



Breaking Down Public Opinion on AI Issues Through the Application of Need for Orientation in Agenda-Setting Theory

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Core Idea

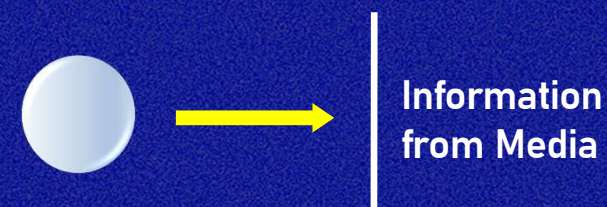
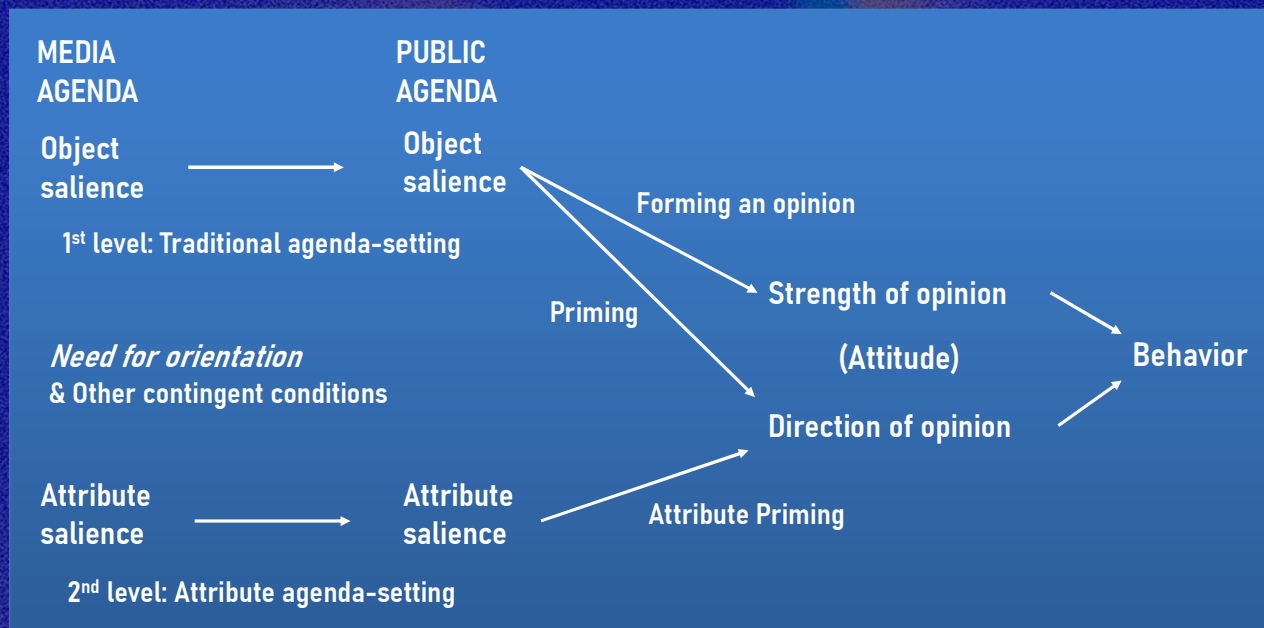
“Summoning a Demon or Engineering an Angel?”



- **One characteristic of public opinion on AI issues: Ambivalence**
⇒ The public acknowledges the benefits of AI technology while also expressing concerns and demanding regulation so that the technology will not be used in an unethical way.
- **The aim of this research: Understanding Public's Ambivalent Attitudes towards AI**
⇒ In order to interpret their ambivalent attitudes towards AI, the concept of Need for Orientation (NFO) is applied.

