

# Every Bit of Information Counts

## How to recognize change in perception in advance, not retrospectively

Why is it that people suddenly start discussing an issue from one day to another – an issue that was previously ignored? What makes them suddenly buy shares that they would have never considered before? And what makes them decide against voting for a politician that they had given their vote of confidence, three years earlier? Researchers into Agenda Setting have been attempting to find answers to such questions for decades.

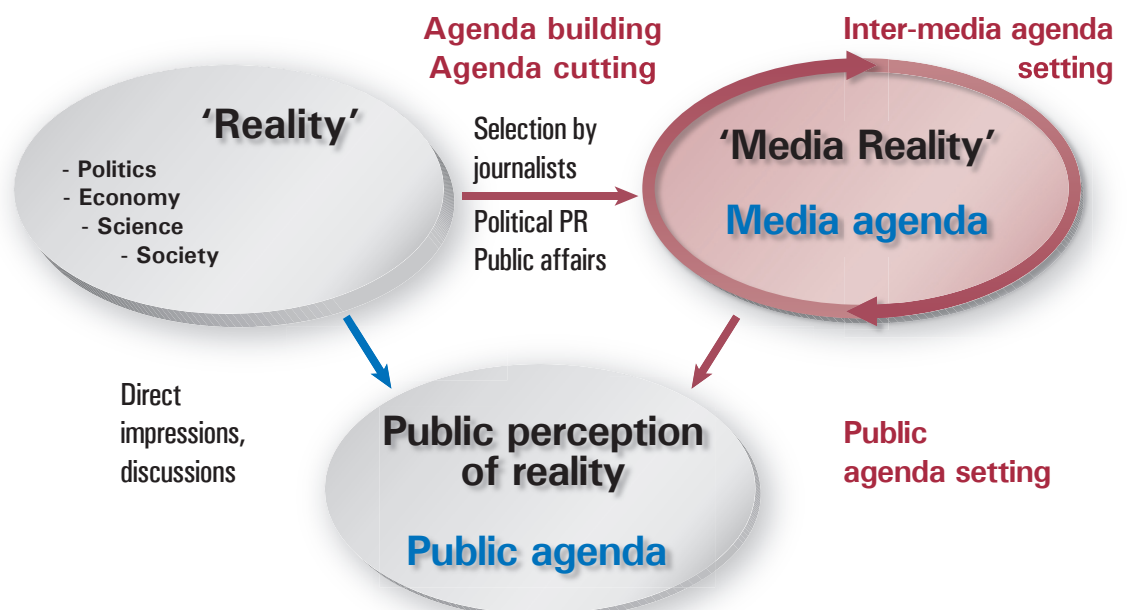
And since Max McCombs media scientists have succeeded in this, yet only retrospectively – in a quasi historical fashion. In the Chapel Hill study McCombs and Donald Shaw, assessed why the compilation of particular issues in regional papers influenced the discussion amongst the electorate in the context of regional elections. The studies that later flowed from Chapel Hill were obliged to follow the initial research design, for the sole reason that media researchers were unable to analyse all the sections in newspapers, that is the complete news and business sections, on a daily basis. Instead, they relied on the selective assessment of individual articles and the agenda setting functions that followed a particular event.

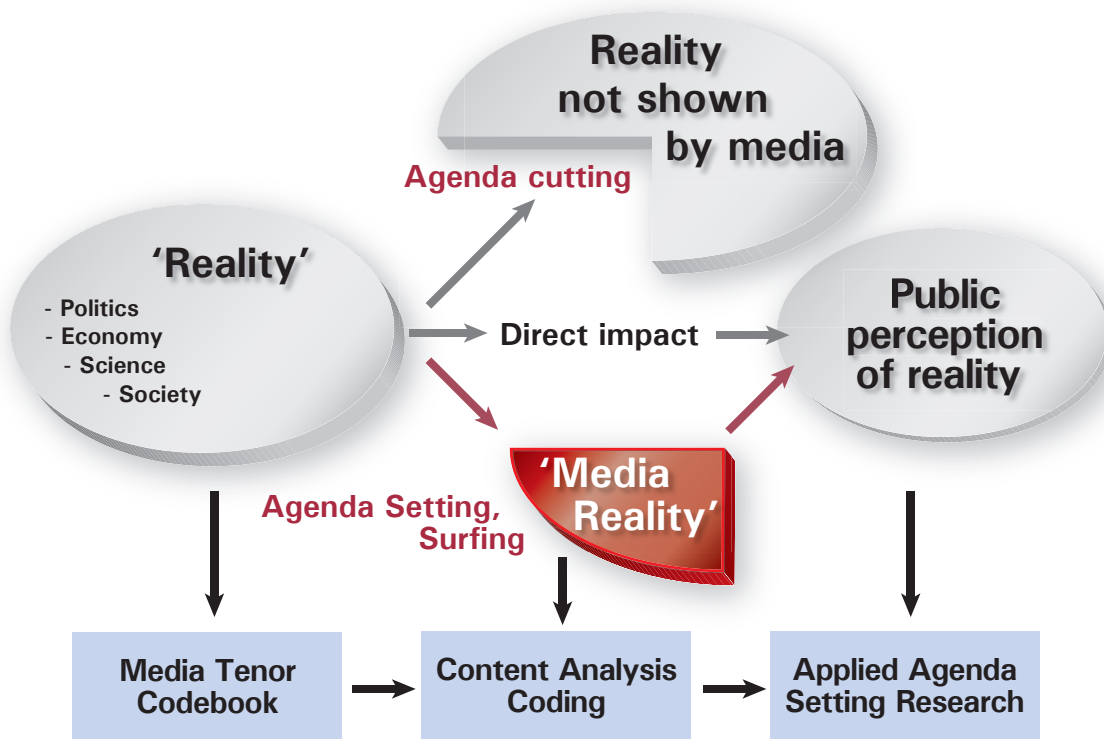
The **first chart** by Frank Brettschneider highlights the concept: the actual reality is being perceived by

