Agenda setting:

An agenda is a list of items (or a list of priorities: what is more important and what is less important), usually in descending order of importance for example: different types of meetings have different agendas.

> The definition of agenda setting refers to setting goals or outlining a plan of action that you or others should take.

Agenda setting is one the possible ways that the mass media have an effect on the public. Agenda setting is the idea that the news media, by their display of news come to determine the issues the public thinks about and talks about. Or the mass media attention to an issue causing issue that issue to be elevated in importance to the public. Just as program content shapes our perceptions of society by focusing attention on certain types of actions, characters, and issues, the mass media by defining the political issues and the amount of attention to attach to a specific topic set the agenda for public discussion.

"The agenda setting hypothesis assumes that a direct positive relationship exists between media c overage and the salience of a topic in the public mind".(cassata & Asante , 1979)

The relationship is stated in causal terms: by conferring status on an issue, the media structure what is important.

As Bernard Cohen(1963) stated, " the press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about."

The link between media agendas and public perception of what constitutes news is a vital one to explore. if the public look to the media for news what the media decides is news. What is emphasized by the media is given emphasize in the public perception; what is amplified by media in enlarged in public perception.

Researchers Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw have then followed this concept. McCombs and Shaw as pointed out by Littlejohn have best described the agenda setting function in their book *Emergence of American Political Issues.* In this book the authors 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 labeled 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)

MCCOMBS& SHAW,s Agenda Setting model:

Figure 4.4 McCombs and Shaw's Agenda-setting Model of Media Effects (1976).
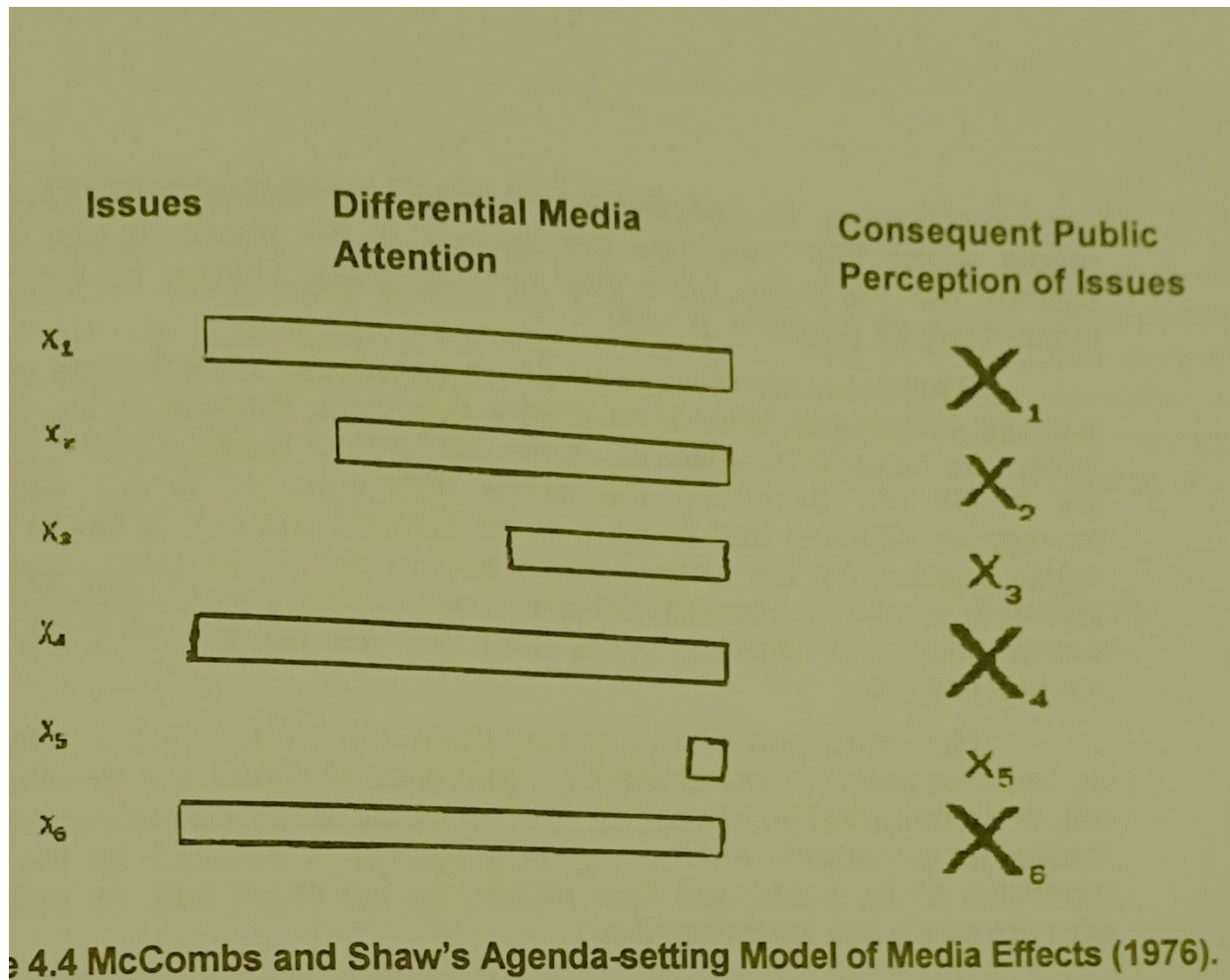
X: Represents chart of issues whose importance is amplified by coverage in the media. Even issues of considerable importance may remain of modest or negligible significances in public perception if they suffer media neglect.

