

## CONTRIBUTION OF SOCIAL MEDIA TO AGENDA SETTING APPROACH

Adem DEMİR SOY\*  
Enderhan KARAKOÇ\*\*

### ABSTRACT

The studies carried out to research the effects of mass communication on societies provide a basis for communication activities. Those activities generally draw the attention as the activities related to the need of sovereigns for leading the society. The sovereigns who desire to maintain the new developments occurring in technology under their own domination fields use mass communication more effectively as a directing tool.

Especially, social media is commonly used as one of the most important mass communication tools of our age. It is a reality that social media plays an important role in determining the social agenda. It is possible to see the use of internet on every field from forming a society to political marketing.

Social networking sites, especially, Facebook and Twitter appear to be the most active sites of current new media. The agenda setting approach developed by McCombs and Shaw is an approach which reveals that the media is extremely successful in determining what people will think about.

In this study which has been carried out, it was aimed to reveal that the Agenda Setting Approach which still maintains its importance today and forms the theoretical infrastructure of various studies is rather effective on setting agenda through Social Media. Literature review method was used in the study and the studies in the literature which were executed in the field related to the determination of agenda by social media were employed.

**Keywords:** Internet, Social Media, Agenda Setting

### SOSYAL MEDYANIN GÜNDEM BELİRLEME YAKLAŞIMINA KATKISI

#### ÖZET

Kitle iletişim araçlarının toplumlar üzerindeki etkilerini araştırmak için yapılan çalışmalar aynı zamanda iletişim çalışmalarının da temelini oluşturmaktadır. Bu çalışmalar genellikle egemen gücün halkı yönlendirebilmesi ihtiyacı üzerine yapılan çalışmalar olarak göze çarpmaktadır. Teknolojide meydana gelen yeni gelişmeleri kendi hegemonya alanlarında sürdürmek isteyen egemen güçler yönlendirme aracı olarak kitle iletişim araçlarını günümüzde daha etkili olarak kullanmaktadırlar.

Özellikle sosyal medya çağımızın en önemli kitle iletişim araçlarından biri olarak yaygın bir şekilde kullanılmaktadır. Sosyal medyanın toplumsal gündemi belirlemede önemli roller üstlendiği bir gerçektir. Topluluk oluşturmadan siyasal pazarlamaya her alanda internetin kullanımını görmek mümkün olmaktadır.

Özellikle Facebook, Twitter gibi sosyal paylaşım siteleri mevcut yeni medyanın en çok işlem gören siteleri olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. McCombs ve Shaw tarafından geliştirilen gündem belirleme yaklaşımı, medyanın insanların ne hakkında düşüneceklerini belirlemede son derece başarılı olduğunu ortaya koyan bir yaklaşımdır.

\* Dr., Selcuk University, Faculty of Communication, ademirsoy@selcuk.edu.tr

\*\* Assoc. Prof. Dr., Selcuk University, Faculty of Communication, enderhan@selcuk.edu.tr

Yapılan bu çalışma günümüzde hala önemini koruyan ve çeşitli çalışmaların kuramsal altyapısını oluşturan Gündem Belirleme Yaklaşımı'nın Sosyal Medya aracılığı ile gündemi belirlemede ne kadar etkili olduğunu ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmada literatür tarama yöntemi kullanılmış olup, sosyal medyanın gündemi belirlemeye yönelik alanda yapılmış literatürdeki çalışmalara yer verilmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İnternet, Sosyal Medya, Gündem Belirleme

## 1. Introduction

Media is the one of the most used vehicles used by people in order to reach information. News, information and content presented by media form highly agenda of society. Also presentation and selection types of televisions and newspapers include so many moot points. In this context, media determines which news will be in agenda and how many minutes will be separated for the news. By doing this, media decides what society will think and for what society feel sympathy or antipathy.

The most important think is that how media will set agenda of society. The first studies about agenda setting roles of media were conducted by Shaw and McCombs in 1970s. According to agenda setting approach, people learn about what they think and speak a daily events from media and this resulted in social agendas. Consequently, agendas set by media affect social agenda with one way or another way.

