

AGENDA SETTING AND ITS CHARACTERISTICS

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Статията обяснява важността на масмедиаите, които вземат участие в подреждането и организирането на света около нас. Разгледани са също особеностите на формиране на дневния ред, ефекта на рамкиране и ефекта на активизиране.

Agenda Setting is the process whereby the mass media determine what we think and worry about. Walter Lippmann, a journalist first observed this function, in the 1920's. Lippmann then pointed out that the media dominate over the creation of pictures in our head, he believed that the public reacts not to actual events but to the pictures in our head. Therefore the agenda setting process is used to remodel all the events occurring in our environment, into a simpler model before we deal with it.

Researchers Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw have then followed this concept. They as pointed out by Lippmann have best described the agenda setting and point out that there is abundantly collected evidence that editors and broadcasters play an important part as they go through their day to day tasks in deciding and publicizing news. This impact of the mass media – the ability to effect cognitive change among individuals, to structure their thinking – has been labelled the agenda-setting function of mass communication. Here may lie the most important effect of mass communication, its ability to mentally order and organize our world for us. In short, the mass media may not be successful in telling us “what to think, but they are stunningly successful in telling us what to think about.” (McCombs and Shaw, 1972)

The agenda-setting functioned as a 3-part-process:

1. Media Agenda - issues discussed in the media;
2. Public Agenda - issues discussed and personally relevant to the public;
3. Policy Agenda - issues that policy makers consider important.

One of the debates between researchers is the questions of causality: does the media agenda cause the public agenda, or vice-versa? Iyengar and Kinder established causality with an experimental study where they identified that priming, vividness of presentation and position were all determinants of the importance given to a news story. However, the question of

whether there is an influence of the public agenda on the media agenda is open to discussion.

Agenda Setting has two levels. As mentioned in Theories of Communication, the first level enacts the common subjects that are most important, and the second level decides what parts of the subject are important. These two levels of agenda setting lead path into what is the function of this concept. This concept is process that is divided into three parts according to Rogers and Dearing (1996). The first part of the process is the importance of the issues that are going to be discussed in the media. Second, the issues discussed in the media have an impact on the way the public thinks, this is referred as public agenda. Ultimately the public agenda influences the policy agenda. Furthermore "the media agenda affects the public agenda, and the public agenda affects the policy agenda." (Littlejohn, 2002).

Many factors can affect agenda setting, they may be the combination of gatekeepers, editors and managers, and external influences. These external influences may be from nonmedia sources, government officials and influential individuals. These factors affect the agenda setting process to an extent that depending what power each factor may have will eventually influence the media agenda.

In order to understand the nuances of agenda setting, an understanding of frames, schema and priming is essential. This is primarily because they are the elements that go into setting an agenda. McCombs and Ghanem (2001) discuss the common ground between agenda setting and framing and state that they both tell us how to think about things.

According to Entman (1993), frames call attention to some aspects of reality while obscuring other elements, which might lead audiences to have different reactions. They provide a context to understand issues. Frames make interpretation possible and can alter the kinds of inferences made. Journalists use syntax, themes, script and rhetoric to frame news. Fisk and Taylor defined schemas as cognitive structures that represent knowledge about a concept or type of stimulus, including its attributes and the relations among those attributes. Priming, according to Iyengar and Kinder (1987) is a psychological process whereby media emphasis. One of the major accomplishments of applying the priming theory to agenda-setting research has been that it provided as plausible, theoretical model of how the media might influence people's perception of the importance of issues or events and how these perceptions in turn might affect political attitudes, opinions and behaviors.

The cognitive basis for framing effects is (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997):

1. Knowledge of issues is organized as connections among concepts or constructs in memory ('nodes') that differ in how easily they can be accessed.

2. The pattern of connections is through associates (sometimes hierarchical ones); activation spreads through the knowledge store along these lines of association.

3. Access to knowledge depends on activation, which in turn depends on recency and frequency of prior activation, chronic ease of access and current external stimulation.