

## **Media Research Beyond Bollywood Some Thoughts on a Systematic Media Perspective in India-related Research**

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For many years, research on films from India has trailed behind the global success of Indian cinema. But now academia – and by academia I mean far more than just the centres for South Asian studies – has also discovered Bollywood and made it into a favourite new subject. As long as this does not lead to Indian cinema being sweepingly equated with Hindi cinema from Mumbai, but brings about an increasing awareness of and interest in what can be discovered and studied in the widely diverse Indian film scene beyond Bollywood, this is a very welcome development. Yet how do things stand with regard to research on all the other ‘old’ and ‘new’ media? These have been booming to such an extent in recent years in India that media development itself can be viewed as a crucial driving force of the new Indian “economic miracle”. An enormous rift becomes obvious here, especially if one considers how little has been published hitherto about the country’s press, for example, which continues to flourish in all languages spoken in India, or about the radio, which experienced the relaxation of state control not long ago. Also, how sensible is it for media-related research to continue to focus largely on individual media, given today’s increasing media convergence and cross-media communication? And finally, what is the social science stance as regards processes of social change that are closely linked with the accelerated increase of mediated communication, a new field of research which has rapidly gained acceptance within the framework of Media and Communication studies?

These are the three questions I will look into in this article, doing so in two stages: in the first stage I will briefly show why the medialization approach seems suitable for regional (and, in this case, for India-related) media research, and which research perspectives based on this approach are currently being opened up. In the second stage I will try to make the connection to one of the most elementary questions in Area studies, namely the question about the conditions for the production, appropriation, and

dissemination of knowledge on non-European regions. The reasons why a systematic media perspective is also relevant here can be explained with respect to the connection and interaction between the circulation of current images of India in the media (which are increasingly co-created by Indian players too) and the recent production of knowledge on India (in both academic and non-academic contexts, e.g. company research units). I believe that this is a topic of particular relevance to India-related research that should receive more attention in the near future, not least in order to comprehend why recently, especially in politically focused discussions, India's so-called "soft power" or "global media power" have come into focus and what these designations really mean.<sup>1</sup>

### **Focus on medialization, not (just) on the media**

The terms medialization and mediatization<sup>2</sup> have become key terms of a new orientation in the disciplines of media and communication studies. Instead of concentrating on the "effects" and/or the impact of the media, the focus of interest is now increasingly being placed on processes of social change, within which technical communication media are ascribed a central role (Krotz 2003; 2007). These two terms are sometimes used virtually synonymously, but also often differentiated depending on what is considered to be the subject of media and communication studies, which definitions of media and communication are used as a basis, and, consequently, which media are included in the discussion (Krotz/Stöber 2008; Meyen 2009).

In terms of a distinct media perspective within the scope of Area and Asian studies, adopting one or both of the terms medialization/mediatization as an approach is undoubtedly not without its problems, since they are both subject to an ongoing inner-disciplinary discussion among media and communication experts. How the outcome of this discussion can be made productive for our context here will have to be identified by means of con-

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<sup>1</sup> Mainly in the anglophone countries the belief that this is a particularly relevant area of research has gained acceptance. On an institutional level this is reflected by the recent establishment of an India Media Centre at the University of Westminster. In Germany, the Institute for Asian and African Studies, Humboldt University Berlin set up the cross-section "Medialität und Intermedialität in den Gesellschaften Asiens und Afrikas" (Mediality and intermediality in the societies of Asia and Africa) in 2009.

<sup>2</sup> For the purpose of a comprehensive meta-process, Krotz and Hepp in the German-speaking world (and increasingly also in the anglophone domain) have coined the term "mediatization" to describe the long-term process of the increasing omnipresence of the media and the global proliferation of technology-based communication media across the various social and cultural fields (cf. Hartmann/Hepp 2010; Krotz 2007).

