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New Media in China and Kazakhstan: The Information Agenda in the Context of Modernization

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Abstract

Agenda-setting is a theory that examines the reconfiguration of the mass environment. Since 1968, when American communication scholars McCombs and Shaw began to systematically study the agenda-setting effect of mass communication, scholars around the world have conducted in-depth discussions on the topic and developed a number of theoretical hypotheses, including "attribute agenda-setting," "agenda fusion," "agenda setting by attributes," "agenda fusion," and "agenda setting by affiliated networks." To date, the concept of "agenda setting" remains a significant area of interest for scholars engaged in the study of public opinion.

Keyword

sagenda setting, new media, communication, Kazakhstan, China

1. Introduction

Agenda-setting is a theory that examines the reconfiguration of the mass environment. Since 1968, when American communication scholars McCombs and Shaw began to systematically study the agenda-setting effect of mass communication, scholars around the world have conducted in-depth discussions on the topic and developed a number of theoretical hypotheses, including "attribute agenda-setting," "agenda fusion," "agenda setting by attributes," "agenda fusion," and "agenda setting by affiliated networks." To date, the perspective of agenda setting remains a significant area of interest for scholars seeking to understand the evolution of public opinion.

As one of the most significant theories in the field of communication science, agenda setting has been developed over decades since its initial proposal, and a relatively mature theory has been established to

date. From its initial assumptions to its continuous improvement of the theoretical framework, and then to its further expansion in the network era, agenda setting has been imbued with new connotations in light of the changes of the times. At the same time, agenda setting has received increasing attention from academics in the process of being introduced into the country, and has undergone a new development in the continuous innovation of new media. A comparison of the information agendas of China and the Republic of Kazakhstan allows us to gain insight into the current situation of agenda setting in the two countries. This comparison offers scholars in both countries a reference point and an opportunity to draw inspiration for future research.

2. Research Directions for Agenda-Setting in the New Media Environment

The data for this study was gathered from the works of Chinese and foreign scientists in Kazakhstan. The research centers in the field of agenda setting in new media were examined, as well as the specifics of communication development in Kazakhstan and China.

The traditional view of agenda setting posits that the media exerts a strong influence on the public's judgment of the factual order of issues. However, as more scholars joined the field, it was found that agenda setting also has a strong influence on the public's value judgment. Subsequently, McCombs et al. began to examine the impact of the mass media on the attributes of issues and proposed the theory of attribute agenda setting, which posits that the mass media can influence individuals' perceptions of events by emphasizing specific attributes of issues. It is posited that the mass media can influence people's views on events by emphasizing certain issue attributes. This implies that the mass media can not only influence what people "think," but also influence how the public "thinks (Negroponte, 1996)." As a theory of communication effect, agenda-setting theory primarily concerns itself with the manner in which the mass media affects the audience's cognition. In essence, it expresses the concern between the media and democracy. In the pre-internet era, television and radio were widely popularized, and the presidential election became more of a media spectacle. The news media's coverage became an important force in determining the democratic process of society. The media's attribute of news highlighted the direction of the election. A number of presidents, including Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan, were subjected to the influence of the agenda attribute of the press. In the audience's mind, the agenda-setting theory is the main discussion of how mass media affects audience perception, and it has presented different impressions in the minds of its audiences (SHI & WANG, 2024).

The data indicate that over the past five years, there have been 148, 38, and 14 articles related to the three phases of agenda-setting theory, respectively. It is evident that the use of traditional agenda-setting theory to analyze the media effects remains the mainstream approach. However, it is noteworthy that research on online agenda-setting is also increasing. A further analysis of the specific research content of the three levels of agenda-setting theory reveals that political and public policy research represents the mainstream of agenda-setting theory (Maxwell, 2008).

3. Information Agendas in China and Republic of kazakhstan: Comparative Analys

Since the American communication scholars McCombs and Shaw began to systematically study the agenda-setting effect of mass communication in 1968, scholars worldwide have conducted in-depth discussions on the topic, extending the concepts of "attribute agenda-setting," "agenda fusion," "agenda construction," "relational network agenda-setting," and others based on this research. The following section will examine the evolution of agenda setting in the context of the new media environment, with a particular focus on the classical agenda setting research.

Media Ecology: The origins of agenda-setting theory can be traced back to the 1960s, a period when traditional media, such as newspapers, radio, and television, were the dominant forms of mass communication. However, with the advent and proliferation of the Internet, online media has emerged as the dominant medium of communication. China and Kazakhstan are situated in disparate historical media environments, which has led to divergent developments in early agenda setting. The study employs a multi-method approach, including survey, content analysis, and comparative methods, to investigate agenda setting in the current new media environment between the two countries.

The operational mechanism has undergone a complete reversal: in the era of interconnection, the conventional mode of information dissemination has been entirely transformed, and a two-way flow of information has been established. The power center of agenda setting has also begun to shift. The one-way flow of traditional agenda setting from the media to the public has gradually transformed into a multi-directional flow of social media, news aggregators, individuals, and traditional media.

At the macro level, national characteristics (e.g., media and political systems) between the two countries should be emphasized and valued as important conditioning factors. It remains to be seen how effective the relational network agenda-setting will be based on the Chinese and Kazakhstani communication arenas. At the micro level, the type of issue, the type of media, and the characteristics of the public are all important intermediate variables in agenda-setting effectiveness.