Theoretical Background & Key Concepts

Agenda-Setting Theory



NFO = Psychological Drive

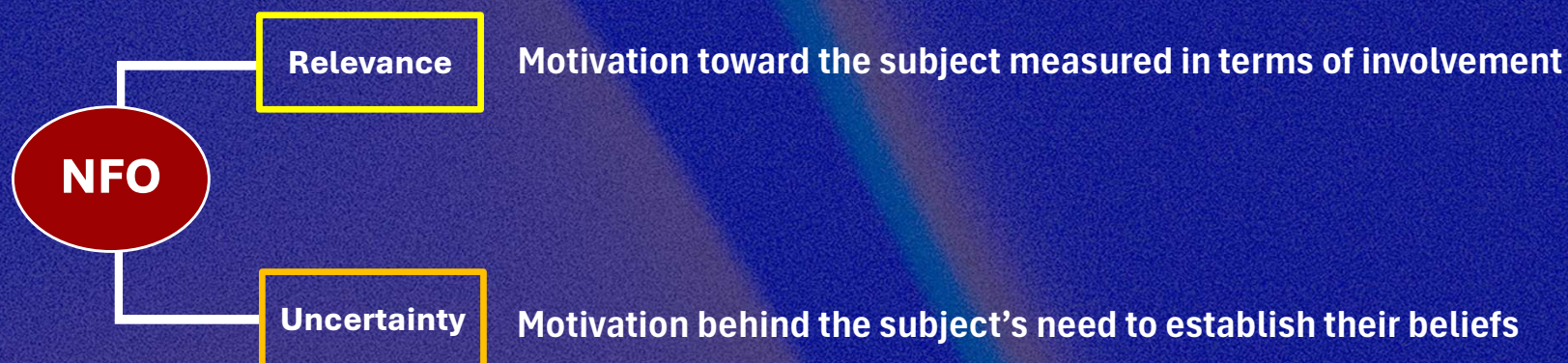
Ref. McCombs (2010)

Theoretical Background & Key Concepts

NFO (Need for Orientation) in Agenda-Setting Theory

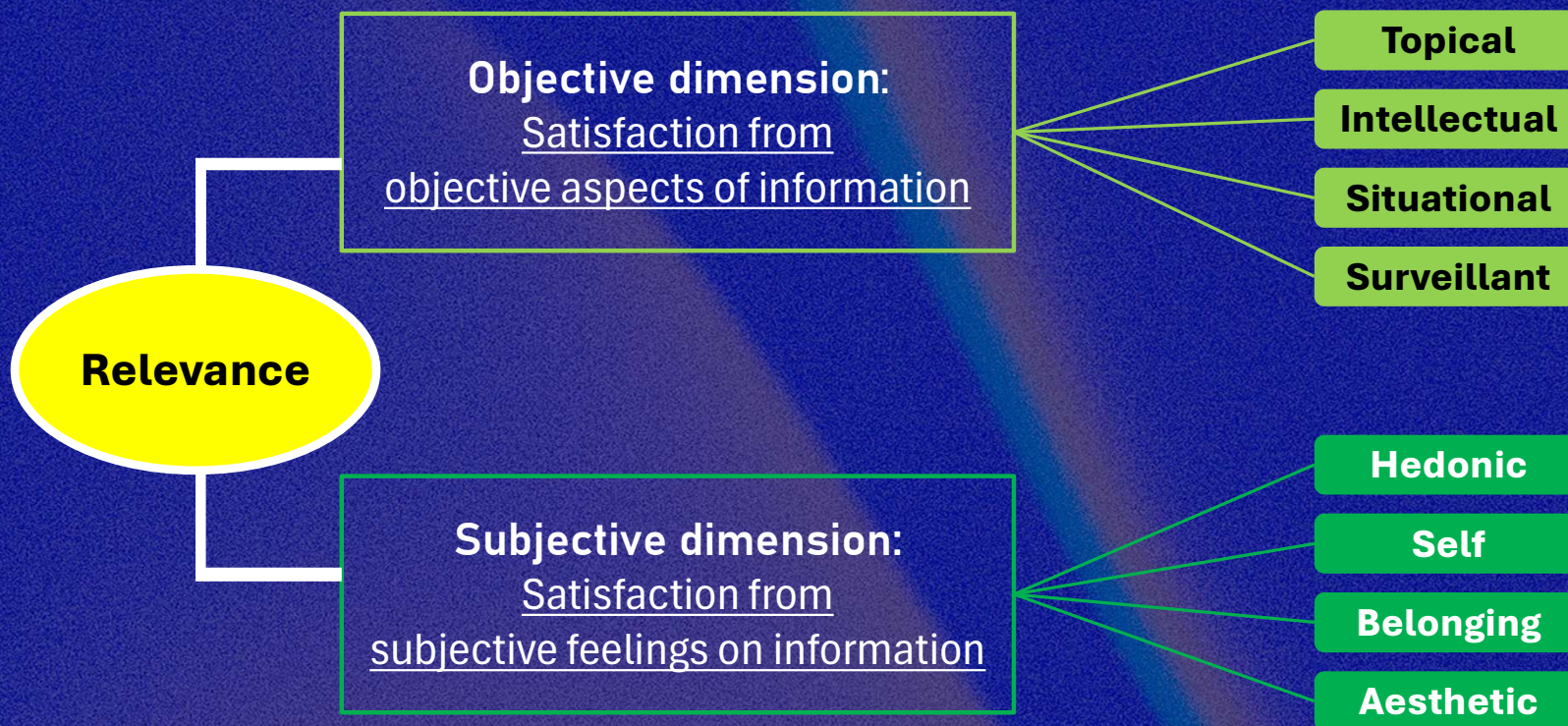
- The sole psychological predictor of agenda-setting effects
- Motivation for acquiring information

