



# The Role of the Mass Media in Creating Awareness

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# How Mass Media Influences The Spread of Awareness

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There is wide agreement that awareness leads to knowledge, and knowledge leads to behavior modification (Rimal, 2000)

Various theories and models acknowledge the importance of the mass media in creating awareness in society

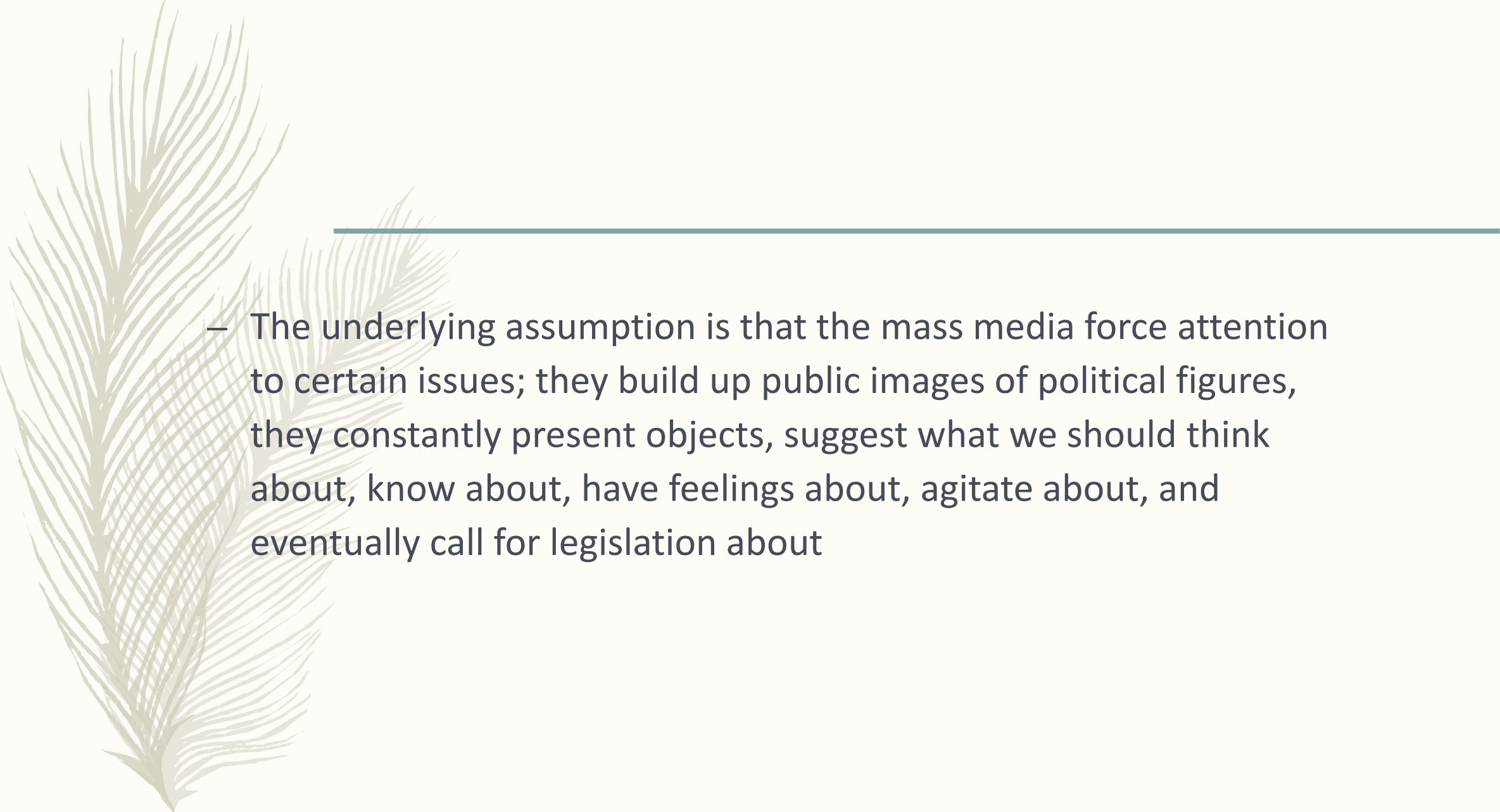
One such theory is the agenda-setting theory, which holds that the media have the ability to advise or tell audiences what issues are major and relevant, thus setting the agenda.




