

From Nostalgia to Legacy: Framing Zong Qinghou's Passing on WeChat by State-owned, Specialised and Private Media

Media Watch
16(3) 362–384, 2023
© The Author(s) 2023
Article reuse guidelines:
in.sagepub.com/journals-permissions-india
DOI: 10.1177/09760911251332825
journals.sagepub.com/home/mdw



Xinyue Zhang¹ and Changsong Wang¹ 

Abstract

This study examines the framing strategies used by state-owned media, specialised media and private we-media on WeChat following the passing of Zong Qinghou, a prominent Chinese entrepreneur. The objective is to understand how media outlets frame the event and construct Zong's legacy. The study adopts Zang Guoren's Three-level Frame Theory, which provides a structured framework for analysing media narratives through high-, middle- and low-level frames. An inductive approach is employed to analyse WeChat posts, allowing flexibility in examining various framing techniques and media influences. The research identifies distinct framing patterns by categorising posts based on the three media types. State-owned media emphasised Zong's achievements and contributions to social stability, while specialised media focused on his economic influence and business legacy. With its more personal tone, private we-media highlighted emotional tributes and public reflections on his impact. The findings reveal that the framing of Zong's passing varies significantly across media types, with state-owned outlets framing the event in nationalistic terms, specialised media highlighting economic aspects and private we-media offering a more personal, nostalgic perspective. This study contributes to understanding how media outlets shape public memory and legacy, offering implications for the role of platform-based media ecosystems in constructing collective narratives.

Keywords

Chinese social media, media framing, specialised media, state-owned media, we-media, WeChat official account