The authors of the model state in "structuring the unseen environment". Audiences not only learn about public issues and other matters from the emphasis of mass media place upon it.

Amplification of issues:

Macomb's and Shaw argue that agenda setting capacity of the media makes them highly influential in shaping public perceptions of the world. This ability to affect cognitive change among individuals is one the most important aspects of the power of mass communication.

But this model does not tell us whether effects are direct, or from the point of view of media, intentional.

Rogers & Dearing's model of Agenda setting:

A later model of agenda setting is posed by Rogers and Dearing(1988). This identifies three interactive agendas. The policy agenda is that propagated by government and politicians. This model is a useful and updated of Macomb's and Shaw, but one might ask why three agendas are presented in equal size and equal power. Because the model is linear one , it does not sufficiently indicates the dynamic relationship between agendas or the potential for conflict..
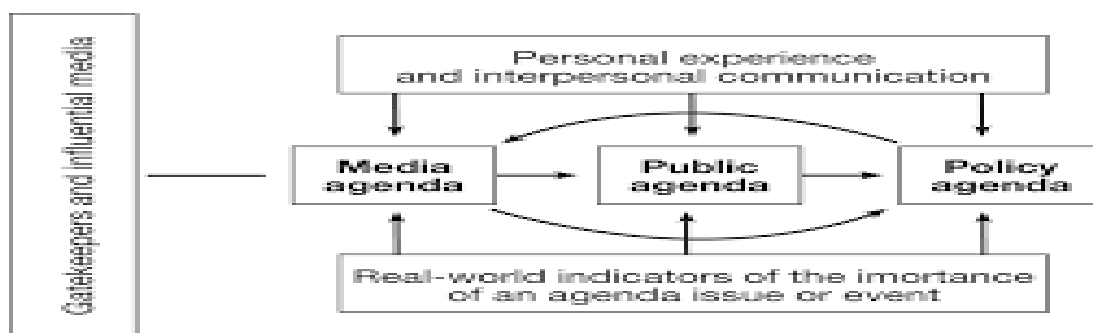
Watson's Tri polar Model of agendas.

Watson (2003) illustrates that to focus on the actual distribution of influence one would have to add an extra agenda that of the corporations which dominate contemporary life. Corporate agendas often work in alliance with, in competition with, the government agenda, aiming to influence public agendas.

Source: Watson 2003.

