BBC and CNN Television News:

Their credibility among viewers in Malta

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Abstract

This research probes people’s credibility toward BBC and CNN TV news in Malta by assessing audiences’ perceptions. The initial questions are: do people in Malta trust more BBC than CNN TV news or vice versa and why? This study could be just a micro study to develop a larger picture of the credibility of such sources in a wider context.

Chapter one serves as a problem statement and chapter two discusses the issue of credibility within the media and psychology literature. TV news is taken as a specific instance of media events particularly the BBC and CNN TV News channels and their viewing in local context. Chapter three provides a description of the methodology used in this study while chapter four discusses the findings of the mail survey undertaken for this investigation. Chapter five concludes with a summary of the findings, the limitations of this research and a number of recommendations for others to drive this research track even further.
I, Xi Mao declare that this dissertation, “BBC and CNN Television News: Their credibility among viewers in Malta”, is my original work.

Xi Mao
For Miss Chu Yi, my desk mate in middle school, a Chinese Rose, who left China for an MBA program in England from the same airport, the same day I left for Malta. She perished there two weeks later…

To China, who gives me the dark hair and dark eyes to urge me to struggle for the light in the darkness!
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Chapter 1

BBC and CNN Television News: Their credibility among viewers in Malta - a problem statement

I felt happy and free there and I needed nothing- but because I have always been consumed with one desire: to touch and see as much as possible of the earth and the sea before I die.
- “Zorba the Greek” by Nikos Kazantzakis

Introduction

For an international student studying in a small island, English TV news becomes a constant reliable source to check “what is happening around the world”. This statement is also likely to be valid for other travellers especially among business community. People travelling on business keep in touch with their “world” by anchoring to familiar news services when they are outside their environment and therefore in “isolation”.

While watching TV news, quite often, Anglophones turn to the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and Cable News Network (CNN), the two dominant and most advertised English-language TV news channels worldwide and vacillate between them before they finally settle for one. This inspired a question on people’s credibility toward BBC and CNN TV news programmes in Malta. Do people trust more BBC than CNN news or vice versa and why? This type of study could be just a micro study to develop a larger picture of the credibility of such sources on a larger scale.
Furthermore, BBC and CNN news services are used by other disseminators, be they personal or institutional, to provide a news service to local publics. They become a reliable source of news for those newsrooms which cannot afford to have their own international correspondents spread all over the globe. Politicians, economists and other decision makers use both sources of news as a basis of data-collection prior to implementing decisions.

TV news organizations are still strong in their coverage of news despite the competition by Internet technology: “There is little sign that with rapidly expanding communication technologies we are going to watch it (TV) any less” (Silverstone, 1991, p. 147). If one believes that audiences rely on the news media for an informative and accurate account of what is happening in the world, TV news can best exert their “seeing is believing”, for news is most likely to be the “second reality” beyond people’s first-hand-check. In addition, whatever the technology means are, the TV news service is a comparatively mature service and performs an important function. It has been nurtured within the development of media organizations for more than 50 years. This has made it possible for TV news to be disseminated through and in cooperation with other media. In fact, many people consult news everyday through the WebPages of the TV news agencies (Croteau & Hoynes, 2000). Among them, BBC and CNN are two giants due to their accessibility in most of the countries.

The media effects research has been through four phases: all-powerful media, theory of powerful media put to the test, powerful media rediscovered, negotiated media influence
(McQuail, 2000, p. 417) and most researches shifted from the early “bullet theory” (Schramm, 1971) to focus on the interaction between communicators and receivers, thus the audience’s interpretation is more emphasized. The present research assumes the latter approach.

This research is not primarily interested in what people trust and believe, it is about why people trust. Some argue that it is hard to test and explain people’s thoughts and cognition. Yet credibility relies on such cognition. Truly there are instances when it is hard to articulate one’s reasons for credibility. Yet this should not prevent one’s best approximation for understanding such a vital aspect of our relationship to the media. There are attributes that make credibility stronger in one instance than in another instance. How do such attributes impact the credibility issue of news for both the BBC and CNN in the Maltese context?

BBC and CNN are the representatives of the European “state-regulated” media system and the “free market” media system of the United States respectively (De Fleur’s model of the taste-differentiated. (n.d.)). Over the past two decades both organisation have become major competitors on the global market. The gap between their credibility (if there is any) might serve as the relative advantage between the two systems.

It is not the aim of this study to deal with the credibility of the two organizations themselves, or discuss credibility through the content analysis of the TV news programs. Instead, this study discusses the audience’s perception by examining the viewership to
understand the basis on which people build their credibility toward TV news. One can then compare the credibility of BBC and CNN’s agenda-settings and the credibility the audience attribute to them in order. Should this study prove useful, then similar studies in larger markets would yield indications to BBC and CNN on how to improve their news programmes in the future. In this sense, this study is just a probe demanding further insight on this topic.

One may argue that a study like this being carried out in Malta, a small island, may be meaningless. Malta is an atypical context. However, the local context shares something in common with a lot of other places in this world. Malta used to be a British colony, now living a post-colonial era. In this it shares the same conditions of many other countries, which acquired their independence in the latter half of last century.

In Malta, English is an official language in its local bilingual system. But English is also emerging as the international business language throughout the world.

Malta has a physical strategic position for the big powers. But this pales when compared to the competition of different media organizations to win over more consumers to their rating. Through a systematic media invasion, foreign media not only offer media content but also different ideologies to their consumers. If we take the logic of this argument further, in this “global village” (McLuhan, 1967), every English-speaking person is lured to become a pariah sharing the same values by consuming the same media content offered by these international English channels. In this sense, this study may apply to
more and more countries and regions where increasing Anglophones are scattered around the world.

Consequently, the questions proposed for this study are: what are the characteristics of the viewers of BBC or CNN TV news in Malta? Do people in Malta who watch BBC and / or CNN trust BBC or CNN more? What causes people’s different perceptions of the two TV news channels? Is there a credibility gap between the two? What do viewers think of the BBC and CNN TV news?

The next chapter of this study discusses the literature already available about media credibility, the BBC and CNN news services, and the Maltese context. Chapter three follows with a description of the methodology used in this study while chapter four discusses the results and findings of the mail survey undertaken for this study. Chapter five concludes with a summary of the limitations and a number of recommendations for others who may want to follow this research track even further.
Chapter 2

Literature review

The last man who has freed himself from all belief, from all illusions and has nothing more to expect or to fear sees the clay of which he is made reduced to spirit, and this spirit has no soil left for its roots, from which to draw its sap. The last man has emptied himself; no more seed, no more excrement, no more blood. Everything having turned into words, every set of words into musical jugglery, the last man goes even further: he sits in his utter solitude and decomposes the music into mute mathematical equations. Each morning they see a new world before their eyes; they do not really see it, they create it.

- “Zorba the Greek” by Nikos Kazantzakis

The literature review for this study is divided into four parts. Since credibility is a psychological construct that manifests itself in behaviours, one has to look into the development of psychology and its contribution within the media effects context. Therefore, the first part will discuss the issue of credibility within the media and psychology literature. The second part of this review concentrates on the issue of TV news as a specific example of media events. The third part reviews the development of the BBC and CNN TV News channels. The fourth and last part deals with the BBC and CNN TV news viewing in local context.

Media credibility as a psychological construct in media effects research

According to the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English, credibility is “the quality that somebody / something has that makes people believe or trust them” (Wehmeier Eds., 2000, p. 295). Thus credibility is an issue of perception that one may have or develop about another subject or object on the basis of some perceived quality (ies). Such a perception would then affect all the communication generated among the subjects of the communication process.
Researchers have demonstrated that this definition also applies to media credibility (Bittner, 1986, p. 257). In the earlier days, research into interpersonal communication investigated how the source of a message can affect its reception, a concept called source credibility (Bittner, 1986, p. 257). Later on, other researchers compared the credibility that audiences attribute to different media, such as radio and TV. They concluded that the media’s contribution to a story’s believability is called media credibility. A recent study on people’s credibility of the online source conducted by Fogg and his colleagues (Fogg et al., 2001) defined people’s credibility with regard to media as (a) believability and (b) a perception based on two factors: trustworthiness (truthful, unbiased and honest) and expertise (experienced, intelligent, powerful and knowledgeable).

This research assumes a twofold approach to credibility. First, from a media perspective, credibility is defined as the “quality that a certain medium or media organization has that deserves people’s believability and trustworthiness”. Secondly, from an audience perspective, people’s credibility towards media is defined as “people’s believability and trustworthiness to media”. Both definitions of “credibility” can be considered as aspects of the same construct which seem to overlap, in fact they are slightly different: from the media side, they assess it as the media “output” while from the audience side, they approach it from their “perceptions”.

Influenced by the “bullet theory” (Schramm, 1971), which assumed that the mass audience was individually affected by the various media with which they came into
contact, initial media effects research did not discriminate among the diverse audiences on the receiving end (Bittner, 1986). Bittner (1986) elaborated that however, investigation by most of the credibility researches at earlier stages focused on the credibility gap of different means of communication. In the 1930s, when radio first appeared as a medium, it quickly surpassed newspapers as the most credible news source. TV’s enormous credibility was attributable not only to the tremendous impact it had on peoples’ lives but also to its two dimensions of sight and sound (p. 258). Today, comparisons between the impacts of different media are still a prevalent topic of credibility research and discussions as reflected in comparisons between TV and on-line news sources.

In the case of research focused on the credibility of a specific medium, Hovland and Weiss (1951, cited in Lowery & DeFleur, 1995, p. 171) tested the effectiveness of source credibility in persuasion. They found that for the same issues, people trusted the high-credibility source more than the low-credibility source in short term, while the low-credibility source appeared to cause greater opinion change in the long term.

In the second half of the 20th century, researches concerned with explaining how mass communication affects people refined the “bullet theory”, or “hypodermic needle” theory (Berlo, 1960, cited in Weiss, 1969). The new view attributed much less power to mass communication messages -a major statement by Joseph Klapper (1960) labelled “limited effects”. According to this theory, people were seen as ordinarily having a great deal of resistance to the mass communication message. This resistance was due to a number of
factors including various psychological filtering systems triggered when people perceived communicated messages. There was a shift from the notion of a passive audience to an active audience. As in the case of print media readership, the audience’s background and context was taken into consideration when discussing media effects.

This means one can examine the traits of individuals to see whether there are correlations between specific variables and people’s perceptions. These variables include audiences’ intelligence (education level), gender, personality traits (characteristics or personality), emotions, individual past experiences, structure of their motives, history of their public and private commitments, ethnic identification and even their demographic conditions. Such correlations do not lead univocally to any causal interpretation of the effects of mass media. But in the context of their conception of the control role of the media, the data are suggestive (Weiss, 1969).

In view of the theory that various media have a “limited effect”, other environmental influences were to be examined such as interests of governments and law-makers, changing technology, the events of history, the activities of pressure groups and propagandists, the ongoing concerns of public opinion, and even findings and the fashions of social science (McQuail, 2000, p. 417).

Some media effects researches focused on news and examined the *framing* of news transmitted by certain media before they reached the audience- an approach from media message perspective. A *frame* is a “central organizing idea for news content that supplies
a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration” (Severin & Tankard, 1997, p. 320). This can mean that different effects can be achieved due to mere existence of one or more media, special characteristics of the media, certain kind of contents or programs provided by the media, single program or communication events, and specific factors in an effective communication (Weiss, 1969, p. 80).

These contextual cues established by a complex set of individual attitudes and beliefs of the communicator and rules or norms within the culture of working professionals are just one side of story. A newer direction in framing research has shifted to the understanding of the dynamics between the communicators and audiences that take place when citizens process and interpret media, a conception called audience framing (Wicks, 2001, p. 90). This echoes the trend in Media effects studies in which audience is considered instrumental to the framing process.

Content analysis is often used to categorize the media messages when it comes to media messages. For example, news yields such clusters as “domestic issues and international affairs”, “commerce, sports, entertainment, and politics” or “prime-time news, weekly news and news briefs”. Sometimes the framing of news stories is suggested by particular devices that are accessed early in the processing of stories, including headlines, the presentation of anchors and other related pictorial images. Therefore, content analysis is able to establish that credibility is not only tied to the information delivered in the news item, but it is also dependent on the framing afforded
to the news item by a news editor. Thus the packaging of news has a direct bearing on its credibility.

