The Local Expression of Cultural and Tourism Short Dramas from the Perspective of Media Landscape: Folk Narratives Empowered by Technology and Cultural Breakthroughs

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Abstract: In recent years, short dramas, as a new type of audio-visual expression medium, have seen a leapfrog growth in topic popularity and commercial value, and their leading role in the online content consumption market has continued to increase. Based on Guy Debord's theory of media landscape, this paper explores the local expression paths of cultural and tourism short dramas. Construct local imagery from the multimodal coding of sensory geography, visual, auditory, etc. With the platformization of memory topology, analyze the media encoding logic in terms of transforming local symbols, reshape the interpretation of local values through the relationship between the memory summoning and structural reengineering of the media space, and point out that folk narratives empowered by technology are the core driving force, providing a new paradigm for the breakthrough of local culture and modern communication.

Keywords: Media landscape; Cultural and tourism short dramas; Local

1. Introduction

In recent years, with the rapid development of Internet technology, the content creation of short-video platforms has been continuously enriched, and the dissemination channels have been continuously expanded. The narrative methods and dissemination paths of local cultural expression are facing unprecedented opportunities and challenges. Short dramas, which are centered on short video platforms and adapted to users' fragmented viewing scenarios, typically have a single episode duration of 1 to 10 minutes, adopt lightweight production, strong plot narrative, and focus on specific themes, and are essentially micro-narrative forms empowered by digital technology. By the end of 2024, the national market size of micro-short dramas reached 50.5 billion yuan, and the user base had reached 662 million [1]. As a result, short plays have become one of the important means of local

cultural expression and image construction in the process of social development. To promote the cross-border integration of micro short plays with cultural tourism, intangible cultural heritage, dialects, and other fields, and to better promote the breakthrough of folk narrative and culture, the State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television issued the "Notice on Implementing the 'Micro Short Play +' Action Plan to Empower Thousands of Industries" in January 2025. In the process of short drama dissemination, emphasis is placed on algorithmic inclination towards quality content, expanding the dissemination of "micro short drama + cultural tourism/ intangible cultural heritage" works, while supporting localities in conducting pilot projects to explore regional characteristic integration models [2]. Based on this, this study attempts to discuss the patterns in the local expression process of cultural and tourism short dramas based on existing short drama narratives.

2. The media coding of local expression

The concept of spectacle was first proposed by the French thinker Guy Debord in his masterpiece "The Society of the Spectacle": "In a society where modern production conditions are everywhere, life itself is presented as a vast accumulation of the spectacle" [3]. Debord points out that the "spectacle" in modern capitalist society is not merely a collection of images, but rather an ideological structure that substitutes reality and manipulates perception. With the popularity of digital media, the media landscape has gradually permeated every aspect of daily life. As a cultural force, it has gradually become one of the main ways for people to understand the world, constantly shaping people's social experience and perception of reality. In recent years, short videos have become a hot topic of academic concern. Short dramas, as a new form of audio-visual communication on short video platforms, have also become a new production mechanism for media landscapes, and the media content expressing local characteristics in cultural and tourism short dramas has also provided a new production path for the construction of local culture.

2.1. Sensory geography: Multimodal production of local imagery

Cultural and tourism short plays often construct a strong sense of place through multi-sensory media languages, such as local dialects, natural landscapes, architectural styles, folk rituals, etc. The coding logic of this sensory geography essentially transforms cultural and tourism resources into experiential and communicable media landscapes, awakening the audience's spatial imagination and willingness to explore through the multi-dimensional superposition of visual, auditory, and physical senses, which is highly consistent with the communication law of sensory aesthetics in art studies.

Visual coding is the most direct form of presentation of local imagery, and its core lies in the narrative implantation of iconic landscapes. The short play "There's a Village in Sanxingdui" transforms cultural symbols such as the bronze sacred tree and the golden rooster carrying the sun totem into visual elements. The bronze pattern pendants worn by the main characters in the play, the totem paintings on the village walls, and the virtual Sanxingdui fantasy scenes not only retain the authenticity of the cultural symbols but also attract young audiences through youthful visual presentation. The number of visitors to the Sanxingdui Museum has increased by 320% compared to the previous year.

