

# ***“Hot Media” and “Cold Media” in Photo News— Comment on the Winning Works of News Photography and News Cartoon Category of Hainan News***

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**Abstract:** Photo news is a genre of reporting news and disseminating information in the form of pictures, which can express news events visually and figuratively. Broadly speaking, photo news includes news photography (photojournalism) and news cartoon, and Marshall McLuhan put forward the concept of "hot media" and "cold media"<sup>[1]</sup>, which considers that photojournalism belongs to hot media and cartoon belongs to cold media. In this paper, we select the winning works in the categories of news photography and news cartoon of Hainan News Award in the past five years, and comprehensively use the theoretical knowledge of journalism and communication to comment on the representative works, and summarize the characteristics of excellent photo journalism.

## **1. Introduction**

In today's "read the picture era", because the picture can give the audience the most direct visual pleasure, "reading pictures" behaviour can have a subtle influence on the audience's reading habits—from reading text to reading pictures change<sup>[2]</sup>. "Reading pictures" is not a simple recognition of pictures, but to obtain information that cannot be fully expressed in words.

In 2018, the Chinese government decided to support the construction of a free trade port with Chinese characteristics on all islands of Hainan, making Hainan the forefront of China's reform and opening up, and a beautiful business card showcasing the styles and images of China. Hainan News Award is the highest award for excellent news works in Hainan Province, selected once a year, with strong authority and credibility. In this paper, the winning works that won the first and second prizes in the categories of news photography and news cartoon of the 29th to 32nd Hainan News Awards (2018-2022) are selected as the research samples, totaling 39 articles. Among them, there are 28 news photography articles and 11 news cartoons.

## 2. News Photography: Uses High-Definition, High-Capacity Information to Present the Vision of Maritime Power

Marshall McLuhan believes that: hot media, the information conveyed is relatively clear and unambiguous, the audience does not need to mobilize too many senses to think and associate when receiving such information<sup>[3]</sup>. Photojournalism uses photographic technology as a mean of reporting newly discovered facts through the medium of images and text, which can be referred as "news reported in photographs". A single photo can convey complex information such as the conveyance of atmosphere and artistic conception to readers, and this kind of medium is "hot" itself, so readers do not need to make too much preparation in advance when they get the information.

Underwater oil tree is the core of the oil industry underwater production system, can control the speed of oil and gas extraction. To address the major themes of installation "Great Power Equipment" in the deep sea, the reporter relies on sensitive news sense, went straight to the "South China Sea No. 7" drilling platform to engage in on-the-ground interview. From the land, sea and air multi-perspective, a true record of the first set of underwater oil tree installation of the whole process and the oil workers behind the story were deeply revealed, as shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1: "Deep-sea Chinese "core" "Hainan Daily, 6 May 2022.

"Documentary photography is the pinnacle stage of photojournalism", which has been proved by the history of photography and creative experience, and it is unlikely to deny the influence and vitality brought by this transformation and enhancement. In this story, the author not only aims at exploring its journalistic nature, but also uses documentary techniques to transform the news event into a work of art. This group of photos is rich in image language, complete story, clear logic, unique perspective, as well as exquisite composition. In particular, the title played the effect of the finishing touch, which is a valuable and infectious masterpiece.



Figure 2: "Harvesting Grain from the sea" Hainan Daily, 10 May 2021.

"Sea rice", also known as salt-tolerant rice, grows on coastal mudflats and saline soil. At present, there are 1.5 billion mu of deserted saline land in China, which is an important national reserve

arable land resources. The reporter followed the researchers into the field, observed their every move, and felt their feelings through the lens, as shown in Figure 2.

The group of photos with documentary approach to record academician Yuan Longping "sea rice" team in Sanya South breeding base of the work scene, which shows a complete story with unique perspective and tension. The main picture adopts an overhead perspective, and the first thing that comes to mind is a large field full of vitality of hybrid seawater rice, and a white net floats away in the picture, which is clean, bright and dynamic. The net, which is used to prevent birds from pecking, contains the efforts and expectations of researchers in cultivating seawater rice, and lights up the whole picture. Overall, this is a set of valuable and infectious photojournalism work, and has also become a symbolic photo of science and technology reporting subjects.

The reporter, along with the researchers from the Institute of Deep-sea science and Engineering of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, spent 21 days and traveled over 3,000 kilometers in the South China Sea, capturing extremely valuable photos of 11 whale species, including sperm whales. Many of these photos are China's first cetacean photos taken underwater in the South China Sea, showing the dedication of the researchers and the beauty of the ecology of the South China Sea in an all-round way, as shown in Figure 3.



Figure 3: "South China Sea turns out to be a sea of whales!" Xinhua Daily, 29 July 2020.

