

An Exploratory Study About Issue and Attribute Salience Within the System of News Promotion, Menéame

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Abstract: The main goal of the paper is to discuss the development and adaptation of research designs for the investigation of agenda setting processes on Internet environments, and more specifically, on the Spanish system of news promotion, Menéame (<http://meneame.net/>), by presenting the methods and findings of an exploratory study, which investigates and analyzes, through content and hyperlink analysis: 1) The nature of issues and attributes of the last 199 articles promoted to the main page of Menéame, collected two days ahead the Spanish presidential elections of 2008; 2) Relationships among the issues and the sources of articles; 3) Political affiliation or attributes (if any) through the selection and voting for the articles. On Menéame, registered users nominate articles, which are voted by other users (either registered or not), promoting continually the most voted ones to its main page, and turning them more popular than other articles, through the system of voting.

As a theoretical background, we intend to present some of the general concepts, assumptions and traditional methods of investigation of agenda-setting processes. After that, we intend to discuss new elements to apply agenda setting research to information environments on the Internet, having as a general assumption, new patterns of production, distribution and consumption of information provided by the unique combinations of features observed on the World Wide Web. As the agenda-setting paradigm is concerned with issue and attribute salience, the importance of investigating it on Internet environments is that there seems to be a radical change in the way issues and events becomes an object of debate and importance through several clusters of news consumption. In other words, there seems to be an amplification of the public space through which we construct and perceive the reality.

Keywords: Agenda-setting – Menéame – Social Media – Research designs

1. The agenda-setting process

According to Dearing and Rogers (1996), the agenda-setting process can be understood as "an ongoing competition among issue proponents to gain attention of media professionals, the public, and policy elites", being the mass media the main shared "public arena", where "different issues rise and fall in importance over time" (p. 2). Agenda-setting offers an explanation of how public opinion is shaped; and "why certain issues are addressed through policy actions while other issues are not" (p. 2). The

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authors conceptualize an agenda as "a set of issues that are communicated in a hierarchy of importance at a point in time" (p. 2), and use Cobb's and Elder's definition of an issue as "a conflict between two or more identifiable groups over procedural or substantive matters relating to the distribution of positions or resources" (1983, p. 32). The authors explain that, according to the dynamics of agenda-setting process, the issues rise or fall on the agenda, which means they compete with one another in order to gain attention. The traditional agenda-setting paradigm conveys that different groups of society (being them either journalists, the public or policymakers) determine the position of an issue on the agenda, leaving other issues behind due to the limitation of space and time on the media agenda (Dearing and Rogers, p. 3).

In this sense, the agenda-setting process is connected to the theory of gatekeeping (Breed, 1993 [1955]), which explains procedures for production and control of information that compete among themselves to achieve public attention, meaning that, although many issues compete for public attention, only a few succeed to reach it, and the media provides a great influence on our perception of what are the most important issues of the day, as no society can pay attention to more than a few issues each time.

The agenda-setting research deals with the interrelationship among media agenda, the public agenda, and the policy agenda. The first one studies the importance of an issue on the mass media agenda. The second research tradition deals with the importance of a set of issues on the public agenda. And the third one is called policy agenda-setting, and it is concerned with policy actions in relation to an issue, partly due to its salience in the media agenda and the public agenda (Dearing and Rogers, 1996).

Another important concept in traditional agenda-setting is salience: "the degree to which an issue on the agenda is perceived as relatively important" (Dearing and Rogers, 1996, p. 8). The authors explain that agenda-setting process can be understood not only through the investigation of negative or positive attributes of an issue (also called frames), but also through its salience: "Research on the agenda-setting process suggests that relative salience of an issue on the media agenda determines how the public agenda is formed, which in turn influences which issues policymakers consider" (Dearing and Rogers, 1996, p. 8).

