

CULTURAL NARRATIVES IN MICRO-DRAMAS: RECONSTRUCTING AND INHERITING CULTURAL IDENTITY

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Abstract. Micro-dramas have become a significant type of digital narrative and cultural consumption in China's media landscape in recent years. This study investigates how Chinese micro-dramas, an emergent media form, support the creation of cultural identity in the digital era using *Escape from the British Museum* as an example. Through a detailed analysis of the drama's creation, cultural symbols, narrative styles, and visual presentation, the research examines how these elements collectively foster cultural identity and heritage preservation. Key findings show that the micro-drama reflects traditional Chinese culture through tactics such as visual anthropomorphism, audiovisual communication, and the use of cultural symbolism and metaphor, thereby increasing audience connection and cultural identity. The study emphasizes the importance of micro-dramas in reconstructing or inheriting traditional culture in a globalized context and how they address the challenges posed by mainstream global influences to local cultures. The study also highlights the crucial role of cultural symbols and visual narratives in attracting audiences and promoting cross-cultural understanding, offering tips to media practitioners and policymakers on how to enhance cultural identity through creative works. This study establishes the groundwork for further investigations into the creation of cultural identities in the setting of modern media.

Keywords: *micro-drama, cultural identity, visual narrative, audiovisual communication, cultural symbols*

Introduction

Cultural identity is a social construct. It reflects who an individual is and their role within their family, education, occupation, and social context (Altugan, 2015). An individual's understanding of the qualities, standards, and characteristics associated with a specific cultural group constitutes their cultural identity. With deepening globalization, the impact of mainstream global culture on local cultures is increasingly intensifying, challenging the status of traditional culture in modern life, and marginalizing some traditional cultural elements in modern society, which may lead to a weakening of cultural identity, particularly as individuals may adopt global cultural norms at the expense of their own cultural practices and values. China also faces complex challenges in terms of cultural identity. As one of the oldest countries in the East, China's complex historical background and diverse culture mean that the interpretation of different historical periods and events often involves different values and cultural perspectives. How to form a shared understanding of history and culture while respecting historical diversity is a challenge that needs to be overcome in the process of constructing cultural identity. Therefore, in the context of modernization, protecting, inheriting, and innovating traditional culture is a long-term and complex task

that requires collaboration among various stakeholders, including communities, educators, and policymakers, to ensure that diverse cultural narratives are preserved and integrated into contemporary society.

Micro-dramas are an emerging form of television or web drama, produced on a small scale, with one episode airing per season. They serve as an alternative to traditional television dramas and have attracted a large audience. While micro-dramas, as a type of short online drama, are increasingly becoming a global phenomenon, the diverse social and cultural backgrounds of different countries influence cross-cultural communication and expression. Therefore, this study focuses solely on Chinese micro-dramas within a Chinese context and their target audience. This means that micro-dramas from different countries can employ different visual narratives to address the same issues, such as cultural representation and societal norms, a limitation that this study cannot resolve. This paper uses the micro-drama *Escape from the British Museum* 《逃出大英博物馆》 as a case study. It primarily analyzes how micro-dramas in the digital age construct people's media memory and shape cultural identity through visual narrative. This micro-drama tells the story of a Chinese jade pot that escaped from the British Museum and, with the help of journalist Zhang Yong'an, embarks on its journey home. By exploring the creative background, cultural symbols, and narrative style of micro-dramas, this study investigates how these factors work together to promote the construction and inheritance of cultural identity. This research contributes to promoting cross-cultural understanding and enhancing audience acceptance and interest in multicultural expression. Furthermore, this research can guide the creation of micro-dramas or films that incorporate diverse cultural narratives and themes, further enhancing the psychological and emotional connection between viewers and the micro-drama.

