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Empowering the Inheritance of Chinese Traditional Arts Through Web-based Micro Series

Mengmeng Liu

Art College, Anhui University of Finance and Economics, Bengbu, Anhui, 233000

Abstract: As the internet media enters the era of fragmentation, the dissemination of Chinese traditional arts relying on emerging media faces significant challenges. To achieve effective inheritance and efficient dissemination of Chinese traditional arts, this article focuses on analyzing the development status of Chinese traditional arts in the “micro” era, comparing outstanding cases of integrating web microfilms, web micro-documentaries, and Chinese traditional culture, analyzing the contemporary value of web-based micro series and its alignment with the era of Chinese traditional arts. It proposes a new creative model of web-based micro series to empower the inheritance and dissemination of Chinese traditional arts, aiming to transform the fragmented dissemination of Chinese traditional arts into systematic dissemination.

Keywords: Web-based micro series; Chinese traditional arts; Internet fragmentation

1. The “Micro” Development Status of Chinese Traditional Arts

Originating from ancient times, Chinese traditional arts embody a strong local flavor and reveal the profound cultural heritage of the Chinese nation through thousands of years of accumulation. With the development of technology and information technology, people’s enthusiasm for Chinese traditional arts has gradually waned. After the Z era, the “micro” era of film and television works has arrived, giving rise to a large number of excellent web microfilms and micro-videos, including many outstanding works that promote Chinese traditional culture and arts.

Microfilms leverage their innate advantages and combine Chinese traditional arts with their powerful narrative function, playing a crucial role in the dissemination of Chinese traditional arts. Meanwhile, micro-videos (micro-documentaries) also play a significant role in inheriting Chinese traditional arts in the era of internet short videos with their unique micro-documentary capabilities. As early as 2017, the internet short video blogger Li Ziqi had already produced exquisite documentary short videos, showcasing various traditional cultures and artistic elements in southwest China through beautiful visuals. The combination of micro-videos and traditional culture, based on the dissemination of Chinese traditional arts through microfilms, guides the public to further appreciate Chinese traditional arts and understand the millennium wisdom of the Chinese nation.

Chinese traditional arts have achieved widespread dissemination in the era of internet short videos through microfilms, and have joined forces with micro-videos in the era of horizontal development of short videos, occupying a place on various short video platforms. However, in the current era of fragmented internet media, the dissemination of traditional arts cannot rely solely on past achievements. The integration of traditional arts and film and television must keep pace with the times. Web-based micro series present an opportunity for Chinese traditional arts to achieve fragmented dissemination.

2. The Times Conjunction of Chinese Traditional Art and Web Micro Drama

Online micro-short dramas inherit the ultra-short length characteristics of online short videos and possess the complete narrative function of online micro-films, which inherently aligns with the needs of the inheritance and dissemination of traditional Chinese art in the modern era. In the era of fragmented online media, traditional Chinese art not only needs to achieve horizontal inheritance and development in its own form, but also needs to seek other carriers to achieve vertical dissemination. Although online micro-short dramas are products of the rapid development of technological civilization, traditional Chinese culture possesses outstanding inclusiveness. The combination of online micro-short dramas and traditional Chinese art is not merely about using traditional Chinese art as the creative theme for online micro-short dramas, but rather integrating the two to form a hybrid that possesses the common advantages of both.

Thanks to the outstanding inclusiveness and innovation of traditional Chinese culture, the integration of traditional Chinese culture and emerging media has become the mainstream interaction mode in the Internet era. At present, the integration of traditional Chinese culture with

tourism, film, advertising, live streaming and other new forms is common in people's lives. Through the transformation of its own form and the innovation of communication mode, traditional culture has gradually become a catalyst for its reblooming in today's society. In the era of content supremacy, the network micro-drama, which has the dual advantages of network short video and micro-film, has challenged the communication advantages of the relatively lengthy micro-film and the network short video with a small load capacity. However, traditional Chinese culture has differentiated into functions that adapt to various communication environments over thousands of years of history. For example, "The Three Miles of Chang'an", which challenges foreign imported special effects films with Tang poetry and poems in the form of animation, and "Strange Tales of China", which combines China's excellent paper-cutting, ink painting, and instruments such as the board drum and small gong in Peking Opera with current social realism issues.

According to Guduo Data, from the beginning of 2022 to October, 290 micro-short dramas have been launched on five platforms including iQiyi, Youku, Tencent Video, Mango TV, and Bilibili.^[1] Nowadays, online novels and online literature are transforming into scripts for micro-short dramas, and major short video platforms are also launching micro-short drama, also known as "medium video" plans. It can be said that micro-short dramas, which have the dual characteristics of short videos and micro-films and rely on the Internet for dissemination, are in a sunrise era. If traditional Chinese art can be disseminated through this way, it will have no less effect than big movies, micro-films, and traditional media.

