

The Development and Evolution of Chinese Micro-Dramas in Bibliometric Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Through the lens of bibliometrics, this article analyzes the research development history and its evolution of micro-dramas in China between 2016 and 2024. Based on the statistics and analysis of 500 related documents in the CNKI database, the article combs through the growth trajectory of micro-dramas, focusing on the reasons for its gradual growth from a low number of publications at the initial stage to the explosive growth in the period of 2023-2024 and its academic value. Finally, the article puts forward forward-looking thoughts on the future research direction and practice of micro short drama, expecting to provide theoretical support for the industry and academia.

KEYWORDS

micro-dramas; bibliometrics; developmental evolution; film and television industry

1 Introduction

As an important development direction of China's film and television industry in recent years, micro-dramas have rapidly attracted a large number of viewers with the rise of short-video platforms, and become an important part of digital cultural consumption. Although micro-dramas initially existed only as a kind of marginal film and television content, with the acceleration of their industrialization and commercialization, they have gradually moved towards the mainstream and become the focus of academic attention.

The purpose of this paper is to systematically sort out the development history of micro-dramas in China through bibliometric methods, and to analyze their research trends and future development directions in the academic field.

2 Overview of bibliometric methods

Bibliometrics is an interdisciplinary field of study that combines methods and theories from mathematics, statistics, information science and sociology to study the quantitative properties and patterns of documentary information. It is basically defined as the study of the quantitative properties and patterns of documentary information. Through the quantitative analysis of documentary information by mathematical and statistical methods, Dictionary of Literature reveals the dynamics, structure and trends of scientific research.

The main research targets are documents, citations, key words and other documentary information. These information can reflect the activity, research hotspot, structure and development trend of scientific researchers.

3 Examining and analyzing the amount of Chinese micro-episodic literature issued based on CNKI

3.1 Lower volume of early postings (2016-2020)

From 2016 to 2020, the number of Chinese micro short plays published on CNKI is extremely low, with only 7 articles published in five years, almost in a blank state. This phenomenon can be explained from several angles. First, as a new form of film and television narrative, the development of micro short drama is still in the budding stage, and the industrial practice and theoretical research have not yet formed a systematic framework. During this period, the market share of short video platforms (e. g., Jittery, Shutterbug) has increased, but it is mainly dominated by user-generated content (UGC), and high-quality short dramas centered on plot have not yet appeared. Secondly, academic research has a lag, and scholars usually need to wait for the accumulation of practice and market stabilization before gradually launching theoretical discussions. Therefore, 2016 to 2020 can be regarded as the primary stage of the transition of micro-dramas from experimental production to large-scale industry, which has not yet stimulated the research interest of the academia.

3.2 Progressive growth phase (2021-2022)

After 2021, China's micro-dramas began to show some growth in the number of articles published on CNKI, with a total of 45 articles. The growth in this period indicates that micro-dramas have gradually become a relatively independent cultural phenomenon and have established a certain influence in the film and television industry and audience groups. The growth in this phase can be attributed to the deep integration of short video platforms and micro-dramas, the promotion of the trend of consumption fragmentation, and the diversification of genres and themes. Regarding the deep integration of short video platforms with micro-dramas, with the further development of short video platforms such as Jittery and Watermelon Video, the platforms have started to support dramatized content and include micro-dramas in the platform traffic ecology. The modern audience's media consumption time is becoming more and more fragmented, the traditional film and television narrative mode is difficult to fully adapt to this change, and the micro short drama with "short and concise" narrative characteristics to meet the needs of the audience. There is also a diversification of genres and themes. At this stage, the genres of micro-dramas are gradually enriched, no longer limited to light comedy or strong net content, but begin to try more diversified themes such as urban, suspense, love, etc., which attracts more scholars to analyze from the perspectives of narratology, genres, and audience research. Although this growth has not yet reached the level of an explosion, it signifies that the study of micro-dramas has entered a preliminary accumulation stage, laying the foundation for the arrival of future academic peaks.

3.3 Explosive growth phase (2023-2024)

From 2023 to 2024, there is an exponential growth in the number of Chinese micro-dramas published on CNKI, with a total of 435 articles, and as many as 346 articles in 2024. This trend reflects the mainstreaming of micro-dramas in the film and television industry, as well as the significant increase in academic attention to this phenomenon. From the perspective of academic research, the driving factors behind the explosive growth can be summarized as follows: firstly, the comprehensive entry of industrialization and capital, micro-dramas are no longer confined to short video platforms, but have entered a wider range of content production fields, and have received comprehensive attention from capital and the industrial chain. The maturity of professional

production and commercial operation mode provides researchers with a large number of opportunities for theorizing and analysis; second, the intervention of policies and industry norms. With the Chinese government's increasing support for cultural and creative industries and the increasingly strict content norms of short video platforms, micro-dramas have gradually transformed from low-cost and experimental productions into a form of content with a sense of social responsibility and cultural communication power. This has provided scholars with a basis for research from the perspectives of cultural industry policy and media ethics; also, the audience effect and the significance of communication, the audience influence of micro-dramas has increased significantly, and they have become an important part of youth subculture and Internet communication. The great attention paid to this phenomenon by academics has not only promoted the gradual formation of the theoretical system of micro short drama, but also reflected the academic value and social significance of this emerging cultural phenomenon.

