

Research on the Comic Media Content Creation of the Wechat Public Accounts with the Themes of Regional Culture

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Abstract

With the emerging of new media, text oriented media targeting mobile devices has become a new way of information transmission. In recent years, the content based on regional culture has become one of the creation trends of Tioman (the comic media content of the Wechat public accounts). It stimulates users' cultural confidence and identity through the description and depiction of local natural attractions and landmarks, cuisine, fashion, housing and transportation, and traditional customs, so as to realize the popularization, dissemination and promotion of regional culture. Based on geographical culture content creation, taking the Wechat public account "City Roaming Plan" as an example, this article discusses the topic selection, the genre and visual design. The article also explores how regional culture information integrates and transforms with the new media transformation trend, and to build a creative thinking framework and model, so as to guide a more scientific visual content production, to promote mutual understanding between regional tradition and modern culture, increase the value and enhance transmission effectiveness of local culture.

Keywords: *Regional culture, framework and model, media creation for Wechat official account, strategy, comic content creation, mobile platform*

In recent years, with the rapid development of domestic economy, traditional culture and customs are facing the impact of modern consumer life, presenting a vast amount of opportunities and challenges. Based on the exploration of regional colors and regional impressions, the regional information media contents share strong public resonance though entertaining comic, curiosities and transiting communication. At the same time, these new contents make public revisit century old local traditions and refocus on local culture and economic development. How do we do it?

I. Topic Selection

The theme of the Tioman (the comic media content of the Wechat public accounts) determines its content and visual style. Like other new media content, Tioman pursues instant and brief information delivery, focusing on user feedback and willingness to share. The topic selection of the region category should grasp the user's reading psychology such as curiosity, belonging and identity of the region; At the same time, we should pay close attention to the new trend of the region based on hot spots.

Cognitive psychology divides human brain's work in cognition and processing external information stimulus into two types: Systematic cognitive Processing and Heuristic cognitive Processing. Systematic cognitive mechanism emphasizes logical thinking, analysis and response; The heuristic cognitive mechanism focuses on the simple and quick completion of decisions and statements [1]. In Tioman, knowledge increment and popular science content more stimulate systematic cognitive mechanism, while emotional content such as joke implantation and value output more stimulate enlightening cognitive mechanism. Therefore, the topic selection that appeals to knowledge increment and emotion can be divided into different strategies.

1.1 Topic Selection Strategy Based on Knowledge Increment

Subject selection resorting to knowledge increment focus on the collection of regional information itself and the

arrangement of information output. The information itself should be authoritative and complete, and the output of information should be supported by logic and rationale. Knowledge increment direction topic selection includes trivia direction and general popular science direction. Trivia to emphasize information against common sense, such as “Naming Capital of Fujian, 99% Were Wrong” from City Roaming Plan, listed by Fujian Province unknown knowledge of geography, history, humanities, customs, to subvert the people of the conventional thinking, the audiences are submerged by fresh knowledge at the same time, but also recognizing a more complete and comprehensive picture of Fujian Province. However, the general popular science guide usually adopts a unique explanation perspective, as an example, “There is a Kind of Sweet called Xinjiang Sweet” from City Roaming Plan, which leads to the popular knowledge of Xinjiang people, music, fruit and scenery from the taste intention of “sweet”, so that the popular science information is romanticized and easier to understand.

1.2 Topic selection strategy based on emotion

These topics focus on arousing the emotional resonance of users, emphasizing the consistency of emotional positions and accurate and strong emotional expression. Emotional orientation topics include humor orientation and other emotional orientation. Humor emphasizes both pleasure and implication to the subject, and gives readers emotional rewards by laying out jokes and setting the rhythm of turning points, at the same time outputs viewpoints. For example, the scene of “College Freshmen Enrollment Collapse in Northeast China” exaggerates the helplessness of college kids in Northeast China in the faces of stereotypes through the word “collapse”. Other common emotions include nostalgia and honor. Nostalgia is mostly a review of regional history and local people's life, which arouses users' memories and yearning for the home cities. And honor is a direct praise of a certain region, easy to arouse local people's sense of identity and honor. The topic selection is rendered by emotion, which implicitly reflects the narrative standpoint and values of unrestrained, and arouses the reflection and discussion of public audiences.

