

AGENDA-SETTING FUNCTION OF MASS MEDIA AND THE CONCEPT OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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Review paper

Abstract

Agenda-setting is one of the fundamental mass media functions. Through exercising this function, mass media are forced to simultaneously satisfy certain material and value requirements. Material requirements are mostly internal and value requirements are mostly external. From the definition of mass media it is clear that the media are predominantly materially oriented, while the society expects from them responsibility and contributing to the community. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a form of practice whose goal is to implement the social good category into the business models of companies. The media which generally support such a practice and regularly denounce other economic factors for their anti-social activities, at the same time on different CSR indicators measuring continuously record poor results. Business practices of mass media is widely perceived as having questionable value. Integrating CSR into laws and statutes which define mass media functioning does not guarantee that the mass media will integrate CSR into their everyday business practice. There are two fundamental reasons for this. The first reason are professional routines and functioning patterns in mass media, and the second is money, i.e. profit. It is therefore not realistic to expect a high level of integrating ethics in the business activities of mass media. Mass media at each given time function at the top of their ethical abilities and cannot adequately satisfy the value requirements the society places in front of them.

Key words: mass media, agenda, social responsibility, public relation, framing

Introduction

Three basic functions of mass media are the watchdog function, the gatekeeper function and the agenda-setting function. These three functions are related and are based on the theory of democracy. It could be said that they are inextricably linked to the concept of modern plural democracy. In this type of social organization, the media should constitute a platform for public debate used to provide people with information and knowledge which is necessary for people to be able to control their own lives effectively. However, despite how theoretically unquestionable and valuable the three functions and the very concepts that form their base are, their practical execution is problematic. Scientists and civil society activists repeatedly point to problems which occur in mass media practice, which are largely a consequence of economic and political pressures.

If there are irrefutable indicators of systematic instrumentalization of mass media, i.e. of the entire mass media system structure for the purpose of special and individual interests of the economic and political elites (e.g., Chomski, 1988; McChesny, 2000; Bagdikian, 1983), can one argue that the value-based execution of mass media basic functions is somewhat of a utopian idea? This paper is focused on the agenda-setting function (agenda-setting function is hereinafter referred to as ASF) and the problems which occur in media practice in the agenda building process and executing ASF in general. The basic difficulty faced by ASF analysts lies in the complicated relationship of big business, politics and mass media. In the real world, the relationship between the media and the elites is subtle and complicated and not so easily distinguishable from the media content.

The media and the elites find mutually acceptable modes of operation which satisfy their interests. So the basic question to be answered is whether private companies largely owned by corporations (private media) and public companies under strong political patronage (public media) can properly execute the function that has its value even without a form of objective coercion? That is, in what way can the ethical and value component of the mass media system be strengthened in relation to market and political components, if this is at all possible?

Basic categories related to the agenda-setting function of mass media

Mass media in a modern democratic society have a task to select issues and according to their perceived importance create a certain issue hierarchy. In this hierarchy, the most important issues should be perceptively clearly emphasized over the less important and irrelevant issues. Issues given priority should primarily possess characteristics of real topics. In this sense, an issue would represent a conflict between two or more groups which can be identified over procedural or substantial matters concerning the distribution of positions or resources. Each issue therefore represents a form of conflict by itself and can be identified on three levels: does the conflict exist at all, should the conflict be resolved and in what way should it be resolved. For a conflict to become an issue it should be identified as such and there must be a demand for its resolution (Dearing and Rogers, 1996). One should understand the distinction between an issue and the news which provide information on the issue, i.e. which are as a category subordinate to the issue (McCombs and Shaw, 1993). A conflict, which is the essence of an issue, is a crucial category for understanding ASF.