crete research projects and theory-oriented debate in the years to come. Yet the potential of an epistemological framework based on a medialization approach appears to be great already, also for non-European regions and societal contexts. For a start, on a very fundamental level, it strengthens a media perspective that does not concentrate exclusively on the changes in communication technology over the last 20 or 30 years, but also takes into account the specific historical prerequisites and the local socio-cultural, political, and economic circumstances when observing contemporary and present-day developments. This historical perspective needs to be taken into consideration in order to make well-founded statements about processes to be examined in association with the interaction and close connection between developments in the media and social change. Recent research projects clearly demonstrate that social change never originates from the media or technical innovations exclusively, as had been long assumed; rather, it depends largely on how people adopt media technologies, on the media practices they develop, and on how they integrate these into their everyday life. That is why Dorothea Schulz, at a recent conference on the subject of “Medialization and transcultural communication in Islamic and Area studies”, made a case for a regionally embedded media research as well as for the study of *media-related processes* instead of the media themselves, as the types of sociability and communication practices greatly influence how media are used (cf. Schulz 2007; Schneider/Gräf 2010). At the same time attention must be given to the respective economic, legal, and political structures, as well as to the type of social processes that preceded the change of habits in communication and thus enabled it in the first place.

What also needs to be taken into account is that medialization processes and social change occur at different speeds and with varying degrees of transformational power around the world. The quasi-teleological explanations that have long dominated are, however, rather problematic, as they always carry the risk of an unreflective replication of dichotomous categories and culturalistic modernization and development theories (cf. Meyen 2009). A functionalist view of the media that regards them either as bringers of “modernization” and “development”, as has long prevailed with regard to post-colonial societies in Asia and Africa, or sweepingly blames them for their “cultural uprootedness”, increasing “westernization”, and growing consumerism of the younger generation is today rightfully criticized as being too restricted.

Schneider and Gräf (2011) view the “medialization” approach as open-ended, for it should not determine which direction global media developments and their associated changes in communication practices will take. It is quite possible that an accelerated medialization and the transnational and

transcultural dynamics of media developments, which Hepp describes as “moulding forces of the media”, could lead to an increased “individualization”, “deterritorialization”, and “immediacy” (cf. Hepp/Hjarvard/Lundby 2010). Yet this is by no means certain, for processes of medialization can also promote seemingly contrasting tendencies, especially with respect to the new forms of collective imagination and to the clearly observable reterritorialization trends. Tendencies that go both ways, though they may seem contradictory at first glance, are closely interlinked and can be observed quite clearly in the rapidly expanding Indian online marriage market, which Fritzi-Marie Titzmann in her article presents as a new area of research particularly relevant for studying the connection between medialization and socio-cultural change. On the one hand her article looks at the changes in the perception of concepts like love, family, and marriage among India’s young generation. On the other hand she demonstrates how the reflexive influence of media technologies and acquired media skills becomes concrete in a way that one could describe as practised intermediality or transmediality via links of matrimonial websites to other communication media or non-internet practices. With respect to these new media configurations and practices, there is one medium that plays a key role in India, a medium considered by many to belong to a past era: the press.

While the print media in the United States and Europe have been in a perceived crisis for years (see Meyer 2004) and are struggling to assert themselves as leading media against the internet and television, in India and China newspapers and magazines have been experiencing such a boom during the last three decades that the two countries together currently constitute the largest market for print media worldwide (cf. Thussu 2009). With regard to India, Robin Jeffrey in his groundbreaking monograph has coined the term “India’s newspaper revolution” to describe this phenomenon (Jeffrey 2000), referring above all to the wholly unexpected upswing of the Indian- and regional-language press since the late 1970s. This revolutionary growth also includes the country’s English-language newspapers, however, which means that India is currently also seen as a major future market for English-language publications from the United States and Europe.

Hence it is surprising that academic involvement in this area of research is still rather limited. From the various reasons I consider responsible for this lack of interest I would like to focus on three: firstly, the notion that the press is an elitist and predominantly urban medium stubbornly persists, underlined in statements like: “in a country like India with its high percentage of illiterates there is little chance of the press ever becoming an actual mass medium” (see for example Singhal/Rogers 2001: 54 or Sharma 1998: 264). Secondly, there exists the deeply rooted belief that the pre-

viously existing communication dynamics and contexts are suddenly fundamentally transformed by media like the television or, nowadays, the internet, and that, consequently, the “old” media will be reduced to a more or less functional status or superseded altogether. Terms like “the Gutenberg era”, “the post-Gutenberg era”, “the golden age of television”, “the information age”, or “the digital age” are examples of the prevailing assumption that the advent of new media marks the beginning of a new era in history (cf. Rajagopal 2009). Accordingly, the press is regarded as an antiquated medium – more relevant to the science of history than to topical research. Thirdly, it still seems to be the case that media-related research on India is primarily concerned with individual media – currently above all with audiovisual and digital media – and only to a much lesser extent with communication contexts and a media system that is shaped by a growing inter- or crossmediality and media convergence (see also Schneider/Gräf 2011).

