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Technological Empowerment or Power Restructuring: AIGC and the Transformation of Micro-Drama Production

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Abstract: This research discusses the application of artificial intelligence-generated content (AIGC) in the micro-drama industry, focusing on whether technological empowerment has fundamentally changed the creative mechanism. With the help of theories such as human-computer collaborative creation, media empowerment, and creative labor, the article puts forward an analytical framework that covers the three levels of technology, production, and power. The research adopts the case analysis method to examine how AIGC changes the content production process, creative subjectivity, and industrial structure. As a result, it was found that AIGC not only improved production efficiency but also reallocated resource allocation and transferred creative power from institutions to individual creators. But at the same time, its generation mechanism exacerbates the homogenization of content and weakens the subjectivity of creation. The research further points out that the micro-dramas generated by artificial intelligence will develop along two trajectories: one is the enhancement of technical control, and the other is the revival of creative value. This contradiction shows that the sustainable development of the industry depends not only on algorithm optimization, but also on the institutional arrangement to protect the subjectivity of creation. Without conscious intervention, the improvement of efficiency may come at the expense of cultural homogenization and the weakening of the author's voice.

Keywords: AIGC; Micro-drama; Human–machine collaboration; Creative labor; Media empowerment

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1. Introduction

In recent years, the rapid development of artificial intelligence-generated content (AIGC) has changed the digital content production mode. This change is especially obvious in the field of micro-short dramas with short production cycles and high output. It is expected that by 2025, the output of China's vertical micro-dramas will reach about 40,000, and the supply of content will show explosive growth.

Against this background, artificial intelligence is changing from an auxiliary tool to the core

infrastructure of content production. But the relationship between technological empowerment and creative transformation is not linear. AIGC has significantly reduced the production cost and shortened the production cycle, but the content quality has not been improved accordingly. On the contrary, problems such as content homogenization, weakening of creative subjectivity, copyright disputes, and lagging supervision have become more prominent.

Most of the existing studies focus on technology application and industrial efficiency, and pay less attention to structural changes in creative mechanisms and power relations. In order to fill this gap, the research analyzes how AIGC can reshape the production process of the micro-skit industry, influence the subjectivity of creation, and redistribute power from the perspective of human-computer collaborative creation theory, media empowerment theory, and creative labor research.

2. The rise of micro-dramas and the entry of AIGC

2.1. The growth and structural constraints of micro-Dramas

The rise of micro-dramas is the result of the continuous evolution of media forms and audience consumption habits. By mid-2025, the number of Chinese skit users has reached 696 million, making it one of the fastest-growing fields in the online audio-visual industry [1].

Despite the rapid development of micro-stunes, the industry still faces severe structural challenges. The imbalance between production capacity and audience demand is intensifying. The production cost continues to rise, and the cost of each work is between 400,000 and 700,000 yuan, which limits the development of small production teams [2]. The phenomenon of content homogenization is still common. More than 80% of works are produced to cater to the mass market, which leads to insufficient innovation [3].

2.2. The technological opportunity of AIGC

Against this background, the breakthrough of AIGC technology has brought new opportunities to the industry. Since OpenAI released the Sora model in 2024, the videos generated by AI have been significantly improved in terms of visual consistency and time coherence. The domestic big model also followed up quickly, further accelerating the development of technology [4].

There are three main reasons why AIGC is particularly suitable for micro-drama. The short and concise characteristics of micro-dramas are more suitable for the current technical ability. AIGC has significantly lowered the production threshold and improved the efficiency. It also changed the traditional production logic, from a capital-intensive linear model to a flexible, iterative, platform-based model. This transformation not only means a technological upgrade but also represents a structural change in the content production paradigm.

3. Applications of AIGC in micro-drama production

3.1. Script generation: From human writing to human–AI co-creation

AIGC has fundamentally changed the process of script creation. Unlike before, creators can now participate in the process of generation, selection, and improvement of scripts [5]. Large-scale language models can quickly generate a variety of narrative structures, character settings, and dialogues, which significantly improves creative efficiency.

This transformation reflects the complementary logic in human-computer collaboration. Artificial intelligence is good at structural generation and information integration, while human creators are responsible for emotional expression and meaning construction. Therefore, AIGC does not replace human creators, but redefines the division of labor of creative labor.

3.2. Visual production: From physical shooting to algorithmic generation

In terms of visual production, AIGC reduces the dependence on real-life shooting conditions. For example, the AI-generated micro-drama Sanxingdui: Future Revelation shows how to generate complex scenes through algorithms, and the drama has been played more than 160 million times.

