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The Repetition and Competition of News Reporting as Mediator to Frame Setting

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Abstract

The rapid spread of information in the world makes news reporting on the current issues around people grows as well. Framing analysis is a theoretical approach that has been considered as one of the indicators used to analyze how people understand the situations. With the diversity of perception, framing analysis too has changed. The competition of news reporting from various types of media gives the audiences more options to choose the frame which is considered right and suitable for them. Similarly, the media also take the initiatives by reporting a repeated news and information in order to provide information and insight to the reader as well as to capture their attention. Therefore, this study opens a new stream of framing analysis on how these two mediators are functional and capable of giving effect to the news framing.

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1. Introduction

Framing concept was initiated by the classical sociologist Erving Goffman (1974). He assumes people cannot understand the world as a whole. They seek to interpret their life experiences to adapt to their surroundings. Entman (1993) introduced four dimensions to explain the concept of framing in text communication. Hallahan (1999)

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introduced seven models of framing in public relations. Nelson, Oxley and Clawson (1997) explains framing as a process of communication for social and political issues construct audience.

Ryabova (2013) defines framing as management of ideas and storytelling that gives meaning to every situation that happened to the community. Framing of news manages every reality that occurs, identify problems quickly and classifies any information obtained to efficiently channel it to the audience. News framing influences the receiver automatically and at the same time helps the recipient to understand the issue. The diversity brought by all these scholars prove the relevance of framing for various fields, including sociology, public relations, psychology and beyond the field of communication. All information received and understood by the audience known as the effect of frame setting.

The study of framing analysis is not something new. The study related to framing analysis has been done by several scholars. They are Entman (1989; 1993), Valkernbug and Semetko (1999), Scheufele (1999; 2004) and others. From the researches done by Western scholars, then framing analysis has been applied by local researchers on their studies (Chang, Faridah & Fauziah, 2012; Chang, Musa & Fauziah, 2010; Kho Suet Nie, Chew Chee Khiang, Tan Joon Ling & Chang Peng Kee, 2011).

Earlier studies on framing construction are divided into frame building and frame setting. Frame building study identify factors that influence the quality of news framing such as internal factors of the journalists and news media organizations framing. Similarly, external factors such as the elite group having influence in framing the news. Each of the processes occurring in the frame building is identified in the text. The frame setting is a process of interaction between the news frame with every existing human knowledge. de Vreese (2005) concluded that exposure to news frames can result in a change of attitude in individuals on issues emphasized. News frame at a larger scale contributes to political socialization, decision making and collective action (de Vreese, 2005).

These researchers focused and emphasized on frame building. Studies of frame setting are relatively new in local study. Scholars such as Scheufele (2004; 2007), Chong and Druckman (2007), de Vreese and Lecheler (2011; 2012) tried to understand how the news frames associated with the European Union has an effect on the society. One of the gap of studies of frame setting is to identify mediators that influence the effect of news framing.

2. Cognitive psychology and frame setting

Some of the concepts of cognitive psychology should be known in order to understand its relevance to the determination of frame setting. Before the development of cognitive psychology in the field of communication, the early exploration is through cognitive psychology itself. The history of cognitive psychology initially started in 1890 by William James who defined the whole concept of psychology as "the Science of Mental Life". From then on, psychological aspects have been extended to include cognitive development, social cognition, cognitive neuroscience, cognitive therapy and cognitive anthropology (Reed, 1988, p. 12).

However, some explicit definition must be given to cognitive psychology. Ulric Neisser, the father of cognitive psychology explained that psychology refers to a process that involves a change when sensory input is being reduced, elaborated, stored and eventually used. He explained that most of these cognitive psychological processes used in doing various jobs such as study, work, write, speak, or do anything (Neisser, 1967).

Kellogg (2007) says that cognitive psychology refers to the study related to mental processes and its role in thinking, feeling and behaving. He also explains elements of cognitive psychology such as perception, memory, knowledge and expertise acquisition, comprehension and production of knowledge, problem solving, creativity and decision-making.

On the other hand, Zimbardo, Weber and Johnson (2006) illustrates cognitive psychology as the existing computer system with a memory containing coding/encoding system, storing and retrieving information. However computer systems are very different from the human cognitive system. This is because the human cognitive system has a close relationship with perception. Every cognitive system that involves human yielding perception, starting from the stimulus entering the five sense organs system, then the information received and selected and converted into a form that is more meaningful. Furthermore the selected information is formed according to the information content inherent in the human mind and stored as memory. And finally this information is stored, accessed and used by people in their daily activities.

