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The Role of Algorithms in Shaping the Media Agenda for the Public via Social Media Platforms

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the role of digital algorithms in shaping the public media agenda through social media platforms, considering the profound transformations in contemporary media environments and the partial shift of agenda-setting power from traditional media institutions to data-driven digital systems. The research addresses how recommendation and content-ranking algorithms prioritize certain issues while marginalizing others, and explores the implications of these processes for public awareness, issue salience, and opinion formation.

The study adopts a descriptive-analytical approach based on a review of relevant academic literature and previous research. It also employs comparative and theoretical analysis to examine differences between traditional media agenda-setting mechanisms and emerging algorithmic agenda-setting practices, using Agenda-Setting Theory as its principal theoretical framework.

The findings suggest that algorithms have become influential actors in shaping media agendas by personalizing and ranking content according to users' interests, behavioral patterns, and engagement levels. This transformation has contributed to the fragmentation of a relatively unified public agenda into multiple personalized digital agendas. Furthermore, engagement-driven content distribution may amplify certain issues regardless of their actual public significance, potentially reinforcing information bubbles, confirmation bias, and limited exposure to diverse perspectives.

The study emphasizes the importance of extending Agenda-Setting Theory to accommodate algorithmic influence within contemporary digital communication environments. It recommends greater transparency in content distribution, stronger digital media literacy, and increased public awareness of algorithmic mechanisms. Finally, it calls for future empirical research, particularly in Arab societies, to assess the extent of algorithmic influence on public priorities and promote more diverse, balanced, and accountable digital media environments.

Keywords: Digital Algorithms, Media Agenda, Social Media Platforms, Agenda-Setting Theory, Filter Bubbles, Public Opinion.

1. Introduction

Digital algorithms have become a major actor in determining the content that reaches users. This shift has contributed to reshaping the relationship between media and the public, as interaction with content has become dependent on smart systems that sort news and information according to users' interests and digital behavior, thereby reproducing the concept of agenda-setting theory in a new digital context (Al-Salam, 2021).

Agenda Setting Theory is based on the idea that the media does not only tell people what to think about, but what they should think about, by highlighting certain issues and ignoring others, which directs public attention towards specific topics. With digital transformation, agenda-setting is no longer confined to media institutions; rather, algorithms on platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are participating in this process by analyzing data and personalizing content, which reinforces what is known as "algorithmic agenda" (Kamal, 2020).

Recent studies also indicate that social media does not only influence the ordering of media priorities, but also contributes to shaping the mental image of individuals and institutions, and strengthening or weakening public attitudes towards various issues. In a field study on the Iraqi

public, it was found that the use of digital platforms directly affects the formation of mental perceptions about social and political issues, as a result of selective exposure to content driven by recommendation algorithms (Khader, 2025).

In the same context, other research has shown that social media platforms have become a fertile environment for the spread of information, whether true or misleading, as algorithms amplify some news and marginalize others, contributing to the reproduction of "information bubbles" that affect public perception of events and public issues, especially during times of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Bani Salameh, 2020).

Based on this, this research aims to analyze agenda-setting theory in its modern framework, focusing on the growing role of algorithms in shaping the media agenda for the public via social media platforms, and understanding how the power of influence is shifting from traditional media to smart digital systems, and the resulting effects on public awareness and public opinion formation.

Algorithms play a pivotal and fundamental role in shaping the media agendas for the public through social media platforms, as they have transformed from mere software systems organizing content into a main actor directing people's interests and determining the priorities of public debate. They can also play a role in the shift from chronological ordering to personalization and filtering. That is, instead of displaying posts according to their chronological sequence of publication, algorithms rely on analyzing huge amounts of data including user behavior, interactions, and past interests to provide personalized content that matches their personal details. In addition to their potential role in amplifying controversial content, algorithms can often play a role in spreading content that stimulates strong emotions (such as anger, excitement, or shock) because it achieves higher rates of participation and interaction, which leads to amplifying controversial issues and pushing serious or complex issues to the margin. Consequently, they can contribute to creating "trends" and directing interests, where recommendation and trending content algorithms contribute to directing the eyes of millions towards specific issues or hashtags in record time, turning a passing observation into a public opinion issue dominating the digital scene.

