

# **City Micro Film: The Daily Life Narratives of City Communication in China**

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## **Abstract**

City micro film is commonly known as "urban theme micro-movie" or "micro film of the city image". It appeared around 2010 in China, it is a kind of new city promo in the form of micro film production, which is aimed to promote the city image and to explore the theme of urban culture. The iconic works are "IN Shenzhen" "Suzhou Love Letter" and so on. In this paper, five typical city micro films are used as samples to explain that, in the traditional image of the city promo comparative perspective, a clear life narration feature is existed in order to disseminate city culture with the micro-film form. The characteristics are performed as the return of individual characters in the film, the daily scene and the integration of emotional narration. Micro film achieves the city promotion under its life narration by introducing urban culture into the theme of the film, constructing cultural landscape as living background and endowing the sound elements local specialties and series of other creative techniques. Despite some shortcomings, urban micro films have matched the basic requirements of urban culture spread substantially, it, definitely, has the broad development.

## **Life-based narrative feature unlike traditional city life promo**

In traditional city promos, the focus of the images is often focused on the natural or cultural landscape of the city, trying to include the whole historical and cultural elements through the lens. What they mainly bring to audience is the visual impact just like a strong "spectacle" effect. Because of more emphasis on the urban landscape and visual experience, people usually use excessive artistic shooting and processing methods, ignoring the represent of urban life and the emphasis of urban residents. Traditional city promo attempts to highlight the city's characteristic by the "spectacle" narration, but the result is often led to "thousands of city sharing one movie", the promos of different cities are often like the same.

Compared with the "spectacle" film, the main part of urban micro film is the urban daily life, putting more attention to individuals, and the creative approach is called "life-based". First of all, it focuses on the individuals who live in the city, regarding them as the main part of movies. They are no longer the contrast of urban view, instead, they highlight the humane care of the city. Secondly, urban micro films present the scene with a civilian perspective, in order to show a true urban environment. By pursuing the transform of individual life scenes, the movies restore a more original ecology of urban style. Thirdly, the city micro film tries to add emotion into its narration, which constructs social reality of the city itself. In contrast, traditional promo always neglects emotional expression, which can only declare an

abstract human feeling and is difficult to touch the emotional resonance of audience.

### **The advantages of urban life spread under life-based narration**

As part of the city propaganda, the final appeals of urban micro film are to highlight the city concept, construct the city's image and realize urban dissemination. Among these, the main advantages of urban micro film are shortening its propagandist goal and putting urban spread into the story and plot of the movie, in order to achieve "softening propaganda".

Firstly, the theme of urban micro film is often attached to the theme of the city culture spread. Thus, the " positioning urban culture exactly, highlighting the uniqueness, presenting the differences reflects, building its continuity and dovetailing it with the theme of micro film can not only make micro film have realistic basis, but also allow urban theme culture has been widely spread. "

Secondly, the urban historical connotation, culture and iconic landscape are no longer the main body of the movie, they exist as a space-time background. This approach would dilute publicity color of the movie, but it does not weaken its propagandist consciousness. In the "life-based" narrative method, the "soft treatment" of the urban cultural and historic elements can contact them with the ordinary citizens closely, which discards the empty grand narration and makes the spirit of city better understood and accepted by the audience.

Furthermore, the audio elements, like the dialogues and songs, are important complements to spread the urban cultural characteristics. Monologue throughout the film is the element which often directly indicates the creator's intentions. However, when the audiences add it to the plots, the story and the emotions of the film, it is largely watered down its propagandist color and easier to get people's approval. In addition, the theme song of the urban micro film is regarded as the complements and extends of the content, which can be achieved independently to enhance the influence and image of the city.

Finally, urban micro film may let the audience respect specific urban life, it offers the imagination of true state of city to the audience, which may affect people's understand of the city and inspire the audience to imagine all sorts of urban life. On this basis, it can achieve some remodels of urban culture.

### **Potential risks in using urban micro film to spread urban culture**

In the first place, urban micro film emphasizes on its story and plots, if handled properly, it may make the audience neglect city itself. In short, urban micro film is more likely to be consumed as a "movie", and the intention of spreading culture is easily covered. The audience more eager to focus on the storyline, the main actors and even the joined stars, those urban landscapes which are handled as the background of the film often fail to mention the interest of audience. Secondly, it appears homogeneity of the creative approach, with the growth of the micro-film production, the results of dissemination may be discounted. It can be imagined that as more and

more cities try to launch its own micro films, the original freshness, just like "eat crab", will be degenerated into numbness, like "same old stuff", urban micro film is also likely to gradually lose existing enthusiasm. Facing this situation, the only way to brighten the future of urban micro film is to re-embark on the viewpoint that "content is the most important one ", and put creativity and the urban spread closely together.

The art is beyond the living, but it always derived from the living. Urban micro film, in a sense, pushes the city promotion back to the ground. It renews focus on everyday life and ordinary city resident, who construct a unique spiritual culture of the city. The "life-based" creative approach opens up a possible direction which makes it easier to be recognized and accepted by modern audiences. As a developing means of urban transmission, micro film does not want to replace the traditional promo, the two should be mutually complementary for a long time to come.

**Key words:** City Microfilms; Image Communication; City propaganda; Daily life narratives