

# CHINESE INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM: A STUDY OF THE CHINA NEWS AWARDS DISTINGUISHED REPORTS

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Chinese investigative journalism is increasingly in the spotlight as Chinese investigative reporting accounts for a higher proportion of the China News Awards. This article analyzes the distinguished winning works of investigative reporting in China News Awards from 2014 to 2018 and understands the tendencies of mainstream news awards for Chinese investigative reporting.

**Key words:** Chinese investigative journalism; China News Awards; investigative report.

In recent years, China's investigative journalism has developed vigorously. By analysing of the investigative journalism works that won the 2014–2018 China News Awards, it can be seen that even though the number of investigative journalism works has increased year by year. However due to the rise of convergent media, China's investigative journalism also faces challenges.

The China News Award was founded in 1989. It is the highest award for national comprehensive annual excellent journalism works approved by the central government. It is sponsored by the Chinese Governmental Journalists Association and selected once a year.

In 2014–2018 years investigative reporting was stood as a separate selection item of China News Awards. This article conducts quantitative analysis on the number of awarded investigations in 2014–2018, the proportion of the subjects and the reporting tendency of the works.

Total number of reports under our analysis is 17. From 2014 to 2018 the number of winning works was 1, 2, 4, 7, 3 respectively. As our analysis shows, from 2014 to 2017 the number of award-winning investigative reports increased year by year and the proportion continued to increase. However, the number of awards for investigative reports in 2018 was decreased because the «Media Convergence Award» was added as a part of China News Award. The application scope of convergent media in various fields of society has become wider, and it has produced a stronger attraction and greater influence on people. It hinders investigative reports.

We divided these winning works into 6 main themes. There are livelihood theme, corruption theme, disaster theme, ecological theme, social theme, and military theme.

For the investigative reports on livelihood theme, there are 9 investigative reports, accounting for 52,9 % from the total amount. Such as in 2014, «Five questions about the reform of county-level public hospitals: an investigative report on the pilot reform of Suining county» was published in «Xuzhou Daily». It showed that all county-level public hospitals in the province are required to completely cancel the medicine addition policy before the end of the year. It strived to increase the rate of medical treatment in the county to about 90 %, and basically helped the livelihood issues. In 2015 the report «Confucianism goes to the countryside, awakening rural cultural genes» was published by «Popular Daily». It investigated the inheritance of Confucian culture in the countryside.

In 2016, there were 3 livelihood issue reports. In the report «Has the ZhiDao nation lived well?» there was the first time when a major central media had carried out a large-scale report on the special group of «Zhiguozu». It was published by «Xinhuanet». There were explored the living and production conditions of the ethnic people, as well as the existing difficulties and problems. And same year the other report «Convenience banks open to villagers' doors: The city's "last mile" survey on rural financial services», published in «Tianjin daily», was investigated the ideas and practices of rural financial services in Tianjin, and deeply analyzed the «Tianjin Model» of agriculture-related finance. The last report in 2016 was titled «Tongzhou, Beijing: How does the administrative sub-center treat disease and save the city». It was published by «China Land and Resources News» as an in-depth report page. It also put forward constructive opinions on the intensive land use.

In 2017, there are 4 livelihood issue reports in total, such as «Why buying grain causes difficulties in a large grain-producing province». It was published by «Xinhua News Agency». The reporter conducted an in-depth interview on this and found that the fundamental reason is that the wheat planting structure and market demand were asymmetrical or even seriously out of touch.

The other livelihood issue was «Investigation into the incident of a female university teacher being expelled from cancer». It was published by «China Youth Daily». The phenomenon of young people being expelled or dismissed due to illness frequently occurs. The dismissal of a female teacher from the Bowen College of Lanzhou Jiaotong University due to cancer was a typical case. Once the report was published, it triggered a strong social response. Public concern about whether cancer patients can integrate into normal work and life normally was rised. By the report «Looking back at Tayuanzhuang in thirty years», published by «Guang-

ming Daily», was launched an in-depth investigation newsletter with the headline on the first page, to create a biography for rural reform and development, and for covering activity of contemporary Chinese farmers. The development experience of Tayuan Village is nationwide. It has important typical promotion significance.

One more investigation «What can you do to save you, a number is hard to find» was published by «Economic Information News». It revealed problems such as the difficulty of registering and seeing a doctor, reflecting the imbalance of data resources behind hierarchical diagnosis and treatment, the sharp contradiction between supply and demand, and the imperfect system, and put forward pertinent suggestions.

For the investigative reports on corruption theme, there are 3 investigative reports, accounting for 17,6 % from the total number. For instance, «How many “business experience” was a piece of promotion certificate» in 2017 exposed the problem of illegal collection of fees by the Science and Technology Development Center of the Jiangsu Provincial Department of Housing and Urban-rural Development. It was published by «Xinhua Daily». The other corruption report was titled «Investigation on disorders in the management of scientific research funds in colleges and universities». It was published in «Legal Daily» and exposed the chaos in the management of scientific research funds in universities. In 2018, «I haven’t done these 28 treatments» was published by «China Consumer News». It exposed the phenomenon that secondary public hospitals use the elderly to falsely prescribe treatment fees to obtain financial funds. It showed corruption in all aspects of society.

For the investigative reports on disaster theme, there are 2 investigative reports, accounting for 11,8 % from the total amount. They are «This night in Kunming» in 2015 and the «Sacrifice» in 2016. The first one was published in «Metropolis Times» and covered the Kunming terrorist attack. The second one was published on the front page of «China Youth Daily» and was the single report with the widest spread and greatest influence. There was described the explosion accident of the «8.12» dangerous goods warehouse in Tianjin Port.

For the investigative reports on ecological theme, there is only one investigative report, accounting for 5,9 % from the total amount. «Qilianshan Mountains in Gansu: ecological breakthrough under the accountability storm» was published by «China Land and resources News» in 2018. It reflected the prominent contradictions and problems faced by the current Qilian Mountain ecological environment improvement.

Other investigations referred to social and military themes, each of them has one investigative report. They are «Let justice don’t be late» in 2017 and «54-year-old veteran’s way home» in 2018. The first report was published in

«People's Court News and Media Headquarters». The reporter went to Nie Shubin's Intentional Murder and Rape Retrial Case Team for an exclusive in-depth interview. The second report included exclusive interview with Wang Qi's old squad leader and his old comrades. It was published by «Southern Weekend». The reporters interviewed officials from the Indian Embassy in China and the Consular Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which enriched the coverage of the report, obtained authoritative official voices to corroborate it, and established the report pattern.

In general, people's livelihood issues are still the main source of themes, and the number of investigative reports continues to grow. Then go corruption issues, concerned with Chinese government and disaster issues, covered the situation with ecological environment.

The subject of the winning China News Awards investigative reports is constantly enriched. Nowadays convergence media are booming, which is one of the challenges for investigative reporting. Other challenges, such as the increasingly fierce global competition in investigative reporting, the weak information transmission, and insufficient changes in journalists' work, influence on media network. Even so, the social expectations of investigative reporting have not diminished, which requires investigative journalists to adhere to the professional spirit of journalism, seize the opportunity of media transformation, and produce high-quality, beneficial to society investigative reports.