ISSUE SALIENCE AND AGENDA-SETTING

IN 2010 SLOVAK ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN

By

Juraj Čokyna

Submitted to

Central European University

Department of Political Science

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Supervisor: Professor Gábor Tóka

Budapest, Hungary

(2016)

With the overall decline of cleavage-based politics, one of the alternative explanations of voting behaviour is connected to issue salience. Issues that are debated in the public sphere can have some electoral consequences; and while research in the agenda-setting field suggests it is the media who set the agenda among the public, there are also other theories which suggest that public issue concern reflect the agenda of political parties. The aim of this thesis is to test these propositions on the 2010 Slovak electoral campaign. There are two levels of analysis. First, the link between public, media and parties' agenda is examined on the aggregate level; next some individual specific variables apart from the media and parties' content are tested, in order to see if they can help to explain variation in the public issue concern. Although there is some evidence that on the aggregate level, citizens are more likely to resemble the media agenda (i.e. most salient issues in the media), results of multinomial logistic regression suggest individual-level variation in issue concern cannot be explained by the need for orientation, education and issue sensitivity.

Table of contents

1. Introduction

In each and every democratic election, there is a certain set of issues being debated in the public sphere. The central research question of this thesis is how and by whom these issues are established. In the field of communication research, this question is for a long time connected with a concept of agenda-setting (e.g. McCombs and Shaw 1972) and agenda-building (e.g. Brandenburg 2002). For example, various scholars found a link between the media agenda and issues that citizens are concerned of. That means issues salient in the media become also salient among the public. On the other hand, as proposed in the agenda-building research, media may have the agenda-setting power, but the issues that are debated in the media are actually proposed by political parties.

To put it more clearly, the question of issue salience is connected to the way democratic representation operates. According to the economic theory of representative democracy, political parties are responsive to voters' concerns, because by doing so they can maximize their vote shares (Kleinnijenhuis and Rietberg 1995, 95). If this is true, parties' and the public agenda should resemble each other. However, there are also media, which do not always have to play an independent role. For example, they can serve as gatekeepers; they can amplify some issues while filtering other and by doing so, they are manipulating the dimension of political competition.

Hence, the aim of this thesis is to find out how is a public opinion created, given that there are at least two main sources of contextual information available to the citizens – the media and the political parties. First I want to examine aggregate results; i.e. what issues were salient in the media, among given political parties and in the public. Can we trace some agenda-setting

power? If so, who set the agenda(s)? Second, I want to find out if there are some individual traits that could trigger different reactions to the agenda-setting. Given that the informational context - issues presented to the public – is the same for every citizen, there can be some variables that can have an interfering role. Therefore, there are two levels of analysis, aggregate as well as individual one.

The outline of the thesis is following: in the first chapter, I review the literature connected to issue voting, issue salience and agenda-setting effects in order to build reasonable hypotheses. In the second chapter, I explain the case selection, data and methods used to test the hypotheses. In the third chapter the results for both the aggregate as well as individual-level analysis are provided. Finally, I summarise these results in the conclusion.

2. Theoretical section

2.1 Literature review

In this section, I will try to explain why we should care about issues that are present in the public agenda and how does it relate to the concept of issue salience. This will be connected with the review of agenda-setting research, in order to propose sensible research questions and hypotheses.

2.1.1 Issue voting

2.1.1.1 Why issues?

Alternative explanations of voting behaviour became more salient with the overall decline of cleavage-based politics. Well until the end of 1960's, social group belonging used to be a strong predictor of voting choice. These social groups stemmed from four different types of cleavages, class, religion, urban/rural and centre/periphery (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). As noted by Dalton (1996, 320), "differences between competing social groups provided the potential basis for political conflict, furnishing both a possible base of voting support and a set of political interests that parties vied to represent." According to Dalton, social cleavages consist of two different elements, ideological divisions that run along these cleavages and institutional setting that help to formalize and maintain them. Empirical studies used to confirm cleavage-based voting, especially when connected to class and religion (Dalton 1996, 321).

However, the frozen cleavage hypothesis formulated by Lipset and Rokkan (1967) was soon to be replaced by the theory of dealignment (see e.g. Inglehart and Hochstein 1972), i.e. the

process of a steady decline in the old partisanship lines which was directly connected with an increase of electoral volatility. There is good empirical evidence that cleavage-based voting – class or religious – has declined significantly in the post-war era Western democracies. For example, Alford class-voting index[1] has decreased over that time by half to two-thirds in the Western democracies (Dalton 1996, 323). Similarly, religion-based voting is in decline as well; although there is some evidence that religion is still a strong predictor of voting behaviour, the number of people being strongly connected with the church is shrinking because of continuing secularization of democratic societies (Dalton 1996, 328). Thus, just as there once used to be the evidence of strong relationship between the social characteristics and electoral choice, there was now other evidence that went quite in the opposite direction. The only exception consists of race and ethnicity which Dalton claims to have "the potential to be a highly polarize cleavage, because it may involve sharp social differences and strong feelings of in-group identity" (1996, 329).

In the era of weakened sociological effects on voting behaviour, there are several alternative explanations of electoral decisions. Performance-based or candidate-oriented voting explanations were already outlined in the previous chapter. The third possible explanation includes issue considerations. Dalton (1996, 335) suggests that "[t]he decline in long-term forces shaping the vote also has increased the potential for issue voting." Other scholars like Franklin (1992) claims that issue voting could counterbalance the decline in cleavage politics.

Cleavage-based voting in the Central and East European (CEE) countries was contested from the very transition to democracy. Some scholars (e.g. Kitschelt 1992) argue there was no base around which the cleavages could arise in the first place – this is due to the fact that societies

---

[1] Index is measured by the percentage of the working class prefering a leftist party minus the percentage of the middle class voting for the leftist parties (e.g. Dalton 1996, 323)

and real political parties were practically non-existent in these countries. However, when Whitefield and Rohrschneider (2009) examined the data from expert surveys (13 countries, two time points), they found very stable political divisions among the parties. This was especially true when it comes to party stances and party competition on several issues (mostly about economic distribution and attitudes to nationalism). However, parties often emphasised different issues at a different time. To put it simply, "parties will change position reluctantly but will respond to changing competitive circumstances by shifting issue emphases" (Whitefield and Rohrschneider 2009, 684). This creates a certain space for issue voting, which is closely connected to the issue salience. I will deal with the concept of issue salience in more detail later.

Estimating the effects of issue voting is not an easy task. Dalton (1996, 336) says there are at least two problems connected; what and how many issues are being considered. Thus, in the next lines, I will look at some of the models of voting behaviour that consider issues as potential explanatory variable of electoral decision.

2.1.1.2 Positional or image differences?

To begin with, there is a broad theoretical debate of how to think about the issues and their potential effects on voting behaviour. This debate is still well under way with no clear results (e.g. RePass 1971, Whiteley et al. 2005). Is it the conflict over policies that drive the electoral competition? And if so, do parties compete by proposing different solutions on a given issue or do each of them stress some issues while ignoring other?

To put it differently, do parties benefit more from the fight between each other on a given issue, such as tax policy, welfare or energy policies? If so, they should be able to differ in positions; for example, we should see leftist parties promoting higher taxes, sustainable environment and inclusive social benefits, while the right-wing parties opposing these stances

9

by promoting lower taxes, discrediting the need for enviro-friendly policies and cutting social benefits. On the other hand, parties do not need to compete with each other; each of them can in fact promote different issues that they – as well as voters –feel are strong in. Thus, there will be no fight between right and left-wing parties over taxation, social or energy policy; rather, each of them will stress different set of issues, e.g. right-wing parties being strong in debt reducing measures, while left-wing parties being recognized for being generally well-equipped with tacking the issues of poverty or social differences.

This is the distinction that lies behind the idea of positional and valence models of issue voting. Positional models build on the Downs' idea that in elections, voters choose the party that is closest to their positions on a left-right scale (Downs 1957). On the other hand, valence model rises around different set of ideas. As proposed by Stokes (1966, 21), valence issues are those in which "the parties or candidates are linked with something which is uniformly approved or disapproved". For example, while the US Democrats were generally considered to be the party of a "common man" and connected with "good times", especially because of the New Deal policies, Republicans were viewed similarly on the issues connected with foreign policy, such as images of peace and war (Stokes 1966, 20-21). To be more specific, valence issues are those that connect parties with some condition: "The key point is that party competition and public issue concerns typically are not about the ends of government action. Rather, they involve competing claims about which party has the means – who is the best able to deliver what (virtually) everybody wants… [it is] the ability of governments to produce in those policy areas that matter most to people." (Whiteley et al. 2005, 4)

However, it seems that there is some connection between valence and positional issues. First of all, Whitley et al. suggest that positional issues are directly dependent on degree of polarization on a given issue. Spatial models assume that parties compete along uni-

dimensional policy space; however, the median voter theorem derived from spatial models also presumes that most voters are located at the centre of this policy continuum. As a consequence, parties try to locate themselves at the centre as well. On the other hand, this would mean that there are virtually no or very small distances between parties. As the positional model suggests that voters choose the party that is closest to them, this is no longer possible and positional issues have in fact turned into valence ones (Whiteley et al. 2005, 5). But the opposite can be true as well. While commenting the 1964 US presidential race, Stokes suggests that "one of the peculiar qualities of the Goldwater candidacy is that it converted into position issues a number of image issues on which a broad consensus had hitherto existed between parties… [There was a] final collapse of the belief that the party under Goldwater was more likely to bring peace than were the Democrats under Johnson." (Stokes 1966, 21)

There is yet another important difference when talking about different type of issues. This difference regards performance considerations. According to Whiteley et al. (2005, 6), valence issues are more about retrospective evaluations of party's performance, while positional issues are more about prospective considerations. What is more important is the distinction Whiteley et al. provide to differentiate between government and oppositional parties. Government parties, they claim, are always assessed on performance, "since voters can judge [them] on [their] record" (Whiteley et al. 2005, 7), i.e. how well did these parties do while in government. Opposition parties, on the other hand, are more prone to spatial consideration, especially if there is no or long forgotten record of their governance.

2.1.2 Issue Salience

The question of extent and frequency with which a given issue enters voters' considerations and electoral campaign is called issue salience. Issue salience is sometimes connected with models of issue ownership which can be seen as a specific subset of valence model as it

presumes that "parties concentrate on promoting a subset of valence issues that they own, […] and they ignore other issues, particularly those 'owned' by their rivals" (Whiteley et al. 2005, 4). I will first deal with the issue of ownership and then come back to the role of issue salience.

The idea behind issue-ownership model is quite simple. Different parties are connected with different issues and by stressing the issues generally connected with one party while ignoring other issues can bring the party an electoral advantage (e.g. Petrocik 1996). It is also usually presumed that if party owns an issue, than it is also seen to be competent in a given field connected with issue (Bélanger and Meguid 2005, 1). This assumption does not need to be entirely true and I will discuss it later; for the time being I will consider it to be true. According to Bélanger and Meguid (2005), there are two components of issue-ownership theory. First component is connected with parties and electoral issues. It is assumed that parties will focus on the issues that they own and there is broad empirical evidence that this is really happening. Second component is connected with individual voters' decision. According to issue-ownership theory, they make two decisions; first, which issue is being considered and second, who owns this issue, as the latter signals competence in dealing with the issue (Bélanger and Meguid 2005, 3).

