Unseen and unheard
– how Dalits are represented in three Indian newspapers

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Abstract

India has a population of 1,2 billion people, and the country also has a great poor population where 70% still live in rural areas. The poorest are often Dalits, once called the untouchables and they constitute one sixth, 167 million people, of India’s inhabitants. They are considered outside the caste system and are often on the bottom of the social ladder. Because of their caste identity they are still discriminated.

Since media has the power to influence this thesis focuses on how the Dalits are represented in three newspapers: Times of India, The Hindu and Indian Express. How do journalists find their reporting about Dalits? The theories used are development journalism, the agenda setting theory and theory about minorities in media.

A quantitative content analysis was done in Delhi during 17 days. 98 articles that mentioned Dalits were found and coded.

This was combined with a qualitative method: respondent research. Eight interviews with political journalists were done. During the field work there was a legislative assembly election in the state Uttar Pradesh, which affected the results since caste is closely related to politics in India.

The results show that Dalits are mentioned quiet often in the newspapers, but the main subject is almost never Dalits and their situation in society. The most frequent topics were the election, affirmative action, and crime and rape against Dalits. These subjects often have a connection to sensation. The most quoted actors in the articles are the elite and not Dalits. Almost all respondents thought they could empower Dalits if they were reported about. This is a paradox since they almost never interview Dalits. There are no Dalit journalists at the three newspapers, which can be one reason why they are not included in the news.

There is little research done on this subject and therefore more research is needed.

Keywords: caste system, Dalits, development, India, media, minorities
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¹ More about the scholarship under Appendix
* Not respondents real name
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1. Introduction

India is the second most populated country in the world. In the 2011 census the population was more than 1, 2 billion people and is estimated to outgrow Chinas population within the next 20 years.\(^1\) It is also a fast developing country where the middle class is growing considerably. But there are still numerous poor people in India and the poorest of the poor are often part of the Dalit community.

The Dalits were once called the untouchables and were seen as impure and treated as polluted by the higher castes. This is still common in India today and the Dalit population is 167 million people.\(^2\)

While so much is happening in India, it is interesting to study how newspapers deal with the Dalits situation.

1.1 Purpose and research questions

How minorities and suppressed groups are included in media is a research field that is of great importance all over the world. The Dalits consists of 167 million people, which makes it significant to study their role in Indian media.

The purpose is to study if the Dalit people have a voice in three English-language newspapers in India and if journalists find Dalit issues important to write about since newspapers has the power to influence.

The research questions are:

1. *How are the Dalits represented in the three newspapers studied?*
2. *How do the journalists find their reporting about Dalit issues?*

This thesis does not have the purpose of cover everything that has to do with the caste system. Questions that will be discussed are issues that have relevance to the research questions. It would be possible to research this for years, but this is a small study done in ten weeks. This thesis wants to highlight a very small part of the Dalits issues.

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1 Daleke. Landguiden.se, search word “Indien” and “introduction”
2 International Dalit Solidarity Network [http://idsn.org/country-information/india/](http://idsn.org/country-information/india/)
1.2 About India

India became independent in 1947 and is often called the world’s largest democracy. It is a semi-federal country with 28 states. The president’s name is Pratibha Patila and she has been in power since 2007.³

India is a land of contrast: in some ways it is a developed country and in some ways it is not. The urban cities are huge with more than 20 million inhabitants, but 70 % of the population still lives in rural areas.⁴

Different parts of India differ considerably from each other. It is almost like different states are like different countries. People do not speak the same language, have different cultural background and different religions.

India has over 300 different languages and thousands of different dialects but about 30 % has Hindi as their mother tongue. English is also one of the main languages.⁵

The poverty in India also differs. The northern part of the country has a larger poor population than the south. For example the state of Kerala has 16 % poor, while the state Bihar has a poor population of 81 %.⁶

India is considered to be very corrupt. The organization Transparency International has ranked all the countries corruption level and India placed on number 95 out of 183 countries in 2011.

All countries are scored between one and ten where ten is the best and one is the worst. Somalia and North Korea are in the bottom with 1.0 points and New Zeeland is in first place with 9.5 points. India gets 3.1 points.⁷

A survey from Political and Economic Risk Consultancy from 2010 also ranked India’s bureaucracy as the worst in Asia.⁸

1.2.1. Colonial history

India has a long colonial history. Vasco da Gama came to India by boat in 1498 and after that the Portuguese put up trading posts along India’s west coast. The British and the French followed and in the 1600s there was hard competition between these two European countries. The British won, since they had great military support from their government, and most of the

³ Daleke.landguiden.se, search word ”India”
⁴ Daleke.landguiden.se, search word ”India” and “befolkning och språk”
⁵ Ibid.
⁷ Corruption Perceptions Index 2011 http://cpi.transparency.org/cpi2011/results/
French were run out of India. In the middle of the 1700s the British had secured their power and in 1858 the British took over the ruling power and had control over almost the whole country.\(^9\)

India’s fight for independence was led by the party *Indian national congress* and Mahatma Gandhi was of great importance in taking back India from Britain. He led millions of people under the device of non-violence.

In 1947 the India was proclaimed independent and the country was divided in two; Pakistan and India. This led to millions of Muslims moving to Pakistan and most of the Hindus staying in India. There are still conflicts between these two countries, especially in the state of Kashmir.\(^10\)

### 1.2.2 Religion

India is considered a secular state in the constitution, but religion is of great importance in politics and everyday life. The most common religion is Hinduism and almost 80 % of India’s populations are Hindus.\(^11\)

They believe that everything has its origin in the world soul: the Brahman, and the thought of reincarnation is central. By doing good things in life you get better karma, and when you get re-born you will get a better life.\(^12\)

Purity is also a central part of Hinduism. The closer you are to the divine Gods, the more pure you are. This is closely related to the caste system where the high castes are considered more pure then the low castes.\(^13\)

The second most common religion is Islam, with 13 % of the population. India has the largest population of Muslims in the world after Indonesia.\(^14\)

### 2. Background

Caste is a complicated issue. To be able to understand how media write about caste the background and context is crucial, hence the background in this thesis will be taking up the following: the caste system, discrimination against Dalits in India today, crime against
Dalits, economy and health for Dalits, affirmative action for Dalits, caste as a factor in Indian politics, the election of 2012, Bahujan Samaj Party and Mayawati.

2.1 The caste system

The caste system is a social hierarchy that is hard to find anywhere else in the world. To understand the hierarchy it can be compared with a triangle with the highest caste on top and the lowest on bottom. Caste is predetermined by birth and cannot be changed and people often marry someone within the same caste. Different castes are associated with different labors.

India’s caste system has existed for more than 2000 years and it is a part of Hinduism. Somewhere during these years the Hindus was divided into four categories called *varnas*. The four different varnas are the *Brahmins* (priests and scholars), the *Ksyatriyas* (warriors), the *Vaisyas* (traders), and the *Shudras* (laborers).

Below the four varnas is a large group of people who were seen as impure and spiritually polluted. They were called the *untouchables*, but are now called the *Dalits*. This group is considered to be outside the caste system, below the bottom of the hierarchy triangle.

Historically the Dalits often had impure occupations where they handled human waste, dead animals and hides. They could not live near the higher castes, get water from the same well or enter the same temples.

The four varnas and the Dalits are also divided into sub-groups, so called *jatis* and there are thousands of different jatis. Varna is a vaster category, while jatis explains to which smaller community one belongs and the jatis also organizes the life in the village.

This thesis will not discuss jatis since of space and time limitations, but it is important to know that the caste system is more complicated than described above.

There is also the group *Other backward caste (OBC)*, which does not include Dalits. These castes are above Dalits, but are still economically and socially depressed. This group is also called Shudras, the fourth caste in the caste hierarchy.

