Agenda Setting and Framing Theories: A Methodological Review of selected Empirical Studies

Bala Muhammad Dalhatu Ph.D [1]
GST/Communication Education Department
Federal University of Technology
Minna
Niger state
Nigeria
bala_yaman@yahoo.com or
balamuhammaddalhatu@gmail.com

Halima Shehu Ph.D [2]
GST/Communication Education Department
Federal University of Technology
Minna
Niger state
Nigeria
halimashehu@hotmail.com

Abstract

This paper is a stand-alone review of selected empirical studies that are grounded in agenda setting and framing theories of media effects with the objective of examining the methodologies employed by the studies so as to see how these can be applied, especially by beginning researchers. Twenty two empirical studies using either of the two theories or a combination of both were purposively selected, and reviewed. Findings indicate that content analysis, survey and the experimental research methods were used to conduct the studies examined in the paper. Therefore, researchers using the agenda setting and framing theories to background their studies will have to take this into consideration and adopt or adapt the most appropriate taking into account their research objectives and resources available. Considering that agenda setting and framing theories focus on media effects, it is recommended that at least two variables, media and audience, be studied by researchers using them as theories to anchor their studies.

Keywords: Agenda setting theory, framing theory, media effects, methodology

Introduction

A student of mass media will have to be generally conversant with the theories that are driving research in the discipline. In the area of mass media effects, agenda setting and framing theories are among the theories that explain how the media influence the thinking and actions of their audience. While agenda setting theory is

about how the media, through the frequency and the conspicuousness it features issues influences the importance and prominence their audience attach to those issues, framing theory focuses on how the way the media's deliberate presentation of issues is adopted by their audience.

For the beginning researcher, there is the challenge of how to conduct studies on the influence of the media on their audience (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007). Although there is a lot of literature on studies in media effects using agenda setting and/or framing theories as framework, and the kind of research method used to conduct the studies (Althaus and Tewksbury,2002; Matthes, 2009 and Borah, 2011), this paper intends to provide a collection, in a single reading, of a range of studies that used the two theories and the research methods utilized in these studies. This will enable the researcher to grasp the dominant methods prevalent in the field and act as a guide accordingly. It will also point the way to further readings in the area. Studies that review the prevalent methods employed in studies on agenda setting and framing theories so that a beginner researcher can easily understand these methods are not readily available. This is what this paper intends to provide.

The paper first introduced the agenda setting and framing theories before reviewing the empirical studies using the theories. The studies were purposively selected to reflect the different methods employed using the two theories; to provide examples of studies from within and outside Nigeria; and to illustrate studies spread over different periods to reflect developments in the two theories. The beginning researcher should have a good understanding of the theories, the linkages between the three variables of the communicator, the manifest content which is what is communicated, and the audience. These variables can be studied in isolation but it is better to link them as the two theories have done.

Objectives

This paper undertakes a review of selected empirical studies using agenda setting and framing theories with the following objectives:

a. Determine the methodologies that are dominant in the selected researches that used the two theories
b. Determine whether they are suitable or not for beginning researchers who would want to undertake studies in areas of Agenda Setting and Framing

Agenda Setting theory and Framing Theory

Agenda setting theory: The agenda setting theory was first formally named by Cohen (McLeod, Becker and Byrnes, 1974). However, they traced the agenda setting concept to Lippmann's 1922 description of how we form pictures in our heads, as well as the discussion of the news gathering process by Park in 1925. They pointed out that studies like those done by Berelson, Lazersfeld and McPhee (1954) and Lipset, Lazersfeld, Barton and Linz (1954) showed that the media was able to influence voters' feelings of saliency on issues in the cause of major political campaigns.

Although these studies did not formally name this effect of the media as the agenda-setting theory as at then, it was clear that they found that how the media covers issues, the prominence and importance allocated to issues, and how often repeated, influenced the importance audiences attach to the issues and that the most immediate effect of political "propaganda" is on voters feeling of saliency of issues. In the preface to their Chapel Hill study McCombs and Shaw (1972:176) state that "readers learn not only about a given issue, but also how much importance to attach to that issue from the amount of information in a news story and its position". Explaining this media effect in a passage containing an often cited statement on agenda-setting effect of the media, Cohen (1963:13) state:

> The press is significantly more than a purveyor of information and opinion. It 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*. And it follows from this that the world looks different to different people, depending not only on their personal interests, but also on the map that is drawn for them by the writers, editors and publishers of the papers they read.

Agenda setting in media studies, therefore, refers to the power of the media to draw attention to certain issues and make them prominent through the placement of the issues on front pages, if it is print media, and mentioning them first in headlines if it is electronic media. It also applies to the frequency with which these issues are treated in the media. The other part of agenda setting, which is the effect, is the giving of prominence and importance to these same issues by the audience, the consumers of media products, because the media has done so. In other words, the audience or public considers an issue very important because the media attach much importance to it (McQuail: 2005). As a theory of media effects, research using agenda setting theory should focus on two locations, media content and the audience which is the consumer of the product. Ideally then, content analysis should be the method of research employed to describe media content. As for measuring effect on the audience in natural conditions, survey method should be used; in a laboratory setting measuring effects, the experimental method is deployed.