people if they have a direct, unblocked access to it. This includes the balance on their bank account as well as the feeling when confronted by foreigners in their hometown. But in the majority of cases people have to rely on a ‘media-tor’ for their reality perception. The increase of GDP is not a category of the perception of individuals as is the perception of foreign heads of state. Even the perception of one’s own public servants is ‘filtered’ through reading newspapers and watching the evening news. Basically, this leads to two different realities that impact on people.

In the **second chart**, a further aspect is underlined: media are only transmitting a fraction of the actual reality, while the majority of the daily (non-) achievement remains below the awareness threshold because media have no space for these realities.

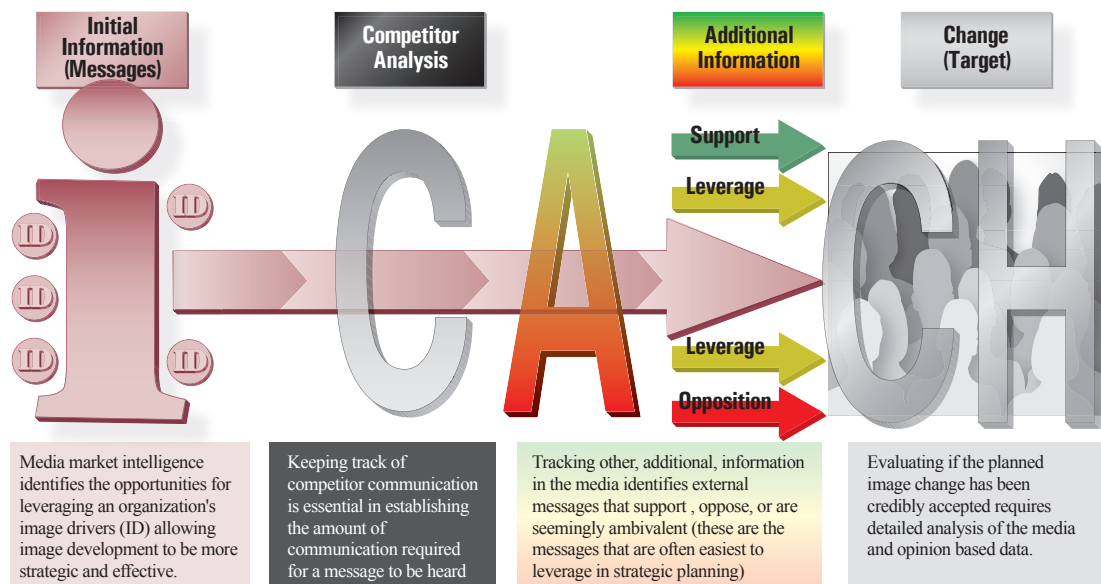
What would happen, if say this could be recognized in advance? **Media Tenor** has devoted the past 150 editions of its research journal to these questions, and has for the past two years primarily focused on its ICA=CH model. This was done for example when the polling behaviour in Germany in 1994, 1998, 2002 and particularly in 2005, but also during the U.S. elections in 2000 and 2004, as well as ifo-index and the Private Consumption Index, were considered. **Media Tenor**’s results in terms of the ‘prediction power’ show that research into media perception is an ideal tool to measure the change in public perception. The impact is even greater if media are no longer analysed on the basis of an individual issue, but comprehensive and current, utilizing a repeatable set of criteria.