This transformation marks the transition from "reality reproduction" to "algorithm generation" [6]. AIGC is particularly effective in generating extremely imaginative scenes, such as scenes in science fiction and mythology, thus expanding the creative boundaries of visual narratives.

3.3. Process transformation: Toward platform-based production

AIGC is not limited to certain applications. It is reshaping the whole production process. Traditional linear processes are being replaced by modular and iterative systems, and artificial intelligence tools can assist or automate different stages of production.

From the perspective of process logic, traditional film and television production follows the linear order of "pre-production-shooting-post-production." The micro-drama generated by artificial intelligence has realized a dynamic iterative workflow, and generation, editing, and modification can be carried out at the same time. Even after the production is completed, specific scenes can be quickly remade according to the audience's feedback. This improvement in efficiency has brought about a surge in production capacity. According to the White Paper on the Development of China's Micro-Drama Industry (2025), from January to August 2025, a total of 2,902 animated micro-dramas were released on various platforms, and the application of AIGC tools has improved the creative efficiency by about 50% on average [7].

This transformation essentially represents the reallocation of production resources. In the past, creators needed to rely on capital investment and professional equipment, which are being replaced by easy-to-access technical tools, so that individual creators can also enter the content production system. In the traditional film industry, professional equipment and capital scale constitute a large entry threshold. Artificial intelligence technology has popularized production tools: only a personal computer and a set of artificial intelligence applications are needed. In the past, it required the entire production team to complete the task, but now a single creator can complete it. The effect of this technology improvement provides new opportunities for independent creators who were previously on the edge of the industry value chain. However, this also brings new dependence. Although creators get rid of traditional capital barriers, they also have to accept the dual constraints of algorithm logic and platform rules. The popularity of technical tools does not necessarily lead to the equal distribution of creative speech, but may give rise to a new technology-dependent class.

4. Challenges and risks of AIGC-driven micro-dramas

4.1. Content homogenization

AI-generated micro-dramas face a structural contradiction, that is, high output but low hit. In 2024, among the original dramas on the TikTok platform, only 4.3% of those had more than 100 million plays, and nearly

half of those had less than 1 million plays [8].

From a technical point of view, this phenomenon can be attributed to the probability of mainstream AI video generation tools. These models predict the most likely output results based on training data and generate content accordingly, which often leads to visual inconsistency, such as style drift, character instability, and inconsistency of facial expressions between different frames. Therefore, a large number of works show obvious homogenization.

Fundamentally speaking, this problem stems from the underlying generation mechanism of AIGC. Probability models tend to choose the "statistically reasonable" narrative mode, which essentially contributes to the standardization of narratives and the convergence of styles, and ultimately leads to the template of the form of expression [9].

4.2. Copyright and legal uncertainty

In addition to the challenges at the content level, AI-generated micro-dramas also face many problems at the legal and institutional levels. The wide application of AIGC is increasingly challenging the existing copyright system, because the content generated by AI will raise complex problems related to portrait rights, voice rights, and intellectual property ownership [10]. At present, there are institutional defects in determining the identity and responsibility of the author of AI-generated content.

Although judicial practice has begun to establish the principle of "user responsibility", the distribution of responsibility is still vague in the model of multi-party use of AI for production. In 2025, the Beijing Internet Court clearly pointed out in a number of judgments that "technical neutrality does not mean exemption from responsibility", emphasizing that users of AI tools must be responsible for the infringing content generated. In addition, the amount of compensation for the judgment of China's first artificial intelligence voice infringement case in 2024 is RMB 250,000, and the court clearly recognizes the extension of personal voice rights to copies generated by artificial intelligence [11].

4.3. Crisis of creative subjectivity

At the level of creative labor, AIGC is promoting a structural transformation, that is, from skill-based execution to strategic control. The core competitiveness of traditional creators is evolving from "content production" to "generating logic design." Although this transformation improves efficiency, it may also weaken the expression autonomy of creators.

The impact of artificial intelligence on the film and television industry is most directly reflected in front-line practitioners. Some screenwriters are worried that production companies may increasingly rely on artificial intelligence to generate the first draft, and then only human screenwriters need to modify and polish, which actually reduces their role to "artificial intelligence-assisted editing." Essentially, this triggers a subjective crisis. As artificial intelligence can replicate standardized performances and create formulaic scripts, practitioners who lack personal characteristics may face the risk of being replaced.