The fallacy of content analysis in media effects studies (including credibility studies) is that it may be performed merely to describe what the media are making available to people: “To accomplish this, an implicit assumption is made that the relevant public perceives the material in terms of the same descriptive system and initially categorizes the content in the same way” (Weiss, 1969, p. 84).

Credibility is such a necessary, though insufficient, factor in triggering persuasion in the communication process that the framework used by attitude and persuasion researches may offer support to credibility research. Petty and Cacioppo (1981) catalogued two distinctive routes to attitude change studies. The first route, which they called the central route, emphasized the information that a person had about the attitude object or issue under consideration. Some of the central approaches focused on how the arguments in a persuasive message were comprehended and learned by audiences while other central approaches focused on the information that people generated themselves. Still other central approaches focused on the ways in which people integrated or combined the information available to them. The second route, which they called the peripheral route, presented a different picture of the persuasion process. According to this second view, attitude change was determined by such factors as the rewards or punishments with which the message was associated, or the judgemental distortions that took place in perceiving the message, or the simple inferences that a person drew about why a speaker
advocated the persuasion.

Different dimensions extended by the two routes, which can be generalized to most of the persuasion studies also apply to credibility research since credibility represents a cognition process. But given credibility is a cognitive conception, one has to be aware that as an attitude, credibility alone does not determine people’s behaviour; thus the result of credibility studies does not indicate but only imply further human behaviour.

Credibility is a cognitive construct through people’s psychological filtering. In the handbook of social psychology (Lindzey & Aronson, 1969), Weiss discussed the nature of media effects under several headings not only to propose a rational order for a diverse body of literature but also to identify existing gaps in the research. Since credibility research is a subset of the media effects research, a cursory elaboration of this framework helps to contextualise the credibility issue.

1. Media effects refer to people’s cognition in its broadest sense, encompassing people’s mere awareness as well as extensive knowledge of events, persons, and possibilities beyond their first-hand experiences. But for many events that people lack direct connection, the media’s role is limited to establishing the external precondition of awareness that is, making available to the audience a supply of pertinent information. So the discrepancy between media news supply and audience’s cognition is to be sought in the psychological characteristics of human beings such as a) selective exposure: audience’s selectivity of attention on news may result from audience’s motivation for
news, their attitude toward and use of the media and also their interest in the subject matter of the news. Together with their selective perception and selective retention, it is a question of “how much they rely on certain media for news?” b) Second-hand reality: what are singled out and offered by news via Media shape a second-hand reality which people are unable to use direct experience as a check. In this way, media do more than merely mediate the environment as an independent agent.

2. People’s comprehension of media content is an important aspect of cognitive effects. Audience’s difficulty of comprehension or miscomprehension of media content, such as news, may reside in the manner of its presentation or in the relationship between the content and people’s significant attitudes and values. This may be related to people’s education level and cultural background.

3. Media stimuli’s emotional arousal depends on people’s perceptual and cognitive processes and their bases in learning, motivation and personality, which must be considered in any analysis of the emotional effects of mass media. Consequently four elements are of importance: people’s mood(s), cognitive schema, setting of exposure and arousal of specific emotions.

4. Media effects reflect people’s pursuit of their identification in media content. This means audience’s involvement in the depicted events through a psychological relationship with one or another of the participants. This viewpoint is, particularly relevant in the analyses of the imitative or modelling effects of media-portrayed
behaviour. In other words, it is the individual’s familiarity with the media news content that will influence the effect.

5. Previous media effects researches have discussed the effects on opinions and attitudes using experimental procedures. It was found that media are relatively limited in their ability to produce an attitudinal change (Klapper, 1960, cited in Weiss, 1969, p. 101). They provide a cumulative impact which is not that pronounced (Emmett, 1966, Goto, 1966, cited in Weiss, 1969, p. 102). This echoes our review on the literature of attitudinal and persuasion research discussed in earlier this chapter.

6. Media effects are demonstrated usually through a particular overt behaviour such as consumer purchase or voting for a particular candidate. This has to do with the credibility that people attribute to the media. In the case of news this becomes especially valuable in the context of political campaigns.

7. Media effects research also deals with how effective the mass media stimulate people’s interests and interest-related behaviour different from those behaviours stimulated by other grounds (e.g. education). News effects may hardly be discussed in this aspect since it is focused on political issues few of which are people’s hobbies.

8. Media also degrade, pander or reinforce the public taste. This poses the question: to what extent is media an educator? This inquiry extends to people’s collective media consuming behaviour of news since there is little doubt that the influence of the media
will be constrained by the far greater role played by social, personal, educational and family determinants of the taste.

9. Despite some assumptions or frequently expressed expectations, there is scant research on the purported influence of the mass media on personal or social values, ethical or moral views, or attitudes toward life. That is the media effect on the \textit{outlook and values} of the society and individual.

10. According to psychological research, media has little to do with \textit{family life}. The major effect seems to be redistribution of time spent at home, especially for young people, the family patterns decide how much media occupy their life.

All these dimensions or issues have been found to contribute to the construct of this credibility research if put all together.

However more recent media effects research has led to further revisions of the thinking about mass communication (Severin & Tankard, 1997). This newer research restores some of the power to mass communication messages, although not as much as they had under the “bullet theory”. Approaches such as the agenda-setting hypothesis or cultivation theory attribute to mass communication what might be called \textit{moderate effects}:

“One result of the changes in technology is that it is no longer possible to think of television as a uniform or monolithic system, transmitting essentially the same message to everyone” (Severin & Tankard, 1997, p.14).
In general, the rapid changes in communication technology suggest that researchers should try to formulate communication theory in terms that go beyond the details of a specific medium or technology. Instead communications theory could be phrased in terms of variables like public affairs information seeking, the need for companionship, degree of user control and so forth (Severin & Tankard, 1997, p.13).

Referring to the literature of the media effect and credibility researches and also considering that the notion of credibility requires a corollary viewpoint on the part of the decoder of persuasive messages, this research measures credibility from the decoder’s side (the audience’s perception). Is there any relationship between the audiences’ credibility and their personal profiles such as their education and culture background etc.? All this requires an examination of the viewership. Based on these two dimensions, one can compare the credibility desired by the Media organizations and the credibility perceived by the audience.

*TV News*

“News” simply is new- timely, fresh, immediate (McIntyre, 1996, p. 1). “Journalist”, is from French word “jour”, which means day, and “journal”, which means daily record. The journalist is a person who keeps a daily record.

Like the notion of “credibility”, “news” can be assessed in two dimensions. People who seek news from different media define “news” as “what is happening new”. People who offer news to the masses have a more sober insight into it. Yorke (1995) in his book
*Television News* mocked the definition of news from an audiences’ perspective using a cynical broad newsroom approach: “news is where you have a camera crew” (p. 242). Virtually all the correspondents related “news” either to the time element or change in a situation. Thus news is not something that happens; instead, news is what gets presented after (a) selecting what gets covered, (b) deciding what will become the focus of the story, and (c) determining how the story gets told by the newsmen (Potter, 2001, p.111).

Every medium of communication possesses a logic or grammar that constitutes a set of devices for organizing experience. The logic or grammar of each medium that dominates an age impresses itself on the users of the medium, thus determining not only what one thinks about but literally how one thinks (McLuhan cited in Carey, 1969).

News bears certain power when it is transformed by Television. In a way, Television is a tactile medium due to its advantage to tell stories visually from the scene of the action making viewers feel as though they are at the scene themselves. In this age where *image* counts, Television has become the source, site, and the symbol of most of what is particular to contemporary culture (Gronbeck, Farrell & Soukup, 1991).

Viewers can receive the news with ease in contrast with receiving news through the reading of a newspaper which needs more concentration. The fact that TV news is delivered by attractive males and females whose carefully nurtured personalities create an aura of intimacy, also contributes to the power of TV news. For many viewers, the TV
messenger who brings the news has more impact than the news itself (Emery, Age & Ault, 1986, p. 295).

In recent years, both in national and international spheres, there is a growing commitment to entertainment for TV news in order to attract large audiences (Potter, 2001), a term coined as “info-entertainment”. It has developed a way of providing snippets of information about everything often decontextualised from other events. Viewers feel more powerful (in terms of information) even if their knowledge about the specific subject of the news is little or inaccurate. McManus (1994) has elaborated in detail that audiences want the content of TV news to be entertaining, such as emotionally arousing, unusual, more about celebrities, visually compelling, and so forth. This is due to that fact that the new generations are guided by the need for instant gratification, and exhibit rapidly changing tastes and values characterised by detachment, impermanence and fads (Lansley, 1994, cited in Kung-Shankleman, 2000, p. 28).

Some critics suggest that entertainment changes its nature and quality when mass communicated. Mass entertainment, whatever the form it takes, it is argued, lowers, or at least fails to raise, public taste to the level that might be achieved by less extensive forms of entertainment such as the theatres, books or opera (Wright, 1986). Wright (1986) went further explaining that though mass entertainment offered some diversion and amusement for everybody, and relaxation and respite which could be functional for people and beneficial to society, too much escapism, too many TV circuses at one’s fingertips, might distract people from important social issues and divert them from useful social
participation and action. It would also be dysfunctional if people became so dependent on mass communication for entertainment that they no longer were able to entertain themselves and became permanent mass media spectators (p. 21). This is more dangerous in the case of news which is closely involved with politics.

*International news service and global journalism*

By far the most intriguing development for television news began with the introduction of 24-hour all news channels set up by the American businessman Ted Turner in Atlanta, Georgia. Previously, news was part of the prime time programming. But it was becoming more and more difficult to keep a network of journalists to cover the globe. Within this context there was the development of thematic stations with CNN leading the way in providing the 24-hour-news. Cable News Network (CNN) initiated its broadcasting on 1 June 1980, and has since reached far beyond its own national boundaries, transmitting its service 36 000km into space from dish-shaped antennas in the grounds of its headquarters to satellites which send the signal back to domestic and international customers on earth (Yorke, 1995).

A blizzard of change swept across the broadcasting landscape, radically altering the established order (Blumler, 1992, Collins, 1998, cited in Kung-Shankleman, 2000, p. 23). A potent combination of deregulation and liberalisation, changes in social structures and attitudes, as well as technological advances combined to redraw the paradigm of broadcasting. A powerful multinational commercial media sector has developed, shifting the balance of power between public service and commercial organisations.
Soon other new and established broadcasters, including the BBC were quickly developing a genuinely global journalism, through which the population of the planet as a whole is coming to share a common agenda and experience. Sky TV and CNN were the pioneers in this respect, but there can be no doubt that the BBC intends, through its World Service Television Network, to compete seriously in this arena and establish a televisual equivalent of its World Service radio journalism, a concept of “bi-media” journalism (McNair, 1996, p. 98). This kind of international newscast channels, joined later by Fox and others, became available to relatively small audiences and niche markets, such as international business travellers and cable subscribers.

The emergence of global television news, led by companies such as CNN and BBC World Television, which may subscribe to “wholesale” services, further undermine the validity of the distinction between wholesale and retail news suppliers (Boyd-Barrett, 1998). These processes of reconceptualisation of the terms “news, news agency, national and international …” go to the most fundamental of the concepts that have so far underpinned the study of agencies. While the more important part is to take a fresh look at how the news agencies have contributed to processes of what for the moment we will call “globalisation”.

BBC World Service Television (BBC WST) is a subsidiary of BBC the public broadcaster. While the BBC is commercial-free and entirely state funded on the domestic markets, its global branch operates from the sale of commercial airtime. Though the international service does not receive any revenue from the television licence fee levied by the British
government, it is not a commercial operation in the same way as CNN. It presents a unique model of the “commercialisation” of a fragmented international public-service channel taking advantage of BBC news sources, an already existing worldwide network of correspondents, a high global journalistic reputation and the operational facilities of the BBC’s news division.

