

How the Sunday Publication of City Daily Create the Fine Column

—Take the Example of Morning Post “QI Investigation”

Yuqing Xiao

Journalism School, Xihua Normal University, Nanchong, China
Email: 674335141@qq.com

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Abstract

In the Chinese newspaper structure, City daily has always occupied the major portion, with its fresh content, civilian view, reformational and innovative form. This paper takes the thematic content in 2014 Shanghai City daily “Morning Post” Sunday publication “QI Investigation” column as the example to analyze how the city daily Sunday publication creates the quality column. The author thinks that how can they manage doing it is because of the fact that the city daily Sunday publication can record the culture of the city and the live pictures of the common people from a “civilian taste” perspective.

Keywords

Sunday Publication, QI Investigation, Cultural Taste

1. Introduction

With the development from the opening and reform policy till now, city daily has already been the mainstream media and also one of the three pillars like Party Newspaper and New Media. The city daily Sunday publication, as the medium of the mass media can record the modern progress of a city in the way of “describing the city”. In the Shanghai local city daily Sunday publication, there is one in-depth investigation column called “QI Investigation”, which takes the live picture of Shanghai people as the focus. Its description of Shanghai has the sense of city homeliness. Through recording the life details of the citizens in the general background and from a different view, one can see the whole picture from a small detail. It aims at finding the way to record time and the fresh vitality and the richness it presents have precious cultural value.

This paper takes the thematic content in 2014 Shanghai City daily “Morning Post” Sunday publication “QI

Investigation” column as the example to analyze how the city daily Sunday publication creates the quality column. The author thinks that how can they manage doing it is because of the fact that the city daily Sunday publication can record the culture of the city and the live pictures of the common people from a “civilian taste” perspective. Thus when creating the cultural interesting column, the following aspects should be paid attention to: specialization, profoundness, uniqueness and interestingness.

2. The Cultural of the City Daily Sunday Publication

Habermas said: “New media is the public instrument and it’s the common tunnel for all the citizens to peep at the society and the natural environment and also the public forum to discuss the public affairs, which has the important position in the public sphere construction of the modern country as the number one” [1]. Mass media, as the social instrument, has its unique social responsibility and must emphasize on the cultural character and art character of the work. Since the 1990’s, China has accelerated the development of market economy and commodity economy. The newspaper, as the mass media also has rapidly paced into the market. During the process of marketization, a huge bunch of city daily has emerged, and among them, some over focus on the commoditization of the newspaper, thus, the newspapers have presented the trend of over-entertaining and vulgarization or the newspaper is full of the social news with much of muchness and lengthy and tedious anecdotes of the celebrities, while the due character the newspaper should have as the cultural product is ignored. The fast development of Internet New Media aggravates the complation and understandability of the cultural products and thus lowers the taste of the public in reading.

With the background of the multi-variant information channel and the declining mainstream culture, some domestic city daily try to open the Sunday special edition on weekends to hold fast to the cultural character of the newspaper media from the perspective of urban culture or by book review and special manuscript to meet the “in-depth reading” pursuit of the readers and this embodies the content positioning and market competition strategy of the city daily.

3. The “Culture Taste” Expressed in the “QI Investigation” Column

Morning Post is a new and comprehensive city daily sponsored by Jiefang Daily Group. The purpose of its reports is to “focus on the state affairs and care about civilian lives”, thus the main readers are the citizen stratum in the cities. “QI Investigation” column normally has 5 spaces of the whole pages in each Sunday publication of “Morning Post”, attracting the common civilians who love reading and concentrating on the culture of Shanghai.

From the micro level, it belongs to the content presentation on the Sunday publication in the newspaper. The interviewees of it are the citizen stratum. Besides, each daily life scene of Shanghai people, who are in the process of modernization, is completely spread, involving the material and spiritual level of basic necessities of life and life experiences. Page B1 is the cover of the special edition and it’s normally a true-life figure with brief introductions of this edition’s content. Page B 2-5 is filled with multi manuscripts of the interviews or the investigations of the reporters and the news photos. The reporters put themselves in the position of common Shanghai citizens to feel the roots of this city, from the records of the basic necessities of Shanghai people, to sense and express their pleasure, anger, sorrow and joy and to show the respect and attention to people who are in the bottom of the society. “QI Investigation” column’s attention to the citizen stratum embodies the conscientiousness of the city daily in transmitting the modern culture.

