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Public Perceptions of Television News in Bangladesh: A Benchmark Study

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Abstract

The TV medium has experienced unprecedented expansion in Bangladesh in the past several years. Given its popularity and influence, and with more people getting their information from this medium, there is very little research regarding perceptions of TV news in the country. In this descriptive study, we examine the perceived credibility of TV news, as well as related constructs including the independence of TV news, its objectivity, its social role, and expertise, all of which influence credibility perceptions of the audience. Using factor analysis and descriptive statistics, we establish perceptual benchmarks, especially concerning the role of television news programs. Policy implications are discussed so that TV news can play a more important role in Bangladesh by promoting greater civic awareness and building democratic processes, instead of being driven solely by special interest coteries.

1 Introduction

Television has become the most global, as well as national form of all media, transcending linguistic and geographical barriers. In South Asia, the audio-visual market is one of the world's biggest and most promising (Thussu 2007). In Bangladesh, particularly, the seventh most populous country in the world, with an estimated population of around 159 million people, there has been a phenomenal growth of the TV medium with impressive advancements (Reza 2012).

The number of television viewers has jumped to more than 40 million, a significant number for a country with per capita GNP equivalent to \$840 in the period 2009–2013 (World Bank 2014). The growth in TV viewership is largely driven by satellite television. This trend in cable and satellite viewing is on the increase after the Government of Bangladesh (GOB) permitted the operation of private satellite TV channels in 1997, when massive investments began to flow into this sector facilitated by the dominant political and commercial elites of the country. The number of television channels as of today is 43 (Prothom Alo 2013) with additional private satellite TV channels preparing to join the airwaves in the near future.

Concurrently, the reach of radio programs has begun to decline substantially. From available studies it is clear that listeners of radio programs have decreased sharply from 42% to 24% in the period 1998–2002. In the same

period, TV viewership increased from 42% to 61%. According to the National Media and Demographic Survey, TV now reaches 70% of the population (Hasan 2010).

With such rapid growth of TV viewership, it may be argued that, within a decade, television has altered the media industry in Bangladesh. It has also changed the habits of how the audience gathers information and engages with daily news. On this matter Bourdieu (1998) opines, “Television enjoys a de facto monopoly on what goes into the heads of a significant part of the population and what they think.” Bourdieu here talks about French television's influence where a high proportion of the population relies on television as their daily news source. Similarly, in other West European countries and in North America, television sets the agenda for political and cultural debates and influences other social fields such as politics and economics (Benson 1999). In Bangladesh, too, the dominant role that television has begun to play has far reaching consequences for the evolution of society because of its purported ability to shape minds and public thinking.

It is in this context that this study was designed: to determine how credible the TV news media is to its audience. In addition we examine related constructs including the independence of TV news, its objectivity, its social role, and expertise, all of which influence credibility perceptions of the audience.

2 Background

As a political agency (Corner 1999), television is often regarded as a window to the world. However, during periods of crises its potential to become a source of facts can be compromised not just by the nature of the medium itself, but also by the curtain of darkness which a government or some special interest group can draw across it, institutional exigencies and self-censorship behaviors.

Television theorist Whittaker (2008) indicates, “Although TV news had its moments of glittering success, over the last few decades the credibility of TV news in general has declined. TV news no longer reflects public interest programming the way it once was. It is now a moneymaking endeavor driven by ratings.” Since rating points translate into profits, maximizing audience size has recently been a significant driving force behind most TV news. This has resulted in a shift away from stories which have social and political significance to stories that are “more engaging” to viewers. With the popularity of tabloid TV shows, news values are being distorted. If one reads the signs carefully, TV news in Bangladesh may, in all likelihood, go down a similar path.

The political involvement of the owners of TV channels, by reigning in the independence of TV news, has had an especially important effect on TV news credibility, often engaging in a crass display of commercialism. In one prime time news slot, for example, 20 minutes were devoted to advertisements out of the total available slot of 47 minutes. Such displays include “Eastern Bank break,” “Citycell News” “Green Delta Insurance Business News” and “National Financial News.” (Haq 2011).

Since the Government of Bangladesh permitted private satellite TV channels a decade ago, its systematic domination by political and commercial elites has led to a ‘clientalism’ relationship (Haq 2011) that has hurt independent and objective reporting. Such relationships have also been noted by Hallin and Mancini (2004).

The media’s increasing association with big business (Curran 2002, Haq 2011), the targeting of viewership, and the growth of the advertising sector has stimulated a new phenomenon: ‘market-oriented journalism.’ According to Beam (1998), during the last decade, newspapers have adopted a stronger market-orientation, concentrating on two customer groups — advertisers and readers — finding ways to meet their wants and needs. Market-oriented journalism tends to generate news that is simplified, personalized, and decontextualized. It stresses action rather than process, visualization rather than abstraction, and is stereotypical rather than reflecting human complexity (Curran 2000, pp. 128-129).

Critics feel that such journalism downplays serious and objective content in favor of frivolous, entertaining

information and that it fails to live up to social obligations by disseminating public-affairs information essential to democratization and civic participation in affairs of statecraft. This is apparently intended. As Newton (2003) suggests, the media has assumed new roles — one is to depoliticize people and the other is to create a consumer culture for the capitalist system to flourish. McChesney (2001) is in accord with this view, asserting that a capitalist society works most efficiently when the bulk of the population is depoliticized.

