

MEDIA DEVELOPMENT IN BOSNIA

A Longitudinal Analysis of Citizen Perceptions of News Media Realism, Importance and Credibility

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Abstract / This article examines public perceptions of the news and information sector in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Since the signing of the Dayton Peace Accord in late 1995, the international community has donated millions of dollars to foster free and fair media. This research explores the media transition in Bosnia through a four-year longitudinal study. The research design measured public perceptions ($N = 1689$) of the realism, importance and credibility of news outlets in the two major media centers: Banja Luka and Sarajevo. The findings suggest that over time Bosnians are relying less on politically motivated news outlets. Moreover, some independent media have emerged as both important and credible sources for news and information.

Keywords / independent media / media development / news media / politically controlled media / source credibility

Media transitions from government ownership to private ownership are an important area of study for both media scholars and development theorists. Media scholars can gain much from systematically studying the successes and failures of transitional media systems. Likewise, development theorists, especially those who recognize the link between civil society and press freedom, also stand to gain insight from examining the media's role during social and political development. Media transitions are occurring throughout the world and one of the most noteworthy regions to study has been Eastern Europe. In this region, the media are transitioning from being a mouthpiece of a Communist state to a fledgling private, commercial enterprise. Jacobson and Jang (2002) reviewed the relationship between media, war, peace and civil society and noted that the media have an important role in helping nations make the transition to democracy.

The newly formed nation of Bosnia-Herzegovina offers media scholars and development theorists a powerful case study of a media transition. What makes the Bosnian media transition particularly noteworthy is that hundreds of media outlets throughout Bosnia have received millions of dollars of international assistance. The objective of this assistance is the creation of independent media capable of moderating the nationalist voices that brought war to Bosnia. Unfortunately, little evidence exists evaluating the effects of this financial assistance on the development of the Bosnian media, particularly in terms of changes in

public perceptions of the media. Only one study has measured public acceptance of media messages during this transitional period. Taylor and Kent conducted focus groups in 1998, just two and a half years after the Dayton Peace Accord, and found:

. . . independent media lack credibility in Bosnia. This may be attributed to a societal attitude toward media that goes back to the nationalist propaganda before and during the war and a suspicion of any media. . . . Regardless of the causes, the independent media in Bosnia need to address their lack of credibility before they can have the impact on democracy that everyone hoped they would have. (Taylor and Kent, 2000: 372–3)

Beyond these focus group data, mass communication scholars and development theorists have little information about the status of the Bosnian news media in the minds of Bosnian citizens. This article attempts to fill this gap.

The first section of the article provides a historical context for understanding the media transition in Bosnia. The second section provides a theoretical context and outlines a series of research questions. The third and fourth sections outline the method and results of a longitudinal study of public perceptions of news outlets in the two media centers of Bosnia – Banja Luka in Republika Srpska and Sarajevo in the Bosnian–Croat Federation. The final section of the article discusses the implications of the findings for mass communication scholars, development theorists and for ongoing efforts to support the development of independent media in transition nations.

The Bosnian Media Situation

In early 1992, war erupted in the heart of Europe. While the war in the former Yugoslavia received scant interest from the American public (Bennett and Flickinger, 1997), it was a watershed moment for the post-Cold War world (Chandler, 2000). The international community has played a large role in rebuilding the region. Billions of dollars of assistance have been allocated to the physical reconstruction of Bosnia (Cousens and Cater, 2001). Additionally, millions of dollars have been spent on civil society initiatives. One major beneficiary of this assistance has been the media sector in Bosnia.

According to Glenny (1996), the international community believed that the media in Bosnia played an important role in the war (1992–5). Therefore, many believe that the media have a role to play in Bosnia's reconstruction. Media development is one area that has been given much attention and financial resources. Since 1995, over US\$60 million have been allocated for media development (Udovicic, 2001). This assistance has been used to create new media outlets such as the Open Broadcast Network (OBN) as well as to support independent-minded media that began during the war (*Nezavisne Novine*) or immediately following the Dayton Peace Accord (*Reporter* magazine).

Bosnian news outlets generally fall into one of two broad categories. The first category includes politically motivated outlets that have aligned with a particular political view or government office. Sometimes these outlets are considered state-controlled media if the political party is in power and sometimes these outlets are considered oppositional media when their party is not in power.

According to the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX, 2001: 68), the same political actors who used media to pursue their goals in wartime still continue to influence media outlets today. The second category includes media outlets that do not rely on any political party or ideology for support. These outlets consider themselves independent or alternative. Many of these outlets have been relying on international donor dollars for financial support. The weakness of the Bosnian economy, poor management and saturation of the media market all make a truly self-sustaining media sector nearly impossible (IREX, 2001).

The media situation is further exacerbated because of the past role of the media in the former Yugoslavia. In the old system, media served Tito's interests and repeated the same political line as government officials (Glenny, 1996; Silber and Little, 1996). Then, during the Bosnia war, the government-owned media outlets shifted their focus and began serving as mouthpieces for the regional nationalist political parties. State-controlled media were most often the only available media during the war and the public was left dependent on this channel for information. The state-controlled media are blamed for contributing to the Bosnian genocide (Glenny, 1996). Hence, one part of the international community's civil society initiatives in Bosnia was the establishment of media outlets independent of government or political control.