There are many objects that can define an agenda. The object is the thing for which we drive our attention or the thing on which we have an attitude or an opinion (McCombs, 1994). In this sense, collection of objects - or even a single object - can compete for the attention of journalists and diverse audiences. Both the selection of the objects of attention and the attributes with which the media represent those objects are powerful features of agenda-setting. The way in which the media's agenda of attributes influence on the public's agenda constitutes the second level of agenda-setting. The first level is the transmission of the importance of an object (which compete for attention among the public). The second level of agenda-setting research or framing deals with the transmission of the importance of an attribute,

which focuses on aspects related to an issue or an event. In other words, attribute agenda-setting (also called framing) research deals the subtle selection of certain aspects of an issue by the media to make them more important and thus to emphasize a particular meaning given to an issue (Iyengar, 1991, p. 11).

According to Mabry (2001), "Framing is a complex concept that functions as a root metaphor about the symbolic representation of social reality" (p. 323) The author argues that framing "constitutes a key issue with respect to its empirical goals" (p. 324). Berger and Luckmann (1996) explain that the way we interpret frames is partially conditioned to the situation it is attached to, as well as to our subjectivity. That means that our perception (and symbolically interpretation) of the immediate (or foreground) experience is influenced by the contours of the background on which is projected. This background is, in its turn, constructed according to the spatiotemporal structure of a social situation, meaning that a perceptual framing depends on how and where society interprets an issue. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that frames have a multidimensional nature, as they "are interpretive nexus of situated meaning" (Marbry, 2001, p. 324), that is, distinct trends in information consumption and selective media exposure play an important role on how people become aware of issues, and interpret them.

What attracts scholars to investigate agenda-setting? Dearing and Rogers (1996) explain: "One main reason for the interest of mass communication researchers is that the agenda-setting paradigm appeared to offer an alternative to the scholarly search for directional media effects on individual attitudes and overt behavior change. Earlier mass communication research had found only limited media effects, which seemed counterintuitive to many mass communication researchers, especially to those who had previously worked in the mass media (Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw had both been newspaper reporters). Further, the early mass communication PhD graduates felt that the purpose of the media was mainly to inform rather than to persuade. So they looked for cognitive effects, like the agenda-setting process, in which people are primed concerning what issues to think about" (pp. 13-14).

Studies on selective exposure are also an alternative to the paradigm of direct effects of mass communication, as it is concerned to selective trends or consuming preferences of enduring messages, as well as what tastes or characteristics makes people choose certain messages instead of others. The central element of selective exposure is the effect on message selection for consumption (Zillman & Bryant, 1985, p. 6).

Why do we claim the need of new developments and adaptation of research designs in order to investigate the agenda-setting processes in information environments on the Internet? Firstly, there appears to be a significant change in the ways by which the public agenda is manifested on Internet environments, since the public manifest opinions through clusters of information, being able to share information about several types of issues, including the ones that are not contemplated by traditional or professional media, and interact through several forms (for instance, a specialized weblogger write about issues of his or her concern, providing collections of information they have produced or gathered from

other sources of information; or a person who participates in discussion forums may discuss about issues of their concern). In other words, the public agenda has become more complex, as users have more resources participate of information clusters of their interest. Since the views and the problems that users consider most important are treated in distinct ways on these environments, this kind of “public opinion” differs from the “public opinion” gathered through statistical surveys, because the opinions of the former become publicly available and may influence or not other people, media and policymakers in distinct ways.

Besides that, due to the phenomena of selective exposure (Zillman & Bryant, 1985) and the diversity of information environments and channels on the Internet, issue salience can be perceived in distinctive ways, which leads more possibilities for fragmentation and personalization, meaning that users can fulfil their selective preferences through several information channels. Another reason pointed out by some scholars is the collapse in gatekeeping practices (Bruns, 2005; Williams & Delli Carpini, 2004), as there is no effective control of the amount of information produced by a wide variety of sources, as well as no restrictions of time and space to publish information of various kinds.

Summing up the reasons to seek the adaptation of research designs to investigate agenda-setting processes: 1) the use of publishing tools, allowing the proliferation of several kinds of information, 2) the growth and variety of information channels, culminating in several patterns of conversation among users, 3) more possibilities for selective exposure: customization, control and choice of information; 4) new forms of distribution, circulation and consumption of news through the spread of standards related to hierarchical authority, popularity of publications, collectively constructed in horizontal networks of communication. In other words, the flow of public opinion is in the process of change and evolution, particularly with regard to expansion of the capacity of the public agenda and how it is manifested through several conversational environments.