3. Discussion on the Innovative Mode of Empowering the Dissemination of Chinese Traditional Arts through Internet Micro-Dramas

3.1 Element Implantation to Highlight the Existence of Chinese Traditional Arts in Life

The transformation and dissemination of Chinese traditional arts in the era of fragmentation should not be hasty. In other words, when combining Chinese traditional arts with internet micro-dramas, it is not a good idea to use Chinese traditional arts as the direct subject matter. Currently, internet micro-dramas are still dominated by themes such as adapted novels and urban love stories. Chinese traditional arts can take a different approach and incorporate their elements into such micro-dramas. For example, in the internet micro-drama "Escape from a Chaotic Marriage" produced by Douyin short videos, traditional Chinese cheongsam and traditional operas are inserted into the narrative plot. The internet micro-drama "Chaoge Fu" produced by Kuaishou short videos uses love and hatred as the main narrative thread, which includes various exquisite costumes, jewelry, and other items from ancient China. Such internet micro-dramas use artistic visualization to implant Chinese traditional art elements into the plot. In addition to already formed internet micro-dramas, many short videos that are in the embryonic stage of internet micro-dramas also contain traditional art elements. For example, the short drama "Things in the 1980s" produced by Douyin short drama creator Zhang Sansao uses a large number of traditional Chinese handicrafts as environmental props. Through such internet micro-dramas, audiences gradually accept the frequency of Chinese traditional arts appearing in micro-dramas.

3.2 Organic Narrative to Expand the Popularity of Chinese Traditional Arts

Internet micro-dramas combine the narrative strengths of internet micro-films and the length advantages of short videos. Therefore, internet micro-dramas need to draw heavily on the narrative characteristics of internet micro-films in terms of narrative. Internet micro-films emerged under the promotion of soft advertisements and the integration of various factors. Most micro-films are inseparable from the implantation of soft advertisements. In view of this, integrating the stories behind Chinese traditional arts into the narrative also realizes the artistic visualization of Chinese traditional arts in film and television. Special attention needs to be paid to this narrative mode when creating internet micro-dramas. For example, Hsu Fu Chi's advertising micro-film "Iron Tree and Silver Flowers" inserts the narrative of non-heritage iron flower craftsmanship into its candy brand advertisement. There are two ways to learn from this narrative mode. First, Chinese traditional arts can be organically integrated with hot events in modern social life, creating highly story-driven internet micro-dramas with the theme of inheriting and disseminating Chinese traditional arts. Second, Chinese traditional arts can be integrated into highly story-driven internet micro-dramas as soft advertisements. In addition, the organic integration of Chinese traditional arts and internet micro-dramas is not limited to Chinese traditional arts itself. For example, the Douyin short drama "Escape from the British Museum" anthropomorphizes the Chinese thin-walled jade kettle with intertwining patterns, presenting the jade kettle as an ancient woman appearing on the streets of the United Kingdom. Finally, it tells the story of various crafts and antiques centered around the ancient woman. In addition to telling the stories behind various antiques, the micro-drama "Escape from the British Museum" also integrates traditional Chinese culture such as Tai Chi, Peking Opera, tea art, sugar blowing, and iron flower craftsmanship, gaining recognition and resonance from a large number of audiences.

3.3 Recording the Process to Achieve Online Inheritance of Chinese Traditional Arts

As a condensed version of documentaries, micro-documentaries inherit many characteristics of documentaries. Nowadays, as internet media enters the fragmented development stage, the "2021 China Network Audio-Visual Development Research Report" shows that 28.2% of

online video users do not watch at the original speed, and a large number of people choose to abandon the original plot rhythm and only seek to quickly obtain content.^[2] Creating micro-documentaries in the form of micro-dramas can not only reduce the abandonment rate but also enhance the dissemination effect of traditional Chinese art. A micro-video usually lasts about 5-10 minutes. According to its content settings, it can be divided into several episodes with one minute as the critical point. For example, the rural guardian creator Shan Bai on the Douyin platform once released two micro-documentaries, "Copying Paper Bamboo Curtains" and "Traditional Silk," while creator Lu Lei released two micro-documentaries, "The Life of Silkworms" and "Silkworm Sand Pillow." These four documentaries were released with a relatively long interval, and their duration was about 5-10 minutes, which greatly reduced the audience's engagement. Given this, such micro-documentaries can be created in the form of micro-dramas, forming episodes of about one minute each based on the content characteristics. Planning the release time of each episode and the creative direction of subsequent episodes based on audience feedback data can not only improve the creative quality of the micro-drama itself but also broaden the dissemination dimension of the work.

Web micro-dramas are not just miniseries that cut micro-films and micro-documentaries into smaller units, but also involve organic restructuring of their content. In artistic techniques, web micro-dramas are precisely supported by the form of "short + continuous," and the "essence of Chinese art" often achieves widespread dissemination through this form of "short + continuous."

4. Conclusion

China's online micro-short dramas are currently in their infancy and will continue to evolve as the fragmentation of the internet deepens. Given the current updates and iterations of mobile terminal devices, as well as the continuous upgrades of hardware and software, the creators and audiences of online micro-short dramas will also undergo significant changes. How to seize this advanced yet accessible new art form to achieve efficient communication in the era of fragmentation is the key that traditional Chinese art needs to explore in the process of inheritance. Fragmentation is only one aspect of the development of the internet, and it will enter our lives in even more innovative forms. No matter which stage of development we are in, we only need to find suitable carriers in the vast world and organically promote excellent traditional culture.

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