

## Postprint on the Control of Discourse Power of Local Radio and Television News in the Context of Converged Media

**Authors:** Zhao Xinchun

**Date:** 2023-10-08T00:00:00+00:00

### Abstract

The rapid development of new media and self-media has had a conspicuous impact on the discourse power of local broadcast television news. This weakening of discourse power has, to a certain extent, exacerbated the irrationality and disorderliness of information dissemination on new media platforms such as the internet. Only through meticulous research into the predicament of local broadcast television news discourse power within the context of converged media can we help local broadcast television media metamorphose. By leveraging new media, through deep media convergence, capitalizing on strengths while circumventing weaknesses, continuing to uphold the traditional journalistic professionalism of objectivity and impartiality, effectively controlling news discourse power, emerging from the predicament, and achieving rapid iterative development and swift takeoff.

### Full Text

#### Control of News Discourse Power in Local Radio and Television Under the Media Convergence Context

*(Zhumadian Radio and Television Station, Zhumadian, Henan 463000)*

**Abstract:** The rapid development of new media and self-media has visibly impacted the news discourse power of local radio and television stations. This weakening of discourse power has, to some extent, fueled the irrationality and disorderliness of information dissemination on new media platforms such as the internet. Only through meticulous examination of the dilemmas facing local radio and television news discourse power within the media convergence context can we help these local broadcast media emerge from their cocoon and transform into butterflies. By embracing new media and pursuing deep media integration, local stations can leverage their strengths while avoiding weaknesses,

continue to uphold the objective and impartial spirit of traditional journalistic professionalism, maintain control over news discourse power, overcome their predicaments, and achieve rapid iterative development.

**Keywords:** media convergence; local; radio and television; news discourse power; control

**Classification Number:** G214

**Document Code:** A

**Article ID:** 1671-0134 (2021) 07-035-03

**DOI:** 10.19483/j.cnki.11-4653/n.2021.07.009

**Citation Format:** Zhao Xinchun. Control of News Discourse Power in Local Radio and Television Under the Media Convergence Context [J]. China Media Technology, 2021(07): 35-37.

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, traditional media including radio and television have successively promoted media integration from central to local levels, creating their own converged and all-media platforms. In this context, how to seize opportunities, continue to carry forward the objective and impartial spirit of traditional journalistic professionalism, leverage the advantages of media convergence, and firmly grasp news discourse power has become an inevitable challenge for local radio and television.

## 1. Connotation and Requirements of Local Radio and Television Media Discourse Power

The term “news discourse” gradually gained prominence following the 1988 publication of *News as Discourse* by Teun A. van Dijk, Professor of Discourse Studies at the University of Amsterdam. In this book, the author analyzed news as a form of discourse for the first time, stating that “news discourse is not only an indicator of social context; it also reflects the personality traits of individuals and groups, serving as a linguistic fingerprint” [1], thereby revealing the ideological nature of news discourse. Since the rise of mass media, traditional media has monopolized discourse power, and news discourse power did not attract much attention. However, with the emergence of online social media, particularly blogs, some experts and scholars began to pay more attention to research on discourse power. In 2003, Zeng Qingxiang translated *News as Discourse* into Chinese, and since then numerous research articles on discourse power, public discourse power, and individual discourse power have emerged. In response to the widespread weakening of discourse power in local radio and television news, especially regarding public and breaking news, many specialized studies and explorations have appeared, such as Tang Yiwen’ s 2018 work *Deconstruction and Reconstruction of News Discourse Power in Prefecture-Level Television Stations Under the New Media Environment*, Cheng Junqing’ s *The Return of Discourse Power to Traditional News Media in the “Post-Truth Era”*, Huang Min’ s *Changes in News Discourse Characteristics and New Expectations in the New Media Era*, Xu Shiqi’ s 2019 *How News Media Can Reshape Discourse*

*Power in the Post-Truth Era*, and Jiang Yuecheng' s 2020 *A Brief Analysis of the Reconstruction of Newspaper News Discourse Power in the All-Media Era*.

Regarding news discourse power, Tang Yiwen defines it as “the ability and power to use news reporting to influence public opinion guidance, social behavior, and national policy” [2]. Jiang Yuecheng, in *A Brief Analysis of the Reconstruction of Newspaper News Discourse Power in the All-Media Era*, believes that “news discourse power is the potential real-world ability to influence public opinion guidance and social behavior through news reporting” [3].