The international community has fully embraced the idea of creating independent media in Bosnia. The Communication Regulatory Agency (CRA), formerly the International Media Commission, reported over 210 independent radio stations, 71 television studios, five main daily papers, three national weekly magazines and countless smaller print outlets operating in the two entities that comprise Bosnia-Herzegovina. The five main daily newspapers in Bosnia have an average circulation of between 80,000 and 90,000 copies for a population of 4 million. This is only an estimate since circulation data are considered a business secret. The three oldest papers, *Oslobodjenje*, *Glas Srpski* (formerly *Glas*) and *Vecernje Novine* (now named *Jutarnje Novine*) face serious problems over funding and privatization (Udovicic, 2001).

Although Bosnia is one of the most saturated media markets in the world (IREX, 2001), it also is one of the poorest economies in the world. Such poverty poses significant challenges to advertiser-supported media. Regardless, with such market saturation it might seem that Bosnians are in an ideal situation to obtain news and information from sources that they trust and value. The multiple media outlets should theoretically offer Bosnians a plethora of information choices. However, as Taylor and Kent (2000) found, Bosnians appear suspicious of all media outlets. Many Bosnians actually feel more comfortable with the politically motivated media because they already know whose interests they serve, and the public has a long history of 'reading between the lines' in media content.

Research Questions

The focus of this research concerns how Bosnians perceive the realism, importance and credibility of the various regional news outlets, and how these

perceptions have changed over the past four years – a time period in which substantial financial assistance has been devoted to the development of independent media in Bosnia.

Historically, Bosnians have had little reason to believe their media outlets. Bosnians lived under state-controlled media during the Tito years (1945–80) and during the nationalist period that followed. Moreover, political use of the media during the war for propaganda purposes has undermined the public's perceived realism of media content. During the war, the media served as a mouthpiece for political leaders and military propagandists (Glenny, 1996). Taylor and Kent (2000) found that one outcome of this propaganda was that Bosnians mistrust messages from both the politically motivated media as well as the newly formed independent media.

Multiple studies about media realism have been conducted in the US. Research about perceived realism has been explored, mostly through experimental design, primarily to investigate how people react to television messages (Potter, 1986, 1988; Rubin, 1981, 1983). Potter (1986) identified three dimensions of perceived realism: the *magic window*, where the viewer believes that media content is an actual representation of life; *instruction*, where the viewer expands his or his knowledge of an area through media consumption; and *identity*, where the viewer perceives the degree of similarity between him-/herself and the television characters and situations.

It is useful to gauge the 'realism' lens through which Bosnians view media messages. When there is too much perceived realism audience members are merely passive receivers, much like children, who believe everything in the media. Alternately, when there is too little realism audience members are so suspicious of all media messages that they cannot trust the media as an information resource. Perceptions of media realism may be low in the early years of the transition as Bosnians recover from the propagandistic tradition. However, over time, the reality lens should change as international dollars are spent on media development and training.

RQ1: How have Bosnian perceptions of the realism of the news media changed over time (1998–2002)?

Given that the media situation in Bosnia reflects a history of mistrust and abuse, it is the international community's goal to foster news sources that are considered important and credible. News importance and credibility measures are one way to understand how people view news outlets and to assess the effectiveness of efforts to establish independent media in Bosnia. The newly created independent outlets need to be recognized by Bosnians as important and credible news sources if they are to have the intended effect of contributing to peace and reconstruction. News credibility is an important foundation for rebuilding trust in the Bosnian news outlets funded by international donors. The extent to which the independent Bosnian media have been accepted as important and credible sources of information drives the next set of research questions:

RQ2a: How have Bosnian perceptions of the importance of their news sources changed over time (2000–2)?

RQ2b: Are there differences in the perceived importance of independent and political news outlets?

RQ3a: How have Bosnian perceptions of the credibility of their news outlets changed over time (1998–2002)?

RQ3b: Are there differences in the perceived credibility of independent and political news outlets?

The methodology used to answer these questions is outlined below.

Method

The Site

To study the media transition in Bosnia, a longitudinal study measuring public perceptions of the news media was designed. Three point-in-time measures of media realism and credibility along with a two-point-in-time measure of importance levels as information sources were employed to provide a well-rounded picture of public acceptance of the politically motivated and independent news media in Bosnia. In-person surveys were administered in the two Bosnian media centers – Sarajevo in the Bosnian Federation and Banja Luka in the Republika Srpska. Since the war, there has been very little convergence of content or news outlets between Sarajevo and Banja Luka. What both regions have in common, however, is long-standing politically motivated media organizations and many newly formed independent news outlets.

Sarajevo is the capital city of the Bosnian–Croat Federation. Located in the southeast region of the country, it is the largest city in Bosnia with over 300,000 residents. Sarajevo suffered extensive damage during the war. Muslim refugees from all over the region sought shelter from the war in Sarajevo. Serb residents of Sarajevo, once comprising almost 50 percent of the population, left during the war and many have yet to return. Every major international organization that operates in Bosnia is headquartered in Sarajevo (e.g. the United Nations, European Union, United States Agency for International Development [USAID], Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe [OSCE], CARE, UNICEF, Soros Open Society Institute). There is high media density in Sarajevo. Multiple television stations, radio stations and print outlets compete for market share. Sarajevo newspapers include the well-known *Oslobodjenje*,¹ *Dnevni Avaz* and *Vecernje Novine* (recently renamed *Jutarnje Novine*). According to former *Oslobodjenje* editor Kemal Kurspahic, *Vecernje Novine* and *Dnevni Avaz* ‘are little more than conduits for the emanations of officials at every level’ (Napoli, 1999). *Dani* magazine is the most widely circulated weekly. The major television stations include the internationally funded Open Broadcast Network (OBN), Bosnia and Herzegovina TV (TVBIH) and several smaller stations attempting to break into the Sarajevo market.

