and analysing it in combination with the relevant research on hot marketing.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This paper searches on China Knowledge Network with the keywords of short web series, short drama and short web series, and finds that the research on short web series is on the rise after 2021. With the popularity of short web series in recent years, more and more people are researching and analysing the development of short web series, which is currently focused on the following aspects:

Analysed from the aspect of the development of short web series, the research about the development is the hotspot of the current academic research on short web series. Zhuang Rongyi, his article From the network short drama <I am Yu Huanshui> success to see the development of China's network short drama, the rapid development of short web series is divided into three aspects to explore, one is the fast-food culture under the background of the audience's aesthetic habits of change, the second is the market diversification of the coexistence of long drama and short drama, the third is the padding drama is rampant, the management department Encourage the creation of short series [1]. In Wen Jianwen's article, Causes and Development of Network Short Drama analyses the internal potential and external environment, provides practical experience for the future development of TV drama, and puts forward that the development of Short web series is in the primary stage, and still faces many problems [2]. Cheng Junxin, in his article Research on the Content Innovation Strategy of short web series, divides the development history of short web series into two stages: the period of germination and exploration (2012-2016) and the period of continuous development (2017-present), and the main features of the latter are that the number of short web series reaches a certain degree, a certain market scale is formed, the short web series is included in the scope of regulation, the development is gradually standardised, and the short drama's quality of short dramas has been significantly improved [3]. Hu Zheng's From Emotional Massage to "Emotional Consumption: The Development Logic of short web series analyses the phenomenon of short web series from the perspective of emotional communication, and attributes the ability of short web series to become a new form of media to the emotional needs of users [4].

From the analysis of the innovation of short web series. In Lin Ziqing's article, The Innovation and Breakthrough of Urban Realistic Theme Network Short Drama in the New Media Era--Taking <I am Yu Huanshui> as an Example, takes the online drama I am Yu Huanshui as a specific case, analyses the innovation in the following three aspects that it has made to win the word-of-mouth and the heat: the theme material, the narration, the form, and provides the direction guidance for the next development and innovation of short web series [5]. In order to provide direction guidance for the development and innovation of the next short web series [5]. Wu Shanyang's article, Participation Experience under the Elimination of Boundaries: The Aesthetic Tendency of short web series, puts forward the innovation of short web series, which is a kind of trans-media narrative under media fusion, referring to creators' use of non-useful media to tell the same story, and also mentions that short web series has adapted to the public's fondness for the vertical screen, and that the vertical screen short drama has pushed forward the innovation of the up and down split-screen image language [6].

From the analysis of the shortcomings of the short web series. In Zhou Sizhuo's article, Short Web Series dissemination characteristics, dilemmas and countermeasures--Take the Kuai Shou small theatre as an example, analyses the short dramas put on Shutterfly, and finds that although the development of short web series is rapid, there are such problems as low quality of content, insufficient guidance of correct values, and lack of cultural values [7]. In Liu Jing's A preliminary exploration of the development status and prospect of short web series, mentioned that the production threshold of short web series is low, and lack of behavioural norms and policy guidance, and its plot inevitably exists many problems such as shoddy fabrication and content similarity [8].

From the level of domestic and foreign research comparison of short web series, regarding the research on foreign short web series, In Liu Yuhui and Chen Yanyu's article, Comparative Research on the Development of short web series in China and South Korea, mentioned that South Korea's short web series has already produced a number of works with excellent market feedback and economic benefits, and compared the characteristics with domestic works [9]. Except for this article, there is no other research on foreign short web series. Through in-depth research, it is found that the phenomenon of short web series mainly focuses on the domestic market, and there are fewer studies abroad.

