

Plot Lines and Narrative Strategies of Short Video News-analysis of Short Video Works Based on the 28th-32nd China News Awards

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Abstract: From the perspective of media memory production, short video news is not only a new type of memory carrier, but also a memory practice that influences the audience's understanding of the past. With the features of low threshold of production, strong social attributes and easy interaction, short video news plays an important role in bridging the information gap, shaping collective memory, and cohesion of national identity. In order to explore the memory practice of short video news in depth, this paper chooses the short video news works of China Journalism Award, which is the trend of short video news production, as the research object, aiming at analysing the highly schematized plot line and narrative strategy in these works.

Keywords: short video news, media memory, narrative strategy, China Journalism Award

1. Introduction

The arrival of “the first year of short video” in 2014 has brought richer and more diversified innovation paths to the news practice of mainstream media. Mainstream media use multi-media integration of communication methods for news content production, so that short video news has become a hot phenomenon in the current media industry, and by virtue of its influence has become an important part of the short video platform content. Short video news with its own interactivity, timeliness and other characteristics of the mainstream media has become a new type of news expression, the news expression of its guidance, dissemination and influence of the huge, triggering scholars from the development trend, content production, communication strategy and other aspects of its research. News is the most public, widely disseminated and accessible film of memory in our society [1], and short video news, as a hot news product today, has not yet attracted attention in terms of the production, storage and shaping of memory. Therefore, in this paper, we take the perspective of media memory and combine the 28th-32nd China Journalism Award short video news works to carry out a full-sample study around their plot lines and narrative strategies.

2. Structural Memory: Memory Writing of Plot Lines

2.1 Writing “grand memories ” with a single plot line

One of the most striking features of human memory lies in the ability to psychologically convert a series of essentially unstructured events into a seemingly coherent historical narrative, and based on this, to serialise complex events into a plot line suitable for the reality of human memory [2]. The construction of a complete plotline reduces the burden of remembering the historical event on the audience, and selectively allows the audience to go back to the “milestones” within the historical interval, even though these plotlines do not necessarily objectively characterise the real event. A single plot line is unidirectional, following a single plot thread in a specific direction, following the logical sequence of events in a rhythmic succession of narratives. This plot line functions like a personal biography, listing important past events as proof of its legitimacy and justification in the present.

Figure 1 depicts the plot line of the 28th China News Awards short video award-winning work “20 years after the handover, ‘one country, two systems’ puts two wings on Hong Kong” [3], which responds to international concerns and provides a Chinese perspective through a “mosaic” display. The news story responds to international concerns, provides Chinese perspectives, and spreads Chinese voices, providing favourable public opinion support for our country through a “mosaic” presentation. The historical time zone of this plot line is between 1 July 1997 and 1 July 2017, mainly explaining the basic national policy of “one country, two systems”, the development of Hong Kong after the handover, and responding to the public opinion of foreign media. The work chronologically shows audiences the important points after the handover of Hong Kong, thus reflecting the new status and opportunities that Hong Kong has ushered in under the leadership of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC). This type of single plot line highlights and deletes many complex, consecutive and informative events, and ultimately highlights the nodes of memory that are in line with the mainstream

ideology.

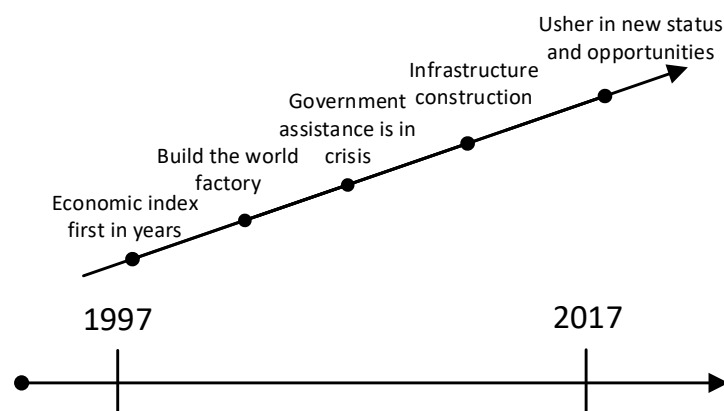


Figure 1. Plot line of the work “20 years after the handover, ‘One Country, Two Systems’ gives Hong Kong two wings”

2.2 Compound plot line highlights the “memory turn”

With a single plot line of the single tendency is different, composite plot line usually exists in one and more than one plot turn, when the news story is usually more vivid than a single plot line narrative, more infectious. Compound plot line in the turn node is the core node of the whole news story line, in the whole news narrative, this critical turning point whether up or down, simply means that an event has undergone a fundamental change. Therefore, the turning node is the core of the plot line of the news work, playing the effect of presenting upward and downward.