Auditory coding enhances local recognition through localized soundscapes and builds an irreplaceable sensory memory. The short play "Inside and Outside the Home" produced by Sichuan Province uses authentic Chengdu dialect throughout, with colloquial expressions such as "chatting" and "bashi de ban" combined with

the clashing of tea bowls in teahouses, the cries of pancake vendors on the streets, and the play of children in military factory family compound to form a three-dimensional "Sichuan-Chongqing urban soundscape." This soundscape encoding is not a simple background sound effect but an integral part of the narrative, which conveys regional character through the dialect dialogue between the main characters, and the urban soundscape enhances the texture of life, allowing the audience to complete the recognition of Sichuan-Chongqing culture at the auditory level. At the same time, in order to balance locality and dissemination, the show added cultural annotations in dialect subtitles, such as "A Feast: The way Sichuan-Chongqing people improve their food", to make up 38% of the audience from outside the province, achieving a unity of the uniqueness of the soundscapes and the wide dissemination. Xiangxi short play "Agui's Village Evening" takes the rhythm of the Miao drum and Miao folk songs as the main auditory thread. The Miao drum performance segments are recorded in their original sound, and the changes in the strength of the drumbeats are synchronized with the mood of the plot, making the auditory characteristics of the intangible cultural heritage skills the core symbol of the local image. After the broadcast, the number of sign-ups for the inheritance of the Xiangxi Miao drum increased by 210%.

The metaphorical coding of the body's senses further deepens the immersion of the local experience. Through plot design, cultural and tourism short plays transform the tactile, gustatory, and olfactory experiences of a place into visual narratives, stimulating the audience's physical associations. In the short play "The Wonderful Journey of the Little Fairy of Intangible Cultural Heritage", the Li brocade weaving segment shows the tactile sensation of the silk thread passing through the brocade and the color change of the dye in the fabric through close-up shots, combined with the character's line "This is the warmth passed down from my grandmother", transforming the tactile experience into emotional resonance; The production scene of Qingbuliang awakens the audience's taste imagination through the milky white color of coconut milk and the bright colors of fruits, driving sales of related cultural and creative products to 8.6 million yuan.

This multimodal sensory coding has transformed the local imagery of the cultural and tourism short drama from an "object of viewing" to an "object of experience", laying the psychological groundwork for the audience's on-site visits.

2.2. Memory topology: Platformized shaping of local symbols

Debo emphasizes that the core of the landscape is the manipulation and dissemination of symbols, and the essence of the local expression of cultural tourism short plays is to transform local symbols from historical memory into platformized landscapes through memory topology, achieving the dual goals of cultural inheritance and cross-domain dissemination. In addition, under the empowerment of technology, the algorithmic distribution and UGC ecosystem of short video platforms provide a new communication mechanism for the memory reconstruction of local symbols, making folk narratives the core force of symbol production.

Selective extraction of local symbols is the basis of the memory topology, and the key lies in the balance between the cultural core and communication fit. The short play "I Found a Top Scholar in Luyuan Village" focuses on Confucian cultural symbols, extracting visualizable symbols such as ritual, archery, and calligraphy from the Six Arts. Through a plot design that traverses the past to the present, the modern protagonist learns the apprenticeship ceremony at the Wenchang Pavilion in Luyuan Village and practices traditional archery at the dragon-shaped waterfront, transforming abstract Confucian culture into concrete narrative scenes. Transform the abstract Confucian culture into a concrete narrative scene. This symbol extraction follows the principle of communication-fit, choosing symbols that are both culturally recognizable and interactionable, laying the

groundwork for subsequent cultural and tourism transformation.

Platform-based communication reconfigures the memory path of local symbols, transforming individual memories into collective landscapes. The algorithmic recommendation technology of short-video platforms precisely distributes local symbol content based on user interest tags, breaking down the barriers of regional dissemination. The bronze symbols in the short drama "There's a Village in Sanxingdui" reached audiences in Guangdong, Zhejiang, and other places through platform archaeology and cultural and creative tag recommendations, accounting for 42%. The Shandong Panlong Bangzi micro-short play, with the labels of folk customs and rural areas, has attracted more than 70% of young audiences aged 18–35, breaking the aging communication predicament of traditional folk customs symbols. At the same time, the platform's social sharing function promotes the memory recreation of local symbols. Users shoot the same check-in videos as the short drama and imitate the challenge of intangible cultural heritage skills to become the secondary encoding of local symbols, forming a communication matrix of core plot + UGC derivative.

The participation of folk narratives makes the memory topology of local symbols more authentic and vibrant. Empowered by technology, folk creators and cultural inheritors are the core subjects of symbol production, and their original life experiences ensure the cultural authenticity of the symbols. Among the creative team of the short play "Inside and Outside the Home", 60% are local citizens of Chengdu, and three of them are family members of military factories. Based on their own memories, they have recreated the life scenes, dialect dialogues, and artifact details of the military factory family compound in the 1980s, such as Qingyang television sets and Tianfu cola bottles, thus avoiding cultural misinterpretation of "Sichuan-Chongqing urban symbols" from an external perspective. Just as the concept of "local creation" in art studies suggests, the participation of civilian subjects has freed the memory topology of local symbols from the manipulation of elite narratives and made them the carriers of "living culture."

