

Agenda Setting Theory

The influence of media affects the presentation of the reports and issues made in the news that affects the public mind. The news reports make it in a way that when a particular news report is given importance and attention than other news the audience will automatically perceive it as the most important news and information are given to them. The priorities of which news comes first and then the next are set by the media according to how people think and how much influence will it have among the audience.

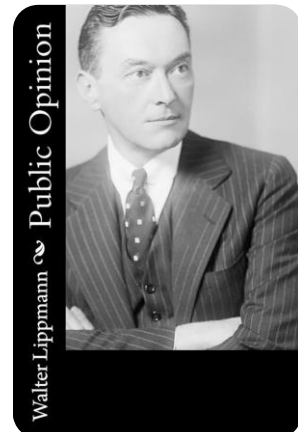
The central idea of agenda-setting theory is that elements emphasized by the mass media come to be regarded as important by the public. The salience of both objects and



their attributes on the media agenda, which is defined by the pattern of news coverage for public issues, political leaders, or other topics, influences the salience of those objects and their attributes on the public agenda

History

The idea of agenda setting can be traced back in the 1920s when **Water Lippmann** (1992), journalist and social commentator, argued in his *Public Opinion* that people were not capable of directly experiencing the bigger world, thus had to rely on the images and messages constructed by news media to form perceptions. **Bernard Cohen** (1963) refined Lippmann's ideas by pointing out that the media do not tell people what to think, but what to think about. **Maxwell McCombs** and **Donald Shaw** (1972) first put this idea to empirical test by comparing news media agenda and public agenda during the 1968 US presidential election. Their study found strong correlations between the prominent issues of the news media and the leading public issues.



in their first article where they brought this theory to light their abstract states:

In choosing and displaying news, editors, newsroom staff, and broadcasters play an important part in shaping political reality. Readers learn not only about a given issue, but also how much importance to attach to that issue from the amount of information in a news story and its position. In reflecting what candidates are saying during a campaign, the mass media may well determine the important issues—that is, the media may set the “agenda” of the campaign.

These are the levels of agenda setting theory:

First Level:

The first level is usually used by the researchers to study media uses and its objectives or the influences that media creates on people and the most proximal thought that people will have on the exposure to the information given by media house.

Second level:

At the second level, the media focuses on how people should think about the nature of the issues. Thus, sensationalization of news reports may happen to bring in the interest of the audience. In fact, media wants to grab attention and implant thoughts in people minds about some serious issues. That's why media turn certain issues viral.

Types of Agenda Setting

1. Policy agenda-setting – the public and media agendas influence decisions being made by the political elite.
2. Media agenda-setting – journalists, editors, newsroom staff and media institutions shape the political reality by choosing which stories to broadcast
3. Public agenda-setting – the public determines the agenda¹.

Example

The royal wedding of Prince William to Kate Middleton, which mesmerised the world, including parts of the world that have no connection to the British monarchy. Discerning audiences may well ask why the wedding of two people, who are in no way related to them, is

¹ <https://media-studies.com/agenda-setting-theory/>

important enough to justify worldwide media attention, or indeed, how and why it might be relevant to them?

Exercise 1

- What is the main idea of agenda theory?
- Talk about the influence in this theory ?
- When did the theory appear and who are its scientists?
- What type of communication does this theory explain? And why

Exercise 2

- Extract some terms of the theory and then translate them into Arabic
- Translate to Arabic:

Topics– issues– political debate– political content– slogans– stereotypes– framing

Exercise 3

Complete the text with the appropriate word.

reality –public agenda– to think– selectively– prominence– ideology– interests–

Also known as The Agenda Setting Function of the Mass Media, it was first put forth by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972 in Public Opinion .They originally suggested that the media sets the, in the sense that they may not exactly tell you what....., but they may tell you what to think about.

The media..... highlights certain events and gives them..... The criteria for the selection depends very much on theof the media editors and their vested..... By highlighting certain events an uncritical audience will perceive and construct the mediatedas reality.