3. EMOTIONAL STRATEGY IN ESCAPE FROM THE BRITISH MUSEUM

Escape from the British Museum is co-created by two 90s self-publishers Jian Bin Guo Zai and Xia Tian Mei Mei O. The series consists of three episodes with a total duration of 15 minutes. The drama uses the anthropomorphism of cultural relics to tell the story of a Chinese Tangzhi pattern jade pot that escapes from the British Museum in human form, meets a Chinese media person working overseas, and then embarks on the journey back home with the help of the Chinese media person to bring back a letter for the cultural relics that can't return home. The Chinese Tangled Branch Pattern Thin Jade Jug is not actually a cultural relic, but a work of Suzhou jade carver Yu Ting, which won the 2007 Beijing Tiangong Prize for Outstanding Work, and the jade jug is now housed in the British Museum, which is the most clear-cut in its origins compared to other cultural relics looted during the Qing Dynasty, and so it has the task of fleeing back home to help deliver the paperwork for the other cultural relics that can't be returned to their homelands in the drama. Within ten days of the play's release, the two bloggers have accumulated 5.5 million fans in Jitterbug, Shutterbug, and Xiaohongshu, and have harvested ten million likes and over one hundred million plays on the Jitterbug platform.

3.1. Main Content is based on Online Topics and Events

The affordances of short video as an emerging media technology provide ample opportunities for emotional logic to intervene in the international dissemination of short video news. For one thing, the infrastructuralisation of short video and other media platforms is continuously deepening the emotional dependence of users on the platform and related information [10]. Short video content often plays a role in pulling people's emotions, people are easy to put themselves into the perspective of the protagonist when swiping short videos related to social events, and experience the experiences and encounters of the protagonist, thus generating feelings of pity and compassion. Empathy refers to the ability to put oneself in another person's shoes and experience their situation so as to feel and understand their feelings. Empathy helps individuals to produce altruistic and pro-social behaviours, while group empathy helps to reduce intergroup aggressive behaviours and intergroup conflicts and improve intergroup relationships [11]. In the short web series Escape from the British Museum, empathy plays a key role in the explosion of this short web series. The short web series is based on the anthropomorphism of cultural relics, which is narrated from the first-person perspective. The anthropomorphism is that the cultural relics are no longer cold and emotionless objects, but living human beings, and the viewers will see this Chinese Tangzhi pattern thin-fibre jade pot as an image of a little girl who cannot go home in a foreign country, so that the audiences can establish a more direct emotional connection with the cultural relics. The audience can experience the desire of the cultural relic to go home, the loneliness of the cultural relic being stranded in another country, and the resentment of being treated unfairly in a foreign country.

3.2. Make Good Use of Audio-visual Language Constructs

Short web series belongs to audiovisual art, often played in mobile communication scenes or fragmented scenes or fragmented scenes, Short web series in the creation of the Short web series need

to take into account the differences between the characteristics of the Short web series and the general film and TV series [12]. Short web series is different from movies and TV dramas, movies and TV dramas relatively have a long time to make the plot padding, while short web series needs to tell a story clearly in a shorter time to advance the plot development, delete unimportant plot elaboration, but this will inevitably result in the fragmentation of the plot, so that the audience can't figure out what to do, and the music can bridge the gap, and become a coherent plot. The music can bridge the gap and become a coherent plot "adhesive", and promote the plot "accelerator" [12]. Film and television music should be unobtrusive but powerful to support the picture, so that the audience in the art of moving in the middle of the music is not perceived to play a role [13]. In *Escape from the British Museum*, background music plays an important role in the construction of emotionality. For example, when the little jade pot hears the hero speak Chinese, her first reaction is to embrace him, at this time, the background music plays the song *Millennial tears*, in the lyrics of which the phrase "through a thousand years of tears" carries a strong sense of predestination, and the little jade pot escapes from the museum and wanders around alone, and finally meets the countryman who speaks his hometown language, which gives the little jade pot the hope of returning home. And at the beginning of the third episode of the series, the little jade pot has a strong sense of destiny. As well as in the beginning of the third episode of the series, the hero takes Little Jade Jug on his way home to experience Chinese culture, and the end of the series when he discovers that the hero's interview is with Little Jade Jug, the song *Protagonist* plays, echoing the song head to head. When the song plays for the first time the hero is an overseas media worker who sends out posters and makes questionnaires, while in the second time when the music plays the song the hero has already become a man who lifts up his pen to face the beacons of the mundane world and fights for the cause of the world. He has become a newsman who faces the fire of the world and speaks out for the disadvantaged. The same song reflects the hero's psychological changes at different times, but also because the hero and the small jade pots in the daily life together awakened the hero chose to do journalism of the original heart, so that the hero to help the disadvantaged firmly in their own ideas.