Consequently, they help in forming digital filter bubbles (Filter Bubbles), through which algorithms isolate users inside "bubbles" displaying only viewpoints similar to their own, reducing the chance of exposure to different opinions and leading to deeper social and political polarization. If what has been presented is correct, then algorithms can control vision and direct behavior, as we assume that algorithms control the "vision" of ideas and not just their direct restriction, which affects the awareness of generations and how they interact with political and social issues (such as the spread of certain segments on platforms like TikTok or X).

2. Research Problem

The contemporary media environment has witnessed a radical transformation as a result of the increasing reliance on social media platforms, where determining media priorities (the media agenda) is no longer limited to traditional media institutions. Rather, content display has become subject to the influence of algorithms that control presentation according to interaction patterns and individual interests. This transformation has led to a change in the way the public perceives public issues, as attention is directed towards certain contents and others are excluded without direct human intervention.

The research problem lies in the possibility of this hidden role of algorithms, which may lead to rebuilding public awareness in an unbalanced way, by enhancing specific issues and marginalizing others, which raises questions about the extent of the neutrality of the "algorithmic agenda" and its impact on shaping public opinion compared to the traditional agenda theory that media institutions have worked with for decades and upon which theories and methods have been established and specialized in measuring the impact process and the direction of public influence and behavior. What is the fate of all this, and to where is the influence process heading?

Recent studies have indicated that social media platforms have become capable of influencing the ordering of public priorities and shaping the mental image of issues, especially in political and social contexts (Al-Salam, 2021). Other studies have shown that this influence is enhanced by the algorithms that control information flow (Kamal, 2020).

Some recent reports and studies indicate the following:

- More than 70% of users rely on social media platforms as a primary source of news globally (Reuters Institute, 2025).

- About 60% of the content a user sees is determined by recommendation algorithms and not directly chosen (Social Media Algorithms Report, 2024).
- The likelihood of a user interacting with news suggested by algorithms increases by 3 times compared to non-suggested content.
- 65% of users do not realize that the content appearing to them is arranged algorithmically and not chronologically.

3. Importance of the Research

Scientific Importance:

- Contributes to developing the understanding of agenda-setting theory in light of digital transformation.
- Adds a modern dimension related to the role of algorithms in media studies.
- Supports research literature on digital media and public opinion formation.

Practical Importance:

- Helps content creators and media professionals understand the mechanisms of news dissemination.
- Contributes to raising public awareness of how algorithms work.
- Supports media policies in organizing digital content.

Research Objectives

1. Analyze the concept of agenda-setting theory in the modern media context.
2. Clarify the role of algorithms in shaping media content on social media platforms.
3. Study the impact of the algorithmic agenda on public awareness and attitudes.
4. Compare traditional media agenda and digital agenda.
5. Reveal the potential risks of algorithms dominating the flow of information.

Research Questions

Main Question:

What is the role of algorithms in shaping the media agenda for the public via social media platforms in light of agenda-setting theory?

Sub-questions:

1. How do algorithms contribute to determining the quality of content to which the user is exposed?
2. To what extent does the algorithmic agenda align with traditional agenda-setting theory?
3. What is the impact of algorithms on the public's perception of social and political issues?
4. Do algorithms lead to enhancing information bias or "filter bubbles"?.

4. Literature Review (Previous Studies)

Studies related to algorithms and shaping the media agenda

A study by Al-Salam (2021) addressed the topic of agenda-setting in political news via the Twitter platform, by analyzing how circulated content affects the ordering of political issues among the public. The study focused on the idea that digital platforms are no longer just a means of transmitting news, but have become an active environment in shaping media follow-up priorities, where some political issues are intensively highlighted at the expense of marginalizing others.

