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Agenda setting function: A special reference to reservation in promotion case

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Abstract

This paper examines the role of media in agenda setting function in reference to the reservation in promotion case. A bill was presented by the UPA 2 government in the parliament. How 4 Indian National dailies dealt with the issue while covering the issue. It is observed that all the four national dailies trivialize or ignored the issue. As the issue is pertaining to the SC and ST and their claims that they are not in adequate numbers in the public sector employment. The data is collected for the quantitative and qualitative analysis.

Keywords: Agenda setting, UPA, DJ (Dainik Jagran) DB (Dainik Bhaskar)

Introduction

Media researchers found that there is intangible relationship between what people read, watch and heard and how they use that information. With the development of measuring the relationship between audience and media inspired some scholars to theorize the concept which tells that media not only inform us but also filters the information in such a way that we consider it as important as importance assign by media. No doubt media create an agenda for our attention and played a very important role for influencing audience in varying degree. When the given priority to any issue or event becomes the priority of the public is known as agenda setting function of the media. Even researchers found that dependency over media of the individual, society increases the chances of agenda setting function. It will depend the media that how the issue or event got emphasized.

Agenda setting function requires a scientific qualitative and quantitative investigation. It has taken 40 years to come to this stage that agenda setting research has contributed a lot in increasing how media formed public opinion and influence the public as accorded to media. But in Indian context there has been scarcity of agenda setting research. There are few studies which try to assess the relationship between the media system and the public.

The current study is another effort in this field.

How agenda setting came into force depends upon the news, a process of converting events or issues into news. The processed items become the foundation on which the agenda setting and public opinion research stands.

Objective of the study

The current study aims to focus on the role of four national dailies in agenda-setting function while covering the Reservation in Promotion, when the then government presented bill in parliament to give the benefit of reservation in Promotion in 2012.

Research Design

While studying the media content, the content analysis method is employed. The study is conducted on four national dailies, two from Hindi, and two from English. The period for conducting the study is one-month of continuous coverage of each daily from the date of happening of said event. The researcher has studied 9 variables which are as under:

1. Total column.
2. Editorial.
3. Placements on 1st page.
4. Placements on 2nd page.

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5. Treatment as 1st lead.
6. Treatment as 2nd lead.
7. Anchor stories.
8. Letter to Editor.
9. Article published.

Table 1: Showing the coverage of Reservation in Promotion case in four national dailies

	The Hindu	TOI	DB	DJ
Total columns	3	8	2	10
Editorials	2	2	0	01
Placement 1 st Page	0	1	2	0
Placement 2 nd Page	1	0	0	0
Treatment 1 st Lead	0	0	0	0
Treatment 2 nd Lead	0	0	0	0
Anchor Stories	0	0	0	0
Letters to Editor	10	10	0	20
Articles	0	0	0	0

Data analysis and interpretation

Total columns: when it comes to count the numbers of column published regarding the said issue, the data clearly shows that Indian media trivialize the issue by giving lesser space. Dainik Jagran published 10 during a tenure of one month followed by TOI 8, The Hindu 3 and the DB had given only 2 columns story.

Editorials

Editorials reflect the policy of any media house, likewise the opinion page reflects the opinion of any individual. None of the newspaper covered this issue in balanced way. The Hindu and TOI each published 2 editorials, followed by DJ 1, whereas DB did not consider worth to publish a single editorial in this regard. The interesting thing was that all the editorials were against the constitutional scheme of reservation. Even the said newspapers targeted the whole reservation while the matter was being taken in parliament for passing a bill regarding promotional cases.

Placement on 1st page

As the data shows, Dainik Bhaskar published only 2 news stories on the 1st page followed TOI 1, whereas DJ and The Hindu had given no space on the front page.

Placement on 2nd page

As per the data shown in the table only 1 news appeared on the second page in The Hindu, whereas rest of the newspapers given no space on the 2nd page.

Treatment as 1st Lead

The table indicates that all four national dailies did not consider this issue to publish as 1st lead.

Treatment as 2nd Lead

The Times of India, The Hindu, Dainik Bhaskar and Dainik Jagran given no space as 2nd lead to this issue.

Anchor Stories

The table given above indicates the data about Anchor stories. In print media context Anchor stories have special importance as they appeared in boxes, that catches attention. But the all the newspapers have no stories about the reservation in promotion.

Letters to Editor

The data in the table quite interesting that except DB, rest three newspapers have received letters to editor. DJ

published 20 followed by The Hindu and TOI each 10. All the letters to editor published about the said issue were against the reservation in promotion. Most of them were ill informed and prejudiced towards the reservation policy.

Articles

Although articles considered personal opinion. They too carry at least inclination towards any ideology. Either favoring or opposing to any event/issue, a flow of information affects the people's perception. No article has been published regarding the said issue.

Conclusion

The policy of reservation has been debatable issue since its starting. There might be some flaws in its delivery and application. But no one can deny the change and fruits it brought about. As the media have the pivotal role in changing people's minds and narratives. If media play its role as desired it can bring positive changes in the society. Its not happening as far as concern to this debate. Indian media be it Electronic, Print and social media have always been critique towards the entire affirmative action. From reporters to Editors, most of the media person belongs to so called upper caste. When they got position in media house, their social location and its influence rush with them. There are visible facts which provide objective knowledge about their biased opinion. An issue which affects nearly 23% population of the country, hardly matters to the Indian media. For example, 40 letters to editor have been selected by the editorial staff but none of them positive towards reservation in promotion. All four newspapers have given space only 23 columns in one month coverage. Not even a single news story appeared as 1st lead in any of them. Editorials were much about the meritocracy not about the need of adequate representation. So, we can draw result by this study that media alters people's minds and public narratives in negative way when it comes to give factual, objective and meaningful information. Indian media have long been failed while delivering social justice through information flow.

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