

Need and Satisfaction Assessment of Ethiopian Private Higher Education Institutions (PHIs) on the Broadcast Media

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Abstract

The education sector in Ethiopia, as one of the major instruments to take the country out of this quagmire of poverty, should be supported by those that can make a difference. The mass media could of course be a case in point here. The three major pillars which most of the mass media use as their mission to achieve are educating, informing and entertaining the public.

Private higher education institution, as part of the driving forces for the advancement of education in the country, shall also be encouraged and supported through all the important means including the mass media.

This study tried to assess the extent to which PHEIs are satisfied with the service rendered by the national Ethiopian television and radio organizations. In addition, what they need from the mass media was also determined. A questionnaire which was designed in a Likert scale mode was used to collect the data. Document analysis has also been employed to substantiate the findings.

In conclusion, it can be said that the majority of the PHEIs are dissatisfied with the consistency and amount of news and /or feature stories coverage given to them. They are unhappy with the scope of the coverage given in relation to the wide range of activities that they believe are doing.

Unfair distribution of air time access among the PHEIs was also identified as an area of concern of the institutions.

On the other hand, timeliness of coverages and reasonable representation of views whenever there are conflicting stories was recognized as positively done. Research works, social contributions, challenges and opportunities, policy debates; other countries' experience in the private education sector were some of the issues that they want to be covered by the mass media.

I. Background and Statement of the Problem

The significance of communication for human life can not be overestimated. This is true because beyond the physical requirements of food and shelter man needs to communicate with fellow human beings. Among the four identified forms of communication is mass communication. This type of communication entertains messages addressed from one to many persons mediated by elements in mass media such as radio, television, film, newspaper, magazine, book etc.

The mass media, as powerful instruments communicate various messages to the people of different class, education and socio-economic status. They are supposed to educate, inform, entertain and mobilize the public for development. It is expected to gather and distribute information within and out side a particular environment. This flow of information could bring unity and coherence among a given society.

The mass media do not end-up in the dissemination of raw information. They interpret, it prescribes conduct and comment on social value. They do these with the assumption that the society for and/or within which the mass media operate could benefit from them and registers different forms of development.

The other important function of the mass media is educating the public. In this, they are basically concerned with exposing the audience to its rights and responsibilities, on what is going on around, the good and bad deeds of various sections of the society, on policies of government and other issues that could bring about the desired change towards development.

All the tasks that are supposed to be done by different mass media agencies should in principle serve the interests of the society that they are working for. They seek to bring the people together and help to advance national development.

It should be noted that apart from their role in development the media entertain the public by providing emotional and cultural enjoyment and reducing boredom.

Ethiopian mass media like other countries' media are supposed to have the same role. The legal and other institutional frameworks, at least in principle, in the country do also require them to follow the same path. Given the importance of the financial strength for the existence of mass media organizations, we may see very sensational stories that are sellable and profitable, flooding news and feature stories of the press and the broadcast media.

But there are mechanisms designed to entertain more serious stories in terms of their role towards development. Community and/or state or public-owned mass media organizations are a case in point.

It is known that there are both print and broadcast state-owned media in Ethiopia. The editorial policy and established documents of the institutions put supporting the overall development effort of the country as the primary role that they should play. One can mention the education sector in general and private higher education institutions in particular as the driving force of the development of a country.

It is through reporting as much specific and grass root level stories as possible that the media are believed to contribute to the overall development endeavor of the country. It is with this assumption that the mass media and private higher education institutions could be related. Hence, it will not be out of place if private higher institutions claim their share from the service of the media. The media on its part should reflect their contributions as part of their duty in supporting development. The public at large in general and students and parents of these institutions in particular shall also be informed about the various issues of education.

The needs and aspirations of both parties shall also be served by the mass media as much as possible. Further still, government policies concerning education shall be explained, discussed and debated. It is through these and other means that the media can possibly make a difference.

In fact it should be through a professional approach that the public including private higher education institutions can be served. This paper tries to see the extent to which PHIs are served by the Ethiopian state-owned national broadcast media, in the eyes of private higher education institutions.

