

The challenge of achieving impartiality in Maltese TV news programming

JOANNA SPITERI

Department of Communications, Media and Culture

University of Stirling

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DECLARATION

This thesis has been composed by Joanna Spiteri. The work this thesis embodies has been done by Joanna Spiteri and has not been included in another thesis.

Signed:

Joanna Spiteri

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Abstract

This study examines some of the challenges that Maltese broadcasting is facing with respect to the news programming produced by the public service broadcaster and by the other two political stations. The thesis also investigates the concepts of balance and objectivity in news reporting and analyzes the extent to which Maltese TV news programmes succeed in providing balanced, impartial and accurate accounts. Special attention is paid to the role of the public service broadcaster, but consideration is also given to the part played by the two Maltese political stations competing with the public service broadcaster. A particular aim of this study is to measure how the requirement to preserve impartiality and balance impinges on the content of TV news bulletins and current affairs programmes produced by PSB and the other two political stations. The study will also consider the impact of current broadcasting regulations and will examine the degree to which such legislation is relevant in the attempt to achieve impartiality and balance in Maltese news broadcasting.

As a basis for the study the thesis focuses on a sample of news programming material broadcast on the three television stations in Malta during a Local Council electoral campaign. The aim is to assess how various news messages are communicated to audiences and to consider whether such messages are perceived as impartial and balanced by the viewers. The study explores how news workers and news producers strive to achieve impartiality and balance in their day-to-day practices. Finally the thesis makes one or two tentative suggestions as to how current broadcasting legislation might be amended in order

for the Broadcasting Authority can become a more effective watchdog and is able to intervene in cases where news programming is not deemed to be balanced and impartial.

Preface

This thesis is the product of a long germination period. Being an avid news junkie myself, and after having spent the early part of my career as a journalist at the Public Service Broadcaster in Malta, my interest in journalism and in news broadcasting practices has deepened. Such enthusiasm remained even when I ceased being a practising journalist and joined the Broadcasting Authority team. It was this that provided the original stimulus to pursue this study. Issues relating to impartiality, objectivity and balance are central concepts in the production of broadcast news. In my professional role at the helm of the Monitoring Department at the Broadcasting Authority, news programming is given priority over other monitoring work, since one of our major remits is to ensure that impartiality and balance are adhered to in this sector of programming.

Though a number of years have passed since I began this research and though several changes in broadcasting have occurred during this time, the fundamental need to preserve impartiality, balance and objectivity in news reporting has remained unchanged. The production of this study has been a challenging journey, but now that the journey is completed I hope that some of my findings will prove useful to broadcasters and to those working for regulatory bodies, as well as those responsible for framing future legislation.

In this study a qualitative methodology has been applied in order to explore the extent to which impartiality, balance and objectivity is achieved in the process of news production. This study also delves into the way that messages are communicated to viewers via these

broadcast texts. Particular consideration is given to the extent to which viewers are able to determine whether the messages received are indeed impartial and/or balanced. The challenges of producing impartial and balanced news are further investigated by an analysis of broadcasting regulations in Malta and the ways in which they can be seen to shape and influence the content of news programming produced by both the public service broadcaster and by the other two political stations

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Chapter 1

Introduction

“There can be no real democracy without just broadcasting. There can be no fair broadcasting without just democracy”. (Chief Executive, Malta Broadcasting Authority, Annual Report, 2002 p. 3)

Aims and objectives

The purpose of this research is to explore, analyse and investigate the challenges that the public service broadcaster in Malta and the other television stations face with regard to adhering to impartial content and balance in news bulletins and current affairs programmes. This research will only study these two particular genres while excluding other types of programming. While I understand that there is also political content in other programming such as magazine programmes, documentaries and other ‘informative’ programmes, I narrowed my research to the news and current affairs since these are the two main genres which are the most popular with the audience and are also considered an important part of the programme schedules and are mostly produced in-house. Moreover, such programming is very often used as the bone of contention from viewers and other stakeholders in the broadcasting industry insisting for an impartial and unbiased information and analysis. Also as in the case of the political stations, it is in these two genres that the shareholder, i.e. the political party, retains editorial influence. This study also focuses on the changing role of the public service broadcasting now that it is in direct competition with the two stations owned by the political parties. It also investigates whether broadcasting regulations pertaining to impartiality and balance on specific TV channels has had an impact on the

news programming broadcast by Maltese TV stations. The thesis focuses on the concept of impartiality within the news bulletins and current affairs programmes aired on the public service broadcaster and the other two television stations owned by the two big political parties in Malta. These are Net TV owned by the Nationalist Party¹ and One TV owned by the Malta Labour Party². (See Note A Appendix i). The Labour Party wholly owns the company that operates One TV. Initially the media were also accountable to the Party's General Secretary who chaired the Board of Directors made up of party officials appointed by the party's Executive Committee. However after 1998 the Labour Party re-organized this structure and while the political party appointed a Chairman and a new Board of Directors, they do not have any executive role within the political party. The Labour Party granted autonomy in all programming and management aspects but the party retained editorial influence in news and current affairs programming. At the end of every year it is the party's Executive which analyse the performance of the Chairman and the Board of Directors. On the other hand, Net TV is owned by media.link communications Ltd chaired by the party's General Secretary who runs the broadcasting station and the other media outlets. The General Secretary of the Nationalist Party (PN) is the Chief Executive of the company. The party mostly retains editorial influence on news and current affairs programming and such programmes are produced in house as happens on One TV. Net TV transmits all programming from the party headquarters while One TV only recently moved out the news and current affairs programming from the party headquarters to a separate

¹ Nationalist Party – hereinafter PN (In Maltese this party is called Partit Nazzjonalista). The political stance of the Nationalist Party is more conservative, inclined towards the Christian Democratic. It militates on the Demo- Christian political platform. The Nationalist Party was in favour of full membership in the EU but is more prone to take a conservative position on social affairs issues.

² Malta Labour Party – hereinafter PL (In Maltese this party is called Partit Laburista). The Labour Party is inclined to adopt social democratic policies and is a working class based political party. Its policies are left wing. The Labour Party campaigned against EU membership but is much more in favour of taking a positive position on social affairs

building. They own a radio, newspaper, electronic newspaper in addition to the television station. So, such television stations are used to promoting their message across to the viewers and ultimately the electorate. Mainly during political controversies, and election campaigns such stations are used for electioneering. The political affiliations of the stations are crucial for this study since this research investigates whether news and current affairs programmes are also part of the electioneering system. The other television station under analysis, the public service broadcaster, is partly funded by Government and partly administered commercially, in the sense that it is mostly financed through advertising revenue. The PSB (Malta) is generally perceived to be affiliated with the political party currently in Government and is very often referred to as the state broadcaster. In Malta it is difficult to distinguish between the governing party and the State itself (Sammut, 2007, p. 152). Moreover, the Maltese political parties enjoy diagonal integration ownership in broadcasting because they own television, newspapers and radio. Very often it is difficult to separate ownership from editorial control and editors are highly influenced by their owners when it comes to content though there seems to be no 'editorial agreements' in place.

These three stations under study are the most relevant within the local broadcasting media scenario as the other commercial stations, either have no or very limited news programming and have minimal audience following according to the audience survey commissioned by the Broadcasting Authority. These three TV stations are the most followed and perceived as the 'three big stations'. Though there are other broadcasting stations, including radio stations, as will be mentioned later on in this study; these three TV

stations remain the most popular with the audiences. Also the Maltese media ecology consists of print media with 4 daily newspapers³, a weekly newspaper⁴ every Wednesday and 7 Sunday papers⁵. Out of these, a daily is owned by the Nationalist Party⁶ and two Sunday papers are owned by both the Labour Party⁷ and the Nationalist Party⁸. Apart from the print news media, there are a number of online news portals, two of which are also owned by the political parties. While the influx of overseas media product is common through two media service providers in Malta⁹, the Maltese audience has to rely on the local media, be it broadcasting, print or online for the local news and current affairs issues because it is only on the local channels that such local news is reported. Furthermore while online media consumption is on the increase, television is still the preferred news medium and the agenda setter in Malta.

Apart from looking into news production, the study focuses on the role of the broadcasting regulations *vis-à-vis* impartiality and balance. This thesis will introduce the theoretical concept of impartiality and balance and how these concepts are practiced in the news. In this study I have attempted to combine the theoretical aspect with the practical aspect of impartiality in the news media industry. This work explores whether impartiality is achieved in Maltese news and current affairs programmes transmitted by the public service broadcaster and by the two party politically-owned stations. It investigates in what ways

³ The Times of Malta, The Malta Independent, L-Orizzont and In-Nazzjon

⁴ Malta Today

⁵ The Sunday Times of Malta, The Malta Independent on Sunday, It-Torċa, Il-Mument, Malta Today on Sunday, Illum and Kulhadd

⁶ In-Nazzjon

⁷ Kulhadd

⁸ Il-Mument

⁹ Melita plc and GO

impartiality and balance are sought by these TV stations. A further objective is to explore whether the party politically owned stations are regarded by members of the public as partisan or not and whether the public broadcaster is perceived to be independent and autonomous from the government or other third parties. The issue of impartiality in news and current affairs programmes is a highly sensitive one in Malta because the other two television competitors are wholly owned, funded and operated by the two main political parties. These two stations have direct party control from the political party which owns them.

This research investigates whether bias and lack of impartiality is demonstrated in news bulletins and current affairs programmes produced by the above mentioned three television stations and whether such concepts are related to the issue of ownership and control. This study analyses whether the public service broadcaster in Malta plays the role of the 'impartial leader' when producing news programmes. It will explore the extent to which the two party politically owned stations produce impartial news according to their own perception of the concept of impartiality. With Malta being a democratic country, I will be investigating whether the television stations give priority to impartiality and whether the public service broadcaster does achieve balance and impartiality. As media theorist McQuail (1992) states, impartiality in news and democracy are linked together; so this study analyses whether news impartiality in the Maltese context is given the attention and importance it deserves. As Harrison (2006) indicates, impartiality implies that journalists should not be prejudiced towards or against one side and that they should not allow their own personal opinions or feelings to influence their reporting of news events. Being

impartial is also associated with issues of balance, since balanced reporting in its way required the presentation of a diversity of opinion in a fair and accurate manner, thereby ensuring that a wide range of different perspectives are given their due weight. Goodwin (1992) suggests that balanced reporting means that all sides should have a fair hearing in news coverage.

This study also refers to the existing regulatory framework that governs issues of balance and impartiality. It will analyse whether such a framework affects the news programmes of the public service broadcaster and the other political stations and whether there should be a need for any changes in the regulatory framework. The thesis outlines the regulations administered by the Broadcasting Authority in Malta. My own position as Head of Monitoring Department at the Broadcasting Authority will enable me to get more inside information about broadcasting regulations, but through the application of particular research methodologies I will be able to present my findings from a more objective point of view.

This study will attempt to explore :-

- the content of news bulletins and current affairs programmes produced by the public service broadcaster and by the two political stations;
- the existing regulations governing news and current affairs programming;
- the audience's perception of impartiality as to whether news bulletins and current affairs programmes are impartial;

- the institutional arrangements of the media organisations particularly newsroom management.

These topics will be studied with respect to four aspects:

- the study of the programme content;
- the broadcasting laws and other regulations on news and current affairs content;
- the views of the audience; and
- the policy and managerial decisions.

What is the research investigating?

Through the above topics and analysis, this work explores whether impartiality is achieved in Maltese news and current affairs programmes transmitted by the public service broadcaster and by the two party politically owned stations. A further objective is to explore whether the public broadcaster is perceived to be independent and autonomous from government. I have chosen to analyse news bulletins and current affairs programmes during a Local Council electoral campaign, envisaging that such an electoral campaign, being on a smaller scale than a general election will still expose the political characteristics of news genre, even though partiality on the political stations might not be related only to an electoral campaign¹⁰. The sample analysed in this study is taken from the 2006 Local Council election. I have also opted to focus on a particular case study, one involving the way in which the three stations covered a significant public event, namely their coverage of local council elections. The latter are also highly politicized events in Malta, since all political parties formally participate in them (See Note B Appendix i). Thus the coverage

¹⁰ The tendency of the political stations in Malta is to side with the party who owns the station

given during a Local Council electoral campaign provides a good example to analyse the impartiality, balance and objectivity of the public service broadcaster and the two political stations. Since it can be considered an election on a smaller scale, it would reveal particular characteristics on the news media content. Also, news bulletins are thought to be the 'flagship' of each station, so news bulletins are the ideal genre to investigate impartiality, balance and objectivity (McQuail, 2005; Shoemaker and Reese, 1996).

The study also explores the topics discussed in the current affairs programmes during the local election political campaign and investigates any differences between the public service broadcaster and the two political stations with regard to balance and impartiality. Apart from analysing news bulletins, I have chosen to examine current affairs programmes because such programmes are also part of the news programming and they might be an extension of the editorial news policy of the station. This study will critically analyse whether the broadcasting laws and regulations and other guidelines of the Broadcasting Authority are effective in maintaining impartiality in the Maltese news media. The pertinent question which the participants of the focus group will address is whether, in spite of a number of regulations, the Broadcasting Authority is acting as an effective watchdog. Also this research examines what measures are now being taken in Malta to achieve impartiality in news and current affairs aired on the public service broadcaster and on the other local television channels and whether these are effective. This study attempts to shed light on whether there is any institutional arrangement that might prevent partiality *vis-à-vis* the public service broadcaster; for instance whether current affairs programmes produced by independent production companies can help or not to achieve impartiality.

Also, the research would indicate whether a proposal made during a national conference¹¹ held by the Broadcasting Authority in 1999, that TVM news should be hived off from the public service broadcaster, was in fact a good suggestion. Further to that, this research will reveal what is the audience's opinion about these programmes with regard to the issues of impartiality and balance.

Even though Maltese broadcasting is saturated with radio stations, the study will not analyse radio broadcasting and will only focus on television broadcasting in Malta. Television's audience share of news programmes is significantly higher than the radio listenership. According to the audience survey commissioned by the Broadcasting Authority, the highest percentages for TV viewing is 26.8% for Oct – Dec 2007, 26.9% for January – March 2008 and 23% for April – June 2008 and 29.6% for January – March 2013. By contrast the highest percentage for radio listenership goes up to only 20.2% for April – June 2008, 19.5% for January – March 2008 and 15.5% for October – December 2007¹² and 22.16% for January – March 2013¹³. According to the same audience surveys¹⁴, percentages start to increase with the evening prime time news bulletins of each station and then continue to increase slightly or otherwise with their respective current affairs programmes¹⁵. Specific data for people watching a particular programme was gathered in

¹¹ This national conference discussed the future of public broadcasting in Malta and was held by the Ministry of Education as part of a brainstorming session on the role of public broadcasting.

¹² Taken from MBA Press Release 56/08 dated 5th August 2008

¹³ Taken from MBA report 'Audience and Television Audience – Malta' – May 2013

¹⁴ MBA report 'Radio and Television Audience – Malta' – January – March 2008 dated May 2008 and MBA report 'Radio and Television Audiences Malta' April – June 2008 dated August 2008.

¹⁵ However, one has to note that the viewers questioned in these audience surveys are asked 'Which station have you watched yesterday for at least 10 minutes?' Thus the question is not directly on the viewership of the particular programme.

an audience survey done by Ernst & Young¹⁶ commissioned by the Ministry for Tourism and Culture for the week dated 24 – 30 January 2006¹⁷. According to this survey the most watched television programmes are the two current affairs programmes aired on TVM - Xarabank leading with 190,000 viewers and Bondi+ following it with 106,000 viewers. TVM news bulletin was mostly watched on Wednesday, Net News on Monday and One News on Monday¹⁸.

In summary, this research will examine whether news and current affairs programmes presented on the Maltese political television stations, are characterised by fairness and impartiality. News has to be about current events of news value, set against a background of honestly and accurately reported information, selected by journalists and included in a programme which is presented fearlessly and objectively but with respect for the law (p. 12)¹⁹. The media system in Malta falls among others under what Hallin and Mancini (2004) describe as the Mediterranean or Polarized Pluralistic model. According to these authors (2004, p. 89) the mass media in Southern European countries were involved in the political conflicts that mark the history of this region and there is a strong tradition of regarding them as means of ideological expression and political mobilisation. At the same time the development of commercial media markets was relatively weak, leaving the media often dependent on the state, political parties, the Church or wealthy private patrons. Because of this dependency, the media lacks autonomy. As can be seen in Chapter 4 political events conditioned and influenced the development of the Maltese broadcasting

¹⁶ Ernst & Young, March 2006, Malta

¹⁷ These dates were chosen because the sample for the study was taken from the 2006 Local Council election

¹⁸ More detailed data of this survey is found in the Appendix ii

¹⁹ In 1987 BBC Publication 'Fairness and Impartiality in Political Broadcasting' (p. 12)

media. This study points out how advocacy journalism is deeply rooted in the local news bulletins and current affairs programming. Since another characteristic of the Mediterranean/Polarized Pluralistic model is the politicization of public broadcasting, this study explores the degree to which the content of public service broadcasting in Malta is politicised and how this is reflected in the news content and in news programmes. In line with the Mediterranean model this research will analyse the style and content of journalism produced by journalists who might have political ties and alliances. As will be deduced further on in this study Malta is a politicized society based on a patron-client relationship between the voters and the two big political parties. Maltese politics permeates a lot of Maltese life generally, and Maltese society lives on political adherence to an extent that sometimes it goes as deep as one's career progression.

Due to the generally narrow margin between the two parties in the electoral result, the two big parties dominate the lives of the Maltese in the sense that the voters and individuals end up paying lip service to politicians and the majority tend to assert independence from a political party. Due to the over-dominance of the political parties, one finds it hard not to affiliate himself/herself with any party and individuals end up taking sides with a political party in a bid to be rewarded in some way or another either through career advancement, employment and other benefits be it large or small. Technocrats, professionals and intellectuals are not perceived to be able to exist separately from parties (Sammut, 2007, p.37). Thus arguments even which tentatively try to steer away from partisan politics end up to be perceived to be partisan in nature to the detriment of critical thinking.

Research methods used

This study is based on qualitative research methods – focus groups, face to face interviews, and the study of relevant documents and other written material. A number of focus groups with TV viewers were conducted as part of this research. This qualitative method will shed light on whether the news coverage is perceived by the viewers as impartial and balanced. Through these focus groups the viewers could discuss whether there is bias, if at all; mainly in the news bulletins transmitted on the Maltese television stations²⁰. During the focus group discussions, the participants analysed a sample of news items and discussed how the message is getting across to them. News clips were shown to encourage debate on different topics and concepts covered by thesis. How such clips were chosen for focus groups sessions is explored in Chapter 3. The pertinent question which the participants of the focus group would be answering is whether, in spite of a number of regulations, the Broadcasting Authority is doing its duty of being an effective watchdog with stations when producing news bulletins and current affairs programmes. This research also examines what measures and regulations are being taken in Malta to achieve impartiality in news and current affairs aired on the public service broadcaster and on the other local television channels and how effective such measures are.

In addition to focus groups and interviews, secondary data has been sourced mainly from the PBS²¹ statistical data on news and consulted a range of documents mainly from the broadcasting regulator, documents from Courts of Malta, and other statistical data from

²⁰ In this case, as already explained the Maltese television stations under study would be the public service broadcaster and the two political stations. I will not include the commercial stations, Smash TV, because at the time it was not producing news bulletins and also because the viewership is minimal according to the latest audience survey issued by the Broadcasting Authority. (See other tables in Appendix iii)

²¹ PBS – hereinafter this refers to PBS Ltd, that is the public service broadcaster in Malta

Parliamentary Questions concerning the political exposure in TVM news bulletins. As for some of the references of the secondary data, I relied on internal PBS documents *vis-à-vis* the collection of statistical data. The period covering the secondary data does not coincide with the sample of the text which formed part of the documentary research data and the sample used for the focus groups which I had chosen myself. There were a number of periods where PBS Ltd did not collect any statistical data of the TVM news bulletins and thus I could not get the secondary data of the same period of the sample of TV news analysed by myself purposely for this research. However, it will shed light on the trend of the political element in the news. There were also other documents which I referred to particularly concerning Court verdicts which were decided over time by the Courts of Malta and which concerned issues of impartiality and balance in Maltese broadcasting.

Reasons for undertaking the research

There has been a lack of academic work on the subject of impartiality and PBS, even though there have been a number of partisan media commentaries. This, together with the particular circumstances relating to the way the media operate in a small island state, acted as the trigger for this research. Malta represents a unique case among the other EU countries since the political parties in Malta own a television station. Mindful of this situation, the study attempts to reveal how the Maltese TV stations can enhance the news product by being more objective, impartial and balanced. At the same time the research considers the extent to which political shareholders are using their television station as a propaganda tool.

In the nineties in Malta, before pluralism²², the Maltese public broadcaster was the only local television station amongst the plethora of foreign channels, mainly at that time the Italian media channels such as RAI and Mediaset. Now despite pluralism and increased competition, the public broadcaster is also essential and relevant because audiences are witnessing a flow of diverse information and news reports coming from two different political stations which would tend to give two opposing views of a story. Thus, the study amongst other things inquires whether PBS is providing the audience in Malta with a clear and balanced picture of events unlike the other partisan media. It investigates whether PBS content and news programmes are really balanced amongst the political stations in Malta. Over the years the public service broadcaster in Malta had been going through several changes with changes in its administration from time to time, and very often it has been involved in political controversies. As is the case with all media outlets, the structure of PBS (Malta) is evolving and moving towards a market model and is competing with the other commercial / political stations. An analysis is needed to explore the possibility of having an impartial public service broadcaster which operates alongside the politically owned stations. Malta is a highly politicised country²³ and this is reflected in the media, thus it is essential to have an impartial news bulletin and balanced current affairs programmes which give the audience an informed view of the current issues brought up in the political fora. Moreover the study analyses whether the viewers are receiving impartial coverage even in electoral campaigns such as a Local Council electoral campaign. Even in

²² Before the nineties Malta had only the public service broadcaster. In the beginning of the nineties pluralism was introduced, in the sense that, other TV and radio stations were introduced including politically owned TV and radio stations together with other commercial stations.

²³ Maltese politics permeates a lot of Maltese life in general, even to an extent that political adherence can have quite a bit also on one's career progression.

the case of a locally based election, the Maltese news media is noted to have a high content of partisan news items covering political issues. The study dwells on whether the Maltese society is being presented with one-sided news content and whether the regulatory framework helps to assist in providing a balanced picture and media system.

Pluralism brought also a new perspective to the legal broadcasting framework. Media analysts and producers criticized the broadcasting regulations on impartiality arguing that these are not giving equal treatment to all the stations with regard to news genre. Changes in the media industry have occurred but the Constitution and the Broadcasting Act itself did not undergo any changes. The Broadcasting Act differs from what the Constitution of Malta says on balance and impartiality in current affairs programmes, thus it throws doubt on the regulatory system. Thus the need for updated and effective regulations has been raised by media producers. It is also hoped that this research might make a contribution to the debate on what changes are necessary to the regulatory system to enable it to take account of all the different media outlets. The thesis will also analyse the producers' and viewers' perception on the structure of the Broadcasting Authority to see if the structure itself is an example of impartiality and balance.

What is the significance of the study and why is the topic important?

Such a study may also be timely, given the lack of academic work on the subject in Malta. Though media commentators, news editors and journalists debate and write about the need to achieve balance and impartiality in broadcasting, very few studies have been published that make suggestions as to how the current system might be revised. Written reports and

commentaries very often are also one-sided and tarnished with Maltese partisan politics. The present study, which is based on a close analysis of the current situation and on empirical research, will make a number of tentative suggestions about how impartiality in news reporting can be better achieved especially with regard to the regulatory framework. For while the Broadcasting Authority has the backing of the Constitution, the Broadcasting Act and Subsidiary legislation; it is still considered to be a toothless watchdog when it comes to regulating broadcasting output with respect to impartiality, balance and objectivity.

Structure of the thesis

Since this research explores television broadcast news and current affairs programmes, I will first of all look at the key concepts of news with particular focus on the key concepts of bias, impartiality, balance and objectivity. In the following chapter I will give a detailed overview of the academic work related to these basic pillars in news broadcasting. An analysis of the broadcasting models will be undertaken and I will be in a position to relate such models to the local broadcasting media. I will also point to other examples of European broadcasting models which might have had an influence on the Maltese media. Being a Mediterranean country, Malta can easily be compared and contrasted with Mediterranean examples. Chapter 2 also lays out the current broadcasting regulations in the Mediterranean and other European countries with regard to impartiality, balance and objectivity in news and current affairs programmes. The description of the research methods and how the empirical research is conducted is presented in Chapter 3. This chapter will indicate why such methods were chosen and describes how I, as the sole

researcher went about conducting such research. Since this study is analysed from a local (Maltese) perspective, it is essential to give a historical overview of the Maltese broadcasting scenario. Thus in Chapter 4 I will give an overview of the history of broadcasting in Malta. It highlights the main developments within the television broadcasting and will also focus on the existent regulatory framework in broadcasting focusing on impartiality in news programming. This chapter describes the salient changes in the Maltese broadcasting regulations. The analysis of the empirical material is put forward in Chapters 5 and 6. These chapters offer an analysis of my findings mainly through the qualitative research methods and highlights the findings after examining the text, the audiences and the production and work which goes into the presentation and production of news bulletins and current affairs programming. Throughout the findings chapter I will be including secondary data provided by PBS Ltd and other data gathered from Parliamentary Questions to highlight the findings from the qualitative data. Finally Chapter 7 is the concluding chapter of this work which would indicate that such work is a stepping stone to further research in the broadcasting industry in Malta.

All the above put into perspective what this study will attempt to analyse and contribute to the local broadcasting scenario. The aim of the work is to provide evidence of what type of news broadcasting exists in Malta and whether news reporting and current affairs programming is balanced and impartial. It indicates what is expected by audiences and what is done by media producers in this field and what regulations can be in place to achieve impartiality and balance in news programming. This present chapter has introduced the topic and research question of this study. It has put down a series of questions that this

study is seeking to answer. The next chapter will give a theoretical discussion of the main concepts under investigation, those of impartiality, balance and objectivity. It will include a literature review of works dealing with impartiality, balance and objectivity in media reporting and will also take a closer look at the Maltese broadcasting system.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

“Media systems are shaped by the wider context of political history, structure and the culture” (Hallin and Mancini, 2004, p.46)

Introduction

This chapter outlines the debates about public service broadcasting, the attempt to achieve balance and impartiality in journalism and the role of broadcasting regulation. It also highlights additional research issues arising from these debates. It will focus on academic theories relating to public service broadcasting. I will then give particular attention on the Maltese broadcasting situation. Especially on how the public service broadcaster has to function amidst a heavily politicized broadcasting scenario.

The first part of the chapter will focus on the four theories of the press dating back to the 16th century and moving towards more recent times with Hallin & Mancini’s work (2004) focusing on the social responsibility model from which the public service broadcaster emerged. The Maltese broadcasting model will also be highlighted in Part 1. The second part of this chapter mainly presents academic definitions of the main concepts analysed in this thesis, especially those of impartiality and balance. Part 3 then focuses on the role and remit of a public service broadcaster. Since PSB in Malta may have similarities with PSB in UK and Italy, this part reflects on the various forms PSB has acquired in these countries. The fourth part of the chapter is entirely devoted to the regulatory aspect with particular

reference to how existing regulatory legislation in Malta attempts to achieve impartiality and balance. Finally the chapter examines the views of Maltese critics and commentators on the subject, and their contributions to the ongoing debate on how best to achieve impartiality in news programme and on what role the regulatory body should play in this attempt.

PART 1

Overview of the broadcasting models

This part kicks off with the basic models of the different media systems and the four theories of the press. Then I will be narrowing it down to one of the media model mentioned by Hallin & Mancini (2004) which is relevant to the Maltese media.

The Four theories of the Press presented by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956) categorize the press according to the role and the effect that the press and the broadcasting have on society and put into perspective the role of politics and the media. Though these are quite universal in their approach they provided a start in categorizing particular media systems, though, the broadcasting scenario cannot stop upon these four theories of the press. An authoritarian press aims to make broadcasting part of the state and the media ends up an instrument of social control and the government using it as a tool to control and mobilize the viewers. In a libertarian model, commonly found in democratic countries, the press functions to present the truth and its aim is to inform the citizens, even though this is quite difficult amidst the pluralism of voices. In a Soviet Communist model, the state and

the government own the media and control the media. This came about as a result of the rise of Communism and then perpetuated and expanded within the socialist system (Siebert, Peterson and Schramm, 1956). Such a system put forward the transmission of social policy and the media is an instrument of government and an integral part of the state.

Such theories were among the early theories which explained the world's media systems, however, other academics built on these theories and presented more elaborate media systems as did Hallin & Mancini (2004, 2012) who presented the three models in broadcasting:- the Liberal Model, the Democratic Corporatist Model and the Polarized Pluralist Model. The basic premise of the work done by Hallin & Mancini (2004 p. 8), is that "the press always takes the form of the social and political structures within which it operates". Since broadcasting structures differ from country to country because they are influenced by specific historical and political developments, this work will focus on the effect of the developments which took place in Malta.

If we take the structure of media markets, the degree and form of political parallelism, professional journalism and the role of the state, Malta characteristically falls under the Polarized Pluralist model because political parties have control over decision making in broadcasting and intervenes even in areas of public life. While in a way the Maltese media situation can also converge into the Democratic Corporatist Model, with extensive state intervention, it lacks the high value on media autonomy and the emphasis on the role of organized social groups in society. Maltese journalism follows the 'Mediterranean or Polarized Pluralistic Model' with a strong role of the state, strong elements of political

parallelism, antagonistic political pluralism and weak development of legal authority (same as in Italy, Greece, Spain, Portugal and France). It does not follow the North/Central European model which focuses on the freedom of the press and is guaranteed by legislation. However, one can say that the public broadcasting in Malta is strong and is powerful²⁴ over the other broadcasting channels, a trend which is significant in the Anglo American model²⁵, particularly in the UK. However, even after the introduction of other broadcasting stations, the state remains the primary definer of news (Hall et al., 1978) and has an effect on the agenda and framing of public issues.

The broadcasting media scenario in Malta can be described as the term put forward by Hallin & Mancini (2004), the instrumentalization of the media. This is also evident in news and current affairs programmes wherein politicians and officials of the political party contribute in such programmes. It also means that journalist might have less autonomy and follow political journalistic criteria rather than functioning in the public interest. In this heavy politicized media, the public service broadcaster has an essential role to play in order for the media to gain public trust. Journalism in Malta is a result of a partisan press and the majority of the media is shaped by party affiliations and pleads for the politicians who support them and sometimes quite fiercely attack their political foes. The media-politics relationship in the Maltese media system as is in any other democracies leaves an impact on the way the media system is administered on the journalistic content of the media itself.

²⁴ PSB has influential power and effects the agenda setting on the public issues. The public service broadcaster also enjoys a good number of viewership.

²⁵ North Atlantic or Liberal Model

It is in a way a form of ‘Italianization of the media’²⁶ due to its dominance of the state control over the media, the party political influence and the structure of the media organizations. Malta reflects the Southern Europe model with party control and the penetration of public broadcasting. Same as in other Southern European countries as Greece, Portugal and Spain the political majority has control over public broadcasting and thus the Government has control on the public service broadcaster, having state intervention with the appointment of the board of directors²⁷. The State itself regulates the media though the regulation is not necessarily as effective. Even the style of journalism relates to what is common in the Mediterranean and Southern European countries in that journalism is not only reporting but is used for commentary purposes with journalists playing an active political role and having political ties. In fact, some of the journalists working with political stations run for political office and some contest the Local council elections and General Elections.²⁸ Such form of journalism leave little space for journalism autonomy and tends to act less as a watchdog over the political issues which would be taking place.

There is political party influence over other media organizations and the relationship of the media and political elites would at times lead to the practice of advocacy journalism. In Malta political leaders and governments aimed to secure media control and after the introduction of other channels in the nineties, the political parties and institutions, such as

²⁶ A term used by S. Splichal (1994) in Dobek-Ostrowska, B. (2012) ‘Italianization (or Mediterraneanization) of the Polish Media System? Reality and Perspective in Hallin, D.C & Mancini, P. ed (2012) *Comparing Media Systems Beyond the Western World*, Cambridge University Press, UK

²⁷ In the recent years, the Government appoints two Board of Directors at PBS, a Board of Directors who is responsible of the commercial aspect of the public service broadcaster and an Editorial Board who is responsible mainly of the content of the programmes

²⁸ A number of Members of Parliament used to work as journalists in the political stations

the Church, also garnered control over the broadcasting scenario particularly with the ownership of TV stations and radio stations²⁹. What Douglas Fetherling said with regard to the Canadian partisan press in the mid 19th century is particularly relevant to the Maltese situation, “behind every proprietor or editor, a politician, or group of politicians offering support”.³⁰ Pluralism in 1991 further reinstated such political polarization and reproduced ‘official’ political arrangements with the consequence of having a powerful presence in today’s media scenario. (Sammut, 2007)³¹ In Malta the idea of political parallelism³² (Hallin & Mancini, 2004) is very common and there is a clear connection between the media and the political party though as Hallin & Mancini (2004) point out this has become less common worldwide and the media is getting more associated with the political tendency rather than with the political party. In Malta journalists and media organizations are connected to institutions such as political parties. As expected the influence of such large political organizations leave their impact on broadcasting and then the programme content. Journalists themselves are shaped by their political affiliations and obviously they are loyal to their news organizations and loyal to their owners. Such political parallelism is also seen in the partisanship of media audiences as will be portrayed through the feedback of the focus group participants who participated in this focus group study.

²⁹ The Church has only a radio station and not a TV station

³⁰ Fetherling, D. *The Rise of the Canadian Newspaper* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, Canada, 1990) quoted in Hackett & Yuezhi Zhao, *Sustaining Democracy? Journalism and the Politics of Objectivity*

³¹ Sammut, C (14th November 2007) interviewed during a TVM programme Reporter

³² Political parallelism is the degree and nature of the links between the media and the political parties (Hallin & Mancini, 2004)

The Mediterranean model

Malta is a unique type of democracy and to a certain extent can to a certain extent be described as “illiberal democracy” (Zakaria, 1997)³³ since the independence of the media and media pluralism is limited and restricted. Malta like Italy falls under the Mediterranean model of media development. As also pointed out by Papathanassopoulos in Terzis (ed), 2007, Malta’s media system is that of the Mediterranean Media model like countries such as Spain, Italy, France, Greece and Cyprus. The media of such model proposed by Hallin & Mancini is intrinsically involved in political issues and conflicts and there is a high element of political mobilization. The media in Malta clearly depends on the state, the political parties and the Church, a characteristic which is significant in the Mediterranean model. While such a system encourages a degree of internal³⁴ and external pluralism³⁵, the broadcasting would lack real autonomy and independence from political actors (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; & Hibberd in d’Haenens & Saeys, 2007). This is similar to the RAI’s *lottizzazione* in the Italian heavy use of the media by the political parties. The Maltese media moguls are the two big political parties themselves and have developed cross-media ownership in Malta, another characteristic of the media in Southern Europe where politicians, and ex politicians or industrialists own the media. They send political influence via their media outlets and are also the leaders in any legislative change which would need to be done and thus might favour their own needs. In Malta there is a level of politicization in a number of media organizations. The ownership of TV stations by political parties in

³³ Quoted in a 1997 article in the magazine *Foreign Affairs*

³⁴ Internal pluralism is defined as pluralism achieved within each individual media outlet or organization. Organizations working for internal pluralism avoid institutional ties and political groups and attempt to maintain neutrality and balance in their content. (Hallin & Mancini, 2004)

³⁵ External pluralism is defined as pluralism achieved at the level of the media system as a whole, through the existence of a range of media outlets or organizations reflecting the points of view of different groups or tendencies in society (Hallin & Mancini, 2004)

Malta is a distinctive characteristic in the Maltese media landscape. Such control of the media by the political parties, and the knowledge of having loyal viewership results in a “fierce battlefield” between the two big political parties, with one of the party being the governing party.

Just as in Italy, media policies in Malta do not necessarily promote media pluralism at European level. The lack of media pluralism and media democracy is intrinsically the result of the political culture of Malta, as will be further explained in Chapter 4. In Malta we do not have adequate levels of pluralism of ownership and diversity of content. Our definition of pluralism tends to be quite different than what is understood in the wider European context. It is understood more as competition rather than the pluralism of diverse voices and ownership. The Maltese democracy developed a particular media system which is quite unique from a European perspective. Though in Malta political dissent is voiced in the media, such dissents and protests and plurality of voices are heard from two opposing viewpoints. Thus following Kuhn’s (1985) arguments, we can argue that this does not mean that the content is not diverse as according to Kuhn there is no correlation between pluralism of ownership and the diversity of content.

Two dimensions mentioned by Hallin & Mancini (2004) are highly influential in Maltese TV news journalism. In the local scenario exists ‘political parallelism’ and a clear link between political parties and the media to an extent that the media reflect the political divisions. Political parallelism is clear in the administration of the TV channels and also in

the governing boards³⁶ of the public service broadcaster since the Board members are handpicked by the party in Government. Malta did not yet manage to separate the public broadcasting from the direct influence of the political majority and as other Southern European countries, it is still subject to political influence and lacks independence from the political affiliations. Such characteristic is similar to the RAI (the Italian public service broadcaster), a station which was controlled by the political parties³⁷. The Maltese media system goes beyond the system of *lottizzazione*, a system where the public service broadcaster is divided between the political parties and each having a different channel (RAI). Similar to what was found by Hallin & Mancini, 2004, with regards to Italy and Spain, in Malta newswriters stress that they favour the Liberal Model of neutrality and objectivity, however, when it comes into practice, particularly with political stations, partisan advocacy journalism is practised and journalism becomes more of political commentary rather than professional neutrality.

As seen above, the main area of this study is the polarized pluralist model with an element of social responsibility from which the PSB concept emerges. The key tenet of this study will focus on the key concepts of objectivity, impartiality and balance within this social responsibility model. The model closest to the system analysed in this thesis, is the social responsibility model which imposes the obligation of social responsibility on the media. The media people should provide socially responsible journalism and puts emphasis on the onus of the public service broadcaster with its pillars and foundation being education,

³⁶ Board of Directors and Editorial Board at PBS (Malta)

³⁷ As Papathanassopoulos (2007, p.195) explains in the 1950s and 60s, RAI was under the control of the Christian Democratic Party and in the 70s under a broader coalition which allowed the Partito Comunista to share in *lottizzazione*. The Christian Democrats retained control of one channel, the “secular parties” the second and the Communists the third channel.

information and entertainment. In the next sub section, I will be looking at academic interpretations of the main terms employed in this study – ‘impartiality’, ‘balance’, ‘objectivity’ and ‘bias’.

PART 2

Impartiality and balance as the main elements in news broadcasting

Definition of main concepts

Bias, objectivity, balance and impartiality are central in this study and here I will be going through different definitions given by media theorists and academics. Before moving on, it is important to point out the difference between impartiality and neutrality. Impartiality has nothing to do with neutrality, a term which according to Hallin & Mancini (2004) cannot be used with news and journalism because it can never exist. This is also mentioned by McNair (2009) when referring to the policy adopted by the BBC in this regard showing that impartiality does not mean ‘detachment from moral and constitutional belief’ (p. 34). As stressed in the 1985 BBC Annual Report (BBC, 1984, p. 171) “...impartiality is not absolute neutrality ... for example BBC does not feel obliged to be neutral as between truth and untruth, justice and injustice, freedom and slavery, compassion and cruelty, tolerance and intolerance (including racial intolerance)”.

These concepts are analyzed by different media theorists and each came up with particular views. In some cases these concepts were tied together as in the case of Watson (2003) who points out that the micro level criteria of the media are objectivity, impartiality and balance and these three criteria form part of “a golden triangle of public service principles” (p. 111). Kuhn (2007) refers to Stevenson (1995), who describes balance, impartiality and objectivity as normative values and though these may well be not achievable, media people and the public look at them as the main principles in the news media. Lichtenberg (2000) considers them as ‘regulative principles’ (in Kuhn, p. 170) and puts the arguments together concluding that “are best regarded as aspirations, imperfectly realized in an imperfect world” (p. 170). For Schlesinger³⁸ (1987) a journalist is impartial if he/she is not involved in what is reported. But at the same time Schlesinger knows that there cannot be a news organization which is totally independent, as is BBC news which is ‘structurally limited by the organisation’s place in Britain’s social order’. In broadcasting, journalists are under statutory obligation to produce objective and impartial news. Since journalism can be interpreted in different ways, objectivity is understood to mean balanced or judging an argument equally (Harrison, 2006, p. 144). Watson (2003) explains that objectivity implies that facts are giving without any subjective slant. However, Fiske (1989) argues that ‘objective’ facts always support a particular point of view. In the next subsection, one can see that there are different arguments on this concept of objectivity.

The term objectivity

The terminology of objectivity in journalism is related to democracy, public responsibility, public life and public good. Objectivity in news is a principle which has been ingrained in

³⁸ Schlesinger, P (1987) *Putting ‘Reality’ Together – BBC News*

journalism. McNair (2009, p. 35) states, “objectivity ... is the most important journalistic value’ and it is the public broadcaster which is expected, more than other channels, to function in the public interest. Objectivity is a form of balance and McQuail (1992) points out to six elements which are associated with objectivity amongst them is balance, fairness, minimal involvement and influence and opinion of the writer and the separation of facts from opinion. Objectivity essentially is “balance and even-handedness in presenting different sides of an issue” (McQuail, 1992, p. 184). There are mixed opinions as to whether objectivity is possible or not. Many journalists agree that objectivity is unachievable. Walter Stewart, a veteran journalist and author claims “Fairness, yes, balance, yes but objectivity, no”. Similar to what a number of news producers/journalists declared during my interviews, Knowlton Nash, CBC icon of TV news said “objectivity is impossible because every human being has personal views and biases, but we do try to be fair and balanced” (in Hackett & Yuezhi Zhao, 1988, p. 55). The main critique of objectivity is due to the fact that it is selective and is influenced by the subjectivity of journalists and the news organization. Other arguments against objectivity are that in a democracy varied and opinionated press is needed as it leads to the competition of ideas. Ward (2007) comes up with the concept of pragmatic objectivity since the traditional objectivity has to be redefined due to ongoing changes in journalism. It does not necessarily mean the reporting of bare facts, but there might be interpretation as long it is substantiated with factual evidence. Interpretation has to be accurate and truthful as possible.

As Hackett & Yuezhi Zhao (1988) point out, objectivity is contrasted by many academics and journalists as “antiquated” word and has to be discarded. According to them, fairness, balance and credibility³⁹ is much more used and wanted from journalists. Interesting to point out that this was also reflected in some of the face-to-face interviews I conducted with journalists and producers and which will be put forward in Chapter 5. However, a number of academics such as Tuchman agree that an objective news story can be presented. Tuchman (1977) explains how a journalist can construct an objective news story in a way that a journalist has to present both sides (and more) of a story, support evidence for any assertions made in the story and quote authoritative sources such as politicians or experts. She argues that in this way the journalist distances himself/herself from the story, separate ‘fact’ from ‘opinion’ and ‘news’ from ‘editorial comment’ and structure the information in a way that the ‘top’ of the story would be placed first. Many have criticized the theory of the objectivity of news and argues that as soon as news is transmitted to the public it becomes biased as it passes through a selective process. Since news is produced by an industry and is shaped by people in government and by institutional authorities, it does not ‘emerge straight from reality’. What is known to be as objective news is actually a selected interpretation of events (Willis, 1971; Fowler, 1991; Glasgow University Media Group, 1976). Such arguments are also emphasized by media sociologists who describe in theoretical frameworks that journalism is not neutral and objective but is interpretative and is influenced by the dominant values within society. McNair (1996) lists three approaches of how news is influenced through:

³⁹ Credibility implies that for news to be credible by media audiences need to have characteristics of accuracy, fairness and impartiality

- the politico-economic approach – in this case journalism is determined by economic and political structure of the news organization.
- the organizational approach – as in other professions, journalists face constraints when gathering the news regarding the news space, presentation and other priorities related to the practices of journalism.
- the culturalist approach – media content is influenced by the power elites of society.

Objectivity which was also mentioned in the face to face interviews I conducted for this study, together with the concept of impartiality and both concepts at times were mixed together as if they are interrelated. However, it was pointed out that such concepts are quite separate in the sense that both concepts are different, and impartiality is more achievable.

The concept of impartiality

According to Allan (1999) the term impartiality is generally used interchangeably by news-workers with objectivity. Objectivity and bias are terms used, according to Allan (1999) with the assumption that journalists have to attain complete detachment. The implication of being objective implies fairness and balance. Harrison (2006) states that impartiality represents the way journalists try to remove their own personal opinion or feelings from news report and present a balanced and accurate account. Through impartiality, independence of editorial decision is protected and news workers get more power to gather and interpret news and arrive to the truth. Cox (1995) argues that the principle of impartiality is the separation of news and opinions. Impartiality maintains that analysis and

interpretation are avoided in news. This is the fundamental thing - the separation of 'facts' from 'values' and 'opinions' to get an impartial picture of the news. The truth is very difficult to define because it can mean whether news reflects social reality truthfully or whether journalists produce a truthful news account. The concept of impartiality is emphasized in the sense that there should be distinction between a reporting of fact and an opinion (Pratte, 1995). In Allan's view (1999, p. 40) the "discipline of impartiality" is stressed with the separation of news and opinion. In a market-based mass system, that is a liberalist pluralist structure where the mass media is perceived to be the Fourth Estate⁴⁰ with journalists having the mission of informing and giving the public a sense of the outside world around them. In this way the news formulates public opinion and is a form of democratic control over the governing authorities.

Kuhn (2007) argues that impartiality can be more "realizable" to achieve than objectivity, but there are still a number of variables used in news production, which make it difficult to achieve the level of impartiality. Within the concept of impartiality there comes the concept of fairness which might give a twist to news because it entails a subjective element in news judgement and somebody has to decide what constitutes a fair treatment. However, fairness still implies that news is basically impartial and independent of particular interests. In practice, according to Kuhn (2007) impartiality is a matter of reducing complex issues to two sides and given approximate equal time. However, Hackett & Zhao (1988) argues that the media can hardly report the world impartially, even if TV news can be a 'mirror to society' and 'a window on the world', one cannot ignore the

⁴⁰ Fourth Estate – a term widely attributed to eighteenth-century British Whig politician Edmund Burke (1729 – 97) to describe the press, in his view, the role of the press in society had assumed a greater importance than the other three 'Estates' (the Church, the judiciary and the commons) of the time. (Allan, 1999, p. 195)

underlying assumptions and framework of news production. An important piece of research, which investigated whether news is neutral or a manufactured product, was that conducted by the Glasgow University Media Group in 1975. They conducted content analysis and analysed the semiotics of news production to analyse the news product. The Glasgow University Media Group found that news “is rather the manufactured production of ideology” (1980, p. viii) and a “sequence of socially manufactured messages...” (1976, p. 1). They suggest that television news violates the obligations to give a balanced account⁴¹. In other research conducted and published in *Bad News* and in *Really Bad News*, GUMG found that news favoured dominant groups and is biased against workers and union organisations. They found that news is not impartial and favour those in power. They also found evident the phenomenon of ‘agenda setting’ which Goodwin (1992, p.48) rightly explains “where the media do not only distort the world that is represented, but help to structure public perception of it *by omission* as well as inclusion”. There was also criticism against the GUMG from the critical tradition thought and sociologists criticised their conclusions because they were said to be simple and implied bias. Harrison (1985) also totally disagrees with GUMG’s arguments and rejects the idea that the media favours the ‘dominant’ view of society. He argues that views attributed to the dominant group seem to be widespread among other social groups and news does not necessarily show one side of the conflict.

While several media theorists are of the view that impartiality involves the separation of facts and opinions, they also draw attention to the fact impartiality also depends on the presentation of different viewpoints. Impartiality in news programming is considered to

⁴¹ in *Really Bad News* (1982)

have been achieved if it provides a balanced presentation of issues and views, reflects a wide range of opinion, explores conflicting views and ensures that no one view is under represented. Thus impartiality also involves the issue of balance, a term that is going to be examined in the following subsection.

The term balance

In news the notion of balance is ideological as it implies that there are always two sides to the issues and generally it is only mainstream views that can be balanced, thus excluding other news which might not be on the mainstream and thus cannot be easily balanced. Balance “means including the viewpoint of more than one side in the story...”. (Potter, 1988, p.119), and this implies that an event can have more than one side to it and thus journalists have to present all points of view. Certain issues cannot necessarily have a dualistic framework and thus not easy to balance them with an opposing view. As Cook (1992) puts it balance is based on the premise of hearing a range of points of view. This is up to the licensee responsibility to ensure that the balance requirement is reached⁴². The concept of balance puts forward the question of who should be balanced with whom and how far a news story gets an opposing view. If we look at the Maltese scenario, there is a tendency that political stations in Malta polarise issues and thus hardly make it a model for public discourse for sustainable democracy. The reporting of different viewpoints might not necessarily mean that viewpoints have to be presented in equal time. Arithmetical balance between views does not necessarily correlate to an objective account of views as Lichtenberg (1992) points out. Balance is not accuracy and while a story can give the two

⁴² Cook, P. G. & Ruggles, M.A., (1992) Balance and Freedom of Speech: Challenge for Canadian Broadcasting, Canadian Journal of Communication

sides of the picture and thus achieving balance, a story is not necessarily accurate. Accuracy in news might result when facts are reported in a clear manner conveying a picture of how it happened (Harrison, 2006).

The term 'bias' was mentioned several times in the above three concepts and thus the next subsection will examine the central role it plays in debates on broadcasting regulation of news programming.

The term 'bias'

There are several media theorists, as seen above, who argue about the objectivity of news and the news as soon as it is produced it immediately would be biased because newswriters are selective when presenting the news⁴³. According to Willis (1971), referred by McNair (2009) news is biased and is selective as soon as it is presented. It is hard to come to a standard definition of bias and thus difficult to define to what extent news bulletins are biased or not. Greene and Stevenson (1980, p. 155) defined bias,

“as the systematic differential treatment of one candidate, one party or one side of an issue over an extended period of time. Bias is the failure to treat all voices in the marketplace of ideas equally”.

The selection of news material, the framing and the story package introduce an element of judgment, perspective and subjectivity and ultimately bias. Bias in journalism can be the result of reporting a news story without lack of context. News can be thought of as biased according to the materialist thesis. Such bias is the result of the link between the power

⁴³ Reference to what is known as the 'social-constructionist argument' (McNair, 2009, p. 38) News can be different from one station to another because the news-workers give a partial account of what they see as reality. This is not bias because the journalist is not 'deliberately shaping the content and presentation of the news' (Ramney, 1983, p.34 in McNair, 2009, p. 38)

structure of a society and its journalistic output. The journalist is part of this power structure and thus the picture the journalist present is the result of this part of structure. This idea of favouritism is mentioned by Kenney & Simpson (1993, p. 346) wherein a party or a candidate receives over an extended period of time.

News bias is often considered as the subjective opinion done by the reporter or news organization. In fact McQuail (1977) points out to different manifestations of bias in news arguments and evidence favouring one view. Lack of bias manifests itself in the use of facts and comments; language that makes clear judgements and omission of points to favour one's side. However, Goodwin (1992) argues that 'bias is not the opposite of 'truth' and explains that every news report has a point of view through its content, visuals or techniques used. However, he points out that all points of view have to be fairly represented in order to treat and make news as unbiased as possible.

Impartiality, balance, objectivity and bias – the four elements in news programming under analysis

All the concepts examined in the above sub-sections can be seen to be inter-related as can be seen when news bulletins and other types of news programming are put to critical examination. In the following section I will consider the various ways in which the concepts are interrelated, though it is important to stress that the significance attached to them will vary according to whether the journalist or reporter is producing a news report for inclusion in a news bulletin or as part of a current affairs programme.

The BBC attempted to point out the difference between balance and impartiality in a 1987⁴⁴ report. According to this document, impartiality is not synonymous with mathematical balance and it is not necessarily achieved through balance. Impartiality in news means that facts have to be presented accurately and fairly, while balance means that reports should be kept neutral and there should be a balanced representation of facts. However, there are some differences with these two concepts with regard to current affairs programmes. To achieve due impartiality in current affairs programmes, the subject matter has to be treated from a wider perspective and include comment, discussion and informed views. The notion of balance in current affairs programmes is achieved through keeping equilibrium when presenting the different viewpoints⁴⁵. While as McNair (1996) points out that objectivity and impartiality are different concepts; however, both are the guiding principles of British broadcast journalism. Harrison (2006) argues that the concepts of balance and impartiality both indicate the elimination of subjective values from news reports and suggests that can be replaced by more practical terms namely accuracy and sincerity.

The concepts of balance and impartiality are the most essential and important ingredients in news and current affairs programming. News is selective because reporters select what to report from an event/activity and then their seniors would choose again from that news report. Such selectivity would lead to a level of partiality but also leads to bias in news (Gans, 2003). However, while Gans (2003, p. 92) describes news as “the highlight of highlights”, Cook (1998) does not agree that selectivity would automatically leads to bias.

⁴⁴ ‘Fairness and impartiality in political broadcasting’, British Broadcasting Corporation, June 1987

⁴⁵ (taken from “Fairness and impartiality in political broadcasting” British Broadcasting Corporation, June 1987).

Cook (1998) accepts that selectivity leads to bias when certain political issues become more covered and reported than others. If we take Cook's arguments we have to agree that news is co-produced between the news organization and the government or a political entity, and the policy is decided in collaboration and conflicts between the news people, the officials and the politicians. Cook (1998) points that journalists can not only play a political role but also a governmental role. This trend of thought is also argued by some of the Maltese media critiques and politicians with regards to some presenters of farmed out⁴⁶ current affairs programmes broadcast on PSB (Malta). Some argue that they set the governmental political agenda and act as governmental officials. Such criticism is denied by the presenters and the station. Sammut (2007)⁴⁷ argue that the main aim of outside production houses are the viewership and the commercial interest, and this might put aside the public interest which the public service broadcaster should give priority to.