The British colonial power contributed to empower the caste system and to maintain it. They introduced census in India in 1901 where everyone had to declare their varna and their

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16 Attewel et al. in Thorat 2010: 36
17 Attewel et al. in Thorat 2010: 36-37
19 Human Rights Watch report *Broken people* http://www.hrw.org/node/24485/section/3
jati. This was done to simplify the complex caste system and to make it easier to administrate the Indian society.  

The caste system still exists in India, but it is more common in rural areas than in urban cities. But since 70% of India’s population still lives in rural areas, the caste system still affects numerous Indians daily.

2.2 Discrimination against Dalits – still a problem

The Indian constitution from 1950 states that no one should be discriminated against because of their caste. However, discrimination against Dalits is still present in Indian society. Since people are born into a certain caste, it has been hard to change the Dalits’ place.

The word untouchability is rare in India today, hence it is discriminating. This does not mean that Dalits are not treated as untouchables. Some want to believe that untouchability is removed from Indian society, but a report from Human Rights Watch (HRW) states that untouchability is “very much alive” in rural areas. It is reflected in “caste-based segregation in housing, schools, public services, public places, and in the prohibition against Dalits’ use of shared water sources.”

In the census from 2001 the Dalit population was 167 million people. It has grown since then, but there are no recent statistics. Almost one sixth of the Indian population is exposed to discrimination only because of their caste identity. The state Uttar Pradesh has the largest Scheduled Caste population, followed by West Bengal and Bihar. The fact that people from different castes are seen as unequal is the core of caste based discrimination.

HRW has an organization called the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights and their goal is to eliminate discrimination against Dalits. The organization even compares the Dalits’ situation with the apartheid system in South Africa.

The Government of India is trying to establish programs for the development of Dalits. These programs have not been successful according to HRW, since they have been poorly prepared, have not had enough funds and have not been able to reach their target groups. Many Dalits do not even know that these programs exist.

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20 Hardtmann et al. 2006:12
21 Daleke.landguiden.se, search word ”India” and “befolkning och språk”
22 Indias Constitution online: http://www.constitution.org/cons/india/p03015.html
27 Ibid.
A study from 2006 investigated Dalit villages and found that almost half of the villages were denied access to water sources and two thirds of the Dalit people were restricted from entering Hindu temples. In 70% of the villages Dalits and non-Dalits could not eat together.28

There are laws to protect Dalits, but they are not implemented. The report from HRW states that the state has “failed to undertake sufficient law and policy review of the under-implementation” of the laws that are supposed to protect Dalits.29

2.3 Crime against Dalits

A significant problem in India is that there are several crimes committed by higher castes against Dalits. The Dalits rights are in theory secured in the constitution, but the reality tells a different story.

The number of crimes where Dalits were exposed to crime was 32 712 in 2010.30 For example almost three Dalit women are raped and nearly two Dalits are murdered every day just because of their caste.

These figures are presumably substantially higher since people fear reprisal if they report these kinds of crimes. People fear intimidation by the police, inability to pay bribes demanded by police, or just the fact that they know that the police will do nothing to help them.31

2.4 Dalits - economy and health

Dalits are poor and their main problem in India is their economic situation. Most Dalits are laborer’s since they do not own any land, and illiteracy is high amongst the Dalit community.32

It is reported that 80 percent of Dalits live in rural areas and 86 percent are landless.33 Two out of three Dalits are considered to live under one dollar a day, compared to one out of three in the rest of India’s population.34

Dalits also have some of India’s worst health problems. For example does 16 percent of Dalits not have access to a doctor or a clinic. Several Dalits are living at the bottom of the

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28 International solidarity network report Cast an eye on the Dalits of India
30 Indian National Crime Records Bureau: http://ncrb.nic.in/
32 Informant interview with R. P Mamgain, director of Indian Institute of Dalit Studies
33 Dalit Solidarity: http://www.dalitsolidarity.org/
social ladder which makes the risk of suffering from premature death, poor health and lack of treatment way higher than for better-off people.\textsuperscript{35}

It is important to notice that some Dalits have worked their way out of poverty and have become successful. But these are only a few of the 167 million Dalit people.

\section*{2.5 Affirmative action for Dalits}

The Indian government uses affirmative action to get under-represented groups to participate more in Indian society. This was stated in the constitution from 1950 and is seen as a sort of compensation for past mistreatment.\textsuperscript{36} Dalits have quotas in political presentation, higher education, and in government and public sector employment. This gives them reserved seats in the local and national legislatures, and a certain quota of jobs in the government and in the public sector.\textsuperscript{37}

The private sector does not have this kind of affirmative action. One example is the newspapers investigated in this thesis.

The quotas for Dalits have been criticized by many in India. The critics mean that affirmative action is inefficient and that it is unfair to give jobs and education to someone who is not qualified for it. \textit{Human Rights Watch} states that this critic against affirmative actions in the government can be dangerous for candidates since there have been cases where Dalit candidates have been threatened, raped and even murdered.\textsuperscript{38}

There is always an ongoing debate in India weather affirmative action is efficient or not.

\section*{2.6 Caste as a factor in Indian politics}

Caste is a significant factor in Indian politics.\textsuperscript{39} Parties are always trying to attract voters and by dividing different castes into interest groups the parties can easier target them during elections. The Dalits are an interest group in itself and often vote in affiliation to their caste.

Caste is important in all Indian politics, but especially in the state Uttar Pradesh since they have the largest amount of Dalits in the country. The Dalit population in Uttar Pradesh is

\textsuperscript{35} Borooah in Thorat et al. 2010: 180, 205
\textsuperscript{36} Human Rights Watch report \textit{BrokenPeople}: http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,HRW,,IND,4562d8cf2,3ae6a83f0,0.html
\textsuperscript{37} Attwell et al. in Thorat et al. 2012: 123
\textsuperscript{38} Human Rights Watch report \textit{Hidden apartheid}: http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2007/02/12/hidden-apartheid-0
\textsuperscript{39} Daleke.landguiden.se search word "Indien" and "kastsystemet"
around 20 percent.\textsuperscript{40} By getting the Dalit votes a party has a great chance if winning the election.

\textbf{2.7 The election of 2012}

The first quarter of 2012 there was a legislative assembly election in five states in India. These elections are held every five years and determine which party will run the state. India is a semi-federal country which gives the states sovereignty in some areas, hence the party that wins the election gets a large amount of power.

Election was held was in Uttar Pradesh, the largest state in India. According to census of 2011 the population of Uttar Pradesh is 200 million people.\textsuperscript{41} To understand the size of Uttar Pradesh it can be compared with the population of Brazil, which also has 200 million inhabitants.

Delhi, which is both a state and a city, is surrounded by the state Uttar Pradesh. This makes everything that occurs in Uttar Pradesh extremely significant for people in Delhi. For this thesis the Delhi edition of the newspapers were studied, so the reporting about the election was substantial.

\textbf{2.8 Bahujan Samaj Party and Mayawati}

*Bahujan Samaj Party* (BSP) is a political party in Uttar Pradesh and was founded in 1984 by Kanshi Ram. The purpose was to give minorities and suppressed groups in India, such as Dalits, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians, a possibility to represent their interests and opinions. The BSP states on their web site that “these people were deprived of all those human rights, which had been secured for the upper caste Hindus”.\textsuperscript{42}

In the 1990s Kanshi Ram became ill and was succeeded by Mayawati Kumari., who is known just as *Mayawati*. She is herself a Dalit and became the first Dalit chief minister in 1995 in any of India’s state governments. She was also the youngest politician to become chief minister in Uttar Pradesh.\textsuperscript{43}

Mayawati has become a symbol for Dalits all over India. Millions of her supporters refer to her as *Behenji* meaning “sister”. She became chief minister in Uttar Pradesh a second time.