Figure 4.6   Watson (2003) Tri Polar Model of Agendas: Policy, Corporate And Media.
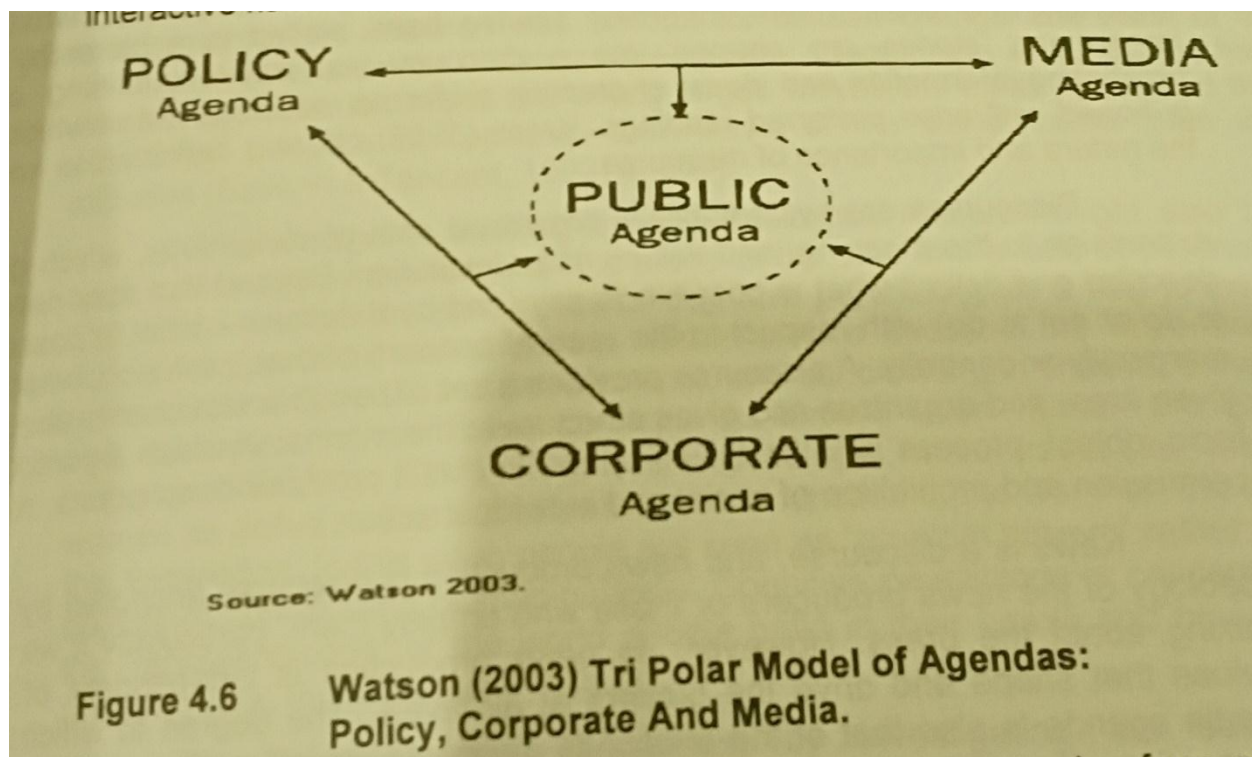
Creation of agenda setting.

Agenda-setting is the creation of public awareness and concern of salient issues by the news media. As well, agenda-setting describes the way that media attempts to influence viewers, and

establish a hierarchy of news prevalence. Two basic assumptions underlie most researches on agenda-setting:

1. the press and the media do not reflect reality; they filter and shape it;
2. media concentration on a few issues and subjects leads the public to perceive those issues as more important than other issues.

These core statements were established by measuring the changes in salience through the use of surveys with the presence of more frequent news coverage.

One of the most critical aspects in the concept of an agenda-setting role of mass communication is the time frame for this phenomenon. In addition, different media have different agenda-setting potential. From the perspective of agenda setting, the analysis of the relationship between traditional media and new virtual spaces has witnessed growing momentum.

Three types of agenda-setting

The research on the effect of agenda setting compares the salience of issues in news content with the public perceptions of the most important issue, and then analyses the extent of influence by guidance of the media. There are three models assumed by Max McCombs: the awareness model, the priorities model and the salience model. Most investigations are centered on these three models. In the research, the dependent variables are media agenda, audience agenda and policy agenda as listed in the following part. Rogers and Dearing identify three types of agenda setting:

1. public agenda setting, in which the public's agenda is the dependent variable (the traditional hypothesis)
2. media agenda setting, in which the media's agenda is treated as the dependent variable ("agenda building")

3. policy agenda setting, in which elite policy makers' agendas are treated as the dependent variable ("political agenda setting")

Mass communication research, Rogers and Dearing argue, has focused a great deal on public agenda setting - e.g., McCombs and Shaw, 1972 - and media agenda setting, but has largely ignored policy agenda setting.

