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The Interplay of Candidate-Initiated and Journalist-Initiated Agendas in the 1996 and 2004 Taiwan Presidential Elections

Chingching Chang

This study examines the interplay of candidate-initiated issue agendas and journalist-initiated issue agendas in the 1996 and 2004 Taiwan presidential elections. The study indicates that both agendas influenced each other, but unequally—the candidate-initiated issue agenda had a greater impact on the journalist-initiated agenda than vice versa. The results were interpreted with discussions of the media’s campaign reporting and the candidates’ campaign management in Taiwan.

Keywords: Agenda-Setting; Presidential Election; Taiwan

In campaign contexts, as Johnson-Cartee and Copeland (1997) note, ‘... it is the interaction among the political campaign’s staff and the news persons that establishes the “story of the day”’ (p. 33). The idea of media as the sole agenda-setter in campaigns has been challenged by researchers (e.g. Dalton, Beck, Huckfeldt, & Koetzle, 1998). Becker and Kosicki (1995) and Dalton et al. (1998) argue that a transaction process occurs among candidates, the media, and the public that together leads to a converging agenda. Just et al. (1996) also suggest that the electoral process is a constructive process through which candidates, citizens, and the media engage in crosstalk to influence the priorities of the other actors.

Among the multiple actors in the constructive campaign agenda formation process, candidates are important agenda-setters. They are the sources of most of the campaign-related news (Sigal, 1978) and they are eager to lead the campaign agenda. West (1993) notes the importance for candidates to lead the agenda. He argues that in a campaign context, the candidate who successfully defines the campaign with the

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agenda of his/her interest and the agenda in favor of him/herself is more likely to win. Since most voters get campaign information through the media, it is especially crucial for candidates to control the news media agenda.

How can a candidate exert influence on the media's agenda? First, this study suggests that journalists can be sensitized to issues discussed in paid political advertising. More media coverage may result from the increased salience of these issues on the candidates' ad agendas. Moreover, campaign managers usually employ well-planned campaign activities to draw the media's attention to issues of the candidates' concern.

As political advertising expenses have increased dramatically in the United States and other countries, scholars have begun to examine the role of political advertising as the source of public agendas during election periods. How political ads' issue agendas may set the agenda for the news media has also drawn some discussion among scholars (e.g. Jamieson & Campbell, 1992) but relatively fewer studies have been done regarding this issue (Boyle, 2001; Lopez-Escobar, Llama, McCombs, & Lennon, 1998; Roberts & McCombs, 1994). In addition, most of the research on the interplay of ad and media agendas has been conducted in the context of Western cultures (e.g. the United States and Spain). Thus, this study will explore the interplay of candidates' ad agendas and news media's agendas in an Asian setting.

It is important to note that past studies on the interplay of ad agendas and media agendas have examined the flow of influence from the perspective of intermedia agenda-setting (e.g. Roberts & McCombs, 1994; Lopez-Escobar et al., 1998). However, it remains arguable whether to categorize the influence between ad agendas and news agendas as an 'intermedia' process. Instead of suggesting that political advertising is an agenda-setter, this study will view candidates as being agenda-setters and will argue that political advertising is one of the important methods that candidates use to affect the media's agenda and to shift the public agenda.

Given limited campaign resources, it is also important for candidates to communicate with the general public through free news coverage of campaign activities (e.g. Joslyn, 1984). Generally speaking, candidates' staged activities are likely to determine what will be covered in the media (e.g. Dalton et al., 1998). Therefore, the issues presented at rallies are more likely to be addressed in the news than those that are not. In addition, they may generate journalist-initiated follow-up analyses or editorial comments (Dalton et al., 1998). In this sense, the candidate-initiated issue agenda delivered in campaign activities may set the journalist-initiated news agenda. This study will thus adopt Dalton et al.'s (1998) perspective to categorize campaign news as either candidate-initiated or journalist-initiated.

On the other hand, it is also likely that campaigners may rely on news media for information about important issues. News stories provide campaigners with cues about what is going on in the world and which issues may concern the general public. Campaigners are likely to believe that voters will be sensitized to the issues discussed more frequently in the news and, therefore, are likely to address them in campaign ads, and at rallies and press conferences.

To recapitulate, this study employs cross-lagged correlation analyses to examine how candidates' campaign agendas may affect the media agenda, and how journalists' issue agendas can change candidates' campaign communication agendas. It will examine two questions: (1) what is the direction of influence between candidates' ad agendas and journalist-initiated news agendas, and (2) what is the direction of the influence between the candidate-initiated news agendas and the journalist-initiated news agendas? Analyses of the campaign ads and campaign coverage of the 1996 Taiwanese presidential election will help answer the first question, whereas analysis of the campaign news coverage for both the 1996 and 2004 presidential elections will address the second question.

The 1996 Taiwanese Presidential Election

The 1996 presidential election was Taiwan's first election that allowed people 20 or older to cast a vote.¹ With missiles launched from China splashing into the waters around Taiwan and military forces on heightened alert throughout the campaign period, this campaign would be remembered not only for producing Taiwan's first democratically elected president, but also for China's military threats and intimidation.

Four candidates sought the presidency. Competing against Lee Teng-hui, the incumbent from Kuomintang (KMT), were Pen Ming-min from the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), and independents Lin Yang-kang and Chen Li-an. The official campaign period lasted from 24 February to 22 March. China's rocket launches, naval exercises, and live-ammunition war games took place during this same period. The United States deployed two aircraft-carrier groups in the Taiwan Strait to prevent military confrontation. Despite the military threat, the election took place successfully with a turnout rate of 76%. Lee won with 54% of the vote and remained in power.

