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The media's agenda setting in manipulating audience's psychology through Ferdy Sambo's case

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ABSTRACT

The media not only presents the text written in the script that is distributed throughout its network, but also highlights dramatic elements that serve as "spices" to manipulate the audience's psychology. In reporting the Ferdy Sambo case, one of the strategies used is the agenda setting technique. Through this method, news is structured to provide a specific mental reaction to the audience's interaction with the media. In the initial news of the uproar over an incident, the important points that need to be highlighted for the audience's consumption are emphasized. This is followed by related news that is considered to be very important in filling the audience's agenda. Based on the media's techniques used, this study aims to determine how the media manipulates the audience's psychology. To obtain appropriate results, this research uses a descriptive qualitative method that is directed to obtain clear information based on high credibility online media platforms. The results of the study show that three online media, namely [kompas.com](https://www.kompas.com), [detik.com](https://www.detik.com), and [tribunnews.com](https://www.tribunnews.com), apply the agenda setting technique to shape the public agenda by emphasizing the distributed script.



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Introduction

The Ferdy Sambo case has drained the audience's energy. Since mid-2022 until February 2023, the audience has been presented with news from online media that appears to be mandatory to know. The media has employed strategies to design the atmosphere and capture the audience's attention (Kristi et al., 2023; Wijaya, 2011). Although highly dependent on the phrases used, the arrangement of words is directed towards achieving a goal. If the goal is to create fear, then the diction used is taken from words that can create terror among the audience. Likewise, if the goal is to build an optimistic atmosphere, the diction used is more constructive. According to Keraf (2002:24), word choice not only concerns the accuracy of word usage but also whether the selected words can be accepted or not, thus not disturbing the atmosphere (Nurcaya et al., 2022). A word that is appropriate to express a certain purpose may not be acceptable to the person spoken to (Latifah et al., 2017).

The atmosphere created by the media is more mental in nature. The effect that occurs touches on all aspects of the audience's personality. However, whether or not the atmosphere can be created will depend on the audience's personality. Because within each individual of the audience, there are perceptions linking to the interpretation of various diction obtained from the media. The plural nature of the audience causes perceptions

not to be the same in understanding the texts received from the media (Sari, 2017). Although it revolves around the same text, this is highly dependent on the maturity and intelligence in understanding the media. Moreover, perceptions are strongly influenced by experience, and experience is formed, among others, by the intensity of interaction with the media. According to Rakhmat (2005), perception is an experience of an object, event, or relationships obtained by concluding information and interpreting messages. Perception provides meaning to sensory stimuli (Arifin et al., 2017).

The difference in the audience's response to the text is a form of the effect created. Some audiences are reactive in responding to messages, thus encouraging them to behave as reported by the media. However, there are also those whose media experience is relatively high, not shaken by the text they receive, even though the text contains dramatic and propaganda elements. According to Doni Juni Priansa, human perception of those things is based on their past experiences and learning related to people, objects, or similar events (Puspasari et al., 2021). Another difference is due to the mood that the audience is currently feeling. According to Thayer (Halgin & Whitbourne, 2010), mood is less intense feelings that occur due to the situation and conditions being experienced. Mood is a state experienced in human life, to some extent, mood can be influenced by the way individuals interact with each other in a social environment (Malentika et al., 2017; Meier et al., 2017).

Mood ultimately guides the audience to respond to various stimuli that come to them. Even if the audience's mood is not good or their mental focus is directed towards an issue, they will not respond much to the symbols received from the media. Instead, they will ignore it because they feel uninterested in reading the news that is currently a stimulus coming to them. On the contrary, when the mental mood is good, it is likely to respond by clicking or reading the text until the end. Theoretically, Dervin (1981) in Melkote & Steeves (2015) explains that in the theory of communication, there are two types of audiences: first, passive audiences, where the audience is considered a 'blank slate' that is ready to receive all communication messages poured out to them. In this case, the communicated message is considered "good" by both the communicator (sender) and the receiver, as in the Hypodermic Needle Theory or Bullet Theory. Secondly, the active audience is the audience that intentionally and actively seeks information in the media to meet their needs, such as in the Uses & Gratification Theory (Asri, 2017).