Literature review

Positioning micro-dramas

The National Radio and Television Administration of China issued the 'Notice of the General Office of the State Administration of Radio and Television on Further Strengthening the Management of Online Micro-Dramas and Implementing the Creation Enhancement Plan,' which defines online micro-dramas as 'those with a single episode length ranging from tens of seconds to about 15 minutes, with a relatively clear theme and main line, and a relatively continuous and complete storyline, accompanying the deep application of mobile Internet and the gradual popularization of video shooting and production technology, as well as the rapid development of long and short online audio-visual platforms.' This is the fourth officially recognized form of online film and television work, after online TV dramas, online movies, and online animations. In China, micro-dramas initially emerged as an entertainment form on online video-sharing platforms through user-generated content (UGC). The UGC format allowed production teams to test the micro-drama for a period of time before it attracted a large audience to assess its popularity. As micro-dramas became increasingly popular, production teams began to provide links to them on social media, redirecting consumers to video-sharing websites. Micro-dramas share common characteristics: simple character relationships, flat characters, single-layered personalities, often highlighting certain characteristics, and often featuring exaggeration. The narrative is disjointed, focusing on fleeting emotions and feelings rather than logical connections between events, requiring viewers to use their imagination to fill in the gaps in the plot.

China's micro-dramas have experienced rapid development from their infancy to their explosive growth. In 2008, China saw the first online sitcom to surpass 100 million views. By 2023, the field experienced explosive growth, with a market size reaching 37.39 billion yuan, a year-on-year increase of 267.65% (iiMedia Research, 2023). As of June 2025, China had almost 1.123 billion internet users. Of those, 55.8% were micro-drama users (CNNIC, 2025). Micro-dramas have further diversified and standardized their development, integrating with local cultural and tourism industries, which has allowed them to reach a wider audience and enhance cultural exchange. To some extent, micro-dramas bear the important responsibility of internet users engaging with and understanding society while also providing a new channel for media memory. Because micro-dramas cater to people's fragmented viewing habits and the aesthetic trends of entertainment, relaxation, and interactivity, more and more people are inclined to watch short videos, which can lead to increased engagement with social issues and a deeper understanding of contemporary culture.

The rise of micro-dramas is as much a cultural phenomenon as it is an industrial one. From a global perspective, micro-dramas are not unique to China. Shows like South Korea's *Brothers Are Harmonious Today*, the US platform Quibi demonstrates the widespread trend of short-form narratives globally, but their respective socio-cultural backgrounds have shaped their unique development paths and content styles. While existing research has made preliminary explorations into the industry scale, user psychology, and narrative techniques of micro-dramas, most studies remain at the level of phenomenon description or audience effect analysis (Hao and Lao, 2025; He et al., 2025). A notable research deficiency exists in the absence of an in-depth examination of cultural identity formation, rigorously scrutinizing the visual storytelling techniques utilized by micro-dramas. Specifically, existing literature rarely answers how micro-dramas, through specific visual symbols, narrative techniques, and aesthetic styles, activate collective memory, transmit cultural values, and ultimately participate in shaping the audience's cultural identity. This study aims to fill this gap by viewing micro-dramas as an important cultural practice and exploring the interaction between their visual narratives and the construction of cultural identity. Therefore, this study will use theories of cultural identity and visual narrative to construct an analytical framework to examine the visual strategies of micro-dramas.

Cultural identity theory

Cultural identity theory focuses on how individuals understand and construct themselves within a specific cultural context. This study argues that cultural identity is not only a cognitive framework for viewers to understand the cultural symbols and narrative structure of micro-dramas but also a medium for them to adjust their self-identity in the digital age. This theory suggests a relationship between intercultural competence and cultural identity. It is applicable to exploring how viewers form or adjust their cultural identity through cultural symbols, values, and narrative structures when watching micro-dramas, particularly in how these elements resonate with their personal experiences and societal contexts. Hall (1991) laid the foundation for cultural identity theory, proposing that cultural identity originates from an individual's pursuit of historical belonging. The formation of identity is a dynamic process in which individuals both deconstruct existing identities and construct new ones. This theoretical perspective emphasizes the constructive nature of cultural and social identity, conceptualizing cultural identity as a journey of tracing one's roots to a shared culture

and ancestors. Lustig and Koester (2000) subsequently defined it as a sense of belonging to a particular ethnic community, which includes the acquisition and adoption of language, religion, aesthetics, and cognitive frameworks.