Campaign Regulations in Taiwan

Campaign advertising in mass media was not allowed in Taiwan's elections until the late 1980s when Taiwan underwent dramatic political changes and reform. In 1989, the restrictions on the use of mass media as a campaign vehicle, as stipulated in the Election and Recall Law, were abolished. According to the new regulations, candidates could run campaign ads in newspapers and magazines, but were not allowed to run ads on broadcast media. Two years later, restrictions on the use of electronic media were loosened. In each high-level election (including elections for the provincial governor, mayors of the two special municipalities, legislators, etc.), the Central Election Committee gave each party free time to air political spots on the government-affiliated broadcast television stations.

Agenda-Setting Theory

The agenda-setting function of mass media was conceptualized by Cohen (1963) who stated that '[the press] may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about' (p. 13). Empirical evidence of the news media's agenda-setting function was first provided by McCombs and Shaw's 1972 study; based on a sample of undecided voters in the 1968 United States presidential election, it showed a substantial correlation between the issues emphasized in the news media and the issues respondents regarded as important in the election. The agenda-setting approach suggests that, through media emphasis, individuals learn how much importance particular issues, persons, or attributes are supposed to have. By attending to some problems and ignoring others, the news media shape the public's political priorities and are capable of making some issues seem more accessible than others, and thus more important.

Following development of the concept of the agenda-setting function of mass media, other studies examined a variety of contingent variables. For example, McCombs (1981) outlined a transactional model based on the individual differences identified in the first 10-year study of the agenda-setting function. Other studies exploring the impact of issue differences and media differences also shed some light on limitations of the news media's agenda-setting capacities.

Lately, the news agenda has been transformed from the independent variable to the dependent variable, and the focus of agenda-setting studies has shifted to 'Who sets the news agenda?' (McCombs, 1992, p. 816). Wire services have long been shown to set the media's agenda (e.g. Hirsch, 1977; McCombs & Shaw, 1976; Snider, 1967; White, 1949) and presidents are acknowledged as important agenda-setters (e.g. Cohen, 1995; McCombs, 1994; Wanta & Foote, 1994; Wanta, Stephenson, Turk, & McCombs, 1989). Scholars have also begun to explore political advertising as a source for campaign agendas (Boyle, 2001; Roberts & McCombs, 1994; Semetko et al., 1991).

The Interplay of Candidate-Initiated Ad Agendas and Journalist-Initiated News Agendas

Roberts and McCombs (1994) expanded the definition of 'intermedia agenda-setting', a term commonly used to address the influence that the news agendas of different news organizations have on each other, to include the interplay between political advertising and news media. They explored the possible role that political advertising played in setting agendas for news media. Using a cross-lagged correlation analysis, they found that TV ad agendas at Time 1 were significantly correlated with newspaper agendas and television news agendas at Time 2. In contrast, newspaper agendas and television news agendas at Time 1 were not significantly correlated with political advertising agendas at Time 2. This indicated that political advertising might have

exerted an impact on news media, but that news media did not impact political advertising. Lopez-Escobar et al. (1998) extended issue agenda-setting among advertising and news media to a second level regarding candidates' attributes. Their results indicated that newspaper ad agendas influenced newspaper and television news agendas, whereas television news agendas, but not newspaper agendas, had a reciprocal influence on newspaper ad agendas.

Roberts and McCombs (1994) suggested that, by covering stories of political advertising, reporters were likely to be sensitized to the issues discussed in political ads. In other words, reporters were influenced by what issues candidates addressed in campaign ads, and their changed perceptions of issue importance were likely to be reflected in the issue selection in their coverage.

In addition, media coverage of political advertising is increasing (West, 1993). Even though these stories generally intend to show the strategic planning behind campaigns or to reveal misleading information in ads, issues discussed in ad campaigns are likely to be given more space in news media. When the news media decide what to write or air about a campaign, the issues contained in political advertisements are more likely to become the reporters' top priorities simply because journalists are responsible for presenting campaign information to voters.

In short, political advertising may shift media agendas, and the reporters may not even realize it. The influence of the ad agenda may operate in two ways, as elaborated above. First, without much awareness, reporters are sensitized to issues discussed in campaign ads. Second, reporters try to present campaign information to readers by covering issues discussed in campaign ads.

The Interplay of Candidate-Initiated Agendas and Journalist-Initiated Agendas

In media-age politics, it is vital to be heard in the media. Candidates endeavor to lead the campaign agenda that is favorable to themselves (West, 1993). Given limited campaign budgets, few candidates can rely on paid communication exclusively. Most candidates allocate considerable campaign resources to developing messages or activities that are newsworthy enough to receive media coverage (Joslyn, 1984). For example, if a candidate wants to address issues concerning the city sewage system, he or she can put on a jumpsuit and go underground into the sewage system or stage a press conference to draw the media's attention to the issue. Free media coverage not only reduces the cost of communicating with voters but is also thought to appear more credible, and thus is more likely to have a stronger impact (Joslyn, 1984).

As Graber (1980) noted, mass media coverage shapes central themes around which campaigns evolve. Various campaign techniques have been developed to draw media attention. For example, it has long been acknowledged that pseudo-events, including public showings, talk show appearances, rallies, and parades, can attract media coverage (Jamieson & Campbell, 1992; Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 1997). Similarly, Dalton et al. (1998) observed that campaign trail activities have been commonly staged by candidates to attract the media's attention. Sigal (1978) also noted that

reporters rely on routine channels, such as press briefings, press releases, and speeches, for campaign information if they are not able to get access to candidates or campaign managers in person.