3. The local driving force of writing

3.1. Medium space: The call of collective memory

The media space constructed by short video platforms is not a simple replication of physical space, but an imaginative space that carries collective memory. Through the scene-based reconstruction of local symbols, cultural and tourism dramas evoke the cultural memory and emotional resonance of the audience, providing emotional impetus for local cultural and tourism consumption. This memory summoning follows the logic from individual memory to collective memory and then to cultural identity, while technology-empowered folk narratives make the memory summoning in the media space more authentic and infectious.

The essence of the rural memory summoning is the landscape expression of nostalgia. The short play "Inside and Outside the Home" constructs the space of a military factory family compound in the 1980s, evoking the collective nostalgia of audiences in the Sichuan-Chongqing region through red brick buildings, displays of old objects, and neighborhood mutual assistance plots, with 62% of the comments in the comment section saying "I remember the family compound where I lived as a child" and "This was our life back then." This summon of rural memory is not a simple consumption of nostalgia, but rather a dialogue between reality and memory that stirs up the audience's willingness to visit in person. Meishan Qinglong Old Street, the filming location of the show, has become a popular check-in spot after its broadcast. The average monthly income of the merchants has been increasing, and the idle old houses have been transformed into short theater-themed homestays, achieving the

transformation of memory value to cultural tourism value and forming a closed loop of memory dissemination—cultural identity—economic benefits.

The call of cultural memory focuses on symbols such as intangible cultural heritage and traditional culture, and builds media Spaces through "living inheritance." The short play "The Magical Journey of the Little Fairy of Intangible Cultural Heritage" incorporates intangible cultural heritage symbols such as Li brocade and Qiong Opera into the fantasy plot, creating a medium space for the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage: the protagonist travels through time and space to learn skills from intangible cultural heritage inheritors, showing both the historical origin of intangible cultural heritage and emphasizing the practical significance of inheritance.

3.2. Structural reengineering: Rebuilding the two-way relationship

The local expression of cultural tourism short plays is a process of the dissemination of local culture, and it is also a process of reshaping the two-way relationship between the audience and the place, culture, and industry. Empowered by technology, folk narratives have become the core driving force for relationship reengineering, transforming places from passive object displays to active participants and achieving the dual goals of cultural breakthrough and industrial upgrading.

The relationship between the audience and the local area has shifted from cognition to participation, which is a core dimension of structural reengineering. In traditional cultural tourism communication, the relationship between the audience and the place is that of the onlooker and the landscape, but through interactive landscape design, cultural tourism short plays make the audience a participant in the place. The Sanxingdui exploration space constructed by the short play "There's a Village in Sanxingdui" engages the audience in cultural interpretation through gamified plots such as unlocking bronze codes and restoring bronze artifacts. The show, in collaboration with the Sanxingdui Museum, has launched the same study package as the show, transforming the relationship between the audience and the local area from watching Sanxingdui to experiencing it. The data shows that after the package was launched, the proportion of young visitors to the museum rose from 35% to 58%, confirming the value of building participatory relationships and forming a closed loop of interaction between creators, audiences, and the local area.

The transformation of the relationship between culture and industry from fragmentation to integration is the practical goal of structural reengineering. Cultural and tourism short plays complete the logic of industrial transformation by shaping media landscapes through cultural symbols, building an integrated ecosystem of short plays + cultural tourism + cultural creativity, and technology empowerment and policy support provide guarantees for this integration. Relying on Chengdu's policy support, "Inside and Outside the House" has obtained supporting services such as the rental of old items and the construction of scenes, driving the upgrading of the urban cultural industry in Meishan Qinglong Old Street and achieving a win-win situation of cultural protection and economic development. This industrial integration follows the principle of prioritizing cultural authenticity, making industrial development a supporting force for cultural breakthrough.

4. Conclusion

From the perspective of the media landscape, the local expression of cultural tourism short plays is an organic unity of technological empowerment, folk narrative, and cultural breakthrough. Through multimodal coding of sensory geography, cultural and tourism short plays transform local imagery into experiential and communicable

media landscapes, awakening the sensory resonance of the audience; Through the platformization of memory topologies, local symbols are transformed from historical memory into collective communication landscapes, achieving cross-domain communication and cultural inheritance; Through the reshaping of the relationship between memory summoning and structural reengineering in the media space, cultural and tourism short plays activate the cultural and industrial values of the place, providing a new path for local culture to break through.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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