Figure 2 depicts the plot line of the short-video journalism work “One Man’s Production Line” of the 2021 China Journalism Awards. The news work explains the story of Yuan Chuanwei, the person in charge of a precision machinery company in Xiangcheng District, Suzhou City, who urgently received an order for the production of disinfectors on 26 January 2020 (the second day of the Lunar New Year), and the products were to be sent to the front line of the “epidemic” in Hubei Province. In the absence of a worker to return to work under special circumstances, he had no choice but to return to the factory, a person to support a production line. He worked day and night, lived and ate in the workshop, and spent 16 days to complete the order of 200 sets on time on 12 February, delivering the products quickly to support the front line in Wuhan. Through the turning node of “resuming work alone”, the work turns the front node of “epidemic” and “personnel shortage” into the background of the news, thus highlighting the node after the turning node, and then expresses The person in charge of the project is in a difficult situation and is responsible for it.

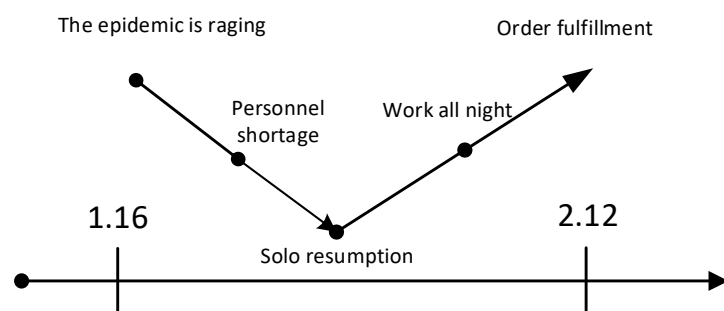


Figure 2. The plot line of the work “One Man’s Production Line”

2.3 Multiple plot lines promote “memory overlay”

Multiple plot lines refer to the setting of multiple narrative lines in the same feature or news story, which are connected and intertwined to form a more complex plot structure. Therefore, this structural arrangement is often used to depict the experiences and intertwined emotional entanglements of multiple characters, in order to reveal deeper character relationships and more easily trigger the emotional resonance of the audience. This plot line is generally applied to complex short video news or short video news features. There are two reasons for this: first, the complex plot line needs to construct parallel news

events, each news event is a complete story, and a few tens of seconds of short video news can't satisfy the volume of the complex plot line story. Second, the application of compound-line plot lines can present news clues in a comprehensive and three-dimensional way, which in turn enhances credibility in the telling of the news story, whereas the inherent teleology of single-line plot lines has a tendency to simplify the causal relationship of events.

Figure 3 depicts the plot line of the short video news work “Life and Death in Jin Yin Tan” of the 2021 China News Awards. This work is full of images and contemporaneous sound of doctors, nurses and patients, and uses the technique of white description and calm, restrained camera language to truly record the rescue story and life-and-death moments between doctors and patients in Wuhan’s Jinyintan Hospital, presenting the truest appearance of Jinyintan Hospital during the epidemic. The work records and writes the memories between medical workers and patients at Jinyintan during the same period of time through the narrative of compound lines, and presents the stories of different characters and patients in a fragmented form, so as to express the hardship of medical workers and patients in the fight against the epidemic. Under the support of fragmented stories, the audience’s memory of doctors and patients gradually deepens, achieving “memory superposition”, and then triggering the audience’s emotional resonance.

