

*Full Length Research Paper*

# Media preferences and perceptions: The case of Bahir Dar University instructors

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The main intent of this study is to empirically examine media preferences and perceptions of instructors at Bahir Dar University (BDU) in selected faculties, colleges and school. The survey method of research was employed to conduct the study, and questionnaire was used as a data collection tool. Proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used for the selection of instructors. The findings reveal that Bahir Dar University instructors consume news on a daily basis. With regard to media usage, television stations, radio stations, and websites are the most chosen information source of respondents. Among TV programs, foreign TV news programs are the most viewed by respondents, and ETV has taken the lead as compared to other local TV programs. Concerning radio programs, foreign radio programs are favourites of respondents, and Ethiopia radio programs are their preferences. In addition, instructors use the Internet on daily basis, mainly for searching for information related to their subject areas, sending and receiving e-mails, and searching for daily news. The media content that instructors regularly consume are social issues, sport and politics. Respondents perceive media roles positively, and the highest level of agreement was expressed with the statement that the media help people become better informed and educated. Impartiality and credibility, and independence from political interest are the major criteria for respondents to choose a particular media over another. Finally, age, background, sex, and academic rank are factors that affect respondents' media perception.

**Key words:** Media, perceptions, consumption, BDU instructors.

## INTRODUCTION

We live in a world where there are different types of media (both foreign and domestic) doing their utmost endeavour to attract the attention of audience. Media contents are addressed to a larger number of audiences that have different compositions.

Media provide us many functions at individual and/ societal level. According to Dominick (1999) mass media have surveillance, interpretation, linkage, transmission of

values and entertainment functions for society. The uses-and-gratifications model also divulges that mass media have cognition, diversion, social utility and withdrawal functions.

Nowadays, audience are exposed to various media outlets: print, broadcast and the Internet. But audience have their own reasons for choosing a given media and media content over others. In relation to media choice,

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Rosengren et al. (1985) cited in McQuail (1992:178) indicate the presence of a “range of various motives for choosing media-for amusement, information, social contact, excitement, involvement, etc or, more generally, the bases for (and degree of) selectivity which is actually exhibited in media choice behaviour.” This notion is very similar to uses-and-gratification approaches in that it perceives “audience [as an] active and goal oriented. The audience members are largely responsible for choosing media to meet their own needs. .... audience know their needs and how to gratify those needs (Little and Foss, 2008:301).

Studies related to media preferences and perceptions are common and have been researched in America and Slovenia. Since media education and media research are current phenomena in Ethiopia, little research has been conducted in the field. Similarly, media preferences and perceptions of audiences have not yet been researched in the Ethiopian context.

### Objective

The main objective of this paper is to examine media preferences and perceptions of BDU instructors in selected colleges, faculties, and a school.

### Research questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What media do Bahir Dar University instructors choose/prefer?
2. What media content/genre do Bahir Dar University instructors most regularly consume?
3. What is instructors' perception of media?
4. What are the factors that affect instructors' media perceptions?

### METHOD

So as to find media preferences and perceptions of BDU instructors, quantitative research method, specifically, survey research was employed. Self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data about instructors' media preferences and perceptions.

### Sampling procedure

The target population for this study is all instructors in Humanity Faculty, Social Science Faculty, College of Science, College of Business and Economics, School of Law, Faculty of Behavioural and Education and School of Law. The total population of the study is 541:73 are females and 468 are males. One hundred and eighty instructors were selected using stratified random sampling techniques. As shown in the previous figure, female instructors are few in number as compared to their male counterparts in the study site.

### Methods of data collection

The research is a survey type so that the researcher made use of questionnaire as a data gathering tool. The questionnaire embraced close ended questions to draw relevant information from instructors. These questions were constructed by adapting from Media Watch Series used by Marko Prpic. In addition to questions related to media preferences, the researcher incorporated questions from reading of literature. However, for questions that is used to measure respondents' media perceptions, the researcher directly used as it was used in Marko Prpic's research.

For the sake of validity, the questionnaire was appraised by 3 instructors from Journalism and Communication department, and another from English department. Its reliability was also calculated and found to be reliable (0.841).