PART 3

The Maltese broadcasting model

When compared to other EU member countries, Malta is on the same ground in relation to what is expected from the public service broadcaster and the other commercial stations. As described by Paraschos (1998, p. 137) generally public broadcasters have more restrictions enforced upon them than the other commercial stations to produce high quality programmes. Also the public service news is more carefully scrutinized for impartiality

⁴⁶ Farmed out – a concept similar to commissioned production. Commissioned from an independent production service, on the broadcaster's initiative and under the broadcaster's editorial control (definition taken from Trends in Communication, 12 (4) 181 – 191 (2004) "Specifications of the Notions of National and Own Production as a broadcasting policy concern in new member states" by Hagi Shein)

⁴⁷ Sammut's comments during a programme, Reporter broadcast on 14th November 2007

than the other stations. Though in Malta there is one law for all the stations including the public service broadcaster, the Broadcasting Authority in effect is more prone to take action on the public service broadcaster's news content; the main reason being that the public service broadcaster is considered to have a public mission. Due to this, the trend is that more complaints from entities or third parties are presented to the Broadcasting Authority against the public service broadcaster as it is considered that this TV station should give coverage and include all interests. Malta also follows the same EU framework with regard to giving free airtime on the public service broadcaster to the political parties during electoral campaigns. The rule used in Malta is the proportional time and not the equal time for all parties. Allocation of time is determined to the strength of the Party in Parliament and to its vote strength in the last election⁴⁸.

The Maltese broadcasting model is a centrally controlled market economy (Curran,1991). If we follow DeFleur's models of broadcasting systems (1996)⁴⁹, Malta tend to have the European – state regulated system or what is known as the social responsibility system, wherein the output of broadcasting is generally regulated through legislative frameworks for broadcasters which are generally stringent than the press⁵⁰. Malta is similar to the European situation in that the public broadcasting model is the most important broadcasting model in contrast with that of United States wherein commercial media enjoyed the top

⁴⁸ Such proportional allocation of time is administered as part of the political broadcasts scheme organised by the Broadcasting Authority

⁴⁹ Taken from "De Fleur's Model of the Taste-Differentiated Audience" Mass media: broadcasting 1/08/03 <http://www.cultsock.ndirect.co.uk> De Fleur (1996) comes up with three main models of the broadcasting systems – the American ('free market' system), the European ('state regulated' system), and the Soviet ('state controlled' system)

⁵⁰ This is also seen in Great Britain wherein broadcasters are required to be impartial, but this is not necessarily for the press. Western European countries are moving away from this system and are examining the idea of privatization state broadcasting and move towards deregulation of broadcasting.

priority in the broadcasting industry. Malta is based on a 'simple' system, based on bipartisanship, a term defined by Mancini (in Dahlgren & Sparks, 1991) with two main political forces. In Malta same as in Italy a state control of mass media exists particularly in broadcasting with two TV channels of PSB and other supporting media (3 radio stations).

What is PSB?

Since this thesis focuses on the role of the PSB, I shall give some attention in this chapter on the academic perspective of the role of the PSB. The mission attributed to public service broadcasting in Europe is that of universal service, quality, diversity, impartiality and education (d'Haenens & Bardoel, 2007) This still holds for the public service broadcaster in Malta. The central planks of PSB still remain those of monopoly, finance, quality and independence. Notwithstanding independence, just as in Europe and Malta included, political interference in the public service broadcaster also exist. Quite a number of media academics wrote about the concept of the PSB and came up with common elements about the PSB. Kuhn (1985) indicates four elements of what constitute the public broadcaster: -

- commitment to balance across programme genres in a way as to provide information, education and entertainment
- a body having financial independence from governmental and also have commercial sources
- service provided to all in return to the payment of a license fee
- its political output is obliged to be balanced and impartial

The focus of this research is the political output mentioned by Kuhn (1985). Though the norms of public service broadcasting in Europe vary between each country, the emphasis on impartiality in news coverage and balance in programme genres and in political content is stressed in all European countries. Venturelli (2001) explains that the notion of public service is tied to the idea of 'general interest'. The Broadcasting Research Unit in UK (1985) aptly defined PSB as "a system of broadcasting which aims to serve the public interest and fulfils a democratic role" (in Harrison, 2006, p. 8). Its range of 'quality' programming lies in the provision of impartial news and current affairs programming. Again the concept of quality in the public service broadcaster relates to the concept of impartiality in specific programming. Also PSB is perceived by society as having an educated role within society and "providing impartial information which will enlighten the viewer and encourage public debate ..." (Harrison & Woods, 2001, p. 477). In view of this, Harrison & Woods (2001, p.481) argue that "PSB requires a certain level of news and current affairs programming". From a European perspective, according to Lange & Renaud (1989) the introduction of competition tends to change the very concept of public service. Public service organisations have to have a public status unlike RAI, RTVE, SSR/SRG or SVT which in effect are commercial companies benefitting from government concession. However, the majority of public service organisations are essentially financed by the licence system (Lange & Renaud, 1989, p. 53) Such organisations are obliged to provide services which are accessible to the citizens as a whole and thus serve the public interest which means that such organisations have the duty to inform, educate and entertain. This was John Reith's policy about the public service broadcaster. As the first general manager since the British Broadcasting Company (BBC) was set up and struggled against the

politicians' influence on the BBC since his policy was that the public service broadcaster is there to serve the public. Thus the Reithian 'philosophy' is to provide programming of education, information and entertainment. While in the past the public service organisations were looked at as non-commercial entities, such organisations have changed and have been authorised to involve themselves in commercial activities, such as the sale of advertising space and programmes. This is also the case in Malta. However, Lange & Renaud (1989), explain that the profits from such commercial activities gained for the public service organisations have to be reinvested in the development of the organisation, contrary to the private sector which revert the profits in the form of dividends to the shareholders.

The feature of PSB has been a central feature in Europe (Brants & Siune, 1992). PSB came under pressure in the 1980s due to a more commercial tendencies and the appearance of media tycoons. This started to be felt in Malta by the advent of pluralism and the programming of PSB (Malta) with the public remit becoming more explicit and public funding more transparent and proportionate to ensure equal level playing field for both public and commercial broadcasters (d'Heanens & Bardoel in d'Haenens & Saeys, 2007). Keane (1991, p.57) argues against the concept of the public service broadcaster and argues that it "confines and reduces choice", and is a system controlled by the government to control what the viewers would watch. Keane (1991) brands public service broadcasting as a brand of paternalism. This view is also mentioned by Lord Reith, BBC General Manager:

“... we are apparently setting out to give the public what we think they need and not what they want – but few know what they want, and very few what they need” (in Curran & Seaton, 1988, p.124).

The economic factor in PSB is quite obvious and news content depends on the ownership of the news organization and who finance it. This is one of the organizational variables which effect the news production together with its structure, technology and the pressures of deadlines. In Britain the way the public service broadcaster is structured, unlike the commercial broadcasters, reduced pressure from commercial entities. Its strongest element is its “*perceived* independence”. (McNair, 2009, p. 57)

Reithian influence on the PSB concept

When referring to the concepts of PSB, one cannot miss out on the arguments brought forward by John Reith concerning the PSB. Sir John Reith influenced the structure of the BBC and insisted that PSB should have a cultural and educative role and not just entertainment. Reith confessed that “the BBC must lead, not follow its listeners” (in Lyle, 1973, p. 23) and during Reith’s period as Director General, the core concept of public service broadcasting was the idea of maintaining high standards within society insisting on a paternalistic idea of providing services which are good to the public and their interests. Due to Reith’s influence, the policy of public service in broadcasting dominated the UK in the 20th century and its foundation was laid in 1920s by the setting up of the BBC as a public corporation. Sir John Reith favoured the idea of changing the BBC to a corporation in the public sector under the authority of the State. When the company was turned into a

public corporation in 1926 by the Crawford Committee it started to be regulated as a public service. The Reithian view of emphasizing monopoly in broadcasting to reach and impose on the audience on a particular sort of programming was intrinsic to the BBC mission and emphasized state support. The relationship between the government and Reith meant that BBC was a non-partisan broadcaster but it was an institution which operates within the Constitution. Furthermore, the Reithian vision was that the mission of the media was a strong cultural and educative mission and that state should support this principle. Reithian's principle was devoid of commercialism. The BBC being a public service had to see what is in the best of national interest. Scannel (1992, p.26) argues in favour of Reith's ideas and positively thinks that the basis of the future system of public broadcasting should be "equal access for all to a wide and varied range of common informational, entertainment and cultural programmes". Such content "must be thought of as an important citizenship right in mass democratic societies". However, the Peacock Committee suggested that the three principles forwarded by Lord Reith should be replaced by market ideas. Despite commercialization of a large part of British radio and TV in the 1990s, thus a great move towards deregulation, BBC and Channel 4 continued to be given a public service purpose by government and ITV retained its public service obligations. However, during the 1990s, while:

"the broadcasting system became more market oriented...it did not become, like the press, subordinated to the market" (Curran & Seaton, 1997, p.330)

The Maltese public service broadcaster is a hybrid of different influences and later on in this chapter; I will be referring to the UK and Italy due to their historical⁵¹ and geographical influence⁵² to Malta. While Malta was a British colony for a good number of years and our broadcasting has been influenced by the British, due to our geographical position, we have also a great influence from our neighbouring country, Italy. For a number of years before pluralism, the Maltese used to follow the Italian TV channels as if these were the local channels⁵³. Thus I had to refer to the UK and Italian version of PSB in this study.

UK version of PSB

The British Broadcasting Company was established in 1922 built under the paternalistic vision of John Reith, the first BBC Director General. Commercial television was introduced in the 1950s having the same remit and Channel Four following in the 1980s but was an advertising finance, state-sponsored corporation with the aim of providing an innovative programming service⁵⁴. Kuhn (1985) argues that the tradition of the public service comes from Britain with BBC as the model of this approach. BBC was envisaged to be the public service broadcaster from its start and this notion of public service was defined by Act of Parliament and remained so even when the monopoly of BBC was broken by the advent of commercial television. Advertising was and is still forbidden on

⁵¹ Malta was a UK colony and we still have held on to some UK influences dating back since Malta regained its independence in the 60s.

⁵² Italy is one of the country which is close to Malta and Malta is very much influenced due to such vicinity. Furthermore the Maltese audience are influenced by the Italian media which is duly followed by the Maltese. The Maltese tend to follow Italian TV channels which are received easily on the Maltese network.

⁵³ The Maltese can easily follow the Italian channels as such channels are free to air for the Maltese customers. Also the majority of the Maltese people understand Italian and this is mainly due to the great influence of the Italian TV channels which the Maltese tend to follow.

⁵⁴ The BBC Licence and Charter defines public service broadcasting as a means of information, education and entertainment

BBC because it is financed by license fees. Collins and Murrioni (1996) state that the BBC is “perceived to be of prime importance to a democratic United Kingdom”. Thus BBC has to continue with its role of public service but can also have a commercial role to be viable. BBC’s role is there to select programmes which are non-commercial, and thus serve the citizens’ interests. Since BBC offers high quality programming it remains essential in UK broadcasting because it serves as a “powerful competitor” (Collins & Murrioni, 1996, p. 144). Also BBC was always careful to observe “a commitment to impartiality as a professional and public duty” (Allan, 1999. p. 36). In theory Kuhn (1985) states that the BBC enjoys public independence and its principal obligation is to produce balanced and impartial news and current affairs. Hutchison (1999) argues that the ideal public service broadcaster model is to be secured financially but which should be free from government interference in programming. It should have a commitment to universal coverage and the regulations of the systems “should not hinder broadcasters to take risks both culturally and politically” (Hutchinson, 1999 p.156). If any of these factors fail, then it would be difficult for the public service broadcaster to function. While there is an element of financial independence in BBC, the government still decides the level of the license fee and it is the government who appoints the BBC’s board of governors. Other large European countries namely France, Germany and Italy adopted this model. However, the BBC is also criticized particularly due to the fact that BBC’s Governors are funded and chosen by government supervising a service of public interest. Collins & Murrioni (1996) suggest that if BBC is to be accountable to the public it has to be opened to public scrutiny and influence in the sense that the Governors represent the public and the public should have influence over the Governors’ performance.

The BBC's model is that it has no editorial view of its own and is not allowed to express an opinion on public policy matters. It must report objectively, dispassionately, fairly and impartially. BBC has to allow airing the widest range of opinions without adopting an editorial stance. The objective of the Board of Governors governing BBC is to "treat controversial subjects with due impartiality ..." (taken from Resolution dated 8th January 1981, p.116). Such achievement with regard to impartiality is achieved by particular pre-production and postproduction procedures. BBC works upon editorial independence but editors are reviewed and controlled by a series of senior officials ultimately the Director-General to the Board of Governors. Schlesinger describes BBC as having "perceived credibility" (in McNair, 2006, p. 60) but he explains that it is only those who have access to power are covered by the news. This might be the case with the public service broadcaster in Malta, that amongst the other two influential political stations, PSB (Malta) is perceived to be singled out as being the more objective and impartial. The political stations in Malta have an identifiable political slant that permeates much of the news content. As Philo (1995) and Miller (1991) found BBC is vulnerable to government pressures and end up having its biases in favour of the British government and this is also perceived to be the case of PSB (Malta) having its slant favouring the Government of the day.

Italy's version of PSB

Italian media are very different to those in the UK. However, as the Italian political system exerts considerable influence on the media, this is quite similar to the Maltese broadcasting situation, because the editorial body responsible for PSB in Malta is directly appointed by

the Minister and the Prime Minister and the BA Regulatory Board is appointed after an agreement between the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition – a system which is being criticized by the present President of Malta Dr George Abela, stressing the need for Constitutional Reform⁵⁵.

In Italy the state broadcasting as Don Sassoon in Kuhn (1985) shows that state monopoly broadcasting has, since its set up, served Christian Democrat interests but later when Socialists got included in the government coalition the hegemonic position of Christian Democrats had severely changed as will be mentioned later on in this chapter. Commercial channels in Italy are not free from politics. Berlusconi used his three TV stations to reach the Italian voters during the 1994 elections which ended with a win for his party – Forza Italia. Same can be said for Malta; the two main political parties use their stations to send out their message and get voters on their side. With the emergence of Fininvest⁵⁶, Italy is a typical example of concentration of media ownership by one person, Silvio Berlusconi who potentially used the media to influence public opinion during his political campaign before the election. As Prime Minister, then he had also *de facto* control⁵⁷ over the state television network – RAI⁵⁸. This raised concern on the independence and free expression of broadcasting⁵⁹. Such power undermines journalistic independence and objectivity in news. In Italy, political elites played a major role in the structure of the Italian public broadcaster – RAI – Radiotelevisione Italiana (Hibberd, 2001). Appointments were controlled by the

⁵⁵ In his speech of the 50th anniversary of the setting up of the Broadcasting Authority, September 2011

⁵⁶ Fininvest is the holding company of one of the world's largest communication group including Mediaset which is a leader in commercial television.

⁵⁷ De facto control – not established by law but such control was developed over time

⁵⁸ RAI was perceived as a political entity and an instrument of propaganda (Padovani, 2003)

⁵⁹ A similar case happened in the 1950s in the US with Rupert Murdoch being the dominant figure in News Corporation.

political parties in Government while some other political factions, mainly the Communist Party were left out from controlling the public service broadcaster. In this way, "...RAI hindered the same democratic process it was seeking to promote" (Hibberd, 2001, p. 234)⁶⁰. In reality RAI was politicized and discriminated against many social and political groups.

Impartiality is always the main objective of a public service broadcaster. The Court in Italy in mid 1970s launched an argument stressing that it is the imperative of a public service broadcaster to base its content on objectivity and impartiality. However, the way the company was run along party lines was geared more towards political logic rather than providing a public service. The system of *lottizzazione*⁶¹ was evident in the Italian psb and with this system, RAI lost all political autonomy and impartiality which should have enjoyed. The 1975 Broadcasting Act (Italy) tried to work against political interference in RAI and this led to a new channel – RAI 3 which caters for the Italian regions. Another event, which effected the Italian PSB, was the Constitutional Court decision in 1976 which granted permission for commercial operators to run television channels and thus monopoly could no longer be justified. This led to a duopoly in broadcasting – RAI controlling 3 PSB channels and Fininvest led by Silvio Berlusconi managing 3 commercial channels. The 1975 Broadcasting Act in Italy brought about the system of *lottizzazione* and RAI had to split into two networks; one having a Catholic culture and the other network having a lay culture. Such reforms lasted for a short period and RAI Uno was favouring Christian

⁶⁰ Hibberd, M. (2001) *Media, Culture and Society* 2001, Vol 23: 233 – 252, Sage Publications, London, Thousand Oaks & New Delhi).

⁶¹ political parties keeping tight hold of RAI "Sharing of positions of power within the broadcasting company between management, journalists and the political parties" (Padovani, 2003, p. 142)

Democrats, and RAI Due the Socialists. Thus with *lottizzazione*, Italian media institutions lost any political autonomy and impartiality. By 1984 Fininvest Group invested in commercial television and owned three quasi national channels. This meant the birth of RAI Fininvest (Mediaset) duopoly which meant a move away from mono-media ownership. The RAI-mediaset duopoly system was sanctioned in law in 1990. Later on, in the 90s, a reform was passed by Parliament aiming to the *delottizzazione* of RAI, that is, dismantling the *lottizzazione* system (Law No. 206, 25 June 1993) (referred by Hibberd, 2001). However, when Berlusconi came to power in 1994, *lottizzazione* took place again and party interference was again used stressing the old cultural concept within the Italian public service broadcaster. The influence of the political system is still present in the Italian media scenario. As Hibberd (2007) points out, there is still political control in the present RAI and senior managerial positions “are still subject to detailed negotiations between political parties” (p. 248).

The Maltese version of the PSB in relation to the UK PSB model

As a nation state, Malta developed its own media policy. Just as in Italy, Malta developed quite unique media pluralism⁶² with political parties owning a TV station amongst other mediums and the public service broadcaster did not succeed in preventing the government from political interference⁶³. This definition of pluralism is definitely completely different than the pluralism mentioned by Hallin & Mancini (2004, p. 166) in the sense that “politics

⁶² It is a unique scenario with regard to pluralism because such pluralism is not on the same lines as Doyle (2002, p. 11) stating that pluralism “is the presence of a number of different and independent voices, and of differing political opinions and representations of culture within the media” (in *Media Ownership: The Economics and Politics of Convergence and Concentration in the UK and European Media*, Sage). Such a definition was also defined by a Committee of Experts on Media Concentrations and Pluralism within the Council of Europe stating that pluralism is diversity of ownership and of diversity of output.

⁶³ Same as in Italy which has a duopoly with RAI and Fininvest-Mediaset duopoly, Malta has PBS / NET – ONE duopoly.

is kept away from the governance of broadcasting in a way that broadcasting represent the diversity of society”. Malta’s unique broadcasting due to political parties owning their radio and television stations “amplify a polarized political culture” (Sammut, 2007, p. 25). Arguments about the PSB (Malta) is that it should follow the BBC broadcasting in UK, in that it is publicly owned and should be expected to set quality standards since it is set primarily for public gain. Same as BBC, PSB (Malta) being funded by the public has to reflect the full range of opinions and experiences of the whole community⁶⁴.

The public service broadcaster should be and perceived to be independent from its ownership. In Malta the stations falling under PBS Ltd are not licensed by the Broadcasting Authority and this might be taken as an indication that the Government has control over these stations. Referring to the UK broadcasting system, the BBC gained independence from partisan political pressure because BBC was not even indirectly accountable to Parliament. British broadcasting started as a public service, serving a social purpose to the public and this enhanced the commitment towards the public. As Curran (1988, p. 272) states, “without a commitment to public service, broadcasters are increasingly vulnerable to detailed political interference in the content of programmes”. The concept of independence of the public service broadcaster relates to the idea of impartiality and balance. Hartley (1982, p. 61- 2) concurs with the idea that impartiality, objectivity, neutrality and balance of the BBC, is the basis of British broadcasting and it has to neutralize the other dominant ideologies presented by other private news organizations which have pressure from their owners (taken from McNair, 2009, p. 57). Such a concept can be followed by the public

⁶⁴ However, PSB (Malta) is partly funded by the Government the rest is financed through advertising on a commercial basis.

service broadcaster in Malta and its independence and thus the achievement of impartiality, neutrality and balance should be the basis of its broadcasting amidst the political media landscape which exists in the Maltese broadcasting scenario. This highlights that publicly owned media are more objective in their news coverage than privately held companies. (Altschull,1984; Shoemaker & Reese, 1991). However, one has to point out what Hallin (1994, in Allan 1999) argued about the ‘mirroring’ qualities of ‘objective reporting’ (p.65). Hallin (1994) describes a form of journalism wherein it aims to give the public a neutral report but at the same time the report would be relying on government officials to describe the events or happenings, so such a news media would actually not be mirroring reality but a version of reality which the government officials would want to present to the public. This can be a mirror version of the PSB (Malta) which is owned by the Government and giving priority to governmental press releases while presenting itself as an objective news service.

Importance of the public service broadcaster for democracy

In a democracy the social responsibility perspective of news is essential. Preston (1999) points out “...television news can be seen as the main example of public service broadcasting”. The main role of PSB broadcasting is its remit to be a democratic tool. The relationship between the State and broadcasting should not be a relationship of hidden State control. The broadcaster has to be responsible and cannot ignore the public’s needs while giving priority to the interests of the State and its administrators. PSB has to be recognized as a public good with a democratic potential. (Harrison & Woods, 2001). Due to the fact that the function of democracy is linked to the objectives of democracy, then the

broadcaster has to see that the public interest is being served without any partisanship. After all, journalism performs a political role in a liberalist society because it gives the citizens information to make rational electoral and economic choices:

“Journalism, according to this viewpoint, underpins democratic institutions by keeping voters informed about the things they need to know” (McNair, 2009, p. 21)

Furthermore, the basis of the public television is that it has to be free from any political alliance for the sake of the public interest and has to be created, financed and controlled by the public. In this way, the public broadcaster has to meet the demands of the whole society because it is addressed towards the citizens first and foremost and not towards the consumers. Public service broadcasting has a social responsibility which goes beyond those of the market place. The 2000 White Paper in UK emphasized the democratic role of the public service broadcasting and was deemed to have an important role in the provision of news and current affairs as the basis of an open and balanced public debate. Cottle in Bromley (2001) referred to news in a democracy and argued that news has an institutional position which has to be independent from the state but has obligations towards impartiality and public service available to all and a service through which “public opinion can be formed” (Habermas 1974⁶⁵, 1989⁶⁶).

While one can argue that public and private broadcasters have a common aim however, actually broadcasters are in competition with each other for audiences, advertising revenue and programme rights. Very often when the public service broadcaster works within a commercial context, the idea of public domain is undermined by the dominant voices in

⁶⁵ Habermas, J. (1974) ‘The Public Sphere’, *New German Critique*, 1 (3) 49 - 55

⁶⁶ Habermas, J. (1989) *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Polity Press, London

society. Sawers (1996) is against the idea of public service broadcasting⁶⁷ and argues that while in the past consumers could not pay directly for the service and so the state provided such a tax-financed television service, nowadays the principles of a liberal economy should be accepted and consumers can pay for what they use and make their own demands and choices. The society should not provide a paternalistic approach any more – in the sense that the broadcaster would know more than the viewer what he/she wants.

If we turn this view to the Maltese situation, one can argue that since PSB (Malta) is not autonomous from the party in Government (Sammut, 2008) and is subtly or crudely controlled by the Government *vis a vis* decision making posts, PSB (Malta) would be more inclined to give its audience issues which would not reflect badly on the Government and cover up and minimize the perception that the government might not be doing its job well. In spite of more than 20 years of pluralism in Malta, PSB (Malta) remained under direct government control. Such failings of PSB are the failings of democracy in Malta since we have a semblance of a multi-party democracy which is by far what can be termed as a free media system with a civil society having little or no say in the democratic process. To strive for a democratic society, PSB (Malta) has to be liberated from the government control and it would become another station striving within the broadcasting market and competing with the other television stations. Then partisan programming on the political stations might change their present operation in a bid to compete with the public service broadcaster.

⁶⁷ implies the notion that its function is not to satisfy commercial interests but its aim is to give to the public – information, education and entertainment programmes bearing in mind the ‘quality’ of the programmes.

PART 4

“Legislation is a necessary condition, however, for good broadcasting to be practised” (Burns, 1197, p. 35)

The task of the regulator in the Polarized media model

Regulation is intrinsic to the public broadcasting system because in a way it defends the viewers from the autonomy of institutions. It ensures that the system fulfils the needs of the public before ensuring those of the market and other political needs. Thompson (1997) explains that the process of regulation can be divided into different ‘moments’ - representation, identity, production and consumption. Thompson (1997) explains that regulation can either mean the adoption of government policies and regulations, or the change or abolition of regulation as in the case of deregulation⁶⁸ and self regulation⁶⁹.

Following the Mediterranean/Polarized Pluralist media model, the regulatory institution in Malta, same as in other Southern European countries, is in a way party-politicized. This is reflected in the structure of the Broadcasting Authority itself⁷⁰ and quite weak to enforce its regulations. While television governance and regulations have to be robust to allow broadcasters to follow their editorial and not their political instincts and critique government performance, the Broadcasting Authority in Malta still struggle to regulate both the public service broadcaster and the other commercial / political stations. In a constitutional democracy, broadcasting is essential and should be used in a correct and

⁶⁸ It is the process of removing or reducing state broadcasting regulations. As happened in Europe in the 1980s, Malta also moved towards deregulation in the 90s since state monopoly was replaced by commercial private channels.

⁶⁹ The industry itself rather than the government does the regulation (Campbell, 1999)

⁷⁰ As will be explained in Chapter 4

objective way so that the citizens are accurately informed on political, economic and social aspects. Thus the role of the regulator is highly important in regulating the broadcasting content. In this respect the function of the Broadcasting Authority (Malta)⁷¹ is vital to guarantee fairness, impartiality and balance amongst the broadcasting stations. In effect, the BA's main role according to the Constitution of Malta is to see that balance and impartiality are kept in matters of political and industrial controversies.

Issues of regulation in Malta

As a general rule the public service broadcaster in Malta is regulated particularly by Article 13 of the Broadcasting Act, which specifically refers to news and current affairs programmes with particular attention to those programmes presented on the public service broadcaster. Articles 118 and 119 of the Constitution of Malta also put the onus on the importance of the regulator in regulating due impartiality. Matters of impartiality were also put forward to the Maltese Law Court. According to Maltese Law Court, impartiality within the public service broadcaster is of utmost importance to be kept. The Court of Appeal of Malta (Cit. No. 711/2002/1)⁷² concluded a couple of aspects of what Articles 118 and 119 of the Constitution imply of the Broadcasting Authority regulations. The Court of Appeal pointed out that the need for impartiality is to be kept in a liberalist and pluralistic media environment; the obligation that impartiality is kept more so on the public

⁷¹ The Maltese regulator is a single regulator for the public broadcaster and all the other privately owned, commercial stations mainly because the Maltese public broadcaster is not only partly funded by government but it also gets money from advertising.

⁷² Cit No. 711/2002/1 Court hearing by Chief Justice Vincent De Geatano, and Judges Joseph D. Camilleri and Joseph A. Filletti (15th January 2003) in a case between Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Public Broadcasting Services Limited vs. Broadcasting Authority and, by means of a decree dated 12 July 2002, Dr Alfred Sant, Leader of the Opposition and Leader of the Malta Labour Party, and Emanuel Cuschieri and Jimmy Magro in the name and on behalf of the said Party), were joined in statu et terminis, decided by the Court of Appeal on 12 July 2002

service broadcaster and the Broadcasting Authority should intervene if impartiality is not kept. The Broadcasting Authority has the power to take action within the boundaries allowed in a democratic society even if the Court is the final arbiter to see if the Broadcasting Authority had acted according to the principles.

The Broadcasting Authority envisages that during election campaign all political debate is conducted on a level playing field. This was explained by the BA chairman, Joseph Said Pullicino in an interview in the print media in 2003⁷³ explaining that the BA issues directives to be followed by the broadcasting stations during the period of an electoral campaign.

Said Pullicino (2003) thinks that it is unrealistic to say that political pressure will be eliminated from the Maltese broadcasting but it is a challenge to let the journalist work freely and be independent of political pressure especially within the public service broadcaster. He argues that the newsroom of the public service broadcaster should distinguish itself by its objectivity and its investigative services. While *prima facie* the Broadcasting Authority seem to have a work practice with stricter regulations on the PSB (Malta), the Broadcasting Act allows private stations to have an editorial position and the Broadcasting Authority interpret the proviso of impartiality by considering the whole output of all the stations in a way that such stations balance one another. On the other hand, the Constitutional obligation of impartiality is applicable to each station but a slant is allowed as long as there is an overall balance and impartiality.

⁷³ Interview by Kurt Farrugia “Wara għaxar snin ta’ pluraliżmu fix-Xandir ... issa x’immiss? L-Orizzont 15th July 2003 p. 14, 15

Impartiality as described in Maltese legislation

After looking at the theories and academic definitions of impartiality, I will be narrowing this concept to the way it is described in Maltese legislation. While keeping in mind the theoretical interpretation of impartiality, this research needs to look at the way such concept is mentioned in legislation as this would impinge on the practicality of this concept. In the Broadcasting Act (Malta), it is only the concept of impartiality which is mentioned while the concept of balance is not mentioned in the main legislation act. In the Maltese broadcasting scenario, the requirement to provide impartial news is a legal one, conveyed by Article 13 of the Broadcasting Act. The Malta Broadcasting Act⁷⁴ is the same to the 1990 UK Broadcasting Act wherein broadcaster are to abide by the rule of ‘due impartiality’ but this is not necessarily achieved in one programme but in a series ‘considered as a whole’⁷⁵. If we take the UK scenario, BBC developed its own internal rules about impartiality which are codified in its Producers’ Guidelines and which are circulated to all staff and producers. It is also conveyed in the Communications Act 2003 which reinforced the protection of impartiality and standards in PSB news.

The way impartiality is achieved is well expressed in a BBC document on fairness and impartiality⁷⁶ and the report gives importance on allowing a wide range of views and opinions to be expressed, giving weight to the views expressed though such views can be challenged. ITC Programme Code adds that impartiality is not pursued ‘in a mathematical

⁷⁴ Article 13 (2) (c) ... that sufficient time is given to news and current affairs and that all news are given in the programmes (in whatever form) is presented with due impartiality;

⁷⁵ ...provided that in that case of (c) to (f), the Authority shall be able to consider the general output of programmes provided by the various broadcasting licensees and contractors, together as a whole.

⁷⁶ ‘Fairness and impartiality in political broadcasting’, British Broadcasting Corporation, June 1987

sense' or means 'equal time must be given to each opposing view' but due impartiality should be 'adequate and appropriate to the nature of the programme'. The Broadcasting Act (UK) 1990 6 (1) (b) is the exact copy of the version Article 13 (2) (b) and (c) of the Maltese Broadcasting Act stating that:

(b) "any news given (in whatever form) is presented with due accuracy;

(c) "that sufficient time is given to news and current affairs and that all news given in the programmes (in whatever form) is presented with due impartiality".

The idea of due impartiality is explained by Winston (2000) who argue that 'due' has to be interpreted in the sense that adequate or appropriate to the nature of the subject and the type of programme⁷⁷. Impartiality cannot be achieved by a mathematical balance more so if there are more than two sides to any issue. BBC and ITC guidelines also favour producers, participants and members of the public in the impartiality equation. A typical example of such programming in Malta is Xarabank⁷⁸, however, one has to point out that the producers start this democratisation process through the choice of subjects and might deliberately leave out topical current subjects. Thus the democratisation process is again hindered through the 'spiral of silence'. If one take the 2006 Local Election campaign⁷⁹ the producers chose not to discuss any relevant topics to the campaign.

The Broadcasting Act allows "due impartiality over a series of programmes" and this shows that while there might be cases that opposing views are reflected in a single

⁷⁷ Also defined as such in the BBC Producers' Guidelines and also constitutes the BBC code as required by Section 5.3 of the Agreement associated with the BBC's charter

⁷⁸ A current affairs/discussion programme produced by a productions house Where's Everybody? And broadcast on TVM every Friday at 20.30

⁷⁹ The campaign chosen in this study

programme or within a single programme item because of the nature of such issues mainly being highly controversial; there are times where impartiality can be spread over a number of programmes and opposing viewpoints are broadcast over programmes. Since the Broadcasting Act 1990 states that impartiality can be considered over a whole series and not necessarily within each individual programme, such a rule requires supervising programme schedules to ensure programme 'balancing'. Also advance publicity has to be made that a forthcoming 'balancing' programme is to be broadcast (Petley, 1999, p.150). In the UK the Broadcasting Act also gives this 'allowance' in the sense that " a series of programmes to be considered as a whole", however, ITC had defined that a series is more than one programme broadcast in the same service, each one of which is clearly linked to the other(s) and which deal with the same or related issues". The ITC does not consider other programmes on other channels or media to provide opposing views and are placed in the same equation for due impartiality "to be considered as a whole". They have to be the same programmes in the same series under the same title. Producers may deal with the same subject over two or more programmes. The ITC Programme Code also cites instances of separate in-depth interviews to the leaders of political parties and in this way impartiality over time is achieved. The intention to achieve impartiality in this way should be planned by producers and be made clear to the viewers. Same as the ITC Programme Code, the BBC Producers' Guidelines explains what is meant by series; a series wherein a number of programmes are linked to the others and deal with the same or related issues; or a series which are broadcast under the same title but separate and different issues are tackled from one edition to the other. In these two cases due impartiality has to be achieved differently. In the first case impartiality can be achieved over a number of

programmes but the how impartiality is achieved has to be made known to the viewers. In the second case due impartiality normally is exercised within each individual programme. In the Maltese legislation or other regulations, ‘series’ is not defined and might give room for interpretation. The interpretation ‘as a whole’ can be interpreted by local stakeholders as the whole of the broadcasting stations. In this case due impartiality is tougher to be regulated. PBS current affairs programmes⁸⁰, generally tackle different issues from one edition to the other and thus it is envisaged that impartiality has to be achieved in each programme. Also such programmes use follow up programmes to allow other views.

In Malta, the Broadcasting Authority lacks to define the legal provision of due impartiality “to be considered as a whole” and the producers and licensee tend to give it their interpretation, though *prima facie* a series of programmes is meant to be thought to be the programme under the same title. Such method of opposing views need to be exposed over a number of programmes and according to Article 13 (2) (f) of the Broadcasting Act⁸¹, this is for matters of political or industrial controversy or relating to current public policy due impartiality has to be kept. Due impartiality also pertains to the idea that interviews are conducted in a fair manner. When an interviewer or a presenter criticizes any wrongdoing, those criticized should be given appropriate time and opportunity to respond. This can be treated, but is not exclusive, as a ‘right of reply’ which is also provided in the Maltese broadcasting legislation. As the ITC Programme Code suggests, due impartiality has to be applied to all areas of controversy, balance should not necessarily be interpreted as any

⁸⁰ Bondi+, Xarabank and Dissett – the current affairs programmes on PSB (Malta)

⁸¹ “Provided that, except in the case of public broadcasting services, in applying paragraphs (c) to (f), the Authority shall be able to consider the general output of programmes provided by the various broadcasting licensees and contractors, together as a whole.”

simple mathematical sense or that each opposing view has to be given equal time; it depends on the type of programming. According to the ITC Programme Code, the choice of participants in a current affairs programme should be determined by fairness on the subject matter and in a political discussion the participants have to reflect opposing viewpoints. As in the case of news and the legal requirements pertaining to news, the Broadcasting Act (Malta) requires that “any news, given in whatever form, must be presented with due accuracy and impartiality”. This implies that reporting should be factual and the main differing views on a controversial matter should be given its due weight when the controversy is active. Conflicting views can either be included in one single news item or can be spread over a series of bulletins but these remains upon the discretion of the editor. The presence of interviewees and the editing of interviews should also lead to impartiality. The obligation of due impartiality does not rely on parties or officials but on the issues per se. There might be cases to discuss issues with officials within the party but there are other instances where the main topic can be discussed with those closely related to party allegiances and not necessarily by politicians.

PART 5

The Maltese view of PSB (Malta)

Very few studies have been done on PSB in Malta and particularly on impartiality in broadcasting though a good number of newspaper articles have been written criticizing the functioning and the policies of the PSB throughout the years. However, the local media scenario is academically well explained by Sammut (2007) and she aptly evaluated the

media system in the scenario of partisan and non-partisan media or more accurately a ‘semblance’ of non partisan media. She found that while partisan media promote the party-centric agendas, the other media tend to ‘balance’ between the two sides in a way that the end picture continues to fostering polarised attitudes. PBS newsroom struggles for quantitative balance between the two parties and is obsessed with equilibrium in their news content (Sammut, 2007). Sammut (2007) points out that the public service broadcaster in Malta for a number of years was part of the political struggle in Malta. Further to this, presently it became also involved in a commercial struggle with the other competing stations and the main ingredient of the public service broadcaster, being the PSO⁸² has been tarnished with commercial needs and perhaps its role is not functioning as it should be. Moreover, Sammut (2007) asks for a reassessment of the democratic role of the Maltese media system to address the element of polarization which is dominant in journalism. However she points out that even though there are a number of shortcomings in the way the Maltese media system is administered by political and commercial media markets, the Maltese system has “a democratizing potential” because “the public service broadcasting and the private sector journalism are allowed to flourish alongside each other” (2007, p. 239). According to Sammut (2007), more issues which were usually sidelined with the civic and public debate were introduced in the agenda of the public service broadcaster in Malta after the restructuring process in 2004. While the state retain control over PBS but the fact that the station had to work for financial stability since its revenues from TV licences were stopped, meant that independent producers could provide more civic issues on their agenda. Yet the political element was and still is very powerful within the media system, be it the public service broadcaster and the privately owned stations. Partisan

⁸² PSO – Public Service Obligation

broadcasting conditions the media system leaving little room for other issues and endeavours. This is the case even with commercial broadcasting as even here, commercial organizations while adopting traits of non-partisan journalism, some of their agenda would still be tarnished with partisan views.

Sammut (2007) points out that public journalism should present news programmes which are truly representative and present an inclusive view of the whole of society and are able to scrutinize the political and economic power structures. The public broadcaster has to walk away from the “fetish with bipartisan balance that overwhelms its agendas” (Sammut, 2007, p.245) and focus more on their public mission and be the voice of the civic society in their choice of news issues. Sammut (2007) concluded that the media model in the Maltese democracy is built on partisan media and public broadcasting, the first representing the major two political powers in Malta and the latter trying to give a representative picture of the society. Though Sammut (2007, p. 246) suggests that, “... PBS is released from clutches of direct state control to inch its way toward greater autonomy”. When debates come up regarding PBS news and current affairs programmes, some local media experts come up with the idea of hiving off news bulletins and current affairs programmes from PBS⁸³, however others⁸⁴ are against this idea, arguing that this would deprive the public broadcasting station from its necessary and important element. Another suggestion raised by Fr Joe Borg is a form of *lottizzazione* in Malta, whereby political stations stop broadcasting and one of PBS channel would adopt a pro-Labour stance and the other would

⁸³ Lino Spiteri in The Times article, 24 March 2013 and Joe Grima (both ex Ministers under the Labour Government)

⁸⁴ Fr Joe Borg in The Times article, ‘From reality to aspirations’, 7 April 2013

adopt a bias in favour of the Nationalist Party. Then a system of pillarization⁸⁵ as that adopted in the Netherlands is adopted on another public service TV station wherein political parties are given equal time.

Such debates also raise arguments on what is described as a needed reform of the Broadcasting Authority in a bid to end the dominance of the political parties in this institution. Such a method of reform was also suggested by the President of Malta during a speech commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Broadcasting Authority (29th September, 2011). He suggested a change in the way the Broadcasting Authority is presently structured. He questioned whether the Broadcasting Authority should remain the regulator and the operator, and pointed out that independence and impartiality of the PSB (Malta) has to be strengthened, while questioning what should be the future of the political party stations. The President of Malta criticized the composition of the Broadcasting Authority because he argued it might give the impression that it is not working in the interests of the public but in the interests of the two political parties represented in Parliament. The President asks for a Constitutional Reform in the sense that the BA appointments in the board are chosen from a wider spectrum of society, amongst others, the political parties, the media, the civil society and the NGOs. He pointed out that the Broadcasting Authority “is not independent enough”. I tend to argue that no change in the Constitution is needed for a change in direction for the members’ appointment. The Constitution simply says that the Broadcasting Authority “shall consist of a chairman and

⁸⁵ Pillarization was a social phenomenon that occurred in the Netherlands in the late 19th century to the mid of the 20th century wherein the society was divided into political and religious groups with a degree of segregation between the pillars. Each pillar had its own institutions – schools, political parties etc (taken from <http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/UsefulNotes/Pillarisation>, accessed on 25th January 2014)

such number of other persons not being less than four as may be prescribed by any law for the time being in force in Malta”. The choice of members being nominated by the two political parties dates back to the sixties originating from the decision, then Prime Minister, Dr George Borg Olivier and that has developed into a cultural tradition. A number of media experts and commentators in Malta tend to differ with the proposed reform voiced by the President of Malta arguing that “it won’t work in practice”.⁸⁶ Though media regulation is important, Sammut (2007) also suggests a reform on the function of the Broadcasting Authority. She suggests changes in the way it is constituted since the way it works is perceived that it is solely defending the interests of the political parties. A reformed Authority should tackle other important issues in broadcasting such as issues of vulnerability, gender issues, the use of the Maltese language and the separation between the editorial content and the commercial interests.

What emerged while researching for this thesis was the lack of academic research on this topic except for the work undertaken by Sammut⁸⁷ (2007). Such work as does exist - albeit at times viewed from a highly partisan political perspective - focuses more on the history of broadcasting rather than an analysis of the current situation. In the absence of academic work there are articles which report on interesting debates which are going on in Malta. Some of these articles debate the role of PSB (Malta) with regard to balance and impartiality, whilst there are also a number of discussion programmes produced by the local media that discuss such matters, including the question of the role of PBS in a heavy

⁸⁶ The Times article written by Bertrand Borg in October, 3, 2011 ‘Reform ‘makes sense but won’t work out in practice’

⁸⁷ Pursued her doctoral research in media studies focusing on the media and the Maltese society

politicized media environment. Such discussions are quite common particularly during an electoral period.

This chapter has focused on the main concepts under discussion in this thesis. It also explored the role of public service broadcasting and has compared the version of PSB operating in Malta with the public service models to be found in Italy and the UK. The last two parts of the chapter focused on regulatory and legal issues and on the role of the Broadcasting Authority in Malta. The next chapter will introduce the particular research methodology used in the course of this research and on the use of the secondary data.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The aims of methodology is to help the blind man see”, to facilitate communication between researchers who either have shared or want to share a common experience’ (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1996, p. 14).

Introduction

After analyzing the concepts of balance, impartiality and objectivity and considering the role and remit of public service broadcasters and regulators in different European countries, I will move on to focus on the research methodologies used in this research. This work, like any other work in the social sciences, rests on theory and empirical research. I will start by giving an overview of what will be analysed and which research methods were used in the course of this study. The chapter will also describe the sample of programming material and will explain why particular research methods were employed.

This study will focus on four main areas:-

- i. the study of the text
- ii. the perception and role of the producers or the internal structures of the programme production
- iii. the audience perception on the text produced
- iv. the legal developments with respect to Maltese broadcasting particularly the legal ‘guidance’ of broadcasting legislation and regulation

The purpose of this research is to examine the news programmes and current affairs/discussion programmes broadcast on Maltese TV channels mainly those aired by the public service broadcaster in Malta (TVM) and by the other two politically owned TV stations (One TV and Net TV). The main aim of the analysis is to investigate any bias, and any lack of political impartiality and balance in these non-fictional genres. Firstly, the research investigates audience's viewpoints and analyses whether concepts of impartiality, balance and objectivity are found in these programmes and if there are any differences in how these concepts are dealt with in the stations under investigation. Data will show whether the audience is receiving an impartial message from TVM; and how impartiality and balance are achieved in view of the fact that the TV broadcasting system in Malta is highly politicized. This study turns to the broadcasters, news editors or news programme producers to analyse their claims on how they are working to produce a non-biased product. What do they consider are the best criteria for being objective, impartial and balanced. Apart from analyzing the content, the study investigates how the audience receives the messages contained in such programmes and how they perceive the news and current affairs programmes aired on the Maltese public service broadcaster and the other two politically-owned stations. Are the criteria used by broadcasters resulting in an objective and impartial product as perceived by the viewers. Furthermore, the study is intended to explore the measures and regulations as cited in the Constitution of Malta and the Broadcasting Act and how these may influence the news programmes of these television stations. Through interviews conducted with the regulators, this study points out what are regulators in effect doing to put forward a news media product which is impartial. How can laws be changed, if need be, so that news programmes reflect such concepts.

Since the concepts of bias, impartiality, objectivity and balance can be tackled from different perspectives this study uses different methodologies to investigate the content, the regulations, the human resources in news organizations and finally the audience in order to get different scenarios of the concepts under investigation. To study these areas, I will be analyzing the three main domains of communication processes; the media producers, the media content and media consumption (Hansen *et al.*, 1998). I will be using face-to-face interviews to study the media organizations and media production through the key media informants such as producers, presenters, journalists and media managers; and also the broadcasting media regulators. I chose this methodology to investigate the testimony of broadcasters operating in the field and of regulators. They are chosen because of their role in news media production and their position within the organisation. Here the parties were highly aware of the sensitive timing of the project, mostly being interviewed on the eve of a general election 2008. A number of people interviewed for this study no longer retain their role or position in the organization, however, in Chapter 5 I will be referring to them in their role which they were assuming at the time of the interview. Apart from media producers, I interviewed the broadcasting media regulators to get their point of view on how regulation affects the news broadcasting scenario in areas of impartiality, balance and objectivity. The concept of broadcasting regulation is an intrinsic part of this research, particularly whether regulation is needed to regulate concepts of impartiality and balance.

Another research method used in this study is focus group interviews which will cover the third domain, that of media consumption and media audiences. These focus groups with

viewers are conducted to discuss issues relating to the main focus of this study, particularly the political impartiality in news and current affairs programmes broadcast by local stations. Such interviews give an insight of how viewers perceive the news message and how they form an opinion on impartiality after following the news bulletins on the three different TV stations. Also the study briefly uses documentary evidence in some instances to highlight the matter under investigation. In this study, I used documentary sources to help document the news culture in local media. Such sources consist of statistical sources, media clips and printed documents. With regard to samples of news clips, I resorted to the documentary method of interpretation. Thus apart from showing a sample of news clips to the participants in the focus group, I also analysed the second level of meaning within the news reports, analysis which was also being made during the discussion within the focus group sessions. Apart from looking at the “intentional expressive meaning”, the news reports were looked upon their “objective meaning”. (Bohnsack et al., 2010, p. 201). In the focus group discussion, the viewers were focusing not on the intentional meaning of the news report but on the meaning and intentions which exist beyond the specific characteristics of the news report. Other documentary evidence used in this study pertains to the written documents. I got statistics through secondary data presented in the Parliament of Malta as a result of a number of Parliamentary Questions put forward. Also the frequency of the coverage of a particular issue and the number of times a politician is reported will not give the tone of usage or the combination with the footage (visuals) used, and so textual analysis is needed in this case. I also managed to get other quantitative data from in house data gathered by PBS Ltd which is generally used for the internal consumption of the organisation. Through my professional capacity at the Broadcasting

Authority I am aware that PBS Ltd from time to time had the resources, albeit limited, to gather statistical data on news coverage in PBS news. Such data was available after given approval from PBS Chief Executive and was granted permission to view and use this data for this research. Such data is never published and it is only used for internal consumption. Thus apart from the qualitative research methods consisting of face to face interviews and focus groups, I will be referring to some statistical data on the exposure and political content on TVM news.

This study incorporates the straight news⁸⁸ and the current affairs programmes and thus I am including all the news programmes of the station's schedule. Even though the perception is that political programmes and news are quite common in TV schedules, it is interesting to note that such programmes constitute a relatively small percentage of transmission time when compared to other types of programmes included in the station's schedule for 2006⁸⁹. According to the schedules received at the Broadcasting Authority from the TV stations⁹⁰, for a weekly transmission, TVM broadcast 8%, One TV 7.7% and Net TV 11% for a 24 hour transmission⁹¹. However, according to the 2006 station schedules, only Net TV broadcast a repeat of the programmes during the day. One TV joins One Radio transmission and broadcast radio programmes during the night. TVM broadcast foreign transmission mainly Euronews. These percentages show that the bulk of the stations' programmes are not straight news or current affairs and discussion programmes. Looking at these low figures, one gets the impression that the viewers are not

⁸⁸ I am only including in the study the evening prime time news bulletin

⁸⁹ The year under review for this study

⁹⁰ Such information is requested by law as per Paragraph 23 of the Broadcasting Act

⁹¹ Figures from the 2006 TV schedule; I have referred to the percentage as at the 2006 TV schedule because the news sample analyzed in the textual analysis and in the focus group date to 2006.

‘bombarded’ with current affairs or political issues. However, one has to keep in mind that the audience also includes listeners to radio programmes coming from 13 different radio stations and news reports of the print media spread over 4 daily newspapers⁹² and 6 Sunday papers, and electronic versions of the news. Thus, election issues are carried forward on all types of media from TV to radio to print. Also in these percentages, the political broadcasts under the Broadcasting Authority political broadcasts scheme⁹³ which consist of debates, political spots and productions⁹⁴ is not included in these figures but which during an election campaign is also included in TVM schedule. Recent figures taken from the October – December 2013 TV schedule show similar percentages though indicate higher percentages for current affairs programming over a 24-hour transmission period for a week. This is mainly due to an increase of daily breakfast programmes introduced by the three television stations and also in the case of TVM and Net TV they introduced early evening daily current affairs programmes. For TVM the percentage is the highest with 19.9%, followed by Net TV at 16.9% and the least is 15.4% for One TV.

I have to point out that political content in Maltese news bulletins and current affairs programmes is not only found during political electoral campaigns. At other times when electioneering is not taking place, the transmission percentages remain very much the same. Moreover, the actual content of news bulletins and current affairs programmes would still be political in nature. Malta is highly politicized and this is also reflected in the local media content as also referred in Chapter 4. However, the sample was chosen from a

⁹² On a Wednesday 5 daily newspapers are published

⁹³ Scheme is the technical word used by the Broadcasting Authority to refer to the Political Broadcast Series.

⁹⁴ These two technical words are not defined in the Broadcasting Law. These are similar to what is known as political advertising. The only distinction which the Authority makes in the rules regulating the Political Broadcasts Scheme is that a ‘spot’ has to be much shorter in duration than a ‘political production’.

political electoral campaign so that a number of stories covered in news would be the same stories though these might be reported from a completely different angle.

The chosen sample

The sample chosen for the study and which was used in the focus groups relate to the 2006 Local Council election in Malta and taken in the last 18 days of the campaign. Later on in this chapter, I will go into more detail on the selection of news clips chosen for the focus group sessions. In Malta, Local Council elections can be considered to be a political campaign on a smaller scale because political parties participate in these local elections (see Note C in Appendix i). Thus the political content in the media increases during this period and especially the partisan media adapt to electioneering⁹⁵ mode. In this way I get an insight into how news and current affairs programmes reflect the political situation in Malta. Also since the news output reflect social and cultural issues (Hansen *et al.* 1998), the sample gives an insight into what messages are transmitted by the news programmes produced locally particularly during an electoral campaign. The news items analysed are taken from the prime time⁹⁶ news bulletins and the current affairs programmes aired during those two weeks, (between 20th February 2006 and 9th March 2006) usually after the prime time news bulletins aired on TVM, One TV and Net TV. According to regular audience surveys commissioned by the Broadcasting Authority, the evening news is the most watched and this was the main reason of choosing the prime time news bulletins over the other TV news. The Audience Assessment commissioned by the Broadcasting Authority was not carried out between June 2004 and June 2006 and resumed again from 1st October

⁹⁵ Electioneering – the act of taking an active part in a political campaign (www.thefreedictionary.com)

⁹⁶ Prime time in my study is the evening news bulletin. On TVM it is aired at 20.00 on ONE at 19.30 and on Net TV at 19.45

2006. Thus here I am referring to the October – December 2006 audience statistics, taken to be the nearest to the period under study. The evening news bulletins for the three stations under study are the most viewed during the day and the most popular programmes are those aired after the evening news bulletins. In some cases such programmes are the current affairs and discussion programmes under study in this research. Generally the highest audience rates are registered in the evening slot from 7.30pm onwards. As seen in the Audience Survey in Appendix iii, referring to the BA audience survey, audience percentages increase with the start of the news bulletin of each particular station (TVM, One TV and Net TV). (See Appendix iii). The local prime time news bulletins in Malta have quite a high audience as can be seen from an audience survey commissioned in January 2006. This survey shows that TVM news on Wednesday registered the highest audience amounting to 92,000, Net News on a Monday with 65,000 and One News on a Monday gaining 50,000 viewers. According to this survey the two most watched TV programmes during the week under study were Xarabank with 119,000 viewers and Bondi+ with 106,000 viewers. These figures reflect the 2006 TV programming since the sample under study is taken from the 2006 period.

Qualitative and quantitative research

Though qualitative research methods are mainly used in this study, I partly made use of quantitative research method to complement what had been found with the qualitative research. Qualitative researchers are concerned with the objective, measurable ‘facts’ or ‘events’, but also with the ways that people construct, interpret and give meaning to these experiences (Gerson & Horowitz in May, 2002, p. 199) Also since qualitative research

assumes that people act in a thoughtful and meaningful way, qualitative researchers try to capture these meanings in a natural environment. (Singeltary, 1994)

“Qualitative research is any systematic investigation that attempts to understand the meaning that things have for individuals from their own perspectives”
(Singeltary, 1994, p.26)

My main motive of using qualitative research, namely focus groups and interviews, is to better understand the people’s interpretations and perceptions on the news media when viewing the news media. Through focus groups the feedback from the viewers’ point of view is taken into account, and by the use of the face-to-face interviews I can investigate the producers’ agenda.

Quantitative data, mainly, statistics are not completely objective and factual. Compilation of data is quite subjective and is the result of a number of decisions taken by person gathering the data when selecting the sample. In my case statistics were gathered in house by the public broadcaster. There are cases when such statistics or similar data records are also presented in the House of Parliament when MPs ask a Parliamentary Question about PBS news.

The research methods used

In this subsection I itemize the particular research methods used in this study and highlight the advantages and disadvantages of using such methods. I will point out the salient characteristics of each method and also speculate on some of the anticipated outcomes of the research.