Compared with national and provincial media, local radio and television stations are grassroots media that must not only fulfill the traditional media principle of “politicians running the station,” playing the role of the Party and government’ s mouthpiece and advocating for national and government interests, but also highlight their advantages as locally authoritative media “within reach” of the masses, connecting with the public, guiding public opinion, and telling local stories well. According to the operational characteristics of news, their news discourse power should include four requirements: First, immediacy of news reporting—whether they can appear at the news scene first and voice their perspective; second, dominance over news events—whether they can discover first-hand content, promptly respond to social concerns, and provide the “first interpretation” ; third, capacity to guide public opinion—whether they can conduct in-depth interviews and lead public opinion through agenda-setting; and fourth, the media’ s own influence—whether they can cultivate their own opinion leaders and possess discourse power in the new media sphere.

## 2.1 The Erosion of Traditional Journalistic Objectivity

Regarding the impact of new media on traditional mainstream media represented by radio, television, and newspapers, Liu Danling’ s 2012 article *Reconstruction in Dilemma: The Turn of Journalistic Professionalism in the New Media Context* analyzed four dimensions: professional media institutions, professional journalists, news itself, and news ethics. Among these, she mentioned the impact of new media on traditional news values, that is, traditional news discourse power: “They rely on their own interests, hobbies, and personal understanding to gather, produce, and release news, even placing strong emotional colors and value judgments within the information discourse, which in any case cannot guarantee an objective, impartial, and unbiased standard of news value” [4]. Under these circumstances, “the public can not only exert indirect influence on news through the market, but also exert direct influence on it by participating in news production, steering it toward a more individualized and extreme direction” [5]. This subjective selection of news deviates from the track of journalistic objectivity. In response to the phenomenon of “no longer believing in truth, only believing in feelings,” foreign scholar Ralph Keyes proposed the term “post-truth” in 2004. An important characteristic of this concept is that netizens make blind decisions and express opinions based on massive amounts of fragmented information. When they receive responses that match their own

emotions, they believe this is the truth of the matter. This is called “three men make a tiger” in traditional Chinese culture and “echo chamber effect” in Western sociology [6]. The disorderliness and irrationality of information release and dissemination in the new media era where “everyone has a microphone” has caused news to lose its basic attribute as a reference for people to cognize and understand the world, and the social guiding power of news discourse is gradually declining.

## 2.2 The Gradual Compression of Public Opinion Space

The rapid development of new media has provided individuals with more platforms and channels for expressing their demands, bringing unprecedented convenience to information release and rewriting the rules of traditional news and information dissemination. People who previously could only influence news reporting through contact and interaction with professional journalists can now, as long as they have a smartphone, casually shoot a video and release what they see and hear through Weibo, WeChat, Douyin, Kuaishou, Toutiao, and other platforms to express their emotions and opinions. This has completely broken the traditional threshold for news practitioners, turning them into what Michael Madsen calls “pan-journalists” [7]. At the same time, new media has also quickly divided and occupied the news public opinion territory of traditional media with its characteristics of convenience, interactivity, timeliness, all-time availability, and diversification. The increasingly structured and organized nature of the public opinion field has gradually marginalized the voice of traditional broadcast television and other traditional media, making the loss of news discourse power an indisputable fact. In the new media context, building converged and all-media platforms is an inevitable choice for local radio and television and other traditional media.

## 2.3 Failure to Fully Leverage Media Convergence Advantages

Whether in the new media era or against the backdrop of media convergence, there is a phenomenon worth deep reflection by local radio and television professionals: mainstream media, including self-operated converged media, always seem to be slower than new media in news reporting and dissemination, even including political news that has traditionally been controlled by radio and television. In 2020, a joint *Public Cognition and Information Dissemination Survey Report on “COVID-19”* by the State Information Center and the Nanjing University Network Communication Research Institute showed that 95% of people obtained epidemic information through mobile phones and 56% through computers [8]. Many news reports with tens of thousands of clicks did not come from new media or converged media created by local radio and television. Qian Liming, duty director of the Zhejiang Radio and Television Group Convergence Media Center, made a vivid statement in *Five Changes in Information Dissemination Under the New Media Context*: “What originally was the work of

media professionals in news release is now being done first by netizens” [9]. The inherent deficiencies of mainstream media-created converged media in terms of 引爆能力 (detonation capability), fermentation capability, online and offline promotion capability, and borderless diffusion capability make it difficult for local radio and television news discourse power to be demonstrated.

### 3. Reconstruction and Control of Local Radio and Television News Discourse Power

The rapid rise of new media is both a challenge and an opportunity for traditional media. It has brought the pain of forced reconstruction to traditional media, but also the dawn of complementary advantages through media convergence. Media convergence has opened a window for local radio and television to control news discourse power. To achieve this, local radio and television must accomplish the following aspects.