Banja Luka is the capital city of the Bosnian Serbs. It is located in the north central section of Bosnia-Herzegovina and is considered a ‘parallel capital’ to Sarajevo. Many of its 240,000 residents are refugees who lived in regions that are now under Bosniak or Croat control. There are very few non-Serbs in Banja Luka. The international community identified Banja Luka as an important

location to foster the peace process. The Office of the High Representative (OHR), most western embassies and large donor organizations such as USAID and Soros have offices there.

The media environment in Banja Luka includes a plethora of news outlets. The politically motivated hard-line nationalist media outlets include SRT (Serb Radio and Television) and *Glas Srpski* (a daily government newspaper). Independent media include *Nezavisne Novine* (an independent paper), ATV (alternative television and OBN affiliate), *Reporter* (a weekly news magazine) and Radio NES (a radio station operated by *Nezavisne Novine*). Each of the media outlets studied in Sarajevo and Banja Luka is briefly described in Table 1.

Procedures

The perceived realism, importance and credibility measures were part of a larger survey collected for a 1998 and 2000 evaluation of USAID's political transition grants in the region. The time three data were collected in 2002 as part of an independent research project. In each time period a professional translator worked with the research team to translate the survey questions into the local dialects. Demographic data such as age and gender also were collected.

Members of a national non-governmental organization (NGO) with experience in survey research administered the surveys. The researchers conducted a pilot study to fine-tune the instrument. Data collection lasted approximately three to five days in each location during all three time periods. The interviewers were given detailed instructions about sampling (e.g. selecting as representative a sample as possible in each city with attention being paid to age and gender), asking and answering questions, and ensuring confidentiality of responses. Interviewers collected the surveys during different times of the day and in various high traffic locations around each town. The response rate was approximately 50 percent in each location.

Measures

Perceived Realism

The perceived realism index (Rubin, 1981) has traditionally been used as a mediator of media effects. The perceived media realism scale also can provide a lens through which we can study how Bosnians view their media. Our primary interest was in tracking changes in the perceived realism of the Bosnian news media over time.

To identify the lens through which Bosnians consume media messages, the perceived realism scale was modified in two ways. First, our interest in this case was in the news sector in general and not in a particular medium such as television or radio. Thus the referent in this study was 'news media in Bosnia'. Second, pilot testing and focus group research showed that many Bosnians had difficulty with one question. The researchers substituted Rubin's (1981) question 'television lets me see what happens in other places as if I were there' question with, 'the news media allow me to compare my experiences to those

TABLE 1

Overview of Bosnian Media Outlets

Source Name and Circulation	Code	Status ^a	Description
<i>Banja Luka</i>			
<i>Reporter</i> magazine 10,000/week	REP	I	Weekly news magazine, provocative content
Radio NES Not avail.	NES	I	Popular Banja Luka radio station, Owned by <i>Nezavisne Novine</i>
<i>Nezavisne Novine</i> 7500/day ^c	NN	I	Daily paper with wide distribution, now available in Sarajevo
Alternativa TV 60%/pop. ^d	ATV	I	Television station, member of Open Broadcast Network (OBN)
Serb Radio and Television 78%/pop. ^e	SRT	P	Politically motivated media, radio and television
<i>Glas Srpski</i> 7200/day ^c	SGL	P	Daily paper with wide distribution
<i>Sarajevo</i>			
Open Broadcast Network 75%/pop. ^c	OBN	I	Television station funded by international donors
<i>Dani</i> magazine 25,500/week ^c	DANI	I	Weekly news magazine, provocative content
Bosnian Television 80–90%/pop. ^c	TVBIH	P ^b	Television station from former system
<i>Vecernje Novine</i> ^f 10,000/day ^c	VN	P	Large daily newspaper, new owner and new name
<i>Dnevi Avaz</i> 40,000/day ^c	DA	P	Large daily newspaper, past affiliation with SDA party

^a The independent identifier is given to media outlets that are not specifically funded or support a political viewpoint or party. The politically motivated identifier describes media outlets that are closely related to a political party and have a political agenda in their tone and content.

^b TVBIH has slowly been devolving to a more 'public broadcasting' model since the pro-Bosniak Party of Democratic Action (SDA) lost power in 2000.

^c www.ejc.nl/jr/emland/bih.html

^d atvbl.com/istorijat.htm

^e www.rtrs-bl.com/latin/onama.htm

^f During the study, *Vecernje Novine* changed its name to *Jutarnje Novine*. The authors continued to use the VN variable name.

in other places'. The new question was an effort to overcome problems in translation and conceptualization. In this study, perceptions of the realism were measured on five-point Likert scales with 1 being the lowest score and 5 being the highest score.

Perceptions of the realism of the information provided by the news media were measured via five questions concerning: (1) the news media present things

as they really are in life; (2) if I see something in the media, I can't be sure it really is that way; (3) the news media let me really see how other people live; (4) the news media do not show life as it really is; (5) the news media allow me to compare my experiences to those in other places. These five questions were combined into a realism index. A factor analysis revealed that the scale measured a single construct. Reliability for this index was .60 using Cronbach's alpha. The lower than desired reliability may be a factor of the question substitution and thus the results associated with this measure should be interpreted cautiously.

Importance

For the media in Bosnia to be a useful tool in peace and democracy building, the news media must emerge as important sources of information. To ascertain the level of importance of each media outlet as a news and information source, respondents were asked to rate the importance of individual news sources when they need to make decisions. Importance was measured on a five-point Likert scale with 1 being the lowest score and 5 being the highest score. The question was as follows: is *source name* an important source for news and information? This measure was added to the 2000 and 2002 studies thus making it a two-point-in-time measure.