The results of the study showed that Twitter plays an important role in reshaping the media agenda, as interaction mechanisms such as retweets, likes, and comments contribute to raising certain topics to the forefront of public attention. The study also concluded that the influence is no longer monopolized by media institutions, but users themselves have become part of the agenda-building process through their interaction with and circulation of political content, which reflects a fundamental transformation in the nature of media influence.

A study by Khader (2025) examined the impact of social media on shaping the mental image of commercial brands among the public, focusing on the indirect role of algorithms in directing users' perception. The study started from the hypothesis that repeated exposure to certain

content via digital platforms contributes to building positive or negative mental perceptions about brands.

The study found that algorithms play a pivotal role in enhancing this impact by displaying personalized content based on the user's interests and previous digital behavior. The results also showed that algorithmic control over content leads to the gradual consolidation of certain mental images, making the user more vulnerable to adopting specific attitudes towards brands without direct awareness of the media directing process.

A study by Kamal (2020) focused on modern theoretical trends in social network research, analyzing the impact of these networks on shaping and polarizing public opinion. The study discussed the shift from traditional media to networked media, and how digital platforms have become a fertile environment for reproducing social and political interactions in a more complex way.

The results of the study showed that opinion polarization no longer occurs only as a result of media content, but has become closely linked to digital recommendation mechanisms and algorithms that control what the user sees. The study also confirmed that these mechanisms contribute to enhancing "opinion bubbles," where the user is isolated within a circle of similar content, which reduces the diversity of sources and increases the severity of intellectual polarization.

A study by Bani Salameh (2020) addressed the topic of misleading news on social media, focusing on the speed of its spread and the role of algorithms in enhancing its reach to the public. The study started from the observation that exciting or emotional content often receives greater interaction, making it more widespread across digital platforms.

The study found that algorithms indirectly contribute to the spread of misleading news, because they rely on measuring interaction as a primary indicator for displaying content regardless of its accuracy or credibility. The results also confirmed that this pattern of distribution leads to misleading the public and forming inaccurate perceptions about events, especially in times of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which highlights the danger of excessive reliance on digital platforms as a primary source of information.

Studies related to the impact of social media on awareness and public opinion

A study by (Sahsah et al., 2024) aimed to analyze the impact of social networks on shaping the political awareness of youth, and found that these platforms have become a primary source of political information, and contribute significantly to shaping the attitudes and perceptions of youth regarding public issues, especially in light of intensive and continuous interaction with digital content.

A study by (Anmar W. Faidhi, 2020) also addressed the impact of social media sites on shaping public opinion towards political issues, and the results showed that these platforms play a direct role in directing individuals' positions, through the speed of news dissemination and the diversity of its sources, which enhances the media influence process on the public.

In a study by (Arafa, 2021), the risks of university youth using social media sites were investigated, as the study showed that excessive use may lead to exposure to misleading information and weakness in verifying sources, which is reflected in the quality of awareness and general perception among users.

Studies related to media discourse and shaping public opinion

A study by (Nahal, 2020) focused on analyzing media discourse and its role in shaping public opinion through a study of Al Jazeera channel's discourse on the Twitter platform, and concluded that the media language used and presentation methods greatly affect directing the public's perception of political issues, which reflects the importance of media discourse in building the agenda.

Studies related to agenda-setting theory in traditional and digital media

A study by (Diab and Rady, 2020) addressed the relationship between television and building the media agenda, and confirmed that traditional media still play an important role in determining the issues that concern the public, despite the increasing competition from digital media.

A study by (Al-Mashhadani and Hussein, 2023) also indicated that agenda-setting theory is still an effective explanatory framework in analyzing news coverage of political issues, but it

needs development to keep pace with changes in the modern media environment.

In a study by (Atta Allah, 2023), the mutual relations between global news agencies and Arab newspapers were analyzed, and a mutual influence was found in determining media coverage priorities, especially in international political issues.