Framing theory: Framing has roots in sociology and psychology. In sociology, for instance, Goffman (1974) assumes that individuals cannot understand the world fully and constantly struggle to interpret their life experiences and to make sense of the world around them. They process new information by applying interpretive schema or what he calls primary frameworks to classify information and interpret it meaningfully. The psychological origins of framing is based on the experimental work done by Kahneman and Tversky (1979, 1984), cited by Scheufele & Tewksbury (2007:11), in which they "examined how different presentations of essentially identical decision-making scenarios influence people's choices and their evaluation of the various options presented to them".

Gamson (1992) likens media frames to photo frames. Media frames do just as picture frames do, they place borders around something or object, distinguishing and highlighting it from what is around. Journalists too, through media frames, are able to highlight a particular aspect of an issue, have audience attention focus on it, ignoring other aspects. Entman (1993:52) states that to "frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communication text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation". He notes that framing is not just the way that information is presented in the text by journalists for their audience, frames also exist in the journalists, the audience and in the culture they share. Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007) provide suggestions for further classification of framing at macro and micro levels: at the macro level it is how communicators present information in a manner that connects with the audiences' pre-existing schemas such that even difficult subjects are presented in a way that fits into audiences' previous knowledge; at the micro level it how people use information and how it is presented to form their own impressions.

What began to emerge from all these definitions is that the universe is large and seemingly amorphous and individuals construct frames or schemas to make sense and meaning out of their experiences of the universe (Goffman, 1974). Frames are thus a means of structuring, organizing and linking our experiences in the universe to make meaning out of them. Applied to the media, it is the manner in which issues are presented by journalists to their audience, highlighting and characterizing particular aspects of an issue while ignoring others, and building contexts to help in providing a particular interpretation of an issue. Framing theory research should examine three variables, how frames are formed or frame building, the manifest text where the frames are found, and the audience that is affected by the text. For frame building, survey or content analysis can be used; for manifest text content analysis; and for audience effects survey or experiment.

Method

The paper purposively selected Nine empirical studies that used the agenda setting theory and thirteen works that used the framing theory to reflect the different methods employed using the two theories; to provide examples of studies from within and outside Nigeria; and to illustrate studies spread over different periods to reflect developments in the two theories. Each of the selected study had its objective(s), the population of the study and the findings examined. However, the focus was on the kind of method each study employed. For each study, the methodology used was identified.

Review of some empirical studies that used agenda setting theory

McCombs and Shaw's (1972 p.77) influential Chapel Hill Study on the 1968 United States Presidential Campaigns on agenda setting effect of the media "attempted to match what Chapel Hill voters said were key issues of the campaign with the *actual content* of the mass media used by them during the campaign". It had two study

population, the audience and the mass media. In randomly choosing respondents from the audience, the list of registered voters in five precincts was used ensuring that economic, social and racial representation of the community was also reflected. For media study population, nine newspapers, magazines and news broadcast that were the sources of information for the community were all used. From 18th September to 6th October, 1968, respondents were interviewed. "The answers of respondents regarding major problems as they saw them, and the news and editorial comments appearing between September 12 and October 6 in the sampled newspapers, magazines and news broadcasts were coded into 15 categories representing the key issues and other kinds of campaign news" (McCombs and Shaw, 1972, p. 178). News content was divided into major and minor in the study to determine if news items were treated in the same way by the mass media. The study successfully compared two aggregate units- group of voters and mass media, highlighting the researching of two populations for studies using agenda setting theory.

Similarly, McLeod, Becker and Byrnes (1974) conducted a study in Madison, Wisconsin, to further examine the agenda setting function of the press using the 1972 Presidential Campaigns in the United States. The two study populations were the voters and the media. "The systematic, probability sample was drawn from official voter registration lists for the city" (McLeod et al. 1974, p. 145) to get the study population for voters while Madison's two daily newspapers were used to represent the media. The respondents/voters were interviewed in the first two weeks of October, while the two papers were content analyzed with a time coverage of 1st September to 14th October, 1972. All Monday-Saturday issues of the paper were content-analyzed using the front page, jump page and editorial pages only. Six categories were developed into which news items were coded. Total number of inches of each category was calculated including headlines. Unit of analysis used in the study for newspaper agenda is the column inch. This study also successfully compared media content to audience perception, again having two study populations- the media and the audience.

Kim, Scheufele and Shanahan (2002) looked at attribute agenda setting function of media "which refers to significant correspondence between prominent issue attributes in the media and the agenda of attributes among audiences"(p. 7). The researchers examined the issue of "a commercial development of a local area, called Southwest Park Development Plan which would fill the area with big-box retail stores" (Kim et al., 2002, p. 12). The community was divided for and against the plan for its various consequences or attributes which were found to be six in number.

The study used a combination of content analysis and survey data to examine salience of particular issue attributes in the media and salience of the same attributes among the public. The time frame selected by the researchers for the media study population was 20th November to 29th February, 2000, the day prior to the beginning of opinion survey. The newspaper chosen as the study population is the Ithaca Journal which "is the only daily local newspaper most of the city residents rely on for local news" (Kim et al., 2002, p. 13). All issues (census) of the newspaper covering the period

formed the study population. Local news, editorial and opinion columns of the newspaper were examined and any reference to the issue was coded.