However, the media perspective is different. The content created is generally general in nature. The distributed text is not intended for a particular group of people, but for all audiences. Although in practice, the media targets its market segment, the distribution pattern does not exclude the possibility of reaching audiences who do not belong to its segmentation. The media always bases its agenda on objectivity. Touches on the cognitive and affective aspects of the audience cannot be avoided, regardless of the feelings or mood they are experiencing, because the media has an influence (Hakim, 2022).

Subjectivity cannot be avoided in guiding the construction of reality, especially since the media attempts to present full coverage as a representation of reality. Although what is presented is not the actual reality, but only a portrayal of certain parts of the overall image of reality. The presence of reality in its coverage form is a product of the construction of facts found and then put together based on the interpretation according to the media managers' perception. The reality found is based on construction compiled through news that leads to an effort to provide understanding to the audience. The reality presented by the media is indeed very fascinating and has a significant impact on all aspects of human life, although according to Muhtadi (2016), media reality is a constructed reality (Taufik & Suhaeri, 2020).

The reality resulting from the media agenda's construction mediates interaction with the audience. The interaction that occurs is closed, in other words, it takes place personally or between individual members of the audience and the media. Thus, the effects created can only be felt by each media user. However, given the nature of the media's direct influence on cognitive, affective, and conative aspects, the effects created include cognitive effects, such as increased awareness, learning, and additional knowledge. Affective effects are related to emotions, feelings, and attitudes. Conative effects are related to behavior and intention to do something in a certain way (Fitriansyah, 2018).

In constructing its message, the media packages it in various ways. Some media use multi-level narrative language that requires a relatively long understanding, but many media use simple and logical language that can be easily understood at a glance. The design of the news affects the application of the language contained in the media text. The interest in this matter is the desire of media managers to guide their attitudes in using language. One of the techniques used is agenda setting. In its use, it certainly spreads a significant influence. Because the media itself is a powerful influence. Not only capable of delivering messages to the audience, but also because the media carries out the functions of educating, influencing, informing, and entertaining (Makhshun & Khalilurrahman, 2018).

Media as one of the forms of fulfilling the aspirations of society. Through the events presented, the audience can be directly influenced. Out of the many events, the media chooses one. The chosen one is then designated as the main issue. The selection of this issue is a decision made by the editorial staff, considering various factors that are deemed important to be immediately reported. Not all events that occur meet the criteria for a worthy news item, especially if placed at the top of the news menu. All of this goes through internal procedures. There is a mechanism that the media goes through before a manuscript is published. A selection process takes place to filter all the information obtained. Mass media has the capability to emphasize and select news or articles based on priority ranking that will be published in accordance with what readers are thinking (Sulastri, 2010).

This selection process is related to the role of gatekeepers. According to Bittner, gatekeepers are "individuals or groups who monitor the flow of information in a communication channel (mass media)." If the meaning is expanded, gatekeepers are people who play an important role in mass media such as newspapers, magazines, television, radio, internet, video tapes, compact discs, and books. Thus, those called gatekeepers include reporters, news editors, even film editors or others in the mass media who help determine the flow of information that is disseminated (Mutiah, 2018).

In addition, the media has procedures and standard values that serve as guidelines in determining the main agenda of the news. Even if it is deemed to have strong value, it will continue to be published by discussing various aspects related to the events that are the focus of the audience. The parts of this event are given a wide place as if they were separate news items from the entire series of events reported by the media. Through its method and style, the news becomes important and interesting. In other words, the news is a product made by the media. Whether it is important to convey to the audience, whether it is interesting to become public consumption, has gone through the instincts of media owners. Especially if the media that disseminates it has high credibility and quality in the minds of the audience. Then whatever is presented by the media is the same as conveying quality content.

Media in its various forms has a real influence on the audience. The influence that is generated touches on cognitive, affective, and conative aspects. Directly touching on the overall influence of these three aspects makes the audience the main target of dissemination. The media strategizes as an effort to steal the audience's attention, directing their gaze to the media. In practice, competition occurs among media, especially in capturing the hearts of the audience. Media also competes in capturing the audience's attention so that their time is consumed by reading, watching, or hearing the issues that they have made the main material. This is because, according to Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw, mass media has the ability to transfer the prominent aspects of news from their news agenda to the public agenda. In due time, mass media is able to make what is important to them, also important to the community (Ritonga, 2018).