Interviewing

Interviewing is a qualitative method which in this research enables the journalists and regulators to present their personal views, on some of the central issues and aims to obtain information from a person. In all, I conducted 16 unstructured face-to-face in-depth interviews⁹⁷ (See Appendix iv for list of interviewees). Seven of these were with journalists/producers who at the time of the study were working either in the newsroom or producing outsourced programmes. I chose the journalists/producers from the three stations under study. Two journalists and presenters from the public service broadcaster who at the time of the study were producing a series of current affairs programmes for the public service broadcaster. Those were the only two interviewees chosen from the PSB because I felt that it was quite important to get their viewpoints since they and their company were being continually criticized by the Opposition, at that time, accusing them of unfair treatment towards the Opposition (the Labour Party). Furthermore they were producing two flagship programmes outsourced for PBS. I chose three news-workers from One TV, one was a working journalist within the newsroom and who was known for his persistent way of following Ministers and representatives of the Nationalist Party when asking pertinent questions. During the period under study he had several clashes with representatives of the opposing party (PN) and was considered one of the radical and political journalist within One TV newsroom. The other news-worker was a journalist in One TV newsroom who produced a current affairs programme on Local Councils. She was also a councillor in one of the local villages representing the Labour Party. Since the sample was taken from the

⁹⁷ Unstructured interview is an in-depth interview consisting of open ended questions. There is no set of pre-established questions with a limited set of response categories.

electoral campaign of Local Council election, the choice of this journalist was quite obvious. Her programmes throughout the schedules reported on the projects and work done by Local Councils. The other news-worker was chosen because at the time of the study used to present and produce two different types of programmes, one which was purely a political programme. A current topic or topics were chosen but the presenter/producer treats them in a partisan political manner enforcing the message of the Labour Party. As for Net TV, I chose three producers; an outsourced presenter / producer of a current affairs programme, a working journalist within Net TV newsroom, and another producer of a current affairs programme. The outsourced presenter/producer was a Minister under the Labour Party government during the seventies and eighties and 30 years he started producing a current affairs programme on the Nationalist party TV station⁹⁸. Another 3 interviews were conducted with the respective Heads of News of the three TV stations. While some open-ended questions were directed at all the journalists and producers, there were some cases where I had to take the particular institutional situation of my interviewee into account by asking slightly different questions. There were also instances where I asked for specific feedback in response to the sample particular news-clips. By interviewing some of the key informants⁹⁹, I obtained insight into some of the favoured strategies of news production. Face-to-face interviews also served the purpose of being able to make inferences about the producers. As Mason (2002) puts it, interviewing is 'an art of knowledge of excavation' (in May, 2002, p. 226). Through qualitative interviewing I could also verify, validate and comment on data obtained from the other two research methods.

⁹⁸ As a side note after leaving Net TV, he started producing and present a current affairs /discussion programme on One TV during the 2013 electoral campaign

⁹⁹ Key informant is simply someone who, by virtue of his/her particular position in the society, knows a great deal about the subject of the research (Stacey, 1969, p. 47). In my case these will be the news media producers and management and the broadcasting regulators.

As well as interviewing working journalists and news producers, I also interviewed 4 people from the regulatory body, the Chairman and the Chief Executive of the Broadcasting Authority (both are not holding this position anymore) and two board members each appointed from their respective political parties. Two interviews were confined to other media key informants to offer a variety of insights because they have the experience in journalism and news production. A key informant interviewed was an ex-PBS Board Member who had also acted as Chairman of the PBS Editorial Board during a controversial period where there had been conflict between the two PBS Boards. Another interview was conducted with a print news editor who was also involved in producing and presenting a one to one interview current affair TV programme. Looking over the holistic scenario, this interviewee was essential since he tends to be quite controversial in his writing and criticized a number of times the way the public service broadcaster in Malta was being administered. All the interviews were held between March and May 2008. After viewing a sample of TV news reports and current affairs programmes I conducted the interviews to be in a position to put forward some questions about certain methods in their respective news reporting and to be able to focus some questions on the style adopted by the TV station. Furthermore, interviewing helps me to delve deeper into the attempts of the news-workers in achieving impartiality in news programmes and after analysing what the viewers think of the news product, I could be in a position to add the challenges of the producers to provide the news service.

I use in-depth interviews to gather elaborate data concerning the opinions, values, motives, feelings and experiences of the news media producers and the broadcasting media

regulators. In these unstructured interviews, news media executives, producers and programme makers are presented with a set of open-ended questions. The questions used were of three types – beliefs, attitudes and attributes (Dilman, 1978, referred in Deacon *et al.* 2004). Due to my dual role as research and as one of the BA personnel, in face to face interviews, though not stated in my first meeting with personnel, the interviewees might have felt reluctant to openly air their views on some media regulations in Malta and on the role of the Broadcasting Authority *vis-à-vis* news. Sometimes working within a regulatory institution brings further pressure, and when asking questions one should be clear that such questions are asked through a role of the research and not as part of the management team within the monitoring department of the Broadcasting Authority. To add to this, my previous employment, that of a journalist with the public service broadcaster in Malta, could have had some impact on the outcome of the interviews. Some interviewees treated me as their friend so the interview ended up as quite an informal affair, while others had to be careful not to get carried away with their comments and opinions due to our previous work relationship. Some other interviewees were careful and sometimes reluctant not to comment too much on particular issues knowing that I would know the way things work within a news organization since I was part of one in previous years. Similar to what happens in ethnographic methodologies and being an insider in both the news production and with the present post, in media regulations, I could contrast my inside information with what was being said during the personal interviewees.

In face-to-face interviews a friendly rapport is established between the interviewer and interviewee. So the interviewee is free to give her/his experience, beliefs and opinions.

Denzin & Lincoln (1994, p. 364) argue that in face-to-face interviews, “the interviewer plays a neutral role while establishing a rapport with the interviewee in order to help the flow of the interview”. I chose to conduct a non-schedule-structure or what is known as a focus interview (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 1996) because I wanted to develop an “active, open-ended dialogue” (Deacon *et al.* 1999, p. 65). I, being the interviewer retain the control of the situation but I tried to keep the conversation as ‘natural’ as possible. Though keeping with the interview guide, I left the discussion open when the interviewee was intent on expressing his/her views and the respondents were given the freedom to explain and express themselves. All interview participants were aware that the interview was being recorded and this made it possible that through electronic recording the interview data can be transcribed verbatim. Every effort was made to accurately transcribe the content of the interviews and the same goes when it comes to translating parts of the interview. All translations here were done by the author, since most of the interviews were conducted in Maltese, the language most preferred by the interviewees.

Through interviews, empirical data is generated. The main characteristic of the interview, which is the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee, is in itself both a positive and a negative element. While, through interaction, the interviewer gets the relevant information, however, the interaction has to be kept limited so that bias and error would be reduced. The presence of an interviewer inevitably raises ‘interviewer bias’ and can encourage certain responses, and ‘inaccurate’ answers which may lead to falsification of interview results. As Deacon *et al.* (1999) argue, questions about beliefs and attitudes are the most prone to be effected by the research process because it might encourage a certain response from the interviewee. Such a research method is appropriate for my study

since generally during interviews, information which is not necessarily expressed in policy documents or press releases, is given out during this personal interaction. While interviewing can be perceived to be similar to conversation talk, however, these are completely different (Lindolf, 1995). In interviewing, the interviewer controls the conversation by directing the questions and guides the discussion as was planned. Even the interviewee can have some control by negotiating the interview's topics, processes and outcomes. Burgess (1984, p. 102) describes an interview as a 'conversation with a purpose'. In interviews, the interviewer and interviewee engage themselves and discuss relevant topics, issues and experiences which come up while interviewer asks questions related to the research topic.

Advantages and disadvantages of face-to-face interviews

A personal face-to-face interview has the advantage of flexibility, the ability to control the interview situation, a high response rate and an opportunity to ask any supplementary questions. It is highly loaded with information because answers given during face-to-face interviews are verbal and long (Bertrand & Hughes, 2005). Furthermore an interview helps to clarify what can be observed. However in unstructured interviews, every respondent "may answer a slightly different version of question" (Wimmer & Dominick 1994, p. 152). There can be an element of bias in face-to-face interviews because the interviewee might answer in a certain way in front of the interviewer. Bias not only can come from the interviewee but also from the interviewer when questioning, and thus effecting the respondents' contribution.

Focus groups

Apart from analyzing the content of the news programmes and studying the institutional policies of the news media, I will attempt to explore audience attitudes and behaviour towards such programmes by conducting focus groups¹⁰⁰. In order to dig below the manifest level of analysis, I use focus groups to analyze the audience's perception as well as to look at the content as part of a whole and draw conclusion about the audiences' perception of media content. I use focus groups in conjunction with the other research methods. The focus group method is used to triangulate the three different research methods and so obtaining "breadth and depth of information" (Krueger, 1991, p. 30). This method will give me another insight which might be different from the data and figures from the secondary data and from the qualitative responses of face-to-face interviews. When media scholars analyze media audience, they choose focus groups because this qualitative research method is 'well suited to detailed interpretative [audience] analysis' (Deacon *et al.*, 1999, p. 55). In my case, focus group interviewing will serve as a complementary approach to the study of media audiences. Through focus group interviews I gather information from lay people (Barnett, 2008) and see how their thoughts are shaped when the participants discuss a topic/subject together with other participants (Bertrand & Hughes, 2005). In my case, one of the purposes of using focus groups is to evaluate and gain understanding and insight on news bulletins and current affairs programmes and gain further insight after getting results from the other research methods. Through focus groups I get an in-depth understanding of how impartiality is perceived by the viewers and understand their perception of what the viewers expect to find on the different local

¹⁰⁰ Focus groups is one of the research method used to get insight into opinions of the news consuming audience and this was one of the reason why I have used such method used in this research

television channels with regard to the news media. Focus groups are a means of knowing the audience's perceptions towards the different angles presented in the news and current affairs programmes - what are the viewers' impressions of these media genre aired on the Maltese television stations. Through their responses I will gain some informative feedback on how news and current affairs programmes are looked upon by 'outsiders' of the production system. Focus groups help me to gain information about interpretative understandings of such media content. In my case I will be using focus group methodology to complement and sustain the data gathered by face-to-face interviews.

I selected the participants by means of purposive sampling (Barnett, 2008, Miles & Huberman, 1984), since the participants were chosen on the basis of their particular viewpoints on political, mainly partisan issues. Participants in the focus groups were selected to provide a broadly representative sample of the public who had their different points of view on political issues. I conducted 5 focus groups and 23 participants took part in these sessions with around 4 to 5 participants taking part in each focus group. The focus groups were conducted in January 2010. Some of the participants were supporters of a particular party and others were political sceptics. Since, the participants had a range of different and opposing political beliefs; this enhanced the discussion and led to the expression of conflicting opinions when they viewed the news bulletins and extracts from current affairs programming. A list of all the participants is found in a separate table in Appendix iv. For the purpose of this study, the group had to be heterogeneous because the focus groups have to capture different opinions and have various perspectives. The participants were coming from different educational background, some used to work in

local television channels though not in news and current affairs programming. Some other participants were still students while others were employed in different sectors excluding the media. When recruiting participants, the snowball technique (Lindolf, 1985) was used because a person can provide names of other potential participants. The main aim of focus groups was to understand and to provide insights into how people perceive a situation. Academically the aim of a focus group is to establish the private and unconscious feelings and emotions of the viewer (Fiske, 1990). The focus group discussions mainly addressed the way political party TV stations and the public service broadcaster are perceived by the public, and what the public expects of their news programmes. They had to evaluate specific programmes, by analyzing extracts from programmes which were shown to the group. Participants were asked a set of questions related to each clip viewed during the focus group discussion.

I have chosen focus group interviewing over individual interviewing since viewers tend to form and give their interpretations and opinions through conversation and while interacting with other participants. Also during focus group discussion, I, as the moderator can elicit, stimulate and ask for further elaboration on the viewers' interpretations. Hartman (2004) argues that if the moderator is the researcher, himself/herself the questions asked during the focus group will be more relevant because the researcher is the most familiar with the research and with what is being studied. On the other hand, when the researcher plays the moderator role, this may lead to bias since he/she would know the subject well and this might affect the responses. For this study I was myself the moderator and this helped to ask additional question and to focus the discussion when it tended to get side lined. Having

a dual role in a management position within the Broadcasting Authority and being the moderator and research in the focus group session could have served as an advantage because my knowledge and empathy with the subject will possibly have led the participants to further analyse and comment on the text. During focus group interviews, the participants engaged in conversations and interpret media content during the session (Hansen *et al.* 1998). The discussion was further stimulated because of the group dynamics and interaction. The question format was structured though the moderator can intervene any time during the discussion.

As suggested by Hansen *et al.*, (1998, p. 275) the sequence followed in this focus group sessions started with general questions about the broadcasting situation in Malta with the presence of the two political TV stations and the role which the public broadcaster should take. Participants were asked general questions about how they see the presentation of news bulletins in Malta and what their impressions are on the way the news is presented by the three TV stations. Then they were shown a sample of news clips. This was followed by warm-up questions to facilitate the discussion. General, open-ended questions were asked and the discussion moved slowly towards focus on issues and topics which were mainly related to impartiality. The focus groups sessions were recorded so that the whole discussion was captured. The recording equipment was in sight and participants knew that up front their comments were recorded. All sessions were held in Maltese and when a quote from the focus group sessions was used in the findings chapter, the translations were done by myself, being the sole author of this study.

The second part of the focus group session was solely dedicated to the viewing of news clips. Nine news clips were shown to participants to analyse the objective meaning of the news reports and to investigate whether the way the news report was constructed and presented lead to impartiality and balance in news reporting as perceived by the viewers. The content and a brief analysis of the clips chosen during the focus groups session are found in Appendix v together with a list of the news clips chosen for the sample of study. I have chosen 9 clips to be viewed and discussed during the focus group participants. I selected 2 items from TVM and 3 news clips each taken from Net TV and One TV. Chapter 5 refers specifically to the news samples which were selected for the sessions, analysed and discussed by the focus group participants. I extracted very few examples from the news bulletins and current affairs programmes which to my opinion have an element of electioneering. Such examples would highlight the main concepts under discussion, that is, impartiality, bias, balance and objectivity. As Hall (1972) states, the meaning is within the sign which is decoded by the reader. The presence of latent messages has therefore to be determined in order to establish what interpretations an audience is putting on programme content. The style of delivery, the presentation, the way editing and graphics and the presentation techniques¹⁰¹ used are referred to in this study. All these modes of presentation leave an impact on the audience who might perceive the message differently depending on the way the content is presented to them and thus some of these clips were also shown to the focus group participants. I chose the sample of news clips myself in order to ensure they lead to a discussion and raise arguments on how balance and impartiality are perceived by the viewers. I chose a range of clips to discuss different viewpoints and political arguments. I chose some news reports which were broadcast on

¹⁰¹ These include the use of background music, use of editing effects such as slow motion, the use of stills, etc

more than one channel so that viewers would have the opportunity to analyze how the same news story was reported on different channels. But I also chose different news reports so that the viewers can comment on the type of media reporting the journalist of that station adopted. There were instances wherein I chose a media clip to discuss the way the journalist handled the news story and the way news editors chose news visuals and footage which would impinge on the discussion of impartiality, balance, objectivity and fairness in the news. Other clips were chosen on the basis of the choice of the news story and the viewers could voice their opinion on why particular news stories end up in the news bulletins of some TV channels.

Two clips for discussion were taken from TVM and ONE news and participants could compare and contrast how the news organization can choose the event and produce a completely separate news report from the other competing news organization. The two clips¹⁰² referred to the Mġarr harbour project but while TVM focused solely on this project and why it took long to be finalised and the estimated time of when this project would be ready, ONE news reported the Mġarr harbour project but the same news item reported the visit of the Labour Party Leader in Gozo and his visit at the Mġarr Harbour. The angle of the stories of both the news items were completely different and thus viewers were asked how would this impinge on imparitality in news. Another two contrasting items put forward in the focus group discussions were taken from the two political stations – One TV and Net TV aired on 25th February 2006 both reporting about the Tigne project. Again both items were chosen since both political stations reported the event from complete

¹⁰² Both news items are aired on 1st March 2006. TVM news item is aired ass the 1st item and ONE news item as the 7th item.

different angles. The viewers could have the opportunity to discuss whether the audience were well informed if they had to follow only one news bulletin aired on one of the political stations. Another item for discussion during the focus group was taken from TVM news and aired on 20th February as the 11th item. It was chosen due to the way two separate events were reported in one news item, one focusing on a light event and the other event taken from the local political scenario. I wanted to investigate how the viewers perceive such a news report and envisaged to raise discussion on fairness *vis-à-vis* certain political news reporting mainly reporting events from the Opposition Party, in this case the Labour Party.

Two items from the news sample, taken from the political stations reported different events were chosen in order to raise discussion on the journalist's behaviours in how they handle questions to the opposing political speaker and how they persist in asking questions. The issue tackled in both news items had to do with one of the main political issue raised in that Local council electoral campaign, that is, the damage done on St Paul's Grotto in Rabat Malta after heavy rain. Participants of focus group would voice their opinion on whether journalists hailing from political stations aim to provide an impartial, balanced and fair account of the news report or whether they behave in an electioneering way when they present the questions to the politicians.

Another news clip chosen for the focus group session was unique for Net news only and reported the third anniversary since the referendum result for EU accession was known. This item was put forward to get to know the viewers' viewpoints regarding such reports

which form part of the news bulletins on the political stations. Such a news clip gave the opportunity for viewers to discuss what is of news value and what should be included in the news. Further to this it raises debates about the reasons why such news item end up in news bulletins and whether such reporting hinders impartiality.

Advantages and disadvantages of focus groups

In focus groups there is certain flexibility in the question design and follow up. During focus groups, the respondents are stimulated from each other's feedback so the line of thinking is more complete and this is expected more during the discussion of the news clips sample. In this way, the discussion has a snowball effect because one group member is commenting on the views of another. Since focus groups are socially oriented and participants are placed in natural settings, this research method captures comments, opinions and decisions of the people who feel more freedom to open up since they are set in natural settings. The greatest disadvantage mentioned by researchers is when sometimes a group can become 'controlled' by a self-appointed group leader who might impose his/her thoughts. Then the rest of the group might not voice their beliefs because of the resentment towards the 'leader'.

Secondary data

The only quantitative data which I will be using for this research are taken from data archives through the use of secondary data. The secondary data which I will be using cover different time periods other than the specific period used in the textual analysis. The data from the secondary data is in fact taken from another time period because it transpired that

during the 2006 Local Council electoral campaign the public service broadcaster in Malta was not compiling any news statistics. The public service broadcaster did not gather such news data regularly and there are periods of time where no such data is available in Malta, because no other entity, other than PBS collects such statistics. Such data gathering is a way of content analysis and it is a way of unobtrusive method¹⁰³ in the sense that it is quite structural thus reducing the element of the researcher's bias. Data is gathered for the main news bulletin content of TVM. The data does not include current affairs programme content. Such data is used only as an add on to the empirical research even though the secondary data cited in this thesis will be referring to a different time frame from that of the textual analysis sample. In this case secondary research was used in the early stages of research to determine what is known already.

Advantages and disadvantages of using this secondary data

In my case, the use of secondary data saved me time and was essential to use information which was already gathered by another entity to add to the findings of my qualitative analysis. This secondary data is useful because it gives an overview of how politicians and political news items are represented in a large number of texts. Approval from PBS Ltd was sought since this archive data is PBS copyright. The secondary data does not provide information on the running order because the coder did not code the news items according to the position shown within the news bulletin. Though I understand that the numbering of the news items broadcast is significant and implies the decisions taken by the news editor hinting on the newsroom agenda; such data is not captured in this study.

¹⁰³ Method of data collection that directly removes the researcher from the interactions, event or behaviour being investigated.

How these research methods combine with each other

The combination of these research methods – interviewing, focus groups and statistics from secondary data together with documentary evidence, makes the study geared toward a post-positivist approach, and find a balance between linking text with the audience and the institution¹⁰⁴ (Graber, 1978). This study involves retrieving textual analysis from what is broadcast, and then this data is analysed through the message of what the audience is getting through data retrieved from focus groups and the insights of the news-workers. The focus groups are used to assemble better answers from the analysis of the text because it gives insight on the audience interpretation. These two ‘versions’ are ‘challenged’ with the actual news process, that is, the aim of TV producers and news-workers are analysed after being interviewed. The interviewing results will also serve to compare what the producers are doing with what the broadcasting regulations and the regulator is actually expecting from the broadcasters. These might be divergent views between the audience and the journalists and regulators, and thus the concept of impartiality, bias, balance and objectivity will be enhanced through the different perspectives.

Limitations of the research

Research is all about processes and difficulties. This study was a process in itself and studying the media makes it more challenging as the situation is all the time changing. In fact the limitation of this study is that, since it took a number of years to complete, issues and personnel did change during the time of research. Limitations which were clearly constrained by practical consideration were those related to timeframe and the choice of

¹⁰⁴ In Bertrand, I & Hughes, P (2005) *Media Research Methods: Audiences, Institutions, Texts*

variables. I set a cut-off date, namely 2012, although exceptionally, I did refer to writing and events which took place after this date. As regards the research methods used, the study is mostly based on qualitative research methods, but could have benefited from the input provided by quantitative research methods, particularly content analysis. Though secondary data in this study is based on the news statistics, the study could have included content analysis to incorporate other quantitative elements, amongst them the news item numbering (the running order of the news items). Such a research method would have consisted of a fully-fledged analysis of data statistics of the same period under study through the qualitative research methods.

As explained above, this cultural study links together texts, institutions and audiences. Using different methodological approaches, I envisage getting different perspectives on the issue of impartiality; that taken from the analysis of media output, from the perspective of the programme makers, and the regulators and the analysis of media audience evaluation of news programmes. The following chapter is a context chapter and will give an overview of the broadcasting landscape in Malta – the main historical developments and the current situation of the broadcasting industry in Malta, with special reference to the two political stations and the public service broadcaster. It will also give an overview of the regulation of broadcasting in Malta, focusing upon present legislation which attempts to regulate impartiality and balance.

Chapter 4

Broadcasting in Malta

At face value, the Maltese media in general and television in particular, seem to present a restricted range of viewpoints (Sammut, 2007, p. 229)

Introduction

The central aim of this chapter is to provide an account of the historical development of Maltese broadcasting, and to describe the present broadcasting infrastructure. In Part 1 will trace the history of broadcasting and describe the media landscape in Malta, placing particular emphasis on the distinction between the private stations and the public service broadcaster. The second part of the chapter deals with the regulatory framework, with special reference to the regulations regarding impartiality in news programming and the role played by the Broadcasting Authority in Malta.

PART 1

Historical development of broadcasting institutions in Malta

The Maltese television station, at that time MTV, was inaugurated in September 1962 and was under the direct responsibility of the Broadcasting Authority. MTV and the radio stations were run by a British owned company¹⁰⁵, Rediffusion Ltd, until 1975 when the government took over broadcasting and handed it to Telemalta Corporation, a public

¹⁰⁵ At that time Malta was still under the British rule until it attained Independence in 1964.

corporation responsible for the telecommunications sector. This meant that Xandir Malta, a fully-fledged company totally owned and controlled by the Government, was running the public service broadcasting. This led the Nationalist Party, at that time in Opposition, to apply for a radio licence because it was arguing that the public service broadcaster was not giving adequate coverage to that party. But the Labour Government rejected the application and the Nationalist Party began to use radio and television airtime owned by private stations in Sicily to air the party's views. (For further details see Note D in Appendix i). Such a situation was referred to by some of the participants during the focus groups as part of this study.

The beginning of the turning point in Maltese broadcasting came in 1987 when the Nationalist Party was elected to Government and declared that pluralism¹⁰⁶ in broadcasting would be introduced which meant that state broadcasting would no longer be having a monopoly over broadcasting. Initially in 1991 Xandir Malta did not remain part of the Telemalta Corporation, and an independent company – PBS Ltd – was set up to administer the public service broadcaster. The government prepared the groundwork for the enactment in 1991 of a Broadcasting Act which ostensibly meant that radio and television stations would be owned by different entities. The main purpose of this enactment, entitled *Commitment towards Pluralism*, was to introduce pluralism in ownership and perhaps pluralism in content as the name itself suggests. Such a concept may be viewed by other countries as a concept of competition and not necessarily pluralism; however, from a

¹⁰⁶ Pluralism is the actual terminology which is used in Malta to refer to the introduction of different radio and television stations owned by different entities, either political parties or commercial companies. It refers to the widening of the audiovisual media market from a state owned broadcasting landscape to one where private companies and the government own broadcasting stations.

Maltese perspective this is referred to as pluralism since it moved away from the idea of state monopoly where the Government owned and had a say over its own and sole broadcasting station. The ongoing pressure of the Maltese state owned stations (radio and television) was coming from the pressure of the political power holders with mainly putting their influence on news content. With this Act (the 1991 Broadcasting Act)¹⁰⁷, the Government gave the right to political parties and the Church to get a licence to broadcast. In fact, the Government unexpectedly offered and issued radio licences to the Nationalist Party, the Malta Labour Party and the Catholic Church¹⁰⁸. The Labour Party and the Nationalist Party started radio transmission in 1991 with the Labour Party insisting on having a television station apart from a radio station. A year later, in 1992, the Catholic Church also owned its own radio station. Such a new development in broadcasting came in time during the period of a General Election electoral campaign. (For further details see Note E in Appendix i). In 1993, the Broadcasting Act was amended to include the liberalisation of the television sector. The first licence for a private television station was granted to Super 1 TV¹⁰⁹ (One TV), owned by the Labour Party which started transmitting in 1994; followed by Smash TV, a commercial station. A cable television channel, Channel 12, which was run by the Broadcasting Authority, started transmitting in 1996 on the cable network. Net TV, owned by the Nationalist Party started to operate in 1997. At that time, Alternattiva Demokratika¹¹⁰ was the only political party which did not own neither a radio nor a television station but in 1998 it was given a licence for a radio station

¹⁰⁷ Still in place

¹⁰⁸ The Catholic Church is a quite powerful entity in Malta and in the Sixties and Seventies it was also involved in the political scenario. The Catholic Church is extremely influential in Maltese society.

¹⁰⁹ Now called One TV. In October 2006 the company did a new branding campaign and instead of Super 1 TV it is now being called One TV.

¹¹⁰ The Maltese Green Party – a very small party without representation in Parliament (hereinafter AD)

up till July 2005. This radio station, which was owned by this small political party, was predominantly a music station with restricted political content limited to news bulletins and a light night evening discussion programmes on Maltese politics. When Alternattiva Demokratika sold its radio licence to a new commercial company the amount of late night discussions dwindled but it has still retained a news bulletin. But in terms of clause 4 of a commercial agreement dated 29th July 2005, entered between Alt Services Ltd and Capital Communications Ltd., Capital Radio was bound to provide free airtime to Alternattiva Demokratika.¹¹¹ The Broadcasting Authority's decision dated 11th January 2006 was that although the station is commercial, it still has *inter alia* a political mission as evidenced by clause 4¹¹² (For further details see Note F in Appendix i). After the introduction of pluralism, the Broadcasting Authority started to regulate all the broadcasting stations, including the public service stations, both radio and television. Thus all the stations, be they political, commercial and public are all regulated by one body in so far as programme content goes.

The current broadcasting media landscape

The situation in broadcasting is shown in a detailed chart (marked Figure 1 in List of Tables)¹¹³. The organisational chart, as at 2013, has been updated to reflect the changes in

¹¹¹ Correspondence sent by Sansone Naudi Advocates to the CEO of the Broadcasting Authority, 8th October 2005

¹¹² Correspondence sent by the Secretary of the Broadcasting Authority to Sansone Naudi Advocates, 11th January 2006

¹¹³ I have to point out that while in Figure 1 one of the commercial radio stations listed is Calypso 101.8, this is not found in the table for the radio audience share. This happened because Calypso 101.8 was still not in operation by March 2005, the time of the last audience survey commissioned by the Broadcasting Authority. The same can be said for Magic FM which was launched in September 2006. Also another commercial radio station, A3FM is listed in the audience survey but is not found in the figure, because A3FM is not operating any more.

the Maltese broadcasting media landscape¹¹⁴. On separate tables (See Tables A – D in List of Tables), radio and television stations are categorised according to their ownership and their audience share so that the stations are placed into perspective within the Maltese current media landscape.¹¹⁵

There are also two local companies providing TV cable services. These are Melita Cable plc and GO plc which took over an entire shareholding in the local Digital Terrestrial Television (DTTV) from Multiplus Ltd in 2007¹¹⁶. Both companies provide packages incorporating channels local channels, Italian channels and other terrestrial channels amongst cartoons, movies, documentaries, sport, music and reality shows. Both service providers provide a good number of channels to their digital subscribers and both companies hold exclusive rights particularly of international football leagues. Amidst all these radio and television stations, the main players in the Maltese broadcasting landscape studied here, are the public service broadcaster (TVM) and the stations owned by the two main political parties (One TV and NET TV). The political stations are influential and powerful because they have the backing of two big political parties, being their owners and the main shareholders. Even the public service broadcaster, which has the backing of the government, is a main player and is usually perceived to be a tool in the hands of government. The other stations are entirely commercial therefore advertising is their priority. They have to compete to get the largest piece of the advertising cake.

¹¹⁴ Excluding digital radio and other non linear television.

¹¹⁵ The percentages in both radio and television audience share do not add up to a 100%. For radio audience share there is missing the percentage of the audience share for the community radios (4.1%) and a good percentage (19.4%) which does not have any preferred radio station. As with television audience share the audience survey commissioned by the Broadcasting Authority also includes the Italian television stations, that is, the Media Set and Rai and other stations which are the Discovery Channel, MTV, BBC Prime, BBC World and other foreign stations.

¹¹⁶ Both companies offer a complete telecoms package, fixed line, mobile telephony, broadband internet and television.

Distinction between private and public service broadcasters

At this point, before outlining the ownership of TV stations in the Maltese context, I will explain the concept of what is meant by public service. Globally, the concept of a public service relies on the definitions of information, education, universal access, and service of minorities and the lack of commercial interest. The public service broadcaster is a means of being a watchdog of democracy and while the private broadcaster is predominantly motivated by commercial issues, the public service broadcaster has to be ruled by diversity, quality of content and multiplicity of opinions and thus forms part of media pluralism. However some of these concepts had to be changed due to global challenges, amongst them, the declining budgets and commercial pressures¹¹⁷. Amidst a combination of private and public broadcasting, a public service broadcaster should be in place for a successful broadcasting system in a democracy¹¹⁸. This is quite similar to the situation in Malta with some uniqueness *vis-à-vis* the ownership of stations by political parties (For further details see Note G in Appendix i). The Maltese public service model is a mixture of what Jakubowicz (2013) describes as the “northern model” and the “residual model”. While the PSB in Malta has a supervisory board largely appointed by the government (as Great Britain, Ireland and Scandinavian countries), contrary to them it is not funded by the licence fee revenue but is funded by advertising and state subventions as in the “residual model” (like Canada, Australia and Portugal). The basic of media and democracy mentioned by Scannell and Splichal cited by Jakubowicz (2013) is that PSB should be broadcasting made for the public, made by the public and functioning for the benefit of the

¹¹⁷ *‘Is there a Future for the Public Service Broadcasting?’* (<http://fcim.vdu.lt/e-media/MD/psb.html>),

¹¹⁸ (<http://fcim.vdu.lt/e-media/MD/psb.html>)

public. Thus public service broadcasting is a means of giving participatory and democratic representation to the community.

Massa (2000) in his thesis on public and private broadcasting in Malta explains the three basic different broadcasting categories which exist in the Maltese media landscape. He explains that:-

- a. public service broadcaster – impartially informs, educates and entertains with a ‘heavy reliance on public funding’¹¹⁹;
- b. political – which according to Massa target the audience with political and religious messages and is funded by ‘entities with profitable sister companies’; and
- c. commercial – profit motive uppermost.

Thus the Maltese private broadcasting industry is made up of political stations and commercial stations. With regard to regulations, I will subsequently detail the regulatory codes and guidelines which apply to both public and private broadcasting with some slight difference on the issue of impartiality.

The ownership of television stations – struggle for survival

As has been outlined previously an interesting factor in the Maltese television landscape which can be acknowledged as unique, is that the State, and the three political parties – the PN and the PL own a radio and television station, and AD used to own a radio station up to

¹¹⁹ At that time the public service broadcaster was receiving the full amount of monies from license fees until the restructuring process took place.

July 2005. From a monopolistic structure of society, Malta became a ‘party pluralistic’ structure with stations struggling to get the higher viewership and their share in advertising. Since television stations need a large amount of advertising to be able to survive, in some instances these stations are not rigidly tied to political content programmes such as in magazine programmes. Nonetheless, the two political party stations not only broadcast entertainment programmes, but they also produce news bulletins and current affairs programmes. In such programmes, the political parties through their broadcasting media want to get their political views across to the audience. In Malta, the public service broadcaster struggles to widen its market share because its main revenue comes from advertising and not through Government funds or licence fees as was the case in Malta in the recent past. This happened because in 2004 the Maltese Government decided to restructure the public service broadcaster and change the way funds are handed to the public service broadcaster. According to Karol Jakubowicz’s definitions of PSB including the classical model¹²⁰, the public service broadcaster in Malta turned to a semi-commercial model¹²¹, relying on advertising revenue and competing with the commercial stations. After the restructuring process (2004) PBS Ltd (Malta) no longer received income from the licence fees as it did before and licence fees started to be levied by the Ministry responsible for broadcasting and passed to Government. According to the Government the restructuring of PBS took place because of the recurrent yearly drain on public funds; however, the Government committed itself to give to PBS Ltd LM500,000¹²² annually due

¹²⁰ Classical model – psb mixes quality and popular programming in order to fulfil its mission and retain market share.

¹²¹ Semi-commercial model – psb relies on advertising revenue to such an extent that it affects the programming policy and competing for audiences with commercial broadcasters through similar programming.

¹²² Equivalent to approximately £780,000 or 1,165,000€

to its public service obligations¹²³ (For further details see Note H in Appendix i). The Government also reaffirmed PBS Ltd's position that it should remain Malta's public broadcaster and broadcast programmes which would not be aired on other stations due to their commercial non-viability. But the relationship between Government and PBS Ltd was agreed to be one of contract whereby the Government determine the public service content, negotiates with PBS Ltd. what should be aired and what should be paid for such a service, and then PBS produces and broadcasts such programme content. (National Broadcasting Policy, May 2004). But the Government provides funds under the Extended Public Service Obligation (EPSO) so that PBS airs non-commercially viable programmes of a social, cultural and educational nature. This is a form of subsidy which the Government pays to the public service broadcaster to cover its obligation to provide non-commercially viable programmes. Even though PBS is registered as a limited liability company under the local Companies Act (Chapter 386), its legal obligations emanating from the Constitution and the Broadcasting Act imposes obligations to provide state broadcasting services in Malta. These are also defined in the National Broadcasting Policy. As part of the Government subsidies, and within the context of PSO,¹²⁴ the Government establishes broad policy parameters of the programmes to be broadcast by PBS. The relationship between the Government and the PBS is one of contract with PBS management whereby the Government negotiates with PBS the public service content it would like to broadcast and pays for such content. However, the Government is meant not to interfere with the day to day running and editorial policy decisions of the organisations and this is the responsibility

¹²³ As stated in the National Broadcasting Policy, May 2004, Ministry for Information and Technology and Investment and Ministry for Tourism and Culture, Malta (p. 6). There are programmes that fall within the Public Service Obligation such as cultural, religious and other media events which do not necessarily attract the advertising market but which have to be broadcast due to the public service commitment.

¹²⁴ Public Service Obligation

of the Editorial Board and the Board of Directors. However one has to point out that whenever there is a change in government, there is a change of Chairman, Board of Directors and thus the public service broadcaster is often perceived to be a propagandistic tool in the hands of the governing party. It is seen as an extension of the power of the governing party on PBS wherein the power is exercised by the appointment of personnel to key positions and thus there might be a hint of indirect interference.

The public service obligation under the 'core PSO' (CPSO) is the broadcast of news, local sports coverage and programmes emanating from PBS' obligations at law and the 'extended PSO' (EPSO) covers the programming content that the Government would like to be aired on PBS and which Government will subsidize such as current affairs, religious topics, drama, culture, events of a national character and those targeted at children¹²⁵. Government does not subsidize costs related to PSB programmes which are covered from general advertising revenue. According to the National Broadcasting Policy, once a year the Ministry and PBS reconcile the cost of each programme and the subsidy given by Government.

What is the role of PBS Ltd?

Though the public service broadcaster in Malta is constantly under threat because of lack of funds from Government, (Zahra, 2005; L-Orizzont, 2005) it is inconceivable to think that a democratic society would not have public broadcasting (Balzan, 2004, p. 22). Such arguments were dated during the PBS restructuring period, however as seen above the Government subsidise PBS programming to produce different genres of programmes. PBS

¹²⁵ DOI Press Release PR 1437E 26th June 2012

Ltd follows the European Model which is based on the idea that the public service has the function to provide radio and television programmes even though some of these programmes do not necessarily grab markets' attention because they are costly and do not generate advertising (For further details see Note I in Appendix i). The Public Service Broadcasting (Malta), just like its counterparts within the European Broadcasting Union have to strive for universality in content with excellence and professionalism while focusing on diversity in audience groups. These are the core values of the public service media as declared by the EBU itself. (EBU, January 2013). The first important task for PBS Ltd was to provide good quality programmes with impartial information and also entertainment programmes. This is similar to the BBC, which is run by a public corporation and aims at giving a service to the viewers as a public service (Vella Laurenti, 1993, p. 108). Malta followed a resolution passed in the European Parliament in 1996¹²⁶ that defined one of the main remits of public broadcasting services as 'to provide unbiased and fully independent information, both in news coverage and in-depth factual programming capable of earning audience trust'. With regard to the news division, it must be completely independent, impartial and balanced as has been suggested in the National Broadcasting Policy¹²⁷ (2004), which provided that "PBS can guarantee news and current affairs programmes presented in a balanced and impartial way solely based on news value criteria" (p. 4). According to the National Broadcasting Act, PBS Ltd had:-

- a) to fulfil the role of providing public broadcasting services in the Maltese islands and thereby to provide high quality programming across the full range of public

¹²⁶ Resolution of 19 September 1996, the Parliament called for both EU and national support to underpin the values of Public Service Broadcasting, in a time of increasing competition between private, multinational media groups and public broadcasters. The Directive referred to media concentration. (www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/4_7_8_en.htm)

¹²⁷ This policy is no longer in place

tastes and interests in line with journalistic principles aimed at ensuring a comprehensive and accurate information service necessary in a democratic and pluralistic society; and

- b) to provide sound, radio and television programmes of an educational nature as well as programmes aimed at meeting the entertainment needs of the general public and to provide advertising facilities.

(Paragraphs 17 & 20 in the National Broadcasting Plan)

However, in 2011, the National Broadcasting Plan, which formed the Second Schedule of the Broadcasting Act, was repealed. Since then there is no National Broadcasting Plan in the law. The reason for such repeal was that the Plan had become outdated and rather than updating it Parliament decided to repeal it. At this stage, it is not clear whether Government will prepare a new National Broadcasting Plan or whether the situation will remain unregulated.

Way back in 2006 according to Borg¹²⁸ for PBS Ltd to fulfil its public role, it has to implement the National Broadcasting Policy¹²⁹, which amongst its four challenges, required that PBS Ltd has to be editorially independent. (For further details see Note J in Appendix i). Thus there is a long way to go as regards broadcasting policy of the public service broadcaster now that such a Plan has been repealed. However, ever since the public broadcaster was a monopoly in broadcasting even after the 2004 restructuring process the pressure of political power was still present and as Sammut, 2004, notes

¹²⁸ Fr Joe Borg was Chairman of the PBS Ltd Editorial Board. He resigned in November 2005.

¹²⁹ As indicated earlier this has been repealed in 2011

“PBS’s key problem remains its lack of autonomy from state control” (p.11) Also the guide of the legal obligation of the public service broadcaster in Malta was listed in Article 19 of the Second Schedule¹³⁰, points out that PBS has the responsibility to provide news and current affairs programmes which respects the Constitutional obligation in the sense of being impartiality and accurate. Informing the citizens through impartial and investigative journalism is a must in the public service programming. The fact that this Schedule is no longer in place leaves a gap in the policy governing the public service broadcaster, though the obligation of impartiality emanates from the provisos in the Broadcasting Act.

The outsourcing of programmes

Another factor which is relevant to this thesis is the use of outsourced programmes by the public service broadcaster. Pluralism and the restructuring process brought with them an increase in outsourced programmes. According to Government, out-sourced programming and co-productions are essential elements to enable PBS to have quality programming (National Broadcasting Plan, 2004). Furthermore after the restructuring process, outsourcing was further encouraged because PBS could not produce in-house programmes because of shortage of staff and lack of funds. PBS outsourced the current affairs/discussion programmes which are broadcast during peak hours. PBS Ltd has only one programme¹³¹ which is produced and presented by a PBS journalist within the newsroom of the organisation. (For further details see Note K in Appendix i). However, the

¹³⁰ Article 19 of the Second Schedule: “The public broadcasting media have the particular responsibility of providing news and current affairs programming which respect the Constitutional requisites of adequate impartiality, and which shall also be in line with journalistic principles aimed at ensuring a comprehensive and accurate information service in the interests of a democratic and pluralistic society. They should be leaders in providing quality television to the Maltese public with regard to programming, news and analysis and should be able to interpret the guidelines issued by the Authority in respect of news and current affairs not as rigid straight jacketing but as a flexible tool in the hands of creative journalists”.

¹³¹ Dissett is the name of the programme produced in house by PBS Ltd

National Broadcasting Policy (2004) pointed out that news bulletins should be produced in-house and PBS Ltd should remain responsible for editorial content as well as the aesthetic and technical quality of such bulletins. After such restructuring and the increase in outsourced programmes even in current affairs programming, the Broadcasting Authority had requested more in house current affairs programmes done by the PBS newsroom staff.

In contrast to this policy, in the recent past (1999) as referred to earlier in this study, the Broadcasting Authority recommended that the news bulletins be hived off from PBS Ltd and entrusted to an independent entity which would be supervised by the Broadcasting Authority. This was suggested during a 1999 national conference which discussed the future of public broadcasting, the term “hived off”¹³² was frequently used and as Frendo (1999) wrote, the Broadcasting Authority had made a recommendation that news and possibly current affairs discussion programmes be hived off from PBS Ltd. The Broadcasting Authority would not be involved in the way news content is selected or presented and the question arose as to how a regulator could be an implementor and a regulator at the same time. (Frendo in ‘The Times’, January 18th 1999). The Minister for Broadcasting, at that time, Dr Michael Frendo was completely against the idea of hiving off. He was in favour, like many others, that PBS journalists be given the space and freedom to work but should not be centralised in a “colonial mentality” (Frendo in ‘The Times’, January 18th, 1999). To date, nevertheless, such a proposal has never saw the light of day and has been severely criticised.

¹³² to set apart from a group

The restructuring process at PBS Ltd also led to the setting up of an Editorial Board¹³³. According to its mission statement, the Editorial Board is attempting to change the structure of TVM news bulletins and hopefully the mentality of the newsroom organisation. Amongst other policies, the Editorial Board has managed to downplay past emphasis on the political content of the news bulletins. In the past each politician's speech tended to be reported extensively and was given much importance. The Editorial Board argued that the criterion for inclusion of a politician's speech in the news bulletin was its newsworthiness. For the public broadcaster to be balanced and to be perceived to be balanced it did not necessarily mean that each news item coming from the three political parties had to be reported. Moreover the Editorial Board announced its new policy that if a politician addressed a 'technical' seminar/conference/activity, his or her speech would not necessarily be the focus of the news item but it should be the conference itself or other experts' speeches that should be extensively reported¹³⁴.

PART 2

From a consideration of institutions, this chapter will move on to the regulatory framework and will chronologically go through the way regulations were drafted and administered throughout the years. In the second part I will refer to parts of the broadcasting regulations which focus on impartiality and balance.

¹³³ The Editorial Board is independent from the Government and according to Borg (2006) 'The Board is not accountable to the Government and it was also given a tenure of office.' Borg continues that, 'The Board was set up to safeguard the national interest and the PBS audiences' interests and not the interests of PBS.' But according to the National Broadcasting Policy, May 2005, the Editorial Board is 'accountable to Government for the State of the public service obligation ...' and 'is also accountable to the Board of Directors of PBS for its work within the company ...'

¹³⁴ Annual Report of the Editorial Board, 'Il-PBS u l-obbligju ta' xandir għas-servizz pubbliku', May – December 2004, p 15

The Constitution of Malta

What does the Constitution of Malta have to say about broadcasting?

The Constitution of Malta requires that in industrial and political controversy, impartiality has to be preserved. The same applies with regard to current public policy. It is important to explain that the term 'political' does not refer to 'partisan' or 'party political' but it also incorporates the policies of non-political parties such as lobby groups, minorities or small groups. Hence the notion of impartiality incorporates all opinions on any matter (albeit controversial) aired on the media because the public have to be informed of the different points of view. Impartiality according to the Maltese Constitution also implies that no point of view may be given undue selective treatment. The constitutional obligation of observing balance and impartiality extends to all stations, including the political stations and not only to the public broadcaster. The Constitution of Malta does not distinguish between party stations and other stations and the Broadcasting Authority has to see that impartiality is there on all broadcasting stations.

Historic development of broadcasting legislation

The Broadcasting Ordinance

What did the Ordinance say on news and current affairs programmes?

The first law in Malta which regulated broadcasting was the Broadcasting Ordinance which has been culled from the UK Television Act 1954. Section 3 of the UK Television Act,

1954, paragraphs (c) and (f) provide the source for paragraphs (c) and (g) of the 1961 Maltese Broadcasting Ordinance. These provisions stated that in, as far as possible, the programmes broadcast by the Authority or by a contractor adhered to the following:-

‘c) that any news given in the programmes (in whatever form) is presented with due accuracy and impartiality

‘g) that due impartiality is preserved as respects matters of political or industrial controversy or related to current public policy and that subject as hereinafter provided in this subsection, no matter designed to serve the interests of any political party is included in the programmes’.

The White Paper on broadcasting

A proposed change in the broadcasting landscape brought a change in the legislation. In 1990 a White Paper entitled ‘The Commitment to Pluralism’ was published. This outlined the Government’s plans on the future of the public broadcasting services and the news sector within the public service broadcaster. As stated before, it brought a new era of pluralism and meant cultural change in the broadcasting space and the liberalization which amplified the same tunes.

The 1990 White Paper brought about the chance for political parties to own a TV or a radio station; however, it stressed the obligation on the Broadcasting Authority which had to follow the constitutional provision and enforce impartiality. Nevertheless, the Authority, argued that while impartiality has to be observed, this does not rule out the possibility of a slant in a particular station’s editorial policy provided that impartiality is preserved over the

programmes as a whole or over a series of items. It appeared that this White Paper had widened the interpretation of impartiality, because a party slant might be permissible within an overall framework of balance and impartiality. In fact when the Broadcasting Act, 1991 was brought into force in June 1991, Section 13 (2) included that:

“except in the case of public broadcasting services... the Authority shall be able to consider the general output of programmes provided by the various broadcasting licensees and contractors, together as a whole”.

This shows that the Broadcasting Act allows private stations to have an editorial position and the Broadcasting Authority interprets the proviso of impartiality by considering the whole output of all the stations thereby allowing these broadcasting stations to balance out one another.

The 1991 Broadcasting Act

The 1991 Broadcasting Act was developed on the basis of the 1989 Television Without Frontiers Directive and the Council of Europe’s European Convention on Transfrontier Television¹³⁵ (For further details see Note L Appendix i). This brought an end to government’s monopoly and with the opening of radio and television stations it was made possible for a political party to have its own broadcasting station. This made Malta the only European democracy that allows political parties to own national broadcasting stations. (Sammut, 2007). In 1993 the Broadcasting Act was amended so that one organisation could own both a radio and a television frequency. This made way for political parties to own not just a radio station but also a television station. However, there is a slight difference

¹³⁵ Council Directive 89/552/EEC of 3 October 1989 on the coordination of certain provisions laid down by Law, Regulation or Administrative Action in Member States concerning the pursuit of television broadcasting activities

between the private and the public sector according to the Broadcasting Act, in that PBS Ltd is bound by paragraphs (a) to (f) of article 13(2) of the Broadcasting Act which include the requirements of due accuracy and due impartiality. In the case of the political party stations, the due accuracy provision applies to them but not the due impartiality one because in the latter case, the proviso of article 13(2) applies, that is, the Authority considers the general output of their programmes together as a whole. In this respect, One TV and Net TV are not necessarily required to comply with the due impartiality provision but with the general output of programmes as a whole.

In Paragraph 19 of the Second Schedule to the Broadcasting Act, this was set more clear and stated that:-

“The public broadcasting media have the particular responsibility of providing news and current affairs programming which respect the Constitutional requisites of adequate impartiality, and which shall also be in line with journalistic principles aimed at ensuring a comprehensive and accurate information service in the interests of a democratic and pluralistic society.”

However, as pointed earlier, the Second Schedule is no longer in place after having been repealed. No such obligation exists *vis-à-vis* the political stations because a proviso in this Act gives the right to the political stations to consider the general output of the programmes as a whole. This means that if one takes into account only the Broadcasting Act, the political stations are not obliged to be completely impartial in their news bulletins because a political slant is allowed. With regard to the current affairs programmes broadcast by these two stations, they can balance each other out. (For further details see Note M in

Appendix i). Thus the legislative framework which stems out from the Broadcasting Act is not as straightforward as is the Constitution, with regard to the content of political stations *vis-à-vis* impartiality. The Broadcasting Act requirements about impartiality allow a series¹³⁶ of programmes to be considered as a whole, provided that when a single current affairs programme is not per se balanced, the legal requirement of impartiality may be discharged. Such requirements give a specific interpretation on what a ‘series of programmes to be considered as a whole’ mean. The Requirements as to Standards and Practice Applicable to news Bulletins and Current Affairs Programmes have specific proviso listed in Paragraph 12 which qualifies how balance is regulated over a series of current affairs programmes. Even past guidelines issued by the Broadcasting Authority gave a leeway for balance within a series of programmes. For instance, guidelines issued in 1988 (before pluralism) recognised that when covering issues of public interest it is not possible to achieve balance in a single programme. So such guidelines entailed that “the statutory requirement of objectivity, impartiality and balance may be discharged over two or more related programmes provided that the broadcasts are transmitted within a reasonable period”, (MBA Annual Report, 1988, p. 37). According to the “Guidelines on Current Affairs Programming on all Broadcasting Media” issued by the Broadcasting Authority in April 1992 in terms of section 20 of the Broadcasting Act:

“The Authority interprets the Constitutional obligation of impartiality as a definite requirement applicable to each broadcasting service. However, the Authority concedes that in Malta’s widened spectrum of radio broadcasting activity it would be possible to allow for some slant for any particularly oriented service. This

¹³⁶ For this purpose a ‘series’ means a number of current affairs programmes, broadcast in the same service, each one of which is clearly linked to the others and which deals with the same or related issue.

permissible slant will have to be within an overall programme framework of balance and impartiality”

This shows an incompatibility between the Constitution and 1991 Broadcasting Act which is also not in line with the Subsidiary Legislation 350.14. While Article 119 of the Constitution stipulates that the BA must ensure “due impartiality” and does not make any distinction between public and private broadcasters, the 1991 Broadcasting Act on the other hand makes a distinction between the two. While it requires public broadcasters to present news with due impartiality, Article 13 of the Broadcasting Act stipulates that in the case of private broadcasters, the BA can gauge impartiality by considering private broadcasters’ output “together as a whole”. Such proviso in effect put the onus on the BA to consider the bias in one political station as cancelling out the bias on the opposing station. However the Subsidiary Legislation 350.14 -Requirements as to Standards and Practice Applicable to News Bulletins and Current Affairs Programmes, refers to a series of programmes as indicated above, that is, related within the same series and which are clearly linked to the others. Thus the Requirements exclude balance between the stations, but obliges the stations to balance the current affairs programmes within the same series and thus within the same station.

One particular ‘lacuna’, which is regularly criticised by local media observers, is the fact that while the concept of impartiality is enshrined in our Constitution there is as yet no definition in the law (D’Amato, 2003). As explained earlier in this chapter, due impartiality and due accuracy for all stations is found in the Constitution but then the Broadcasting Act has a proviso 13 (2) which makes the Authority consider the general output of the

programmes aired on the political stations and thus the due impartiality provision excludes the political stations. Way back in 1993, the *Malta Independent*¹³⁷ editorial (7 November 1993) envisaged the conflict between the Constitution and the Broadcasting Act as an “unresolved time bomb” on the issue of balance and impartiality. This situation in Maltese broadcasting is rightly referred to as such by the editor, because a solution has never been found with regard to this anomaly between no Constitution and the Broadcasting Act. The newspaper editor envisaged that sooner or later the players in the broadcasting environment would need to have a clear policy to follow because the issue of impartiality is a fundamental element in news programmes, whilst keeping in mind that a very good percentage of the Maltese broadcasting is managed by the political parties. Even with the draft of the News and Current Affairs Requirements the concept of impartiality was not still defined in this legislation.

The development of the Broadcasting Authority

After having referred to the historical development of Maltese broadcasting, I will briefly outline the process of broadcasting regulations, the role of the Broadcasting Authority and giving an overview to these laws and measures designed to promote impartiality in broadcasting. An important milestone in the history of broadcasting in Malta was the setting up of the Broadcasting Authority in September 1961 to control programmes aired by Rediffusion Company. When it was established, the Broadcasting Authority followed the pattern of the UK Independent Television Authority in that it was a Public Authority which carried out no broadcasting itself and contracted its rights and duties to a number of private companies which produced programmes on behalf of the Authority. The

¹³⁷ An independent newspaper in the Maltese market

Broadcasting Authority in Malta only differed from the UK Authority in that it was responsible for both television and sound. However, the Broadcasting Authority, after the introduction of pluralism in Malta, differed from the new regulatory structure in the UK because the Maltese regulatory body regulates all television and radio stations, including the public service broadcaster. This means that the news content of the two political stations and the public service station under investigation in this study are regulated by the same body and with the same legislation as the other commercial broadcasting stations.