To choose respondents for the survey, which was done through telephone, researchers used random-digit dialing technique to select 468 residents of Tompkins County, New York where the city of Ithaca is located. Cooperation rate was 45% and variables in which respondents were interviewed include their local newspaper usage; awareness of the commercial development plan; their opinion on each attribute issue; and support for the development plan. As control, ties to the community and demography of respondents were also used. The study thus used content analysis and survey to successfully examine the relationship between the issue attributes the media emphasized and those emphasized by its audience. The study linked media content to its effect on the audience.

Yioutas and Segvic (2003) used agenda setting and framing theories to study the Clinton/Lewinsky scandal leading up to the 2000 United States Presidential Campaigns by content-analyzing the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* and relating this to national polls on President Clinton's popularity over the same period. A stratified list with a random starting point was used to select "70 articles from each newspaper evenly distributed across three points in time" (Yioutas and Segvic 2003, p. 572). The three periods are 16th January-30th January, 1998, when a special prosecutor was permitted to investigate Clinton/Lewinsky relationship; 1st September-15th September, 1998 when the prosecutors' report was delivered to the House; and 9th December-23rd December, 1998, when the House proceedings and impeachment votes took place. The selected articles from the two newspapers covering the three time periods were content analyzed for placement/presentation, frames/attributes, and sources. Categories were derived from a list of topics running through coverage of the scandal. Coders were trained to select only the dominant frame by determining the main theme running through the story, focusing on headlines, subheads, and lead paragraphs.

The researchers used polls conducted by other media and professional pollsters to compare to the results of the content analysis of the newspapers. Thus, an important methodological lesson in this study is the use of secondary data in research and how content analysis can be deployed to compare media content with actual reality.

Chyi and McCombs (2004) did a study on the Columbine school shootings in the US that "examines how the media can build a news event's salience by emphasizing different aspects of the event during its life span" (p. 22). The study is framed using the agenda setting theory as espoused in the second level agenda setting and content analysis as the method for the study. An important methodological aspect of the study was the proposal by the researchers for the measurement of news frames using a two dimensional measurement scheme of time (present, past, future) and space (individual, community, regional, societal and international). *The New York Times* was chosen as the study population because it is a leading national source of news and "its role as an intermediate agenda setter acknowledged by previous researchers" (Chyi and Combs, 2004, p. 27). Time period covered is 21 April 1999 and 20 May 1999. The shootings

occurred on 20 April 1999 and after 21 May 1999, another shooting occurred in Georgia and media attention shifted there.

All articles related to the shootings, covering the study period, were retrieved using Lexis-Nexis data base with "Columbine" and "Littleton" as keywords. Coding was done using three variables-date, time and space. Coding categories for space are individual, community, regional, societal and international; for time it was past, present and future. When there was more than a frame in a story, the dominant frame was used to categorize the story based on headline, the lead, or central organizing idea. Two coders were used and Intercoder reliability reached Scott's *pi* of .86 across the space and time variables.

The importance of this study is the proposal by the researchers of a measurement instrument using time and space dimensions to emphasize how the salience media places on aspects of an event changes over time. A drawback of this study is its failure to link media agenda to audience agenda as a study on agenda setting should. Without this link of media content to effects on audience only the first leg of the agenda setting theory is studied.

Rill and Davis (2008) conducted a second-level agenda setting study examining the valence, whether positive or negative attributes were emphasized, of the coverage of the Hezbollah and Israel 2006 wars in Lebanon and it effects, if any, on US readers of the print media. The researcher conducted an experiment which sets out to find if "participants who read negative or positive framed news stories about Hezbollah or Israel will more frequently use keywords/aspect attributes from those news stories in their descriptions of Hezbollah or Israel than research participants who read other articles" (Rill and Davies, 2008, p. 613). Other considerations included whether exposure of participants to the negatively framed articles on the two parties to the war would yield negative perceptions about Hezbollah/Israel than exposure to the positive articles; and whether exposure of either frame will yield to more perception of the frame exposed to, compared to those not exposed to either frame (control group).The study design is therefore experimental. Participants' answers to open-ended questions were compared to news stories on the conflict which were fabricated by the researchers using articles about the conflict "gathered from mainstream news sources" (Rill and Davies, 2008, p. 614). Four articles were fabricated, one negative and one positive about Israel; then one negative and one positive about Hezbollah. The fifth article for the control group is about a Dolphin that received an artificial tail. These articles represent the stimuli.

Study population who took part in the experiment was 485 undergraduate students consisting of 190 men (39%) and 295 women (61%) with an average of 19.85 years. Participants read newspapers an average of 2.79 days per week, used internet for news an average of 4.38 days per week and watch TV news an average of 3.41 days per week. These averages are a little less than US national average of news consumption (Rill and Davies, 2008). Researchers used a between-subject design to randomly assign participants to one of the five conditions; strong negative article against Israel; strong

positive article for Israel; strong negative article against Hezbollah; strong positive article for Hezbollah and a neutral article which did not even mention the parties. A pre-test was done in which ten participants in each group were given the articles.