Established in 1980 with headquarters in Atlanta, CNN is seen in 60 million American homes and in 140 other countries (Volkmer, 1999). CNN has two major sources of income: subscription fees (cable operating companies make a payment to CNN for each subscriber who receive CNN) and advertising (carried predominantly on its domestic networks). In this sense, it is more market-oriented than BBC since it is supposed to attract mass audiences and lacks the shield under the governmental slant policies. CNN and the 24-hour news service BBC World Television News of BBC’s World Service Television are increasingly in competition in the global market, although BBC’s World Service Television is not yet available globally—it currently broadcasts into Europe, Asia, Africa, the middle East, Canada and the USA. Therefore it is hard to judge the credibility of BBC and CNN simply by the audience rating or the number of cable-fee payers due to their different accesses in different countries and regions.

“It is almost self-explanatory that these different organizational structures involve different programming goals as well as a different requirement in terms of co-operation with other channels in order to have access to news sources.” (Volkmer, 1999, p.128)
BBC News produces 41,000 hours of output for 12 networks a year. The only comparable news broadcaster, in terms of size, is CNN. It is in newsgathering that the BBC has a clear lead over CNN and all other news broadcasters. BBC News has 200 specialist correspondents and 50 overseas bureaux compared with CNN's 32 bureaux. BBC’s newsgathering relies on its efficient agencies within the giant itself, while CNN news service depends on the co-operation with local agencies in different countries.

Initially with its reduced staff of reporters, CNN was finding the going difficult, and was obliged to set up several direct cooperation agreements with other national and international broadcasters. CNN’s label news programme *World Report (WR)* functions as a news agency for participating organizations around the world. Within this system established in 1987, contributors deliver the reports to CNN (the contributing news organization pays the cost of production as well as that of delivery to Atlanta, preferably by satellite). Reciprocally the participating countries are permitted to use CNNWR in their own news programmes by transmitting either the whole programme or just parts of it. Participating news organizations are asked to contribute any content they wish and cover any topic they wish from their own perspectives. Thus CNN has established a “peripheral” as well as a “horizontal” news exchange system, which guarantees its direct access to news all around the world though with tight budget.

Volkmer (1999) stated that CNN’s newsgathering structure challenged BBC’s news service. According to Volkmer, BBC WST must gain a large global audience share in order to receive credibility as a “Global” network. It needs to gain a large audience in
competitive and attractive regional markets, such as Europe, Southeast Asia, and the USA. It also needs to make as many cooperative agreements as possible with regional broadcasters for the rebroadcast of carrier programmes and to have access to satellite transponders in highly competitive markets such as Europe, the US and southern and southeast Asian. Furthermore, global expansion can be gained only by co-operation with “vertical” integrators such as Reuters, who ensure a market expansion in a multilevel news service without further investment. (p.127)

Unlike entertainment, TV drama or other TV products, TV news is supposed to offer the facts of events around the world. Both BBC and CNN want to win audience’s credibility to them with the same slogan: “serve the public”. Volkmer (1999) concluded in his study of CNN and its impact on global communication that whereas the BBC had gained reputation for objective rather than mass-market-appeal news presentation and gathering, CNN had earned a reputation for airing globally attractive “mass” news events. In fact, different cultural backgrounds contribute to different guidelines and policies at BBC and CNN. Before we go into detail, we have to be aware of the warning of Kung-Shankleman (2000) of previous studies of BBC and CNN that the BBC is an older and more complex organisation than CNN and is engaged in a wider range of broadcasting services so the public data on the two organisations vary widely. Therefore CNN is a favourite of management theorists and available material leans heavily towards business analysis. The BBC has been and continues to be written about extensively, but primarily from historical, sociological or journalistic viewpoint.
As the representatives of public service broadcasting (BBC) and the market-born baby (CNN), the spirit of BBC and CNN both stemmed from their idealistic founders. The BBC was created by John Reith, a visionary leader who wanted to establish an organisation with “high moral ground” (Blumler, 1992, cited in Kung-Shankleman, 2000, p. 63). CNN was the product of Mr. Ted Turner, the flamboyant “Captain Outrageous” who acclaimed: “I mainly did CNN to see if it could be done” (cited in Business Wire, 24 August 1998 in Kung-Shankleman, 2000, p. 77).

Based on Reith’s moral, it is no wonder that the BBC journalists by comparison to journalist in USA and other countries, see the watchdog role as important, but less so than communicating new ideas and entertaining the public (Kung-Shankleman, 2000). On its homepage, BBC guarantees the standard that the audience can expect from it (The standard you can expect from BBC, 2002):

“Our journalism will always be truthful, accurate and impartial.

It will apply a spirit of inquiry and will be based on evidence, carefully judged.

It will reflect a broad and significant agenda.

We will be tough in asking questions and will seek realistic answers.

Our dealings with all our sources and contributors will be fair and honest.

We will report through narrative wherever appropriate.

Our journalism will use clear language.

It will provide enough contexts to the news to tell people why it matters.

Our programmes will experiment with styles and formats to stay fresh”.
The above standard BBC maintains is in line with its earlier broadcasting moral: “Good broadcasting inevitably involves responsible risk-taking in order to enlarge and enrich the worthwhile experience of listeners and viewers.” (Schlesinger, 1978, p. 5)

The BBC requires its personnel to be socially perceived as credible neutral producers whose whole tone is that of giving us “the facts” rather than articulating a perspective within which fact and value are inextricably interwoven (Schlesinger, 1978, p. 204). It is another way of saying, “all sides presented”, to make sure no one side prevails in the newsroom.

There is no wonder that BBC is proud of the licence-free backup, which enables it to explore more qualities than offering only what the mass wants. Traditionally, governments have not intervened in decisions about programmes in the day-to-day management of the BBC (Schlesinger, 1978). At the same time the British Government believes the BBC should continue as a major broadcasting organization, with special responsibilities for public service broadcasting. On the one hand, public service broadcasting ensures that the interests of all viewers are taken into account. On the other hand, public service broadcasting is a counter-balance to fears about concentration of ownership and the absence of diversity of views. Finally, there are strong cultural justifications for public service broadcasting.

Subsequently this ethos makes people whatever their opinion about the BBC, feel a very strong sense of identity with the BBC (Kung-Shankleman, 2000).
CNN got its credit especially in earlier 1990s, when for the first time international news events were dominated by live television coverage—more specifically by CNN, the 24-hour news channel, which relayed events unedited to a global audience. Reports of the first radio on Baghdad and Iraqi missile attacks on Israel made particularly riveting viewing. At times it seemed that even the politicians in the White House and Baghdad were relying on CNN for their information (Volkmer, 1986).

During its first 10 years CNN has invented new modes of journalism. The fact that news and information were available 24 hours a day has brought about a new understanding of journalism in terms of immediacy, breaking news and fact journalism. Kung-Shankleman (2000) elaborated this radical change brought by CNN: first, it would be a 24-hour service broadcasting news non-stop. Second, the orientation would be global—CNN would report news from all over the world to all over the world. Third, it would be live—CNN covering news as it happened, rather than report after the fact. The guiding principle was to create “a role in the process for our viewers” (Peters, 1992, cited in Kung-Shankleman, 2000, p.33), it is even claimed (Peters, 1992) that CNN redefined news from something that has happened to something that is happening.

Thus international or global satellite television does not have to take account of primetime in the same way that they used to do in domestic markets. Because of the world’s numerous time zones, “the sun comes up somewhere all the time”, as a CNN slogan aptly states. The elimination of a set primetime decreases the need for journalistic deadline (or in a way, makes every minute a deadline) and increases on-the-spot
journalism of a new satellite-newsgathering type, which was enhanced by the satellite technology.

Criticized as “A mile wide and an inch deep (Bibb, 1993, cited in Kung-Shankleman, 2000, p. 3)”, the presence of CNN has led to news figuring increasingly as a commodity (Volkmer, 1986).

The issue of credibility becomes more important as the news services move to commercialisation. According to McManus (1994), the market journalism, which is usually connected to market-oriented media organizations like CNN, is information about current issues and events designed to serve the profit-maximizing interest of the firm, often-but not always-at the expense of the public’s need to understand its environment. The Market journalism is said to value the attention of the wealthy and young over the poor and old because news selection must satisfy advertise’s preferences (McManus, 1994, p. 197), since it costs more to discover and report objectively on the significant events and issues than to produce merely interesting content.

While the commercialisation of the TV news is not always a bad thing. In America, Television has found in liberal democracy and a relatively free market economy a nurturing climate in which its full potentialities as a technology of images could be exploited. One result of this has been that American television programmes are in demand all over the world (Postman, 1987, p. 88).
One can argue that if the BBC seeks for more depth of news, CNN has gained an international reputation for live coverage, instantaneously transmitted to cooperating broadcasters.

To sum up, BBC tries to cultivate and train qualitative audience with its British ethics while CNN cater for the audience as a business.

In a way, both BBC and CNN TV news services are problematic. BBC’s confidence in its quality of self-made products including the TV news isolates them from other international TV news channels. Luckily, in its earlier days, competition was either entirely absent (until 1954), or, until relatively recently, present only to a very limited degree. This allowed the development of a strong indigenous television industry with a track record of producing high-quality programming in all genres, and also meant that the longer-established organisations, had almost no experience of full-throttle competition (Kung-Shankleman, 2000).

On the other hand, the long-time public funding service generated deep-rooted inefficiency and bureaucracy within BBC itself, including excessive red tape, a corporate climate marked by lack of co-operation between divisions, a lack of freedom in deciding what to do or how to accomplish the task, insufficient resources and an overemphasis on the status quo (Kung-Shankleman, 2000). These all hinder the development of BBC in a more and more competitive global context. As what Tony Hall was aware: “though the BBC would attempt to occupy and hold the ‘high ground’… it doesn’t mean that we
occupy an ivory tower, immune from the economic pressures of the broadcasting industry.” (T. Hall “a voice worth listening to”, *Broadcast*, August 16, 1991, cited in McNair, 1996, p. 94)

As for CNN, though it boomed up quickly as an “underdog”, which is not the present situation any more, it has hot potato in hand to keep it moving. For example, CNN’s main financial resources—the advertisers are basically interested in consistently reaching large numbers of “attracted” viewers. CNN has traditionally had problems in this respect. In terms of news they are seeking relevance, immediacy, drama, speed and accuracy, as well as flexibility of scheduling (something that CNN realised before its network peers). But at the same time, CNN has always been highly dependent on big international news stories and periods without a big braking story can create problems in attracting and keeping viewers. Its strategic priority therefore was to find ways to smooth out its viewer level by improving its “non-news”, “appointment-based” programming.

Therefore, exerting a “gate-keeping” function of information transmitters, BBC and CNN may have different news programming, depending on the space that allows them to exert under the constraints and limits coming from all directions. Potter (2001) listed some of them: professional responsibility and marketing perspectives of the media organization, its news story formulas, its resource constraints (time place space and talent), its organizational forces, the pressure from the advertisers, use of sources and geographic focus. In a way, all news is relatively homogeneous across all kinds of outlets; the
particular medium does not strongly influence the content of news stories (Potter, 2001, p. 117).

Of news in particular, Potter (2001) also reports seeing a trend towards opinion and interpretation over hard reportage, a “Dallasification” adverts, whereby news is trivialised and stereotyped rather than analysed, a blurring of the lines between information and entertainment, and an increase in levels of sex and violence, under the guise of “reality programming” (the depiction of true-to-life chronicles of personal tragedies). Such criticisms are frequently directed at CNN in particular.

Yet in the era when the broadcasting industry is finding itself embroiled in a period of unforeseen turbulence and far-reaching change brought by technology upgrading the fast shift of people’s lifestyle, both BBC and CNN are currently seeking to shift market focus and balance themselves to be better niche channels.

There are some other new trends in the cable TV industry. Such as a growth in media concentration worldwide with more and more power of ownership being concentrated in fewer hands and with tendencies for merges between electronic hardware and software industries, a growing global “information economy” involving an increasing convergence between telecommunication and broadcasting, and a decline in the public sector of mass media and in the direct public control of telecommunication. Furthermore, the focus of the business has shifted from construction to marketing and customer service, nobody knows how and what will affect the cable TV programs. Those trends may cause less
variety in Media content due to the monopoly of ownership, or may stimulate different media content because of hot competition among media organizations. The far-reaching influence brought by these new moves in cable TV industry and people’s credibility to it remain unknown, but it urges the Cable TV companies to constantly adjust their management accordingly.