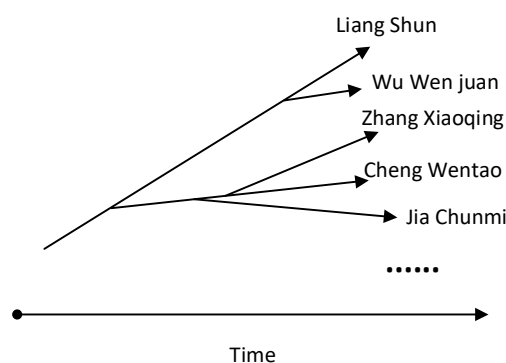


Figure 3. Plotline of “Life and Death in Jin Yin Tan”

3. Multiple Narratives: The Narrative Strategy of Short Video News

3.1 “Flat and fast” narrative based on a single plot line

Short video news with a single plot line usually adopts a flat and fast narrative. The narrative of short video news is fast-paced, limited by the production time and broadcasting time, almost forming a timely and efficient “picture + subtitle narration” inherent narrative mode, usually based on the time of the event as the main line, the structure is relatively simple, and the content is relatively flat, which tends to show a single emotion, flat events, which focus on It focuses on the presentation of the phenomenon without exploring the reasons behind the phenomenon. This kind of narrative can quickly convey important information to the audience and build a memory picture that is easy for the audience to understand and remember.

In the short video news award-winning works of China News Award, the single plot line is more related to the red memory and national memory, and this single plot line is more of an upward ladder of progressive narrative. Short video news reports will take advantage of the “flat and fast” narrative advantage to quickly organise a “progressive” view of history, convey national consciousness, memories and achievements to the audience, and construct the audience’s national memory, for example, the 32nd short video news work “50 years, see China’s answer sheet!” In the Saihanba mechanical Forest Farm forest protection fire lookout Liu Jun and other people’s stories, from environmental protection, poverty alleviation and other fields to witness the development of China in the past 50 years and the contribution to the cause of the United Nations. On the contrary, the historical narrative with the theme of “retrogressive” does not appear, which also meets the requirements of the selection method of China Journalism Award for news works, that is, the submission of works must adhere to the correct political direction, public opinion direction and value orientation.

3.2 Panoramic Narrative Based on Composite Plot Lines

In the two awards in 2020 and 2021, in order to further emphasise newsworthiness and typicality, short video news will be subdivided into two awards: short video live news and short video feature report. Short video news caters to Internet users’ habit of browsing information in a fragmented and scenario-based manner with its short and concise characteristics, and the China News Award requires that short video live news be no longer than 3 minutes in length, and short video feature

reports be no longer than 8 minutes in length [4]. It can be seen that the duration is a hard indicator to divide the two. In the 2022 awards, the classification of the two was cancelled, and the fusion news awards were divided into “fusion reporting” and “application innovation”. No matter how the awards change, the length of short video news will always limit the amount of information reported.

From the perspective of media content production, some subjects are less affected by timeliness, and complex news events with a long production cycle require more workload in interviews and filming and editing, so their narratives are more detailed and full, and each video has a detailed and complete story line with ups and downs. The media usually focus on a theme to dig deeper into the details, so as to tell a richer news content and build a fuller character image. At the same time, the complexity and reversal of news events also require the media to report the events in detail in order to strive for news authenticity. From the point of view of the audience’s individual memory, the turning points in the complex plot line bring the audience the highest memory pressure, and the audience’s own memory will pay special attention to the origin, turning point, and the end of the event nodes, and these turning points will help the audience to retrace the news events. Therefore, for news events with large information content and complex plots, the media will elaborate on the “node turn” of the event and then develop a “panoramic” narrative, in order to build a complete and clear memory picture for the audience. It is worth noting that the seemingly complete memory picture after the audience receives the media’s “panoramic” narrative may still be incomplete, because the media will selectively obscure and highlight certain details of the event for social and capital considerations.

3.3 “Fragmented” narratives based on compound plot lines

Compared with the compound plot line, the “fragmented” narrative adopted in the compound plot line is not only rising and falling or falling and rising, but also a multi-threaded parallel narrative, which results in “fragmented” story segments. In the new media environment, the media narrative breaks up the logic, correlation and wholeness between characters and events, splices them with fragmentary details, and selectively highlights the relevant scenes and character features [5]. The short video news based on multiple plot lines has the characteristic of “fragmented” narrative, in which there are multiple parallel narrative lines, therefore, it shows a certain sense of fragmentation in narrative expression. However, this fragmented narrative does not mean that the news is “fragmented” and “incomplete”, in the new media environment, the news narrative is “fragmented and complete, fragmented and system”.