Most importantly, it is likely that candidate-initiated news stories will lead to more journalist-initiated follow-up investigations or in-depth discussions of these issues. In other words, candidate-initiated campaign rallies, announcements, and speeches may make certain issues more salient and induce reporters to pay more attention to these issues. As a result, more editorial or analytical news stories follow.

This study suggests that candidates can vie for the news media's attention in two ways: first, by highlighting certain issues in political advertising and thus sensitizing reporters to these issues; second, by initiating well-planned campaign activities to lead the issue agenda. Moreover, campaigners and candidates are avid news consumers. They read newspapers for information on important issues with which the general public is concerned. In this sense, journalists can easily set the campaign agenda for candidates or campaigners.

To explore the directions of influence, this study first examined political ad content and newspaper coverage in the 1996 presidential election campaign in Taiwan. Due to the historically unique circumstances of this campaign, two sets of analyses were conducted. The first set concerned all issues appearing in the candidates' and news agendas. The second set excluded China-related issues. Due to the military threats from China, candidates and journalists were naturally sensitized to issues related to China–Taiwan relations. It could be reasonably assumed that the candidates' staged campaign activities and the journalists' news coverage would heavily address this issue to respond to voters' real-life concerns. Thus, they were reacting to a real-life event but not maneuvering it. Therefore, including China-related issues may have unnecessarily inflated the correlations among different sets of agendas.

Methodology: The 1996 Election

Samples for Content Analysis

The official campaign period for this election was four weeks, lasting from 24 February to 22 March 1996. However, since the first print political ads started to appear on 15 February, news stories and political advertisements shown from 15 February to 22 March were used for analyses. This study will try to show whether advertisements run during the first period of four weeks (Time 1) will have an impact on news in the final days of the campaign (Time 2), as well as whether candidate-initiated news agendas during Time 1 will have a positive correlation with the journalist-initiated news agendas at Time 2.

In terms of time lags, it has not been theoretically specified how long a lag should be for an optimal agenda-setting effect to emerge (e.g. Eyal, Winter, & DeGeorge, 1981; Rogers & Dearing, 1988). Past discussions on the length of lags are generally limited to the effects of the news agenda on the public agenda and no agreements can

be reached. Eyal et al. (1981) suggest that different issues will take different amounts of time to achieve salience in the public's mind, and agendas in different media may need different time spans to exert the optimal effects. Indeed, past studies have documented agenda-setting with time lags varying from several days (e.g. Iyengar & Kinder, 1987) to a few months (e.g. Stone & McCombs, 1981; Winter & Eyal, 1981). The three-day time lag used in the 1996 analysis was selected based on the following reasons. First, only 144 ads appeared during this five-week period. When determining the two periods, one of the important criteria was having as equal a number of ads as possible in these two time periods. As a result, the two periods (15 February to 15 March vs. 19 March to 22 March) were chosen because there were 56 ads in the first period and 57 ads in the second period. Second, in a campaign context such as that of the 1996 Taiwan election, campaigners closely monitor media news and journalists attentively observe candidate-staged campaign activities. Therefore, a short time lag between period 1 and period 2 was appropriate. Given the fluidity of presidential election campaigns, campaigners reveal that print political ads are sometimes created in as little as three days to respond to the spontaneity of election contexts (Chen, 1999). A three-day lag between Time 1 and Time 2 thus seems justified.

This study focuses on political advertisements and news stories in newspapers, for several reasons. First, even though newspapers accounted for only 31% of media expenditures in the 1996 election, in total, more advertisements were printed in newspapers than spots were shown on the air due to cheaper rates for newspaper space. Second, in Taiwan, 66.1% of people read newspapers regularly (A. C. Neilson, 1998), so controlling the newspaper agenda was deemed essential. Third, analyses indicated that the issues were less likely to be discussed in televised spots in the campaign (Chang, 2000). The average number of issues that were discussed in each televised spot was only 0.23. Finally, previous research has shown a high correlation between the issues covered in newspapers and television newscasts during general elections (e.g. Shaw, 1977; Weaver, Graber, McCombs, & Eyal, 1981). In addition, Roberts and McCombs (1994) and Lopez-Escobar et al. (1998) demonstrated that the newspaper agenda influenced the television news agenda. Thus, for the purposes of this study, it seemed more meaningful to analyze newspaper stories and advertisements to explore the candidates' roles as issue agenda-setters.

All the political advertisements printed in the three leading national newspapers, as well as all newspaper stories that covered the election campaign in these three newspapers, were content-analyzed for the periods from 15 February to 15 March (Time 1) and 19 March to 22 March (Time 2). The three newspapers were the *China Times*, *United Daily News*, and *Liberty Times*. A total of 895 stories from the *China Times* (798 stories for Time 1 and 97 stories for Time 2), 1,085 from the *United Daily News* (940 stories for Time 1 and 145 stories for Time 2), and 676 from the *Liberty Times* (636 stories for Time 1 and 40 stories for Time 2) were collected. In total, 2,656 news stories were examined. The same time frame was used for political advertising. Forty-seven advertisements from the *China Times* (19 ads for Time 1 and 28 ads for Time 2), 21 from the *United Daily* (nine ads for Time 1 and 12 ads for Time 2), and

45 from the *Liberty Times* (28 ads for Time 1 and 17 ads for Time 2) were analyzed. In total, 113 political advertisements were examined.

Coding Procedure

Issues in the coding scheme were identified from an examination of the news stories. These issues included China-related issues,² the constitutional statute, corruption, the economy, social welfare, public safety, the 2–28 event,³ and crime. ‘Story’ or ‘ad’ was the coding unit for news and ads. An issue was coded for presence if more than half of the story was devoted to discussing that issue. Since a political issue can be discussed within its economical or social ramifications, for such cases, more than one issue could be coded as being present in a single news story. This also applied to political advertising.