II. Genre

Existing studies tend to classify Tioman itself as a genre, but there have been different genres in Tioman. There are not only some similar genres with articles, such as explanation, interview and autobiography, but also some graphic genres with its own characteristics, such as group images and four-panel comics, as well as new genres brought by computers and mobile devices, such as games and tests. Genre is the layout and typesetting of text and pictures in Tioman. Good genre can adapt to the content, information load, idea dissemination to the maximum, and can be also innovative. The regional genre includes the following six points:

2.1 Explanation

As the contents of the Tioman are mostly popular knowledge for specific region, that genre is the most widely used in the regional comics. The expository genre usually speaks in the third person, in the form of a speaker's personification or narration, and explains information in spatial or temporal order. Compared with expository articles, Tioman focuses on individual point of view and simple popular science language. For example, “Is Everyone going to Baa baa in Guangzhou?” takes Guangzhou's nickname “Sheep City” as the entry point. In fact, “Sheep City” has no sheep, which leads to the introduction of Guangzhou's natural ecology and wild animals. Another example is “The Internet in this city is seriously underestimated”, which focus on the strong scientific atmosphere of Shanghai and the enthusiasm of the general population for digital life in details through such humorous language as “The paper of the academic conference of middle school students as the online article brush” and “Tech + FIN is the national game”. The descriptive genre usually points to a clear direction, the text directly describes the image, often citing charts and symbols, free mirror, divided and no divided case coexist.

2.2 Group portraits

Group portraits is a unique genre in the Tioman with regional theme. There is no obvious boundary in the sub-mirror of group images. The whole view is a big scene, and all kinds of symbols seem to be integrated in a space, and the

plot is promoted by scattered character dialogues. For example, “Notice of Qingdao on High Temperature Sea” and “Sorry Ningxia, I Underestimated You” (Fig 1) both use a large number of group image genres, which have a large visual field, meticulous and complex painting style, rich image details, almost no narration but only dialogue, and describe all kinds of life. The genre of group images is of urban interest, and the readers seem to be placed above the crowd, endowed with “God's perspective”, with a strong sense of presence.

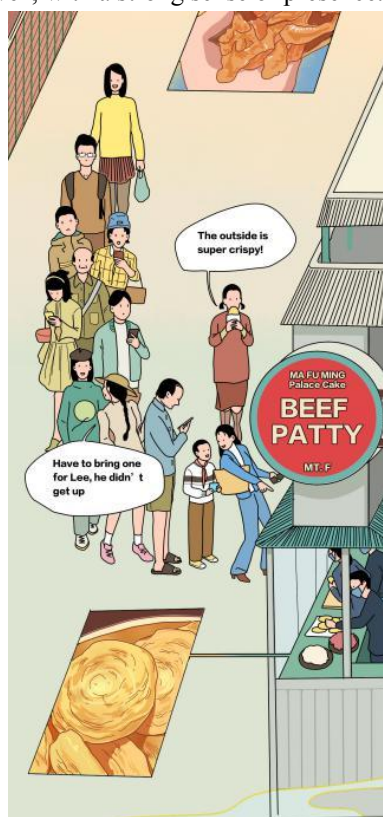


Fig 1: Li Pengyu, excerpt from “Sorry Ningxia, I Underestimated You”, published on March 20, 2020

2.3 Game/test

A game/playtest genre is a genre in which Tioman are programmed into a game format that requires the reader to participate in the plot development. The genre does not prejudice the narrative, but conveys information through the gameplay as the user plays the game. For example, “How to Make Ten Million Fast in Shenzhen” imitated monopoly flying chess, by rolling dice to determine the fate of the character, in order to score points, the winner. Among them, “invest in real estate in Baoan”, “act as a farmer in Nanshan”, “act as a god in Longhua” and so on are set based on the life pattern of Shenzhen, outlining the various phases of Shenzhen. This genre attracts interactive reading, where the user constructs the fate of the character in the game, which is novel, exciting and fun.

