

# *A Brief Discussion on the Emerging Trends of "Warm News" in Recent Years*

Naifeisi Abuduaini\*

*Shanghai University, 99 Shangda Road, Baoshan District, Shanghai, China*

*\*Corresponding author*

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**Abstract:** This paper explores the concept of "warm news" and its development in China and the United States, focusing on its evolution and generative mechanisms in both traditional and social media. By examining the role of media transformation, government policies, and audience needs, the paper highlights the key differences between the two countries in their adoption and dissemination of "warm news." It also predicts future trends and global implications, emphasizing how "warm news" contributes to positive social energy and addresses societal challenges in both nations.

## **1. Introduction**

According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, human needs are divided into five levels, from the lowest to the highest: physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs. The essence of social needs is the desire for friendship, trust, warmth, and love, while esteem and self-actualization encompass emotional needs.

"Warm news" meets people's needs in this regard. This indicates that the development of human society has fulfilled the majority of people's physiological and safety needs, thus turning to the pursuit of higher-level needs. This is also why "warm news" is bound to emerge in the field of journalism.

The concept of "warm news" did not originally exist in journalism. However, with the continuous development of practice, it has frequently been mentioned and used. To date, there is no clear definition of "warm news" in China. Professor Wang Chuanbao from the Department of Journalism and Communication at the Nanjing Political Academy of the PLA once defined "warm news" as a general term for certain types of news reports. Its major characteristic is the narration of positive stories, rather than being a clearly defined news genre. It provides audiences with a warm and touching reading experience<sup>[1]</sup>.

"Warm news" is a direct manifestation of human-centered journalism. It focuses on showcasing the beautiful life stories of ordinary people, which is significant in alleviating the anxiety faced by people in times of societal crisis.

In contrast to "cold news," which tends to expose falsehoods and evils, "warm news" seeks to report and explore truth, goodness, and beauty. The large amount of criticism, exposure, and unveiling in news, although truthful and reliable in conveying one side of the real world, overlooks the innate human desire for beautiful things. Readers not only need to understand the world through

the news but also draw energy in the process of understanding the world. "Warm news" precisely meets this need of readers. In addition, the emergence of "warm news" cannot be separated from government guidance. The government encourages media to focus on positive energy and promote social harmony, providing policy support for the rise of "warm news."

The concept and causes of "warm news" are closely related to factors such as social needs, media competition, policy guidance, and the spread of social media. "Warm news" is an emotional expression, created by focusing on the ordinary lives and everyday events of regular people. However, from the general classification of news, ordinary people and ordinary events do not necessarily make good news. So, how did "warm news" gradually occupy the news market and establish an important position in readers' minds?

## **2. "Warm News" in China**

### **2.1. The Evolution and Generative Mechanism of "Warm News" in China**

The evolution of "warm news" in China involves diversified media, policy support, the influence of social media, and public demand. The diversified development of China's media sector has provided opportunities for "warm news." Traditional media, such as television, newspapers, and magazines, as well as new media platforms like Weibo, WeChat, and Douyin, have all participated in the reporting and dissemination of "warm news."

The rise of social media platforms in China, especially Sina Weibo, has made it easier for "warm news" to spread. Many "warm news" stories have become popular topics on Weibo, quickly sparking wide discussions and sharing. Meanwhile, the Chinese government encourages positive news reporting, media to convey positive energy, and the promotion of social harmony. This policy support has, to some extent, facilitated the development of "warm news." At the same time, Chinese audiences, affected by stress and the fast-paced modern lifestyle, have increasingly pursued positive and uplifting news content, driving the media's focus on positive stories.

The generative mechanism of "warm news" in China involves topic planning, in-depth reporting, new media dissemination, social interaction, and public participation. "Warm news" uses the PUGC production model: news materials are solicited from a large user base for compensation and then professionally edited in the later stages. This model allows the public to participate in the dissemination process, granting people the rights and motivation to discover beauty, record warmth, and thus endowing "warm news" with real and powerful vitality<sup>[2]</sup>.

The composition of "warm news" usually involves live video complemented by corresponding text and music, creating an "on-site" viewing effect that not only conveys the key information of the news but also enhances emotional resonance and empathy. At the same time, the text of "warm news" on Weibo uses the news headline as a topic hashtag, making it easier for users to participate in discussions and enabling them to move toward value identification in conversations with other viewers<sup>[3]</sup>. By adhering to the operational logic of the internet and emphasizing the "human-centered" concept throughout the entire process from news production to user viewing, "warm news" effectively gathers "warm" energy and ultimately achieves value guidance.

### **2.2. The Development of "Warm News" in China**

The emergence of "warm news" in China can be traced back to around 2014, although the author believes it began with the 2003 program "Touched China." It has since become a widely recognized news genre, and people can grasp its meaning just from its name. Increasingly, more media outlets have begun to launch segments focusing on "warm news." Regarding "warm news," the establishment of the "Warm News" section on Phoenix Net marked a key moment in its recognition

in China. This has had a significant demonstrative effect on subsequent long-term practices.