Objectives of the Study

This study has the following two major objectives:

1. assess the extent to which the services rendered by the national service of radio Ethiopia and Ethiopian Television satisfy the interests of private higher education institutions (PHEIs)
2. identify the media coverage needs of PHEIs.

II. Method

The study employed a descriptive method of researching. Document analyses were also used to substantiate the findings.

Questionnaire was used as the major tool of collecting the data. The questionnaire has three parts. In the first part items that are meant for assessing the satisfaction level of the PHEIs in the service rendered by ETV and Radio Ethiopia, specifically in the news and feature stories are prepared in a Likert scale mode. The second part contains questions that can help detect the needs of the PHEI concerning the service rendered by the two mentioned mass media organizations. In the third part are open-ended questions that request them to comment on the weak and strong sides of the mass media and to state what they think is the importance of the mass media to their institutions in particular and to the education sector in general.

Seven items of analyses are used to measure the level of satisfaction. The items can be mentioned with regard to the service rendered by the mass media were selected in their role to give full pictures of the PHEIs for the audience.

The mass media can only be effective when it succeeds in creating or providing full image on what it is reporting for its audience. The one which the story is about could also benefit from the service in the same way.

A total of 5 Colleges and University Colleges were used as subjects of the study. The sampling was done by considering the institutions' years of experience and accreditation record in the different disciplines they offer. The selected colleges and University colleges have a relatively longer years of experience and good record of accreditation than other private Colleges and University colleges. The questionnaire was distributed to the selected 6 institutions and 5 of them were returned.

II. Operational Definitions of Items Analyses

1. Frequency / Consistency

The consistency and frequency of news and / or feature story coverages determines the effectiveness of the media in achieving its role for supporting development efforts of a country.

Reporting private higher education institutions should not be a one-time fashion. In order to give to the public their full picture there has to be professional selection and coverage in a consistent manner.

2. Scope

The mass media cannot cover each and every last detail of an event. But it is expected to provide the audience with diversified views, opinions and activities. In line with this assertion, PHEIs, in their different activities in the education sector, could seek proper representation.

3. Timeliness

The importance of proper time management, as an important factor for the success of a desired change, could also work for the mass media.

News or feature reports could only achieve their mission if and only if they are published or broadcasted on the right time.

4. Fair access

This item of analyses is used in relation to the responsibility that the state owned media is obliged to obey. In our country and in many other countries, establishing codes and editorial policies of such media require them to give fair access to the voices of different sections of the society. It is in this assumption that the PHEIs may seek fair access from the state –owned media. In fact, fair access can only be done through professional decisions.

5. Balance

The mass media has this power of promoting a certain view, opinion or activity over the other. It can abuse its power of disseminating information for a huge number of people in few minutes time by favoring a certain view over the other.

PHEIs might or might not suffer from unbalanced coverage of the mass media.

6. Service

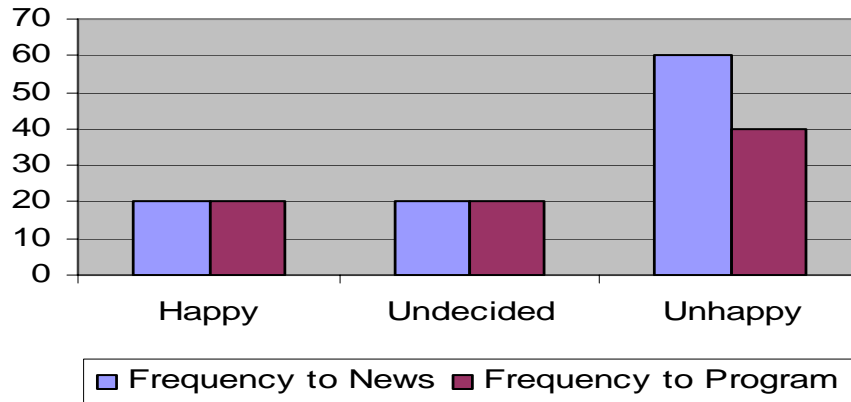
This item refers to the two media organizations customer handling service.

7. Contribution

Any message that come out from media agencies is supposed to have positive contribution to the social, political, economical or spiritual, etc.. development of a society.