* Original concept of NFO (McCombs & Weaver, 1973)



Theoretical Background & Key Concepts

Relevance within NFO



Theoretical Background & Key Concepts

Relevance within NFO

Topical

Motivation to search for topic of interest

Substantive

Motivation to search for information to gain background knowledge

Situational

Motivation to search useful information to understand current situation

Surveillant

Motivation to search for information to maintain oneself as a member of a society

Hedonic

Motivation to search for information for pleasure (for fun)

Self

Motivation to search for information to establish sense of self

Belonging

Motivation to search for information to establish social bonds

Aesthetic

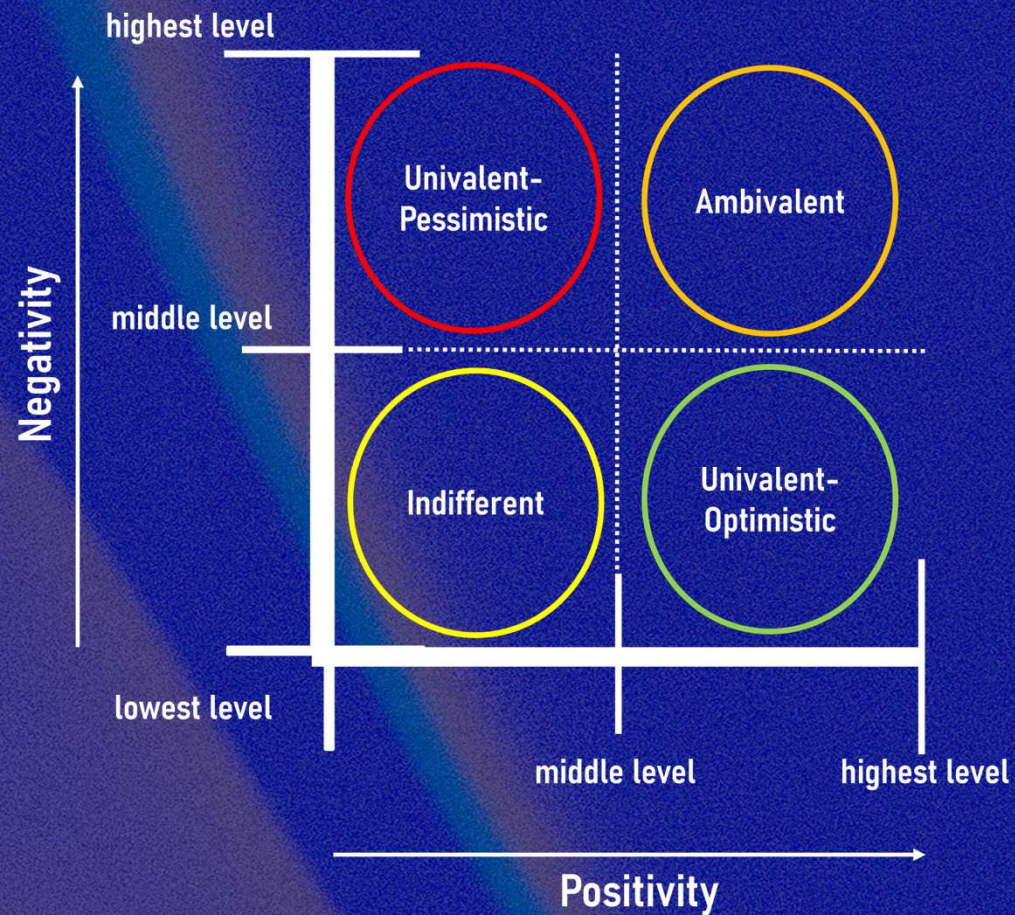
Motivation to search for information for diversion (for escape from reality)