\textsuperscript{40} Census of India 2011, Scheduled castes: http://censusindia.gov.in/Census_And_You/scheduled_castes_and_sceduled_tribes.aspx
\textsuperscript{42} The BSP website: http://www.bspindia.org/about-bsp.php
\textsuperscript{43} The BBC: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/1958378.stm
2007, but lost the power in the 2012 elections. She resigned from her post on March 7th 2012.\footnote{Election Commission of India, Assembly elections 2012 results: http://ecireults.nic.in/PartyWiseResult.htm}

The BSP was of great importance in the 2012 election campaign and there was an intense media focus on Mayawati.

3. Media in India

3.1 Freedom of the press

According to Freedom House Indian media is defined as “partly free”, but India’s media scene is actually the freest in South Asia.\footnote{Freedom House: http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2011/india} The Indian constitution states that there is freedom of speech and expression and these laws are mostly upheld.\footnote{Ibid.}

India is an immense country; some states are more dangerous to work in as a journalist than others. Rural areas are considered more dangerous than urban. The most dangerous states for journalists are Chhattisgarh, Jammu and Kashmir, Assam, and Manipur. Here journalists face pressure from both government and insurgents.\footnote{Ibid.} Most of the English-language press is privately owned which gives them the opportunity to write about the government more freely and to provide a wide coverage of news. The newspapers studied are all private owned.

3.2 Printed media in India

India has one of the largest newspaper markets in the world with more than 107 million copies of newspapers circulating daily.\footnote{KPMG Indian Media and Entertainment Industry Report 2011 http://www.kpmg.com/in/en/issuesandinsights/thoughtleadership/ficci-kpmg-report-2011.pdf} In Europe and the US people tend to read their papers online instead of buying them in a store, but in India trend looks a bit different. Here the newspaper industry is blooming like never before.

Figure 3.2.a, from the KPGM, shows the sales of Indian newspapers compared to the UK and USA.\footnote{Ibid.}
The literate population of India is estimated to 579 million people where almost one third read a newspaper daily. Since more people learn to read in India, the trend when it comes to sell newspapers is expected to sustain over the next five years.\(^{51}\)

Internet access for the Indian population is under 10%,\(^{52}\) which is one reason why the newspaper market is still growing. The KPMG states that:

“India is considered among those developing countries that will last see the wrath of digital penetration because Internet penetration is still nascent and consumer migration has not yet happened”.\(^{53}\)

The newspapers in India are so cheap that even the poor can afford it. The newspaper merely costs from one to five rupees, about 0, 1 to 0, 5, Swedish crowns.

\section*{3.3 The newspapers studied}

All the newspapers chosen are private owned since no big English-language newspapers in India are government owned.

\textit{The Times of India} has a circulation of about 7, 6 million copies a day\(^{54}\) which makes it the largest English-language paper in India. It is defined as \textit{conservative} and is published by \textit{The

\textit{\footnotesize 3.2.a}\(^{50}\)}

![Global print circulation trend](image)

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure3.2a.png}
\caption{Global print circulation trend}
\end{figure}

\(^{50}\) Ibid.
\(^{51}\) Ibid.
\(^{53}\) KPMG \textit{Indian Media and Entertainment Industry Report} 2011
\(^{54}\) Indian readership survey, fourth quarter of 2011 http://mruc.net/irs2011q4_%20toplines.pdf
Times Group. It was founded in 1838 under the name The Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce.\(^{55}\) The head quarter is in Delhi, but they have different editions all over India.

This newspaper was chosen since it sells the most copies a day of all the English-language newspapers. It also has a more tabloid approach than the other two newspapers.

The Hindu has a circulation of about 2.2 million copies a day\(^{56}\), which makes it the third largest English-language paper in India. The newspaper was founded in Madras in 1878 as a weekly newspaper, but became daily in 1889.\(^{57}\)

It is defined as \textit{left-leaning or independent}. The Hindu is a family-run newspaper and is published by the Hindu group. Their headquarter is situated in Madras, but they have editions and editorial offices all over India, including Delhi.

This paper was chosen since it has one of the largest circulations and it is more left-leaning than the other two newspapers.

The Indian Express has a circulation of about 630 000 copies a day\(^{58}\), which makes it the ninth largest English-language paper in India. It started in 1931 in Madras. It is owned by the Express group and it is a \textit{centrist} newspaper.\(^{59}\) Today they have their head quarter in the Express building in Delhi.

This newspaper was chosen because it is read by bureaucrats and politicians. They are also famous for doing investigative journalism and to write about things that the other papers do not.

4. Theoretical framework

Three theories will be implemented: first \textit{development journalism}, because this research is done in a development context. Second the \textit{agenda setting theory} since it is important from a democratic point of view that the Dalits are given a voice in the media. To raise important questions in society, media is one of the best platforms to do so. The third theory is about \textit{minorities and suppressed groups in media}, since the Dalits are one.

\(^{55}\) Times of India: http://www.indiatimes.com/aboutus
\(^{56}\) Indian readership survey, fourth quarter of 2011 http://mruc.net/irs2011q4_%20toplines.pdf
\(^{57}\) The Hindu: http://www.thehindu.com/navigation/?type=static&page=aboutus
\(^{58}\) Indian readership survey, fourth quarter of 2011 http://mruc.net/irs2011q4_%20toplines.pdf
\(^{59}\) Indian Express: http://www.expressindia.com/news/expressgroup/
4.1 Development journalism

“The whole point of development journalism is to engage and empower the people and to involve them actively in the process of economic, cultural and political development”.

This is stated by Xu Xiaoge in his chapter about development journalism in the book “The handbook of journalism studies”. Development journalism first started in the 1960s because journalism was “believed and expected to play a key role in facilitating and fostering national development.” This theory is used because it is highly respected in India.

One of the key components of development journalism, that Xiaoge mentions, is that a journalist should “empower the ordinary people to improve their own lives and communities”. Journalists should empower the ordinary people and not the elite “to participate in human life and human development.” This means that you can view journalists as “agents of empowerment”. By giving Dalits a voice in the media it could help them empower themselves.

Liz Ford, a development journalist at the Guardian, says that development journalism means “getting behind the clichés of starving children and getting people to tell their own stories”.

4.2 The agenda setting theory

This theory has its origin in 1922 when the researcher Lippman discussed “how media messages influence the ‘pictures in our heads.’ ” The researchers McCombs and Shaw did a survey in 1972 that has been called “one of the 15 milestones in mass communication research”. They studied how peoples’ opinions about an election correlated with the issues that media wrote about, and found an almost perfect correlation. Since then the agenda setting theory has been greatly established and a lot of research has been done in the light of this theory.

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61 Xiaoge in Hanitzsch et al. 2009:357
62 Xiaoge in Hanitzsch et al. 2009:358
63 Ibid.
64 Xiaoge in Hanitzsch et al. 2009:362
65 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
67 George (2009) http://www.guardian.co.uk/journalismcompetition/professional-what-is-development-journalism
68 Coleman et al. in Hanitzsch 2009:148
69 Ibid.
Media is supposed to give information about important problems in society.\textsuperscript{70} If media focus on one issue, then the audience will find this to be more important than an issue that they do not write about,\textsuperscript{71} and this is the core of the agenda setting theory. The more attention a subject gets, the more important it becomes for people.\textsuperscript{72} Simply you could say that the media tells the audience what to think about, and that is the agenda-setting theory.

Since media only has a certain amount of space and time a selection of news is necessary. It is the journalists’ news values and professionalism that concludes what becomes news or not.\textsuperscript{73} In the end it is the journalists’ news values that decide what kind of news the audience will think about.

The researcher McQuail is a mass communication researcher and he states that when it comes to picking news one can see it in three different ways: what theory says news should be like, what journalists find most relevant, and thirdly what the audience thinks is the most interesting.\textsuperscript{74} The abnormal and sensational is something that newspapers like to report about. Research has shown that these are the kind of news that attracts the audience.\textsuperscript{75}

For this thesis it is, combined with the agenda-setting theory, interesting to study how journalists think about their target group when they select their news.