Market-oriented journalism thus works closely with the collaboration of political and business elites and with state-disciplined news sources. Therefore “private, corporate media and governments are far better seen as partners, and both far more adept at serving those who sit atop the social pyramid than those who are found closer to the bottom” (McChesney and Schiller 2003).

In Bangladesh, this partnership has not only formed an elite-bias but has also created a rift between the actual role of television channels and the role it could play in a progressive society. Research suggests that corporate-media partnership trends have influenced the content and process of news production (Rahman 2007). Khan (2007a) and Ferdous (2007) argue that the trend towards commercialization in news production has undercut the independence and impartiality of the media. Ferdous (2009) also argues that mass media in Bangladesh is more like a class media, and additionally that it is a male media. Rahman (2009) found that among 1,653 reporting assignments of a leading television channel in Bangladesh, 68 per cent were biased in favor of the government and of a market-driven agenda, whereas only 16 percent of the assignments were related to the public good. Such market-driven trends may be affecting the objectivity and impartiality/independence of news directly and indirectly and could result in a loss of credibility.

Moreover, even scholarly articles depict, “... a growing trend in yellow journalism over the years ... to contemplate plans to introduce new law to target yellow journalism because of newspapers and television and radio channels that are making false and misleading news to tarnish the image of ministers, lawmakers, the government and the country are in fact doing yellow journalism.” (Alam 2012, p. 5).

Given the proclivity of the media to bend the truth, as gleaned from the above discussion, The Bangladesh Press Council (BPC) Act of 1974 entrusted the BPC with responsibility for devising a code of conduct for maintaining high professional standards. That provision is articulated in Article 12(1) of the BPC Act (Alam 2012):

“Where, on receipt of a complaint made to it or otherwise, the Council has reason to believe that a newspaper or news agency has

offended against the standard of journalistic ethics or public taste or that an editor or a working journalist has committed any professional misconduct or a breach of the code of journalistic ethics, the Council may warn, admonish or censure the newspaper, the news agency, the editor or the journalist, as the case may be.”

Given this scenario, this study is expected to make an important contribution by examining the perceived credibility of the news media in Bangladesh from the perspectives of its largest constituency: the audience. Our focus is on TV news. In addition, this study is also designed to establish a benchmark of public perceptions of TV news.

3 The Constructs in the Study

Credibility is considered to be a valid reflection of reality. What makes credibility a focal point of mass communication is that it can be considered as an index of the effectiveness of media. As Golan (2010, p. 3) notes, “The mass media serves as an important forum in which journalists, public relations professionals, advertising practitioners, politicians, and issue advocates (as well as many others) try to educate, inform, persuade, and influence media audiences.” In order for the senders to achieve these goals, it is very important that the receivers believe the message. Public perceptions of credibility of the media can shape their behaviors: from political orientation and voting patterns to social motivations, resource allocation decisions, and consumption styles. For those involved with the media industry, credibility can spell the difference between success and failure.

Credibility is defined as a valid reflection of reality. Trustworthiness is an integral component of credibility (Barlow and Bakir 2007, McQuail 2005, Waisbord 2006). For Waisbord (2006), trust is a relational process between journalists and audiences. It is also a result of the pact or contract between news producers and consumers. Dependability was also introduced as a measure of credibility in view of the idea that, “Trust indicates a positive belief about the perceived reliability of, dependability of, and confidence in a person, object, or process” (Tseng and Fogg 1999). A third measure used directly was credibility itself, the focus of the study. Finally, we included a measure, recommendation, because when a person finds a source credible, (s)he would feel confident to recommend it. See Table 3 for the measures of credibility and other constructs.

Independence of TV news is defined as a TV channel’s freedom from influence of various stakeholders; it is operationalized as being free from political bias, from owners’

influence, from the interest of its shareholder/partner and having reporters who are not politically motivated.

The social role of TV news is defined as the role that raises awareness and social consciousness of the viewers and is operationalized in terms of TV news playing an important role in improving society; contributing to solving political, social and economic problems; building awareness of the dominant issues; and campaigning for the right social causes.

Objectivity is difficult to define in simple terms, but is linked to our operationalization in terms of presenting facts, precise information, in-depth information, and information from reliable source. If TV news presents the facts as it is rather than being biased, provides precise rather than unclear and inaccurate information, and reflects in-depth and investigative information from reliable source, it will be perceived as credible to the audience.

Expertise is defined as skill or knowledge in a particular field (TV news reporting) and was operationalized as skilled reporting, with TV news providing immediate information and regular updates to an evolving situation, and doing so expertly.

4 Research Method

The research method is described next which involved conducting secondary research, questionnaire design and pre-testing, sampling, and data collection.

4.1 Secondary Research

Research on source credibility in Bangladesh is scant. Thus, insights were obtained from research conducted in other countries to assess the characteristics of the selected constructs. Adjustments appropriate for Bangladesh were made subsequently. The findings are expected to improve the perceived credibility of TV news in the country, with its informational, developmental, and entertainment implications.