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They can achieve this by choosing what stories to consider newsworthy and how much prominence and space they give those stories (Folarin, 1998).

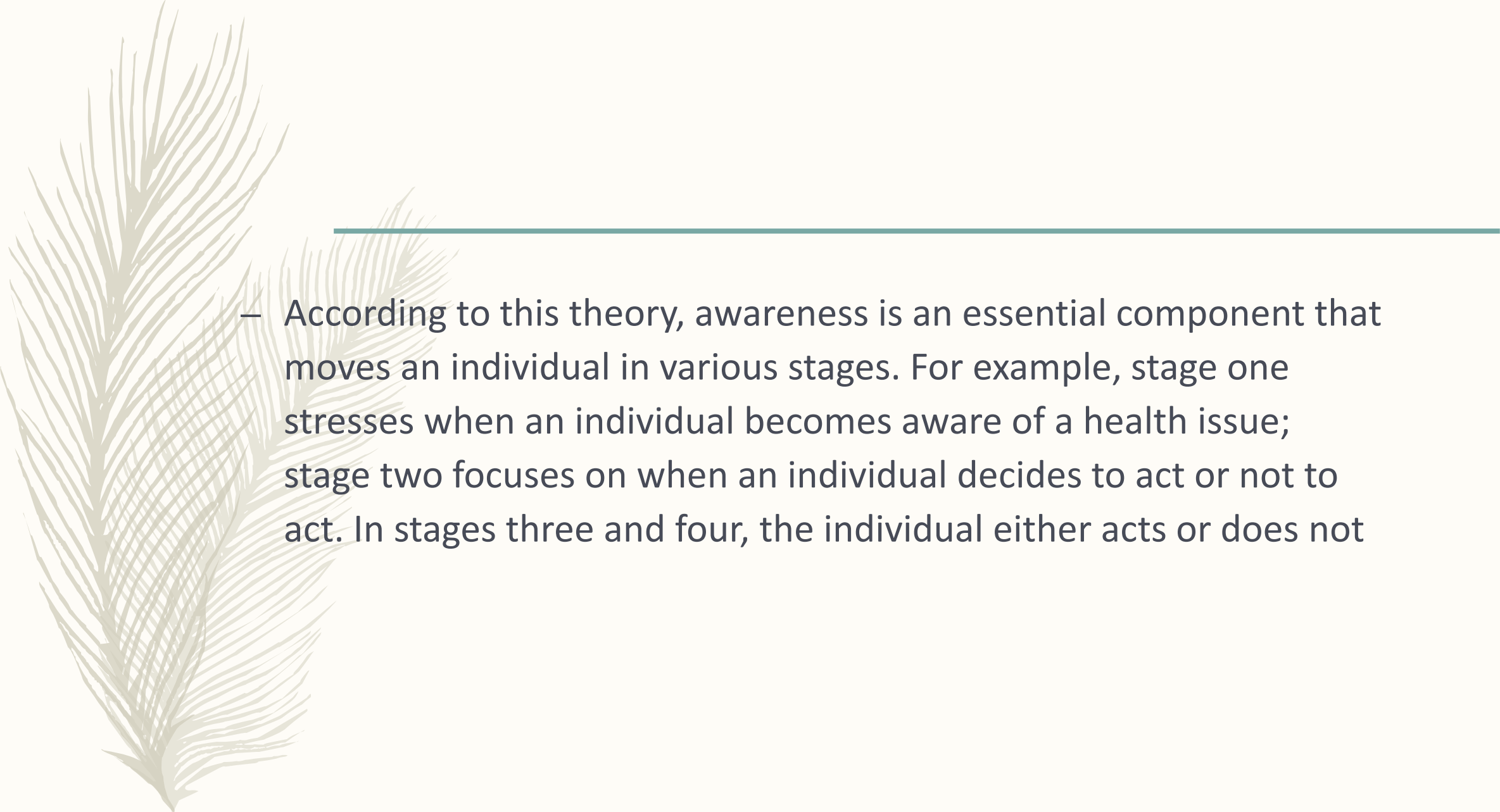
In other words, this theory explains that the mass media through their presentations of event(s) and other kinds of information selected for publication ascribe prominence to the stories selected

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- The underlying assumption is that the mass media force attention to certain issues; they build up public images of political figures, they constantly present objects, suggest what we should think about, know about, have feelings about, agitate about, and eventually call for legislation about



However, other critics criticized previous agenda-setting research for neglecting possible effects on what people think concerning who is important, where important things happen, and why things are important.