4.3 Minorities and suppressed groups in media

Media is one of the main sources of peoples’ knowledge, attitudes and ideologies and media has the power to construct how the audience views different groups in society. This is stated by the researcher Cottle.\textsuperscript{76}

India is a multicultural and multi-ethnic society, which means that media can contribute to how their readers view different groups in society.

When journalists write about ethnic minorities the news are often about conflicts, drama, controversy, violence and deviance. This is, according to Cottle, strongly connected to the journalists’ news values,\textsuperscript{77} hence journalists news values is important when it comes to making a news selection.

\textsuperscript{71} Strömbäck 2004: 31
\textsuperscript{72} Coleman et al. in Hanitzsch 2009:147
\textsuperscript{73} Coleman et al. in Hanitzsch 2009:148
\textsuperscript{74} McQuail 2006: 356
\textsuperscript{75} McQuail, Denis (2006) \textit{Mcquails’ mass communication theory}. London: Sage Publications Ltd. p. 359
\textsuperscript{76} Van Dijk in Cottle, Simon (2000) \textit{Ethnic minorities and the media}. Oxfordshire: Marston Lindsay Ross International Ltd p. 37
\textsuperscript{77} Cottle 2000: 21
The media landscape is fast changing and today ads and commercial is important to finance the newspaper. Cottle means that there is an ongoing tabloidization of the media around the world and this affects the way journalists report about minorities. Newspaper reports less and less about minorities because it does not sell.

In general minorities are quoted less in newspapers than elite groups and minority representatives seldom speak alone in an article.

4.5 Previous research

Previous research about Dalits and the media is mostly about Dalits’ representation in the news rooms. There are hardly any Dalit journalists, and in particular not in the English-language press.

An analyze of the editorial pages in The Hindu and Times of India in 1996 shows that any of the newspapers only had four articles about Dalits during a nine month period.

In the article Dalits and a Lack of Diversity in the Newsroom the author argues that the “under-representation of Dalits in Indian media leads to an exclusion of news on Dalits.” The author also states that there are almost no Dalits workings as journalists in the newsrooms in India.

There is little research done concerning news about Dalits, thus I find it interesting to study.

5. Methodology

This thesis is divided in two parts: one quantitative which answers the question how much, and one qualitative which answers the questions in what way and how. By combining these two methods it will give a better understanding about caste in Indian media today.

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78 Cottle 2000: 22
79 Van Dijk in Cottle 2000: 39
81 Jeffrey 2000: 169
5.1 Definitions

*Dalits*: literally meaning *broken people*. It is a term often used by rights activists and the population to refer to *untouchables*. It refers to those that are not a part of the caste system.\(^{83}\) This is the term being used in this thesis.

*Scheduled castes*: a list of socially deprived castes prepared by the British Government in 1935. The term scheduled caste is used in the constitution and in law.\(^{84}\) It means the same thing as *Dalits*.

*Untouchables*: This term is not so often used anymore when someone speak about the Dalits because it is disparaging. It means that people outside the caste system are impure and cannot be touched.\(^{85}\) It is the same thing as Dalits.

*Upper castes*: those occupying the first three major caste categories and thereby excluding the Dalits.\(^{86}\) In this thesis the term refers to all non-Dalit Hindus.

*Media*: When this term is used it refers to the general media in India, which includes newspapers, TV, radio and the web. When it is about newspapers only the term *newspapers* will be used.

5.2 Quantitative Content method

For the first part a quantitative content method is used. One of the research questions is *how are Dalits represented in the selected newspapers*. To get an answer this method is adequate to use, hence it can answer questions about how often, how much or how frequently different categories are represented in a material.\(^{87}\)

The units being analyzed are articles that contain the words *Scheduled caste, Dalit* or *Untouchable*. This selection was made since all the articles about the Dalits would be collected. There were articles where the author used the term *lower caste* which means that the caste was not defined. These articles are not included in this study since *lower caste* can be any caste below the *Brahmins*. To study these articles was not an option since of time limitations.

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\(^{83}\) Human Rights Watch report *Broken People*: http://www.hrw.org/node/24485/section/3  
\(^{84}\) Ibid.  
\(^{85}\) Ibid.  
\(^{86}\) Ibid.  
To code the articles a codebook with fourteen different variables was constructed and used. (To view codebook, see Appendix.) The variables were divided into three different categories: range, actors and content.

Variables about range contain questions about in which newspaper and what section the articles were published in.

Variables about actors ask who is being quoted in the article.

Variables about content contain questions about the main subject of the article. Nineteen different content categories were used. Each article could be place in just one category.

5.3 Respondent research

For the second part a qualitative method is being used. The interview method is called respondent research and the purpose of the interviews is to analyze the journalist’s intentions, values and reflections, to see patterns in the answers, and compare them with each other. A questionnaire was structured so that the same questions could be asked to all the interviewees.

The questions used were semi structured. The reason is that prepared questions are central, but the possibility to ask follow-up questions is equally important. The questions are also connected to theories about development journalism, agenda setting and minorities in media.

5.4 Selection of respondents

A total of eight respondent interviews were made since around ten people are enough to make an interesting analysis.

To know anything about how the journalists thought about Dalits the essential was to interview journalists who were writing about them. By interviewing these people answers like “I don’t know” could easily be avoided.

Journalists in India that writes most about Dalits are political reporters. Therefore five political reporters and three editors were interviewed.

One informant interview was also made for this thesis. It was with professor

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88 Esaiasson et al. 2008: 233-234
89 Esaiasson et al. 2008: 231-233
90 Knapskog et al. 2008: 103
91 Esaiasson et al. 2008: 231-233
92 Knapskog et al. 2008: 292
R. P. Mamgain, who is the director of Indian Institute of Dalit Studies. This interview was made to give background information about the Dalits, and to give information about previous research concerning this subject.

5.5 Material and research process

Articles from the newspapers The Hindu, The Indian Express and The Times of India were collected. They were studied for 17 days from January 15th to February 2nd 2012. The newspapers from the 28th and the 31st of January are not included. The reason is that I did not get The Indian Express in my subscription these days. It was decided not to include the other newspapers either since then there would have been two more newspapers from the Hindu and Times of India. Articles about sports were not included and nor were inserts, such as weekend inserts, since of time limitations.

The amount of articles collected was 98. The study could have been going on further then 17 days, but because 98 articles are quite many it was enough. I also did the reading myself which was very time-consuming.

These newspapers were read and the articles about Dalits collected and coded with the code book.

The interviews were made in Delhi during January to March 2012 they were done at the newspapers’ editorial offices in Delhi. The interviews lasted between 30 minutes up to an hour and all the interviews were recorded. This was important since I wanted to concentrate on the interview and be able to ask interesting follow-up questions. Afterwards all the interviews were transcribed to give an overview.

5.6 Limitations

First of all one of the limitations is time. The subject has been narrowed down to only concentrate on the research questions.

Secondly the study was done in Delhi. This city has an immense urban population, which is also the newspapers target group. Most of Dalits live in villages in rural India, and not in the urban cities. This can affect how the newspapers write about the Dalit communities, since they want to adjust their news to their target group.

Third: since I do not speak Hindi the three newspapers studied are written in English. English-language newspapers in India have a different target group than the Hindi once, but

94 Esaiisson et al. 2011: 258
the newspapers studied still reach out to several people and are read by politicians, bureaucrats and other influential people. From a development perspective it is interesting to look at the newspapers written in English.

Fourth: something that is not included is the Dalit perspective. The intention was to talk to at least one Dalit journalist, but this was found to be almost impossible. I simply could not find any Dalit journalists at the newspapers investigated. So the focus is on the research questions, even though it would have been interesting to hear how a journalist that was raised in a Dalit community find this.