An important criterion governing a regulatory authority is its independence. The independence of the Broadcasting Authority is entrenched in the Constitution of Malta which states that the “Broadcasting Authority shall not be subject to the direction or control of any person or authority”. The provisions governing the Broadcasting Authority can only be changed by a vote of two-thirds of the Members of the House of Representatives. Its function is enshrined in article 119 of the Constitution which has entrenched the Authority’s role as guardian of impartiality, fairness and balance without prejudice. Since its establishment, the Broadcasting Authority underlined the need for impartiality in the news service. Article 119 (1) of the Constitution of Malta provides that:

“It shall be the function of the Broadcasting Authority to ensure that, so far as possible, in such sound and television broadcasting services as may be provided in Malta, due impartiality is preserved in respect of matters of political or industrial controversy or relating to current public policy and that broadcasting facilities and time are fairly apportioned between persons belonging to different parties”

Reduced to its simplest terms the Broadcasting Authority's role is "the safeguarding of the public interest in broadcasting" (MBA Annual Report 1978). It is the legal guardian over the impartiality and accuracy of news and current affairs programmes and in controversial matters the broadcasting facilities are equally apportioned. Also "credibility" and "quality" are the two main objectives which the Broadcasting Authority was set to safeguard and to promote as Frendo (1999) states. It is the main functionality of the Broadcasting Authority to act as a watchdog and in a democratic society ensures impartiality and accessibility to different and diverse opinions. The Court of Appeal way back in 1997 also pointed out the dual function of the Broadcasting Authority:

"This is the dual function of the Broadcasting Authority – in being a constitutional tool to ensure the right of the freedom of expression amongst equality, impartiality and equal opportunities and the second function to implement in practice this diversity within a pluralistic media environment".

(Court of appeal Malta, 122/97 APP 17th July 1997, Dr Eddie Fenech Adami vs Prof Joe Pirotta & Prof John J Cremona).

All this shows that the constitutional framework is there for the Broadcasting Authority to regulate impartiality in all the broadcasting stations. From the outset the Authority has felt that news and current affairs programming can pose difficulties in broadcasting mainly because of the Maltese political context and the political-religious struggle which was at its peak in the Sixties and Seventies¹³⁸. But at that time the Maltese broadcasting structure

¹³⁸ Mizzi, E (1995) *Malta in the Making, 1962 – 1987. An Eye witness account*, Malta, Midsea Books Ltd, Malta

consisted only of the public service broadcaster. As pointed out in the Broadcasting Authority's Annual Report 1961/62:

“A difficult political situation plus unfamiliarity with an independent impartial service of this kind, combine to make such a service a matter of considerable difficulty and often controversy particularly in the matter of selection” (p. 3).

The Authority always pointed out that the news service must follow the provisions of the Broadcasting Ordinance and be fair and impartial in its presentation¹³⁹.

With the advent of what is known as pluralism, the Constitutional duty imposed on the Authority widened in order to:-

1. ensure balance among the several stations;
2. ensure impartiality in the material broadcast both by a particular station and among the several stations.

Apart from this duty, the Broadcasting Authority is obliged to follow its mission statement:

-

- i. To ensure the preservation of due impartiality in respect of matters of political or industrial controversy or relating to current public policy.
- ii. To fairly apportion broadcasting facilities and time between persons belonging to different political parties.
- iii. To select and appoint radio and television station licensees and contractors.
- iv. To monitor these stations and regulate their performance in terms of their legal and licence obligations.

¹³⁹ MBA Annual Report, 1968.

- v. To ensure that the system consists of public, private and community elements that offer varied and comprehensive programming to cater for all interests and tastes¹⁴⁰

Though the concept of impartiality is given priority in the Broadcasting Authority's mission statement, way back in 1993 the Broadcasting Authority's Chief Executive confirmed that "the requirements of impartiality and non editorialising are more rigidly applied to the public broadcasting services than to their counterparts in the private sector" (MBA Annual Report 1993, p.8). The Broadcasting Authority's understanding on the role of public broadcasting in Malta is explicitly stated below:-

"Public broadcasting service is fundamentally different from private sector broadcasting insofar as, whereas the private sector is driven by the interests of the operator, in the case of the public service broadcasting service, the operator and the audience constitute the same entity – the public. ...the role and aims of public broadcasting can be condensed in two headings: credibility and quality"¹⁴¹

Due to the Maltese politicised environment, as Prof. Joseph Pirotta, ex chairman of the Broadcasting Authority stated in the Annual Report 2001, the Authority's obligations are there to provide a level playing field for the political parties but the Authority is also there to provide a democratic environment to the citizens. This is stated in its mission statement.

¹⁴⁰ MBA Annual Report, 1996, p.5

¹⁴¹ Taken from MBA Annual Report, January, 1999 referring to a Paper by Antoine. J. Ellul during the conference 'Redefining the role of Public Broadcasting in Malta' January 13th 1999

Its principal role is to safeguard the public interest, ensure freedom of expression and uphold the public's right to information¹⁴².

To enhance a level playing field to all political parties, the Broadcasting Authority, has since its Constitution produced a scheme¹⁴³ of political broadcasts which is still in place and which the public service broadcaster has the legal obligation to run. (For further details see Note N in Appendix i) Such a scheme is not only produced during a General Election campaign but political parties expect that such a scheme is produced every year¹⁴⁴. When no General Election has been called, only the three political parties (PN, PL and Alternattiva Demokratika) were allowed to participate in these broadcasts¹⁴⁵. The scheme generally consists of discussion programmes in the form of political debates, political spots and political productions. The Broadcasting Act's provision (Article 13 (4)) on political broadcasting is based on a system of a representative and democratic government and it adopted parliamentary strength as its yardstick for a fair apportionment of broadcasting time. This means that the amount of time granted to each party or independent candidates takes account of the size of the parties and the time is allotted according to their respective size and parliamentary strength, if any. It is important to point out to an anomaly found in the Broadcasting Act and the Constitution when referring to the participation of political parties in the Broadcasting Authority's political scheme. While the Broadcasting Act envisages that Alternattiva Demokratika cannot participate in the scheme of political

¹⁴² Broadcasting Authority, Annual Report 2001, p. 5

¹⁴³ This is the actual word used by the Broadcasting Act to refer to a programme schedule of political broadcasts. (Article 13 (4)). See Note O in Appendix i for full text of the mentioned article.

¹⁴⁴ In the very recent years, such political broadcasts were organised for an election, be it a General Election, Local Council Elections and Referendum campaign

¹⁴⁵ In General Elections, all the parties involved (even if they might be a one man party) participate in such political broadcasts. If there are any independent candidates who would be contesting the elections these are generally allowed a very short production.

broadcasts organised by the Broadcasting Authority because it does not have any representation in Parliament, the Constitution does not require that political parties which participate in such broadcasts must have Parliamentary representation. This is another anomaly between the Constitution and the Broadcasting Act. Alternattiva Demokratika insisted on this matter of representation and took the Broadcasting Authority to court arguing that the Broadcasting Authority should follow the Constitution first and foremost because the Constitution was the supreme law and that in case of a conflict between the Constitution and the Broadcasting Act it is the Constitution which had to prevail. Following the judgement which resulted in favour of AD, this party has been included in the party political broadcasts scheme¹⁴⁶.

The legal regulations adopted by the Broadcasting Authority

I will briefly describe the Maltese legislation *vis-à-vis* impartiality in broadcasting because it is essential to understand the existing legislation and regulations to get the full picture of the broadcasting scenario, not only with regard to the existing stations but also with regard to the environment within which they operate. The Maltese producers do not have any equivalent to the BBC Producers' Guidelines. However, there had been various Codes, Regulations and Guidelines¹⁴⁷ drawn up by the Broadcasting Authority and the Minister responsible for broadcasting; which deal with several topics, apart from news and current affairs, but there is no consolidated version of them all. Apart from codes and guidelines adopted by the Broadcasting Authority along the years, there is the Constitution of Malta

¹⁴⁶ 31st July 1996 Court Case - Dr Wenzu Mintoff et nominee. – vs – Dr Joseph Pirota et. nomine. (31st July 1996) (See Note P in Appendix i for further details)

¹⁴⁷ Known as 'Broadcasting Authority Guidance and Requirements on News and Current Affairs Programming' (2006)

and the Broadcasting Act which are partly designed to regulate impartiality. There might also be in house guidelines or policies prepared by the broadcasting stations. An important factor with regard to codes, regulations and guidelines, is that while codes are binding, guidelines are not unless they would be approved by the Broadcasting Authority as directives to stations in which case they will have binding effect. The Broadcasting Authority in October 2006 launched a process of consultation on proposals of the guidelines presented by the News and Current Affairs Committee in May 2004¹⁴⁸.

The Broadcasting Authority has stated that certain provisions of these guidelines were intended to become enforceable because they were not adhered to. But the consultation process has been limited to only those provisions of the guidelines which mainly refer to ethical behaviour of journalists. The Authority did not see it necessary to remedy the impartiality provisions of the guidelines as these were implemented already through the Constitution of Malta (Article 119) and the Broadcasting Act 13 (2). Following the conclusion of the consultation period, the Authority approved a final version of the Guidance and Requirements as to Standards and Practice applicable to News Bulletins and Current Affairs Programmes by amending some paragraphs of the documents.¹⁴⁹ These provisions of the news and current affairs requirements are enforceable in terms of Article 20 (3) of the Broadcasting Act¹⁵⁰.

¹⁴⁸ Media Release 27/06 dated 23rd October 2006

¹⁴⁹ The paragraphs amended were 7.2, 8.4, 11.1, 14.1. The final version was issued in Circular 7/07 dated 19th January 2007. (for further details see Note Q in Appendix i)

¹⁵⁰ Article 20 (3) of the Broadcasting Act states, “The Authority may, in the discharge of its general responsibility for programmes, impose requirements as to standards and practice for such programmes which go beyond, or relate to matters not covered by, the provisions of the code under this article”.

The Broadcasting Authority regularly takes steps to encourage impartiality in broadcasting. The broadcasting media are obliged to report activities in a balanced manner even during election campaigns. This obligation emerges both from the Broadcasting Act and from Directives issued by the Broadcasting Authority during election period. The Broadcasting Authority over the years published a number of guidelines and legal notices. The first code related to current affairs programming was issued by the Authority in 1993. This code was issued in terms of Section 20 (1) (b) of the Broadcasting Act 1991 *Guidelines on Current Affairs Programming on all Broadcasting Media*. It emphasized that broadcasters have to be impartial but some slanting is allowed ‘within an overall programme framework of balance and impartiality’. These guidelines stated that programming must be objective which ‘implies unbiased reporting, uncoloured by the sentiments and inclinations or subjective views of the broadcaster’ and impartial which ‘implies being fair and just in reporting and presenting the facts without favouring any particular interest or interests involved’ (Fsadni, 2003, p. 21). The Code entailed that current affairs programmes are balanced if all significant viewpoints are represented in an equitable manner and there is a primary obligation to be fair to all interests involved in the issues’. Another programming code was issued by the Broadcasting Authority in December 1994 which consisted of guidelines for news broadcasts and dealt on “news value, accuracy, news sources, impartiality, false and misleading news” (Fsadni, 2003, p. 24)

Since news is dominated by local politics, the Broadcasting Authority insists on fair and impartial coverage and consistency in reporting political activities. In 2000, an Advisory Committee which was set by the Broadcasting Authority, was concerned with the

increasing amount of station comments and fabricated news items which were broadcast on political stations mainly used for propaganda purposes (Broadcasting Authority Annual Report 2001, p. 13). The Committee's concern was the regular manipulation of news broadcasts on the political stations and urged the Authority to stop this 'deteriorating situation' (Broadcasting Authority Annual Report 2002, p. 11). After investigating such content, in May 2004 the Committee presented a final document of the guidelines for news and current affairs after a public seminar and consultations were held. As stated earlier in this chapter, these guidelines were under a consultation process so that certain provisions concerning ethical behaviour of journalists would become legally enforceable. They became fully enforceable in February 2007. (For further details see Note R in Appendix i).

What is the structure of the Broadcasting Authority?

The Broadcasting Authority has two functions, one which is Constitutional and the other which emanates from the Broadcasting Act. Such functions are completely separate and distinct and are independent from each other and are judged in a different way. While on the Constitution part the Authority is independent and autonomous from any other authority, but according to the 1991 Broadcasting Act, the Broadcasting Authority is subject to the scrutiny of the state, and is obliged to operate within the legal obligations and other functions laid by the Constitution¹⁵¹. Legally the Authority is an autonomous body, not a Government Board. As stated under Section 119 (1) of the Constitution, the Broadcasting Authority " [it] shall not be subject to the direction or control of any other persons or authority". The independence of the Authority is an essential requisite for

¹⁵¹ 31st July 1996 Court Case - Dr Wenzu Mintoff et nominee. – vs – Dr Joseph Pirota et. nomine. (31st July 1996)

safeguarding the concept of impartiality. The members of the Authority¹⁵² are expected to act exclusively in the interest of the public and not in the interest of the Government, political party or any other group.

According to the Constitution of Malta, the Broadcasting Authority is appointed by the President under the advice of the Prime Minister after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition. Presently, the members of the Broadcasting Authority are appointed by the two main political parties represented in Parliament, that is, the PN and PL, as in two Government nominees and two Opposition nominees, and the chairperson is chosen by the President of Malta on the advice of the Prime Minister after consulting the Leader of the Opposition. When there is no agreement on the choice of the Chairperson, the Prime Minister still chooses his appointee. While all this is within the Constitution, and the Constitution is respected, the Authority members are perceived by the public as representatives of the political party that appointed them rather than as representatives of the public interest. During the BA sittings, the chairman always has the casting vote. In the past the Chief Executive was appointed by the Prime Minister but this was adjusted under the Broadcasting Act, 1991 and the Chief Executive is now “appointed following a public call for applications by the Authority” (Article 5 (1) of the Broadcasting Act, 1991).

Given the historical development of Maltese broadcasting, the question which immediately arises is to what extent is the content of the news bulletins and current affairs programmes aired by Maltese television stations impartial? Do the audience perceive the news programmes broadcast on the three television stations under investigation to be impartial,

¹⁵² like the Directors of the BBC

balanced and objective? The media need the right environment to succeed in being independent and impartial but does this environment exist in Malta? Also this study explores the important role of the public service broadcaster in such a polarised environment, as is Malta, particularly when reporting news and producing current affairs programmes. Since the political parties in Malta forged ahead in their own ways, where does PBS stand? The main argument of this thesis revolves around the ownership of stations by political parties and the public service broadcaster, and the concept of impartiality, balance and objectivity when these stations produce news programmes. As already shown, the broadcasting regulator itself, while being perceived to be independent, has to enforce the laws to safeguard impartiality whilst also being an effective watchdog. An attempt to answer such questions will be made in the following chapters which present the findings of this study. Such findings evolve around the audience's views, an analysis of the text and the perspectives of the producers working on the production of news bulletins and current affairs programmes.

The next chapter is concerned with the findings chapters of this study. Its particular focus will be on what goes on in the news and on how producers, news managers and regulators perceive the production of news and current affairs programming. A special concern is with how these production personnel view the issue of the preservation of impartiality and balance in news bulletins and current affairs programmes. The chapter also considers the role of the regulatory body and whether, according to the newswriters, current broadcasting legislation is effective in achieving an impartial news product. Finally the chapter will examine the views of those who represent the regulatory perspective, in

particular whether they are of the opinion that the public broadcaster in Malta has been successful in producing an impartial news programming service and what the role of the political stations should be.

Chapter 5

Findings Chapter

TV news stories are very much a constructed product, shaped by technical and ideological codes (Hackett & Yuezhi Zhao, 1988, p. 47)

What goes on in the news?

The previous chapter highlighted the Maltese broadcasting scenario and the developments that broadcasting went through particularly after the introduction of pluralism and the changes it brought with it. It also highlighted the regulatory framework concerning impartiality and balance and the remit of the Broadcasting Authority in this regard. The next two chapters are about my findings. The first findings chapter will delve into the opinions and thoughts of the producers of news and the people responsible for the news media product. As indicated in Chapter 3, I have conducted a number of face to face interviews with journalists, producers, news media executives, media experts and broadcasting regulators to get to know which measures and procedures are taken in the attempt to provide impartial news coverage. They also commented on the present broadcasting regulations and how these effect programming content. I have also conducted interviews with the representatives of the regulator to investigate what measures and policies are employed in order to guarantee impartiality and balance. Such feedback was voiced by the broadcaster regulator, the Chairman, the Chief Executive and some board members of the Broadcasting Authority.

How concepts of impartiality, balance and objectivity are defined and interpreted by people in the media industry?

The interviews started with a discussion about central issues in the news programming which are being investigated here – those of impartiality, balance and objectivity. What did the interviewees understand by these terms? While broadcasting regulations point to the terminology of impartiality and accuracy and the producers and TV stations have to abide by such regulations, I wanted to investigate with the producers and journalists what understanding they had of such terms and how do they interpret them. Different interpretations were envisaged regarding the definition of concepts, and what would be the criteria, albeit different, of producing an impartial news programme.

Producer A points out that in Malta the idea of balance “is not a healthy one”. He argues that it is not a question of getting people in favour or against an issue. He defines balance as:

“many different forms of opinions as possible but do not stop with opinions in favour or against”.

He is against what is required by the Broadcasting Authority and PBS Editorial Board with regards to the need to provide balance in giving both sides to the story. He declares that for a discussion programme to be balanced, there should be different opinions because “nothing is yes or no, white or black”. This tallies with what Potter (1988) and Cook (1992) describe balance and more so such definition is quite surprising in a bipolar country as is Malta, in that the producer calls for more than two sides of the story¹⁵³. Producer A

¹⁵³ Usually since Malta has two big political parties, the mentality is that an issue or a topic has to be dealt from just both sides

totally disagrees with the BA's interpretation and argues that the Authority's regulations hinder discussion because "the Authority's idea of balance is keeping balance between the two". Producer A insists that balance should not be considered to be one side against the other and declares that he is against a dual mentality¹⁵⁴ in the sense that a discussion has to include an opinion from the two big political parties in Malta. He points out that he tries to produce a programme which would overcome "the stereo mentality"¹⁵⁵ and invites different and diverse opinions expressed in the course of the programme, even if some opinions might be those of the audience and not necessarily those of the expert/guest panel¹⁵⁶. While in some issues there might be the possibility of showing more than two viewpoints, very often in Malta political controversial matters would have to be tackled from two viewpoints, particularly those emerging from the two political parties. In this regard, the third party (the Green Party) is left in isolation on a number of issues. Regulator M has similar views on balance and points out that balance does not "necessarily mean blue and red; it should get outside views". He adds that the Broadcasting Authority should not be happy with the balance because there is red and blue¹⁵⁷. Here it has to be pointed out whether the structure of the Broadcasting Authority, in the sense that the board members are appointed by the two political parties represented in Parliament is impinging on the way balance is looked upon by the Broadcasting Authority itself. There is much more scope on

¹⁵⁴ The idea of dual mentality comes from the culture of bi polarism in Malta. It is considered that the Maltese society is divided into two political beliefs, everything due to power of the two big political parties – the Labour Party and the Nationalist Party – and their effect they have on our beliefs and way of behaviour

¹⁵⁵ This stereo mentality comes from the fact that Malta is a two party state and this is a Constitutional and a political reality which have an encompassing effect on the institutions, in this case the broadcasting industry but also the composition of the broadcasting regulatory body

¹⁵⁶ As indicated in the interview, very often the production team places the people with expertise on the subject as part of the audience and the people who can recount their experiences as members of the panel who would be the main speakers of the programme

¹⁵⁷ Red and blue – referring to the colours associated with the political parties in Malta

the part of expert and academics to widen the discussion and a subject should not only be seen from a partisan political point of view.

During the interviews, I came across similar arguments to those put forward by media theorists mentioned in Chapter 2, particularly Hackett & Yuezhi Zhao (1988) with regard to objectivity, namely that fairness and credibility has to be achieved rather than objectivity because this can also be selective. Producer A blatantly states that: “objectivity does not exist”. Producer A argues that programmes cannot all be balanced. He narrates one experience when the programme discussed “quite an economically tough budget” and he argues that it was useless to get people in favour and against the budget. The entire panel present was against the budget for some reason or another, but the fact that different people’s viewpoints were addressed and expressed then the programme did contain an element of balance. Such idea of balance is not the same as of the interpretation of balance as put forward by the Broadcasting Authority.

The majority of producers disagree with the Broadcasting Authority’s definition of balance. Such concept is only internally interpreted and defined by the regulatory body. In the Broadcasting Act the only instance where ‘balance’ is mentioned is in Article 13 (2) (4)¹⁵⁸, the Article referring to the production of political broadcasts as part of the Broadcasting Authority’s political scheme. This Article interprets balance as mathematical balance,

¹⁵⁸ Article 13 (2) (4) reads as follows:-

It shall also be the duty of the Authority to organize from time to time schemes of political broadcasts (including political spots) which fairly apportion facilities and time between the different political parties represented in Parliament; to produce properly balanced discussions or debates that afford access to persons from different interest-groups and with different points of view, and also to produce commentaries or other programmes about questions relating to current public policy, wherein persons taking part can put forward differing views and comments.

namely that each speaker in a discussion should have the equal amount of time (Lichtenberg, 1992). While regulations hint that balance is a question of time and exposure, Producer C argues that he is trying to get away from the culture of balance in the sense of equity or time or giving equal coverage; "...for me balance is not a question of equity".

However the concept of balance is mentioned in a number of paragraphs in Subsidiary Legislation 350.14 and this concept is associated and intertwined with the concept of impartiality. Also balance rightly so is more related to current affairs programming than news bulletins. Academic literature (Harrison, 2006) showed that while both concepts are interrelated, there are more characteristics for a news programme to be considered as impartial. Since legislation intertwines impartiality and balance together, the tendency with local producers is to treat both concepts as one. With regard to news this concept is mentioned wherein the reference to comments and judgements are pointed out. In two separate paragraphs, both referring to the news bulletins, the subsidiary legislation points out that comments in news have to be balanced and that the journalist in question has to make balanced judgements¹⁵⁹. The concept of balance is pointed out in the legislation (SL 350.14) referred to above, in the section focusing on current programming. It is envisaged through legislation - Paragraph 12.1 of SL 350.14¹⁶⁰ - that the subjects (topics) of the current affairs programmes should be balanced and the choice of participants should be fair and balanced as pointed out in Paragraph 12.5¹⁶¹. But then Paragraphs 12.2¹⁶² and 12.4

¹⁵⁹ Paragraph 2.1.3 (iii) and Paragraph 3.1 are referred to.

¹⁶⁰ See Note S in Appendix i for the full mentioned paragraph 12.1 of SL 350.14

¹⁶¹ See Note T in Appendix i for the full mentioned of Paragraphs 12.5

¹⁶² See Note U in Appendix I for Paragraph 12.2 and 12.4

mix both concepts of balance and impartiality together. This legislation shows that according to the proviso in this Subsidiary Legislation, impartiality and balance are linked together in the sense that when a current affairs programme is not balanced then the Authority looks into the whole series of programmes to assess whether impartiality, albeit not balance, has been achieved over the series. This shows that Maltese legislation considers impartiality can be achieved over a period of time and focuses on the trends of the programming while an individual programme is judged on balance. The Authority interprets that when balance is not attained, then it shifts the focus on the requirement of impartiality and puts both concepts as one concept. In Paragraph 12.4 (see Note U in Appendix i) the Legislation points out that impartiality is not mathematical balance or equal apportionment of time. It indicates that while impartiality is not neutrality, as also indicated by the producers interviewed in this study, it implies more the idea of fairness and the exposure of divergent and opposing points of view.

Producer C admits that it is very difficult to define impartiality and lack of bias because: “... two people can be looking at the same thing and say different things...” Some producers related impartiality with objectivity and Producer C argues that all viewpoints of the people or entities involved in that particular issue are presented. While everybody admits that each station and producer strive for impartiality, some argue that one cannot be completely impartial and balanced. Producer F argues: “...everybody has his own prejudices, his own biases” and one’s slant would hinder objectivity and impartiality. At one point during the interview, Producer F describes concepts of objectivity and

impartiality as a “problem” for a journalist working in a political station because the viewers perceive the journalist’s belief according to which station he/she is operating in:

“...the people see you from a certain point of view, they accept it to a certain extent but they know that your programme will be biased towards one side”.

However, he insists that he gives:

“fair treatment and equal time. I put forward my questions even though the guest might not be comfortable with them. But then it is my responsibility to see whether the programme I presented was biased or not”.

Such an admission indicates that local broadcasting, particularly political stations are by far different than the BBC broadcasting since the latter is guided by objectivity and impartiality as the principles of British broadcasting (McNair, 1996); though as from the interviews I conducted, news-workers within political stations admit they still try to achieve impartiality and balance in their work.

In this case, the producer did not give any weight to the type of question the journalist might ask during the programme. He also ignored the method of presentation which might also leave an impact on the perceived objectivity of the programme. No other producer or journalist interviewed put forward this argument, and neither was it ever mentioned in the focus group and in academic literature. The responsibility of having an objective programme lies on the producer/presenter. This was also pointed by Producer G who explains that, “balance is equal opportunity at one and the same time; full divergent opinions”. He continues that one has to look at the objectivity of the presenter and not of the guest because the guest is always partial in his/her comments. On the other hand the

presenter has to be objective in the sense that he has to give equal opportunity to everyone and has to keep the discussion balanced. Impartiality has to be seen in a holistic manner, it is not only through the presenter's question, but also through the choice of participants, how these are treated, whether the viewers were given the chance to speak up and how one moderates the discussion. As he says, "impartiality is a quality; the sense of fairness has to be inbuilt."

Producer G recalls his training experience at BBC when asked about these basic concepts. He explains that, according to how he has been trained and what he has been taught, balance is achieved when giving equal opportunities to all aspects of the argument. During a single programme all the principal elements have to be exposed even if the majority of the elements might be in favour of or against an issue. He stresses that these practicalities of balance should be adhered to by all the stations and not envisaged only by the public service broadcaster, "...this is the main principle of broadcasting".

The situation seems to differ between producing a news report for a news bulletin and producing a current affairs programme. Producer G explains that news cannot be balanced because it is dictated by facts. Thus the principle of balance does not apply for news bulletins. Such argument raises a discussion in the sense that not all that is factual can be balanced and while a news service is factual it does not necessarily mean that it is balanced. He insists that the Broadcasting Authority cannot require PBS to report on political parties equally because "news is news and cannot necessarily be balanced". While regulations hint that balance is a question of time and exposure, Producer C argues that he

is trying to get away from the culture of balance in the sense of time equity or the need to give equal coverage. Also the Head of PBS¹⁶³ news is trying to move away from political news items and is more in favour of reporting the story and not the politician;

“...it is not the Minister that makes the news but the effect that the item will have on a number of people or its intrinsic value or oddity”.

From the PSB (Malta) point of view during the electoral campaign¹⁶⁴, Producer C argues that PSB (Malta) newsroom does work in an impartial way, citing an example on the adherence to a running order in the way political activities were reported. They would stick to the order of reporting the activities of the governing party first, followed by the party in Opposition and then reporting the other small political parties.

In current affairs programmes the journalist has to present different points of view on the same subject but according to Producer I, the journalist has a social role as well and thus the way a news feature is produced would lead to subtly transmitting political and social messages to the viewers. He argues that “everyone has a bias; the journalist carries his/her own baggage...” He admits that while the editorial line is dictated by the viewers’ expectations and the station tries to introduce different points of view and perspectives, but then the editorial line would mean that one perspective is pushed further than any other point of view. Producer I, coming from a political station admits that to a certain extent they cannot be impartial because they have an editorial policy which is a partisan one. This is quite similar to the Italian situation wherein the owner of the station would effect the political slant the station would take (Hibberd, 2001). But Producer I refers to the

¹⁶³ at the time of study

¹⁶⁴ Referring to the 2008 General Election campaign

programme content and explains that every news feature should have different points of view and all news facts have to be sourced; “not even BBC is impartial, even if they are perceived to be totally impartial and objective” (Producer I). He points out that news sourcing is the most important and reliable element in a news production. Thus he emphasizes on accuracy in his work.

Producer K describes impartiality as:

“something based on facts; ...the facts are the public domain, then there is the opinion which is different”.

Though she admits that the situation in a current affairs programme would be different than in news because:

“undoubtedly there is slant, particularly in the way subjects are chosen to be tackled in the programme”.

With regard to objectivity she states that objectivity does not have to do with the political editorial line, though she admits that during an electoral campaign this objectivity “gets a bit blurred”. Apart from objectivity, neutrality and fairness came in during the interviews, Producer B argues that one can be totally impartial but not necessarily totally neutral, “neutrality does not exist”. He stresses on the concept of fairness which is “possible”,

“...whatever you discuss, the way you organize the programme, whoever you invite, you always have to be fair with the subject and with the people”

Regulator N thinks that balance should not only be viewed mathematically, i.e. interpreted in numbers, but also semiotically and visually, in the sense that producers use subliminal

messages to put forward the message. He explains that balance or lack of it can be depicted through the way visuals are presented or the way shots are depicted and used in programmes. He comments that while he understands that the political stations have their political agenda and want to get across their political party message, opinions should still be kept separate and distinct from facts. This is what was also stressed by Producer I who at that time was managing Net News. He admits that in news bulletins broadcast on the political stations, facts are reported together with interpretations, however, he stressed that as a news manager he always insists on reliable sources and that facts are sacred.

Producer L thinks that news can be totally impartial if it is administered by someone who wants impartiality to be achieved. He specifically refers to how PBS newsroom is administered and criticizes the fact that a number of journalists at PBS newsroom used to work in a political station newsroom, a situation which was also mentioned by the focus group participants and which does impinge on the perceived impartiality with the viewers. As for PBS, the production of news is much more restrictive and it is also prone to criticism for not producing impartial content. Regulator N strongly believes that for PBS there is a tighter scenario and PBS news should not contain any comments and should only present the facts. That might be the reason that PSB (Malta) is perceived to be the most credible when compared with the other stations as pointed out by Producer L. This is similar to the situation with BBC and the perceived credibility (Schlesinger in McNair, 2006) it enjoys, though in the next chapter there are instances wherein the focus group participants did point out, after viewing TVM news clips that the way some news reports were report led to lack of impartiality. During the interview, Producer H does make a

distinction between the news and the current affairs programmes on TVM. While the viewers' perception of TVM news is that such news is factual and truthful, the viewers have a different perception about the current affairs programmes broadcast on TVM. Producer H says:

“No, by time the public learnt that PBS current affairs programmes, or better still current affairs aired on PBS are totally unbalanced”.

Such findings clearly suggest that news bulletins and current affairs programmes have to be treated separately and while they are ruled by the same concepts of balance, impartiality and objectivity, the practice of such concepts have to be different for the different news programme formats. Further to the definition of impartiality, Regulator O refers to the court sentence given by Judge J R Micallef in 2003 where a definition of impartiality and balance were given. Also he refers to the Requirements for News and Current Affairs (SL 350.14) issued by the Broadcasting Authority¹⁶⁵. As was also suggested by Regulator O, the Broadcasting Authority is defining these concepts differently for the political stations and is using the proviso of Article 13 (2) (c) and (f) of the Broadcasting Act¹⁶⁶ which mainly considers the “general output as a whole” for the other stations except PBS. Regulator O thinks that the concept of balance cannot exist in news bulletins, however, news bulletins have to be impartial, that is:

“giving a fair coverage of all activities held by the Government, Opposition Party and other entities”.

¹⁶⁵ In court sentence 738/02JRM MLP vs MBA & PBS Ltd, Judge J R Micallef referred to another court sentence Auld LJ R vs British Company et, ex parte Referendum Party (1997) EMLR 605. It was ruled that impartiality does not have anything to do with parity.

“Impartiality is not to be equated with parity or balance as between political parties of different strengths, popular support or appeal...It means fairness of allocation having regard to those factors, yet making allowance for any significant current changes in the political arena and for the potential effect of the powerful medium of television in advancing or hindering such changes”.

¹⁶⁶ See Appendix Y for full Article 13 (2) of the Broadcasting Act

Another court verdict related to impartiality and balance in broadcasting was taken by the Court of Appeal in July 1997 (1228/97 APP)¹⁶⁷ due to lack of reporting of the Leader of the Opposition in a political and controversial issue after the broadcast of speech extracts of the Prime Minister with business people on the VAT system. According to the Appeal Court, as long as there are different viewpoints, then the matter is controversial and thus the need that the viewers are correctly and accurately informed.

Regulator P argues that balance has to be achieved through “a combination of things; in terms of participation, representation, and relative time¹⁶⁸;... but the most important thing is balance in the presentation, how the presenter behaves when presenting/producing the programme.” The concept of perceived impartiality was also mentioned during a number of interviews and Person Q admits that:

“news should not only be impartial but also it has to be seen to be impartial; and the problem with PBS is that it is not seen to be impartial”.

He referred to a situation before the 2008 General Election campaign when a number of journalists who used to work for a political station were employed by PPS Ltd,

“Without saying whether they are doing their job well, however, the perception of balance is missing”.

Thus Person Q speaks in favour of “more transparency in the recruitment of human resources”. As discussed in Chapter 2, impartiality and balance are the basis of the public service broadcasting and the basis of British broadcasting should be practices in the local

¹⁶⁷ Court of Appeal Cit No 1228/97 Judges (Chief Justice?) Joseph Said Pullicino, Carmel A. Agius & Joseph Filletti 17th July 1997 in a case between the Leader of the Opposition Dr Eddie Fenech Adami vs Prof Godfrey Pirota, Chairman BA and Prof John J Cremona, Chairman PBS

¹⁶⁸ Relative time - the time has to be given according to the size of the party. The political parties cannot have the time shared equally, because it depends on the size of the party.

public service broadcaster in that impartiality, objectivity, neutrality and balance would be the basis of the PSB broadcasting (Hartley, 1982).

The presenter has the responsibility to be objective in a way that any personal bias is not present in the programme. Regulator N explains that impartiality implies that all the viewpoints are presented in an equal manner to the viewers;

“thus balance and impartiality go hand in hand; if a programme is balanced then it is impartial”.

Can the political stations achieve impartiality, balance and objectivity?

While the news-workers themselves did not agree on how concepts of impartiality and balance can be achieved in news and current affairs programming because each had their own opinion to what extent impartiality can be achieved, there was also lack of consensus whether political parties should own a television station. Producer A argues in favour of political stations,

“I believe more in political stations rather than in commercial stations because commercial stations have money as their main and principal scope and political stations have an element of democracy”.

The “element of democracy” was not explained but he emphasized that their main interest is not to make money but to get their political message across. Producer A argues that the news and current affairs of the political stations are more “honest” than other stations because their agenda is known to the viewers beforehand; “...I know what to expect from them”. Producer D puts the argument further and tries to compare it with the print media.

Producer D argues that the viewers know the editorial policy of a political station unlike the agenda of the print media which they declare to be independent when in reality all print media would have their own agenda. She argues that the agenda of the political stations is openly declared unlike the agenda of the print media:

“is a bit more difficult to decipher their agenda, however, if one analyses it over a span of time one can see their agenda because they would highlight some stories while ‘burying’ other stories”.

A completely opposing view was voiced by Producer B who refers to the Italian media and argues that unlike the TV stations in Italy particularly Rai 1, Rai 2 and Rai 3, the Maltese TV stations not only have their political orientation but do not respect objectivity and are “another arm of the party”. This goes against the concept of media democracy because the media should provide a “spotlight” on politicians, so that their lives can be assessed by the viewers. Producer B explains that the political stations are:

“pointing the spotlight at each other, ignoring their remit of being a service to the viewers (citizens); ...they are not real stations, not real news, not real current affairs. They are a system of propaganda”.

Producer B voices his concern about what the viewers are being exposed to with the two political stations. He raises his concern if a number of viewers watch only one political TV station because:

“...they think that what they are seeing is a picture of the country, when in fact it’s not”

From the feedback of the focus group participants this did not result because each participant pointed out that it is hard to stick to only one news bulletin, particularly the

news aired on a political station and viewers are looking to other channels and news sources to get another viewpoint of the same story.

Producer B insists that:

“the political stations are scarring democracy in Malta...; ...a political party is not there to make journalism...”

According to Producer D the bias in news is not a local issue but bias is also present in international news organisations. However, she admits Malta would be more biased because political stations own a television station¹⁶⁹. She admits:

“...I have my doubts how much impartial we can be; ...We have our political bias”.

In this regard bias is not taken as not treating all the voices equally (Greene and Stevenson (1980) but the exclusion of all other voices except the one who owns the media. Political stations in Malta very often exclude the other opposing party from their current affairs programmes and treat the opposing party in a completely negative light in news bulletins.

Considering the above comments, it was hard to understand how while admitting that such stations have biases, she points out that they never have any pressure from the station's owner. When I interviewed the news editor of the other political station, Producer I agreed that the political party does not put pressure on the news structure, however, the editor would know what editorial policy he/she should take. The editor would have to stick to the rules set down by the shareholder, rules which might not necessarily be written or declared but would be mutually understood due to shared political beliefs. Producer D points out to

¹⁶⁹ The interviewee explains that the news organization falls under One Productions Ltd which is a commercial entity but the shareholder is the Labour Party.

a case to emphasize that her news organisation works on stories without facing pressures from the shareholder. She refers to stories which were reported by the newsroom, of a contractor who was involved in illegal developments and these were reported even though they might have meant commercial or political drawback to the station. She continues: “...on other stations you will not find such stories.” It seems that political stations report stories which might not necessarily feature in the news of the public service broadcaster mainly due to tendency that it is much more difficult to be investigative and controversial in the news reports aired on the PSB (Malta) rather than on the commercial channels. Such situation is the result of more restrictions, albeit internal, on the public service broadcasters (Paraschos, 1998).

Producer F views the political stations as being indispensable for Maltese society. He argues that the media landscape now depends on these stations, because according to him, PSB (Malta) was leaving out a number of cases in which the viewers were interested. He argues that PSB (Malta) was acting as a gatekeeper for the Labour Party¹⁷⁰ messages.

“If it was not for Super 1, certain messages which the Labour Party wants to propagate, found an incredible wall of gatekeeping”.

He referred to a number of news stories reporting the case of a Parliamentary Secretary in the Nationalist Government who was allegedly breaking the Ministerial Code of Ethics when using his notary office for other types of business. Producer F argued that no other newsroom was reporting this story and it would not have been known to the viewers if they had not been following their news bulletin. Due to this lack of reporting and exclusion of stories, in his opinion the media system cannot survive without the political stations. From

¹⁷⁰ At the time the Party in Opposition

these interviews it was noted that the news of the political stations serve as investigative journalism, however, the news-workers did not admit that there is an element of advocacy journalism with the party owning the political station. But Producer G, who at the time of the interview, presented a current affairs programme on a political TV station, admitted that with the inclusion of political party stations, the State accepted “political clientalism in the media”.

The role and status of the political TV stations in Maltese broadcasting

Other producers, amongst them Producer H, also spoke against the inclusion of political station in the Maltese broadcasting structure. He commented:

“...I believe that in Malta we committed the worst mistake, that of having the two political parties owning a TV station”.

Interestingly he points out that if the state broadcaster “is truly balanced” then the political stations are not needed. He insisted that: “the state broadcaster always belongs to the Government, any Government”. But Producer A also states that one should be aware that PBS newsroom might face pressure from the Government of the day, “this happens automatically” but he argues that the PBS newsroom should strive for popularity in order to gain power. The challenge for PSB (Malta) news-workers is that while they have to give a balanced and impartial picture to the public and give a ‘public service’ they are also committed to their owner being the governing party (Hartley, 1982 in McNair, 2009). According to Producer H the audience turns to PBS to have a balanced picture because the viewer is aware that the political stations put forward their political messages¹⁷¹. As is the

¹⁷¹ As will be seen in Chapter 6, such viewpoint was also voiced by a number of participants during the focus group sessions.

situation with the political stations, the situation is similar with the public service broadcaster and the organizational variables of the channel will impinge on the news production.

Producer L clearly stated that the political stations have “a big problem” when presenting their news and current affairs programme because “literally they are the *lungo manus* of the Secretary General of the party”. Furthermore, he thinks that current affairs programmes produced by the political stations are completely controlled by the party and are only used to “score political points” and their aim is “far from investigating a story or report stories of news value”. However, this contrasts to what news-workers working with political stations pointed out that their role in investigative journalism is accomplished simply because they are giving what the public service broadcaster is not providing. However, regulator M says, “... I don’t believe in these stations”. He explains that such political stations were established because in the past the national station:

“was being abused by the party in Government and was hindering the Opposition to view its thoughts”.

Even, interviewee Q who was part of the Broadcasting Authority’s Board when political stations started to function, admitted:

“*mea culpa*, since I was partly involved in it when I was a Board Member of the Broadcasting Authority”.

He argues that due to this polarised situation in broadcasting, the Broadcasting Authority has to accept that a political station will send its political message through its media, in this

case its television channel. But Person Q stresses that the Broadcasting Authority should still “be vigilant concerning accuracy; and concerning the fabrication of news”.

What is the remit/role of PBS (Malta)?

Producer B argues that in the past PBS newsroom maintained its mission by being “the part of the least resistance”. Due to the rigidity of the interpretation of balance, PBS newsroom was not able to produce challenging and investigative news stories, however, PBS role is still highly essential in Malta amidst the political stations in the market:

“In Malta we do not have Sky, CNN, Rete 4, thus the responsibility falls on PBS to give the viewers news and current affairs programmes which respect their intelligence”.

This echoes the Reithian concept in that PBS (Malta) has to give the best of service due to lack of plurality of voices but also lack of news objectivity and impartiality. Since PBS viewership is potentially not one sided, then PBS news has to address viewership with different political viewpoints and thus according to Head of PBS news, the PBS newsroom has to attract more viewers by focusing on the human interest in news rather than just politics. Producer E described PBS as not “any other station” because “being a national station we provide an impartial service to the public” (Altschull, 1984; Shoemaker & Reese, 1991). He points out that particularly during a general election; the station has to provide an impartial and credible service to the viewers. Ex PBS Chief Executive (Producer E) interestingly points out that “PBS is the only station which is perceived to be impartial”. He explains that not only PBS station is believed to be impartial but PBS news personnel strive to achieve impartiality. This perceived impartiality and credibility is also

perceived with the British public broadcaster (McNair, 2006). A number of participants from the focus group sessions did point out that the station works to achieve impartiality and is more credible when compared to the other stations.

Regulator N explains that the public station is considered distinct from the other political stations and this is reinforced by the broadcasting regulations. Also he refers to Court decisions asking for auto regulations of the public station regarding impartiality and balance.

“A number of court verdicts point out that the public service broadcaster should have a system of auto regulation, prior than the Broadcasting Authority’s role in such matter, PBS should see that its programmes are in no way impartial and there should be balance in political and industrial actions”.

This decision was taken by the Court in a verdict heard on 5th September 2002 (Cit. No. 738/02JRM)¹⁷² stating that while the Broadcasting Authority is the watchdog and the regulator, PBS Ltd has the obligation to abide by its public service broadcaster regulations.

Some producers did criticize how PBS functions particularly due to its administration and management. Interviewee Q comments that PBS should not be considered as the public service broadcaster. It is more a state broadcaster rather than a public broadcaster.

“It is not the voice of the public which governs it but it is the Government”.

¹⁷² Court Appeal given by Chief Justice Vincent Degeatano, Judge Joseph D. Camilleri and Judge Joseph A. Filletti on 15th January 2003 in a case between Leader of the Opposition, Dr Alfred Sant & Emmanuel Cuschieri and Jimmy Magro as representatives of the Malta Labour Party vs BA Chairman and Chairman of PBS Ltd.

He bases his argument on the appointment of the Board of Directors and the Editorial Board who are chosen by the Government. Further to this, the pressure from Government might be felt more in the production of current affairs programmes because the Government gives funds to the public service broadcaster for the production of such programming. The Government gives an amount of money to be spent in particular programme genres since PBS has programmes which fall under the Core Public Service Obligation (CPSO) and the Extended Public Service Obligation (EPSO). Amongst these programmes there are current affairs programmes, children's programmes, religious and cultural programmes. Being a public service broadcaster, the station is obliged to carry such programmes through the use of the Government funds. Such an obligation might put pressure on the programme content and risk the programmes, in this case current affairs programmes, end up not being impartial and use advocacy journalism in favour of the station's shareholder. The scenario that current affairs programmes fall under the Public Service Obligation programming and thus PBS (Malta) gets funds to produce such programmes would impinge on the programme content while striving to be perceived as impartial and not influenced from its ownership, even though as shown in the next point below, PBS Editorial Board takes the final decision on PBS current affairs programming. The importance of an impartial and unbiased public service broadcaster was voiced by the producers during the interviews. Person Q while accepts bias on political stations, stresses that bias on TVM is unacceptable:

“I accept bias, bias in the sense of approach, bias in the sense of attitude from the political stations in the sense that *il tono fa la musica*, but I do not accept lies or

negative or positive misrepresentation. As regards PBS I do not accept any of such kind.”

Working for impartiality and balance in news programming

In the face to face interviews I targeted a number of questions solely to PBS news-workers to investigate the way PBS is administered in attempting to produce impartial and balanced programmes. Surprisingly, other producers working within political stations did speak about achieving impartiality and balance in their current affairs programmes even though the station is owned by a political party. From PBS producers’ comments it seemed that the Editorial Board has the onus on what is aired in current affairs programmes. They mainly referred to the role of PBS Editorial Board who has the last say in approving the subjects and participants of the current affairs programmes even of out sourced programmes. However, Producer E (ex PBS Chief Executive) explained that “the news is in the discretion of the registered editor”, who is the Head of News. The PBS news editor points out that since he is legally responsible for all the content, then the Editorial Board should not interfere;

“...for me the Editorial Board is a consultative body which I should be able to consult if I am stuck”. “...if I am legally responsible, then is my decision to decide”.

But, conflicting Interviewee Q¹⁷³ explained that the National Policy in Broadcasting did not specify who would be responsible for PBS news bulletins. He stated that:

“the Registered Editor is personally responsible for what is broadcast but the Editorial Board is responsible for the working out of the news bulletin”

¹⁷³ who happened to sit in the Editorial Board in 2006

Contrary to what some journalists commented regarding the integrity of PBS, PBS News Editor reveals that neither the management nor the political parties interfere in the news compilation though he admits that sometimes he gets pressure from political parties particularly during an electoral campaign. The News Editor argues,

“..you can report an event, be objective and then if it hurts someone it is not my problem. We are not here to protect or not to hurt people, we are here to show what happened”.

Since the public broadcaster has an editorial body¹⁷⁴ one can see an attempt for balance and impartiality in PBS programmes. This board has the onus to look into the programme content and its remit is not to assess whether the station’s programming are commercially viable contrary to the remit of the Board of Directors. In fact, there were instances along the years, when the two boards (the Board of Directors and the Editorial Board) had conflicting decisions. PBS Board of Directors¹⁷⁵ is responsible for the management of the company, the financial aspect and the general well being of the company. The PBS Editorial Board is purely responsible for the content of the programming and the ‘share’ of each genre of programming will be given in PBS schedule¹⁷⁶. Regulator P sees PBS Editorial Board functioning as a self regulatory body in the sense that it has to work in situations not necessarily related to the broadcasting legislation but has to step in particular

¹⁷⁴ though members are also appointed by the Government

¹⁷⁵ members are also appointed by the Government

¹⁷⁶ The programme scheduling decision is taken jointly between the two Boards. The scheduling issue can also be a matter of content apart from effecting the advertising income from the programme. In 2006 the Chairman of the Board of Directors intrude in the decision of programmes regarding their content and the Editorial Board “stood its ground resulting into conflict between the two Boards. The conflict ended up with both Chairmen of both Boards resigning. In 2007 the Chairman of the Editorial Board resigned again because of disagreement about the short listing of programmes. Such conflicts were mentioned by Interviewee Q.

situations. Regulator P augurs a good relationship between PBS Editorial Board and the Broadcasting Authority in order to work for impartial and balanced programmes and provide a good public service to the viewers. While both entities have their separate roles, throughout the years, the chairmanship of the Broadcasting Authority always sought for a good relationship with PBS Editorial Board, particularly in the production of news and current affairs programming, in a bid to deal with situations which would not necessarily be against the legislation but would help to achieve an impartial and balanced outcome. Steps to achieve impartiality and balance in PBS programming are not only taken in house but there are cases where the Broadcasting Authority informs PBS of any lack of adherence to impartiality legislation.

What are the criteria for achieving balance and impartiality in current affairs programmes?

From the face to face interviews it was found that the choice of subjects, the guests who are chosen to participate in the programme and the way the discussion is conducted are the three main pillars of maintaining balance in the programme.

The presentation of the issue, the choice of subjects and the choice of guests

Producer B admits that he chooses the subject “not for the sake of balance” but because it would be a subject which is being talked about by the ‘man in the street’. Interesting to note that according to my analysis of the 2006 Local Council election campaign which covered almost three weeks of media campaign, no political issues were tackled¹⁷⁷ on

¹⁷⁷ Programmes dealt with – the historical richness of Egypt, the strike ordered by the bus drivers and Carnival

TVM. When questioned about this, Producer B argues that this happened because he thinks that Local Council elections do not interest a lot of people; "...political parties inflate them or not for their political reasons..." Producer E agrees that the public does not want to see too much focus on Local Council elections. Looking at the macro level of the station rather than the micro level, he argues that the most important element to achieve balance in the programmes is to have a balanced 'platform'. Referring to PBS he argues that,

"programmes cannot be skewed, so we make sure that we have a balanced platform".

During the interview he stresses that the channel 'platform', has to be perceived as being impartial. Moreover, in an attempt to achieve a balanced output, the presenter has to be careful about the choice of subject and it is up to the presenter to see how best to open up the subject with the help of the guests. A similar argument is voiced by Producer H who stresses that balance has to be "across the board" throughout the PBS schedule and not only on prime time programmes. He points out that even in programmes which are considered as magazine programmes¹⁷⁸ there might be slots during the programme where a political or current subject is discussed and even in such programmes balance has to be kept.

Apart from the choice of subjects, Regulator M adds another criterion to achieve impartiality. The presenter cannot be seen to have a biased agenda in the way he/she presents the programme. According to Regulator M, a presenter is called "neutral" if

¹⁷⁸ A programme which includes a variety of topics; from fashion, beauty slots but can also include interviews concerning a current affair issue.

his/her agenda is to “grill whoever the guest may be”. It is interesting to note that very few producers did mention this criterion which is particularly referred academically to as an important criterion for impartiality and balance (Allan, 1999; Harrison, 2006). On the other hand it transpired that the choice of guests in the studio plays an important role in achieving balance in a programme and this was pointed out quite frequently by the interviewees. Producer G thinks that the choice of participants is crucial,

“one should not only choose two Labourites and two Nationalists but one has to choose relevant people.”

Even Producer F, a political station producer¹⁷⁹ stressed that the balance in the programme is gained through a balanced panel of guests. Balance is sought through the choice of guests, even though there were instances, particularly during an electoral campaign when he faced resistance from guests coming from opposing parties and admitted that the Nationalist Party guests failed to attend to his programme because, “they knew that he will not treat them softly but grill them”. Producer F blames his position for finding resistance from PN speakers to attend the programme due to the fact that he is a journalist working within a political party station;

“being a Labour Party journalist, a front liner in the newsroom, the Nationalist Party does not see me in a good light, thus balance is very much subjective, but I consider my questions were always balanced”.

Producer D insists that ONE TV producers work hard for a balanced programme in the panel, however, “very often PN speakers fail to attend, and so the programme turns out completely different from what is expected”. When asked about the AD representatives,

¹⁷⁹ This producer described his programme *Vici Versa* as a programme that had the aim of sending a political message, though not necessarily an impartial message.

she admits that their lack of visibility is due to the fact that they are less invited than the PN representatives. Even PBS news editor admits that as for the news bulletins, the coverage of the small political parties, namely AD is minimal due to logistical and content purposes. A random sample of statistics gathered by PBS¹⁸⁰ showed a huge difference in media coverage for the three parties highlighting the lack of AD reporting. In the news for April 2011, AD was reported in 4 news items, the Labour Party¹⁸¹ were reported in 17 news items and the Nationalist Party¹⁸² got 93 news items; in February 2011 AD was reported in 3 news items, the Labour Party featured in 13 news items and the Nationalist Party in 61 news items. According to the PBS news editor they have fewer issues and “thus the coverage has to be dealt in different manner”. Regulator N also speaks about the participation of AD in the local media and explains that the Constitution does not make a distinction between political parties which are represented in Parliament and other political parties. On the other hand, as far as the scheme of political broadcasts is concerned, the law obliges the Broadcasting Authority to include ‘political parties represented in Parliament’ within the scheme¹⁸³ and this would mean that AD will not participate in the scheme of political broadcasts. However, since it was set up, the Broadcasting Authority “fairly apportion”¹⁸⁴ the time allotted to the political parties in political broadcasts and includes the AD in the broadcasts since the Constitution asks for all parties to be represented. Even though the law states the above, it does not mean that the other political parties cannot or should not be included in such a scheme. This point was made by the Constitutional Court

¹⁸⁰ This secondary data was gathered by PBS for the 8pm news bulletins.

¹⁸¹ Including the Labour Party news reports and the events held by the Leader of the Opposition

¹⁸² Including the Nationalist Party news reports and the events held by the Ministers and the Prime Minister.

¹⁸³ The Broadcasting Act refers to political parties represented in Parliament. The Constitution makes no such distinction. It discriminates between parties not on the basis of Parliamentary representation but on the basis of fairness.

¹⁸⁴ A term used in the Broadcasting Act, Article 13 (4)

in *Wenzu Mintoff et noe vs. Chairman, Broadcasting Authority et.*¹⁸⁵ In fact, such apportionment of time is given during the political broadcast scheme produced by the Broadcasting Authority. Article 119 of the Constitution of Malta states that, ‘broadcasting facilities and time are fairly apportioned between persons belonging to different political parties.’ This applies to any programme, including the Authority’s own party political schemes or any other broadcasts the BA organises¹⁸⁶. The term ‘fairly’ and not ‘equal’ is used in the Constitution, hence a smaller party gets less time than a bigger party. It is meant that a political party which has a bigger representation in Parliament and a bigger bite in the electoral vote would get a little more time than the other party represented in Parliament¹⁸⁷. The ‘fairly apportions’ time is determined on a case by case basis by the Broadcasting Authority. The Broadcasting Authority meets party political representatives to discuss the individual procedures. Before drawing up such a scheme, such meetings are held through a matter of good practice as the Broadcasting Authority is not bound by law to meet up with the representatives of political parties. The criterion for the time allotted to the political parties by the Broadcasting Authority has been popular support.