News stories were coded either as candidate-initiated or journalist-initiated. Candidate-initiated news involved candidates’ activities on the campaign trail. For example, the issues discussed in stories covering candidates’ press conferences, campaign rallies, news releases, and televised debates were considered to be candidate-initiated. On the other hand, adopting Dalton et al.’s (1998) views, this study coded news analyses, opinion columns, editorials, political cartoons, and press-conducted interviews with candidates as journalist-initiated news.

Two coders were trained to code the ads and news stories. Coding procedures recommended by Kolbe and Burnett (1991) were employed to improve the objectivity of the coding. These procedures included providing coders with detailed descriptions of rules and procedures, familiarizing the coders with the coding scheme and operational definitions through training, pre-testing coding categories using a sample of stories and ads, finalizing definitions, and then having the coders code independently.

Analyses and Results

Inter-coder reliability

To test for inter-coder reliability, two coders coded a randomly selected sample of news stories and advertisements (which was about 20% of the total sample in this study). Two sets of inter-coder reliability were estimated. The first set involved news selection. Before coders coded which issues each piece of news discussed, they had to determine whether the piece of news was relevant to the presidential campaign. The percentage of agreement for news selection was estimated at 0.85. The second set involved coding the presence or absence of different issues. Holsti’s reliability formula was used with a resulting 0.87 agreement across all categories.

Ad agenda

Overall, the rank-ordered agenda for ads at Time 1 showed that the most frequently discussed issues were China-related issues, corruption, and the 2-28 event (see

Table 1). When the ad agenda at Time 2 was examined, it indicated that China-related issues, corruption, and social welfare occupied the top three positions in the ad agenda.

Candidate-initiated news agenda

Issues appearing in candidate-initiated news were rank-ordered according to the frequency of the issues' presence. China-related issues, the constitutional statute, and the economy appeared to be the most frequently discussed issues at Time 1 (see Table 1). The top three issues at Time 2 were China-related issues, constitutional statute and corruption.

Journalist-initiated news agenda

The top three issues in the journalist-initiated news agenda at Time 1 were China-related issues, the constitutional statute, and the economy, which were identical with the top three issues at Time 2.

The interplay of ad agendas and journalist-initiated news agendas

To establish the flow of influence during the 1996 presidential election in Taiwan, cross-lagged comparisons of correlations and partial correlations were conducted. When the simple correlation (Spearman's rho) between the ad agenda at Time 1 (AD1) and the journalist-initiated news agenda at Time 2 (JN2) (0.410) was compared with the simple correlation between the journalist-initiated news agenda at Time 1 (JN1) and the ad agenda at Time 2 (AD2) (0.587), the latter was relatively stronger than the former and it exceeded the Rozelle–Campbell Baseline (0.494) (see Figure 1).

However, since JN1 was highly correlated with JN2 (0.838), to reduce auto-correlation problems, a partial correlation between AD1 and JN2 was further estimated (0.059) controlling the effects of JN1. Similarly, a partial correlation between JN1 and AD2 was calculated (0.248) controlling AD1 due to a high correlation between AD1 and AD2 (0.566). The comparison of partial correlations indicated that JN1 was more likely to exert an influence on AD2.

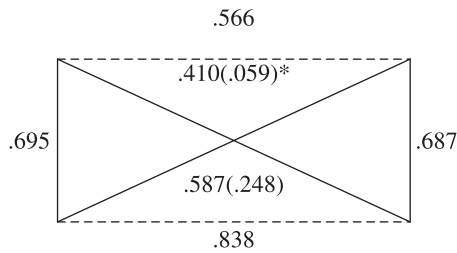
Since China-related issues dominated the news, in order to understand whether the results were similar without considering China-related issues, further analyses were conducted for comparison. Further analyses indicated that when China-related issues were removed from the agendas, the correlations among all pairs of agendas were reduced, but the patterns were consistent (see Figure 2). The correlation between AD1 and JN2 (0.109) was lower than the correlation between JN1 and AD2 (0.378), which was larger than the Rozelle–Campbell Baseline (0.314). However, since JN1 was highly correlated with itself at Time 2 (0.757) and AD1 was highly correlated with itself at Time 2 (0.345), the partial correlation between AD1 and JN2 controlling the effects of JN1 (−0.546) was compared to the partial correlation between JN1 and

Table 1 Rank-Ordered Issue Agenda for Candidate-Initiated News, Journalist-Initiated News and Political Advertising

Issue ranking Issue names	Time 1 (2/15–3/15)						Time 2 (3/19–3/22)					
	Candidate-initiated news (<i>n</i> = 1,331)		Journalist-initiated news (<i>n</i> = 1,043)		Ad agenda (<i>n</i> = 56)		Candidate-initiated news (<i>n</i> = 109)		Journalist-initiated news (<i>n</i> = 173)		Ad agenda (<i>n</i> = 57)	
	Frequency	Ranking	Frequency	Ranking	Frequency	Ranking	Frequency	Ranking	Frequency	Ranking	Frequency	Ranking
China-related issues	757	1	716	1	24	1	75	1	121	1	32	1
Constitutional statute	97	2	78	2	4	4	10	2	10	2	5	4
Corruption	53	4	23	4	8	2	7	3	4	4.5	9	2
The economy	68	3	37	3	1	6.5	3	4.5	9	3	4	5
Welfare	52	5	12	7	1	6.5	2	6	3	6	6	3
Public safety	30	7	13	6	2	5	3	4.5	4	4.5	2	6
The 2-28 event	42	6	16	5	6	3	0	8	0	8	1	7.5
Crime	14	8	5	8	0	8	4	7	1	7	1	7.5