The experiment was conducted and data "collection took place in fall 2006, soon after the height of the Israel-Lebanon conflict" (Rill & Davies, 2008, p. 614). Participants in the experiment completed the study in a campus lab by answering an open-ended electronic questionnaire after reading the articles. They were requested to describe their knowledge, opinions and feelings about the "recent war in Lebanon" (Rill & Davies, 2008, p. 615). They were also asked to provide information about their media diet, demographics and feelings, whether they felt 'extremely favorable-extremely unfavorable' (feeling thermometer) about each of the parties. Afterwards, participants were debriefed through emails and told about the fabricated articles and the seven sources of those articles.

In analyzing data, researchers used a one-way ANOVA to examine differences between the groups as to their favorability ratings of both Hezbollah and Israel. Thereafter computer content analysis was done to compare key words in the articles with those of the participants in their responses. Keywords were generated using concordance computer software program which produced a list of all the words appearing in each article. Words not pertaining to attributes were eliminated and the list of top ten terms for each article was done and compared with participants responses to the open-ended questions to find similarities between the two and evidence of second-level agenda setting effects. Finally "keywords were entered into SPSS to determine frequencies among conditions, and a one-way ANOVA was run to determine the differences in reported attributes" (Rill & Davies, 2008, p. 615). The study succeeded in comparing media content to readers' perception using the experimental method which is has a controlled environment.

Park, Holody and Zhang's (2012) study applied the two theories of agenda setting and framing to the treatment of race in the media coverage of two school shootings in the US, one in Columbine in 1999 and the other at Virginia Tech (VT) in 2007. The perpetrators of the Columbine shooting were white and that of VT shooting was Asian. What the researchers did was to adopt Chyi and McCombs (2004) two dimensional measurement scheme and the data gathered in that study to compare to their own detailed study of the Virginia Tech (VT) school shootings. Like the Chyi and McCombs (2004) study, the unit of analysis and time frame was the same. However, in addition to *New York Times, USA Today* articles were included to increase generalizability. Stories from the two papers were obtained from the LexisNexis database. From the *New York Times,* 70 articles were chosen and 66 from *USA Today* making a total of 136. Three coders went through trainings, and test of random sample of 10% of the articles achieved Krippendorff's Intercoder reliability of .81 or higher.

Variables for coding were divided into agenda setting variables and framing variables. The agenda setting variables adopted Chyi and McCombs (2004) two dimensional measurement scheme of time and space to aid comparison. For time, there

is past, present, and future; and for space, there is individual, community, regional, societal, and international. The only modification is that stories focusing on a single community other than where the shootings took place were coded in the community category in the Chyi and McCombs (2004) study but coded at the societal level. (Park, Holody and Zhang 2012). As for coding framing variables, five were identified in the study and operationalised as i) racialisation of the perpetrator ii) racialisation of the crimes; iii) racial generalization of criminal culpability; iv) prominence of racialisation; and v) racialisation via implicit stereotyping. Both studies only treated media content without linking this to how this affects consumers of the content.

Ita and Ita (2016) did a study on how Nigerian newspapers have covered the Boko Haram insurgency using different frames and how this framing of the insurgency impacted on the perception of the insurgency by undergraduate students of a Nigerian university. The study used agenda setting and framing theories as its theoretical framework.

The population of the study was the 17669 undergraduate students on the one hand and *Vanguard, Thisday* and *Punch* newspapers on the other hand. Period covered by the study was 1st April 2014- 31st December 2014. Stratified random sampling method was used to choose the student sample population of 400 and purposive sample used to obtain 400 issues of the newspapers containing stories on Boko Haram. Research method used is content analysis to examine the newspapers and survey instrument of questionnaire to assess students' perception. The unit of analysis was newspaper articles in the form of news, features and editorials. Frames in the study were divided into two, causes of Boko Haram insurgency, and solutions to the insurgency. Frames under causes of insurgency are greed, religious, ideology, illiteracy, tribalism, political and unemployment; and under solutions we have unity, employment, harmonization of religions, education, industrialization and entrepreneurial frames. Intercoder reliability was 0.84 using Holsti's formula. A drawback of the study is its failure to link the framing of the insurgency by the newspapers to the perception of the same insurgency by the students using similar frames so as to reveal if a relation exists.

Suleiman and Salau (2012) researched press coverage of ethno-religious violence and how this has implications on national integration. They focused on the 2011 post election violence and the Jos ethno-religious crisis that occurred in late August of 2011 and used *Vanguard* and *The Sun* as study population. The objective of the study was to find out the prominence given to ethno-religious violence in the Nigerian press, how the coverage of this violence by the press promotes national integration and how the press frames ethno-religious violence. The study used agenda setting theory as its framework.