### **Restructuring of the press in a converging media environment**

According to Gaye Tuchman (2002) one can discern two different strategies employed by the press worldwide in an attempt to assert itself against the electronic media: firstly, imitation of such media, particularly television, and, secondly, opposition. Both these strategies are clearly recognizable in the latest developments in India’s media system. However, the attention of media critics is for the most part directed to the first strategy, adaptation to the age of television – they unanimously deplore the journalistic loss of quality and the tabloidization of the Indian press. In contrast, the second strategy, particularly with regard to India, has received very little attention. At any rate, several of the country’s newspaper proprietors specifically argue that, in an era of super-fast communication of news, any understanding of political issues and contexts is lost.<sup>3</sup> They have now found alternatives, mainly in magazine format, which counteract the “breaking news” principle with detailed and critical in-depth reports. In this way they emphatically demonstrate the ability of print media to offer far more depth and sophistication than the television’s “headline service”. And although India’s magazine market has shrunk again after the great upsurge of the 1990s, numerous political news magazines have been launched in recent years, often in a local or regional context, many of which are ambitious and

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<sup>3</sup> See for example the statements of *Hard News* (retrieved from <http://www.hardnewsmedia.com/aboutus>, 18.01.2010), *Tehelka* (retrieved from <http://www.tehelka.com/about/>, 18.01.2010) or *The Little Magazine* (retrieved from <http://www.littlemag.com/about/about.html>, 18.01.2010).

avowedly refuse to make any concessions to the entertainment or infotainment factor.

Both strategies are therefore indicators of the print media's attempts to reform in the face of the growing presence of digital and electronic media. The establishment of online editions is vital for this process, as these are not merely conversions of printed paper into a digital format, but have become a new intermedial form that, though closely tied to the printed version, promotes and brings to the fore the aspect of interactivity.

However, Indian newspaper publishers are not only *re-acting* to the mounting success of audiovisual media. Publishers have in many cases become pioneers of newly emerging media sectors. This enables them to exert influence on the moulding of new media forms and, at the same time, to ensure the embedding of manifold cross-connections and overlaps, especially between the two media formats of press and television (see also Schneider 2005: 1–77). It is therefore not surprising that some of the best-known Indian journalists appear on television as anchors and editors of political talk shows. The transcripts of interviews conducted during these programmes are then often published either in the printed or in the online edition of the newspaper that belongs to the same company. In this way a form of interview hitherto specific to audiovisual media becomes “compatible” for other types of reception. At the same time the internet users/viewers/newspaper readers are made aware of the other two media formats and thus encouraged to use a combination of these formats as they please. Accordingly, media content becomes more and more adaptable, or even “recyclable”, within a media company rooted in several sectors, while differentiation becomes primarily a matter of reception possibilities. In this context, the significance of the terms convergence and inter- or crossmediality is, above all, that public and political discourse takes place in an ever-dwindling number of interdependent channels (cf. Rajagopal 1994: 1660).

Hence, medialization in the Indian context basically means that more people than ever before are included in public discourse, even though this discourse is pervaded by advertisements and PR messages and it can be assumed that it is commercialized to a greater or lesser extent (cf. Jeffrey 2000: 75ff.). Furthermore we are confronted with an unprecedented contemporaneity, with both the “old” and the “new” media booming simultaneously in India, which has among other things led to an increasingly integrated media system – both horizontally and vertically – due to legal ambiguities and the ownership structures of Indian media corporations (cf. Schneider 2005: 15–30). Accordingly, this wider context needs to be taken into consideration when conducting any media-related research, even when deals with one particular medium, such as the press. In the case of India's

press this also means that our perception of it must be of a highly differentiated medium, the printed format of which “functions” differently from the online edition, and which cannot be considered separate from other media forms and, above all, from the intermediate spheres outlined above.