In their study of Canadian parliamentary elections, Bélanger and Meguid (2005) tested the second component of issue-ownership model connected with individual-level voting behaviour. They claim that due to the fact virtually all previous studies dealt with the theory's first component (aggregate-level analysis), one factor was largely omitted. Issue salience, i.e. the extent to which a voter cares about a given issue, is a mediating variable between issue-ownership and voting behaviour. To put it differently, voter's decision will be affected by a party issue-ownership only if the voter perceive this issue as important to

himself. Thus, "individual vote choice is conditional upon perceived salience of the issue." (Bélanger and Meguid 2005, 6)

I already noted that early issue-ownership studies automatically connected party which owns an issue with notion of that party being competent in a given issue field. This assumption is contested by Lachat (2012) who differentiates between associational and competence ownership. This is in fact strongly related to the work elaborated by Bélanger and Meguid (2005); on an individual-level, it is reasonable to expect that parties will benefit from issue-ownership only when the issue is of importance to them. Thus, Lachat claims that this can be attributed to a positional agreement between voters and party owning an issue. Again, idea behind such claim is simple. The simple fact that a party is salient on some issue does not necessarily means that all voters considered it to be competent too: "From the point of view of the voters, a party most strongly associated with a given issue is not necessarily the party deemed most competent to handle that political issue." (Lachat 2012, 1)

Issue-ownership models have been so far treated as a subset of valence models. However, when different parties hold different positions, mere association with an issue becomes insufficient. It is the division between association and competence that allows to apply ownership model to positional issues. If voters "disagree with the party's aims on their central issue, they certainly will not consider party to be most competent or to have the best solutions" (Lachat 2012, 3). Hence, Lachat suggests that only the competence ownership will have a direct impact on the probability of voting for such party. Associative ownership provides no such direct effect (Lachat 2012, 4).

13

2.1.3 Agenda-setting

2.1.3.1 Who set the agenda?

The main question of this thesis is connected to the sources of issue salience. This is mainly because, as noted by Brandenburg (2002, 35), "if salience determines vote choice, then to manipulate salience means to manipulate voting". He also claims that "although choice theories of voting (spatial or non-spatial) conceptualize the effects of salience differently, the common denominator is that altering the balance of electoral agendas will invariably impact on the vote shares of parties and can under specific circumstances decide an election" (2002, 37). So who, how and when set an agenda (or agendas) that is being discussed in the public sphere? Is it the media? Is it the political parties competing to set their own issues? Or is it the public with its own set of issues they consider important and relevant?

Theories from communication studies as well as from political science provide several alternative explanations. The very first studies of agenda-setting stressed the central role of the media when explaining the sources of issue salience. According to a famous statement made by Cohen (1963, 13), press "may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about". In their seminal work regarding the agenda-setting function of mass media in the US, McCombs and Shaw (1972) found there were strong correlations between the campaign topics as displayed by the media and the most important topics according to public (1972, 181). Since then, dozens of studies acknowledged that issues promoted by the media were reflected among the public (McCombs 2002, 3).

However, the view of powerful media which set the agenda for the rest of society (public and parties) is a contested one, on several grounds. First of all, several studies questioned if strong correlations between the media content and public issue awareness really mean causation (e.g.

Dalton et al. 1998, Brandenburg 2002). What is important here is the question if the final societal agenda-setting isn't more of a function of interplay between several actors – parties, media and public. For example, Brandenburg found evidence that the driving forces behind the overall agenda dynamics during the 1997 British parliamentary election campaign were political parties, not the media themselves. This is because prior to the process of agenda-setting (media influencing issue salience which is reflected in the public), there is another process Brandenburg calls agenda-building (related to the issues with which parties supply the media, especially during electoral campaigns).

Dalton et al. (1998) talks about two rival models of sources of issue salience. Under the media-centred model, media are supposed to have "an independent causal role in determining the public's interests […and] are seen as autonomous actors who set the agenda of both the public and political elites", regardless of the campaign events (1998, 464-465). But the agenda-setting can also look more as a "transaction process" where "the actual agenda of the campaign results from the interaction of social actors; each actor is constrained by the others and by the flow of actual political events" (1998, 465). The main difference between the media-centred and the transaction process models comes with the degree of media control. In the latter model, the media are unable to set the agenda independently from other actors and it is reasonable to "expect a general consensus in various aspects of campaign coverage and relatively little evidence that the media are independently creating the campaign agenda" (1998. 466).

Similar approach can be seen in the work of Kleinnijenhuis and Rietberg (1995). According to authors, there are four sources of societal agenda-setting (political, media, public agenda and real-world cues) which can result in three models of agenda-setting:

15

1.) Bottom-up model: the public agenda is reflected in the media as well as political agenda and the media agenda serves as a proxy for public agenda through which parties know what issues are salient. The public agenda is influenced only by the real world cues.

2.) Top-down model: the public agenda is influenced by the media, which is influenced by the political elites. Neither public nor the media have any agenda independent of the political one.

3.) Mediacracy model: the public agenda is set by the media who also influence political elites. In this case, media agenda is independent of other agendas.

2.1.3.2 Who is more susceptible to agenda-setting?

The process of agenda-setting – transfusion of issue salience from the media to the public – can also be contested from other grounds. We know that the society consists of people with a different background and capabilities. So why should we think that everyone will be impacted in the same way? People differ in terms of education, income, ethnicity, political interest and affiliation, so it should reasonable to say that they will also differ in terms of agenda-setting effects. The aggregate-level analysis – to compare distribution of issue salience among public as such – "ignores the obvious fact that issue concerns can and do arise from sources other than media exposure – notably from personal experiences, group perspectives, and real-world conditions" (Erbing et al. 1980, 18).

For the purpose of this thesis, I will adopt three possible explanations from the work of Zhu and Boroson (1997). In their study of agenda-setting on the individual-level, they came up with three theoretical models to explain variation of audience susceptibility to media messages: cognitive sophistication, issue sensitivity and issue obtrusiveness. Cognitive sophistication is connected with varying levels of attention and education (MacKuen 1981).

Issue sensitivity refers to audience's predisposition to media issue coverage (Erbing et al. 1980) and to some extent also to our need for orientation (McCombs and Weaver 1973, Weaver 1980, McCombs and Stroud 2014). On the other hand, issue obtrusiveness is more connected to issue characteristics, not individual differences as such (Zhu and Boroson 1997, 72); it simply divides issues according to whether one has to rely on the media for information about some issues or whether it can be learned from one's own experience. In the next section, I will briefly explain these theoretical explanations more closely, as they provide ground for modelling my hypotheses.

Cognitive sophistication

One of the most important questions while dealing with contingency factors that influence the level of agenda-setting among individuals is attention towards incoming information and cognitive ability to process this information (Zhu and Boroson 1997, 70). This is based on MacKuen's work (1981) where he came up with two possible explanations why some audience members are more susceptible to the process of agenda-setting than others.

There is an "attentiveness model" according to which we should expect that people with higher interest in politics (attentiveness) and higher educational level (cognitive ability) will be more inclined to media agenda-setting. This is because "the better educated members of the audience are more attentive to public affairs [and] it is reasonable to expect them to be more responsive to media agenda-setting effects than the less educated" (Zhu and Boroson 1997, 71).

On the other hand, according to a "cognitive framework theory" one should expect precisely the opposite – that higher political interest and education will lead to less media agenda-

setting, because this audience "have developed a more effective self-defence mechanism against external influence and thus are less subject to agenda setting" (1997, 70).

Need for orientation

There is another widely accepted variable which has a potential to explain variations of agenda-setting among individuals. It is called need for orientation (McCombs and Weaver 1973) and it "describes individual differences among people in their desire to understand a new environment or situation by turning to the media" (Camaj and Weaver 2013, 1444). In fact, concept of need for orientation was present even in the McComb's and Shaw's seminal paper, because their analysis of agenda-setting among Chapel Hill voters was in fact based only on the undecided voters. "[These voters are] presumably those more open or susceptible to campaign information" (1972, 178).

The idea behind this concept is based on the following logic. People differ in terms of interest towards something and when they are interested but at the same time they feel uncertain about this object of their interest, they will want to 'fill the information gap'. It is the media that often provides this opportunity.   Hence, "need for orientation leads to media use, which in turn leads to agenda-setting. As an individual strives to map the political issues through the use of the mass media, he is susceptible (at least in some situations) to the agenda-setting effects of the mass media" (McCombs and Weaver 1973, 3).

In fact, the need for orientation is composed by two different variables, relevance and uncertainty. In order to have a higher need for orientation, one must first sense that an issue at stake is relevant for him/her. If an individual has no interest, need for orientation is low and so should be the level of agenda-setting. However, when a person feels something is relevant, than the level of need for orientation is a function of uncertainty about the given issue - if

18

he/she is pretty certain about this issue, need for orientation is moderate; if not, need for orientation is high. And when the need for orientation is high, it is expected that one should expose himself to the media and therefore agenda-setting can take place (Weaver 1980, 365).

Table 1: Levels of Need for orientation according to Weaver (1980)

		Uncertainty	
		Low	*High*
Relevance	*Low*	Low NFO	Moderate NFO
	High	Moderate NFO	High NFO

Thus, need for orientation is a composite measure of relevance and uncertainty, which are usually operationalized through the level of political interest and political party identification (McCombs and Weaver 1973, Weaver 1980) and is considered to be "the most widely accepted psychological explanation for the agenda-setting effects" (Camaj and Weaver 2013, 1446). However, Camaj (2012) suggested we should not prioritize level of relevance over level of uncertainty. By doing so, she was able to divide the Moderate NFO groups into more meaningful categories – interested partisans (high relevance, low uncertainty) and uninterested independents (low relevance, high uncertainty; McCombs and Stroud 2014, 83).

In the previous studies of need for orientation, it was expected that interested partisans should display lower levels of agenda-setting (compared to High NFO group). "But in the contemporary media environment, where partisan media options are available, it is less clear that Partisans will display weaker agenda-setting effects. Partisans may use more news media

thus increasing aggregate agenda-setting effects relative to Independents" (Camaj 2012 in McCombs and Stroud 2014, 82). That means that we should see similar levels of agenda-setting among interested partisans and High NFO groups; however, they will differ in terms of agenda-setting origins. The first group should turn to partisan media, while the latter to mainstream media (McCombs and Stroud 2014, 83).

Table 2: Levels of Need for orientation according to Camaj (2012)

		Uncertainty	
		Low	*High*
Relevance	*Low*	Low NFO	Moderate–Passive NFO
	High	Moderate-Active NFO	High NFO

Issue sensitivity

Erbing, Goldenberg and Miller criticized previous agenda-setting studies on two grounds. First, they contested a "mirror-image" model used by early scholars of agenda-setting, i.e. focusing on the degree of correspondence of aggregate measures of media and public agenda. Second, the authors claimed it is necessary to look for another sources of public's issue salience, since it does not arise only from the issues set by media, but also from "personal experiences, group perspectives and real-world experiences" (1980, 17-19).

However, they claimed it is not enough to incorporate these additional factors. The proper analysis of agenda-setting effects should be based at the individual-level that will also look at

the individual predisposition toward a particular issue. Issue sensitivity is the central concept their study introduced. "Not only do the audience's issue-specific characteristics influence issue salience in their own right, but they also sensitize or desensitize the individual to media coverage of a particular issue" (1980, 20).