To put BBC and CNN into a “fair play”, one factor should not be ignored that BBC may enjoy more reputation because of its longer history and more comprehensive “BBC image”, which covers not only news industry. Unfortunately McNair (1996) found there was a strong consistence of people’s credibility to certain news resources with their established reputation, even the journalists harbour an ideological assumption that these are automatically the most credible, authoritative sources of information, and have privileged access to the media as of right. The powerless, on the other hand, are not seen as credible sources of knowledge and explanation, and tend as a result to be marginalized in journalists’ accounts.

At the same time, as competition and broadcasting choice increase and allegiances to public sector organisations dissipate, loyalties to long-established broadcasting patterns decrease. Audiences that had once been socially and culturally homogeneous fragment both socially and spatially (Kung-Shankleman, 2000).
Limited to a comparatively small, tranquil and safe island, Maltese people like to be informed of the happenings in the rest of the world, especially those news related to United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and United States. This may be reinforced by the fact that a large number of Maltese migrants are scattered in these countries.

Like any other British colony citizens in the world, Maltese people harbour a valued connection with the BBC. In his paper, Abela (1996) gave a brief history of BBC service in Malta. Early in 1933, the sound broadcasts were transmitted from naval wireless station at Rinella. At the same time, BBC radio was relayed to North Africa and some of the governors had access to BBC in Malta. In the following year the then Colonial government entered into an agreement with the Rediffusion subsidiary, Broadcasting Relay Service (Malta) Ltd. to establish a wireless system in Malta. This wireless service was urgently needed when the Rediffusion planned to inaugurate its service in 1935.

The pending war between the British Empire and the Italian neighbour at an international level in Media paved the way for BBC’s penetration in Malta. In 1945, BBC helped the local Rinella Wireless Station to produce programs in Maltese at National network( “B” channel ). While at “A” channel, by middle of 1940s, BBC radio program was already transmitted regularly on organized base. So although BBC 24-hour TV news channel worldwide became available in Malta after CNN TV channel, its image was so deep-rooted in Malta. For such a long time, the BBC was the model for the local channels to
imitate, especially for the older generations. BBC is a benchmark, a household name that they feel attached to. Furthermore most of the local media staff were trained by the BBC. All these might undermine the credibility of CNN in Malta.

Maltese people came to know CNN TV news in 1989 due to the transmission by an Italian TV station on the event of the “Bush- Gorbachev— ending of the Cold War”. For this international event, CNN sent a full force to Malta to report and Malta itself was broadcasted to the world through CNN TV news. CNN started its broadcasting in Malta by inserting its programmes through local channel MTV (Malta Television) of PBS (Public Broadcasting Service) in early 1990s and later became also available with the introduction of local cable service- Melita Cable in 1991. The BBC TV news channel was received through Cable or satellite dishes after its set-up.

For a short time (1998-2000) the local channel national TV channel (PBS Ltd) transmitted CNN transmissions from 11:30 P.M. to 6:30 A.M. After the contract elapsed, these transmissions continued until CNN warned PBS with the possibility of legal actions on the point of breach of copyright if the transmissions went on (G. Cauchi personal communication, May 9, 2002).

There are no contracts between BBC and local TV stations, but on more than one occasion, local channels did cooperate with BBC. Normally, they provide via-satellite footage of events in Malta or interviews as requested by BBC. In other occasions, BBC journalists came to the island and worked with technical assistance from one of the local
channels. A case in point of such cooperation was the stories that BBC did in the island of Gozo in connection with the case of the separation of the Siamese twins Jodie and Mary.

Currently the local TV station Super One TV channel has exclusive cooperation with CNN news service based on a contract in the local area—the same model operated by CNN’s World Report mentioned earlier in this chapter. According to the accorded contract, Super One can share CNN news service and news source. They have free access to the footage of the news and they can download them by a special code offered by CNN. In regular days, they have 3 daily satellite news feeds, which they can select according to their own need; meanwhile they are provided the script of the news bulletin. They also have the right to transmit the whole live program in case of breaking news. Since Malta is small, big news happen infrequently, but in case something happens, Super One TV will provide the first footage to CNN as a reward, once again on a mutual agreement basis.

PBS, another local station also has agreement with CNN TV news but on the breaking news only.

Therefore in Malta, people can receive BBC and CNN (i) using satellite antennas (ii) with cable channels offered by Melita Cable, the only cable TV company operating locally (iii) through the relay by local TV stations.
The access to certain satellite TV channels carries much weight on its effects. With the rapid upgrading of technology, whoever controls the conduit controls access to the customers. Thus those failing to anticipate developments in technology standards or to forge agreements with conduit suppliers could become “locked out” of their current markets. If some affiliates have overlapping or weak signals, which fail to reach effectively significant numbers of television households, ratings will be diminished, no matter how great the appeal of the program.

Therefore the sampling for this study is under the consideration of both the literature of previous studies in this field and the local context. Chapter three will discuss in detail of the sample choice and the process of the phone survey and mail survey conducted for this research.
Chapter 3

Methodology

I was consumed by the ingenuous desire of uniting these two things, of finding a synthesis in which the irreducible opposites would fraternize, and of winning both the earthly life and the kingdom of the skies.

“Zorba the Greek” by Nikos Kazantzakis

The choice of sample and Melita Cable

Malta is officially bilingual. English is one of the two official languages because Malta had a colonial history under a British rule for over 180 years. It is therefore no surprise that media in Malta use both the Maltese and English languages. For decades, Malta had local newspapers in both languages. The cable radio services provided by the Rediffusion Company had two channels, one in Maltese and another in English. The proliferation of wireless radio frequencies offered the local audiences a fare in both languages. This is also the case with TV programming since all stations complement their offerings with imported materials in the English language.

Theoretically, access to BBC and CNN Channels on the island is limited to those with access to cable TV and satellite dishes. Up until the year 2000 the local Public Broadcasting Service broadcasted more than six hours of CNN news programmes everyday to supplement its own broadcasting schedule. This has since changed and the time previously allotted to CNN is now devoted to a Euro news service in English.

Lazarsfeld (1940) argued that: “only after it is known whom each medium reaches and why people are attracted to it does it make sense to compare the effects of the media”
(cited in Weiss, 1969, p. 77). Thus the target audience for this study was part of the Maltese population -those who could receive and watch BBC and / or CNN TV news.

In Malta, normally people can receive certain TV channels either using satellite dishes or with cable channels offered by Melita Cable, which is the only cable TV company operating locally. Another leeway for people to get the signal of some Italian channels is through the antenna set up by themselves in the terrestrial parameter of Italian TV stations. The reception varies in Malta according to different geographic positions of the cities.

According to the statistic figures offered by Melita Cable (Melita cable homepage, 2002), 65% of Maltese households are the customers of the company. This presents Melita Cable as the obvious choice for this study due to its dominance in this field with affluent information about the viewers.

Melita Cable offers several packages. Each package is made up of a cluster of channels related around a theme. The packages containing the reception of both BBC World and CNN are: (i) either the entry package plus Education package or the entry package plus Lifestyle package, and (ii) the Family package.

Originally the researcher wanted to draw a sample from the subscribers of the above packages, but according to the data-protection law protecting the confidentiality of information for the citizens of Malta, Melita Cable is not allowed to give access to the
information about their own customers to third parties without the customers’ permissions.

The problem with Melita Cable is that more and more persons are opting for satellites receivers to view foreign channels. People are starting to perceive that the Melita cable offerings are too expensive. A full bundle of packages from Melita Cable would cost more than Lm150 (c. US$360) annually, while the purchase of a satellite receiver and antenna would cost around Lm250. It is an open secret that encryption cards for satellite receivers are available under the counter at a very low cost. This and those self-set antennas together put Melita Cable at a considerable disadvantage. However one needs to note that customers having a satellite system will still need to either subscribe to the entry package with Melita Cable or keep a terrestrial antenna. Failure to do so would deprive the viewer of Maltese channels since the local production houses do not offer satellite transmission.

Melita Cable conducts regular research studies using its own research facilities, but those studies are primarily concerned with the viewership for local TV channels and related to Melita Cable's own service. So this research was totally independent from their research concerns and facilities.
Sampling

Although a probability sample in the strict sense of the term could not be created for this study, an attempt was made to approach a probability sample as far as possible. Whereas a nonprobability sample does not follow the guidelines of mathematical probability (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000), it is frequently used in mass media research, particularly in the forms of available samples, samples using volunteer subjects, and purposive samples.

This research sampled 250 persons. The size of this sample was decided in consideration of its more exploratory approach and certain sample attrition. The sample was made up of two parts. One part (114 respondents) was chosen with the help of the Melita Cable out of their customers. In the three weeks from June 17 to July 6, 2002, when customers phoned the cable company or went to pay their bill they were asked if they would participate in the study. Those who accepted were then sent the materials at home. This method was adopted to safeguard privacy concerns required by data-protection legislation in Malta.

This part of the sample was considered to be an available sample- a nonprobability sample. An available sample (or convenience sample) is a collection of readily accessible subjects for study. It is problematic because such samples contain unknown quantities of errors (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000). But this research considered its positive more than its negative effects, for available sample often helps eliminate potential problems in
research procedures, testing, and methodology before more comprehensive research study is attempted (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000).

The other part of the sample (136 respondents) was generated through systematic sampling of the telephone directory as a probability sample. The phone survey was conducted on weekdays mornings from 9 to 12 a.m. and afternoons from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Centre for Communication Technology (CCT) of the University of Malta during the first two weeks of July in the same year. The different time choices were used to avoid a time-biased sample. People were phoned and asked if they watched BBC or CNN news. Those people who answered the phone were also asked if they would participate in the study. On acceptance they were sent the survey materials at home with a self-addressed envelope.

Thus, although randomness was sought for this study, the resulting sample cannot be consider as totally random in the full sense of the term.

**Survey research**

This research was directed to find out those who watched BBC and CNN TV news and more importantly to understand why they trusted one source more than the other. Research on credibility is not equivalent to ratings research, because obviously the issue of credibility is *not only* the decisive factor of people’s choice of a certain channel. In this study survey research was deemed to be more useful using a mixture of closed and open-ended questions.
Once the sample was created, a mail survey was conducted with a questionnaire. The cost of a mail survey is reasonable, is highly suitable for reaching people scattered in a region and is also recommended for use among highly specialized audiences. The anonymity involved in such situations allows for dealing with sensitive questions due to the lack of personal contact. Furthermore, respondents are allowed to take the time to answer the questions at their own pace and in their own time.

Survey research has some advantages: one may investigate issues in realistic settings; the expense is reasonable; there will be a large amount of data to allow deeper comprehension to tackle the issue. However, it is not without limitations. The questions are self-explanatory. Yet, given that the survey is addressed to a household one is never sure who is exactly answering the questionnaires. Since the use of a pilot study helps to clarify any resulting queries and difficulties in further studies, certain discrepancy caused by the methodology in the research can be accepted.

The questionnaire for the survey research was laid out in four main parts as a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches. The first part was the introduction to the research and questionnaire for the respondents. The second part asked about people’s TV news watching behaviour and their general ideas of BBC and CNN TV news. The third part was made of the measurements of people’s credibility of BBC and CNN TV news in scales. The last part offered some open-ended questions to understand the reasons behind the credibility gap.
A database search revealed an instrument which measured the image of mass media news sources on the part of the receiver published in the *Journal of Broadcasting*, spring 1975 by McCroskey and Jenson. This instrument clustered five dimensions to assess the source credibility: competence, character, sociability, composure and extroversion. Chasing the same line, the researcher referred to the construct and measurement of the ethos and credibility for three decades reviewed by McCroskey and Yong (n.d.). As McCroskey and Jenson had already noted (1975), the researcher was aware of the fact that varying subject-type or source-type may cause the dimensionality of source credibility scales to change. From the above-mentioned five dimensions, (McCroskey and Teven, 1999), the *Competence* was picked up, and together with another factor *Trustworthiness* in a more recent measurement of source credibility by McCroskey and Teven (1999) were adopted for the questionnaire including the following factors:

- intelligent-unintelligent
- trained-untrained
- expert-inexpert
- bright-stupid
- informed-uninformed
- competent-incompetent
- honest-inhonest
- trustworthy-untrustworthy
- moral-immoral
- ethical-unethical
- genuine-phony (here modified to “authentic-artificial” for easy understanding).
In the questionnaire, the researcher reversed the seven point scales of some measurements to avoid people’s inertia in fulfilling questionnaires, thus to make them be conscious of their answers. The last part of the questionnaire included several questions about respondents’ personal profile to examine the demographics of viewership.

