SZÉCHENYI 2020

		Thing to remember:
UNIVERSITY OF SZE...		What do the citizens do with the media?
Norbert Merkovity	**20-25 minutes**	

Parties and Political Systems in Europe: Communication of the Actors

6.   Infotainment, politainment

Infotainment (and politainment) can be used to explain the citizens-voters role attitudes in political communication. A constructed noun, infotainment is the combination of the words information and entertainment, suggesting a practice of the blending together of their presentation within the broadcasting of news and current affairs. However, infotainment is not just a practice of news production but also an attention-grabbing phenomenon.

Politainment is similar to infotainment. The emphasis is on "political".

How do political agendas work in the era of social media?

While the previous phenomena, described in earlier lectures, mainly dealt with the political actors and their consequences affected the political actors' communication, agenda melding shows how political actors have to strive for attention. Agenda melding directly comes from the theory of agenda-setting. Donald Shaw and his researcher team wanted to show how agendas coming from the different channels become one on the public's agenda.

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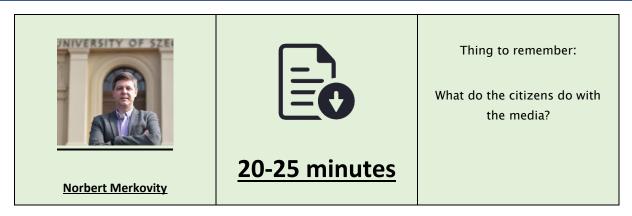
MAGYARORSZÁG KORMÁNYA

BEFEKTETÉS A JÖVŐBE

Project number: EFOP-3.6.2-16-2017-00007
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sustainable and inclusive society: social, technological,
innovation networks in employment and digital economy"

Therefore attention turns to recipients of the message and poses the question: **what does the citizen do with media?**

Different agendas on different channels

According to the traditional theory, the citizens' agenda is affected by the (vertical) media with a great audience. However, we cannot disregard the effects of webpages' agenda with a small number of visitors and social media. The agenda-influencing power of the vertical media (traditional, broadcasted media) is still great. However, horizontal media (e.g., social media) has a rich and ever-available informational environment has an increasing base of users in its background.

Therefore, the theory of agenda melding supposes active consumers who choose the way they get the pieces of information. The concept shows correlation with people's orientation needs, their desire to understand their environment and the situation they are part of or are interested in. The process was shown during the research of the original agenda-setting in the American presidential election survey in 1968.

The orientation need can be demonstrated with two other theories: relevance and uncertainty. Relevance means the object that interests the person, while uncertainty is present if people feel they do not have the information they need to judge the situation. This latter one is especially important at the time of elections. In case of high relevance and uncertainty, the orientation need appears, and the solution to it is the agenda melding.

The 2008 agenda melding research studied the horizontal and vertical media in the American presidential elections 2008. With in-depth interviews, 70 Democrat, Republican and Independent voters were investigated in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, where the famous 1968 research was conducted. Their goal was to understand the most important topics among the voters. To understand the differences between the horizontal and vertical media, they used content analysis. In the latter case, the research concluded that news channels of cable

television and talk shows about public life worked with more topics in small units and connecting these units. In comparison, daily news and newspapers worked with fewer topics and larger units connected with the elections. The final result showed that vertical media could effectively influence the topics on the agenda, but horizontal media presence can also be detected.

With the use of the 'big data', they repeated this research in 2012, at the time of the American presidential elections. The research concluded that voters use media as a source of information in various ways. In general, it was stated that the later winner, Barack Obama's circle of supporters, liked the institutions of traditional (vertical) media better. In contrast, his opponent, Mitt Romney's supporters, preferred the niche (horizontal) media's news presentations.

To conclude, researches showed the rising presence of vertical media. Horizontal media can excellently mediate the political agenda but cannot convey thoughts, serving political attention by agenda melding. This, at the same time, the barrier and the strength of vertical media as well. So, those who want to take action in specific issues (e.g. want to vote) but do not or hardly know the field (e.g. they hardly know the candidates and their programs) will need orientation that they probably get from newspapers or television; therefore, the agenda of (vertical) media will reappear in their decision. This is what shows the strength of vertical media. Its barrier, however, starts when people do not need to go through the stages as mentioned above as they know the candidates and their programs or are not interested in politics and meet this kind of information only by chance among the newsfeeds that interest them. For them, the agenda of vertical media does not affect as much. There will be a greater agenda melding that happens based on the 'likes' of their communities.

The above mentioned 2008 research during the American presidential elections showed that different agendas melt depending on political stance and age: the Republican and young voters were the ones who had both the agendas of the vertical and the horizontal media on their agendas with a higher expectance.

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According to the agenda melding, pieces of information (not only about political issues) can be affected by communities. To prove this, there are three elements through which agenda will melt,

(1) information about communities,

(2) information about communities where there is personal involvement, and

(3) personal interest, experience and faith.

The theory assumes that (starting from the cognitive dissonance) the individual instinctively know the information about the general community based on which s/he chooses communities for her-/himself. The individual defines 'self' within the community based on the information connected with the community; this is influenced by the 'self', i.e. personal interest, experience, and faith. The three elements have a simultaneous effect but show multiple results individually that turned out in the research of 2008 and 2012. As agenda melding takes the different interests of the individuals and the need for cultural interaction into consideration, it can also be a community-building factor. Understanding the significance of horizontal and vertical media in agendas, politicians – with infotainment – can build communities.

How people vote?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eermkiaFoWc (US)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nlYpMGI6iNQ (young people, UK)

Questions

1. What is the meaning of infotainment?

2. What is infotainment 1.0?

3. What is infotainment 3.0?

4. When does political socialization start?

5. How do people learn about politics?

6. What are the reasons behind voting? What is the main reason?

7. What is opinion?

8. What qualified public means?

9. What active public means?

10. Explain agenda melding!

See:

Cristobal Rovira Kaltwasser, Paul A. Taggart, Paulina Ochoa Espejo, Pierre Ostiguy (eds.): The Oxford Handbook of Populism. Oxford University Press, 2017. ISBN: 978-0198803560.

Kate Kenski, Kathleen Hall Jamieson (eds.): The Oxford Handbook of Political Communication. Oxford University Press, 2017. ISBN: 978-0199793471.

Pippa Norris, Ronald Inglehart: Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit, and Authoritarian Populism. Cambridge University Press, 2018. ISBN: 978-1108595841.

Caramani, Daniele: The Nationalization of Politics: The Formation of National Electorates and Party Systems in Western Europe. Cambridge University Press, 2004. ISBN: 978-0511185182

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University of Szeged
Address: 6720 Szeged, Dugonics tér 13.
www.u-szeged.hu
www.szechenyi2020.hu

European Social Fund and the budget of Hungary.