When referring specifically to an electoral campaign, Producer H, hailing from a political station pointed out that having both Secretaries General of the opposing party debating together in one programme on a political station during an electoral campaign is not a common event. He proudly observed that his programme invited both Secretaries General

¹⁸⁵ *Dr Wenzu Mintoff and Saviour Balzan in the name and in the interest of Alternattiva Demokratika (AD) vs. Chairman of the Broadcasting Authority, the Minister for Culture and the Prime Minister*, Constitutional Court, 31 July 1996

¹⁸⁶ In 2004 the BA organised another series of political broadcasts entitled *Malta u L-Ewropa* during the EU referendum electoral period

¹⁸⁷ Prof Kevin Aquilina, ex BA Chief Executive and now Dean of the Faculty of Law, University of Malta

and commented that this is “something which was not even done by the other political station”. He argues that in principle he believes in balance which he describes it as “giving the chance to people to say what they like even if that means criticising you”. He refers to his discussion programme where the production team invited both Secretary General of the big political parties, and were given the chance to criticize and attack the political party which owns the political station. In the face to face interviews, when producers spoke about achieving balance in the programmes through a balanced panel and a balanced number of guests, it was observed that in the framing of balance, the producers always mentioned the two big political parties and thus excluding the Green Party. Again this reinforces the duo mentality that for a programme to be balanced two political viewpoints seem to be enough. These interviews show according to news-workers, that they strive to achieve impartiality and balance in current affairs programmes even if such programmes are produced on the political stations, however, due to their biases in the overall broadcasting of the station, in this case, particularly in news bulletins, the viewers would find it hard to understand that such attempts are made.

The challenges faced by PBS (Malta) in a partisan political environment

Producer G, having worked in a managerial capacity years ago at PBS (at the time Xandir Malta) argues that PBS has a much greater challenge than the other stations because it has the pressure to be and to be perceived as independent, however, he admits

“...definitely PBS is not that “cool” as one might expect it to be”.

However, Regulator M believes that PBS is loyal with regard to the presentation of news programmes and argues that is by far distinct from the other two political stations. After all

it is its duty that even in an electoral campaign, PBS “being the national station has to make all the views/voices known”. Such duty is felt even from the present PBS management and even though PBS is only partly funded by Government, ex PBS Chief Executive works so that PBS gives importance to producing balanced programmes as this would mean more viewership resulting in more revenue from the advertisers. Ex PBS Editor admits that it is important for them to produce balanced programmes because:

“even though we are a public station we cannot keep working at losses, so we have to break even too and to break even you have to get money because you have to invest in other things”.

It seemed that PBS news enjoys more popularity and viewership amidst pluralism in Malta because the viewers are being exposed to the news coming from different sources, two of them political parties, and in such a scenario, PBS seem to match with the Italian saying ‘*fra due litiganti il terzo gode*’¹⁸⁸, thus viewers are inclined to watch PBS rather than the two politically motivated stations. On this matter, Interviewee Q argued that since political stations in their news bulletins tend to exaggerate about their party and criticize blindly the other party’s activities, then the viewers have no alternative than to watch PBS to try to gather the facts. He interestingly observed that the news are so ‘corrupt’ that people tend to watch the first 15 minutes of One TV¹⁸⁹, then tune in to Net TV¹⁹⁰ for the other 15 minutes and then watch PBS news¹⁹¹. However he observed that:

“we are talking of credibility in the midst of total bias, bias and lies, one has to go beyond bias, to get the news”.

¹⁸⁸ This is an Italian expression suggesting that between two rivals, the third party will benefit

¹⁸⁹ One TV news starts at 19.30

¹⁹⁰ Net TV news starts at 19.45

¹⁹¹ TVM news starts at 20.00

Thus PBS is following the mission attributed to other public broadcasters in Europe of working upon a service offering quality and impartiality amongst other. (d'Haenens & Bardoel, 2007)

How were Local Councils treated in the media's reporting of the 2006 local electoral campaign?

While the news bulletins had an element of electoral campaigning, surprisingly, current affairs and discussion programmes on the public service broadcaster did not tackle any local council matters in the 2006 electoral campaign as also mentioned by the interviewees above. From the two week sample analysed¹⁹², it showed that it was only current affairs programmes broadcast on the political stations, particularly One TV, that treated Local Council issues. Producer G's discussion programme¹⁹³ treated the issue of Local Council elections in one of his programmes. The producer argues that since the programme treated current affairs he could not leave out Local Council matters:

“Current affairs mean you take note of what happens in the country, things that the people talk about”.

Producer J spoke about her programme which dealt with projects and activities organized by the Local Councils. While she says that the programme was not propagandistic and was “very objective”, she admits that the features¹⁹⁴ covered in the programme differed from each other depending whether the Local Council had a Nationalist majority or a Labour majority. In a somewhat contradictory argument she described the same programme broadcast during a Local Council electoral campaign, as, “a billboard for the party and part

¹⁹² between 20th February 2006 and 9th March 2006

¹⁹³ aired on a political party station

¹⁹⁴ A news service wherein an analysis of issue/s are presented in an already packaged clip.

of the party machine”, and admitted that during this time period the programme is not objective. She also agrees that very often even visuals are used as a means of propaganda and says that she is sending the party’s message through the programme. In fact, during an electoral campaign this programme did change the emphasis on the content aiming to send a partisan political message. Local Council electoral issues in 2006 were given importance in discussion and current affairs programmes broadcast on the Labour Party political station contrary to what happened on the Nationalist Party TV station. In fact two conflicting ideas were registered between Producer D who said that being a political station, One TV gave importance to Local Council elections, whereas Producer I, journalist from Net TV, admits that the Local Council election campaign is not given a lot of importance by the station, because:

“it is not a nationwide election and two thirds of the Maltese population who are out of the local election, would not be interested in what is happening in other localities”.

The same argument that only one third of the population would be voting in local councils was raised by Producer B who pointed out that Local Councils issues might not be necessarily relevant to the audience and probably two thirds of the population (the non voters) would not be interested in such elections, and thus this was one of the reasons why Local Council electoral issues were not put forward on his programme:

“Being a programme broadcast on a national station, I have to discuss national agenda”¹⁹⁵.

¹⁹⁵ One of the topics discussed during the programme was the issue of the surcharge on water & electricity bills.

He argues that producers follow the viewers' needs and tastes and Producer B admits that they give what the viewers want and thus they avoid covering the Local Council electoral campaign because the Maltese viewers are presented with a lot of political issues and news stories throughout the year. This tallies with Harrison & Woods (2001) pointing out that the broadcaster has to be aware of the public's needs and PSB has to have a democratic potential and appeal to the public good. This is similar to McNair's argument (2009) in that journalism is to inform citizens with what they want to know. However from the above interviewees' comments, it seemed that there is a disagreement regarding what the viewers' want to know so one would ask whether really and truly the local producers are gauging what the viewers' need. One might argue that One TV gave importance to Local Council issues during the 2006 electoral period since being the party in Opposition wanted to capture a good number of votes, showing that such political party is still having the support of the electorate albeit amongst a smaller number of the Maltese population.

The lack of broadcasting directives during a Local Council election which are usually issued for a General Election did not impinge on the producers. Regulator N explained that contrary to what happens in a General Election campaign, the Broadcasting Authority does not ask the stations for the subjects and the participants of the current affairs programmes before they are broadcast, however, he says the BA insists that programmes are not used for electioneering. Even though it seemed that very few restrictions from the BA were in place for the 2006 Local Council electoral campaign, the producers, particularly, those of the public broadcaster, did not choose to produce and present current affairs programmes which focus on Local Council matters. This contrasts with what will be discussed later on

in this chapter, that broadcasting regulations at times hinder the production of programmes due to restrictive measures taken by the Broadcasting Authority.

How impartial is the reporting of political events/activities by the political stations?

One of the main arguments raised during the face to face interviews, was the reporting of political activities and events, particularly the method of reporting the politicians. Producer D, who manages the newsroom of a political station, justifies the fact that her journalists produce news reports reporting on what was not tackled by the political speaker during a political event:

“If we do not report these things, no other media would. When politicians do not want to give us any comments we have to report this ... no other institute of journalist defended us on such drawbacks that we face”.

Producer F, a journalist in a political station agreed,

“... a journalist can be in a position to report what was not said. We want to be journalists and not tape recorders”.

However, counter arguments to this attitude method was voiced by Interviewee Q, “news is not what was not said”, while referring to particular instances aired on the political stations; “...such reporting should not be included in the news”. The journalist is allowed to investigate the story but cannot report something which was not said or which the journalist thinks should have been said. However, while opting for such journalism, news-workers did not agree that partisan comments should be included in news reports. To one of the news item taken from the sample chosen and aired on One TV on 1st March 2006, wherein the journalist described the Mgarr Harbour project as “a complete disaster”, Producer D

was not in favour of such blatant propaganda. However, in chapter 6, the participants of the focus group also commented on the way this stand upper was presented which was thought to be partisan.

As seen even from the sample showed to the focus group participants, the presentation of news stories particularly of political news items differs greatly from one political station to another. Net News, being administered by the party in government¹⁹⁶, stresses the positive things while One News continuously stresses the negative. This is done through words and visuals and both stations spin the news story according to what partisan political message they would want to convey. This goes against what is highlighted by media theorists that news is sacred (Tuchman, 1977; McQuail, 1992; Goodwin, 1992), something which Producer I comments upon; “news has to remain news and not commentary”, and the journalist has to get the facts and cannot include any comments.

Do news-workers make a distinction between being a news reporter and working on a current affairs programme?

I thought of putting forward such a question mainly to news-workers of the political stations because throughout the interview it was evident that they have different roles to play within the news organisation and also the party structure. While they admit that they have to be impartial and balanced in their work, they are aware that their role is to propagate the political party’s message. Some news-workers within the political stations were asked about conflicting messages they were transmitting to the viewers due to the different ‘roles’ they had within the political station they worked in. When asked

¹⁹⁶ at the time of empirical research

specifically how to defend the partisanship element in their journalistic work, Producer F disagrees that he is a partisan journalist, and criticizes the other party for building up such a perception of him, “putting me on a political platform...; and tarnishing my journalistic credibility”. According to the journalists of the political stations interviewed for this study, while a journalist has to refrain from passing any political comments in the news reports, the journalist/presenter can pass his own personal and political judgements or opinions when presenting a discussion programme. Producer H within the same organization presents two purely political programmes classified by the producer himself as the daily political message of the party targeting supporters and getting across the “party’s message”¹⁹⁷ and points out that in such a programme he is expected to pass on political comments and judgements. He adds that it depends “on which chair I am sitting”. This indicates that the presenter is made to have different roles and distinguishes between the production of news and other types of programmes and he argues that whenever he produces news he has to decide and act differently than when he produces programmes conveying a political message. However, according to Producer H the viewers are more influenced by the station ownership rather than the way the presenter produces the programme. This did not tally with what most of the participants in the focus group suggested as will be shown in Chapter 6. They generally did blame the personality of the journalist particularly when the journalist was responsible for a news report and when the journalist turned out to be quite arrogant with the politician interviewed or reported. They argued that the blame for the lack of impartiality has to be upon the journalist and not the station which is reporting the news report. In fact Producer H explains that the news

¹⁹⁷ The two programmes had different formats; one programme in the form of a one to one interview mainly featured differences between what was promised by the Government and what happened in reality, the other programme consisted of partisan features criticizing the Government and praising the work of the Opposition

produced by the political party station is always at a disadvantage compared with the public broadcaster. He points out viewers still do not believe the political party station news if they happen to be the supporters of the opposing party. Producer H says that if One News or Net News would report a truly and factual news story, the supporters of the opposing party would still not trust the story reported by their party's station even if it would have been totally factual. He admits that:

“The people do not believe the truthif for instance that story is being factually reported by Super 1, then for them [referring to the Nationalist Party supporters] it is wrong if the story is against the Government”.

On the same line of thought, Producer H thinks that the viewers' perception about TVM is that it is the most balanced TV station for news, but he points out that:

“It can only be a perception, you can do a very good news service and say that it is balanced but psychologically you are instilling other issues through the journalist's news script writing”.¹⁹⁸

This was quite an ‘allegation’, an argument which is raised locally that while PBS is seen to be the most impartial, balance, objective and credible, the public service broadcaster might be using certain techniques in its news reporting to send in a subtle message. Though PBS challenges in achieving impartiality is meticulously worked up and more than the other stations, its political output should be geared to achieve impartiality and objectivity (Kuhn, 1985)

¹⁹⁸ Producer H here refers to an example which was broadcast some days before the face to face interview was held. The PBS news item reported that PL Executive meeting and the item was introduced “...with closed doors, and security guards by the door, the PL Executive meeting met...”. Producer H argues that such a news picture gave a twisted and slanted picture of what in reality happened. He argues that a security guard and is the norm in public/official places and front doors of establishments are usually closed. He pointed out that such script, however, gave the viewers the impression that something secretive and wrong is happening.

Section B :-

How are broadcasting regulations administered to achieve impartiality and balance?

The second part of the chapter will shed light on the way interviewees spoke about the broadcasting regulations and legislation in relation to impartiality and balance. Parts of the interview addressed the regulatory aspect of broadcasting. The majority of interviewees interpreted the legislation and other regulations put forward by the Broadcasting Authority as an attempt to achieve impartiality and balance in news programming. Producers were asked to comment on broadcasting regulations and whether such regulations needed to be amended in order to achieve impartiality. Quite a radical stand on broadcasting regulations and the Broadcasting Authority was suggested by Producer B. He thinks that TV broadcasting could be similar to the print broadcasting which does not have any regulatory body. He comments:

“I do not think that the country is collapsing (reached its lowest level) because we have newspapers having a different editorial line”.

However, one has to point out that broadcasting regulations and broadcasters having an editorial line are two separate matters. With the broadcasting regulations in place, stations still can have, or ought to have their editorial line.

Alternatively if broadcasting is still subject to regulation, Producer A insists that the BA should have the responsibility to control all the private stations alike including the political stations. He argues that it is impossible to ask for balance and objectivity because “everyone has his/her biases”, though he still agrees that there should be some form of

broadcasting regulations because, "...there is some form of balance which everyone agrees upon".

Some criticized the regulator for not adhering to its watchdog responsibility, an issue raised by the focus group participants as well, arguing that the Broadcasting Authority is very often perceived as the toothless regulator, something which is reflected in the Mediterranean model (Hallin & Mancini, 2001). Producer B argues that the BA "abdicated its responsibility from controlling the media in Malta" because according to Producer B it only controls PBS on the basis of balance and impartiality, while letting the political stations "balance each other out" and describes the situation as "Nero plays the harp while Rome is on fire". Producer C believes that since PBS is a public television, each programme has to be balanced and this does not tally with the Broadcasting Authority's regulation (as stated in Article 13 (2) (c) to (f) of the Broadcasting Act and Paragraph 12 of the Requirements of News and Current Affairs Programmes that balance can be reached across a series of programmes. He declares that: "for me it is not really acceptable that balance is achieved over a series of programmes". However, PBS ex Chief Executive argues that the Broadcasting Authority should look at the series of programmes as a whole and not issue a charge against the station on the basis of solely one current affairs programme which the Authority thinks is not balanced or is not impartial. Others believe that every programme has to be balanced and this should be applied to all the programmes on all stations. Producer I believes that through such balance the broadcasting station will gain credibility and thus more audiences. The present broadcasting legislation does create an anomaly in the way PBS is treated differently than the other private stations. According

to Article 13 (2) (f) of the Broadcasting Act, this article excludes the public service broadcaster to be included in the regulation of impartiality over a series of programmes¹⁹⁹. Producer C, while insisting that there is balance within the programmes broadcast by TVM, states that it does not make sense that the other stations “balance each other out”. He argues that all TV stations are competing for audiences, thus he insisted on a level playing field amongst the local TV stations,

“...I do not have a problem that our news bulletins are scrutinized but their [referring to the private stations] news bulletins should be scrutinized too and they should be reporting as factually as we do”.

This ‘different treatment’ is described as “bizarre” by Producer L, who observes:

“The BA insists on the state broadcaster and not on the commercial stations”.

PBS ex Chief Executive suggested the Broadcasting Act should be amended in the sense that the Broadcasting Authority would not be allowed to look at only one programme but over a whole series of programmes. He compared the audio visual media to the print media, describing the latter as being more liberal in the sense that each newspaper would have an opinion writer with specific political leanings. He insists that the Broadcasting Authority should take into consideration the platform on which the programme is being aired:

¹⁹⁹ Article 13 (c) (f) states:- “... that due impartiality is preserved in respect of matters of political or industrial controversy or relating to current public policy:

Provided that, except in the case of public broadcasting services, in applying paragraphs (c) to (f), the Authority shall be able to consider the general output of programmes provided by the various broadcasting licensees and contractors, together as a whole.

“If the platform [referring to the channel] is balanced then there is no need for the Broadcasting Authority to go into the details of production, episode and every programme”.

It is interesting to note in this respect that if one looks at the Subsidiary Legislation 350.14 particularly Paragraph 12.2 (see Note U in Appendix i), such paragraph does speak on impartiality over a series of programmes and this Subsidiary Legislation does not distinguish between the political stations and the public broadcaster. Another interviewee commented on the interpretation of the regulations, that the stations ‘balance each other out’. Producer G is also against part of the requirement in the Broadcasting Act which gives the right to the stations “to balance each other out”²⁰⁰. The article does not explicitly state this and it is only by way of interpretation that producers are concluding this mythical belief. However, the practical procedure which the Broadcasting Authority follow gives makes this interpretation valid. As referred earlier in this chapter, part of Article 13 (2) states that:

“...the Authority shall be able to consider the general output of programmes provided by the various broadcasting licensees and contractors, together as a whole”.

This does not necessarily mean that the political stations are allowed to balance out each other. While at one time the Broadcasting Authority did interpret such proviso as such, however, this is not written in the Act and the general output of programmes as a whole

²⁰⁰ In effect Article 13 (2) of the Broadcasting Act stipulates a number of requirements amongst is due impartiality in news and current affairs and impartiality has to preserved in respect of matters of political or industrial controversy or relating to current public policy. However the same Article states that with regard to these requirements, amongst others,

“... except in the case of public broadcasting services, the Authority shall be able to consider the general output of programmes provided by the various broadcasting licensees and contractors, together as a whole”.

might indicate that it is referring to the output of programmes within the station and not comparing the output of the two political stations.

Producer G spoke against what he called a “loophole” in the broadcasting legislation because:

“this means that we have given the licence to the stations to be completely unbalanced.... then the law stipulates that in the fullness of time one can do a programme which create balance”.

Producer G who was a Member of Parliament when this Broadcasting Bill was being discussed, observed that, at the time, Government took the “short cut” and passed the Broadcasting Bill with a simple majority, and did not go into the hassle to change parts of the Constitution as this requires two thirds majority. He explains that there is a conflict between the Constitution that states that in matters of public policy there has to be absolute balance and exact timing and the law which is not that clear in this regard. This has never been tackled by politicians and therefore “we are broadcasting in a state of illegality” till the law and the Constitution would both reflect the call for balance and perhaps equal apportionment of time.

Should BA regulations be different for the public broadcaster?

The consensus of opinion emerging from the interviews was that the producers agreed that the Broadcasting Authority should seek to ensure that all stations are balanced as voiced by Producer C. The focus should not only be on the public station, and some criticized the fact that the Broadcasting Authority refrains from taking action against the lack of balance on

the political stations. Others, amongst them Producer F, were more in favour of relying on the viewers' intelligence and argued that since the viewers are aware of the political agenda of the political stations, then such stations can 'balance each other out'. Such a scenario is possible as long as the public service broadcaster is fair and perceived to be fair. Producer F finds it unacceptable that a presenter of the public service broadcaster expresses his/her personal partisan political opinion while he/she still presents and produces a current affairs/discussion programme²⁰¹. He says that:

“at least there should be an attempt that on the national broadcaster there is the perceived impartiality”.

However other interviewees maintained that the BA's role should be a watchdog for PBS only. Actually a regulator interviewed in this study does admit that the Broadcasting Authority is more focused on PBS and points out that the law demands more impartiality from PBS. As he observes:

“Without doubt (the Authority is more focused on PBS) because this is what the law asks for as well [referring to proviso 13 (2) of the Broadcasting Act]²⁰², and this is how things should be because PBS is the national station...it is everyone's station”. (Regulator M)

However one should note that the Constitution of Malta does not refer to these differences in between the public service broadcaster and the other private stations.

²⁰¹ clearly referring to a current case at the time of the interview, when a presenter of an outsourced current affairs programme broadcast on TVM expressed his political sympathies publicly

²⁰² “Provided that, except in the case of public broadcasting services, in applying paragraph (c) to (f), the Authority shall be able to consider the general output of programmes provided by the various broadcasting licensees and contractors, together as a whole”

During the interviews, the interviewees – producers and regulators – in some instances did not make a distinction between news bulletins and current affairs programmes. Regulator N explains that the broadcasting regulations apply for all the stations however interestingly he admits that:

“Rules apply for all but I do not think that they are being enforced, ... both political stations contain excessive comments and such comments are not distinct from the facts”.

He is hinting that even the Broadcasting Authority as a regulator is not strong enough to see that the stations adhere to the Broadcasting Legislation. This reflects the regulators’ stand in a Mediterranean/Polarized Pluralist media model (Hallin & Mancini, 2001) wherein the regulatory authority is considered to be quite weak. Thus the perception that the Broadcasting Authority is criticized as being weak, a criticism which was also voiced in the focus groups, is after all not a unique characteristic for Malta.

The two concepts of impartiality and balance by the national broadcaster are stipulated in the Constitution of Malta²⁰³ and also mentioned in Article 13 of the Broadcasting Act (referred to in an earlier footnote). There are also Court verdicts which stated that PBS has to be balanced and impartial. Regulator O (ex BA Chief Executive) points out that for PBS being balanced and impartial is not a question of self regulation but the law imposes such obligations on the public broadcaster. Regulator O explains why the Broadcasting Authority, in its watchdog role, focuses more on PBS rather than on the other political

²⁰³ Article 119 (1) of the Constitution of Malta states:

It shall be the function of the Broadcasting Authority to ensure that as far as possible, in such sound and television provided in Malta, due impartiality is preserved in respect of matters of political or industrial controversy or relating to current public policy and that broadcasting facilities and time are fairly apportioned between persons belonging to different political parties.

stations. Since PBS being the public service broadcaster has more obligations imposed on it through the Broadcasting Act, this leaves the Broadcasting Authority to be more “vigilant” with PBS rather than the other commercial stations, including the political stations. Legislation does make a distinction between PBS and the other commercial stations and this is evident in the obligations imposed by law with regard to PBS licensing. As Regulator O puts it, “Other stations do not have the same licensing obligations as PBS does”. These obligations used to be conveyed from the Second Schedule of the Broadcasting Act (Paragraphs 16 -19), PBS Licence and the Public Service Obligation and the National Broadcasting Policy which focuses on the public broadcasting services. Paragraph 19²⁰⁴ of the Second Schedule specifically pointed to the production of news and current affairs programming whilst achieving impartiality on the public service. Regulator O stated that due to certain conditions in the PBS licence, the Broadcasting Authority has the right over PBS in programming, scheduling and the choice of producers. However, Regulator O admits: “the Authority does not exercise this right”. He explains that the Broadcasting Authority receives the PBS quarterly schedule and only sees that the schedule proposed is balanced and impartial “and stops there”. He continues that “strictly speaking the Authority can decide the type of programming of any genre, and not only gives its input or feedback but the final decision would be of the Broadcasting Authority and not of PBS.”²⁰⁵ On the other hand, Regulator P points out that the Authority does not have a legal

²⁰⁴ Paragraph 19 of the Second Schedule states:-

“The public broadcasting media have the particular responsibility of providing news and current affairs programming which respect the Constitutional requisites of adequate impartiality, and which shall also be in line with journalistic principles aimed at ensuring a comprehensive and accurate information service in the interests of a democratic and pluralistic society. They should be leaders in providing quality television to the Maltese public with regard to programming, news and analysis and should be able to interpret the guidelines issued by the Authority in respect of news and current affairs not as rigid straight jacketing but as a flexible tool in the hands of creative journalists”.

²⁰⁵ Article 23 (2) states :

mandate to ask PBS who can produce its programmes. The Authority “only has the mandate to approve the programme schedules”. The emphasis on more obligations and greater accountability on PBS towards the public and with regard to the obligations of impartiality was also mentioned by Regulator P.

From the interviewees it transpired that news-workers are in favour of revising the position of the Broadcasting Act to clarify the wrong idea of ‘balancing each other out’. Producer G calls “a big shame” that technically there can be a programme totally in favour of one issue because the Broadcasting Act only asks that such a programme can be balanced with another programme within the same series. When Regulator P was asked about the lack of balance and impartiality in the political stations, he commented that for the political station:

“ [it] is another matter, how much can you regulate the political parties with regard to impartiality and slant?”

Though the majority of interviewees did not see any relevance of having regulations which would differ for the public broadcaster and the other stations, Producer H, hailing from a political station, agrees that BA regulations should only be for PBS because One and Net TV balance out each other;

“Let ONE and Net be free from regulations, and regulate PBS”.

Having said that, Producer H agrees that there should be a set of guidelines regulating how a current affairs programme should be produced and specifically mentioned cases when

‘... no person providing broadcasting services in Malta may transmit any programme unless it forms part of a programme schedule approved in writing, in advance, by the Authority, in accordance with this article.

(3) A programme schedule –

- (a) shall be drawn up in consultation with the Authority, and
- (b) shall be for a period to be determined by the Authority;

guests do not accept the invitation to participate in the programme because such behaviour itself results in one-sided programmes particularly in the case of political stations. He explains that the guest chooses not to come to the programme so as not to be “ridiculed” by the viewers and this leads to one sided programme because the guests who would accept an invitation to take part in the programme would be the people siding with the political party or the policy of that political party. In other words, Producer H puts the blame for a one side programme, in this case, on the lack of participation of the guest and not on the presenter or producer of that programme. Again Interviewee Q also points out that the political stations have to be kept as they are because in their very nature they would have this political slant and agrees with the practice that the political stations balance each other out. He concludes that:

“once the licence was given to these political stations, one had to adopt this rule (referring to the ‘leeway’ of the Broadcasting Act) because if not, then these political stations would be fined every day”.

As from the regulators’ point of view, Regulator M who has been a Board member in the BA for more than ten years (at the time of the interview) admits that the practice has always been that the political stations balance each other and admits “something that I cannot come to terms with”, describing the situation, “allowing a lie balancing another lie”. While he accepts that on the political stations there is bias, he insists that facts and comments should be kept separate even on these political stations, a statement which was also voiced in the focus groups. But he explains that the Constitution of Malta outweighs

the Broadcasting Act and it is only the Broadcasting Act which allows the political stations to balance each other:

“I believe the political parties are abusing their role and we [the Broadcasting Authority] console ourselves that they are balancing each other out”.

Another regulator, agrees with his colleague and says that: “it is not the best solution” that the political stations balance each other out. Here one has to point out whether an unbalanced programme can be considered part of quality programming. Regulator N stated that when a programme is one sided, then it is stale and not interesting and thus would effect the quality of the programme.

BA ex Chief Executive argues that the proviso itself in the Broadcasting Act allows that the programmes on the political stations have a slant because of the proviso in the Act which allows balance over a series of programmes. Regulator P also refers to the proviso²⁰⁶ in the Broadcasting Act which was established after the introduction of the political stations because:

“the legislator saw it would be impossible that the political parties stations would follow the restricted obligation imposed by the Constitution”.

Thus, according to this Act, with regard to impartiality, the BA can look “at the general output”. According to Regulator P this means that the BA should look at the general output of broadcasting and not necessarily the general output of a particular station. From the interviews with some members of the regulatory body I could see discrepancies in the way they look at concepts of balance and impartiality but also at the interpretation of a programming series. Specifically in this regard while Regulator P sheds doubt on what

²⁰⁶ See Note V in Appendix i

should be interpreted as the general output, the proviso to the Broadcasting Act, that is, Paragraph 12.2 of the Subsidiary legislation states clear that a series:

“means a number of current affairs programmes, broadcast in the same service, each one of which is clearly linked to the others, and which deals with the same or related issues”.

As already referred above in this chapter, the Broadcasting Authority does tend to see impartiality on the general output of broadcasting and not necessarily on the individual station.

“I think that the myth of balancing each other out was the result of this interpretation of the Act, because neither the legislation as in the Act, nor the Constitution does state that stations can balance each other out”. (Regulator P)

This idea, brought in by the Broadcasting Authority, that the political stations balance each other, might not be interpreted as the political balance which is required by the Constitution and in fact it has been criticized by many in the local media industry. Such an interpretation would mean that news and current affairs in particular can be used as weapons of propaganda – broadcasting a political message because the competitive ‘political’ news will do the same.

Furthermore, Regulator P admits that,

“it is impossible to eliminate editorial slant on the political stations and manage to make these stations as impartial as the public service broadcaster.”

He insists that,

“it is difficult to envisage in the BA requirements the same level of impartiality from the political stations as you expect from the public service broadcaster”.

This indicates that the broadcasting legislation has to reflect this difference in ownership though it is not yet clear whether there should be different requirements for the different stations. During his interview, Regulator P also made reference to the commercial channel, Smash TV which should adhere to the legislation of impartiality and balance as the public service broadcaster.

Balance and impartiality – is there a difference between these two concepts?

An interesting assumption voiced during the interviews by the producers and also the regulators was that they tend to speak of the two concepts - balance and impartiality - as one concept. Producers and regulators were talking about balance over a series of programmes, wherein the subsidiary legislation (SL 350.14) only refers to impartiality and not balance, as seen in the proviso 12.2. Thus while the interviewees were voicing the term “balance”, in effect they were referring to “impartiality”.

Regulator N refers to the discrepancy between the Constitution of Malta and the Broadcasting Act. While the Broadcasting Act refers to the whole output of the series, the Constitution does not state that. Regulator N says,

“In my opinion the fact that a series of programmes creates balance from one programme to another is not an ideal form of balance. The best balance in broadcasting is achieved when an effort is made to balance each and every programme”.

Paragraph 12.2 (see Note U in Appendix i) of the Requirements of News and Current Affairs Programmes in a way interprets the disposition of the Constitution of Malta and the Broadcasting Act stating that impartiality is not necessarily achieved in one programme but it can be achieved over a number of programmes in a series. Regulator O explains that,

“having said that the Broadcasting Authority can take steps against the station on one particular programme if such a programme would go against other requirements, however, if the programme would consist of a one-to-one interview with the Prime Minister, and then the station balance such a programme two months after with an interview with the Leader of the Opposition, then the Broadcasting Authority cannot take action against the station.”²⁰⁷

The discrepancy between the Constitution of Malta and the Broadcasting Act, has not yet been challenged by station owners and thus “the situation would remain as is” (Regulator O). As things stand presently and in such cases of discrepancies, the Constitution prevails the Broadcasting Act. Article 13 (2) of the Act only the term impartiality is used. The concept of balance is used in other paragraph in the Act when there is a reference to the political broadcasts organized by the Broadcasting Authority.

Are all the requirements in the Subsidiary Legislation 350.14 enforceable by the Broadcasting Authority?

The procedure used in Malta with regard to penning down the legislation is done with the issuing of guidelines first, then a Legal Notice is formulated and passed through Cabinet

²⁰⁷ Regulator O quotes Paragraph 12 (2) of the News Requirements (SL350.14) stating, “where the broadcaster informs the viewers or listeners during the first programme of the date of the subsequent programme where he/she intends to balance the first programme given sufficient information as to the date of programme, subject of the programme and proposed participants.

and Parliament until finally a Subsidiary Legislation is presented and would be legally binding. Before the legal implementation the regulator gets feedback from the people in the industry. Guidelines are generally more detailed and extensive than a Legal Notice, the latter being less descriptive not to hinder the producers in their work. During the face to face interview in 2008, Regulator O explains that the Requirements are first issued as guidelines and then,

“eventually the Broadcasting Authority decides to put such guidelines as binding, particularly the requirements concerning the ethics in journalism; ...the political section was still kept as guidelines”.

In fact Sections 18 and 19 are not enforceable by the Broadcasting Authority but the onus falls on the public service broadcaster to choose whether to enforce such requirement or not.

During a General Election campaign, the Broadcasting Authority issues a Directive to all stations to provide information regarding the subjects and the participants who will be taking part in the current affairs programmes a month before its transmission. Through such a directive the BA Board could analyse whether such programmes are balanced. These directives, which are aimed at all the broadcasting stations, are criticized by a number of producers on different grounds. They argue of a loss of flexibility on the part of the producers and journalists working in current affairs programming. With regard to current affairs programming, these directives ask for the submission of detailed programme schedules to the Authority covering the period of the electoral campaign. In current affairs and discussion programmes; the producers are asked to provide a list of guests who will be

taking part in the programmes and the subjects which would be tackled. Such information is forwarded to the Authority for approval and following such approval no changes may be made to the schedule with the exception of a written detailed request by the station for change in schedule or other related information. This directive also states that all programmes should be balanced and programmes tackle diverse opinions on the subject discussed and that these should include the participation of the three political parties. The Authority, in this directive, insists on safeguarding balance and impartiality and that programmes should be in conformity with the law and in terms of information given by the political stations, such information is considered:

“in the light of the optional provision which may be exercised by the Authority in terms of article 13 (2) of the Broadcasting Act”.

(taken from The Broadcasting Authority Directive on Programmes and Advertisements broadcasting during the period 13th February to 10th March 2012, issued on 8th February 2012 accessed from <http://www.ba-malta.org/directives-directions> on 27th July 2013)

The requirement for information to be provided weeks before the programme was criticized by journalists. They explained that, given the nature of their work, a producer/journalist cannot plan a current affairs programme days ahead and wait for the approval of the Authority's Board.

Should there be broadcasting regulations?

The existing gaps between the Constitution, the Broadcasting Act and the Subsidiary Legislation, and the adherence to regulations are criticized by a number of producers

interviewed in the study. Several producers clearly stated that regulations are important to the broadcasting, however all broadcasting legislation have to be in harmony with each other to be effective. As Producer A states: “In political issues broadcasting regulations should be present”. The Broadcasting Authority faces conflict as it is caught between two big forces – the law and the Constitution. Since these were both done by the political parties, Producer G thinks the Broadcasting Authority:

“is trying to act out of logic, sometimes the BA goes in favour of one and in other times it goes in favour of the other”.

Some interviewees are against regulation because they feel restricted in their journalistic work. Producer D argues that she feels a bit restrained with the rules of the Broadcasting Authority because if the station does not abide by certain rules, the station will be fined. The producer again refers to the print media arguing that the print is free from regulations while TV and radio media is heavily regulated. As a station they have to be careful about many aspects of broadcasting such as news visuals, news comments, advertising in news etc. Some gave specific examples wherein the Broadcasting Authority imposes regulations which would impinge on the work of the journalist. Producer F refers to the BA directive issued some months before the elections asking the stations to present them with the discussion programme subjects and participants for the BA approval, as being not “feasible”. While agreeing that the broadcasting media cannot be a “laissez faire for everyone”, and the Broadcasting Authority should assess the journalists’ work and should reprimand journalists even before producing a programme²⁰⁸ if need be. The BA should be there to follow that broadcasting is going on smoothly especially in time of controversy but

²⁰⁸ here referring to the BA Directive which is issued by the writ of the every electoral campaign mainly asking stations to indicate the guest list for the current affairs programmes before being broadcast

“should not be there to hinder me from performing my journalistic duty”. A counter argument from Regulator M explains that the Broadcasting Authority has stricter regulations during an electoral campaign because the electorate should be given all the facts to make a political decision.

Bias on the part of PBS presenters?

Another issue which was discussed during the face to face interviews was whether PBS presenters should declare their biases. Sections 18 and 19 of the SL 350.14 refer to this matter, which are not enforceable by the BA but place the onus on PBS to enforce them, specifically are there to guarantee impartiality and independence of their presenters. Producer L who is a newspaper editor and regularly contributes to his newspaper, admits that when presenting the current affairs programme²⁰⁹ he is more objective in the sense that he shies away from adding his editorial comments contrary to what he does in his writings. When presenting the programme on PBS, “he cannot go over the limits”. On the other hand, Producer A, being a presenter on the public service broadcaster, argues that the fact that he presents a discussion programme on TVM, does not give him more responsibility than the other presenters. The responsibility of the presenter does not depend on the ownership of the station. Each station has to be ethical and responsible for what is being broadcast. Producer A insists that one has to declare his position on the subject before the start of the discussion programme to be fair with the viewers. He argues that he feels obliged to declare his position so that the viewers would know the presenter’s side and, “you are not deceiving the audience”. Those in favour of declaring their position during the programme argue that this does not impinge on the impartiality of the programme.

²⁰⁹ This current affairs programme consisted of a one to one interview

Producer G declares that in some occasions he declared his bias at the start of the programme and this does not impinge on the balance and lack of it in the programme. In his own words:

“The balance is gained on how I address and moderate the discussion and not through what I believe or not”.

Others agreed that even when a presenter declares his/her opinion in another media, more so if the presenter writes on the topic which the programme would be discussing, then it would be hard to achieve impartiality in the programme. Producer H is totally against programmes discussing issues which had been already tackled by the presenter/producer in another media wherein he/she had already declared his/her position. Producer H argues that in this way the programme is already one-sided and argues that the BA should not allow a programme administered by a private company on state television to discuss political current affairs. During the face to face interviews, there was criticism on one particular media company which was producing outsourced current affairs programmes for PBS (at the time). Producer H insists that a presenter on state television should not declare his biases because “he is paid from people’s money and he is obliged to be balanced”. He suggests that the BA should take a stand on this issue and state that if a presenter pens his/her opinion then he/she “...cannot produce and discuss programmes and subjects of a political nature”.

Producer B, on the other hand, who manages the same media company together with Producer A, states that he feels he should not declare his political biases during the programme. He argues that: “these come naturally during the programme”. Producer B

reasons that the viewers would make out the presenter's views from the way the programme is presented and produced but that does not hinder the producer of producing a fair programme. As he observes: "I do not think that anyone is neutral, but this does not mean that no one is fair". However, Producer B is not in favour of voicing his opinion in other media, particularly the print media and then treat the same subject during the programme. Regulator N commented about current affairs presenters and independent producers on PBS who publicly voice their beliefs and ideas. Regulator N refers to the BA regulations and says that such regulations state that as far as possible independent producers on PBS should not voice their political opinion and this helps the public perception on the station. It is interesting to note with the new amendments made in October 2008 of the Requirements of News and Current Affairs (SL 350.15) primarily issued on February 2007, such requirement became no longer enforceable by the Broadcasting Authority but may be applied by the public service broadcaster. Thus the onus on such a requirement no longer remained on the Broadcasting Authority. The same happened for Paragraph 18.1²¹⁰ of the same Requirements which refers to the impartiality of the Public Service Broadcaster, and the amendments [done] put the onus on the public service broadcaster to take any action if it deems necessary. Thus the legislation partly works on self regulation and auto regulation by the public service broadcaster even in issues which would impinge on achieving impartiality and balance. This would make it more difficult for the Authority to take steps against the station if the presenter declares his/her biases or giving his/her opinion in the print media or other form of media on any

²¹⁰ Paragraph 18.1 states that:

'Producers of news and current affairs programmes should have no outside interests or commitments which could damage the public service broadcaster's reputation for impartiality, fairness and integrity'.

controversial issue. Ultimately it has to be the presenter's responsibility not to pen his/her biases.

What do producers think of the Broadcasting Authority?

The sample of interviewees interviewed for this study spoke negatively on the structure of the Broadcasting Authority board, mainly due to its lack of representation. The producers were asked about the composition of the Broadcasting Authority's board and whether this reflects on the outcome of the results with particular focus on achieving impartiality and balance. The composition of the Board and its representation was harshly criticized by the producers and news-people interviewed in this study. Through its composition the Broadcasting Authority's interest is perceived to be for the political parties and not the viewers i.e. citizens. The Broadcasting Authority structure is seen to reflect a stereotypicality²¹¹ typical of Maltese society (Producer A) and is described as "scandalous" (Producer G). The interviewees are all in favour of the structure being changed in order to better reflect the structures and values of civil society. Its composition gives rise to the perception that "there is too much power in one pair of hands" (Producer B) and such power is also reflected in the public broadcasting. Producer B explains that the Prime Minister heads PBS, is the leader of a political station, appoints two members of the Broadcasting Authority Board and appoints the chairman²¹². The chairman's appointment

²¹¹ As already noted before the Broadcasting Authority is composed of two members from the two political parties (PN and PL) and the Chairman is chosen with the agreement of the Prime Minister and the Leader of Opposition. With respect to the member appointed for political parties, these may show decision making reflective of the policies of their respective party and in favour of the same party

²¹² If we follow Article 118 (2) of the Constitution of Malta it states that: 'The members of the Broadcasting Authority shall be appointed by the President, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister given after he has consulted the Leader of the Opposition'.

though is described as independent, due to the actual input²¹³ of the Prime Minister sheds doubt, in the eyes of the viewers, on how independent the Broadcasting Authority chairman is. As Producer C states:

“Nobody is independent, and he can be in favour of one and the next time in favour of the other. The Authority is continuously walking a tight rope trying to please either side.”

The same producer criticises the Board members for not being, “conducive to good broadcasting, to good journalism”. The inclusion of the third party in the Maltese political spectrum was mentioned by Producer G who pointed out that even though the third party has been on the Maltese political scene for more than 17 years, this party is still not represented on the Authority’s Board. Producer G points out:

“God forbids, if we will remain with the political party system in the Board, then at least there should be all the political views.”

The people at the helm of the Broadcasting Authority also gave their views on the structure of the Broadcasting Authority, mainly due to the members’ affiliation to the political parties. As Regulator M puts it, “Some board members think that their *raison d’etre* is to promote and safeguard the interest of their political party”. The nomination of the members from the political parties “might impede the possibility of being watchdogs on the political parties”. However, Regulator N denies that the four board members are in a way representative of a political party and he rests on the Article 118 (2)²¹⁴ states that the

²¹³ The BA chairman is appointed after an agreement between the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition and if they do not come to any agreement the Prime Minister will decide and have the last say.

²¹⁴ Article 118 (2) of the Constitution of Malta states that:-

Constitution of Malta members are appointed after an agreement between the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. He agrees that the board members might have “different political leanings but they are not representatives of any party”. The argument is between being representative and being appointed. Regulator N argues that a Board member is appointed but is not representative of a political party. Regulator P replies to the ongoing criticism of the BA structure, and agrees that, “the way board members are nominated over a number of years is wrong”. The Constitution which envisages that the people chosen as Board members have to be broadly acceptable in the Maltese society and thus should not in any way represent political parties, however, Regulator O adds:

“The Constitution does not say that the members have to represent a political party, ... but since the late 90s (1997/1998) the practice, for me a bad practice, was that the Nationalist Party leader and the Labour Party leader chose two members on each side”.

The members and the chairman are to be agreed upon between the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition but, as Regulator O puts it: “The real discussion between the political leaders is about the chairman”. The way that members of the Authority’s Board are nominated might also have a negative effect internally. The method of appointment was criticized as it might have a negative impact on the duties of the Authority, in that the Authority’s members might take decisions which favour the party which nominated them,

“the members’ perception is that they represent the Party that nominated them and their allegiance would be on the Party rather than on the Authority ...; ... such

“The members of the Broadcasting Authority shall be appointed by the President, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister given after he has consulted the Leader of the Opposition”.

position might make the Chairman in an awkward position and its authority is sometimes hindered” (Regulator O)

Concluding remarks

The focus of attention in this chapter has been on the people involved in preparing the news and producing news programmes. The producers were challenged on the methods used to achieve impartiality and balance in news broadcasting. Media producers were also asked about the broadcasting regulations and were asked whether such regulations hindered their work when producing news broadcasts. Regulators spoke about the measures and policies which are in place and which are used to intervene in issues of impartiality and balance. All interviewees had different opinions as to how impartiality and balance should be achieved and to what extent these two concepts should be worked upon depending on the TV station in question but agreed that the essential ingredients in a current affairs programme to achieve impartiality are the choice of subject, the choice of guests and the way the presenter places the questions and present the programme. On the other hand news is dictated by facts and through the reporting of accurate facts through reliable sources that it can only be fair and impartial, thus there should not be any editorial comments presented as part of the news reports. From the interviews conducted it was agreed that people turn to PBS news for a balanced picture and thus the responsibility is further entrusted on the public broadcaster to provide balance and impartial news programming. The producers agree that political stations are there to propagate the political party’s message, however, news bulletins have to remain factual since facts are sacred. The majority of interviewees did agree that while there are discrepancies and faulty interpretation of the broadcasting

legislation and regulations, the Broadcasting Authority has to remain strict with its regulations on the public service broadcaster. The next chapter will analyse the viewers' perception of impartiality and balance on the public broadcaster and the other two political stations. It will refer to the findings regarding the viewers' opinions, after a number of focus group sessions were held and after a sample of news items taken from the 2006 Local Council electoral campaign were viewed and discussed by the focus groups.

Chapter 6

Findings chapter

Nobody knows what news is – beyond that it should be accurate, fresh, timely and unexpected – and both interesting and important (Cook, 1998, p.72)

The news programmes through the audience's eyes

The following chapter looks at the results from focus groups which will shed light on how TV viewers perceive the messages communicated via news programmes and whether they think that the news messages are impartial and balanced. This chapter will also include an analysis of those news items presented to the participants of the focus groups. Such findings will throw light on how the audience views instances of perceived bias found in news bulletins and current affairs programmes. The focus group sessions gave participants an opportunity to analyse samples from news bulletins in a way they would not normally do as everyday consumers of news programming. The focus group participants were also given the opportunity to speak about the broadcasting regulatory system but as we shall see later on in this chapter, the majority was not knowledgeable of the work of the Broadcasting Authority in Malta concerning impartiality in news.

When analysing the focus group respondents, I will be treating news and current affairs as separate issues. This tallies with Schlesinger's view (1978) that both matters should be tackled separately. News bulletins and current affairs programmes tend to differ in the way journalists present news and current issues. In news reports there is less flexibility because

it should be a report of facts and should steer from in-depth analysis; in current affairs programmes, issues and current events are analysed and commented upon while keeping in mind that balance and impartiality should still be maintained. Primarily for this reason, the discussions on these two types of programming will be dealt with separately. In the focus group sessions the discussion focused on the three main TV stations analysed in this study.

How does the audience perceive the programming broadcast by the three largest TV stations?

There is a risk of seeing the relationship between news as a product of public service broadcaster and news as a product of a political station as good versus bad. Though this might be the generally accepted view, it may not necessarily be the case when one analyses media consumers' feedback, in this case the feedback of focus group participants. This was also perceived to be the case by the news workers interviewed and they admitted that TVM news is more credible and popular since it strive more for impartiality. These participants had markedly different opinions about these three TV channels. Some argued that TVM²¹⁵ is a tool in the hands of the Government and it remained so even after pluralism was introduced in 1991. Mr A stated that “the tendency [on TVM] is that it sends a message in favour of the Government...it has always been an instrument in the hands of Government” and adds that:

“the birth of the political stations was primarily to have the means to pass on their propaganda through a tool which is quite powerful”.

²¹⁵ TVM is the public service station in Malta. It is a state television channel but is partly financed by funds from Government and partly by adverts. TVM has to compete commercially with other commercial stations for the advertising revenue.

Such an argument was also voiced by Producer G in a face to face interview when the producer maintained that, because a political party spent its money on building a TV station, it would obviously use the TV station to transmit a political message.

The widespread feeling among interviewees and focus group members was that PBS was biased towards the Government. Partisan viewers were more aware of the partisan slant of news outlets, but participants were reluctant to decipher the slant or bias of the public service broadcaster news. They argued it was being more subtle in its news reporting. Ms K agrees and states that PBS always sides with the party which is in Government, be it the Labour Party or the Nationalist Party, though she points out that when the Labour Party was in Government in the seventies and eighties, PBS clearly sided with the Government at that time. However, some participants had a slightly different point of view and as Ms D stated that the message on TVM is more 'neutral', while Net and One TV are more 'partisan'. Some participants used more colourful language when they were asked to state what comes to mind when they follow TVM, Net and One News. Ms B said "I describe them as hell, heaven and maybe the present life". According to viewers, it is only natural that the three local stations transmit different messages. Even if the three stations consider themselves as objective Fiske's theory (1989) is that even 'objective' facts would consist of a slant. However, Mr C describes, the Maltese media reality as "frightening". Though the participants did not go as far to describe the political ideologies, Mr E observed that one is more left, the other is right and the third 'oscillates' in the middle. Mr F and Ms G both agree that while TVM is thought to be neutral, some news items are not necessarily neutral. It is interesting to note that the two participants had to count on the perception rather than

the factuality and this tells the audience can read behind the message. Mr F explained that TVM gives more priority and exposure to news items related to Government rather than news items related to the Opposition. This was evident in some of the secondary data referred to in Chapter 5. In TVM news, the short sound bites (hereinafter referred to s.o.t.²¹⁶) of the Government representatives by far outnumber that of the Opposition. According to a Parliamentary reply given by the Minister to a Parliamentary question put forward by an Opposition MP, between October 2011 and May 2012 TVM registered 27 s.o.t of the Prime Minister, 97 s.ot of Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries; while the Leader of the Opposition's sound bites added up to 18 and 10 for the Opposition speakers²¹⁷. The idea of using the station as a propaganda tool was also mentioned by Mr P who said that PBS is also used as a means of propaganda but “there are some checks and balances and ethical issues which restrain it from being a fully fledged propaganda station”. In this scenario the role of the public broadcaster is fundamental because in such a model of broadcasting, it should give priority to the truthfulness of the news (Harrison, 2006; Harrison & Woods, 2001).

Some interviewees were of the opinion that accusations of bias in PBS programming were somewhat exaggerated. Mr Y answered regarding comments that PBS has a slant in favour of the Government and said that it is the audience perception that PBS sides with the Government. However, statistics given in Parliament relating to the political items broadcast in news bulletins between January and September 2009 indicate that Prime

²¹⁶ sound on tape. This is the terminology used by the public service broadcaster in Malta which refers to the short comments asked by the journalists during the news and which are included as comments in the news items

²¹⁷ Parliamentary Question 34367, Sitting Date 14th May 2012, Question presented by MP Gino Cauchi and replied by the Minister Dolores Cristina

Minister's governmental activities amounted to 91 and Ministerial activities reported amounted to 392, while the Leader of Opposition's activities added up to 104. Such data reflected exclusively governmental activities and not partisan political activities wherein the Prime Minister participated as the Leader of the party²¹⁸. Moreover he argues that the message transmitted depends on the journalist who works on the story and the report presented would reflect his/her beliefs. To underline his point he refers to cases where journalists who used to work with political party stations now are working with PBS and thus the viewers would immediately associate a particular journalist with a particular political belief. Such situation would impinge on the 'perceived impartiality' which has been referred to in the previous chapter. Mr R agrees and describes it as the 'draining out' of journalists from political stations to independent media²¹⁹. This is what Hallin & Mancini (2004) termed as political parallelism wherein the journalists tend to be associated with their loyalty to the news organisation. In this case since the previous loyalty of the journalists would have been a political news organization, the tendency is that the viewers would associate them with that political viewpoint.

In attempting to measure the impact that news programmes broadcast had on viewers, there was considerable divergence of opinion as far as the participants of one particular focus group was concerned. Participants argued for a long time about the viewership of news mainly about the viewers who watch only one political station for the news. Mr T commented that:

²¹⁸ Parliamentary question 12200, Sitting Date 9th December 2009 , Question presented by Labour MP Anthony Agius Decelis and replied by the Minister Dolores Cristina

²¹⁹ Mr R refers to Keith Demicoli and Sergio Mallia who moved from Net news to TVM and Julia Farrugia who moved from One to Malta Today (an independent newspaper)

“the viewers who follow only one station which has a political agenda are not well informed because many news items do not have news value but mainly consist of political curiosity”.

This is in line with Producer’s B view (as referred to in Chapter 5) wherein he called that it would be an “unhealthy situation”, but Ms V observes that many viewers are “loyal to partisanship”. On the other hand, Mr N during a different session group argues that even viewers who tune in to only one political station according to their belief, might still be reluctant to watch news which is so staunchly partisan. Mr Y, contrary to Mr C’s comments, points out that very few people believe all that a political party says. The main reason for his argument is that with pluralism in place, the viewers are able to “sift what is reported to them”. In another session group, Mr P comments that ‘political fanatics’ would only watch programmes produced by one political station which they support and those who are not interested in politics “take the news of the political stations lightly”. All participants during this focus group agreed that an impartial station is very important in order that viewers may have multiple and balanced viewpoints and thus moving away from the political stations.

When asked to assess the overall service provided by the Maltese TV stations, participants felt that having three main TV stations did not necessarily mean that people are well informed. As Ms V admits, the situation is more confusing. In her own words:

“I don’t know in which Malta I am living”.

As common with a Mediterranean media model, given that the media is involved in political issues (Hallin & Mancini, 2004), political mobilization is felt from viewers

themselves. The three stations give a different interpretation of the facts but TVM tends to be more “realistic” but the other two realities “are completely different”. She is concerned about viewers who watch only one station because they are “being brainwashed”. Mr P argues that viewers who are politically affiliated with a party know “that their station is not so accurate” but people who are not interested in politics might also “take TVM news with a pinch of salt”. After all, news can be a highly political and loaded form of broadcasting and viewers who are not keen on politics might choose other types of programme. But is this situation so different to that in other European neighbouring countries? Mr U argued that the situation in Malta is similar to countries like Italy in that Italian TV stations owned by Berlusconi have their agenda set and the viewers are aware of their agenda. He compares this with the political stations and argues that viewers know that such stations have an agenda set by their shareholders who are the political parties. In chapter 2 I have pinpointed similarities between the Maltese and the Italian broadcasting landscape having both the Mediterranean Polarized model (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). It came as no surprise that a participant would mention the Italian media, firstly because of the geographical affinity between the two countries and the popularity of the Italian media amongst the Maltese viewers. Though the political stations enjoy popularity especially during an electoral campaign and more specifically for their news broadcasts, Ms G argues that the news on the political stations “will die a natural death...; this nonsense no longer appeals to the majority of the people”. The presentation and such biased reporting will have a negative effect on the viewers. She hopes that the political stations will realize that they are being followed only by the hard core audience; thus they will have to see the need to find a solution to the situation. This might not necessarily be reflected in the audience

viewership as shown in Appendix iii. Such figures show that, when compared to the national broadcaster, the political stations are still far behind, however, in total they do add up to a substantial percentage of viewership. If one takes the viewership of One TV and NET TV in total for 2013 this will add up to approximately 32% a little less than the viewership of TVM which add up to 35%²²⁰. Ms G suggests that it should not be the Broadcasting Authority's role to warn that the style and decisions being taken by the newsrooms are leading them to their downfall but it should be an internal analysis which would indicate what changes need to be made to the programmes put out by the political stations. One has to keep in mind that the political parties in Malta not only own a television station but also a radio station and print and online media. So political content might be more aggressive in one medium and might be less in another. Participants in the focus group all agreed that the essential purpose of One TV and Net TV is propaganda and they admit that the level of propaganda would increase during election periods.