All the questionnaires were sent on July 15, 2002 and the respondents were given more than two weeks to return them. Such timing allowed for the inclusion of three weekends thus giving the respondents more opportunity to answer the questionnaire. Two days before the deadline (July 27), another phone call was made at CCT to remind all the respondents to return the questionnaires in time. By then the researcher was informed by some of the respondents that they would not return the questionnaire for different reasons.

All the returned questionnaires were marked in order according to the time they were received and entered into SPSS (Statistic Package of Social Science) for further statistic analysis.

The final return rate was 118 out of 250 (47.2%); this was acceptable for such a pilot study.

The 118 respondents turned out to be more mature and elder persons. Only 7.6% were under 25. This is a reflection of a wider tendency for younger people to watch less television. The age group 26-35 was represented with a 16.9% response. People who
were aged 36-45 accounted for 19.5% while those from 46-55 were 23.7%. The oldest group was represented with the largest portion of respondents (32.2%).

The male respondents (61.3%) were more than the female ones (38.7%).

The more educated including managers, doctors, professors and artists constituted 48.1% of the 100 valid respondents. 32.4 percent of the respondents were from a special group labelled “pensioner/ retired/ housewife”, this part of sample could not be identified clearly. The third group, semi-educated, made of 19.4%.

The educational constitution of the respondents was made up of 7.8% who only completed primary school, 56.5% completed secondary school while 35.7% of the respondents completed tertiary education. In Malta secondary education is compulsory for all up to the age of 16 years. It is therefore no surprise that the primary category is so low. But the tertiary category is higher than in the general population. This however is only a reflection of the sample.

Most of the respondents were Maltese either by birth (81.2%) or by naturalization (11.1%) and the majority had been abroad (97.4%) for business, study, and travel or as an emigration.

In the next chapter, the findings will be examined with some statistic means to see the correlations among different variables.
Chapter 4

Data Analysis

For as soon as I arrived here I drew a circle, in the way you taught me, and called that circle “my duty”. I said: “if I save this entire circle, I am saved; if I do not save it, I am lost!”

“Zorba the Greek” by Nikos Kazantzakis

Given a considerable return rate of the questionnaire (47.2%), this research does offer significant data for the researcher to discuss people’s credibility with regard to BBC and CNN TV news in Malta.

Demographics of the sample

As indicated at the end of chapter three, people who answered the questionnaires (see Appendix III) in this study inclined to be elder persons. The two oldest age groups (46-55 and above 56) accounted for 55.9% of the respondents. Thus it can be assumed that either old people watch more news than younger ones or that older people are more willing and available to answer the questionnaires because they have more leisure time.

(p=0.021)

\[
\begin{array}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\text{Watch TV news} & \text{Age} & \text{Less than 25} & \text{26-35} & \text{36-45} & \text{46-55} & \text{56+} & \text{Total} \\
\hline
\text{Daily} & 3 & 10 & 16 & 22 & 30 & 81 \\
\text{Less than Daily} & 6 & 10 & 7 & 6 & 8 & 37 \\
\text{Total} & 9 & 20 & 23 & 28 & 38 & 118 \\
\hline
\end{array}
\]

Regarding the gender issue of the sample, males outnumbered female respondents (61.3% to 38.7%). It is possible that compared to females, males watch and are more
concerned about news, since politics, the essence of news, is the eternal topic of men’s talk. (p=0.038)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Watch TV news</th>
<th>Gender</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>72</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Less than Daily</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>106</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Little could be discerned from respondents’ education background except that people who had secondary education made up the largest portion (56.5%). The respondents’ career as a variable was intriguing mainly because in Malta it is hard to identify the individual characteristics of the group made of “housewife/ pensioner/ retired”. But it was clear that leading jobholders such as doctors, managers, artists and teachers etc. cared more about news (with the highest percentage of 48.1%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Watch TV news</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Housewife/</td>
<td>Manager/</td>
<td>Semi-</td>
<td>Total</td>
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<td></td>
<td>pensioner/</td>
<td>teacher</td>
<td>educated</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>retired</td>
<td>art/Dr.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than Daily</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some other variables considered earlier in the questionnaire were not significant, yet they might offer some insight into the make up of the Maltese population.
The respondents were primarily Maltese by birth (81.2%), and a small amount were Maltese by naturalisation (11.1%). That means that this research applies mainly to the Maltese local inhabitants not to those special groups such as foreign students or travellers in business community who need to be looked into more meticulously because of their more sophisticated interaction with local environment. Most local respondents had been abroad for holiday (50.4%), business (22.1%) or on study (15%).

In aggregate, demographic data provides a picture of the size and makeup of the media audience. Telecommunications demographics are the equivalent of newspaper and magazine circulation figures (Sherman, 1995). However, demographic do not explain why people listen to one station over another or drop one premium cable service in favour of another. Nor do they link media use to the broad range of personal activities, including sport and hobby pursuits and religious and political beliefs (Sherman, 1995). That is the concern of psychographics research.

People’s news resources

The first part of the questionnaire provided for a description of Maltese people’s news seeking behaviours. The results pointed to TV news as the most sought after news source. This is in line with other local studies (Vassallo, 2002). About 68.6% of the respondents said that they watched TV news daily, while 23.7% watched twice to four times a week. After recoding the original four cells into two, “daily” and “less than daily”, researcher found significant correlations between the frequency of TV news watching and three variables: age, gender and education. With the increase in age, people watched news
more often. The gap between “daily” and “less than daily” was bigger and bigger from the age group of 36-45 onwards. This might imply that younger generations watch less TV news compared to older people.

Though one’s occupation, on its own, does not describe a person, it does contribute towards a certain classification of social status. As stated earlier, “housewife/pensioner/retired” was a very particular group in Malta. The status of housewife is a controversial issue in local context. It is understandable that one can never tell the “level” of a pensioner or a retired person. Consequently, the difference between the “daily” watching and “less than daily” watching was bigger in the group of housewife/pensioner/retired than that in other two groups due to the diverse constitution of this group.

When asked to rank their priority of their news sources, people gave similar answers as they did for the previous question about their frequency with different media for news. 75.2 percent of the valid respondents ranked the TV news as their first choice of news source, indicating the dominance of the TV news in people’s news choice. Newspapers and magazines came second (24.8%). Unlike results of some researches conducted in United States (The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, n.d.), seldom did Maltese people use the Internet to check news, only 0.9%. That is caused by the lacking popularisation of PC and Internet access in local context. The acceleration of computerization both at work and home in recent years may speed up people’s use of Internet for news sources in near future. Given that the population in the sample is older
one is not surprised at this outcome. It is normally expected that younger persons are more familiar with Internet usage (Azzopardi, 1996).

The researcher took up people’s first and second preferences of news sources for further comparisons against other variables. The cells of the table regarding people’s first preference of news source were so fragmented that it was just close to being significant.

**News first preference and age**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source 1st pref</th>
<th>Age Less than 25</th>
<th>26-35</th>
<th>36-45</th>
<th>46-55</th>
<th>56+</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TV</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper or magazine</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
<td><strong>22</strong></td>
<td><strong>28</strong></td>
<td><strong>35</strong></td>
<td><strong>105</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

People under age of 25 years preferred more newspaper and magazines or other media means than TV. The figures remained steady in adult groups (age 36 and above). When shifted to people’s second preference of news source, newspapers and magazines kept the lead as traditional media means.

**News second preference and age**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source 2nd pref</th>
<th>Age Less than 25</th>
<th>26-35</th>
<th>36-45</th>
<th>46-55</th>
<th>56+</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TV</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper or magazine</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td><strong>23</strong></td>
<td><strong>70</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the basis of previous findings, the researcher cross-examined people’s news source preference and their news reliability and discovered that the news preference and
reliability were not equal. Because of reasons unknown to the researcher, people did not always trust most the news resources they resorted to.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reliable Source 1st pref</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper or magazine</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The researcher also cross-tabulated the news source preference and news source believability with the variables above. There was a significant difference between the gender and the choice of TV news (p = 0.035).

People’s reliable sources were correlated with education, gender and occupation but not with age. Those who were under or above university education trusted more on TV news while the well educated trusted black letters on white pages. When it came to the second reliable news resources, age replaced gender to be the significant variable.
Besides the media sources offered in this questionnaire, “gossip from family members and friends” was listed by respondents as their frequent and reliable news alternative. This kind of interpersonal communication had already been highlighted in Hillman’s research about the dissemination of information in Malta (1996). As a Mediterranean island state, Malta is famous for its people’s intimacy within the community due to its geographic smallness and the Mediterranean way of life where the all-year-sunshine allows more socialization among people. Then no wonder in Malta the “grapevine” is a vital channel of news spreading among all classes and communities.

The reasons behind people’s credibility and preference to media news source were partly what was expected and partly were a surprise.

“Immediacy” came first as the reason why people preferred certain media vehicles. Unsurprisingly Internet as the fastest technology nowadays was played down by the fact that in Malta people’s access to Internet - the issue of the “convenience of certain
medium” was limited. The mobility and portability of different media are crucial to people’s consideration of media choices.

The impression people had for TV’s “immediacy” in news reports might be derived from the privilege of “seeing is believing” - the TV news pictorial presentation. The “seeing is believing” was the second reason why people preferred TV news, right after “immediacy”.

Some of the characteristics of certain media to convey news were double-valued by the respondents. Respondents treated them both as the advantages and disadvantages of certain media at the same time. Some stated that they preferred TV to newspaper because the news in newspaper was too selective and slanted by the manipulation of editors; meanwhile some proponents of newspapers were critical of TV news’ lack of context and further analysis of news, especially for breaking-news. By the same token, some people liked TV news because it was short and direct, while others regarded “to be short and direct” as its shortcoming without details for them to grasp the whole story, or, the lack of an “all-sides-presentation”. With the same logic, radio’s portability and the only need for sense of hearing from audience kept some loyal followers, while Internet lost to radio on this point.

People’s reliance on certain media for news was based on a sophisticated rationale. Newspapers won a lot of votes because people appreciated the content and presentation of its diverse opinions. Some respondents distrusted TV news because they thought it was
too much influenced by political powers while some others liked foreign channels because they were just “foreign”, which for them were devoid of the local context and offered other alternative approaches to news issues. There were some people who did not linger on or stick to one medium- they chose different media according to the content.

It is only when people’s pattern of certain media use is understood that media effects through different media channels on audience can be better assessed. This also applies to TV news watching. Respondents were asked to state why they watched TV news. Although respondents were asked to check their first choice according to their preference, some opted to rank all the responses offered. These answers were recoded taking into account only their first choices.

“To know what is happening” was the main purpose for watching TV news. “To be able to gain knowledge enabling me to speak with authority about things that are important to me” ranked the second most important. There was no big difference between those who chose watching TV for “work/ study, fun/ relax” and “kill the time”.

**BBC and CNN TV news watching and their credibility**

The second part of the questionnaire starting from question five examined issues about BBC and CNN TV news. Respondents’ familiarity with BBC and CNN TV news was checked in order to validate their answers to the subsequent questions. The majority had watched both BBC and CNN (74.1 %). A small number of people watched BBC or CNN only. People who only watched CNN were more than those who watched BBC only
(19.8 % to 6.0 % respectively). More than half of the respondents watched the two channels during the last week (56.6 %).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Watch channels</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBC</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNN</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBC&amp;CNN</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>72.9</td>
<td>74.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>98.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing System</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Ms. N. Inguanez (personal communication, June 25, 2002) at Melita Cable said, besides BBC and CNN, this research indicated that more and more Maltese people turned to Sky (a locally available English channel) and other available international TV news channels for English TV news. Some respondents stated that they preferred to watch local TV stations in their own mother language for international news instead of turning to international news channels directly.