5.7 Things that have affected the number of articles

There are three things that have affected the results.

First, there was an election in Uttar Pradesh when the field work was done. Caste and Dalits are important in Indian politics, and are therefore written more about during the election campaigns. Second, the fact that the ruling party is led by the Dalit woman Mayawati also affects the number of articles found.

Third, there was a big debate called the elephant debate. In Uttar Pradesh there are parks with a large number of elephant statues, and the elephant is the BSPs’ party symbol. That made the Election Commission think that the statues were propaganda for the BSP and they decided to cover all the statues with pink plastic. Mayawati, the leader of BSP, then called the Election Commission “anti-Dalit”, which lead to a huge debate in Indian newspapers.

5.8 Validity and reliability

Validity can be defined as if you are measuring what you are supposed to measure.\textsuperscript{95} Articles about Dalits were supposed to be investigated and therefore a strict selection was made: articles that contained the word Dalit, Scheduled caste or Untouchable was collected. By using key words for the selection there can be no discussion of which articles should have been collected or not.

A distinct selection was also made when it came to the respondents. By interviewing people who were actually writing about Dalits it will give a more accurate result of what actually goes into the newspaper.

\textsuperscript{95} Esaisson et al. 2011: 63
**Reliability** is the lack of mistakes during the data gathering process. The newspapers were read each day carefully, but this does not mean that an article could have been missed out. The number of articles found was high (98 articles) which can compensate for any missed articles. The results would not have differed if one or two more articles would have been found. The articles were coded and some of them re-coded to get an accurate result.

5.9 Ethical considerations

Before this research started I thought that caste might be a sensitive topic to talk about for journalists. The fact that some of the respondents wanted to be anonymous in the study was therefore encountered.

The respondents were told about the study and how it was going to be published. After this they were given the option to be anonymous. This was done since it was important to get the respondents to say everything they had in mind. Two respondents decided to be anonymous and six wanted to have their name published. I do not think this affects the results or reliability of this study. If the respondents had not been given this option several answers and interviews could have been missed out.

In qualitative research it is common to show the results without relating them to specific people.

6. Results

6.1 Quantitative part of the study

6.1.1 Range

Out of the 98 articles found, 42 articles were found in the Indian Express, 29 articles in the Hindu and 27 articles in the Times of India. See figure 6.1.1.a

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96 Ibid.
97 Knapskog et al. 2008: 128
83 articles were published in the *domestic* part of the newspapers, which is not surprising since caste is a subject that almost only exists in India. That is why no articles were found in the international section. Nine articles were written in *columns* and four articles were *letters to the editor*. See figure 6.1.1.b.

Only four articles were published on the first page. Three out of the four articles that made it to the front page was from the same day; one each from the three newspapers, and it was on the same story. The articles were about that Mayawati had called the Election commission anti-Dalit after they decided to put plastic over elephant statues in Uttar Pradesh.

The fourth article on the front page was from the Indian Express and was about the election.

The extent of text shows that 49 articles were of *medium-length*, 34 articles were *short* and 15 articles were *long.*
Out of the nine articles about crime against a Dalit eight were short articles. Seven of the long articles were about the election, one was about caste issues and none about crime and rape.

6.1.2 Content
A total of 19 different categories were created, and the most frequent category was the election and 28 articles were placed here. The second most frequent category was about BSP and Mayawati, which is also is strongly connected to the election. 19 articles were placed here.

The third most common category was about affirmative action and 11 articles were placed here. The Dalits are often mentioned as an example amongst other groups that also are quoted in different areas.

The fourth most common category, with nine articles, is crime and rape against Dalits. See figure 6.1.2.a

Several articles had a connection to the election in Uttar Pradesh and Punjab. The articles main subject might not have been the election, but the article had some connection to it. One variable was also created to study how many of the articles actually had a connection to the election. The result shows that 66 articles (two thirds) had some connection to the election and 32 did not.

In 43 of the articles were the Dalits are mentioned, they are not important for the article itself. The article would work fine without mentioning the Dalits.
If you would only count the articles were the Dalits are very important or important, a total of 55 articles, the distribution between the three newspapers are: 12 articles in *Times of India*, 16 articles in *The Hindu* and 27 articles in *Indian Express*.

**6.1.3 Actors**

In 44 of the 98 articles no one was quoted. The most quoted actor was politician, who was quoted in 24 articles. An expert is quoted in eleven articles. A private person is quoted in eight of the articles, and Dalits are also quoted in eight articles. A politician from the BSP was quoted in six articles, the police in two and a representative from a company was quoted in one. See figure 6.1.3.a In 75 of the articles there was no second actor.

**6.2 Qualitative part of the study**

This section will be divided into seven different categories according to the answers from the respondents: first a short presentation of the respondents, then the respondents answers about the audience, third: answers about Dalits as news, fourth: answers about the reporting fifth: answers about empowerment of the Dalits, sixth: answers about the Dalits’ voice in the newspapers and last answers about the Dalits representation in the newsrooms.

**6.2.1 The respondents**

Avani Verma*, Times of India (TOI):

- Writing was all I ever wanted to do.

Avani Verma has been working as a journalist for six years and she says that she always knew what she wanted to be.

* Not respondents real name
She feels really strongly about writing about people who do not often get their voice heard in mainstream media. Her main topics are hunger, poverty, caste, woman issues, human rights, agriculture and changes in rural India. She also runs a blog at TOI about these issues and she says that “it is a really geeky blog for people who are interested in these issues”.

**Subodh Ghildiyal, Times of India (TOI)**

When he was younger he wanted to be a soldier. But at university in Delhi he changed his mind and decided to become a journalist. He has been in the profession for 16 years and has been working for TOI for almost seven years. Subodh says that he is not liberal when it comes to news:

– *Many things that I find trivial and ridiculous are getting accepted as news now days.*

He mostly covers politics, but also writes about social justice, Dalit welfare and rural development.

**Vikas Singh, Times of India (TOI)**

Vikas Singh has been working as a journalist for 17 years and has been an editor at TOI for five years.

– *I guess most of us basically want our lives to be meaningful. Maybe I do not want to change the world, but I can do what I can. And if you can help by exposing corruption, through removing injustice then it’s good. And being a journalist may help a little bite more with that than being a banker.*

He also says that his answers in the interview are his personal views and not TOIs’ opinions.

**Kv Prasad, The Hindu (TH)**

He has been a journalist for a little over 25 years and has been working at TH for twelve years and he covers politics as a reporter. He comes from a family of journalists and has his dad and grandfather as inspirations in his work. As a journalist he wants to raise the level of consciousness among people by bringing important things to notice. He also means that it would be hard to leave TH because “it is one of the best newspapers in India.”

**Vidya Subramaniam, The Hindu (TH)**

She is deputy editor at TH and also works as a reporter. When she writes stories she mostly covers politics and minority affairs. She has been in the profession for 30 years and has been
working at TH for seven years. She became a journalist because she likes politics and writing “and in journalism you can do both”.

**Ajay Kapur**, Indian Express (IE)
– I always wanted to write, and because I was not capable of anything else I became a journalist.

He is an executive editor at IE and has been working as a journalist for 20 years. He loves his job and says that a good news story makes his day.
– India is a huge, vibrant diverse country. You will find stories everywhere.

**Seema Chishti, Indian Express (IE)**
– Oh god…I have been working as a journalist for 20 years. That is a long time!

She has been working at IE for six years and covers politics, identity issues such as Dalit issues and occasionally writes about culture and art. She worked for the BBC in London for several years, but then “came running back to India” because “there are no bad news days in this country.”

**Ravish Tewari, Indian Express (IE)**
He is an engineer by training, but after studying social policy at Oxford decided to become a journalist instead.
– I thought it would be better to be here in India to understand how social policy is being implemented, executed and planned. It is a much better hands on experience than reading in books at Oxford.