As noted by Zhu and Boroson, the concept of issue sensitivity (at least to some extent) resembles the issue relevance, one of the main indicators of need for orientation (1997, 71). However, the role of issue sensitivity is a bit different. According to Erbing et al., it is reasonable to expect that once a person is sensitive to a given issue, he/she will be susceptible to agenda-setting prior to another person who is less sensitive to the issue. For example, individuals with unsecure jobs, "as they pick up messages of impending employment trouble, […] may be expected to refocus their concerns more promptly than others whose jobs are secure". Thus, "differences in issue coverage by the newspapers will be significant primarily for people who are sensitive to the particular issue." (1980, 28-29)

Issue obtrusiveness

The last set of explanation in agenda-setting effects focus on the issue characteristics, which may interact with individual predispositions. Zucker (1978) divided issues into two categories – obtrusive and unobtrusive. Obtrusive issues are those with which the public has a direct experience (e.g. inflation, unemployment or economy); unobtrusive issues are the opposite (e.g. foreign affairs, welfare or environment).

What is important, several studies found strong relationship between unobtrusive issues and media agenda-setting (Zhu and Boroson 1997, 72). This is explained by the fact that when dealing with unobtrusive issues, one has to rely on the media because information about these issues is not at hand through more informal channels. Thus, the media should play much more

important role with unobtrusive issues, while it should have lesser impact in case of obtrusive issues.

2.2 Research questions and hypotheses

Building on the literature review, I propose two sets of research questions and subsequent hypotheses.

RQ1: Who has a stronger relationship with the public agenda?

Hypotheses related to this research question will be tested on the aggregate level. Based on the previous research of agenda-setting, I propose following hypotheses.

H1: On the aggregate level, distribution of issue salience among public will more likely resemble the media agenda than the party agenda.

H1a: On the aggregate level, distribution of issue salience among public will more likely resemble the media agenda, especially for an audience with high need for orientation.

H1b: On the aggregate level, distribution of issue salience among public will more likely resemble the party agenda, especially for an audience with moderate-active need for orientation.

H2: On the aggregate level, the issue salience among the high need for orientation group will correlate with the media agenda more strongly than among the moderate-active and moderate-passive need for orientation group; issue salience among the moderate need for orientation groups will correlate with the media agenda more strongly than among the low need for orientation group.

22

The second set of hypotheses will be tested on the individual level, as it may be possible to explain the issue concern by several individual specific variables.

RQ2: Why did an individual pick issue X over other issues as the most important?

H3: The higher the level of education and need for orientation the individual has, the higher the probability he/she will pick an issue which is at the top of the media agenda (as opposed to the party agenda).

H3a: This probability will be influenced by issue obtrusiveness and issue sensitivity; if the issue is obtrusive as well as sensitive to the individual, the probability he/she will choose an issue regardless of relative position of that issue on the media agenda should arise.

3. Methodological part

3.1 Case selection

Hypotheses stated at the end of the previous section will be tested on the case of Slovak 2010 electoral campaign. To my knowledge, no such analysis was ever done for the Slovak data. Thus, this is the main reason why I find this topic worth investigating. In the next two subsections, I provide some context to the electoral campaign I will investigate.

3.1.1 Electoral context

During the 4-year electoral term (2006-2010), Slovakia was governed under the politically stable coalition government which consisted from three parties - Smer-SD, SNS and HZDS. Under the premiership of Robert Fico (Smer-SD), governing coalition maintained comfortable parliamentary majority of 85 seats (out of 150). During the whole term, Smer-SD was a dominant party and also the only one among all parliamentary parties that strengthen its support among voters.

When assessing the government's performance, there are several things worth mentioning. First, when the Fico's government came to power in 2006, Slovak economy was in a very good shape. This was mainly a result of several structural reforms conducted by previous right-wing governments of Mikuláš Dzurinda (SDKÚ-DS) during the years 1998-2006. Unemployment was decreasing as the FDI was increasing; GDP growth was the highest among EU countries and even though the government budget was never a surplus one, Slovakia was able to follow the Maastricht criteria, which resulted in joining the Eurozone in 2009. However, things had changed since 2008, partially in relation with the arrival of global

economy crisis. As the Slovak economy was very export-oriented, this resulted in the rise of unemployment, government debt and deficit, as well as in the decrease of GDP growth.

This development was also closely related to the second performance component, social policy. After 8 years of economic reforms and partial austerity measures during the right-wing governments, 2006 elections' results were generally expected to result in a significant policy turnout. In particular, it was Smer-SD who had always criticized the lack of social policy considerations during the right-wing governments. Before 2006 elections, the party promised to abolish most of the previous reforms which included flat-tax, cuts in social spending, mandatory private pension insurance or minor healthcare payments. As it turned out, however most of these claims were just populist appeals. Moreover, after the economy crisis breakdown, the Fico's government was not capable of meaningfully managing the country's economy; this was manifested mainly in the increasing budget deficits and government debt, which proved to be an important issue especially with regard to problems in the Eurozone and PIIGS countries. Thus, the left-wing government was being gradually marked as economically incompetent.

Thirdly, the Fico's government was also stigmatized for its blatant corruption. Several well documented cases proved that the left-wing government was unable to tackle the nepotism, misuse of public procurements and worsening state of judicial system. Corruption cases occurred in relation with all of the government parties, although Smer-SD tried to blame its smaller coalition partners, media and opposition.

Finally, Fico's government performance can be described in the terms of conflict and enemy-seeking. First of all – and to a large extent regarding the presence of nationalist SNS – relations with Hungary and Hungarian minority in Slovakia hit the new low. This was

connected with the populistic version of nationalism manifested in excluding the national minorities and disregarding the citizenship-based ties to the state. Secondly, the government – and especially the prime minister – was in a permanent and aggressive conflict with most of the Slovak media; he had repeatedly labelled them as the enemies of the state and named them as "prostitutes", "snakes" and "idiots". Thirdly, the government was also in a permanent conflict with the parliamentary opposition. Named as "the-winner-takes-it-all" strategy, government parties had repeatedly diminished the role of opposition and refused to cooperate even on the procedural level.

3.1.2 Slovak electoral campaign in 2010

It is likely that the aforementioned general government performance did influence the way voters had thought about their electoral decision. What is important, virtually all of the four performance components were to some extent present in electoral campaign before 2010 elections. First of all, opposition parties, mainly SDKÚ-DS and newly formed SaS, tried to present an alternative to economic performance of Fico's government. This was connected with their promise to reform the social contribution system and reducing the budget deficit, mainly in relation with problems in Greece. In short, some of the opposition parties tried to provide a picture of meaningful alternative to the incumbent government's economic failures. This was strengthened by the fact that voters could have connected these promises with retrospective performance of right-wing parties before 2006.

Secondly, future alternatives of government coalitions were hotly debated. Initially, some of the opposition parties were reluctant to exclude the incumbent parties from coalition considerations. However, during the last month before parliamentary elections, all four opposition parties with the biggest chance to gain parliamentary seats promised to form a

right-wing government if possible – thus reducing coalition potential if the biggest party, Smer-SD.

Thirdly, relations with Hungary were very salient during the campaign. It was because of the steps of recently-elected FIDESZ which passed the law of double citizenship for Hungarian minorities in the neighbouring countries. This could have helped both sides – voters tired of continuing nationalistic rhetoric could have vote for the opposition parties while voters concerned with Hungarian politics could have vote for the incumbents.

Issues connected with corruption were also present during the campaign. In February 2010, leader of SDKÚ-DS Mikuláš Dzurinda decided not to run in the elections because of the illegal party financing allegations raised by PM Robert Fico. However, during the last month before elections, Fico was accused of exactly the same thing and although he denied, it was vastly debated in the media and among opposition parties. However, the extent to which the corruption allegation affected the electoral decision is unclear; I would expect that to a large extent, it could only discourage voters from participating as they could have thought there are no real differences among parties. On the other hand, this could have yielded an advantage to new parties.

Finally, there were massive floods all over the country during the campaign. Again, the impact is far from clear. However, as the floods had continued, a large extent of media attention aimed their coverage on it. Moreover, one thing could have disadvantaged Smer-SD, as it was debated that PM had misused his contingency fund and that he had no money left to help the people in need.

3.2 Data

There are two main sources of the data. First, I will use a post-electoral survey conducted shortly after 2010's elections, less than two weeks after the election as part of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES). Altogether 1203 respondents were asked several questions regarding voting behaviour, attitudes toward parties and candidates, electoral campaign and voters' values. Unfortunately, this survey was the first and so far also the last of its kind in Slovakia; thus, it is not possible to make this study longitudinal. Thus, CSES serves more as a snapshot in time.

The second source of data consists of the media content, parties' statements and their electoral manifestos. In order to get more aggregate and contextual information that was at voters' disposal through the campaign, I conducted several text analyses; steps taken will be described in the next chapter. As already noted, the actual content was derived from three different sources. As for the media, I have analysed two Slovak newspapers and one television; one of the newspaper is the most read Slovak broadsheet (Daily SME), second is the most read Slovak tabloid (Nový Čas). The television I analysed (TV Markíza) is owned by a multinational corporation by 2010, its evening news were watched by a majority of TV viewers. In fact, its audience far exceeds even the amount of tabloid readers. As a proxy for party statements, I coded the content of two Slovak news agencies, as there was not enough information on the parties' websites. Only articles that reflected either party briefings or statements made by party members were included.

In order to analyse issues present during the electoral campaign, I collected all party statements and the news content for the last four weeks prior to the elections (May 17 – June 11). For the newspaper content, I collected all articles that were published under the home and economy sections (Daily SME) or politics' section (Nový Čas). I coded only news articles

directly related to the domestic issues[2]. In the case of TV evening news, I collected all articles that were broadcasted before the first commercial break (13 to 21 news). Again, if a write-up referred to foreign affairs, it was omitted. The final collection consists of 737 newspaper articles, 158 party statements and 6 electoral manifestos[3].

3.2.1 Text Analysis

In order to assess salience of issues, I conducted several thematic content analyses that I applied on the data collected from news, parties' statements and parties' manifestos. Text analyses were conducted in Spitta programme and were used to find occurrence of issues. The programme requires three things; one file containing a text that will be analysed, one file containing categories and one file containing search entries for each category.

As far as I want to connect the contextual information provided by parties and media with individual data from the post-election survey, the first step was to look at the most important issue coded for each respondent in the survey. As I was concerned about the quality of coding done by previous researchers who conducted the survey, I have recoded respondents' answers to open-ended questions in a manner that would make them more feasible for further analysis. I will describe this process more precisely in the next section; however, results of this recoding can be seen in the Table 3. There are six categories that capture the most common issues raised by survey respondents. For the purposes of text analyses, one of them – political culture - was omitted due to the vagueness of its meaning.

Table 3: Categories and subcategories used for the analysis

---

[2] If an article referred to foreign affairs, it was coded only if the story included issue related to Slovakia or Slovak politicians.

[3] I collected only statements and manifestos of six political parties that entered the Slovak parliament after 2010's election.