1.2. Measuring agendas

As our paper intends to discuss the adaptation of research designs through which media and public agendas could be observed and measured, it is useful to quote some of the reviews done by Dearing and Rogers (1996) about measurement of the agendas². The authors explain that the relative position of an issue on the public agenda is usually found through public opinion surveys, whose questions is a variation of one originally designed by George Gallup: “What is the most important problem [MIP] facing this country today?” (p. 18). To find out the issue salience on the media agenda, in its turn, researchers usually develop content analysis of the news media to settle the amount of news stories about an issue or issues of study. Attribute agenda-setting researches, in they turn, are conducted through laboratory experiments,

² We do not intend to discuss all methodological traditions of agenda-setting research, except the ones that are important for our exploratory study. To probe discussions about both historical developments and types of agenda-setting methods of research, see Dearing and Rogers, 1996.

providing understandings of how individuals will evaluate issues.

As it happens within other types of information environments (of personal, media and policymakers nature), multiple agendas and multiple hierarchies coexist on Internet environments. However, it is possible to account more research variables regarding the study of issue and attribute salience, as several types of issues, content, attributes and hierarchies coexist and are spread through more transparent and spontaneous conversational patterns. Thus, new research designs regarding attribute and issue salience may appear to investigate correlations between several types of agendas, as well as their attributes.

The development and adaptation of research designs concerning the first and the second level of agenda-setting allow more possibilities to observe categories related to attributes that otherwise wouldn't be possible in another information environment or media outlet. Aspects such as hierarchical processes (being them related to the most popular or authoritative issues and pages), explicit cues of how people orient themselves (through hyperlinking practices, where people may mention the original sources of the issues and make explicit judgments about them), not to mention the construction of opinion leadership processes, and other forms of information spreading.

Perhaps, such possibilities may fulfill or respond to some limitations credited to agenda-setting research tradition, as Reese (2001) points out: "The tendency, for example, to classify into categories, such as 'the economy' and 'crime' obscures the important questions of how they are defined in the first place" (p. 8). Kosicki (1993) also calls attention to this limited trend in agenda-setting research design that emphasizes issue salience, because it lacks "a real focus on the nature of the disagreement between the parties and the essence of the controversy. In short, a great deal of valuable contextual information about the issue would be lost" (p. 116). Ettema et al. (apud Dearing and Rogers, 1996, pp. 92-93) point out another problem in agenda-setting research, when state that "The literature on agenda-setting has been stunningly successful in telling people what data to collect but it has not been very successful in telling its readers why the data matter". The possibilities of analyzing content from Internet environments may partially overcome these limitations, as it is possible to create categories and variables in order to understand the climate of opinion of a product releasing, or a political campaign, in a more qualitative fashion, just to cite a few examples.

Comparisons among Internet environment's agenda with public agenda gathered through surveys could be also useful to test degrees of similarities and differences among issue and attribute salience of such environments. In this sense, it is useful to mention Burd's (1991) criticism addressed to agenda-setting research designs, when notes that: "(...) too many agenda-setting researchers rely on a linear, one-dimensional, assembly-line model for the production and manufacture of public opinion and policy" (apud Dearing and Rogers, 1996). Dearing and Rogers argue that such criticism of the agenda-setting paradigm may be overcome as researchers observe dynamics of a long-term trend in agenda-setting

research is toward disaggregation of the data, meaning that less aggregated research designs "allows scholars greater insight into the relationships of key variables in the agenda-setting process - relationships that are otherwise masked" (p. 93). In this sense, the media agenda variables, the public agenda variables, and the real-world indicators were disaggregated to the individual and localized level of analysis, which are necessary to understand what Java (online, 2008) calls "The Long Tail of Public Opinions" meaning that Public opinions, like many things, follow a long tail distribution. Most people [...] just rely on one or two sources for information. Technology should encourage opinions in the long tail to express themselves freely".