Although the multiple parallel narrative lines of short video news show fragmentation, these narrative lines always point to a big theme with small cuts, and on the whole, they are still “fragmented but the spirit does not exist”. A “fragmented” narrative based on multiple plot lines can express a grand theme with the help of small characters. Moreover, this kind of “fragmented” multi-threaded narrative is an innovation to the single-threaded narrative, which can deepen the news memory through the superposition effect of memory brought by different fragments, and can also fully mobilise the audience’s emotional memory to achieve emotional resonance. Taking the award-winning work of the 32nd Fusion Reporting “The Greatness of Communists” as an example, the work starts from the unique angle of “wisdom”, selects the wisdom points in the major historical events of the centenary of the founding of the Party, and tells the “greatness” of the Communist Party through different stories.

4. Research Summary and Outlook

4.1 Research Summary

Short video news is a product of traditional media to carry out the practice of media integration, as a new type of information dissemination has become an important point of force for the competition of various media. This paper analyses the short video news winning works of the 28th -33rd China News Awards from the perspective of media memory, and the research mainly finds the following two aspects.

Symmetry between plot line and news narrative. Memory is not a completely random process, but is facilitated by a highly structured plot line. Plot lines are always present in news narratives, and short-video news reports develop specific narratives around plot lines and burn them into the human mind during the narrative process, forming schematic memory patterns and building a single-dimensional memory picture. Through the study of short video news award-winning works, it is found that the short video news award-winning works write “grand memories” through a single plot line, highlight “memory turn” through a composite plot line, and promote “memory superposition” through a compound plot line. The award-winning journalism works outline the media memory landscape through three ways: single plot line writes “grand memory”, compound plot line highlights “memory turn” and compound plot line promotes “memory superposition”, and accordingly develops “flat and fast”, “panoramic” and “fragmented” narrative strategies. In addition, there is a high degree

of symmetry between plot lines and news narratives, i.e., in the memory picture constructed by a single plot line, there can only be two kinds of news narratives, one is a narrative of progress and the other is a narrative of decline; in the memory picture constructed by a compound plot line, the news narrative combines the two kinds of narratives of a single plot line and there is a narrative turn; and in the memory picture constructed by a compound plot line, the news narratives show a tree-like or multi-threaded compound narrative, which is the same as that constructed by a single plot line. tree-like or multi-threaded complex narratives.

The fusion of individual memory and grand narrative. The China News Prize is an award for works that review the annual work of the press, and the winning works focus on grand themes such as major events, important figures, and typical phenomena of the year that reflect the development of the country and society. These grand themes are collectively written by journalists and condensed into the collective memory of the people of China on major news issues. According to Maurice Habwach, collective memory is “the process and result of sharing past events among members of a particular social group, and the condition to ensure the inheritance of collective memory is that the social interaction and group consciousness need to extract the continuity of the memory. Even though the collective memory survives in a collection of people, and from its foundation, it is a collective memory that is not only a collective memory, but also a collective memory. survives and draws its strength from its foundations, it is only the individuals who are members of the group who remember” [6]. There is no pure individual memory, any individual memory is wrapped in a collective memory framework, and only when individual narratives based on individual memories are embedded in collective memories do individual memories have a semantic space for elaborating meanings and sharing commonalities; collective memories are the result of socialised extraction of people’s individual memories. The news media realise the narrative and continuation of collective memory through the recording and writing of major social events and important people. This article through the China News Award short video news award-winning works found that nowadays, more and more media in order to tell a good grand theme, short video news works from a micro perspective, through the writing of individual memories, with the mouth of the small people to elaborate policies, history and other grand themes, so that the individual memory of the individual memory socialised into the collective memory, so as to make the content of the short video news more real, rich and close to the audience.

4.2 Future Prospects

Nowadays, media integration has stepped into the deep water, the significant advantages of media integration news products compared with traditional news products are also emerging with practice. Media integration news works are not only technological innovation, but also content innovation. Especially short video news, as an important fulcrum of “telling a good Chinese story”, the content form and narrative style of the report have high reference value for spreading a good Chinese story. In the future, in the process of writing short-video news, it is necessary to find a good fit between grand themes and soft narratives, and to expand the space of common meaning between the news content and the audience. At the same time, mainstream media should firmly implement the principle of “people-centred”, and go deep into the reality of people’s lives. News producers should continue to learn from the nutrition and experience of these excellent short video news works of the China News Awards, learn how to continuously produce creative and excellent works, combine various new media technologies with news content, let the technology better serve the content, and endeavour to create more and better short video news works with warmth, ideas and innovation.

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