

RESEARCH REPORT IREX STG

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1. Topic of Research and Country Visited

IREX funding supported the collection of a third-point-in-time data set measuring media development in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH). The researcher traveled to BiH in early May 2002 and conducted research in Sarajevo, Banja Luka, and Mostar.

2. Relevance and Contribution to Policy Research and Development

The development of a credible and independent media sector is an important component of U.S. humanitarian assistance to many nations of the Newly Independent States. Given the recent history of media being used as a propaganda and nationalist tool, an independent media is especially important in Bosnia-Herzegovina. However, it appears that even after 6 years of financial assistance totaling over \$70 million US dollars, the independent media in Bosnia have failed to gain public trust.

Two findings in particular may be of interest to policy makers.

First, in their decision-making Bosnians continue to value interpersonal channels for gathering information rather than valuing media sources.

Second, the Internet is emerging as an important information source, especially among the 18-35 age group.

Policy makers may want to shift resources from mass media outlets and instead invest in an Internet news source specifically dedicated to the growing group of Bosnian Internet users. Additionally, the high level of reliance on interpersonal sources for trusted information shows that more micro level projects (i.e., funding NGOs that train future leaders, community members, opinion leaders) are needed.

3. Methodology

During this research visit, over 1000 randomly selected Bosnians were asked to complete a quantitative questionnaire about media importance and credibility. Approximately 50% agreed to participate. Surveys were conducted in the two media centers of Bosnia-Herzegovina — Sarajevo (n= 305) and Banja Luka (n= 200). Sarajevo is the media center for the Federation and Banja Luka is the media center of the Republika Srpska. I also traveled to Mostar but did not have the opportunity to supervise survey collection there. An English version of the survey can be found in Appendix A.

4. Research findings and Preliminary Conclusions

The preliminary findings suggest several important trends in media usage and media credibility:

- There is a consistent skepticism about the media throughout BiH. For instance, a large majority of the people surveyed in both Banja Luka and Sarajevo noted that they do not believe the media show things as they really are and are unsure if they are getting the whole story from news outlets.

- Media in BiH continue to struggle in gaining public trust. Politically motivated media show very low levels of credibility and independent media are also struggling. (See Appendix B for a breakdown of credibility means). Independent magazines such as Reporter (Banja Luka-based weekly) and Dani (Sarajevo-based weekly) appear to have the highest credibility scores and show increased scores over the last three data sets. Support for these outlets should be continued.

5. Suggestions for Future Researchers

The IREX Sustainability Report (2001) offers insight into the professionalism of media in Bosnia and this report offers another perspective — public perceptions of the media. Now, it is time to find out which specific factors will help build media credibility. Focus groups, panel studies, and content analyses are important research methodologies for future media researchers in Bosnia. Also, the high level of interpersonal influence in information gathering, and the rise of the Internet offer researchers another area of inquiry.

6. Suggestions for U.S. Policy Makers

In the late 1990s, the U.S. government, through USAID and other granting organizations, shifted resources away from NGO development to focus on media development (Taylor, 2000). It may be time to revisit this decision given that media are not gaining in credibility and that interpersonal channels of communication have emerged as highly influential.

References

IREX Sustainability Report (2001). Available at http://www.irex.org/publications-resources/msi_2001/index.htm

Taylor, M. (2000). An Evaluation of USAID/OTI Political Transition Grants in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Research report published by the United States Agency for International Development, Office of Transition Initiatives, Washington, DC. (US Doc PN ACK-165, 39 pp.& Appendices). http://www.dec.org/pdf_docs/pnack165.pdf

APPENDIX A

SURVEY ON THE PUBLIC'S ATTITUDE ABOUT MEDIA IN BOSNIA

This survey is trying to explain and describe the public's attitude toward media in BiH.
Instructions: Please circle the number between each pair of words and phrases (with opposite meanings) that best represents how you feel about that media as a source of information and news.

