Antti Ämmälä

CANDIDATE IMAGES IN THE 2007
FRENCH PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

University of Tampere
International School of Social Sciences
Department of Journalism and Mass Communication
Journalism and Mass Communication
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This study examines the political images of candidates competing for the French presidential office in 2007. The focus is both on the media and public projections of these images. The research investigates how the media affects the public's descriptions of political candidates. Furthermore, the public's images of candidates are examined in relation to their impact on the vote.

The influence of media on the public's focus of attention, referring to who and what people are thinking about, has been studied within the agenda-setting theory since the 1970's. More recently the theory has expanded to elaborate the influence of media on how people think about persons and topics in the news. This expanded version of the theory, defined as either the second-level agenda-setting or attribute agenda-setting, strengthens the media's impact on the audience. In this respect, the media not only tell us what to think about, but also tell us how to think about.

Combining the analysis of French editorials and opinion surveys, my study provides strong evidence for the second-level agenda-setting hypothesis within the context of presidential elections. The media's descriptions of both major candidates, Ségolène Royal and Nicolas Sarkozy, affected the public's evaluations of them. The tone employed in the media's descriptions of candidates, whether positive or negative, corresponded with the picture voters had in their minds. Consequently, the public images of candidates had a significant impact on voting choices.
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1 INTRODUCTION

Throughout the campaign preceding the first round of the 2007 French presidential elections political commentators raised discussion over the “qualities” and “faults” of the main candidates. Candidate images were on the media’s and voters’ lips especially a few days before the first round. For instance, the competence of the Socialist candidate Ségolène Royal was fiercely discussed. (Boy & Chiche 2008, p. 77.)

The electoral campaign of the 2007 French presidential elections was visibly marked by “the battle of images”, quite differently from the previous presidential elections five years earlier. The emphasis on the candidate images was seemingly due to the lack of major topic of discussion, contrary to the 2002 elections where the theme of insecurity became an important benchmark for both the media and voters. Due to the absence of a major topic to be discussed, some characteristics of the two main candidates, Ségolène Royal and Nicolas Sarkozy, were largely mediatised. This was the case especially with Royal's competence: it was constantly questioned since the presidential campaign started for real in January 2007. This media coverage was potentially going to influence negatively voters' evaluation of some aspects of her personality and place the incompetence as one of the main criteria in her evaluation when voters assessed their choices. (Perrineau 2008, p. 14; Gerstlé & Piar 2008, p. 41.)

“The battle of images” as the central characteristics of the recent presidential elections in France is a strong example of the importance of candidate images to modern elections. Most importantly, candidate images are considered as one of the factors to influence voters’ decision-making (e.g., Hacker 2004; Vedel 2007). However, the degree of this influence is questioned, especially in comparison to other factors such as partisanship. In the United States, according to Hacker (2004, p. 4), as the importance of parties to voter information and voting decisions have diminished, candidate images have gained a more important position in presidential elections. With the decline of parties, campaigns have become more candidate-centred, or
influenced by voter perceptions of candidates above and beyond their party membership. (ibid.)

In France, many voters do not see themselves anymore as strong supporters of a particular party. Instead, they have become rootless and electorally pragmatic in political terms. As consequence, professionals of political communication have asked candidates to depoliticise and personify their communication in order to reach these undecided or non-politicised voters. For instance, the mediatisation of intimacy in terms of politicians’ everyday life has grown during the recent years. Equally, television has significantly modified the political communication in personifying the campaigns. (Kuhn 2004, pp. 39-40; Maarek 2007, p. 157.)

However, one should bear in mind that there are three factors that make the French political life particularly distinctive. First, individual privacy, including that of politicians, is strictly protected by law. Secondly, tabloid culture is basically inexistent among the mainstream news media. This affects the content and tone of political journalism. In particular, the so-called attack journalism is less personalised than in the United Kingdom and the United States. Finally, the French public opinion is not easily shocked by certain behaviour of the nation’s politicians and do not regard some of their private failings to be a suitable criteria for the electoral decision-making. (Kuhn 2004, p. 40.)

In spite of these recent changes and hardly rooted characteristics of French political life, the study of the relationship between the media and politics has for long been marginal in France. In the case of elections, a great attention is usually paid to results and voting behaviour, while the campaign tactics and candidate strategies have gained less interest. For one part, the study of voting behaviour has mainly concentrated on long-term factors such as party-affiliation or socialisation to politics at the expense of forces that are usually considered to work over a shorter period of time, such as candidate images. (Neveu 1998, p. 439; Vedel 2007, p. 9.)
My thesis wishes to respond to this lack of research. Paying less attention to questions of voting behaviour, my study focuses on the media perspective of candidate images during the 2007 French presidential campaign. The core of the research lays at the impact of media on the public's perceptions of candidates. I draw from an area of research that has been active for nearly four decades, the agenda-setting theory. In its classical sense, the agenda-setting theory states that the media coverage of issues match with the public concern of those same topics (Kiousis et al. 1999; McCombs, 2004). While the majority of agenda-setting studies have concentrated on the influence of public issues, the theory has recently expanded to cover new objects such as candidate images. Characterised as the second-level agenda-setting or the attribute agenda-setting, the extended theory states that the media has an impact on how the public perceives the political candidates. The extended theory strengthens the media's impact on its audiences: the second-level of agenda-setting suggests that the media not only tell us what to think about, but also tell us how to think about objects (McCombs 2004, p. 71, emphasis in original).

In my research the examined political candidates are Ségolène Royal and Nicolas Sarkozy. Both were the major candidates of the 2007 presidential elections. Eventually, the elections were clearly won by the right-wing candidate Sarkozy. As both candidates were known for their willingness to pay careful attention to their public image, exposing eagerly their private lives as a part of this image construction (Kuhn 2007), it was interesting to see how the French media depicted the candidates during the campaign and what kind of impact this media coverage had on the public's perceptions. In order to reveal clear argumentation regarding candidate images and to limit my data to a decent number of articles, the editorials of two newspapers and two news magazines are examined. As the second part of my analysis, the descriptions of candidates found in the editorials are compared to the public opinion surveys conducted within the French Political Barometer and Electoral panel.
2 RESEARCH PROBLEM AND HYPOTHESIS

Since the beginning of 1970's, the agenda-setting research has demonstrated the centrality of media coverage to the focus of public opinion, the agenda of issues considered important by the public. Only more recently, the agenda-setting research has expanded to a new field, examining an agenda of attributes defining the very way we perceive and think about public issues, political candidates or other topics in the news. (e.g., McCombs, Llamas, Lopez-Escobar, & Rey 1997; Lee 2005.)

This second-level of agenda-setting has been further divided into two dimensions: substantive and affective. In the second-level agenda-setting literature employing the political candidates’ images, the substantive dimensions have been generally the candidates’ ideology, qualifications and personality. Accordingly, the affective dimensions have been the tones - positivity, negativity and neutrality - in candidates’ images presented in the news reports. (ibid.)

The attributes forming the images of the candidates can be analysed in terms of both a substantive dimension and an affective dimension. Specifically in terms of second-level agenda-setting effects, this study hypothesises:

1) The agenda of substantive attributes of candidates (e.g., descriptions of their personality) depicted in the editorials influences the agenda of substantive attributes defining the images of candidates among voters.
2) The agenda of affective attributes of candidates (positive and negative descriptions) presented in the editorials influences the agenda of affective attributes defining the images of the candidates among voters.

I begin my thesis by defining the essence of candidate images, their influence on the vote and the growing interest of politicians and the media to involve questions of private life in the formation of these images. The case of France is compared to the global tendency to report increasingly on the personal life of political actors. I will then deal with other characteristics that influence the formation of candidate images in
the case of French presidential elections. Both questions of legislation and political culture restricting the political expression are discussed.

The chapter five is the largest part of my thesis. It connects the study of candidate images to the agenda-setting theory. The chapter includes a detailed discussion of the recent convergence of the agenda-setting theory with another major communication concept, framing. I will then introduce the methodology and data of my research. Having left behind the theoretical framework, the chapter seven presents the results of my study. Both the editorial descriptions of candidates in question and their correspondence with the public's assessments are discussed. The focus is on the aspects of candidate images that dominated over others in the media and the public agenda. I finish my thesis by summing up the major findings of my research and their relevance to the current tendencies in the field of political communication. Equally, the last chapter will assess how I succeeded in my thesis and discuss its shortcomings.

3 POLITICAL IMAGE

Presidential elections are, to a great extent, competitions of persons. They emphasise the personalities and qualities of those taking part of this game; both the media and voters measure candidates' experience, their ability to govern, and character, in order to see which one of the participants meet the demands of the presidential post. From this perspective, the electoral campaign has the tendency to become personalised and organise itself around the image of the candidate. (Vedel 2007, p. 29.) In this chapter I examine the very essence of this image, its impact to voters' decision-making and the mediatisation of politicians' private lives as a growing manifestation of image-centered politics.

3.1 Definitions of image

People use the word 'image' in numerous ways. The very word comes from the Latin “imago” which is an imitation or a copy (Benoit & McHale 2004, p. 49). The Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary online (2005) gives five entries for the word 'image'.
According to the first entry, image is “the impression that a person, an organization or a product, etc. gives to the public”. For instance, it can be said that “His public image is very different from the real person”. Image can also be defined as “a mental picture that you have of what somebody or something is like or looks like”. Thirdly, the dictionary defines image as “a copy of somebody or something in the form of a picture or statue”. Image can also be seen as “a picture of somebody or something seen in a mirror, through a camera, or on a television or computer”. Its fifth definition refers to “a word or phrase used with a different meaning from its normal one, in order to describe something in a way that produces a strong picture in the mind”. An example of this is “poetic images of the countryside”.

Understanding of images in politics derives from the term’s use in other areas, especially, in public relations, popular culture and campaign politics. In the area of candidate images in politics, Kenneth Boulding’s definition of image in his classic book *The Image* (1973) has served as a reference point to understanding the concept. Boulding concluded that image is a subjective knowledge structure that, on the other hand, evolve and change as we confront the surrounding world. (Nimmo & Savage 1976, p. 3; Boulding 1973). Boulding's definition of image describes also the two main characteristics that are given to image in everyday language (see The Oxford’s Advanced Dictionary above). Images are, one the hand “mental pictures” that each one of us has of something or somebody, but also “impressions” that are given or “feed” to us. Boulding (1973) calls this double-nature of image as the message-image relationship.

There are three presidential candidate image definitions in political communication research. The first model is known as the candidate-driven image or the stimulus-determined view of candidate image. It’s primarily formed of the candidate’s messages to voters. The first model emphasises the attributes, style and technique the candidate uses in the campaign. This definition of presidential candidate images is the oldest model and also the most contested today. The second model is the voter-driven image or the perceiver-determined view of candidate image. The model suppose that voters give attributes to candidates and that these attributes form their images. It
highlights the voters’ predispositions, such as partisanship and socio-demographic characteristics, in the image formation. The third definition is the candidate-voter interactive view of images. It assumes that the voters form their own candidate images but that these images are affected by the candidate’s messages to voters and campaign events. (Denton & Woodward 2000; Hacker 2004, p. 5; Nimmo & Savage 1976, pp. 205-206.) This last definition is also the basis of my thesis: the agenda-setting hypothesis assumes that candidate images are formed of interaction between the media representations and the public's own perceptions.

One of the most significant features of candidate images is that they can be changed. This is justified by the importance of political consultants, participation in debates, and sums of money spent on advertising in order to create and shape images. Changes occur in candidate images during and between campaigns. Sometimes the evolutions in media and in the eyes of the public opinion are significant, or even spectacular in nature. This was the case with the former French Prime Minister Edouard Balladur during the presidential race of 1995. In a few months time his image deteriorated considerably. Sometimes changes in candidates images can, however, be subtle. (Vedel 2007, p. 158; Hacker 2004, p. 13; Nimmo & Savage 1976, p. 206.)

In the field of candidate image studies scholars have for decades disagreed about the significance of issues in the candidate image formation. The candidate images have been defined as source credibility traits or persona impressions. Candidate’s positions, for their part, have been left without much of attention and considered not being part of the image construct. Later research has argued that candidate images do consist of both issue and impressions related to the personality of candidate. The distinction has prevailed, because of the assumption that voters process more features related to the persona impressions than to issue position perceptions. However, based on empirical studies, it has been shown that in most presidential elections in the United States, there is a positive relationship between issue orientations and candidate support. Moreover, the relative weight of persona and issue impressions can vary according to the candidates, voters and elections. (Hacker 2004, p. 13; Hacker, Zakahi, Giles, & McQuitty 2000, p. 227.)
3.2 Weight of image in the voters' decision-making

The study of candidate images is often justified by the assumption that images affect voters’ decision-making (Hellweg 2004, p. 23). In their classic work *Candidates and Their Images* (1976) Dan Nimmo and Robert Savage stated that one side of candidate images, such as affection and feelings of liking and disliking, is the single most important explanation of voting decision-making in the context of U.S. presidential elections. However, most of the scholars are more reserved with the influence (Hellweg 2004, p. 23). Vedel (2007, p. 157) concludes that candidate images seem to be one of the factors that influence the voting behaviour.

The importance of image to voting, whether more or less strong, derives from changes in electoral behaviour in Western democracies. The core features of these changes are expressed in factors that explain voting decisions. Voting choice seems to be now less dependent on long-term determinants, most importantly on social clivages, such as voters' religion and social class, and, on the other hand, partisanship. The decline of these factors has resulted in the individualisation of electoral behaviour. In these terms, the focus of attention has moved to the short-term factors explaining the vote, in particular to variables attached to effects of electoral campaigns, such as the influence of major themes and candidate images. (for an overview see Gerstlé 1996.)

The shift of focus to effects of electoral campaigns is explained by the fact that long-term determinants are poor in explaining instability and change in voters' behaviour. While long-term factors are structural determinants, explaining electoral stability, short-term factors can be characterised as conjunctural, explaining change in electoral behaviour. (e.g., Carrigou 1989.) The importance of these conjunctural factors is highlighted by the fact that all elections take place in specific circumstances and that all these circumstances have more or less significant and enduring effects on the outcomes of elections. These conjunctural factors matter the most when it comes to themes and candidates of elections in question. While parties and political tendencies
remain relatively stable in nature, candidates can vary significantly. (Gaxie 1989, pp. 28-32.)

Even though candidate images matter more than before, their weight is always restricted with voter's own predispositions, such as partisanship and ideology. This was already noticed in one of the first major voting studies to concentrate on voters' perceptions of candidates, conducted during the 1940 U.S. presidential elections. To put it simply, researchers found that voters pay selective attention to campaign information and expose themselves to campaign messages that, above all, support their own perceptions of candidates. The research, along with a few other major voting studies, ended up in the conclusion that voters perceive candidates very selectively. This selectiveness expressed itself in several ways: voters perceive, or misperceive, the campaign information to conform to their own predispositions, usually with regards to partisanship; voters remember and forget messages and their content in a selective manner; and they selectively respond to candidates' appeals. (Nimmo & Savage 1976, pp. 14-15.)

At least in the context of U.S. presidential elections, partisanship and ideology seem to be the most important factors to influence voters' perceptions of candidates. In the U.S., the influence of ideological questions seems to be less important than the partisanship. (ibid., pp. 90-91.) Some studies have, for their part, indicated that the importance of images to voters' assessments depend on the level of politisation and the interest for politics of the person in question. On the one hand, voters who are highly politicised and hold high interest for the elections seem to evaluate candidates in more complex ways, taking into account, above all, their political programmes and declarations. On the other hand, those who are little politicised and hardly interested in politics tend to rely on shortcuts that allow them to rapidly evaluate a candidate. Candidate image is one of those shortcuts. (Vedel 2007, p. 157.)

In France, two long-term determinants, party identification and ideology, have traditionally defined voting choices. However, whether one of these two is more important than the other, is subject to enduring debate. On the one hand, it is argued
that party identification is the dominant factor in determining voting choices. On the other hand, many French voting researchers hold that left-right ideological orientations matter more than party identification. The weight of ideology over party identification is due to two major reasons: the fragmentation of the French party system and the lack of stability in party names. While research in the U.S. has come to the conclusion that party identification matters the most, France seems to fall into the same category with other Western European democracies where the importance of party identification has been more or less questioned. (Fleury & Lewis-Beck 1993; Bélanger, Lewis-Beck, Chiche, & Tiberj 2006.)

The relative weight of candidates images in comparison these traditional determinants is somehow an unanswered question and subject to little research in France. Among the few, Peirce (2002) examined how the candidate images, such as personality and leadership qualities, have affected the electorate's behaviour and the electoral outcome in presidential elections. The study concentrated on the extent to which the traditional left-right dimension, a strong long-term force to influence voting in France, can be showed to play a role in electorate's behaviour and the outcome of elections. Furhermore, the study investigated whether there were elections where one candidate had a clear advantage over the other in terms of personal popularity or perceived leadership attributes. In this respect, the study aimed at evaluating whether the left-right dimension was weaker at those elections where personal qualities seemed to be stronger.

Peirce (2002, p. 126) concluded that the public's assessments of candidates is restricted by long-term variables, such as partisanship and ideology. On the basis of six presidential elections examined, Peirce suggests that the weight of images to voters' decision-making seem to be strongest in elections where voters perceived very differently leadership qualities of the candidates in question. Candidate images have counted in those French presidential elections where there have been heroic leadership or particularly tight races. The unanchored voters pleased with specific candidate images may have supplied the margin of victory in such closes races as the presidential elections of 1974 and 1995.
In conclusion, it is frequently brought up that electoral campaigns influence only little voters' decision-making, for most partisans vote for their own party's candidate. Equally, only a minority of voters do not follow the usual patterns of voting, such as voting with party, ideology, and casting the vote in favour of an incumbent who has performed well in economics or foreign policy. This view, however, do not take into account the fact that campaigns influence above all the undecided voters and swing voters, who, at the end, can turn the election to one's favour. As for the media, its agenda-setting and priming role during the campaigns for the perceptions of candidates can not be ignored. (Hacker 2004, p. 12.)

3.3 Mediatisation of politicians' private lives

Politicians can be seen to work within several spheres, in other words worlds, of political action. At least three distinct spheres of action can distinguished, even though all of these worlds are more or less interwined. First, there is the sphere of political institutions and processes. Within this world politicians establish their identity as politicians and develop their careers. Second, there is the world of public and popular. In this sphere politicians are seen as 'public figures', subject to constant attention from the part of the media. The world of public and popular can be seen as "the stage where, for instance, politicians develop reputations, draw varying levels of support, are judged as good or bad, undergo meteoric or steady advancement, decline, resign or are sacked". (Corner 2003, pp. 72-74.)

A third sphere is the private one. It enters often in relation with other spheres, for the private and personal background of a politician will form their identity and career in political institutions as well as in their public projections. With reference to the world of public and popular, the private sphere is now more than ever being used as a political resource, manufacturing, for instance, political identity and helping in its repair after a phase of difficulties. (ibid., pp. 75-76.) It is also in this growing cooperation or exploitatation of these two spheres, the public and private, where candidates' image projections find their newest impetus.
The personal life of political actors is nowadays broadly reported and commented upon in 'quality' and as well as 'populist' media formats. As consequence, the line that has traditionally defined the public and private is being aggressively redrawn. This transformation has provoked an ongoing debate about whether the coverage of politicians' private lives is in the public interest and where the boundaries between the public and private should be drawn. The answers to these questions seem to depend on the news and political culture of the country in question. (Stanyer & Wring, 2004, pp. 1 and 6.)

With regards to where the boundaries between the public and the private should be drawn, countries seem to fall into two broad categories. In the highly laissez-faire media cultures, such as the United Kingdom and the United States, the exposure of politicians' private lives are considered by many journalists as fair, particularly when politicians have taken advantage of their personal lives for publicity purposes. In the U.K. and the U.S. unauthorised revelations tend to appear in tabloid-style publications. The editors of these publications justify the line of conduct by the provision information that helps the public to evaluate politicians' authenticity, trustworthiness and competence to govern. (Stanyer & Wring, 2004, p. 6.)

The more conservative group of countries include autocratic regimes in the Middle East, but also established democracies such as Spain and France. In these countries journalists have been fairly unwilling to report on politicians' private lives, even if these matters are not new to the journalist community in question. The journalistic culture in these countries seems to be reticent in intruding into politicians' personal affairs. This practice is reinforced by state controls and privacy laws. When speaking of democracies, the press has been the most unwilling to intrude in countries where citizens have constitutionally guaranteed rights to privacy. (ibid., pp. 6-7.)

When one leaves aside legislation and journalistic cultures, there is clearly a trend towards a more intrusive political reporting. This change both reflects and is heightened by the growth of market-driven tabloid media and the rise of personality
politics. Moreover, the highly competitive tabloid news culture has helped to alter traditional journalistic cultures and deferential attitudes towards political elites. As consequence, this more intrusive style of reporting has strengthened a more conflictual and mutually suspicious relationship between the politicians and journalists. (ibid., p. 7.)

But what do we mean when we speak of public and private in politics? Separating the public from the private in the mediatisation of politics requires consideration on the status of information and the process of its dissemination (here the term mediatisation is used both as the media's and politicians' willingness to expose one's private affairs to the public). When it comes to the status of information, it seems to be useful to think in terms of a continuum where full publicity lays at one end and full secrecy at the other. A broad range of different possibilities can be found between these two extremes. Similarly, the process of dissemination of information via the news media into the public is complexe. For instance, does the politician want the information to be public through the media or not? Once again, there are no simple affirmative or negative answers, for it can be sometimes difficult to find out politicians' intentions and measure the final outcome (negative of positive) of the spread information. Another important facet of this process is its overt/covert nature. For instance, the frequent use of both on- and off-the-record briefings by journalists in their relations to politicians may result in the dissemination of information that was not intended by the part of the politician. (Kuhn, 2007, pp. 187-188.)

The combinaison of these different features creates three categories that help to analyse the mediatisation of politicians' private lives (ibid., p. 188):

1) Public revelations – information that been voluntarily disseminated into the public sphere by a politician via an overt, public process, as in an on-the-record press conference or televised presidential address.

2) Private revelations – information that has been voluntarily spread into the public sphere by a politician through a covert, non-public process, as in an off-the-record briefing to journalists.
3) Public secrets – information that has been involuntarily disseminated into the public sphere, in other words against politician's own will, via journalistic investigation, briefing by a political opponent, unauthorised leak or by chance.

In addition to these three categories, there is the category of private secrets, referring to information that a politician manages successfully to keep in the private sphere. However, there is no guarantee that these secrets will forever remain private. For instance, the publication of memoirs or the declassification of official documents can turn private matters into public ones. In practice, news stories often cross these analytic categories. For instance, the unwanted mediatisation of an aspect of a politician's private life (public secret) is usually followed by a response from the politician. This response can combine open media appearances (public revelations) and behind-the-scenes briefings of trusted journalists (private revelations). (Kuhn, 2007, p. 189.)

4.3.1 The case of France

In France, the interface between the public and the private spheres has been marked by three distinct features: a high level of legal protection accorded to private lives provided by the legislation introduced in the 1970's applicable to all citizens; the lack of a tabloid news culture among the mainstream media, affecting the content, style and tone of political coverage; and a growing unwillingness of the public to consider certain aspects of politician's private lives – such as sexual orientation, marital status or religious practice – as important benchmarks to evaluate politicians' fitness to hold public office. For a long time, these features have distinguished France from other advanced liberal democratic societies, such as the U.K. and the U.S., in terms of how the private lives of politicians are mediatised into the public sphere. (Kuhn 2004, p. 40; Kuhn 2007, pp. 185-186.)

However, a mixture of politicians' voluntary revelations and exposure by journalists has added to the growing mediatisation of politicians' private lives in recent years.
There is a number of reasons to this development. They can all be analysed in three bilateral relationships: politicians and voters; media and audiences; politicians and journalists. Significant changes in all of these relationships have blurred or altered the line between the private and the public in French political communication. (Kuhn 2007, p. 193.)

4.3.1.2 The growing personalisation of politics

Politicians' quest for the mediatisation of their private lives is an important part of election campaigns. For instance, private affairs are disseminated to the public through the use of strategies that create impressions of intimacy and ordinariness. This type of mediatisation belongs to a broad process of political marketing, electoral positioning and image protection to create a recognisable political persona with whom voters can identify. Personal character traits such as honesty, integrity, competence, trustworthiness and sincerity are combined with political statements, issue positions and policy proposals in order to create a coherent package. This package is then communicated to the electorate via numerous media outlets and is constantly reshaped in response to focus group feedback and opinion poll findings. (Kuhn, 2007, pp. 193-194.)

Wide changes in the French political realm explain this phenomenon. A greater weight than in the past is given to non-ideological variables of differentiation in electoral competition. This tendency is due to at least three reasons. The ideological conflict across the political spectrum, embodied in the querelles over nationalisation/privatisation, has diminished since the late 1980's. The traditional left/right cleavage has equally declined. The success with regards to durability of three experiences of executive cohabitation since 1986 has for its part diminished the salience of ideological questions. Politicians have in equal terms contributed to, or being affected by, desacralisation, banalisation or demystification of political leadership. Instead of presenting themselves as part of an elite living on a different level than the electorate, party leaders and presidential candidates increasingly make
efforts to listen to the concerns of ordinary voters. (Kuhn, 2005, p. 319; Kuhn, 2007, p. 194.)