Very few studies on media effects applied to Internet environment have been done, and some of them have used theoretical agenda-setting background, and more specifically, focusing on cognitive and experimental designs. Knobloch-Westerwick et al.'s study (2005) is an example of the how types of online news recommendation, based on collaborative filtering, affect the process of information choice among 93 users. The researchers classified the recommendations in explicit (where readers would give a grade to the articles) or implicit (through the number of page views). The results show that users would select more articles if the portal displayed explicit recommendations, and this type of stronger recommendation would stimulate a longer exposure to those matters.

Fico et al. (1987) explored effects of agenda-setting from content indexing. The researchers replaced the clues of importance and hierarchy (the headlines of the front page), typical of a printed newspaper, by indexed topics. They suspected that the index would decrease the agenda-setting power of the media over the audience. The results found significant statistics differences with regard to the exposure of readers on the news topics, suggesting that different styles of reading produce responses according to the display of news on a newspaper.

Schoenbach, de Waal and Lauf (2005) compared levels of public perception on topics among readers of printed and online newspapers. The authors argue, through literature review, that the printed newspaper draw attention to a number of issues related to public affairs, when compared to other media, fostering, thus, a shared social life. However, the authors point to a gradual reduction of newspapers consumption in Western countries and the likelihood that the printing will be replaced by daily online news, a fact that suggests changes in the perception of the importance of the issues in general).

Reese (2007) analyzed the posts and hyperlinks of six American weblogs about politics to extract categories related to issues and political affiliations related to practices of hyperlinking. Regarding issue attributes, Silva (2008b) explored news values criteria applied by Menéame's users, when selecting and voting for the articles, and by the "common agenda" of the five Spanish news websites, when selecting and publishing the stories. The study found great differences between the criteria by which the articles were promoted to Menéame's main page and published on the home page of the Spanish news websites.

While the common agenda of the five news websites were more concerned with stories that mention the degree of hierarchy of individuals and institutions, Menéame's users promoted other types of stories, although most of articles were related to stories about people who behaved in an unusual situation.

1.2.1. Observing media outlets: How are they designed? What possibilities do they provide for publishing, spreading information and establishing hierarchies?

Aspects such as synchrony or asynchrony, type of message (text, image etc.), and other types of applications (e.g. possibilities of hyperlink insertion) are very important to design research questions. These structures affect the way an agenda is designed and maintained in several ways. For instance, the way the agenda of a weblog is measured is different from the way the agenda of a social system of news promotion, such as Menéame, is conceived. If your research design aims at measuring individual agendas, a weblog would be more appropriate, as it is maintained by a single person, while Menéame would be more suitable to measure public agenda, even knowing that a detailed study about uses and gratifications would be necessary to understand what these people do with, and what kinds of reward or satisfaction they get with the use of this system.

1.2.2. Observing the information environment: What are the patterns of interactions among users and issues?

Aspects, such as possibilities of content publishing and updating by individuals or groups, insertion of links and comments, voting, criteria establishment of authority, popularity, among others, are also important to design research questions, as well as to measure the agenda of these environments. The time-lag variable, for instance, has to be considered differently when analyzing certain patterns of interactions among users. The need for orientation (Weaver, 1980) can be also identified through the cues users provide when updating a weblog, inserting a link or making a comment, when nominating an article in Menéame. The votes an article obtains can provide important cues about what people are thinking and through what kinds of information channel they guide themselves. In the case of Menéame, for instance, it is possible to analyze both issue and framing salience, not only because users promote articles that come from several sources of information, but also because of the comments the promoter of the article makes when nominating it. For instance, issue salience and frames in Menéame can be also analyzed under the perspective of the articles which have not been nominated, that is, the ones which have been waiting in a pending queue, meaning that registered users don't approve or have no interest that a particular political position appear in the main page of the system.