4 Examination and analysis of the main themes of CNKI-based microshorts literature distribution

From the period of 2016-2024, the main themes of China's microshorts postings can be broadly categorized as follows:

4.1 The Rise of Micro-Shorts and the Integration of Online Communication

The theme of "micro-episodic drama" leads the list with 130 articles, which indicates that micro-episodic drama, as an emerging form of theater, has become the focus of academic attention. The rise of micro-drama is closely related to the development of network communication technology. The immediacy, interactivity and extensiveness of network communication provide a platform for the creation and dissemination of micro-drama, which enables micro-drama to quickly attract audiences and form influence.

4.2 Case study "The British Museum"

There are 81 articles on the theme of "The British Museum", of which 41 articles on the theme of "Escape from the British Museum" show the important role of a specific work in cultural dissemination and education. This work may explore the topics of cultural heritage and cultural relics protection through the form of drama, which has aroused extensive attention from the academic community. The theme of "British Museum" follows with 40 documents, which may be related to the relevance of "Escape from the British Museum". As a world-renowned cultural institution, the collections and exhibitions of the British Museum provide rich materials for the micro-skit. Microshorts can enhance the public's awareness of cultural heritage and its protection by telling the stories behind the museum's collections.

4.3 Innovation and Diversity in Online Micro-sketches

The theme of "web microshorts" is followed by 70 articles, which reflects the innovation of web microshorts in terms of content and form. Web microshorts usually have the diversity of content, which covers a wide range of areas such as social hotspots, daily life, emotional stories, etc.; the flexibility of form, which can be single episode, series or interactive to meet the needs of different viewers; and the reduction of production cost, which is lower than that of traditional TV dramas, with a shorter production cycle, which can quickly respond to market changes.

4.4 Diverse combinations and innovations of micro sketches+

In the course of its development, micro-sketch has collaborated with other sketches in different formats, such as short plays and short videos. The theme of "sketches" came in third place with 45 documents, which shows that there is a certain boundary between sketches and micro-sketches, but there is also a tendency towards convergence. Short dramas usually refer to dramas of shorter duration, while micro-dramas are more focused on online distribution and the viewing experience on mobile devices. The two are different in terms of content creation, narrative structure and audience interaction, but are gradually converging to form a new form of theater. The theme of "short video" shows the importance of short video platforms in the dissemination of micro-dramas with 30 articles. The rise of short video platforms provides a new communication channel for micro short plays, which enables micro short plays to spread rapidly and attract a large number of viewers. The interactivity of short videos also provides new possibilities for the creation of short micro-dramas, such as audience participation in the development of the plot and interactive storylines.

4.5 Communication Development Characteristics and Strategies of Micro Short Plays

The characteristics and strategies of micro-dramas in the process of dissemination are also the hotspots of attention nowadays. For example, the themes of "dissemination strategy" and "cultural and tourism integration" have shown the innovations of microshort dramas in dissemination and cultural tourism with 14 articles and 14 papers respectively. Innovations in communication strategies help micro-skit dramas reach their target audiences more effectively, while cultural and tourism integration combines micro-skit dramas with local culture and tourism resources to form new cultural products and promote local economic development. The themes of "international communication" and "empathetic communication" show the potential of micro-skits in international cultural communication and emotional resonance with eight and seven articles respectively. International communication helps to enhance the international influence of Chinese culture, while empathy communication enhances the audience's viewing experience through emotional resonance. The themes of "high-quality development" and "screen-constant media" are illustrated in seven papers, respectively, which show the efforts of microshorts in pursuing high-quality content and adapting to the viewing experience of mobile devices. In terms of communication strategies, the themes of "innovation path" and "strategy research" have shown 11 and 8 papers respectively, which indicate that academics have conducted in-depth research on the innovation and strategy of micro-dramas. These studies help to explore the development direction of micro-dramas, and provide theoretical guidance and practical reference for the industry. The themes of "narrative features" and "short video platforms" show the research on micro-dramas in terms of narrative skills and platform interactivity with 6 papers respectively. The research on narrative features helps to improve the narrative quality of micro-dramas, while the interactivity of short video platforms provides new possibilities for the creation and dissemination of micro-dramas. The themes of "development strategy" and "strategy analysis" each contain five papers that show the forward-looking thinking of academics on the future development of micro-book dramas. These studies help to provide strategic guidance for the sustainable development of micro-sketch dramas.

5 Conclusion

Analysed through more than 500 pieces of relevant literature indicating that the cultural productivity and academic research value of micro-dramas have been fully realized in recent years. From an academic point of view, the rise of micro-dramas can be regarded as a product of the deep

integration of China's film and television industry and digital media technology, reflecting the transformation of the production logic of film and television culture in the new media era. Behind the rapid increase in research fever, the following academic propositions are reflected. To summarize, the development of micro short drama in China has experienced a rapid transformation from sporadic practice to academic hotspot, which not only epitomizes the change of the film and television industry, but also is a true portrayal of the paradigm change of cultural research in the new media era.

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