Changes in the voters' behaviour and attitudes have also affected politicians' campaign strategies. French voters have become more volatile and no longer see themselves as uncompromised and committed supporters of a particular political party. Since the 1970's some traditional societal divisions such as class and religion have diminished in electoral significance, while others such as gender and race have increased in importance. As consequence, politicians cannot simply rely on activating political allegiances by appealing to voters' membership of or support for a particular political tradition. Nor are voters easily persuaded merely via a process of rational engagement. It is also important to captivate their attention by appealing to their emotions. (Kuhn 2004, p. 39; Kuhn 2007, p. 194-195.)

French voters have become increasingly more difficult to mobilise. Since the 1980's presidential and parliamentary elections turn-outs are generally lower than before. The voter abstentionism has firmly grown in the last twenty years. The activation of young voters is particularly difficult. While voting is still the number one form of political participation for the majority of people, a significant portion of French choose another type of participation, such as demonstrations, as their first choice to make a difference. Especially young generations and supporters of left-wing parties can easily privilege forms of political participation that reach beyond the voting act. In the face of strong abstentionism and other forms of political participation, politicians may choose to emphasise their private lives as an important element of differentiating themselves from the competitors and of their personal appeal to unsatisfied voters. (Muxel 2006, pp. 1-5; Kuhn 2007, p. 195.)

Both major candidates for the presidential elections of 2007, Nicolas Sarkozy and Ségolène Royal, have been eager to mediatise aspects of their private lives in the past. The mediatisation of privacy has been especially at the core of Sarkozy's media strategy. This mediatisation has concerned, above all, his ex-spouse Cécilia Sarkozy and his family in general. Until their marital problems became the big news of the
summer 2005, the couple's close relationship had been mediatised in its full extent by Sarkozy himself (Kuhn 2007, p. 192). The promotion of a spouse, providing a more rounded, human image, has been particularly useful for Sarkozy whose image is based on firmness and order, much due to his post as the strong Interior Minister. In addition to family values, Sarkozy has been equally eager to project an image of good health. Media pictures of Sarkozy cycling and jogging have intended to send out the message that he is in a good shape, and, therefore, capable of meeting the demands of a top job. These pictures have also supported one of the key aspects of Sarkozy's image as a dynamic 'man of action'. (ibid., pp. 190-192.)

Royal, for her part, has attached her image to family values. For instance, during her time as a government minister, Royal famously meditated her role as a 'working mother' by allowing the press and television to take photographs of her in hospital after the birth of her fourth child. Royal has been also interested in the mediatisation of relationship with his now former compagnon François Hollande, who is the leader of the Socialist party. In a way, the duo Royal-Hollande created a counterforce to the Sarkozy couple, or vice-versa. However, while Sarkozy has used the mediatisation of his family as a means to soften his image, Royal has attempted to take advantage of her gender, and in particular her role as a mother, in connecting them to positions she has adopted on certain political issues, such as opposition to pornography on television and violence in schools. (Artufel & Duroux 2006, p. 46; ibid., pp. 192-193.)

4.3.1.3 Improved opportunities for the self-promotion

Contemporary France has highly competitive media markets as a result of multiplication in outlets, mostly in radio, television and electronic media, such as internet. This multiplication has led to an aggressive pursuit of both audiences and advertising revenue. Media outlets seek to turn changes in popular taste into commercial gain. For politicians the multiplication of outlets has meant possibilities to distribute information through a wide spectrum of channels as well as improved opportunities for the promotion of their personal image. (Kuhn 2004, p. 1; Kuhn 2007, p. 195.)
In France, as in other Western democracies, the biggest mass mediums have become the principal sources of political information. The most significant of all, for thirty years, is television. 58% of French declare using television as their primary source of political information. Almost three out four say they watch television news programs regularly. Voters also consider television as the most reliable source of political information. (Vedel 2007, p. 182.)

For most of the population, the news broadcasts of the free-to-air channels TF1 (advertising funded commercial channel) and France 2 (public service channel) are the main sources of national political information. For instance, around ten million French watch the TF1 evening news every day. In the meanwhile, traditional political debate programmes have reduced in number since the 1990's, especially from the private channels. The main reason to this decline is their inability to attract sufficient audiences. For instance, TF1 and M6 (advertising-funded commercial channel) barely cover politics outside election campaigns, except as a part of their news programmes. (Kuhn, 2004, p. 25; Kuhn, 2007, p. 195-196.)

Contrary to the power of television, the French press has low sales figures in comparison to several major western European democracies. At the end of the twentieth century only 149 newspapers were sold in France for every 1000 inhabitants. The gap is significant when compared with 299 newspapers in Germany and 321 in the UK. The French newspaper scene especially lacks a daily with a large nationwide circulation; none of the national dailies has even a circulation of half-a-million copies per day. Three out four French never read a daily national paper. Due to the absence of strong national dailies there is no equivalent of the popular agenda-setting influence or mobilising impact of the mass-market British tabloids. Instead of the national titles, the newspaper scene is dominated by regional publications, which in most cases have gained nearly a monopoly position in their own geographical market. (Kuhn 2004, p. 25-26.)
While the overall circulation of general information newspapers is in decline, magazine sales have held up or been in rise. In particular, celebrity magazines (la presse people) such as *Voici* and *Gala* have gained more readership. Every week approximately 2,5 million French purchase this type of celebrity magazine and more than 13 million French read them. The popularity of these magazines offers politicians a tempting way to reach voters. Above all, it enables targeting sections of the electorate who do not usually read general information newspapers and follow traditional political programmes in television or radio. For instance, the now former Sarkozy couple featured widely on the pages of *Gala* and *Paris Match* on several occasions in the past, with the purpose to present the authentic persona behind the politician. (Kuhn 2007, p. 195-196.)

4.3.1.4 From the culture of deference to the practices of exposure journalism

Traditionally in France the relationship between politicians and journalists has been characterised by a high degree of deference on the part of journalists towards politicians. In the early years of the Fifth Republic journalists working in the mainstream news treated the political elite, especially the president, with kid gloves. This culture of deference has continued to exist, most visibly in broadcast interviews, and by close ties between these two agents; leading politicians and journalists spend their time in the same circles and get to know each other well. Even affairs of the heart, including marriages between politicians and journalists are not out of usual. (Kuhn 2007, 198; Kuhn 2004, p. 316.)

However, alongside with this culture of deference has developed a practice of investigative and exposure journalism, a journalism of irreverence, for a long time unusual in the tradition of French journalism. The satiristic newspaper *Le Canard Enchaîné*, indulged in exposure journalism since its very beginning, served as an example. For instance, in the early 1970's the newspaper published the tax returns of the then prime minister, Jacques Chaban-Delmas, and contributed to his destabilisation in the Gaullist party. In the 1980's and 1990's close ties between the judiciary and the media made the cases of corruption against leading politicians to
stay in the news. But this time it was not just Le Canard Enchainé. This type of coverage also made the front-page of such mainstream news outlets as Le Monde and L'Express. Le Monde also adopted a highly adversial attitude towards president François Mitterrand, in particular during his second term of office, revealing scandals such as his wartime association with the collaborationist Vichy regime. (Neveu, 1998, p. 452; Kuhn, 2005, p. 318; Kuhn, 2007, p. 198.)

During the recent years the journalistic deference towards the political class has been clearly in decline. This change of culture has been evident in the selection of stories and the tone of coverage. There has even emerged a French equivalent of the Anglo-American practice of personalised attack journalism, embodied, for instance, in a series of critical books on now former president Jacques Chirac. In general, the change in reporting has been more visible in the print than in the broadcast media. Radio and television journalists tend to treat politicians delicately. Especially the French president appearing in formal interviews of the major networks is being asked easy questions and not subjected to rigorous interrogation. Outside the mainstream news programmes, such as in chat shows, the tone is now seemingly more critical than before. (Neveu, 1998, p. 452; Kuhn, 2005, pp. 317-319; Kuhn, 2007, p. 198.)

However, one should not exaggerate the recent decline in journalistic deference. For instance, French politicians remain largely outside certain types of investigative journalism. Especially exposure of sexual orientation and behaviour is largely off-limits in the mainstream news media. This does not mean that the French public is uninterested of politicians' sexual behaviour. For instance, the scandal magazine Voici, covering such topics, enjoys a high circulation. However, the sexual behaviour of public figures is not seen as a factor to influence their suitability for public responsibilities. In particular, voters do not seem to regard sexual infidelity in private life as synonouss with untrustworthiness in the public life. (Kuhn, 2004, p. 37; Kuhn, 2005, p. 319.)

In conclusion, it is evident that the personalisation of electoral campaigns has grown in France during recent years. This has led to a more vaguely defined boundary
between private and public in the mediatisation of politicians both by themselves and and by the media. In these respects, France is catching up with aspects of media and political behaviour which are considered common in other advanced liberal democracies. At the same time politicians can now control much less what comes public than a few years ago. This evolution seems to be independent of the tough privacy legislation. The higher degree of exposure seems to derive from the routinisation of Internet as an effective means to spread information and the decline of journalistic deference towards political class. Due to the imperatives of voter outreach, the impact of technological developments, the pressures of media markets and the public's desire for revelation, it is ever more difficult for politicians and the media not to indulge in the mediation of intimacy and the exposure of secrets. (Kuhn 2007, pp. 197 and 199.)

4 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN FRANCE

Electoral campaigns are the great moments of political life. They celebrate the values of democracy, mobilise citizens and raise debates. And at least in France, it is especially the presidential elections that command, structure and organise the political life. Both parties and great political leaders organise their endeavours according to this central competition of the Fifth Republic. (Vedel 2007, pp. 9 and 17.) In this chapter, I shall present the main characteristics of the French presidential elections. The chapter begins with an introduction to president's role in French politics. Then I shall present different legal and cultural limitations to the functioning of presidential campaign communication. The chapter finishes with an overview of the fundamental evolutions of the presidential campaign communication since the 1960's.

4.1 President as the key actor in political life

The importance of presidential elections for French political life derives, above all, from two factors: the constitutional powers of president and his or her election by universal suffrage. Since 2002 the role of president in French political life has even accentuated. This derives from the modification of presidential term from seven to
five years, synchronising it with the mandate of National Assembly. However, regardless of the institutions in place, the presidentialisation of the French political system depends greatly on the style of gouvernance of president. (Vedel. 2007, pp. 17-18.)

The Constitution of 1958, which established the Fifth Republic, increased significantly the presidential powers in comparison to precedent regimes. President was positioned at the heart of the French political system and given the first title of the Constitution. President seizes both proper and shared powers. Two of the proper these powers guarantee him a dominant position vis-à-vis other political actors: the ability to nominate Prime Minister and disband the Parliament. Second, the president can display powers that are shared, in other words, decisions taken in the name of these powers have to be signed also by the Prime Minister or government. These features of power distinguish the French political system from most European countries and approaches it, to a certain extent, with the American political system. (Vedel, 2007, p. 19.)

The centrality of the French presidential elections do not merely derive from constitutional powers, but also from the way president has been elected since 1965. Due to the Constitutional revision of 1962, the presidential elections of 1965 were held on universal suffrage. The universal suffrage has given president the direct legitimacy of people which is in these terms equal to that of National Assembly. However, even though both of these institutions represent the will of people, the president does it in a more solid and less fragmented way than the National Assembly. (ibid., pp. 23-24.)

Recently, a new configuration has presidentialised the French political system even more. Since 2002 the president is elected for five years instead of seven. The duration of term is equal to that of National Assembly. The modification of the term brought about the elections of these two institutions to same year, the president being elected in April or in May, and the National Assembly in June. The new configuration has accentuated the role of president. The parliamentary elections seem to serve more than
before as a process to guarantee the president with the parliamentary majority that he or she needs to execute his policy. (ibid., p. 25.)

A new degree of presidentialisation is not, however, self-evident. On the one hand, it is possible that French voters chose deliberately or by accident a president, for instance, from the left side of the political spectrum and give the right-wing parties a majority in National Assembly. On the other hand, the growing presidentialisation of institutions depends also greatly on the governing style of the president in question. Even though he or she can be given a parliamentary majority, it does not involve that the president has to behave like the “superboss” of the government and submit the Prime Minister as a sort of General Secretary. (ibid., pp. 27-28.)

In the presidential elections of 2007 two opposed views of the role of the president seemed to collide, as Vedel (ibid., p. 28) notes. Nicolas Sarkozy presented himself, above all, as captain, decided to turn a new page in the history of France and launch himself to the construction of the country after the elections. Sarkozy seemed to summarise his vision as follows: “I am going to tell you what I am going to do and I'll do what I say”. Ségolène Royal introduced herself more as a referee, paying close attention to the diversity of preoccupations of voters, regardless of their political orientation, and insisting more on the values than future actions. Equally, she seemed to look for a constant state of listening with voters. Royal's vision could be summarised as follows: “I am going to do what you tell me to do”.

4.2 Rules of the game

In France, the rules of the presidential elections are based on the Constitution, laws and decrees. These rules can be organised along three categories in terms of their nature: rules that organise the practical processus of elections, such as the polling system; rules regulating the financing of campaigns; and rules that define the allowed of prohibited means of communication. (Vedel 2007, p. 35-36.) Of these three, the last category is the most relevant for my purposes, for it shows how different rules
modify the practices of campaign communication and, consequently, influence the political images of candidates.

The political publicity, defined as the purchase of space for the diffusion of a message, is highly restricted in France. Television spots with political purpose are completely prohibited by law since 1990. Traditionally, this prohibition is justified by two arguments. First, it is a question of granting candidates with certain equality. In the same sense, the purpose of the law is to prevent the richest candidates from using channels of communication that their rivals could not use because of money. Second, there is fear that the political publicity in television would deteriorate the political debate and favour practices of communication that would deteriorate the political message. In this respect, it is above all the language of the television spots and their inner logic that is seen as harmful. However, with regards to political publicity in television, the control is not as severe as it seems. In Europe, several other countries have legislation that bans political publicity in television. (Vedel 2007, p. 130.)

As for the usage of publicity in other mediums, the law is slightly more liberal. Candidates can use publicity in the press, Internet and billboards during the beginning of the campaign. This means that the publicity is not anymore allowed after the first of January. This touches to a certain extent also Internet. In the past, the prohibition applied only for the last two weeks of the campaign, in other words during the official campaign period. In all, the severe regulation of the political publicity has led to a total disappearance of this form of expression. Among the professionals of publicity the regulation has been highly criticised for it seems to prevent candidates from using an independent form of political expression and highlight the role of television as the main channel of campaign communication, privileging candidates who are the most well-known. The regulation adds for the inequality of campaigning among candidates, deteriorating the political communication that can not anymore combine different forms of expression and different tones. (ibid., pp. 131-132.) The only direct access to audiovisual media left is the very short airtime given free to candidates or political parties on Public broadcast channels and to the final 'decisive debates' (Maarek 2007, p. 151).
Similarly to publicity, the direct marketing of candidates and their ideas is rare. By definition, the direct marketing refers to the by-passing of mass-media by the promotion of candidates directly to voters. The direct marketing can involve mailing (by post or Internet), telephone calls or face-to-face meeting with voters. While some candidates have relied on mailing campaigns through post, the use of different types of direct marketing is seldom in France in comparison to other countries such as the United States and United Kingdom. This difference can be explained by two factors. Once again the legislation is fairly strict. It is prohibited to collect or treat different types of personal information. This disposition makes it clearly harder to use direct marketing to political ends. Equally, it is a question of culture. In France, it is not common to express publicly one's political opinions. Information concerning the voting-choice is regarded as belonging to the private sphere of life. (ibid., pp. 133-134.)

A high level of legal protection accorded to private life of citizens and politicians is one of the distinct features of French political life (Kuhn 2004, p. 40). The restrictions on direct marketing are only one example of this protection. Apart from strong legislation, the protection of private life is equally a question of culture. In France, it is generally admitted that the private life of politicians do not belong to the public discussion (Vedel 2007, p. 256), event though this non-written rule seems to be more flexible than ever before, as we shall see. The consequences of the status of private life are discussed more in details in Chapter 4.

In addition to rules concerning political publicity and direct marketing, the requirements of pluralism are the core of mediatisation of politics in France. This requirement is not merely a principle guiding the work of journalists. The law imply that the pluralism is guaranteed in radio and television. The watchdog of pluralism is Superior council of audiovisual media (Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel, CSA). Until 2000 the council guaranteed the pluralism by the requirement of equal air-time for three types of actors: members of government; personalities of parliamentary majority; and personalities of parliamentary opposition. In January 2000, the rule was
slightly modified. It improved the position of opposition and gave non-parliamentary
groups the right to air-time. (Vedel 2007, pp. 138-139.)

As for presidential elections, the council distinguishes three periods during which the
audiovisual media is submitted to strict obligations. During the pre-election period,
finishing one month before the first round, radio and television have to cover
candidates' actions according to the rule of equality. This requirement of equality
remains more or less the same until the very beginning of the official campaign
period. During the official campaign, the rule of equality touches all areas from the
speech time to the organisation of televised debates. For instance, if one candidate is
at the centre of a reportage that lasts one minute, all other candidates have to be
entitled to same treatment. In all, the rule of equality during presidential campaigns is
considered as democratic, even though difficult in application when the number of
candidates is high. (ibid., pp. 140-141.)

4.3 Presidential campaign communication and its evolutions

Professionalisation is perhaps the most commonly used keyword to describe
contemporary practices in political communication. Although subject to contested
nature, professionalisation could be described as “a process of change, in the field of
politics and communication as elsewhere, that, either explicitly or implicitly, brings
about a better and more efficient – and more studied – organisation of resources and
skills in order to achieve desired objectives, whatever they might be”. In the field of
modern election campaigns, the use of polls and political consultants, for instance, are
probably the best examples of this professionalisation. (Papathanassopoulos, Negrine,
Mancini, & Holtz-Bacha 2007, pp. 9-10.) Similarly to other democracies, this
professionalisation has penetrated deep into French political life (Maarek 2007, p.
145). However, the invasion did not happen in a day, as we shall see. While the
evolutions of political communication are not limited to elections only, the following
presentation concerns, above all, presidential campaign communication and the
effects of its changes to candidate images.
The introduction of modern political marketing techniques in France is most commonly associated with the first direct presidential elections held in 1965. It brought about a personalisation of campaigning that was expressed through the usage of political advertising and television. (Maarek 2007, p. 146; Delporte 2001, p. 2.)

The methods of political marketing were most eagerly used by a then unknown centrist candidate Jean Lecanuet. He hired as his main advisor a marketing consultant by the name of Michel Bongard who had spent several months in the United States to learn new campaign techniques. Lecanuet took advantage of the new ways to portrait a candidate in campaign advertisements. Lecanuet's campaign was based on a personal image that consisted of younghood, dynamism and modernity. This image was communicated through one single photo were the candidate appeared smiling. The photo was used to various purposes. It made the cover of his widely spread political programme. It appeared on several items of campaign material, such as postcards and pens. His political advertisements were especially present on the walls of cities and towns. In Paris, large billboard advertisements of Lecanuet invaded the city. For the first time in modern history, French voters were introduced with the image of a smiling politician on political spots. Lecanuet’s strong presence in advertisement enabled him to gain attention in the press, establish his identity as the “French Kennedy”, achieve notoriet and establish his image before the beginning of the official campaign in television. (Maarek 2007, p. 146; Delporte 2001, p. 2.)

More than ever, television left its mark to presidential elections of 1965. The official campaigns in radio had been extended to television already in 1956, but they merely showed representatives of parties who addressed to audience for a few minutes. In addition, the audience itself was small in number and paid little attention to these appearances. In 1965, almost half of the households had a television. A new law, regulated in 1964, stated that each candidate was granted free airtime of two hours in television and in radio within official campaign programmes. According to opinion polls Jean Lecanuet seemed to be the winner of this free air-time in television. Among the candidates he was the most watched and left the best impression. Advised by Bongrand to distinguish himself from the incumbent president Charles de Gaulle, Jean
Lecanuet kept constructing same type of image that he had spread in the phase before the television campaign. (Maarek 2007, p. 146; Delporte 2001, p. 4.)

By winning the presidential elections of 1974, Valéry Giscard d’Estaing took one step further in establishing professionalized political marketing as a core element for victory in political campaigns. Being the Finance Minister, Giscard d’Estaing tried to soften his deeply rooted public image as a bourgeois tax collector. He attempted to modify his image by introducing personal details about his private life during the campaign. In the main campaign poster Giscard d'Estaing was presented as a charismatic father alongside his daughter. The name of the president-to-be was only mentioned at the side of the poster and the advertisement did not have any political slogan on it. Briefly, the political project was the man himself. (Maarek 2007, p. 147; Delporte 2001, pp. 7.)

1970’s placed for good television at the core of political image. Its importance was highlighted by the relaxation of state control over radio and television which, for one part, established political debates in television. In addition, television had spread to most households in France. One of the most enlightening examples of the importance of televised debates was the encounter between Valéry Giscard d’Estaing and the Socialist candidate François Mitterrand during the second round of presidential campaign in 1974. Under the eyes of 25 million viewers, d’Estaing beat Mitterrand due to his media skills. His media training had been so successful that he could deliver seemingly without any efforts quotes that are still fresh in the memory of many viewers and admired by politicians. His opponent Mitterrand was ill-prepared and kept seeking shelter behind his pile of notes that he used to support his answers. (Maarek 2007, p. 147; Michel 2005, p. 292; Delporte 2001, p. 6.)

Once elected, Giscard d’Estaing kept the doors open to his private life. The media’s attention was gained by events or acts that were not common to French political life: the President of Republic had lunch with French at their homes and let his wife present her wishes publicly. The opening of private sphere illustrates, for one part, how Giscard d’Estaing used television to establish a new, more informal style of
presidential communication that would help him to assert his presidential authority. (Maarek 2007, p. 147; Michel 2005; Delporte 2001, pp. 7-8.)

No campaign ever followed more closely the rules of professionalised political communication than the victory of Francois Mitterrand in 1981. His main slogan, 'La Force Tranquille' (The quiet strength) was based on sociological research on voters' desires. This positioning proved right. Also the professionalised preparation of the 'decisive' television debate against Giscard d'Estaing was one of the cornerstones of his presidential victory. However, during the fourteen years of Mitterrand's era professionalisation of electoral campaigning was not an isolated phenomenon. As president, he effectively used all means of professionalised political communication in order to implement his policy but also to build and sustain his image. (Maarek 2007, pp. 148-149.)

In the 1990's the French political communication was deeply shaped by the somehow paradoxical influences of the 1990 law that nearly erased all political publicity. The law forced politicians to be satisfied with 'old fashion' media, like meetings, leaflets and canvassing. While professionals of political communication have until now fiercely criticised the law, its implementation has eventually increased the need for professionalisation of the campaigns and, therefore, the need for their help. In order to comply with the new law that diminishes the range of media to use, politicians have been forced to redesign their campaigns more thoroughly. In 1995 and 2002, candidates real hindrance was to overcome the burden put on the physical level. The only way to reach citizens directly or indirectly, through newscasts was to run around the whole of France. In these battles crowd pleasers like the now former president Jacques Chirac were good. (ibid., pp. 150-152.)

Professionalisation probably found its own limits in the 2002 primaries. That year, the presidential race led to a suprise that has few reference points in the history of Fifth Republic. The incumbent Socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin did not only make it to the second round but gave way to the far-right extremist leader Jean-Marie Le Pen. Jospin seemed to have put up a very sophisticated and professionalised
campaign, but his targeting of voters from center and right sides of the political spectrum failed, paradoxically, with the help of political consultants. Credited for his left wing mandate achievements, Jospin appeared unsincere, which was an image problem for someone who had promised to be 'a better president'. In all, Jospin had made a mistake by over-excessively professionalising his campaign; and this made him loose his authenticity in the eyes of the potential voters. (ibid., pp. 154-155.)

In conclusion, one can say that French political communication has taken its toll on French politics since the mid-sixties, similarly to other democracies, following more or less the American model of the use of modern media. At the same time the dangers of too professionalised political communication have become evident. The quest for important undecided voters has led candidates to 'depolitisise' their campaigns. The resulted insistence on personality instead of issue positioning has altered the symbolic strength of political life which, consequently, can be linked to decreased participation. Professionalism can also fail, as we have seen with the case of Lionel Jospin, for instance. (ibid., p. 157.)

The presence of political consultants has had its effects also on the nature of candidate images. In the past, the picture of candidates was filled with “solemnity, pompousness, lyrism and ceremony”. Since the 1960's this image has become gradually more banal and simplified. At the same time the construction of appealing images has become more complex. In order to meet the demands of voters, candidate images are subject to a series of tests. Instead of addressing to the whole of population, candidate images are targeted to specific segments of electorate, with communication channels that capture the best the voters in question. This demanding and delicate construction of images has placed political consultants at the core of the processus. (Delporte 2001, p. 15.)