Developments in new communication technologies and fast spread of internet in person's daily life caused the birth of social media as an innovation. This situation has increased interests of people to media. Rapid distribution of news by social media and its operation as an agenda setter have resulted in some changes about perception of media.

Transformation in mass communication vehicles and especially social media's becoming as news and knowledge source caused some alterations in the dimensions of agenda setting approach. Contrary to one-dimensional form of traditional media; social media's two-dimensional form and distribution speed for news and knowledge have become so effective in setting social agenda.

Once upon a time some the events were not taken in hand by media, but today same events are taken in hand as news by social media. Beside this, events cared about society are turned into news and especially instantaneity of news triggered traditional media and because of this social media has become an important information source.

In this context, this study aims to show the roles of social media to influence agendas of society. In the content of this study, it was founded that social media plays an important role for the formation of general and special agenda of society.

## 2. Concept Of Social Media

Social media has started to develop after entrance of internet in daily life. At first this process started as only e-mail but later virtual environments like Facebook, Twitter, Gtalk, Myspace located in our daily life. On the one hand, a new communication form has developed in these new virtual environments; on the other hand new social fields have formed although they are virtual (Güngör, 2011: 312).

Data-based internet implementations defined as social media supplies more interac-

tions to users and because of this borders of communication have started to enlarge in virtual environments. That is; social media is a communication form in which there is no limitation like border or time (Vural & Bat, 2010: 3351). Social media is defined by highlighting its social dimension and usage (Akar, 2010: 17).

As term, social media represents whole vehicles, services and implementations which provide interaction by using users' network technology.

Social media also can be defined as a process including every kind of idea, point of view and approach; unprejudiced because of independency from interest groups; at the same time interactive and sharing because of its specific vehicles and methods (Kahraman, 2010: 14).

As online, social media covers social networks, blogs, forums, micro blogs, chat rooms, web pages, discussion forums, e-mails, dictionaries (Mangold & Faulds, 2009: 358). Because of implementations and web pages providing people to share information and content each other; internet users snap at a chance to get advantages of content and information about their interests. Social media environments, which are seen as daily dialogues between persons or groups even in small groups, have realized a rapid diffusion with shared content, information and its increasing membership numbers.

### 3.Components Of Social Media

The most used components of social media are blogs, wikis and social networks.

#### 3.1.Blogs

Conceptually, blog is defined as "web diaries". It was started by a group of computer programmers who broadcasted some internet pages with little notes on their own internet pages in 1997. The most similar form of blogs like today came into picture in 1999. Today it has turned into an industry. Blog as a word was produced from the word of "weblog" and they have become most used vehicles of social media in which everybody can explain his or her ideas and create some content according to their expertness for their followers (Yurttaş, 2011: 18).

#### 3.2.Wiki

Wiki is the software designed by GNU that it allows users to create new pages, connect these pages each other and arrange these pages functionally. Actually this software was designed as suitable with a license which create course materials like books or other sources. For example, Wikipedia is the well-known wiki pages on internet (<http://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Viki>).

### 3.3.Social Networks

Although there are so many social networking sites, today the most used of them are Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google Plus (Gündüz & Pembecioğlu, 2013: 318).

There is a general definition of social networking sites. According to this definition; social networking sites are web data-based services and they provide their members to create a profile, to list others' profiles in their profile, to look others' connection lists in system and to follow other members on internet (<http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol13/issue1/boyd.ellison.html>).

At the same time social networking site means that it is people who are connected each other with more than one social relation and that is why they are connected each other with socially. As for the lists of these relations, they are friendship, kinship, communication and power. In fact, social networking sites create virtual groups to act together in terms of sharing ideas, finding solutions and similar activities.

Online environment, in which mutual people come together for sharing their ideas, feelings, comments, is named as social network or social networking sites (Saymer, 2008: 123). People can form social groups and share every kind of written and visual materials on these social networks and all implementations on these sites are free of charge.