Studies related to media agenda in channels and platforms

A study by (Al-Meyar, 2021) on agenda-building in Algerian television media showed that there are multiple factors affecting the ordering of issues within private satellite channels, including political and economic considerations and the targeted audience.

Points of agreement between previous studies

1. Most studies (Sahsah et al., 2024; Faidhi, 2020; Arafa, 2021) agreed that social networks have become a primary source of information, and have a direct impact on shaping public awareness and opinion among individuals.
2. Agreement on the role of media in shaping public opinion: Media studies such as (Nahal, 2020) and (Diab and Rady, 2020) confirmed that media, whether traditional or digital, plays an important role in directing the public's perception of public issues through content selection and presentation methods.
3. Agreement on the continued validity of agenda-setting theory: Studies such as (Al-Mashhadani and Hussein, 2023) and (Atta Allah, 2023) indicated that agenda-setting theory is still an appropriate explanatory framework for understanding how media issues are ordered, despite changes in the media environment.

Points of difference between previous studies

1. Difference in the studied media environment: Some studies focused on traditional media such as television (Diab and Rady, 2020), while other studies focused on digital media and social media platforms (Faidhi, 2020; Sahsah et al., 2024).
2. Difference in the angle of analysis: There are studies that focused on the psychological and behavioral impact on the public (Arafa, 2021), while other studies focused on analyzing media discourse or relations between media institutions (Nahal, 2020; Atta Allah, 2023).
3. Difference in the level of theoretical analysis: Some studies addressed agenda-setting theory directly, while others addressed topics close to it such as political awareness or public opinion without deep linking to algorithms.

Research Gap

Despite the abundance of studies that have addressed agenda-setting theory or the impact of social media, there is a clear gap represented in:

- A lack of studies that directly link agenda-setting theory with digital algorithms.
- Weak focus on the concept of "algorithmic agenda" and how it restructures the public's priorities away from traditional media.
- A shortage of studies that explain how the content ordering process turns from a human editorial decision to an automated decision based on artificial intelligence and data analysis.
- The absence of sufficient analysis of the impact of algorithms on the difference in agendas between users (multiple digital agendas).

Based on this, this research seeks to fill this gap through analyzing the role of algorithms in shaping the media agenda for the public via social media platforms.

Commentary on previous studies

It is clear from reviewing previous studies that they provided a scientific basis for understanding the relationship between media and the public, especially regarding the impact of social media on awareness and public opinion. They also helped confirm the continued importance of agenda-setting theory in modern media studies.

However, most of these studies remained within the traditional framework of media influence, and did not sufficiently delve into modern technological transformations, especially the role of algorithms in directing media content. Some of them focused on the results of influence without analyzing the technical mechanisms behind it.

Therefore, this research is distinguished by attempting to move from the level of "media

influence" to the level of "influence industry," through studying algorithms as a fundamental actor in shaping the media agenda in the digital environment.

5. Theoretical Framework

5.1. Agenda Setting Theory

Agenda Setting Theory is considered one of the most important and famous communication and media theories that formed in the mid-twentieth century, and was fundamentally linked to the works of "Maxwell McCombs" and "Donald Shaw". It is based on a fundamental idea that the media does not tell the public what to think, but also determines what they should think about, by highlighting certain issues and ignoring others.

The strength of this theory lies in that it does not claim that the media imposes a direct opinion on the public, but rather confirms that it affects the arrangement of thinking priorities. That is, the intensity of media coverage of a certain issue makes the public consider it more important than others, even if it is not actually the most important. Thus, media influence here is a "perceptual arrangement" and not a "direct persuasion."

Agenda-setting theory has gone through three main developmental stages:

1.The First Stage (Issue Identification): Where the media determines what the issues are that should be paid attention to.

2.The Second Stage (Attribute Identification): Where the media does not only determine the issue, but determines how to think about it by focusing on certain aspects without others.