The research method used was content analysis; 32 issues of the two newspapers were examined. Period of study was 18th -26th April 2011 and 30th August -14th September 2011. Purposive sampling was used to select the newspapers and the sample size. Unit of analysis were "pictures, headlines, captions, articles, line drawings and letters to the editor, features, editorials and opinion articles" (Suleiman and Salau, 2012,

p. 134). A weakness of the study is that the framing categories were not defined and the population of the study was too small to be generalized. It was also on media content alone.

Review of empirical studies using news framing theory

Norris (1995) conducted a study on Network news framing of the post cold-war comparing international new coverage stretching over two decades to analyze consistent trends. Content Analysis was the research method. To get the population of study "a structured random sample of 2,059 stories on ABC and CBS network news television programs was drawn from 1973 to 1993" using the *Television News Index and Abstracts* from the Vanderbilt Archive (Norris, 1995, p. 4). The study period was divided into three, 1978-1987, late cold war years; 1988-91, transition years of the collapse of communism and 1992-1993, the early post cold-war years. Since the cold-war is in the domain of international news, the study tried to see if there are changes in the priority given international news, changes in the coverage of nations and regions, and changes in the thematic focus of the stories. Like some of the studies already reviewed, this research also studied media content alone.

Shen (2004) used the experimental method in his study of the effects of news frames and schemas on individuals' issue interpretations and attitudes. The study population (subjects) was students in a communications class in a major public university in the US. One hundred and ninety three subjects took part divided into two major groups with each group sub divided into two. Each major group was given stimulus on one of the two issues to be tested. Each sub group was given a stimulus in support or in opposition of the issue. A pretest survey was administered on the subjects, under the guise of a different research, to establish the subjects' schemas on the two issues to be treated in the study.

The two issues treated were, 1, stem research, framed (a) in terms of its benefits, and (b) in terms of the moral questions it raises, and 2, drilling for oil in a National Wildlife Refuge framed in terms of its (a) economic benefits, and (b) in terms of its degradation of the environment. The stimuli materials used were constructed from news coverage of stem cell research and oil drilling which had then both received a lot of coverage in the US. A 7 point scale was used to measure participants' issue schema. Issue attitudes were similarly measured from 1 for "strongly opposed" to 7 for "strongly in favor". This experimental study successfully links media content to its effects.

Luther and Miller (2005) conducted a study in the area of frame building in which they examined the texts provided by demonstrators for and against the 2003 US-Iraq war and how news coverage of the demonstrators reflect those texts. They partly tried to answer the question of how frames occur in communication texts by using the research method of computer assisted content analysis. The researchers collected 182 texts (partisan texts) from the websites of major organizers of demonstrations for and against the U.S-Iraq war of 2003, one hundred and five anti war texts and 77 pro war texts. The texts "were submitted to the VBPro Alphabetizer which produced lists of

words in alphabetic order along with their frequency of occurrence" (Luther and Miller, 2005, p. 83). The lists were processed by VBPro Select program which chose 200 words for further analysis. Select program used chi-square criterion to sort out words used frequently and exclusively by each group. To obtain each group's "master frame" texts were coded according to identified frame words and subjected to mapping and clustering analysis to "derive the group of terms that define master frames". Based on the master frames derived, a new code list was created to classify news articles to see if they reflect the texts.

As for news stories used as study population, 386 articles covering demonstrations taking place in the U.S were selected from the LEXIS-NEXIS database. These news stories "were drawn from the associated press and eight newspapers representing different corporate owners and geographical locations" (Luther and Miller, 2005, p. 84). Time period covered was 29 January 2002 to 1st May 2003. This study examined one of the ways frames that emerge in news content are constructed by looking at texts of releases from pressure groups and news content. However, the research did not examine how news content influences audiences' perception.

Esser (2009) did a study on the framing of the role of the news media and of military news management in the two U.S-Iraq wars by the press. The study was done with a focus on metacoverage of mediated wars, that is, how journalists "make the news media, and communication-related publicity efforts aimed at them, important aspects of their stories" (Esser, 2009, p. 712-713). Mediated wars referred largely to wars that are perceived by the audience almost entirely through the media and in which the participants adapt their behaviors to media routines and requirements.

The researcher's study population is five leading German newspapers chosen because they are very influential and as a study has shown "journalists working in other German media organizations use these newspapers as important guides for news selection as well as yardsticks for editorial opinion" (Esser, 2009, p. 720). The study used content analysis. The period of study was the first two weeks after the outbreak of the two wars; January 17 to 30,1991 for the first Iraq war and March 20-April 2, 2003 for the second war. These are the periods "represent the decisive phases of military invasion, intensive reporting, media sense-making, and frame-building" (Esser, 2009, p. 720). A total of 3,705 stories were published with 1752 for the first war and 1953 for the second. These numbers encompass all stories on the wars including those reporting on the news media and publicity operation (Metacoverage). The two dimensions of meta coverage studied were news media and public relations/publicity and these were categorized into press frames and publicity frames under which are metacoverage frames of 'conduits', 'strategy', 'accountability' and 'personalization'. Although this study focus was how the media frames news about the media, that is the media's reporting of the media, it also did not relate this to the influence of this framing on the public.

Borah (2009) employed content analysis in a study of visual framing of two natural disasters, Hurricane Katrina in the US and the Tsunami in the Indian Ocean.