He writes about national politics and social policy issues and has been a journalist for six years.

**6.2.2 The audience**
TOI has a younger audience than the other two newspapers, but they all have a urban readership. Five out of eight respondents think that their target groups are interested in reading about Dalit issues, but only in certain areas. Two does not think they are interested, and one does not know.

Avani Verma (TOI) describes their audience as “hyper-urban”. She says that TOI has its focus on larger cities and a younger audience around 25-35 years and they are middle to

*Not respondents real name*
upper-middle class. She thinks that people are interest to read about Dalits, but not in all sections:

- *Our readers have big problems with TOI reporting on quotas for Dalits. Sympathy is easy to have, but when you have to do something about it, to take affirmative action, that disturbs the middle class feelings.*

Vikas Sing (TOI) says that their target audience is the elite and he does not think their audience is interested to read about Dalit issues since it is “*overwhelmingly a rural phenomenon. At least in the cities we are trying to make the caste system disappear*”.

Subodh Ghildiyal (TOI) also describes TOIs’ target group as the elite:

- *It is read by the urban. Youngsters. It is the leading newspaper and a trend setter.*

He means that he would like TOI to be read by a more rural audience but “*either they don’t know English or they are just too far away from the news centers to get the paper in time.*” He thinks that his audience is interested to read about the Dalits, but that the interest is two folded: first it is people that have a general concern for the Dalits, and secondly it is people who want to see their social adversity.

Vidya Subramaniam (TH) describes TH’s target group as “*middle to upper middle-class*”. She does not know for certain how interested people are in reading about Dalits but says that “*it is a group that normally will not be interested in it*” but means that TH writes about it anyway.

Kv Prasad (TH) says that TH is a very serious newspaper and that the paper is “*widely read in the establishment, the government and in by people overseas.*” He does not know how interested his target group is to read about Dalit issues.

Ajay Kapur (IE) says:

- *I would say that our target group is not young. Seventeen year olds in India do not pick up my paper. They are in their thirties, urban, socially aware and a very influential group of people. We do not trivial news, we are very serious, so I guess young people find us boring.*

Ajay Kapur also says that he does not care if their audience is interested to read about Dalit issues:

- *If I am constantly worried about what my readers want to read I will never be able to do what I want. The Indian urban, who is going to the mall every week, is he or she worried about Dalits? He may not be, but I should do my job.*

Seema Chishti (IE) also believes that their target group is slightly older and means that their readers “*are sort of news junkies, bureaucrats and academics.*” She also thinks that their audience is interested to read about Dalits if it is about something spectacular.
Ravish Tewari (IE) thinks that people who read IE are people that are interested in serious political debates.

— *It can be a student community, people on government level, business people, and bureaucrats*, he says.

He also thinks their audience is interested to read about Dalit oppression.

### 6.2.3 Dalits as news

Here almost all the interviewees responded the same way and the answers were no different between the papers.

According to the respondents the following makes Dalit issues into news stories: *violence, obvious discrimination, affirmative action, positive stories about Dalits who has made it as entrepreneurs and the caste factor in elections*. These are also the situations when you mention someone’s caste in an article.

All of the respondents also said that they were reporting more about Dalits and caste during the election.

Vikas Singh (TOI) says that they almost never mention someone’s caste in an article except when it comes to the stories mentioned above.

— *You can’t analyze the election in Uttar Pradesh without mentioning that Mayawati is a Dalit. But that is because she chose to play the Dalit card, not because we chose to*, he says.

Ravish Tewari (IE) says that:

— *Except for during the elections, you rarely see caste mentioned in articles. I mean people are voting in affiliation to their caste. We can’t keep our readers uninformed about that. We have to inform our readers.*

Subodh Ghildiyal says that when it comes to crimes that have a casteist motive you have to mention caste:

— *You have to make a distinction between a woman being killed as a ‘normal’ crime and a Dalit woman being killed or raped because she is a Dalit. Was she killed because of her caste? Because of prejudice? Because of casteist motivations?*

Vidya Subramaniam (TH) was the only one that said that they did not mentioned that Mayawati is a Dalit leader:

— *Why should we? What does it matter what caste you are?* Vidya says.

Kv Prasad (TH) said:

— *Someone’s caste does not have anything to do about what we are reporting, unless there is something specific to that event. Of course in Indian politics caste has a major role to play.*
But when we are reporting about the elections and are mentioning caste we do not make any value judgment. It is just for fact.

6.2.4 The reporting

– We do an excellent job. Excellent, because I cover the caste issues here. During six and a half years I have been reporting about sensitive issues that have not been taken very well by our readership. But I have never been told not to write those stories. - Subodh Ghildiyal (TOI)

Six out of the eight respondents think that their newspapers are doing a good job covering Dalit issues. The editor Vikas Singh (TOI) says that he thinks his newspaper “do a fare job” and that they try very hard in covering these issues.

Avani Verma (TOI) thinks that her newspaper should report more on longer processes than just incidents. She thinks it is important to put the caste issues in a larger context and not just report on crimes and elections.

– The Dalits lives have changed a lot in the last 15 years, and people do not remember what they had it like before, she says.

The journalists from TH mean that their reporting about Dalits is “better than a lot of other newspaper” but that they still could do a more intensive coverage. They also mean that they are a “fairly balanced newspaper” and that they often write about the oppressed.

All of the journalists from IE think they are doing a good job reporting about Dalits. Seema Chishti says that:

– IE has the finest reporting about caste. If I have a good story about caste my paper would pick it up, flash it and give it the eminence it deserves.

Five of the eight respondents said that caste is not a sensitive topic to write about. Two said it was sensitive and one said he did not know.

But all the respondents said that when they reported about caste they did it with sensitivity. Avani Verma at TOI says:

– Indians talk about caste all the time. If you travel and meet people everyone is very open to talk about their caste.

Ajay Kapur at IE says that “India is used to caste and it is a thing you can’t ignore.”

Kv Prasad at TH doesn’t either think it is a sensitive topic to cover, at least not for the TH or other large newspapers.
But if you are a small newspaper and exist in a village, he or she who has reported about it can come under attack. The bigger newspaper has more resources and protection. It all depends on who you are and where you are, Kv Prasad (TH) says.

Vikas Singh (TOI) says:
– I guess that when you have been abused for 5000 years you tend to get a little touchy about what people write about you. So we are sensitive in what we write.

6.2.5 Empowerment of the Dalits

All of the respondents thought that there is discrimination against Dalits in India and seven respondents thought that media can empower Dalits if they are written about in the media. Six out of eight respondents also thought that media can contribute to development in India.

– If you don’t write about the Dalits they don’t get highlighted. If there is a story about oppression against a Dalit village in Tamil Nadu and nobody writes about it in English. How will the world, the establishment, the government react? Nobody would react. Somebody needs to tell these stories because they do exist, Ajay Kapur at the IE says.

Subodh Ghildiyal (TOI) says:
– How do you ensure that people sitting in Delhi read about these people? Dalits are not our audiences’ kind of people and Dalits don’t have the education or the money power. So you have to give them a voice where decisions are taken and media can help with that.

Vikas Singh at (TOI) says:
– We can influence them and we can support them. We have constantly taken the stand that the Dalits need development and that they need to be more inclusive in society. I presume some people read it and I hope it that it influence them.

Avani Verma (TOI) says that yes they can be empowered if they are written about, but that they need to be a part of the mainstream media to a greater extent.

Ravish Kapur at IE means that the fact that they are getting heard gives them a sense of empowerment within themselves and that the Dalits need to feel that they are as strong as anybody else in the village. He also means that by highlighting these issues, they can create debate.