The combination of those characteristics mentioned above can provide different designs to measure public agenda, in a way that could not be measured through traditional surveys, or laboratory experiments, as the possibilities of knowing patterns of news consumption among the audience are

completely different, less detailed and not as spontaneous as through information environments, meaning that the users who promote or vote for an article, have some interest for it, while people who respond a survey may or may not have little knowledge or interest about the issue (Bishop, 2004) and are submitted to experimental conditions, in the case of laboratory experiments.

In an attempt to define conceptually the agenda of information environments on the Internet, and more specifically, the agenda of Menéame, we have observed and analyzed how the system works, particularly with regard to patterns of interaction among its users, that is, how they select the articles and make them available on the home page. We have also observed and analyzed hierarchical patterns of the system, that is, how the articles become more or less popular and how they are displayed on the page. When observing the process of selection and displaying of news, we shall say that Menéame's agenda, in its final stage (from the moment when the selected articles appear on its main page), can be seen as a public agenda, in the sense that it is the result of the patterns of interaction among its users. In this sense, we have witnessed a process of formation of a public agenda, which is a result of interactions among distinct individual agendas, to the extent that the registered users select the articles, which, in turn, are reorganized in a pending queue, waiting for votes to be promoted to the main page. In this second stage, we can see the formation of an inter-personal and public-user agenda, since the issues and events are disseminated and promoted collectively, through practices of hiperlinking, establishing inter-personal relationships among users, through the use of systems of comments and news nomination. Observing this Spanish system of news promotion, we can also say that it is possible to analyze Menéame under point of view of a media agenda, despite not having traditional media features. Menéame is, first and foremost, a media outlet with its specific traits, in the traditional sense of the term, that is, it stores and conveys information through a channel of communication, and it has global reach. Besides that, it can be observed and consulted as a source of information by many different receivers and producers of information.

1.2.3. Observing patterns of hierarchy among the issues: How do they become salient? Who makes them salient?

How do users convey the priority of an issue to a system? How do users provide cues to the relative importance of an issue? These questions can be answered through the observance of linking practices, types of content publishing, as well as patterns of hierarchy established by both the users and the system. In the case of Menéame, registered users nominate articles, which go to a pending queue and wait for votes (also called Menéos) to be promoted to its main page. Once the articles get to the main page, users (registered or not) vote for the articles they consider the best. Other articles go to the main page as soon as they get enough number of votes, replacing older articles that go to be stored on a second page.

2. Research questions

1. What are the most salient issues and attributes, collected from the last 199 articles promoted to the main page of Menéame, two days before the Spanish presidential elections of 2008?
2. Is there a relationship trend between the most salient issues and the original sources of the articles, regarding the types of media outlet?
3. What are the political affiliations or frames (if any) through the selection and voting for the articles?
4. What frames and issues related to technology are salient?

3. Methodology

3.1. Selection of the articles

Differently from the previous studies done with Menéame (Silva, 2008a; Silva 2008b), at this time we selected the last 199 articles³ promoted by Menéame's users before the weekend of the presidential elections started, in a continuum data collection. In our previous studies, we selected the articles during the week, at a specific time of the night, missing other articles, which had been published during other times of the day. The choice of analyzing the last 199 articles just before two days of presidential elections was to identify the main current issues and attributes as well as to understand the climate of opinion of users about the issues. In one of our previous studies (Silva 2008b), we selected articles which had been published at the beginning of February, and we identified also that most articles promoted by Menéame's users were related to the elections, so that we could also identify sub-issues related to politics which would be promoted just before the presidential elections, when nominating and voting for the articles.

3.2. Finding out a relationship trend between the most salient issues and the original sources of the articles

Following our previous studies (Silva 2008a; Silva 2008b), we coded the source of hyperlinks that referred to the last 199 articles collected on March 7th, at 11:19 p.m. However, at this time, we sought to find out correlations among the most salient issues and their sources, so that we would be able to see trends between the types of issues that have been promoted and its original sources. We tried to classify the sources of the articles according to: type of media outlet (e.g. weblog, national news website etc.), specialized or generalized, among other categories.