The understanding and definition of cultural identity vary across different academic disciplines. Psychology emphasizes belonging and inner commitment, often treating cultural identity from the perspective of "an individual's subjective orientation toward their racial origins" (Kim, 2007; Alba, 1990). Sociology focuses on the internalization of social norms and value systems, that is, the socialization process of group members. Culture is often viewed as a social category, an element of a nation, defined by membership, which is distinguished from other groups by a set of objective characteristics, qualities, or conditions (such as ethnic and/or geographical origin, language, religion, and race) (Kim, 2007). Anthropologists emphasize the interaction among group members. Nash (1989) argues that culture and race are a temporal continuity or shared tradition that connects members to a shared future through social practices such as language, behavior, beliefs, and values. Cultural identity is part of an individual's self-concept, reflecting their perception of their social group and the value and emotional significance of this group identity (Tajfel, 1978). In other words, the center or core of cultural identity is the image of self and culture intertwined in an individual's overall conception of reality (Adler, 1998). Furthermore, some scholars have revealed its plasticity from different disciplinary perspectives; it can be constructed with the help of external factors and may evolve over time, especially when influenced by various cultural backgrounds (McAdams, 2011; Giddens, 1991; Williams, 1990). Yang et al. (2021) further emphasizes that this plasticity has significant political implications in contemporary times. The reconstruction of cultural identity is not only a tool for resisting Western essentialism but also a process by which marginalized cultures establish autonomous power by reshaping discourse in a postcolonial context.

Drawing on the research perspectives of various disciplines on cultural identity, this study proposes that cultural identity refers to an individual's acceptance and recognition of specific cultural characteristics within a cultural group. Cultural identity not only influences an individual's cognitive and behavioral patterns (Rusu, 2022) but also serves as a spiritual bond for national cohesion and ethnic identity (Gellner, 1987). In the realm of micro-dramas, the formation of cultural identity constitutes not merely an aesthetic experience but also a replication and fortification of national sentiment and consciousness within digital narratives. As Yang et al. (2021) argues, by rewriting cultural identity, individuals can re-examine historical truths obscured by Western discourse. This perspective offers an important tool for understanding short dramas such as *Escape from the British Museum*. These works are not solely artistic endeavors but also a means for contemporary youth to rebuild cultural confidence and challenge essentialist biases.

Visual narrative

Visual narrative serves not only as a medium for information but also as a symbolic framework that generates meaning through visual sequences. Pimenta and Poovaiah (2010) characterize it as visual content that intrinsically serves a narrative purpose, highlighting its intuitiveness and emotional resonance in storytelling. In comparison to text, visual elements like photos and videos are more effective at eliciting resonance in viewers and rapidly communicating information. Any visual creation intended to convey a tale to observers qualifies as a visual narrative (Pimenta and Poovaiah, 2010).

In digital communication, visual narrative employs aspects like color, composition, symbols, and images to capture viewers' attention and elicit emotional responses through visual symbolism. It defies the linear constraints of language and, as a form of 'Pictorial Turn' (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2020), discreetly influences the audience's aesthetic inclinations. This attribute renders visual narratives more beneficial in today's information-saturated world, facilitating the swift transmission of cultural information. Mitchell (1994) asserts that pictures are not mere reflections of reality but active agents that influence social creation. Visual narrative is characterized as visual content that openly conveys a tale (Pimenta and Poovaiah, 2010), exhibiting significant intuitiveness and emotional resonance. Audiences now comprehend tradition not merely through language but intuitively acknowledge and affirm their identity via visual storytelling like micro-dramas.