In pursuit of unique perspectives and exquisite visual effects, the reporter endured harsh conditions and used drones, underwater cameras, and other equipment to shoot from aerial, underwater, and ground angles. This multi-angle approach showcased the diversity of whale species in the South China Sea. The photos are not only unique and aesthetically pleasing, but also of great research value, confirming the existence of several rare species in the South China Sea. This report not only conveys the information about the diversity of species in the South China Sea, but also expresses the importance China attaches to the ecological protection of the South China Sea.

### 3. News Cartoons: Monitoring Public Opinion with a Small Amount of Vague Information

According to Marshall McLuhan, "cold media" is the opposite of "hot media" in that it conveys less information and is relatively vague, which requires the audience to mobilize multiple senses and give full play to their imagination. The audience needs to use multiple senses to cooperate with each other and give full play to their imagination to think at the same time<sup>[4]</sup>. As another genre of photo news, news cartoons often use metaphor, personification, exaggeration and other techniques to show the essential characteristics of things through witty and humorous images, and to reveal and comment on the problems and phenomena in social life. News cartoons are not as clear as photographic pictures, and readers need to think and imagine more when they understand what it conveys, so it is a cold medium.

News cartoons have a critical nature, which also allows them to celebrate and praise what is

good as well as expose and criticize bad phenomena<sup>[5]</sup>. Out of the eleven winning news cartoons, there were a total of five with a negative attitude, and all of them focused on political themes. This shows the role of news cartoons in monitoring public opinion, which is of great practical significance in news dissemination.

The cartoon “Look! I've put on a lot of locks” focuses on the prominent problem of formalism in the operation of power constraints and supervision. The cartoon depicts that although policy makers have symbolically locked the seal of power in a cage and placed many locks on it, they still hold the keys to these locks. This kind of "closed but not locked" behaviour is a formality, a sham, cannot play a due role, resulting in the loss of power constraints and supervision, as shown in Figure 4.

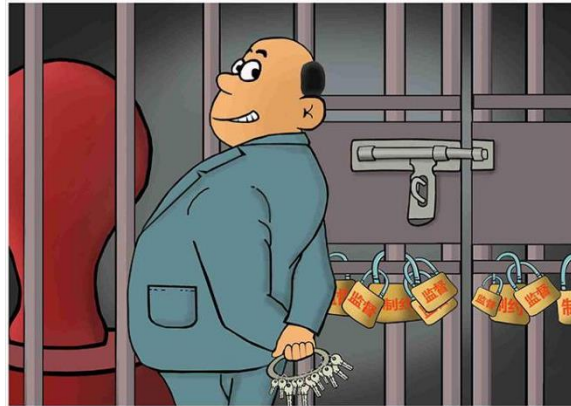


Figure 4: “Voila! I've got a lot of locks on” Hainan Daily, 26 Dec 2019.

"Put the power into the cage of the system" is a key to today's political construction and power supervision. However, in reality there are some formalist behaviour, it seems that there are many measures, but they are all for show, and cannot achieve any effect. This cartoon is thematically significant, imaginative, rich in humour, concise in conception and pungent in writing, satirizing and attacking the corruption problem that the constraints and supervision in the operation of power are in the form of formalities and virtual deficiencies.

To the grassroots research, this is to comprehensively collect "original" information, to provide a basis for scientific decision-making. And some research activities are in order to merely complete the task of research without empirical purposes. That is, policy makers first set the conclusion and then go to the grassroots level to find examples, so that the grassroots situation "in line with" the conclusion of the research. Such a reversal of priorities has fallen into the trap of formalism, making it impossible to solve real problems and turning the research into mere "window dressing", as shown in Figure 5.



Figure 5: “Shooting arrows before painting targets” Hainan Daily, 3 Jan 2020.

Formalism in research activities primarily stems from a mindset of lazy governance. With an



ostentatious style, they follow predetermined routes superficially, showing little concern for the real situation at the grassroots level. Decisions made in this way not only fail to solve practical problems, but also bring a burden to the grassroots work. With a novel concept, rich imagination, and a sense of humour, this news cartoon vividly satirizes the formalism, ostentation, and detachment from reality present in the mindsets and behaviour of some current officials.

#### 4. Conclusion

The difference between "hot media" and "cold media" lies in "clarity of information", "amount of information content" and "sensory involvement". The difference between "hot media" and "cold media" lies in the three aspects of "message clarity", "amount of information content" and "sensory involvement". Different media act on the audience in different ways, which will cause different psychological responses from the audience.

News photography is a "hot media" because it is intuitive and realistic in its presentation, with a high degree of information clarity, a high volume of information content and a low degree of sensory involvement. The common characteristics of the award-winning works are: strong journalism, on-site capture, strong expressive, clear images, well-produced, not only shows the activities of the characters, but also the environment in which the characters are located and the unique emotions, giving readers a refreshing feeling.

News comics are more implicit and virtual, with low clarity of information, small amount of information content and high sensory involvement, making them a "cold media". The common features of the award-winning works are: letting the audience get visual pleasure while acquiring information, and adding commentaries in the news report, which greatly satisfy the audience's demand for opinions.

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