An, S. & Lee, G. (2019). Cognitive and Affective Dimensions of Need for Orientation: A New Approach to Devising Agenda Setting Effect's Psychological Backbones. *Korean Journal of Journalism & Communication Studies*, 63(5), 367-399.

An, S. & Lee, G. (2024). The Public's Attitudes and Psychology on AI issues: An Analysis from the Perspectives of Agenda-Setting Theory and Need for Orientation. *Korean Social Science Journal*, 51(1), 1-21.

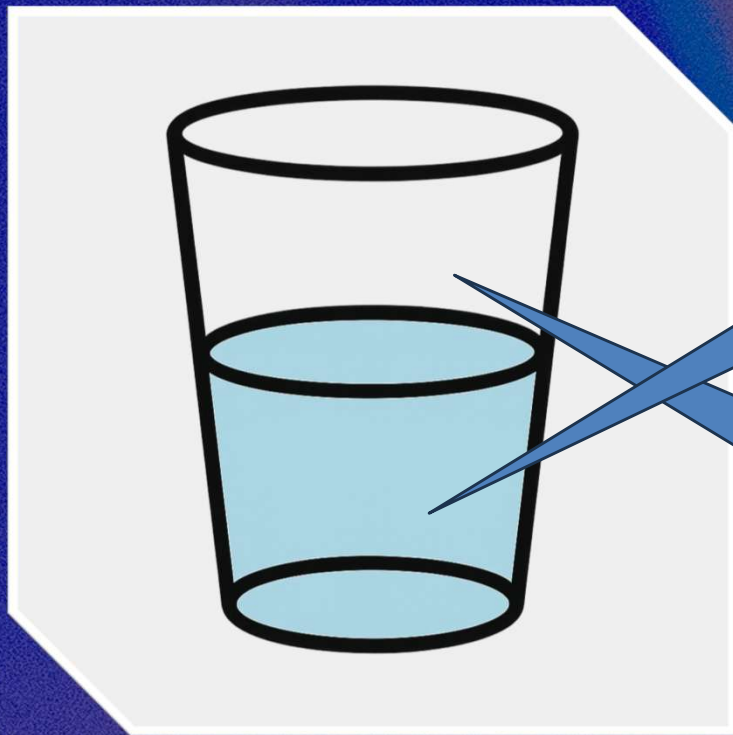
Theoretical Background & Key Concepts

Uncertainty within NFO



Theoretical Background & Key Concepts

Uncertainty within NFO



Optimistic perspectives:
"This cup is **half-full**."

Pessimistic perspectives:
"This cup is **half-empty**."

Survey Comparison

"What are differences in the data from 2019 and from 2025?"