### Techniques of data analysis

The obtained data were analysed quantitatively. The data related to respondents' media preferences were analysed using simple percentages, and those related to media perceptions were analysed using chi-square. Both of the analyses are done by using SPSS software.

## DATA PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

### Socio-demographic information

The research was conducted in 2012. Only Bahir Dar University instructors from selected School, Colleges and Faculties were asked to complete the questionnaire, and participation was voluntary. Of the 541 instructors (468 males and 73 females) participating in the study, 180 were enrolled as data sources. As shown in Table 1, the majority of respondents were males (86.1%); whereas, the rest are females. At the University of Bahir Dar, the highest number of participants is chosen from College of Science (31.11%), followed by College of Business and economics (23.33%), Humanity Faculty (17.22%). The least number of participants is from School of Law (6.11%). The majority of participants are between 20-40 years of age. In addition, the majority of participants (72.22%) are Masters Degree holders.

### Media Usage of Respondents

As shown in Table 2, the majority of respondents 143(79.9%) stated that they consume news on a daily basis, while 31(17.3%) of them indicated that they consume it three to five times a week. One point seven percent of participants obtain news once or twice a week, and 2 (1.1%) less than once a week. Among those who consume news on a daily basis, men prevail (81.8%) over women (68 %). In the second group, which consumes news three to five times a week, women prevail (24 %) over men (16.2%). The difference between respondents' gender and their news consumption is statistically significant (with p-value= 0.036).

Regarding sources of information that respondents

**Table 1.** Respondents' Socio-demographic information.

Variable	F
Sex	
male	155 (86.1%)
Female	25 (13.9 %)
Background ( <i>Faculty/college/school</i> )	
Science College	56 (31.11%)
Education and Behavioural Faculty	18 (10%)
School of Law	11(6.11%)
College of Business and Economics	42 (23.33%)
Humanity Faculty	31 (17.22%)
Social Science Faculty	22(12.22%)
Academic rank	
First Degree	42 (23.33)
Masters Degree	130(72.22%)
PhD	8 (4.44%)
Age	
20-30	68 (37.8%)
31-40	70 (38.9%)
41 and above	42(23.3%)

most frequently use, TV station tops the list of the media genre as it is viewed by 76(69.1%) of respondents. It is followed by radio station attended by nearly one-fifth of TV viewers (15.5%); then websites are visited by (11.8%) of respondents. In addition; daily newspapers and weekly newspapers are read by small number of respondents, that is, (1.8%) for each. In general, it is found that TV stations are the most information providers of the respondents.

With regard to TV news programs, the greatest number of respondents 145(42.6 %) chose foreign TV news program followed by 93 (27.4%) of respondents who watch ETV news programs. Amhara TV news program come third with one-third of foreign TV news program viewers 48(14.1%). Oromiya TV news program takes the fourth stage with 40 (11.8%) respondents. Nearly three times of Tigrigna TV news program viewers watch Dehub TV news programs.

As to radio news programs, the greatest proportion of respondents (30.9 %) listen to news programs on foreign radio stations. Radio Ethiopia news programs come second with (23%) of respondents. In addition, nearly one third of foreign radio news programs respondents 28(9.9%) chose regional radio station news programs, and nearly two times of regional radio news programs listen to Radio Fana news programs.

As many as (77.8%) of respondents stated they used the Internet on a daily basis (88% of female respondents and 76.1% of male respondents). It is used three to five

times a week by (12.2 %) of instructors, and once or twice a week by 7.8 % of them; 2.2% of instructors use it less than once a week.

As per the purpose of respondents' usage of the Internet, the three most frequent types of Internet usage include searching for information related to respondents' subject area (28.9%), exchanging information through e-mail (25.3%), and searching for daily news (18.5%). However, searching for information for respondents' country politics and Internet telephony are at the bottom of the list.

With regard to media content, relatively the highest number of respondents (18.7%) chose Social Issues. Sport came in second with 14.9% followed by domestic politics and foreign politics (12.7 and 12.6%, respectively). Crime and celebrity topics are the least chosen by 0.8 and 1% of respondents, respectively.