Two US newspapers, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* were chosen as study population by the researcher without indicating why. The study was on the use of photographic images without texts by the newspapers to find out the salient frames used in the coverage of the disasters by the two newspapers; if there is a difference in the usage of the frames by the newspapers; and the extent to which bodies were shown in the newspapers. The study period was the first week of coverage of the disasters.

A total of 264 images were gathered. A random sample of these was done and coded by two coders to assess Intercoder reliability which was established at an average of 94.1% using Cohen's Kappa formula. Frames were coded as either "present" or "not present". Salient frames identified were five, namely the loss and gain frame; pragmatic frame; human interest frame; political frame; and other frames. Images were analyzed based on use of camera shots with clear interpretations; whether bodies were covered or not; whether faces in photos were visible; the pages the photos appeared on; and the size of the photo. Out of the 264 photos retrieved from the newspaper, 106 were those of the Tsunami disaster and 158 of the Hurricane Katrina disaster. This study also has the weakness of not relating the content analysis done to how this impacts on the public perception.

Lewis and Reese (2009) studied frame building process by interviewing journalists at a US newspaper. They argued that "frames do not arise organically; they are constructed and disseminated as a result of social and institutional interests" (Lewis & Reese, 2009, p. 86). The study focused on 'War on Terror' frame and sought to examine how the U.S government's invention of the term 'War On/Against Terror/Terrorism' was transmitted and internalized by media and the role played by journalists in the process.

Thirteen Journalist chosen from *USA Today* newspaper form the subject of the study. The newspaper was chosen "because it has the widest circulation of any U.S newspaper and seeks to speak with a national voice" (Lewis and Reese, 2009, p. 89). The journalists were chosen after a process of elimination. The interviews were conducted through the phone and lasted between 10-30 minutes. The study aimed to find out from these journalists what, in their views, was War on Terror, and how the frame was transmitted, used and internalized by them. Interview is a popular research tool for understanding how journalists work. Questions were prepared in advance and interviews were loosely structured and revolved around three areas. They "were asked to define the War on Terror, reflect on the phrase's use in news media, and offer thoughts on how such issues should be presented in the press" (Lewis and Reese, 2009, p. 89). This study goes beyond the traditional framing studies that examined text to focus on how frames were built as in Luther and Miller (2005).

Lechler and de Vreese (2012) conducted an experimental study on mediation of framing effects by examining two of such mediators namely, belief importance and belief content change as part of an increasing interest in research on *"how* and under which conditions news can affect public opinion''(Lechler and de Vreese, 2012, p.185). Belief importance has to do with how frames, by selection, exclusion and salience make

some considerations and therefore belief more important than the others, making the beliefs the basis on which opinions are formed and decision made. Belief content change has to do with how frames can also lead to changes in the substance of schemas that individuals use to interpret information. Specifically, the study "presents a mediation analysis including both belief importance and belief content in the context of EU enlargement, with opinion as dependent variable". (Lechler and de Vreese, 2012, p. 186).

The experimental design was single-factor, post-test only with participants randomly assigned to one of three conditions. Two conditions have the generic frame of "economic consequences" with one emphasizing risks, and the other opportunities, of Bulgaria and Romania joining the European Union (EU). The third condition is the control with no treatment administered. A total of 1,537 participants were recruited by a Dutch research company "from their representative web panel consisting of approximately 2,000 households across the Netherlands" (Lechler and de Vreese, 2012, p. 190). Participants filled a pretest questionnaire after which the two treatment groups were exposed to an article with either an opportunity or risk frame. Next a post-test questionnaire was administered with information on belief importance, belief content and opinion. The control group filled the pre and post-test questionnaire only, with no treatment. The articles were constructed based on real news articles. Most information, except for one paragraph, was the same. Opinion, which in this case is the framing effect, was measured on a 7 point scale with higher scores indicating support. Measuring belief importance was done by asking participants to rate four considerations in accordance to their importance to them when forming opinions, from 1 (not at all important) to 7 (very important). Measuring of belief content was done by asking participants to agree or disagree with statements on Bulgarian and Romanian markets and EU on a scale of 1-7. This experiment linked content to perception.

Conway and MclInerney (2012) examined the framing of a female terrorist plotter in US press to see if the framing of female terrorist plotters is different from that of their male counterparts. The principal subject, a white female named Colleen La Rose, is an American citizen, who was arrested in October 2009. The framing of the coverage of her arrest and subsequent trial was compared to that of two male terrorists, namely Daniel Patrick Boyd, white American citizen arrested in July 2009, and Farooque Ahmed a naturalized American citizen of Pakistani origin who was arrested in October, 2010. Boyd and Ahmed, like LaRose, were arrested on terrorism charges.