- **What remained the same between both surveys?**
 - Predominant types of NFO-Relevance
 - The perceived importance of general AI issues
 - Attitudes towards specific issues on AI (i.e. Employment and Election & Politics)
- **What was updated in the 2025 survey?**
 - NFO-Uncertainty ⇒ Predictor that shows participants' ambivalent attitudes towards AI
 - Attitudes towards the newly added specific issues on AI
(i.e. Education, Healthcare, Media Credibility, Privacy, Social Justice, Legal Regulations & Responsibility, Mental Health, Military Weapons)
 - Methods of acquiring AI information (Seeking vs Scanning)

Data Collection

Characteristics of Participants in 2019 & 2025

March 20th – 21st in 2019:

Online survey of 350 Koreans in their 20s through 50s

	Men	Women	Total
20s	40	38	78
30s	40	40	80
40s	50	48	98
50s	48	46	94
60s	-	-	-
Total	178	172	350

April 30th – May 1st in 2025:

Online survey of 400 Koreans in their 20s through 60s

	Men	Women	Total
20s	40	40	80
30s	40	40	80
40s	40	40	80
50s	40	40	80
60s	40	40	80
Total	200	200	400

Findings

Common Points

○ Predominant types of Relevance

	2019	2025
(1)	Intellectual	Intellectual
(2)	Topical	Topical
(3)	Self	Situational
(4)	Surveillant	Self

⇒ Situational showed a sharp increase.

⇒ Total mean relevance increased.

	2019		2025	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Topical	4.87	1.23	4.71	1.28
Intellectual	4.89	1.15	5.16	1.20
Situational	3.94	1.20	4.70	1.25
Surveillant	4.20	1.23	4.40	1.31
Hedonic	3.70	1.28	3.79	1.45
Self	4.34	1.23	4.49	1.28
Belonging	4.19	1.18	4.16	1.36
Evasive	3.67	1.28	3.62	1.47
Total	4.23	0.99	4.38	1.08

Note: All results are based on a 7-point Likert scale. (1 = Not related at all, 4 = Moderate, 7 = Very closely related)

Findings

Common Points

- The perceived importance of issues on AI: “How much importance do you place on AI issues in your life?”

	2019	2025	
General AI issues	4.80	5.57 ▲	<div><div>1</div><div>4</div><div>7</div></div> <div>Not much importance at allModerate importanceA great deal of importance</div>

- The attitudes towards AI in ‘Employment’ / ‘Election & Politics’ issues:
“To what extent do you think the development of AI technology will have a positive or negative impact on [‘Employment’ / ‘Election & Politics’]?”

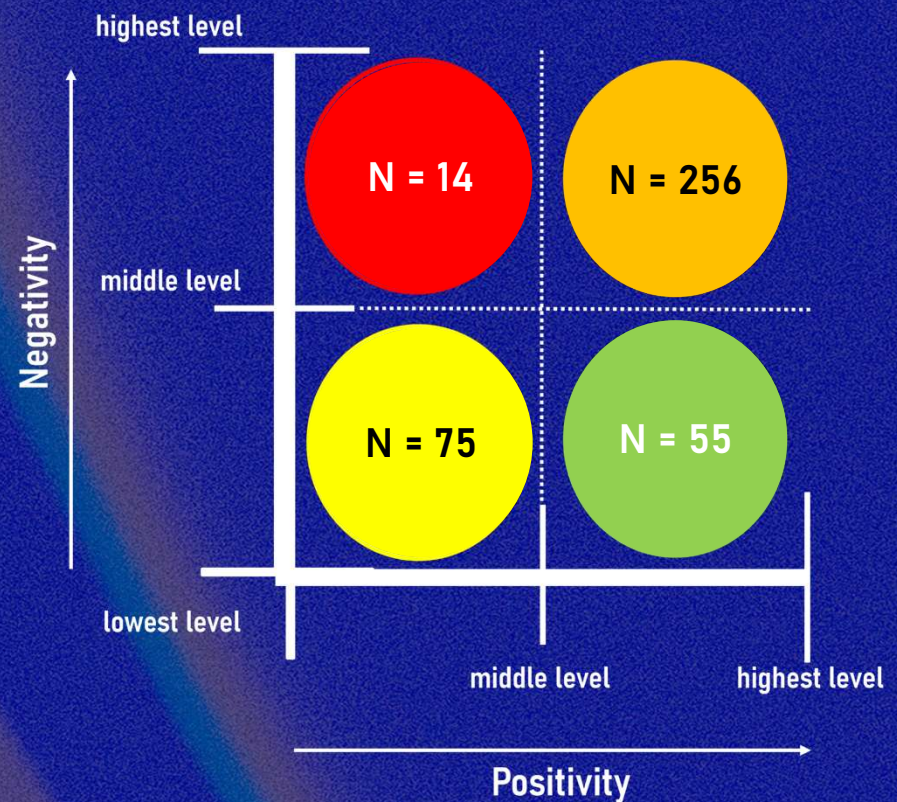
	2019	2025	
Employment	4.00	3.88 ▼	<div><div>1</div><div>4</div><div>7</div></div> <div>Very negative impactNeutralVery positive impact</div>
Election & Politics	4.63	3.37 ▼	