Among the criteria respondents considered in choosing a particular medium, impartiality and credibility stands out by its frequency of choice. This criterion was chosen by 30.2% of respondents followed by independence from political interest (24.4%) of respondents. Price or access fee and independence from economic interests are among the criteria chosen by relatively fewer numbers of respondents (4.2 and 5.5%, respectively).

Finally, respondents were asked about the media (foreign media and domestic media) they most frequently attended. Foreign media were chosen by the majority (74.7%) of respondents, and domestic media were chosen by nearly one-fourth of the total respondents (25.3%). But this result is inconsistent with Prpic (2008) which reveals a higher choice of domestic media over foreign media.

### Media usage cross-tabulated

As shown in Table 3, there is respondents' strong association between their news consumption and their background (Faculty/ Colleges/ Schools) (with p-value = 0.000). In addition, their usage of the Internet has strong association with their backgrounds (with p-value = 0.000).

The result also shows strong association between respondents' usage of the Internet and their backgrounds (with p-value of 0.001). However, there is no association between respondents' media preference (Foreign media and domestic media) and their Faculties, Colleges, and Schools (with p-value= 0.074). The table also displays that there is a strong association between respondents' age and their Internet usage (with p-value= 0.000).

The result further shows, as the age of respondents' increases, their preference to domestic media tends to increase, but as the age of respondents goes down/ approaches 20, respondents' preference to foreign media tends to increase. Of the respondents who prefer domestic media to foreign media, instructors whose ages are 41 and above constituted the majority (42.9%). Almost all respondents between 20-30 years of age

**Table 2.** Respondents' media usage.

<b>News consumption</b>	<b>%</b>
Less than once a week	2 (1.1%)
Once/ twice a week	3 (1.7 %)
Three to five a week	31(17.3%)
Everyday	143 (79.9)
<b>Source of Information</b>	
Daily newspaper	2(1.8%)
Weekly newspaper	2(1.8%)
Radio station	17(15.5%)
TV station	76(69.1%)
Website	13(11.8)
<b>TV news program respondents attend</b>	
Ethiopia Television (ETV)	93(27.4 %)
Amhara TV news program	48 (14.1 %)
Debub TV news program	11(3.2%)
Oromiya TV news program	40 (11.8%)
Tigrigna TV news program	1(0.3%)
Foreign TV news programs	145 (42.6%)
<b>Radio news program respondents listen to</b>	
Radio Ethiopia News program	65 (23%)
Regional radio station news program	28(9.9%)
Radio Fana news program	50(17.7%)
Foreign radio news program	87(30.9%)
<b>Internet usage/ habit</b>	
Less than once a week	4 (2.2%)
Once or twice a week	14 (7.8 %)
Three to five times a week	22 (12.2%)
Everyday	140(77.8%)
<b>What is the Internet for?</b>	
Send/receive e-mail	139 (25.3 %)
Search for daily news	102(18.5%)
Chatting	62(11.3%)
Search info. for my subject	159(28.9%)
Search info. for my country politics	20(3.6%)
For internet telephony	12(2.2%)
For entertainment	27(4.9%)
Take part in online forums	29(5.3%)
<b>Media content respondents prefer</b>	
Domestic politics	75(12.7%)
Foreign politics	74(12.6%)
Social issues	110(18.7%)
Environment	20(3.4%)
Local news	58(9.8%)
Culture/arts	27(4.6%)
Science/technology	58(9.8%)
Economy	18(3.1%)

**Table 2.** Contd.

Crime	5(0.8%)
Sport	88(14.9%)
Celebrity topics	6(1%)
Health advice	50(8.5%)
<b>Important criteria for choosing media</b>	
Impartiality and credibility	137(30.2%)
Independence from political interests	111(24.4%)
Independence from economic interests	25(5.5%)
In-depth reporting on selected issues	88(19.4%)
Price or access fee	19(4.2%)
Quality and originality of individual authors	74(16.3%)
<b>Frequently attended media</b>	
Foreign media	115 (74.7%)
Domestic Media	39(25.3%)

(94.6%) prefer foreign media over domestic media. Strong association is also obtained between respondents' age and their media preferences (foreign and domestic media) with p-value =0.000. There is a statistically significant difference between age of respondents and their media preference with p-value= 0.000.