Kv Prasad at TH means that once a story about oppression is reported the government is forced to take action. He also gives examples of when the parliament actually had to do something because the media were reporting about a killing in a Dalit village.
6.2.6 The Dalits’ voice

All of the respondents found it to be important to incorporate ordinary people, such as the Dalits, in their articles. Some of the respondents developed their viewpoints on this. Vidya Subramaniam (TH) said that a real story only comes out if you go out on the field and talk to people:

– How would you write a story without talking to them?

Avana Verma from TOI said:

– If I was writing about a company and did not get the spokesperson from that company then you would be yelled at. That would not happen if you were writing about Dalits and did not quote a Dalit person.

6.2.7 Representation of Dalits in the newsroom

There are no Dalits working at the three newspapers studied, or if there are it is not possible to find out. All of the journalists thought that it is a problem that there are no Dalits workings as journalists at the English-language newspapers. Ravish Kapur (IE) said:

– In my team at the newspaper I don’t have Dalit reporter, and that’s sad…

All of the journalists also thought that Dalit issues would be highlighted more or at least in a different way if there were more Dalit journalists.

– I think it is only when we have a better representation of Dalits that we will be able to see what we have been missing all this time, said Seema Chishti (IE)

According to the answers the diversity in the newsroom was greater at IE than at the other newspapers. Here they worked with trying to get people from various different backgrounds.

It is interesting to compare the answers from the editor at TOI and the editor at IE about hiring:

– I think I can tell you for sure that if I have Dalit CV and an equally good CV from a non-Dalit I would perhaps bring in the Dalit, Ajay Kapur at IE says.

Vikas Singh at TOI, on the other hand, states that:

– Honestly, when I am sitting in an interview panel and someone walks in I am not going to think ‘oh he is a Dalit; I’m going to hire him.’ I don’t. I’m just looking for the best guy.
7. Discussion

The discussion will have its starting point in the research questions. The questions are discussed in the light of theories about development journalism, agenda setting and minorities in media and previous research from the chapter Theoretical framework.

7.1 How are the Dalits represented?

According to the theory about minorities in the media journalists write about ethnic minorities when it is about conflicts, drama, controversy and violence.98

Several articles were about Mayawati and the BSP and these articles were often connected to controversy. The elephant debate is an example of this. When the newspapers are reporting about affirmative action it is also often connected to some sort of controversy, since this is always a sensitive topic in India.

Since most of the articles about crime and rape were short there is no space to problematize why crimes against Dalits still are so common. It could be that Indians know why this is happening and that journalists do not want to inform their readers about something that they are already aware of. But since these are awful crimes, where people sometimes are murdered or get their hands cut off, maybe a debate is crucial.

The agenda setting theory means that if media focus on one issue, then the audience will find this important.99 Because of the election the Dalits were more represented in newspapers than they use to be. But Dalits’ issues are going on in India even when there is no election. According to the agenda setting theory the more attention a subject gets, the more important it gets for people.100 Because newspapers write more about caste during the election at least it gets into the audiences’ mind that this is still an important issue. But what happens when the election is over? Will the Dalits disappear from the newspapers? To get an answer more research is needed.

98 Cottle 2000: 21
99 Strömbäck 2004: 31
100 Coleman et al. in Hanitzsch 2009:147
7.2 How do the journalists find their reporting about Dalit issues?

7.2.1 Empowerment of the Dalits

The theory about development journalism states that journalists should empower the ordinary people and not the elite “to participate in human life and human development.” 101 Most journalists found this important, but how and if this is implemented is the interesting question.

According to this study it is the elite that have the voice in the newspapers. Journalism is not only reporting about other people, but to talk with them to get an accurate story. To tell someone else’s story interviews and meeting people is crucial. The most quoted people in the articles studied were politicians and experts, and Dalits are almost never interviewed. The theory about minorities in media states that in general minorities are quoted less in newspapers than elite groups102 and this was found in the articles studied.

Maybe if there were more Dalit reporters this would change. In previous research used in this thesis it is stated that if there were more Dalit reporters there would probably be more new about Dalits.103 More research is needed to give any clear results and maybe a brother discussion about the heterogeneous newsrooms in Delhi is needed.

It is hard for Dalits to get into the newsrooms, especially in the English-language press. The main reason is that millions of Dalits are extremely poor and still live in rural areas. There are plenty of obstacles in the way for them to get a proper education coming from that kind of background. It is clear that India is still a development country, where poor people need help. The fact that Dalits are still discriminated against does not make it easier. The solution to get more Dalits in the newsroom is not easy.

7.2.2 Whose agenda?

What becomes news has to do with what journalists find most relevant.104 Almost all journalists said that they had to inform their readers about how people voted with their caste affiliation. This is the way politics work in India.

Here politicians have power because they in some ways control how journalists report about caste. If journalists report about it in a proper way it is a good thing since Dalit issues are highlighted. But journalists should also be careful so that they not only report issues that

101 Ibid.
102 Van Dijk in Cottle 2000: 39
104 McQail 2006: 356
politicians want them to. The journalists should follow their own agenda and not the politicians.

Another way that journalists pick news is according to what the audience think is interesting.\textsuperscript{105} This concurs with the results from this study. Most respondents said that they thought that their target group was interested to read about Dalits. But many of them also said that they were only interested to read about them if it was about something spectacular. In this study several articles that include Dalits are spectacular. This concurs with the results found in both the quantitative and qualitative part.

If journalists want to empower and highlight Dalit issues maybe they should problematize some of these articles more and explain why some of these things still exists in India today. It is a fast developing country, but they still have several problems to solve.

7.2.3 News values

Theory states that when a journalist makes the news selection he/she does this because of certain news values.\textsuperscript{106} After studying the respondents’ answers from the interview it becomes clear that the reporting about Dalits has less to do with the newspapers policies, and more about the individuals and their own opinions and news values.

If the paper wants to highlight these things journalists who are interested and engaged are of great importance. Writing about Dalit issues is about taking your own initiatives and coming up with good stories about Dalits. Some reporters mentioned that they had almost never been told not to write something about Dalits when they had come up with a suggestion for a story.

To get Dalits interests carried in the newsroom papers need reporters with these news values. If newspapers want to report about Dalit issues and development they need reporters in the newsroom that find this central. Since Dalits themselves are not represented in the newsroom someone has to carry their interests.

7.3 Suggestions on further research

First: since this research was done during the time for an election it would be interesting to do the quantitative part of this study during another time period.

Second: the quantitative study was only done during 17 days, which is quite a short time. It would be interesting to research this during a longer period.

\textsuperscript{105} McQuail 2006: 356
\textsuperscript{106} McQail 2006: 359
Third: one limitation of this study is that it was done with English-language press. These newspapers do not have the same target group as Hindi-language press. It would be interesting to do research at the Hindi newspapers in India. Would the results differ?

The fourth suggestion is to make a more in depth study of who actually work in the newsrooms in Delhi. How diverse are the journalists’ backgrounds, and is this important for the news they produce? It was found that several journalists thought it was a problem that no Dalits were represented in the newsroom. India is an enormous country where people come from various backgrounds; hence it would be interesting to study how this reflects in the newsroom.

The fifth suggestion is to study how the newspapers hire their reporters. Do the editors find diversity in the newsroom to be important? What do they ask people at a job interview? By comparing the two different answers about hiring from IE and TOI (see 6.2.7) it would be an interesting thing to study more.

8. Conclusions

Three main conclusions were drawn from this study. Seven secondary conclusions will also be presented.

8.1 Main conclusions

1. The most quoted actors in the articles are the elite and not minorities. A Dalit was only quoted in eight articles and the most quoted actors were politicians and experts. Almost all the journalists thought that they could empower Dalits if they were written about and they also found it important to empower the Dalits. This is a paradox, since this was not found in the quantitative part of the study.

2. Five out of eight respondents thought they had very good reporting about Dalit issues, and two journalists were critical. This becomes a paradox when the answers are compared with the quantitative part of the study. Dalits are mentioned quite often, but the main subject of the articles is almost never Dalits and their situation in society.

