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Agenda- setting: The neglected role of some agents of power-propaganda (rumour,gossip,religion. .)

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Abstract

This study responds to the generalization by traditional agenda setting or media effects studies, especially media agenda-setting hypothesis that people accept as important whatever the media considers to be so; and being so, have the capability to structure issues for its audience. Also, the thesis is uncomfortable with the media's blanket use of the term 'mass' to refer to its audience particularly when considered against the background of Africa's rurality.

This study therefore is an attempt to stake out a new conceptual approach to the media's agenda-setting capabilities with an emphasis on the 'other neglected agents of power', that is, this study's proposition as 'the established structures of community' in Africa, especially rural Africa, in setting be it the media or 'territorial' agenda.

Using the multifaceted and predominantly qualitative methodology of histories and the triangular orientation of personal interviews, survey questionnaires and content scanning of relevant media, the thesis amongst other issues of conceptual relevance re-awakens the theoretical issue of 'whose agenda is the media agenda?" and whether the media and its agenda setting capabilities are not an urban phenomenon?

The universality and applicability of the theory especially in Africa's rural setting where language, illiteracy, poverty and the lack of access to modern media constitute obvious barriers is also a major concern of this study.

With the above as a background, the three part (I – conceptual framing of the problem and relevant issues, ii – a proposition and iii – data presentation and research findings) study then agues, proposes and concludes that:

[a] Media agenda is 'source' oriented as its sources quite often are identifiable and that, the media serves better (as against the overwhelming claim of agenda-setting) as a conduit or arena for contending issues, views, opinions, even sentiments; there is therefore no significant category of intellectual analysis called media agenda, at least, in Nigeria.

[b] Media is urban based and centred, urban driven and even urban cultured …it is simply an urban phenomenon.

[c] Indeed there are significant indicators that the 'established structures of community' functions and play major roles both in setting the media-agenda (where there is one) and in political power dynamics.

[d] Media agenda may be plausible but an 'uncertain' agenda; in Africa, especially rural Africa.