Issue	Proportion (survey)	Number of cases (survey)
Economy	17.7	213
Unemployment	14.8	178
Relations with Hungarians	5.1	61
Corruption	9.7	117
Welfare	5	60
Other	20	241
DK	21.1	254

Search entries that form the dictionary used for text analyses were built during the process of text extraction from the web pages of two news agencies. I looked solely for the words with a political context. Later I have broadened the dictionary with inflected words. Search entries collected during this process were later adapted to fit the categories that aroused from the survey. In order to conduct the text analysis precisely, all words with diacritic marks had to be changed. This was done simply by replacing letters containing the diacritic marks with letters without them. Search entries were then checked again to find and resolve potential problems with ambiguity. Fortunately, there was only one word with double meaning. This word, in the case that it had meaning unrelated to the one needed for the analysis, was then replaced by other word without changing its true meaning. Same categories and search entries were used for news content, parties' manifestos and parties' statements.

It is important to note, that I used different sampling and recoding units. As I am primarily concerned about issue occurrence, results of the text analyses reflect proportion of articles and statements where a given search entry for a given category was found. Thus in this case, sampling units were of the same size as recoding units[4]. This decision was based on the fact that the only thing I wanted to find was the occurrence of issues in the statements. Because one article was considered to be equivalent to one statement, later I just recoded the category's occurrences as binary; that means that every time the program found the occurrence of a category in a statement, I then recoded it into 1, regardless the number of occurrences within one category. As far as parties' manifestos are concerned, the results reflect the proportion of recording units containing at least one search entry for a given category versus the proportion of all recording units in a manifesto[5].

3.3 Variables

In order to answer research questions, I should first operationalize concepts outlined in the previous part of the thesis. First of all, there is an issue salience, which forms the basis for setting the three agendas – public, media and party. Public agenda is an aggregate measure of the most important problem (MIP). MIP is a widely used variable based on answers to the survey question "what is the most important problem the country is facing right now?" Media agenda is expressed by proportions of the most salient issues in the media. Party agenda can be measured in several ways. In this thesis, it will be either the proportion of the most salient issues in a party manifesto or in the party statements.

---

[4] However, in order to check for the co-occurrence of issues or co-occurrence of issues and parties related to them, news articles were also coded as the sampling units while each sentence in these articles were coded as the recording unit.

[5] For party manifestos, a sampling unit is equal to one broader chapter; recording unit is equal to one paragraph in a given chapter.

Then there is the concept of need for orientation. As stated before, it consists of two separate concepts – relevance and uncertainty. The first is usually expressed through the level of political interest, the latter by political affiliation. For the purpose of this thesis, I will operationalize need for orientation as a composite measure of campaign interest[6] and party closeness[7].

As for the issue obtrusiveness, I found there are five most salient issues. As an issue is considered obtrusive if the public (can) have the direct experience with it, I consider unemployment, relationship with Hungarians and welfare[8] to be obtrusive. Among these three issues, I will also investigate the issue sensitivity among individuals. For example, for the issue of employment, an individual should be sensitive to this issue if he/she is currently unemployed. In the case of relationship with Hungarians, sensitivity is measured by having a Hungarian nationality. And in the case of welfare issues, individuals with household income below the national median income will be coded as sensitive to this issue.

3.3.1 Individual-level analysis

In order to test hypotheses related to the second research question (why did an individual pick issue X over other issues as the most important?), I conducted a multinomial logistic regression, which allows to connect several types of variables into one model. In my analysis, there are three types of variables; first, there are individual specific variables which are unique to an individual but do not vary between issue choices. Second, there are contextual, alternative independent variables which vary between choices but not between individuals.

---

[6] „How carefully did you follow the electoral campaign?"

[7] "Is there a political party close to you?"

[8] Although welfare is often considered to be an unobtrusive issue, based on the survey answers I will consider it to be obtrusive here. Citizens' concerns were usually about issues such as pensions, poverty or prices, which in my opinion are often experienced directly. On the other hand, I will consider issue of economy to be unobtrusive, because the answers usually dealt with issues such as debt, economic crisis, Greek loan or economic issues in general.

Finally, there are also alternative specific variables which vary not only between choices, but also between individuals. In the next lines, I will briefly say more about the variables I used for the multinomial logit model.

Individual specific variables

As was stated in the theoretical sections, there are a few variables that could help to explain issue choice's variation among individuals. First, there is the concept of need for orientation, which is a composite measure of relevance and uncertainty. This variable was created by combining questions regarding campaign tracking (relevance) and political affiliation (uncertainty). Thus, the higher the need for orientation, the more susceptible should an individual be to agenda-setting effects – i.e. the probability of choosing issues salient in the media or his/her close party should rise[9]. Apart from NFO, education is also predicted to have a significant impact on individual's susceptibility to agenda-setting, exactly in the same way as the NFO[10].

Then there are three binary variables measuring sensitivity to three out of five issues that I chose as obtrusive – welfare, unemployment and relations with Hungarians. Sensitivity to welfare issues is coded as 1 if an individual's household income was below 600 EUR/month[11]. Sensitivity to unemployment issues is measured by current (at that time) job status; if an individual is unemployed, he is considered to be sensitive to unemployment issues present in the media and parties statements. Last, sensitivity to relations with

---

[9] In the dataset, High NFO was coded as 1, as opposed to Low NFO which was coded as 4. It should be kept in mind while interpreting the results.

[10] There are three levels of education; 1 for elementary school, 2 for secondary education, 3 for tertiary education.

[11] Median income in 2010 was 510 EUR/month; source: Eurostat http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/income-and-living-conditions/data/database

Hungarians are measured simply by nationality – if an individual has a Hungarian nationality, he/she should be sensitive to such issues.

It should also be noted that there are two control variables – age (coded as a continuous variable) and gender.

Alternative independent variables

As noted before, multinomial logit models also allow measuring the impact of more contextual variables. For the purpose of this analysis, I will use the proportion of issues salient in media (for each of five MIP) as this kind of variable. Besides, issue obtrusiveness could also be considered as kind of an alternative independent variable[12].

Alternative specific variables

This last type of variable will be used in the context of party statements, measured as proportion of issues salient in statements of six Slovak political parties that entered the parliament after 2010 election. This variable varies not only between issue choices, but also between individuals. Thus, it will differ according to respondents' party affiliation[13].

---

[12] Obtrusive issues are the same as in the case of issue sensitivity variables – welfare, unemployment and relations with Hungarians. However, obtrusive issues vary only between issue choices, not between individuals.

[13] For example, if an individual has Smer as close party, 'statement' variable will reflect party's issue salience between five issue choices. If there is no close party, 'statement' will be 0 among all issue choices.
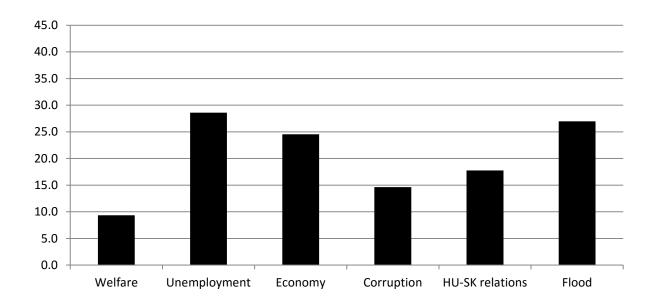
4. Results

4.1 Aggregate results

4.1.1 Media agenda

As already stated, media agenda was measured as the number of articles that contained at least one word connected with a given issue. Data were extracted by conducting a text analysis of two newspapers and one television. The resulting sample consists of over 700 articles that were available to the public during the four weeks preceding the election. Aggregate results can be seen in Figure 1.

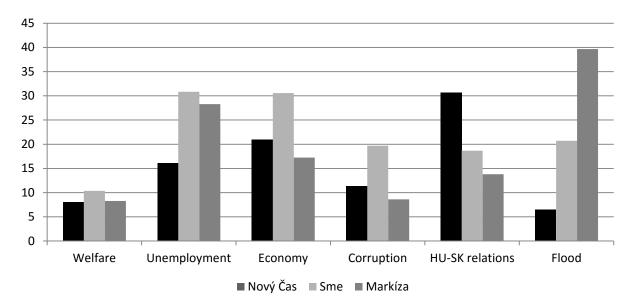*Figure 1: Issue proportions in the media (in %, for all weeks)*

Note: Welfare N=69, Unemployment N=211, Economy N=181, Corruption N=108, HU-SK relations N=131, Flood N=199

The most salient issues in the media during the last four weeks prior to the election were connected with performance problems, i.e. unemployment and economy. It is not surprising given that the global financial crisis and later on also the Eurozone crisis substantially slowed

Slovak economy, which is to a large extent export-oriented. This resulted in less job opportunities and as the Fico's government tried to react by subsidizing various public projects, the government debt increased substantially. However, also salient was serious flood that stroked several regions prior to the election. On the other hand, welfare issues were debated the least by far.
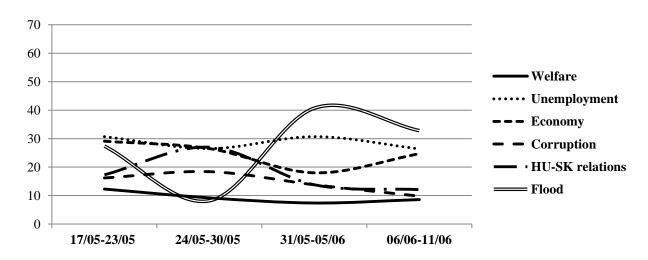
However, content of various media tend to differ, so it should be interesting to break down the media agenda according to the actual media. Results can be seen in Figure 2. Only in the case of welfare issue there were no big differences between the issue proportions in the tabloid (Nový Čas), broadsheet (Sme) and the TV (Markíza). Otherwise, the proportions differ substantially. For example, the tabloid seemed to be disproportionally uninterested in the performance problems (issue of economy and unemployment), while it nurtured the issue of relations with Hungarians. On the other hand, the broadsheet was much more interested in reporting about the economy and corruption. Finally, there are two important points in regard to the issue proportions in the TV. First, for the last month preceding the election, it was by far the most interested in reporting about flood, which was unrelated to the election campaign. It was also the least interested media to report about problems connected with corruption, although the same is true for the issue regarding relations with Hungarians.

Figure 2: Issue proportions according to the media type (in %, for all weeks)

Legend: ■ Nový Čas ■ Sme ■ Markíza

Finally, as can be seen from Figure 3, the differences in issue proportions were not only between different media, but also in time. Four weeks before elections, the most reported issues were that of economy and unemployment, closely followed by reporting on flood. The next week, however, it was the issue of relations with Hungarians which took most of the spotlight. For the last two weeks, flood was remained to be the most reported issue in the media, followed by unemployment and economy. It is also interesting to note that reporting on the corruption gradually fell down with the upcoming election, at the end almost by half.

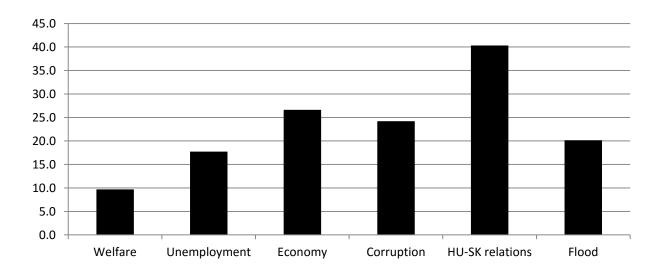*Figure 3: Issue proportions in the media in time (in %, all media)*

Legend: —— Welfare; ······ Unemployment; – – Economy; — — Corruption; — · HU-SK relations; ═══ Flood

37

4.1.2 Party agenda

Next I deal with the party agenda, i.e. the issues parties themselves came up with during the 2010 electoral campaign. There are two sources I looked at – parties' statements issued during the last four weeks prior to the election and parties' manifestos published before the elections but partly independently to the campaign as such.