As "warm news" gained popularity among the public, a phenomenon emerged where media reports on "warm news" became overly simplistic, focusing more on quantity than quality. In recent years, "warm news" has continued to follow the old model of seeking out people with unique professions or facing special difficulties. The dedication and selflessness of police officers, firefighters, and medical staff, or the inspiring lives of disabled individuals, single-parent families, and impoverished farmers, are often highlighted. This has led readers to become weary of the existing form of "warm news" and has encouraged its producers and platforms to shift from journalists and news agencies to social media influencers and new media platforms.

### **2.3. The Transition of "Warm News" in China from Traditional Media to Social Media - The Example of Journalists Turning into Social Media Influencers**

The core of the transformation of traditional media lies in the transformation of people. With the advent of the internet, the previous communication structure has begun to change, with the original "audience" becoming "users," and the distinction between transmitters and receivers blending. The value of the individual "person" has been greatly activated. The golden age of traditional media has long passed, while emerging media has rapidly developed. Social media influencers, who struggled to realize their ideals in traditional media, found development opportunities in the tides of the times, shedding the halos of journalists and hosts to create their own social media blueprints<sup>[4]</sup>.

Journalists choose to transition into social media influencers due to the reduction of job opportunities in traditional media, their dissatisfaction with the state of journalism, and the decline of established media organizations<sup>[5]</sup>. In addition, media professionals have many advantages when transitioning outside the system. Many have become experts in specific fields through long-term work, continuously accumulating knowledge, and forming valuable connections with experts or celebrities in their field, thus gaining access to more network resources. Moreover, their experience in traditional media has sharpened their market insights, allowing them to produce higher-quality video content and quickly identify business opportunities.

For example, at the end of 2012, former CCTV producer Luo Zhenyu started the video knowledge talk show "Logic Thinking" after leaving the network. In 2014, former Xinhua News Agency reporter Wu Xiaobo established the professional financial social media platform "Wu Xiaobo Channel"; former CCTV financial host Wang Kai created the parenting-focused social media platform "Uncle Kai's Storytelling"; and former chief reporter of Southern Metropolis Daily Fang Yimin founded "Rebeca's Fantastic World." These transitions of traditional media professionals into social media have attracted wide social attention. They focus on specialized production in specific fields, constructing self-media platforms with strong personal characteristics through platforms such as Weibo, WeChat, video media, and self-built apps.

Rising media figures have established strong personal brands based on their charismatic personalities. Fang Yimin, Luo Zhenyu, Wu Xiaobo, and Wang Xiaolei, among others, have become "internet celebrities." While building their own social media brands, they have also become opinion leaders and garnered the support of users. After transitioning from traditional media to social media, these individuals have gained increasing communication power and public opinion influence on social media platforms. They have even become forces capable of competing with traditional media, guiding public opinion and leading social trends.

The content published by these "internet celebrities" who transitioned from traditional media to social media is characterized by professionalism and diversity, while also providing emotional value to the audience. Many media professionals have entered platforms like Weibo, using their expertise not only to live-stream news, but also to interact with audiences and gather news leads through

social media.

If the definition of "warm news" is about empowering ordinary people and spreading positive content that brings a beneficial social impact, the content published by today's popular "internet celebrities" can be regarded as "new era 'warm news'."

In fact, whether the content published by media professionals who have transitioned into social media influencers, or the content published by other social media influencers, it cannot be classified as "news" in the traditional sense. However, it aligns with Lu Dingyi's definition of news as "the reporting of newly occurring facts." If the content they publish effectively spreads, highlights, praises, and promotes positive energy, then isn't it precisely "warm news"?

The transition of traditional media professionals into social media influencers represents the shift of "warm news" in China from traditional media to social media, providing evidence of this trend.

### 3. "Warm News" in the United States

#### 3.1. The Evolution and Generative Mechanism

When discussing foreign "warm news," the author must mention the first social media influencer to put the concept of "warm news" into practice, Weis Corbley, the founder of the Good News Network ([goodnewsnetwork.org](http://goodnewsnetwork.org)). In the 1990s, Weis Corbley participated in television news production in Washington D.C. She gradually realized that "today's television news creates a distorted perception of the truth because it often focuses on fragmented truths instead of the entire truth." Disappointed with mainstream news reporting in the U.S., she resigned from television in 1997 and founded the Good News Network. Thus, the concept of "warm news" is, in fact, a challenge to traditional journalistic values and an attempt to rebuild the relationship between the simulated news environment and the real world.

"Warm news" in the U.S. is similar to "warm news" in China, emphasizing positive emotions, touching stories, and socially uplifting values. However, American "warm news" has its unique evolution and generative mechanisms.

**Commercialization of media:** The U.S. media environment has long been market-driven and highly commercialized. This leads media outlets to focus on audience needs when reporting news, and positive, uplifting news is typically more popular.

**Media diversity:** The U.S. has a wide variety of media, including traditional print media, television, radio, online news portals, and social media. This diversity means that different types of news can find an audience across various platforms, including those seeking positive emotions.