### Media perception of respondents

This part was intended to check the respondents' understanding of the role media play in society. Eight statements to which they could indicate their agreement on a 5 point scale (1 – I strongly disagree, 2 – I disagree, 3 – I neither agree nor disagree, 4 – I agree, 5 – I strongly agree) were provided.

The instrument used to measure instructors' media perception contains eight statements whereby respondents' responses were regarded as positive and negative perceptions. Those who answered at least four of the eight statements agree and above are taken as having positive perception to the role media could play, but the rest are taken as having negative perception.

As shown in Table 4, 13(52 %) females and 16(13%) males are found to have negative perception about media, but 12(48%) females and 137(89.7%) males do have positive perception about media. This finding shows that there is a strong association between respondents' perception of media and gender (with p-value=0.001). One can infer that males do have a better perception of media as compared to their female counterparts. There is also a strong association between respondents' background and their perception of media (with p-value=0.000). All of the respondents from Behavioural and Education Faculty, College of Business and Economics and School of Law do have positive perception of media's roles. Over all, in Humanity faculty,

**Table 3.** Media usage cross-tabulated.

Chi-Square (p-value )	Percentages	Chi-Square (p-value )	
News consumption by faculty			
Less than a week	2(1%)	0.000	
Once or twice a week	3(1.7 %)		
3 to 5 times a week	31 (17.3%)		
Internet Usage by Faculty			
Less than once a week	4 (2.2 %)	0.001	
Once or twice a week	14(7.8%)		
3 to 5 times a week	22(12.2%)		
Everyday	140(77.8%)		
Media Preference by Faculty			
Foreign media	115(74.7%)	0.074	
Domestic media	39(25.3 %)		
Internet Usage by age			
Less than a week	4(2.2%)	0.000	
Once or twice a week	14(7.8%)		
3 to 5 times a week	22(12.2%)		
Everyday	140(77.8%)		
Media Preference by Age			
	Foreign media	Domestic media	0.000
20-30	53(94.6%)	3(5.4%)	
31-40	46(65.7%)	24(34.3)	
41 and above	16(57.1%)	12(42.9%)	
Total	115(74.7%)	39(25.3%)	

College of Science, and Social Science faculty, there are fewer numbers of respondents who have had negative perception about the roles of the media.

Respondents' ages have had a strong association with their perceptions of media. As the ages of respondents increase, their perception of media roles also increases (with a p-value =0.022). There is also an association between respondents' highest degree and their media perception. All PhD holders have positive perception about media. However, there is no association between respondents' highest position and their media perception (with P-value 0.088). In addition, there is no association between their media preference (foreign media and domestic media) and their media perception with p-value =0.307.

There is a strong association between respondents' news consumption habits and their perception of media with p-value=0.000. However, there is no association between respondents' Internet usage and their media preference (with p-value =0.151).

## DISCUSSION

Though it is needless to say that our surrounding is traf-

ficking with various media outlets, this section discusses BDU instructors' media preferences and perceptions in relation to international experiences. BDU instructors consume news on a daily basis which is inconsistent with the finding of Prpic (2009) which was studied in Slovenia on university students in that only slightly less than one-fourth of respondents consume news on a daily basis. Main source of information for BDU instructors is TV stations followed by radio stations and websites while websites are the primary source for Slovenian university students. While foreign radio stations are favourites of BDU instructors, local radio stations are the most beloved information source for Slovenian university students. BDU instructors use the Internet everyday mainly for searching for information related to their subject matter, and this result appears to be consistent with the findings of Prpic (2009) in such a way that Slovenian University students use the Internet on a daily basis but for e-mail purposes. However, BDU instructors' purpose of using the Internet seems inconsistent with Loan (2011:156) citing Pew Internet and American Life Project (2003) in that "Americans used the Internet most for sending electronic mail, using search engines, researching products and services before buying, and looking for