### **Media images of India, nation branding and the new production of knowledge about India in the German-speaking world**

*Die Zeit*: In 2006, Germany saw a real India hype with Bollywood on every TV channel, the Hanover fair and the Frankfurt Book fair [...]. Was this compression of events a large-scale plan?

*Meera Shankar*: I would say a mix of strategy and chance. In any case, this year was a milestone for German-Indian relations. (“Sehen wir in Indien nur Klischees”, *Die Zeit*, December 15, 2006).<sup>4</sup>

In the context of the discussion on the cultural consequences of globalization, Tomlinson, Hall and Appadurai have argued that the new “global cultural economy” of the present and the near future can no longer be viewed in terms of centre-periphery models, as has long been the case, even though several centres and peripheries have been anticipated (Appadurai 1996; 1998). Rather, they are being replaced by a complex, overlapping, and disjunctive order, or, as Tomlinson puts it, a “complex array of interconnectivities and interactivities” (Tomlinson 2002: 151). Accordingly, the image of a decentralized network in which power is divided rather than concentrated, and in which distribution structures are unstable and changeable, describes the present situation better than the concept of firmly established global hegemonic centres with concentrated economic and cultural power (ibid.). The imaginative resources of lived, local experiences are increasingly influenced by the effects of deterritorialization, which Appadurai describes as one of the central forces of the modern world. As a process in which money, commodities, and persons are engaged in ceaselessly chasing each other around the world, this deterritorialization is in turn the fertile ground on which haphazard fantasies of entire groups of people thrive (Appadurai 1996: 25). Along with the spatial, Hall also underlines the temporal dimension of this process, speaking of an unprecedented “space-time compression”, whose new “nervous systems” he identifies in the communication media (Hall 2002: 95f.). They truncate the speed at which images travel, the distances across which commodities can be assembled,

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<sup>4</sup> Between 2005 and 2009, Meera Shankar served as India’s ambassador to Germany. At present, she is India’s ambassador to the United States of America.

the rate at which profits can be realized or lost (reducing the so-called turn-over time of capital). This “information revolution” in turn generates the transformation of global relationships: “Whether we like it or not, the new forces and relations this process has set in motion are unravelling many of the patterns and traditions of the past” (Tomlinson 2002: 98).

One question that could be posed at this point is whether India’s ever increasing “news value” and the concurrently changing image of India in the “West” can be viewed equally as an expression *and* a motor of a fundamental transformation in the relations between India and “Western” countries. Until recently the prevailing images of India were largely the result of orientalist research, or, more generally, of production of knowledge and “cultural translation” in the context of a highly unequal power relation between the colonial powers, or “Western industrialized nations”, and the colony, or the “Asian developing country”, of India (see Bhatti 1997: 3–17). Consequently, an assessment of the participation and influence India has on its representation in the media as well as on the production of knowledge in general can provide an insight into the existing “power relation”.

An important clue is here provided by India’s recent image politics, which has for the first time been consistently pursued with an eye to presenting and promoting the country in the Western media as an up-and-coming economic and political superpower. And since this strategy seems to coincide with a leap in India-related news items and reports, one could deduce that these representations in the media are not unidirectional, i.e. not “about” India, but that certain players in India are at least involved. At the same time it is clear that the new image of India in the “West”, in other words the change in the country’s image abroad, is closely followed and discussed in the public sphere of India’s media.

### **Old and new images of India**

In spite of the scarcity of systematic empirical studies on the change of India’s image in the media during the last two decades, there is much to suggest that this change has been profound as can be seen in India’s rapidly increased news value.<sup>5</sup> Like many of the so-called “developing countries”, India rarely found its way into the Western media in previous decades, and then mainly due to “wars, crises, and disasters” (Reljić 2001: 68f.). It was all the more surprising when the testing of nuclear weapons in 1998 unveiled India’s global political and economic ambitions. From an Indian per-

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<sup>5</sup> This assumption is based on the analysis of random samples of India-related articles in print and online editions, mainly from *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Der Spiegel*, *Stern*, and *Die Zeit* (between 2000 and 2006).