Participants in any form of conflict which deserves special media attention because of its importance for society are important social actors in term of individuals, formal groups or institutions. All those actors, in the sense in which they possess certain importance, also possess a certain amount of power to influence the course of social events. So if the conflict does not include at least one powerful actor with a wider range of social influence, it can be news, but it can hardly be an issue in the full sense. This condition clearly outlines the position of the mass media. The word medium itself suggests a form of mediation, in relation to someone in the middle. One side of the media is directed toward the audience and simultaneously exerts influence through content, while the other is directed towards social elites that try to influence the creation of the very same content. While scientists in the field of communication science predominantly treat agenda-setting as a cognitive effect that media exert over their audience, political scientists consider agenda-setting to be a complicated dynamic process that takes place between the media, the audience and the elites; adopting policies and establishing social institutions (Dalton et al., 1998). Through the process of agenda-setting, society gives priority to issues which should be dealt with first, considering their perceived importance. This is very important task in order to allocate social resources for resolving priority matters, material or intellectual. Rogers and Dearing (1988) describe the mutual relationship of participants in the agenda-setting process in the context of policies in the following way: media strongly influence the audience's agenda, the media agenda has a direct strong influence on the policy agenda, media also indirectly influence the policy agenda through the audience's agenda, which they form and reflect. Kepplinger (2007) in his work also analyses the possibility of reciprocal effect of mass media on decision makers in society as subjects of media issues. Certainly, it is clearly evident that the relationship between the actors in the agenda-setting process is quite complicated.

Objective conditions under which the media carry out the agenda-setting function

Mass media agenda-setting function is related to the process of the formation of public opinion. It has been previously stated that the process of agenda-setting is closely related to the formation of policies.

A bidirectional relationship between public opinion and policies using media as, in a manner of speaking, mediators has also been mentioned. As we can see, media are between the ones making the decisions and the ones on whose behalf the decisions are being made. As it has been repeatedly proven that special media interest in particular subject being reported on is the key determinant of the perception of importance thereof by the public opinion (McCombs, 2004), we can conclude that media ASF could take on a character different than the one in the theory. As the dominant direction of influence moves from elites to the ones on whose behalf the decisions are being made or the ones they relate to, a possibility arises for media, instead of being a platform for public debate and the distributor of information used to form public opinion, to become a machine for producing consensuses on pre-defined decisions.

Due to its size and complexity, the society needs the media as instruments of dissemination of information essential for successful functioning of society as a whole. This primarily refers to the concept of civil society as a link between the state (public) and the market (private). Civil society is characterized by informed and socially active citizens with a minimum consensus on fundamental matters of general interest. It is this consensus on fundamental general matters that makes a society successful or unsuccessful and it is here that the mass media play a crucial role. Reversing the entire process and excluding the ones on whose behalf the decisions are being made from it destabilizes the society.

The problem arising from the definition of mass media

To see what exactly constitutes mass media, one should start from the definition. One of the best definitions was given by the American scientist Potter (2011, p. 905): "a mass media are organizations that use technological channels to distribute messages for the purpose of attracting an increasingly large audience and conditioning those audiences for repeated exposures so as to increase one's resources such that the enterprise is at least self-supporting". Accordingly, the key categories which formally define a mass medium are: technological channel, the purpose of using the channel and economic sustainability. As we can see, the focus is entirely on the sender, typically an organization, with the primary aim to cause a ritual type of exposing the audience to its content. So when an organization uses a technological channel of communication to build and then retain an audience, we can call it a mass medium. The category of economic viability accurately describes the minimum economic requirement for an organization that tends to be defined as a mass medium, but it also conceals one other, for this paper more important, category - creating profit. The category of economic viability is the formal threshold for entry in the mass media group, and as soon as a medium exceeds this threshold, the category of viability is replaced by the category of increasing the profit. However, the category of economic viability is important for the definition of mass media because it eliminates for example a personal Facebook profile from the mass media group, but accepts Facebook as a whole as a mass medium. Mass media are an institution of a modern democratic society and as such should reflect the values that this type of society generally promotes. From the system theory standpoint, mass media is a system run by internal and external goals. This approach detects internal goals as rigid and formal (we could also call them material), while the external are qualified as value goals. This indicates the existence of dualism in mass media goals and it is this dualism that is the basic cause of problems generally associated with mass media. Given that every social institution should have external value goals which in some way contribute to the society, internal goals should be consistent with the tendency to achieve external value goals. In practical terms, such important social institutions like mass media should not allow themselves to become their own purpose nor should they replace their general social use for facilitating individual and special interests within their internal goals.

But in reality, there is a deviation between what an institution realistically represents and what it should or could represent in an ideal sense.