IV. Data Presentation and Analysis

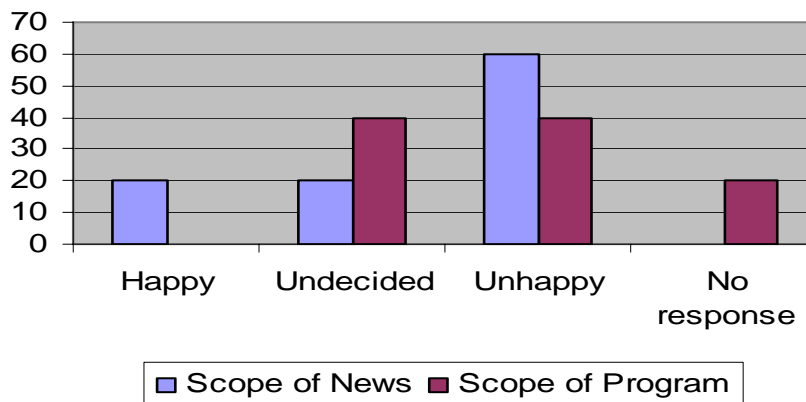
Frequency



As the above table indicates the majorities of the institutions are dissatisfied by the consistency of news and feature stories coverage they are given by both ETV and Radio Ethiopia.

These institutions do have a good record of accreditation which is given by concerned government body. This implies that there are activities done by these institutions which can have its own contribution to the advancement of the countries development. But the institutions are saying that their contribution, challenges and opportunities success and failure stories are not consistently covered by the two mass media

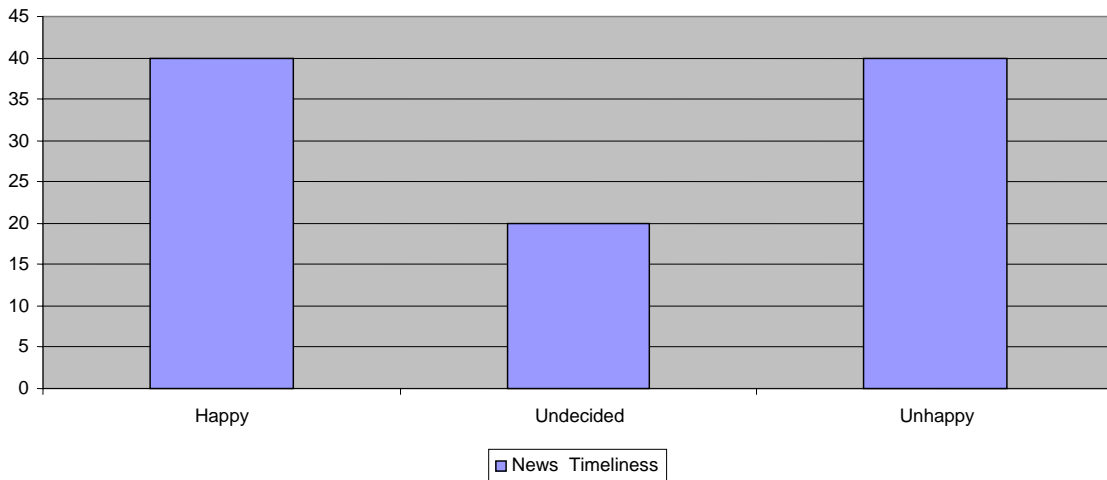
Scope



It is not only in the consistency of coverage that the institutions are not satisfied. They are also unhappy about the scope of coverage that they were already given. As the above chart indicates 60 percent of them considered the news reports on them as narrowly focused. And 40 percent of them feel the same about the feature stories. These imply that there are areas that should be investigated further and get the appropriate coverage.

It is through diversified reports that the audience can have a full picture of the PHEIs. News and feature stories that cover certain and very limited aspects of an event would fail to achieve their mission of informing, educating and entertaining the audience on diversified issues from different perspectives. As a simple observation we can say that many of the news reports broadcasted by ETV and Radio Ethiopia relates only to the graduation day of each institution.