In a visual tale, visual symbols serve not only as decorative elements but also as representations of cultural values and identity. The visual conveyance of symbols renders cultural communication more tangible and vibrant. Audiences create their cultural identity by interpreting visual symbols. The formation of this cultural identity is dynamic, involving an ongoing process of redefinition and reinforcement via visual narrative. Contemporary visual narrative has consequently emerged as a crucial instrument for defining and conveying cultural identity. Visual tales can embody the cultural and historical environment from which they emerge. As societal reflections, they provide insights into the social, political, and cultural issues of particular periods and locations. This is especially significant in the communication and reconstruction of traditional culture. In Chinese micro-dramas, traditional symbols, including clothes, architecture, festivals, and etiquette are meticulously showcased through visual design, quietly shaping the audience's cultural identity.

Materials and Methods

This study utilizes qualitative research methods, focusing on the comprehension of deeper meanings, interpretations, and cultural subtleties of data using visual content analysis. Lim (2024) asserts that qualitative research is a scientific methodology that prioritizes the depth and complexity of context and perspective in comprehending social phenomena, as opposed to their prevalence. Qualitative research designs offer superior direction for the social science study process for cultural matters such as values, symbols, rituals, and concepts (Erciyes, 2020). This research design is deemed suitable as it elucidates the potential connection between the visual narrative of micro-dramas and cultural identity, emphasizing the profound significance of their visual representations and the cultural construction processes involved, rather than seeking quantitative, universal conclusions (Kohlbacher, 2006). This study correlates cultural symbols with ideology, examining the significance conveyed by the visuals and their implicit implications, along with their relationship to the formation of audience cultural identity. This study selects *Escape from the British Museum* as a case study due to its distinctive creative context and notable communication successes. Since its debut in August 2023, the series has amassed over one billion views online and captured mainstream media interest. Its considerable societal influence renders it an essential case study for examining the cultural ramifications of micro-dramas. The series, produced by a self-media blogger, comprises three episodes totalling 15 minutes. This micro-drama not only affirmed the efficacy of visual communication tactics but also

elicited extensive cultural resonance at both social and psychological levels, rendering it an exemplary case for examining the formation of cultural identity in the digital era. As the most representative micro-drama at present, it can be studied in depth to reveal the culture it depicts and the content accepted by the audience. In addition, its successful communication proves its effectiveness in visual storytelling, making it an ideal analytical sample to reveal how visual strategies drive emotional resonance and cultural identity. The research data comes from the complete series of *Escape from the British Museum* on the Douyin media platform. This study delineates the analytical units as four aspects of multimodal elements: cultural background, visual representation, audiovisual communication, and symbols and metaphors, to ensure a systematic analysis. The analytical process aims to deconstruct how these multimodal units intertwine to weave a narrative network about cultural identity and historical memory and ultimately explore how these visual narrative choices, as a cultural practice, participate in and reshape the cultural identity of contemporary audiences.

Results and Discussion

Cultural background

This study found that through a series of visual narrative strategies, it successfully transformed a story about the return of cultural relics into a cultural identity practice that resonated widely. Specifically, this construction process is manifested in the following four interrelated dimensions. The story background and theme of *Escape from the British Museum* are closely related to the loss of cultural treasures, a sensitive topic in Chinese history. This is not only a touch on individual memories but also a call for collective memory in Chinese society. Manier and Hirst (2008) argue that collective memory refers to memories shared by the entire community and related to the community's identity, which helps to form the community's sense of identity. It gains practical significance by shaping memories, forming shared values in the present, and plays an important role in maintaining cultural identity and social cohesion. *Escape from the British Museum* has sparked the Chinese people's attention and enthusiasm for cultural relics. Terms like 'British Museum,' 'cultural relics,' and 'escape' evoke a sense of identity among the Chinese populace. The drama engages viewers' profound memories and emotions related to the loss of historical cultural heritage, transforming them from mere spectators into active participants in the dialogue on cultural heritage preservation and transmission. Furthermore, the re-enactment of history reinforces historical memory, while the digital transmission of history through the internet can enhance psychological affiliation and aid in the formation of a national identity framework.

