

In a profoundly vicious and counterproductive circle, traditional news consumers are driven to alternatives to seek information of importance, audience base diminishes, forcing news organizations to relay more non-traditional information in attempt to attract and keep new audience which further dilutes traditional information which, in turn, weakens information audience attachment to product but does not fully attract consumers who want a full menu of non-traditional fare.

3. Having said all that, for time being in this period of transition, there is pertinent, solid research that shows that most people still consume national and international information via television; most find television inherently more trustworthy than any other medium; and though national media do not influence what people think OF particular issues in any profound way -- they do still have extraordinary effect on what people think ABOUT. The emphasis and tonnage of media coverage combine into a clear agenda setting function. Remember, that is because most consumers still think media ethos is to convey and order importance.

More importantly perhaps, there is clear evidence that having established their agenda setting purpose, media then influence their consumers' view about governance and leadership by assigning causality to leadership for problems. The popularity of government and leadership, in turn, varies with their efficacy in treating those issues and resolving them.

Some of this is the natural result of the relationship between media and its audiences and the trust those audiences invest in media. However, as news organizations determine to strengthen the attachment of a consumer by building not on that consumer's NEEDS but the consumers DESIRES, media has begun to pander to a variety of consumer impulses. In an alienated and frightened society, media has found it commercially rewarding to attack the effectiveness, and then, the legitimacy of government. It has tried in many ways to arrogate to itself the role of representation. In a world where the sophisticated information consumer is increasingly turning away from mass media, the distortion of both the news model and the role of media has run into less resistance than it might have otherwise.

So in pessimistic summary, we have had, and will continue to have for a while, a situation where mass media is the main source of information for most people; it determines its news agenda by commercially driven criteria; that news agenda is transmuted by the electorate into a public policy agenda and leadership is evaluated by the electorate and a sometimes hostile media by the way it hews to, and resolves, that agenda. This explains in large part government by risk avoidance.