Effects of the mass media agenda-sett. function

Every person has a fundamental need to understand his/her living environment. A large part of understanding it is based on the knowledge acquired by socialization and formal education. However, practically a significant part of the modern man's perspective of the world is a reflection of the mass media perspective. This media-induced image predominantly refers to the social environment outside the direct experience of an individual (Lippman, 1922). What today's man contemplates about under the term of social environment is considerably different from what this term implied 200, 500 or 1000 years ago. Today's perception of social environment is technologically determined, and McLuhan's "global village" (McLuhan, 1973) is reality. A very important mass media role in such a society ("village") is to inform the audience. Informing implies distribution of informative content to dispersed audience in order to understand social processes, policies and institutions. The category of informing implies the existence of certain information based on certain data. The consequence of informing is knowledge which becomes foundation for acting within the social reality. This clearly shows that informing, in addition to being very important mass media role, also represents power because of the potential to generate action through data and information manipulation. It has been noted that managing the salience of issues and media frames is a subtle but extremely powerful mechanism for influencing the perception of audience. What is methodologically extremely hard or even impossible to differentiate is to what extent the influence on the meaning of media messages by the media themselves is intentional and to what extent it is spontaneous or non-intentional. But despite the dilemma, it is evident that mass media possess manipulative potential and that the content of media messages is influenced by a series of factors which are often in direct conflict with the fundamental value of professional journalism-objectivity. Scientists have researched at length and proven that the mass media influence the audience directly and indirectly, long-term and short-term, knowingly and unknowingly. They influence audiences understanding, attitudes, behaviours, emotions, and even cause physiological reactions (Bryant and Zillmann, 2009; Basil 1992; Grossberg et al., 1998). Today's scientists and professionals agree on the existence of decrease in the audience's trust in mass media. The audience is therefore capable of intuitively penetrating the core of the process of public informing. What the audience is actually aware of is hidden in the semantic level of media content and it manifests as perceived disproportion between reality and media presentation of reality. Mass media content is perceived as simply a form of fabricating meaning, which does not even come close to reflecting reality. When it comes to mass media entertainment, this can be acceptable and even desirable, but when it comes to a function such as agenda-setting, fabricating meaning is not acceptable. Agenda-setting theory deals with socially relevant issues, i.e. issues that the society should be confronted with.

Information that are the basis for these issues are not based on fiction, but are or should be based on solid reality. This applies to every society that wants to be successful long-term. However, researchers of agenda-setting have observed that the process is limited by a series of factors which cumulatively cause content deformations on the semantic level. Factors such as owners, advertisers, political elites, newspaper routines, professional values, personal psychological states of journalists, their personality traits or motivation, etc. are proven to have an adverse effect on media agenda, i.e. they make it less ideal. Maybe individual influence of one of the factors would be negligible, but it is never actually alone. In practice, all factors or a part of them continuously and cumulatively exert influence on each issue. The result of the mentioned factors' influence on ASF is manifested in the decline of content diversity, thematic unification across all media types, unification of interpretative models for the same issues across all media types, mainstreaming perspectives, self-censorship, elimination of alternative approaches, etc. This in return reflects negatively to the audience's perception. Thomas and Thomas (1928, according to Kunzik and Zipfel, 2005, p. 207) state that if people define a situation as real, it is real in its consequences. This claim proves that people do not only react to the objective meaning of a situation, but to the meaning the situation has for them. If this is applied to the media induced public image, the danger of artificial and subjective media formation is clear. The audience relies on mass media with a certain amount of trust and internalizes meanings offered by contents. In accordance with these meanings, the audience creates cognitive schemes which become the filter for subsequent input information and the foundation for action. This suggests a possibility that the interpretation of a part of reality deformed by the media, inadvertently or purposely, might become the base for making judgements and the base for action in reality. According to this, material consequences can come from something which basically does not even exist, except as mass media content. Manipulative potential of mass media through ASF is methodologically not easy to explain. This has many reasons. The first problem is to separate spontaneous or non-intentional interventions on media content from the intentional ones. The second problem is that the objectivity in media content is more a matter of measure than yes/no categories. The question is to what extent is breaking the objectivity postulate acceptable before the media content becomes more propaganda than informing. The third problem is objectivity in general. The problem is that every news media content is a form of reducing the complexity of social reality based on intersubjectivity. But who is the one to define what is objective? The fourth problem is the scientist researching the agenda-setting, adding another level of subjectivity to the entire process. One can argue that ASF is the object to a form of media manipulation. This manipulation has massive social potential which is based on individual psychological mechanisms of the audience. The final consequence of this form of manipulation is the creation of a pseudo-environment as an integral part of social reality which represents a subjectively shaped individual world image, limited and with prejudice, resulting in a condition where people live

in the same world, but feel it and think about it in a completely different way. To put it simply, the consequence of ASF is a successful transfer of nominal importance given by the media to a particular issue to the audience's perceived importance of the same issue. With every transferred issue, a certain part of the meaning in interpretative schemes is transferred as well.