What are the viewers' expectations of PBS?

During the focus group sessions it became clear that viewers were aware of the remit of PBS in Malta, especially with regard to its public service obligations. A number of focus group participants commented on the audience surveys and referred to the high audiences which TVM prime time news bulletins always registers every quarter. Such results were also mentioned when the discussion during the focus groups turned on criticism against PBS. In some cases, the participants mentioned the audience share and the news content and argued that in spite of criticism, TVM always registers the largest audience share in TV news bulletins. When referring to the audience survey results, Ms I admits that the public

²²⁰ According to BA audience survey for January – March 2013, published May 2013, Malta

service station in Malta is very different from public service stations in other countries because PBS is competing with other TV stations for commercial revenue from advertising when its role has to be a “station for the people” regardless of its audience share but producing quality programming even for a small sector of the population (d’Haenens & Bardoel, 2007). On the other hand, Mr E argues that the role of PBS (Malta) is completely different from that of the BBC be it in a political or a commercial sense. He argues that BBC should be “the point of reference for us” and PBS (Malta) is “the only station with a public service obligation and has an obligation towards the citizens and the state, thus has to be neutral”. However, Mr A argued that even the political stations have an obligation towards the public since they are a nationwide station. According to some of the participants the obligation towards the viewers emanates from the fact that the station is broadcasting on a nationwide level. Participants are more in favour of PBS serving its mission as a public service station with a general interest perspective (Venturelli, 2001) and notwithstanding the introduction of competing stations, the mission of serving public interest remain unchanged (Lange & Renaud, 1989).

Participants also expressed views about ways in which the current broadcasting arrangements could be improved to make the Maltese public service station impartial or perceived to be impartial and balanced. Journalists working in private media and journalists on public TV are both bound by their profession to be fair and not be influenced by their personal agendas. However, while, the journalists in the private media are bound by the rules of their employer, the public broadcaster is bound by the public service obligations, which might go beyond the rules of the news editor. The public service

broadcaster has to be perceived as fair to all interested parties not just political but also to civil society. This lack of perceived impartiality was taken to be the result of the structure of PBS management. Mr E proposes changes in the way PBS chairmanship is chosen. He argues that while there is an agreement between the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition about the BA chairmanship, this is not the case with PBS chairmanship²²¹. Mr E argues that while the BA is the watchdog on broadcasting and there is consensus on its chairmanship, the public service broadcaster which is a major player in the broadcasting industry and provides a service to the public is being led by an official who “is controlled by the Government since it is appointed by the Government”. Thus this highlights the need that the appointment of chairmanship should be agreed by both parties in Parliament to gain credibility and strive for neutrality. The control of the Government over PBS put forward the argument mainly raised by one of the speakers of the Labour Party²²² that the public service broadcaster in Malta is a state-controlled station and not a public station. Some participants convey the idea that being a public station, TVM promotes the Government campaign and Mr A points out that this would be mainly the station’s agenda. Focus group participants had mixed feelings to what extent PBS is fulfilling its duties to carry out the task set for it in April 2004 in the National Broadcasting Policy that ‘it is only PBS that can guarantee news and current affairs programmes presented in a balanced and impartial way solely based on news value criteria’ (p. 4). While the same Policy recommended that the national broadcaster should be the broadcaster ‘that will represent and give a fair treatment to different views and values present in our society’, the focus

²²¹ The post of PBS chairmanship is a political appointee and the chairman is appointed by the chairman of PBS is presently chosen by the Prime Minister. The post is a political appointee.

²²² Evarist Bartolo, now Minister for Education and Employment who in the past years was also a spokesperson on media. He lectures journalism at the University of Malta

group participants argued that relatively PBS do treat fairly current issues, however, others were still sceptical that the public broadcaster is duly abiding this rule. Mr J further pointed out that as long as the Ministry is governing PBS, in a way, the Minister is a PBS regulator. This makes it more difficult for PBS to be independent from Government and making it more difficult to provide an impartial news service without propagating the Government message. Mr L argued that PBS “also has to play the game” because in a way PBS is being employed by the state and there might be instances where PBS has to side with its employer. This matter is raised every now and again when the situation of the public service broadcaster is discussed locally. Sammut (2007) comments that PBS should move away from being the channel seen to be administered by the Government in order to attain, the impartiality it is obliged to have. Mr L continues: “PBS (Malta) is not like BBC, BBC can do without the government and couldn’t care less”. Such a statement was challenged by Mr M because he argued that the onus falls on the Broadcasting Authority to regulate PBS and see that its content is as impartial as possible. Mr L argued that PBS can still be well regulated because the Broadcasting Authority emanates from the Constitution of Malta. This is mainly the expectation of the viewers stressing that the watchdog has to have enough teeth to regulate PBS as well, mainly with regard to impartiality. Here the lack of knowledge about the relationship between the Broadcasting Authority and PBS (Malta) leaves much to be desired and the participants showed that they are not aware of the type of legislation which exists. The lack of public relations by the Broadcasting Authority about its remit, role and legislative input is minimal in Malta and the participants’ comments confirm this.

Objectivity was stressed during the focus groups and Mr S during the session continually stressed that PBS has to be objective because he argues that the other television stations in Malta also have their agenda, “every other political party, that is, political stations, are subjective, have their own agenda”. This can be exemplified in the news items which reported the building of Mgarr Harbour²²³. Participants commented that while One News has described the same event as ‘a disaster’, Net News has presented it as ‘a project’. TVM news item succeeded in giving both sides to this project and while presenting this project, the newsroom put forward interviews giving views about the delay of the project²²⁴.

Are the audiences in favour of political stations?

The existence of political stations is clearly a contentious issue as pointed out by the focus group participants. While some participants see nothing wrong in such stations, others are totally against them and some of the opinions were far apart. Moreover, some who agree with the setting-up of political stations are still against the production of news by these same stations. They argue that political stations should only produce other genre of programming except news and current affairs programmes. At this point the participants compared the print media to the broadcasting media. During the discussion some pointed out that while the print media in Malta are partly politicised, society seems to accept the

²²³ News items which were shown during the focus group session to all the participants. The same news item reporting the same event was reported on the three TV stations and the three news items were analysed by the participants during the focus group session

²²⁴ TVM interviewed the chairman of the Maritime Authority who spoke about the delay and the change of plans in the project and reported what Dr Sant commented about the present situation of the project. The news item reported reasons why the project was delayed, but also reported the comments of the Labour Party about this delay.

political situation of the print media but do not accept political shareholding of the broadcasting media²²⁵. Ms I, who for some years used to work with a political station, does not agree with the existence of political stations because she feels such stations propagate their political agenda and considerably influence the viewers with such agenda. She describes as “a very big blunder that political stations were giving the licence to operate”. Producer B²²⁶ during the face to face interview describing it as “a disastrous situation ... and a threat to the democracy of the country” because instead the media is putting a spotlight on politicians’ deeds, such political stations are pointing “their fingers” to each other forgetting their main target, that of consumption of news in the interest of the public. However, Mr E (during the same discussion), while agreeing that it was a mistake that political stations were given the licence to operate, thinks that there should be a balance between commercial TV media and the public service media. Ms I, in her concluding comments during the discussion, stressed her disagreement that the political stations should have their own newsrooms. She argues that viewers expect the news to be accurately and truthfully informed, and thus this is what they should be given. While she accepts political stations to produce discussion programmes because she thinks that since news should tell the truth and facts, the latter should not be broadcast on a political station. Neither of the news-workers whom I interviewed expressed this view and the journalists working at the political stations agreed that news are sacred and their news is factual though would have an element of slant.

²²⁵ The press is subject to a system of self regulation by the industry and it is the Press Ethics Commission which deals with complaints made on the press though not exclusive on the press. However, decisions taken by the Press Ethics Commission are not legally binding and are not supported by any legislation. Broadcasting is legally regulated by the Broadcasting Authority

²²⁶ Interesting that Producer B when pluralism was introduced started at the chairmanship of a political station as he himself explained

For some participants the mere existence of political stations was a source of concern. Comments from the focus groups reflected what McNair, Hibberd & Schlesinger (2003) pointed out that the political media are in a way promoting “public apathy and cynicism” due to the way such media are covering politics. This is leading to a lack of democratic participation due to the bad performance of the political media. The focus group related to what McNair, Hibberd & Schlesinger (2003, p.6) stated that “political journalism has become shallow and incestuous...”. It is dominated by speculation and spin doctors as the sources of political news and analysis. Political stations are thought to be a source of conflict. Mr J, admits that “it’s a pity that the political parties own a television station” because “they cause friction for nothing”; “it’s bloody ridiculous”. The way they report certain news items “they come across as panic stations..., and that causes unnecessary upheaval and friction ... political parties should never have their TV station and should not produce any type of programming”. Having said this, Mr J doesn’t see anything wrong that a political party owns the print media²²⁷ but he objects to TV ownership saying that “TV is in everybody’s household and that thing [referring to TV] can influence and shape up your life”. Ms O who for some time worked as a journalist in a political station in Malta also does not agree with political parties owning a television station and observes:

“it doesn’t make sense. ...if I want to follow my party I do not need to follow the political party news”.

²²⁷ PN owns a daily print newspaper (In-Nazzjon) and a Sunday newspaper (Il-Mument). It also owns a news portal (www.maltarightnow.com).

PL owns a Sunday newspaper (Kulhadd) and also a news portal (www.maltastar.com).

A trade union (General Workers Unions) owns a daily print newspaper (L-Orizzont) and a Sunday newspaper (It-Torca). It also owns a news portal (www.inews.com). These are pro-Labour.

But Mr M leaves it to the viewer to decide whether he/she wants to follow their news or not. Not all participants agreed that political parties should not own political stations. Amongst these was Mr P who does not agree that political parties should be banned from owning political stations; however, he insists such stations should be held accountable by a competent authority. Such an argument puts more onus on the Broadcasting Authority to regulate the news produced by the political stations and it seems that the participants put the final responsibility on the Broadcasting Authority to supervise and monitor the content so that viewers would have an impartial product which is near to the true news picture. Other participants were more categorical and stated that political parties should not own a TV station if they continue to produce the news bulletins. However, Mr M emphatically agrees that political stations should own a TV station and during the session completely disagrees with Mr L who argued that political stations were important in the broadcasting industry in the production of several programme genres but they should not operate a newsroom. Mr M disagrees with Mr L's statement saying that "a [political] party which does not produce news is an "undressed" party"²²⁸ An interesting point which came up during the session, was that of Mr M, a hard core supporter, who admits that even though he has his political view from which he wouldn't budge, he only watches TVM news. He says that if he isn't able to follow TVM news then "it seems that I didn't watch news that day". Whereas Mr M argues that television is manipulated by the political parties so "having a TV can be very dangerous", Mr L insists that, for a section of the population, news produced by the political stations is important, while another part of the population "couldn't care less". Just like Mr M, Ms Q was one of the few participants in these focus groups who agree with political stations owning a television station, because otherwise

²²⁸ Showing that news is important for the political party to send its message

there might be a number of news items which would not be broadcast, the same argument voiced by journalists working in the political stations during the face to face interviews. Amidst the discussion about the existence of political stations, they discussed truth and associated with impartiality. It is more of a question of regulating or watching over the impartiality issue rather than regulating the content and the bias which a political station might have. If one follows such thoughts one would need to ask oneself whether self-regulation would be enough. One might come up and suggest that an internal board within the newsroom would not allow lack of truth and enhance impartiality. However, this might be a rather pious hope and though some would be willing for self-regulation, it is unlikely to be achieved.

Mr N, one of the participants in the focus group, Mayor of a Local Council²²⁹ Mr N blames the political parties stations for producing politically biased news:

“...this is one of the problems we have in this country; that two stations are owned by the parties so I believe there would be bias on One TV and Net TV”.

In his opinion “they are distorting the citizen’s thoughts”. While he accepts and watches discussion programmes on political stations, consciously knowing beforehand what their agenda in such programmes would be, he still does not agree that political parties should own their station because he thinks that:

“they are helping the society building a perspective and get influenced by partisan politics, ... thus these are not doing any benefit for society”.

As for the choice of information, McNair (2009) describes the need in a democratic institution for, citizens to be given information in order to allow them to make rational

²²⁹ Mr N contested the Local council elections as a Labour Party representative.

electoral and economic choices. Since broadcasting in Malta mainly consist of partisan journalism, this leaves little space for viewers to come up with rational choices.

As discussed in Chapter 2, pluralism in Malta is different than what is meant by pluralism in other European countries mainly because of the inclusion of political stations. Due to the inclusion of political stations as part of the pluralist media scenario, Malta is more into political parallelism (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). During the focus group sessions, participants were asked whether through pluralism they are getting a holistic impartial picture of the news. Participants had to state whether they follow the three main TV stations for the news bulletins and by following one TV station would they be impartially informed. Ms I voices her concern that many viewers follow only one station. She recounts her experience when working with a political station,

“when I worked with a political station, the people who used to follow the station, even if it doesn’t interest the programme, they would still follow it. This is the danger”.

Such loyalty is typical with hard core supporters who follow their political party without questioning. Such supporters tend to follow the political station owned by the party they support.

Participants moved on to comment on other forms of media which they tend to follow. It seemed that the viewers are not solely relying on TV broadcasting from which to get their news and information. A number of participants mentioned the portals which are becoming much more popular due to their news immediacy and accessibility. Since

audiences are getting broadcasting news outlets due to external pluralism in the local broadcasting media some may argue that values of balance and impartiality are achieved through such outlets and thus the enforcement of balance and impartiality in each station might be obsolete. Some argued that since they are in a position to check with other news online then this is enough to get different points of view to a news story.

What do participants think about the presence of ‘slant’ in the news, and what are their views on impartiality in news programmes?

The view that emerged from focus group discussion was that, whilst a political slant was inevitable with the news reporting of political stations, it was completely unacceptable on TVM. Though the message is politicised, the participants accept a form of slant in the news reported by the political stations but it is not acceptable on TVM. Ms G declared:

“If I am watching Super 1²³⁰ [referring to One TV], and being the country as it is, I expect some type of slant, but I do not expect any slant on TVM”.

Ms H does not agree with this and says that:

“everyone and each station have a slant, no television station can be neutral and it is very difficult to think that”.

But Mr A adds that political stations should not be so blatant with their partisan political comments in their news reporting and in this way they gain more credibility with the viewers. This indicates that viewers might tend to accept ‘subtle’ bias or slant, however, political stations tend to be more ‘aggressive’ with their message, particularly so during an electoral campaign when their main role is to continue driving the message of their

²³⁰ One TV previously was called Super 1. The station was launched with this brand name and by time it changed to One TV. Most viewers still refer to One TV as Super 1

shareholders to gain more votes. While agreeing that, ideally, slant should not be included in any of the news bulletins, Mr A states that “slant is inevitable in the political stations”. Slant in the political stations is also accepted by the regulator as admitted Regulator P during the face to face interview and argued that it was impossible to eliminate it. Unanimously focus group participants agree that political stations are not impartial. Mr A clearly shows his position about the evident lack of impartiality and slant present in the political stations:

“They were born for that particular reason.., I accept the fact that they give me partial information because they belong to a party, but I do not accept the fact that they give me information which is totally incorrect”.

This indicates that viewers do make a distinction between partiality and lack of truth or accuracy. As a matter of fact the legislation rightly so, does emphasize on accuracy and not on impartiality. If one takes the viewers’ opinions, news bulletins should move towards achieving truth first and foremost before venturing on achieving impartiality. In his concluding remarks Mr A added that “it is impossible not to have slant, there are different types how one present a slant and how to propagate the agenda without being much pornographic and blunt”. However Mr A stressed that while PBS as a public service provider should have fewer slants than the other stations, however, the other stations also have their obligation towards the public, being a nationwide station and have to be cautious to what extent their news items are partial.

“...Net TV is not followed only by the Nationalists supporters and One TV is not followed only by Labourites,... they have nationwide obligations and not towards one political sector”.

During the focus group session, as indicated in the Chapter 3, the participants were shown a sample of news items for further discussion. Mr A refers to Net News item ²³¹ featured as the third news item in the news bulletin, wherein the journalist interviewed the Labour Party leader²³² and argued that this interview turned into a rude and arrogant debate between the journalist and the politician. He thinks that the Broadcasting Authority should not have allowed to be broadcast, more so because this news item was reported in the middle of an electoral campaign²³³. However, Ms G, though she accepts that the journalist was rude, asks whether the journalist did break the broadcasting law by being arrogant. She argues that the remit of the BA should not infringe on the journalist's right to have his/her own method concerning how he/she presents the news story. The narrative structure highlights the journalist's agenda of negatively portraying the Rabat Local Council administered by a Labour Party majority. After showing parts of the interview, the news item reports the press release issued by the Water Services Corporation denying that there was no damage in the water pipes and this case is in no way the responsibility of the Water Services Corporation. This is in contrast to what Dr Sant is shown replying to the NET News journalist, thus putting the Labour Party in a negative light to the viewers. To emphasize that the Rabat Local Council is to blame, the journalist reports how the

²³¹ Broadcast on 8th March 2006

²³² Ex Labour Party leader – Dr Alfred Sant

²³³ The news feature reported that the allegations made by Alfred Sant that the water with mud and tar seeped through due to the damage caused in water pipes and thus the responsibility falls on the Water Services Corporation was denied by the corporation. In a press release issued by the Water Services Corporation, it was said that there exist an agreement between the Corporation and the Local Councils, that before tarmac is done, the Corporation would be informed so that if the need arise the water pipes would be changed. The journalist reports that it resulted that the Rabat Local Council never informed the Water Service Corporation about the work being done on the street above the underground Grotto and so all damage caused falls under the responsibility of the Council. The investigations made by the corporation confirmed that there were no water leakages coming from the pipes of the corporation before the tarmac was given as ordered by the Rabat Local Council with a Labour majority.

procedures are taken as explained by the Water Services Corporation before every road project, and that according to what is reported the Rabat Local Council did not follow such procedures with the Corporation. The discourse is quite clear in the repetition of the word ‘damage’ throughout the 3’ 36” news feature.

Some of the participants argued that the BA cannot intervene on the style of the news reports, and while Mr A agrees with this, however, as an employee within the Monitoring department of the Broadcasting Authority he commented that “the broadcasting laws are quite open and vague and cannot go into specific details of every case”. It is a known fact that the Broadcasting Authority keeps away from regulating the editorial policy of the station in the sense that it does not regulate the presentation of the news bulletin and the running order of the news items and what is to be included in a news bulletin. However, the broadcasting regulations state that a news item should have an element of news value to be included in a news bulletin as stated in Paragraph 2.1.1²³⁴ of the Subsidiary Legislation 350.14. It is up to the news editor to decide which news item has to be included, as is also stated in Para 2.1.4²³⁵ of the same Subsidiary legislation quoted above.

The participants were also sceptical about any action which the Broadcasting Authority could take on the use of news visuals and in the news item where the Leader of the Labour Party was interviewed and shown throughout the news report, without any editing in

²³⁴ “The sole criterion for the inclusion of any item in a news bulletin is its news value. News can be defined as tidings, new information or fresh information. News values usually cited include: timelines, proximity, prominence, magnitude, impact, conflict and oddity. As such, a news item which is essentially a repetition or simply constitutes a rehash of a news item already featured in a previous edition of a news bulletin cannot be justified for inclusion in a news bulletin”.

²³⁵ “It is the responsibility of the Head of News to decide what constitutes news value”.

between the questions sometimes in an attempt to ridicule the party leader through the use of close ups and then the journalist following him even when the leader was ready from his comments. One can discuss the decision that the interview was carried out in this way, that is, the journalist stopping Dr Sant during his walk-about around Rabat accompanied by the Rabat Mayor, other Labour Party candidates and the party supporters. This can be seen as very strategic because the journalist would be the only one out of all the people gathered at that moment that would allege that the damage at the Grotto was done due to the irresponsibility of the Rabat Local Council. Obviously the journalist knew even before he started the first question that the party supporters would side with their Leader and would show their expression of support towards their Leader or Party. In this way Net News viewers who would in all probability be Nationalist sympathisers would disassociate themselves from the insensitivity of the Labour Party supporters.

Some focus group members were more categorical and could not understand how a slant could be allowed in news. Ms B does not accept that there should be any slant in the news and she argues that there can only be one fact, “the media is not giving the reality, it tells you something which would favour the media reporting it and that’s it”. This reinforced the study conducted by the Glasgow University Media Group, 1976. To this argument, Mr H insists that the issue of slant and the presence of different angles in news stories put out by different media are not only a local issue but an international issue and other foreign stations present different angles according to their agenda of the news organisation. He explains that the Maltese situation is perceived differently because of the size of Malta:

“but the only thing is that we are so small that we can understand the strings attached to the puppets more easily...”

It is not only the ownership or the editorial policy of the newsroom organisation, but also the personal view and influence of the journalist which effect the presentation of the news item and the scripting of the report. Mr C argues that a slant is inevitable because every journalist who produces a news report would put his/her own slant on the story. Mr C who works with an independent TV station, which is relatively new in the Maltese broadcasting scenario²³⁶ also admits that within their news-workers²³⁷ one can tell which party they side with when writing the story though the station policy is to be totally independent,

“we are mixed, coming from different political parties, but when one writes the news, you will be wrong if you think that they are not influenced by what they believe”.

Such arguments highlight what Kuhn (2007) points out about the objectivity in news wherein he stresses that the audiences have to understand that news is a product of a selection and construction process and reporting events may sometimes be accurate but sometimes such reports may be biased. Furthermore, audiences need to recognize that whatever outlets they use for their news provision, none of them can be the purveyor of “the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth”. Goodwin (1992) argues, however, that television news is perceived to be less biased than the press and radio by the audience and this might be due to the fact that pictures are shown to give ‘evidence’ to the story.

²³⁶ This TV station began broadcasts in January 2009 and is a commercial station administered by an independent broadcasting company.

²³⁷ the people writing the news stories

What does the audience understand by the concepts of impartiality, balance and objectivity?

During the focus group session, I endeavoured to get participants to address the main theoretical concepts of impartiality, balance and objectivity in order to elicit their understanding of such concepts before their analysis of the news items sample. What is the viewers' understanding of the three concepts? While viewers were prepared to give their views about the Maltese stations – the political ones and the public service broadcaster – they had greater difficulty in defining and interpreting the terms impartiality, objectivity and balance. But some participants did their best to contribute and speak about their perception on the lack of impartiality and balance in news. A number of participants associated the concept of news credibility with the theoretical concepts of impartiality and balance. Mr E explains the situation of credibility between the political stations and the public service broadcaster by this quote, “In the land of the blind the one eyed man is a king”; on TVM there is a greater element of objectivity because it is more credible, contrary to the other two political stations. Thus the association between impartiality, objectivity and balance is related to credibility. Depending on the station's credibility, the viewers reach a decision as to whether that news is impartial or not. Such a quote indicates that TVM is not necessarily impartial but is perceived as impartial when compared to the other political stations, similar to what Schlesinger described as “perceived credibility” for BBC (in McNair, 2006, p. 60). Such ideas were raised by Producer F in the face to face interview when he put the onus of impartiality and credibility on the station rather than requiring that credibility should be the responsibility of the journalist or presenter.

Regarding impartiality Mr M accepts that the lack of impartiality in political stations is acceptable because the main purpose of a political station is to transmit a political message, however, Mr M sees that the main issue regarding the news on the political stations is that “even the facts are different”. He expects that the facts on both political stations should be the same though presented differently. Even Mr R²³⁸ agrees that a news-worker at a political station cannot be impartial “I don’t expect that someone from the political station is impartial, it is not the case and I do not pretend it is the case”. While a number of participants agree that TVM is perceived to be the most impartial and balanced station out of the local television stations, Mr N argues that to have “an impartial PBS, it shouldn’t have interference from the Government of the day”. He adds that “TVM also transmits a political message but in a subtle way”. Mr U agrees with this and says that “it is more difficult for the man in the street to read through the agenda of TVM than to read through the agenda of One TV or Net TV”. TVM’s presentation can be more subtle, but in effect is geared to be more impartial than the other stations. Mr S agrees that: “PBS should be objective as much as possible, since the other political stations are subjective and have their own agenda”. Mr T also agrees and states that TVM is not totally neutral and objective because “one feels that it is siding with a particular political thought ... mainly by the way they report a developing story”, though he admits that he follows TVM to have a full picture of what is happening. Mr R and Mr Y disagreed with statements that TVM news side with the Government. They argue that the news content depends on the editor and on the news-workers who would be on duty. Mr R agrees that: “PBS ideally has to do what One TV and Net TV are not doing”. In this way, the viewers expect that TVM achieves

²³⁸ Mr R works in the Finance Department of a political station, is a member in PN council and is a PN councillor in a Local Council.

impartiality and addresses the unbalanced situation in broadcasting due to the political stations news broadcasts. Mr R argues that it is very difficult to state in such a small island that there is a media organisation which is completely independent and objective; “it is difficult to have total objectivity”.

Ms O admits that she makes it a point to watch TVM news after watching the other two political news bulletins to see which news story was right, though she admits she might still have reservations for TVM news. “If one of the stations said this is red, I want to hear it again that it is red and then I would know whether that news was the truth or not”. From the focus group session, I could observe that participants seem to rely on TVM for the true picture. However, Ms O said she does not believe all that is reported on TVM and checks the story on the electronic version of the *Times of Malta*.²³⁹ Interesting to point that on line news, particularly this news portal, seems to enjoy more credibility with the viewers and this continues with the tradition that even the print version of this newspaper has very good readership.

Balance was an even more difficult issue with the participants. According to some participants, it is quite difficult to define balance because it is very subjective and it is taken from one’s political point of view. Mr J asks: “... where do you draw the line?” In effect during all the focus group sessions, I did not manage to get a viewer to define balance. The participants focused more on truth and facts as the main elements for a news bulletin. As will be shown later on in this chapter, these concepts were further discussed

²³⁹ timesofmalta.com – the news portal administered by The Times of Malta. This news portal was mentioned by the majority of the participants as their point of reference and more so to have the immediate news.

when participants were shown a number of news item clips from the three television stations analysed in this study.

Viewers' understanding of the role of the Broadcasting Authority in ensuring impartiality and balance in news programming

During the focus group sessions, the participants were asked about the role of the Broadcasting Authority and how broadcasting regulations are used in news bulletins and other current affairs programmes. While the lack of information about the remit of the Broadcasting Authority was persistent throughout the different sessions, an observation pertaining to an ideal position about the role of the BA is pointed out by Mr A saying that the role of the Authority should be “to inform the public so that viewers can decipher certain situations and thus be able to make an objective analysis of what it is being shown on TV”. As will be seen later on in this chapter the participants suggested that the Broadcasting Authority should pay more attention to particular news items which might be perceived as being partial.

The majority of the participants agree that the broadcasting rules and regulations should apply to all the TV stations irrespective of their ownership. Mr F and Mr A point out that “the law has to be across the board”. On the same lines, Mr H commented that “regulations should be the same for all, ... I don't think that someone can close one eye “. A number of participants argued on the same lines (Ms O, Mr P, Mr J and Ms Q) and agree that regulations should be the same throughout. There was, however, quite a heated argument between Mr J and Mr M during the session regarding to what extent the broadcasting rules

should regulate all the TV stations. Mr M argues that One TV and Net TV should not be regulated, but PBS should because PBS is:

“a state station and it is paid with my funds, One News is paid from funds coming from a niche sector”

This argument is reinforced by Mr J who states bluntly: “the regulator should definitely be the watchdog of the state television”. According to Mr J this helps eliminating the “mistake of the eighties and seventies” wherein in a broadcasting monopoly the Government controlled the public station. Mr J agrees that political stations should be given more leeway for editorial comments and believes that such political comments do not incite propaganda, so should be allowed because: “Political parties are there to send their message” but still thinks that the regulations should be there for everyone. This is the opposing view of news media theories in that news has to be free from comments (McQuail, 1992). However participants agree that facts on the political stations are reported with a particular viewpoint and this reinforces the pragmatic objectivity put forward by Ward (2007) that bare facts are also interpreted, however, highlights that interpretation has to be accurate and factual.

Mr R spoke positively about the duties of the Broadcasting Authority and says that is already “liberal” with the political stations. Mr R, Mr S and Mr Y agree that as long as ethical and privacy issues are kept, the political stations should be allowed to work more freely as long as the local TV stations “do not end up like the UK tabloids” (Mr S). Interesting to point out, the ethical issues were not mentioned by the news-worker. Some participants, however, took a firmer line and argued that the Authority should also

intervene in the editorial policy of the station. Ms W states: “we cannot let one station voice its opinion, the other does the same; there should be the Authority to see that there is balance in the stations”. Some argue that the BA should have more power and Mr J suggests that the BA should be in a position to judge if a news item is libellous or not. A number of the participants criticized the Broadcasting Authority as being a weak regulator even though its legal powers are entrenched in the Constitution of Malta and has the power to administer the Broadcasting Act and other Subsidiary Legislation. This is similar to the Mediterranean model as mentioned by Hallin & Mancini (2004). While viewers are in favour of giving more power to the Broadcasting Authority, as expected, the news-workers criticized its role and are more sceptical of its remit, mainly due to what they saw discrepancies in its legislation and what could have been described as ‘unfair treatment’ by the BA between the public broadcaster and the political stations.

The participants spoke about the importance of news visuals and how these can be seen to be communicating their own messages (Goodwin, 1992). Participants pointed out that such visual material should also be regulated by the competent authority. Ms I also commented on the impact of news visuals and suggested that the Broadcasting Authority should be vigilant in the way news visuals are used. Ms B agrees that:

“the Authority should control both visuals and content, the Authority should either control both [i.e. content and visuals], or else the Authority should give up its control”

Mr R refers to events and instances when important people and politicians are pictured in the news. However, he argues against regulation of the visuals because according to him

politicians and public figures have to be careful about their actions when they are in a public event which is being filmed. "...the politicians should be aware that the camera is on..." The technique of the news visuals was not mentioned by any of the interviewees, contrary to what happened during the focus groups sessions, highlighting that viewers give importance to the news visuals as much as the news script. An interesting observation on the role of the BA was made by one of the participants, Mr E, in saying that the BA should address cases of portrayal of vulnerable people and minors in media programming rather than regulate the political element in the media in tandem with Sammut's (2007) viewpoint of the role enhancement of the Broadcasting Authority. In effect the Broadcasting Authority does address cases of vulnerable people and minors and is backed by the broadcasting legislation on such issues.

The participants further discussed the responsibility of broadcasting regulator. According to the Broadcasting Act, the Broadcasting Authority puts the onus of the station on what is being broadcast and any irregularities are addressed to the station. It is the licence holder's responsibility for what is being broadcast.²⁴⁰ Mr J does not agree and argues that the regulator should be given the power to make the journalist responsible for what he/she is reporting when he/she is in breach of the law "and then you will see how things change". He refers to other careers in the financial or medical sector wherein the person who committed the breach would be kept responsible for his/her actions. However, journalism in Malta is not seen as a profession and journalists are not treated on the same lines of other professions. So Mr J's argument would be more difficult to achieve and it is up to the

²⁴⁰ SL 350.07 Special Administrative Procedure Regulations Paragraph 3 (1) states that "The Chief Executive shall issue a notice of a charge to a broadcaster". Broadcaster in the legislation refers to the licence's holder

media owner to put on the responsibility on the journalist as its employee. However, in libel cases in Malta, particularly regarding print media cases, the editor and the journalist are usually held responsible. When it comes to broadcasting content, it is usually the editor's responsibility even if there are cases when the editor of the station is not necessarily a journalist. There was a counter argument on this and Mr N argued that it should be the station responsible of what is being broadcast because it is the station which is allowing such content. Furthermore each newsroom is supervised by the news editor who has the ultimate responsibility for news that is broadcast.

Arguments about the different level of regulations in the media mentioned were raised during the session, some being quite outspoken particularly when viewing a clip on One News reporting the Mġarr Harbour project. The item reported Dr Sant's visit at Gozo and was broadcast as the 7th item in the news bulletin. This item is a diary event item and can be compared to TVM news item aired on 1st March reporting about the Mġarr Harbour project. ONE NEWS item which lasted 2' 47", did not specifically report only the Mġarr Harbour project but reported all the activities and visits made by Dr Sant during his visit to Gozo. Mr J points out that BA should have taken action against One News because it was a one-sided news item and according to the participant, if the law is there to safeguard balance, the two sides of the story should have been reported. Mr J points out, that action taken against PBS is different to that taken against political party stations on the same matter; the political parties "are getting away with murder". The PBS has to follow all the regulations,

“If one is saying X and there is another opinion Y, one has to report both opinions and then the viewer should decide. Is Super 1 [referring to One TV] doing it? No. Is Net News doing it? No; but if PBS does not comply, we cut its head out; but the others can do what they like”.

The discourse of this news item (also mentioned in Section B of this chapter) focused on the negative points raised by the Labour Party leader during his visit and the reporter on location highlighted this negativity in the introduction of the news report when in a stand up²⁴¹ she says that “as soon as people arrive at Mgarr Harbour they find a ‘complete disaster’ because the Mgarr Harbour project is still not ready even though the Government had promised its completion by 2003”. Some of the participants of the focus group commented on the text used in this news item stating that through the journalist’s comments, it was easy for a viewer to decipher that the journalist’s view is biased towards the Labour Party administration while being negative towards the Government. Also the way comments and the way the report were presented, would offer difficulty and uncertainty whether the comments were made by the Labour Party spokesperson or if they were partisan political comments coming from the journalist.

When the discussion on broadcasting regulations was underway, participants pointed out the discrepancy in regulations of the broadcasting media and the print media. While there are broadcasting regulations which regulate the political TV stations, this is not the case

²⁴¹ stand-up: a reporter’s appearance in a TV news story. Usually a head and shoulders shot which features the reporter talking into the camera at the scene of the news event, often used as a transition, or at the beginning or ending – taken from <http://www.thenewsmanual.net/Resources/glossary.html> accessed on 3rd January 2014

with the print media even though there are print media which are owned by the political stations. Mr J finds no objection that television is more regulated since this is a powerful media, "...television has become part of our life....television is switched on in every household even when consciously one is not necessarily watching it". From the sessions, one could deduce that broadcasting should be subject to some form of regulation and that there is a place for the Broadcasting Authority to function and that it should continue to be the watchdog over broadcasters. However, when asked when the BA should intervene, turned to be quite a difficult question to answer and the participants admitted that the most difficult part in this matter is where one draws the line. While participants did agree that slant is quite difficult to regulate, however, they stressed that the Authority should ensure that the facts which are reported are accurate. Lack of accuracy seemed to be the issue that would raise the alarm for the Broadcasting Authority officials, a criterion which is also mentioned in the legislation regulating news. Mr U argued that the Authority should intervene when the stations are "lying". Mr M thinks that the Broadcasting Authority is expected to at least check on the facts reported, however, he points out:

"I don't think that political parties (referring to political stations) shouldn't be allowed to say their opinion".

Ms I agrees that the BA should not regulate where there is slant but when the facts are not right. It shows that it is much more difficult because the BA should not be there to control the political parties and their message, but as Mr M explains, the BA remit has to focus on the end product of the political parties on their broadcasting station. It gets more complicated because what is aired on the political station is after all the political party's message and if one is controlling the message aired on the broadcasting political station,

then it is in a way controlling the party's message. Notwithstanding this, many criticize the role of the Broadcasting Authority for its lack of action on the political stations accusing this regulatory entity that it is siding with the two big political parties, something which obviously is not in tandem with what the journalists working within the political parties think. Furthermore, Mr E argues that the BA should be more proactive and has to intervene without waiting for any complaints to be received. Mr E mentioned two specific instances (which he could relate and which happened during different electoral campaigns) where, in his opinion, the BA should have intervened. One was during the 2009 MEP elections when Net TV reported an incident which had occurred in Zejtun polling booth²⁴²; and in another case when Dr Eddie Fenech Adami, then Prime Minister had accused Dr Alfred Sant, then Leader of the Opposition that Dr Sant had prevented his son from entering University during a political debate organized under the scheme of BA political broadcasts²⁴³. Mr E argues that since there is not an immediate remedial legal action, the BA should have intervened, though he admits that such a case could have backfired against the Authority and would be accused that it is siding with the Opposition party against the Government. The second case mentioned was a question of taking action against a politician. Though this was broadcast during a political debate as part of the Broadcasting Authority political scheme, however, it was a comment made by the then Prime Minister and the intervention of the Broadcasting Authority would have meant that it intervenes with the party's message

²⁴² During the 2009 MEP election there was an argument in one of the polling booths between the political party representatives and it was reported that a PL representative allegedly attacked a PN representative. Net News continuously started to report such an incident even during the silent day and allegedly insinuating the violent characteristic of the Labour Party in Malta.

²⁴³ During the last political leaders debate held on Thursday 6th March 2003 (a day before the silent day) organized under the Broadcasting Authority political broadcasts scheme for the EU referendum, Dr Fenech Adami accused Dr Sant that he denied his son of entering the University when he was involved in the Students' Choice Committee. On 7th March 2003 Dr Sant had filed a libel case against Dr Fenech Adami which Dr Sant won on 7th December 2004. (Dr Alfred Sant vs Dr Eddie Fenech Adami, Magisterial Court, 7th December 2004, 145/2003)

and not on the broadcast itself. As long as the two political speakers were given an equal amount of time to put forward their message, then the Broadcasting Authority does not have the remit to intervene.

Another argument concerning regulation raised during the focus group session was about a level playing field for all TV stations. Having stations owned by political parties and the public service broadcaster competing together for content, can broadcasting regulations be the same for all the TV stations? The majority of the participants during the sessions answered in the affirmative, though in many cases they qualified their answer. Mr A stressed his argument that all the stations have to be equal in front of the law – “BA has to see that the law is to be addressed equally for all the stations”. However Mr M though continuously stressing that facts and accuracy in reporting are sacred, comments that:

“while the regulator has to see that there is transparency, the regulator has to be more flexible when political messages are transmitted through the news reporting of the political stations.”

He adds on, “Editorial messages should be allowed...” Mr Y and Mr R agree that since Malta is a democratic country and unless ethical issues are regulated, then the Broadcasting Authority’s role should be “... more practical with political reporting” in the sense that a number of partisan political news reports would be allowed to be aired on the political stations. In line with other participants, Mr M argues that the state broadcasting media should be heavily regulated because the political stations, by their very nature, are there to transmit their biased political message. The regulator should be there “so that the mistakes which took place in the seventies and the eighties on the state television” would not be

repeated.²⁴⁴ He argues that political stations can have guidelines but “in my opinion it is useless to have some type of control because where can one draw the line?” Mr J is totally against this argument and stresses that even political stations should be well regulated; “Imagine the political parties do not have rules. We are listening to this rubbish”. Thus such an argument indicates that even with the present regulations the political stations are putting on air highly politicised news items which are propagandistic and which go beyond the idea of impartiality in news broadcasting. Lack of accuracy and moving away from the truth seem to be the trend in the news bulletins of the political stations. While expressing views of how the present regulations should be used in the news broadcasting local scenario, the participants criticized the set up of the Broadcasting Authority in that the members are nominated by the political parties and the focus group participants perceive this as resulting in favouritism. Mr J describes the situation “I owe him a favour and you owe me a favour...” Such a position would make the members more prone to criticism but Mr M’s concern is that due to this situation, the regulator does not speak up for fear of criticism. The set up of the Broadcasting Authority is criticized by the participants because its members are directly associated with a political party so one can argue that their decisions are not really impartial.

Does the complete political spectrum feature in Maltese news bulletins?

The idea of pluralism in Malta involves the public broadcaster and the two political stations and would exclude other opinions and points of views. Thus taking the local media

²⁴⁴ During this mentioned period the state broadcaster had a broadcasting monopoly and it was used by the Government as tool for state propaganda. There was a period when the Opposition leader’s name could not be mentioned. During this period there were some years when the Broadcasting Authority Board was not constituted due to a boycott from the Opposition party

scenario wherein the two big political parties have their own TV station, how does this impinge on the third political party (Alternattiva Demokratika) in Malta which does not have any broadcasting channel? As noted in Chapter 5, statistics show that Alternattiva Demokratika (AD) is almost excluded from TVM news bulletins when compared with the other political parties. Some of the focus group participants agree that the third party is being marginalized from the media scene by the two big political parties. Since Alternattiva Demokratika does not have its own broadcasting station it is difficult for them to compete with the other political parties. Mr A argues, “they might be suppressed because the media is what it is”. Ms B argues that AD is at a “great disadvantage” because it lacks media ownership. While some argue that there is no place for the third political party in Malta and they should act only as a pressure group, Ms G hopes for the ‘real’ existence of the third party so that One TV and Net TV would be “neutralized, and would not come out with all this power”. Apart from the lack of media ownership, AD also seems to suffer from a lack of media exposure on the other stations. While the two political stations mainly cover their parties’ interests, AD also lacks in TVM coverage as seen in statistics cited in Chapter 5. Mr N expects that if AD has an issue then PBS should give it all the space and time it requires. Mr P stressed that if an issue carried forward by the two big political parties is featured on TVM, the same should be done with AD issues. “All political parties should be on the same ground”. Ms W agreed that TVM should be the station to give exposure to these political parties because they need a media platform wherein they put forward their views. Ms V described their exposure as: “nearing the non-existent”, even during an electoral campaign “their exposure on TVM is minimal”. Such way of compiling the news clearly puts the biases of TVM towards the big political parties.

Ms W states that the small political parties absolutely do not feature and if they are featured they are shown as not important to the local scene in the way that political representatives seated with the audience and not as part of the main panel. On the contrary, some participants argued that since AD does not have the manpower and lacks the necessary resources then it would be hard to get reports and images about it into the media.

Section B

The viewing of media clips during the focus group sessions

In the second part of each focus group session, the participants were shown a set of media clips taken from news bulletins and current affairs programmes aired on TVM, One TV and Net TV and aired during the electoral campaign for of the 2006 Local Councils Elections. Local Council elections in Malta are held every 3 years²⁴⁵ and around 25 localities are included in each election. Local councils in Malta are highly politicized and candidates contest such elections under the name of the three political parties (PL, PN and AD). Very few independent candidates contest these elections. Such local council elections are a quasi General Elections and the political parties organize a fully-fledged campaign for such elections. For this purpose a Broadcasting Authority political broadcast scheme is organized during the campaign and the political parties are given their proportionate time of share to participate in such programmes. The political parties are allowed to send in their representative (even if these are not the candidates themselves) to participate in such broadcasts, thus such broadcasts exclude the other few independent candidates.

²⁴⁵ recently this changed to 4 years

I have come up with a sample of media clips taken from news bulletins and current affairs programmes, and after discussing general questions with the participants as indicated in the first section of this chapter, I engaged the participants in an analysis of the media clips. The participants were given ample time between each clip to discuss their thoughts and feelings keeping in mind that the concept of impartiality in news broadcasts. The participants were given a very short summary of what the news item or the media clip would be about but then the floor was open for discussion. There were times when a news clip had to be viewed more than once upon their request. Some of the news items which were used for the textual analysis were also shown to the participants in the focus group. This second part of the chapter will include all the media clips which were shown during the sessions.

The first item was taken from TVM news bulletin broadcast on 20th February 2006 as the eleventh (11th) item. This item was quite particular in its presentation because it reported two completely separate events in one news item. The news feature reported a dog show in a commercial hotel organised by an NGO which works for disabled people and a visit which the Leader of the Labour Party and the Opposition Leader Dr Alfred Sant paid to a dogs' sanctuary. A number of focus group participants were unable to assess this news item. At one point the argument during the discussion focused much more on the political event per se rather than the media report of the event, even though the political reference came quite late in the news report. In fact from a 2 minutes news report, the report of Dr Sant's visit lasted only 25 seconds. The last concluding sentence refers to the opinion of the 'institutional voice' saying that those who keep up the sanctuary have lack of resources.

(Hartley, in Marris & Thornham, ed, 1996). Participants argued whether Dr Sant should have visited the dogs sanctuary or not and could not comment on the actual reporting of the event. Some argued that the news item about the abandoned dogs was reported because the Leader of the Opposition visited the dogs' sanctuary. Ms X argued that if it had been the Prime Minister who visited this dog sanctuary, then TVM would have reported much earlier in the news bulletin. So usually it is the person who makes the news and not the event. This shows that TVM is perceived by the viewers that the station gives more weight to the Government representatives than the Opposition and this highlights that the public broadcaster in Malta is perceived to be more of a State broadcaster than a public channel. Mr M agreed with Ms X, and emphasized that since Dr Sant was the Leader of the Opposition thus events concerning him would be placed down in the running order than events covered by the Prime Minister. Some participants argued that the presentation of such a news item was ridiculous because this news item mixed three complete separate elements in one feature – the importance of dogs to disabled people, the dog show in a commercial establishment and Dr Sant's visit to a sanctuary. If we analyze this news item textually, and one focuses his/her attention on the feature introduction, he/she realizes the position the reporter takes. The reporter seems to in a way be 'promoting' the work done by a particular association with regard to helping and caring abandoned dogs. Also the emphasis is that the main aim of the association is that while keeping abandoned dogs, such dogs are trained to help disabled people. Thus the last part of the feature which reports Dr Sant's visit comes as a surprise to the viewer. The feature starts with 'fashion discourse' and gives the impression that this feature is a 'light feature', dealing with issues such as catwalks, but then the news feature actually reported a fund raising activity and later on

reported a Labour party leader's visit to a dog refuge. Many agreed that the last part of the news item merited being a news report in its own right. Due to such presentation of the news item, the participants were confused as to how to analyze this news report because such an item gave the impression that these two events which were considered not important and lack high news value to the news organisation were put in one news item at the end of the news bulletin. A public broadcaster newsroom cannot leave such philanthropic events out of the news bulletin if it wants to be considered as a public broadcaster.

The majority of the participants agree that the two parts of the news item should have been reported separately. Dr Sant's visit as part of an electoral campaign has been inserted into another event which was completely separate and had no political content. Both events reported in the same news feature are by no means related and such techniques might confuse the viewer and reduce his/her attention to one of the events. Furthermore from the newscaster's introduction to the feature, it was never mentioned that Dr Sant's visit will by any means be reported in the forthcoming feature. The fact that these two items were edited together in one news feature would perhaps tone down the effectiveness of Dr Sant's political commitment towards abandoned animals, in this case, abandoned dogs. Since the news feature started with a relatively 'light' subject, the second part of the feature which was political in content, becomes almost irrelevant to the viewer. The viewer's attention would be lost by the end of the feature because it treated three different subjects – the dog show, fund collection and Dr Sant's visit to a dog sanctuary. Ms V & Ms W agree that with the introduction of the politicians in the news item, the rest of the item became less

important because the focus is taken away from the first part of the news item and will be moved to the politicians and their exposure. Ms W commented that the first part of the news item “is a strange add on”. Some participants agree that this news item consist of subtle biases especially the way it was placed. Ms W explains that “the selection of news which is reported, the way news is reported and what importance certain news is given” all can lead to biases. Such analysis indicates that it is not only the news script but also the presentation of the news report might lead to lack of impartiality and fairness. Essentially this is Ms W’s point in her analysis of this news item. In this regard Mr U refers to the Broadcasting Authority’s role and argues that the broadcasting regulator should be competent enough to decipher such cases of lack of impartiality in news item presentations because the lack of impartiality would not necessarily be the result of misquoting a politician but it might be the result of “where and how one is being placed in the news”.

Participants discussed the newsworthiness of the news item. During one of the focus group session participants did not agree whether the news item was newsworthy or not. Mr N agrees that it should have been in the news bulletin but Mr H and Ms Z do not agree. They argued that such events were not newsworthy and did not have a news value to be reported. Mr H and Ms Z agree that the fact that Dr Sant got into the picture gave more weight to the rest of the news item. Ms B, an NGO member, stressed that this is the norm in the local news media particularly more so during an election campaign. The news media report the politicians so that the “hype” would fall on the politicians and not on the work done by NGOs. Ms B stressed that this is a clear example of the methods used by the news media to expose politicians at the expense of voluntary work by the voluntary organisations. Ms B

argues that NGOs are continually used by politicians during an electoral campaign so that they are reported to be seen that the political parties are including NGOs in their political agenda. Participants also commented about the positioning of this news item. Ms O was one of the few participants who argued differently than the rest. In her opinion if the news item did not report Dr Sant then the item should have moved much higher in the news bulletin. She argued that not only politicians should make the news, but there are other “interesting” events which should be promoted further up in the running order of the news bulletin.

The media clips which followed were two reports of the construction of the Mgarr harbour at Gozo aired on TVM and on ONE on 1st March 2006 as the 4th item and 7th item respectively. These two news media clips were deliberately shown (during the focus group session) one following the other so that the participants would be able to compare and contrast the same news story reported on a different TV channels. The participants were asked to comment on the differences in the coverage and reporting of the two different stations. Participants agreed that the difference in both items is not the lack of facts but the focus of the news report and the way how facts are presented in a partial manner. All the participants agreed that the two stations sent different messages when reporting this news item because One News focused on the Labour Party activities in Gozo and TVM focused on the Mgarr Harbour project. Some of the participants’ first reaction was that TVM news item was much more impartial than ONE News item because TVM showed the “two sides of the coin... the concept of hearing the other side of the story is present on PBS”²⁴⁶,

²⁴⁶ TVM news report reported the first phase of the construction of Mgarr harbour at Gozo which is expected to be finished by April. It reported that the final expenditure would amount to 14.5 million Maltese pounds,

according to Mr J. PBS reported the comments of the Chairman of the Maritime Authority and the reaction of the political party. Mr J stressed that TVM news item was impartial and was right in showing that Dr Sant was not saying the full truth. This was indirectly shown by the Chairman's comments. Mr J said:

“If someone says that PBS was partial here, I don't know what impartiality is because I think they put the facts on the table”.

Mr S, Mr T and Mr R argued that this TVM news item was “near impartiality”; however, Mr T admitted that for the most part of the TVM news item the project was defended and thus there was an element of partiality and lack of fairness on the opposing side. The feature lasted 3' 35” and it was only the last 25” that the news report turned its focus on the Labour Party leader's criticism of the terminal project at Mgarr Harbour. It was reported that Dr Sant criticized the project for taking a long time to be finished because the full project was promised to be ready by mid 2003. The news item reported Dr Sant saying that this effected negatively the operations of Gozo Channel. The journalist reported that Dr Sant argued that due to lack of proper usage of the piers, this was having a negative impact on the business in Gozo. The way TVM reported and presented this news item opened a discussion on the element of investigation in a news item. Mr M and Mr J presented different arguments as to what extent PBS news items can be investigative. In this case, TVM investigated the Mgarr Harbour project using the chairman of the Maritime Authority, Marc Bonello as the main source and the institutional voice explaining why the

which means 6.5 million Maltese pounds more than was originally proposed. The report explained that the projects of Mgarr and Cirkewwa Harbours had started again last July after the plans were changed and permits could be issued. The Chairman of the Maritime Authority, Marc Bonello spoke to PBS and said that work is in progress and the first phase will be ready by April. The project including the terminal will be ready till March next year.

final expenditure will go up to 14.5 million, that is six million more than what was estimated in 1996. In this way the investigative report was replying to Dr Sant's criticism which came at a later stage (the last 25 seconds) of the news report.

Mr J admits that TVM tries to show the two sides of the issue but since PBS is funded by the Government, very often a PBS journalist would find it difficult to investigate the Government especially more so in an electoral campaign. At this point, Mr M pointed out that, however, there were a couple of instances when a PBS journalist/presenter was being investigative on his programmes. He asked "why can he be investigative when producing a programme and not when reporting a news item?" The programme referred to in this example was a farmed out programme produced by an outside production house and the presenter/journalist does not work within the PBS newsroom. Such a situation brings in the difference between the programme being investigative, and the news bulletins produced in house. Since news bulletins are produced by PBS newsrooms and thus the journalists are directly employed by the broadcaster which is partly state funded, this might limit the 'flexibility' of the journalist in going out of the structure of reporting and be investigative and might shed a negative light any Government entity, project, etc.

On the other hand, some participants after deeper analysis, observed that TVM news item regarding the Mġarr Harbour was not necessarily impartial. Ms G commented on the spiral of silence of the journalist in that the reporter should have investigated why there was change of plans for the project and the reason behind the replacement of the architects.

Such changes were mentioned by the Maritime Authority chairman but the news report did not delve into the reason behind such changes. Ms G argued that,

“PBS should have left the justification voiced by the chairman and it was not PBS role itself to justify the waste of funds...”

Such analysis shows that the viewers want a newsroom which investigates the story and not a justification of an unaccomplished national task. This is the duty of a public relations officer to justify any shortcomings. Interestingly one participant during the session changed his argument in the course of the discussion about the way both news items reported the matter. The discussion itself, and the comparison between both items, led to a change of opinion. At first Mr M stressed that ONE news wanted to make propaganda out of the event and was not interested in reporting the facts, however, after further analysis Mr M questioned whether TVM news item was fair in the news report. He pointed out that after all TVM did not report the any other visit of the Labour Party leader in a number of sites in Gozo and chose to focus on the Mgarr project. Mr M argued that PBS left out completely two negative events raised during the two different visits by Dr Sant, that is, the closing down of two factories and the termination of employment in industrial estate. He argued that the juxtaposition of the facts in the news report would have made it impartial.

“... if PBS first reported the Labour Party leader’s views and then reported the discrepancy in the expenses used for building the sea terminal, PBS news item would have been fair and perceived to be impartial”.

However, Mr M stressed that PBS wanted to show the other half truth which according to him was left out by Dr Sant. This was another case in which TVM toned down the Opposition leader’s activities and highlighted a national project which actually was not

completed on time. The other two stories of news value which were part of the Opposition leader's speech mainly regarding unemployment were completely left out from the news item and also from the whole news bulletin broadcast on that same day (1st March 2006). This 'change of heart' in some of the participants' analysis was only possible because the viewing of these news clips were done scientifically and which does not happen during an everyday²⁴⁷ viewing. Some participants pointed out that the structure of the news item changed the tone. The structure of the information in this news item (Tuchman, 1977) was placed in a way that some viewers felt it led to partiality and unfairness. TVM gave the impression that such a news story was an investigative story about the Mgarr Harbour project when in effect this issue was raised by Dr Sant during one of his press conference upon his arrival in Gozo as part of the Local Council electoral campaign visit. Ms I who is more into TV production, commented on the news visuals and the differences between the visuals used in both items:

“While visuals on ONE showed the Labour Party in a proactive manner and showed nice visuals of Gozo heliport offices, TVM news item showed the Labour Party officials from an elevated angle showing them pathetic”.