Reed (1988) defines the content and information messages that occur in human schemata as the information

processing approach. He proposes the concept of information processing through cognitive psychology based on Figure 1 below:

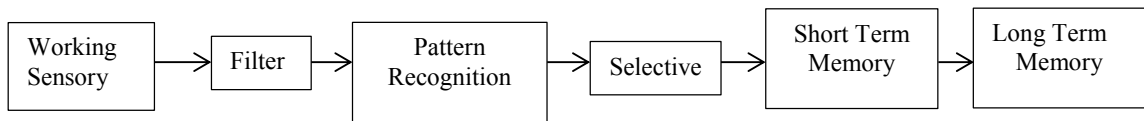


Fig 1. Processing information model (Reed, 1988).

Reed (1988) explains the sensory memory saves a brief storage of information. Normally the sensory memory exists for sensory information such as taste, smell and touch. Sensory memory extends the amount of time when human identifies patterns that being observed. If individuals received visual patterns emitted for five seconds, then they can identify relevant visual information based on the information stored in the individual sensory memory. The information is processed through the senses then it will be going through a selection process, where information that is not related to them will be removed from individual's schemata. The information that are related or having any connection with them will be stored in a memory box called short-term memory and long term memory.

Human short-term memory has certain limits to ensure their memory system does still appear to be working. This situation will influence human daily activities (Reed, 1988). Goss and O'Hair (1988) explains the short-term memory capacity is expected to be able to survive in the human schemata between seven seconds to 30 seconds. However the long-term memory capacity is not limited. A study proposed by Reed (1988) says that the psychological aspects tried to apply through the effect of frame setting by framing analysis. Currently, framing studies are trying to explore more the effect of news framing to the reader either for short term or long term period.

Therefore, from the memory, it will eventually bring impact to the cognition and expression of an individual in real life situation. Solso, Maclin and Maclin (2005) defines cognition as a form of mind thinking about the world, how the information is stored and processed by the brain system, how people solve problems, to think and formulate a message and the information received. For smaller scope, cognition generally refers to the memory of, or can be defined as an orientation towards cognitive processes that occur in social situations. He explained the process of cognition is an attempt to open the black box that runs between the receipt of information and the reaction of the readers (Shrum, 2009).

Neisser (1967), Reed (1988) and Zimbardo, Weber, and Johnson (2006) attempt to adopt cognitive psychology in the context of media and communication as explained by Nelson, Oxley and Clawson (1997). He explained the process of news framing is hard to understand and not generally understood because it involves a complex psychological process. Concepts and terms described through specific elements of cognitive psychology is that human schemata traveled through the determination of the impact of the news through the media frame.

Entman (1989) concludes that the dependency between the audience and the processing of information through media has been developed by some psychologists. This is a way to fully understand the processes between the two elements. They are audience and the process of information itself. This study also describes how individual cognitive systems manage their thoughts and it is called as schemata. The schemata system found in individual thought contained elements of beliefs, attitudes, values and choices along with the rules associated with different ideas (Entman, 1989).

Entman (1989) further explains that schemata system found in the human mind is distributed to the relevant information. It is a guide to interpret as a form of the information received by the reader. In addition, the human mind schemata also serve to filter and remove information that is not related to schemata storage of thinking. The element of news framing as reviewed by Entman (1993) said that the frame will choose an issue that is considered true and will be featured in the form of communication text.

In general, frame setting refers to two major processes. Firstly, it is the process of how the news frames affect audiences' cognition. Secondly, the process of news frames in influencing behavior, beliefs and cognitive levels when exposed to current issues in the media. Some scholars opine that news frames can affect perception on the importance of an issue, and not just the issue per se (Igartua, Toranzo & Fernandez, 2011).

Therefore, frame setting is not just theoretically linked with cognitive psychology, but it affect reader's cognition and expression. The research on communication and psychology has been started since 1980. The rise of mass media makes understanding the effect of mass media on the psychology of audiences of increasing importance.

In this aspect, Shrum (2009) introduced a few factors that can be the deciding factor in the memory of a reader. Among the factors are the frequent activation and updates, the clarity of the information received and the relationship with the existing constructs in readers schemata. Some of the information that went through the process of cognition in turn will lead to the formation of opinion and was finally able to change the expression of reader. Through the delivery of this opinion, the active community are well-informed and at the same time give closer attention to the actions of the government (Boyle et al., 2006).