In sum, the mass media has the influence to pre-determine issues that people should be aware of in society. The precaution adoption model also recognizes that the media plays a major role in disseminating information and raising awareness

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- According to this theory, awareness is an essential component that moves an individual in various stages. For example, stage one stresses when an individual becomes aware of a health issue; stage two focuses on when an individual decides to act or not to act. In stages three and four, the individual either acts or does not

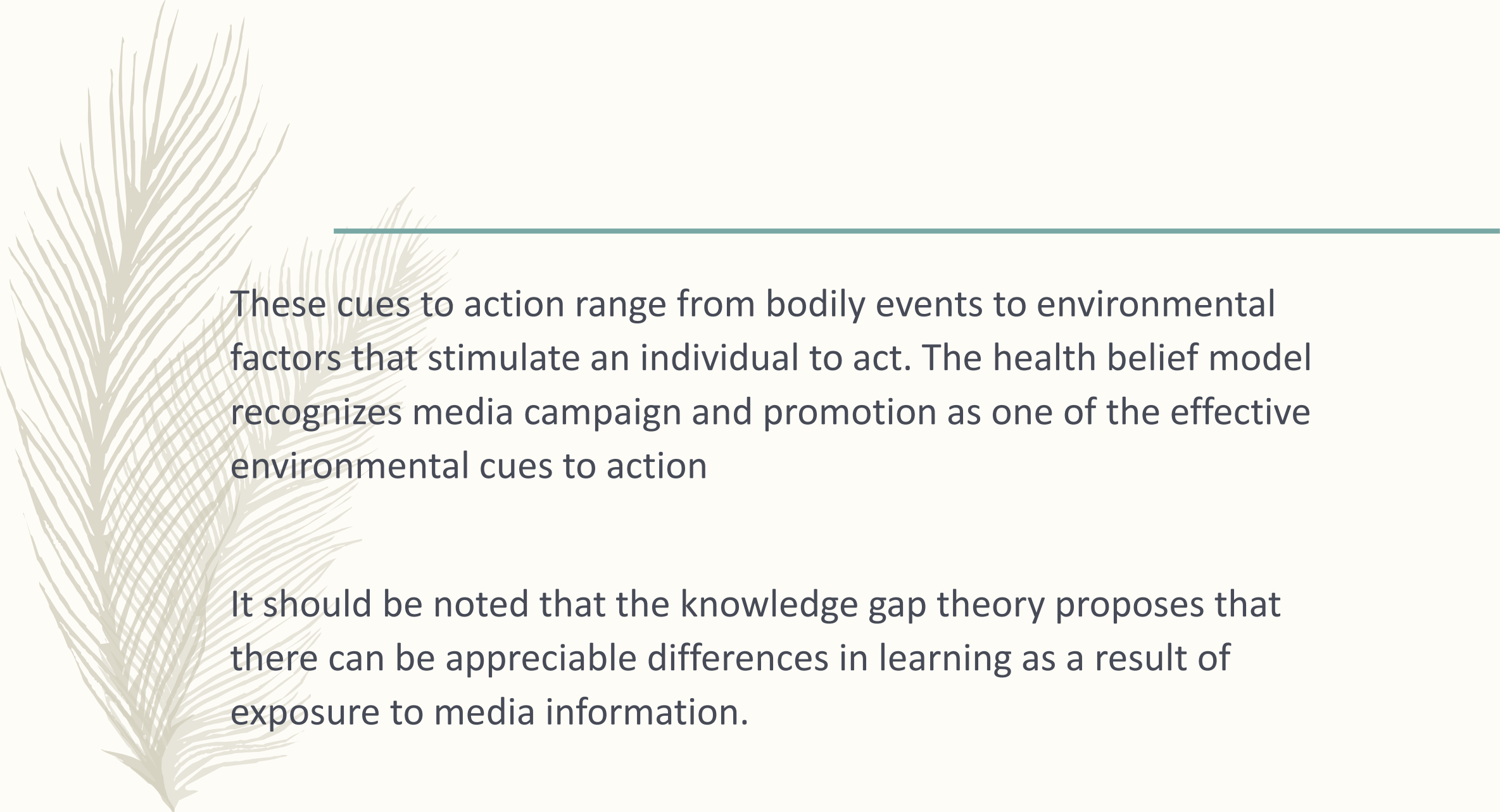




The mass media not only informs individuals about health issues, but its message can also be used to influence individuals to action.