This method is a form of influence on the audience, especially in terms of its psychological aspect, because the influence is related to the emotional state. The determining factor is when the media constructs events of sadness, the audience is guaranteed to be influenced and become sad as well. Conversely, if the news presented by the media emphasizes achievements or happiness, it will indirectly have the same effect on the audience. According to Luo & Hancock (2020), social media involves positive impressions and social support, and can have a direct positive impact on psychological well-being by providing positive influence, sense of accountability, stability in a person's life, recognition of self-worth, and reducing psychological pressure. Luo & Hancock (2020) also added that socially lonely and anxious people are more willing to express themselves on social media than non-anxious people. Similar to Chen & Li (2017), the use of mobile phones has shown that the use of social media increases well-being by significantly reducing loneliness and shame. Thus, making people believe that they are noticed or valued and have more access to resources and opportunities (Chen & Li, 2017; Widowati, 2022).

This influence becomes more extensive and massive when consumed by the entire audience. Media news massification occurs because of its increasing frequency. With its increasing spread to form public opinion. In this process, the creation of opinions that lead the audience into the agenda prepared by the media occurs. Public opinion occurs as a form of integration of various opinions expressed by the public. According to Bogardus, public opinion is the result of integrating opinions based on discussions held in a democratic society. Integration in this sense means the result of a conversation, debate, discussion, or exchange of ideas among people in that group (Taufik & Suryana, 2022). The expansion that eventually attracts the audience's attention is determined by using agenda setting techniques with a specific focus on certain news. According to McCombs and Donald Shaw, agenda setting is what is considered important by the media, so it is also considered important by the public. Therefore, if the mass media pays attention to certain news and ignores others, it will have an impact on public opinion. The agenda-setting theory assumes that society will learn about what issues are, and how these issues are arranged based on their level of importance (Agustina, 2017).

Agenda setting is also used not only related to large cases according to the media version but can also be constructed from ordinary issues that often occur. Through this method, the content packaging created will become an opinion that arrives and influences the audience's mind. According to Stephen W. Littlejohn (1996:361), the function of agenda setting is a linear process consisting of three parts. First, the media agenda itself must be compiled by the media team. Second, the media agenda in some ways influences or interacts with the public agenda or the public's instinct regarding the importance of the issue, which will later influence policy agenda. Third, the policy agenda is what public policy makers consider important to the public (Natalia, 2017).

By doing so, the Ferdy Sambo case, which contains important elements, is made the main issue and not displaced by other events that occur. Although there was a major event such as a devastating earthquake that shook Cianjur in that period, it was unable to displace the news about Ferdy Sambo which was published from the beginning to the end of the coverage of the case.

Method

This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach, which seeks to explain the agenda setting techniques used by media with credible quality standards in serving information to the public. According to Bogdan and Taylor, qualitative research methodology produces descriptive data, both in oral and written form, from people or observed behavior (Sutikno, 2020). This method was chosen considering that the media coverage shown through excessive construction with a very high frequency of appearance. With titles that are designed to attract public attention, demanding readers to learn more about the agenda set.

The data sources in this study are three online media outlets that are considered to have very high credibility in the national online media scene. These three media outlets are *kompas.com*, *detik.com*, and *tribunnews.com*. The research focuses on observing the agendas created by the three media outlets, namely, news about the Ferdy Sambo case.

Results and Discussions

From this case, the study aims to determine the number and frequency of news about it within a two-month period, from January 2023 to February 2023. The selection of the prioritization in January and February is because the public has felt bored and tends to be apathetic in following news related to the case. In the initial phase, precisely in August 2022, the public was so enthusiastic about following the case that occurred in the police institution involving a two-star general.

The media even considered the incident very interesting and worthy of being the main agenda with the setting it created. However, because news about it appeared almost every day with various content that not only related to the case, but also linked to Ferdy Sambo, by the end of 2022 and entering early 2023, the public felt bored with the presentation of the case that tended towards melodrama.

Furthermore, data in the form of news that has been published in the three online media outlets are then grouped in a hierarchical structure based on the order of publication time. Although the case was recorded by the media since August 2022, it continuously reported the same case before there was another case that shook the public's psychological state, which then changed the agenda towards the newly emerged case. However, entering early 2023, the Ferdy Sambo case still became the main media agenda. The end of the journey of this case was the verdict handed down by the judge on February 13, 2023, to the main suspect, Ferdy Sambo.