Figure 4 shows the distribution of issue proportions based on all parties' statements[14] for all four weeks. It can be seen that by far the most salient issue was the one regarding relations with Hungarians, followed by issues connected with economy and corruption. The least salient issue that the parties came up with was welfare.

Figure 4: Issue proportions in the parties' statements (in %, for all weeks and all parties)

However, it is expected parties will differ in what issues they stress because, as debated in the theoretical section, they can gain some electoral advantage by doing so. Results shown in Figure 5 confirm such expectations. First, relations with Hungarians were in general the most salient issue in parties' statements; however, there were two parties that stood out – Most and
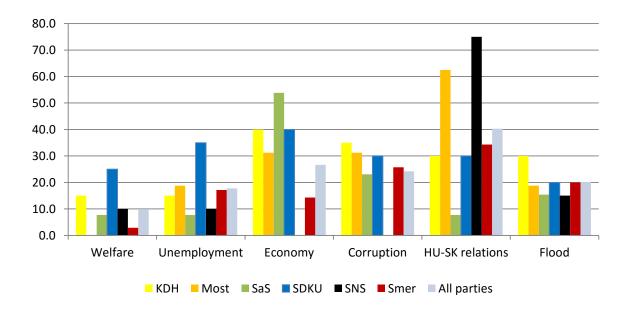
---

[14] It should be reminded only the statements of six political parties that entered the parliament were analysed

SNS. This is not surprising as they are usually said to represent nationalistic voters, either Hungarians (Most) or Slovaks (SNS). Only SaS stood aside as they did not follow this trend.

Second, the economy issue was to a large degree debated only by the opposition parties, by which they probably tried to gain some advantage, as this issue is to a great extent connected with the government performance. As can be seen, the then governing parties (Smer and SNS) tried to avoid this issue. The same is true for the corruption issue, although the difference between Smer and opposition parties is not that substantial.
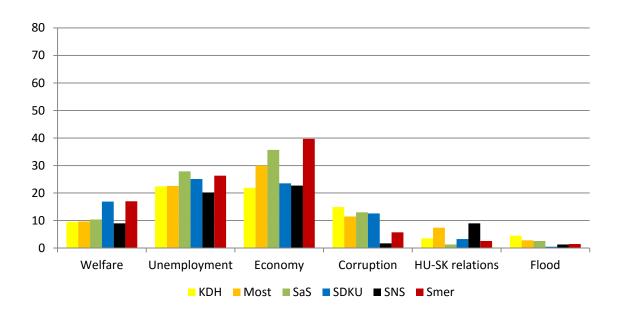
Third, it is a bit surprising to see that issues of welfare and unemployment were sustained mainly by SDKÚ, a right-wing party. Especially interesting is the fact that Smer, the only left-wing party being considered here, ignored the welfare issue almost entirely. As can be seen from the results shown in Figure 5, Smer was interested mainly in the issue of relations with Hungarians.

Figure 5: Issue proportions in parties' statements (in %, for all weeks)

These results are even more interesting when compared to the issues parties presented in their own manifestos. As shown in Figure 6, all of the parties focused on the economy and welfare issues. The least salient issue was that regarding relations with Hungarians, which clearly shows that during the electoral campaign, some of the parties focused on the issues other than those salient in their manifestos. This is also true for Smer; in their manifesto, economy, unemployment and welfare issues were the most salient, unlike the issues presented in their statements during the campaign.

Figure 6: Issue proportions in parties' manifestos (in %, for all weeks)

Finally, when the issue proportions are broken down by the weeks, it can be seen that relations with Hungarians were especially salient during all but last week of the electoral campaign. Flood issue gradually took over and in the last week, it was by far the most salient issue in the parties' statements, followed by 'down-to-earth' issues such as economy or unemployment; corruption was also debated, especially during the second and the last week of campaign. Results are presented in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Issue proportions in parties' statements in time (in %, for all parties)

4.1.3 Comparison of media and party agenda

What can be seen by now is there were some differences in issue proportions in the media and between parties. I compare these overall agendas in Figure 8. What can be seen from it is that only in case of welfare and economy issues, the relative issue proportions in the media and party statements did not really differ. Overall, parties were much more interested in issues connected with corruption and relations with Hungarians. On the other hand, the media were more focused on reporting about unemployment and the flood. Thus, it will be very interesting to see what the most important problems are according to the citizens and if it relates more to the media or particular political parties.

Figure 8: Comparison of issue proportions in the media and parties' statements (in %, for all parties)
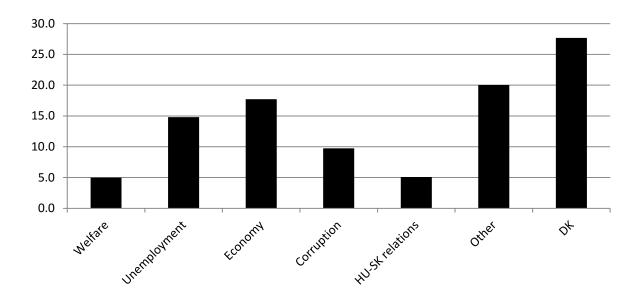

4.1.4 Public agenda

As already noted, public agenda is measured by answers to the survey question 'What is the most important problem facing the country today' (MIP). The survey was conducted among 1203 individuals two weeks after the election and thus should capture the impact of electoral campaign.

The most salient issue among the respondents was economy, followed by unemployment and corruption. Relations with Hungarians and welfare issues were the least salient. A large proportion of respondents (20%) chose some other issue as the most important[15]. Furthermore, more than a fourth of all respondents (27.7%) either did not know the answer or did not answer at all. Aggregate results are shown in Figure 9.

[15] More than a third of these cases were related to issues of 'political culture' which were recoded under the heading 'other', mainly because there was no way of measuring it in the media and party agenda

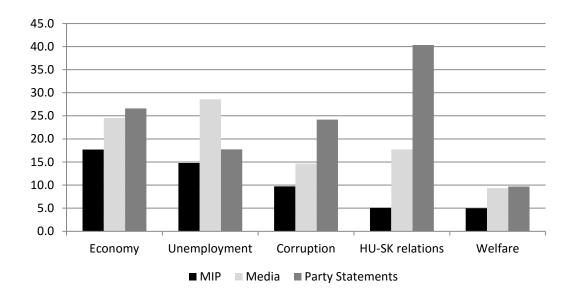*Figure 9: Issue proportions in the survey (MIP, in %)*

4.1.5 Aggregate agenda-setting

The first research question I set was related to aggregate agenda-setting, i.e. whether the public agenda resembles agenda set by the media or particular parties. Thus, first I compare public agenda as such (i.e. without any audience restrictions) to the media and party agenda. Based on the visual inspection, it seems the overall public agenda resembles rather the issues salient in the media than in parties' statements, although this fit is not perfect at all. The most salient issue among the respondents was economy, which was the second most salient issue in the media as well as in the parties' statements. The second most salient issue in the public was unemployment, which was the most salient issue in the media, but only fourth most salient issue in parties' statements. Next, there is a corruption; this issue was the third most salient issue in parties' statements, but only the fourth most salient issue in the media. Although the issue of relations with Hungarians was the most salient issue among parties and also the third most salient issue in the media, this was not reflected in the public as it was the penultimate most salient issue in public agenda. The only issue that was similarly reflected by public,

parties and the media was the issue of welfare, which for all types of agenda ended up as the least salient.

Figure 10: Comparison of issue proportions in the public, media and party agenda (in %)
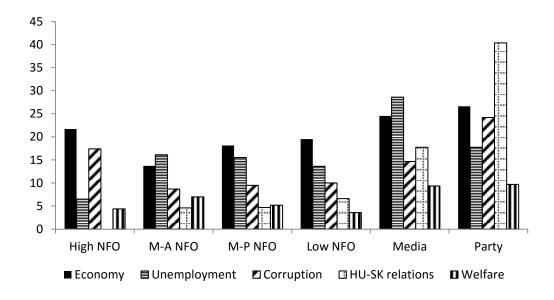

However, it is expected agenda-setting will not have the same influence over different audience groups. Thus, the survey respondents were divided into four groups according to their need for orientation, i.e. relevance and uncertainty, measured as political (campaign) interest and party affiliation. Group with low need for orientation should be the least susceptible to the agenda-setting, because it is not interested in tracking the campaign. Group with moderate-passive need for orientation should show some agenda-setting effects, but not at the same level as the other two groups. Moderate-active need for orientation group is interested in the campaign but their uncertainty is low because they have some close political party and it is expected they will reflect the agenda of that party, rather than agenda presented in the media. Finally, high need for orientation group should be the most prone to agenda-setting as they are interested in the campaign but lack the party they are close to.

However, if anything can be said about the results shown in Figure 11, it is that the relationship between the issue concerns among the high need for orientation group and the media agenda is dubious at best. For example, while the most salient issue among the High NFO group is economy, it does not seem to be very concerned about unemployment (which ranked first in the media agenda) it is not at all concerned about relation with Hungarians (ranked third in the media agenda). On the other hand, this group seems to be disproportionally concerned about corruption. Were it not the non-existent concern about relations with Hungarians, it would resemble the overall party agenda. It is also interesting to note that compared to other NFO groups, the proportion of respondents who said some 'other' issue is the most important problem was by far the highest (30.2%).

Based on the visual inspection, it is Moderate-Active need for orientation group which resemble the media agenda at most. The only difference is that the issue regarding relations with Hungarians was not as important as would be expected based on the media content. Moderate-Passive and Low NFO groups looks very similar to each other but it is very hard to say if they resemble more media or party agenda.

Figure 11: Comparison of issue proportions in the different NFO groups, media and party agenda (in %)

As was said, it is the Moderate-Active NFO group that in general seems to follow the lead by the media. However, people in this group are expected to be more susceptible to their respective parties' messages. Hence I compared Moderate-Active NFO respondents and the proportion of their issue concerns with the agenda of a party that is close to them. However, for most of the parties there were not enough respondents with Moderate-Active NFO to meaningfully compare the proportions of their issue concerns. Thus here I only compare respondents who chose Smer and SDKU as the close party.

The results are somewhat surprising, at least for Smer, because the issue concern among Moderate-Active NFO respondents with Smer as a close party goes exactly opposite to the issues stressed by the party in its statements. For example, the most salient issue in the party statements regarded relations with Hungarians, while this was the second least salient issue among the given respondents. Economy was perceived as the most important problem by respondents with Smer as a close party, while for the party itself it was the second least salient issue, at least based on the content in their statements. The only case when there is an agreement between the party and respondents is the welfare issue, which is the least salient both among the people and in the party statements. It should also be noted almost 20% of these respondents chose some other issue as the most important problem.

On the other hand, there seems to be a better relationship when it comes to SDKU and the Moderate-Active respondents who chose the party as a close one. Both party and the respondents are mostly concerned about economy, unemployment and corruption; however, the respondents were less likely to care about relations with Hungarians and more likely to care about welfare, while with the party it was the opposite. That being said, more than 14% of these respondents also chose some other issue as the most important problem and a quarter of them could not say any.