Ad Agenda
Time 1
(AD1)

Ad Agenda
Time 2
(AD2)



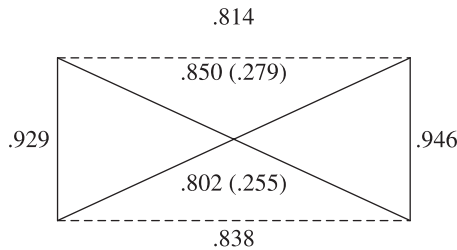
Journalist-initiated
News Agenda
Time 1
(JN1)

Journalist-initiated
News Agenda
Time 2
(JN2)

Rozelle-Campbell Baseline = +0.494

Candidate-Initiated
News Agenda
Time 1
(CN1)

Candidate-Initiated
News Agenda
Time 2
(CN2)



Journalist-Initiated
News Agenda
Time 1
(JN1)

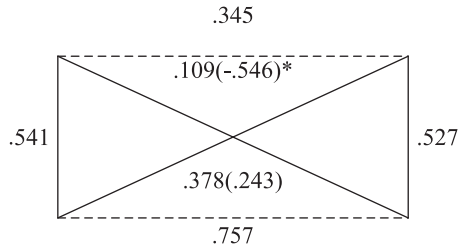
Journalist-Initiated
News Agenda
Time 2
(JN2)

Rozelle-Campbell Baseline = +0.774

Figure 1 Results of Cross-lagged Correlations and Partial Correlations for the Issue Agenda in the 1996 Election. Figures in parentheses show the partial correlation between an agenda at Time 1 on the other agenda at Time 2 controlling the influence of the other agenda at Time 1.

Ad Agenda
Time 1
(AD1)

Ad Agenda
Time 2
(AD2)



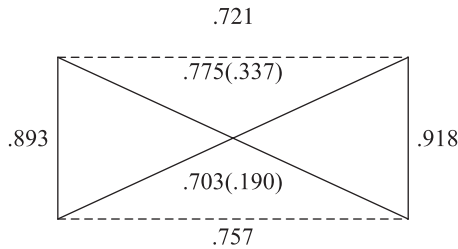
Journalist-initiated
News Agenda
Time 1
(JN1)

Journalist-initiated
News Agenda
Time 2
(JN2)

Rozelle-Campbell Baseline = +0.314

Candidate-Initiated
News Agenda
Time 1
(CN1)

Candidate-Initiated
News Agenda
Time 2
(CN2)



Journalist-Initiated
News Agenda
Time 1
(JN1)

Journalist-Initiated
News Agenda
Time 2
(JN2)

Rozelle-Campbell Baseline = +0.669

Figure 2 Results of Cross-lagged Correlations and Partial Correlations for the Issue Agenda when China-Related Issues were Excluded from the Analyses in the 1996 Election. Figures in parentheses show the partial correlation between an agenda at Time 1 on the other agenda at Time 2 controlling the influence of the other agenda at Time 1.

AD2 controlling AD1 (0.243). The comparison indicated that AD1 had a negative relation with JN2 but JN1 exerted a positive influence on AD2.

The interplay of candidate-initiated news agendas and journalist-initiated news agendas

The correlation between candidate-initiated news agendas at Time 1 (CN1) and JN2 was 0.850, whereas the correlation between JN1 and candidate-initiated news agendas at Time 2 (CN2) was 0.802. Both were larger than Rozelle–Campbell Baseline (0.774). The relatively stronger influence was CN1 on JN2. Given high correlations between JN1 and JN2 (0.838), a partial correlation between CN1 and JN2 was further estimated (0.279) controlling the influence of JN1. Similarly, a partial correlation between JN1 and CN2 was calculated (0.255) controlling CN1 due to high correlations between CN1 and CN2 (0.814). The comparison of this pair of partial correlations showed that the relatively stronger influence was CN1 on JN2.

When China-related issues were removed from the agendas, the correlations among all pairs of agendas were again reduced, but the directions of influence remained consistent. The simple correlation between the CN1 and the JN2 (0.775) was higher than the correlation between JN1 and CN2 (0.703). Both were larger than the Rozelle–Campbell Baseline (0.669). Moreover, since JN1 was highly correlated with JN2 (0.757) and CN1 was highly correlated with CN2 (0.721), the partial correlation between CN1 and JN2 controlling the effects of JN1 (0.337) was compared to the partial correlation between JN1 and CN2 controlling CN1 (0.190). The comparison indicated that the former was higher than the latter, suggesting a relatively stronger influence from CN1 to JN2.

Discussion

The results of the analysis indicated that the influence of journalists' agendas on candidates' ad agendas was greater than the other way around. However, candidate-initiated news agendas exerted relatively stronger influence on journalist-initiated news agendas. It is likely that advertising and other candidate-initiated campaign activities play different strategic roles. On the one hand, candidates used paid advertising to address issues that the media had discussed. On the other hand, candidates employed staged events and news conferences to attract journalists' attention.

As noted, the 1996 presidential election campaign was unique in that Taiwan was under the constant threat from China's missile attacks. In order to obtain a more thorough understanding regarding the interplay between journalist-initiated news agenda and candidate-initiated news agenda, it was important to determine if other election campaigns would produce similar findings. Moreover, it was likely that as Taiwanese campaigning became more professional, candidates would develop better strategies at manipulating the media's attention. We expected that candidates' agendas would more strongly influence journalists' agendas in the more recent

presidential elections. Thus, we decided to explore news coverage of the 2004 election, Taiwan's most recent presidential contest.