Credibility

Credibility research is one of the most well-developed areas of media studies (Metzger et al., 2003). The credibility scale used in this study was originally created for differentiating credibility of television, radio and newspapers (Westley and Severin, 1964). Graziano and McGrath (1986) extended this research and created a 12-item credibility scale for newspaper editors. Meyer (1988) dropped several of the items to create a five-item scale. The slightly modified version of the news credibility measure used in this study is derived from Graziano and McGrath (1986) and Meyer (1988). There is a variety of ways to measure media credibility and the scale that is used often has a large influence on what researchers will find (Rimmer and Weaver, 1987). Perceptions of the credibility of individual media outlets were measured in this study via four questions (Graziano and McGrath, 1986; Meyer, 1988): *source name* (1) is objective and fair as an information source; (2) tells the whole story; (3) is factual; and (4) is trustworthy. These four measures were combined into a credibility index for each media outlet. Each of the four questions was measured on a five-point Likert scale with 1 being the lowest score and 5 being the highest score.

Reliability scores (using Cronbach's alpha) for each of the media outlets studied in Sarajevo were as follows: the Open Broadcast Network Television Station (OBN): .64; *Dnevni Avaz* (DA): .81; politically controlled Bosniak television (TVBIH): .67; *Dani*, a weekly news magazine (DANI): .76; and *Vecernje Novine*, a daily newspaper now named *Jutarnje Novine*, (VN): .77. For the news outlets studied in Banja Luka, the reliability scores were as follows: Serb Radio and Television (SRT): .77; Alternativa TV (ATV): .84; *Srpski Glas* newspaper

(SGL): .85; *Reporter* magazine (REP): .85; Radio NES (NES): .81; and *Nezavisne Novine* (NN): .84.

Results

Descriptives

A total of 1689 respondents were surveyed over the three time periods. In 1998, 485 respondents completed the surveys with the number in the Federation's capital of Sarajevo ($n = 297$) and in Banja Luka, the capital of the Republika Srpska ($n = 188$). In 2000, 699 respondents – Sarajevo ($n = 409$) and Banja Luka ($n = 290$) – completed the survey. In 2002, 505 respondents in Sarajevo ($n = 305$) and Banja Luka ($n = 200$) completed the survey. The gender of the respondents in this study was fairly evenly split between male ($n = 832$) and female ($n = 844$). The mean age of the respondents is 34.5 (SD = 13.84). This mean age, although low, seems in line with UN reports showing that Bosnia has a large youth and middle-age population. Approximately 70 percent of the population is under 64 years of age and this figure is consistent with demographic data collected throughout many of the nations in Eastern Europe.

Perceived Realism of Bosnian Media

RQ1 addressed Bosnian perceptions of the realism of the information they receive from the news media. Table 2 presents Bosnian perceptions of the realism of the media by year and city studied. The combined perceived realism scores range from a low of 11.68 (Banja Luka in 1998) to a high of 13.90 (Sarajevo in 2000) on a summed 25-point index scale.

A key issue that concerned this study was whether perceptions of the realism of the media changed significantly over time. Looking first at Banja Luka, there was a significant change in the perceived realism of the news media over time ($F = 7.45$; $p < .01$). Specifically, the increased perceptions of realism demonstrated between 1998 (11.68) and 2000 (12.76) were statistically significant, according to Tukey's Highly Significant Difference (HSD) test ($p < .05$). The difference between 2000 (12.76) and 2002 (12.48), however, is not ($p > .05$). The difference between 1998 and 2002 also is significant ($p < .05$). Thus, it would appear that Banja Lukans' perceptions of the realism of their news media improved significantly between 1998 and 2000, but have not changed significantly since then.

Turning next to Sarajevo, we once again find a significant difference over the time period studied ($F = 8.90$; $p < .01$). The difference between the 1998 (13.33) and 2000 (13.90) realism perceptions is significant according to Tukey's HSD test ($p < .05$), as is the difference between 2000 (13.33) and 2002 (12.97; $p < .05$). The pattern here, then, is one of significant improvement from 1998 to 2000, followed by significant decline from 2000 to 2002 back to roughly 1998 levels (the difference between the 1998 and 2002 scores is not significantly different; $p > .05$).

In sum, in terms of RQ1, the data indicate that Bosnian perceptions of the

TABLE 2

Perceived Realism of Bosnian Media

City	Year			F
	1998	2000	2002	
Banja Luka	11.68 ^{b, c} (183, 3.31)	12.76 ^a (280, 2.70)	12.48 ^a (193, 3.02)	7.44**
Sarajevo	13.33 ^b (293, 2.80)	13.90 ^{a, c} (388, 2.67)	12.97 ^b (299, 3.28)	8.90**

Notes: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Tukey's HSD ($p < .05$):

^a Significantly different from 1998 (intra-city).

^b Significantly different from 2000 (intra-city).

^c Significantly different from 2002 (intra-city).

realism of their news sources have changed over time, but the pattern of these changes is different across regions. In Banja Luka, improvement took place between 1998 and 2000. However, in 2002 there was a slight decline. In Sarajevo, improvement also took place between 1998 and 2000; however, this improvement evaporated by 2002 when the scores dropped below the 1998 levels.