4.2 Questionnaire Design and Pre-testing

A preliminary questionnaire was first developed in English, based on the literature review, as well as in-depth interviews of the TV news audience. It was constructed using 7-point Likert scales and then translated into Bengali (the local language) and retranslated for clarity, conciseness and ease of communication. The wording, format, and length of the questionnaire were adjusted after it was pre-tested on a small set of randomly selected respondents.

4.3 Sampling and Data Collection

Bangladesh is a densely populated country. People from every part of the country and from different socio-economic segments (education, income, profession, etc.) live in Dhaka City that had a population of roughly 12.6 million in 2005 with a growth rate of 3.2% (<http://web.worldbank.org>). Thus, the residents of Dhaka City were deemed as fairly representative of the nation, serving as the target population for our study.

To select a representative sample, multistage cluster-sampling was used. The city was divided into several clusters according to the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce's allocation of different police stations (or Thanas). From these clusters, ten police stations were selected randomly. The entire area under each police station was considered as a cluster. From each cluster, one ward (the next level of administration) was selected randomly and from each ward, thirty households were selected randomly. Responses were solicited from the head of the household. In their absence, the next available adult person was selected as a replacement. There was no attempt to identify the respondents, who were guaranteed anonymity. In so doing, respondents would feel freer to provide unbiased responses. According to research protocol, respondents were offered the option to withdraw from the study at any point.

Data were collected from 300 respondents via face-to-face interviews. Prior to the interview, the field staff explained the study and asked the interviewee to self-administer the questionnaire; occasionally, the interviewers filled out the questionnaire based on respondents' verbal responses.

4.4 Analysis

Factor analysis (a data reduction technique) using principal components analysis with varimax rotation was conducted first to group the variables measuring the four main constructs of the conceptual model - independence, social role, objectivity, and source expertise. A final factor structure was retained consisting of 16 items and four factors that were easy to interpret and that explained 58% of the cumulative variation (see Table 1). Credibility was assessed separately and resulted in a four-item construct.

5 Results

Reliability of each factor was assessed using Cronbach's. To be reliable, the value of ought to equal or exceed the value of 0.7 (Nunnally 1978). Only one factor had a value slightly less than 0.7 (see Table 2). Frequency analysis was performed next to obtain measures of central tendency, variation, and distribution values, shown in Tables 2 and 3.

5.1 Composite Scales

Overall credibility, after combining the four scale items and measured on a 7-point scale, obtained a mean score of 5.45 ($s=1.16$). Similarly, independence had a mean of 3.23 ($s=1.58$); social role had a mean of 5.90 ($s=1.01$), objectivity had a mean of 5.28 ($s=1.03$), and source expertise had a mean of 5.55 ($s=2.08$). Overall, TV news earned favorable ratings on all the composite measures except for independence, which had the lowest mean and the greatest variation.

Next each factor was broken down into its component items to examine both central tendencies and frequency distributions to gain additional insights. The findings are presented in Table 3.

5.2 Perceptions of TV News Credibility in Bangladesh

Credibility was measured using four items: dependability, trustworthiness, credibility and recommendations. The respondents offered varied opinions on each of these components (Table 4 and Figure 1). Only 53.4% of the respondents expressed that they find TV news in Bangladesh highly dependable (scores of 5 and 6). In terms of trustworthiness, 58.2% of the respondents showed a high level of trust regarding TV news in Bangladesh. Similar distributions are evident in terms of credibility (55%) and recommendations (58%).

5.3 Perception of Independence of TV News

Independence of news is an important factor influencing audience perceptions of TV news credibility and was measured using four items: owner's influence, serving the interests of shareholders, political bias and reporters' political motivations. The mean scores and standard deviations of the individual items are shown in Table 3. It is clear that each item was rated below the mid-point value of 4: Owner's influence, serving the interests of shareholders, political bias and reporter's political motivation have mean scores 3.03, 3.31, 3.06 and 3.49 respectively, which reflects that TV news is not perceived as independent.

Respondents indicated the relative lack of freedom of TV news from owners' influence, while serving the interests of shareholders. Since many TV channels are owned by the politically influential, respondents seem to believe that some political bias creeps into TV news and may also influence hiring patterns since news reporters also are not free of political bias.

From the distribution of responses (Table 5 and Figure 2), 48% of the respondents (with scores of 1 and 2 on the 7-point scale) seem to believe quite firmly that TV news is not free from owner's influence. A similar percentage (47.3%) of people thinks that TV news is not free

Table 1: Factor analysis results: Rotated Component Matrix

Measures	Component			
	Independence	Social Role	Objectivity	Expertise
News of the TV channel is free from its owners' influence.	0.843	-0.015	0.128	0.062
The TV channel's news serves the interests of its shareholders/partners.	0.817	-0.067	0.092	0.026
TV news presented by the news channel. is free from political bias.	0.738	0.075	0.140	0.004
TV news reporters are not politically motivated.	0.698	-0.061	0.091	0.244
TV channel's news plays an important role in improving society.	0.037	0.824	0.028	0.089
TV news builds awareness on the dominant issues.	-0.087	0.814	0.102	0.171
TV news contributes to solving political, social, economic problems.	-0.053	0.771	0.120	0.060
TV news campaigns the right social causes.	0.041	0.602	0.146	0.202
TV channel's news presents information from reliable sources	0.118	0.045	0.803	0.039
TV channel's news provides precise information.	0.273	0.110	0.736	0.188
TV channel's news presents facts.	0.037	0.132	0.666	0.074
TV channel's news presents in-depth information.	0.099	0.143	0.542	0.392
TV channel's news provides regular updates to an evolving situation.	-0.045	0.128	0.064	0.750
TV channel's news provides immediate information.	0.057	0.159	0.037	0.731
TV channel's news reporters are expert in reporting.	0.224	0.119	0.194	0.633
TV channel's news presents skilled reporting.	0.141	0.114	0.359	0.507