The media has the discretion to display news that it deems important to be conveyed to the public. Throughout the events in a 24-hour period, they can determine the main agenda that influences the public agenda. By applying value and interesting elements, an event is established as the main issue. Although in the context of new media, the audience can provide feedback through the comment column in the news, it will not change the selection of themes that have become the editorial decision of the media.

Through agenda-setting techniques, the media strives to be at the forefront in revealing reality that is considered meaningful. The disclosure is thorough with all the elements related to an event until it is finished. The most current event related to the Ferdy Sambo case. Since anomalies were found regarding the death of Brigadier Josua on July 8, 2022, this case emerged and surpassed other issues during August 2022 until the verdict against Ferdy Sambo. The media does not want to miss out on the big case involving police personnel and involving a Two-Star Police General and continues to highlight the issue.

Based on observations, almost all media, both credible and non-credible, verified by the Press Council and unverified, do not want to miss out on reporting the case. However, the focus of the study is on credible and verified media. As an indicator of the credibility of these three media, teknorush.com reported the Top 20 Ranking of Indonesian Online Media 2022 on Tuesday, February 28, 2023, at 09.55. While quoting a survey conducted by ComScore, teknorush reported that there are currently 20 high-rated online media in Indonesia. These online media are placed gradually from first to twentieth. The twenty online media are: 1. Detik.com, 2. Kompas.com, 3. Tribunnews.com, 4. Pikiran-Rakyat.com, 5. Suara.com, 6. Sindonews.com, 7. Cnn.indonesia.com, 8. Merdeka.com, 9. IDN-Times, 10. Liputan6.com, 11. Kumparan.com, 12. CNBC.Indonesia.com, 13. Okezone.com, 14. JPPN.com, 15. Viva.co.id, 16. Bolasports.com, 17. Kompas.tv, 18. Tempo.co, 19. Kontan.co.id, 20. Jatimnetwork.com.

From the rating order, the media that is the focus of this study is those included in the top three ratings of Indonesian online media, each in first, second, and third place. Furthermore, to explain the use of agenda-setting techniques used by these three media, the results of the study are presented as follows:

Kompas.com setting agenda in the Ferdy Sambo case

The planned murder case against Brigadier Josua became interesting because it was related to the police institution. As a police officer assigned as the driver of Ferdy Sambo's wife, Josua was shot dead on July 18, 2022. From the shooting until Josua's death, the media did not report it. The buzz in the media about the case began in August 2022. The emergence of the case led to various speculations. The public speculated and linked the case to certain events, but all were driven by media opinions presenting views and opinions from various parties. The case only became clear after the media presented the facts presented in court.

Compared to similar cases that befall ordinary people, it can be guaranteed that it would not capture the attention of the entire public. Even if some people are interested, it would only be a few and it would not last long. Their attention would quickly disappear or be forgotten in the public memory. Even if the public still remembers the case, it would only be as a passing interest without following it as closely as when the case was first discovered. Similarly, the media exposure would not be as significant as the case involving Ferdy Sambo. The media would use a strict selection process by highlighting the important and interesting aspects of the case. Moreover, if the media that reports it has high credibility, it would attract more attention. Not all cases with the same modus operandi as Ferdy Sambo's case receive the same extensive coverage.

Kompas.com's interest in Ferdy Sambo's case can be seen through its repeated coverage. Kompas.com continually updates news related to Ferdy Sambo or news that is related to Ferdy Sambo. Its coverage provides a series of explanations about the case from the beginning to the end to make it a complete explanation. It even tries to resolve the issue to make it clear. With its credibility, kompas.com can easily capture the public's attention, so the agenda setting it creates is approved by the entire public. Although the public's psychological state in early 2023 was no longer very concerned about the case, kompas.com, with its network and aggressive news dissemination techniques, eventually managed to penetrate the public's attention. This can be evidenced by the agenda-setting technique used by kompas.com in reporting Ferdy Sambo's case as shown in the table below:

Table 1. Kompas.com News Count In The Ferdy Sambo Case

No	Month	January 2023	February 2023
1	Frequency	12	9
2	Total	12	9

Based on the table, Kompas.com used agenda-setting technique in reporting the Ferdy Sambo case both in January and February 2023. The January coverage was during the trial phase when the public was already bored and tired of following the case, yet it was still relatively high with 12 news items. The number 12 was determined based on daily coverage, although some days had two or three news items. Meanwhile, the February coverage was relatively low as the trial was heading towards the judge's verdict, which had been scheduled for February 13th. Therefore, the news coverage on Ferdy Sambo was not as intense, except for news related to expert opinions on the judge's death sentence verdict for Ferdy Sambo.

