

**Carroll, C. E. (Ed.). (2011). *Corporate reputation and the news media: Agenda-setting within business news coverage in developed, emerging, and frontier markets*. New York: Routledge.**

**Reviewed by: [Mary Power](#)**

Are you looking for some examples of research methods that can be applied in the fields of communication, public relations, media studies and journalism using Agenda-setting theory? Then purchase a copy of this book for your library as it is full of ideas for research methods that students at Masters and Ph.D. level could apply to local or national media or public relations campaigns. In his final chapter Carroll suggests that Mass communication textbooks imported from the US shape Mass communication theory and research in many countries, suggesting that this book creates value in providing empirical work from many more countries. One problem with the research in this book, however, is that it is early research in each national field and is based on samples too small to conduct multiple regression or other multivariate analyses p. 430.

Sandwiched between two chapters by Craig Carroll, Assistant Professor in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the first on international perspectives on agenda setting theory applied to business news, and the last on the state of agenda setting research on corporate reputation and the news media around the globe: conclusions, cautions and contingent conditions, are 24 chapters on corporate reputation and the news media in 24 countries, including neither Australia nor New Zealand. In the developed markets those countries covered are Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States. In emerging and frontier markets they are Argentina, Brazil, Chile, China, each, Russia, South Korea, Turkey, Nigeria, Slovenia, and the United Arab Emirates.

Countries vary in a surprising number of ways, from availability of different media, amount of government control of media, cultural attitudes towards positivity (did you know that Germans are rather critical toward corporations and reticent about giving positive appraisals, following to (sic) the German adage that 'not grumping is sufficiently praising' (p.434)), and diversity (the French news provides a wider diversity of viewpoints than what is found in the United States (p.435)).

Carroll sees this project as being most closely related to journalism and public relations, but including input from people who work in organisational communication, management, marketing, economics, sociology, political science, and business journalism.

Carroll defines corporate reputation as having three dimensions including the firm's public prominence, its public esteem, and three qualities or attributes for which a firm is known. Corporate reputation has several advantages ranging from attracting and retaining talent to attracting investors and gaining access to new markets along with more favourable news coverage.

Agenda setting theory is used to investigate the effects of the news media on corporate reputation. Data for the developed markets section was obtained through the methods of media analysis and a poll of from 1 to 13 newspapers over a period from six months to 2 years in relation to from 25 to 63 firms. Agenda setting research was applied to business news in emerging and frontier markets through means of literature reviews, focus groups, personal interviews and case studies as well as a telephone survey. The media examined in this section were fewer than the other section with most studies analysing or one, two or three newspapers and only in Turkey were 18 national newspapers analysed.

As Kjaer and Morsing note in discussing agenda setting theory in Denmark, research on the news media has traditionally been preoccupied with political news, and media researchers have largely disregarded business and economic news, as well as media outlets that specialised in business journalism (p. 19), which perhaps sums up the benefits of this work in gathering together data on the effect of the news media on corporate reputation across the globe. In Denmark, Kjaer and Morsing found a positive relation between media coverage and corporate reputations, but weren't sure whether corporate communication activities drove the news media or the news media drove reputations.

In Finland corporate reputation was seen to involve various stakeholder reputations, not all of them manageable through the media (p. 56).

Davidson and Chazaud lament the similarity between business newspapers and mainstream newspapers in institutional terms in France (p. 73).

For those interested in agenda setting research on social, political and economic issues, Einwiller, Bentele and Landmeier provide coverage on recent German research in the area as well as media effects on both positive

and negative corporate reputations. They end their chapter with seven detailed questions to guide further research in the area.

In Greece, findings were different in that extensive media visibility does not necessarily lead to a better corporate reputation and the worst company reputation is positively correlated to media coverage (p. 103). Goutzamani, Zyglidopoulos, and Bantimaroudis consider that cultural factors might intervene in the transfer of salience from the media to the public in political communication.

In Italy public awareness appeared to be more related to advertising expenditures than news media coverage, and in Japan findings show that advertising was more influential than news reports (p. 139). Norwegians Ihlen and Bronn saw their research into the influence of news media on corporate reputation as being rather inconclusive (p. 165). In Spain, however, there was a high correlation between the level of media visibility and the corporate reputation index of the main Spanish companies (p. 185).

Probably no one would be surprised to find that the most trusted companies in Sweden are IKEA, Volvo, Ericsson and Saab. Fredriksson and Grafstrom seem to say that trust is hard to earn, but easy to lose as evidenced by the effect of scandals on reputation and loss of trust, and that not much work has been done on the relationship between the media and corporate reputation. In a media culture that enviably combines libertarian ideology and the ideology of social responsibility (p. 197), and in a country where research shows that there is very little likelihood that news sources would be able to bribe Swedish journalists in order to publish or not publish information (p. 197) and where 81% of the population read a newspaper on an average day (p. 198) I wondered what the fact that Sweden has one of the largest concentrations of public relations practitioners per capita (p. 199) means. One of the benefits of this book is that it gives you an inside look at areas you know something about, in cultures you may not know much about.