In recent years, the discourse surrounding the repatriation of cultural artifacts to national institutions or governments has significantly intensified (Grumhaus, 2023). The British Museum, renowned for its extensive collection, is a focal point of criticism in the cultural heritage repatriation discourse (Godwin, 2020; Fincham, 2013). The British Museum houses over 23,000 Chinese antiquities, ranging from the Neolithic era to contemporary times. It encompasses a diverse array of artifacts, including paintings, prints, jade, bronzes, lacquer, and ceramics (TBM, 2026). The British Museum has been criticized for its large collection, acquired during British colonial and imperialist periods, and for its lack of further action regarding the management of its artifacts and any ethical debates (Grumhaus, 2023). Duthie (2011) explores the controversy

surrounding the British Museum within the context of classical heritage. Despite significant pressure from foreign governments, the museum has consistently refused to return artifacts and antiquities acquired during the imperial acquisitions (Duthie, 2011). The discourse surrounding the restitution of artifacts represents a significant conflict between cultural sovereignty and identity.

Visual representation

Anthropomorphism, as a classic narrative strategy, has been used in film and animation for decades. From a literary rhetoric perspective, anthropomorphism is the act of personifying objects (including plants, animals, and abstract concepts), giving them human appearance, personality, or emotions to achieve a vivid, figurative, and concrete effect (Booth, 1968). Epley et al. (2008) pointed out that anthropomorphism is a tendency to infuse human-like characteristics, motivations, intentions, or feelings into the real or imagined behavior of non-human agents. It ascribes cognitive or emotional states to an observed entity to justify its action within a particular social context (Duffy, 2003). In *Escape from the British Museum*, anthropomorphism surpasses simple rhetorical ornamentation, becoming a significant instrument of cultural mediation. It enhances audience participation, immersion, and emotional resonance, bringing them into the realm of cultural relics and fostering emotional connection. The anthropomorphic perspective in *Escape from the British Museum* is predominantly evident in its imagery and conduct. The anthropomorphic depiction of the ‘Chinese Intertwined Vine Pattern Thin-Walled Jade Pot (中华缠枝纹薄胎玉壶)’ (*Figure 1*) illustrates a significant convergence between visual representation and cultural identity. The authors depict it as a young woman attired in light green Hanfu, rather than employing abstract analogies (*Figure 2*). This visual selection is laden with significance; the hue and texture of her attire visually resonate with the warm and translucent characteristics of the jade vessel. Moreover, the robust cultural emblem of ‘Hanfu’ solidifies the ‘Chineseness’ represented by the jade pot, manifesting via its materiality and craftsmanship into a distinct national cultural identity. As she traverses the streets of London or Chinese cities, her presence transforms into a dynamic cultural proclamation, rendering the abstract notion of ‘Chinese culture’ tangible through a relatable individual. The visual representation of the cultural artifact and its human shape attain harmony, subconsciously fostering a sense of proximity and eliciting feelings of intimacy and familiarity in the observer. By observing this tangible jade pot,’ the spectator transitions from scrutinizing an objective artifact to attributing an emotion to a cultural symbol. This emotional empathy, elicited by visual perception, underpins the formation of cultural identity.



Figure 1. Chinese Intertwined Vine Pattern Thin-Walled Jade Pot, an artwork by jade carving artist Yu Ting, photograph by the author, at the British Museum, London.



Figure 2. The Micro-drama *Escape from the British Museum*, 2023, created by 'Xia Tian Mei Mei' and 'Jian Bing Guo Zai'.