Detik.com setting agenda in the Ferdy Sambo case

Detik.com is one of the pioneers of online news reporting in Indonesia. With its comprehensive, fast, and factual information services, it has become a primary reference for the public. Similarly, in the case of Ferdy Sambo, detik.com is relatively active in reporting it. The construction carried out is not only related to the case itself, but also by enriching the elements directly related to the incident. As a media with high credibility, detik.com is relatively easy in influencing the public with agenda setting techniques.

The delivery of news, including news of the Ferdy Sambo case, is a necessity that needs to be known by the public. With its strong commitment, detik.com grouped it into a full page that specifically discusses the case. Although updates are displayed on the homepage, they then go into the specific page that discusses Ferdy Sambo. Regarding the frequency of news that is made, it can be presented in the following table:

Table 2. Number Of News on Detik.Com In The Case Of Ferdy Sambo

No	Month	January 2023	February 2023
1	Frequency	13	12
	Total	13	12

The number of news articles on the Ferdy Sambo case published by detik.com in January was relatively high, with a total of 13 articles. This number is based on daily publications, meaning the number of days when news on the Ferdy Sambo case was published. However, on certain days, there were up to 4 news articles on the same topic. This greatly depends on the events that occurred on that day. On the other hand, in February, which was the month leading up to the verdict of the main perpetrator of the Ferdy Sambo case, the number of news articles was relatively low. Even after the judge's verdict was announced, news related to the case, such as the other defendants, continued to be reported.

Tribunnews.com setting agenda in the ferdy sambo case

Ranked at the top of online media in Indonesia, tribunnews.com is very active in reporting cases related to Ferdy Sambo. Like other online media, tribunnews.com does the same, which is to make news items related to the case on certain days. The publication of several items is because events that occur on a certain day require further explanation. As a media with impressive development, tribunnews.com tries to review and dissect events thoroughly, especially regarding the Ferdy Sambo case.

Based on observations, there have been changes made by tribunnews.com, which initially applied short news, so that in reviewing an event, it had to be done with other news items, now becoming longer. That is, one case can be fully explained with just one news item. Unlike before, which had to include many news items with corresponding items to explain the case. This will affect the number of news items related to a case on the day of publication.

This can also be seen from the number of news items related to the Ferdy Sambo case, as presented in the following table:

Table 3. The Number of News Tribunnews.Com In The Case Of Ferdy Sambo

No	Month	January 2023	February 2023
1	Frequency	14	12
2	Total	14	12

The number of news items published in January related to the Ferdy Sambo case is relatively high. The number is based on daily publications from January 1 to January 31, 2023. Tribunnews.com published 14 times in January 2023, although there were several Ferdy Sambo news items for certain days. Meanwhile, in February, it published 12 news items about Ferdy Sambo with many items on the day of the verdict against the perpetrator of Brigadier J's murder plan, Ferdy Sambo, on February 13, 2023. After the verdict was announced, tribunnews.com continued to report on the case, both related to the death penalty and news related to other defendants.

Conclusions

The media often uses agenda setting as a means of delivering events to audiences. As a result of building by media managers, agenda setting strategies are intended at generating opinions so that public attention is focused on the content being delivered. Aside from being a tool to compete with other media operating in online networks, the media are concerned since it is a way to expand the number of interactions with their audiences. Media managers make an effort to shock their audiences into accepting their conceptions by taking into account the emergence of psychological impacts from the content that is transmitted.

Major media outlets like Kompas.com, detik.com, and tribunnews.com engage in the same method and style of agenda creation as their less reputable counterparts. Everyone's paying attention whenever a two-star police general like Ferdy Sambo is involved in a major case. In addition to informing the public about recent events, the media's goal is to establish itself as a reliable resource by staying ahead of the competition. The top

three media outlets cover all aspect of the case involving Ferdy Sambo, not just the history of the investigation. This means that coverage about Ferdy Sambo dominates the media landscape.

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