She associated the differences in news visuals with news balance and questioned “I don't know whether you can call that balance or not”. The whole presentation of a news story is the message which the news organization wants to communicate to its viewers and Ms I did question the use of visuals and the editing.

The visuals used in the TVM news report, accompanying the news script showed the construction work underway at the Mgarr Harbour and also photographic representation of

²⁴⁷ Everyday as in normal viewing

what the terminal will look like when it is finished. Throughout the first part of the news item the use of a number of graphics of the terminal showing what would be the end result of the project gave a positive message and ‘feel good factor’ to the viewers and thus enhancing the positive message which seems to be the agenda of the PBS journalist in this news report. On the other hand, ONE news used a stand up as part of the presentation of this news story. Mr M commented on the stand up²⁴⁸ used and argued that the word “disaster” should not have been used²⁴⁹. “..They should have used a milder term such as ‘not ready’”, though he admits that, “... I will not believe and accept everything I hear on One News”. Mr H agrees that such a comment from the journalist reduces the credibility of the news item, though Ms W while agreeing that the term ‘disaster’ is “a bit sensationalist”, the visuals backed the comment of the reporter. Again the viewers did give weight to the visuals and effected their perception on the news story presented. The majority of the participants, with the exception of just a few, particularly Ms Q, did not agree that such a comment could have been aired on TVM because they argue that they accepted a slant from One News but TVM has to be more neutral and unbiased. A word used in a news script can shed bias on the whole news report. However, participants were undivided whether the Broadcasting Authority should intervene on political stations to regulate such political comments. The extent to when the regulator should draw the line is highly debatable. Some argue that the Authority should not intervene when such comments are

²⁴⁸ Stand up read :- As soon as tourists arrive in the island of Gozo they are welcomed by a complete disaster, since the project of the Mgarr Harbour is still not completed. It was a Nationalist Government itself who had announced that this project was to be ready by 2003. [Hekk kif it-turisti jaslu fil-gzira Ghawdxija jsibu jilqagħhom diżastru shih; dan hekk kif il-proġett tal-port tal-Imgarr għadu ma tlestiex. Kien Gvern Nazzjonalista stess li kien habbar li dan il-proġett kellu jitlesta fl-2003].

²⁴⁹ The word ‘disaster’ was used by the journalist to describe the situation at the Mgarr Harbour.

used because it would be intruding in the political agenda of such stations. Ms B, however, commented that the BA should at least warn about the use of certain language:

“The fact that it is a political party station does not mean that the station can say whatever it wants”.

So while the viewers would agree that the broadcasting regulator should be a watchdog on impartiality, however it was not clear which elements to regulate to achieve impartiality in news. As seen above visuals used, editing and script, even if it is just a descriptive word, might all lead to lack of impartiality but then it is difficult to put a clear legislative framework on the use of such methods. When participants were asked to view both news items they were able to analyze and form a picture in their minds of how a news item is manipulated by the news-workers in the creation of the message. In one particular instance, mentioned above, a viewer changed his mind completely when viewing both items. Thus one concludes that viewers have to watch more than one local news bulletin to be able to get a complete picture of the news story. A viewer might not have the possibility to view more than one station, a point which was raised during the focus group session wherein participants had different viewing habits. Some agreed to watch different stations but other relied on the public service broadcaster for the truth. Ms W commented that it was important for TVM to be informative and true because “viewers see it as the base line for truth” while knowing that TVM news can also be biased in the way “the story is chosen, the running order and the selective editing”. Notwithstanding all the biases, TVM news item was perceived by a number of participants that is more informative and gives of a good news service to its viewers. Ms D admitted that the viewer is more informed on the project through TVM news item.

Two different media clips of the same activity taken from One News and Net News were shown during the focus group session for the purpose of comparing and contrasting the two news reports. Both news items reported a press conference addressed by Minister Mugliette to Sliema residents regarding the Tigne project. These items were broadcast on 25th February 2006. ONE news puts this news item as the first news item in the news bulletin and NET news placed it as the 10th item. During the focus group sessions these two items were shown one after each other since both items reported the same event and the participants could compare both news items. The reports covered a press conference given by a Minister who spoke about the Tigne proposed project. The differences between the two news items could be put together in one remark voiced by Ms I & Ms B in different sessions,

“we went to heaven and to hell in five minutes”.

ONE news reported that the project as proposed for Sliema is very worrying for Sliema residents. Amongst the proposals for Tigne and Qui si Sana are the building of pedestrian zones, parking spaces, restaurants, bowling centre, shopping complex and a tunnel. During the meeting organized by Minister Jesmond Mugliette, Sliema residents showed their worries about the proposed project. The news report revolves on the worries of Sliema residents about Tigne project, while Net news report reported that the project as proposed for the Tigne point offers balance between the needs of the citizens who visit this site but puts forward the residents' needs. It reported what the Minister for Urban Development and Roads Jesmond Mugliette said during the public debate with Sliema residents particularly regarding the proposals for the development of Tigne. Both news

organizations treated such a news story very differently and while One news put it as a priority and aired it as the first item, NET placed it as the 10th item. Again the participants' comments drew attention to the use of particular words in the news reports. Mr A and Mr F commented about the words used "consultation meeting" and "debate". They argued that both political stations used these words differently for their propaganda purposes. While one political party wanted to show that the Government is active and is ready to hear the residents' concern and thus the use of 'consultation meeting', the Opposition Party pictured the conference as being a hot debate between the residents against Government representatives and chose to describe it as a 'debate' implying lack of agreement and the negative discourse in One news item was used throughout.

Also participants commented on the different styles adopted when reporting this event. Mr Y commented that while One TV stressed the debate which took place during the conference, leading to protests from citizens, "Super 1 (referring to One TV) showed this in full volume", and a study of the news item text reveal that the focus of the story were the Sliema residents. The residents made the news and One News wanted to put forward their voice. On the other hand, "on Net TV we never saw the reactions of the people present" and as the news text showed the news feature gave priority and reported in detail the Minister's speech about the consultations meetings in an attempt to show that the Minister will take heed of residents' worries. Participants commented that in this sample again news visuals were again used to drive the message home and in this case One TV showed lack of agreement between residents and the Minister who was present during the press

conference, Net News visuals focused more on stock shots²⁵⁰ of the Tigne area without highlighting what was happening during the meeting. Ms I observed:

“NET news visuals showed the sea, everything is calm and nice, ...ONE news footage showed people complaining and arguing about the project”.

Surely Net TV footage conveyed a positive message, giving the impression that this new proposed project will give a new dimension to Tigne point in Sliema. News visuals do leave an impact on the viewers and in this case due to clear contrast between the two items, the participants commented on the use of visuals. Mr R argued that the difference between both news items is clear more so in the news visuals, though he argues that the majority of viewers “wouldn’t necessarily realize”. Mr P commented that the two types of visuals carry an agenda and argues that the fact that One News made use of visuals showing the residents present at the press conference while arguing with the Minister, gives a hint that the Government is going against the people’s will. Such a message is highly propagandistic in a context of electoral campaign when the Opposition is continually criticizing the Government that with its decisions is going against the will of the citizens.

The most common comment concerning these two news clips was that the main aim of the news on both these stations was to convey their political message and not report a news story. Their partisan political agenda comes before the reporting of a news story. An interesting observation was made by Mr J, and after viewing both items he put forward a question to the group “Did anyone understand what the project is about?” He set the group thinking and all agreed that they were not at all informed even though they viewed these two news reports. He argued that both stations did not say anything about the project but

²⁵⁰ Stock shots – archive footage, library pictures of the area, in this case Tigne area in Sliema

led to confusion in the viewers' minds. He emphasized his point made earlier during the session, that the political stations keep on emphasizing the same message which they want to convey and thus increase the level of political propaganda. In a different session participant R suggested that since the viewers do not know the facts, they had to turn to independent on line journals for the facts. One of the participants (Ms W) who happened to have been present during the Tigne conference recounted what had happened and she said: "the fact that Net TV portrayed that there were two groups of residents confronting each other was not the case; it wasn't like that at all"²⁵¹. Ms V agreed that "Net TV news item had a complete agenda, was not realistic and factual".

When both news items are compared, the absence of some news points is evident. Amongst the residents pictured on One news there was no one who seemed to be in favour of the project as was visualised by Net News. According to Net news the residents were divided between those in favour of the project and those against the project and not as One News depicted showing all the Tigne residents seemed to be against the project. The confrontation mentioned by Net news between two groups of residents from the two zones was never mentioned in One news. Also the script between One News and Net News varies considerably. While Net news reported that this activity was a public debate, One News reported that it was a 'consultative meeting, held few days before the Local Council election in Sliema'. According to Net News the Minister participated in the debate while One news reported that the meeting was organized by the Minister. Both clips highlight the lack of factual reporting which is missing in the reports of the local political stations and which leads to a lack of credibility in the news reporting of these stations. In this particular

²⁵¹ Net News item gave the impression that there were two groups of residents who were not agreeing between each other regarding this proposed Tigne project and car park

case it is not just a question of separating the facts from the comments (Pratte, 1995; Allan, 1999)

Another news item clip shown to the participants was a Net News item broadcast on 8th March 2006 as the third (3rd) item. It was a news report which focused on the lack of solutions by Rabat Local Council on the infrastructure which led to damages in St Paul's Grotto. In this news item the NET news journalist put a number of questions to the Leader of the Opposition, Dr Sant, during his visit at Rabat as part of the electoral campaign. This item was already mentioned when the participants spoke about how far slant and bias can be allowed in the political stations as opposed to the public service broadcaster and its text was analysed in detail further up in this chapter. This news item was typical of a couple of news stories presented by the political stations, particularly in the way the journalist behaves when preparing the story. The participants' comments regarding this news item were targeted to the way Net News journalist²⁵² interviewed the Labour Party leader about the responsibility of the Rabat Local Council on the alleged damage of St Paul's Grotto²⁵³. Before yet commenting on the news item content, they criticized the way the journalist went about asking questions to the politician. The majority did not approve the journalist's behaviour. Ms G described the way he put his questions as "rude" and participants argued that he encouraged antagonism through the way he went about asking questions. Mr H's first reaction to this was "shocked, shocked". Participants argued that this news item was an example of "aggressive reporting" and which does not necessarily works out well even

²⁵² Dione Borg

²⁵³ This was a main issue in the 2006 electoral campaign for Local council elections. Usually in the locality of Rabat it is a tight race between the political parties and it was not surprising that during the 2006 election the political parties did their best to garner votes for their candidates to win over the majority at this Local Council.

with hard-core party supporters. However, during one of the focus group sessions wherein a number of participants were ‘declared’ political supporters this item led to a debate and Mr J passed a partisan political judgement,

“it would have been better if we²⁵⁴ [referring to the Nationalist party] stayed quiet because we might have taken it from them [Labour party].”

Such aggressive reporting very often backfires on the station and the party which uses this method of reporting. Party supporters, even if they are hard-core supporters, do not agree with such a blatant and aggressive way of propagating the party’s message. This item triggered different responses from the viewers. Mr M did raise the issue that such reporting might not lead to what would have been expected by the party. While the participants argued that such items regarding the alleged damage of St Paul’s Grotto worked against the Nationalist Party in that the Nationalist Party did not succeed in winning the Rabat Local Council, Mr M argued that had the same news item was shown on One TV it would not have backfired against the party because he argued that Net TV audience is by far different from One TV audience:

“One TV audience are not ‘floaters’, while Net TV audience tend to go from one station to another, it is only 11%²⁵⁵ that does not float”.

On the contrary Mr U and Mr C commented that hard core political supporters like this type of reporting and “it makes them happy; they like it...” Ms W said that the cliché used by loyal supporters is “look how much we pressed them”. The same comment was passed by Ms Q,

²⁵⁴ Mr J being a staunch Nationalist Party supporter

²⁵⁵ 11% is the audience percentage quoted in the audience survey commissioned by the Broadcasting Authority

“...normally, such items go well with the partisan supporters”.

Loyal viewers to One TV or Net TV would like journalists being arrogant with the opponent and this is also reflected in the newsrooms because certain ‘tough’ journalists are sent to report on such events. A counter argument to this was raised by Mr R and Mr Y who argued that since it was an electoral campaign for Local Council elections, certain news items would not have influenced the viewers even if these viewers would have been potential voters for Local Councils. They argue that Local Council elections have to be treated quite differently from a General Election and in a polarised political environment, as is the case with Malta, voters are more likely to change their party in Local Council elections but will not do the same during a General Election. The journalist in the news item kept on asking the same question to the Leader of the Opposition while being booed by the Labour supporters who were following the leader throughout the streets of Rabat. Mr M described the journalist as “a pest” and Mr L said “I see it as embarrassing to the journalist”. Mr H agreed that “at that time the so called journalist’s role has been destroyed and he turned to be a party agent”. However, Mr J argued totally the opposite and he said that a journalist “has to be a pain in the ass. His duty is to persist until he hears from the interviewee what he wants”. Contrary to what Mr L and Mr M said that the journalist surpassed his limits when interviewing the Labour Leader, Mr J insisted that this journalist should be admired for his persistent tactics; “...the pity is that the journalist did not follow the story up”. Mr R also agrees that the journalist’s behaviour was acceptable because “the journalist is there to ask questions”. On the contrary Mr S commented that in this case the journalist did not ask questions to the Labour Party leader but he “went to a hostile

environment and faced him with accusations and did not go there to question”. He continued that the news item was more a political campaign spot rather than a news item:

“if you want to use it as a political move, then it was good; as a political footage but not for news”.

Ms B agreed and argued that the way the journalist interviewed Dr Sant was propagandistic because,

“the real ‘problem’ was not whether mud seeped through the Grotto and how we are going to solve the problem but the issue was that the Local Council had a Labour majority”.

As seen above, some participants did agree that some news items presented on the political stations convey propaganda and are turned into a political partisan spot rather than a news item. Would such news items be allowed on the local news? Should such items be regulated? Mr R argued that such behaviour should remain because,

“such behaviour was also sending a message, ... it also reflect on the individual who is being interviewed...”

Some participants considered that partisan political news items were not to be eliminated from the news bulletin because the viewer can also decipher the politician’s attitude from the way the journalist behaves. However, such attitude from the journalist is only tolerated on the political stations and not on the public service broadcaster. All the participants, even those who agreed with the journalist’s behaviour argued that they would not have accepted that a TVM journalist would have behaved in that way. Participants did not agree on the role of the Broadcasting Authority in similar matters like this. Mr H and Mr N said that the Broadcasting Authority should have stopped the journalist and should have taken steps

against the journalist personally, but Mr P said that Broadcasting Authority should not intervene and let the journalist act as he/she wishes even if he/she might act arrogantly. However, Mr C argues that the BA should intervene because it should have an educational role.

“...we have to educate, are we going to remain like this? Are we going to keep on these grudges...?”

The participants were shown another Net news item commemorating the result of the referendum for Malta on EU membership. This news item was broadcast on 9th March 2006 which marks the third anniversary of this result and was placed the third (3rd) item and lasted 2' 05". This news item in a sarcastic way reported that the date marked the third anniversary since partnership won.²⁵⁶ The main criticism of this item mentioned by the majority of participants was its subject because they argued that it does not have any news value and thus it should not have been included in a news bulletin²⁵⁷. Mr A explained that the word 'news' itself indicate that something 'new' has to be reported. Mr A, Mr F, Ms G

²⁵⁶ In 2003 a referendum was held for Malta accession in the EU. The Nationalist Party, at that time the party in Government was in favour of Malta joining the EU, and fought in favour of a YES campaign. But the Opposition, the Labour Party was against and led a NO campaign, which proposed an alternative relationship with the EU, what it was called 'partnership'. and its Leader was arguing that a no vote (an abstention) in the referendum was a vote against Malta joining the EU. In the referendum the YES vote accounted for 53.6% of the valid votes and the NO obtained 46.4%. Despite the outcome the main Opposition party, the Malta labour Party did not concede defeat. The turnout was quite high and amounted to 91% and a relatively narrow margin between the YES and the NO campaign was registered. The Labour Party was not conceding defeat as it was arguing that the Leader of the Party, Dr Sant had advised opponents of EU membership to opt for one the three tactics – to vote No to abstain in the referendum (by registering but not voting) or to invalidate the ballot paper. Thus the Labour party announced that the partnership won. Up front he stressed that he would not necessarily recognise the result of the referendum, arguing that it was a consultative referendum. Thus the day after the referendum results were known, the Prime Minister called a General election. The outcome of the General Election results which was to be held on 12 April would determine whether or not Malta joins the EU.

²⁵⁷ The news item dealt about the third year anniversary since the result of the referendum on EU membership was held in Malta. This was reported from the perspective of the way the Labour Party interpreted the referendum result which according to Dr Sant, Partnership had won over full EU membership

and Ms I agreed that news should not be made up of history and this news item recounted a history incident. On the other hand Mr U and Ms W commented that it is a norm that news bulletins broadcast on political stations report past events highlighting a number of successes gained by the party and thus they did not object that such item should not be included in the news bulletin. Mr Y commented that such an item was used as “a political tactic”. He admitted that “political stations are there to take a political advantage”. Ms O and Mr P agreed that such a news item should have been aired. Mr P argued that this news item was making the viewers aware of a past action and thus makes it newsworthy. However, Mr S completely opposed this view and instigated a discussion about the definition of news value and asked,

“is news value all about being objective of a news event or is it about taking a political advantage when reporting an event?”

News visuals were again mentioned during the discussion and all agreed that news visuals do send a political message in the way visuals are placed and edited. Ms I commented on the news visuals²⁵⁸ and she argued that such visuals used in this news items were allowed because from the first place political stations were allowed and,

“we did not put an editorial policy on such stations, thus we gave them the right to broadcast anything”.

She observed that Net TV is much more powerful in its news images and through camera shake and the use of large headroom when portraying the opposing party, the politician is depicted as weak and pathetic; while One TV uses strong and hard language and falls weak

²⁵⁸ In some instances the news item showed Labour Party supporters celebrating the result which was interpreted by Dr Sant as a win for partnership. These shots depicted of old age supporters and particular male supporter who is topless, possibly drunk and is filmed doing funny gestures.

in visuals. Mr P also commented on the visuals but defined such visuals as providing a slant which is acceptable and participants argued that visual material is used for political mileage. The visuals used in this news item were taken from archive footage showing political party supporters from both political parties celebrating the referendum result. Other archive footage showed clips of a programme aired on One TV (at that time Super 1 TV) during the day of the referendum result and a clip from a press conference addressed by the Leader of the Labour Party at the time of the referendum result. When analysing such visuals, the way Dr Sant is framed during a political meeting put him in a ridicule situation; his body language and the way he gesticulates make him look humorous. Several other archive shots, general shots and close ups of Labour Party supporters celebrating showing them in a ridiculous position particularly a shot of male supporter, topless and possibly drunk and is filmed doing funny gestures. These shots can be compared and contrasted with shots taken from a high angle position showing an enormous crowd of Nationalist Party supporters celebrating the Yes result. Also the use of lot of headroom when showing voice clips of Dr Sant during a press conference and is also framed on the left hand side of the screen giving the impression that the speaker will fall out from the screen also sends in a partisan

Another example of how a politician is approached by a journalist working in a political station was shown on One news item. The issue of the alleged damage in St Paul's Grotto in Rabat was again the subject matter of a news item discussed by the participants. The item²⁵⁹ reported a political activity organized by the Nationalist Party which was addressed

²⁵⁹ The activity which was supposed to be reported is a party political activity which took place at the PN Club in Fgura where the Leader of the Nationalist Party Dr Lawrence Gonzi addressed the PN supporters.

by the Leader of the Nationalist Party Dr Gonzi. The activity was held in the Fgura party club and was aired on ONE on 8th March 2006. ONE News journalist asked questions to the Leader of the Nationalist Party while he was leaving the party club asking him about the alleged damage in St Paul's Grotto. The participants agreed that even though they heard a lot on the issue²⁶⁰ from different TV stations they still do not have a full picture of what happened because they have an interpretation of facts. The news media turned the issue of St Paul's Grotto from a local issue to a national political issue and was used by the political media as a way to garner votes. The participants commented on the style adopted by One News and the use of the phrase 'campaign of lies' used throughout this particular news item. All the participants agreed that One News did not report what was said by Dr Gonzi during the political activity and admitted that after all One News was not interested in getting across Dr Gonzi's speech. They were more interested in the way Dr Gonzi would be answering to One News journalist about the alleged damage in St Paul's Grotto. Such way of journalism was pointed out by a number of working journalists, mainly journalists working in a political station, and argued that such reporting should be kept and the journalist has to dig deeper than what is said during an event. However, an ex Board member at PBS was contrary to this type of journalism arguing that news reports should consist of a report of what happened and not a report of what did not happen.

An analysis of the text of this news item shows that the introduction to the news feature already puts the viewer into perspective because it shows the editorial view which One

However, the item focused on the lack of agreement between Minister Francis Zammit Dimech and the Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi about the damage in St Paul's Grotto in Rabat. It is not clear whether the Prime Minister did refer to the issue during his speech. But this issue was put forward by ONE NEWS journalist to the Prime Minister as he was entering the PN club for the political activity.

²⁶⁰ The alleged damage in St Paul's Grotto

News wants to achieve. The introduction starts off by stating that the campaign of lies by the Nationalist Party continues and the Prime Minister ‘is choosing’ to lie. This partisan comment made by the station is a form of electioneering and propaganda against the campaign of the Nationalist Party and in favour of the Malta Labour Party. The narrative discourse puts stress on ‘the campaign of lies’ and describes that this campaign had been going on in the last week, while emphasizing that one of the Ministers²⁶¹ is contradicting what the Prime Minister is saying²⁶². One News highlights this lack of agreement indicating that the disagreement is found even within the Nationalist cabinet of Ministers. The news item continues highlighting the contradiction by showing a comment made by the Prime Minister during the short interview to highlight the lack of agreement between the two. The viewer gets the impression that this comment reinforces what the news report is emphasizing, that is, the Prime Minister ‘is insisting on a lie’. Mr F, contrary to what Ms I thinks, see that there was nothing wrong in One News item even if the same item was broadcast on TVM,

“If the journalist thinks that it was newsworthy to ask him about St Paul’s Grotto, there is nothing wrong in depicting this”

But Ms I insisted that the item was “a misrepresentation of facts” because the political speaker probably did not speak solely (if he ever did) on this issue during this political activity. She said that the news item was misleading and the Broadcasting Authority should have the right to take action against the station in this regard. Mr E argued that this news item is a typical spin used by the political station and not all viewers realize that the

²⁶¹ Minister Francis Zammit Dimech

²⁶² One News that while Minister Francis Zammit Dimech is reported to have said that water and soil has been entering St Paul’s Grotto; ONE NEWS reports that Dr Lawrence Gonzi is ‘insisting’ that it is not mud but tar which is seeping in the Grotto.

news journalists are spinning the story. Textually the news item apart from highlighting the point that there is disagreement between a Minister and the Prime Minister, described the scene as witnessed by ONE news journalist and reported that ‘several supporters’ left before the arrival and the speech of the Prime Minister giving the impression they were not ready to wait for the Prime Minister’s arrival and were not interested in his speech. During the focus group session the participants spoke about the way ONE News journalist interviewed the Nationalist Party leader. While Mr Y argued that ONE News journalist approached the Nationalist Party leader in the same way as Net News journalist did in the previous item, Mr Y said that the leaders’ reactions in both news items were different. Others argued that the way One News journalist asked the questions to the Nationalist Party leader was very different because she did not face the political leader and put forward a series of accusations as was the case in Net news item. Mr S also commented that the environment wherein the questions were asked was much calmer as opposed to the hostile environment which Net News journalist faced when the Labour Party leader was surrounded by his supporters.

Participants spoke about the phrases used in the item, mainly ‘campaign of lies’. Mr C admitted “that it annoys me”, while Ms W explained that the Nationalist Party leader did not comment whether the alleged damage in St Paul’s Grotto was tar or soil but it was the political media stations that were adding the spin. One News instead of saying that there was “inconsistency” in Dr Gonzi’s argument; they used much more simple language and

described it as “lies”. It was interesting to see that Mr N, even though he is a Labour Party official²⁶³ did not agree with such phrases, “the introduction²⁶⁴ was too biased”. He admits,

“I want to see my station in a much better and different way”.

Here he referred to the new Labour Party decision to migrate the newsroom and the news workers from the Party Headquarters to the television station which is found in a separate locality²⁶⁵ He argued that if,

“the tone is more moderate, the message would still get through to the viewers”.

Ms D argued that such phrases and such an ‘aggressive’ message is only acceptable to hardcore political supporters, and she specifies that these would be the viewers who watch the only one party political station which they support. Ms O thought much the same way as Ms D and referred to the first part of the news item wherein it was reported that “a number of supporters left the party club before the arrival of the party leader”. Ms O commented “that obviously the partisan supporters want to see this”. Mr P argued quite differently from the other participants stating that even if words were put mildly they would have meant the same. He puts all the responsibility on to the journalists because,

“if they report that the Nationalist Party leader lied and then it turns that it was not actually so, then the journalist and the media has to be accountable for what is reported”.

The fact that the participants did hear the two different political stations on the issue of the alleged damage of St Paul’s Grotto, they were still could not understand what happened in this matter. Again the plurality of stations did not transpire that the viewers were more

²⁶³ Mr N is also a Mayor who was elected from the list of the Labour Party candidates

²⁶⁴ Introduction started “the campaign of lies of the Nationalist Party continues” [tkompli l-kampanja ta’ gideb tal-Partit Nazzjonalista].

²⁶⁵ in previous years One TV newsroom was housed in the Labour Party Headquarters and not within the TV and radio station

informative. Mr T argued that they could not decipher what happened. He argues that even though the Water Services Company was mentioned by both stations and it seemed was involved in the case,

“we still did not get their view to know whether they would defend or not their position which they were being alleged to”.

Participants agreed that the different stations did not give the full picture of what happened but an interpretation of the facts. (Ward, 2007) In this particular news item, ONE News used three types of news sources – the Prime Minister himself, the statement made by Minister Zammit Dimech in Parliament and other “information gathered by ONE News” regarding the Water Services Corporation about the maintenance of water pipes. While the comment of the Prime Minister was reported in the news item, the Minister’s declaration in Parliament was not reported through a voice clip and the third source was not official; it was not clear whether the information was officially gathered from the Water Services Corporation or whether they had another source which passed such information. Having used different sources, the viewers, as indicated in the focus group session were still confused about the matter.

As regards the Broadcasting Authority intervention, there was lack of agreement between the participants about this matter. Some argued that the Broadcasting Authority should not intervene in such items and leave it to the audience to make their judgement (Mr L and Ms K). Referring also to Net news interview with the Labour Leader, some participants argue that the editor in charge of the newsroom and not the regulator, should take the responsibility and take steps against the journalist. Mr M argues that both One News item

and Net News item are sending a political message with their different reporting styles, thus if the Broadcasting Authority would intrude it will be sending a message that:

“the stations cannot send a political message, something which doesn’t make sense if it is done!”

Notwithstanding their arguments, viewers tend to be hesitant about whether the Broadcasting Authority should take any action on certain news items. Mr P argues that the Broadcasting Authority should intervene with regard to the use of certain words, in this case the continuous use of the word “lies”. Mr N argues that the BA should intervene because we will end up in an uncontrollable situation. Ms V and Mr P are more radical as regards broadcasting regulations and argue that the BA should intervene and state that certain words cannot be used in news reports. Mr P stresses that the BA can “draw the line on particular words”.

After viewing a general sample of news items the participants were asked on the role of the Broadcasting Authority when regulating such news items. Ms G agrees that the Broadcasting Authority should have intervened in visuals when stereotypes of Labour Party supporters in the ‘partnership news report’ were used portraying a negative image of the Labour Party supporters²⁶⁶. But Mr E did not agree that the Authority should decide which visuals should not be used. “The Authority should not go into the nitty gritty”. Mr R and Mr Y also agreed that the Broadcasting Authority should not intervene in the

²⁶⁶ This item was referred and analysed further up. It was a news item broadcast on Net TV commemorating the result of the referendum for Malta on EU membership. This news item was broadcast on 9th March 2006 which marks the third anniversary of this result and was placed the third (3rd) item and lasted 2’ 05”. This news item sarcastically reported that that date marked the third anniversary since partnership won, the political slogan used by the Labour Party. The news visuals, as already referred, showed Labour Party supporters in a way that were meant for ridicule and also the way the Leader of the Opposition was being filmed during a press conference was sending a negative message.

regulation of news visuals as long as the visuals are not “compromising” (Mr Y). It should be the politician’s responsibility to be cautious of his/her behaviour when the TV camera is on location. Mr H, who seemed more inclined to comment on the news visuals during the whole focus group session, stressed that the Broadcasting Authority should take action about the juxtaposition of images which are used for propaganda purposes mainly by the political stations. He argued that the Broadcasting Authority has to be aware of the “technological conventions” which the TV stations use “to twist and tweak images when sending their message”. He also points out that the Broadcasting Authority should have an editorial control over the TV stations and has to be present when the facts are given. According to some participants, particular news visuals have to be accepted to be aired on political stations because they argued that the viewers would expect such visuals as they are fully aware that they are watching a political station and thus it would have its political biases. Mr Y argued that regulation has to be more flexible with the use of visuals by the political stations as long as “we had accepted the setting up of political stations”.

When it comes to the issue of exposure and not when visuals negatively portray the opposing party, the broadcasting regulations seem to be different as Mr U who presented short interview programmes with personalities, recounts from his experience. According to him the Broadcasting Authority does regulate the exposure of the politicians.

“If I interviewed a Labour Party official, then the next day I have to interview a Nationalist Party official, even if the interview had nothing to do with politics,... it’s a question of exposure...”.

Such procedure by the BA is diligently administered during the six weeks of an electoral campaign and this is also mentioned in the BA Directive issued for that particular purpose. As a general comment Mr N argues that it is getting more difficult for the Broadcasting Authority to intervene because the messages are getting more subtle,

“The stations are sending their message in a different way so that they would not be seen to be in breach of the law”.

Ms O argued that with the influx of party political stations such confrontation and aggressive terminology is expected from the viewers.

As indicated previously, the participants were also asked to analyse a smaller sample of media clips taken from current affairs programmes. However, the discussion rather focused on the sample taken from news bulletins and there was much less time for the discussion of the current affairs programmes. Contrary to what generally happens in Malta during the Local Council elections campaign, the public service broadcaster in 2006 did not put any emphasis whatsoever on the Local Council elections, something which was also discussed with some producers of the public service broadcaster during the face to face interviews conducted for this study and referred to in the previous chapter (Chapter 5).

A chosen clip taken from a TVM programme (Bondi+) was a typical example of the different subject other than the Local Council Elections was tackled during this programme. The programme broadcast in the last week of the election, on 7th March 2006 discussed Carnival matters²⁶⁷. The sample showed comments given by the Minister of Culture and the Carnival participants which were recorded outside the studio discussion

²⁶⁷ Carnival is usually celebrated in Malta in February

and were included during part of the discussion. Such a sample was also chosen to assess whether the viewers would realize whether selective editing and the juxtaposition of comments would also lead to less impartiality and objectivity. Are the viewers aware of such editing techniques? The majority of the participants commented that the clip was clear and impartial. Mr N commented that the viewers had both sides of the story – the position of the Carnival participants and the position coming from the Minister of Culture. However, Ms W analyzed further this clip and commented that such a clip was an example of “selective framing and editing” because the Minister’s comments were edited and mixed with the participants’ comments in such a way as to picture the Minister in a positive way.

“This is continuously done even with the small political party when the Minister and the Shadow Minister are present during the programme and then a short edited clip/comment of the representative of the small party is edited according to the needs”.

Overall discussion

As shown in this chapter, a number of news items, particularly those aired on the political stations embarked on a national campaign during the Local Council elections and issues related to a local village or town were spun into national matters. Items containing propaganda were based on a national level rather than on a local level even though it was a Local council electoral campaign. But as pointed out earlier in this chapter taking the size of Malta, a Local Council election easily becomes part of the national agenda. From the participants’ comments one has to be cautious what would constitute news value and thus it would be difficult to legislate on the interpretation of news value. Having said this the

Subsidiary legislation 350.14 does define what should be included as news value mainly “...timeliness, proximity, prominence, magnitude, impact, conflict and oddity.” However, all these criteria are subject to interpretation as well. If one looks at NET news item reporting the anniversary of the referendum result one might argue that this item does not have any of the above criteria and it was still on the news bulletin without the regulator taking any action against such a news item. Then one would argue that its oddity in itself would have made news but then one would come up with a counter argument saying that in spite of its oddity, this did not happen at the current time and it was only an ‘anniversary’ that was being reported. Apart from the script, visuals do leave an impact on the viewers. Participants commented on the type of visuals used particularly in three news items – the Mġarr Harbour news item, the anniversary of the referendum result and the Tigne project news item. Such visuals send a political message leading to propaganda and political stations would use particular visuals and editing to continue to stress their partisan message. Other items leading to political partisan comments and which need to be tackled through legislation are the number of items which supposedly have to report an event or activity but the journalist chooses to present it focusing on another matter. In the sample chosen, this happened in ONE news item which was meant to report the political activity addressed by the Leader of the Nationalist Party and the news item focus only on the question asked by ONE news journalist to the Leader on his way out of the party political club and nothing was reported from the speech. Even TVM used this type of reporting when presented an item entirely on the Mġarr Harbour project and excluded the different visits which the Leader of the Labour Party did during a visit in Gozo.

Concluding remarks

This findings chapter has reflected on whether the audience is aware of any possible slant in the news bulletins and current affairs programmes aired on the three stations under investigation and has also considered how viewers perceive the role of the Broadcasting Authority in attempting to safeguard balance and impartiality. It is clear that the public broadcaster is perceived to be the most 'neutral', factual and accurate. Since both political stations are used as a propaganda tool in the hands of each political party, the public service broadcaster is fundamental to the maintenance of truthfulness in the news. It is clear that pluralism, in this particular study, referring to the introduction of the two political stations did not relate to being better informed. Viewers were clear that when they watch the news bulletins they are being confronted by an interpretation of facts, however, they insist that such an interpretation has to be factual and based on truth. While everyone is in favour of pluralism, and was against the Maltese situation in the 80s where broadcasting consisted only of the state broadcaster, viewers admit that very often such political stations introduced an element of conflict and 'friction' due to their partisan news messages and visuals.

Thus they regard the public service broadcaster as the competent station which can be relied on to present accurate, truthful and factual news without any political comments. For further achieving impartiality and balance, viewers insist on a competent authority which regulates the political stations and the public service broadcaster. The Broadcasting Authority needs to be given more power to take action even with respect to news broadcast on the political stations. While it was evident that there is no clear cut line as to when the

Broadcasting Authority should intervene, everyone put the onus on the Broadcasting Authority to ensure a truthful and accurate level of reporting

Chapter 7

Conclusion

Partisan media blatantly promote party-centric agendas, whereas the other media tend to emphasize “balance” between the two sides and so they indirectly promote a monochromatic world picture that fosters bi polarism (Sammut, 2007, p.229)

The aim of the thesis was to analyse the challenges faced by television channels in Malta (the Maltese public service broadcaster and the two political stations) in providing impartial and balanced news programming. The major impetus for this study was that Malta has a quite unique media set-up based on the model of political parallelism (Hallin & Mancini, 2004) with two political stations owned by the two political parties represented in Parliament providing news bulletins and current affairs programmes in competition with the public service broadcaster which has a special responsibility for providing impartial and balanced news programming. This thesis has examined some of the challenges that news-workers face in attempting to provide impartial news bulletins and current affairs programmes. It has considered, among other things, whether the Maltese public service broadcaster confronts greater challenges than the two political stations in fulfilling audience expectations. What the study has also shown is that the broadcasting legislation currently in place is, to say the least, not in harmony with some of the practices of the regulatory body: the Broadcasting Authority. There appears to be a clear lack of consistency between the terms listed in the Broadcasting Act and the Subsidiary Legislation on News and Current affairs programmes and the Constitution of Malta.

The study has also considered viewers' own thoughts on issues of impartiality, balance and objectivity. By setting up focus groups an attempt was made to discover whether viewers in Malta think that are getting impartial news coverage and especially whether the public service broadcaster is still seen to be the main flagship as far as the production of impartial news is concerned. Consideration was also given to the issue of whether news broadcast on the political stations could be regarded in any way as impartial, balanced and fair.

The findings of this research suggest that, while the public service broadcaster is perceived to be the most impartial station, it is still a big challenge for news broadcasts and current affairs programmes to remain totally objective with regard to their content. According to both news-workers and to viewers total objectivity is itself unattainable (Hackett & Yeuzhi Zhao, 1988), in spite of the fact that news-workers should always be striving for fairness, credibility and accuracy. Impartiality is something that needs to be worked upon and while news-workers themselves believe that they are providing an impartial news service, the audience think otherwise. In some of the focus group discussions viewers made the point, for instance, that accompanying news visuals as well as the actual script will sometimes give a twisted and slanted view of the news. The use of such techniques reinforces the idea that especially the political stations can be seen primarily as a propaganda tool, and thus the role of the public broadcaster becomes essential to work painstakingly on the truthfulness and accuracy of news in the sense of giving an impartial picture of the news. While news-workers and viewers alike think that political television stations are there to promote their own messages with the electorate and that bias is to be expected, news bulletins have always to be factual and accurate. However, with respect to the public service broadcaster,

the presence of any political bias or slanted commentary was considered to be unacceptable. There was a recognition that it was difficult to separate content and editorial ownership and that such ownership was bound to impinge on the editorial content. Nevertheless news-workers themselves did not see this as their main hurdle in attaining impartiality. And in spite of all protestations to the contrary and even though nothing was recorded in any policy documents, political influence was still discernible in the programming of such stations. Moreover from different news clips, it could be observed that Maltese broadcasting was dominated by 'interpretative' forms of journalism and political reporting.

Viewers expect all three stations to have an obligation towards the public and that they should be therefore obliged to produce factual and accurate news. But whilst the public broadcaster is perceived to be the most credible of all the three stations the way the public broadcaster is administered and regulated sheds doubt on how independent it can be since the PBS board of management and chairman are political appointees. However, even though viewers and producers know that PSB, by dint of its administrative structure, is loyal to the governing party, it is still required to provide an impartial, balanced and fair news service. For PBS to be perceived as totally impartial it would require that there should not be any interference from the governing party. For this reason there was an expectation that there should be no political appointments within the public service broadcaster. In order to eliminate the perceived partiality in the public service broadcaster, appointments of the governing board at PBS should therefore be subject to change, as the appointments procedure hitherto has always shown signs of political control and this has

given rise to fears that the news agenda might not necessarily be governed by journalistic criteria such as newsworthiness, but rather by the agenda that the governing party wants to promote. However, there was never a mention by producers and viewers that TVM news is hived off from PBS Ltd in order to avoid influence from the Government on the news service provided by TVM. Such an idea was mentioned in this thesis in Chapter 4 referring to what Spiteri & Grima suggested²⁶⁸.

It is clear that in a two party State like Malta (this is a constitutional and political reality), viewers rely more on the public service broadcaster to provide them with impartial and fair news. With different media channels having diverse agenda, oppositional views can be expressed in the local media and through different media outlets, rather than being aired by one particular station. Thus, if one looks at the media scenario in Malta as a whole, one would argue that in this sense the situation is democratic (Votmer, 2012). While it is becoming increasingly common that viewers turn to other media portals to get the latest and updated news, the news put out by the public broadcaster still attracts a good number of audience who consider that it offers impartial and balanced news programming. From both the viewers' and producers' perspectives, people turn to PBS news for a balanced picture, since the political stations are much more inclined to transmit their party's message while PBS is seen to be more credible and impartial. Interviewees and focus group participants agreed that the choice of subjects, the selection of participants and the way individual programmes are conducted are the key points in achieving impartiality when producing and presenting current affairs programmes. On the other hand, for news

²⁶⁸ Lino Spiteri in The Times article, 24 March 2013 and Joe Grima (both ex Ministers under the Labour Government)

bulletins, facts, truth and reliable sources are the main ingredients for an impartial news product. These are the same ingredients which should be used by the political stations, even though the tendency is for political stations to produce an interpretation of facts in their reporting. Producers agree that these should constitute the basis of good and impartial programming and that it is then up to the viewers to form an opinion about the subject under discussion. As for news impartiality, it is always related to accuracy, fairness and credibility.

Viewers were more in favour of pragmatic objectivity (Ward, 2009) because while news reporting does not exclusively consist of the reporting of the bare facts, if any interpretation is needed, this has to be based on factual evidence. The challenge of impartiality and balance is much more difficult for PSB journalists and producers because the main remit of the PSB is to provide a public service and thus PSB journalists and presenters should shy away from any attempt at electioneering and propagandistic news production. The journalist has to be perceived as not taking sides during a debate. Likewise his or her personal opinions should never be seen to be influencing the content of news programming. Viewers insisted that all points of view should be tackled in a news report and that journalists always had to be loyal to their viewers. With regard to political stations, viewers were totally against what was perceived as 'aggressive' reporting and they argued that this would work against stations which were seen to be acting in this way.

What also emerged in this study was that there were different views on the role and function of the Broadcasting Authority. The people working in the media feel that the

interpretation of the Broadcasting Authority on balance might be felt as too restrictive particularly in current affairs programmes on the public service broadcaster. They are also of the view, however, that there should no longer be an insistence on balance as it has been practiced hitherto. The idea that one station should balance another does not make sense even though news-workers tend to agree that broadcasting regulations should be more lenient and flexible with regard to the political stations. Misinterpretations and misconceptions about the broadcasting regulations and legislation result from the fact that the Broadcasting Act and the Subsidiary Legislation on News and Current Affairs Programmes are not in line with the Constitution, a point which had been raised by a number of news-workers interviewed for this study. Viewers are more in favour of the Broadcasting Authority to adopt an active role as an effective watchdog particularly in regulating news bulletins, even though the majority of the viewers think that the remit of the Broadcasting Authority was hard to define. The study has revealed that a change in the broadcasting legislation is needed. While one acknowledges the discrepancies between the print, broadcast and online media with regard to regulation, viewers and producers agreed that news broadcasting should be more heavily regulated and that standards of fairness and accuracy in news reporting should be enhanced. There was also a consensus that broadcasting regulations should be the same for all the broadcasting stations and that the Broadcasting Authority should become a more effective watchdog even though there was an understanding that regulation always involves treading a thin line, and that it is hard to regulate in certain cases. In its present form the regulatory system is not assisting in providing a fair and accurate news media service mainly because it is allowing the political stations to continue to produce news reporting which is very often economical with the

truth. Further to this, regulations need to focus on the visuals and on the way that visual material is edited for use in news programming since there were the main criteria mentioned by viewers that would impinge on the lack of impartiality in news.

Broadcasting regulations should focus on the criteria of news values. Although involving a degree of subjectivity, it has also to be strict in the way it judges certain aspects of news presentation, including the use of techniques which may have some bearing on the nature of the message that is conveyed. While the majority of respondents agreed that legislation should be the same across the board, it was understood that the challenges of impartiality and balance for PSB (Malta) are much more cumbersome and that the role of the public service broadcaster remained a key one in the furthering of democracy. The study indicates amidst the agreement that PSB should be leading by example, when it comes to the balance and impartiality in legislation, that the Second Schedule of the Broadcasting Act which has been repealed, and which highlighted the National Broadcasting Plan focusing on the role of PSB should be once again included in the legislation. Another necessary change seen to be needed in the broadcasting legislation is that there should be no discrepancies between the Articles in the Constitution and the provisos in the Broadcasting Act. This will foster more harmony in news broadcasting regulation in the attempt to create a more balanced and impartial form of news production, not only in news bulletins but also in current affairs programmes. The proviso that balance should be maintained across a series has to be rigorously enforced.

Since the Maltese model is based on political parallelism (Hallin & Mancini, 2004) in which journalists and media owners are political allies, the input of the Broadcasting Authority is absolutely crucial but its structure should not be also perceived as providing another ally for the political parties, as it is presently perceived to be. Its structure helps this perception since the Board Members are appointed by the political parties and this method of selection might well impinge on the autonomy of the Board members even though, as rightly stated in the Constitution, it is an autonomous body. The role of the Broadcasting Authority as a regulator has to go far beyond achieving impartiality with respect to the public service broadcaster and balance and objectivity in news and current affairs programming. It also has to ensure that PR and journalism are kept well apart from each other. So while a party journalist is producing news reports for news bulletins or is in charge of producing current affairs programmes, the journalist has to stay away from attempting to reinforce a policy objective of the political party. The journalist has to choose, either campaigning for the party or producing an impartial news product. Such method of work would work against the obligation to be impartial which a newsroom has vis-à-vis the viewers and the challenge of gaining credibility. Thus the emphasis of the viewers that the Broadcasting Authority has to focus on the news value aspect of the news report and not allowing what was termed to be 'lies' in news reporting.

It is clear that the news broadcasting media are now facing competition from online portals. While the print media is perceived to be partisan, though less regulated, viewers are still keen to check news information from online portals. The dependency on online portals seems to be on the increase, so the broadcast news media nowadays not only have to

compete with fellow broadcasting institutions but also with other news media. Like any other profession, the journalistic profession in Malta has to have a code of ethics. First and foremost, journalism has to be regarded as a profession like any other. The Code of Ethics for journalists (press and media) has to be updated. It is, after, only by adopting an ethical approach that journalists can gain credibility.

In the light of this research, therefore, PBS news should continue building on its reputation of being the most impartial channel and due to the political pluralism present in Malta, PSB is surely needed to provide an impartial version of news. Viewers are aware of the existence of slant and bias in political stations but they expect that truth, facts and reliable sources should be the vital criteria to enable each station to be credible. The Broadcasting Authority, in its administration but also in the legal aspect, has to develop and reform its regulations while being clear in its interpretations in order to help achieve balance and impartiality. It needs to work on clear interpretations when specific pieces of legislation are in place. News-workers need to ensure that the legislation in place is supporting their democratic role and should not regard it as a hindrance to provide the type of journalism that aspires to inform the viewers and is not a form of advocacy journalism. The most urgent objectives which stations should work on in the attempt to achieve maximum impartiality and balance are to focus on credible sources, to avoid commentary in news reporting and to provide different perspectives. All stations have to work on fairness and credibility, which are the keys to impartiality and balance.

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APPENDIX i

Additional notes

Note A

The two main and largest political parties in Malta are the Nationalist Party (PN) and the Malta Labour Party (PL). The third party which is the Green Party, in Malta called Alternattiva Demokratika (AD) is a very small party without any representation in Malta. Another very small party only set up in 2007 is called the Alleanza Nazzjonali (AN). The two large political parties are the main shareholders of a television station apart from a radio station, a Sunday newspaper and an electronic newspaper for both parties, and a daily newspaper for the Nationalist Party and an electronic newspaper.

Note B

In Malta, Local Councils are contested by the three main political parties, that is, the Malta Labour Party, the Nationalist Party and Alternattiva Demokratika. Each party presents a number of candidates and the leader of the 3 political parties take an active role in the Local Councils electoral campaign. To a certain extent, it is similar to the General Election campaign, though on a smaller / local scale. Only a small number of candidates contest independently from political parties. Only a handful of independent candidates contest local council elections.

Note C

Since the introduction of Local Councils, way back in 1993, it was only the Nationalist Party which contested the elections. The Labour Party argued that Local Councils should be left independent from partisan political interference. However, when the MLP experienced a political deficit in Local Councils' administration; after 6 years since the introduction of Local Councils, the MLP started to contest these elections. These elections are highly partisans to the extent that the political parties nominate their candidates to contest such elections.

Note D

According to Dr Michael Frendo, a Minister who was responsible for broadcasting, Xandir Malta managed by the Telemalta Corporation, was highly typical of being under a Socialist

administration²⁶⁹. It was not a commercial company but a fully fledged company owned by government. According to Borg (2003), the Minister responsible for broadcasting in the Seventies publicly declared that the public service broadcaster had to be used to build a Socialist regime. Cutajar (2001, p.65) argued that at the end of the Seventies and beginning of the Eighties, Maltese broadcasting was being manipulated and opinions which criticised the Government were not broadcast. According to Zammit Dimech (1986), broadcasting in Malta has been rapidly deteriorating since 1975 (p. 21) and after it had been taken over by Government, broadcasting was abused and biased. Frendo (2003) argues that public broadcasting was a monopoly in the hands of the government during the 1970s and 1980s. It was lacking of impartiality under the leadership of Toni Pellegrini and also as Edgar Mizzi (1995) had admitted;

‘The man [Toni Pellegrini] had many good qualities, but as head of Xandir Malta providing the only broadcasting service and doing it in the name of the State, he was absolutely the wrong man. He had no sense of impartiality (pp. 430 - 431)’

Mizzi (1995) explained that the Opposition, at that time, the Nationalist Party, participated in the programmes by the Broadcasting Authority, “but they were otherwise secluded” (p. 431)

Note E

The 1992 General Election meant a complete change in the way political propaganda was spread. This was the first election in which the political parties had their own radio stations to propagate their message. Before this election, the political parties could only voice their messages on the public service station through a party political scheme commissioned by the Broadcasting Authority.

Note F

The transfer of the radio licence of Capital Radio to Alt Services Ltd and Capital Communications Ltd. dated 29th July 2005 raised some issues between both parties involved in the transfer and the Broadcasting Authority. The Authority stated that ‘... the Authority shall continue to consider Capital Radio as a political radio representing the

²⁶⁹ Interview on The Sunday Times, September 6, 1992 p. 10.

interests of Alternattiva Demokratika'. But the licensee objected to the phrase 'political radio' and argued that it will tarnish their reputation and prejudice the radio's own existence. In a letter dated 8th October 2005 sent to the Broadcasting Authority, the lawyers of the licensee stressed that Capital Radio is an independent radio which entered into a commercial agreement with Alt Services Ltd and Alternattiva Demokratika. One of these obligations is to provide AD with air time during periods of time prior to elections. However, they stressed that Capital Radio is not a political radio representing the interest of AD. The Broadcasting Authority answered in a letter dated 11th January 2006 that in terms of the agreement, provision is made to the effect that the licensee is obliged to grant to the licensor free airtime. Such a contractual obligation entered into by a political party and a company implies that, Capital Radio is still bound to provide free airtime to AD. Hence although the station is commercial it still has *inter alia* a political mission. The Authority said that it is still of the view that Capital Radio balances out Radio 101 and Super 1 Radio in so far as AD is concerned.

Note G

The broadcasting situation in Malta is unique because first of all, with just around 450,000 people, the broadcasting market is saturated with radio and television stations (18 nationwide TV and radio stations). Further to this, the two largest and influential political parties own and manage a radio and TV station. These stations not only broadcast entertainment but their 'flagship' are news bulletins and current affairs programmes.

Note H

Prior to 1992, PBS used to receive the monies from all licence fees and advertising and this system was criticised by the other TV stations. The stations argued that by being national stations they also have the right to receive part of the licence fees. They argued that while PBS was taking part of their advertising market share, similarly they should take part of the licence fees. PBS Ltd was producing the same types of programmes as the other commercial stations. In 2004, after the restructuring process, PBS Ltd no longer received money from licence fees and thus it had mainly to struggle for advertising. The funds which the Government is giving annually to PBS Ltd are meant to finance programmes that

fall under the public broadcasting mission but are commercially unfeasible such as children's, current affairs and cultural programmes. (Malta Today, Sept 17th, 2006, pp. 1 - 2)

Note I

The public service obligation of PBS Ltd (TVM) emanates from international commitments listed in the 1994 Prague Declaration entitled 'The Media in a Democratic Society'²⁷⁰ and the 'EU Television Without Frontiers Directive'²⁷¹ apart from the local commitments found in the Constitution of Malta and the Broadcasting Act. A declaration issued at the conference 'Public service broadcasting: Europe's opportunity' held in Brussels in 1993 under the auspices of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) insisted that only public service broadcasting can offer programming for all, 'a forum for democratic debate with news and current affairs being impartial and independent debate which clarifies the issues'. As the EU Amsterdam Protocol (Protocol No. 32)²⁷² declared that the system of public broadcasting in the member states 'is directly related to the democratic, social and cultural needs of each society and to the need to preserve present media pluralism'. (also cited by Bartolo, 2004, p. 12) PBS programming is made up of core PSO and Extended PSO (Public Service Obligation). These segments are the result of the National Broadcasting Plan (2004) which describes PBS mission as follows:-

PBS serves the general public as well as particular segments of the population by striving to be the most creative, inclusive, professional and trusted broadcaster in Malta"

(taken from Directives of the Ministry for Tourism and Culture, April 24th 2006)

Note J

The 4 challenges set by the National Policy for Broadcasting for PBS are:-

- programming that distinguish it from others

²⁷⁰ This declaration was the result of 4th European Ministerial Conference on Mass Media Policy of the Council of Europe held in Prague (Czech Republic), 7 – 8 December 1994. The document was entitled 'The Media in a Democratic Society'.

²⁷¹ TWF is the Directive in the cornerstone of EC's audiovisual policy

²⁷² The Amsterdam Protocol – Protocol No. 32 refers to the system of public broadcasting in Member States (June 1997)

- it has to have audiences
- financially sustainable
- editorially independent

Note K

An audience research conducted by Ernest and Young (2006) for the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, showed that TVM was the most preferred station (37%) for news, discussion and current affairs programmes. The same research showed that the 2 current affairs/discussion programmes and the most preferred out of all the different genres were the two farmed out programmes – Xarabank and Bondi+. According to a report revealed by Malta Today (Sept 24, 2006), PBS Ltd newsroom and the Board of Directors disagreed on the production of an in house current affairs programme after its duration was reduced by half and slotted at a later time, after the commercial programmes. Acting chairman of the PBS Editorial Board, Dominic Fenech, was reported saying “I believe we need more in-house current affairs programmes, because despite the decimated newsroom it is still better than all the other newsrooms” (2006, p. 7).