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
 Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
 a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics on composite variables

Constructs	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Reliability Alpha
Credibility	300	5.45	1.16	0.86
Independence	300	3.23	1.58	0.84
Social Role	300	5.90	1.01	0.77
Objectivity	300	5.16	1.10	0.74
Expertise	300	5.55	1.08	0.68

Table 3: Central tendency and dispersion: individual items

Constructs	Measures	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Credibility	I can depend on the information provided by the news of that TV channel.	296	5.40	1.36
	I think the news provided by the TV channel is trustworthy.	297	5.51	1.30
	I think the TV channel's news is credible.	297	5.46	1.29
	I would recommend others to watch the news of this TV channel.	285	5.46	1.58
Independence	News of the TV channel is free from its owners influence.	288	3.03	1.96
	The TV channel's news serves the interests of its shareholders/partners.	260	3.31	1.88
	TV news presented by the news channel is free from political bias.	294	3.06	1.97
	TV news reporters are not politically motivated.	296	3.49	2.04
Social Role	TV channel's news plays an important role in improving society.	295	6.12	1.23
	TV news builds awareness on the dominant issues.	295	6.06	1.21
	TV news contributes to solving political, social and economic problems.	297	5.75	1.37
	TV news campaigns the right social causes.	293	5.65	1.43
Objectivity	TV channel's news presents information from reliable sources.	290	5.17	1.42
	TV channel's news provides precise information.	298	5.04	1.57
	TV channel's news presents facts.	293	5.40	1.31
	TV channel's news presents in-depth information.	296	5.04	1.55
Expertise	TV channel's news provides regular updates to an evolving situation.	291	5.56	1.55
	TV channel's news provides immediate information.	296	5.75	1.55
	TV channel's news reporters are expert in reporting.	295	5.38	1.47
	TV channel's news presents skilled reporting.	290	5.50	1.41

Table 4: Distribution of ratings on credibility

	Credibility							Total (%)
	Likert Scale							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
I can depend on the information provided by the news of that TV channel.	1.7	2.0	4.4	14.9	23.6	30.4	23.0	100
I think the news provided by the TV channel is trustworthy.	1.3	1.7	3.4	14.1	21.2	34.3	23.9	100
I think the TV channel’s news is credible	1.7	0.7	3.7	15.5	23.9	31.0	23.6	100
I would recommend others to watch the news of this TV channel.	5.3	0.4	3.9	14.0	18.2	26.7	31.6	100

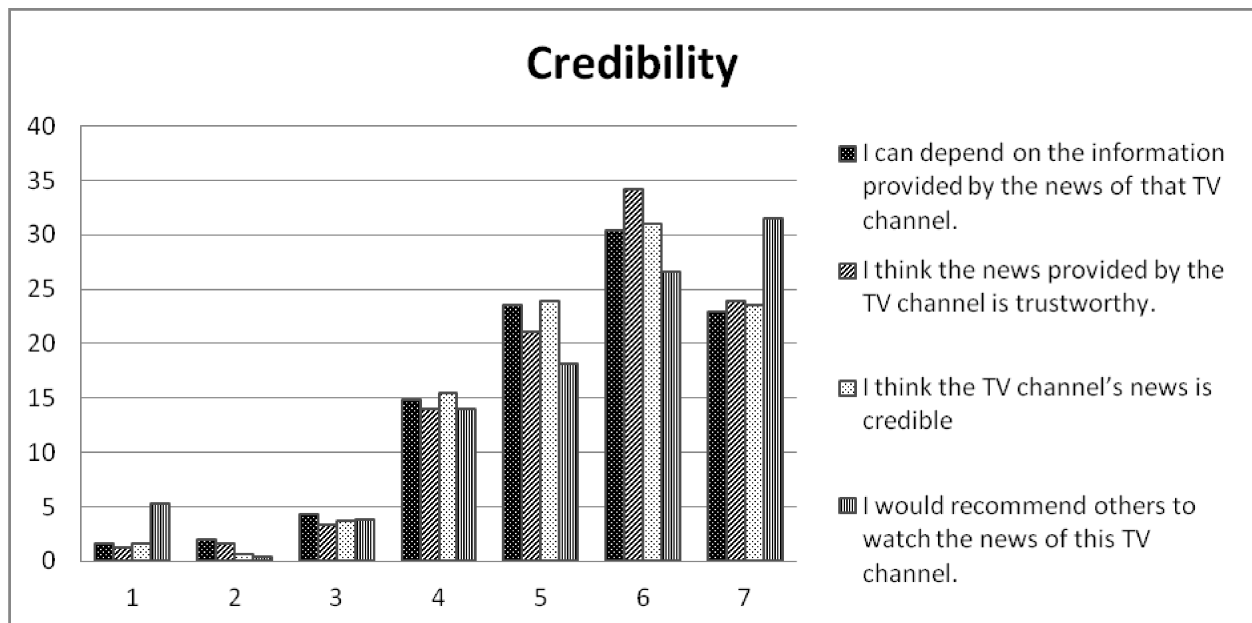


Figure 1: Bar chart of distribution of ratings on credibility

from political bias. It is also of some concern that only 37% of the respondents disagree rather strongly that the reporters are “not” politically motivated, and only 38% think that TV news does not serve corporate interests.