Apart from influencing the outcome of elections, these changes in political communication and campaigning have indirectly considerably affected the whole French political system and modified the balance of power towards the increase of president's role. By inducing a stronger personalisation of politics in the elections, the
professionalisation has strengthened presidents in relations to their loosing opponents and fellow party members. Political parties have considerably weakened, having lost much of their ideological value and turned into mere tools to guarantee electoral success for presidential candidates and presidents. (Maarek 2007, p. 158.) However, the increase of president's role is not a mere question of communication, for the effects of professionalisation work in tandem with the presidentialisation of French political system, guaranteed by the institutions, as we have seen earlier in this chapter.

5 AGENDA-SETTING THEORY

In this chapter I will present the theoretical framework of my thesis, the agenda setting theory. In its classical sense, the agenda setting theory states that media coverage of issues correspond with public concern of the same topics (Kiousis et al. 1999; McCombs 2004). The chapter begins with a short introduction locating the agenda-setting theory in the history of media effect research and theory. I will then present the core idea of agenda-setting and its theoretical development through several stages since the 1970’s. In the theoretical development of the agenda-setting theory the focus is on the aspects that construct the framework of my thesis. The core of my study lies on a fairly new field of agenda-setting research, the second-level agenda-setting, examining an agenda of attributes defining the very way we perceive and think about, for instance, political candidates in the media (e.g., McCombs, Llamas, Lopez-Escobar, & Rey 1997; Lee 2005). This second-level of agenda-setting has been further divided into two dimensions: substantive and affective, depicting, in the case of political candidates, different aspects of their images and the tone used by the media in these descriptions. The second-level agenda-setting, as well as other theoretical domains, is introduced with the company of specific studies.

5.1 Agenda-setting theory in the history of media effect research

Scholars of mass communication often divide the history of media effect research and theory into four stages (McQuail 2005, pp. 457-462). In the first phase, starting from
the early 1920’s, the media effect research was dominated by two areas of study: propaganda and public opinion research. In this phase, the media was considered to have powerful effects on audiences, as in the formation of public opinion in democracies. At the beginning of the 1930’s, the initial paradigm was quickly replaced by much more theoretically and methodologically sophisticated ideas. As research methods changed and evidence became stronger, theory suggested new types of factors, such as individuals social and psychological characteristics, that should be taken into account when evaluating the media’s effects on people. Consequently, new statements by communication scholars granted far more modest role to media in causing intended or unintended effects. In short, there was no direct link between media stimulus and audience, but the relation was affected by several variables. (Rogers 2004, pp. 4-5; McQuail 2005, p. 459; Scheufele & Tewkesbury 2007, p. 10.)

In terms of political communication, this phase initiated the study of the effectiveness of election campaigns in the 1940’s. This area of research was part of the larger study of voting behaviour. Paul F. Lazarsfeld and his research group concluded that the media had little effect in the 1940 U.S. presidential elections. These conclusions, for their part, replaced the initial model of powerful media effects by a limited effects model. One of the first major voting studies was also the very beginning of the research on candidate images. The Lazarsfeld group addressed itself to the question of how voters perceive candidates. The researchers found that voters have selective interest in the content of campaigns and expose themselves above all to messages that support their own images of candidates. (Nimmo & Savage 1976, p. 14; Rogers 2004, pp. 4-6.)

The advocates of the second phase were rapidly challenged by those who doubted that the whole story of media effects had been written. There was a lot of contemporary evidence, although somehow marginalised, that the media could indeed have significant social effects and could serve as an instrument for exercising social and political power. In addition, one of the main reasons for the reluctance to accept the prevailing minimal effect conclusion was the emergence of television in the 1950’s and 1960’s. Television was seen to have more power of attraction than press and
radio, and was blamed to have implications for social life. In terms of political communication, television became already in the 1950’s the dominant channel used in political campaigns in the United States. The formerly crucial role of political parties in affecting election results faded in the new age of television politics. (Rogers 2004, pp. 9-11; McQuail 2005, pp. 459-460.)

This third phase of media effect research and theory was marked by a shift of attention towards long-term change in individuals caused by media effects. This involved focusing on individuals’ cognitions rather than attitudes and affects. The attention was equally placed on collective phenomena as one explanation of media effects. These phenomena involved, for instance, climates of opinion, ideologies and cultural patterns. A lot of attention was also attached to intervening variables between media and audience, such as context, disposition and individuals’ motivation. (McQuail 2005, pp. 459-460.)

As a part of the third paradigm of media effect research and theory, the 1970’s marked the birth of agenda-setting research. In all, the agenda-setting effect gained considerable attention from scholars frustrated by the prevailing perspective that the media had only minimal effects on audiences. In the political communication research the agenda-setting theory assumed the return of powerful mass media. (Scheufele & Tewkesbury, 2007, p. 10.) For more than thirty years, mass communication scholars have used the agenda-setting theory as the main framework for understanding the effects of media content on public opinion (Kiousis, 2005, p. 3; Graber 2005, p. 487). Some (e.g., Kiousis et al., 1999, p. 414) state that agenda-setting has become perhaps the most prolific theoretical paradigm for research on media effects.

As a theoretical perspective, agenda-setting research has had a rich history of more than 35 years. Since McCombs and Shaw’s (1972) opening study on the 1968 U.S. presidential elections, more than 400 articles about agenda-setting in the social sciences has been published. Scholarly research has been steady since the beginning of the 1970’s, reaching its peak in the number of publications at the end of the 1980’s.
and at the beginning of the 1990’s. (McCombs & Shaw 1993; Rogers and Dearing 1993; McCombs 2004; McCombs 2005.)

One trend in the intellectual history of agenda-setting research is responsible for the steady rate of publications. Agenda-setting research has rapidly expanded beyond its initial theoretical domain that deals with the correlation between the media agenda and the public agenda. There are five historical stages of agenda-setting research: first-level agenda setting is concerned with the basic issue salience transfer between the media agenda and the public agenda; the second-level agenda-setting looks at the same transfer of salience but in terms of attributes; intermedia agenda setting deals with the transfer of salience among the media; the concept of need for orientation treats the psychological explanation of the agenda-setting theory; and the concept of priming is concerned with the evaluative dimension of the theory. (McCombs & Shaw 1993; McCombs 2004; McCombs 2005; Lee 2005.)

It should be noted, however, that the four stages of agenda-setting research exist only in the sense that they have appeared in a chronological order. They are not areas or stages in which one approach succeeds or replaces its predecessor. All phases are still intense areas of research, even though some are more active than others. (McCombs & Shaw 1993, p. 60; McCombs 2005, p. 544.)

5.1.1 First-level agenda-setting

As briefly mentioned above, the agenda-setting research was initially sparked by the landmark study of McCombs and Shaw (1972), although the very phenomenon had been long noticed and studied in election campaigns (McQuail 2005, p. 512). The study investigated the agenda-setting capacity of the mass media in the 1968 U.S. presidential campaign. The intention was to match what 100 undecided voters in the town of Chapel Hill said were main issues of the campaign with the content of the mass media used by them along the campaign. From the comparison of the opinion survey and analysed news content, they found an extremely high correlation, +.96, between the media and the public agenda. McCombs and Shaw concluded “that media
appear to have exerted a considerable impact on voters’ judgements of what they considered the major issue of the campaign”. (pp. 180-181.)

The 1972 study launched a research area that at first followed McCombs and Shaw’s approach of combining the analysis of media content with an audience survey of the ranking of agendas. Rogers and Dearing’s (1993) review of the publications dealing with agenda-setting research since the 1970's showed that 131 of the 223 publications wholly or mainly concerned this relationship between the media agenda and the public agenda. (Rogers & Dearing 1993, p. 72.)

The main focus of the majority of the over 400 agenda setting studies since the 1970’s has been on an agenda of public issues. The core finding of these studies is that the degree of emphasis placed in the issues in the news affects the way the public value those issues. In short, the media's agenda defines the public's agenda. The agenda-setting influence of the media is a by-product of the necessity to concentrate on a few topics in the news every day. Regardless of the medium, a tight focus on a handful of issues signals to the audience what the most important issues are at the moment. In this respect, agenda-setting studies have concluded that the media indeed tell the public “what to talk about”. (McCombs 2004, pp. 19-20 and 68; Rogers 2004, pp. 9-11.)

Theoretically speaking, traditional agenda-setting research deals with the first level of agenda-setting. This first level is concerned with the transfer of object salience from the media agenda to the public one. Public issues are not, however, the only objects that can be transferred. The first-level of agenda-setting can deal with the transfer of any objects, such as political candidates, public institutions, brands or public goods. (McCombs & Ghanem 2001, pp. 67-69.)

The Internet has become the new area for research on the first level of agenda setting effects. The new digital medium and its consequences on the overall communication landscape set two major hypothesis to be tested in the context of first-level agenda-setting research. First, the agenda setting role of the media has traditionally consisted
of focusing our attention on a small number of issues, but the Internet might change 
this. Because the public spreads its attention widely across the Internet, there must be 
a large fragmented Internet audience. The second hypothesis touches the possible 
correlation between the traditional news media agenda and the agenda of online 
versions of these same outlets. This hypothesis is based on the logic of distributing the 
same basic content through several channels. (McCombs 2005, p. 544-545.)

5.1.2 Tracing contingent conditions behind agenda-setting effects

One of the enduring questions among agenda-setting scholars has been whether the 
agenda-setting is a universal effect or involve certain people under certain conditions.
Majority of scholars seem to agree with the latter explication. It has become 
unquestioned that the agenda setting effects are affected by a number of factors. 
(Hugel et al. 1989, p. 192; Zhu & Blood 1992, p. 114.) In my research the 
measurement of these factors helps to understand the differences in individual 
responses to the presidential candidate images depicted in the news coverage.

Already in their ground-breaking study, McCombs and Shaw (1972) compared 
agenda-setting effects according to party affiliation (Democrats, Republicans, and 
Independents), issues (high or low prominence in the media) and media outlets 
(newspapers, newsmagazines, and television). The purpose of the analysis between 
different groups was to examine the “individual differences” that might be lost in the 
overall design of “lumping all the voters together in an analysis” (p. 181).

Most of the studies examining the contingent conditions in relation to the media 
agenda setting have dealt with audience attributes. While majority of the traditional 
demographic and socio-economic factors seem to play only a minor role in agenda-
setting effects, scholars have found audience involvement in its various types to be a 
significant contingent condition. This involvement has been gauged by such variables 
as political partisanship, campaign interest, and media preference or media 
dependency. These variables are used in two ways: in order to eliminate a possible 
spurious effect of the media agenda on public agenda or in order to detect differential
effects of the media agenda to the different audience group. Conclusions drawn from most of the studies investigating this side of agenda-setting indicate that the more involved an audience is, the more susceptible the audience is to media agenda setting. (for an overview see Hugel et al. 1989, p. 192; Zhu & Blood 1992, p. 115.)

For instance, Iyengar and Kinder (1987) examined the influence of education, party identification and political involvement of the impact of television news coverage on those who watch it. They found that viewers with a weak educational background were influenced more than the well-educated; independents more than partisans; the politically passives more than the politically involved.

Why are more involved audiences likely to be more influenced by agenda-setting? Within the realm of agenda-setting theory the main explication of this influence is provided by the concept of need for orientation. It is involved in the first new direction leading to the expansion of agenda setting theory. In addition to testing the original findings on the correlation between media agenda and public agenda, Shaw and McCombs (1977) investigated the conditions that improved or limited media agenda setting, emphasising need for orientation, as it provides a psychological explanation for individual differences in the responses to the media agenda. (ibid; McCombs 2005, p. 547, emphasis added.)

The concept of need for orientation derives originally from cognitive utilitarian theories of motivation in psychology. These theories emphasise the role of information in individual’s problem solving. In this respect, the utilitarian theories seem particularly suitable for explaining political information seeking and the cognitive effects of this information. Political campaigns, involving calls for participation and allocation of power by voting, can be regarded as collective problem solving. (Weaver 1980, p. 363-364.)

In the agenda setting theory, the need for orientation involves two, less abstract concepts, relevance and uncertainty. Here relevance refers to the perceived importance of the problem and uncertainty to the perceived existence of a problem.
These two concepts provide a set of explanations for individual agenda-setting effects when combined. Low relevance, in other words low interest in the subject of the message (e.g., campaign information), results in a low need for orientation; high relevance and interest concerning the subject of the message and low uncertainty regarding this subject (e.g., which candidate to support) leads to a moderate need for orientation; and high relevance and uncertainty result in a high need for orientation. (Weaver 1980, pp. 364-365; McCombs 2005, p. 547, emphasis added.) In conclusion, a person is regarded to have a high need of orientation when he or she is very interested in, or strongly believes in the importance of, a public issue, but is equally highly uncertain about the same issue. A high need for orientation will lead to active media consumption, which, in turn, enables an agenda-setting effect.

There are some theoretical and methodological advantages in combining variables of relevance and uncertainty under the umbrella of need for orientation. Utilitarian theories of motivation deal with environmental problems or challenges and with changes in an individual’s cognitive state through relevant and helpful information. When uncertainty (the perceived existence of a problem) is combined with relevance (the perceived importance of the problem), the major concepts of utilitarian theories of motivation are embedded in a single concept that can be applied to a broad spectrum of settings. Methodologically, it is more practical to deal with one variable than with several. (Weaver 1980, p. 365.)

Distinctions in the need for orientation provide an explanation, for instance, to the high correlations found in the McCombs and Shaw’s (1972) study of 100 undecided voters in the Chapel Hill community. These persons who intended to vote in the 1968 U.S. presidential elections were presumambly the most open or susceptible to campaign information. In other words, the relevance of elections news was high for this category of people. And because these voters were undecided, they also had a high level of uncertainty. Taking into account these conditions, the high correspondance of the media agenda with the public one is not a surprising result. (McCombs & Shaw 1972, p. 178; McCombs 2005, p. 547.)
The concept of need for orientation is inherently connected to the psychological explanations of how agenda setting effects occur in the individual's mind. These explanations lay at the heart of the theoretical foundations of agenda-setting that originate from the research done in psychology on the cognitive processing of semantic information (Scheufele 2000, p. 299; Scheufele & Tewkesbury 2007, p. 11). This area of research holds that the reception and processing of information create in individuals’ memory what can be called “activation tags” (Collins & Loftus, 1975). In other words, some concepts or issues are primed and made more accessible in memory. In consequence, activation tags affect the further information processing: when another concept is presented, it has to enter in contact with one of the tags left earlier in the memory to find an intersection. (Scheufele 2000, p. 299; Collins & Loftus 1975, p. 409.)

The metaphor of activation tags has been later replaced by the concept of accessibility (Scheufele 2000, p. 299). The idea of accessibility is the foundation of a memory-based model of information processing. In the agenda-setting research much of the work on the basis of this model owes to Iyengar (e.g., 1990). He promotes the accessibility bias model which states that at the moment of judgements individuals tend to rely on information that has a high accessibility. Here high accessibility refers to constructs that can be readily fetched from long-term memory. For instance, information frequently of just recently read in the news is likely to be very accessible in the individual's mind. The accessibility bias model explains why a respondent tends to mention issues or topics that are prevailing in the news when asked about the most important issues, for instance, facing the country. Some other researchers have titled the same mechanism of information receiving and processing as the accessibility-based model (Scheufele 1999 & 2000; Kim, Scheufele, & Shanahan, 2002, emphasis added).

The psychological explanations of how its effects occur extend agenda setting by the concept of priming (Scheufele & Tewkesbury, 2007, p. 11, emphasis added). As defined in the political communication research, priming refers to “changes in the standards that people use to make political evaluations” (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987, p.
63). Priming is involved when news suggest to their audiences that they ought to use specific issues as reference points in order to evaluate politicians. (Scheufele & Tewkesbury, 2007, p. 11.) Priming in conjunction with agenda setting begun to predominate the terminologies in the journalism and mass communication studies quite late, in the mid-1980's (Lee 2005, p. 17).

There are two reasons to consider priming as an extension of agenda setting. First, as in agenda-setting, the effects caused by priming are grounded on the memory-based models of information processing (Scheufele & Tewkesbury 2007, p. 11). Second, based on this common theoretical foundation, some researchers consider priming as a temporal extension of agenda setting that goes beyond the psychological explanations of effects (Iyengar & Kinder 1987), highlighting the consequences of agenda-setting effects for attitudes and opinions (Kim & McCombs 2007, p. 301). By making some issues more salient in people's mind (agenda setting), media can also influence the considerations that people take into account when judging political candidates or issues (priming) (Scheufele & Tewkesbury 2007, p. 11). In this respect, agenda setting and priming seem to work in tandem, the latter highlighting the media's role as opinion organisers (Lee 2005, p. 18).

5.1.3 Second-level agenda-setting

In most discussions of the agenda-setting importance of the mass media the object of analysis on each agenda is an object, a public issue. Though, public issues are not the only objects that can be studied within the agenda-setting theory. For instance, in elections the objects of interest are candidates. Different types of objects that can define an agenda in the media are nearly limitless. In this respect, the term object is used in the same sense that social psychologists use the term attitude object. The object is the thing towards which our attention is oriented or the thing of which we have an attitude or opinion. (McCombs 2004, pp. 69-70, emphasis in original.)

In addition to the agenda of objects there exists another level of agenda-setting. Each of the objects on the agenda has several attributes, in other words characteristics and
properties that construct the picture of each object. Like objects vary in salience, so do the attributes of each object. Naturally these attributes can vary widely in their scope. In terms of agenda setting theory, attribute is a term that includes the entire set of properties and traits that characterise an object. For instance, political candidates have attributes that separate them from one another, such as personality traits, issue positions and qualifications. (ibid. p. 70; Kiousis & McCombs 2004, p. 38.)

Both the selection of objects for attention and the selection of attributes to describe those objects are powerful ways to set agenda. An essential constitute of the news agenda and its objects are the attributes that journalists and public have in mind when they think and talk about each object. The way these news agendas of attributes affect the public agenda is the second level of agenda-setting. On the first level of agenda-setting, the object salience is transmitted. The second level is the transmission of attribute salience. While the first level of agenda-setting is focused on gaining attention in communication, attribute agenda-setting emphasises on which aspects of the issue, political candidate or topic are salient for public. This theoretical distinction between attention, media concentrating on a limited number of topics, and comprehension, through which attributes these topics are perceived, is important. Even though media messages usually consist of information that is simultaneously connected to both levels of agenda-setting, the nature of the influence is distinct. (McCombs 2004, p. 70; Kiousis & McCombs 2005, p. 38.)

Two studies from the 1976 U.S. presidential elections illustrate the second level of agenda-setting and its emphasis on an agenda of attributes. The context of these elections during the spring primaries was all but normal in terms of candidates. While the Republicans had invested in the incumbent president Gerald Ford as the party’s nominee, the Democrats had eleven presidential candidates competing for their party’s presidential nomination. The Democrats’ candidates constituted an exceptionally large group of candidates to learn about and, for most American voters are not too eager on politics, observers had to consider to which point voters’ images of candidates were shaped by news coverage. (McCombs 2004, pp. 72-73; McCombs, Llamas, Lopez-Escobar, & Rey 1997, p. 705.)
Becker’s and McCombs (1978) study on the primaries found a significant correlation between the agenda of attributes in *Newsweek* newsweekly and the agenda of attributes in New York’s Democrats’ perceptions of the runners for the party’s presidential nomination. The evidence is strengthened by the fact that the Spearman’s rank order correlation between the two agendas increased from +.64 of mid-February to +.83 by end of March. The authors noted that “What is newsworthy to *Newsweek* seems to be salient to voters”. But not just to *Newsweek*. The authors referred to earlier studies, for instance to McCombs and Shaw (1972), and stated that there seem to be very little media differences in the agenda of attributes selected for play by newspapers and the television networks. Becker and McCombs concluded that contrary to the public agenda of issues, the public’s perceptions of candidates and the information they had on them changed very much because of the media during the early part of the primary season that was studied. In this respect, the evidence indicated that voters did not only learn the media’s agenda, but with some additional exposure during the weeks of the primaries they learned it even better. (pp. 304–307.)

In the very elections the incumbent Ford faced the Democrat Jimmy Carter who had beaten his ten competitors in the party’s primaries. An additional evidence of voters’ learning from the news media was discovered when Weaver, Graber, McCombs, and Eyal’s (1981) panel study compared the agenda of attributes in *Chicago Tribune* newspaper and the agenda of attributes of Illinois voters depicting Carter and Ford. The correspondence between these two agendas was very high. Throughout the election year, the median value of cross-lagged Spearman’s rho correlations between the media agenda and the public agenda was +.70. These attribute agendas consisted of a broad spectrum of candidate traits, such as competency, compassion and political beliefs. Because these cross-lagged correlations take into account both the influence of media on the voters and the effect of voters on the media content, it supports even more the evidence that the direction of effects was from the media agenda to the public agenda. (ibid; McCombs 2004, p. 73; McCombs, Llamas, Lopez-Escobar, & Rey 1997, p. 705.)
Neither of these studies on the 1976 U.S. presidential elections was at the beginning conceptualised within the theoretical framework of second level of agenda-setting. However, they correspond with that conceptualisation and provide highly reliable evidence that the news media can affect the agenda of attributes that define voters’ perceptions of candidates. (McCombs, Llamas, Lopez-Escobar, & Rey 1997, p. 705.)

With the study of Weaver, Graber, McCombs, and Eyal (1981), agenda-setting research entered its third phase. The idea of agendas was spread to two new fields. One was the agenda of candidate attributes in the news and in voters’ perceptions. The second was the broader agenda of personal concerns in which all aspects of politics, such as issues and candidates, are merely a single player. (McCombs & Shaw 1993, p. 59.)

The accumulated evidence clearly indicates that the second level agenda-setting influence of the media appears in elections of different countries wherever both the political system and the media are adequately open and free. The existence of these agenda-setting effects in diverse cultural settings is well illustrated by a profound and extensive study on the 1996 Spanish general elections. (McCombs 2004, p. 73.) In addition to providing evidence of agenda-setting effects in a different cultural context, the study of McCombs, Lopez, and Llamas (2000) contributed to the theory of second level agenda-setting by covering the different outcomes of cognitive and affective attributes of candidates. The distinction between these dimensions of attributes had been originally emphasised and tested by McCombs, Llamas, Lopez-Escobar, and Ray (1997) in their study of the 1995 Spanish regional elections.

McCombs, Lopez-Escobar, and Llamas (2000) examined the images of the three main candidates of general elections in the context of Pamplona, the capital of the province of Navarra. The three major national candidates were Felipe Gonzales, the incumbent president and the candidate of the Spanish Socialist Workers party (PSOE); Jose Maria Aznar, the candidate of the Popular Party (PP) who successfully challenged Gonzales and won the elections; and Julio Anguita, the candidate of the United Left (IU) and other left-wing parties. (p. 82.)
The substantive attributes (or cognitives) in the descriptions of the candidates by the media and by the voters were divided into five categories: issue positions and political ideology; formal qualifications and biographical data; perceived qualifications; personality; and integrity, which was grounded on statements that explicitly described a candidate as ‘corrupt’ or ‘not corrupt’. The last category was related to the considerable controversy in Spain at that time over whether the incumbent prime minister Gonzales was involved in the corruption. In order to gauge the affective traits of the candidates’ images, all substantives statements about the candidates were also categorised according to their tone: positive, negative, or neutral. (ibid., p. 82.) The involvement of tone pushed the study one step further from the examinations of attribute agenda-setting that we have seen in the context of U.S. elections.

The study also combined the substantive and affective aspects of candidates. The 15 different descriptive matrices, consisting of five substantive attributes and three tones, were simultaneously compared. In other words, the results indicating the degree of correspondance between the media and the public in the study are grounded on the comparison of 15 different categories that deal with all possible combinations available. (ibid., pp. 82 – 83.) The combination of substantive and affective aspects of candidates distinguished the study from the earlier research on the candidate images in Spanish local elections. In their study, McCombs, Llamas, Lopez-Escobar, and Rey (1997) dealt with the substantive and affective aspects of candidates separately.

In order to determine the candidate images portrayed by the media, content analysis included the total election coverage of seven principal media used in Pamplona for candidate information. The data consisted of two local newspapers, *Diario de Navarra* and *Diario de Noticias*; two national dailies, *El Pais* and *El Mundo*; the main news program of the national state television channel *TV1*; the free television advertising television slots on the same channel; and the main news program of *Antena Tres*, a commercial national channel. For each of the seven medias, a separate descriptive matrix was created for each of the three candidates. All combined, it created 21 media attribute agendas. (ibid., pp. 84–85.)
Comparisons of voters’ perceptions of the candidates with the twenty-one descriptions of the candidates in the wide media coverage provided particularly strong evidence of the second level agenda setting effects. All the twenty-one correlations were positive. Their median correlation was +.66. 15 of the 21 correlations are statistically significant. Their median correlation was +.72. The correlations between the voters’ perceptions and the newspapers portrayals of candidates, both local and national, were particularly strong. Further analysis found that the messages deriving from different media outlets overcame selective perception, in other words the voters’ tendency to emphasise the positive attributes of one’s favourite candidate and the negative attributes of the competing candidates. The evidence for attribute agenda-setting from the 1996 Spanish general elections is highly persuasive, for it combines a large and diverse set of media outlets with substantive affective aspects of the three national candidates in a young democracy. (ibid., pp. 85–87; McCombs 2004, 74 75.)