The role of frame

Agenda-setting researchers have long time ago come to the conclusion that the fundamental principles of the agenda-setting theory have just slightly opened the doors of other, much more complicated issues. McCombs and Shaw (1972), in their pioneer study, concluded that mass media influenced the assessment of voters on which are the biggest (most prominent) issues in a political campaign. The media managed to transfer their own attitude on the importance of certain issues to the audience's attitude by increasing attention to those issues. Only subsequent analyses connected with the framing concept following the agenda-setting theory will show that the media also influence the way the audience thinks about prominent issues. To put it simply, the audience finds the issues pointed out by the media important, but also accepts interpretative frames given to the issues by the media. "Social world is a kaleidoscope of potential realities, any of which can be readily evoked by altering the ways in which observations are framed and categorized" (Edelman, 1993, according to Scheufele, 2000, p. 302). Every issue that reaches the media represents an interpretation of a certain part of reality and has a certain interpretative frame. By the way a certain issue or event is presented in the media through applying certain interpretative frames, the meaning of the media message is influenced and therefore the audience's perception (Takeshita, 2005). To journalists and other communicators who construct media content, framing is the means for reducing the complexity of an issue and adapting it to the parameters of the medium where it is to be published. It is also an invaluable tool for efficiently presenting complex issues in a manner understandable to the audience. Tankhard et al. (1991, according to Weaver, 2007, p.143) describe frame as "a central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration." Entman (1993, according to Weaver, 2007, p. 143) claims that "to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation". McCombs (1997, according to Weaver, 2007, p. 143) says that "framing is the selection of a restricted number of thematically related attributes for inclusion in the media agenda when a particular object is discussed". McCombs also states that there are many alternative "sets of attributes" which could be applied on any issue or political figure. Nelson et al. (1997, acc to Scheufele, 2000, 298) state that "frames influence opinions by stressing specific values, facts, and other considerations, endowing them with greater apparent relevance to the issue than they might appear to have under an alternative frame".

Mass media and corporate social responsibility

The concept of corporate social responsibility (further in the text referred to as CSR) is an American formation dating from the beginning of the 20th century when corporations began to be extensively criticised for their antisocial activities. Such practice, in addition to creating an initial impulse for creating the CSR concept, also prompted the creation of corporate public relations offices. The phrase was used in its final form in the 1950s when incorporated in business models of companies as a form of self-regulation. CSR policies of companies started having a form of a regulating and supervising mechanism of overall business activities monitoring that the business policy is in accordance with the law, ethical standards and international norms. Some companies have incorporated more than this general minimum, requiring specific actions which would effectively contribute to social good and which are not directly related to primary interests of the company or statutory minimums. But considering that CSR is not a legal requirement nor is it formally defined, every company can arbitrarily define it (McWilliams and Siegel, 2001). The concept of CSR has the fundamental aim to encourage the company to forms of action which would create a positive impact through concrete actions on the environment, consumers, employees, social community and in general all those influenced by the company. Taking all this into account, many saw CSR as a utopian idea which violates the commercial spirit of the company and potentially represents only financial harm. Scientific studies thereof have given mixed results ranging from positive, zero to negative effect, but the meta-analysis of the applied econometric models have shown that they were wrong. McWilliams and Siegel (2000) have demonstrated that when a CSR model is properly determined, it has a neutral effect on financial results. Social responsibility implies the implementation of business ethics which is in business models often suspended or only on paper. This raises the question of the underlying mission of a company and what it actually stands for, what "good" does it bring to its consumers? These are very principle questions that can have very diverse answers. It is therefore not surprising that different institutions have a completely different understanding of social responsibility. Votaw (1972, according to Gulyas, 2009) states that the term social responsibility is brilliant because it represents something which is not always the same for everyone. To some it represents the idea of legal responsibility and obligation, to others socially responsible behaviour in the ethical sense; to the third group it represents "responsibility for something"; the fourth identifies it with charity donations; the fifth perceives it as social awareness; the sixth associates it with legitimacy in terms of integrity of actions, to the seventh it is a form of fiduciary duty which requires higher standards of conduct for business people than for the general population. The term CSR today has a much broader meaning than the philanthropy it was associated with in the past and giving to charity at the end of the financial year. It now represents the year-round responsibility for the environment, best working practices and involvement in the local community; recognizing that a brand does not only depend on the quality, price and uniqueness, but also on the