5.4 Perception of Social Role of TV News

The average scores on the individual elements of social role of TV news in Bangladesh are particularly insightful. On whether TV news plays an important role in improving society, the mean score was 6.12 (Table 3). Mean score on building awareness of the dominant issues was 6.06, on providing solutions to political, social and economic problem was 5.75, and on social campaigns, the mean was 5.65. The social role of TV news is very positive in the eyes of the Bangladeshi audience.

The mean scores on the elements of the social role factor reflect higher scores than the measures of the other factors. Table 6 and Figure 3 show that around 78% of the respondents (with scores of 6 and 7 on the 7-point scales) think that the TV news channels are playing an important role in improving society. On providing solutions to social, economic and political challenges, 64.7% believe that the TV news plays an important role. Also, around 75% feel that TV news builds awareness on dominant issues, while only 63% feel that TV news champions the right social causes. These are insightful results that merit further discussion.

5.5 Perception of Objectivity of TV News

Objectivity of TV news is a combination of presenting facts, precisely, and in-depth, while drawing upon reliable sources. These elements do not differ greatly in their mean scores (see Table 3), reflecting a consistent rating pattern. Regarding presentation of news facts the mean score was 5.40. Both preciseness of news and in-depth coverage obtained a mean score of 5.04, while reliability of the news had a mean of 5.17. Each of the elements has scope for improvement.

From the frequency distributions (Table 7 and Figure 4), it was found that 50.9% of the respondents believe that TV news presents facts (with scores of 6 and 7 on the 7-point scales) while 45% considers that the information was precise or accurate. Regarding the in-depth quality of the news 43.9% of the respondents felt the news provided in-depth coverage. On reliability, 46.5% felt the news to come from reliable sources.

The distribution of the scores illustrates audience perceptions of each element of news objectivity in Bangladesh more vividly. Though the ratings are relatively high, yet roughly 20% of the audience is absolutely satisfied with the objectivity of the TV news. Clearly, TV channels need to present more objective news to improve

audience perceptions of objectivity and thus news credibility.

5.6 Perception of Source Expertise

In the context of Bangladesh, source expertise was reflected on four items: immediacy of information in the news, regular updates on an evolving situation, expert reporting, and skilled presentation. The respondents provided a mean score of 5.56 on regular updates of the TV news, which indicates that the news updates could be more frequent. Almost similar ratings were obtained on immediacy of information (5.75), expertise in reporting (5.38), and skilled reporting (5.50). These average scores suggest that there is room to develop further in the area of source expertise and its elements.

The distribution of the responses indicate (Table 8 and Figure 5) that about 41% of the respondents feel that the level of reporting skill needs to be raised, while about 49% feel the reporters' expertise could be improved (scoring 1–5 on the 7-point scale). Also, about 43.7% of the respondents believe that TV news needs to provide more immediate information, while 37.4% of the respondents feel that there is a need for more regular updates. On these items, reporting efficacy of TV news does not seem to be very satisfactory.

From Figure 5, while the immediacy of TV news appears to be in better shape than the other elements of the source expertise, it is evident that three of them can be improved further, that can affect the overall credibility of TV news in Bangladesh positively.

6 Conclusions

Television is the most popular medium in Bangladesh today; it is also potentially the most useful vehicle for carrying important messages to the masses. Despite having a plethora of TV channels, there is a clear dearth of studies that address the issue of their credibility and related factors. In fact, research on media and journalism has probably been one of the most neglected areas in Bangladesh.

While accessibility and utilization of TV as sources of information have increased markedly, people do not trust or believe everything the TV medium presents. Thus credibility remains a challenging issue for democratic processes such as formation of public opinion, elections, and public diplomacy.¹ For example, efforts at public diplomacy, no matter how richly funded, can be fruitless, if it is not credible to the public in the first place. Several studies conducted in the Middle East showed that when comparing the performance of regionally owned transnational television channels like *Al-Jazeera* and *Al-Arabiya*, the U.S. sponsored channel *Al-Hurra* is suffering a serious deficit of credibility, hampering its role as a public

Table 5: Distribution of ratings on independence

	Independence							Total (%)
	Likert Scale							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
News of the TV channel is free from its owners influence.	34.0	14.2	12.8	13.5	10.4	9.0	5.9	100
The TV channel’s news serves the interests of its shareholders/partners	25.8	11.9	17.3	16.5	13.1	9.6	5.8	100
TV news presented by the news channel is free from political bias	33.0	14.3	13.6	14.3	9.5	7.8	7.5	100
TV news reporters are not politically motivated	26.7	10.5	14.5	13.2	15.5	9.5	10.1	100