The growing body of evidence about second level agenda-setting is based mainly on comparisons of opinion polls and content analysis of the news media and political advertising. However, this kind of evidence is limited in its ability to provide researchers with a definitive cause-and-effect relationship between the media agenda and the public agenda. In order to offer complementary and convicting evidence, laboratory experiments should be pursued to document the existence of a causal relationship. Until recently, this type of research regarding candidate attributes has provoked little interest among scholars. (Kiousis et al. 1999; McCombs 2004, p. 77.)

In order to examine how media coverage of candidate attributes influences the agenda setting process, Kiousis et al. (1999) conducted two controlled laboratory experiments in which the candidate attributes were manipulated. In the first experiment undergraduate students of the Texas University were asked to read news articles about fictitious candidates running for the U.S. Congress. The students read one article each. The manipulated attributes were candidate qualifications and personality traits. Candidate qualifications were defined according to candidates’ educational background (high and low), and their personality was defined along their corruption
level (high and low). In the first case, the candidate was described as highly educated and moral politician. In the second case, the candidate was not well educated but moral. In the third case, the candidate was presented as highly educated and corrupt. In the fourth case, the candidate was corrupt and uneducated. The students had to respond to an open-ended question and to close-end rating to determine their perceptions. Students also had to evaluate how honest, sincere, trustworthy the candidate appeared to be. (pp. 418-419.)

In the second experiment a group of undergraduate students from the same university were exposed to the same four cases about a fictitious political candidate. However, in this experiment the objective was to evaluate the influence of attribute salience on object salience, in other words on the perceived overall salience of the candidate by the students. Furthermore, it was examined whether these attributes influenced affective opinions of candidates. (ibid., pp. 420 and 422–423.)

Taking into account the two experiments, the study concluded from the results that a second level of agenda setting exists, for manipulation of candidate attributes influenced students perceptions of politicians in many ways. Especially perceptions of candidate personality traits (their corruption level) reflected media’s pictures of those traits. In turn, students’ perceptions of candidate qualifications (candidate education level) did not seem to correspond to media portrayals of those qualifications. The results also show that candidate qualifications do influence affective perceptions of politicians. (ibid., pp. 423 and 425.)

The emergence of second-level agenda setting further formalised the use of priming as the extension of the agenda-setting theory in the mid-1990's (Lee 2005, p. 17). While the initial studies on priming effects took into account the level of issues (Iyengar & Kinder 1987), recent studies contemplate the relationship between the attributes of different objects and priming effects (Kim et al. 2002). In this new context, the original definition of priming (Iyengar & Kinder 1987) is not applicable anymore for it takes into account “competing influences of various, differentially salient issues” (Kim et al. 2002, p. 11). Quite differently, it is more suitable to assume
that individuals' attitudes and evaluations on a particular issue are shaped by how salient various attributes of the issue are in public discourse (ibid.).

In their study of the press and the public's evaluation of a local issue, Kim et al. (2002) defined this new type of priming as *attribute priming*. In short, attribute priming deals with the media's influence on the public's evaluation of issues. Furthermore, Kim et al. hypothesised with attribute priming that specific issue attributes highlighted in the media will become significant standards for issue evaluations among the public. This hypothesis was tested by the exploration of attribute agenda setting process during a conflict about a proposed commercial development plan in the city of Ithaca, inside the state of New York. In particular, it was examined how the proposal and its various advantages and inconveniences, in other words issue attributes, were covered in the main local newspaper *Ithaca Journal* and how this coverage played on the salience of various attributes of the issues among readers. Kim et al. concluded that, in addition to providing support for the notion of attribute agenda setting, their study found a great deal of evidence on attribute priming as a consequence of second level agenda setting. The issue attributes salient in the media were discovered to be significant benchmarks of issue evaluations among the audience.

In addition to issues, the concept of attribute priming can also be applied to political candidates. Furthermore, attribute priming can deal with both the substantive and affective dimensions of attributes regarding, for instance, political candidates. Recently, this new dimension was brought up by Kim and McCombs (2007) who investigated the 2002 Texas gubernatorial and U.S. senatorial elections. By comparing the election coverage of the local newspaper, the *Austin-American Statesman*, of four candidates and a telephone survey concerning peoples' opinions, they found that the attributes positively or negatively covered in media are perceived more or less in the same way by the public and influence highly opinions people have on political candidates.
The emergence of second-level agenda-setting theory has moved the focus of research from investigating what issues news cover to how they cover them. Attribute agenda-setting suggests that the media not only tell us what to think about, but that they also tell us how to think about objects. This assumption is further strengthened by the link between priming and attribute agenda-setting, for it asks how people form their opinions on different issues. In conclusion, attribute agenda-setting leads us to ask whether the media sometimes do tell us what to think. (Kiousis 2005, p. 4; McCombs 2004, p. 71.)

5.2 Agenda-setting theory and framing

The theory of agenda-setting has incorporated or converged with a variety of other communication concepts and theories since the 1970’s. These concepts include such notions as stereotyping, image building and gatekeeping. For instance, gatekeeping which depicts and explains the flow of news from one media organisation to another, leads to ask who sets the media’s agenda. Research executed on this field has identified a web of relationships and effects that reach beyond the news media. Gatekeeping has been characterised as intermedia agenda-setting that operates at both the first level and second level of agenda setting. As for the theoretical complements to agenda-setting, one should take into account cultivation analysis and spiral of silence. (McCombs, Llamas, Lopez-Escobar, & Ray 1997, p. 704; McCombs 2004, p. 86.)

Second level of agenda setting, attribute agenda-setting, connects the theory of agenda-setting also with another prominent contemporary concept, that of framing (McCombs, Llamas, Lopez-Escobar, & Ray 1997, p. 704, emphasis in original). Framing, contrary to many more esoteric research concepts, has gained extraordinary popularity both among scholars and the public (Reese 2007, p. 148). In fact, framing has become the most utilised mass communication theory of the present era, having more or less rapidly reached a high level of popularity, for it barely made the list of the most applied mass communication theories in the 20th century (Bryant & Miron 2004, p. 695).
The notion of framing has been defined in various ways in different disciplines such as sociology, economics, linguistics, communication science, political communication and public-relations research (for an overview see e.g., Van Gorp 2007). Despite its wide usage across different disciplines, framing remains fractured and scattered conceptualisation, not a coherent theory (e.g., Entman, 1993, p. 51). Mostly due to this lack of commonly shared theoretical model, framing research is characterised by theoretical and empirical vagueness. Difficulties in defining the concept of framing have led into operational problems, limiting the comparability of research instruments and results. As consequence, the term framing has been used repeatedly to describe similar but seemingly distinctive phenomenon. The diversity of conceptualisation could, from one point of view, suggest that framing is gradually becoming a concept that can be without further hesitation applied everywhere. (e.g., Scheufele 1999, p. 103; Van Gorp 2007, p. 60.)

To a great deal, the discussion around the conceptual vagueness of framing has been concerned with the similarity of framing regarding other concepts such as agenda setting and priming. While initial studies of this kind combined framing with agenda setting and priming (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987), recent research takes one step further and suggests that framing is a natural extension of agenda setting (e.g., McCombs, Llamas, Lopez-Escobar, & Ray, 1997).

My purpose here is to sort out the different approaches to framing and see in which points the concept is applicable to agenda-setting theory. I shall begin with an introduction to framing research in the larger historical context of media effects research and introduce the different theoretical foundations of framing. Following the example of Scheufele (1999), the different approaches to framing research are then categorised along two dimensions: the type of frame examined (media frames opposed to individual/audience frames) and the way frames are operationalised in previous studies (frames as independent variables opposed to frames as dependent variables). On the basis of these distinctions, four processes of framing can be distinguished: frame building; frame setting; individual-level effects of framing; and a
connection between individual frames and media frames. Drawing from this classification, I shall demonstrate that the concept of framing comes closest to agenda setting when it is defined as a process of frame setting.

5.2.1 Theoretical foundations of framing

In the history of media effect research and theory, framing belongs to the fourth and present stage. This phase was initiated in the early 1980's. The current paradigm is characterised by social constructivism. The foundations of social constructivism define media and its recipients in a way that combines both strong and limited effects of media. On the one hand, media construct social formations and history itself by framing images of reality, in fiction and in news, in predictable and patterned ways. On the other hand, audiences construct for themselves their own view of social reality and their place in it, in interaction with the symbolic constructions offered by the media. In other words, media effects are restrained by an interaction between media and recipients. The constructivist approach enable both the power of media and the power of people to make their choice, with constant negotiation in between. (Scheufele 1999, p. 105; McQuail 2005, p. 461.)

The constructivist approach does not replace all earlier formulations of the effects process. These formulations include, for instance, attention-gaining, messages' direct stimulus to individual behaviour or emotional response. The constructivist approach belongs more clearly to the cultural than to the structural and behavioural traditions. However, constructivism is connected to the behavioural tradition for its investigations about media effects have to be located in a societal context, and, moreover, it states that the constructions of social reality are the outcome of a variety of behaviours and cognitions of participants in social events. Therefore the constructivist approach can be applied to study several types of media influence, in particular public opinion, social attitudes, political choice, ideology and many cognitions. (McQuail 2005, p. 462.)
Also various formulations of framing can be placed under the category of social constructivism. As a type of media effect, framing “refers to the adoption by the audience of the same interpretative frameworks and 'spin' used to contextualize news reports and event accounts” (McQuail 2005, p. 467). Therefore, framing assume that the media have potentially strong attitudinal effects. However, these media effects depend to a high degree on predispositions, schema, and other characteristics of audiences that have an effect on the way they enter in relation with and process information in the media. Therefore, having its theoretical foundations in social constructivism, framing emphasises the interactive approach to media effect research and theory. (McQuail 2005, p. 462; Scheufele & Tewkesbury 2007, p. 11.)

In the constructivist view of framing, the potency of frames to affect the public derives from their close connections to familiar cultural frames. Constructivists state that journalists are information processors who build “interpretive packages” of the views of political “sponsors”, in other words different sources such as interest groups, spin doctors and advertisers, in order to reflect and add to the “issue culture” of the topic. The constructivist approach argues that a frame can dominate and prevail in the news coverage for a long time. Yet, the power of the frame in media content is not forcing, for constructivists see frames as a set of tools from which citizens ought to draw in order to form their opinions about issues. (Gamson & Modigliani 1989; D’Angelo 2002, p. 877; Van Gorp 2007.)

Even though the theoretical foundations of framing seem to lay on social constructivism, there has been little agreement on its definition in practice, as noted above. This lack of agreement is related to how framing work as an effect process. (McQuail 2005, p. 511). As some scholars (e.g. Entman 1991) have called for a unified paradigm of framing, others (D’Angelo 2002; Reese 2007) consider framing more of a research program that is guided by a combination of the cognitive, constructivist, and critical paradigms or approaches. It seems that the majority of framing studies synthesise ideas from the three. These approaches or paradigms illustrate for their part the same type of clivages that are well-known to the whole of communication discipline. (D'Angelo 2002, pp. 878 and 883, emphasis added.)
Due to the historically strong focus in communication research on media effects most of the studies on framing have approached the chosen topic from the cognitive perspective (Reese, 2007, p. 149). The cognitive approach tries to understand how frames in media change individuals’ patterns of thoughts and feelings. Above all, the way how these patterns are altered depend on how a frame enters in relation with an individual’s prior knowledge. On the one hand, readily accessible patterns of thoughts and feelings that depend on the person’s established knowledge are more likely to be activated. On the other hand, this knowledge activation depends on the media frame of a given situation which can render other ideas and feelings available, even if these ideas and feelings are not already in mind. In order to alter the way people think, news must make frames accessible or available to an individual. (Price, Tewkesbury, & Powers 1997; D’Angelo 2002, p. 875.)

The cognitive approach has been little or not at all concerned of how frames are implicated in the political and social level power (Reese 2007, p. 149; Carragée & Roefs 2004). By and large, both the constructionist and the critical approach attempt at widening the perspective on framing, and not to limit it to media content or to a form of media effects (Van Gorp 2007; Entman 2007; Carragée & Roefs 2004). Critical perspective has considered frames as dominating, hegemonic, and parts of perspectives held by political and economic elites. Frames are the outcome of news gathering routines by which journalists convey information of issues and events. These frames are seen to dominate both news coverage and audiences. (Reese 2007, p. 149; D’Angelo 2002, p. 876.)

On the basis of social constructivism, Scheufele (1999) has suggested a process model of framing effects that defines them as outcomes of interaction between three different types of actors: sources and media organisations; journalists (media); and audiences. In all of these interactions frames are considered as either individual (receiver) frames or media frames. Both types of frames can be either independent (a cause) or dependent (an effect) attributes. There are four interconnected framing processes involving these actors: frame building; frame setting; individual-level effects of
framing; and a connection between individual frames and media frames. In the following this process model of framing serves as a model to define in which points framing can be integrated with agenda-setting theory.

5.2.2 Media frames and individual frames

Communication scholars and political scientists usually use the concept of framing in two ways, as media frames and individual frames (Scheufele, 1999, emphasis added). In the field of political communication, Gitlin (1980) and Entman (1993) promote two similar definitions of both. According to Gitlin (1980, p. 7), frames, “largely unspoken and unacknowledged, organise the world both for journalists who report it and, in some important degree for us who rely on their reports”. Entman (1993, p. 7) distinguishes individual frames as “information-processing schemata” of individuals and media frames as “attributes of the news itself”.

According to Gitlin (ibid.), “media frames are persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which routinely organize discourse, whether verbal or visual”. Media frames enable journalists to process large quantities of information quickly and routinely. In this respect, frames enable journalists to recognise the flow of data as information, file and place information to cognitive categories, and to package it for efficient relay to their audiences. (ibid.)

Entman (1993) elaborates that media frames essentially involve selection and salience. Here salience is referred to as ways to make a piece of information more noticeable, meaningful, or easy to remember for audiences. (pp. 52-53.) On the basis of review and synthesis of the research literature in political communication research Entman (2004) promotes the following standard definition of framing in media: “selecting and highlighting some facets of events or issues, and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/or solution”. (p. 5.)
In other terms, frames have four functions in a communication text: problem definition, determining what a causal agent is doing with what costs and benefits; causal interpretation, the identification of forces creating the problem; moral evaluation, or judgements or assessments made of parties involved in the problem; and suggestion of remedies, the proposing of solutions and the prediction of their likely effects. (Entman, 2004, p. 5; Entman, 1993, p. 52-53.)

Entman (1991) defines individual frames as “schematas” that are “mentally stored clusters of ideas that guide individuals’ processing of information”. In this respect, the notion of frame come close to such concepts as categories, scripts or stereotypes. (p. 53.) Individual frames refer to what sociologist Erving Goffman called in his classic book *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (1974) as “the schemata of interpretation” that enable individuals to “locate, perceive, identify and label” information (pp. 8 and 21). Two types of individual frames can be used to interpret and process information: global and long-term political views and short-term frames that are related to issues (Scheufele, 1999, p. 107).

5.2.3 Frame-setting, frame-building and individual-level effects of framing

Different approaches to framing can be categorised along two dimensions. First, framing has to be examined according to level of analysis. A between-level dimension defines media frames on macroscopic level and individual/audience frames on a microscopic level and contemplates relations between these two. Second, a within-level dimension treats media frames and individual/audience frames in separate terms as both independent and dependent variable. On the basis of this distinction of dimensions, three different processes can be distinguished: frame-building, frame-setting and individual-level effects of framing. (Scheufele, 1999 & 2000.)

Studies dealing with the process of frame-building have conceptualised frames as dependent variable. The focus of this type of research has been on the various factors influencing the creation or modification of frames. (Scheufele, 1999, p. 107 & 2000, p. 306-307.) At the media level, framing can be influenced by several socio-structural
or organisational factors (Shoemaker & Reese 1996) and by individual or ideological variables (Tuchman, 1978). However, no evidence has been systematically collected of how these various factors impact the structural qualities of news in terms of framing (Scheufele 1999, p. 109). Based on previous research, at least five factors may potentially influence the way journalists frame issues: social norms and values, organisational pressures and constraints, pressures of interest groups, journalistic routines, and ideological or political orientations of journalists (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Tuchman, 1978).

Studies dealing with the process of frame-setting are interested in examining how news frames influence the public's perception of given issues. In other words, the focus of research is on the effects of framing. In many cases of this type of studies, media frames are conceptualised as the independent variable and the individual/audience frames as the dependent variable. Meanwhile some of these studies manipulate media frames in experiments in order to examine how they influence the audience frames, some research measure both media and audience frames. (Scheufele, 1999, p. 107 & 2000, p. 307; Zhou & Moy, 2007, p. 81.)

In their studies, Pan and Kosicki (1993) and Entman (1993 & 2004) have conceptualised media frames as the independent variable. These studies can be regarded as highly pertinent in terms of investigating framing as a type of media effects. In addition, these studies provide an important insight to how the links between media frames as independent variables and individual/audience frames as dependent variables are depicted. (Scheufele 1999, p. 110.)

Studies that have examined media frames as an independent variable can be placed under two categories. In the first category of studies, researchers have conceptually defined media frames as an independent factor having consequences on peoples' attitudes, opinions, or individual frames. Generally, however, these studies have not offered empirical data on the links between media frames as inputs and other factors, like audience frames, as outcomes. (Scheufele 1999, pp. 110-111.) For instance, Pan and Kosicki (1993) and Entman (1993) assumed that there is a link between media
and audience frames, but did not subject that assumption to any empirical tests. However, throughout his studies, Entman have emphasised that the presence of frames in the text, as perceived by researchers, does not guarantee their effect on the audience. (1989; 1991, p. 7; 1993, p. 53.)

In his study concerning the news coverage of the downing of a Korean and Iranian airplane, Entman (1993) defined media frames as an independent variable by calling them as “attributes of the news itself” (p. 7). These media frames were conceptualised to have an effect on political decision-making and public opinion. Entman identified media frames by analysing the content of newspapers, news magazines, and network newscasts. He found five traits of media texts that impose a certain frame of reference and, consequently, influence strongly the information processing among individuals: 1) important judgements; 2) agency, or the answer to the question who did it?; 3) identification with potential victims; 4) categorisation, or the choice of labels for the incidents; and 5) generalisations to a broader national context.

Similarly to the previous category, studies on individual frames as a dependent variable (e.g., Iyengar 1987; Price et al. 1997) have defined a relationship between media frames as the independent and individual frames as the dependent variable. This type of studies focus on individual frames as outcomes of specific types of media frames. In consequence, all studies belonging to this category measured only the dependent variable and in experiments manipulated media frames as the independent variable. For this reason, they are classified here as studies on individual frames as dependent variable. (Scheufele 1999, p. 112.)

Iyengar (1987 & 1991) content analysed network television newscasts. He found out that networks frame newscasts episodically or thematically. According to Iyengar (1987), the main difference between episodic and thematic framing is, “episodic framing depicts concrete events that illustrate issues, while thematic framing presents collective or general evidence” (p. 14). Episodically framed stories focus on an individual or on a one-time event (Iyengar 1991). In the case of newscasts, Iyengar (1991) concludes that the networks rely strongly on episodic framing. Furthermore,
Iyengar hypothesised that the type of media frame, episodic or thematic, influences how individuals attribute responsibility. In order to test the hypothesis, participants were first exposed to television news stories in laboratory conditions. According to answers to open-ended questions in the post-test questionnaire, two types of attribution of responsibility were distinguished: causal and treatment responsibility (e.g., Iyengar 1987, pp. 818-819). The hypothesised relationship between media frames and audience frames was examined for five issues: crime, terrorism, poverty, unemployment, and racial inequality. Results (Iyengar 1991) showed that a relationship between media frames and audience frames depends strongly on the issue under study. An experimental manipulation of highly salient issues, such as unemployment, proved to have little of no impact on the attribution or responsibility by the individual members audience (p. 62).

Price, Tewkesbury, & Powers (e.g., 1997) have provided perhaps the most elaborate approach to study individual frames as the dependent variable, for they expanded this category of studies from investigating politically relevant outcomes to involve the immediate influence of news frames on readers' cognitive responses, in other words on thoughts and feelings (p. 483). Undergraduate students participating in two studies were asked to read and respond to fictitious news articles about possible cuts in state funding to the university. These articles varied according to the frame employed. Used frames were: a conflict frame, in which the conflict between opposing interest groups is depicted; a human interest frame, depicting the retirement of a state budget director tired of struggling for equal funding of all Michigan universities; and a consequence frame that dealt with the possible financial consequences for all students. Immediately after reading the news story, students responded to a post-test questionnaire where they were asked “to write down all thoughts and feelings” they had while reading the preceding article, including thoughts that were not relevant in terms of the topic (p. 490).

Price et al. (1997) concluded from both studies that issue frames of news stories had a significant effect on the respondents' cognitive responses. Some story frames, like the human interest and conflict frames, suppressed the default reactions caused by the
story, while another, the consequence frame, increased them. (p. 500.) In all, “the results illustrate a kind of hydraulic pattern, with thoughts of one kind, stimulated by the frame, driving out other possible responses” (p. 501). However, Price et al. (1997) discovered that individuals' frames do not exclusively depend on media coverage of an event or issue. Rather, “participants demonstrated a capacity to introduce their own thoughts, going beyond the information provided and drawing out some basic implications on their own” (Price et al. 1997, p. 496).

Third process deals with the individual-level consequences of framing. This type of studies regard individual frames as the dependent variable. Especially the social movements literature provides an explicit and direct link between individual frames as the independent variable and individual information processing or political action (Scheufele 1999, p. 113). An example of this category of studies is Entman's and Rojecki's (1993) research on the framing of the U.S. anti-nuclear movement.

Of all the processes frame setting seems to come closest to the core idea of agenda-setting. The use of term setting is similar to the initial notion of agenda-setting provided by McCombs and Shaw (1972). Later, McCombs et al. (e.g., 1997) have argued that both types of setting are grounded on identical processes. While agenda-setting deals with the salience of issues, frame setting, as the second level agenda-setting or the attribute agenda-setting, is concerned with the salience of issue attributes (ibid.). In other words, agenda-setting research and framing research are concerned with almost the same problem: how the media define an individual object (e.g. public issues or political candidates) for us. Consequently, emphasising some aspects of the object and ignoring others, the media will affect the way audiences perceive the object in question. (Takeshita 2005, p. 280.)

5.2.4 Translating framing into the language of agenda-setting

McCombs and his associates (McCombs, 2004 & McCombs, Llamas, Lopez-Escobar, & Rey, 1997) put Entman’s (1993) definition of framing as essentially involving
selection and salience to the language of second-level agenda setting. From the point of view of second-level agenda setting, framing involves the selection and emphasis of certain attributes for the media agenda when referring to an object. In turn, as we have seen with the characteristics of attribute agenda-setting, audience also frames objects, emphasising on various degrees the attributes of persons, public issues or other objects. The perspectives and frames media and audience uses draw attention to certain attributes and away from others. Both framing and attribute agenda-setting emphasise the way communicators and their audiences perceive topics in the news, and in particular, the special status that certain attributes or frames have in the content of a message. (p. 87; p. 704; McCombs 2005, p. 546.)

A frame is an attribute of the object in question because it depicts the object. Though, not all attributes are frames. If a frame is defined as a dominant perspective on the object, then a frame should be categorised as a very special case of attributes. The first step towards the understanding of this special class of attributes is to locate attributes at the micro- and macro-level. In the case of person's attributes, the scope from the micro-level to the macro-level can vary along the cognitive and affective dimensions of attributes. At the micro-level, descriptions of persons can be very simple, such as the age. In turn, at the macro-level, descriptions tend to be very complex such as the definitions of national hero. The cognitive and affective attributes of candidate images in the Spanish election studies (McCombs et al. 1997 & McCombs et al. 2000) ranged from the middle-level (e.g. political ideology) toward the micro end of this continuum (negative, positive, or neutral descriptions). (McCombs & Ghanem 2001, p. 74.)

Even though frames can vary along their location in the micro-macro continuum, most frames can be categorised as complex, situated at the macro-level, because they encompass a number of lower level attributes. In other words, “frames are organizing principles incorporating and emphazising certain lower level attributes to the exclusion of many others”. In these terms, all attributes are not frames, but all frames can described as attributes. (McCombs & Ghanem 2001, p. 74.)
Embedding the concept of a frame in the world of attributes binds frames and other attributes in a useful and clarifying way, for many attributes are in the research literature defined as frames. However, the location of frames at the macro end of the attribute continuum does not provide agenda-setting theory with a definition that could be specific enough. The definition proposed in the context of agenda-setting, a frame as a dominant attribute in a message, distinguishes two types of attributes, aspects and central themes. Aspects are a general category of attributes. In turn, central themes construct a delimited category of attributes for they are the attributes defining a dominant perspective on an object. In other terms, attributes defining a central theme are frames. This distinction is clear in the way media messages are examined in the content analysis: identifying the attribute defining the major theme of each news text versus a set of the various attributes that appear throughout the sentences and paragraphs of each news text. (McCombs & Ghanem 2001, p. 75; McCombs 2005, p. 546-547; McCombs 2004, pp. 88-89.)