cumulative interaction of companies, the community and the environment (Brown, 2006, according to Gulyas, 2009). Despite a lot of CSR criticism, research has shown that there is increasing awareness on its importance. 85% of executive directors and investors have ranked CSR as an important and central item to be taken into consideration when investing (Gulyas, 2009). This data was obtained in a survey so it can be assumed that a large portion of the answers was induced by socially acceptable behaviour when answering. The role of CSR in media companies is interesting. The fact is, the media generate the CSR issue and regularly find themselves in the role of critics, while the data on them put them in a position of being very unreliable critics. The data suggest that mass media actually "fall behind" other industrial sectors when observed from the aspect of CSR management and its effects. On various CSR indicators measuring, the media continuously record poor results. For example, in 2007, the Dow Jones Sustainability Index had only 8 media companies in the total 322. In 2006, the main CSR index in Great Britain had only 4 media companies in the total 80. At the level of annual reporting on CSR, the media have also failed. An international CSR research has shown that only 29% out of the 100 largest media companies in 16 industrial states published a CSR report, which is a very small percentage when compared to other industrial sectors (Gulyas, 2000). The media sector has been labelled hypocritical as it has been noted that it most often talks about CSR from the environment protection aspect. Critics argue that the media have a relatively small effect on the environment compared with their social and cultural effect. Nevertheless, they regularly attack other economic sectors for their impact on the environment, and their own CSR is questionable. The issues that the media should be covering within their CSR are the production of responsible content, enabling access to media content for the handicapped, committing to content diversity, opening channels for feedback information and content criticism, ensuring responsible advertising, supporting creativity, ensuring a platform for public debate, supporting education for media literacy. The concept of CSR together with ASF can represent the foundation of socially acceptable journalism. Without the need for philosophical definitions and unrealistic demands, the CSR concept observes the mass media as what they are (by definition). Mass media are simply companies selling their product in the form of media content. This content has its consumers and its sphere of influence. Precisely because it is a media product and its influence is therefore in a way more abstract than other economic sectors, special attention is drawn to it. Thus the influence of the media is said to leave a so called brain-print on the audience, while other sectors leave a so called footprint on the environment (WWF-UK and Sustain Ability, 2005).

Implementation of the system of values in the mass media practice

There are two fundamental reasons why the idea of implementing genuine social values into everyday practice of media is almost utopian. The first are professional routines and functioning patterns, and the second is profit.

This does not mean that social values are irrelevant; it means that they will never come first, or more precisely: each time the social values clash with the material ones, material values will prevail. The first reason can be more easily described by saying that the media are what they are simply because they are. Only by turning reality upside-down and defining mass media in a completely wrong way by making the ideological end point the starting point can an observer be surprised by the deviations of the mass-media system. The system actually works quite well under market rules, it is well-coordinated and has been working under the same principles for centuries. Some claim that nothing in the system has significantly changed from day one until today. Professional routines include many elements inherent to media which cumulatively limit the quality of content, such as deadlines, constant demands for fresh news, pressures from owners and many others. All of those are elements well known to elites and they exploit them wisely. The symbiosis developed by the media and the elites benefits both sides. The second reason why implementing genuine social values into the practice of mass media is almost utopian is profit. Money means different things for different people, ranging from a survival resource to a pilling resource. Every form of content that causes material damage to the medium is most likely going to be rejected on all levels. On the lowest level this manifests itself as self-censorship which is a reflection of the most basic fear of losing a source of income when it comes to journalists. On the highest level, it is a matter of sound logic because owners want profit and nothing else. Otherwise they would not be owners. Each content that brings the owner in conflict with the economic or political elite bears financial consequences, which is unacceptable.