The diffusion of innovation theory holds that the mass media can be a crucial component in influencing beliefs and attitude that will eventually lead to a behavior.

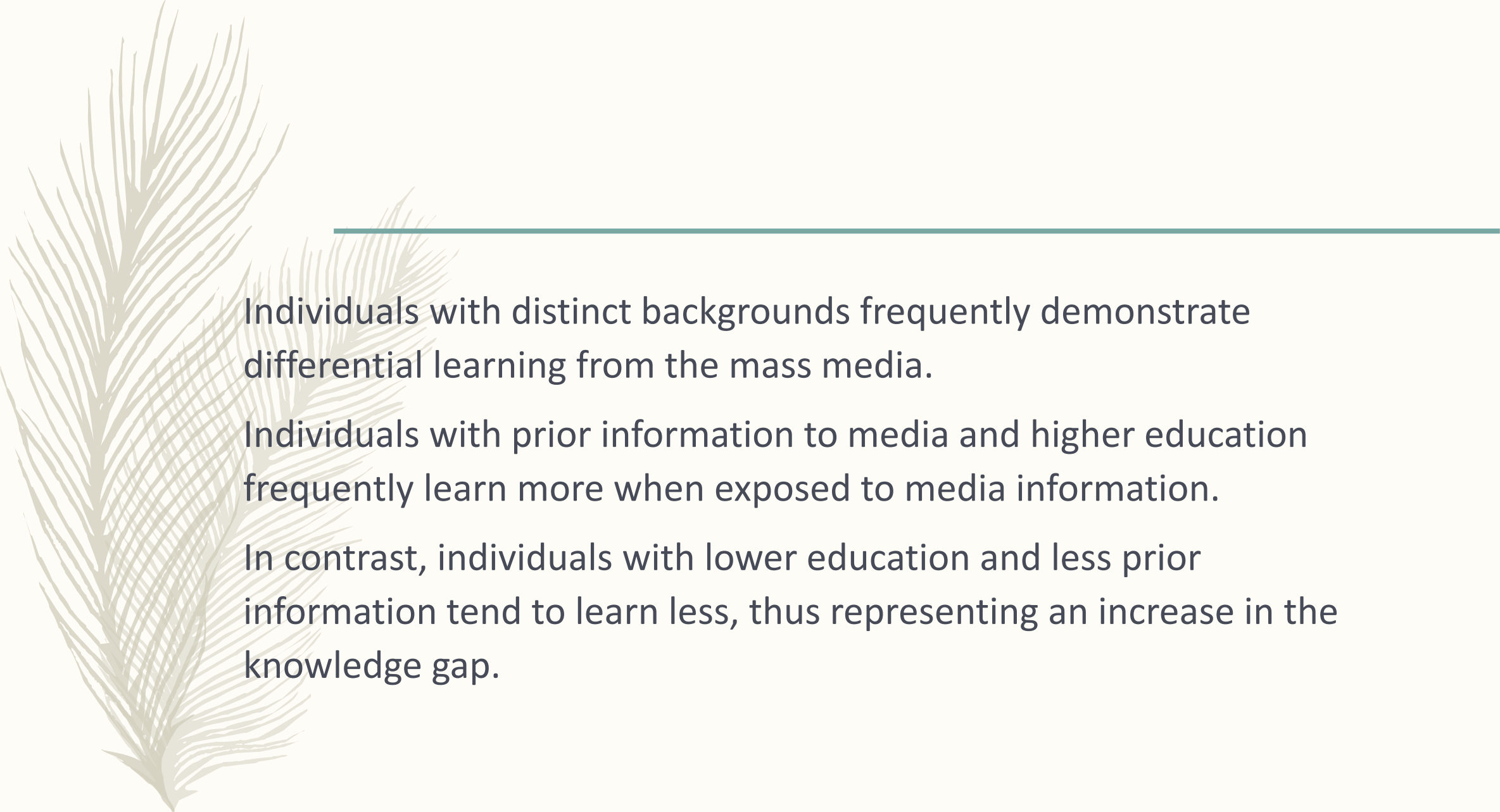
Similarly, one of the major constructs of the health belief model is the cue to action that helps trigger a particular behavior. A cue to action is something that helps move someone from wanting to make a health change to actually making the change.