The pattern of how people watched the two all-news-channels was answered by question six in the questionnaire. Half of the respondents followed specific programs such as hard talk, hourly news of BBC, and news bulletin of CNN. Some respondents (32.9 %) followed different programs, indicated in the survey as “watch the news program randomly”. Others (11.4 %) either followed news programmes according to their regular timetables (the “rush hour” for news watching was concentrated on specific hours in the morning before people went to work and in the evening when people waited for their dinners after work) or watched TV news programs according to the content and other
elements of the news (5.7%). People followed more TV news when there were big
events like the September 11 in 2001 when the World Trade Centre collapsed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Random/all</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>32.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific program</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>82.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>depends</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>88.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>depends on time</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>59.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To answer the earlier question: “is credibility equivalent to rating?” people’s choices
between BBC and CNN TV news channels and their believability of the same channels
were cross tabulated. A positive correlation was found. There were few who watched one
of the two channels while trusting the other channel, only one case for each. People who
watched both BBC and CNN trusted more BBC.

Watch channels * trust channel Cross tabulation
Sig.0.000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Watch channels</th>
<th>BBC</th>
<th>CNN</th>
<th>It depends</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BBC</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNN</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBC&amp;CNN</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The importance of the access to certain TV channels was more pronounced in this
question. This is reasonable for how can people trust a channel they do not receive at all?
In Malta, people had more access to CNN, and no wonder among those who only
watched one of the two channels, more respondents trusted CNN than BBC because more
had access to CNN than to BBC. Thirty-one out of 106 valid respondents said they would choose the channel depending on different news programs and content and other reasons.

When asked for a further explanation as to why BBC or CNN, respondents considered several reasons. “Bias” was the most frequent word mentioned by the respondents. People who preferred BBC emphasized its “independence” from the government and “financial independence”. BBC’s wider coverage on foreign news of different countries especially those of the “third world” was appreciated. Its diversity in program making, more details and deeper analysis into news were also welcomed by the audience. Some respondents mentioned BBC’s high reputation and its historical influence was recognized. To some extent, BBC retained a high repute among these respondents as the heritage from the British colonial period.

Compared to their evaluation of BBC, the respondents gave more negative marks to CNN. They considered CNN too biased with their American double standard- one standard for American domestic issues and the other for international issues in countries outside United Sates. They criticized that CNN provided little coverage of European countries and developing countries. They also pointed out that the main tone of CNN was too sensational. While the “immediacy” and on the spot “presence” were what the respondents appreciated CNN most for. Some respondents said that the news offered by CNN were more digestible.
Both BBC and CNN enjoyed the privilege of pictorial images as an audio-video medium. Some people trusted one of them because of the performance and personalities or certain presenters, which implied that presentation of certain TV news programs on certain channel might contribute to people’s credibility to the channels.

In this study an eleven-item differential instrument using a seven-point scale was derived from McCroskey and Yong’s (n.d.) two reliably tested dimensions (competence and trustworthiness) to assess source credibility. This was used to ask respondents to identify source credibility in both BBC and CNN news sources. Although the original work by McCroskey and Teven contained a larger pool of items intended to measure the image of news sources, this was deemed too difficult to handle in the Maltese context. Difficulties included both the length and, more so, the linguistic nuances which would have made the instrument hard to decipher.

The eleven items adopted were meant to measure people’s credibility and were to value the competence and trustworthiness of TV news. Respondents were asked to repeat the same instrument for both CNN and then BBC. The researcher first calculated the frequencies of the eleven elements of BBC and CNN. According to the result, both BBC and CNN enjoyed good reputation among their audience with regard to the two factors. The following are the frequency tables for the respondents.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intelligent</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.84</td>
<td>1.437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trained</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.74</td>
<td>1.489</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.70</td>
<td>1.404</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bright</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.37</td>
<td>1.549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informed</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.62</td>
<td>1.556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competent</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.71</td>
<td>1.510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honest</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>1.619</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthy</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.48</td>
<td>1.539</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.81</td>
<td>1.232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.69</td>
<td>1.353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.64</td>
<td>1.229</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intelligent</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.65</td>
<td>1.387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trained</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.01</td>
<td>1.259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.75</td>
<td>1.417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bright</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.33</td>
<td>1.536</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informed</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.59</td>
<td>1.661</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competent</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.74</td>
<td>1.433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honest</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>1.639</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthy</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.13</td>
<td>1.440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>1.373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.29</td>
<td>1.429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.80</td>
<td>1.729</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Subsequently a factor analysis was performed using a principal components analysis with a Varimax rotation method. The items clustered around three major themes tentatively labelled ethics (component one), informed (component two) and trained (component three). The first one “ethical” included four elements: trustworthy, moral, ethical and authentic. The second group “informed” included four characteristics: intelligent, bright, informed and honest. While the last group “expert” was made up of three dimensions:
trained, expert and competent. The clusters of the two channels were almost consistent with each other except in the first group, “competence” was not included by CNN.

The following are the loadings that resulted from the factor analysis. The loadings were similar for both BBC and CNN pointing to the stability of the instrument. The scale on competence was the only marked difference to this general pattern. In the case of BBC, this item loaded on two separate components while only loading on the third component in the case of CNN TV news.

Rotated Component Matrix for BBC TV news (Q8)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Component</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intelligent</td>
<td>.216</td>
<td>.789</td>
<td>2.474E-02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trained</td>
<td>.298</td>
<td>9.371E-02</td>
<td>.681</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert</td>
<td>.328</td>
<td>.129</td>
<td>.770</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bright</td>
<td>4.803E-04</td>
<td>.891</td>
<td>.168</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informed</td>
<td>-8.225E-03</td>
<td>.891</td>
<td>7.862E-02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competent</td>
<td>.580</td>
<td>.274</td>
<td>.469</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honest</td>
<td>.399</td>
<td>.452</td>
<td>-.460</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthy</td>
<td>.799</td>
<td>4.290E-02</td>
<td>.162</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral</td>
<td>.843</td>
<td>4.067E-02</td>
<td>.173</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical</td>
<td>.869</td>
<td>.141</td>
<td>.157</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic</td>
<td>.865</td>
<td>5.432E-02</td>
<td>.228</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. a Rotation converged in 4 iterations.
Rotated Component Matrix for CNN TV news (Q9)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intelligent</td>
<td>.101</td>
<td>.614</td>
<td>.414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trained</td>
<td>.181</td>
<td>.100</td>
<td>.885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert</td>
<td>.318</td>
<td>.191</td>
<td>.810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bright</td>
<td>.223</td>
<td>.780</td>
<td>.244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informed</td>
<td>.200</td>
<td>.839</td>
<td>8.786E-02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competent</td>
<td>.449</td>
<td>.247</td>
<td>.700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honest</td>
<td>.306</td>
<td>.723</td>
<td>1.427E-02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthy</td>
<td>.792</td>
<td>.171</td>
<td>.257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral</td>
<td>.827</td>
<td>.231</td>
<td>.234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical</td>
<td>.847</td>
<td>.217</td>
<td>.211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic</td>
<td>.758</td>
<td>.350</td>
<td>.267</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Each of the components was then checked for the reliability using a Cronbach’s alpha.

The resulting alphas were consistently high as indicated in the following tables.

Component one for BBC TV news

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Scale Mean if Item Deleted</th>
<th>Scale Variance if Item Deleted</th>
<th>Corrected Item-Total Correlation</th>
<th>Alpha if Item Deleted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q8H</td>
<td>17.1190</td>
<td>12.1784</td>
<td>.7235</td>
<td>.9014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8I</td>
<td>16.7738</td>
<td>13.5988</td>
<td>.7922</td>
<td>.8702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8J</td>
<td>16.8690</td>
<td>12.6935</td>
<td>.8088</td>
<td>.8620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8K</td>
<td>16.9167</td>
<td>13.4026</td>
<td>.8237</td>
<td>.8598</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reliability Coefficients  N of Cases = 84.0  N of Items = 4  Alpha = .9015

Component one for CNN TV news

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Scale Mean if Item Deleted</th>
<th>Scale Variance if Item Deleted</th>
<th>Corrected Item-Total Correlation</th>
<th>Alpha if Item Deleted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q9H</td>
<td>15.3021</td>
<td>16.6341</td>
<td>.7551</td>
<td>.8875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9I</td>
<td>15.1563</td>
<td>16.7016</td>
<td>.7990</td>
<td>.8740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9J</td>
<td>15.1563</td>
<td>16.0911</td>
<td>.8182</td>
<td>.8659</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9K</td>
<td>15.6042</td>
<td>14.2838</td>
<td>.7931</td>
<td>.8799</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reliability Coefficients  N of Cases = 96.0  N of Items = 4  Alpha = .9047
Component two for BBC TV news

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Scale Mean if Item Deleted</th>
<th>Scale Variance if Item Deleted</th>
<th>Corrected Item-Total Correlation</th>
<th>Alpha if Item Deleted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q8A</td>
<td>16.1412</td>
<td>13.1703</td>
<td>.6521</td>
<td>.6978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8D</td>
<td>16.6235</td>
<td>12.0709</td>
<td>.6998</td>
<td>.6671</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8E</td>
<td>16.3647</td>
<td>12.1154</td>
<td>.6905</td>
<td>.6719</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8G</td>
<td>16.9059</td>
<td>14.4672</td>
<td>.3520</td>
<td>.8518</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reliability Coefficients  N of Cases = 85.0  N of Items = 4  Alpha = .7808

Component two for CNN TV news

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Scale Mean if Item Deleted</th>
<th>Scale Variance if Item Deleted</th>
<th>Corrected Item-Total Correlation</th>
<th>Alpha if Item Deleted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q9A</td>
<td>15.5243</td>
<td>17.0950</td>
<td>.5615</td>
<td>.8117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9D</td>
<td>15.8252</td>
<td>14.6554</td>
<td>.7216</td>
<td>.7401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9E</td>
<td>15.5922</td>
<td>14.0478</td>
<td>.6907</td>
<td>.7539</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9G</td>
<td>16.5243</td>
<td>14.9970</td>
<td>.6162</td>
<td>.7900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reliability Coefficients  N of Cases = 103.0  N of Items = 4  Alpha = .8218

Component three for BBC TV news

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Scale Mean if Item Deleted</th>
<th>Corrected Item-Total Correlation</th>
<th>Corrected Item-Total Correlation</th>
<th>Square Multiple Correlation</th>
<th>Alpha if Item Deleted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q8B</td>
<td>11.5000</td>
<td>5.9321</td>
<td>.5422</td>
<td>.3067</td>
<td>.6739</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8C</td>
<td>11.5000</td>
<td>6.1049</td>
<td>.6112</td>
<td>.3738</td>
<td>.5982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8F</td>
<td>11.5610</td>
<td>5.8543</td>
<td>.5354</td>
<td>.2966</td>
<td>.6837</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reliability Coefficients  3 items  Alpha = .7369

Component three for CNN TV news

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Scale Mean if Item Deleted</th>
<th>Corrected Item-Total Correlation</th>
<th>Corrected Item-Total Correlation</th>
<th>Square Multiple Correlation</th>
<th>Alpha if Item Deleted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q9B</td>
<td>11.6061</td>
<td>6.4045</td>
<td>.7040</td>
<td>.5004</td>
<td>.8427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9C</td>
<td>11.8384</td>
<td>5.3410</td>
<td>.7805</td>
<td>.6099</td>
<td>.7668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9F</td>
<td>11.8889</td>
<td>5.1814</td>
<td>.7465</td>
<td>.5670</td>
<td>.8037</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reliability Coefficients  3 items  Alpha = .8623
The following table highlights the comparison of the three components for both BBC and CNN. It represents the summary of the findings above for the three clusters identified.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ETHICS</td>
<td>BBC</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>22.5595</td>
<td>4.72459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CNN</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>20.4063</td>
<td>5.23868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INFORM</td>
<td>BBC</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>22.0118</td>
<td>4.63294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CNN</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>21.1553</td>
<td>5.05025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRAIN</td>
<td>BBC</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>17.2805</td>
<td>3.44364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CNN</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>17.6667</td>
<td>3.44638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>BBC</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>61.8608</td>
<td>9.67383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CNN</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>59.1053</td>
<td>11.36013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The researcher then performed an independent sample t-test to identify any significant difference between the perceptions of the respondents for the two TV news sources. The summary of the comparison is given in the following table.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>df</td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETHICS</td>
<td>1.998</td>
<td>.159</td>
<td>2.879</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.899</td>
<td>177.829</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>2.1533</td>
<td>.74270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INFORM</td>
<td>2.200</td>
<td>.140</td>
<td>1.201</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>.231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.211</td>
<td>183.892</td>
<td>.227</td>
<td>.8564</td>
<td>.70721</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRAIN</td>
<td>.081</td>
<td>.776</td>
<td>-.751</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>.454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-.751</td>
<td>172.829</td>
<td>.454</td>
<td>-.3862</td>
<td>.51439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>4.107</td>
<td>.044</td>
<td>1.703</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>.090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.728</td>
<td>171.895</td>
<td>.086</td>
<td>2.7555</td>
<td>1.59469</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although some marginal differences appear between the totals of the components for the two stations, only the difference on the ethics component is significant. Thus only the four elements in this group “trustworthy, moral, ethical and authentic” really matter with the regard to the difference in credibility of BBC and CNN TV news.
The means of all the eleven measurements for BBC were above 5.0 (7 was the highest positive mark), some scores even reached above 5.5. When researcher compared the means of the two channels, there was a slight difference due to the invalid answers of those who only scored BBC.