Particularly important issues for society as a whole are usually associated with the elites due to the range of their economic and political influence. These elites live in symbiosis with the media while they should be under their scrutiny. It is clearly evident that in the case of a conflict between the practice of the elites and social values, the media will side with the elites. This is a historical fact, and in accordance with the aforementioned, the only possible outcome. Every other possibility would present a problem for the media and a deviation from the standards. The functioning of mass media is defined by laws, statutes, and codes of conduct adopted individually by institutions. In principle, everyone agrees how the media should function. There is no dispute that e.g. the Croatian Media Act probably lacks nothing, as do most other media acts adopted in modern western democracies. Additional efforts are being made by applying CSR in order to implement the social good, i.e. the good of the wider community, into the business strategy. However, all that is written on paper is not necessarily binding or feasible in reality. Scientists who deal with problems in media practice have recognized a series of negative patterns which cause a deviation from the values promoted by law. Since the main interest in this paper is connected to ASF, we will see which problems arise in executing this specific function, with special attention to the effect of public relations. A particularly noteworthy practice is the one referring to public relations offices of state and private bodies and their relationship with the media.

Research has shown that public relations offices play the key role among the subjects which affect the media agenda building (Kioussis and Wu, 2008). Some scientists estimate that, depending on the media, public relations offices affect 25 - 80% of news content (Lee and Solomon, 1990). Public relations offices essentially contribute media agenda building by offering information to journalists through press releases, press conferences, media consulting, interviews, etc. This form of cooperation is extremely unidirectional in character, because everything comes from the public relations offices to the media, and then to the audience. The so called fourth branch of government, the watchdog of democracy, etc. is a company which is an instrument of PR professionals in private and public bodies. At the beginning of the paper it was mentioned that the concept of CSR and public relations are historically connected with opposition to anti-social practices of corporations. In this sense, the idea of CSR was a form of requirement, i.e. public pressure on corporations, while public relations have the opposite direction.

What is happening today is that public relations which use mass media as instruments have become a form of pressure on the public, and CSR in terms of media has become a popular phrase. The media have become a tool for promoting the attitudes of elites. This unfortunate practice is as much a consequence of intent as it is of spontaneous action. Specifically, there is a certain symbiosis between the media and public relations offices. They need each other because they literally live off each other. It would be naive to expect this to change. Their relationship is a deeply rooted routine resulting from very practical reasons. A high proportion of news produced by the activities of public relations offices will most likely remain stable. A medium with a high proportion of this kind of information cannot be called independent and free, because such medium is in no position to adequately promote the values listed by law. The law cannot regulate such practice. The question is simply on the level of work ethics, in this case journalists' and common sense. "To go where it is silent. This is the task and the responsibility of journalists; to give a voice to the forgotten and the helpless, the ones crushed by the ones with power. This is the best reason known to me why we with pens, cameras and microphones in our hands (searching for an issue) enter different communities and travel around the world", is how journalist Amy Goodman (2006, according to Petković, 2012) describes her professional credo. It summarizes the purpose of journalism as the guardian of democracy where journalists systematically investigate irregularities and the abuse of power within the system, searching for answers and exposing lies, corruption and crimes of the ruling elite, giving a voice to victims, exposing to public criticism and seeking responsibility from the perpetrators of this abuse, thus exposing the institutions responsible for sanctioning such practices to the pressure of civil society and public opinion (Petković 2012). This type of journalism requires undeniable commitment to active, persistent and systematic search for information which will provide a more complete and verified image on the irregularities and power abuse. It requires an active and sharp investigative attitude which does not stop at the boundaries of company interests or interests of the state or nation the journalist belongs to.

Such journalism implies an honest, open and transparent relationship with the public and concern for the ethical dimension, which includes accepting mechanisms for questioning journalists' own mistakes and giving the people the chance to participate in these mechanisms (Petković 2012). This kind of journalism definitely does not imply 80% of the content to be created by "somebody else", especially not professionals working in favour of the elite. Nevertheless, the news produced by the activities of public relations offices are dominated by news of public and state bodies, and not private ones. They are indisputably shaped according to the opinion of political elites and such practice, based on the structural organization of media in modern democracies, is the foundation for hegemony and maintaining the status quo. This is effective practice of controlling the circulation of ideas in the society. Because of that, journalism is rightfully accused of performing the function of a publisher in an already set political arena instead of performing the investigative function of revealing and clearing underlying political affairs and events. This functioning pattern offers no room for implementation of social responsibility to the agenda-setting function.