Importance as News Sources

RQ2a and RQ2b addressed whether the perceived importance of Bosnian news outlets changed over time and whether there were differences in the perceived importance of independent vs political media outlets. However, because data on the perceived importance of Bosnian media outlets were not gathered in 1998, only comparisons between 2000 and 2002 are reported.

Table 3 reports that for media outlets in Banja Luka, only ATV experienced a significant increase in its perceived importance ($t = 4.05$; $p < .01$) from 2000 to 2002. NES ($t = 5.40$; $p < .01$), NN ($t = 5.48$; $p < .01$) and SGL ($t = 3.96$; $p < .01$) all experienced significant declines in their perceived importance. REP ($t = .33$; $p > .05$) and SRT ($t = 1.95$; $p > .05$) exhibited no significant change. In Sarajevo, three of the four news sources studied exhibited significant changes in their perceived importance. OBN ($t = 3.61$; $p < .01$), TVBIH ($t = 3.53$; $p < .01$), and VN ($t = 11.74$; $p < .01$) all experienced significant declines. DANI ($t = 1.94$; $p > .05$) exhibited no change. Thus, the data indicate that only the independent news outlet ATV experienced a significant improvement in its perceived importance during the time period studied. Both independent (NES, NN, OBN) and politically motivated (SGL, TVBIH, VN) media outlets experienced significant declines in their perceived importance during the 2000–2 time period.

Table 3 also indicates shifts in the most important media outlets to Bosnians over the time period studied. Looking first at Banja Luka, in 2000 the two news

TABLE 3

Individual Media Outlet Importance

Outlet	Year		<i>t</i>
	2000	2002	
Banja Luka			
ATV	3.12 (216, 1.11)	3.57 (192, 1.13)	4.05**
REP	3.19 (196, 1.16)	3.23 (192, 1.26)	.33
NES	3.14 (254, 1.21)	2.52 (190, 1.18)	5.40**
NN	3.15 (221, 1.19)	2.49 (193, 1.26)	5.48**
SRT	3.69 (271, 1.16)	3.47 (195, 1.19)	1.95
SGL	3.44 (210, 1.15)	2.96 (192, 1.28)	3.96**
Sarajevo			
OBN	3.53 (390, 1.13)	3.20 (294, 1.25)	3.61**
DANI	3.41 (369, 1.26)	3.60 (288, 1.23)	1.94
TVBIH	3.88 (399, 1.07)	3.57 (303, 1.25)	3.53**
VN	3.16 (368, 1.19)	2.04 (276, 1.21)	11.74**

Note: Sample number and standard deviations in parentheses.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

outlets that scored the highest on the importance scale were politically motivated media outlets, SRT and SGL. In 2002, it was ATV and SRT that scored the highest. In Sarajevo, two television stations, OBN and TVBIH, were rated as the two most important media outlets in 2000. In 2002, DANI and TVBIH were rated as the most important.

Next, the perceived importance of political vs independent media outlets in the aggregate from 2000 to 2002 was examined. In order to examine this issue, each media outlet was categorized as either a politically motivated or an independent outlet (see Table 1). Then, a mean importance score was computed via averaging the importance score for each media outlet in the category for each city. Thus, we computed an importance score for independent media in Banja Luka by taking the mean importance score for ATV, REP, NES and NN, the four main independent news outlets in Banja Luka. We computed an importance score for politically motivated media in Banja Luka by taking the mean importance score for SRT and SGL, the two main politically motivated media

TABLE 4

Media Outlet Importance (Political vs Independent)

Outlet Type	2000	2002	<i>t</i>
Banja Luka			
Independent	3.10 (159, .78)	2.95 (186, .84)	1.71
Political	3.69 (210, 1.06)	3.41 (191, 1.07)	2.63**
<i>t</i>	5.91**	4.64**	
Sarajevo			
Independent	3.45 (361, .93)	3.41 (281, .98)	0.53
Political	3.52 (366, .89)	2.82 (276, .97)	9.49**
<i>t</i>	1.04	7.14**	

Note: Sample number and standard deviations in parentheses.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

outlets in Banja Luka. For Sarajevo, the importance score for independent media was computed from the importance scores for OBN and DANI, the primary independent media outlets in Sarajevo, while the politically motivated importance score was created from the importance scores for TVBIH and VN, two of the main politically motivated media outlets in Sarajevo. DA was not included in this analysis because data were not gathered for both time periods.

As Table 4 indicates, independent news outlets in Banja Luka as a whole experienced no significant change in their perceived importance between 2000 and 2002 ($t = 1.71$; $p > .05$). In contrast, political media outlets experienced a significant decline in their perceived importance ($t = 2.63$; $p < .01$). In terms of differences between independent and political media outlets in Banja Luka, in both 2000 and 2002 political media outlets were, on average, rated as significantly more important than independent media outlets (2000: $t = 5.91$; $p < .01$; 2002: $t = 4.64$; $p < .01$). Thus, even with the significant decline in perceived importance that political media outlets experienced over the time period, these outlets, as a whole, were still assessed as more important than independent news outlets.

In Sarajevo, the independent media outlets (OBN and *Dani* magazine) exhibit no significant change in their perceived importance from 2000 to 2002 ($t = .53$; $p > .05$), while once again political media outlets exhibit a significant decline ($t = 9.49$; $p < .01$). However, in contrast to the Banja Luka situation, independent and political media outlets in Sarajevo exhibited similar levels of perceived importance in 2000 ($t = 1.04$; $p > .05$), and by 2002 the perceived importance of Sarajevo's political media outlets was significantly lower than that of independent media outlets ($t = 7.14$; $p < .01$).