Findings

Updated Points in 2025

○ NFO - Uncertainty

- The ambivalent type was the most common.
- Individuals in the ambivalent group were likely to report higher levels of:
 - perceived importance of AI issues
 - perceived impact of AI on their lives
 - trust in AI when making important decisions



Findings

Updated Points in 2025

- Attitudes towards the 8 new specific issues on AI

		Mean	SD
Negative Inclination (+Employment, Election & Politics)	Privacy	3.63	1.61
	Media Credibility	3.83	1.47
Positive Inclination	Healthcare	5.19	1.24
	Military Weapons	4.80	1.58
	Legal Regulations & Responsibility	4.48	1.49
	Education	4.44	1.39
	Mental Health	4.20	1.47
	Social Justice	4.09	1.31

1	4	7
Very negative impact	Neutral	Very positive impact

Findings

Updated Points in 2025

- Methods of acquiring AI information

[**Scanning**: encountering information incidentally while using media
Seeking: actively searching for information

⇒ Participants were **more likely to do scanning** than seeking

⇒ Main sources of seeking and scanning were **portal sites** & **video-sharing platforms**

- Relevance

Those who did *Seeking* had high levels of:

- Hedonic - Situational - Self - Belonging

Those who did *Scanning* had high levels of:

- Hedonic - Intellectual

- Uncertainty

Seeking : Negativity and Positivity

Scanning : Positivity only

Key Insights

Consistent Drivers

- Across both surveys, **intellectual**, **topical**, and **self** motivations consistently drove AI information behavior.

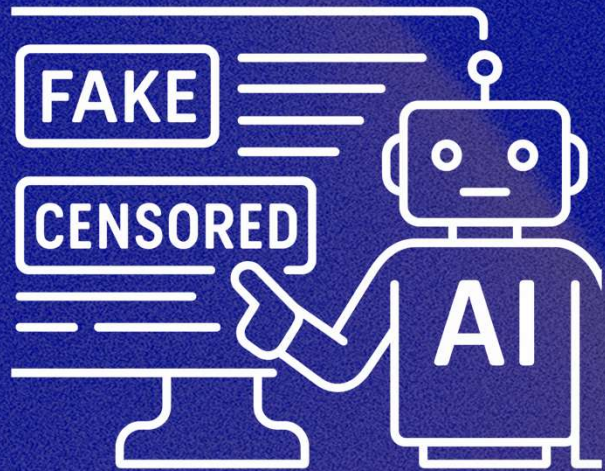
Emerging Driver

- In 2025, **situational** motivation—the need to understand AI due to immediate life contexts—rose sharply.

Ambivalent Attitude

- Participants actively weigh both benefits and risks when engaging with AI.
 - Reflects public ambivalence, not indecision.

Broader Implication in Politics



- In 2025 survey, public attitudes toward the use of AI in politics and elections were clearly negative.
- Real-world concerns—such as controversies over ChatGPT’s handling of political content—reflect a similar pattern:
people are sensitive not only to what AI says, but also to what it avoids.
- This underscores the need for transparent, psychologically informed AI governance, especially in democratic settings where neutrality and trust are paramount.

Thank you



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