**Table 4.** Respondents' media perception cross-tabulated.

Variable	Perception		Chi- Square (p-value )
	Negative	Positive	
Sex			
Female	13(52%)	12(48%)	0.000
Male	16(10.3%)	137(89.7%)	
Faculty/college/school			
Education and Behavioural Faculty	0	18(100%)	0.000
Business and Economics Faculty	0	42 (100%)	
Humanity Faculty	4(12.9%)	27 (87.1%)	
Law School	0	11 (100%)	
Science College	14 (25%)	42(75 %)	
Social Science Faculty	8(36.36 %)	14(63.64)	
Age			
20-30	14 (20.6 %)	54(79.4%)	0.022
31-40	14 (20 %)	56(80%)	
41 and above	1 (2.4%)	41(97.6%)	
Academic Rank			
First Degree	14(15.2%)	78(84.8%)	0.028
Masters Degree	22 (17%)	108(83 %)	
PhD	0	8(100%)	
Highest Position			
Assist. Professor	0	14(100%)	0.088
Lecturer	29(17.5%)	95(82.5%)	
Graduate Assistant	18( 42.86% )	24 ( 57.14 )	
Total	47(26.11%)	133(73.89%)	
Frequently attended media			
Foreign Media	16 (13.9%)	99(86.1%)	0.307
Domestic media	3(3.3%)	36(92.3%)	
Total	19(12.3%)	135(87.7%)	
News consumption/ habits			
Less than a week	0	2(100%)	0.000
Once or twice a week	1(33.3%)	2(66.7%)	
Three to five times a week	13(41.9%)	18(58.1%)	
Everyday	14(9.8 %)	129(90.2)	
Internet usage habit/frequency			
Less than a week	0	4 (100%)	0.151
Once or twice a week	0	14(100%)	
Three to five times a week	2(9.1%)	20(90.9%)	
Everyday	27(19.3%)	113(80.7%)	
Total	29 (16.1%)	151(83.9%)	

information for hobbies and leisure activities". While BDU instructors rate social issues their first media content preference followed by sport and domestic politics, Slovenian University students chose domestic politics

first followed by sport and science/ technology. BDU instructors chose media mainly based on impartiality and credibility criterion, whereas Slovenian University students prefer media mainly for quality and originality of

individual authors.

Regarding perception of media, BDU instructors have shown positive media perception in that the highest level of agreement was expressed among instructors with the statement that the media help people become better informed and educated while Prpic's (2009) finding proved that Slovenian University students tend perceive media negatively in that the highest level of agreement among respondents expressed with the statement that the media encourage consumerism.

### Concluding remarks

The data obtained through questionnaire were analyzed, interpreted and concluded as follows.

Bahir Dar university instructors consume news on daily basis from which men respondents prevail over women in daily news consumption.

With regard to media usage, television stations, radio stations, and websites are the major information sources of respondents. Among TV programs, foreign TV news programs are the most viewed by respondents. However, from domestic TV programs, ETV has taken the lead as compared to other local TV programs. Concerning radio programs, foreign radio programs are choices of respondents, and Ethiopia radio station is their preferences among local radio stations.

In addition, instructors use the Internet on daily basis, and the three most cited reasons that respondents use the Internet include searching for information related to their subject area, sending and receiving e-mails, and searching for daily news.

The media content that instructors regularly consume are social issues followed by sport and politics. With regard to the perception of the role the media play in society, the highest level of agreement among respondents was expressed with the statement that the media help people become better informed and educated.

Impartiality and credibility, and independence from political interest are the major criteria for respondents to choose a particular media over another.

Concerning respondents' media usage, strong associations were made between the age of respondents, their usage of the Internet, their media preferences, their background and their news consumption.

Respondents show positive perception to roles of media, and males have better perception of media roles as compared to their female counterparts. As respondents' age increases, their perception of media roles also increases. Respondents' age, faculty, sex, highest degree, news consumption habits are major factors that affect media perception of respondents.

### Conflict of Interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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