On the whole, BBC was ranked higher than CNN, but CNN was perceived credible as well.

From the respondents’ answer to question ten and eleven in the questionnaire researcher had a better understanding of audience’s standard and expectation for a credible TV news sources. As stated in literature review, a news resource’s reputation gives weight to the people’s credibility of its news content. The question ten was: what is your impression of the BBC and CNN? Question eleven was: how do you think BBC and CNN TV news can be improved?

According to those descriptive narratives (Q10 and Q11), BBC and CNN had different stories. “Good and professional” was the most frequent complement people addressed to BBC. “Trustworthy” was the second. “Informed and educated” was something CNN did not get from the audience. BBC was not regarded as “present and immediate” but it appeared independent both financially and politically to audience, which probably contributed a lot to its credibility. Some respondents thought BBC covered more European and global news. Some people stressed BBC’s image as the legacy of colonial history.
As an organization, BBC was credited as organized by few people. Ironically some people even mentioned “funny” as their impression on BBC TV news, which might annoy BBC managers who were proud of BBC’s “British Seriousness”. The opposite voices were heard only with regard to “present/immediate and trustworthy”. The lack of “present/immediacy” of BBC might be due to two possibilities: first, some of the local respondents might have had access to BBC TV news but not through the BBC World Service which was supposed to be a 24-hour news channel like CNN. Second, BBC did not establish the image of “non-stop news channel” with the respondents.

The evaluation people gave to CNN was not optimistic. The biggest problem for CNN which undermined its credibility was its image of “American biased” coming from not only the news content but also from its financial structure and political stand. Another negative image CNN got was “sensational”, it seemed that CNN exaggerated and played up the news too much. The salient characters of CNN TV news broadcasting were: “present and immediate” and “24-hour-non-stop”, which also led to its “competitiveness”. However this was not mentioned when people judged BBC TV news. In the end, CNN was ranked next to BBC with complements including “good and professional, present and immediacy, trustworthy, well-informed, funny and competitive”.

To sum up, both BBC and CNN were perceived professional among audience with slight difference of their salience in news reporting.
Chapter 5

Conclusion

As a child I had been full of impulses, superhuman desires, I was not content with the world, gradually as time went by, I grew calmer. I set limits, separated the possible from the impossible, the human from the divine, I held my kite tightly, so that it should not escape.

- “Zorba the Greek” by Nikos Kazantzakis

Carey (1969) already questioned the outcome of media studies a long time ago: “It is hard to understand how such a vast range of social phenomena are to be so simply explained.” (p. 294). Such a statement is not meant to terminate the use of media studies, instead it invites more delicate and sophisticated approaches in understanding the presence of media in society. Perhaps the most confusing aspect of research on media effects is the multiplicity and complexity of the phenomena involved. This study does provide food for thought for planners not only concerning people’s perceived credibility of BBC and CNN TV news but also about media impact beyond the Maltese context.

This research was initially concerned about the “media effect”, the news message conveyed by BBC and CNN, two satellite all-news TV channels to the audience in Malta. Although media “effects” are simply the consequences of what the mass media do, whether intended or not (McQuail, 2000), the interpretation of the audience at the receiving end was emphasized in this study.

Limitations of the study

This study has a number of limitations. The reader must keep in mind that the sample of the study is made up of two separate groups (due to the uncontrollable situation). This
might undermine the results. In hindsight the author could have discussed statistic comparisons between the two groups to justify their aggregation.

Furthermore, the initial studies by McCroskey (1975, 1999) considered more dimensions than were taken up in this study. The current choice of the dimensions was driven by what appeared feasible in the current context due to constraints in survey length and linguistic abilities of the respondents.

These considerations, though not invalidating the study, require cautiousness in the interpretation of the generalizations that follow.

Conclusions

As an intellectual production, mostly covering political issues, (TV) news is consumed by mass. According to this research, elder males watch more BBC and CNN TV news in Malta. White-collar audiences seek more TV news. In this study the majority of respondents had a secondary level of education. This is to be expected because in Malta all citizens have to continue education until the age of 16. Furthermore, one expects that only persons with a certain level of education would probably follow the news services under investigation because they are in a foreign language. In this study, the purpose for people watching TV news is in line with the usual news seeking agenda, mainly to know what is happening. How people watch TV news is less straightforward. People watch TV news randomly using these 24-hour TV news channels since “news are all the time”. Some declare they follow specific news programs while others would choose channels
depending on the news content. Some watch more domestic news, in which case, the local TV channels benefit from that attention. When they seek international news, then international news channels like BBC and CNN become their priorities.

Though Malta is a small island, researchers might be amazed at the flourishing of media in such a small population. In this miniature cosmopoly the traditional institutions such as the church and two main political parties, have managed to build strong media organisations. Together with the Italian channels (terrestrial reception available in Malta) all vie for credibility among the local population. But due to language and time constraints the Italian channels were excluded from this study. The local channels only carry two or three international news items during their bulletins. This aspect could be an excellent topic for further investigation.

Previous research indicated (Vassallo, 2002) that the Maltese, like other social groups, behave according to set behavioural patterns in the way they consume media productions, more detailed studies on their TV news watching patterns are needed. Such investigations require larger datasets to meticulous examining such issues as the tastes of specific audiences, what they value and who is the most influential person in the family when determining which channel is to be viewed.

This research was mainly concerned with the credibility gap between two channels of the same medium in Malta. Indirectly it also touched on the credibility gap among different media by asking people for their perception of different news sources. Among the
respondents, most prefer to follow news on TV. The dominance of TV as people’s news resource still leaves room for competition among different media conveying news in Malta. It is probable that frequency of use follows credibility perceptions: people are more likely to trust the media they use most. Yet it is clear that the choice of a medium can also depend on the type of programme one is looking for. Thus if a person is interested in news, TV might be a likely choice because of the visual content. This research finding corroborates the conclusions drawn from a psychological approach namely, that the audiovisual media can induce a sense of personal contact with what is being seen. This echoes the statement of Schoenbach (2001): “Audience falls for pictures” (p. 365). Unfortunately this does not only apply to lazy potato-couches.

Another interesting fact has been pointed out by previous research conducted in USA namely, that for half of the American adults who rely on two or more sources of news, the weakness of one may be offset by the strength of another. This is more likely at the national and global levels of reporting where the competition is greater and more diverse (McManus, 1994, p. 183). This result may refer to Maltese situation as well, by far few researches have examined the different media contributions to people’s news credibility to the same subject(s).

Truly, respondents watch news to be informed about significant daily happenings, yet this is not enough. Maltese audiences require something more from BBC and CNN TV news.
First, the contagious trend of expecting more entertainment in news, inherited from other TV genres, cannot be stopped by the warning from Jensen (1990). According to the latter, Amusement is dangerous not in and of itself, but when it penetrates inherently serious forms of public discourse, and becomes the world in which we live (p.47). This may explain why CNN and Sky TV news, which offer news in a less serious tone and alternatively even with their American flavour are more and more accepted in Malta though BBC news has dominated the scene for decades. In such a “post-modern” climate, transient, superficial forms of culture, appealing to the senses rather than to rationality, are in demand.

Second, the respondents are tired of so much bad news. The world on the TV screen seems to be in chaos with war, earthquakes and bloodletting, the sensationalism TV professionals initially seek to attract people’s attention. Yet some respondents are weary of the sensational aspect to the extent that they complain about it. Could such complaints lead to a loss of credibility in the future?

Maltese audiences also call for different voices about the same issues. They acknowledge the lack of the native voice, for the news services largely portrait the Anglo-American standpoints. They want TV news to be more diverse, they want narratives instead of opinions or interpretations.

Third, more news coverage especially from developing countries and the third world may strengthen people’s credibility toward BBC and CNN TV news. For people in Malta,
CNN has not been yet embarked on a version of its TV news service targeted for a European community. Perhaps this audience is being served by the recent emergence of Euronews. In the coming years, one could even introduce Euronews as a comparable News Service also fighting for credibility in ways similar to BBC and CNN. This could provide an interesting research undertaking.

Catering for the above-mentioned requirements by the audience will make TV news more appealing. Yet, it is still an open question whether increasing the appeal would also increase the credibility of the service.

CNN is more business oriented than BBC. It operates a consumer-directed marketing effort. Therefore it is no surprise that CNN TV news is more available than BBC in Malta. Although, Sky TV news was the pioneer of the international news channels, it became available to the Maltese audiences much later than BBC and is not yet a key player in this area. Consequently one must emphasize that credibility is also related to access.

Both BBC and CNN TV news channels, whether received by satellite, cable package or by other means, offer news to the Maltese audience as part of an “international delivery”. Both offer a service that targets stratified audiences around the world with their 24-hour news service. They compete intensely with each other in a global context including Malta (see Chapter two). Yet both have a different strategy to achieve their objective.

As the representative of the European state-regulated TV channel, BBC builds its credible
reputation as an impartial organization. CNN is the representative of the market-orientated TV channel. The respondents perceive both stations to be credible. However on the dimension of ethical BBC is perceived more credible than CNN. The two news services were perceived to be similar in terms of trained and well-informed. In the narrative comments, respondents are attracted to CNN because of what appeared as “on-the-spot” simultaneity and access to news report in different regions, albeit it is labelled as “American biased” by the audience.

Could the ethical discrepancy result from a different journalistic approach? Commercial media organizations such as CNN have been criticized that they have moved the news away from the professional responsibility perspective and placed it squarely within the marketing perspective. That critique is reinforced by the complaint of the professionals within the newsroom: “broadcasting journalism is going down the tubes. We are not doing news anymore. We are doing scandal, celebrity gossip, and cutesy animal stories. It’s become just a formula to build and entertain audience. ” (Eisenberg quoted an anchorman at San Francisco’s most prestigious station, 1990, p. 93, cited in McManus, 1994, p. 187).

If this reasoning were to be true, then this research indicates that what the news services think is only partly true. With more checking and anticipation of audiences’ expectations while watching TV news, the motto “Turning heads was more important than filling minds” (McManus, 1994, p. 186) is challenged. The appreciation of BBC’s qualitative newsgathering in Malta has proved this statement. However this does not mean that
respondents can necessarily articulate their perceived difference in a conscious manner. The use of refined instruments and deeper statistical analyses could benefit the news services.

When we take a closer look at people’s expectations for BBC and CNN TV news, they request minor changes. More media-literate audience realize that there is no absolute truth out there, only presentations- part of the truth. So they prefer the narration of the events instead of being told how to value them; if there are opinions, they want different opinions- “all-sides-presented”. Audiences do not demand drastic changes for media services or few audiences really know what they want. Therefore the mission for both BBC and CNN is to balance their audience rating and the social responsibility given that they regard themselves watchdogs of society.