A further trait that separates frames from the mass of attributes is their power to structure thought. This aspect refers to frames’ ability to shape how we think of public issues, political candidates or other objects in the news. In addition to individual reasoning, frames have consequences for attitudes and even for public behaviour. (McCombs & Ghanem 2001, p. 78; McCombs 2004, p. 89) The ability to structure thought derives from frames’ characteristics on the individual level. Goffman (1974, p. 8) has called these frames “schemata of interpretation” and Entman (1991, p. 53) as “schematas”. In terms of structuration of thought, frames actively ‘promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described.’(Entman 1993, p. 52, emphasis in original.)

The idea of power then links agenda setting with the four functions of framing (Entman 1993, 2004, & 2007). The first level of agenda setting performs the first function of framing, that is defining problems worthy of public and government attention. These problems can spotlight, for instance, character traits of a candidate. The second or attribute level of agenda setting comprises the three remaining
functions that, as emphasised above, work in the structuration of thought. Frames on the attribute level of agenda setting highlight the causes of problems, encourage moral judgements and promote favoured policies. (McCombs 2004, p. 89; Entman 2007, p. 164.)

At the level of media frames, these functions are put in practice when media texts improve the salience of bits of information by their placement or repetition, or associating them with symbols that are familiar or common in cultural terms. Frames are constructed from and appear in the keywords, metaphors, concepts, symbols, and visual images emphasised, for instance, in a news. Frames do not eliminate all inconsistent information, for texts contain always data that is incongruent. Though, by repeating, placing, and reinforcing connections with each other, the words and images of which the frame consists, make one interpretation easier to comprehend and memorise than others. (Entman, 1993, pp. 52-53; Entman, 1991, p. 7.)

The definition of framing in this way has essential consequences for political communication. Frames direct attention to some aspects of reality while obscuring other elements. This highlighting and shadowing might lead audiences to have different reactions. Politicians who are fighting for the appraisal of people compete then with each other and with journalists in order to impose frames that favour them. In this respect, framing is at the core of the usage of political power. The frame in a news is the imprint of power: it points out the identity of actors that fought to gain a dominant position in the text. The words and images building the frame can be separated from the rest of the news by their capacity to gain support or opposition to the sides in a political conflict. Frames that use more culturally resonant terms than others have the greatest potential for influence. (Entman, 1989; Entman, 1993, p. 55: Entman, 2004, p. 6.)

One should take into account, as previously noted, that Entman's (1993 & 2004) formulations of frames' power assume that there is a connection between media frames and audience frames. Thus, this connection is not based on empirical tests. However, as Scheufele (1999, p. 111) notes, the fact that Entman (1993), in his study
on the coverage of the downing of a Korean and an Iranian airplane, uses data as
illustration is not a short-coming, for he does not make any causal statements.

If we emphasise the idea of power, the definition of frames should be limited to
central themes. (McCombs 2004, p. 91.) However, McCombs (ibid.), states that one
should not ignore “aspects” of coverage for their influence is identified and measured
by research. Kiousis (2005, p. 5) suggests that in terms of candidate images the
application of attributes is more in line with the “aspects” definition than with the
“central themes” definition.

While attributes defining a central theme are frames, not all of these attributes are
equal. McCombs notes that some attributes “are more likely than others to be noticed
and remembered by the audience quite apart from their frequency of appearance or
dominance in the message. In the interpretation of a message some attributes will also
be considered more pertinent than others. Certain characteristics of an object may
resonate with the public in such a way that they become especially compelling
arguments for the salience of the issue, person or topic under consideration.” (2004, p.
92, emphasis added.)

The idea of compelling arguments further integrates framing and agenda-setting.
Compelling arguments are frames, certain dominant ways of organising and
structuring the picture of an object that hold a high degree of succes among the public.
Compelling arguments create a link that connects attribute salience on the media
agenda with object salience on the public agenda. In short, when a particular attribute
of an object holds a dominant position on the media agenda, it can influence directly
the salience of that object on the public agenda. And some ways of depicting an object
can be more persuasive than other ways in order to create object salience among the
public. An example of compelling arguments could be, for instance, news about
unemployment. As a sub-topic, unemployment in a news coverage should not just
shape the perceived importance of unemployment among the public but also the
perceived importance of the general issue of the economy. (ibid., pp. 92-93; McCombs 2005, p. 547; Kiousis 2005, p. 5.)
The convergence of framing and attribute agenda-setting significantly improves the explication of media effects on the public by highlighting the special position held by certain attributes, frames, in a media message. These effects on the public range from a broad spectrum of attributes depicting the various aspects of an object to a single attribute defining a dominant frame that can function as a compelling argument. The expanded version of agenda-setting, characterised as an agenda of attributes defining the way we perceive and think about topics in the news, gives the media an even more powerful role in the political process. (McCombs 2004, p. 87; McCombs, Llamas, Lopez-Escobar, & Rey, 1997, p. 704; McCombs 2005, p. 547.)

5.2.5 Critics of framing as an extension of agenda-setting

There has been considerable debate in the scholarly literature regarding the relationship between attribute agenda-setting and framing (e.g. McCombs 2004, p. 89; Kiousis 2005, p. 4). For instance, Scheufele (1999 & 2000), Reese (2007) and Van Gorp (2007) have argued for the separation of these two concepts, for agenda-setting and framing rely on distinctively different assumptions and therefore involve equally different theoretical frameworks. Takeshita (2005) summarises that the critics of agenda-setting in relation to framing concern essentially the effects of agenda-setting process and the conceptualisation of attribute agenda-setting, which is similar to the idea of framing effects.

One type of criticism levelled against the combining of these two concepts derive from the way they define their effects on audiences. In short, agenda-setting effects are considered as cognitive (influencing knowledge and opinion), while consequences of framing seem to be more than that. As we have seen, the basic agenda-setting model states that the media do not tell people what to think but what to think about. In this respect, the agenda-setting effects seem to remain in the cognitive dimension. In turn, framing effects, as described by Entman (1993), can also involve the affective dimension (influencing attitude and feelings) and even the behavioural dimension. (Takeshita 2005, p. 281; McQuail 2005, p. 465.)
However, agenda-setting research has equally reached other levels than the mere cognitive dimension. As we have previously seen, when combined with the concept of priming, agenda-setting is concerned with the attitudinal dimension, for priming states that issues emphasised by the media will likely become benchmarks that people use to make political judgements (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). The idea of priming counts also for the consequences of attribute agenda-setting. The attributes of an object, such as the traits of political candidates, highlighted in the media will influence the audience, and, consequently, become standards by which the candidate as whole will be judged (Kim et al. 2002; Kim & McCombs 2007.)

Van Gorp (2007, p. 70) states that within the constructivist approach framing can be distinguished from agenda-setting for at least two reasons. First, in contrast to the constructivist approach that emphasises the interactive process in which social reality is constructed, the theoretical premises of agenda-setting are causal (ibid., p. 70; Scheufele, 2000). Though, the premises of constructivism are not merely expressed in terms of effects of media content on the public, for media frames refer to various ways in which the news media can cover an issue persuasively, but the framing process pays also attention to the journalistic production process and the interpreting audience. Second, contrary to agenda-setting research, the concept of framing distinguishes issues and frames, in other words one issue can be covered from multiple angles or frames, and the same frame can be used to cover different issues. Van Gorp considers even the spectre of second level agenda-setting research more limited, for it does not take into account the role of journalists. (2007, p. 70.)

Scheufele (1999 & 2000) refers to a few empirical studies that seem to contradict theorising that framing should be considered as an extension of agenda-setting. For instance, from two experiments examining the influence of news frames on tolerance for the Ku Klux Klan, Nelson et al. (1997) concluded that the perceived importance of specific frames by the public rather than salience is the key factor. In other words, “media frames influence opinions by stressing specific values, facts, and other
considerations, endowing them with greater apparent relevance to the issue than they might appear to have under an alternative frame” (ibid., p. 569).

The difference between the perceived importance of frames and the salience of frames can, at the first sight, seem operational. In this respect, perceived importance and salience represent different ways of measuring the same construct. However, there also seem to be conceptual differences between these two. These conceptual differences are essentially related to the distinction between accessibility and applicability effects. In this sense, salience of frames refers to their accessibility: how people think of an issue is affected by the accessibility of frames. Agenda setting along with priming are accessibility effects, in other words they are grounded on memory-based models of information processing. The temporal sequence of agenda setting and priming assumes that media can make some issues or aspects of issues more accessible, in other terms easily recalled for people and in this way have an effect on the standards they use forming attitudes about candidates. (Scheufele 1999, p. 116; Scheufele & Tewksbury 2007, p. 15, emphasis added.)

In turn, the perceived importance of frames is the result of a more conscious process of information gathering and processing. The importance of frames refer to their applicability which is a fundamental characteristic of framing effects. (ibid.) Applicability deals with the message processing where “the salient attributes of a message evoke and activate certain constructs, which then can have an increased likelihood of use in evaluations made in response to the message” (Price et al. 1997, p. 197.)

Takeshita (2006) notes that Scheufele’s (1999, 2000) criticism of agenda-setting presumes that salience is synonymous with accessibility. However, scholars have given different meanings to the notion of salience. In short, salience seems to be a word that has two meanings. While traditional voting behaviour scholars have applied the word to demonstrate importance of priority, scholars from cognitive psychology have often regarded it as a synonym of accessibility. Takeshita argues that the concept of salience in agenda-setting research should not be regarded as synonymous with the
concept of accessibility. Takeshita states that for the founders of agenda setting salience must have meant perceived importance. Accordingly, the concept of salience used in agenda-setting research should not be equated with the concept of accessibility. (Takeshita 2006, p. 278.)

There is evidence already from the earlier agenda-setting research that the salience of issues in the public agenda is the outcome of more than the accessibility of those issues. Both aspects of knowledge activation, applicability as well as accessibility, are involved in agenda-setting effects. In addition, “the appropriateness of accessibility versus applicability as a theoretical explanation for the cognitive processes involved in the transfer of object and attribute salience from one agenda to another may not have an empirical answer *per se*”, for both are black-box models which involve virtually untestable assumptions about cognitive processes. (McCombs 2005, p. 552.) Furthermore, the salience of an issue presented on the media agenda to an individual is significantly influenced by the individual’s state of mind, especially when it comes to the individual’s level of need for orientation, as we have seen earlier. Evidence that people with a high informational need end up to have stronger agenda-setting effects indicate that the effect process is to a degree a deliberate one. (McCombs 2005, p. 551; Takeshita 2005, p. 278.)

Elsewhere Miller and Krosnick (2000) have provided strong evidence to support the hypothesis of deliberate process. Their major finding is that people who adapt to the media agenda are “political experts, who apparently *choose* to rely on a source they trust to help them sort through the wealth of information they have obtained in order to make political judgements”. In other words, the agenda setting effect seems to be strongest among people who both have confidence in the media and know a great deal about politics. This implies that like priming, agenda-setting may be more conscious and deliberate process than thought in the past. (p. 312.)

The view of active processing is in line with the hypothesis of Price and Tewkesbury (1997). They state that not all activated constructs are automatically used in evaluating a stimulus, and that some of them may be filtered out when consciously
judged to be irrelevant to the situation at hand. However, Miller and Krosnick noted that agenda setting was also visible among people who were neither highly trusting nor highly knowledgeable. This suggests that agenda setting might also appear automatically and with little cognitive effort. (2000, p. 312.) Takeshita (2005, p. 279) elaborates that the variation in effects suggests that there might be two types of agenda-setting: a deliberate agenda-setting involving active inference and an automatic agenda-setting explained by the accessibility bias.

In conclusion, whether framing is more or less similar to second level of agenda setting seem to depend greatly on the way framing is defined. For instance, in the recent issue of *Journal of Communication* (2007) dedicated to the matter at hand, the authors use a number of definitions of framing, including problem definitions, causal interpretations, moral evaluations, and treatment recommendations, and equally key themes, phrases and words. In comparison to second level agenda-setting, framing seems to include a broader range of cognitive processes. While framing can include moral evaluations, causal reasoning and treatment recommendations for problems, second-level agenda setting deals with the salience of attributes of an object. (Weaver, 2007, pp. 143 and 146.)

In my thesis presidential candidate images are understood within the framework of second-level agenda-setting, in other words attribute agenda-setting. In addition, following the definition of McCombs (2004), attribute agenda-setting is incorporated with the concept of framing. In this respect, my focus of research is on certain dominant attributes of candidates, in other words frames, that are expressed, on the one hand, in the media content, and on the other hand, in the public opinion. These dominant attributes can include, for instance, personal qualifications and character. However, it is above all the consequences of media content for cognitions, opinions and behaviour among the public that will decide which specific attributes to study. This focus on the agenda-setting outcomes “reiterates the emphasis among framing scholars on the power of frames” (McCombs 2004, p. 89).
6 METHOD AND DATA

In this chapter I present the methodology and data used in my thesis. Following the example of previous agenda-setting research on candidate images (e.g., McCombs, Llamas, Lopez-Escobar, & Rey 1997; McCombs, Lopez-Escobar, & Llamas 2000), my study combines content analysis of both media texts and opinion surveys. The content analysis of candidate images in newspaper and news magazine editorials relies, above all, on the quantitative approach, measuring the importance of different aspects of images and their nature. Descriptions of candidates are organised along two dimensions: substantive dimension depicting candidates' ideology, qualifications, personality, and matters of private life; and affective dimension taking into account the tones – positive, neutral or negative – found in the substantive categories. Eventually, candidate images found in the editorials are compared to voters' perceptions of those same candidates in order to see how the media and public agenda correlated during the presidential campaign.

6.1 Combining content analysis of editorials and opinion surveys

A quantitative content analysis is designed to provide a descriptive analysis of what a media text (for instance newspaper report) contains, and to so in a way that can be repeated by others. To express it in a more detailed manner, quantitative content analysis is, first, systematic in utilising a principled form of media output sampling and content coding. Second, it is objective in the sense that the researcher's own biases should not influence the analysis. Eventually, quantitative content analysis is quantifiable: its major focus is on “counting occurrences of predefined entities in a media text”. (Gunter 2002, p. 220.)

Agenda-setting research is one of the most well-known examples of media research traditions using this type of quantitative methodology. Increasingly used to a wide range of media issues in the second half of the twentieth century, the quantitative approach found one of its most prominent applications in this new area of research,
examining patterns of news coverage in order to indicate the agenda-setting role of media. (ibid.)

As Jensen (2002, p. 262) notes, agenda-setting research exemplifies in a clarifying manner the general deductive logic common to the quantitative mainstream of media and communication research. This deductive logic, described equally as 'hypothetico-deductive', proposes to research to test hypothesis which have been deduced from general 'law' of some kind. First, it is deduction which ensures that a hypothesis is neither logically inconsistent nor tautological – something that would prove it irrelevant for empirical research. Second, if a relevant hypothesis could been seen to contradict or specify an accepted law, it should be object to further study. Finally, if the findings correspond to the prediction, the hypothesis is confirmed. This means that it can be accepted among the recognised and cumulated theories. (ibid.)

The ground-breaking agenda-setting study of McCombs and Shaw (1972) followed the logic of deduction by departing from previous findings regarding political communication. These findings suggested that “although the evidence that mass media deeply change attitudes in a campaign is far from conclusive, the evidence is much stronger that voters learn from the immense quantity of information available during each campaign” (p. 176). Next, the authors deduced a conceptual distinction between attitudes and agendas and operationalised this distinction in an empirical comparison of news content and voters’ assessments. Their hypothesis stated that “the mass media set the agenda for each political campaign, influencing the salience of attitudes toward the political issues” (p. 177). Accordingly, the study attempted to match “what Chapel Hill voters said were key issues of the campaign with the actual content of the mass media used by them during the campaign” (ibid., emphasis in original).

As Jensen (ibid.) notes, two findings of the Chapel Hill study illustrate the deductive logic. First, the research design aimed to establish causality, and revealed that the media had “exerted a considerable impact” (McCombs & Shaw 1972, p. 180) on the voters' perceptions of the political issues in question. The analysis found very strong
correlations between media emphasis and voters' judgements (ibid.). Correlation between such two variables, meaning that one is associated with the other, is a basic characteristic of a quantitative content analysis (e.g., Riffe et al. 1996). Second, a further analysis was conducted of those respondents who had a preference for one candidate. These respondents' references to the issues associated with a particular party or candidate were compared to their references to issues in all the news. The findings suggested that “the voters attend reasonably well to all the news, regardless of which candidate or party issue is stressed” (McCombs & Shaw 1972, p. 182, emphasis in original). The fact that voters' assessments seem to reflect the composite of the mass media gives more support to the agenda-setting hypothesis, as Jensen (ibid., p. 263) notes.

As we have previously seen, the traditional agenda-setting hypothesis raised by McCombs and Shaw (1972) has been verified over 400 hundreds studies since the 1970's, the majority of them concentrating on an agenda of public issues (e.g., McCombs 2004). Being a fertile area for further studies, the agenda-setting hypothesis has expanded to cover new areas of research. Recently, the agenda-setting hypothesis has been verified in the case of second-level agenda-setting, highlighting media's influence on the public's perceptions of various detailed attributes (or frames) of issues or political candidates (e.g., McCombs et al. 2000). As we have seen, this second-level agenda is further divided mainly into two dimensions – substantive and affective (Kiousis et al. 1999; McCombs et al.,2000), the latter referring to tones used in the descriptions of political candidates, for instance. In this respect, there is strong evidence that candidate traits that are covered positively or negatively in the media are perceived in a similar fashion in the public opinion and are significantly related to opinions about political candidates (Kim & McCombs 2007, p. 310).

The methodology of my thesis derives from this accumulated evidence of agenda-setting hypothesis. To test the hypothesis according to which candidates' attributes in the media affect perceptions of these same candidates in the eyes of the public, I have to examine in quantitative terms both the content of media and opinion surveys and compare them. The purpose is to find correlations between these two agendas.
However, I do not use in my research any technical tests such as Chi-Square or Cramer's V to indicate statistical significances or the strength of the relationship between two variables, contrary to what has been the case with the majority of agenda-setting studies. This choice is mostly due to the fact that my data derives from two separate sources; in other words, the analysis of media data has not been operationalised the same way than the opinion surveys which are conducted in France and not done specifically to my purposes.

6.1.1 Editorials

The agenda-setting literature suggests that, in general, newspapers are more frequently the dominant agenda setter, influencing, above all, the agenda of television (e.g. Kim & McCombs 2007). This finding seems to find support also from the French media landscape, for at least the national dailies serve as agenda-setters for regional newspapers, radio and television. Equally, they are significant agenda-setters for political elites. In this respect, the influence of French national dailies on the mass public seems to be largely indirect, not direct because of their small circulation. In addition, the status of French newspapers has to be estimated with regards to the fact that the newspaper sector lacks a daily title with a large nationwide circulation, which, in turn, leads to the absence of the popular agenda-setting influence of the British tabloids. (Kuhn 2004, pp. 25 and 29.)

The agenda-setting force of newspapers was also behind my own choice of data. My research data consists of two French leading dailies, *Le Monde* and *Libération*, and two weekly news magazines *L’Express* and *Le Nouvel Observateur*. *Le Monde* and *Libération* are general information newspapers and are both predominantly sold in the Paris area. As weekly news magazines, *L’Express* and *Le Nouvel Observateur* provide analytic journalism of high quality. Their readership derives from the upper stratas of society and is politically knowledgeable. (Kuhn 2004, p. 26.)

In addition to taking into account the agenda-setting force of these newspapers, it was important to gather a wide spectrum of publications regarding their political
orientation in order to contemplate whether candidates were depicted differently in different newspapers and news magazines. In general, the political identification of the French newspapers is relatively high (e.g. Hallin & Mancini 2004). As for my data, *Le Monde* is seen representing the center-left. *Libération* is regarded as vaguely leftist and anti-establishment. In the case of main news magazines, *L’Express* has defended moderately liberal positions in political terms. It is owned by the same media group than the right-wing *Le Figaro*. *Le Nouvel Observateur* is considered to be left-wing. The magazine has become a strong supporter of the new socialist left and fights for the unification of this vague political orientation. (Feyel 2001, p. 40; Kuhn 2004, p. 29.)

Regarding all four, I decided to limit my data to editorials, in order to avoid falling into a large mass of material. This focus excludes from data, for instance, all the news articles. I chose editorials as my data for a few reasons. They are a distinguishable form of opinion article which often present the publication's stance on different issues, even though in the case of France general ideological orientations, for instance, do not necessarily translate into open editorial support for a particular party or candidate during elections (see Kuhn 2004, p. 29).

The research period concerning editorials is a little less than four months, starting from the 13th of January 2007 and finishing on the 7th of May. The research period was set between the official campaign launch of Nicolas Sarkozy in the mid-January and the second round of presidential elections in May. The official campaign launch of one of the main candidates was chosen as the starting point, for since then the campaign heated up and provoked growing interest from the part of the media and voters.

A total of 123 articles was retrieved. The unit of analysis was an assertion in an article where a candidate possessed a particular attribute. Following the example of recent agenda-setting studies on candidate images (e.g. McCombs, Llamas, Lopez-Escobar, & Rey 1997; McCombs, Lopez-Escobar, & Llamas 2000), attributes were organised
according to two dimensions: (1) a substantive dimension; and (2) an affective dimension. The substantive dimension referred to:

(1) **Ideology and issue positions.** This category includes all statements regarding candidates ideology, such as “socialist” and “right-wing”, and all the remarks depicting the position of candidates on specific issues, such economy, immigration, national identity etc.

(2) **Qualifications and experience.** This category includes all statement about the competency of the candidates for the office, their previous political experience and different biographical details of the candidates.

(3) **Personality.** This category includes all personal traits and features of the character of the candidate, such as their moral, charisma, intelligence, courage, ambition, independence, and etc.

(4) **Private life.** This category includes statement concerning the private lives of candidates, such as references to family, personal relationships, sexual orientation and behaviour, money, and etc.

The reduction of attribute agenda to a few macrocategories reflects a long-standing scholarly effort to identify the basic aspects or frames in both media and voter images of political candidates (e.g., Nimmo & Savage 1976). Secondly, all of these statements were codified in terms of positive, neutral, or negative affect. This categorisation refers to the sub-categories of the affective dimension. It is important to include the affective context of the substantive attributes, as descriptions of the political candidates both in the media and by voters often are depicted in a positive or negative tone, as McCombs et al. (2000, p. 82) note. More importantly, candidate traits that are covered positively or negatively in the media are perceived in a similar fashion in the public opinion and are significantly related to opinions about political candidates (Kim & McCombs 2007, p. 310).
Taking into account the difficulty of avoiding biases when coding affective attributes, I paid a lot of attention for this part of the content analysis. It was easiest to define all those statements than can be regarded as positive or negative by the average person: “competent” vs. “incompetent” or “traitor” vs. “honest”. On a more demanding level, I picked out some commonly used pejorative words in France. For instance, the term “lépeniste”, referring to the radical leader of extreme-right Jean-Marie Le Pen, holds a highly negative meaning in the mass public.

Equally, I paid attention to the meaning of statements in relation to their context. For instance, the notion of “police” with regards to a candidate can have a highly negative connotation when it is expressed in a left-wing publication. Similarly, such as expressions as “he is right-wing” about a candidate who has made a point of being “center” would be regarded as negative. In sum, it has to be noted that did not try to identify any underlying meanings in the statements found in the editorials. Any statement referring to a candidate that would not explicitly favour or harm the candidate was categorised as neutral.

6.1.2 Opinion surveys

Surveys are a major form of quantitative research that does not involve any manipulation of participants or their circumstances in advance. They gather data after the fact. Surveys cannot test cause-effect relationships in direct ways, for they receive information from respondents about their knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, values and behaviours after the fact in question took place. Instead, surveys explore relationships or degrees of association between variables. (Gunter 2002, p. 214.)

In France, several types of barometers measure the popularity of major politicians. Some of these surveys concentrate on the public's perceptions of the image created by politician's personality; others investigate directly opinions on politicians' actions, being somehow harder than the mere image surveys, for they are based on concrete and recent events. In addition, some surveys measure what endeavours or wishes the
public has regarding politicians' future, such as one's suitability to presidential office. (Artufel & Duroux 2006, p. 175.)