The methodology of the study is computer-assisted content analysis. In all, "150 newspaper articles containing the search terms 'Collen LaRose' (115), 'Farooque Ahmed' (21), and 'Daniel Patrick Boyd' (14) as gathered from the Lexis-Nexis Database for all dates up to and including 28 July 2011" formed the study population (Conway and McInerney, 2012:10). The 150 articles were arrived at after excluding all articles that have less than three mentions of each individual's name from the original 248 articles initially turned up. The articles were subjected to content analysis using the Free University of Berlin's TextSAT software. Six frames were examined, building on

previous research in the area. These are the 'physical appearance' frame; the 'family connection frame'; the 'terrorist for the sake of love' frame and the 'women's lib/equality' frames. Others are the 'tough-as-males/tougher-than-men' frame and the 'bored, naïve, out-of-touch-with-reality' frame. The study focused on media content only.

Houston, Pfefferbaum and Rosenholtz (2012) focused on framing and frame changing in the coverage of natural disasters in the US. The study examined how newspapers and television reported eleven major natural disasters that have occurred in the US. For the framing of the news on the disasters, the study "measures aspects of a disaster that are emphasized in disaster news coverage, thus assessing how a disaster is defined for the audience'' (Houston et al., 2012, p. 608). As for frame changing, the study examines how the types of frames used in covering the disasters change over time because as "issue and events are covered in the news, the frames used generally change so that different aspects of the issues or events are emphasized at different points in time'' (Houston et al., 2012, p. 609).

The methodology employed was content analysis. Three U.S daily newspapers with the highest circulation and two U.S network evening news broadcast stations were the study population. Unit of analysis was the news story and Lexis–Nexis database was used to search the five study population for any mention of the eleven natural disasters studied. The period covered was 1st January, 2000 to 31st of December, 2010. A total of 927 stories were collected, 387 for newspapers and 540 for television. Date, source of story, and name of disaster were coded for each study. Also coded were disaster effects; disaster affected; coverage frame; event phase; and event time. The coverage frames were political; economics–in terms of impact; environment–also in terms of impact; human interest; criminal; and other frames. To help determine frame changing, the Chyi and McCombs two-dimensional measurement of the variables of space and time was used (Houston et al, 2012, p. 612). Tests to determine Intercoder reliability among the five coders used were done using disaster stories not included in the study population. The least score for the variables coded was a=.79 using Krippendorff's alpha. This study also focuses on manifest content only.

Okoro and Odoemelam (2013) did a study that sought to discover the pattern of news used by Nigerian newspapers in the coverage of Boko Haram activities, the dominant frames used and also which of the used frames was prevalent in the coverage. The researchers used news framing theory as the theoretical framework of the study. Content analysis was the research method used in the study and period covered by the study is twelve months, January – December, 2012. The newspaper study population is *Guardian*, *Daily Sun, Vanguard* and *Thisday.* A combination of what the researchers referred to as the Nwanna sample size formula which advocates for use of 10% for populations above 1000 was used with quota sampling and simple random sampling to reduce the study population from 1460 to a sample size of 146 with each of the newspapers having 36 issues content analyzed.

The frames used in the research are the "response frame, political frame, economic frame, religious frame and ethnic frame. Others include: powerlessness frame, attribution of responsibility frame, labeling frame, human interest frame and conspiracy frame" (Okoro and Odoemelam, 2013, p. 87). The study used articles as its unit of analysis and content categories were equivalent to the ten frames of the study. Intercoder reliability using Holsti's formula was 0.86. This study also focused on media content alone without studying effects on audience.

Odoemelam, Ebeze and Okwudiogor (2015) researched into the framing of visuals in the coverage of Boko Haram insurgency by Nigerian newspapers to determine the pattern of visual coverage and ascertain the frames that were used in this coverage, the prevalent frames, and the dominant frames. They also sought to find out the extent of variations in visual techniques applied to the coverage. Framing and social responsibility theories were used to anchor the study.

The research method employed was content analysis, and unit of analysis was photographs used to accompany stories on Boko Haram. Period of study was January to December, 2012 with *Guardian, Vanguard, Thisday* and *The Sun* as the study population. A combination of the Nwanna sample size formula, quota sampling and simple random sampling was used to arrive at the sample size of three issues to each newspaper for each month. The frames used in the study are ten, namely: response, political, economic, religious, ethnic and powerlessness frames. Others are attribution of responsibility, labeling, human interest and conspiracy frames. These frames form the content categories of the study. Intercoder reliability using Holsti's formula was 0.80. Like most of the studies reviewed, this research also did not link media content to audience perception and the number frames is rather large.

Ngwu, Ekwe and Chiaha (2015) studied how Nigerian newspapers framed the abduction of secondary school female students in Chibok, Borno State in April, 2014. They examined the frames used by the newspapers in covering the story, the dominant frames used in the stories and the kind of influence the framing of the stories had on the newspapers' audience. To study newspaper framing, the study used content analysis while survey was employed to assess influence of framing on the audience. Framing theory was used to provide a theoretical grounding to the study.

Purposive sampling was used to select four newspapers (*Guardian, Daily Trust, The Sun* and *Leadership* newspapers) from the population of study. Period covered is 15th April 2014, a day after the schoolgirls were abducted, to 14th May 2014. Newspaper population is therefore a total of thirty day issues of the four newspapers which is 120 issues. For the human population to assess framing influence, the population is the newspaper audience in south east Nigeria. Newspaper sample size of 48 was chosen using the Nwanna sample size formula which researchers explained was 40% of population of a few hundreds. For the audience, purposive sampling was done to select three out of the five states in the south east, and their capital cities chosen to administer the survey instrument of questionnaire.