#### 3.3.1.Facebook

Facebook which provides people to communicate with others and share information each other is a social networking site. Beside this, it supplies introducing themselves on a single page to its users and it also provides personal information about its users (Walther vd., 2010: 230).

Contrary to web sites which provides their users to chat and send messages; Facebook and Twiter function as an online social platform which provide members to organize social activity, to share ideas, to form groups according to faiths and religions. Rising of social networking sites have turned organizations into online social groups (Boyd & Ellison, 2010: 212).

Active Facebook user number in Turkey from June 2013 to December 2013 has increased from 33 millions people to 34 millions people and at the same time daily active user number has increased from 20 millions people to 21 millions people. This is an approximate increase as % 5.

At the same period, active Facebook user number on smart phones has increased from 21 millions to 23 millions and daily Facebook usage on smart phone has also increased from 9.5 millions to 12 millions.

% 94 of total internet user in Turkey use Facebook and as for daily rates, % 58 of

total internet user in Turkey use Facebook everyday (<http://www.campaigntr.com>).

### 3.3.2. Twitter

Twitter is an online social networking and micro-blogging service that enables users to send and read short 140-character text messages, called “tweets”. Registered users can read and post tweets, but unregistered users can only read them. Users access Twitter through the website interface, SMS, or mobile device applications.

Twitter supplies a basic following mechanism to internet which has been turning into turmoil and members can follow subjects according to their domains and last discussions.

Twitter has become one of the most popular and fast social networking sites; it has realized an impulsive power role in social media so far. Twitter transfers the events realized in daily life into virtual environments. By doing this, Twitter carries real agendas of societies into social media.

Twitter can be used as Turkish after 25 April 2011 and this situation has sharply increased its member numbers in Turkey. Last year, Monitera which observes and evaluates social media in Turkey explained some numbers in an academic conference. According to this numbers, there are approximately 9.6 millions active Twitter users in Turkey. Prominently, % 53 of these users is women and %47 is man. There were % 33 increases on the user number of Twitter in Turkey among the years of 2012-2013 and it means about more than one million new Twitter users (<http://www.usasabah.com/Guncel/2014/04/15/turkiyede-twitter-ve-rakamlar>).

## 4. Agenda Setting Theory

The first systematic study about Agenda Setting Theory was conducted by McCombs and Shaw in 1972 and this theory describes the power of the news media to influence the salience of topics on the public agenda. According to Gökçe (1993: 113); agenda setting theory is based on an approach that by using their presentation techniques mass communication vehicles highlight some topics as more important than others and whereby they can determine of shape agenda of public opinion.

Mass communication vehicles care about so many events realized in society, some social problems and subjects. These subjects and events are highlighted and separated more place by mass communication vehicles. It can be stated that there is clearly a compatibility among the subjects cared about by mass communication vehicles and the subjects taken in hand by politicians in political agenda (McQuail, 1994: 294).

The subjects which are cared about more by mass communication vehicles will be known so much by people living in same society and the subjects which are not

cared about by mass communication vehicles will be forgotten by people in a short time (McQuail & Windahl, 1993: 92). In another words, the subjects taken in hand by media as important will be taken in hand by society also as more important than other subjects.

The most important subjects of media cover the first pages, titles, comments, discussions and reportages. Subjects are arranged according to their importance level. They can take place in media by starting from first page to last page, from big title to small one, from giving more places to small one. It is also repeated or not repeated according to importance of the subjects (Erdoğan & Alemdar, 1990: 147). According to the studies conducted about agenda setting theory; television, newspaper and internet are frequently used by people as information sources.

To sum up; agenda setting theory states the function of mass communication vehicles for reflecting the problems of society or it states discussions of society about these problems and it activates society to solve these problems by setting agenda (Tokgöz, 1978: 89). Instead of what it should think, media inculcates what it should think about into society. Masses have a tendency about reliability and importance of the subjects highlighted by media. These subjects are repeated frequently in the content of different media organizations and by doing this these subjects are reinforced as real agenda of people.