The 2004 Taiwanese Presidential Election

The race had two principal competitors. Running against Shuei-bian Chen, the DPP incumbent, was Zhan Lian from the Kuomintang. The official campaign period lasted from 21 February to 19 March. Chen won the election by a fraction of a percent (50.11% to Lian's 49.89%).

Methodology: The 2004 Election

Samples for Content Analysis

The official campaign period for the election was four weeks, lasting from 21 February to 19 March 2004. However, candidates actively engaged in different activities starting in early January. Newspaper stories that covered the election campaign for the periods from 1 January to 19 March comprised the population of news stories for this study. Similar to the analysis for 1996, only stories in the three leading newspapers were analyzed. Fifteen days of coverage were randomly selected from this period for content analyses. In total, 750 stories were analyzed. A total of 262 stories from the *China Times* (174 stories for Time 1 and 88 stories for Time 2), 227 from the *United Daily News* (163 stories for Time 1 and 64 stories for Time 2), and 261 from the *Liberty Times* (165 stories for Time 1 and 96 stories for Time 2) were collected.

The 2004 analysis covered a longer time frame (1 January to 19 March) for two reasons. First, acknowledging the problem of a short four-day period for period two in the 1996 analysis, the analysis of the 2004 campaign decided to exclude political advertisement from the analysis. Therefore, issue agenda accumulated over a longer period could be analyzed for period two. Second, the official campaign period for the election was four weeks, lasting from 21 February to 19 March 2004. However, candidates actively engaged in different activities in early January. Therefore, it seems reasonable to analyze news coverage since January.

In addition, the nine-day time lag was chosen for the following reasons. First, since the time frame stretched over 10 weeks, the important question is whether candidates' activities in the pre-campaign period could shift journalists' issue agendas during the campaign period. Therefore, this study first divided this 10-week time frame into the pre-campaign period (1 January to 20 February) and the campaign period (20 February to 19 March). In addition, given that there is no agreement regarding the optimal time lag for the interplay between journalists' agenda and candidates' agenda, this study used 1 March as the cutting point. This allowed a nine-day time lag similar to the 10-day lag used by Boyle (2001).

Coding Procedure

Similar coding procedures were adopted. Coders first coded whether the story concerned the election, coded whether it focused on issues or candidate traits and then coded who initiated the story. When the story addressed issues, coders would further code the issue types. When stories were initiated by candidates, they would further code the method of initiation.

Similar to the content analysis of the 1996 election coverage, issues in the coding scheme were first identified from an examination of the news stories. Ten issues were recognized: China-related issues, the constitutional statute, corruption, the economy, social welfare, the 2–28 event, independence–unification ideology, education, environment, and referendum. Seven of these issues were identical with salient issues in the coverage of the 1996 presidential election. Unlike our analyses for 1996 news coverage, each story was assigned to only one issue category, namely, whatever issue was dominant or more appropriate.

Following a similar coding scheme used in the analysis of the 1996 campaign coverage, news stories were coded either as candidate-initiated or journalist-initiated. In addition, candidate-initiated news stories were further coded based on the following types: press conferences, activities on the campaign trail, official campaign activities (e.g. televised debates and forums), news releases, community activities, candidates on call-in shows, and charge-pressing at the courts.

The percentages of agreement were estimated at 0.98 for categorizing election stories from non-election stories, at 0.97 for categorizing issue stories from candidate trait stories, at 0.92 for coding issue type and at 0.94 for coding initiation methods.

Analyses and Results

Candidate-initiated news agenda

Issues appearing in candidate-initiated news were rank-ordered according to the frequency of the issues' presence. Referendum, corruption, and China-related issues appeared to be the most frequently discussed issues at Time 1 (see Table 2). The top three issues at Time 2 were referendum, corruption, and China-related issues.

Journalist-initiated news agenda

Referendum, corruption, and China-related issues appeared to be the most frequently discussed issues at Time 1 (see Table 2). The top three issues at Time 2 were corruption, referendum and China-related issues.

The interplay of candidate-initiated news agendas and journalist-initiated news agendas

The correlation between candidate-initiated news agendas at Time 1 (CN1) and JN2 was 0.819, whereas the correlation between JN1 and candidate-initiated news agendas

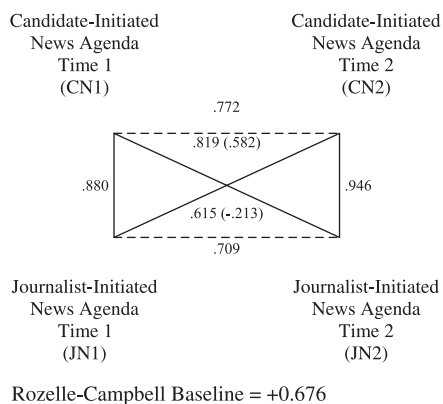


Figure 3 Results of Cross-lagged Correlations and Partial Correlations for the Issue Agenda in the 2004 Election. Figures in parentheses show the partial correlation between an agenda at Time 1 on the other agenda at Time 2 controlling the influence of the other agenda at Time 1.

at Time 2 (CN2) was 0.615 (see Figure 3). The former was relatively larger than the latter and it exceeded the Rozelle–Campbell Baseline (0.676).

Given high correlations between JN1 and JN2 (0.709), a partial correlation between CN1 and JN2 was further estimated (0.582) controlling the influence of JN1. Similarly, a partial correlation between JN1 and CN2 was calculated (−0.213) controlling CN1 due to high correlations between CN1 and CN2 (0.772). The comparison of this pair of partial correlations showed that the relatively stronger influence was CN1 on JN2.

Further analysis indicated that in the first time period, campaign activities as well as press conferences drew media’s attention (see Table 3). Later in the campaign, journalists focused more on the campaign trail activities. It seems that before the campaign started what candidates did might not necessarily attract journalists’ coverage. However, when the official campaign began, candidates were under the spotlight and whatever they did would naturally attract media attention.