4.1.6 Summary

To sum up the findings from this subsection, there is some evidence in support of the media agenda-setting. Based on the comparison of issue proportions on the aggregate level, survey respondents seemed to follow the issues that were the most salient in the media; they only follow the issues debated by parties to some extent.

On the other hand, there is no clear evidence that the High NFO group was more susceptible to media messages. There was only one NFO group – Moderate-Active - which to a large extent (although based only on the visual inspection) resembled the agenda set by media. It is precisely the one that was expected to follow the respective parties' agenda, but this is hardly true, as seen in the case of respondents with Moderate-Active NFO, whose close party was Smer. Moreover, the differences in issue concern between the Moderate-Passive and the Low NFO group were surprisingly small, which is also in contradiction to the expectations.

Hence, out of four hypotheses, I only found support for the first one of them; on the aggregate level, distribution of issue salience among public resembled more the media agenda than the party agenda.

4.2 Individual-level analysis (Multinomial Logit Model)

Before I proceed to actual interpretation of the results of multinomial logistic regression, it should be noted that its estimated coefficients have to be interpreted with regard to a reference category. In this case, this consists of respondents who did not know (were not able to say) what is the most important problem.

First, I tested several models to see how well do they fit. The one that I chose consists of all individual specific variables that arose from the theory (need for orientation, education and

sensitivity to unemployment, welfare and relations with Hungarians), control variables (age and gender) and interaction between the need for orientation and all other individual specific variables, apart from controls. There are also alternative independent variables ('news' measuring the effects of media content and 'issue obtrusiveness') and alternative specific variable ('statement' measuring the effects of content in particular parties' statements).

4.2.1 Estimated coefficients

4.2.1.1 Impact of need for orientation and education

It is predicted that the higher the level of need for orientation and education, the more susceptible to media agenda-setting should an individual be and thus it should be more likely he/she will choose an issue at the top of media agenda. However, based only on the interpretation of estimated coefficients, it is not possible to confirm these hypotheses. Neither the need for orientation, nor education (nor even an interaction between the two variables) shows any statistically significant difference between the reference category ('don't know') and some other MIP category.

What can be said is that higher education as well as higher level of need for orientation increases the probability of choosing 'economy', 'unemployment' and 'relations with Hungarians' as the most important problem, while it decreases the probability of picking 'corruption' and 'welfare' as the most important problem. This is in line with the predictions, because welfare and corruption are the least salient issues in the media. On the other hand, higher levels of need for orientation and education also lead to an increased probability of

choosing 'other'[16] issue as the most important problem, which goes in the opposite direction than expected.

4.2.1.2 Unemployment sensitivity

There is only one statistically significant relationship between being sensitive to unemployment and choosing the most important issue. Being unemployed seems to increase the odds of picking the 'economy' issue, but this relationship does not pass the 5% threshold (p=0.062). What is interesting is that the expected relationship - that sensitivity to unemployment should increase the probability of choosing the 'unemployment' issue as the MIP – even goes in the opposite direction; however, this is rather random as it does not pass threshold for statistical significance. On the other hand, when I allow interaction between the need for orientation and unemployment sensitivity, the odds of choosing the 'economy' issue over the reference category decrease (p=0.041). At the same time, there is an increase in probability of choosing the 'unemployment' issue, but even now this relationship is not statistically significant.

4.2.1.3 Welfare sensitivity

As can be seen from the estimated coefficients, being sensitive to welfare decreases the probability of choosing the 'welfare' issue as the most important problem, but again, this relationship is not statistically significant. In fact, being sensitive to welfare lowers the probability of choosing all of the remaining issues as well. But only in the case of 'corruption' issue is this relationship statistically significant to a certain extent (p=0.086). However, once I allow interaction with the need for orientation, these results are reversed. But only in the case of 'economy' issue is this relationship statistically significant (p=0.028).

---

[16] i.e. issues other than the five most frequently mentioned among survey respondents

4.2.1.4 Sensitivity to relations with Hungarians

Again and in contradiction to the expectations, being sensitive to relations with Hungarians actually lowers the probability of choosing related issue as the most important problem, although this relationship is not statistically significant. Only in the case of 'corruption' issue is there a statistically significant relationship related to being sensitive to relations with Hungarians, although only at the level of 10% threshold (p=0.067). Once again, when I allow interaction of this variable with the need for orientation, the previous results are reversed (being issue sensitive is now positively related to choosing the issue as the most important problem) but at the same time random, i.e. not statistically significant.

4.2.1.5 Age and gender

Being a woman seems to decrease the odds of choosing all the most frequent issues as the most important problem. This is especially true for the issues of 'economy', 'other', 'relations with Hungarians' and 'corruption', where this relationship is statistically significant[17]. Moreover, age seems to increase the probability of being concerned about corruption, although this effect is at most borderline statistical significance.

4.2.1.6 Parties' statements

Content that the political parties issued in their parties' statements does not seem to be either strongly or statistically significantly related to choosing the most important issue. The only exception is the relationship between the content in parties' statements and choosing the 'other' issue as the most important; however, this is statistically significant only at the 10% threshold level.

---

[17] Although the 'corruption' issue is only statistically significant at the 10% threshold level

4.2.1.7 Media content and issue obtrusiveness

Neither of these alternative independent variables have statistically significant relationship when it comes to explaining the issue concern.

4.2.2 Predicted probabilities

4.2.2.1 Need for orientation

Based on the theory, higher levels of need for orientation should increase the probability of choosing salient issues in the media (i.e. economy, unemployment and relations with Hungarians). However, predicted probabilities show something slightly different.

Compared to the Low NFO males, High NFO males are 6.3 percentage points less likely to choose the 'economy' issue as the most important problem, if they have only elementary education; 1.6 percentage points less likely if they have secondary education, but 4 percentage points more likely to choose this issue if they have tertiary education. Similarly, when compared to Low NFO females, High NFO females are predicted to be less likely to choose the 'economy' issue as the most important problem; in the case of having only elementary education, this probability is even down by 16 percentage points.

When comparing predicted probabilities of choosing the 'unemployment' issue, High NFO males with elementary education are more than 7 percentage points less likely to choose the 'unemployment' as the most important problem, compared to the Low NFO males and only around one percentage point more likely to choose it if they have secondary or tertiary education. On the other hand, High NFO females are predicted to be a little bit more likely to choose the 'unemployment' issue. For example, compared to Low NFO females, High NFO females with elementary education should be 11 percentage points more likely to pick this issue as the most important problem.

In the case of 'relations with Hungarians' issue, the differences between High and Low NFO individuals are practically non-existent, irrespective of education and their gender.

Table 4: Predicted probabilities for need for orientation

Gender	Education	NFO	Issue						
			DK	welfare	HU-SK	corruption	unemployment	economy	other
Male	Elementary	Low	0.327	0.042	0.059	0.088	0.143	0.167	0.172
		High	0.242	0.038	0.052	0.188	0.072	0.104	0.305
	Secondary	Low	0.344	0.042	0.053	0.091	0.169	0.173	0.128
		High	0.393	0.031	0.042	0.056	0.181	0.156	0.140
	Tertiary	Low	0.402	0.032	0.041	0.063	0.180	0.140	0.142
		High	0.300	0.048	0.038	0.067	0.194	0.181	0.173
Female	Elementary	Low	0.207	0.009	0.029	0.089	0.047	0.333	0.285
		High	0.303	0.038	0.048	0.079	0.156	0.173	0.203
	Secondary	Low	0.248	0.050	0.055	0.107	0.128	0.160	0.251
		High	0.311	0.039	0.047	0.066	0.175	0.151	0.212
	Tertiary	Low	0.308	0.043	0.047	0.111	0.123	0.169	0.198
		High	0.309	0.042	0.048	0.102	0.131	0.169	0.200

In spite of some differences in predicted probabilities, it can be concluded that in fact these differences are neither substantively, nor statistically significant. As can be seen in Table 5, where predicted probabilities are put together with standard errors, the differences between

means for economy (i.e. Low and High NFO), unemployment and relations with Hungarians are very small and statistically insignificant. Therefore, there is no support for the hypothesis that the higher the levels of NFO, the higher the possibility an individual will pick issues that were salient in the media.

Table 5: Predicted probabilities for need for orientation with standard error[18]

Gender	MIP	NFO	Mean	SE	2.5%	97.5%
Male	HU-SK relations	Low	0.054	0.032	0.009	0.142
		High	0.052	0.029	0.007	0.123
	unemployment	Low	0.159	0.06	0.065	0.31
		High	0.157	0.056	0.068	0.295
	economy	Low	0.167	0.058	0.057	0.288
		High	0.174	0.058	0.077	0.307
Female	HU-SK relations	Low	0.053	0.031	0.009	0.123
		High	0.055	0.032	0.009	0.136
	unemployment	Low	0.157	0.055	0.073	0.291
		High	0.155	0.051	0.071	0.27
	economy	Low	0.171	0.054	0.072	0.296
		High	0.172	0.055	0.078	0.287

---

[18] While having secondary education and no sensitivity to any issue

4.2.2.2 Education

Education should show similar effects as the need for orientation, i.e. people with higher education should be more susceptible to media messages. Once again, the results are mixed. As for the 'economy' issue, only in case High NFO males are the results in line with expectations. In this case, having a tertiary education increases the probability of choosing this issue as the most important by almost 8 percentage points (as opposed to having only elementary education). With Low NFO males and Low and High NFO females, this probability is actually decreased by the level of education – e.g. in the case of Low NFO females by more than 16 percentage points.

On the other hand, the higher the education, the higher the predicted probability an individual will choose the 'unemployment' issue as the most important problem. The only exception is the category of High NFO females, where the predicted probability decreases by 2.5 percentage points when comparing individuals with elementary and tertiary education. Finally, for the 'relations with Hungarians' issue, there are only very small differences in predicted probabilities between individuals with various levels of education, irrespective of their gender and NFO.

Yet again, as can been seen in Table 4, when these differences are complemented with standard errors, they cease to show any statistically significant relationship. Therefore, I reject the hypothesis that higher education significantly increases the probability of choosing an issue high on the media agenda, because the differences between means for economy, unemployment and relations with Hungarians are very small and statistically insignificant.