Studies conducted by Scheufele (2004) and Boyle, Schmierbach, Amstrong, Cho, McCluskey, McLeod and Shah (2006) to see how the news framing affect the expression of action of audiences. Scheufele (2004) finds that individual exposed to positive frames tend to have positive attitude while those exposed to negative frames tend to have negative attitude. Boyle et al. (2006) further explains some levels form of expressions by audience include talking with friends and family about an issue, discussion, sending a letter to the editor, contacting public officials as well as attending public meetings and rallies.

Therefore, each news frame exposed to the news audience has its impact to the cognition and expression of audiences. However, recent studies of frame setting identifies a few other mediators that can affect the change of cognition and individual expression. The key assumptions reflected in the study are that frame setting leads to a direct impact on individuals. However, if some other mediators are identified, what are the differences that may contribute to changes in cognition and individual expression?

3. Different frames as mediators to frame setting

Julia and Chang (2013) study the effect of news framing of public safety to the cognition and expression of reader. The study focuses on the effects of schemata and processes of information processing of the readers if readers are exposed to certain public safety news frame in a short term period. The study by Tewksbury and Schfeule (2009) explain that the effect of framing is actually more focused on the effect on the individuals themselves. Accordingly, a variety of other internal and external factors can be assumed to influence the effectiveness thereof sparking the debate of mediators that existed in frame setting.

Lecheler and de Vreese (2012) studied accessibility as a mediator as well as the importance of faith and belief content. Chong and Druckman (2007) looked at the competition of political environment mediators. Later on, Chong and Druckman (2012) also identify counter frames as mediators. Some researchers who believe the competition and the repetition of frames are mediators on the effect of frame setting such as Lecheler and de Vreese (2012).

O'Keefe and Jensen (2009) look at the pro frame and con frame to draw the audience to health campaign and assume that the exposure of a negative frame (loss frame) is more effective in persuasion than the positive frame (gain frame). Lee and Park (2011) use the pro-contra frame to identify the effect of public reporting on issues related to the Free Trade Agreement between Korea and U.S. The results from the studies show that negative frames influence people more than positive frames.

Tversky and Kahneman (1981) on the other hand, introduce the prospect theory. According to them, the prospect theory suggests when potential outcomes with more risk, individuals prefer to select loss framed messages, but when the potential outcomes with less risk, individuals will choose gain framed messages. The findings of prospect theory introduced by and Tversky and Kahneman (1981) show that each frame by the media has a value in it, be it positive or negative.

Lecheler and de Vreese (2012) however opine that exposure to repeated frame yields more effect in frame setting. According to both of them, the effect of repeated exposure will be stronger, especially in changing an attitude and behavior. Usually, the effects can be seen after a long period. Lecheler and deVreese (2012) also concluded that competition of conflicting frames and exposure to pro and con news frames actually remove or minimize the effect of frames. When there is a conflict between the two frames, audiences have the tendency to consistence reject both the frames (Lecheler & de Vreese, 2012).

These studies indicated that there are various mediators that can exist in frame setting and there is a need for framing analysis to be renewed to understand the mediators. Understanding the effect of repetitive and competitive

frame as mediators in determining framing effect is one of the new trends that are and should be extended in framing research. Each frame used by the media has its own value and it depends on the reader to accept and interpret the content of each message carried by the news frames. Strategies such as repeating the same frame and presenting competing frames are constantly used by the media. It is intended to draw the attention of the audience on the issues. However, the effectiveness of repetition and competition of frames to the audiences, especially in the cognition and expression aspect are still lacking and should be examined in news framing analysis.

4. Conclusion

This article started with understanding the current scenario of framing studies from frame building and frame setting. It then went on to explain aspects of cognitive psychology which will be relevant in understanding how frame setting actually impacts the cognition and expression of audiences. The study also seeks to understand many mediators that come between a reader's cognition and frame setting such as positive frames versus negative frames, gain frames and loss frames. The researcher identified existing gap in which repetitive and competitive frames are said to be the mediators of frame setting, but the researches done on this is still lacking. The impact of repetition and competition frame to the psychological aspect of audiences such as their cognition and expression on the issue is yet to be explored. Therefore, framing analysis need to understand and conceptualize the link between cognitive psychology and frame setting. This will contribute to better efficiency of news framing by media practitioners and audiences to understand how different frames influence them.

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