3.1. Focus on “Nobody”

Shanghai has a special position in China’s geography and it’s one of the earliest ports which were open to foreign countries in modern China. The culture of Shanghai is called “Shanghai-style culture”. The stratum that “QI Investigation” column targeted at is a miniature of the Shanghai civilians and has the feature and characteristics of Shanghai people. In the historical background of social transformation in China, the development of the city is closely related with people and the huge discrepancy of the urbanization imposes more life pressure and confusion on people. Under this background, to investigate and interview how the Shanghai people, who are in the bottom of the society, is a beneficial try for the modern media to embody the social responsibility.

The “QI Investigation” of “Morning Post” in 2014 has done many special editions, about the Shanghai citizen stratum, like articles related with civil shops “*maintenance shop for domestic trivias*”, “*common cigarette paper*

shop”, “*therapeutic’ lottery shop*”, “*public phone record*”, “*wife’s shop of a couple*”; or articles related with the trivial stuff in daily life “*chores in Spring Festival*”, “*Where are the vegetables from?*”, “*interview in the kitchen*”; or the articles focusing on different age groups like “*It’s kind of happiness to go downstairs*”, “*I know the young one are bearing great pressure*”, “*Kids on the BaoChun Road*”.

The readers can find that the interviewees of “*QI Investigation*” are just the common people living in this city. They live or work at the edge of the field in the rural areas, in the attic of the house in the lane, at the stall in the market and at the corner of the busy streets. During the process of modernization, they are facing the problems and confusion of attending school, hunting for jobs, marital family life. For example the special edition “*Kids on BaoChun Road*” focuses the kids of the migrant workers in Shanghai. The parents have to leave their hometowns to work hard in Shanghai and they have supported the service industry in the neighboring community. Yet, they can only reunite with their kids in the summer and winter holidays. Through the visiting and interviewing, the life, emotion and confusion of these “outsiders in the city” are revealed in front of the readers and invokes more thinking of the family issues of the migrant workers from the society.

3.2. Reflect the Transition of the Society

American scholar Roz Murphy points out in the article *Shanghai—the key to Modern China* that “Shanghai, together with its growth and development pattern within nearly a century, is the miniature of the Modern China. Shanghai has offered the key to the things already happened in Modern China and new things which are in advent [2].” Shanghai is a migration city. The immigrants from different areas have brought their own featured local culture in Shanghai. After the clash and blend in the migration society, the whole city has formed the open and compatible attitudes and cultivated the spiritual quality of being explorative and pioneering.

“*QI Investigation column*” in 2014 has focused on the group with the characteristics of the times, existing from the opening and reform policy till now and has published “*interview record of the children of the educated youth*”, which recalls the situations of the children of the educated youth who came back to Shanghai at the end of 1980’s and the beginning of 1990’s in the memorial documentary, arousing strong responses between the readers. The special edition “*Memoirs about ‘Moonlight’ in Japan*” is about the stories of Shanghai people’s studying abroad while working part-time to earn money at the end of 1980’s and the beginning of 1990’s. The interviewees have different life tracks, but through the stories on the paper and recalling the experiences, the readers can see the transformations of the society.

3.3. Record the Common Customs of Shanghai

The common customs and harmony together constitute of the featured civilian culture of Shanghai [3]. It’s not only a symbol of the city but also the “earth” which reserves the local culture. The scenes of the time-honored brand food shops, ancient towns, lanes and Shanghainese cuisine are hard to be found today, but it is due to these nostalgic spaces and objects can the living style of Shanghai people be embodied.

“*QI Investigation*” column in 2014 has published the special edition about Shanghainese cuisine called “*Spring Festival Food of A’Shan*”, which introduces a Shanghainese called A’Shan sharing his food for Spring Festival. Smoked fish, braised duck, boiled pig’s stomach, quick-boiled aromatic grains soup, beancurd leaf rolls with minced pork, fried boiled pork, betony with transparent noodles and eight-treasure rice pudding, all these dishes have aroused the memories with the Spring Festival in the deep heart of the readers and brought the thinking about food, time and reunion. These are also series of special edition about lanes in Shanghai called “*Series of Lanes*”, which pays attention to the Jiang’An Villa in Nanjing West Road, Longmen Cun in Shangwen Road and grassroots lane in Qinguan Road. These three kinds of different lanes have represented three kinds of different architectural styles and human feelings.

3.4. Embodiment of the Shanghai Spirit

The cultural research school in Britain thinks that to bury the public culture in the living style of the common people is what the public love to see and hear. The emergence of mass culture makes the culture get rid of the situation of being enjoyed by a small group of people and satisfies the cultural need and consumption of the public, thus, it has an effect of liberating thoughts and morality; Mass media has the certain enlightening common custom features [4]. “*QI Investigation*” column has focused on the stories of a great number of Shanghai-

nese. Even if their stories differ from each other, they all reflect the survival philosophy of each own.