Table 6: Predicted probabilities for education

Gender	NFO	Education	Issue

54

			DK	welfare	HU-SK	corruption	unemployment	economy	other
Male	**Low**	**Elementary**	0.327	0.042	0.059	0.088	0.143	0.167	0.172
		Secondary	0.344	0.042	0.053	0.091	0.169	0.173	0.128
		Tertiary	0.402	0.032	0.041	0.063	0.180	0.140	0.142
	High	**Elementary**	0.242	0.038	0.052	0.188	0.072	0.104	0.305
		Secondary	0.393	0.031	0.042	0.056	0.181	0.156	0.140
		Tertiary	0.300	0.048	0.038	0.067	0.194	0.181	0.173
Female	**Low**	**Elementary**	0.207	0.009	0.029	0.089	0.047	0.333	0.285
		Secondary	0.248	0.050	0.055	0.107	0.128	0.160	0.251
		Tertiary	0.308	0.043	0.047	0.111	0.123	0.169	0.198
	High	**Elementary**	0.303	0.038	0.048	0.079	0.156	0.173	0.203
		Secondary	0.311	0.039	0.047	0.066	0.175	0.151	0.212
		Tertiary	0.309	0.042	0.048	0.102	0.131	0.169	0.200

Table 7: Predicted probabilities for education with standard error[19]

NFO	MIP	Education	Mean	SE	2.5%	97.5%
Low	Economy	Elementary	0.156	0.073	0.029	0.305
		Secondary	0.167	0.058	0.057	0.288
		Tertiary	0.175	0.053	0.078	0.293

[19] Results shown only for males with no sensitivity to any issue

55

High		Elementary	0.16	0.062	0.044	0.303
		Secondary	0.174	0.058	0.077	0.307
		Tertiary	0.177	0.055	0.08	0.304
Low	HU-SK relations	Elementary	0.053	0.031	0.008	0.125
		Secondary	0.054	0.032	0.009	0.142
		Tertiary	0.053	0.031	0.01	0.115
High		Elementary	0.055	0.032	0.011	0.133
		Secondary	0.052	0.029	0.007	0.123
		Tertiary	0.052	0.029	0.01	0.122
Low	Unemployment	Elementary	0.177	0.09	0.055	0.418
		Secondary	0.159	0.06	0.065	0.31
		Tertiary	0.153	0.051	0.063	0.276
High		Elementary	0.167	0.074	0.06	0.369
		Secondary	0.157	0.056	0.068	0.295
		Tertiary	0.153	0.049	0.064	0.268

4.2.2.3 Issue Sensitivity

The next thing being tested was whether sensitivity to an issue leads a person to choose it as the most important problem, regardless of the relative position of that issue on the media agenda. Here is what can be concluded for predicted probabilities:

Sensitivity to unemployment

There is no real link between being sensitive to unemployment (i.e. being unemployed) and the probability to pick unemployment as the most important problem, except for the Moderate-Passive group. It means that for all other NFO groups, the predicted probabilities of choosing the 'unemployment' issue as the most important problem decrease if a person is sensitive to unemployment (mostly in the case of Moderate-Active NFO group where the probability of choosing the 'unemployment' issue decreases by 6.5 percentage points for males and 5.5 percentage points for females when compared to males and females without sensitivity to unemployment).

On the other hand, being unemployed in general increases the probability of choosing the 'economy' issue[20]. For example, being a High NFO female sensitive to unemployment increases the probability of being concerned about the 'economy' by 21 percentage points (compared to the High NFO female not sensitive to unemployment). Being unemployed also increases the probability of choosing the 'corruption' issue as the most important problem, especially for Moderate-Passive and High NFO males (they are almost 5 percentage points more likely to pick the 'corruption' issue as the most important, compared to the same group without unemployment sensitivity).

Table 8: Predicted probabilities for sensitivity to unemployment

Gender	NFO	sensitivity	Issue						
			DK	welfare	HU-SK	corruption	unemployment	economy	other

---

[20] The only exception is the Moderate-Passive male group, where it the probability of choosing the 'economy' issue is down by 15.4 percentage points compared to the same group without being sensitive to the issue.

Male	**Low**	**No**	0.344	0.042	0.053	0.091	0.169	0.173	0.128
		Yes	0.312	0.030	0.041	0.102	0.140	0.240	0.135
	Moderate-Passive	**No**	0.291	0.008	0.022	0.060	0.074	0.272	0.274
		Yes	0.457	0.038	0.037	0.107	0.109	0.118	0.133
	Moderate-Active	**No**	0.336	0.027	0.038	0.046	0.196	0.135	0.221
		Yes	0.221	0.028	0.024	0.056	0.131	0.207	0.334
	High	**No**	0.393	0.031	0.042	0.056	0.181	0.156	0.140
		Yes	0.240	0.065	0.052	0.102	0.135	0.203	0.203
Female	**Low**	**No**	0.248	0.050	0.055	0.107	0.128	0.160	0.251
		Yes	0.243	0.052	0.064	0.114	0.116	0.171	0.241
	Moderate-Passive	**No**	0.242	0.053	0.064	0.125	0.109	0.171	0.238
		Yes	0.220	0.035	0.019	0.042	0.175	0.218	0.291
	Moderate-Active	**No**	0.319	0.054	0.032	0.094	0.173	0.147	0.180
		Yes	0.354	0.027	0.020	0.062	0.118	0.178	0.240
	High	**No**	0.311	0.039	0.047	0.066	0.175	0.151	0.212
		Yes	0.166	0.083	0.046	0.086	0.164	0.362	0.093

Sensitivity to welfare

Being sensible to welfare (i.e. to have household income lower that median) should lead to higher probability of choosing the 'welfare' issue. However, as can be seen from Table 6, this relationship is very modest and in the case of High NFO group, being sensitive to the issue

58

actually decreases the probability of choosing the issue as the most important by 0.6 percentage points. However, this is only true for the men and there is an exactly opposite relationship in case of females – there it is only the High NFO group that show an increase in predicted probabilities of choosing the 'welfare' issue as the most important by 0.8 percentage points. On the other hand, being sensitive to this issue generally increases the probability of choosing the 'corruption' issue as the most important.

Table 9: Predicted probabilities for sensitivity to welfare

Gender	NFO	sensitivity	Issue						
			DK	welfare	HU-SK	corruption	unemployment	economy	other
Male	Low	No	0.344	0.042	0.053	0.091	0.169	0.173	0.128
		Yes	0.259	0.058	0.033	0.227	0.124	0.153	0.146
	Moderate-Passive	No	0.291	0.008	0.022	0.060	0.074	0.272	0.274
		Yes	0.213	0.022	0.084	0.075	0.167	0.241	0.199
	Moderate-Active	No	0.336	0.027	0.038	0.046	0.196	0.135	0.221
		Yes	0.166	0.037	0.028	0.052	0.126	0.234	0.358
	High	No	0.393	0.031	0.042	0.056	0.181	0.156	0.140
		Yes	0.205	0.025	0.029	0.097	0.136	0.238	0.271
Female	Low	No	0.248	0.050	0.055	0.107	0.128	0.160	0.251
		Yes	0.357	0.027	0.031	0.118	0.117	0.165	0.185
	Moderate-Passive	No	0.242	0.053	0.064	0.125	0.109	0.171	0.238
		Yes	0.276	0.035	0.047	0.150	0.147	0.186	0.160

			DK	welfare	HU-SK	corruption	unemployment	economy	other
	Moderate-Active	**No**	0.319	0.054	0.032	0.094	0.173	0.147	0.180
		Yes	0.153	0.029	0.038	0.100	0.113	0.259	0.309
	High	**No**	0.311	0.039	0.047	0.066	0.175	0.151	0.212
		Yes	0.330	0.047	0.024	0.198	0.145	0.133	0.123

Sensitivity to relations with Hungarians

It is expected that if an individual is sensible to issues related to the relations with Hungarians, there should be an increased probability he/she will pick related issue as the most important. Based on the results, however, there is no clear evidence for this proposition and the differences between predicted probabilities of people with and without sensitivity to this issue are very small. What may be a bit interesting is that being sensitive to relations with Hungarians increases the probability of choosing the 'unemployment' issue as the most important problem for Low and Moderate-Passive NFO males, while this probability is rather decreased for Moderate-Active and High NFO males. As for women, being sensitive about relations with Hungarians increases the probability of choosing 'unemployment' as the most important problem for all NFO groups apart from High NFO group, where this probability is decreased by almost 13 percentage points.

Table 10: Predicted probabilities for sensitivity to relations with Hungarians

Gender	NFO	Sensitivity	Issue						
			DK	**welfare**	**HU-SK**	**corruption**	**unemployment**	**economy**	**other**
Male	**Low**	**No**	0.344	0.042	0.053	0.091	0.169	0.173	0.128

		Yes	0.227	0.061	0.052	0.056	0.197	0.218	0.189
	Moderate-Passive	**No**	0.291	0.008	0.022	0.060	0.074	0.272	0.274
		Yes	0.317	0.048	0.055	0.093	0.158	0.135	0.194
	Moderate-Active	**No**	0.336	0.027	0.038	0.046	0.196	0.135	0.221
		Yes	0.272	0.048	0.038	0.087	0.177	0.268	0.109
	High	**No**	0.393	0.031	0.042	0.056	0.181	0.156	0.140
		Yes	0.313	0.041	0.047	0.080	0.157	0.152	0.210
Female	**Low**	**No**	0.248	0.050	0.055	0.107	0.128	0.160	0.251
		Yes	0.253	0.032	0.051	0.054	0.215	0.194	0.200
	Moderate-Passive	**No**	0.242	0.053	0.064	0.125	0.109	0.171	0.238
		Yes	0.234	0.057	0.052	0.071	0.173	0.207	0.207
	Moderate-Active	**No**	0.319	0.054	0.032	0.094	0.173	0.147	0.180
		Yes	0.295	0.047	0.043	0.064	0.191	0.189	0.172
	High	**No**	0.311	0.039	0.047	0.066	0.175	0.151	0.212
		Yes	0.351	0.009	0.025	0.088	0.048	0.257	0.221

Thus, even the effects of issue sensitivities were not as expected in the hypotheses. Moreover, when predicted probabilities are complemented with standard errors, there is no statistically significant relationship. Hence I did not find support for the hypothesis that if the issue is sensitive to an individual, the probability he/she will choose an issue regardless of relative position of that issue on the media agenda should arise.

4.2.3. Summary of individual-level analysis

To sum up, I did not find enough support for the hypotheses on the individual-level. Need for orientation, education, being sensible to an issue and either news content or issue obtrusiveness did not fulfil the expectations set in the hypotheses. Although there were some large differences between predicted probabilities for some of the variables, when put together with standard errors they failed to show any statistical significance. Hence it is safe to conclude both hypotheses connected with individual-level analysis.

5. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to find out how is a public opinion created, or to put it more correctly, how well does it fit the two main sources of contextual information available to the citizens – the media and the political parties. I also wanted to test some individual specific variables, which could explain public issue concerns on the individual level. To test the hypotheses, I chose the 2010 Slovak electoral campaign. There were two main reasons for this case selection; to my knowledge, this kind of analysis was never conducted in Slovakia. Second, I was able to connect the content published in the media and the parties' statements and manifestos with issue concerns on the individual level.

First I examined link between the public, media and political parties on the aggregate level. I found some evidence that on the aggregate level, respondents were more likely to be concerned with issues highly salient in the media, but not in the parties' statements. However, I did not find enough support for the hypotheses which suggested this link will be further strengthen by the level of need for orientation. Second I conducted a multinomial logistic regression to see if there were some individual specific variables that could help to explain variation in issue concern on the individual-level. Although there were some large differences between predicted probabilities of issue concern for some of the variables, they were statistically insignificant. Hence I did not find enough support that need for orientation, education or issue sensitivity could explain the variation between individuals when it comes to choosing the most important problem.

I should note that these results may have been impacted by several things. First, on the individual level, I had to work with a dataset which, unfortunately, did not contain enough

data for this kind of analysis. For example, it did not contain data measuring the levels of exposure, which is often expected to play an intermediary role between the need for orientation and education on the one side and susceptibility to the agenda-setting on the other hand. There were also further limitations when conducting the text analyses – although the analysis itself was done using Spitta software, it was only me who built a dictionary this software later used to find the issue occurrences. Were there more coders, measurement of media and parties' content could have been more precise and it would be possible to measure it (e.g. by measuring inter-coder reliability). However, I still believe the thesis contributed to the field of agenda-setting; least by enabling to compare the Slovak case with other countries.