In Switzerland early significant correlation was found between the salience of a company in the media and the Swiss populations awareness of it. Eisenegger, Schranz and Schneider found that increases or decreases in media coverage explain changes in corporate reputation better than media reputation, and that in Switzerland high media salience is associated with increased reputation risk. It somewhat reassuring to see that the Swiss medias identification of the large Swiss banks as instigators of the financial crisis in 2008 to 2009 affected their corporate reputation in a negative direction. Is that punishment enough?

Craig Carroll's own chapter on the United States offers a tentative suggestion that perhaps public relations professionals should concentrate on influencing organisational behaviours and performance that directly affects publics with a relationship with the firm, and pay less attention to influencing media coverage of the firm that affects only those who paid little attention to it (p. 234). Carrolls study also breaks down corporate reputation into multiple dimensions.

In Argentina, religion has reputation and large multi-national companies dont. Lennon and Pena show that the Catholic Church, the president, ministers of the national administration, and the mass media have higher credibility and are perceived as having high power. Large multi-national companies have the lowest credibility, but a high power perception, along with large national companies who have a medium credibility but high power. Interestingly the police and unions have medium power and the Armed Forces have low power. The authors see the media through its positive valuations of small and medium companies as not neutral and as involved in a profound crisis in values in Argentina.

In Brazil positive media coverage has a strong influence on a companys reputation while at other times the same media have a negative influence when crises threaten a company's reputation (p. 275). Similarly in Chile, the power of the news media is at its height in situations where an industry disaster or in ethical lapse by company has occurred (p. 291).

Deng questions whether in the one party state of China the media will take on the roles of songbirds celebrating corporate success, or whether they will become the croaking crows who disclose the dark side of corporate activities (p. 312). So far some crows have become songbirds. Public relations firms are increasingly powerful in creating corporate reputation and image. This chapter shows the way into some fascinating research areas as China grows ever stronger.

Kennans chapter recognises that as Egypts private economy develops it will be possible to build from the propositions and research models of Carroll and McCombs (2003) to investigate corporate reputations, and the news media. Similarly with, regard to Russia, Koikkalainen suggests that further research about the relationship between media coverage and corporate reputation is needed.

Cha and Yang found a close relationship in South Korea between the amount of media coverage and the public's awareness of the five companies studied (p. 352). They also mention agenda setting effects in the area of the new media such as the Internet, on-line newspapers and websites campaigns (p. 342).

Gorpe and Yuksels chapter on Turkey focuses on public relations, and in particular the replacement of the term public relations by the term reputation management in certain situations. They also provide lists of graduate research in the area, and lists showing media ownership. They use a case study methodology to examine the area.

In Nigeria, which has the largest population of any African nation at over 153 million, Amujo, Otubanjo, Laninhun and Adejo provide information on the penetration of media and describe their study based on content analysis and semi-structured interviews. Like many of the studies in this book they found a close positive relationship between the amount of news coverage of a corporation and the public's awareness of the corporation. Similarities in the nature of reputation practices were noted between the United States and Nigeria along with the affiliation of some Nigerian reputation management firms with US public relations firms.

Podnar and Vercic describe their study as being a preliminary empirical link between agenda setting and reputation in the public relations area in Slovenia. Similarly Walters found research in the area in the United Arab Emirates to be under-developed. He found that fewer than 16% of national respondents reported using the Internet on a daily basis. An important factor in reputational management is the UAE governments input into what is read and seen or heard on the media. Walters concludes that the UAE remains a separate society in which people maintain their particular cultural identity and where newsworthiness is directly related to that cultural identity (p. 415).

Carroll's final chapter draws conclusions from the broad spectrum of the earlier 25 national studies and maps the pathways it opens for new and fruitful scholarship. If you are searching for research ideas this final chapter might be the one to read first rather than last as I did. However, if you do that you may be influenced by Carroll's view of the importance of some issues rather than forming your own ideas based on your experience of a culture that differs from that of the United States of America where the theory of Agenda-setting developed.

**About the reviewer:** *Mary R Power is Professor of Communication and Media, Bond University, Australia. Dr Powers work focuses on the human interaction and cultural aspects of communication, especially where these intersect with the fields of law and social psychology such as in negotiation, mediation and conflict resolution. Her current work is in the area of the social uses of communication technologies, conflict situations in the workplace, conflict styles in relationships, and crisis communication.*