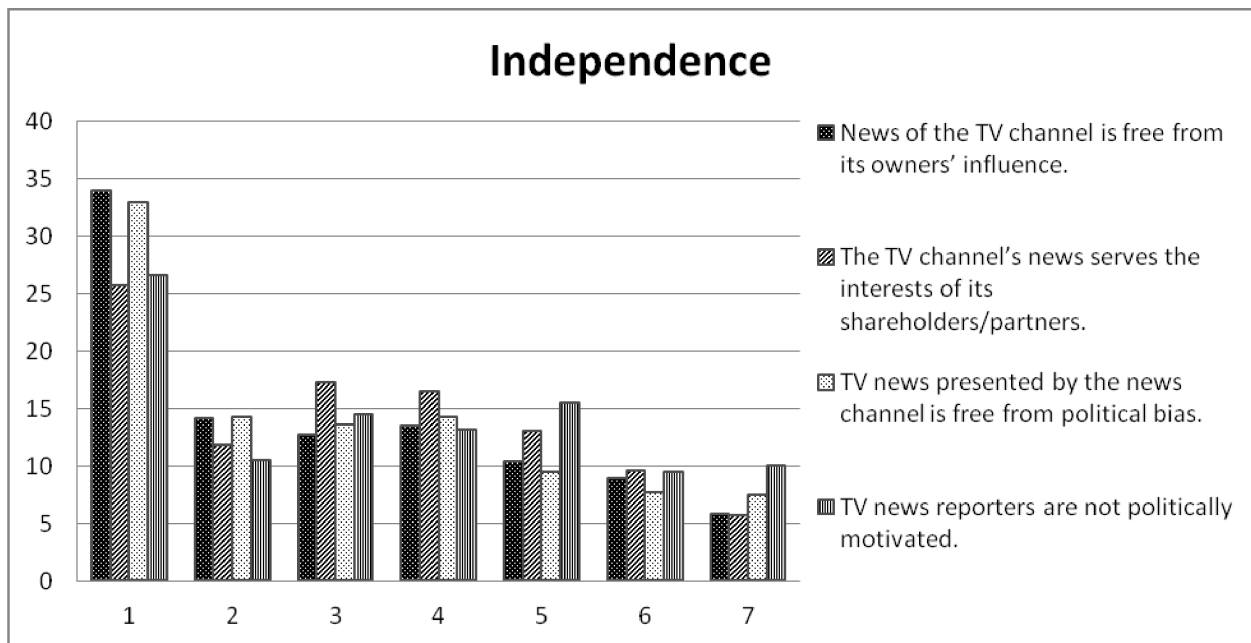


Figure 2: Bar chart of distribution of ratings on independence

Table 6: Distribution of ratings on social role

	Social Role							Total (%)
	Likert Scale							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
TV channel’s news plays an important role in improving society	1.4	0.3	2.4	6.8	11.5	25.4	52.2	100
TV news builds awareness on the dominant issues.	1.0	0.7	3.1	5.1	14.9	26.8	48.5	100
TV news contributes to solving political, social and economic problems.	2.0	1.3	2.4	10.8	18.9	26.3	38.4	100
TV news campaigns the right social causes.	2.0	2.4	3.1	11.6	17.7	28.3	38.4	100