These cues to action range from bodily events to environmental factors that stimulate an individual to act. The health belief model recognizes media campaign and promotion as one of the effective environmental cues to action

It should be noted that the knowledge gap theory proposes that there can be appreciable differences in learning as a result of exposure to media information.





Individuals with distinct backgrounds frequently demonstrate differential learning from the mass media.

Individuals with prior information to media and higher education frequently learn more when exposed to media information.

In contrast, individuals with lower education and less prior information tend to learn less, thus representing an increase in the knowledge gap.

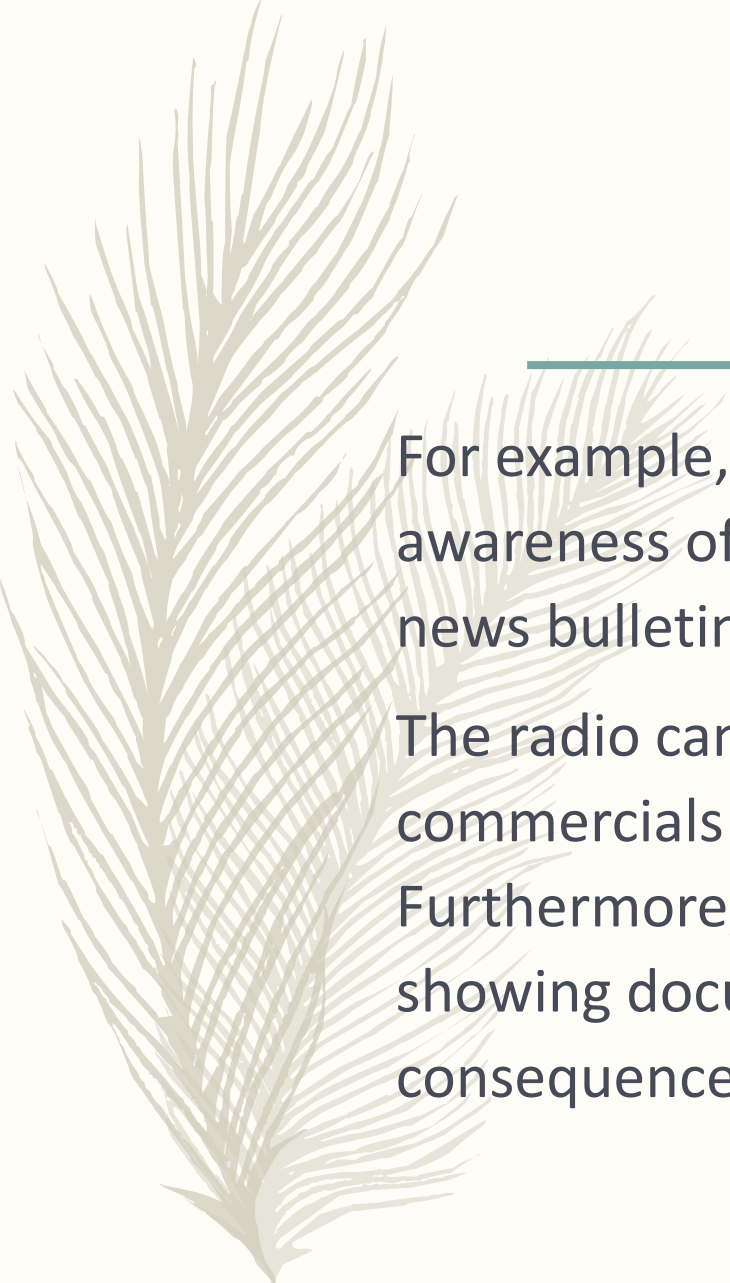


# Mass Media Strategies for Creating Awareness

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1- The use of electronic media in creating awareness: The radio and television can be used in the vanguard of creating awareness of breast cancer, for example. Effective broadcast media use requires that both program type and time of airing be given due consideration.

in other words, radio and television use for breast cancer awareness must be targeted at peak periods or “primetime,” when most audience members stay tuned to their sets