General Discussion

An important issue among political communication scholars is who controls mass media agendas in election campaigns. Candidates often use campaign advertising and create pseudo-events to attract media coverage and set the media agenda (Jamieson, 1992). Journalists also struggle for the formative role in the election campaign agenda-shaping process (Semetko et al., 1991). Since the news media agenda has been demonstrated to be highly correlated to the public agenda, controlling the media agenda indicates control of the public agenda. Where will this lead? Studies on priming (e.g. West, 1993) suggest that, by defining the campaigns differently, the media can determine how candidates will be evaluated.

Table 2 Rank-Ordered Issue Agenda for Candidate-Initiated News and Journalist-Initiated News

Issue ranking Issue names	Time 1 (1/1–2/20)				Time 2 (3/1–3/19)			
	Candidate-initiated news (<i>n</i> = 143)		Journalist-initiated news (<i>n</i> = 359)		Candidate-initiated news (<i>n</i> = 104)		Journalist-initiated news (<i>n</i> = 144)	
	Frequency	Ranking	Frequency	Ranking	Frequency	Ranking	Frequency	Ranking
Referendum	31	1	127	1	26	1	18	2
Corruption	7	2	35	2	14	2	19	1
China-related issues	7	3	26	3	8	3	9	3
Independency/unification	6	4	8	5	3	4	2	8
The 2-28 event	5	5	11	4	0	8	6	4
Education	2	8	7	6	0	8	0	10
The environment	3	6	4	7	1	6	6	4
Constitutional statute	2	8	3	8	1	6	3	7
Social welfare	3	6	2	9	0	8	5	6
Economy	2	8	1	10	2	5	1	9

Table 3 Method of Initiation for Candidate-Initiated News Agenda

	Time 1 (1/1–2/20) (<i>n</i> = 143)		Time 2 (3/1–3/19) (<i>n</i> = 104)	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Press conferences	46	44.23	17	16.35
Activities on the campaign trail	52	50.00	40	38.46
Official campaign activities	3	2.09	11	10.58
News releases	12	8.39	13	12.50
Community activities	27	18.88	11	10.58
Call-in shows	1	0.70	5	4.81
Charge-pressing at the courts	2	1.40	7	6.73

Using the 1996 and 2004 presidential election in Taiwan, this study examined whether candidates' campaign agendas impacted the news agenda through staged campaign activities and political advertising. Findings indicate that the issues brought up in staged campaign activities influence journalists to devote more coverage to those issues. As Dalton et al. (1998) argue,

... the setting of presidential elections is different from the general process of opinion formation. Elections, especially presidential elections, are structured, highly visible, and institutionalized settings. During presidential elections, relatively well-defined sets of actors (the candidates and their campaigns) are consciously attempting to shape the public agenda. Through their daily campaign speeches and pronouncements, the campaigns are trying to define the content. (p. 476)

It is worth noting that this study demonstrates that news media not only devote time to covering campaign trail activities but they also seem to be sensitized to these campaign-highlighted issues. This is reflected in the increase of relevant issue content in succeeding journalist-initiated news stories, such as analyses, opinion columns, editorials, political cartoons, and press-conducted interviews with candidates.

However, the data also indicate a positive correlation between the journalist-initiated news agenda at Time 1 and the candidate-initiated news agenda at Time 2 in the 1996 election. There seems to be a reciprocal influence between the candidate-initiated news agenda and the journalist-initiated news agenda, with the former generating relatively greater influence on the latter than the other way around. The 2004 analysis revealed a similar pattern. The correlation even became negative when the auto-correlation between journalists' agenda at Time 1 and Time 2 were taken into account. It is likely that in the 2004 election, campaigners had gained more experience with media management and were better able to stage events and activities to gain media attention. The other possible explanation is that the 2004 election had only two candidates, rendering the coverage of the 2004 campaign easier. However, it is difficult to rule out the possibility that the different time frames used for these two content analyses might have led to the results. In addition, inconsistency in time lags may also be a limitation of this study.

The results indicate that political advertising reflects but does not lead the news agenda. When controlling the journalist-initiated news agenda at Time 1, the correlation between the ad agenda at Time 1 and the journalist-initiated news agenda at Time 2 was even negative. However, the journalist-initiated news agendas at Time 1 were positively correlated with the ad agenda at Time 2 when controlling the influence of the ad agenda at Time 1, suggesting a possible influence from the journalist-initiated news agenda on candidates' ad agendas. This contradicts Roberts' and McCombs' (1994) findings in the 1990 Texas gubernatorial campaign. The difference suggests that the interplay of political advertising and news may vary across different cultures or campaign contexts. Specifically, the contradictory findings may be caused by differences in candidates' media management and campaign strategy development, as well as media news practices, in these two political contexts.

Altogether, the relative greater influence of candidate-initiated agendas on journalist-initiated agendas may be better understood if discussed within candidates' campaign media management and journalists' campaign reporting routines in Taiwan. Campaigners in Taiwan generally believe that news manipulation is more effective than political advertising (e.g. Xie, 1996); therefore, they usually rely on staged campaign activities to draw the media's attention. For example, in the 1996 presidential election, more than half of campaign budgets were spent on rallies and staged activities (e.g. Guo, Shen, Yang, & Chen, 1996). Campaigners are eager to design activities that have high news values or involve dramatic episodes, because they know that journalists, who usually travel with candidates, need them for information to fill news space.