3.1 Comparative Analysis of Information Agendas: Substantive and Formal Characteristics in China and Kazakhstan

China's information agenda is typically focused on matters of national development, policy priorities, social stability, economic growth, scientific and technological innovation, and other significant issues. The agenda is often employed to publicize the policies of the Party and the government, advocate for socialist core values, and promote national development. Given its vast population, China's information agenda encompasses elements of guiding public opinion and influencing public opinion. This agenda serves to enhance the reputation of the country and the government by disseminating positive information and shaping a favorable image.

Formal Characteristics: China's information agenda is primarily disseminated and carried by official media outlets, including CCTV, Xinhua News Agency, and other official organizations. China's information agenda is disseminated in various forms, including text, images, videos, and other media formats, to meet the diverse needs of different audiences. With the advent of new media, China's

information agenda is also disseminated on the Internet, social media, and other platforms, forming a multi-channel and three-dimensional communication pattern. The Chinese government exercises control over the dissemination of information, imposing restrictions on the reporting of sensitive topics in order to ensure the stability and safety of information dissemination.

In terms of substance, Kazakhstan's information agenda encompasses a range of key areas pertaining to national development, including economic, political, social, and cultural issues. The overarching objective of this agenda is to facilitate national development. The content of Kazakhstan's information agenda is similarly multifaceted, encompassing a diverse array of topics related to domestic and international events, policy developments, social issues, cultural activities, and more. This breadth of coverage is designed to meet the diverse needs of various audiences. In contrast to China, Kazakhstan has a relatively high degree of freedom of expression, despite certain restrictions. The media are afforded a certain degree of freedom to report on critical views and sensitive topics.

Formal Characteristics: Kazakhstan's information agenda is diverse in terms of the forms of dissemination, including traditional media such as newspapers and television stations, as well as emerging media such as Internet news sites and social media, forming a multi-channel communication pattern. Despite the existence of a certain amount of private media, the information agenda in Kazakhstan is still dominated by state-owned media, and government agencies and government-controlled media play an important role in information dissemination. As Kazakhstan is a multiethnic country, the information agenda typically encompasses multiple languages, including Kazakh, Russian, and others, to meet the information needs of diverse ethnic and linguistic groups.

The author compares the information agendas of China and Kazakhstan and finds that they share many similarities in terms of their substantive features. Both countries prioritize national development, propaganda and guidance, and diversity of reporting. However, the formal features of the two countries are significantly different. China's media landscape is dominated by the official media, with extensive multi-media dissemination and content control. Kazakhstan, on the other hand, has a more diverse media landscape and linguistic diversity.

Despite the growing prominence of online platforms, traditional media outlets such as newspapers, television, and radio continue to exert considerable influence on the shaping of China's new media agenda. State-controlled traditional media remain an important tool for disseminating official discourse and propaganda. In Kazakhstan, traditional media also play a role in agenda-setting, especially among the elderly population and in rural areas where Internet penetration is low. However, with the growing popularity of online platforms, the influence of traditional media is declining.

In China, the majority of news and social media content is consumed on platforms such as WeChat, Weibo, and Tencent QQ, all of which are domestic digital media platforms and content ecosystems. These platforms offer a variety of multimedia content and interactive features. In Kazakhstan, the most popular platforms include VKontakte (VK), WhatsApp, and Instagram, among others. Social media use in Kazakhstan is influenced by local and global trends (DIGITAL, 2023).

Although there are similarities between the new media agendas of China and Kazakhstan, differences in language, national policies, and cultural influences determine the way information is presented and disseminated in both countries.

4. Conclusion

Rather than replicating existing models, it is imperative that distinct socio-cultural forms are firmly anchored in their intrinsic cultural characteristics and open to the influence of other social forms[5]. This will facilitate the formation of a multicultural, heterogeneously interconnected network society. "The factors influencing the operation and development of media systems in China and Kazakhstan are also markedly distinct. Consequently, new media research in the two countries should be grounded in disparate contexts, histories, and socio-political developments, rather than being merely imitative and employed to construct new media perspectives that are suitable for different countries in transition." In light of the context of globalization, the new media ecology, and the overall transformation of communication research, it is essential to consider the macro impact of social structure, as well as the role of new media at the level of personal experience. This necessitates striking a balance between macro theories and micro perspectives.

China has a long cultural tradition, a large population, a vast territory, and great cultural differences. Media agendas are usually influenced by social hotspots, cultural trends, and public opinion orientations. Additionally, traditional culture and values exert an influence. Kazakhstan is a multiethnic and multicultural country, and the media agenda is similarly influenced by different ethnicities and cultures. Religion, language, ethnic relations, and other factors also play a role in media coverage and agendas.

Consequently, the formation of the agendas of the media systems in China and Kazakhstan is influenced by a combination of political, economic, cultural, and social factors. Although there are notable differences in the media environments of the two countries, both are to some extent influenced by a number of factors, including government control, economic interests, and cultural traditions.

Consequently, Kazakhstan's media are at the vanguard of the digital transformation agenda and play an important role in shaping public perceptions of technological innovation. This is evident in the positive narratives promoting Kazakhstan's progress and modernization. This has implications for public awareness, policy development, and Kazakhstan's positioning as a competitor in the global digital economy. In contrast, Chinese media are seeking to expand their influence in the global media market through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and investments in international media organizations. Central Asian countries, as key partners in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), can benefit from China's experience in using media as a tool for projecting soft power and shaping the region's image. The experiences of Central Asian media players in building international partnerships, producing content for global audiences, and utilizing media to achieve diplomatic goals are all relevant to the region.

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