## 5. The Relation Of Social Media And Agenda

Social media has gained a big popularity against traditional media in the last years and it can determine to its own agenda and form the agenda of other social groups by providing personal areas to its members. An event or idea can be turned into an important subject of social agenda by rapid distribution of social media. When information or knowledge is shared on Facebook; a tweet can be liked quickly, it is retweeted or it is added to favorites and all of these implementations can be distributed in a short time among the users.

Especially social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter etc. has started to take an important place in daily life of people anymore. After the rapid spread of smart phones in people’s daily life Twitter can form it original agenda with its “top trend lists” because Twitter has a rapid message distribution among its members. Users can speak or comment about a top trend subject with following it. If this subject is very attractive, it can be distributed quickly although it has not news value. If this subject has news value, people can read this subject in national press or even in international media. Contrary to this, news published by national press can be distributed in Twitter and this subject can form or set daily agenda of virtual environment. Sometimes news published by national press had already been talked and discussed in social media and that is why it could be dated for readers.

The most important element which makes social media an indispensable part of our people's daily life is that social networking sites are mobile networks. Whereby, users can consume the contents shared in social media also they can produce content and share in these social networking sites. So that not only implementations about entertainment but also implementations used for producing and sharing news can be used in these virtual environments. Consequently, users of social media make important contributions to news production processes.

When an event is realized, it is turned into breaking news and distributed on television, internet and radio at the same time. However, this news is reflected by written press only one day later. At this point, the attractive side of process is that whether written press explains social media in its news structure as news source or not. Although social media has a big problem about reliability of information distributed by social media, Facebook and Twitter have generally real users and that is why, reliability level of information distributed by them can be accepted as reliable. However, it should not be forgotten that fake counts are the general problem of these two main powers of social media.

Production, store and large distribution of information shared on social media are so cheap and easy; that is why, this information can not be erased quickly. Consequently, agenda set by social media can reach every part of the world easily and so many people can also make extra contributions to strengthen and legitimize this virtual agenda.

Social media can obtain simultaneous feedbacks from its users and this makes it useful in the eyes of its users. Beside this, social media implementations are open to its users and users make additional contributions to these implementations. Developments in communication technologies especially in social media implementations have turned people consuming traditional media products into content producers for social agenda in the last decade.

People using social media implementations effectively can be social media reporters by transferring not only news about their personal life but also news about social life and public opinion into social media platforms.

The subjects ignored by traditional media are reflected by social media users with using mobile devices or smart phones and this has created an alternative media on virtual environment compared with traditional media and its devices.

Rapid coordination possibility provided by social media tools and virtual organizations are suddenly seen in real life and it can be turned into demonstrations, social movements and protests. All of these social movements have resulted in important outcomes. For example, initially traditional media was silent for Gezi Events in Turkey. On the other hand, social media followed the Gezi Events from beginning to end carefully and this situation has set political and social agenda of Turkey.

Protests, demonstrations, meetings, turmoil named Arab Spring have become the most important subjects of world media because of taking place in social media. Also these events have been organized in some other countries of the world like Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Bahrain, Algeria, Jordan, Yemen and these organizations were suppressed by army forces. To sum up, power of social media on agenda of societies have been understood very well after these social movements.

## 6. Conclusion

When appearing dates of internet and social media in people's life and their developments are taken in hand, it is seen that their user numbers have been increasing regularly in a short time. This rapid increase in user numbers proves the power of these concepts for affecting society and shaping agenda of societies. Beside this, people can contact with every body in every place by using internet and social media and this situation has increased effectiveness of social media on setting the agenda of societies.

To sum up, social media is the most effective communication vehicle that provides people to share their ideas, knowledge and thoughts. It also strengthens social organizations; forms public opinions; meets needs of people such as understanding, explaining and education. Social media also changes human relations and teaches people new kinds of behaviors and attitudes.

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