I relied on the French Political Barometer realised by the Research Center of Politics of Science Po (CEVIPOF) during the presidential campaign and the surveys conducted by the French Electoral Panel. In order to compare the media and public agendas of candidate images, four waves of opinion polls were chosen. The first of these was conducted between the 5\textsuperscript{th} and 19\textsuperscript{th} of February 2007.\textsuperscript{1} The second poll was realised between the 29\textsuperscript{th} of March and the 21\textsuperscript{th} of April. The third survey was done between the two rounds of elections, and the fourth and the last survey was conducted between the 9\textsuperscript{th} and 23\textsuperscript{th} of May, after the second round of elections. \textsuperscript{2}

In all the four waves of the opinion surveys voters' assessments of candidates were measured with the help of the this question: “Regarding all the following sentences, tell me if the sentence at hand correspond very well, fairly well, not really well, or not well at all to the candidate:

(1) He/she worries you
(2) He/she is honest
(3) He/she understands problems of people like you
(4) He/she fills out the requirements of President of the Republic”

In addition to measuring these candidate traits and their evolution throughout the campaign, the surveys allowed to examine candidate images in relation to socio-demographic and political characteristics. In terms of socio-demographic and political factors, respondents’ perceptions were categorised along their profession and their political positions on the left/right dimension. Eventually, the surveys gauged the relative weight of candidate images in voters' decision-making in comparison to other voting choice determinants. These determinants included respondents’ position on the left/right dimension and the degree of attachment to a particular political party.

\textsuperscript{1} The first wave of opinion polls included in my research was conducted in the context of French Political Barometer, using telephone surveys of a sample of 5000 people

\textsuperscript{2} These surveys were conducted in the context of French Electoral Panel, combining face-to-face interviews and two telephone surveys of individuals who formed an electoral panel
It should be noted that the question when to begin and stop measuring the media content has to be carefully considered in relation to polls. All the research that attempts to examine the relationships between media content and public opinion must take into account the question of time lag. Studies on agenda-setting have produced mixed results regarding the optimum time lag, ranging from a few days to several months prior to public opinion polls. (e.g. Kiousis & McCombs, 2004, p. 44.) I have decided to use a time frame in which the first articles are published in the middle of January, three weeks before conducting the first opinion polls. Accordingly, the last editorials are published on the last day of election campaign. The fourth set of opinion surveys ends on the 23rd of May, leaving a time gap of more than two weeks.

7 ANALYSIS

In this chapter, I shall present my findings concerning candidate images in the editorials and opinion surveys. The first part of the chapter concentrates on the analysis of candidate images found in the media. I shall begin with general remarks, regarding especially the media presence of examined candidates. Then candidate images of Ségolène Royal and Nicolas Sarkozy are examined both according to their substantive and affective dimension. On the second part of the chapter, these images are matched with the public's descriptions of candidates. The chapter finishes with an analysis of the impact of candidate images on voting choices.

7.1 General remarks

“Since 1981, French have never been this fascinated by politics.” Like journalist Jean-Michel Thénard was already able to conclude in Libération (16.3.2007), the presidential campaign of 2007 could easily be compared in importance to that of 1981, bringing the left to power for the first since the birth of the Fifth Republic. The enthusiasm for the elections was also reflected in the media that had intensively followed the main competitors since the very beginning, initiating with the probable
right-wing candidate Nicolas Sarkozy already in November 2004. With regards to the
media, all major candidates' seemed to take into account the need to start to construct
a personal image long before the official campaign launches (see Vedel 2007, p. 70).

Since the nomination of Ségolène Royal as the presidential candidate of the Socialist
Party at the beginning of November 2006, the main candidates appeared on the
French press on daily basis. Leidenberg, Holtz-Bacha, & Koch (2008) point out in
their study that between 9.11.2006 – 9.5.2007 the French national dailies and weekly
news magazines published nearly 18 000 articles dealing with Ségolène Royal,
Nicolas Sarkozy or Francois Bayrou. In a representative sample of 1030 articles,
Nicolas Sarkozy clearly passed his competitors in presence. He was mentioned in 85
percent of articles, while Ségolène Royal in 65 percent and Francois Bayrou only in
33 percent. The weight of candidates' presence was the same when articles referring to
only one candidate were counted.

The high visibility of two main candidates was equally true for television. Analysis of
the main news programmes show that between September 2006 and May 2007 Royal
and Sarkozy clearly dominated the air-time. Their air-time more than doubled the one
of Bayrou. However, in comparison to the press, the air-time devoted to Sarkozy was
only slightly higher than Royal's. While the reason to this tight race remains open, one
could imagine that it was due to the requirements of equal air-time imposed by the
Superior council of audiovisual media (Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel, CSA), the
watchdog of pluralism. (Gerstlé & Piar 2008, pp. 37-38.)

Nicolas Sarkozy also dominated editorials chosen to my research. In the data,
consisting of editorials referring to either Sarkozy's or Royal's image or both,
Sarkozy's image was mentioned in 86 percent of articles. At the same Royal's portion
was 72 percent. The distance between Sarkozy and Royal is also clear when measured
by the number of notions referring to candidates. While there were 205 assessments
regarding Sarkozy's image, Royal was referred to less frequently, capturing 180 times
media's attention in examined editorials.
The total amount of articles or the number of notions, however, are not sufficient answers when analysing candidates' media presence. One is easily left to wonder whether this type of media presence depends on the publication dealing with the candidates. In this respect, the political orientation of analysed dailies and news magazines might play a role in referring to one candidate at the expense of another. One could assume that, for instance, the moderately liberal weekly magazine *L'Express* would in this respect favour Sarkozy, and the leftist *Libération* Royal. Quite surprisingly, the results of my analysis show that in almost every publication, independent of the political orientation, there were more articles commenting on Sarkozy's image than the one of Royal. Only in the left-wing *Le Nouvel Observateur* the number of articles mentioning the image of Sarkozy was the same than that of editorials referring to Royal. While the advantage for Sarkozy was fairly subtle in most publications, the leftist *Libération* sacrificed clearly more often its editorials to Sarkozy's image.
Leidenber, Holtz-Bacha, & Koch (2008) ended up in similar results regarding Royal's and Sarkozy's presence in the French press. Similarly to the German press, Sarkozy was cited more often than his closest competitor, independent of the political colour of the publication in question. Also in this study it is surprising to see that while the national daily Le Figaro, anchored to the right, published more articles on Sarkozy, so did also the leftist Libération. In correlation to my findings, the gap between Sarkozy and Royal is narrower in weekly news magazines, Le Nouvel Observateur treating candidates with the same number of articles.

What is the reason to Sarkozy's dominance over his competitor? Leidenberg, Holtz-Bacha, & Koch (ibid.) refer to Sarkozy's decision to maintain his position as Interior Minister as long as possible. This strategy seemed to offer him possibilities to be present in the media. Leidenberg, Holtz-Bacha, & Koch found out that in 17 percent of the French articles dealing with Sarkozy he was referred to in relation to his functions as Interior Minister. This seemed to be the case also with the publications chosen to my study, especially with Libération, the newspaper often quoting Sarkozy with reference to his functions in government.

Sarkozy's dominance over Royal can also be explained by his recognised skills in political communication. In order to gain media's attention Nicolas Sarkozy seems to communicate on everything and all the time. This strategy consists of presenting a public problem that is seen somehow tabou and then create debate over it. This courageous and unordinary method seems to guarantee him visible media coverage. In the government of Jean-Pierre Raffarin 2002-2004, Nicolas Sarkozy's was clearly the most cited minister in the French press. Assessments were made in connection to topics for which he was responsible as Interior Minister (e.g. law on domestic security), but also to his personality and efforts in the field of communication. In terms of number of citations Sarkozy's dominance over his collegues continued after he had returned to Interior Ministry in 2005, enjoying high visibility in the government of Dominique de Villepin at least until the beginning of 2006. (Artufel & Duroux 2006, pp. 100-101 and 108-109.)
While the strong media presence of Nicolas Sarkozy was not new, the almost total absence of one of the major themes of modern political communication could be considered as a surprise. Only 6 percent of the examined articles referred to candidates' private lives. Compared to other aspects of candidate images (ideology and issues; experience and qualifications; and personality), the private affairs played more than a minor role in the construction of Royal's and Sarkozy's images in the editorials. Only two themes raised the interest of editorials to deal with the private lives of candidates: Sarkozy's campaign launch speech dealing with his personal losses in mid-January and Royal's alleged tax avoidance concerning her property holdings with her compagnon Francois Hollande, equally in January. After January, no remarks were made concerning candidates' private affairs.

Leidenberg, Holtz-Bacha, & Koch (2008) ended up in similar results concerning candidates' private lives. They found that both the German and the French press were little interested in candidates' children, brothers, sisters or parents. The German press was, however, more interested in Royal's family affairs than the French. In France, only 3 percent of articles dealt with Royal's family life. Sarkozy was a lot more rarely mentioned in these terms. Equally, candidates' spouses were hardly ever mentioned in the German and the French press. Cécilia Sarkozy was mentioned with her husband in 4 percent of the German articles and 2 percent of the French. For Francois Hollande, the number of articles mentioning him was higher, partly due to his role as the leader of the Socialist Party. The more visible presence of Hollande than Cécilia Sarkozy is clear also in the examined editorials, for Cécilia Sarkozy was not even once mentioned during the research period.

The minor role played by both Royal's and Sarkozy's private life is surprising in the sense that as well as candidates' own interest as the one of media lays nowadays more and more in the mediatisation of private affairs, as we have already seen in the chapter 3. Also in France, the mediatisation of politicians' private lives has grown during recent years (Kuhn 2007, p. 193). Both Ségolène Royal and Nicolas Sarkozy have been eager to mediatise their private affairs in the past as a part of their media strategy. The press coverage of major candidates during the presidential campaign
seems to confirm the distinct features of French political life in comparison to other countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom. As we have seen with Kuhn (2004 & 2007), the interface between the public and the private has been marked by three factors: a high level of legal protection of privacy; the lack of a tabloid news culture; and an unwillingness of the public to consider some aspects of politicians' private lives as important benchmarks to evaluate politicians' fitness to hold office.

7.2 Royal's image

Ségolène Royal's nomination as the presidential candidate of the French Socialist Party was largely considered as a surprising choice: she was fairly unexperienced politician and a woman, something that was not too common in the fairly conservative and masculin French political life. However, her nomination showed that these faults were turned into assets in the eyes of the party members, breaking path to a new type of presidential candidate. While Royal was equally star in the public opinion and media, she seemed to be the only right choice to compete with the strong right-wing candidate Nicolas Sarkozy as the presidential race begun for real at the beginning of 2007.

7.2.1 The emergence of a new type of leadership

As the presidential elections of 2007 approached, the crumbling reputation of Jacques Chirac's presidency seemed to be the best hope of the French Socialist Party (Parti Socialiste, PS). As the other major party in French politics, in opposition since 2002, the Socialist Party lacked effective leadership. Former Prime Minister and party leader Lionel Jospin had faced an embarrassing exit on the first ballot of presidential elections in 2002. In the lack of replacements the Socialist Party did not have designated presidential candidate until late 2006. (Bell & Criddle 2008, p. 190.)

Eventually, three persons ran against each other in a vote of the membership in November 2006. Laurent Fabius, being the most experienced of the three, had been
Prime Minister (1984-1986) of a government that began denationalising and deregulating the French economy. In 2005, he was one of the leaders of the 'No' campaign in the Referendum on the EU constitution, in defence of the social model. Dominique Strauss-Kahn was nearly as experienced as Fabius. He was a former Finance Minister. However, unlike Fabius he belonged to the social democratic wing of the party. And then there was Ségolène Royal, not even nearly as experienced as the two others, but star in the opinion. She had led over other aspirants since becoming a regional council President in 2004, and was judged in the polls preceding the vote a potential winner over Nicolas Sarkozy in a presidential second ballot. (ibid.)

Beating clearly her more experienced competitors, Royal was nominated as the presidential candidate by 60 percent of the party members. Her victory was considered as a surprise for several reasons. First, she was seen as distinctively different from the politicians traditionally chosen to compete for the French presidency. Even though she was an experienced politician, Royal was not a central person within her own party. She had not been assigned for the top posts of the party or been minister of high importance (twice junior minister, though). In this respect, her political curriculum vitae was fairly poor. During the months preceding her nomination, Royal was highly criticised by some of her party colleges and journalists due to her alleged lack of experience that, in their opinion, made her endeavour for the presidential office illegitimate. (Sineau 2006, p. 1; Bell & Criddle 2008, p. 190.)

Second, it took many by surprise that one of the main parties designed a female candidate, taking into account the fact that France has been reluctant in letting women to enter politics. One should bear in mind that France is the only country where women had to wait for their right to vote nearly a century after the universal suffrage devoted to men. French political culture has been attached to this “democracy between brothers” to our days. In the parliamentary elections of 2002, only 12 percent of the female candidates were elected to the National Assembly. When it comes to presidential elections, the direct vote by people since the 1962 has created a virile image of power. (ibid., pp. 1-2.)
Her nomination seemed to reflect the fact that her alleged faults were turned into assets. In equal terms, the fact that she stayed out of the disagreements between different movements of the party was perceived as positive, distancing the candidate from the party machine and its traditional way to speak. In this respect, other dimensions than the political one seemed to favour her: she was young, mother, living in couple but not married. Royal gave the image of a pluralist woman – traditional and modern at the same time – something that pleased the public opinion. As a family mother, she did not seem to be distant from the problems of every day life. (ibid., pp. 2-3.)

Ségolène Royal responded to a need of a new type of political leadership in France; instead of charismatic leadership embodied in the former presidencies of de Gaulle and Mitterrand the public opinion seemed to be in favour of a leader who was more prosaic and close to people and their concerns. Through the usage of simple language Royal gives the impression of being able to identify the every day concerns of French. In this way, she wants to show that politics is not a dogma separated from the experience and every day life. This vision is embodied in her political programme: it does not want to be determined in beforehand and written from above, but open to propositions coming from ordinary people. (ibid., pp. 2-3.)

The nomination of Ségolène Royal as a presidential candidate left open a variety of questions concerning the political significance of this choice and her overall strategy of the election campaign. For some, her nomination was seen as the end of party democracy, overcome by the public democracy. In the worst scenario, she was seen as a product of populism. In the best case, she represented a gaullian-type meeting between a woman and the people, by-passing the party. For others, Royal provided a needed remedy for the leadership crisis of the party and responded to the decline of the representative democracy. This line of thought highlighted the fact that Royal had paid attention to certain changes in political life: the decline of parties; the emergence of more instructed, informed and critical citizens; the horizontal diffusion of information via Internet – which changed the style of political authority – and the
necessity to rely on certain procedures of direct or participative democracy to repair the representative democracy. (ibid. pp. 3-4.)

Even though the Socialist Party nominated Ségolène Royal as presidential candidate already in November 2006, the official launch of her campaign was delayed until early February 2007. This delay was seemingly due to her willingness to allow for the participation of the rank and file of the party. Between her nomination and the official campaign launch, and therefore also during the very beginning of my research period, Royal's campaign echoed with participative debates (débats participatifs), which were 5000 in number. This phase of “listening” had the objective of “collecting all the best of what had been contributed to her presidential programme”, as the ex-Prime Minister and supporter of Royal Pierre Mayroy put it in Le Monde (26.1.2007).

Royal's devotion to associate voters' to the elaboration of her political programme embodied one of the distinct features of the presidential elections of 2007. In their own way, both major candidates, Royal and Nicolas Sarkozy, had invited voters' to contribute to and comment on their political programmes. In March 2006, Royal’s candidacy was initiated with a call for voters to contribute to her campaign book or join the participative debates. In this respect, the elections of 2007 were seen as a split vis-à-vis the traditional notion of candidates imposing their own vision of France. (Vedel 2007, p. 66.)

7.2.2 Royal's image in the editorials

The editorial coverage of Ségolène Royal provides clearly a positive image of her during the four months of my research period. Taking into account the three possible tones, the positive remarks occupy nearly half of them all (49 %). In the meanwhile, the negative assessments constitute 28 percent of the notions.
This overall view of the affective dimension of Royal's image is partly consistent with the findings of Leidenberg, Holtz-Bacha, & Koch (2008). Their analysis revealed that the image of Royal was more positive than negative in the German press. In Germany, more than half of the articles treated Royal in a positive tone. In turn, third of them saw Royal under a negative light. As for the French press, the story was a bit different. The amount of articles depicting Royal in a negative tone was higher, occupying nearly half of the stories in question. However, more than third of the articles referred to Royal in positive terms.

Equally, the positive assessments dominated over the negative ones throughout the research period. Only in January the number of negative remarks almost equalled the amount of positive ones in editorials. My analysis of the data shows that the overall image of Ségolène Royal slightly improved towards the end of the campaign when it comes to the examined editorials. In May, during the last week of the campaign, there were six times more positive remarks than negative ones.
However, the coherence of the picture is partly different when one looks at it according to the publication. Three out four publications (*Libération*, *Le Monde*, and *Le Nouvel Observateur*) depict Royal clearly in positive terms. Occupying the most intense coverage of candidates, the number of positive remarks is highest in *Libération*. Royal's image is the most positive in *Le Monde* where there are four times more positive remarks than negative ones. The dominance of positivity in these publications could be explained by their political orientation. Neither one of them can be situated on the right side of the political spectrum, *Le Monde* being center-left, *Libération* and *Le Nouvel Observateur* being clearly leftist. The relevance of political orientation is supported by the fact that *L'Express* is the only publication where negative assessments clearly pass the positive ones. Characterised as moderately liberal, *L'Express* distinguishes itself from rest of the publications in this respect.

If the overall image of Ségolène Royal clearly positive, is it also true with the different aspects of this image? To find out whether the different components are consistent with the general picture, I have classified different notions regarding Royal's image into the three chosen categories: ideology and issue positions; qualifications and experience; and personality.

Regarding the category of ideology and issues, Royal's image is clearly positive, more than half of the remarks in this category favouring her. While negative assessments constitute only a small minority of remarks, one should take into account that quite surprisingly almost third of the assessments do not take any position towards this side of Royal's image. As for the category of qualifications and experience, Royal's image turns clearly to a negative one. As much as 67 percent of the remarks concerning this category depict Royal in a more or less negative tone. In turn, Royal's personality is depicted the most often in positive terms, more than 60 percent of the assessments in this category being positive.

As we have seen, it is, above all, the consequences of media content for cognitions, opinions and behaviour among the public that will decide which specific attributes, in other words frames, to study (McCombs 2004, p. 89). Therefore, I have decided to
concentrate my analysis on the aspects of candidate images that seem to have gained special attention in the media and, consequently, influenced the public's perceptions of these same attributes. For Royal, it is especially her qualifications and experience and her personality that have been highlighted both in the media and public opinion.

7.2.2.1 From an opinion star to an incompetent woman

Royal's poor image in terms of her qualifications and experience has its origin in the very beginning of the campaign. In mid-January 2007, while Royal was determined to let voters say their last word in her political programme, her fiercest rival in the campaign for the presidential office, Nicolas Sarkozy, launched his official campaign, almost one month before the “listening” candidate. In retrospect, this time of mid-January was seen in a lot of points as a crucial moment for the presidential campaign (Le Figaro 1.2.2007). Star in the public opinion for quite a while, Royal saw her popularity in a rapid decline when the presidential campaign started for real.

Before January the voting intentions had more or less favoured Royal at the expense of Sarkozy. During the first half of January signs of change were in the air when the polls promised candidates equally good chances to be elected as president. However, the end of the month saw a significant decline in intentions for Royal. In turn, Sarkozy's courbe of voting intentions passed those of Royal and other candidates. This gap between Royal and Sarkozy, initiated in January, maintained itself until the very end of elections. (Gerstlé & Piar 2008, p. 46.)

What was the origin of this dramatic change? In the French press, the reasons for the change of positions were largely seen as deriving from both sides: on the one hand, it was a question of Royal's campaign failures; on the other hand, Nicolas Sarkozy, seemed to have succeeded in his campaign launch. For the part of Royal, the origins of these sudden difficulties where summarised in a clarifying way in the editorial of L'Express:
“Suddenly the icon becomes Icarus. Ségolène Royal, riding on the waves of polls towards the electoral glory, falls down having reached out the sun of the Elysée palace. Too much ease in her attitude, which seems to lead her nowhere, and not enough in knowledge, ending up in incompetence, have both cast a shadow her ability to be president.” (L'Express 1. - 7.2.2007)

Royal's incompetence was largely commented upon in the French media. And more importantly, the importance of the theme itself captured something essential of the whole campaign: as the campaign did not have one major theme to be discussed, Royal's competence was constantly questioned during spring 2007 (Gerstlé & Piar 2008, p. 41). Royal's incompetence was also clearly an issue in the editorials referring to the candidate's image. The number of notions concerning Royal's competence constitutes 23 percent, in other words almost a quarter, of all the assessments made of her in the editorials. This importance of competence or the lack of it as an issue for the electoral campaign is also highlighted by Leidenberg, Holtz-Bacha, & Koch (2008). In their data of more than thousand articles from the French press, fifth of the stories refers to Royal's competence.

The tone referring to her abilities to be a president is highly negative in the examined editorials. 67 percent of notions concerning her competence can be characterised as negative. In turn, Royal is referred to in positive terms only 19 percent of the assessments. But most surprisingly, this highly negative stance towards Royal's competence is independent of the publication in question. Contrary to the hypothesis that newspapers or newsmagazines would favour candidates from their own political orientation, Royal's is judged more incompetent than competent in all the examined publications. And while clearly left-wing oriented Libération assesses Royal more positively than the center-left Le Monde and moderately liberal L'Express, 73 percent of its remarks concerning Royal's competence are still negative.
What is behind this highly negative image? By looking at the remarks made of her competence, one can notice that half of them are published within one month, ranging from the mid-January to mid-February. In most of these assessments Royal's competence is referred to in function of her insufficient knowledge on different issues. Especially towards the end of January the French press reported on a series of Royal's “blunders”. These blunders involved ill-informed statements about Chinese civil liberties, the Middle East, Québec, Iran, Corsica, and the size of the French nuclear submarine fleet. For instance, the case of nuclear submarine fleet aroused debate. It was asked whether someone who had not right knowledge on the number of submarines could be president, if he or she, eventually, was to command them.

In addition to references concerning her insufficient knowledge, Royal was judged as unable to present a credible political programme. This type of remarks multiplied shortly after the mid-February when Royal presented her presidential programme. While the examined editorials seemed to judge positively the way voters' propositions were transformed into Royal's political programme, the content itself lacked in credibility, as the editorial of Libération pointed out with reference to her campaign start speech:
“The candidate succeeded in her performance last Saturday. She reassured her troops by translating the participative debates into a solid programme. However, figures would have been needed to make her programme credible.” (Libération 16.2.2007.)

The lack of figures referred to the economic basis of Royal's programme: the socialist project was not financed (Le Figaro, 13.2.2007). This was the case already in June 2006 when the editorials fiercely criticised the socialist programme of its lack of credibility by the time of programme's initial publication (Reymond & Rzepski 2008, p. 105). Clearly more than Sarkozy, Royal was accused of raising public expenses by her programme in a country where the public deficit was considered as one the biggest problems to be tackled in the future. As economist Patrick Artus pinpointed in the interview of Le Monde (15.2.2007), “In general, some of her propositions can be placed in the category of 'generous, but not possible’” While the media and voters seemed to wait anxiously how much measures proposed by Royal would actually cost, candidate and her party stayed silent.

While Royal's competence was fiercely discussed in the editorials from mid-January to mid-February, it was not anymore an issue during March. In April, the debate over Royal's competence came back on the scene when the first round approached. In the days of May preceding the second round of elections competence was discussed only in minor terms, the leftist press such as Libération clearly attempting at prove that Royal was, after all, capable of being president. Even though Royal did not commit anymore blunders, the decline of the theme in March is somehow surprising, especially when elsewhere in the media her competence was questioned constantly during the whole campaign, as Gerstlé and Piar (2008, p. 41) point out.

My results concerning Royal's competence are supported by another recent study analysing her image in the German and French press. Leidenberg, Holtz-Bacha, & Koch (2008) found that Royal was frequently presented as an incompetent candidate, especially because of her political programme that did not seem to please voters. When it comes to the German press, Royal was almost all the time judged as
incompetent. In the French press, the evaluation on the competency of candidates did not either favour Royal. And surprisingly enough, Royal was not judged in positive terms even in Libération, in which the study found twice the amount of negative remarks than the positive ones.

Why Royal's incompetence was such an issue? From the point of view of journalism, it seemed to provide a good way to dramatise the campaign coverage. As Gerstlé and Piar (2008, p. 41) note from the part of television, the dramatisation was created by emphasising the blunders, crucial strikes of rivals and ups-and-downs in the public opinion. Every wrong step of a political actor can be highly mediatised, and, in equal terms, be presented as a determining event in the campaign race. The blunders or mistakes oppose to the political programmes of the candidates which are filled with statistics and do not meet the demands of newsworthiness. The interest provoked by Royal's mistakes can also be understood by media's willingness to resist candidates' news management, providing evidence that journalists do not let themselves to be manipulated by campaign teams. (ibid., pp. 41-42.)

On a more general level, the media's attention to Royal's blunders could be explained by her way to deal with journalists. Royal seemed to rely on the strategy of “restrained information”. This strategy consists of strongly framing the work of journalists, providing them with a limited number of carefully prepared events. In this respect, the politician aims at avoiding all improvised interaction with the media. The outcome of this strategy can be negative to candidate. It seems that the more candidate controls the information, the more journalists tend to present him or her under a negative light. Journalists' response to attempts to restrain information seems to be aggravated by the fact that campaign teams try to influence the media more than before. This equation could, for one part, explain why the media was easily interested in Royal's blunders. (ibid.)