The special edition “*Where are the vegetables from*” in 2014 has recorded the food market and the greengrocers in Shanghai. Through the records of the families of the common greengrocers, the nature of life is presented—first to survive then to live better. The special edition “*series of neighboring restaurant*” focuses on the restaurants in the market and street in Shanghai, recording the philosophy and wisdom in life of the owners. The special edition “*The young man who’s interested in the family history*” records the story of the migration and settlement of the ancestors of Shanghai people. From their stories, the readers can contemplate the society and compare it with their own experiences to create the sense of immersion and resonance.

4. How the City Daily Sunday Publication Create the Fine Column

Today, in the globalized economy, urban culture has been one of the cores of the cultural industry. As the regional city daily, the various types of Sunday publications have become the excellent carrier of transmitting the urban culture, due to their clear transmission scope, having both graphics and text, long reservation time, massive audiences and maturely developed collecting and editing process. Especially in the Internet era, how to deal with the challenge of the multi information space of the Internet and how to make best use of the advantages and by pass the disadvantages to create the delicate and fun content are questions worthies to be studied for the newspaper, as the space-limited traditional media. The author thinks the content feature of the City daily Sunday publication is “regionality, citizenization and interestingness”, thus when creating the cultural interesting column, the following aspects should be paid attention to.

4.1. Specialization

The perpetual object of the City daily Sunday publication is just a local area. It has a narrow scope and relative focused topic. Normally the anchor point of it is the concentration, profoundness and richness of a certain aspect. For example, “QI Investigation” column mainly focuses on the basic necessities in life of the Shanghai common people, paying attention to capture the common but thought-invoking scenes in life. Based on this point of sight, there will be an extensive group for interviewing and writing, like the Shanghai Uncle, the granny at the lane hall, the young artist, the retired teacher, the tattoo artist, the dim sum chef, the stall keeper in the market and the families of migrant workers in Shanghai.

4.2. Profoundness

Sunday publication can just focus on one topic to develop the in-depth news fact or figure, to analyze them from the macro or micro level, to observe and compare them between the history and reality and to read the information fully from the multi layer and multi side. For instance, the special editions of “QI Investigation” like “*series of the lane*”, “*interview record of the children of the educated youth*”, “*Memoir of ‘moonlight’ in Japan*” all have the profound historical background. Through the strong contrast between the history and the reality, more thinking is offered to the reader for them to feel the pulse of the times.

4.3. Uniqueness

This includes the uniqueness of the selection of the title, the viewpoint and the layout. The coverage of “QI Investigation” is full of characteristics. Normally it’s a hand painted true-life colorful figure, which has clean line and “real life taste”. The inside pages will be accompanied with documentary news pictures or hand painted figures according to the content of the manuscripts. For example, in the special edition “*Spring Festival food of A’shan*”, according to the content of the manuscript, the ingredients and the food are exquisitely painted by hand, embodying the uniqueness of the viewpoint and the detail of the real life better.

4.4. Interestingness

Within the time of inundant information, city daily special edition should capture the interestingness in life and reflect it. “QI Investigation” also has abundant of contents with unique viewpoints such as “Mushroom hunter in suburb of Shanghai”, “Sketch of emergency room”, “Urban fish man”, “New farm work in vernal equinox”, “Personal history of skin”, “Animal observation in new field”, and all of them are full of interest.

“QI Investigation” also pays attention to the usage of the dialect in the news language to make it closer to the regional culture. It appropriately employs some dialect like “nong”, “yi”, “a’la”, “cuo”, “biao”, which highlights the local specialty of Shanghai. As a result, the readers will create huge self-identification and sense of belonging psychologically [5].

5. Conclusions

The famous sociologist Xiaotong Fei once mentions the opinion of “culture self-consciousness”. Newspapers, as the traditional mass media, have the social role and responsibility to deliver the information and record the current social progress and development. In the new media era, the superior resources of the daily city are the specialization of the news viewpoint and the archive function of the urban culture. Internet has accelerated the production and transmission of the news content. What the readers are lack of is not information but the selected and edited work with profoundness and readability.

For the city daily Sunday publication, to do this kind of content well needs the deliberate and exquisite work of the reporters and the editors to plan well, to plunge into the life to have solid interviews, to fully attachment importance to the value of the original content and to cultivate the regular reading habits of the regional core readers [6].

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