Name of Newspaper

Very important	5	4	3	2	1	Not important at all
Is Fair	5	4	3	2	1	Is unfair
Is biased	5	4	3	2	1	Is unbiased
Tells whole story	5	4	3	2	1	Doesn't tell the whole story
Is accurate	5	4	3	2	1	Is inaccurate
Can be trusted	5	4	3	2	1	Cannot be trusted

Name of Television Station

Very important	5	4	3	2	1	Not important at all
Is Fair	5	4	3	2	1	Is unfair
Is biased	5	4	3	2	1	Is unbiased
Tells whole story	5	4	3	2	1	Doesn't tell the whole story
Is accurate	5	4	3	2	1	Is inaccurate
Can be trusted	5	4	3	2	1	Cannot be trusted

Name of Radio Station

Very important	5	4	3	2	1	Not important at all
Is Fair	5	4	3	2	1	Is unfair
Is biased	5	4	3	2	1	Is unbiased
Tells whole story	5	4	3	2	1	Doesn't tell the whole story
Is accurate	5	4	3	2	1	Is inaccurate
Can be trusted	5	4	3	2	1	Cannot be trusted

Magazine Name

Very important	5	4	3	2	1	Not important at all
Is Fair	5	4	3	2	1	Is unfair
Is biased	5	4	3	2	1	Is unbiased
Tells whole story	5	4	3	2	1	Doesn't tell the whole story
Is accurate	5	4	3	2	1	Is inaccurate
Can be trusted	5	4	3	2	1	Cannot be trusted

Media Scale

Instructions: Here is the list of statements that people made about media. Next to each statement are numbers. Please circle the number that describes the best the level of importance of each statement to you. Numbers are on scale of 1 to 5, with 5 meaning you fully agree with the statement and the number 1 meaning you fully disagree with the statement.

1. Television presents things as they really are in life.

5 4 3 2 1

2. If I see something on TV, I can't be sure it really is that way.
5 4 3 2 1
3. Television lets me really see how other people live.
5 4 3 2 1
4. TV does not show life as it really is.
5 4 3 2 1
5. Television lets me see what happens in other places as if I was really there.
5 4 3 2 1
6. I use media to obtain information.
5 4 3 2 1
7. Media helps me make important decisions in life.
5 4 3 2 1
8. I use media for entertainment.
5 4 3 2 1
9. I use media to obtain information so I can pass it to others.
5 4 3 2 1
10. I use media because I like to compare my own ideas to what the commentators say.
5 4 3 2 1
11. I use the following news sources for information:
- | | | | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| Press | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Radio | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Internet | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Personal Contacts | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Television | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

Demographic Data

1. Sex Male _____ Female _____
Age _____

Appendix B

Percentage Agreement of Importance as an Information Sources in Sarajevo

	<u>1998</u> (n=297)	<u>2000</u> (n=410)	<u>2002</u> (n=304)
TV and Radio BiH (P)	55%	66%	60%
OBN (I)	65%	56%	42%
Vecernje Novine (P)	52%	39%	15%
Dani Magazine (I)	60%	50%	68%

Mean Credibility of News Sources in Sarajevo

	<u>1998</u> (n=297)	<u>2000</u> (n=410)	<u>2002</u> (n=304)
TV and Radio BiH (P)	43.17	47.00	37.2
OBN (I)	48.14	53.00	41.4
Vecernje Novine (P)	37.00	31.20	13.1
Dani Magazine (I)	35.71	39.40	47.0
Dnevni Avaz	39.4	not avail	32.6

Percentage Agreement of Importance as an Information Source in Banja Luka

	<u>1998</u> (n=188)	<u>2000</u> (n=291)	<u>2002</u> (n=200)
SRT (P)	36%	57%	49%
Srpski Glas (P)	36%	47%	36%
Radio NES (I)	37%	39%	19%
Reporter Magazine (I)	not avail	42%	47%
Nezavisne Novine (I)	42%	42%	23%
ATV (I)	32%	37%	65%

Mean Credibility of News Sources in Banja Luka

	<u>1998</u> (n=188)	<u>2000</u> (n=291)	<u>2002</u> (n=200)
SRT (P)	35.4	42.40	29.6
Srpski Glas (P)	not avail	39.00	25.8
Radio NES (I)	36.00	32.80	23.3
Reporter Magazine (I)	31.28	41.40	43.9
Nezavisne Novine (I)	36.85	35.20	18.7
ATV (I)	27.71	30.80	50.4