spective, it has repeatedly been stressed that the controversial tests have yielded the country more clout on the global stage than any “success story” from “the world’s largest democracy”, a statement that seems to be corroborated not least by the bilateral Indo-U.S. nuclear deal of 2006. The fact that this key event initially caused obvious irritation rather than an instantaneous shift in the perception of India can be explained partly by the continued existence of stereotyped images of India (see in this respect DeZoysa 1997: 19–41) and the deep-rooted perception patterns of “developing countries” in Europe (Gautier 2000), but also by the so-called Sinocentrism, that is the focussing on China to the disadvantage of India, which according to Jaffrelot is also very pronounced in Germany (Jaffrelot 2006: 3f.). In this context one cannot but think of the visual presentations in the style of “magical oriental India” which have been present for some years in the “Incredible India!” tourism campaign, and have successfully contributed to the increase of the numbers of visitors to the country.

However, it is often pointed out in this discussion that India, in comparison to China, has kept a low profile for many years with regard to its lobbying in Europe and its “image building” as an emerging country, let alone as an “emerging economic superpower” (ibid). A key reason for this is India’s aspiration to economic autarchy, which can in turn be explained by the country’s postcolonial situation. Unlike China, and despite India’s economic liberalization during the 1980s and early 1990s, attracting large-scale foreign direct investment (FDI) was never among the top priorities of any of the successive Indian governments. Rather, they endeavoured to strengthen their local enterprises (Restall 2006: 12ff.; Huang 2006: 31ff.). Accordingly, FDI was long considered in Indian public discourse as an attempt by Western countries to re-colonize India, culturally and economically. The heated debates over this issue continued throughout the 1990s and into the new millennium, with the reverberations still being felt today – most recently in connection with the new statutory regulations (2004) on foreign investment in media companies, especially in the booming press sector (Sonwalkar 2002; Schneider 2005).

In the meantime, and in the course of the discussion over a “lower-growth Europe”, a new type of fascination with India manifested itself when the obsession with growth rates, BCIs (Business Competitiveness Index), GCIs (Global Competitiveness Index), and other numerical values that indicate the “performance” of a country gripped the globe. “India Inc.” or, in the comparative perspective of the two Asian “rising giants”, “Chindia” are the key terms in this context, paradigmatically expressing the high degree of economization in India’s self-image and also in its external perception (Restall 2006: 12ff.). This new image does not preclude the fact that

“orientalizing” clichés continue to exist, or are even revived, as the cover page of the *Time* magazine’s European edition published on July 3, 2006 demonstrates. On it, we see a very “traditional” looking Indian woman wearing one of the essential symbols of “India Inc.,” the headset – an indispensable accessory of the employees in India’s many call centres. This image suggests something that continues to underlie the economized perception of India, despite all efforts towards creating a new awareness of multiple modernities in non-European regions, namely the notion of a bipolar area of tension between tradition and modernity, which allegedly still persists in India.

Along with the praise India has been increasingly receiving in the German media in recent years for its economic development and the “enormous potential”, a growing feeling of threat is also becoming apparent. For example, on April 20, 2006 the weekly *Die Zeit*, after having addressed the “threat” to Europe due to the growing global significance of China and India in its previous editions, featured on its cover page the headline “Attack from Asia. How the two largest countries in the world pose a challenge to us”. The illustration that accompanied this lurid headline consisted of a globe in front of a fiery-red background encircled by a dragon and a tiger ready to pounce merging head to tail.

These vague fears of an “Asian threat” were articulated for the first time in the Christian Democratic Party’s (CDU) election campaign slogan “Kinder statt Inder” (children instead of Indians) on the occasion of the green card initiative of the German government in power at that time (Goel 2000: 11–16), and later in the widespread fear of mass job losses following the relocation of production and service facilities to India. Another relevant issue, the global “environmental hazard” as a result of the growing energy demands of China and India gained such significance, especially in 2006, that something like a new topos started to take shape. Headlines like: “Hunger for energy banishes ecology – India’s need for new resources exploits the environment” (*Das Parlament*, No. 32/33, August 7–14, 2006, p. 1; see Kessler 2006) were commonplace.