3.3. Analyzing the articles

³ We actually collected the articles that appeared on the last five pages of Menéame, on March 7th, 2008, which were in total, 199.

As it had been shown at the research questions, we have sought to answer to four questions, through content analysis. From the 199 articles collected and analyzed, we first coded them into four main categories, according to issue salience: 1) Politics related to the elections itself (including opinions, manifestations during the political campaign, strategies and policies before and during the elections, as well as futures decisions); 2) Politics related to the assassination of Isaiás Carrasco⁴; and Technology (including, free software, safety, energy, science, medicine, software, copyright and elections).

After selecting the most salient issues, we coded them according to their attributes: Regarding the presidential elections, we coded the articles according to political affiliation (see table 2). Regarding the murdering of Isaias Carrasco, we coded the articles according to the ideological position (see table 3). Finally, considering technology, we coded attributes of four sub-issues (see table 4), namely, free software, copyright laws, environment and Microsoft products.

4. Results

4.1. Relationship between the most salient issues and the sources of the articles

As table 1 shows, most sources concerning sub-issues related to politics come from professional news media, belonging to either national, international or local news and information websites. Conversely, most sources concerning sub-issues related to technology come from specialized websites, being them either weblogs, organizations websites discussion forums, among others. In a similar fashion, most of the articles related to the murder of Isaiás Carrasco (which was the most salient sub-issue related to the elections, at the time of data collection) came from traditional and professional news media. The second most salient issue at the time of data collection was the presidential elections, and, apart from the microblogging source, all the articles somehow came from traditional media as well. Conversely, when it came to identify the sources of the issues related to technology, we have found that most of the articles promoted by Menéame's users came from specialized sources.

4.2. Political affiliation related to the promotion of the articles

Table 2 shows that there are fewer articles supporting both PSOE and PP than articles that are in opposition to them. This may be an indication that users don't support PP neither support PSOE, but rather are against what they consider the least damaging political option. In other words, most of the promoted articles deal more with highlighting problems of both parties, rather than with defending them. Another aspect observed through the analysis of the results which corroborates the view that Menéame's

⁴ Carrasco was a Basque politician affiliated with the PSE, and was murdered two days before the Spanish presidential elections of 2008, on March 7th of this year, when he was leaving his house. The murder is believed to be committed by ETA, a Basque nationalist separatist organization, whose group advocates the maintenance of Basque traditions and culture, and demands Basque independence through violence and terror. The politicians suspended the electoral campaign due to the Carrasco's murder and the issue had reached the top of national agenda, reflecting also on Menéame. Because of that, we decided to investigate the attributes of this sub-issue

users don't seem to be concerned with what party or candidate is the best, but with the ones which seem not to be the worst can be seen through the number of articles attacking and supporting both parties: 7 articles (with 3.577 votes) attack both parties and only one (with 447) support them. More specifically, we can observe a bias favoring PSOE and José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, as there are 5 articles that support PSOE (followed by 1.586 votes) against only 1 article supporting PP (which had only 367 votes). Another aspect which evidence this slight bias towards PSOE can be seen from the total number of votes reserved to the articles against Partido Popular (11.309 votes) and supporting Zapatero's candidature (3.314 votes reserved for the articles against PSOE, that is, 70,6% of more votes supporting PSOE and its candidate).

Regarding the murder of Isaías Carrasco, we can observe in table 3, a bias favoring PSOE and its candidate, as there appear 3 articles highlighting the intervention of either the party or its candidate (followed by 1.061 votes), against only 1 article supporting PP and its candidate (followed by 248 votes). It has been also evident that Menéame's users condemn not only ETA, the organization which it is believed to have murdered Isaías Carrasco (with the biggest number of articles and votes: 5.428 in total), but also Acción Nacionalista Vasca (ANV) for supporting the Basque organization (3 articles and 1.034 votes).

Regarding technology sub-issues, we have found the following attributes: articles supporting free software, attacking copyright laws, supporting the preservation of natural resources and attacking Microsoft products. Most of the articles refer to this last sub-issue (7), followed by the ones that support free software. However, the number of votes seems to be balanced proportionally regarding all issues.