3.3. Cultural Symbolic Construction

The cultural factors highlighted in the content design of *Escape from the British Museum* add to the storyline of the short play. From a semiotic point of view, a product is composed of three dimensions: semantics, semantic construction and context, reflecting the implicit connotative imagery of the product such as performance, style, emotion and culture. In their creation, designers must dig out the mapping logical relationship between the objective visual features and the implied connotative imagery [14]. In *Escape from the British Museum*, when Jade Jug meets the hero for the first time, she hears him speak Chinese and calls him "family", and Jade Jug says, "Black eyes, yellow skin, those who can understand me are family". "Family is a fellow human being who is connected by blood, as long as I meet my family, I will be safe", etc. The concept of "family" is constantly emphasised because The concept of "family" is emphasised because for Chinese people, "family" does not necessarily mean people related by blood, but also two Chinese people who meet in a foreign country. The term is very familiar and relatable to the audience, which is why the audience can empathise with Xiao Yu Jug.

4. THE HOT MARKETING OF ESCAPE FROM THE BRITISH MUSEUM

Hot marketing is also known as borrowing momentum marketing, borrowing momentum marketing is a kind of event marketing, mainly by using the social influence of characters or events to attract the media and the audience, so that they are interested in and concerned about the work being promoted, so as to increase the popularity of the work [15]. Borrowing momentum marketing in media publicity is divided into two forms, one is borrowing the current situation marketing, one is

borrowing the celebrity effect marketing, *Escape from the British Museum* belongs to borrowing the current situation marketing.

The concept of anthropomorphic artefacts in *Escape from the British Museum* is not new, and similar concepts have been used in *National Treasures*, but the real reason *Escape from the British Museum* came out of the closet was because of the theft of more than 2,000 artefacts from the British Museum. 16 August 2023, the British Museum announced that more than 2,000 items in its collection were lost, stolen or damaged. or Then on 25 August the British Museum director Hartwig Fisher announced his resignation, and the loss of cultural relics to take responsibility for the incident, the deputy director also resigned voluntarily in the director of the resignation of three hours later, however, in the process of their resignation as the museum leaders did not lose cultural relics to do any explanation or to take some cultural relics to protect the measures. After the theft of artefacts from the British Museum was revealed, many countries demanded the return of looted cultural relics. 27 August, the *Global Times* officially put forward a demand for the British Museum to return all Chinese cultural relics obtained through improper channels without compensation in the capacity of the Chinese media, which rushed to the Weibo hot list on the same day of the highest level of news. The creators released a teaser trailer for *Escape from the British Museum*. At first, the inspiration for *Escape from the British Museum* came from a video posted on 23rd January 2023 by the Tiktok user "Xiaochai Popcorn", which tells about netizens' thoughts on the topic of escaping from the British Museum. The creator of *Escape from the British Museum*, "Jian Bin Guo Zai", commented on the piece. He was previously a sketch blogger, but after seeing the idea, he chose to stop his account and travelled to the UK for three months to work on it. The creator released the trailer of *Escape from the British Museum* on the short video platform with the topic of "Theft of Artefacts From the British Museum" at the height of the news, which instantly gained more than 10,000 views, and when the official episode started to air, it was broadcasted more than ten million times on Bilibili and Weibo, and more than one hundred million times on Jittery Voice, which was highly praised by netizens. Netizens have praised the film, and the marketing has played an irreplaceable role in the success of *Escape from the British Museum*.

5. CONCLUSION

Short web series is an emerging product of the combination of TV drama and network short video. In today's era, the reason why Short web series can be out of the circle is not only the high-quality content itself, but also the need to use hotspots to drainage, emotional strategy and hot marketing is an important way of media communication. *Escape from the British Museum* draws on the hot content of independent innovation, with the help of the network hot wind direction, to create a network of audience enjoyable short web series, for the self-media creators to provide an excellent case, for the short web series market set a good example. With the development of short web series this year, more and more creators devote themselves to the creation of short web series, but blindly follow the trend does not necessarily make it a success, in the contemporary era of traffic and content is king, the most important thing is to create high-quality content, good content in order to be remembered, and flocked to the traffic in order to be widely circulated. Creators should take into account both content and dissemination in order to produce a successful short web series out of the circle.

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