To summarize, with regard to RQ2a, there has been significant change in

the perceived importance of Bosnian media outlets over time. Looking at the scores individually, many more media outlets – both independent and politically motivated – exhibited declines in their perceived importance than exhibited improvements. Only the Banja Lukan independent media outlet ATV experienced a significant improvement in its perceived importance from 2000 to 2002.

In regard to RQ2b, when politically motivated news outlets are compared to independent news outlets as a whole, we see that in both regions, politically motivated outlets are declining in terms of their perceived importance. Yet, independent media outlets as a whole exhibited no change in their perceived importance over the time period studied. Despite this pattern, Banja Lukan politically motivated media outlets continue to be perceived as significantly more important than independent media outlets. This changes slightly for Sarajevo, where independent media outlets as a whole have surpassed politically motivated media in terms of their perceived importance.

Perceived Credibility of Bosnian Media

RQ3a and RQ3b addressed changes in the perceived credibility of Bosnian media outlets over time, and whether significant differences exist in the perceived credibility of independent vs political media outlets. Table 5 presents the credibility indexes for each of the news outlets studied. This table indicates which outlets experienced significant changes in their perceived credibility over time (as indicated by a one-way ANOVA test), as well as which specific differences between time periods were significantly different (tested post hoc using Tukey's HSD test).

Looking first at Banja Luka, all media outlets studied (with the exception of the politically motivated news outlet SRT) experienced significant differences in their perceived credibility over the time period studied. However, only independent outlets ATV ($F = 40.65$; $p < .01$) and REP ($F = 8.44$; $p < .01$) experienced significant improvements in their perceived credibility over the four-year period. In the case of ATV, the perceived credibility index increased from 11.90 in 1998 to 12.13 in 2000, to 14.23 in 2002. *Reporter* magazine's (REP) credibility score was 12.41 in 1998, 12.36 in 2000, and a significantly higher 13.47 in 2002.

NES, NN and SGL all experienced significant declines in perceived credibility over the time period studied. NES and NN share much of the same content and editorial oversight. NES's perceived credibility declined from 12.76 in 1998 to 11.41 in 2002 ($F = 9.43$; $p < .05$). NN declined from 12.77 in 1998 to 10.01 in 2002 ($F = 43.16$; $p < .01$). Finally, SGL experienced a significant decline from a score of 12.67 in 2000 to 11.74 in 2002 ($F = 9.23$; $p < .01$). Perceived credibility data for SGL were not gathered in 1998.

We see significant changes in the media outlets perceived as most credible by Banja Lukans. In 1998, the two highest rated media outlets were NES and NN. In 2000, the two media outlets with the highest credibility scores were SRT and SGL, and in 2002, the top most credible news outlets were ATV and REP.

Turning to Sarajevo, all media outlets except DA exhibited significant

TABLE 5

Individual Media Outlet Credibility

Outlet	Year			<i>F</i>
	1998	2000	2002	
Banja Luka				
ATV	11.90 ^c (163, 2.76)	12.13 ^c (210, 2.93)	14.23 ^{a, b} (187, 3.76)	40.65**
REP	12.41 ^c (163, 2.75)	12.36 ^c (184, 3.01)	13.47 ^{a, b} (184, 4.07)	8.44**
NES	12.76 ^c (161, 2.93)	12.08 ^c (242, 3.39)	11.41 ^{a, b} (181, 3.56)	9.43**
NN	12.77 ^c (168, 2.96)	11.93 ^c (208, 3.35)	10.01 ^{a, b} (183, 3.76)	43.16**
SRT	12.31 (171, 2.94)	12.76 (262, 3.05)	12.26 (187, 3.47)	1.99
SGL	NA	12.67 (198, 3.27)	11.74 (183, 3.54)	9.23**
Sarajevo				
OBN	13.08 ^c (293, 2.59)	13.44 (366, 3.03)	13.84 ^a (275, 3.76)	4.21*
DANI	12.73 ^c (291, 2.32)	12.35 ^c (354, 3.50)	14.07 ^{a, b} (267, 3.76)	22.44**
TVBIH	12.63 ^b (294, 2.62)	13.53 ^a (369, 2.83)	13.12 (296, 3.59)	7.12**
DA	12.36 (296, 2.53)	NA	11.80 (284, 4.51)	3.38
VN	12.67 ^{b, c} (291, 2.21)	11.95 ^{a, c} (344, 3.18)	10.80 ^{a, b} (187, 4.29)	19.46**

Notes: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Tukey's HSD ($p < .05$):

^a Significantly different from 1998.

^b Significantly different from 2000.

^c Significantly different from 2002.

changes in their perceived credibility over the time period studied. OBN, DANI and TVBIH all experienced significant improvements in their perceived credibility. OBN's perceived credibility increased from 13.08 in 1998 to 13.44 in 2000, to 13.84 in 2002 ($F = 4.21$; $p < .05$). DANI experienced an improvement in perceived credibility from 12.73 in 1998 to 14.07 in 2002 ($F = 22.44$; $p < .01$). TVBIH experienced an improvement in its perceived credibility from 12.63 in 1998 to 13.53 in 2000, and a decline to 13.12 in 2002 ($F = 7.12$; $p < .01$). The improvement from 1998 to 2000 is the only significant difference among the three time periods according to Tukey's HSD test ($p < .05$). VN

TABLE 6

Media Outlet Credibility (political vs independent)

Outlet Type	1998	2000	2002	<i>F</i>
Banja Luka				
Independent	12.48 (151, 2.13)	12.01 (146, 2.23)	12.19 (170, 2.80)	1.32
Political	NA	12.72 (195, 3.02)	12.01 (179, 3.14)	6.52*
<i>t</i>		2.39*	.56	
Sarajevo				
Independent	12.92 ^c (287, 2.08)	12.88 ^c (332, 2.57)	13.96 ^{a, b} (250, 3.20)	14.60**
Political	12.58 (288, 1.81)	NA	11.85 (180, 3.60)	8.43**
<i>t</i>	2.09*	6.40**		

Notes: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Tukey's HSD ($p < .05$):

^a Significantly different from 1998.