3. All respondents in this research said that the reporting would change if there were more Dalit reporters. They would bring in a perspective in the newsrooms in Delhi. Today there are no Dalit reporters at Times of India, The Hindu or Indian express.
8.2 Secondary Conclusions

1. Both the quantitative part and the qualitative part of the results showed that the most articles about Dalits are about politics, crime and affirmative action. These three subjects often have a connection to sensation, and concur with theory about minorities.

2. The respondents said that they reported more about caste during the election than they did otherwise. This is the same results as in the quantitative part where two thirds of the articles had a connection to the election.

3. Indian Express was the only newspaper that said they were working actively to incorporate people with different backgrounds in their newsroom. Indian Express was also the newspaper that reported the most about the Dalits. This might have a correlation, but it is hard to tell since this is a small study.

4. There is little space to problematize caste violence, since most of these articles are short.

5. To sell, newspapers sometimes have to adapt to their audience and Times of India is the paper that does this the most. They also have the youngest readership and were the newspaper that had the least number of articles about Dalits. This might have a correlation, but it is hard to tell since this is a small study.

6. When media from other countries report about India, they sometimes use these three newspapers as their source. Therefor it is necessary for correspondents and foreign media to get knowledge about the issues presented above.

7. There is little research done on this subject and more research is needed.
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http://www.indiatimes.com/aboutus

9.3 Articles

9.4 Informant interview:
R. P Mamgain, the director of Indian Institute of Dalit Studies. (17/1-2012)

9.5 Respondent interviews
All the interviews with the respondents were recorded and transcribed and is available if someone wants to read or listen to them.

Avani Verma,* Times of India (26/1-2012)
Subodh Ghildiya, Times of India (1/2-2012)
Vikas Singh, Times of India (3/2-2012)
Kv Prasad, The Hindu (25/1-2012)
Vidya Subramaniam, The Hindu (29/1-2012)
Ajay Kapur,* Indian Express (19/2-2012)
Seema Chishti, Indian Express (20/2-2012)
Ravish Tewari, Indian Express (23/1-2012)

* Not respondents real name
Appendix

Minor Field Studies

Minor Field Studies (MFS) is a scholarship that will help Swedish students to do a minor field study in a development country. The purpose with MFS is to give students knowledge about development countries and development issues. It is also to encourage internationalization.

To get the scholarship your research questions needs to be related to development processes in the country you are going to visit. You have to stay in the country for 8-12 weeks to collect the data you need for the thesis. The essay needs to be written in English, French, Portuguese or Spanish and you need a contact person in both Sweden and the country you are going to visit.

The scholarship is for 25 000 Swedish crowns and is supposed to cover all the costs during the project. It is financed by the Swedish organization Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). Read more at http://www.programkontoret.se

My own experience of the research

I am not from India, but I have spent nine months in the country the last two years. I found it hard to come as an outsider and do research about something that is extremely rooted in Indian society. Some of the things discussed in this thesis may be obvious for Indians, but complicated for someone who comes from another country. This thesis is written in an Indian context but with a Swedish/outsider perspective. That is why I think it is important to know just a little bit about me and my relationship to India to understand the basis of this thesis.

For someone who has not grown up in India, where the caste system becomes a natural part of your life, it can be hard to understand how it works, and how people think about it.

Annie Namala, a Dalit activist, describes it in an article in the newspaper The Globe and Mail:

- As insiders we recognize the caste of the other person through surname, family and village connections, food habits, rituals and ceremonies and general enquiry into one’s family and background.107

By talking to several people I have done my best to get an overview of The Dalits situation and from my own perspective, this is what I have found interesting and relevant for my purpose and research questions.

I would also like to add that it can be an advantage to be an outsider. It might be possible to see things from a different perspective that might not be obvious for an insider.

**Code book**

V1. Article ID

V2: Date of coding

V3 Date of publishing

V4 What newspaper?
   1. Times of India
   2. The Hindu
   3. Indian Express

V5 What section in the newspaper is the article in?
   1. Domestic
   2. International
   3. Column (opinion)
   4. The newspapers opinion
   5. Letter to editor
   6. Book review

V6 What is the main subject of the article?
   1. The election (in Uttar Pradesh and Punjab)
   2. BSP and Mayawati
   3. Health care
   4. Crime against Dalits
   5. Rape against a Dalit woman/girl
   6. Crime committed by a Dalit
   7. Caste issues (such as marriage between castes)
   8. Food issues (such as hunger, farming, food)
   9. Quotas
   10. Education
   11. Gender issues
   12. Economy
   13. Dalit studies
   14. Dalit/Indian history
   15. Other crimes
   16. Martin Luther King
   17. Awards
   18. Land conversion
   19. Dalit villages

V7 How important are the Dalits for the article?
   1. Very important. Without Dalits there would be no article.
   2. Important. The Dalits are mentioned more than once and are a part of the article.
   3. Not important. The Dalits are only mentioned in the article. The main subject of the article would not change if the Dalits were not mentioned.

V8 Is the article on the first page?
   1. No, only inside the paper
   2. Yes, only on the first page
   3. Yes, and continues inside the paper
V9 Have the journalist been talking to a Dalit in the article?
1. No
2. Yes, Mayawati
3. Yes

V10 Extent of text
1. Short – not more than 170 words
2. Medium – 171 – 450 words
3. Long – more than 450 words

V11 What word does the journalist use for the Dalit’s?
1. Dalit
2. Scheduled caste
3. Untouchable

V12 Who is quoted in the article? First actor.
1. Politician from the BSP (including Mayawati)
2. Politician from other party
3. The police
4. A Dalit as a private person
5. A Dalit politician (not Mayawati)
6. A private person
7. An NGO
8. An expert
9. A religious group
10. Other
11. None
12. A representative for a company
13. A representative for the Dalit community

V13 Who is quoted in the article? Second actor.
Same as V12.

V14. Is the article connected to the election?
1. Yes. The article would probably not have been in the newspaper if it was not for the election.
2. No. The article would probably have been in the paper even if there was no election.

Questionnaire

Personal questions
1. How long have you been working as a journalist?
2. How long have you been working at this newspaper?
3. Why did you become a journalist?
4. What aim do you have with your journalism?
5. What kind of topics do you write most about?

About the paper and the audience
6. Does your newspaper have any political stand points?
7. How would you describe your target group/ your audience?
8. When do you have most contact with your readers? When do they call/write to you? Any specific subjects that engages your readers more than others?
9. How interested do you think that your audience is to read about the Dalits?
10. Do you think you can influence your audience about how they see the Dalits? How?
Caste
11. Do you think that there is discrimination against Dalit’s in India?
12. Do you write about it?
13. At what occasions do you mention someone’s caste in an article?
14. What does it take to make something about caste/the Dalits news?
15. Is this a sensitive topic to write about?
16. Do you have any polices when it comes to write about caste?
17. How do you feel about the way your newspaper report about caste issues in India?
18. Do you have discussions in the newsroom about reporting about Dalits or caste issues?
19. What is the most important thing to think about when you report about the Dalits? (or caste issues)
20. Does lobbyists or other people who have interests in caste issues affect your reporting?
21. How does your newspaper reflect the social reality?

Development questions
22. How do you think the media in India contributes to development in India? (i.e. raising political issues and contributing to change.)
23. Does your newspaper mostly report on day-today news or do you sometimes focus on long term development processes? If you do, in what kind of subjects?
24. Do you often make interviews with “ordinary” Dalits when you write about them? Or do you mostly interview someone who represents them?
25. Do you think it can empower marginalized groups, such as the Dalits, if they are written about in the media? In what way?

Representation in the newsroom
26. How do you think the reporting about the Dalits would change if there were more Dalit journalists?
27. Are there any Dalits workings as journalists at this newspaper?
## Coded Articles

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