### **Branding the Nation – Creating “Brand India”**

The persistence of a view of India that is reduced to stereotypes has long been criticized by Indian intellectuals; in political and financial circles it is also seen as a major obstacle for the progression of the country in the global arena. Particularly in the context of EU-India relations, it has repeatedly been pointed out that cliché-loaded images of India still shape the disposition of many European players toward their Indian negotiating partners and thus concretely affect the arrangement of bilateral and multilateral agree-

ments, not least during the negotiations over an EU-India free trade agreement (cf. Jaffrelot 2006; Eberhardt 2010). In this context, the “patriarchal demeanour of the European Union” has been criticized and interpreted by some as an expression of a “still existing colonial mentality”, which in turn has provoked obvious resentment on the Indian side (Jaffrelot 2006: 4). Moreover, there have been complaints of a serious lack of knowledge about India, especially with respect to the material currently sold in Europe purportedly offering information about the “new” India – mainly in the form of handbooks on intercultural management.

Against this backdrop, the Indian government launched the official image campaign “Brand India” in 2004, which is backed by a broad alliance between the Indian Department of Trade and Commerce, the Confederation of Indian Industry and media corporations, as well as Indian enterprises based overseas. The idea behind “Brand India”, however, is much more than a mere image campaign. The image projected of a strong, ambitious India, of a country capable of coping with its specific problems and mastering its challenges, demands a coordinated use of its powers of persuasion not only for the outside world, but also inwardly (as is the case with any strategic communication and PR work). The idea of building a national brand should also be actively supported by Indian society and, above all, become an integral part of the self-image of as many Indians as possible.<sup>6</sup>

At the same time the large number of non-resident Indians (NRIs) and persons of Indian origin (PIOs) should have a key role in promoting the Indian nation as a brand, as it is first and foremost they who shall become active mediators and advocates of a positive image of India, as well as disseminate the “Indian success story” over the world. With particular regard to the Indian migrants and their descendants, the transnational image politics ties in seamlessly with the politics of mobilization of the so-called

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<sup>6</sup> Marketing advisor Simon Anholt has become the leading expert for nation branding strategies worldwide. He has taken his “Nation Branding Masterclasses” seminar around the globe, including Asia and the Middle East. The seminar is designed to “give government policy-makers, city and regional authorities, foreign direct investment professionals, trade bodies, tourist authorities, export promoters, NGOs, brand marketers and agencies – indeed anyone connected with the health of a national brand – the opportunity to learn the tools to help create outstanding reputations and economic success” (retrieved from: <http://www.nationbranding-events.com>). At the same time his company regularly issues indices, such as the Nation Brands Index, with the aid of which the success of relevant campaigns can be evaluated and compared, a helpful tool as well as a challenge, especially in the hands of PR professionals. Nation Branding, Public Diplomacy, or “soft power”, a political science term coined by Joseph S. Nye Jr., are all concepts which are being discussed more and more all over the world and have become the subject of numerous recent publications.

diaspora that both the Indian government and economy have been pursuing ever since the early 1990s.

The “Brand India” campaigns concentrate on a different geographical location every year, for which the Indian communication strategists develop and plan a specific programme. In 2006 the target was Western Europe and in particular Germany, where India attracted great media interest with several highlights at the Hanover Trade Fair and the Frankfurt Book Fair, a success which can doubtless partly be attributed to the strategic communication planning in India.

A series of carefully choreographed presentations spread over the whole year (including the Leipzig Fair, the Hanover Fair, the Biennale in Bonn, and the Frankfurt Book Fair) ensured that in 2006 India’s news value for the German-language media was constant. Less high-profile but just as important were the numerous conferences and congresses that focused on the bilateral interests of Germany and India, predominantly on economic, science, and technology issues. Parallel to these, and particularly in the technology sector, the demand for “application-oriented knowledge” about India and the training opportunities offered by business consulting firms have risen rapidly.<sup>7</sup>

Naturally, India’s media follow with great interest the image-boosting politics of the country’s political and economic leaders as well as the radical changes in its perception in Europe. As Jaffrelot remarks, a historically-conditioned resentment towards the former colonial powers is clearly evident in some of the reports, occasionally manifesting itself in a certain gratification about “Europe’s stagnation” (Jaffrelot 2006: 3ff.). However, I would argue that the internal analysis of the rapidly growing significance of the country in world politics and its role as a “global player” can hardly be reduced to an unsympathetic stance and “contempt” for Europe which is supposed to exist among “a substantial part of India’s elite”.