4.4. Regulatory lag and value risks

In response to the rapid development of artificial intelligence micro-dramas, China's regulatory framework has accelerated the adaptation to emerging technologies. On February 5, 2025, the State Administration of Radio and Television officially issued the Notice on Further Coordinated Development and Safety and Promoting the Healthy and Prosperous Development of the Online Micro-dram Drama Industry, introducing

the “graded audit” system of online micro-dramas. The policy further stipulates that online audio and video platforms are prohibited from spreading or promoting micro-short dramas without official permission or registration. From June 1, 2024, micro-dramas without regulatory review and registration will be banned from online dissemination.

At the same time, the responsibility of the platform has also been significantly strengthened. Since 2025, major digital platforms, including WeChat, TikTok, Kuaishou, Hongguo.com, and Taobao, have increased the control of micro-drama content. These platforms have issued regulatory notices many times, and collectively intercepted, rectified, or removed thousands of illegal works from the shelves. In October 2025, TikTok announced the upgrade of the micro-skit content review framework to clearly strengthen the restrictions on seven types of problem content, including harmful values, pornography and vulgarity, violence and blood, and inferior aesthetics.

The platform operator also emphasized that it will continue to support those works that promote mainstream social values and are well-made. In this regard, the platform aims to guide the industry to explore socially constructive themes while encouraging innovation in narrative structure and content production.

5. Future trends

5.1. Technical trend: From “probability generation” to “precise execution”

The technological development of artificial intelligence to generate micro-dramas is changing from simple “content production” to the production of “high-quality” and “extensible” content. Early AIGC tools were mainly based on probability output, which often led to problems such as style inconsistency, character instability, and visual drift. Emerging technical solutions increasingly emphasize “director-level control”, so that they can accurately control camera motion, lighting, composition, and film language.

At the same time, the leading technology company is accelerating the construction of industrial infrastructure and developing a multi-intelligent collaboration system, in order to integrate script creation, frame splitting, rendering, dubbing, and post-production into a unified production platform. This transformation also shows that artificial intelligence is moving from an isolated tool application to a multi-party full-participation ecosystem.

5.2 Industrial trends: Ecosystem differentiation and the emergence of the “fourth pole”

An industrial ecosystem around artificial intelligence micro-dramas is rapidly forming. From the perspective of the value chain, intellectual property owners, digital platforms, production companies, and technology providers are forming a new division of labor. For example, large intellectual property companies such as China Literature Group have opened access to more than 100,000 literary works, and their business model is shifting from “copyright licensing” to broader ecosystem reconstruction. At the same time, Hongguo.com, TikTok, and other platforms have launched a guarantee incentive plan, and the subsidy for a single work can reach up to 3.6 million yuan. The production company is also undergoing a transformation from a small workshop-style operation to an industrial production system.

At the same time, technology infrastructure providers are becoming the “fourth pole” of the industry. In addition to providing technical tools, these participants are increasingly involved in talent training, workflow standardization, and industry governance, thus becoming the co-builders of industry standards.

5.3. Development direction: Towards a new paradigm of human-computer collaborative creation

In the face of the rapid development of artificial intelligence micro-dramas, all stakeholders in the industry need to respond rationally and ensure the quality of content and humanistic value while embracing technological innovation.

At the content level, industry competition is expected to shift from quantitative expansion to qualitative differentiation. The core challenge is no longer whether to produce content, but whether to create unique and innovative narratives. At the regulatory level, it is urgent to establish evaluation standards for artificial intelligence micro-dramas and further improve the copyright and intellectual property framework. Third, at the talent level, the industry needs interdisciplinary professionals with both creative ability and artificial intelligence-related technical expertise.

In a word, the results of this study show that the future development of micro-dramas is likely to follow three interrelated paths, namely, improving content quality, improving supervision and governance, and cultivating hybrid talents with both creative and technical abilities.

6. Conclusion

AIGC is not only a productivity tool, but also a basic infrastructure to reshape the creative mechanism of the micro-drama industry. It restructures the relationship between creative participants and redistributes power by changing the production process and resource allocation.

However, this change follows a double logic. While AIGC democratizes content production, algorithms and platforms also strengthen new forms of control. Finally, the future of micro-dramas will depend on the development of human-computer collaboration and the ability of creators to re-establish their own subjectivity in an artificial intelligence-driven environment.

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