BBC appears to be immune from financial pressures. This wins more people’s credibility for BBC TV news programmes as an output of independent media organization free from political influence and blind catering to masses’ taste. Because of its market orientation CNN may not be able to change its structures, but may appear to be more independent from its financial shareholders interests of political orientation.

Though this research does not analyse the TV news content, the way that the news reaches the audience through the TV screen is not ignored. Some of the respondents mention that they follow certain programs because of certain TV personalities, and they emphasize the tone of the news. Generally people trust more when the tone of news
report is neutral. The pronounced political bias in TV news undercuts the audience’s
credibility toward it.

Once the darling of new media, cable TV industry now faces a slowdown in construction,
competition from other technologies such as home video, and rising consumer
dissatisfaction (Sherman, 1995) in a turbulent time. The emphasis on Cable TV
management is no longer on growth, but on consolidation and marketing. More direct to
win bigger shares, a cable channel must not only have a unique identity but also have to
deliver familiar products expected by audiences-the middle ground between the
demanding variety and the familiarity of the cable TV production by the audience. The
implications of this finding are not that the organizational structure of BBC and CNN
needs to be radically altered- a different set of requisites might simply mean that the
contours of network news would be propelled in different directions.

The significance of a research is based on the researcher’s full awareness of the
advantages and limitations of the research conducted. As stated at the beginning of the
study, this research is a pilot study which could lead to other discussions. Obviously
considerations for different contexts have to be taken into account.

This research draws on a sample of 250 persons, which is considered fine with a pilot
study but should vary accordingly in other countries or regions for the sake of accuracy.
For this research a factor analysis was used to identify different components of the
credibility concept. This needs to be complemented with studies using other approaches
(for example, content analysis).

Media impact is not only determined by the service providers but also by the immediate personal experience of the audience (McQuail, 2000), and the social context of reception (Weiss, 1969). Although some variables including people’s age, gender, education level and occupation etc. are cross tabulated in this research, further investigation is required to determine how these demographics interact with the perception of credibility.

Echoing the psychological dimensions of the media effects research elaborated in the Literature Review, there are other dimensions to be measured in further studies.

The emphasis on the role of the audience in determining effects is strengthened when length of exposure is added to the influence of such psychological processes of which the recipient is not conscious of (Weiss, 1969). Audiences are never passive, nor are all their members equally active. Some will be more experienced, or more active “participants” than others. The fact that those who choose to expose themselves do so because they seek certain gratifications from the experiences or desire to use the medium in personally satisfying ways may not be revealed but difference between heavy and light viewers should be distinguished.

This research investigated individual perceptions of credibility. Yet, audiences for particular media genres often comprise separate “interpretative communities” which share much of the same forms of discourse and frameworks for making sense of media
(McQuail, 2000). Hence, it might be useful to investigate how the collective norms of a group of significant others influences such individual perceptions. The model by Ajzen and Fisbein (1977 cited in Petty & Cacioppo, 1981, p. 26) could be useful in this regard. Such a discussion would take into account the issue of credibility within subgroups of the same society.

Earlier in 1990s, Yorke (1995) already noticed that, the audience was far more discerning, demanding the same high standards of presentation and production in news as of any programme which might have taken months rather than hours to prepare. If this ability were to be coupled with the ability to discriminate between fact and fiction, then one will conclude that reaction to news is a matter of learning and an aspect of socialization of the audience. Then, an audience’s ability to make correct discrimination is likely to depend on the background of relevant knowledge and experiences to the news (Weiss, 1969). Thus one will need to question whether the audience’s growing literacy of TV news decoding may influence audience credibility. The data in this study is inconclusive. However other signs exist pointing to an increase in an audience that is more discerning. Once a person understands how the news media operate, one will often develop higher expectations about the news. Therefore, the improvement of TV news requires the interaction of both the news agencies and the recipients. Such interaction impacts people’s credibility of TV news. In this sense, no medium is excessively dangerous if its users understand what its dangers are.

Insights like those listed above, together with the comments of the respondents to this
survey, indicate that qualitative methodologies can compliment the findings of this study. It is not enough to ascertain a significant difference on one of the component dimensions of credibility. The reason for such a difference begs for further research and exploration.

Credibility of news is also influenced by historical times of crisis or heightened awareness (McQuail, 2000). Though this research was conducted almost one year after the event of September 11th in United States, the after-effect cannot be ignored. It appears from the questionnaire that in those days people in Malta tracked more news and preferred serious news to more entertaining programs. CNN had established its reputation in Malta and globally during a number of events including the Gulf War of 1989, the Bush- Gorbachev meeting in Malta, and the September 11, 2001, bombing of the World Trade Centre. On the basis of this reputation, people are more likely to look up CNN channels whenever there is a moment of crisis. Researchers need to ask how such moments affect the credibility of news sources.

This research focused on source credibility through audience’s perceptions of BBC and CNN news services. The same approach can be used to compare other local and foreign news services. Furthermore one could extend this study to include credibility ascribed to political personalities and how this in turn impacts voting behaviour. Is this work different from the purchasing behaviour explored by marketing scholars? If so, in what way?

Could this research approach be used in a different country or region? For example, Hong
Kong shares a similar historical background like Malta. Both were British colonies. Both enjoy a geographical location of strategic importance together with knowledge of western news services. Would this study, if repeated in Hong Kong have the same result?

The issue of quality and credibility will become increasingly important over the coming years as competition intensifies within cable TV all-news channels, among newspapers, radio and television, and other burgeoning media. Although credibility of a news source does not necessarily correspond to popularity of a news source (Robinson & Kohut, 1988, cited in Fischof, 1996), it could however be used to gain relative advantage in a crowded environment.

International news services both promote and are themselves a reflection of the globalisation process. BBC and CNN news channels, together with other equivalent competitors are leading fundamental revolutions in TV journalism and a reconstruction of “reality” via TV. It is amazing that some underdeveloped countries still receive reports about events in their own countries from BBC and CNN, those First World news services (Gronbeck, Farrell & Soukup, 1991). As competition and broadcasting choice increased and allegiances to public sector organisations dissipated, loyalties to long-established broadcasting patterns (like that of BBC) decreased. Audiences that had once been socially and culturally homogeneous fragmented both socially and spatially (Kung-Shankleman, 2000). The so-called “digital revolution”, is gradually eroding the structural barriers between the media, telecommunications and information technology industries. Will credibility play an important role in this new world order?
While the scenario is far from clear. Epstein (1974) quoted a network vice-president’s speech in his book: “I wish that everyone chose to watch the program that most appealed to them from among the competing programs; it would make my job much easier. Unfortunately that is not the way it works.” (p. 92)
References


**Internet sources**


Appendix I: Cover letter to Melita Cable

June 15 2002

Customer Service Manager,

Melita Cable.

Dear Sirs,

This confirms that Ms Mao Xi, (ID # 150055586), a Chinese student is currently reading a Master’s programme in Communication Studies at the University of Malta. As part of her studies she is doing a research study on “People’s perceptions of BBC and CNN TV news in Malta”. The attached questionnaire seeks to understand such phenomena and is a copy of what will be sent to the intended respondents.

The study assumes a sample of 250 subscribers to Melita Cable that have access to both BBC and CNN news services. The findings of this study will be used for educational purposes and at no time will respondents be identified individually. All responses will remain confidential.

I would appreciate if you can assist the student in targeting a random sample of 250 respondents from such a target population. The student is allowed to share with Melita Cable a summary of findings as a token of appreciation for your assistance.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Professor Saviour Chircop, Director
Centre for Communication Technology
Appendix II: List of questions asked for the call-ins at Melita Cable

1) May I ask whether you watch BBC and CNN TV news?

2) This is *Mao Xi, a Chinese* student at the University of Malta. I am doing a study about “People’s perceptions of BBC and CNN TV news in Malta”. Would you be willing to fulfil a questionnaire- just simple questions like “what you think of their TV news program?”

If you accept, we will send you the questionnaire and you can return it through the mail.

In addition, all responses will remain confidential

3) Where can we send you the survey material?

4). Thank you for your co-operation.

Will you leave your address and name?
Appendix III: Questionnaire

Dear Sir/Madam

This is Mao Xi, a Chinese student who is reading a Master’s programme in Communication Studies at the University of Malta. As part of my studies I am doing a study on “People’s perceptions of BBC and CNN TV news in Malta”.

This questionnaire seeks to understand your perceptions of BBC and CNN TV news services. Your answer to the questions will be valuable for this study.

Your name was selected through a sample of subscribers to Melita Cable\(^1\) who receive BBC/CNN news services or a random sample of telephone subscribers. In each case the permission of a household member was sought. The results of this study will be used for educational purposes and at no time can your responses be identified individually. All responses will remain confidential.

I take this opportunity to thank you for accepting to receive this questionnaire. I will be very grateful if you can complete the questionnaire and return it in the enclosed self-addressed envelope by July 27\(^{th}\), 2002 to the following address:

Mao Xi  
C/o Centre for Communication Technology  
University of Malta  
Msida, Malta. MSD 06

Thank you for taking the time to assist in this study.

**BBC/CNN Questionnaire**

The following questions assess your perception of the BBC and CNN news services. There is no right or wrong answer. Indicate your honest opinion by following the instructions. Thank you for your assistance.

1. **How often** do you watch TV news? (check the box that best expresses your choice)

   \[\checkmark\] daily \[\checkmark\] 2 to 4 times a week \[\checkmark\] once a week \[\checkmark\] less than once a week

2. Rank in order of priority (1=most important, etc.) **your sources** of news information? (Put your numbers in the boxes provided)

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\(^1\) I acknowledge and thank Melita Cable for their assistance in this project.
3a. Which is the most reliable news resource? (Give order, 1= most reliable, 2=less reliable, 3=even less reliable, etc. Put your numbers in the boxes provided)

TV  newspaper or magazine  radio  Internet

others (please specify) ________________________________


3b. Why? __________________________________________

4. What is your purpose of watching TV news? (Check the box that best expresses your choice)

- to know what is happening
- for work or study
- for fun and relax
- to kill the time
- to be able to speak about things that are important to me

5a. Have you ever watched BBC and CNN TV news? (Check the appropriate box)

- BBC only
- CNN only
- Both BBC and CNN

5b. When? (Check the appropriate box)

- In the last week
- During the last month
- During this past year
- More than a year ago

6a. Which news program did you follow on BBC? _______________________

6b. Which news program did you follow on CNN? _______________________

7a. In matters of TV news, which do you trust more? (Check one box)

- BBC
- CNN
- It depends (Go to 7b)

7b. If it depends, indicate your reason (Check the appropriate box)

- It depends on different programs.
It depends on the content (domestic or international program)

Others (please specify)___________________________________________

7c. Why?__________________________________________________________

8. Please rate BBC TV news on the following criteria: (Circle the most appropriate)

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<th>4</th>
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</table>
9. Please rate CNN TV news on the following criteria: (Circle the most appropriate)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Intelligent  Unintelligent

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Untrained  Trained

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Inexpert  Expert

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Bright  Stupid

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Informed  Uninformed

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Inexpert  Expert

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Incompetent  Competent

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Honest  Dishonest

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Untrustworthy  Trustworthy

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Immoral  Moral

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Unethical  Ethical

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Artificial  Authentic

10. What is your impression of the BBC and CNN?

BBC

CNN
11. How do you think BBC and CNN TV news programs can be improved?

**BBC**

**CNN**

Finally, please can you give us some information about yourself?

12. Age  
- less than 25
- 26 - 35
- 36 - 45
- 46 – 55
- 56+

13. Gender  
- Female
- Male

14. Education (Check 4 the box that your highest educational attendance)  
- Primary school
- Secondary school
- University or above

15. Occupation  
____________________

16. Citizenship (Check 4 one box)  
- Foreign
- Maltese by naturalisation
- Maltese by birth

17. Have you ever been abroad?  
- yes (go to 18)
- no

18. If yes, for what reason? (Check 4 the most appropriate box)  
- study
- business
- holiday
- others (please specify)