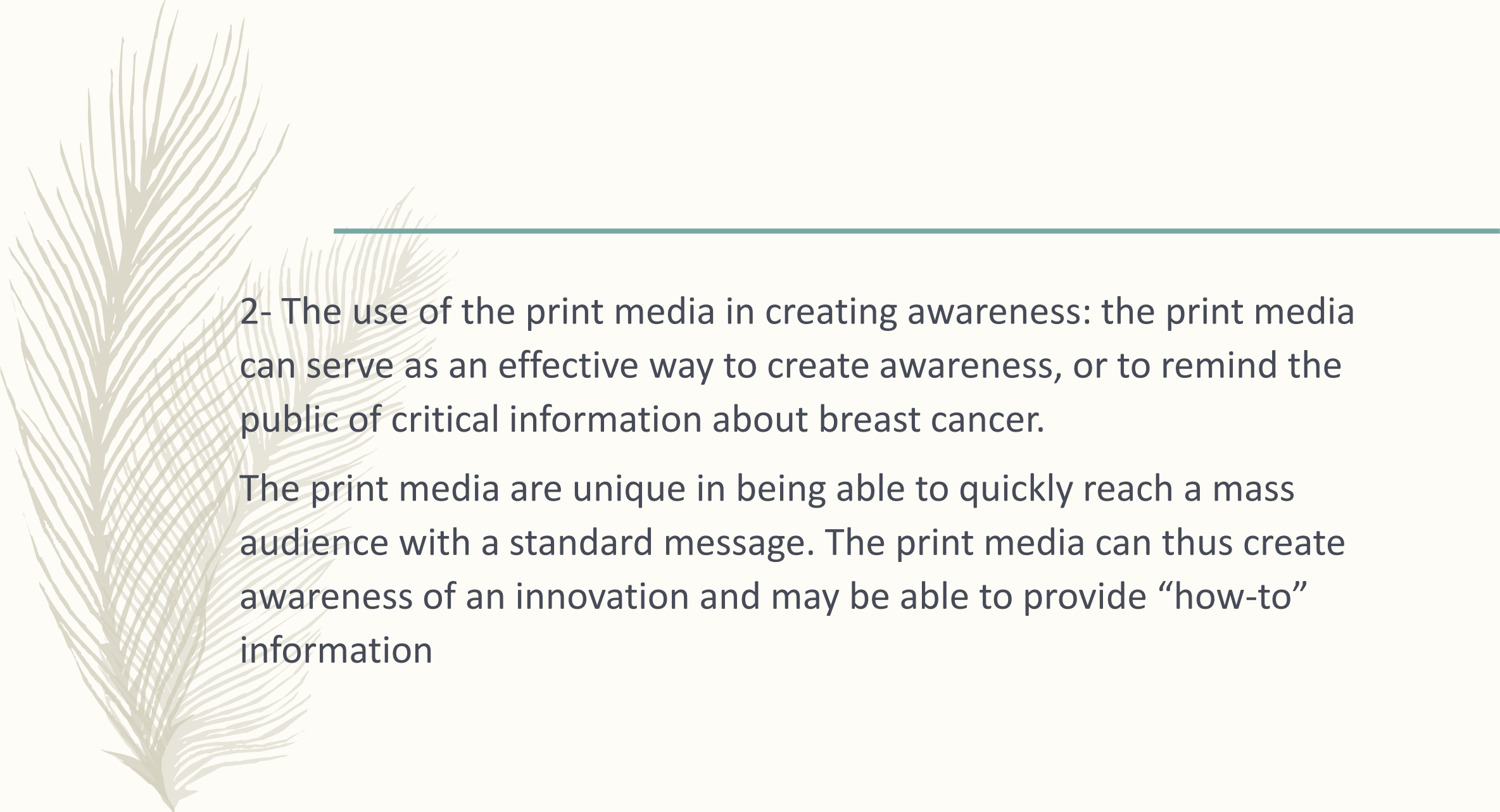


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For example, television can be used to set an agenda by creating awareness of breast cancer through scrolling messages on primetime news bulletins and programs.

