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City Micro Film:

The Daily Life Narratives of City Communication in China

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Content

- (1) discovery a question
- (2) features of Chinese city micro film
- (3) advantages in city communication
- (4) the reason for its rapid development
- (5) about its future
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(1) Discovery a Question:

The extraordinary rise of Chinese city micro film

- In 1999, the first promotional video of a city emerged in China. Weihai, a small city of Shandong province, become a famous city quickly with the help of this video.
- Over a decade years later, this kind of traditional propaganda film has been a very important way of creating a city's image in every Chinese city.



Weihai, Shandong

Shanghai



- Five years ago, this kind of situation began to change. There are different scenes and images in city promotional videos and the main cause of the change is city micro film.



Suzhou



Kunming

- City micro film , commonly known as "urban theme micro-movie" or "micro film of city image" in China, appeared in 2010 .
- It is a new kind of 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.
- Nowadays, almost every city in China has its own micro film, or is considering making one.

■ Questions:

- Why could city micro film grow so fast?
 - What are the features of these videos?
 - What functions does it have in city communication?
 - Where might it go?
- *In order to answer these questions, we chose five typical city micro films as our samples.*

Table 1 Films Related to the Study

City	Name	Year	Length (min)
Shenzhen	<i>IN Shenzhen</i> (IN 深圳)	2011	14
Shanghai	<i>Rooftop</i> (天台)	2012	5
Suzhou	<i>A Love Letter for Suzhou</i> (苏州情书)	2013	22
Nanjing	<i>Nanjing·201314</i> (南京·201314)	2013	21
Kunming	<i>Next Station, Kunming</i> (下一站, 昆明)	2014	12

(2) Features of Chinese City Micro Film: Life-based narrative

■ *Spectacle Narrative*

- a. in traditional city promos
- b. focuses on the natural or cultural landscape
- c. historical and cultural elements
- d. "spectacle" effect
- e. "thousands of cities shares one movie"

- *Life-based narrative*
- Compared with a “spectacle” film, the main part of a city micro film is the presentation of daily life. It puts more attention to individuals and ordinary citizens. Facing this change, we’d like to use the word of “life-based narrative” to summarize the features of city micro films.

- **Firstly**, city micro film focuses on the individuals who live in the city, regarding them as the main part of videos.
- Ordinary citizens are no longer the contrasts of urban landscape, instead, they become the main content of the video and highlight the humanistic spirit of the city.

- **Secondly**, all shots of city micro films are taken with a civilian perspective in order to show a true urban environment.
- By pursuing the transformation of individual life scenes, the movies restore a more original image of the city.

- **Thirdly**, the city micro film tries to add emotion into its narration, which constructs the 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.

(3) Advantages of City Communication

- As an important part of the city propaganda, the ultimate goals of city micro film are to highlight the city's cultural theme and construct the city's image.
- The main advantage of micro film in city communication lies in its hiding people's intentions of propaganda and putting them into a beautiful story. We call this advantage of city micro film as "softening propaganda".

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- **First of all**, the theme of city micro film is often attached to the theme of the city's culture.
 - Through such kind of approach, city micro film can help people to remember the key words about the city's culture when they watch these videos.

- **Secondly**, the history and the landscape of the city are no longer the main content of the movie. On the contrary, they all become the time and space background of citizen's daily life. It will make the city culture more acceptable for the audience.
- By "life-based" narrative method, the "soft treatment" of the urban cultural and historic elements makes the spirit of the city more easily understood and accepted by the audience.

- **Furthermore**, the audio elements, such as the dialogues and the songs, are important complements to promote the local culture of a city.
- Monologue of a film is the element which often directly indicates the creator's intention of propaganda. However, when the audience add it into the plots, the story and the emotions of a city micro film, it is much easier to get people's approval. In addition, the theme songs of micro films can also be regarded as the complements and extends of city communication, which can be achieved independently to enhance the influence of the city.

- **Finally**, city micro films tell the audience many kinds of life stories, which may affect people's understanding of the city and inspire the audience to imagine all sorts of urban life.
- On this basis, city micro film may lead to the reconstruction of city's culture.

(4) The Reason for Its Rapid Development

- **Economic reasons**
- Traditional promotional video of a city often come to the audience through television, which always costs a lot.
- When it comes to city micro film, Internet, which is free for everyone technically, is the most important way of its communication.

- **Technical reasons**

- social media;

- viral marketing;

- This kind of communication requires a viral social conversation that people can participate in and share with friends.

■ Policy Reasons

- “ban on all TV stations airing commercials”
(XianGuangLing, 限广令)
- *Notice on Further Strengthening the Management of Broadcast and Television ads*, Chinese State Administration of Radio, Film and Television, October 11, 2011.

- **Cultural reasons**

- “Micro Era” (Micro-blog/messege/fiction/film)
- changed way of information acceptance
- changed audience
- awareness of individual consciousness

(5) Where might it go?

■ Potential risks

- City micro film pays more attention on its story and plots, if handled badly, it may make the audience neglect the city itself. In other words, urban micro film is more likely to be consumed as a "movie", and the intention of spreading culture is easily overlooked.

- With the growth of the micro-film production, it appears homogeneity of the creation approach, the results of dissemination may be discounted. It can be imagined that as more and more cities try to make its own micro films, the original freshness, will be degenerated into numbness. City micro film is also likely to gradually lose its enthusiasm of the audience.

■ Solutions

- Facing this situation, the only way to brighten the future of city micro film is to re-embark on the view that "content is the most important one " and put the creative films and city communication together closely. (idea/Creativity/Originality)

(6) Conclusion:

From “Showing a Picture ” to “Telling a Story”

- Art is higher than life, but always comes from life. City micro film changes the way how a Chinese city sell itself. In the past, it pays more attention to its external image and now more concerned about its spirit and culture.
- As far as I am concerned, this is not only the advantage brought by the progress of information technology, but also brought by the transformation of the concept of propaganda in China.

Thanks !

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