However, the prominent place gained by Royal's incompetence derived also from the fractions dividing the Socialist Party itself. In fact, candidate's communication should not be influenced by dissonant declarations from within his or her own party if it
wants to be effective. In other words, it is a question of securing “the discipline of the message”. It is quite challenging to find a more enlightning example of a failure of this strategy than the Socialist campaign for the 2007 presidential elections. While Royal's media strategy worked effectively during the presidential primaries, it lost its edge rapidly after her nomination. (ibid., pp. 43-44.)

The importance devoted to Royal's competence is also understandable as a part of the “toolkit” belonging to those who wish to be president in France. Here the term “présidentiable” is important. Having made its appearance already in the first presidential elections of universal suffrage in 1965, the term is frequently used by the French press, political experts, polling institutes and politicians themselves. Despite of its wide usage, the term bears different meanings that are, however, close to each other. (Vedel 2007, p. 38.)

For some, “présidentiable” describes a personality who bears capabilities, competence or physical character of a president. In this respect, the term refers, above all, to personal qualities, regardless of the person's engagement to the presidential competition. For instance, the recent French Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin was qualified as “présidentiable”, even though he was not nominated as presidential candidate. In a larger sense, the term “présidentiable” can also refer to all persons being able to present themselves in presidential elections. This definition pays attention to support from a particular political formation, as in the case of centrist Francois Bayrou. At the wake of the last presidential elections he was characterised as “présidentiable”, even though he did not seem to have too much chance to be elected. (ibid., p. 38.)

The third definition of the term, narrower than the previous one, refers only to persons who are seen to have good chances to be elected the next president, and, in this sense, also to appear on the second round of the elections. Contemplation of the history of French presidential elections of universal suffrage points out conditions that have often been required to the second round. The most important condition: candidates voted for the second round have nearly always been ministers before their candidacy.
Traditionally, the fact of being Prime Minister has been a good way to run for presidency. However, the post of Prime Minister do not seem to guarantee the presidency itself, for only two former ones, Georges Pompidou and Jacques Chirac have been elected to the office. (ibid., pp. 38-39.)

Another major condition is ability to seduce the media or public opinion. The history of French presidential elections has seen several efforts to build candidacy around a favourable media image or support from the part of public opinion. While opinion polls, above all, have become an important source of information in the selection of candidates, to rely on polls is a risky game. The initial forecasts of polls, taking place several months before the actual elections, do not provide reliable information on the outcome elections. (ibid., pp. 45-47.)

French political scientists Olivier Duhamel and Jérôme Jaffré have, for their part, summarised the components of the person who is “présidentiable” into an equation: E=N+O+P+X. Being éligible (E) requires a real Notoriousness (N), favourable public Opinion (O), central political Party (P), and recognised presidential capabilities (X), which have not been subject to commonly shared definitions. First, notoriousness seems to be a necessary condition for the one who wants to be elected. In most cases, it is a product high-profile political responsibilities, like in the case of François Mitterrand who had a career of 35 years in the top posts of the country before he was elected. Second, popularity within the public opinion is a necessary condition for the one who wants to be elected. However, the popularity is not a sufficient condition, for the public opinion do not want all persons it praises to became head of the state. Third, the support of a big party is necessary, to rely on extremes is useless. Fourth, there are the several components of recognised presidential capabilities. In this respect, presidential capabilities deriving from ministerial functions (especially those of Prime Minister) seem to give a great advantage, under the condition that the person pleases the public opinion. (Duhamel 1993, pp. 131-132.)

Within these components of “présidentiable”, Ségolène Royal's popularity in the eyes of the media and public opinion could have affected too much her nomination as
party's presidential candidate. It seems to have been done, above all, at the expense of her recognised presidential capabilities, such as competence deriving from top ministerial functions. Initially, her lack of experience was seen as “freshness”, and faults were turned into assets. In practice, Royal was unable to prove that she was competent enough, the press fiercely attacking her on this side whenever it had the opportunity.

7.2.2.2 Riding on the waves of proximity

“Femininity and the fact of being something new have perhaps not correlated with solidity and credibility.” This is how one of the militants from the Socialist Party, interviewed by *Le Monde* (15.2.2007), estimated Ségolène Royal's strong decline in the opinion polls in the aftermath of her official campaign launch. The quotation is revealing in the sense that it shows how Royal's public image was since her initial presidential endeavours constructed around her personality, whether is was a question of gender or new proximity with people.

Under this light, it is not surprising that Royal's personality was judged in very positive terms in the examined editorials. The analysis shows that in 62 percent of the assessments her personality was judged as pleasing. In turn, only 17 percent of the remarks estimated her personality in a negative tone.
The editorials pay attention to Royal's personality especially in February. The number of assessments published during that time comprise more than third of the remarks. This concentration of assessments can be explained by her long-awaited campaign start. As estimated in several editorials, it was time for her to prove wrong the critics she faced since the mid-January and set her campaign to the right track. Signs of regain of confidence were looked for in the image she projected during the inaugural speech:

“...Ségolène Royal was simply in the state of grace. She showed an enlightning serenity, a real self-confidence, a genuine capacity to move when she highlighted the distress of youngsters but also their duties, the misery of kids but also parents' responsibility, the violence towards women. In all of these themes, she imposed herself as a woman of conviction.” (Le Nouvel Observateur 15.-21.2.2007)

As her nomination for the presidential candidacy had already shown (Sineau 2006), Royal's gender would definitely be an issue during the months to come. Royal had herself highlighted the rare occasion of choosing a woman as head of the state by
picking up the slogan “La France Présidente”. Ever since she was elected as candidate, French asked themselves whether the electoral campaign was not going to be a mere battle between left and right but also a duel between a man and a woman. One could at least imagine that the media would bring this battle to the front. (Leidenberg, Holtz-Bacha, & Koch 2008.)

In this respect, it is not surprising that the gender issue attracted attention also in my data. 27 percent of all the statements regarding her personality concerned gender. However, in comparison to all the remarks made of Royal's image, gender occupy a relatively small portion, 12 percent. With regards to the tone used, it is interesting to see that in half of the assessments Royal's gender was dealt with positively. Only 18 percent of the remarks were negative. However, 32 percent of the comments did not employ any tone in the descriptions of her gender. At the end of the day, it seems that Royal's gender was not a criteria of choice that should be emphasised:

“Why Ségolène Royal? Not because she is socialist, but because she has been able to leave behind the old left in order to open up a path of renovation. Not because she is woman, but because she is a free woman.” (Libération 6.5.2007)

The media has often been blamed for representing female politicians in relation to their appearance rather than political positions (Leidenberg, Holtz-Bacha, & Koch 2008). Also the appearance of Ségolène Royal provoked more attention than the one of Sarkozy in the examined editorials. However, Royal was still extremely rarely referred to in terms of her physical appearance, looks or clothing. And when these types of remarks gained place, they were done in a positive tone. The lack of interest regarding Royal's appearance was also noticed by Leidenberg, Holtz-Bacha, & Koch (ibid.)

A more prominent component of Royal's personality was her proximity, in other words the way she as a politician looked for a new, closer relationship with people, something that the French politics had lacked for a long time as Sineau (2006) notes. I have categorised these notions of proximity as belonging to the category of
personality, even though they could be placed under the category of experience and qualifications for the office, for the majority of them refer to Royal's participative campaigning.

In the editorials the proximity is an essential component of Royal's personality, more than 30 percent of the assessments referring to it. Her proximity is judged in positive terms, for more than half of the remarks are positive. Only some 15 percent of the assessments are negative. While the few negative remarks are not satisfied with the way Royal still goes on with her participative debates, the majority of editorials is pleased with how Royal empowers ordinary people:

“Having taken seriously the crisis of representative democracy, the president of the region Poitou-Charentes is making visible efforts to regain the confidence of ordinary people. Avoing the traditional channels of political communication, she has sculpted an image that is at the same time majestic and close, sort of Lady Di socialist of the poor.” (Libération 5.2.2007)

It is a bit surprising that the editorial coverage of Royal's proximity was not more influenced by the critics of her decision to continue with participative campaigning and not to present her presidential programme until the mid-February. Royal was, after all, forced to defend her method towards the end of January, faced with the public opinion that did not seem to be convinced of her decision (Boy & Chiche 2008, p. 80). One explanation to this lack of critics seems to be the nature of publications. 70 percent of the remarks concerning her proximity derive from the leftist Libération, and their tone is highly positive. Le Monde, representing the center-left, is already different in its tone: all of its assessments can be characterised as neutral. The moderately liberal L'Express questions Royal's proximity, taking negative stance towards her. In all, it seems that the assessments of Royal's proximity are affected by the political orientation of the publication.
7.3 Sarkozy's image

Nicolas Sarkozy's clear victory in presidential elections was the outcome of a long campaign. This race evolved through several stages. The very first step to take in this path was to create the image of “présidentiable”, the image of someone who was capable of taking the office. And as Pascal Perrineau notes, the construction of this image do not take place overnight for those politicians who have not encountered exceptional events (war, major crisis...), but is the result of a long work. For Nicolas Sarkozy, this work involved the gradual accumulation of support from the part of party and voters. (Perrineau 2008, pp. 119-120.)

7.3.1 In the construction of the image of “présidentiable”

When Nicolas Sarkozy was appointed as the French Interior Minister in 2002, he had already behind him a political career of 30 years. Born in 1955 of Hungarian and French Jewish parents, Sarkozy had became mayor of Neuilly-sur-Seine in 1983 and the local deputy in 1988. Between 1993-1995 he served as the Budget Minister and the government's spokesman in the government of Edouard Balladur. This was the time when also Sarkozy's image started to exist on the scale of country and have an impact: in May 1993 he was chosen among those politicians whose popularity was measured on monthly basis. In 1995, he resigned from his post and became the spokesman of Balladur in his campaign for the presidential office. The context of 1995 presidential elections was out of the ordinary, for Balladur ran against the RPR party leader Jacques Chirac. The party was at that point divided into two, and Nicolas Sarkozy decided to stay with Balladur who seemed to be his new mentor. (Arteful & Duroux 2006, p. 19-20; Perrineau 2008, p. 120; Bell & Criddle 2008, p. 189.)

However, for the disappointment of Balladur and Sarkozy, the elections turned to the favour of Chirac. Balladur and his supporters, particularly Sarkozy, became banned within the party. Sarkozy's image turned to fairly demolished, he was perceived as one of those who betrayed Chirac. Sarkozy became isolated in the political arena, facing several political failures. In 2002, he returned to the scene and participated
actively in the reelection of Jacques Chirac. Sarkozy was appointed as the head of Interior Ministry the same year. On capturing the control of the new-founded party UMP (Union pour un mouvement populaire) in 2004 Sarkozy was forced by Chirac to quit the government (in which he had shortly been also Finance Minister). The next year, however, Sarkozy was back to hold the office of Interior Minister, after the loss of EU referendum and the appointment of a new Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin. As Interior Minister and the leader of UMP, Sarkozy was more than ever before at the head of robust political networks and spheres of influence, and backed by the support of more than 200 000 militants of his own party. (ibid., p. 20; ibid., p. 189.)

Towards the end of 2006 it is was clear that Nicolas Sarkozy had won the battle over party's presidential candidacy. There was no candidate of his size in terms of electoral potential or image within his own party. Sarkozy was in position to control his own political family. For the French right, this domination was out of the ordinary. Contrary to presidential elections of last 25 years, the major candidate was in position of hegemony, and not faced with fierce competition from the part of rivals as it had been so often in the past. (Perrineau 2008, pp. 122-124.)

Sarkozy's campaign for the presidential office was divided into two parts: to win the nomination and to win the elections. To win the party's nomination in January 2007, he had to appeal UMP activists and turn to the right side of the political field in order to distinguish himself from the ill-favoured Chirac administration (of which he was still part, though). In order to meet the objective Sarkozy took tough stances on law and order and highlighted the notion of 'rupture' as a sign of his commitment to free market reforms to diminish the French corporatism. In the media and public opinion Sarkozy's remarks of law and order were fast labelled as part of his 'tough cop' reputation as Interior Minister. Therefore, once nominated as the presidential candidate of his party, Sarkozy was forced to move back towards the centre. This drift included emphasis on healing a 'social fracture' – a reminder of the social Gaullism employed by Chirac to conquer the presidential office in 1995. However, Sarkozy still
stressed the need to reward hard work and liberalise the labour market. (Bell & Criddle 2008, p. 191.)

Sarkozy launched his campaign officially on the 14th of January 2007. This involved his designation as party's presidential candidate. On the same occasion, Sarkozy presented his presidential programme. As I have previously mentioned, Sarkozy's campaign launch was in many points seen as a turning-point for the elections (Le Figaro 1.2.2007). Royal's popularity in the public opinion begun its decline as the one of Sarkozy started to rise. While it would be naïve to claim that the sudden change of positions was the mere outcome of successful campaign launch, Sarkozy's proven capacity to gather the right and to address to the whole of voters was certainly the source of this dynamism (Le Figaro 1.2.2007). Sarkozy's campaign launch captured wide attention in the media. When compared to other major candidates, his campaign launch was given the most air-time in the news programmes of all the campaign events (Perrineau 2008, p. 39).

7.3.2 Sarkozy's image in the editorials

Analysis of editorials show that Sarkozy's image was strongly negative during the four month period. 60 percent of notions referring to his image depicted the candidate in a negative tone. In turn, only fifth of the notions refer to him in a positive manner. These results are very similar with the findings of Leidenberg, Holtz-Bach, & Koch (2008). According to their study, Sarkozy was depicted in a negative tone in 65 percent of the examined articles in the French press. For the German press, the degree of negativity was extremely high, for the German press described Sarkozy negatively in 78 percent of the cases.
While the examined editorials depicted Sarkozy in negative terms all along the campaign, there was clearly an increase in the negativity towards the end of the campaign. More than half of the negative remarks were made in March and April. Simultaneously, the relative amount of positive remarks decreased. In March, his image seems to have deteriorated due to the rise of immigration and insecurity as themes of the campaign. In mid-March, Sarkozy promised to create a Ministry of Immigration and National Identity. As Gerstlé and Piar (2008, p. 35) note, the proposition was very controversial and wrapped the campaign around the theme of immigration for several days. Sarkozy was accused of strongly assimilating immigrants to the right-wing national values. Even in moderately liberal *L'Express* (15.-21.3.2007) he was highly critisised: “National identity, immigration: Nicolas Sarkozy has made a big mistake by placing one in the other...” Equally, the issue of insecurity was for a while on the scene when the violence between police and delinquents broke out in one of the metro stations of Paris at the end of the month. In *Libération* (29.3.2007), the confrontation was seen as a sign of failure of Sarkozy's work as Interior Minister.

The month of April was without same type of incidents. However, the debate regarding Sarkozy was still influenced by the issue of Ministry of Immigration and
National identity. It was perceived as the symbol of Sarkozy's efforts to push his declarations more to the right-wing of the political spectrum. These declarations were not left without opposition. As the editorial of *Le Monde* (20.4.2007) summarised at the wake of the first round of elections, “Mr. Sarkozy should not make adventures too far away to the ideological landscapes of National Front.”, referring to the far-right French party.

The publication in question plays more important role in the descriptions of Sarkozy's image than in the case of Royal. While all the examined dailies and news magazines refer to Sarkozy more in negative than positive terms, the political colour of the publication influences greatly the tone. The leftist *Libération* criticises Sarkozy on daily basis. 72 percent of its assessments regarding Sarkozy are negative. Under this light, it is not surprising that the candidate himself did not want to join the meeting of the daily when he was invited. *Libération* is according to him “a newspaper that has created the profession of attacking him in the morning, afternoon and evening” (12.4.2007). Regarding the rest of the publications, Sarkozy was treated more positively, however, his image still being clearly negative. In the moderately liberal *L'Express*, positive and neutral remarks comprised half of the remarks.

Classification of different aspects Sarkozy's image provides a detailed and somehow different picture of the candidate. Within the three categories (ideology and issues; qualifications and experience; personality), it is above all the personality that distinguishes him from Ségolène Royal. In the examined editorials Sarkozy's personality is judged very negatively throughout the campaign. In turn, Sarkozy had a clear advantage over her rival in terms of his qualifications and experience for the presidential office, even though the leftist press tried to make its best to blacken this image.
7.3.2.1 Dangerous personality

Changed, dangerous, energetic, and talented. Here merely a few adjectives with which Nicolas Sarkozy's personality was treated during the presidential campaign in editorials. The spectre of characterisations was filled with colours, but was it more positive or negative? The analysis indicate that his image was in this respect highly negative during the presidential campaign. Over 70 percent of statements dealing with Sarkozy's personality depicted the candidate in negative terms. At the same time a bit more than 20 percent of the remarks characterised Sarkozy's personality in a positive tone. In other words, there were over three times more negative statements than positive ones.

It is surprising to see that in three publications out of four the number of negative remarks is higher than positive ones. Only in *Le Monde* the number of negative remarks equals the positive ones. The political orientation of the publication seems to have diverse and even contradictory effects on the descriptions. The moderately liberal *L'Express*, that could be more in favour of Sarkozy than against him, assesses...
him only in negative terms. However, the leftist *Libération* declares clearly its position in terms of Sarkozy's personality, referring to it negatively in 80 percent of cases. It should be taken into account that *Libération* has a strong impact on the image of Sarkozy's personality, for the newspaper is responsible for 70 percent of the assessments.

Some 40 percent of the notions referring to Sarkozy's personality was published between mid-January and early February. Two occasions seem to have influenced comments on candidate's personality. The research period begins with editorials on Sarkozy's inaugural speech by the time of his campaign launch. The speech was actively commented, for it seemed to introduce a new Sarkozy, which, in turn cast a shadow over his sincerity:

“The question is to know whether in turning himself into candidate, the number two in government has not changed his clothes in order to provide home for the new Sarkozy.” (*Le Monde* 16.1.2007)

The tone used in Sarkozy's inaugural speech was seemingly intimate and confessional, highlighting personal losses and difficulties. The principal message was to say: I have changed, and it means that I can understand you. One can not gather French unless one cannot identify to them, Sarkozy visibly thought. Intimacy and confessions seemed to have a clear objective. Sarkozy wanted to convince the French that he had not always been the ambitious person, product of a success story. In politics, scars can often seduce more than victory. By highlighting personal life he seemingly wished to soften his image of man of order. Furthermore, the fact of being sincere with his own life, seemed to indicate that the president wanted to be an authentic man. (*Le Monde* 19.1.2007)

The end of January was also filled with (at least in the leftist press) permanent doubts over the honesty of Sarkozy's action. Remarks about Sarkozy's personality were made during the debate over politicians' solidarity taxes on fortune (l'impot de solidarité sur la fortune, ISF). Ségolène Royal and her companion and party leader
Francois Hollande were revealed to have allegedly evaded taxes. Especially from the part of the leftist press (*Libération*), Sarkozy and his party were accused of being the source of information on the evasion and spreading it on the Internet in order to have an effect on Royal's reputation. *Libération* also fiercely attacked Sarkozy on his plans to modify the whole tax. Like several times during the campaign, the daily accused Sarkozy of dishonesty, for he had highlighted the willingness to defend the rights of the weakest, and now he was going to cut down the taxes that were the basis of these rights.

And when it had the occasion, the press did not miss its chance to blame Sarkozy for being “the first cop of France”. This time it was his double function as Interior Minister and candidate that was questioned. Sarkozy was blamed for spying on Royal's entourage with the help of his own police forces. The police admitted that it had gathered information on Bruno Rebelle, who was the head of Greenpeace in France and part of Royal's team. Both in *Libération* and *Le Monde* Sarkozy's alleged actions were accused of being in contradiction with “the irreproachable democracy” he wanted to install in France, and that he should, at least, resign from the post Interior Minister in order to maintain his credibility (*Libération* 26.1.2007 & *Le Monde* 26.1.2007).

Sarkozy's negative image in terms of his personality finds support from the study conducted by Leidenberg, Holtz-Bach, & Koch (2008). For the German press, his personality is judged in negative terms in all of the examined publications. For France, similarly to my results, they found that the leftist press criticised fiercely Sarkozy's image. For instance, *Le Nouvel Observateur* published only negative articles with reference to his personality. Surprisingly, not even the national daily *Le Figaro*, traditionally on the right, clearly favoured Sarkozy: the number of negative remarks equalled the number of positive ones.

**7.3.2.2 The most “présidentiable” of the two**
As we have seen, the two main competitors for the French presidency, Ségolène Royal and Nicolas Sarkozy, had quite different political backgrounds. There was, above all, the question of experience. Sarkozy had taken care of important ministerial functions since the 1990's. Sarkozy was also the head of his party. In the meanwhile, Royal had been merely junior minister. In the Socialist Party, she did not belong to the central figures. As Pascal Perrineau (2008, p. 124) note, Sarkozy's solid experience had provided him already a strong image of statesman in the eyes of the public opinion. Ségolène Royal lacked far behind him in these terms.

Sarkozy's comparative advantage over Royal in terms of qualifications and experience for the office finds support also from the examined editorials. While nearly 70 percent of the remarks judged Royal as incompetent, for Sarkozy the same number figured at 54 percent. In the same respect, Sarkozy's competence gains clearly more positive remarks than the one of Royal. While for Royal this side image gained less than 20 percent of positive remarks, Sarkozy is appreciated by 35 percent of the assessments.
While Royal's image was largely build around her blunders, Sarkozy did not leave much to be criticised on this side. In the examined editorials, the candidate was several times appreciated of his knowledge on different issues. This image of competence is the outcome of a long work. Sarkozy has paid special attention to it since he was appointed as Interior Minister in 2002. Right from the beginning, its objectif was to expand his narrow image of “first cop France” to other fields of politics and in this way impose himself as the future “présidentiable” (Arteful & Duroux 2006). In the eyes of the public opinion, Nicolas Sarkozy was able to convince voters, for instance, in economic questions (Jaffré 2008).

The examined editorials rewarded Sarkozy also for his abilities in the field of communication. These remarks concerned especially his ability to seduce media and give speech. For instance, regarding his declarations, Sarkozy was credited for his rhetorical gifts. Sarkozy's media performance was depicted clearly in positive terms also in the articles examined by Leidenberg, Holtz-Bacha, & Koch (2008). The credit given to Sarkozy's communication abilities is not surprising, for he is the French politician whose communicative work is the most commented in the media (Artufel & Duroux 2006). While some consider this communication as brilliant and professional, others see it as demagogue and populist (ibid.). The negative connotations of Sarkozy's communication gained a few comments also in the editorials, referring especially to candidate's alleged nature of demagogue.

While Sarkozy was clearly seen as better prepared for the presidential office, this advantage was only compatif in nature. The image concerning his qualifications and experience for the office was still more negative than positive. Once again this negativity derived from his functions as Interior Minister. Several editorials note that his actions as minister have had more negative than positive outcomes. The deterioration of conditions of immigrants and, on the other hand, inability to improve conditions of security:
“One has the impression that Nicolas Sarkozy has agitated a lot, but acted little, or even worse. At least, it is not on the concrete achievements that he can wish to build upon his image of ‘présidentiable’.” (Libération 26.3.2007)

The editorials also attach him to a concept of power that is highly negative. The key words in relation this notion of power are firmness, brutality, monarch, and excessive. This negative image, painted by the editorials, matches well with his weak points in the eyes of the public opinion. While the majority of French associate Sarkozy with political authority, willingness to reform, and strong conviction, this image has also its reverse. Authority can reassure, but also create anxiousness; reform can gather but also divide; conviction can attract but also create the impression that there is not sufficiently place for listening. (Perrineau 2008, p. 125.)

Sarkozy's fairly long mandate as Interior Minister has added an extra factor to this negativity. As Perrineau (ibid.) note, the work of Interior Minister has always involved firmeness and authority, but, equally, repression and secrecy. The way Sarkozy has established his authority as “the first cop of France” has contributed to sharpen an image of “harshness”, “menace” and turbulence (ibid.). These characteristics have not influenced negatively only his competence but also his personality in general, as we have previously seen.

As the above described characteristics illustrate, Nicolas Sarkozy is credited for his conviction. However, even though being the reverse of conviction, his political image is equally attached to proximity. Sarkozy is well-known of his endeavour to create more direct ties between politicians and ordinary people (e.g. Artufel & Duroux, 2006, pp. 227). As we have seen, also his party UMP has been willing to engage voters to participate more closely in its work (Vedel 2007, p. 66). This proximity was, however, absent from the descriptions of Sarkozy's image in the editorials, quite contrary to Ségolène Royal. While it could have been a clear choice from the part of Sarkozy to project himself as more distant figure than Royal and, instead emphasise his “présidentialité”, as Perrineau (2008, p. 128-129) note, his proximity clearly suffered from this absence. The negative effect could have been strengthened by
Royal's proximity, as it has been in the case of public opinion, playing clearly to the advantage of the socialist candidate (ibid., p. 127).