#### 3.1 Deep Integration

They must aggregate their own advantages and consciously embrace new media to make it serve their purposes. First, medium convergence. In traditional radio and television operations, radio and television were actually separate entities. Although many places have established radio and television stations and set up converged media centers through resource integration, barriers still exist in actual operations. Some places simply set up a new converged media center under the existing media framework, resulting in redundant structures and resource waste, with converged media advantages not prominent and comprehensive effectiveness not obvious. True media convergence must be the integration of advantages of various professional media, shifting from independent operation to joint operation to minimize human, material, and financial costs, thereby forming integrated advantages and improving news product quality. Second, channel convergence. In the traditional media era, media news often focused mainly on news topic selection, planning, interviewing, writing, editing, and review, with little consideration for news dissemination and promotion—basically, it ended once broadcast. In the media convergence context, facing massive information, dazzling dissemination platforms, and competition with homogeneous content, to master news discourse power, it is necessary not only to focus on news production but also to work hard on its dissemination, utilizing both traditional radio and television release channels and integrated new media channels. Through online and offline promotion, they must break through boundaries and geographical restrictions to achieve the widest dissemination, best reputation, greatest influence, and longest-lasting spread of their news. Third, content convergence. Nowadays, radio and television media also have their own websites, and subordinate media have their own WeChat, Weibo, and video accounts. By integrating text, sound, pictures, animation, video, and other forms of communication, they have broken the previous single reporting mode dominated by sound or images. “Panoramic news” has enhanced the discourse power of radio

and television news. In the UGC era of news information dissemination, where users generate or provide content, the massive amount of information provided by social platforms has long broken the closed loop of media dissemination. Content convergence means integrating the content advantages of traditional media, self-media, and new media to do a good job in news “processing of incoming materials,” building a strong media matrix, and maximizing the production model of “netizens produce and provide content, media does release and dissemination.”

### 3.2 Content is King

The problems of low-quality, homogeneous news have long been criticized by people in the internet era. To strengthen converged media and control news discourse power, traditional radio and television media must leverage their traditional advantages. First, in-depth reporting. In competition with new media that features fragmented information and rapid dissemination, local radio and television cannot compare in terms of information capacity and release speed. Naturally, selecting and copying homogeneous, low-quality content cannot attract audience interest. To possess their own news discourse power, they must be good at digging out stories behind online news, solidify their advantage in in-depth reporting, leverage their strengths while avoiding weaknesses, pursue victory through quality, and provide high-quality content for audiences. On November 28, 2016, a picture of a two-year-old girl whose head was caught in a second-floor anti-theft window and several migrant workers holding her up to save her was posted online with a few words—very much in line with new media information dissemination characteristics. However, upon receiving this news, Zhumadian Radio and Television Station journalists acted quickly, conducted in-depth interviews, and wrote *Zhumadian Migrant Workers “Hold-up Brothers” Hold Up the Hope of Life*, which completely restored the true process of the entire incident and the story behind the migrant workers’ rescue. It was forwarded by many online media as first-location, first-authoritative information, producing excellent publicity effects and winning the Henan News Award. Second, authoritative release. Despite the multi-channel nature of information release, and although some agencies and departments are no longer limited to traditional media like radio and television in information and news release, an undeniable fact is that the authoritative advantage of information release by traditional media such as radio and television has not been lost. After experiencing the dazzling “clickbait headlines,” one-sided information, and irrationality, many people have begun to call for rational and authoritative voices. This provides a buffer space for local radio and television and other traditional media that have been suppressed by the internet and new media, clarifying their 坚守领域 (areas to hold firm). The 2020 Zhumadian WeChat Communication Index (WCI) ranking list produced by the Huanghuai Public Opinion Big Data Research Center of Huanghuai University College of Culture and Media shows that traditional media converged media like the Zhumadian Radio and Television App “Palm Zhumadian” firmly rank in the top three in terms of click rates and effective reading volume, and people still recognize their authority in releasing current affairs

news and public information. Third, audience experience. An important reason for the rapid advancement of new media is its “user-centered” approach that attaches great importance to user experience. To obtain news discourse power, traditional radio and television, especially local stations, should establish 打动思维 (empathetic thinking), start from the audience perspective, strengthen their role and positioning as content providers, focus on what audiences care about as the innovation and 发力点 (focal point) of information dissemination, and use exquisite products, targeted services, and 感受式传播 (experiential communication) and 沉浸式体验 (immersive experience) to disseminate diverse, healthy, in-depth, and warm mainstream value news products to audiences.