3.The Third Stage (Networked Agenda): Which appeared with digital media, where the public, platforms, and algorithms all participate in building the agenda.

In the critical context, recent studies have begun to indicate that the theory is no longer sufficient to describe the complex media environment, especially with the multiplicity of digital information sources and the overlap of roles between the producer and the consumer. Some researchers have pointed out that traditional media theories suffer from a methodological deficiency, because their emergence in Arab contexts does not necessarily reflect the recent global media transformations (Al-Bashar, 2003).

As (Negm, 2020) confirms, reliance on media alone is no longer accurate for understanding reality, because the media reality has become multi-source and full of biases and misinformation, which imposes a re-reading of the theory within a new digital context.

5.2. Digital Media and the Transformation of the Media Agenda

The media environment has witnessed over the past two decades a radical transformation as a result of the digital revolution and the emergence of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok, where traditional media are no longer the only source of information. Rather, the user himself has become part of the production and distribution process.

This transformation has led to what can be called "the fragmentation of the unified media agenda," as there is no longer a single agenda for the public, but rather multiple different agendas depending on users' interests and their digital behavior and the content they are exposed to.

Digital media is also characterized by several fundamental characteristics that contributed to changing the nature of the media agenda, including:

- **Interactivity:** Where the public has become involved in content creation through comments and sharing.
- **Super speed:** News flow is instantaneous without achieving full accuracy sometimes.
- **Personalization:** Displaying different content for each user according to their interests.
- **Multiplicity of sources:** The absence of a media monopoly on information.

Consequently, media is no longer just a channel for transmitting information, but has become a digital social environment in which public perception is built through continuous interaction with digital content.

The literature indicates that this transformation necessitates a re-reading of agenda-setting theory, because the process of determining priorities is no longer centralized as before, but has become distributed among the media, the user, and digital platforms (Al-Arabi, 1996).

5.3. Algorithms and their Role in Shaping the Media Agenda

Today, algorithms represent the most influential and invisible element in the digital media

environment, as these systems work on analyzing huge amounts of data related to users' behavior, such as: likes, views, interaction times, search processes, and browsing patterns, with the aim of providing personalized content for each individual.

Here the biggest transformation in agenda-setting theory appears, as the power to determine priorities has shifted from:

Traditional media -> Digital algorithms

Algorithms perform two main functions:

1.**Content Filtering:** Selecting what appears to the user and what is excluded.

2.**Enhancing Interaction:** Promoting content that achieves the highest interaction rate, regardless of its scientific value or accuracy.

This approach leads to important media results, the most prominent of which are:

- Amplifying some issues exaggeratedly.
- Marginalizing other issues despite their importance.
- Creating "information bubbles" (Filter Bubbles) that make the user trapped inside content similar to their interests only.
- Enhancing confirmation bias among individuals.