Behavioral anthropomorphism, encompassing behaviors, language, and emotions, imparts a more profound significance than just physical imitation. In *Escape from the British Museum*, the protagonist Yu Hu's fascination with the contemporary world and her tears of anguish as she trails Yong'an home poignantly illustrate her character, evolving her from an indifferent entity into an emotionally complex individual burdened by nostalgia and grief. The emotional realism attained via behavioral anthropomorphism is the fundamental mechanism for eliciting profound empathy in the audience and converting cultural concern into identity recognition (Duffy, 2003). The spectator is no longer observing an artifact but rather empathizing with a 'companion isolated in an unfamiliar territory. The integration of physical and behavioral anthropomorphism enables the viewer to progressively embrace the feelings of the depicted figure, relate to

the historical narrative and their own comprehension, and foster profound emotional empathy. Personification transcends a mere creative method; it elicits profound emotional resonance in audiences concerning cultural legacy, national identity, and historical memory. In the conventional museum setting, artifacts are frequently perceived through a 'passive gaze,' representing static history. Personification, however, alters the 'gaze,' enabling the audience to reassess the colonial historical implications of the British Museum as a repository for items from diverse nations via the lens of a young girl. Through her feelings, they also reexamine the importance of 'country' and 'home' for a cultural entity. This interactive model converts the audience from passive recipients to active empathizers. By forming an emotional connection with the personified character, viewers not only rebuild historical memory but also reinforce their national identity by advocating for the preservation of cultural treasures.

Audiovisual communication

Audiovisual communication fundamentally involves the integration of audio and pictures to enhance engagement and impact. Visual effects facilitate the elucidation of intricate concepts, whilst audio reinforces essential points and amplifies emotional resonance. Rottenberg et al. (2007) contend that film uniquely elicits emotions by integrating dynamic visuals with sound and music. This combination employs visual and auditory inputs to augment the audience's immersion in a cohesive narrative, hence enhancing the authenticity of the emotional experience. Visuals encompass a sequence of operations that utilize visual perception to communicate information or messages to others. Visual communication integrates art, symbols, typography, painting, graphic design, illustration, and color. The film visually depicts two disparate spatial environments. The illumination within the British Museum frequently appears frigid and unchanging, representing the confined history of the items. In the drama, the artifacts are meticulously enclosed in glass exhibition cases, illuminated predominantly from above or the side, producing a stark contrast of light and shadow that accentuates their solitude and vulnerability as 'objects of contemplation.' Conversely, scenes located in China employ warm tones and fluid cinematography to create a vivid 'homeland' soundscape. This visual contrast quietly underlines the narrative dichotomy of 'confinement and freedom,' 'foreign land and homeland,' directing the audience's emotions towards the 'home' perspective. This meticulous focus on the symbolic significance of color and historical fidelity significantly enhances the visual representation of Chinese cultural identity and a distinct historical period.

This micro-drama effectively develops emotion through soundscape design. In the museum setting, sparse monophonic melodies interlace with extensive physical echoes, enhancing the sense of estrangement between items and contemporary culture. Simultaneously, the rich auditory elements of daily life and nature within the Chinese context create a dynamic 'homeland' soundtrack. During emotional pivotal moments, particularly in the 'reading family letters' scene, the music transitions to a majestic orchestral composition. The incorporation of non-diegetic music amplifies personal homesickness to a shared national significance. Rottenberg et al. (2007) assert that film, as an audiovisual medium, uniquely elicits emotions; its efficacy arises from the immersive experience created by the interplay of moving visuals and music. This drama employs this concept, converting the historical reality of artifact loss into a profound emotional recollection through alterations in rhythm, timbre, and volume. The post-memory hypothesis asserts that subsequent generations can inherit terrible memories

they did not directly encounter through potent narratives, imagery, and emotional projections (Hirsch, 2012). This awakened collective emotion not only fortifies bonds within the group but also solidifies and internalizes the cultural identity rooted in this historical memory. The formation of cultural identity in micro-dramas is realized not through didacticism but through aesthetic and sensory methods. The film employs audiovisual language as an emotional technology, skillfully coordinating space, body, and sound to interpret the extensive national history and cultural legacy into a profoundly affecting emotional experience. Ultimately, it fulfills a vital phase in the audience's progression from awareness and comprehension of history to cultural identification.