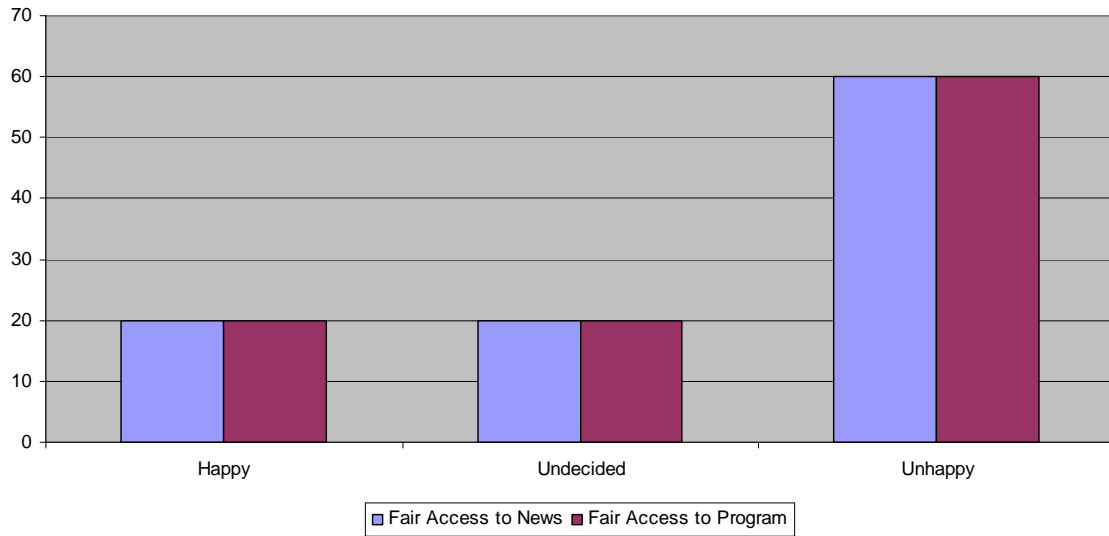
Timeliness



Time is considered as an important element for the successful accomplishment of tasks. ETV and Radio Ethiopia managed to satisfy nearly half of the institutions by giving timely coverage. But another half of them are still dissatisfied. This tells that there were news reports broadcasted untimely, either early or late. It is unlikely for such news broadcasts to have the possible impact which may have the desired change.

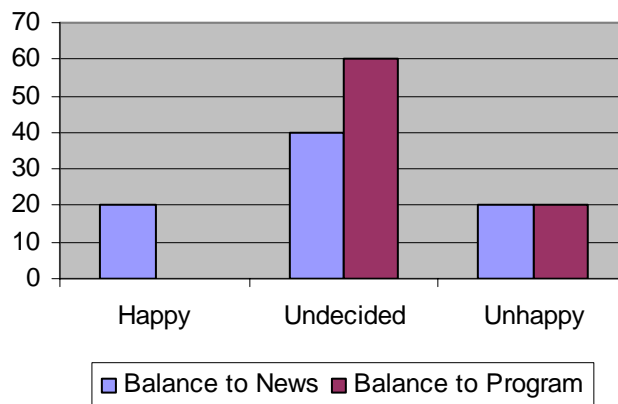
This will lead them to be just fill in for the news hour, which in fact is, not self supporting for the media itself. It is because the audience is also interested to listen to news and other feature stories that are timely.

Fair Access



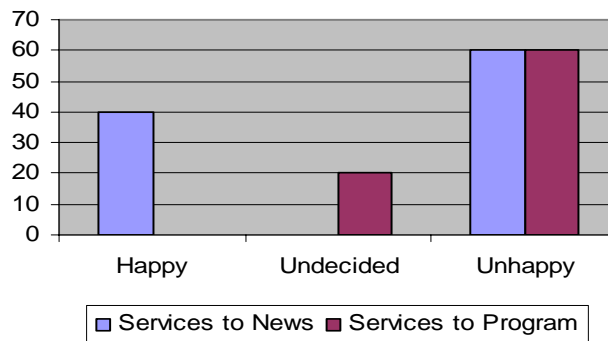
Ethiopian Television and Radio organization are obliged to serve the public fairly and equally by law. But the chart shows that PHEIs don't feel they are served fairly. 60 percent of them are unhappy on the fairness of access given to both news and feature stories. They are dissatisfied on the access given among themselves, but not with other sectors and/or state-owned higher education institutions. This indicates that there are groups that are privileged and others who are disregarded by the media, which is in contradiction to what is expected from state owned media organizations. This act can also create a distorted reality with in and outside of the PHEIs. In consequence the country's education be damaged.