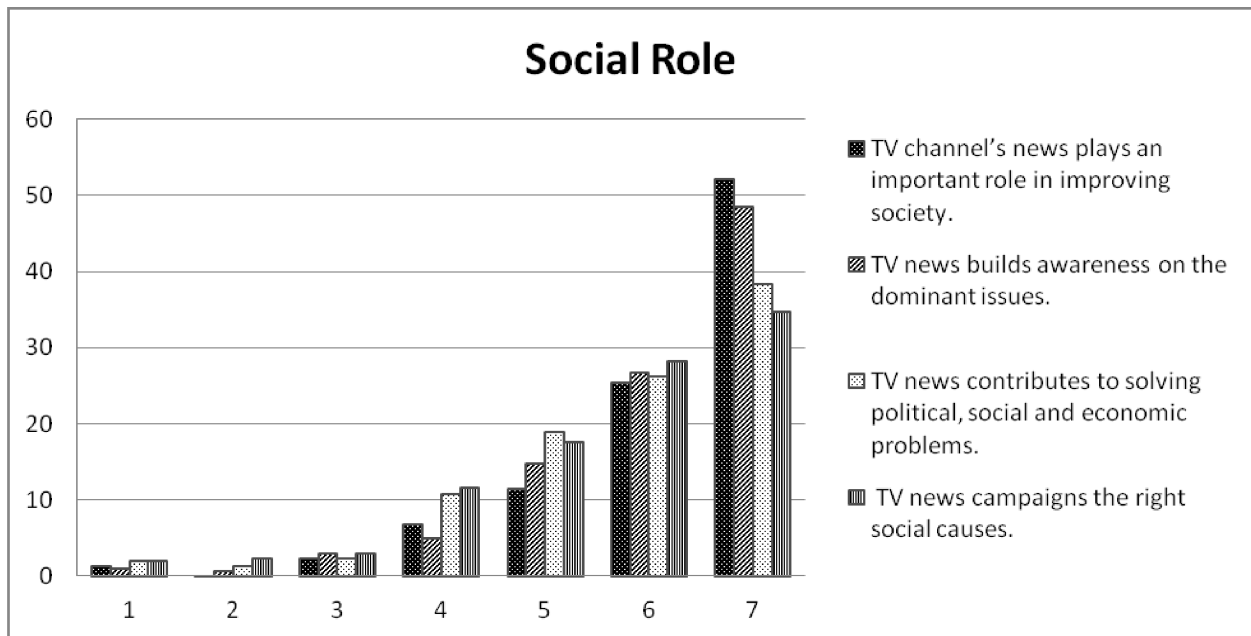


Figure 3: Bar chart of distribution of ratings on social role

Table 7: Distribution of ratings on objectivity

	Objectivity							Total (%)
	Likert Scale							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
TV channel's news presents information from reliable sources	3.4	1.0	4.5	22.1	22.4	28.6	17.9	100
TV channel's news provides precise information	3.4	5.7	6.4	16.1	23.5	26.5	18.5	100
TV channel's news presents facts	1.7	1.4	3.4	15.7	27.0	28.0	22.9	100
TV channel's news presents in-depth information	3.4	4.7	7.4	15.9	24.7	25.7	18.2	100

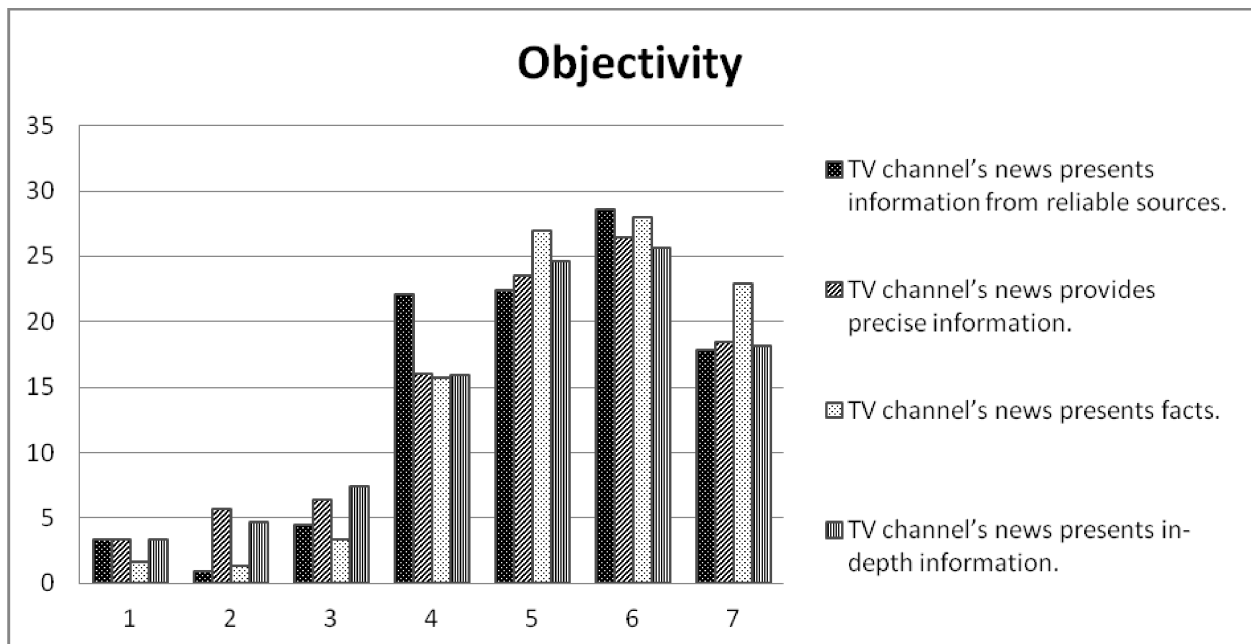


Figure 4: Bar chart of distribution of ratings on objectivity

Table 8: Distribution of ratings on expertise

	Expertise							Total (%)
	Likert Scale							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
TV channel's news provides regular updates to an evolving situation	4.1	2.7	3.1	7.9	19.6	30.6	32.2	100
TV channel's news provides immediate information	4.1	1.7	2.7	8.8	14.0	26.4	42.2	100
TV channel's news reporters are expert in reporting	2.0	3.7	4.1	13.6	25.8	22.7	28.1	100
TV channel's news presents skilled reporting	2.4	2.1	2.1	16.2	18.3	31.7	27.2	100