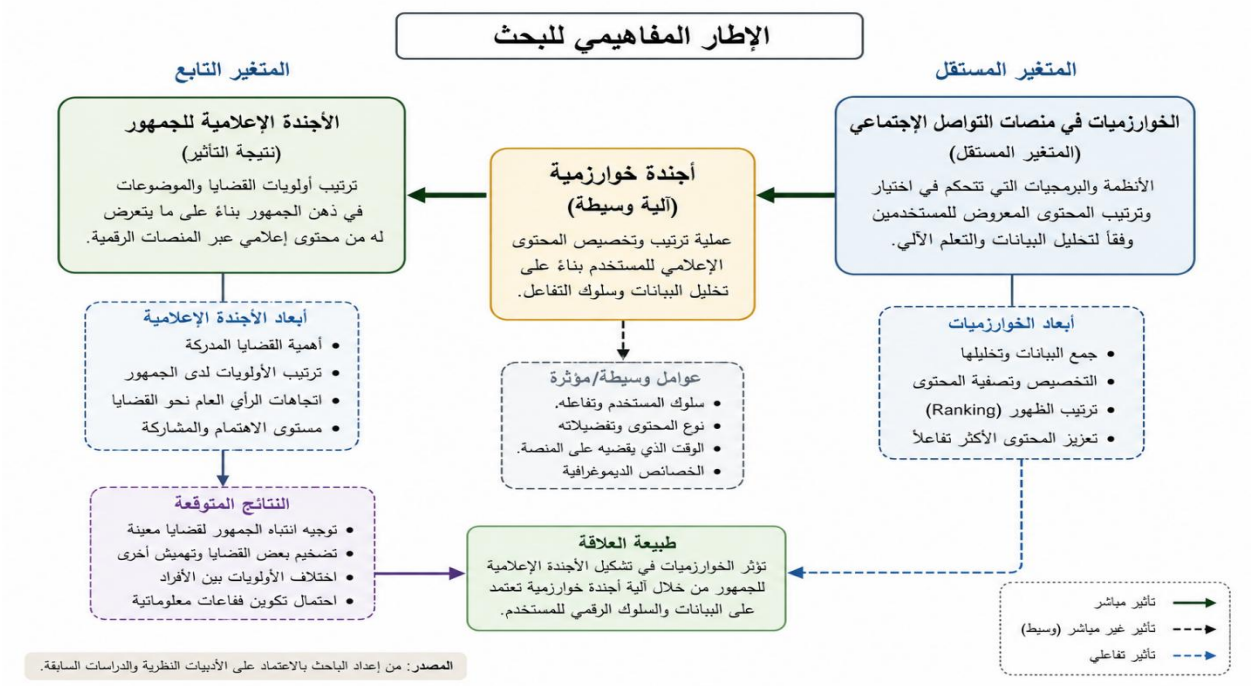
Thus, it can be said that algorithms are no longer just technical tools, but have become an invisible media actor participating in shaping public awareness and reproducing media reality.

(Zahran et al., 2021) confirms that this transformation has made media influence more complex, as it is no longer direct or clear, but has become hidden and works through smart systems based on big data and artificial intelligence.

Conclusion of Theoretical Framework

It can be said that agenda-setting theory in its traditional form is no longer sufficient to explain the contemporary media reality, as digital transformation has led to a redistribution of media power among traditional media, users, and algorithms. Thus, the "media agenda" in the modern era has become a complex interactive product, in the building of which several parties participate, the most important of which are algorithms that play a pivotal role in directing attention and shaping public perception, which imposes the necessity of redeveloping the theory to suit the era of data and artificial intelligence.

5.4. Conceptual Framework and Research Model



(Space reserved for Figure 1: The Conceptual Framework of the Research)

Study Variables

1. **Independent Variable:** Algorithms in social media platforms.

It refers to the software systems that rely on analyzing user data and their digital behavior (such as interaction, views, search, and sharing) with the aim of determining and ranking the content that appears to them. These algorithms represent the main factor influencing the media content to which the public is exposed.

2. **Dependent Variable:** Media Agenda for the Public.

It refers to the ranking of issues and topics that the public focuses on or pays attention to the most as a result of their exposure to media content via social media platforms, as this agenda is formed based on what is displayed, repeated, and algorithmically personalized.

3. Mediating Variables:

They are represented in the group of factors that affect the strength of the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable, including:

- Level of interaction with content (likes, shares, comments).
- Type of content (political, social, entertainment).
- Previous interests and digital behavior of the user.
- Degree of trust in media platforms.
- Information bubbles and cognitive bias.

6. Research Methodology

This research relies on the descriptive-analytical approach, where the literature and previous studies related to agenda-setting theory and digital algorithms are analyzed, in addition to studying how social media platforms influence the formation of media priorities for the public.