6. Appendix

Table 11: Coefficient estimates (model used for the individual-level analysis)

	Estimate	Std.Error	t-value	Pr(>|t|)	
NFO:welfare	-0.51029	0.441368	-1.1562	0.24762	
NFO:HU-SK	0.087019	0.459366	0.1894	0.84975	
NFO:corruption	-0.39373	0.335172	-1.1747	0.24011	
NFO:unemployment	0.318995	0.385233	0.8281	0.40764	
NFO:economy	0.075504	0.361199	0.209	0.83442	
NFO:other	0.183461	0.235699	0.7784	0.43635	
Education:welfare	-0.28812	0.436077	-0.6607	0.5088	
Education:HU-SK	0.349079	0.427377	0.8168	0.41405	
Education:corruption	-0.28625	0.307977	-0.9295	0.35266	
Education:unemployment	0.556195	0.390023	1.4261	0.15385	
Education:economy	0.320146	0.365918	0.8749	0.38162	
Education:other	0.288801	0.191914	1.5048	0.13236	
sensitivity.Job:welfare	-2.65767	2.065962	-1.2864	0.1983	
sensitivity.Job:HU-SK	-1.05283	1.693458	-0.6217	0.53414	
sensitivity.Job:corruption	-0.64005	1.036443	-0.6175	0.53687	
sensitivity.Job:unemployment	-1.02648	1.155012	-0.8887	0.37415	
sensitivity.Job:economy	1.681838	0.90118	1.8663	0.062	.
sensitivity.Job:other	0.333288	0.79943	0.4169	0.67675	
sensitivity.welfare:welfare	-0.78932	0.862395	-0.9153	0.36005	
sensitivity.welfare:HU-SK	-0.63088	0.832596	-0.7577	0.44861	
sensitivity.welfare:corruption	-1.03757	0.604232	-1.7172	0.08595	.
sensitivity.welfare:unemployment	-0.13039	0.533321	-0.2445	0.80685	
sensitivity.welfare:economy	-0.81665	0.501077	-1.6298	0.10315	
sensitivity.welfare:other	-0.76605	0.49728	-1.5405	0.12344	
sensitivity.HU:welfare	0.790021	1.123439	0.7032	0.48192	
sensitivity.HU:HU-SK	-0.548	1.151546	-0.4759	0.63416	
sensitivity.HU:corruption	1.35962	0.74243	1.8313	0.06705	.
sensitivity.HU:unemployment	0.624755	0.72213	0.8652	0.38695	
sensitivity.HU:economy	0.353008	0.687797	0.5132	0.60778	
sensitivity.HU:other	-0.01972	0.655931	-0.0301	0.97601	
Gender:welfare	-0.43901	0.282801	-1.5524	0.12058	
Gender:HU-SK	-0.56855	0.284072	-2.0014	0.04535	*
Gender:corruption	-0.36513	0.218401	-1.6719	0.09455	.
Gender:unemployment	-0.09031	0.194979	-0.4632	0.64323	
Gender:economy	-0.38104	0.184636	-2.0637	0.03904	*
Gender:other	-0.42045	0.171563	-2.4507	0.01426	*
Age:welfare	0.003006	0.009383	0.3204	0.74865	
Age:HU-SK	-0.00025	0.009488	-0.0262	0.97906	
Age:corruption	0.0132	0.007346	1.7969	0.07236	.
Age:unemployment	-0.00802	0.006593	-1.2163	0.22386	

Age:economy	-0.00021	0.006238	-0.0334	0.97335	
Age:other	-0.00148	0.005639	-0.2628	0.79268	
NFO:Education:welfare	0.314038	0.198021	1.5859	0.11277	
NFO:Education:HU-SK	-0.09814	0.214694	-0.4571	0.64759	
NFO:Education:corruption	0.167139	0.157191	1.0633	0.28765	
NFO:Education:unemployment	-0.10825	0.173116	-0.6253	0.53178	
NFO:Education:economy	-0.02458	0.163632	-0.1502	0.88061	
NFO:Education:other	-0.12953	0.11473	-1.129	0.25889	
NFO:sensitivity.Job:welfare	1.116398	0.70629	1.5807	0.11396	
NFO:sensitivity.Job:HU-SK	0.353369	0.69312	0.5098	0.61018	
NFO:sensitivity.Job:corruption	0.583678	0.424118	1.3762	0.16876	
NFO:sensitivity.Job:unemployment	0.235034	0.484018	0.4856	0.62726	
NFO:sensitivity.Job:economy	-1.02552	0.502268	-2.0418	0.04117	*
NFO:sensitivity.Job:other	-0.01111	0.36674	-0.0303	0.97584	
NFO:sensitivity.welfare:welfare	0.269594	0.36411	0.7404	0.45905	
NFO:sensitivity.welfare:HU-SK	0.262522	0.368386	0.7126	0.47608	
NFO:sensitivity.welfare:corruption	0.378439	0.271865	1.392	0.16392	
NFO:sensitivity.welfare:unemployment	0.109289	0.244278	0.4474	0.65459	
NFO:sensitivity.welfare:economy	0.492839	0.224394	2.1963	0.02807	*
NFO:sensitivity.welfare:other	0.143179	0.23593	0.6069	0.54394	
NFO:sensitivity.HU:welfare	-0.22294	0.500325	-0.4456	0.65589	
NFO:sensitivity.HU:HU-SK	0.591459	0.450429	1.3131	0.18915	
NFO:sensitivity.HU:corruption	-0.32104	0.361019	-0.8893	0.37386	
NFO:sensitivity.HU:unemployment	-0.0909	0.321178	-0.283	0.77715	
NFO:sensitivity.HU:economy	-0.02941	0.306046	-0.0961	0.92344	
NFO:sensitivity.HU:other	0.253312	0.288473	0.8781	0.37988	
statement:DK	-0.00067	0.004797	-0.14	0.88865	
statement:welfare	-0.00125	0.007726	-0.1613	0.87186	
statement:HU-SK	-0.00656	0.006319	-1.0389	0.29887	
statement:corruption	-0.00352	0.006217	-0.5664	0.57111	
statement:unemployment	0.002506	0.005523	0.4538	0.64994	
statement:economy	0.007575	0.004662	1.6249	0.10418	
statement:other	0.007736	0.004492	1.7222	0.08504	.
News	-0.03166	0.036153	-0.8757	0.38118	
Obtrusiveness	-0.52556	0.995228	-0.5281	0.59744	

Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

Log-Likelihood:	-2047.6
AIC:	4245.1
df	75

7. Bibliography

Bélanger, E., Meguid, B.M. (2005). Issue Salience, Issue Ownership and Issue-Based Vote Choice: Evidence from Canada. Paper prepared for delivery at the annual meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association London, Ontario, June 2-4, 2005

Brandenburg, H. (2002). Who Follows Whom?: The Impact of Parties on Media Agenda Formation in the 1997 British General Election Campaign. The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics 2002 7: 34

Camaj, L. (2012). The media's role in fighting corruption: Media effects on governmental accountability. The International Journal of Press/Politics, 1940161212462741.

Camaj, L., & Weaver, D. H. (2013). Need for orientation and attribute agenda-setting during a US election campaign. International Journal of Communication, 7, 22.

Cohen, B.C. (1963). The Press and Foreign Policy. Princeton, Princeton University Press

Dalton, R.J. (1996). Political cleavages, issues, and electoral change. Comparing democracies, 2, 189-209

Dalton, R.J., Beck, P.A., Huckfeldt, R., Koetzle, W. (1998). A Test of Media-Centered Agenda Setting: Newspaper Content and Public Interests in a Presidential Election. Political Communication, 15:4, 463-481

De Vries, C. E. (forthcoming?). The Issue Voting Triangle: The Role of Voter Salience, Party Conflict and Issue Linkage in Issue Voting.

De Vries, C. E., Van der Brug, W., Van Egmond, M. H., & Van der Eijk, C. (2011). Individual and contextual variation in EU issue voting: The role of political information. Electoral Studies, 30(1), 16-28

Downs A. (1957). An Economic Theory of Democracy. New York: Harper & Row

Erbring, L., Goldenberg, E. N., & Miller, A. H. (1980). Front-page news and real-world cues: A new look at agenda-setting by the media. American Journal of Political Science, 16-49.

Franklin, M. N., Mackie, T. T., & Valen, H. (1992). Electoral change: responses to evolving social and attitudinal structures in western countries / Mark N. Franklin, Thomas T. Mackie, Henry Valen, with Clive Bean ... [et al.]. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press

Inglehart, R., & Hochstein, A. (1972). Alignment and Dealignment of the Electorate in France and the United States. Comparative Political Studies, 5(3), 343-372.

Kitschelt, H. (1992). The formation of party systems in East Central Europe. Politics & Society, 20(1), 7-50.

Kleinnijenhuis, J., & Rietberg, E. M. (1995). Parties, media, the public and the economy: Patterns of societal agenda-setting. European Journal of Political Research, 28(1), 95-118.

Lachat, R. (2012). Issue ownership and the vote: salience or competence? September 2012, first draft

Lipset, S. M., & Rokkan, S. (1967). Party systems and voter alignments. New York, 1-64.

MacKuen, M. B. (1981). Social communication and the mass policy agenda. More than news: Media power in public affairs, 19-144.

McCombs, M. (2002, June). The agenda-setting role of the mass media in the shaping of public opinion. In Mass Media Economics 2002 Conference, London School of Economics: http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/dps/extra/McCombs.pdf

McCombs, M., & Stroud, N. J. (2014). Psychology of agenda-setting effects. Mapping the paths of information processing. Review of Communication Research, 2(1), 68-93.

McCombs, M., & Weaver, D. (1973). Voters' Need for Orientation and Use of Mass Communication.

McCombs, M.E., Shaw, D.L. (1972). The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media. The Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 36, No. 2 (Summer, 1972), pp. 176-187

Petrocik, J. R. (1996). Issue ownership in presidential elections, with a 1980 case study. American journal of political science, 825-850.

RePass, D.E. (1971). Issue salience and party choice. The American Political Science Review, 389-400.

Stokes, D.E. (1966). Some Dynamic Elements of Contests for the Presidency. The American Political Science Review, Vol. 60, No. 1, pp. 19-28

Weaver, D. H. (1980). Audience need for orientation and media effects. Communication Research, 7(3), 361-373.

Whitefield, S., & Rohrschneider, R. (2009). Representational consistency: Stability and change in political cleavages in Central and Eastern Europe. Politics & Policy, 37(4), 667-690.

Whiteley, P., Stewart, M.C., Sanders, D., Clarke, H.D. (2005). The issue agenda and voting in 2005. Parliamentary Affairs, 58(4), 802-817.

Zhu, J. H., & Boroson, W. (1997). Susceptibility to agenda setting: A cross-sectional and longitudinal analysis of individual differences. Communication and democracy: Exploring the intellectual frontiers in agenda-setting theory, 69-84.

Zucker, H. G. (1978). The variable nature of news media influence. Communication yearbook, 2, 225-240.;