Table 1: Relationships between the most salient issues and the original sources of the articles, regarding the types of media outlet

Sources of articles/Issues	the	Politics (murder of Carrasco)	Isaías	Politics (elections)	Politics (general)	Technology	Other issues
National/Regional/local website	news	11		22	5	5	42
Specialized weblog/website/		-		3	1	20	7
Blog hosted by a news website		2		-	-	-	1
Microblog		-		1	-	-	-
Weblog linked to a national news website (community project)		-		1	-	-	1
Information and opinion website		-		5	1	1	3
Non-profit national/regional organization		1		2	1	3	4
Online compendium		-		-	-	-	1
Specialized website	news	-		3	-	3	6
Non-profit service	internet	-		-	1		-
International website	news	-		-	-	2	11
Company's website		-		-	-	1	-
Amateur/generalized weblog/website		-		2	1	1	11
Raising funds website		-		-	-	-	1
Sharing video website		-		2	-	-	1
Image gallery/ Artist's website		-		1	-	2	1
Specialized discussion forum		-		-	-	1	1
Community-based news article popularity website		-		-	-	1	-
News agency		-		1	-	-	-
Wikipedia		-		-	-	-	2

Table 2: Political affiliations regarding the Spanish presidential elections

Political positions	Number of articles	Total number of votes for the articles
Supporting Partido Popular (PP - Rajoy's party)	1	367
Against PP	16	11.309
Supporting Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE - Zapatero's party)	5	1.586
Against PSOE	6	3.314
Against both parties	7	3.577
Neutral position/No ideology explicitly related to a political affiliation	10	5.560
Supporting both parties	1	447

Table 3: Ideological affiliations regarding the assassination of Isaías Carrasco

Positions	Number of articles	Total number of votes for the articles
Supporting Partido Popular (PP - Rajoy's party)	1	248
Supporting Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE - Zapatero's party)	3	1.061
Neutral position/No ideology explicitly identified	1	855
Against ETA	5	5.428
Against ANV	3	1.034

Table 4: Attributes regarding technology sub-issues: Microsoft, copyright, free software and environment

Frames	Number of articles	Total number of votes for
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		the articles
Supporting free software	6	2.198
Against copyright laws	3	1.218
Supporting maintenance of the environment/natural resources	5	1.909
Against Microsoft products	7	2.015

5. Discussions and conclusions

This article is, first and foremost, an attempt to contribute to the debate on the development and adaptation of research designs on agenda-setting processes applied to information environments on the Internet. By trying to understand how new elements combined among themselves provide cues in order to investigate correlations between agendas on Internet environments, we believe to be contributing to approximate research designs related to issue and attribute salience. The combination of new elements - namely: new media outlets, new structures of hierarchy, uses, control and visibility of information, fragmentation, as well as the diversity of content and news channels, transparency of users preferences, through practices of publishing content and hyperlinks - enrich possibilities for research on agenda-setting processes, as provide new possibilities to investigate the nature and correlations of different agendas, as well as to better understand the patterns of interaction among users in a more qualitative fashion.

With respect to more significant changes of the agenda-setting research on Internet environments, we can point out the wide range of hierarchies, conversational patterns and information channels, in order to investigate issue and attribute salience, as those environments may provide also the application of a number of new categories drawn from content analysis to study the attributes of these issues. In the case of our study, it was possible to investigate the climate of opinion before the Spanish presidential elections of 2008, according to categories related to political affiliation, as well as the attributes of sub-issues related to the elections and to technology.

Studies comparing Meneame's political agenda with the public agenda coming from surveys are also interesting to identify differences and similarities in both dynamics of issues and attributes salience. In an attempt to answer to the criticism pointed by Ettema et al. (apud Dearing and Rogers, 1996, pp. 92-93), who say that agenda-setting has not succeeded in telling people why the data matter, it is possible that agenda-setting research applied to Internet environments becomes useful to marketing research, as users and tools provide many possibilities of production, consumption and distribution of information.

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