Balance



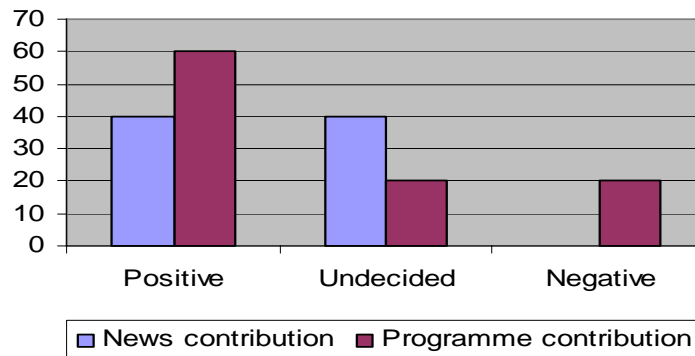
In the above chart we see that the PHEIs are to a certain extent satisfied and to a certain extent dissatisfied with the fair representation of their views, opinion and voices by the two mass media. It is to be noted that whenever there are opposite views, accusations and other stories of such nature that concern PHEIs, the media should seek and entertain their views, so that balance would be maintained. But the above chart does not show it. It is only 20 percent of them that are fully satisfied with it. Unbalanced reporting as some call it ‘human right abuse’ would probably end –up in the failure of the victim institutions.

Service



As regards the customer handling service of the two mass media, 40 percent of the PHEIs are satisfied. But still the majority of them are disappointed. Poor customer handling, when it is observed in the state owned media organizations might be taken as a serious problem. For one thing it is an unlawful act not to properly serve the public, which is named here as a customer. Secondly, it can create a huge hole for abusing such a sensitive organ for the interests of few individuals or groups. In effect, it harms the advancement of education.

Contribution



Every mass media agency, as discussed in the first part of this paper, is expected to contribute positively to the entire development of a society. It seems that the ETV and Radio Ethiopia are heading towards it in the eyes of the PHEIs. However, what can be observed from the above chart is that there are significant portion of the PHEIS (20 percent) who feel the media is damaging the institutions. This may lead to abnormal relationship between the media and the institutions. It can also hinder proper exploration of the media to the advancement of the country's education.

V. Conclusions

This study tried to assess the extent to which private higher education institutions are satisfied with the service rendered by Ethiopian Television and the national Ethiopia radio organizations. In addition, an attempt was made to identify these institutions' needs concerning their activities, which they want to get them covered by the two mentioned mass-media organizations.

In conclusion, it can be said that PHEIs are dissatisfied with what the mass media is doing in the context of their interest. Majority of them are found to be unhappy with the consistency of news and feature stories coverage they are given by the two mass media organizations. They believe that there are news and /or feature stories worth activities done by the respective institutions. But they felt that the mass media do not pay the appropriate attention to it.

The other area of concern is the scope of the coverage to the PHEIs. The institutions took the news and /or the feature stories which concerns them as narrow focused. They think that their full picture can never be obtained in such narrow focused coverages. Pertaining to fair access to the mass media, dissatisfaction has been observed. The PHEIs feel that they are not served equally by the two state-owned media.

There are also areas of service that were recognized by the PHEIs, as positive elements in the two mass media. Timeliness of coverage and fair representation of their views in times of conflict were taken positively by the PHEIs.

In addition, the majority of the institutions considered what has already been covered by the two mass media as positively contributing to their advancement.

Concerning their needs with regard to their activities which they want to get them covered by the mass media, the following list has been identified:

- Research and development
- Special contributions
- Challenges and opportunities
- Positive image building in the minds of the audience
- Education policy debates and,
- Graduates tracking

VI. Recommendations

- PHEIs association shall give due attention to put pressure on the mass media.
Areas of focus could be;
 - Consistency of coverage
 - Depth and width of coverage
 - Fair access to air time to all
 - Better customer handling mechanisms
- The mass media shall seek a professional approach to respond to the voice of the PHEs.