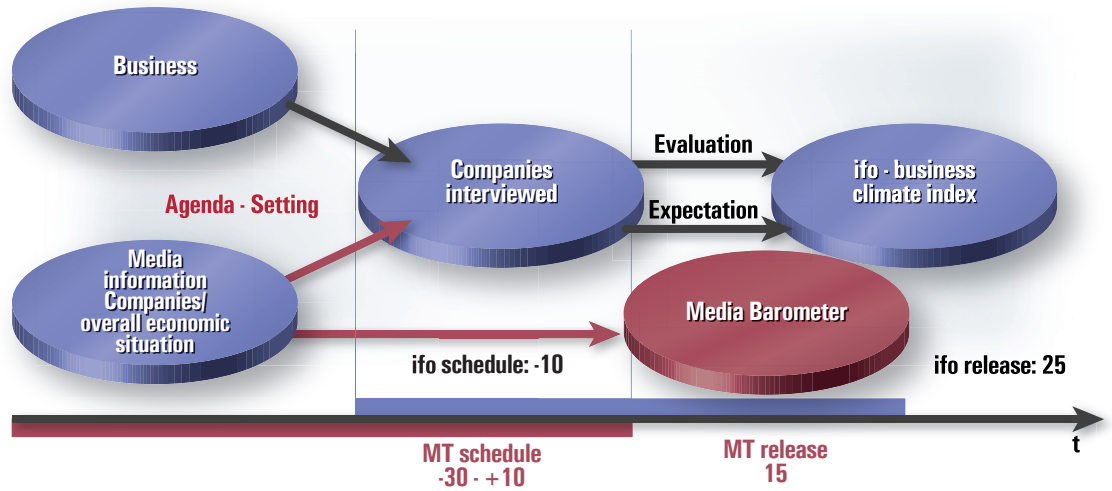


What is so special about the ICA=CH model? Contrary to the standard stimulus-response models, which primarily have dealt with the actual case of public perception, the **Media Tenor** model takes not only the actual issue into account, but benchmarks it against the full 100% content of the information flow of those who react in a expected manner to the communicated message. Next to the I for information, which influences the decision of the people to CHange, **Media Tenor** also analyses, in its research, the alternative facets of information that ‘compete’ with the actual information: how intense is competitor C communicating? But it is not only the clear determination of the qualitative and quantitative vol-

ume of coverage that the ‘opponents’ of a perception change (in terms of the I) utilize for their own benefit, that gives an indicator about the size of the I, only the assessment of the complete information basis (= all reports and additional information) form the basis for a reliable indicator for the amount and quality of I as transmitted to the target audiences by the media. Amongst this Additional Information might be messages that either support (see green arrows) or endanger (see red arrows) the initial information output. The majority of Additional Information can initially been considered as ‘information-neutral’ (see yellow arrows), but a consistent analysis of the total amount of information gives the sender an indication how the



**Agenda Setting model: news flow and ifo business climate index**

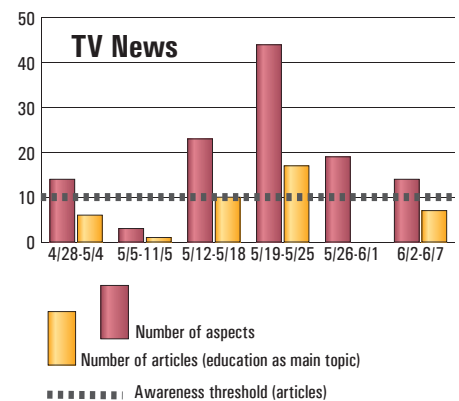
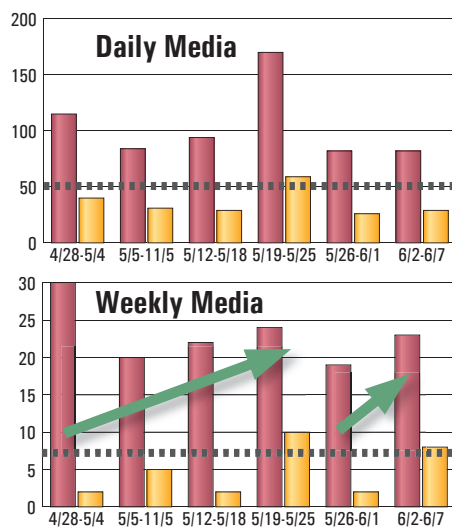


initial message can be supported through the use of the existing information in the media environment. This effect is called Agenda Surfing, since the news flow of additional information can be utilized for one's own benefit. Particular emphasis has to be placed on the image factors that, next to the key message, have to be communicated via the media. It is no longer enough to communicate for instance on the arrival of a new car on the market, but parallel potential buyers have to receive the relevant additional information (taking adequate volume = intensity of coverage into account) as well: the car manufacturer is financially solid, customer service for parts is guaranteed, the car is environmentally friendly, no child labour was used

etc. These image drivers, continuously synchronized with **Media Tenor's** research partners Harris Interactive, The Reputation Institute as well as Prof Nitin Nohria or Harvard Business School, are crucial for the change of perception amongst the potential buyers.

Based on the ICA=CH model, the much needed awareness thresholds for different issues, target markets and key media can be defined. Application areas include political campaigning, investor relations and the simple sale of products in the same way as the classical form of reputation management, no matter whether for governments, companies, NGO's or universities.

**Weekly analysis and prognosis: Communication environment "Education"**



**Prognosis (correct): Communicate education topics via weekly press**

Source: Media Tenor  
04/28 - 06/07/2005

Basis: 24,424 reports/37,476 aspects from the main category in reports and passages in 23 media