^b Significantly different from 2000.

^c Significantly different from 2002.

experienced a significant decline from 12.67 in 1998 to 11.95 in 2000, to 10.80 in 2002 ($F = 19.46$; $p < .01$).

Unlike in Banja Luka, there are relatively few changes in terms of the media outlets considered the most credible in Sarajevo. In 1998, independent outlets OBN and DANI were perceived as the two most credible media outlets. In 2000, OBN was still considered one of the two most credible media outlets, along with politically motivated TVBIH. In 2002, OBN and DANI were again consistently perceived as the most credible media outlets, as they were in 1998.

To address whether there were significant differences in the perceived credibility of independent vs political media outlets, these outlets were classified in the same manner as they were for the importance analysis and mean credibility scores for each media outlet category were computed from the credibility scores for each media outlet (recall that the credibility score for each media outlet is an index created from the summed responses to four questions). Table 6 presents the credibility scores for politically motivated and independent media in both Banja Luka and Sarajevo from 1998 through 2002.

Looking first at Banja Luka, the mean credibility score for independent media is 12.48 in 1998, dropping to 12.01 in 2000, and increasing slightly to 12.19 in 2002. These differences are not statistically significant ($F = 1.32$; $p > .05$). Thus, there appears to be no change in the perceived credibility of independent media in Banja Luka over the time period studied. Looking next at politically motivated media, the mean credibility score dropped from 12.72 in 2000 to 12.01 in 2002 (credibility data for both politically motivated media outlets were not gathered in 1998). This difference is significant ($F = 6.52$; $p <$

.05), indicating a decline in the perceived credibility of politically motivated media from 2000 to 2002. Comparisons between independent and politically motivated media in Banja Luka in 2000 and 2002 indicate that politically motivated media were perceived as significantly more credible than independent media in 2000 ($t = 2.39$; $p < .05$); however, by 2002 their levels of perceived credibility were roughly equal ($t = .56$; $p > .05$).

Turning to Sarajevo, the mean credibility score for independent media improved significantly over the time period studied ($F = 14.60$; $p < .01$). The credibility score went from 12.92 in 1998 to 12.88 in 2000, a difference that was not significant at the .05 level using Tukey's HSD. However, the increase from 12.88 in 2000 to 13.96 in 2002 was statistically significant ($p < .05$), indicating that over the past two years Sarajevans have begun to perceive significant improvements in the credibility of their independent media outlets (the difference between 1998 and 2002 also was statistically significant; $p < .05$). In terms of politically motivated media outlets, the mean credibility score dropped significantly from 12.58 in 1998 to 11.84 in 2002 ($F = 8.43$; $p < .01$; data on the credibility of all politically motivated media outlets in Sarajevo were not gathered in 2000), indicating a significant decline in the perceived credibility in politically motivated media outlets in Sarajevo from 1998 to 2002. In terms of differences between politically motivated and independent media outlets in Sarajevo, independent media outlets (mean credibility score of 12.92) were perceived as significantly more credible than political media (mean credibility score of 12.58) in 2000 ($t = 2.09$; $p < .05$). By 2002, this difference in perceived credibility had grown even more pronounced (mean credibility score for independent media: 13.96; for politically motivated media: 11.85; $t = 6.40$; $p < .01$).

In sum, in Banja Luka, independent news outlets as a whole experienced no meaningful change in their perceived credibility, while politically motivated media outlets experienced significant declines, such that there is now no significant difference in the perceived credibility of the two categories of media outlets. In contrast, in Sarajevo independent media outlets have experienced significant improvements in their perceived credibility, while politically motivated media outlets have experienced significant declines, such that independent media outlets are now perceived as significantly more credible than politically motivated media outlets.

Discussion

The data show the trend of Bosnian perceptions about media from 1998 to 2002. By examining media realism, importance of various outlets and credibility, we can gain insights into the evolving news media transition in Bosnia.

Media Realism

The perceived realism measure served as a lens through which to understand how Bosnians view the media. Banja Lukans' perceptions of the realism of their media increased significantly between 1998 and 2000, but these scores have

not changed significantly since then. In Sarajevo, there was a significant increase from 1998 to 2000, followed by a significant decline from 2000 to 2002 back to roughly 1998 levels. These findings have important ramifications for media and development scholars. One of the major goals of the international community is to foster media in Bosnia that can contribute to peace and reconstruction. The Bosnian news media need to reach a level of development whereby they are accepted as realistic sources of information. The results of this study suggest that there has been only modest success (and no recent success) in developing a news and information system in Bosnia capable of significantly improving citizens' perceptions of the realism of the information they receive.

Perceived realism has paradoxical implications for media scholars and development theorists. If the public has too much belief in what they see in the media, then they will be unable to question or critique media messages. This situation would augur ill for the development of a critical, informed public with the ability not to be manipulated by those who control the media. On the other hand, if the public has too little perceived realism, then the media will not be valuable as an information dissemination tool in a democratic state. Bosnians in both Banja Luka and Sarajevo appear to have middle-range scores on perceived realism. Given the long history of political control of the media in Yugoslavia and during the war, and now the emergence of multiple independent media outlets, Bosnians may be in a relatively good position to recognize the motivation behind media messages.