Who sets media agenda?
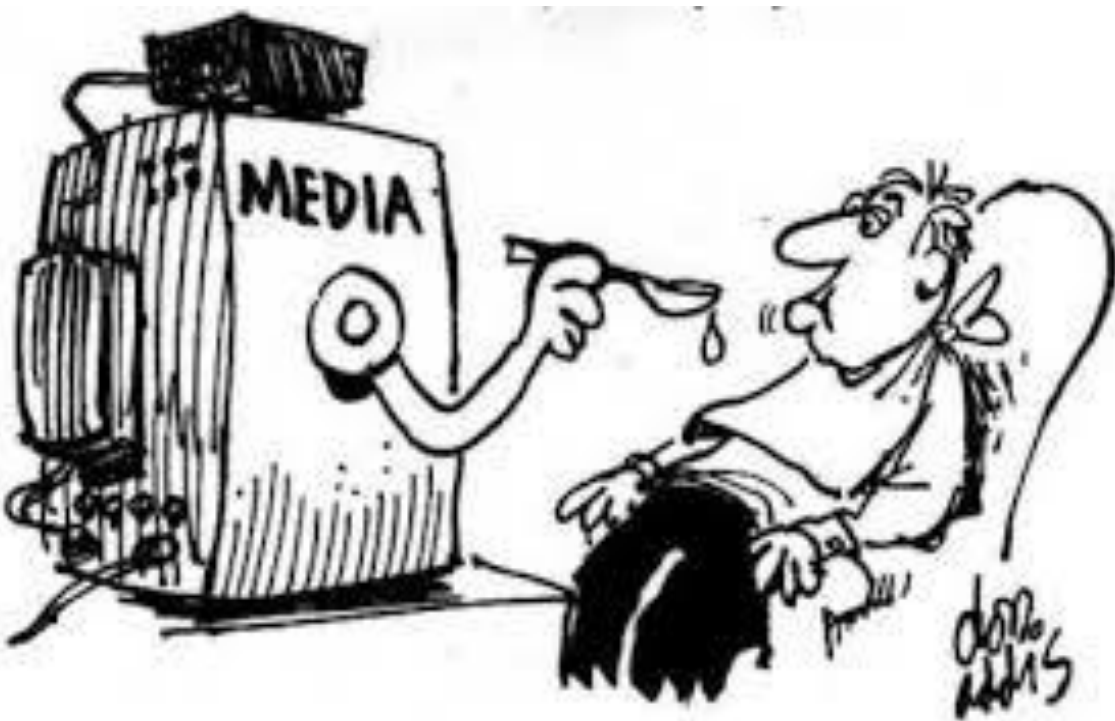
Influence of ideology. The ideology represents society level phenomena

- ➤ influence individual media workers.
- ➤ Influence of media routines.
- ➤ Organizational influence on content.
- ➤ Influence on content from outside of media organization.

Uses and Gratification Theory

Definition:

Uses and Gratification Theory is a popular approach to understanding mass communication. The theory places more focus on the consumer, or audience, instead of the actual message itself by asking "what people do with media" rather than "what media does to people" (Katz, 1959).

It assumes that members of the audience are not passive but take an active role in interpreting and integrating media into their own lives. The theory also holds that audiences are responsible for choosing media to meet their needs. The approach suggests that people use the media to fulfill specific gratifications. This theory would then imply that the media compete against other information sources for viewers gratification. (Katz, E., Blumler ,J.G., & Gurevitch, M. 1974)

An example: A person watching television may choose to watch the commercials or choose to change the channel.

History and Orientation:

Originated in the 1970s as a reaction to traditional mass communication research emphasizing the sender and the message. Stressing the active audience and user instead. Psychological orientation taking needs, motives and gratifications of media users as the main point of departure.

Basic Model:

It is suggested that the uses and gratification theory has to fulfill one the following when we choose a form of media:

Identify:

Being able to recognize the product or person in front of you, role models that reflect similar values to yours, aspiration to be someone else.

Educate:

Being able to acquire information, knowledge and understanding.

Entertain:

What you are consuming should give you enjoyment and also some form of escapism enabling us to forget our worries temporarily.

Social Interaction:

The ability for media products to produce a topic of conversation between other people, sparks debates (etc who is left on the x factor)

In UGT:
- The audience chooses which message will be received and acted upon.
- The audience also has an influence on the media.
- Grants power to the individual audience members.

Favorite Method:
- Qualitative and quantitative questionnaires and observations among individual users of media.

- Demographics, usage patterns, rating scales of needs, motivation and gratification.

• Difference between Uses & Gratification And Agenda Setting:

Uses and Gratification:

- This theory demonstrates a fulfillment of need on behalf of an audience.
- Audience appears to have control (audience chooses which messages will be received & acted upon).
- This theory is more useful in social situations.
- This theory is more theoretical than evidential.
- This theory grants power to individual audience members (audience has an influence on media).

Agenda Setting:

- This theory demonstrates cause and effect between media agenda and public agenda.
- The media appears to have control (media does not tell people what to think, rather what to think about).
- This theory leads the audience to consider what stories the media deems most important.
- This theory is proved in repeated studies.
- This theory focuses on the benefits for mass media.

To be able to apply Uses and Gratifications theory to suggest reasons people watch sitcoms.

1
- Developing empathy
- identifying with others and gaining a sense of belonging
- finding something to talk about
- having a substitute for real-life friends

A - Information

B - Entertainment

C - Personal Identity

D - Integration and Social Interaction

2
- finding reinforcement for personal values
- finding models of behaviour
- identifying with valued other (in the media)
- gaining insight into one's self

4
- escaping, or being diverted, from problems
- relaxing
- filling time
- emotional release
- sexual arousal

Match the uses with the gratifications.

In pairs – 2 minutes – be prepared to feedback!

3
- finding out about relevant events and conditions in immediate surroundings, society and the world
- seeking advice
- general interest
- learning
- Security through knowledge

Uses and Gratification Theory