### 3.3 Topic Leadership

In news theory, there is a professional term for topic leadership called “agenda-setting,” first proposed by Maxwell McCombs. Zhu Yi summarized its basic connotation as “news reporting and information communication activities influence people’s judgment of ‘major events’ and their importance in the surrounding world by granting various ‘issues’ different degrees of salience” [10]. In the current situation, news agenda-setters, or topic leaders, can be press spokespeople, news parties, media themselves, or opinion leaders. To control news discourse power and do a good job in topic leadership, local radio and television must: First, become the “first news source.” Due to the influence of traditional news thinking and broadcasting patterns, traditional radio and television often face a “time lag problem” in “agenda-setting.” In reporting some emergencies, they cannot be on the scene as quickly as social media. Although these on-site news or information may be false and one-sided, leading to “post-truth” news phenomena, their speed cannot be denied. With the deepening of traditional media convergence, radio and television converged media platforms often also have many tip-offs from enthusiastic audiences, creating conditions for traditional media to build a “first news source.” What local radio and television need to do is change their traditional thinking that focuses on result reporting and effect reporting, and use converged and new media platforms to release more news, instant news, rolling news, and process news to seize the initiative in public opinion, issue authoritative voices first, satisfy the public’s right to first-time information, and build a “first news source” that has the right to speak on the first scene and the right to first interpretation. In martial arts, speed is the only thing that cannot be broken; if you cannot be fast, news discourse power will be weakened. Second, cultivate grassroots opinion leaders. In recent years, central radio and television stations have successively introduced news commentators, who are opinion leaders cultivated by traditional media. For local radio and television to seek development, they have proposed a brand-name construction strategy, focusing on building famous hosts and famous journalists, but they should also include the cultivation of grassroots opinion leaders. These grassroots opinion leaders can be senior editors and reporters from the station who are often rooted at the grassroots level, or they can be social figures who are familiar with the mass discourse system. The purpose of cultivating them is to 疏通 (unblock) the

“bottom-up” channel for opinion expression through the circular path of “radio and television news—grassroots opinion leaders—ordinary masses” [11], provide convenient channels and potential energy for individual users to express their demands, allow the discourse power of “ordinary people” to be fully released, and simultaneously implant rational discourse into the mass discourse system and opinion appeals, ensuring that rational voices are never absent in the new media era represented by “three micro-ends” (Weibo, WeChat, micro-videos, and news clients).

- References:** [1] [Netherlands] Teun A. van Dijk, translated by Zeng Qingxiang. *News as Discourse* [M]. Beijing: Huaxia Publishing House, 2003.
- [2][11] Tang Yiwen. Deconstruction and Reconstruction of News Discourse Power in Prefecture-Level Television Stations Under the New Media Environment [J]. *Radio & TV Journal*, 2018(3): 25-26.
- [3] Jiang Yuecheng. A Brief Analysis of the Reconstruction of Newspaper News Discourse Power in the All-Media Era [J]. *Military Correspondent*, 2020(8).
- [4][5] Liu Danling. Reconstruction in Dilemma: The Turn of Journalistic Professionalism in the New Media Context [J]. *Nanjing Social Sciences*, 2012(2): 109-116.
- [6] Xu Shiqi. How News Media Can Reshape Discourse Power in the Post-Truth Era [EB/OL]. *The Paper*, [https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail\\_{{forward}}\\_{{5086447}}](https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_{{forward}}_{{5086447}}), 2019-11-29.
- [7][USA] Michael Madsen, translated by Xu Guiquan. *The Sociology of News* [M]. Beijing: Huaxia Publishing House, 2010.
- [8] State Information Center, Nanjing University Network Communication Research Institute. *Public Cognition and Information Dissemination Survey Report on “COVID-19”* [EB/OL]. *People’s Daily Online*, <http://media.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0226/c14677-31606056.html>, 2020-2-26.
- [9] Qian Liming. Five Changes in Information Dissemination Under the New Media Context [J]. *Urban Party Newspaper Research*, 2018(7): 40-43.
- [10] Zhu Yi. Convergence or Divergence—A Comparison of Framing Theory and Second-Level Agenda Setting from Multiple Perspectives [J]. *Consume Guide*, 2009(7): 191.

**Author Introduction:** Zhao Xinchun (1972-), male, from Zhumadian, Henan, Director Editor. Research direction: Radio and television news.

**(Responsible Editor: Zhang Xiaoqing)**

*Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.*

*Source: ChinaXiv – Machine translation. Verify with original.*