A more detailed analysis of Sarkozy's image regarding his qualifications and experience reveals that the “big picture” is somehow misleading. It is not surprising that the leftist press is eager to depict him negatively. In *Le Nouvel Observateur*, none of the comments regarding this side of his image was positive. In *Libération*, there were two times more negative comments than positive. However, surprisingly, *Le Monde* was very pleased with Sarkozy in this respect, 80 percent of the comments being positive. In *L'Express*, the opinions about Sarkozy's competence were far more positive than in the leftist press, ending up in the same amount of positive and negative comments. These results show that descriptions of Sarkozy's competence depended on the political orientation of the publication, but that there was also genuine respect for his abilities, as the analysis of *Le Monde* indicate.

My findings concerning Sarkozy's competence more or less match with what Leidenberg, Holtz-Bach, & Koch (2008) found in their analysis of candidate images. In the German press, Sarkozy's abilities to run the presidential office are clearly more appreciated than those of Royal. As for the French press, the difference between Sarkozy and Royal is a bit narrower for the advantage of Sarkozy. Similarly to my findings, in more than half of the articles referring to Sarkozy's competence he was depicted in negative terms. As for positive statements, Sarkozy, however, was depicted in a favourable tone in 25 percent of articles. In all, in both the German and the French press, Sarkozy was ahead of Royal regarding competence. However, this aspect of his image still remained clearly more negative than positive.

In conclusion, contrary to the case of Royal, the examined editorials depicted Nicolas Sarkozy in a very negative manner during the four month research period. It was especially Sarkozy's personality that was criticised, whether it was a question of his honesty or firmness. In turn, he was clearly seen as better prepared for the presidential office in terms of his competence than Royal. Sarkozy avoided “blunders” and was appreciated for his knowledge. However, he was still more criticised than appreciated.
for his qualifications. In this respect, the weak points of Sarkozy's image in the eyes of the public opinion seemed to find ground from the examined editorials.

7.4 Matching the agendas

To test the hypothesised influence of the editorials on how the public pictures the presidential candidates, my analysis pursues with the examination of correspondence of candidates' substantive and affective attributes on the media agenda and public agenda. The analysis is introduced with the public's perceptions of candidate images during the pre-campaign period in 2006. I shall then examine how the editorial coverage possibly influenced voters' perceptions of Ségolène Royal and Nicolas Sarkozy during my research period. The examination of public's perceptions is based on four waves of opinion surveys conducted between mid-February and the end of May 2007.

7.4.1 Strong deterioration of Royal's image

The three first waves of Political Barometer, from March to December 2006, reveal that the images of main candidates were relatively stable during the pre-campaign period. In particular, this stability was consistent with candidates' capabilities to take care of presidential functions. In terms of “présidentiabilité” (he/she meets the requirements of a president) and the willingness to change the way things are, Nicolas Sarkozy already stands out against his competitors. With regards to the same criteria, Ségolène Royal is left behind in comparison to her closest rival, especially in terms of presidential capability. Only half of the voters are convinced of her “présidentiabilité”. In turn, regarding the criteria of “understanding peoples' problems”, the two candidates are perceived in the same way. Royal beats Sarkozy in two questions: “honesty” and, in particular, regarding the fact that she raises only little “anxiousness”, contrary to Sarkozy. (Boy & Chiche 2008, p. 78.)

The pre-campaign stability of images was interrupted when the last wave of Political Barometer was published in the mid-February 2007. Changes were remarkable. The
The overall image of Ségolène Royal was significantly deteriorated in comparison to the precedent polls. The symbol of this decline was a rapid deterioration of her “présidentiabilité”. While 52 percent of voters had regarded Royal as capable of being president in December 2006, two months later only 42 percent of them were still confident about the same issue. As Chiche and Boy note, this remarkable decline of “présidentiabilité” seemed to derive from the large and intense mediatisation of Royal's “blunders” towards the end of January. As we have previously seen, these blunders took place especially on the international scene. For instance, in mid-January, during her trip to the province of Québec, Royal evoked Québec's souverainty. The Canadian Prime Minister was indignified. On the domestic scene, Royal was highly criticised of her decision to go on with her participative method of campaigning, a choice that did not seem to please the public opinion. (Boy & Chiche 2008, p. 80.)

The deterioration of Royal's image in the public opinion is consistent with my findings from the media agenda. As my analysis of the editorials show, Royal's image regarding her qualifications and experience was highly negative between mid-January and mid-February. In all, half of the remarks regarding Royal's qualifications and experience were made during this period of time. Taking into account the decided time span of a few weeks between the media agenda and the public agenda, it seems well justified to argue that the highly negative mediatisation of Royal's competence had a deep effect on the voters' perceptions of her ability to be a president by the mid-February. However, the criticism concerning her decision to go on with the participative campaign did not find any ground from the examined editorials. Quite contrary, as we have seen, the remarks concerning this side of Royal's image were positive in examined editorials. While the issue could have been treated negatively elsewhere in the media, it is an open question whether the public opinion attached the participative campaigning to Royal's incompetence or not.

While the overall image of Ségolène Royal deteriorated in the eyes of the public opinion, her closest rival, Nicolas Sarkozy continued to perform well. He even made some progress in comparison to the barometer of December 2006. While most aspects
of his image are stable, it is, above all, his “présidentiabilité” that convinces voters. In February 2007 already 69 percent of voters are convinced that Sarkozy is able to meet the demands of a president. The gap to Royal is remarkable. (Boy & Chiche 2008, p. 79.)

Sarkozy's strong image of “présidentiable” is partly consistent with my findings from the media agenda. The analysis of the examined editorials show that Sarkozy's image in terms of his qualifications and experience for the office is clearly more positive than Royal's. In this respect, 35 percent of assessments were positive, while those of Royal remained on the level of 19 percent. It seems to be justified to argue that the net advance of Sarkozy's media image in comparison to Royal have affected public opinion's positive perception of his “présidentiabilité”.

However, the examined media agenda of Sarkozy's “présidentiabilité” do not correspond with the public agenda in one respect. In the examined editorials Sarkozy's competence gathers still clearly more negative than positive assessments. This negativity does not seem to be in line with the strong belief in his “présidentiabilité” in the eyes of the public opinion. One reason to this disaccordance could be the biases caused by Libération, strong in volume and highly negative towards Sarkozy. Still, another study, covering a wider spectrum of publications has provided strong evidence concerning the negativity of Sarkozy's media image (Leidenberg, Holtz-Bacha, & Koch 2008).

The fact that the relatively negative media coverage of Sarkozy's qualifications and experience do not seem to correspond with the public opinion could be explained by different factors. As Artufel and Duroux (2006, p. 187) note, in the case of Sarkozy the public opinion has not been in all respects influenced by his negative treatment in the media. This negativity has, above all, derived from the firmness with which Sarkozy handled the suburb crisis in 2005. However, the firmness seems to have been what the public opinion waited for; French were hungry for Sarkozy's action to tackle the problems of the suburbs (ibid.). Another explanation to voters' confidence regarding his “présidentiabilité” could be his solid experience and proven abilities in
the field of high-profile politics. Sarkozy's image has been strong in the state affairs since he was appointed as Interior Minister in 2002. And when a strong leadership of a party is added to this image of a statesman, two crucial requirements of a “présidentiable” are already fulfilled (Perrineau 2008, p. 121).

By the mid-February the most “présidentiable” candidate was without any doubt Nicolas Sarkozy. However, this advance was contested on other characteristics. Above all, Sarkozy competed head to head with Royal on the ability to understand peoples' concerns. 52 percent of voters were convinced of candidates' “proximity with people”. The proximity had been the strongest of aspect of Royal's image since the spring 2006. Royal's devotion to associate voters to the elaboration of her campaign and political programme was without any doubt at the core this proximity. The same autumn political scientist Pascal Perrineau wrote that “Ségolène Royal has build an essential part of her image and success upon this notion of proximity, listening and identification with ordinary men and women”. (Perrineau 2008, p. 128.)

The fact that public opinion appreciated Royal's proximity seems to correlate strongly with my findings from the media agenda. As we have seen, 52 percent of the remarks concerning Royal's proximity were positive in editorials. This is exactly the same percentage than the amount of favourable opinions in the Political Barometer of February 2007. However, one could assume that the criticism evoked in the media concerning her decision to continue with the participative campaign towards the end January could have affected the relative degradation of Royal's proximity in the last Political Barometer. Royal's proximity declined, after all, from 57 percent to 52. This assumption finds evidence from the examined editorials, for all negative assessments with regards to her proximity were made before the beginning of February. Taking into account these findings, it seems that the editorial coverage of Royal's proximity corresponded with the public's assessment of the same attribute.

While Royal lacked far behind Sarkozy in competence and competed head to head with him in terms of proximity, her personality was clearly more positive than his competitor's. In the Political Barometer candidates' personality was referred to with
attributes of “anxiousness” and “honesty”. Royal aroused clearly less anxiousness among voters than Sarkozy, gaining an advance of nearly 10 percent. Royal was also considered more honest than Sarkozy on equal terms.

The anxiousness than can be related to Nicolas Sarkozy grows from a solid ground. While the majority of French do associate Sarkozy with positive authority, this image has its flip side. Authority can reassure, but also create anxiousness. As Interior Minister, Sarkozy had the load of being associated with firmness and authority but also with repression and secrecy. The determination with which Nicolas Sarkozy gained the title of “first cop of France” could have contributed to accentuate an image of harshness, menace and turbulence. Equally, several opinion polls conducted in 2006 already showed that voters considered Sarkozy much more worrying than Royal and in a lot of respects less moral. (Perrineau 2008, p. 125.)

Taking into account this effect of anxiousness, it is not surprising that the press coverage of Sarkozy's personality was highly negative during the campaign, as we have seen with Leidenberg, Holtz-Bach, & Koch (2008) and with my analysis of editorials. In the examined editorials over 70 percent of the assessments regarding Sarkozy's personality were negative. In most cases this negativity was associated with danger, unforeseeable character and authority. When it comes to notions related to honesty, Sarkozy's image was clearly marked by doubts cast over his more or less legitimate action as Interior Minister in order to create turbulences in the campaign. In all, the negativeness of Sarkozy's personality depicted by the press seems to correlate with the public's assessments of anxiousness and honesty as it was described in the last Political Barometer. The transfer of this attribute salience seems to have taken place especially in the case of honesty. The editorials referred actively to Sarkozy's honesty in January. This seems to have influenced voters, for Sarkozy's honesty declined by four points in comparison to December 2006.

In turn, the positive press coverage of Royal's personality seems to have contributed to her relative advantage over Sarkozy in terms of anxiousness and honesty. As we have seen, over 60 percent of remarks made of her personality in the editorials were
positive, in comparison to some 20 percent in the case of Sarkozy. In the case of Royal, only a few assessments refer to anxiousness. Furthermore, there is no reference to her honesty. Therefore, the absence of references to these attributes seems to have contributed to the positive perceptions of her personality in the public opinion.

7.4.2 The rise of negativity at the wake of the first round

The “face-to-face” interviews of the French Electoral panel during the weeks preceding the first round of presidential elections indicated significant changes in public's perceptions of the main candidates. In general, voters' seem to have taken more negative stance towards candidates than previously. The number of positive assessments falls for all four “qualities” (honesty, comprehension, willingness to change the way things are, and presidential status). In turn, concerning three out four main candidates, voters' are more anxious about candidates than in February.

The rise of negativity seems to correlate with my findings from the editorials. In the case of Sarkozy, as we have seen, more than half of the negative assessments concerning his image were made during March and April. For instance, in February the number of negative statements is visibly smaller than in any of the whole months included in the research period. Royal's overall image is still positive, but the relative weight of negative statements in comparison to positive ones is higher than in January or February. Under this light, one can estimate that the more negative editorial coverage of candidates had an effect on the public's perceptions of their images. However, the limits of this correlation should be taken into account. As Boy and Chiche point out, the change of method from telephone interviews to face-to-face ones could play role in the negativity.

Beyond the general decline of positive assessments of candidate images, it is especially candidates' honesty that is questioned by voters. In comparison to February the decline is 11 percent for Royal and 13 percent for Sarkozy. According to Boy and Chiche, this decline seems to derive from the fierce debate over candidates' real estate fortune, initiated by an article of *Canard Enchainé* on the 27th of February and on the
scene for several weeks. While the debate was an issue in the French media, it did not touch the examined editorials. No single reference was made, quite contrary to the situation in January when the same issue was brought on the scene. Under this light it is difficult say how deep effect the debate had on the public opinion.

The general profiles of Sarkozy and Royal remained the same in comparison to February. Sarkozy was still clearly ahead of Royal in terms of “présidentiabilité” and “willingness to change the way things are”. The “présidentiabilité” of Royal declined by four points to 38 percent, while the one of Sarkozy remained well over 60 percent. In turn, Royal was more appreciated than Sarkozy with regards to “proximity”, “honesty”, and “anxiousness”. Voters' relative appreciation for Royal's proximity seems to have derived from the press coverage of her participative campaigning. This coverage was also fairly positive in tone, and even very positive as it was in the case of examined editorials: majority of assessments made of her proximity were positive after the beginning of February, and only minority of them neutral. None of them was negative. While one should take into account biases caused by the leftist press clearly favourable to this side of Royal's image, the media coverage of her proximity seems to have enabled the candidate to maintain this advantage over Sarkozy.

The results of the first Electoral Panel show how the fundamental elements of Sarkozy's and Royal's images remained the same all along the presidential campaign. In the field of “opinion democracy”, fairly depolitisised in essence, the advantage was Royal's. Her personality was more appreciated, whether it was question of creating anxiousness or of honesty. In turn, Nicolas Sarkozy was clearly the winner in the field of more political questions. He maintained the convincing gap in terms of “présidentiabilité” and “willingness to change the way things are”. While Royal maintained her advantage in terms of proximity, this difference was never crucial in comparison to Sarkozy's “présidentiabilité”. Sarkozy's advantage with regards to “présidentiabilité” became too significant already in February, and it was never questioned since. Taking into account also the more favourable voting intentions for Sarkozy all along the spring, it was clear that voters' had priviledged the
“présidentialité” over “proximity”. At the doorstep of the first round, the duel of images had been won by Nicolas Sarkozy. (Perrineau 2008, pp. 127-130.)

7.4.3 The end of campaign: more smoothness in the images

The second wave of surveys within the French Electoral Panel, conducted between the two rounds of elections, presented a remarkable particularity: both Sarkozy and Royal saw a significant improvement in their images. In particular, voters were clearly more satisfied with candidates’ “honesty” than before the first round, as if both of them had been washed clean of their sins because of their qualification for the second round. The effect of qualification could have caused also the strengthening of “présidentialité”, especially for Royal who progressed in this respect with 14 points. However, her gap to Sarkozy remained significant. In all, the general profiles of the two remaining candidates remained the same than in February or April.

The third wave of surveys, conducted after the second round of elections, indicate that the fact of being elected “smoothens” the image of the winner. Therefore, Nicolas Sarkozy's image was strengthened in nearly all aspects (however, still remaining the source of anxiousness for 56 percent of voters). In turn, Royal, having lost the elections, saw her image stagnate or slightly deteriorate (only two qualities was tested for the last Electoral Panel for her part).

Did the media agenda correlate with the public one after the first round? At least for the editorials, it did not. The overall improvement of candidates' images in the public eye after the first round cannot be backed by the media images. Their overall profiles remained the same than before the elections. In this respect, one could reasonably suppose that the improved picture of candidates images in the public opinion was, in fact, caused by the qualification for the second round.
7.5 Candidate images in the voting choice

How did candidate images vary along socio-demographic and political characteristics? While there were some differences according to voters' age, social category and profession, the left-right dimension in the political spectrum explained best the differences voters had in perceptions of candidates. Following the well-known political logic, all four major candidates enjoyed the most positive assessments in their own political reference group. 51 percent of respondents coming from the category “on the left” attributed all four positive qualities to Ségolène Royal. For Nicolas Sarkozy the same percent in his own reference group “on the right” was 62. Sarkozy equally enjoyed wide support in the category “on the far-right”.

In order to determine “the specific weight” of candidate images in the voters' decision-making for the first round of elections, images were compared to other important factors influencing the vote. These other determinants were the political position on the left-right dimension and partisanship. Both factors are traditionally, as we have seen, the two most important factors in determining the voting-choices in France. In all cases, the attribution of four qualities to a candidate is an important factor in determining the vote. In turn, in the case of Nicolas Sarkozy the degree of anxiousness attributed to him plays an important role.

How candidate images influenced then the vote of the second round? The limited choice to two candidates clearly in positions on the left-right dimension should logically reduce the weight of personal factors. At the first sight this assumption seems to be right. 97 percent of voters positioning themselves on the left and appreciating (four qualities) Ségolène Royal declare to vote in her favour. The situation is exactly the same in the case of Nicolas Sarkozy. However, candidate images continue to play an important role independent of the political orientation. Especially in the case of Sarkozy “the dissonance” between the political orientation and the weight of candidate images is strong. 79 percent of voters from the left side of political spectrum who attach all four qualities to Sarkozy intend to vote for him.
When all chosen variables (the left-right dimension, partisanship, candidates' qualities and anxiousness candidates entail) are compared to voting intentions, one can note that all four variables are important in determining voting choices. However, a more detailed examination shows that in the case of Sarkozy four qualities attributed to him remain the best explanation of vote among the chosen variables. In turn, the voting intentions for Ségolène Royal are best explained by voters' political orientation, in other words by the position on the left-right dimension or partisanship.

In conclusion, as Boy and Chiche (2008, p. 95) note, candidates' qualities and faults were subject to important attention both from the part of media and public until the last days of presidential campaign. The opinion polls conducted during the campaign period revealed both the changing and structuring nature of candidate images. In fact, candidate images are not variables that remain the same all along the campaign. Quite the contrary, they change according to declarations, debates and stances. These evolutions were proved right during the twelve months of surveys: while the images were relatively stable at the very beginning, they changed fast during the few months preceding the elections. (ibid.)

The analysis of the opinion polls shows that candidate images have a significant impact on the vote. This impact was revealed when candidate images were compared to variables that traditionally influence the most voting choices; one's position on the left-right dimension and partisanship. The results showed that in comparison to these variables candidate images have an equal or sometimes superior impact on the probability to vote for a candidate. There seem to be good reasons to assume that the superiority derives from the fact that respondents could more easily express their “feelings” towards a candidate than place themselves on the left-right dimension or express their partisanship. (ibid., p. 95.)

8 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The core proposition of the agenda-setting theory is that dominant elements in the media's pictures of the world influence the salience of those same elements in the
public's pictures of the world. At the second level of agenda-setting one of the most straightforward applications of this idea is the influence of the media on the public images of political candidates. The theoretical distinction between the first and second levels of agenda-setting – agendas of objects and agendas of attributes – can be easily distinguished in elections. The candidates are a set of objects. The salience of each of these candidates can be influenced by media coverage. In these terms, political campaigns around the world are increasingly seen as media campaigns whose primary goals involve the image building of candidates (e.g., McCombs et al. 2000, p. 81). While the objects are the candidates, the agenda of attributes is the various traits that define the images of candidates in the media and among the voters.

The findings of my thesis indicate that these candidate attributes, whether it was a question of descriptions of personality or qualifications for the office, influenced the way voters perceived the images of major candidates in the 2007 French presidential elections. Furthermore, the attributes positively or negatively covered in the media were perceived in the same way by the public. The second-level agenda-setting effects were found both in the case of Ségolène Royal and Nicolas Sarkozy. The general profiles of the candidates in the media matched well with those of voters, even if some changes in the public's perceptions did not find much ground from the media. For Ségolène Royal, it was the positive descriptions of her persona that corresponded with the public's evaluations, creating an image of proximity, relative honesty and unanxiousness. In turn, Nicolas Sarkozy's persona was badly perceived by the media and the public, but he overcame his competitor in more political matters, such as competence, experience and capacity of political renovation.

However, some candidate traits dominated over others and, consequently, had also the deepest impact on the public's evaluations. It was especially the media's picture of Ségolène Royal's competence that had the strongest effect on the public's perceptions. Editorials depicted her as an incompetent candidate, which, consequently, strongly deteriorated her “présidentiabilité” (ability to be president) in the eyes of the public opinion. The intense media coverage of this side of Royal's image had a crucial impact on the voters' perceptions of her already at the very beginning of the
campaign. The damage was never repaired in the eyes of the voters. The effects of Royal's incompetence can not be merely restricted to the second-level of agenda-setting but should be extended to priming. It seems that the strong media coverage of Royal's incompetence, downgrading the importance of other aspects, was used as a benchmark by voters to evaluate her overall image, and that this benchmark also had a role to play in the voting choices.

Royal's case involves also another theoretical extension. If Royal's competence or the lack of it is characterised as her dominant attribute, this side of her image can be referred to with the notion of frame. In this respect, it seems justified to argue that my thesis provides support for the theoretical convergence of second level agenda-setting and framing. As we have seen, it is, above all, the consequences of media content for cognitions, opinions and behaviour among the public that will decide which specific attributes can be regarded as frames. The intense media treatment of Royal's incompetence and its deep effect on the public opinion, playing a subsequent role in the voters' decision-making, seem to meet these requirements, connecting the agenda-setting outcomes with “the emphasis among framing scholars on the power of frames” (McCombs 2004, p. 89).

The fast deterioration of Ségolène Royal's image reflects tendencies that are increasingly visible in the political communication throughout the world. Royal's blunders and mistakes and the speculation over her prospects in the coming elections as well her ups and downs provided the French media an effective way to dramatise the campaign coverage. The media's behaviour illustrates well the tightened focus of political journalism on the game or the horse race coverage, highlighting who is winning or losing (McNair 2000, p. 171). This focus has affected the overall media coverage of politics by leading it to a less substantial and more speculative direction (ibid.).

Equally, Royal's case provided the media an effective way to resist to the strong news management employed by the major candidates. The resistance towards news management seemed to show that journalists could not be manipulated by the
campaign teams and that they were able to keep their autonomy. This role as the watchdog of power is one of the established functions of political journalism. However, in recent years political journalism has become steadily more adversial and less deferential towards political actors (McNair 2000, p. 172). This adversialism is, above all, fuelled by the commercial imperatives of the media market in which the criticism and scrutiny towards politicians can be regarded as a highly saleable commodity (ibid.). While the political media have stayed truer to the normative ideal of the fourth estate in its adversialism, the crisis of legitimitation of politicians has undoubtedly intensified, deteriorating one of the key basis of their authority, as the veil of secrecy and the control of information (including information about image and personality) have been lifted (ibid.). As merely one illustration of this cynicism towards politicians, the major candidates of the French elections were increasingly perceived in negative terms towards the first round by the public opinion, as we have seen.

Even though my results indicate strong evidence for attribute agenda-setting, some findings do not support the tested hypothesis. This is the case with the competence of Nicolas Sarkozy. Even though Sarkozy's competence is referred to in editorials clearly in more positive terms than the one of Royal and he did not commit any blunders, this side of Sarkozy's image remains more negative than positive. This negativity do not seem to correspond with the strong belief in Sarkozy's “présidentiabilité” in the eyes of the public opinion. At the first sight, the biases caused by my data of publications, giving more weight to the leftist press, seemed to have been partly behind this low degree of correspondence. However, as the study of Leidenberg, Holtz-Bacha, & Koch (2008) indicates, Sarkozy's image was strongly negative in a wider spectrum of publications and articles. The fact that the public opinion was not strongly influenced by the negative media coverage could by then explained by Sarkozy's success in the construction of his image of “présidentiable” in the eyes of the public opinion. As Perrineau (2008, p. 124) notes, this image is mostly the outcome of long experience in the state affairs. And, being solid for several years, it could not be so easily influenced by the negative coverage during the campaign.
Equally, my thesis adds evidence to the general plausibility of this extended version of agenda-setting theory. There is diverse international evidence supporting the second-level of agenda-setting. As for the first-level of agenda-setting, the replications of attribute agenda-setting in different settings appear to be based on the similarities in political and media systems: all the research countries are fairly open democratic political systems with reasonably unfettered media (McCombs et al. 1997, p. 715). However, I have not been able to find any similar French case studies dealing with political candidate images in this theoretical context (which do not, of course, mean that there would not be any). In this respect, testing the theory in different countries and diverse cultures is indispensable for pointing out the common ground in communication research: theories should be general, even though they are not independent of context (ibid.).

My study has clearly a few shortcomings. It is, above all, the choice of data that limits its generability. My sample of editorials represents only a minor portion of all articles dealing with candidate images in the elections in question. The initial data of the study Leidenberg, Holtz-Bacha, & Koch (2008) conducted, nearly 18 000 articles in the French press, indicates how massively the presidential elections were covered. However, the same study, as we have seen, supports my results, which gives significantly more weight to the generability of my thesis. Another shortcoming is the choice of data regarding the nature of publications. While I attempted to cover a wide spectrum of newspapers and news magazines in terms of their political orientation, my data lacked a national daily that is clearly right-wing, such as Le Figaro. The newspaper in question was left out due to inaccessibility of the data. However, once again, the study of Leidenberg, Holtz-Bacha, & Koch (ibid.) shows that the major results regarding candidate images were not influenced by the political orientation of publications. Finally, it can be considered as a shortcoming that my study did not rely on any technical tests to indicate statistical significances or the strength of the relationship between the media and the public agenda, contrary to what has been the case with the majority of agenda-setting studies.
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