

Abstract

The rapid development of blog service and prevalence of blogging behavior give rise to the new social convention of public discussion online. In virtue of the new media for public deliberation featured by high accessibility, usability, interactivity and wild connectivity, the viewing pattern of audience is shifting from the "first-come-first-serve" principle in the traditional media use context to the keywords-navigation and random-walk-through-weblinks fashions in the online world. The change of audience behavior inevitably brings about the changes in the mechanism of agenda-setting, the prominent function of media that has interested researchers all the time. The research question has always been in what capacity the media agenda is likely to influence on public agenda. Message salience, as the direct reflection of audiences' selective attention to the media contents, is an intuitive observation on the public agenda online. Thereby this thesis provides an integrative investigation on the determinants of message salience or the public agenda online, which in particular emphasizes on the impact of attributes of blog contents on message salience instead of merely the role of temporal or spatial unit in which the contents are presented. The key proposition of the thesis is that attribute matters in determining the public agenda online. In light of the previous studies on framing effect, this thesis re-examines the agenda-setting mechanism in an

attribute-oriented manner, rather than adopting the issue-centric approach acknowledged by traditional lines of research.

By developing a path model based on such understandings achieved in the perspective above, this study demonstrates a bold attempt to integrate both attribute and object level salience transmission in the framing process, to seek for the universal outcome of framing effect while to discover the magnitude of framing effect given the known determinants being controlled.

The empirical data reveals that the basic framing strategy, which includes responsibility, morality, conflict, human interest and economy, can increase the message salience, whereas the extensive framing strategy in terms of policy deficiencies, public monitoring and civil rights can decrease the message salience slightly. The result remains significant when the known confounding variables being controlled in the baseline model. The follow-up path analysis explicates the framing process from a cognitive approach, finding that the reminded risk and the audience activation are the two mediators but of disparate nature for two clusters of framing. For the basic framing strategy, reminded risk and audience activation completely mediates the relationship between basic framing strategy and message salience. For the extensive framing strategy, as verified in the post-hoc analysis, the reminded risk acts as the suppressor for the relationship between extensive framing strategy and message salience, whereas audience activation is found to be a partial mediator for it. In the post-hoc analysis, an additional analysis

including the impact of external media agenda is conducted, finding that the current path model retains sufficient explanatory power. The independent variables in the path model altogether have explained 34.2% of the variance in the dependent variable.