Content categories in the study are the seven frames to be examined: rescue efforts frame, hopelessness frame, political frame, religious frame, ethnic frame, conspiracy frame and economic frame. News articles are the unit of analysis. Intercoder reliability using Scott's formula was 84.75%. This study linked media content to audience perception unlike the earlier studies reviewed.

Amenaghawon (2015) researched into the framing of 2011 Christmas day Boko Haram bombing of a church on the outskirts of Abuja by *Daily Trust* and *Guardian* newspapers, two Nigerian newspapers with wide national circulation. The research employed content analysis to look at placement of stories on Boko Haram; sources of reports on Boko Haram stories; story types in covering Boko Haram - whether news, editorial, feature etc; and media frames used. It also looked at the direction of coverage of the sect - positive, negative or neutral. Frames for Boko Haram are Islamic militants, political miscreants, terrorists, Islamic religious group and revolutionary group. Frames on causes of Boko Haram attacks are political differences, religious intolerance, and ethnic intolerance. Others are no reason, economic reason and social factors.

News framing theory of media effects was used to provide the study with theoretical framework using content analysis as the research method. The period covered by the study is one month, 26th December, 2011 a day after the bombing, to 26th January, 2012. All issues of the newspapers covering the study period constitute the sample, census method was thus employed. The study did not link this framing to audience perception.

Findings and Discussion

This paper has demonstrated that the research methods used in the studies reviewed are content analysis, survey and experiment (these should be your finding and explained clearly. Content analysis is (this points to uncertainty) the (tautology) dominant method employed, with 13 out of the 22 studies using the method, and 5 using the method triangulated with the survey method. Three studies out of the 22 reviewed used the experimental method while only one used survey. The three tables below summarized the findings.

The methodologies dominant in the selected researches that used the two theories

Table 1: Summary of methods: Studies using agenda setting theory

METHOD	NUMBER
Content analysis and Survey	4
Content analysis only	4
Experiment	1
Survey only	0
Total	9

Table One shows that from the 9 studies reviewed, four used content analysis and survey.   Another four used content analysis only and one of the studies used experimental method. The experimental method was a study by Rill and Davis (2008) to find if participants would use keywords/aspect attributes from those news stories they read. The table shows content analysis as the dominant method in the studies using agenda setting theory.

Table 2: Summary of methods: Studies using framing theory

METHOD	NUMBER
Content analysis and Survey	1
Content analysis only	9
Experiment	2
Survey only	1
TOTAL	13

Table two also shows that content analysis is by far the dominant method in research using framing theory with ten out of thirteen studies using the method.

Table 3: Summary of methods for the two theories

METHOD	
Content analysis and Survey	5
Content analysis only	13
Experiment	3
Survey only	1
Total	22

A summary of research method used in agenda setting and framing studies as seen in Table 3 indicates that content analysis is the most method with thirteen studies using it alone and another five using it in combination with survey. This is understandable as both theories focus on manifest content of communication.

Conclusion

Content analysis which focuses on manifest content and describes the characteristics of a given text, is the dominant method used in media studies. It is used alone to describe media content or triangulated with another method especially survey in studies on media effects. Survey method is employed to measure the effects of media content on the audience. The combination is thus used to test effects under natural conditions. The experimental method is used to establish the relationship of media content to audience perception - to measure media effects under controlled conditions.

These three research methods and how they were used in the studies had been reviewed. It is clear that a researcher in mass communication should have competence in the use of these methods, particularly content analysis which describes the

characteristics of manifest communication content. For research in communication effects, a researcher should also be able to apply the survey method which can measure communication in natural settings, or the experimental method which can measure effects in a controlled environment.

Recommendation

It is recommended that researchers using Agenda Setting and Framing theories of media effects should link media content to its effects on its audience (which of the finding is this recommendation addressing? Note that recommendation is not a must. This means that two variables, media (using content analysis) and audience (using survey or experiment), should be studied, with the media as the independent variable except where media content is measured as effect. While studying the characteristics of media content is important, linking it to its effect on their audience is what is more consistent with the agenda setting and framing theories. Researchers should also be conscious that that while the experimental method may more successfully establish effects, replicating the research in a more natural setting can pose challenges.

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Author(s)
Dr Bala Muhammad Dalhatu *attended the University of Maiduguri for his first degree in English (1986), and holds two Master degrees, MCA (1997) and MA (2011) in Communication (Ibadan). He also has a PhD in Communication, specializing in Print Journalism (Ibadan). He is a lecturer with the Federal University of Technology, Minna. His research interests include news framing, organizational communication, and conflict communication.*

Dr Halima Shehu *is a lecturer in the English section of the General Studies Unit, Federal University of Technology, Minna. Her academic qualifications are: BA and MA degrees in English (ABU, Zaria); MA Commonwealth Literature (Leeds); and PhD English (Kent). Her Research interests are in the fields of English Language, African Literature, Sociolinguistics and Communication.*