It also relies on:

- Reviewing previous studies.
- The Comparative approach: To compare the traditional media agenda with the algorithmic agenda.
- Theoretical induction: To understand the relationship between algorithms and agenda-setting theory.
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Research Community and Sample

The research community is represented in the literature and scientific studies related to agenda-setting theory, digital media, and the role of algorithms in social media platforms, whether Arab or foreign studies. This community includes all research published in the modern period that addressed the impact of traditional and digital media on shaping public opinion and the media agenda.

As for the research sample, it was selected purposefully, as it was limited to peer-reviewed scientific studies and academic articles published during the period (2020-2025), which are directly related to the research topic, with the aim of analyzing them and extracting theoretical results related to the role of algorithms in shaping the media agenda.

Data Collection Tools

This research relied on a set of theoretical tools for collecting data, the most important of which is desk analysis of previous studies and relevant scientific research. Scientific content analysis of academic literature was also used with the aim of understanding the basic concepts related to agenda-setting theory and digital algorithms. In addition, peer-reviewed references and scientific articles published in academic journals were relied upon to provide an accurate knowledge base that supports theoretical analysis.

Validity and Reliability of the Tools

The validity of the research tools was ensured by relying on peer-reviewed and reliable scientific sources issued by recognized academic journals, which ensures the accuracy and validity of the information. Reliability was also enhanced through the diversity of studies and references used, so that they cover more than one scientific and cultural context, which reduces bias and increases the reliability of the extracted results.

Research Limits

The research limits are represented in the objective limits that are limited to studying agenda-setting theory and the role of algorithms in shaping the media agenda via social media platforms. As for the temporal limits, they include recent studies and research during the period from 2020 to 2026. Regarding the spatial limits, the research included Arab and foreign studies without being restricted to a specific geographical region. The human limits are also limited to the audience of social media users as they are the group most affected by the algorithmic agenda.

Theoretical Terms

1. **Agenda Setting Theory:** It is one of the communication and media theories that assumes that the media does not only transmit reality as it is, but influences the arrangement of the public's priorities by highlighting certain issues and ignoring others, making the public believe that the issues that are media-focused are the most important in reality. That is, the media determines "what people think about," and not just "how they think" (Al-Salam, 2021).
2. **Algorithms:** It is a set of rules and software processes used by social media platforms to analyze user data (such as interaction, likes, search, and viewing) with the aim of organizing and ranking the content that appears to them. These algorithms work on personalizing content for each user individually, which leads to a difference in the media agenda from one person to another (Kamal, 2020).

Operational Terms

- **Agenda-setting theory:** Refers to the ability of the media to arrange the public's priorities by highlighting certain issues.
- **Algorithms:** Which means the software systems that rely on analyzing user data to determine the content that appears to them.
- **Media agenda** refers to the arrangement of issues and priorities that are focused on in the media.
- **The algorithmic agenda** is the process in which media content is arranged based on artificial intelligence and user behavior.
- **Information bubbles** refer to the state in which the user is surrounded by similar content that reinforces their orientations and reduces their exposure to different opinions.

Data Analysis Methods

The research relied on the descriptive-analytical method in studying previous literature and understanding media phenomena related to agenda-setting theory. Comparative analysis between different studies was also used to identify similarities and differences between them, in addition to critical analysis of theoretical concepts with the aim of assessing their suitability for the modern digital media environment. This method helps in interpreting the relationship between algorithms and the media agenda in a deeper and more comprehensive way.

7. Results and Discussion

1. Agenda-setting theory has maintained its effectiveness in explaining how public priorities are formed, but it needs development to suit the modern digital environment.
2. Algorithms on social media platforms have acquired a direct role in determining the content that reaches users, making them an essential partner in building the "media agenda."
3. The media agenda is no longer unified, but has become multiple and different from one user to another as a result of the algorithmic personalization of content.
4. Algorithms contribute to strengthening some issues and weakening others based on interaction, and not necessarily on the importance or accuracy of the content.
5. This process leads to the creation of "information bubbles" that may limit the diversity of knowledge and increase cognitive bias among the public.
6. Traditional media is still influential, but it has lost a large part of its ability to fully control the arrangement of public issues.