In terms of campaign coverage, journalists in Taiwan are less likely to initiate in-depth investigations of issues unless oriented to them by candidates' official releases of White Papers. Journalists usually follow up with stories after these issues are brought up at candidates' news conferences or campaign rallies. These follow-up stories aim more at providing voters with background information than setting the campaign agenda. Journalists' reliance on candidates for issue initiation probably derives from a deeply held belief among journalists that readers are less interested in policy issues than in horserace stories. Indeed, campaign news coverage in Taiwan is more likely to feature horserace competitions or mudslinging among candidates than issue discussions (Chang, 1999). Thus, if the candidates want journalists to cover an issue, they have to prod them. Even though the media have freedom to determine which issues to cover, their reliance on candidates as sources of information means that they transmit the issue priority initiated by the candidates. Thus constrained by issues that are advanced by candidates and campaign managers, journalists are less likely to have a balanced concern for the general public, who may have a different agenda than the candidates (Weaver, 1994).

The candidate-initiated agenda and journalist-initiated agenda converge to a greater extent at Time 2. The convergence is probably driven by their reciprocal influence. Despite earlier discussions on how candidates' news agendas might lead journalists' coverage, it is also possible that the convergence at the final stage of the

campaign is caused by a third factor whose influence cannot be ruled out by cross-lagged correlations analyses (e.g. Kenny & Harackiewicz, 1979). For example, one of these possible factors may be the general public's issue concerns, which drive candidates' and journalists' agendas to converge at Time 2.

Political advertising is treated by campaigners as a supporting media or vehicle to help highlight a candidate's issue policies, and as a means to shape his/her image (Iao, 1996). The involvement of ad agencies in packaging candidates has a relatively short history in Taiwan. The first time they were used was in the 1992 legislature election (Xie, 1996). The core of the campaign staffs who could make important decisions in the 1996 presidential election were mainly recruited from their candidate's party, and they seemed to have more experience with media management and voter mobilization than with developing advertising campaigns (Zhuang, 1996). Nevertheless, they sometimes questioned ad professionals' expertise in packaging candidates (Guo et al., 1996). Ad professionals, without much decision-making power, were more likely to design and execute political advertisements that helped to reinforce candidates' images, than to decide how to advance or demote issues strategically. In addition, campaign budgets were limited for some candidates, like Lin and Pan in the 1996 election (Shen, 1996; Yang, 1996). As a result, they could only allocate most of their ad money in the final stage of the campaign to create the perception that their candidacy was very viable. This reduced the possibility for this political advertising to be an agenda-setter.

Even though effectively employed political advertising can add value to candidates by setting the campaign agenda, campaigners seem to have more confidence in their news management experience than political advertising. Ads are mainly employed for shaping candidate images or attracting young voters who were raised in the age of MTV (Zhang, 1996). Thus, when issues are highlighted in political ads, they are brief, short on details, and designed to bolster candidates' images. Journalists do not take this kind of issue discussion seriously. It is not difficult then to understand why political advertising in the 1996 Taiwanese election did not exert the same level of influence on the news agenda as occurs in the US (e.g. Roberts & McCombs, 1994).

In the 1996 election, China-related issues appeared at the top of the candidate and news agendas and pushed other important issues off the table. It is natural for an important real-life event connected to the election to dominate the news agenda as well as campaign agendas. Even though military threats from China made the citizens of Taiwan, including voters, reporters, and campaigners, think about China–Taiwan relations and be alert to the dangers posed by China's military maneuvers, they did not complicate the interplay of the candidates' agendas and the news agenda. When China-related issues were excluded from the analyses, the comparisons of paired partial correlations indicated that candidates still had more influence on journalist-initiated news, and journalist-initiated news still had a relatively stronger impact on candidates' ad agendas. Similar results have also been found in the news coverage of the 2004 election, suggesting that candidates played a more initiating role in the interplay process.

This study addresses the interplay of candidates' campaign agendas and the news agenda without exploring the consequences of such an intertwined relation. Weaver (1994) posits that the issue of who sets campaign agendas can have political consequences. If voters feel that they are left out of the process of setting the agenda for political discourse in election campaigns, they are likely to feel alienated and cynical. Therefore, it is necessary for future research to investigate any possible consequences of who the agenda-setters are. In addition, it is important to note that sometimes how a piece of news is framed has more political impact than whether it is reported (Miller, Andsager, & Riechert, 1998). Since the media agenda does not inform us how issues or news are covered (Swanson, 1988), future research should address both the amount of coverage and the frames of coverage.

Notes

- [1] Before 1996, the president was elected by National Assembly Representatives.
- [2] China-related issues include: how China and Taiwan might establish a mode to regulate people-to-people contacts on a daily basis; China's military threats during the campaign; and the future relationship between Taiwan and Mainland China.
- [3] After World War II, the government of the Republic of China regained the sovereignty of Taiwan from Japan. Its troops began to garrison the island during the Chinese civil war. The government established by the KMT was corrupt and gained a reputation for treating the Taiwanese as a conquered people. Friction increased until, on 28 February 1947, an anti-government demonstration was triggered by the murder of a Taiwanese woman by a Mainland policeman for selling smuggled cigarettes. Riots erupted around the island with thousands of demonstrators either arrested or killed. This became known as 'the 2-28 event'. For decades, this has been an issue that people did not talk about for fear of being sent to jail or of receiving a punishment. After martial law was lifted in 1989, the 2-28 event was widely discussed, especially by members of the Democratic Progressive Party, who believed that the event was evidence that the Taiwanese people were treated unfairly by the Mainland-established government. Thus, they concluded that independence was the only future for the Taiwanese people. President Chen and his government decided to hold a nationwide referendum on the day of presidential election regarding the purchase of anti-missile systems to boost national defense and create a more equal basis for negotiations with China.

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