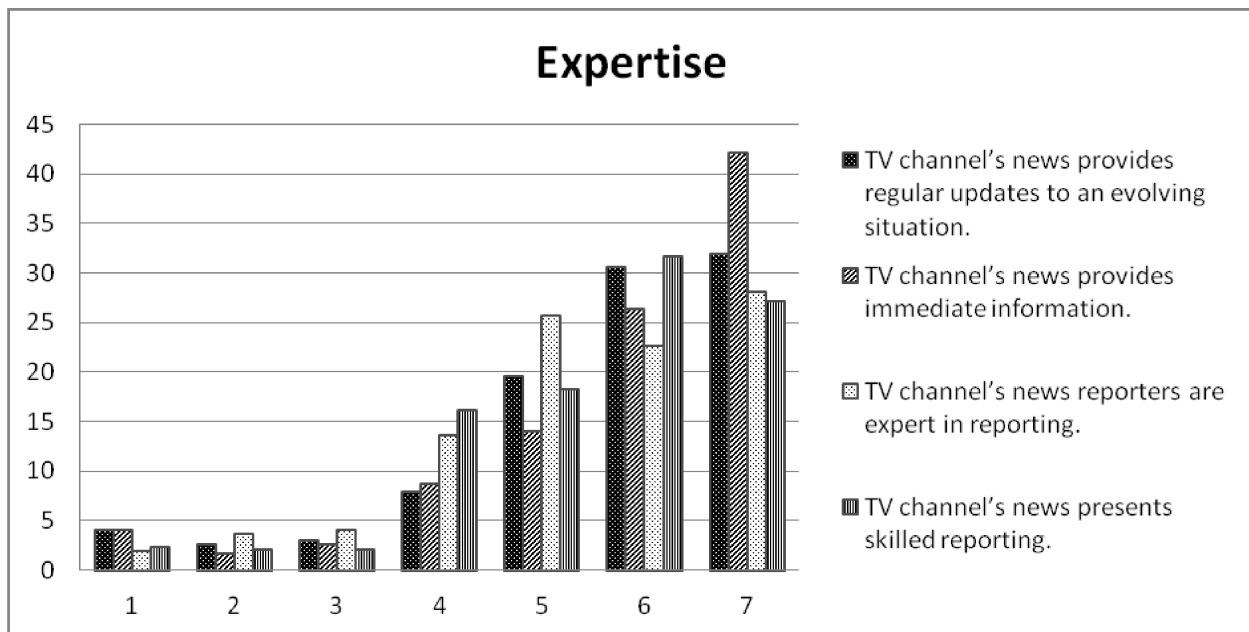


Figure 5: Bar chart of distribution of ratings on expertise

diplomacy tool for democratization (Dabbous and Nasser 2009, Douai 2011, El-Nawawy 2006, Johnson and Fahmy 2008).

However, in the era of neoliberal marketization, the public role of television news has been challenged by the rise of market-oriented journalism as, in most parts of the world, the news medium has become more market-driven and entertainment-centered.² Market-orientation has become one of “the principal dimensions of journalism cultures” (Hanitzsch 2007, p. 371).

This study provides audience perceptions of TV news credibility which is fairly positive and suggests that TV news may still retain a fair amount of influence in shaping public opinion. Interestingly, the audience provided low ratings for the Independence factor. This response reflects how the political elites and owners undercut the independence of TV news (Ferdous 2007, Khan 2007b). Clearly, TV owners must reduce their influence in the newsroom and let the journalists to do their job.

The study also indicates that the audiences of TV news think that TV news plays a significant social role instead of being purely market driven. From the distribution of the scores it is evident that people are satisfied with the role that TV news is playing in improving society and building awareness of the dominant issues. One might conjecture, however, that the audience expects TV news to play a greater role in solving political, social and economic problems as well as campaigning for the right social causes. Regardless of being market-oriented, if the TV channels pay more attention to contemporary crises, constraints, aspirations, and hopes of society with a constructive approach to solving these problems, they would tend to be perceived as more credible by the audience. By providing information that will encourage development and spur social awareness among the audience, by disseminating information among the public, TV news can play a credible social role and help in the process of economic advancement and accelerate the pace of cultural and social development.

Ratings for objectivity and source expertise are similar to the ratings for social role. In fact, despite being market-oriented TV news can be still perceived as credible to the audience in a dialectic way. This also suggests there is a gap between the critique of media commercialization and market-orientation (Haider 2007, Haq 2002, Rahman 2007; 2009) on one hand and audience perceptions on the other. Media researchers need to consider this dialectic relationship while building theoretical models.

7 Limitations

Our study is limited in some ways. For example, it does not represent the perceptions of the rural audience. This

audience is less scattered and tends to view television in a community neighborhood (Rahman 2009). This communal nature of viewership may change the entire dynamics of how credibility and its factors are perceived as interpersonal communication and group persuasion factors come into play.

Furthermore, a comparative analysis of cross-media credibility perceptions regarding print, television, radio, and Internet media could also be undertaken. This study provides a preliminary look at citizens’ perceptions of TV news credibility in Bangladesh only and may be considered as an effort to provoke further explorations surrounding the unexamined issue.

Based on this study, similar studies may be repeated not only for TV news, but also for other news media to follow emerging credibility trends in journalistic reporting. This is important as a social control mechanism to exert external influence on an industry about which Gaziano (1987, p. 267) wrote: “Public inability to believe the news media severely hampers the nation’s ability to inform the public, to monitor leaders and to govern. Decreased public trust also can lead to diminished freedom of the press and can threaten the economic health of some media.”

Endnotes

1. From the U.S. perspective, empirical research shows that if the public are suspicious of the media, they tend to reject the opinions that are created by the mediated climate. On the contrary, when people trust the media, they are more likely to converge with the media’s election predictions (Tsfati, 2003).
2. James Curran and colleagues explains that “this is the consequence of three trends that have gathered pace since the 1980s: the multiplication of privately owned television channels, the weakening of programme requirements on commercial broadcasters (‘deregulation’) and a contraction in the audience size and influence of public broadcasters” (Curran, Iyengar, Brink Lund, & Salovaara-Moring, 2009, p. 6).

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