Media Importance and Media Credibility

Banja Luka

There was a significant decline in perceived importance that political media outlets experienced over the time period. However, these outlets are still assessed as more important than independent media outlets. Some independent outlets have improved. ATV, reaching approximately 60 percent of the audience share, has experienced an increase in both importance and credibility over time. It now enjoys higher importance and credibility than any other television station in the Republika Srpska. ATV's emergence as the premier television station in the region may be linked to significant amounts of journalism training, infusions of money and equipment from the international community, and the resources made available from its OBN affiliation. ATV also benefited when international assistance for a competitor station, NTV in Banja Luka, ended.² *Reporter* is now the most widely read weekly magazine in the Republika Srpska with over 10,000 copies sold each week. Its high credibility score, second only to ATV, suggests that its content is useful to Serbs. While *Reporter* appears to have gained in credibility, its importance as a news source has not shown improvement. Perhaps it has reached a ceiling of importance constrained by its distribution as a weekly magazine.

What is most interesting about media importance and credibility in Banja Luka, however, may be the changing public perceptions about Radio NES and *Nezavisne Novine*. Both of these outlets had been considered the 'model'

independent media. Their content was professional, credible, moderate in political tone and often gave voice to oppositional candidates. The international community funded these outlets to serve as competition for SRT and *Glas Srpski*. Radio NES and *Nezavisne Novine* have received large amounts of financial assistance and training from the international community. These news organizations, under the editorship of Zeljko Kopanja, were considered successful, sustainable and moderate news organizations in the early years of the transition (1995–8).³

Yet, both news outlets have dropped in credibility ratings since their high ratings in 1998. The cause of this may be the election of Milorad Dodik, a financial backer of the paper. Dodik served as prime minister of the Republika Srpska from late 1998 through early 2001. Radio NES and *Nezavisne Novine* were overly positive in their news coverage of the Dodik government. While Dodik's party does not control the paper, the content is rarely critical of current government. This poses an interesting question: what happens to independent media outlets that give voice to oppositional politicians and positions once those candidates and positions gain power? Will the media remain as independent or will they move from 'oppositional' to 'positional' coverage? The declining importance and credibility scores in 2000 and 2002 of *Nezavisne Novine* and Radio NES suggest that media organizations in this position may have had a difficult time remaining objective when the electoral transitions that they helped to create actually occur.

Sarajevo

Many of the news outlets in Sarajevo experienced a decline in their importance levels from 2000 to 2002. OBN TV, TVBIH and *Jutarnje Novine* (formerly known as *Vecernje Novine*) all showed decreases in their importance levels over time. This may be attributed to the media saturation in Sarajevo, with dozens of media outlets competing for audiences' attention. The data do show that OBN and *Dani* magazine have increased in credibility ratings over time. This is good news for the international community, who donated over US\$6 million to develop OBN. At the same time, the two large newspapers, *Dnevni Avaz* (40,000 daily circulation) and *Jutarnje Novine* (10,000 daily circulation), each with questionable relationships to government officials and political parties, showed significant decreases in credibility.

Conclusion

The case of Bosnia can help mass communication scholars and development theorists understand the various roles of media in political and social transitions. The results suggest that with time, mentoring in reporting and professionalism, and large amounts of international financial support, an independent news sector can emerge to help moderate nationalistic voices and provide citizens with the information necessary to make informed decisions about personal, political and social issues. There are, of course, several limitations to the study. The low reliability on the perceived media realism measure should

be addressed and the labels of ‘politically motivated’ and ‘independent’ should be refined in future research to better capture the dynamic and ever-changing media situation in Bosnia. The data also reflect a rather young sample. However, in spite of limitations, this study shows that some independent news media in Bosnia are showing increases in perceived importance and credibility. While the perceived importance and credibility of the independent news sector as a whole have not improved drastically, certain independent outlets are showing positive changes. The reasons behind these changes, and any lessons learned from these specific media outlets, should be the focus of future research.

It has been almost seven years since the signing of the Dayton Peace Accord. In that time, over US\$60 million has been spent on creating and training the independent media in Bosnia. Local journalists have benefited from countless training sessions by USAID, IREX, Soros and the BBC. The media monopoly of politically motivated media is over and for the first time ever, Bosnians recognize that they have a choice when it comes to news and information. The multiple media outlets in both the Bosnian–Croat Federation and the Republika Srpska provide different perspectives and compete with politically motivated media for advertising revenue and consumers. Yet, this new media competition cannot last forever. There are far too many outlets and too few advertising dollars to support all of the new Bosnian media. However, the mere existence of so many media independent news outlets may help to boost the credibility of the media sector over time. And, continued study of the media transition in Bosnia may help scholars and donors learn from the successes and failures of this effort.

Notes

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1. *Oslobodjenje* was not included in this study because it did not receive significant amounts of international financial assistance. Moreover, it was a viable media outlet before the war, known for its cultural and arts news coverage.
2. NTV (Nezavisne Television) received large amounts of funding from 1998 to late 1999. During the summer of 1999, during the Kosovo crisis, NTV's coverage of the events was considered biased and inflammatory. Donor assistance has dropped off significantly since 2000.
3. Kopanja is considered a moderate and professional journalist. In 2000, an assassination attempt left him paralyzed. He was awarded the International Free Press Award by the Committee to Protect the Journalists (CPJ) in 2000.

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