2.4 Interview

The interview genre is similar to that of the article, but the regional diffuse creation should highlight the connection between the experience, life, social role and other information of the interviewees and the region, and the interviewees usually carry labels related to the region. The image part of the interview style is usually the foil of the text, with less information.

2.5 Autobiography

The autobiographical genre is narrated in the first person, putting the reader into the protagonist's experiences and feelings. For example, in Guizhou, every pepper dies for the right reason, chili is personified, and what chili sees and

hears is the epitome of Guizhou people's food culture and chili economy. Autobiography genre perspective is unique, strong story. The sub-lens is relatively free, with the hero's view and the reader's view switching freely, delicate and tension.

2.6 Four-Panel Cartoon

This genre follows the tradition of four-panel cartoon and pays attention to plot paving and turning (not necessarily four frames). "The Scene of Breaking the Stereotype in Various Cities in Anhui" and "Henan City, Who Has the Most Sense of Existence" are both in the four-panel cartoon genre, the two formats are the same, to outsiders' impression of the region and local people's impression of the region to make a comparison, outline the city label while opposing the established one. The regional four-panel Tioman mostly appeared in the form of a set of jokes, short humor.

III. Visual Design

Digital technology and current visual culture make "audio-visual" become a common way of perceiving and recognizing things, and people's dependence on and emphasis on "seeing" has reached unprecedented levels [2]. Storytelling and visual presentation have long been regarded as important work for museums because it brings knowledge and culture close and interesting [3]. In order to conform to the emotional orientation of the topic, the visual design of Tioman should consider the genre of the content, the ability of image form to show the content and the aesthetic value of the image itself. The visual design in regional Tioman creation is mainly classified into the following three points:

3.1 The use of regional visual symbols

Semiotics scholar Zhao Yiheng believes that symbols are one-sided [4]. The transmission of regional information does not need to be exhaustive, but needs to be deliberately extracted and simplified to make it easy to understand. By summing up the regional features of environment and life, the visual symbols in the regional category can be divided into two categories: landscape symbols and cultural symbols.

One of the landscape symbols is the natural conditions of a place, including resources, landscape, climate, etc. The selection should reflect the characteristics of geographical location and ecological environment. For example, the terrain of Guizhou (A province in southwest China) is rugged and dominated by mountains. "How Can Guizhou Be So Capable That It Can Go to Both Heaven and Hell" lists the Fanjing Mountain, Foguangyan Waterfall, Mushroom Rocks and terraces, showing the unique steep beauty and original ecology of this place. The environment also reflects the unique survival wisdom of local residents. Another landscape symbol refers to the artificial landscape, such as a place of interest, architecture, and urban appearance, etc. The artificial landscape embodies the history, characteristics and heritage of a place. For instance, "Shanxi Girls Are the Cutest and Ranked Second among Vinegar Drinkers" listed the Yungang Grottoes, Yingxian Wooden Pagodas, Pingyao Ancient City, Yongle Palace, Qiao Family Courtyard and other historical landmarks, reflecting Shanxi's profound cultural heritage and long history.

Humanistic symbols refer to food, customs, living habits and so on, which are the physical manifestation of culture. The description of diet is the most common in the regional Tioman. The taste is light in Guangdong and Guangxi, spicy in Sichuan and Chongqing. Huaiyang cuisine is sweet, and northeastern dish is large. The difference in diet is also the difference in culture. In "Which City is China's Most Favored?", a list of fresh meat mooncakes, Yanduxian(bamboo shoot soup with fresh and pickled streaky pork), green glutinous rice dumpling and steamed buns gives an outline of Hangbang cuisine in the east China coast, highlighting the delicate food style of the Jiangnan generation. In "Northeast Men Are Dreams of 900 Million Girls" (Fig 2), northeastern dishes such as barbecue, pot wrapped meat, and braised goose in iron pot also reflect the grand and forthright food culture of the three northeastern provinces. The two diets reflect the different regional characters. In terms of customs, Tioman reflects the customs of worshipping gods and people's expectations for life in Southern China through the introduction of gods

and offerings in “Cantonese Worship God Like This, It’s Hard Not to Get Rich” (Fig 3). In “Chaoshan girl turned out to be like this”, the dowry of chaoshan girls reflects the traditional concept of marriage and love in Chaoshan.