**Social media dissemination:** People often share and comment on touching news stories on social media, thereby increasing the influence of these stories.

**Charity and social responsibility:** The U.S. has many charitable organizations, volunteer groups, and social responsibility programs. These organizations often collaborate with the media to promote positive news, encouraging social participation and charitable donations.

**Government and nonprofit involvement:** The U.S. government and nonprofit organizations frequently participate in positive news reporting, conveying policy information, social issues, and success stories, which also provides support for the emergence of warm news.

The generative mechanism of "warm news" in the U.S. includes topic selection and editorial choices, followed by interviews with the story's protagonists, gathering their personal experiences and emotions, and integrating these with various multimedia elements to enhance the story's emotional impact. Finally, media organizations encourage readers, viewers, and listeners to share their news reports on social media to expand the reach of the story.

### 3.2. The Transition of "Warm News" in the U.S. from Social Media to Traditional Media

The reporting principle of "warm news" in the U.S. is "to avoid political and controversial content and focus on positive energy in daily life." For example, the Good News Network once published a story titled "Foundation Spends \$6 Million to Let 100,000 New York Students Watch Hamilton." The Good News Network primarily focused on the "sponsorship" aspect, while The New York Times' report was fragmented, incorporating the historical theme of the American Revolution from the musical "Hamilton" into various sections of the report. It can be said that "history" rather than "charity" was the theme of The New York Times' report. What most distinguishes The New York Times' reporting style is its embedding of the value core of "pluralism" within its news texts. For example, racial issues and women's rights are important topics in mainstream American values, but the Good News Network rarely touches on these grand themes. Instead, it either focuses on small, heartwarming incidents in everyday life or reports on a meaningful slice of larger events.

This reporting angle serves as a survival strategy for social media in the intense media competition and, objectively, supplements the reporting framework of mainstream media.

On one hand, it represents the emotional resistance of readers and journalists to the mainstream media's tendency to cluster around negative news topics such as disasters, conflicts, political conspiracies, and economic crises. On the other hand, it reflects some people's aversion to the increasing ideological manipulation in news reporting.

This phenomenon has not only promoted the rise of self-media represented by the Good News Network but also led to the emergence of advocates of "warm news" among journalists, editors, and hosts in mainstream American media. The choice of "warm news" by media professionals in mainstream and traditional media indicates their criticism and reflection on the existing journalistic practices in American mainstream media. As a result, practitioners are few, and most are already well-established senior media figures. On the other hand, holding a critical and reflective stance does not imply a wholesale rejection of the existing news system. Rather, it is more about repairing and adjusting the current reporting principles.

If the concept of "warm news" in self-media and the practices of a few mainstream media practitioners were just a spark, in recent years, with the inclusion of traditional media like CNN and NBC, "warm news" has gradually spread and gained widespread influence. In the field of "warm news," self-media values brevity and simplicity, while traditional media is more formal: self-media focuses more on soft news, while traditional media favors hard news; self-media is filled with citizen journalism, whereas traditional media is more institutionally driven; self-media celebrates humanity, while traditional media promotes humanitarianism; self-media emphasizes the harmony between people and people, and between people and nature, while traditional media focuses on institutions' charitable acts and social welfare; self-media reports tend to be depoliticized, while traditional media's reports carry clear ideological signifiers<sup>[6]</sup>.

For example, in the traditional media domain, CNN created the "CNN Heroes" award in 2007, selecting 10 individuals globally each year who have made outstanding contributions to humanitarian aid. They are recognized and awarded a substantial cash prize. This award, named "Heroes," defines heroic acts as providing assistance and charity to vulnerable, marginalized, and disaster-stricken groups. The recognition and encouragement of such actions effectively bridge the gap between marginalized groups and mainstream society, acting as a form of social reconciliation.

On NBC's "Hire a Hero" channel, the concept of a hero is directed towards active or retired military personnel. In the post-9/11 era, under the shadow of terrorism threats, and amidst the frequent gun violence incidents across the U.S. leading to social instability, the construction and reinforcement of the ideology that "soldiers are heroes" has, on one hand, strengthened the sense of



honor among military personnel, and on the other, increased public reliance on and trust in the military, thereby contributing to social stability and security.

It can be seen that the "warm news" that originated from self-media has been effectively utilized by traditional media in the U.S., achieving the gradual transition of "warm news" from self-media to traditional media.

#### 4. Conclusion

"Warm news," whether in the U.S. or China, has played an important role in promoting social positive energy and uplifting social values. The development of "warm news" in the U.S. began with self-media and later introduced traditional media, while in China, it started with the guidance of traditional media and gradually transitioned to self-media's spontaneous production and dissemination. Thus, both countries have formed a situation where "warm news" develops and progresses in tandem in both self-media and traditional media.

If the advent of the internet has made public opinion more globally fluid, then the development and flourishing of "warm news" may imply that, in the future, the news industries of various countries will have more space for dialogue in terms of reporting concepts and perspectives. This will make the world a better place, enabling global citizens to face life's challenges with a positive attitude and thus driving the progress and development of the world.

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