Multiple symbolism and metaphor in cultural symbols

In the visual narrative of *Escape from the British Museum*, symbolism and metaphors serve as fundamental components of mediatized identity. Ma and Li (2023) assert that the symbolic importance of an object frequently surpasses its physical limitations, indicating a broader cultural framework. Through the decoding and re-encoding of particular signifiers, the series converts disjointed visual components into a unified national metaphor. The naming strategies used in micro-dramas have profound referential meanings. The male protagonist's name, 'Yong'an,' is not a random designation, but a direct reference to the 'Yong'an' mark on a real Chinese porcelain artifact in the British Museum. This setting binds the individual protagonist to the collective fate of all lost cultural relics. Furthermore, the micro-drama uses culturally significant symbolic design, metaphorically representing 'Guijia Road' as the route for cultural relics to return to their homeland. This is not only the geographical path the protagonist walks, but also symbolizes the efforts of cultural relics and culture to seek return and recognition in the context of globalization and diaspora. Furthermore, the series employs numerous symbols with widespread cultural agreement, intending to evoke the audience's collective memory. The current environment of London amplifies the historical significance of Hanfu as a visual extension of the identity of 'Yu Hu.' Simultaneously, visuals like Tai Chi, Peking Opera, and sugar figurines, as 'culture transmitters,' can evoke traditional living patterns in the audience's consciousness without necessitating any clarification. Assmann and Czaplicka (1995) posits that cultural memory is a collective memory manifested through cultural symbols. It is a cultural identity collectively shared. It is comparatively archaic and possesses an artificial quality. The 'family letters' serve as the primary symbolic device of the series. In addition to their communicative function, they serve as a mediating link between fragmented legacy and the parent culture. The voiceover's recitation, 'May our mountains and rivers be safe and sound, and may our country be forever secure,' transforms this personal sentiment into a collective declaration aimed at the nation-state. This method effectively transforms individual 'post-memory' suffering into a tangible patriotic attitude, thus embedding cultural identification within the audience's awareness.

Conclusion

This study employs a qualitative examination of *Escape from the British Museum* to demonstrate that micro-dramas are not simply digital entertainment but serve as significant venues for cultural practice. The play effectively converts static,

decontextualized traditional cultural artifacts into emotionally engaging narrative topics through visual anthropomorphism, audiovisual storytelling, and the use of symbolism and metaphor. This shift departs from the typical museum narrative's 'gaze,' substituting it with a potent 'empathy,' thereby facilitating a dynamic reconstruction of cultural identity within the realm of digital communication. The results indicate that the persistence of modern cultural identity arises not from educational teaching but from the effective engagement of communal memory and post-colonial trauma via audiovisual aesthetics. This study broadens the application of cultural identification theory within mobile short films, illustrating that fragmented narratives can convey overarching themes of national identity. The concepts of visual anthropomorphism and emotional technology introduced in this study offer a novel theoretical framework for the distribution of intangible cultural heritage within a worldwide context. The success of this drama illustrates the emerging function of media bloggers as 'culture mediators,' adeptly bridging the emotional void created by government grand narratives in engaging youthful audiences with these storytelling techniques. This study examined the narrative logic of a particular case; however, it possesses several limitations. Employing a singular case may lack generalizability and inadequately capture and quantify the feedback and identification effects of actual audiences. Future research may further analyze the identity formation tactics of micro-dramas across various subjects and examine the identity representation challenges of Chinese micro-dramas in cross-cultural communication.

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Conflict of interest

The authors confirm that there is no conflict of interest involve with any parties in this research study.

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