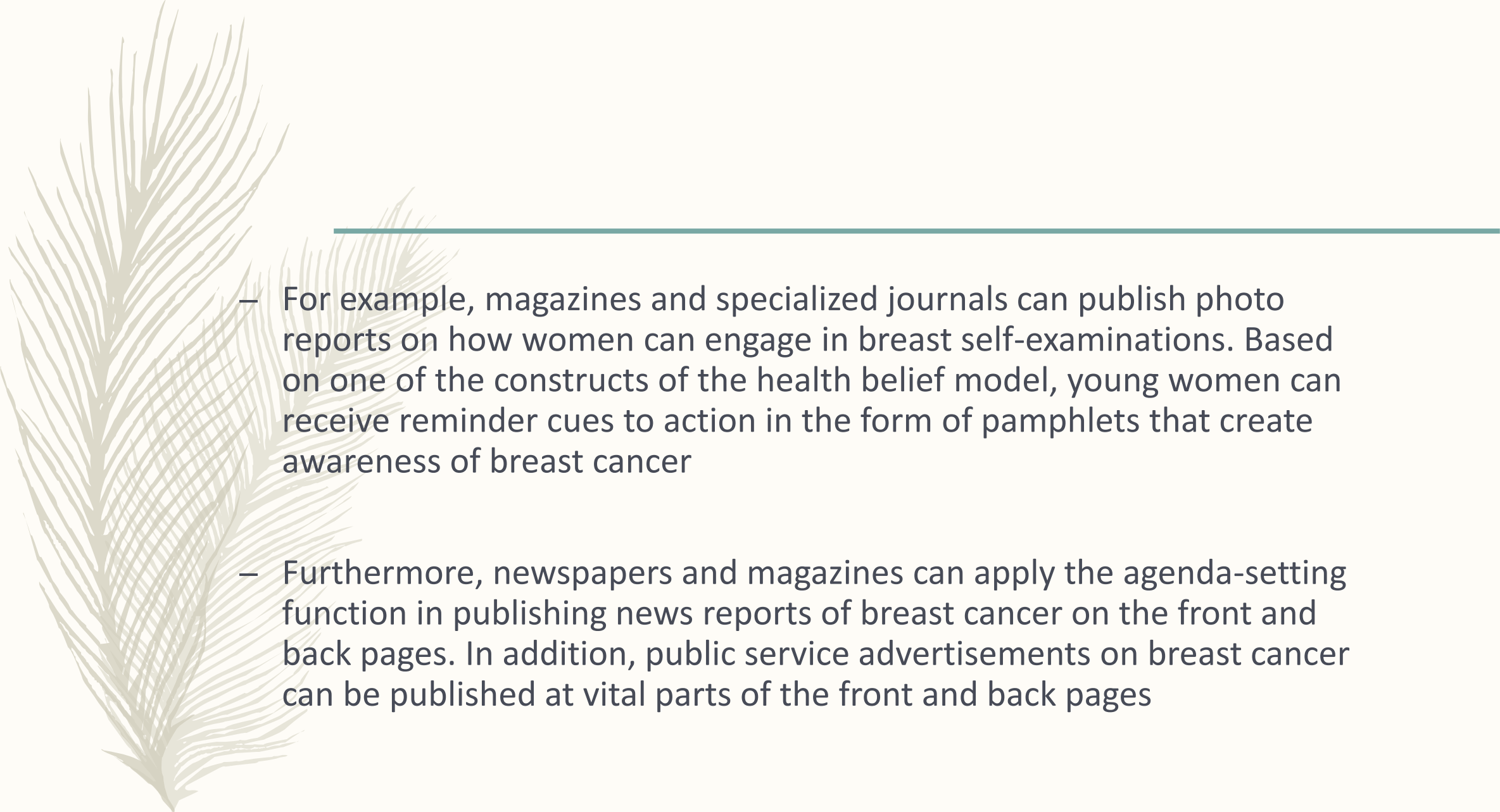
The radio can also be used to set an agenda by introducing musical commercials about breast cancer during prime-time periods.

Furthermore, the television can be used to create cues to action by showing documentaries that focus on the nature, causes, and consequences of breast cancer



2- The use of the print media in creating awareness: the print media can serve as an effective way to create awareness, or to remind the public of critical information about breast cancer.

The print media are unique in being able to quickly reach a mass audience with a standard message. The print media can thus create awareness of an innovation and may be able to provide “how-to” information

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- For example, magazines and specialized journals can publish photo reports on how women can engage in breast self-examinations. Based on one of the constructs of the health belief model, young women can receive reminder cues to action in the form of pamphlets that create awareness of breast cancer
  - Furthermore, newspapers and magazines can apply the agenda-setting function in publishing news reports of breast cancer on the front and back pages. In addition, public service advertisements on breast cancer can be published at vital parts of the front and back pages