Conclusion

The mass media possess indisputable social power because of their ability to influence the audience. The agenda-setting function is essentially conceptualised as an intentional way of influencing the audiences taking into account that this influence should be value-based and socially beneficial. In theory, this form of influence is desirable because it activates material and intellectual social forces in order to resolve important social issues. The media should initiate and articulate the most important issues. The very definition of an issue as such implies a certain form of conflict. Opposing forces must be socially relevant for an issue to even be called an issue, and not news. Socially relevant forces are usually political and economic subjects with a sufficient supply of power to influence a wider community. Where there is any form of social exercise of power, one will encounter political and economic elites, i.e. the ones that make the decisions and have a great social influence. Based on the results of a series of scientific research of mass media, today we can argue that a large proportion of the media agenda-setting is done by the elites, predominantly influenced by the political elites. Such practice qualifies mass media as objects, not subjects, i. e. their basic function is instrumentalised. Media as public and private companies with an imperative to make a profit are forced to function in symbiosis with the elites or inevitably suffer material damage. Material damage is not an option for any medium so the logical outcome is a more passive position between the elites and the audience. The process of agenda-setting is reversed and the FPA is used for purposes which cannot be related to the fundamental purpose of the function. In fact, a form of communication is established, which is essentially unidirectional, and just appears to be bidirectional. With the help of public relations professionals, the elites provide legitimacy for their predefined policies and economic actions by relying on the media as intermediaries and using their "natural position". The "natural position" of the media

is that they need the political and economic elites. Whether the media are public or private, the elites provide the information and feed them. From such a perspective, it is completely clear that social values come second to material demands. To integrate all the values from laws, regulations, statutes, acts, codes, etc. into the mass media daily practice sounds quite naive and utopian. The media are actually functioning at the peak of their possibilities, because if they could function better, they would. The efforts of scientists, non-governmental associations, guild associations, etc. to raise business ethics in the media on a higher level and incorporate in the business model are praiseworthy and they should

exist, but realistically, any form of significant change in the mass media practice would mean a significant change in the essence of human beings, which is highly unlikely. What is a lot more important than unrealistic demands on the mass media is to develop a "defence" of the audience through insisting on developing media literacy. It is however a lot easier to develop awareness of the audience on the essence of mass media than starting to change this essence which is based on market logic. Human greed and "his highness - king money" are powerful generators which drive the market, and the media are only one small wheel in the system whose essence is not pretty at all.

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POSTAVLJANJE AGENDE MASS MEDIJA I KONCEPT SOCIJALNE ODGOVORNOSTI

Sažetak

Postavljanje agende jedna je od temeljnih funkcija masovnih medija. Kroz vršenje te funkcije masovni mediji su prisiljeni simultano zadovoljavati određene materijalne i vrijednosne zahtjeve. Pritom su materijalni zahtjevi pretežno unutarnji dok su vrijednosni zahtjevi pretežno vanjski. Iz same definicije masovnih medija jasno je da su mediji dominantno materijalno usmjereni, dok društvo od njih očekuje odgovornost i doprinos zajednici. Društvena odgovornost poduzeća (DOP) vid je prakse kojom se teži implementirati kategoriju društvenog dobra u poslovne modele poduzeća. Mediji koji načelno podržavaju takvu praksu te redovito prozivaju druge gospodarske čimbenike radi antisocijalnog djelovanja, paralelno na raznim mjeranjima pokazatelja DOP-a kontinuirano bilježe slabe rezultate. Poslovna praksa masovnih medija široko je percipirana kao vrijednosno upitna. Integriranje DOP-a u zakone i statute, koji definiraju funkcioniranje masovnih medija nije jamstvo da će masovni mediji integrirati DOP u svakodnevnu poslovnu praksu. Dva su temeljna razloga za to. Prvi su razlog profesionalne rutine i radni obrasci u masovnim medijima, a drugi je novac odnosno zarada. Nije stoga realno od masovnih medija zahtijevati visoku razinu integracije etičnosti u poslovanje. Masovni mediji funkcioniraju u svakom trenutku na vlastitom etičkom maksimumu i ne mogu adekvatno udovoljiti vrijednosnim zahtjevima koje društvo pred njih stavlja.

Ključne riječi: *mas-mediji, agende, društvena odgovornost, odnosi s javnošću, framing*

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