An interesting aspect during my research in 2006, particularly in respect of the new labels such as “India Inc.” and “Brand India”, was that these were by no means only regarded as key terms used by the Western media, but also served as reference points for self-positioning and – to some

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<sup>7</sup> There exists a remarkable number of new publications – with similar titles – on the “up-and-coming superpower” or “world power” India, which were launched on the German book market at the 2006 Frankfurt Book Fair, when India was the guest of honour: Harald Müller (2006), *Weltmacht Indien. Wie uns der rasante Aufstieg herausfordert*, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer; Olaf Ihlau (2006), *Weltmacht Indien. Die neue Herausforderung des Westens*, München: Siedler; Oliver Müller (2006), *Wirtschaftsmacht Indien. Chance und Herausforderung für uns*, München: Hanser.

extent ironic – self-reflection.<sup>8</sup> A lively debate was conducted over the question whether one could look at and promote a country characterized by “such extreme contrasts” under the singular idea of a brand. After all, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) tried to enter the 2004 elections using a one-sided positive image of the Indian economic miracle in its campaign and suffered an unexpected defeat. “India shining”, the title of this campaign, is considered the epitome of a PR disaster by business consultants in India today, and a prime example of how any image campaign in India is foredoomed to failure due to the pronounced diversity and differences.

In order to prove my hypothetical assumption – that the rapid growth in India’s presence in the media during 2006 and the concurrent differentiation of its image in the German-speaking world have actually been decisive factors in the establishment of a new market for the production and dissemination of knowledge on India in the German-speaking world – it would be imperative to systematically examine this knowledge market in terms of research projects. It ranges from a multitude of new publications on India to a growing number of educational and consulting services, and to specialized internet portals and in-company research departments. Since no empirical studies exist on this subject to date, the first priority should be to determine who the players in this knowledge-market are, where they derive their expertise from, and in which interaction contexts they are involved – both in India and in Germany. Having said that, one certainly also needs to take into account that critical media events such as the Mumbai attacks of 2008 are likely to abruptly reverse changes in the perception of a country that may have taken place beforehand or at least to alter them significantly. In order to be able to assess the impact and longevity of media images related to “terror” (or “natural disasters”), much more in-depth research over a longer period of time would be required.

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<sup>8</sup> For example Ramesh Narayan, “Brand India re-visited”, *The Hindu Business Line*, March 3, 2005 or Anil Padmanabhan/Aditi Khanna, “Cover Story: Indian Invasion”, *India Today International*, April 10, 2006, p. 37ff.; (no author), “World’s view of India has changed”, *Business Line*, internet edition, February 20, 2006; Kaveree Bamzai, “Soft power, hard sell”, *India Today International*, March 6, 2006., p. 36f.; Aroon Purie, “Cover Story Davos 2006: Hype & Hardsell”, *India Today International*, February 13, 2006, p. 6–10; “It is an exciting time to be in India”, interview with Stephanie A. Burns, *India Today International*, April 3, 2006, pp. 26f.; Venkatesha Babu, “Infosys. The Brand Within Us”, *India Today International*, May 29, 2006, pp. 31f.

## Conclusion

To summarize, I would argue that a systematic media perspective in India-related research can be related to three distinct but equally relevant areas: Firstly, to the media development past and present, for which a lot more research is necessary than has been conducted to date. Secondly, to the reciprocal effect between the increasing medialization of society as a whole and the patterns of social change. And, thirdly, to the question of the significance this has on India's role in global interaction. If it could be proven that the globally-oriented activities of Indian media experts have a growing and lasting effect not only on the perception of India internationally, but, above all, also on the ensuing production and appropriation of knowledge *about* India, then this touches on a fundamental question for academic discussion, namely, how the paths to knowledge are changing and will change in the future under the conditions of an increasingly mediated communication.

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