8. Recommendations and Conclusion

Recommendations

1. The necessity of developing agenda-setting theory in line with digital transformation and the emergence of algorithms as a new media actor.
2. Enhancing users' awareness of how social media platform algorithms work and their impact on the displayed content.
3. Encouraging media institutions to commit to transparency in the production and distribution of digital content.
4. Introducing media and digital literacy concepts into educational curricula to raise individuals' ability to distinguish between targeted and non-targeted content.
5. Conducting more studies on the concept of "algorithmic agenda" and its impact on shaping public opinion in Arab societies.
6. Limiting the spread of misleading information by developing regulatory policies for digital platforms.

Researcher's Opinion

According to the researcher's opinion (in my opinion), the media alone is no longer what controls what we see and think about; rather, algorithms have come to play a more dangerous and influential role because they operate invisibly and quietly. This sometimes makes the user believe that they are choosing content freely, while in reality, they are receiving content that has been pre-arranged for them based on their behavior and interests. I also see that this development carries two sides: a positive side represented in facilitating access to information that concerns the user, and a negative side represented in narrowing the circle of knowledge and enhancing bias. Therefore, the real challenge today is not only in the media, but in how we, as an audience, understand these systems and deal with them with greater awareness.

Conclusion

The research concluded that the accelerating transformations in the digital media environment have reshaped the mechanisms of building the media agenda and brought about a fundamental change in the nature of the relationship between the media and the public. Traditional media institutions no longer monopolize the determination of issues that receive public attention; rather, digital algorithms have become an influential partner in selecting and arranging content and determining its levels of appearance and spread across social media platforms.

The theoretical analysis has shown that algorithms do not necessarily perform a neutral technical function, but contribute to redistributing media attention according to standards related to users' behavior, preferences, and interaction rates with content. Despite the advantages provided by algorithmic personalization in facilitating access to information relevant to individuals' interests, these mechanisms may lead to narrowing cognitive diversity, enhancing confirmation bias, and forming information bubbles that limit exposure to different opinions.

The scientific importance of the research emerges in confirming the continued validity of agenda-setting theory in explaining media influence, with the necessity of developing it to accommodate transformations related to the algorithmic agenda and the multiplicity of digital agendas. The research also confirms that shaping media priorities has become a complex interactive process in which media institutions, digital platforms, and users overlap, instead of being limited to traditional one-way influence.

In light of this, the need emerges to enhance transparency and accountability in algorithm management, develop media and digital literacy programs, and encourage media institutions to adopt professional standards that balance reach, credibility, and the public interest. The research recommends conducting future field and experimental studies to measure the actual impact of algorithms on public priorities and attitudes, especially in the Arab media environment, leading to a deeper understanding of communication transformations and the building of a more open, pluralistic, and responsible digital space.

In conclusion, it becomes clear that agenda-setting theory still retains its importance in explaining how public interests are shaped and their awareness of public issues is directed, but the nature of its application has changed radically in light of digital transformation and the spread of social media platforms. The process of determining media priorities is no longer

limited to traditional media; rather, digital algorithms have become an essential element in arranging content and directing users' attention.

The research has shown that these algorithms contribute to reshaping the media agenda indirectly, through analyzing user behavior and providing personalized content for each individual, leading to the emergence of multiple and different agendas among the public, instead of a unified media agenda as was the case previously. This trend also contributed to strengthening some issues and weakening others, and led to the expansion of the phenomenon of "information bubbles" and cognitive bias.

The research also concluded that the danger does not lie in the technology itself, but in the way it is used and the degree of public awareness of it, which makes the need urgent to enhance media and digital literacy among individuals, and to understand the mechanisms of how algorithms work and their impact on shaping public opinion.

Based on this, understanding the relationship between agenda-setting theory and algorithms represents an important step towards developing contemporary media studies and interpreting the profound transformations witnessed by media in the digital age.

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