Fig 2: Li Pengyu, excerpt from “Northeast Men Are Dreams of 900 Million Girls”, published on December 30, 2019



Fig 3: Li Pengyu, excerpt from “Cantonese Worship God Like This, It’s Hard Not to Get Rich”, published on November 21, 2019

3.2 Storyboard and composition

The storyboard determines the rhythm of the narration. The effect of shooting arrangement on the atmosphere and overall emotional tone is huge. Compared with traditional Cartoon, the storyboard of Tioman is more free [5], and varies greatly according to different genres. The sub-mirrors of group images are the most characteristic. Due to the natural transformation of scene space, each sub-mirror either seems to be in the same scene, sharing perspective system, and all sub-mirrors are connected in series with long strips (deep streets or high-rise buildings). Or the scene transformation can be realized through collage of materials. For example, in “Sorry Ningxia, I Underestimated You”, cloud pattern are inserted. Clouds and buildings block each other, subtly assisting the scene transformation. The storyboards of expository or autobiographical genres are more free, interspersed with full-screen and normal storyboards, and the distance between storyboards varies flexibly according to the rhythm and mood of the narrative. What is special about the regional Tioman is that due to the strong expository nature of the content, there are few repetitive details of the expressions and actions of the objects or characters in the shooting scenes.

Composition is the reasonable arrangement of scene materials and symbol objects in the sub-mirror, and it is the image skeleton of diffuse. Studies have shown that composition is considered to be the most important factor among the numerous factors that affect the aesthetic feeling of images such as color, light and line [6]. First, traditional thirds are common, where the subject object is usually on the dividing line of 1/3 or 2/3 of the screen. Secondly, composition should follow the law of visual balance. The composition should fit the text layout and allow for narration and dialogue to make the final visual look visually balanced and well illustrated. The visual balance of regional strips is often achieved through S-shaped composition, that is, images and words are arranged in a staggered way in the strip space, which is balanced and lively at the same time. S-shape composition can also be applied, suitable for the layout of food, scene and people and other elements.

3.3 Color

The color of Tioman is much richer than that of paper comics. In the “Urban Roaming Plan”, the realistic style Tioman is in full color, and a color is usually divided into three color levels: bright, medium and dark. The cartoon style Tioman can be divided into two colors and multicolor, which choose two main colors (usually contrasting colors) to create rich effects based on the depth of the color or the texture of the pattern. Multicolor is usually painted in full color. The color scheme of the region is related to the emotion brought to people by the region. For example, in “Sorry Ningxia, I Underestimated You”, the large area of earth yellow and ochre and small area of green and red are used to echo the geographical environment and climate of Ningxia and create the image of “Jiangnan on the Frontier Fortress” in Ningxia.

IV. Conclusion

In this paper, the topic selection strategy, genre types and visual design characteristics of regional Tioman are sorted out in order of the creation process. First, the topic selection of the regional Tioman is based on the content transmission, or the popularization of regional knowledge, or to arouse people's emotional resonance to a place. Secondly, different styles of content communication rely on different genres of Tioman. The more serious popular science content is mainly shown as Explanation or Interview, while the more lively and interesting content is likely to be Group Portraits, Games/Tests or Four-Panel Cartoon, which have different narrative forms and visual presentation ways. Thirdly, regional content communication is based on the use of regional visual symbols, including landscape symbols and cultural symbols. The visual design of Tioman needs to adapt to the long space and reading habits of wechat official accounts, and take the advantages of the rich colors of electronic screens. However, if the research can use examples to compare the differences between Tioman and traditional comics, it may be better to explore the influence of WeChat official accounts on comic reading habits and content dissemination in more depth.

Tioman has now become a common type of wechat public account content, some accounts even have millions of followers. Taking the place where people live as the clue, the regional theme has become a popular type of content in Tioman creation, integrating traditional and modern, landscape and human, online and offline. The sorting of the regional category of Tioman helps its creation to focus the basic problems and promote better quality and fresh content creation.

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