Note L

The Council of Europe’s European Convention on Transfrontier Television works upon programme services embodied in transmissions. The purpose is to facilitate, among the Parties, the transfrontier transmission and the retransmission of television programme services. The European Convention on Transfrontier Television is the most relevant legal instrument of the Council of Europe in the broadcasting sector. The Convention lays down a number of minimum rules on transfrontier broadcasting and in so doing provides a framework for the free and unhindered circulation of television programmes across Europe. The Convention was adopted in 1989 and was the first instrument to define at the European level a number of common principles for the transfrontier circulation of television programme services. The Convention served as a basis for the preparation of the 1989 EU Directive on "Television without Frontiers", and has also been an inspiration for several countries when designing their national television broadcasting legislation. Both the Convention and the EU "Television without Frontiers Directive" create a legal space for the

broadcasting sector in Europe. The difference between the Convention and the EU directive is that while the Convention provides a pan-European framework for the free circulation of television programme services, it does not regulate domestic broadcasting activities as such. That means that the Convention only applies to transfrontier programmes; whereas the EU "Television without Frontiers" Directive applies to the "Television without frontiers" (TVWF). Since the adoption of the Television without Frontiers Directive in 1989, and after technological and market development and thus amendments in the regulatory framework in 1997, the last revision took place in 2007 and the Directive was renamed as the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD). This was revised to take into account the technological developments and changes in the structure of the audiovisual market. This new Directive mainly provides a distinction between linear and non linear services in broadcasting and brought more flexibility in advertising. Amongst other things it also ensures the protection of minors and the promotion of cultural diversity.

Note M

The idea that the two political stations balance each other out means that while a current affairs programme aired on one political station is biased and has partisan political content in favour of that political party which owns the station, the other political station is allowed to broadcast a current affairs programme which is biased and is in favour of the other political party. Net TV which is funded and owned by the Nationalist Party can produce a current affairs programme in favour of the Nationalist Party. Then ONE which is funded and owned by the Labour Party can balance Net TV, by producing a current affairs programme in favour of the Labour Party. In this way the two political parties balance each other out with regard to the programme content and to the participants (if any) who take part in the programme. This is the interpretation as is understood within the regulatory framework.

Note N

These party political broadcasts are held annually and are broadcast on the public service broadcaster. The political parties approach the Authority to hold a 'scheme of political

broadcast' every year. The Authority meets with the political parties and asks for feedback regarding the planning and participation of these broadcasts. The political parties show their preference but the final decision is taken by the Broadcasting Authority. The annual scheme usually consists of the production of 'political spots' and 'political productions' by the political parties, discussion programmes and press conferences, with the subject of the programme being chosen by the political party. The Broadcasting Authority allots time for the parties for each programme, spot or production. During General Elections, a special political broadcast 'scheme' is set up but more or less based on the same structure. In political broadcasts during electoral campaigns, the Broadcasting Authority grants access to these schemes to all political parties and independent candidates contesting the General Election. These broadcasts are carried by the public service broadcaster as part of its public service output but the Authority is responsible for what is broadcast during these political broadcasts. In fact, the Authority vets the political spots and productions before such productions are aired.

Note O

Article 13 (4) of the Broadcasting Act states that 'it shall also be the duty of the Authority to organise from time to time schemes of political broadcasts (including political spots) which fairly apportion facilities and time between the different political parties represented in Parliament; to produce properly balanced discussions or debates that afford access to persons from different interest-groups and with different points of view and also to produce commentaries or other programmes about questions relating to current public policy, wherein persons taking part can put forward differing views and comments.

Note P

In court case *Dr Wenzu Mintoff et. nomine. - vs –Dr Joseph Pirotta et. nomine* held in 31st July 1996, the Constitutional Court declared that Article 13 (4) of the Broadcasting Act is not consistent with the Constitution of Malta and gives a restricted and literal interpretation in the sense that it limits the participation in the political broadcasts to the political parties which have Parliamentary representation. However, a wider interpretation of the Constitution guarantees that while the political parties represented in Parliament participate

in such political broadcasts and have to have equal facilities amongst them, the Constitution does not preclude the participation of other parties. In this Court Case, the Court revoked the appealed sentence and decided that Article 119 (1) of the Constitution of Malta should be interpreted in the sense that in such political broadcast scheme, the Authority should not exclude the participation of other parties which do not necessarily have Parliamentary representation, apart from the other political parties represented in Parliament.

Note Q

Paragraphs amended deals about:

Par 7.2 refers to media releases issued in reaction to an earlier event or statement;

Par 8.4 refers a subject's permission to be obtained when using material from closed-circuit television cameras;

Par 11.1 refers promotional material supplied by or on behalf of companies or other bodies should be labeled on air.

Par 14.1 refers to discussion programmes and the presenter's duty to note that a public figure has been invited but declined the invitation.

Note R

In 1999 the Authority set up an Advisory Committee on News and Current Affairs to formulate guidelines for the news programmes and help the Authority produce properly balanced discussions, but due to financial constraints the appointment the Advisory Committee was not extended. The guidelines were approved by the Authority and implemented in May 2004. The Committee was made up of 5 media experts particularly in journalism.

Note S

Paragraph 12.1 states:- Broadcasters should aim to present current affairs programmes:

i. in a way which allows informed public debate on substantial issues affecting the community;

- ii. to provide reasonable opportunities to present significant viewpoints when dealing with controversial issues of public importance;
- iii. of immediate relevance to the community, including interviews and commentary dealing in depth with news items.

As such, a series of current affairs programmes should be balanced with a diversity of topics, including topics of a social, cultural, educational, environmental, economic, industrial and political nature, as well as other subjects of general interest. Where the topics selected address issues of political or industrial controversy or of current public policy, the broadcaster is to ensure that, at least over a series of programmes, the selected topics adequately reflect the current debate affecting the whole political spectrum in the country.

Note T

Paragraph 12.5 states, “The choice of participants in research-led investigative journalism or a studio discussion will be determined by the need to be fair, balanced and knowledgeable on the subject matter. However, in a studio discussion participants are normally chosen with a view to reflect divergent viewpoints. Where the subject matter refers to an issue of political or industrial controversy or addresses public policy, this Requirement implies that participation in the programme should reflect a balanced and adequate representation of all the interested parties, political or otherwise. It also implies that the use of audiovisual material, including clips and features, in such programmes should reflect in a balanced manner the views of all the parties concerned. Where the programme involves the active participation of an audience, the audience selection process should, to the extent possible, ensure that the audience is composed of persons with different views.

Note U

Paragraph 12.2 states,

“The Broadcasting Act requirements about impartiality allow a series of programmes to be considered as a whole provided that when a single current affairs programme is not *per se* balanced, the legal requirement of impartiality may be discharged:

- (i) over two or more related programmes within the same series;
- (ii) where the broadcasts are transmitted within a reasonable period from each other; and
- (iii) when the broadcaster informs the viewers or listeners during the first programme of the date of the subsequent programme wherein he/she intends to balance the first programme giving sufficient information as to date of programme, subject of the programme and proposed participants. For this purpose, a “series” means a number of current affairs programmes, broadcast in the same service, each one of which is clearly linked to the others, and which deals with the same or related issues.

Paragraph 12.4 states, Apart from the matters specified in section 4.3 above, impartiality does not mean that balance is required in any simple mathematical sense or that equal time must be given to each divergent point of view. Journalists and producers do not have to be absolutely neutral on every controversial issue. They should nevertheless tackle even handedly with divergent points of view to supplement or create a democratic debate amongst contrasting ideas.

Note V

Article 13 (2) states that: It shall be the duty of the Authority to satisfy itself that, so far as possible, the programmes broadcast by persons providing sound or television broadcasting services in Malta comply with the following requirements, that is to say -

(a) that nothing is included in the programmes which offends against religious sentiment, good taste or decency or is likely to encourage or incite to crime or to lead to disorder or to be offensive to public feeling;

(b) that all news given in the programmes (in whatever form) is presented with due accuracy;

(c) that sufficient time is given to news and current affairs and that all news given in the programmes (in whatever form) is presented with due impartiality;

(d) that proper proportions of the recorded and other matter included in the programmes are in the Maltese language and reflect Maltese cultural identity;

(e) that the programmes broadcast contain a substantial proportion of matter closely designed to appeal to the interest, tastes and outlook of the general public; and

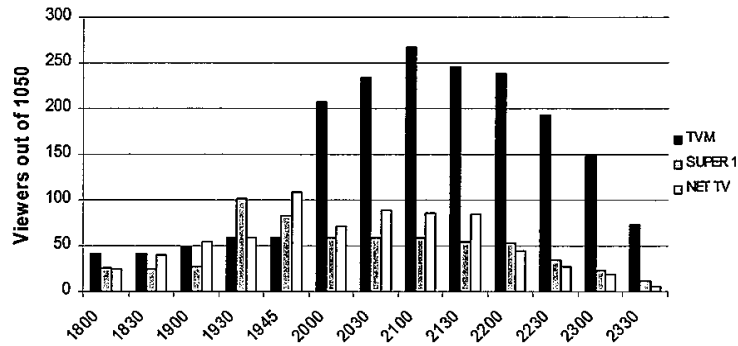
(f) that due impartiality is preserved in respect of matters of political or industrial controversy or relating to current public policy:

Provided that, except in the case of public broadcasting services, in applying paragraphs (c) to (f), the Authority shall be able to consider the general output of programmes provided by the various broadcasting licensees and contractors, together as a whole.

APPENDIX ii

Statistics of audience survey by Ernest & Young

TV stations watched by time slot



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ERNST & YOUNG
Quality In Everything We Do

Most watched television programmes

Programmes (Top ten)	Viewers in sample (150)	Estimated number of viewers in population (to the nearest 1000)
Xarabank	53	119,000
Bondi+	47	106,000
Tista' Tkun Int	47	106,000
Showtime	46	104,000
Santa Monika	41	92,000
L-iSpjun	37	83,000
Il-Kotra	31	70,000
Mhux bic-Cajt	25	56,000
Numru 9 (Saturday)	23	52,000
Il-Lejl it-Tajjeb	22	50,000
Main news bulletins		
TVM News (Wednesday)	41	92,000
Net News (Monday)	29	65,000
One News (Monday)	22	50,000

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ERNST & YOUNG
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APPENDIX iii

Statistics of audience survey – Broadcasting Authority Malta

TABLE 6.3.A: TV AUDIENCES – MONDAY

	TVM	One TV	Net TV	Smash TV	Education 22	Rai 1	Rai 2	Rai 3	Rete 4	Canale 5	Italia 1	Channel	MTV	BBC Prime	BBC World	station	NONE	TOTAL
MIDNIGHT	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
0:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
1:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
1:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
2:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
2:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
3:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
3:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
4:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
4:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
5:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
5:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
6:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
6:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
7:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
7:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
8:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
8:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
9:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
9:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
10:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
10:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
11:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
11:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
NOON	1.54	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	98.46	100
12:30	1.54	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	98.46	100
1:00	1.54	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	97.69	100
1:30	1.54	2.31	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	95.38	100
2:00	0.77	2.31	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.31	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	93.08	100
2:30	0.77	2.31	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.31	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	93.08	100
3:00	0.00	2.31	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.54	2.31	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	93.08	100
3:30	0.00	2.31	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	2.31	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	93.85	100
4:00	0.00	2.31	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.54	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	95.38	100
4:30	0.00	2.31	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.77	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	95.38	100
5:00	0.77	1.54	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	96.15	100
5:30	0.77	2.31	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	95.38	100

6:00	1.54	3.08	0.77	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.77	91.54	100	
6:30	1.54	3.08	3.08	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	2.31	87.69	100	
7:00	1.54	4.62	4.62	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.54	0.00	0.00	1.54	0.00	2.31	83.08	100
7:30	1.54	9.23	3.85	0.00	0.77	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.54	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	81.54	100	
7:45	2.31	9.23	4.62	0.00	0.77	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.54	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	80.00	100	
8:00	8.46	9.23	4.62	0.00	0.77	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.54	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.54	73.08	100	
8:30	12.31	7.69	16.92	0.00	0.77	2.31	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.54	56.92	100	
9:00	10.00	6.15	16.92	0.00	0.00	2.31	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	2.31	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.77	60.00	100	
9:30	8.46	4.62	8.46	0.00	0.00	2.31	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.54	3.85	0.77	0.00	0.00	1.54	68.46	100	
10:00	6.15	2.31	2.31	0.00	0.00	2.31	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	3.08	0.77	0.00	0.00	1.54	80.77	100	
10:30	4.62	0.77	0.77	0.00	0.00	2.31	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	3.08	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.77	86.15	100	
11:00	2.31	0.77	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.54	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	93.08	100	
11:30	1.54	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	1.54	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	95.38	100	

Average	1.46	1.66	1.38	0.00	0.17	0.30	0.00	0.00	0.05	0.31	0.64	0.13	0.00	0.06	0.00	0.30	6.47
Maximum	12.31	9.23	16.92	0.00	0.77	2.31	0.00	0.00	0.77	2.31	3.85	0.77	0.00	1.54	0.00	2.31	43.08
std. dev.	2.83	2.62	3.67	0.00	0.32	0.72	0.00	0.00	0.19	0.61	1.00	0.29	0.00	0.26	0.00	0.62	10.51

TABLE 6.3.B: TV AUDIENCES – TUESDAY

	TVM	One TV	Net TV	Smash TV	Education 22	Rai 1	Rai 2	Rai 3	Rete 4	Canale 5	Italia 1	Channel	MTV	BBC Prime	BBC World	station	NONE	TOTAL
MIDNIGHT	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
0:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
1:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
1:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
2:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
2:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
3:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
3:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
4:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
4:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
5:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
5:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
6:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
6:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
7:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
7:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
8:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
8:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
9:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
9:30	0.00	0.00	0.78	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	99.22	100
10:00	0.00	0.00	0.78	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	99.22	100
10:30	0.00	0.00	0.78	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	99.22	100
11:00	0.00	0.00	0.78	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	99.22	100
11:30	0.00	0.00	0.78	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	99.22	100
NOON	0.00	0.78	0.78	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	98.45	100
12:30	0.00	0.78	0.78	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	98.45	100
1:00	0.00	0.78	0.78	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.78	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	97.67	100
1:30	0.00	0.78	0.78	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.78	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	97.67	100
2:00	0.00	0.78	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.78	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	98.45	100
2:30	0.00	0.78	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.78	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	98.45	100
3:00	0.00	0.78	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.78	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	98.45	100
3:30	0.00	0.78	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.78	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.78	97.67	100
4:00	0.00	1.55	1.55	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.78	96.12	100
4:30	0.00	1.55	1.55	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.78	96.12	100
5:00	0.78	1.55	1.55	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	96.12	100
5:30	0.78	1.55	1.55	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	96.12	100

6:00	1.55	3.10	1.55	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	93.80	100
6:30	1.55	3.10	2.33	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.78	92.25	100
7:00	1.55	3.10	4.65	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.78	89.92	100
7:30	3.10	8.53	3.88	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	84.50	100
7:45	3.10	8.53	6.20	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	82.17	100
8:00	7.75	10.08	6.20	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.78	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	75.19	100
8:30	10.85	17.05	6.98	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.78	2.33	0.00	2.33	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.78	2.33	56.59	100	
9:00	9.30	17.83	6.98	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.78	0.78	2.33	1.55	2.33	0.00	0.78	0.00	0.78	2.33	54.26	100	
9:30	6.20	9.30	3.10	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.78	0.78	1.55	1.55	2.33	0.00	0.78	0.00	0.00	2.33	71.32	100	
10:00	5.43	6.98	1.55	0.78	0.00	0.00	0.78	0.00	1.55	0.78	2.33	0.00	0.78	0.00	0.00	2.33	76.74	100	
10:30	5.43	4.65	1.55	0.78	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.55	0.78	1.55	0.00	0.78	0.00	0.00	1.55	81.40	100	
11:00	0.78	1.55	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.55	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.78	95.35	100	
11:30	0.00	1.55	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	98.45	100	

Average	1.19	2.20	1.19	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.05	0.06	0.19	0.19	0.25	0.00	0.06	0.00	0.03	0.32	5.76		
Maximum	10.85	17.83	6.98	0.78	0.00	0.00	0.78	0.78	2.33	1.55	2.33	0.00	0.78	0.00	0.78	2.33	45.74		
std. dev.	2.59	4.14	1.93	0.15	0.00	0.00	0.19	0.21	0.58	0.40	0.70	0.00	0.21	0.00	0.15	0.69	10.75		

TABLE 6.3.C: TV AUDIENCES – WEDNESDAY

	TVM	One TV	Net TV	Smash TV	Education 22	Rai 1	Rai 2	Rai 3	Rete 4	Canale 5	Italia 1	Discovery Channel	MTV	BBC Prime	BBC World	Other TV station	NONE	TOTAL
MIDNIGHT	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	99.23	100
0:30	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	99.23	100
1:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
1:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
2:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
2:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
3:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
3:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
4:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
4:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
5:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
5:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
6:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
6:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
7:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
7:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
8:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
8:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
9:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
9:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
10:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
10:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
11:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
11:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	99.23	100
NOON	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	99.23	100
12:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	99.23	100
1:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	99.23	100
1:30	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	98.46	100
2:00	0.00	0.00	2.31	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	97.69	100
2:30	0.00	0.00	2.31	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	97.69	100
3:00	0.00	0.00	2.31	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	97.69	100
3:30	0.00	0.00	2.31	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	97.69	100
4:00	0.00	0.00	2.31	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	97.69	100
4:30	0.00	0.00	2.31	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	96.92	100
5:00	0.00	0.77	3.08	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	95.38	100

5:30	0.00	0.77	3.08	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	95.38	100	
6:00	3.08	0.77	4.62	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.54	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	89.23	100	
6:30	3.08	0.77	6.15	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.54	1.54	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	86.15	100
7:00	4.62	1.54	6.15	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.54	3.08	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	80.77	100
7:30	3.85	4.62	5.38	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.54	3.08	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	79.23	100
7:45	3.85	4.62	6.15	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.54	2.31	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	79.23	100
8:00	9.23	3.08	7.69	0.00	0.00	2.31	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.77	1.54	1.54	0.77	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.77	72.31	100
8:30	6.92	5.38	9.23	0.00	0.00	2.31	0.00	0.77	0.77	1.54	1.54	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	1.54	69.23	100	
9:00	5.38	6.15	8.46	0.00	0.00	3.08	0.00	0.77	0.00	1.54	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.54	72.31	100	
9:30	3.85	3.85	6.92	0.00	0.00	3.08	0.00	0.77	0.00	1.54	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.54	78.46	100	
10:00	2.31	1.54	4.62	0.00	0.00	1.54	0.77	0.77	0.77	1.54	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	1.54	83.85	100	
10:30	2.31	1.54	2.31	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.77	0.77	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	1.54	88.46	100	
11:00	0.00	0.77	1.54	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	95.38	100	
11:30	0.00	1.54	1.54	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	95.38	100	

Average	0.99	0.77	1.90	0.00	0.00	0.31	0.05	0.13	0.06	0.31	0.33	0.06	0.03	0.03	0.00	0.33	5.31		
Maximum	9.23	6.15	9.23	0.00	0.00	3.08	0.77	0.77	0.77	1.54	3.08	0.77	0.77	0.77	0.00	1.54	30.77		
std. dev.	2.09	1.56	2.64	0.00	0.00	0.78	0.19	0.29	0.21	0.61	0.77	0.21	0.15	0.15	0.00	0.52	8.69		

TABLE 6.3.D: TV AUDIENCES – THURSDAY

	TVM	One TV	Net TV	Smash TV	Education 22	Rai 1	Rai 2	Rai 3	Rete 4	Canale 5	Italia 1	Discovery Channel	MTV	BBC Prime	BBC World	Other TV station	NONE	TOTAL
MIDNIGHT	3.08	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	96.92	100
0:30	2.31	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	97.69	100
1:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
1:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
2:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
2:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
3:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
3:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
4:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
4:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
5:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
5:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
6:00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	99.23	100
6:30	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	99.23	100
7:00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	99.23	100
7:30	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	99.23	100
8:00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	99.23	100
8:30	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	99.23	100
9:00	0.77	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	97.69	100
9:30	0.77	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	97.69	100
10:00	0.77	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	97.69	100
10:30	0.77	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	97.69	100
11:00	0.77	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	97.69	100
11:30	0.77	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	97.69	100
NOON	1.54	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	96.15	100
12:30	1.54	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	96.15	100
1:00	1.54	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	96.92	100
1:30	1.54	1.54	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	96.15	100
2:00	1.54	1.54	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	96.92	100
2:30	1.54	1.54	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	96.92	100
3:00	0.77	1.54	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	96.15	100
3:30	0.77	1.54	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	96.15	100
4:00	0.77	2.31	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	94.62	100
4:30	0.77	1.54	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	96.15	100
5:00	0.77	1.54	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	97.69	100
5:30	0.77	1.54	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	97.69	100

6:00	1.54	1.54	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.54	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	94.62	100
6:30	1.54	2.31	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.31	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	93.08	100
7:00	0.00	3.08	1.54	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.85	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	89.23	100
7:30	0.00	4.62	1.54	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.62	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	86.92	100
7:45	0.00	4.62	2.31	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.85	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	86.92	100
8:00	3.85	5.38	2.31	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.77	4.62	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	1.54	79.23	100
8:30	23.08	7.69	4.62	0.00	0.00	1.54	0.00	0.77	1.54	2.31	5.38	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.54	51.54	100
9:00	23.08	6.15	4.62	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.77	1.54	2.31	5.38	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.31	52.31	100
9:30	21.54	5.38	4.62	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.77	0.77	3.08	5.38	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.08	54.62	100
10:00	19.23	4.62	0.77	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.77	1.54	5.38	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.08	63.08	100
10:30	13.85	3.85	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	1.54	3.85	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.08	72.31	100
11:00	9.23	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.31	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	87.69	100
11:30	5.38	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	93.85	100

Average	2.98	1.54	0.52	0.00	0.02	0.19	0.00	0.13	0.13	0.24	1.15	0.06	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.41	7.36	
Maximum	23.08	7.69	4.62	0.00	0.77	1.54	0.00	0.77	1.54	3.08	5.38	0.77	0.77	0.00	0.00	3.08	48.46	
std. dev.	6.17	1.87	1.20	0.00	0.11	0.37	0.00	0.29	0.36	0.69	1.81	0.21	0.11	0.00	0.00	0.85	12.52	

TABLE 6.3.E: TV AUDIENCES – FRIDAY

	TVM	One TV	Net TV	Smash TV	Education 22	Rai 1	Rai 2	Rai 3	Rete 4	Canale 5	Italia 1	Discovery Channel	MTV	BBC Prime	BBC World	Other TV station	NONE	TOTAL
MIDNIGHT	1.57	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	97.64	100
0:30	1.57	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	97.64	100
1:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
1:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
2:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
2:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
3:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
3:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
4:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
4:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
5:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
5:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
6:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
6:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
7:00	0.00	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	99.21	100
7:30	0.00	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	99.21	100
8:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
8:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
9:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
9:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
10:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
10:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
11:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
11:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
NOON	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	99.21	100
12:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	99.21	100
1:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	99.21	100
1:30	0.00	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	98.43	100
2:00	1.57	0.79	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	0.79	0.00	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	94.49	100
2:30	1.57	0.79	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	0.79	0.00	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.79	93.70	100
3:00	0.79	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	1.57	0.00	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.79	94.49	100
3:30	0.00	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	1.57	0.00	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.79	95.28	100
4:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	97.64	100
4:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	97.64	100
5:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	98.43	100
5:30	0.00	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	96.85	100

6:00	1.57	1.57	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	2.36	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	92.91	100
6:30	3.15	2.36	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	2.36	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	90.55	100	
7:00	3.15	2.36	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.57	0.00	0.00	0.79	0.00	90.55	100	
7:30	2.36	2.36	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.57	0.00	0.00	0.79	0.00	91.34	100	
7:45	3.15	3.15	1.57	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.57	0.00	0.00	0.79	0.00	88.98	100	
8:00	14.17	3.15	2.36	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	0.00	1.57	0.00	0.00	0.79	0.00	76.38	100	
8:30	27.56	3.15	1.57	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	0.00	1.57	0.00	0.00	0.79	0.00	62.99	100	
9:00	33.07	3.94	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	3.94	0.00	0.00	0.79	0.00	53.54	100	
9:30	31.50	3.94	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	0.79	3.94	0.00	0.00	0.79	0.00	55.91	100	
10:00	27.56	3.15	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	1.57	4.72	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	60.63	100	
10:30	23.62	1.57	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.57	4.72	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	66.93	100	
11:00	6.30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.57	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	91.34	100	
11:30	2.36	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.57	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	95.28	100	

average	3.81	0.76	0.24	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.06	0.24	0.87	0.00	0.13	0.11	0.00	0.40	6.62
maximum	33.07	3.94	2.36	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	1.57	4.72	0.00	0.79	0.79	0.00	3.15	46.46
std. dev.	8.83	1.20	0.51	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.22	0.43	1.27	0.00	0.29	0.28	0.00	0.60	12.26

TABLE 6.3.F: TV AUDIENCES – SATURDAY

	TVM	One TV	Net TV	Smash TV	Education 22	Rai 1	Rai 2	Rai 3	Rete 4	Canale 5	Italia 1	Discovery Channel	MTV	BBC Prime	BBC World	Other TV station	NONE	TOTAL
MIDNIGHT	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	98.43	100
0:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
1:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
1:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
2:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	99.21	100
2:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	99.21	100
3:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
3:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
4:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
4:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
5:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
5:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
6:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
6:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
7:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
7:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
8:00	0.00	0.00	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	99.21	100
8:30	0.00	0.00	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	99.21	100
9:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
9:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
10:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	99.21	100
10:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	99.21	100
11:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	99.21	100
11:30	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	98.43	100
NOON	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	99.21	100
12:30	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	99.21	100
1:00	0.79	1.57	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	96.06	100
1:30	0.79	2.36	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	96.06	100
2:00	0.79	3.94	2.36	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.57	91.34	100	100
2:30	0.79	3.94	2.36	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.57	0.00	0.00	0.79	0.00	0.00	1.57	88.98	100
3:00	0.79	3.94	2.36	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.57	0.00	0.00	0.79	0.00	0.00	1.57	88.98	100
3:30	0.79	3.94	1.57	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.57	0.00	0.00	0.79	0.00	0.00	1.57	89.76	100
4:00	2.36	3.94	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.36	88.98	100
4:30	2.36	3.94	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.36	88.98	100
5:00	1.57	3.94	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.36	89.76	100

5:30	1.57	3.15	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.36	90.55	100
6:00	0.79	3.94	2.36	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.15	89.76	100
6:30	0.79	4.72	2.36	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.36	89.76	100
7:00	0.79	3.94	1.57	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.36	90.55	100
7:30	2.36	4.72	1.57	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.36	88.19	100
7:45	2.36	4.72	1.57	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.36	88.19	100
8:00	3.94	7.09	2.36	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.57	83.46	100
8:30	11.81	12.60	2.36	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	0.00	3.15	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.57	67.72	100
9:00	9.45	13.39	1.57	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.57	3.15	5.51	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	64.57	100
9:30	7.87	13.39	1.57	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.57	3.15	5.51	0.00	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.79	65.35	100
10:00	6.30	9.45	1.57	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.57	3.94	3.15	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	73.23	100
10:30	4.72	4.72	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.57	3.15	2.36	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	81.89	100
11:00	1.57	0.00	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	1.57	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	94.49	100
11:30	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.57	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.79	96.85	100

average	1.41	2.39	0.72	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.16	0.55	0.63	0.00	0.06	0.00	0.00	0.74	6.67	
maximum	11.81	13.39	2.36	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.57	3.94	5.51	0.00	0.79	0.00	0.00	3.15	35.43	
std.dev.	2.54	3.60	0.88	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.45	0.99	1.26	0.00	0.22	0.00	0.00	0.98	9.31	

TABLE 6.3.G: TV AUDIENCES – SUNDAY

	TVM	One TV	Net TV	Smash TV	Education 22	Rai 1	Rai 2	Rai 3	Rete 4	Canale 5	Italia 1	Discovery Channel	MTV	BBC Prime	BBC World	Other TV station	NONE	TOTAL
MNGHT	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.71	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.71	98.58	100
0:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.71	99.29	100
1:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
1:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
2:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
2:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
3:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
3:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
4:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
4:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
5:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
5:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
6:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
6:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100
7:00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.71	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	99.29	100
7:30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.71	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	99.29	100
8:00	0.71	3.55	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.71	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.71	0.00	0.00	94.33	100
8:30	1.42	3.55	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.71	0.00	0.00	94.33	100
9:00	0.71	3.55	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.71	0.00	0.00	95.04	100
9:30	0.71	3.55	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.71	0.00	0.00	95.04	100
10:00	0.71	4.26	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.71	0.00	0.00	94.33	100
10:30	0.71	4.26	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.71	0.00	0.00	94.33	100
11:00	3.55	4.96	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.71	0.00	0.71	90.07	100
11:30	3.55	4.26	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.71	0.00	0.71	90.78	100
NOON	4.26	2.13	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.71	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.71	0.00	0.71	91.49	100
12:30	2.13	2.13	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.71	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.71	0.00	0.00	94.33	100
1:00	2.13	2.84	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.42	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.71	92.91	100
1:30	1.42	2.84	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.42	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.71	93.62	100
2:00	0.71	4.26	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.42	0.71	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.13	90.78	100
2:30	0.71	4.26	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.42	0.71	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.13	90.78	100
3:00	0.00	4.96	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.42	0.71	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.13	90.78	100
3:30	0.00	4.96	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.42	0.71	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.13	90.78	100
4:00	1.42	4.96	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.71	0.71	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.13	90.07	100
4:30	1.42	4.96	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.71	0.71	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.13	90.07	100
5:00	1.42	4.96	0.71	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.71	0.00	0.00	2.13	90.07	100

5:30	1.42	4.96	0.71	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.71	0.00	0.00	2.13	90.07	100
6:00	1.42	4.26	0.71	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.71	0.71	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.13	90.07	100
6:30	1.42	4.26	0.71	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.71	0.71	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.13	90.07	100
7:00	2.13	7.09	1.42	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.42	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.42	86.52	100
7:30	2.84	11.35	1.42	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.42	0.00	0.00	0.71	0.00	0.71	81.56	100
7:45	2.84	11.35	1.42	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.71	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.71	0.00	0.71	82.27	100
8:00	9.22	11.35	1.42	0.00	0.00	0.71	0.71	0.00	0.71	0.71	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.71	0.00	0.71	73.76	100
8:30	19.15	12.77	1.42	0.00	0.00	0.71	1.42	0.00	1.42	0.71	2.13	0.00	0.00	0.71	0.00	1.42	58.16	100
9:00	17.73	12.77	1.42	0.00	0.00	2.13	1.42	0.00	1.42	0.71	2.13	0.00	0.00	1.42	0.00	2.13	56.74	100
9:30	9.22	12.77	0.71	0.00	0.00	2.13	1.42	0.00	1.42	0.71	2.13	0.00	0.00	1.42	0.00	2.13	65.96	100
10:00	4.96	6.38	1.42	0.00	0.00	1.42	1.42	0.00	1.42	0.71	1.42	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.42	79.43	100
10:30	3.55	4.26	1.42	0.00	0.00	1.42	0.71	0.00	0.71	0.00	1.42	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.42	85.11	100
11:00	1.42	1.42	0.71	0.00	0.00	1.42	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.42	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.42	92.20	100
11:30	0.71	0.71	0.71	0.00	0.00	0.71	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.71	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.42	95.04	100

average	2.16	3.69	0.33	0.00	0.00	0.26	0.14	0.00	0.16	0.33	0.42	0.00	0.03	0.26	0.00	0.84	8.63	
maximum	19.15	12.77	1.42	0.00	0.00	2.13	1.42	0.00	1.42	1.42	2.13	0.00	0.71	1.42	0.00	2.13	43.26	
std.dev.	3.97	3.80	0.54	0.00	0.00	0.55	0.41	0.00	0.42	0.50	0.65	0.00	0.14	0.40	0.00	0.88	10.09	

APPENDIX iv

List of interviewees in face to face interviews

Details of participants in focus groups sessions

List of interviewees for face to face interviews

Producer A – Producer/presenter of an outsourced programme on TVM

Producer B – Producer/presenter of an outsourced programme on TVM

Producer C – Head/Editor PBS News

Producer D – Head/Editor One News

Producer E – PBS Chief Executive

Producer F – Journalist One TV

Producer G – Presenter/Producer Net TV programmes

Producer H – Presenter/Producer One TV programmes

Producer I – Head Net News

Producer J – Presenter/Producer One TV programme

Producer K – Journalist media.link Producer L – Editor of print media and ex presenter

Producer M – Board Member BA

Producer N - Board Member BA

Producer O - CEO BA

Producer P – Chairman BA

Producer Q – Ex PBS Editorial Member

A number of interviewees are not occupying the role within the organization anymore.

Details of focus group participants (as indicated by themselves after each session held in January 2010)

Mr A is a male employee in the mid 20s, working as a programme monitor at the Broadcasting Authority. Due to his work he has to regularly monitor news bulletins and current affairs programmes but in his free time, he admits that he is not a regular follower of news. However, he admits that he likes to keep himself up to date with current issues. He did not reveal his political affiliation.

Ms B works in a non voluntary organization, an organization which mainly works for the environment. After she graduated in Communication Studies at the University of Malta she worked for some time as part of a production house producing breakfast shows and mid morning shows on PBS. She was also involved with Graffiti, a non voluntary organization. Her political affiliation is with the Green Party.

Mr C presently is the Head of Programmes of a commercial TV station – Favourite Channel and is presently presenting a breakfast show programme which consists of one to one interview with a guest discussing several types of subjects. He started working on One Radio (at that time Super 1) and after 5 years he moved on to television. Due to such programmes he built a good relationship with the listeners and the viewers. He was asked by the Labour Party internal structures to contest a Local Council election and he was elected as a councillor. He then had to move away from the party because he was in favour of EU membership, something which the Labour Party was against.

Ms D an accountant by profession, not actually interested in media though she follows news on the different types of media. She is from Gozo but lives in Malta. She is in her early thirties and did not reveal her political affiliation.

Mr E has just graduated as a lawyer from the University of Malta. He is mainly interested in current affairs and political issues in Malta and also follows very closely the British politics. As a law student he presented and produced current affairs programmes which were aired on the University national radio station – Campus FM.

Mr F is 37 years old and is a self employed auditor but is also interested in politics and the news media. For a number of years he has been a Labour Party Councillor but he did not

contest the most recent Local Council election in his hometown. Presently he is an accountant of a Local Council and he feels obliged to follow what is happening with regard to political current affairs issues. He follows the news on a daily basis mainly through the news portals. He considers himself as a hardcore party political supporter.

Ms G is 34 years old and is a teacher. She considers herself as an aligned Labour party supporter, however, she was never directly involved in Maltese politics. She regularly follows the news mainly the print and the online media.

Mr H is a media lecturer at MCast (Higher Secondary College). He spent a year working as a technical producer at Southampton Solent University working with BBC 1.

Ms I in her mid thirties has a Masters Degree in Communications from the University of Malta. For eight years she used to present and produce programmes on One (at that time Super 1 TV), Voice of the Mediterranean, Campus FM, Live FM, Radju Malta and PBS. Presently she is a Senior Producer at Education 22 and also presents and produces programmes for PBS and RTK. Presently she is coordinating a project as an Assistant Lecturer at the University of Malta.

Mr J in his late forties is an auditor by profession. He admitted that he is a hardcore Nationalist Party supporter and he is a counting agent with the Nationalist Party. He is very open with his political beliefs and he forms part of the voluntary team who help the Nationalist Party during an electoral campaign. He works voluntarily as a counting agent of the Nationalist Party. He follows news on a daily basis, however, he admits that he likes to follow international news on Euronews, CNN, and BBC. He is an internet addict and thus also follows the news on several news portals. He works for some years in Russia in the financial sector.

Ms K is 40 years and is a mother of three. She works in property. She likes to watch Maltese television channels and is interested in current affairs issues. Her favourite programme is Xarabank because it involves the audience. She is mainly interested in Local Council matters and is seriously thinking of contesting Local Council elections in the near future.

Mr L is a television producer and director but mainly works in drama. He worked for 14 years with the state broadcaster – at that time called Xandir Malta. He admits that he likes the news but he became skeptical due to the way it is presented. He watches the news on

all the local TV stations but he prefers TVM. He is also interested in foreign news and follows regularly Euronews and Al Jazeera. He is fascinated by the way the international TV channels report the news unlike the local TV channels. Mr L lived for a number of years in Canada wherein he also worked in the media.

Mr M in the late thirties works as an accountant. He tries to follow the 8 o'clock news, otherwise he follows the timesofmalta news portal. He tries to follow two PBS current affairs programmes – Dissett and Xarabank, as they offer analysis of current affairs issues which not necessarily would have been reported in the news bulletins. Though hesitant during the focus group session, Mr M admits that he is a Nationalist Party supporter, however, political matters are not raised in his family atmosphere because his wife supports the other rival political party – the Labour Party.

Mr N in his mid forties, is a teacher by profession and is presently a Mayor in a Local Council with the majority for the Labour Party. He is very much interested in politics and he is currently involved in the Labour Party executive. He is regularly assigned by the Party to prepare papers regarding the party's views on different matters. He admits that before his post as a Mayor, he was very much interested in news and current affairs. He admits that he spends a good amount of time watching the news.

Ms O in her late thirties is currently reading for her PhD in Media Studies. Before pursuing her Masters studies, she worked as a journalist at Net TV. She admits that she listens to the headlines on the three TV stations but prefers to follow the 8pm news on TVM for what she calls a balanced picture.

Mr P is 31 years and graduated in social work ten years ago. He works as a social worker in an old people's home. He is actively involved with Alternattiva Demokratika (the Green Party) and is a spokesperson on immigration. He is the Public Relations Officer of the Alternattiva Demokratika Żgħażaġh. He is involved in Migrant Solidarity Movement which works on education and other projects which help on the integration of African and Asian immigrants within the Maltese society. He watches TV news on the local channels but he prefers to verify such news from the news portals.

Ms Q is a teacher in a state government secondary school and works as a TV announcer at PBS. Though she is not an avid follower of news, she prefers to follow the news on television and radio.

Mr R in his early thirties works as a financial controller of a media company owned by the Nationalist Party. He is also very active in the media and presently presents a daily political programme on the Nationalist Party radio station – Radio 101. He is a councillor for the Nationalist Party and is a Secretary General of the PN Youths. He used to regularly contribute on the print media. Due to his full involvement in politics he is an avid follower of news and current affairs matters.

Mr S is a law student in his final year. He follows the news on TV and internet but hardly follows any radio news. In this final year he is an Executive member in the law students' group and this year he produced a series of programmes 'Bil-Haqq u s-Sewwa' on the University national radio station – Campus FM.

Mr T is 22 years old and had just graduated in Communication Studies. He is currently working within the TEFL industry teaching English to foreign students. He runs a fan based website that updates information on local music. He is also involved in an organizing committee in one of the main local festivals in Malta. With regard to viewing the news media, he admits that he follows news on the internet though he admits in not being an avid follower of news.

Mr U is 35 years old a graduate from the University of Malta. After his graduation he worked as a teacher for 10 years and then in 2007 he moved in the international relations as a diplomat in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Malta. In 2011 he moved to Lisbon as a charge d'affairs. As part of his hobby he presented a number of TV programmes particularly on Education 22. He follows the news, particularly foreign news as part of his work.

Ms V is 38 years old and is a social worker by profession. She does not follow news on television, radio or on the print media. She prefers to follow news on the internet and the different blogs on current affairs issues. She follows all the local news portals but prefers the timesofmalta.com news portal. She admits that since she is coming from a social work background, she prefers human news stories and other reports which highlight the political work on an advocacy level, such as news items about human rights, reports on activities organized by NGOs and other news reports of social awareness.

Ms W is a self employed lawyer. She has been practicing this profession for 10 years. Her area of expertise is family law and environmental law. She is an AD supporter. She is also a columnist and write in Sunday Times on a weekly basis.

Ms X is in her mid thirties. She graduated from the University of Malta as an engineer but she works as a personal assistant to a Member of Parliament representing the Labour Party. She prefers TVM news but also follows the current affairs programmes broadcast on TVM particularly Dissett and Xarabank.

Mr Y is the artistic director of the Manoel Theatre. He is also a part time journalist for an online journal. He is in his mid thirties and is a graduate from the University of Malta.

Ms Z In 2010 she graduated in B.Communications with Italian in 2010 and is currently attending M.A preparatory course. As a student she been actively involved in the communication association as President for 1 year and is also currently the MaKS (Faculty of Media and Knowledge Sciences) student representative. During the summer months, she works as an office manager for a tourist car rental company.

Details of focus group participants

FOCUS GROUP 1 (23rd JANUARY 2010) (am)

Gender	Age Group	Employment	Declared Party Political Supporter
M	38	Auditor	Yes
M	25	BA Prog Monitor	No
F	36	Senior TV Producer	No
F	34	Assistant Head of school	Yes
F	22	Law student	Yes
M	24	Lawyer	No

FOCUS GROUP 2 (23rd JANUARY 2010) (pm)

Gender	Age Group	Employment	Declared Party Political Supporter
M	67	Pensioner	Yes
F	40	Self employed	Yes
F	34	MP Personal Assistant	Yes
M	36	Accountant	No
M	47	Auditor	Yes

FOCUS GROUP 3 (29th JANUARY 2010)

Gender	Age Group	Employment	Declared Party Political Supporter
M	39	Sec school teacher	Yes
F	27	Administration (NGO)	Yes
M	28	Higher secondary teacher	No
F	20	Student	No

FOCUS GROUP 4 (6th FEBRUARY 2010)

Gender	Age Group	Employment	Declared Party Political Supporter
M	28	Financial Controller	Yes
M	20	Student	Yes
M	32	Artistic Director	Yes
M	23	Student	Yes

FOCUS GROUP 5 (20th FEBRUARY 2010)

Gender	Age Group	Employment	Declared Party Political Supporter
F	39	Lawyer	Yes
M	33	Foreign Affairs	Yes
M	40	Head TV Programmes	No
F	36	Social worker	Yes

FOCUS GROUP 6 (20th MARCH 2010)

Gender	Age Group	Employment	Declared Party Political Supporter
F	28	Accountant	No
F	39	Unemployed/PT student	Yes
F	32	Teacher	No
M	31	social worker	Yes

APPENDIX v

List of news clips chosen as the sample study

Details of clips chosen for focus groups

List of media clips viewed by the focus group participants

TVM News	20 th February 2006	11 th item
TVM News	1 st March 2006	4 th item
ONE News	1 st March 2006	7 th item
ONE News	25 th February 2006	1 st item
ONE News	8 th March 2006	6 th item
NET News	25 th February 2006	10 th item
NET News	8 th March 2006	3 rd item
NET News	9 th March 2006	3 rd item

Clip from a current affairs programme aired on TVM

Bondi+ clip 7th March 2006

TVM 20th Feb 06 – 11th item

The item was reported as the 11th news item and lasted 2 minutes. This is what had been reported.

In the introduction read by the newscaster it was reported that it is known that the animals are man's friends. But according to the report the fact that the animals can help disabled people is not so widely known. The report continues that in Malta there is an organization which takes care of abandoned animals to help blind and deaf people, and those who are bound to a wheelchair. This project not only takes time, but involves a great expenses amounting to thousands of Maltese pounds. Thus to collect funds to cover the expense, the organizers organized a fund raising activity which was the main point of this report.

The journalist started the feature referring to fashion shows saying that in fashion shows we are used to see beautiful ladies wearing top designers clothes walking elegantly on a catwalk. But yesterday's show was different from such shows. The audience which gathered in a shopping complex could enjoy the abilities and beauty of 8 dogs of different races who were accompanied by their owners, during the show. The association Hakuma Matata organized the activity in order to collect funds for 15 abandoned dogs which are kept in Tas-Salib sanctuary in the limits of Rabat. It was reported that this sanctuary got damaged due to bad weather and the dogs had to be taken in another sanctuary in the limits of Naxxar. These dogs were trained by particular people to serve as a guide for disabled persons. Apart from this, the association is doing an educational campaign to raise awareness about dogs. Presently the association is doing a project together with schools to teach children how to take care of animals.

In the meantime, the day before the Labour Party leader Alfred Sant visited the dogs' sanctuary. While the people responsible of the sanctuary spoke about the lack of support they get from authorities to administer the place, they appreciated Sant's visit to the sanctuary. The Labour leader said that this visit clearly showed that the people who administer such sanctuaries have lack of resources.

Comments

- Issue being addressed

In this feature two issues are addressed – a dog show to collect funds for a particular association; and Dr Sant's visit at a sanctuary for abandoned dogs.

- Narrative structure

This item was very low in the running order. It was the eleventh item in the news bulletin on TVM on 20th February 2006. The introduction of the news item and the first 1' 15" of the feature focused on a fund raising activity which consisted of a dogs' show to help collect funds for the association Hakuma Matata mainly to be able to repair the damages

which faced the sanctuary due to heavy rain and in consequence the dogs had to be moved temporarily to another sanctuary. Apart from renovating the dogs' sanctuary, the funds would be used to train abandoned dogs to help disabled people.

Then using the word "sadanittant" meaning "in the meantime" the feature turned to Dr Alfred Sant's visit at a dogs' sanctuary in Delimara. It reported that while the carers of the place spoke about the lack of support from authorities, they were pleased with Dr Sant's visit and spoke about their financial need. The last concluding sentence refers to the opinion of the 'institutional voice' saying that those who keep up the sanctuary have lack of resources. (Hartley, in Marris & Thornham, ed, 1996). The second part of the feature lasted only 25 seconds.

- Discourse

The discourse of the first part of the feature depicted in the media and which showed that this dogs' fashion show is completely different from the fashion shows the viewers are used. The emphasis of the news feature as also indicated in the introduction is on the activity held by a voluntary organization in order to raise funds for its aim.

Dr Sant's visit as part of an electoral campaign has been inserted into another event which was completely separate and had no political content. Both events reported in the same news feature are by no means related and such techniques might confuse the viewer and reduce his/her attention to one of the events. Furthermore from the newscaster's introduction to the feature, it was never mentioned that Dr Sant's visit will by any means be reported in the forthcoming feature. The fact that these two items were edited together in one news feature would perhaps tone down the effectiveness of Dr Sant's political commitment towards abandoned animals, in this case, abandoned dogs. Since the news feature started with a relatively 'light' subject, the second part of the feature which was political in content, becomes almost irrelevant to the viewer. The viewer's attention would be lost by the end of the feature because it treated three different subjects – the dog show, fund collection and Dr Sant's visit to a dogs' sanctuary.

- What position does the writer take?

If the viewer focuses his/her attention on the feature introduction, the position the reporter takes is to 'promote' in a way the work done by a particular association with regard to helping and caring for abandoned dogs. Also the emphasis is that the main aim of the association is that while keeping abandoned dogs, such dogs are trained to help disabled people. Thus the last part of the feature which reports Dr Sant's visit comes to a surprise to the viewer.

The feature starts with 'fashion discourse' and gives the impression that this feature is a 'light feature', dealing with issues such as catwalks, but then the news feature actually reported a fund raising activity and later on reported a Labour party leader's visit in a dogs sanctuary.

- Visuals used

The visuals used in the news feature consisted of general shots, first of the dog show held in a shopping complex in Malta. In some instances there were close ups to show the way dogs walked on the 'catwalk' and the dress code and accessories of these dogs. When the news feature refers to Dr Sant's visit in the dogs' sanctuary, there were also general shots of Dr Sant and other party officials together with the journalists visiting this sanctuary. There was an instance of a close up of one of the abandoned dogs in this sanctuary which showed the state of the dogs in the sanctuary and reinforced the message that such sanctuaries need continuous financial help for the upkeep of the place and the dogs.

TVM news 1st March 2006 4th item

The news item placed fourth in the running order. It reported the first phase of the construction of Mgarr harbour at Gozo which is expected to be finished by April. It reported that the final expenditure would amount to 14.5 million Maltese pounds, which means 6.5 million Maltese pounds more than was originally proposed.

The report explained that the projects of Mgarr and Cirkewwa Harbours had started again last July after the plans were changed and permits could be issued. The Chairman of the Maritime Authority, Marc Bonello spoke to PBS and said that work is in progress and the first phase will be ready by April. The project including the terminal will be ready till March next year.

In the interview Marc Bonello described what the project consists of, saying that particularly the marshalling area, the ramps and the substations would be ready by Easter (April). The news item featured Marc Bonello, as an 'institutional voice' explaining why the final expenditure will go up to 14.5 million, that is six million more than what was estimated in 1996. He clearly described that the 1996 project, emphasizing 'the project during a Labour Government' was estimated 8 million Maltese pounds, but he said that he wants to emphasize that at that time the project was in its very initial phases and in its early stages of projection. When the work started on site, the plans were very much different than those proposed in 1996 and the estimated expenditure in 2001 went up to 13 million Maltese pounds; confirming that the Government and the Ministry of Finance knew of this figure. But from then on architects and plans were changed. There were some problems with MEPA (Malta Environmental and Planning Authority) for some architectural designs to be accepted by the Planning Authority, thus a re-dimension of the project was needed until the figure went up to 14.5 million Maltese pounds. (dur 3' 10")

The feature all of a sudden turned its focus on Dr Sant's criticism of the terminal project at Mgarr Harbour. It was reported that Dr Sant criticized the project for taking a long time to be finished because the full project was promised to be ready by mid 2003. The news item reported Dr Sant saying that this effected negatively the operations of Gozo Channel. The journalist reported that Dr Sant argued that due to lack of proper usage of the piers, this was having a negative impact on the business in Gozo. (dur 25")

Finally the news feature referred to the statement issued by MHRA, the Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association which is reported to be worried of the state of the project. The association stressed that Gozo Channel passengers should be given priority and be given good service with safety and security.(dur 20”)

Comments

- Issue being addressed

The issue is about the project of the Gozo Terminal project from the perspective of the Chairman of the Malta Maritime Authority and from the perspective of the leader of the Labour Party, Dr Alfred Sant. It also slightly referred to the criticism of MHRA *vis-à-vis* the project and the business in Gozo.

- Narrative structure

The introduction to the news feature reported the final estimated expenditure of the construction of the Mgarr Harbour. Then the focus turned to the Chief Executive of the Malta Maritime Authority who was made to explain the reason behind such expenditure and the delivery time of the project. Dr Marc Bonello, in this case is the ‘institutional voice’ and he contrasted the project under the Nationalist Government, with the proposed project under the Labour Party administration in order to justify the increase in the expenses.

Then following Dr Bonello’s explanation about the project, the journalist reported Dr Sant’s criticism to the project during a press conference which the Labour Party organized on site as part of the electoral campaign in Gozo. Dr Sant criticized the Government for not keeping his promises about the deadlines of the Terminal building.

The other criticism coming from MHRA was reported in the final part of the news feature

- Discourse

The first impression is that TVM is being investigative about the Gozo Terminal project and showed initiative when Dr Marc Bonello was interviewed to explain about the project and the expenses. However, if one looks at the political events which took place on the 1st March, one finds that Dr Alfred Sant visited Gozo as part of the Local Council Electoral campaign and gave a press conference at the Mgarr Harbour to criticize the Government particularly the fact that according to the Malta Labour Party, the promises were not kept. In fact, Dr Sant’s visit in Gozo during which he visited the Gozo Heliport and the village of Xewkija were reported much later in the same news bulletin. The criticism he made with regard to the Gozo Terminal project was taken out and placed in this feature.

Being in Gozo, Dr Sant focused on the unkept promise of the Mgarr Harbour which was promised to be ready in 2003 and in March 2006 was still under way. Also during the press conference Dr Sant criticized that the estimated expenditure which was once given now rose to 6 million Maltese pounds more.

If one looks holistically at this news item one finds that the Malta Labour Party activity was softened and undertoned in a way that the comments of Dr Marc Bonello and information about the project itself were given priority. Also TVM showed the comments of Dr Bonello and gave a full description of the works on the project and the reasons behind the change of the estimated expenditure, a point mentioned by Dr Sant. These were reported prominently in the first part of the feature which lasted for 3 minutes 10 seconds, side kicked the MLP activity. The reference of Dr Sant's press conference only lasted 30 seconds from a total of 3 minutes 55 seconds, and was relegated in the second part of the feature. To further tone down the importance of the MLP press conference at Mgarr Harbour and Dr Sant's comments during this conference, TVM reported part of the statement issued by the MHRA showing dissatisfaction about the present state of the Mgarr Harbour.

Dr Marc Bonello's comments clearly indicate that these were a reply to Dr Sant's criticism. The comments which were presented in the news item referred to what the project consist of, how the plans changed from when they were proposed in 1996 during the Labour Government, and what are the actual plans with a different total expenditure under this administration.

This item can be regarded by some viewers as balanced because both views about the cost and the duration of the Mgarr Harbour project are presented. But one can argue that Dr Sant's comments should still be reported first and then the explanation of the Malta Maritime Authority be presented as a reply to what Dr Sant said. Furthermore the MLP reaction to the project seemed not to be important for TVM because in the introduction for the news feature Dr Sant's press conference was never mentioned. It only referred to the Terminal project and the estimated expenditure of this project.

- What position does the writer take?

From the way the news feature is structured shows that the journalist wanted to emphasize the present position of the project and the views of the Chief Executive of the Malta Maritime Authority whose aim was to reply to Dr Sant's criticism which the viewer was unaware of it as yet.

While the journalist asked questions to Dr Marc Bonello who in turn explained more about the administrative aspect of the project, the news report showed out the difference between the 1996 proposed project and the present project particularly with regard to finance. Dr Bonello was also given time to explain as well the difference in plans from the 1996 project to the present project and the viewer was very subtly given the reasons of why the promises were not kept.

- Visuals used

The visuals in the news feature shows the construction work underway at the Mgarr Harbour and also photographic representation of what the terminal will look like when it is finished. Throughout the first part of the news item there was a lot of use of computerized pictures of the terminal showing what would be the end result of the project. These were mixed with other footage of the action at the harbour, that is, the construction under way.

Then the visuals turned to Dr Sant's press conference at the Mgarr Harbour amidst the construction work being done while addressing the press conference.

One News item 1st March 2006 7th item

The item about Dr Sant's visit at Gozo was broadcast as the 7th item in the news bulletin. This item is a diary event item and can be compared to TVM news item aired on 1st March reporting about the Mgarr Harbour project. ONE NEWS item which lasted 2' 47", did not specifically report only the Mgarr Harbour project but reported all the activities and visits made by Dr Sant when he was in Gozo.

In the introduction to the news feature it was reported that 40 per cent of the helicopter flights were cancelled in the first nine months from the start of the helicopter service between Malta and Gozo. Also it was registered that there were only three passengers in one flight. This was revealed by Dr Alfred Sant in Gozo. He also spoke of the Mgarr Harbour and about the employment sector when he visited the industrial estate at Xewkija.

The feature started again by referring to the helicopter service saying that this service was targeted to carry 40,000 people between Malta and Gozo but ended up taking three passengers for every flight. The journalist reported that Dr Sant said that this service failed because of the high prices of the flights. A tourist who wants to fly between Malta and Gozo one way has to pay 30 Maltese pounds and fifty Maltese pounds for a two way. Even for the Maltese and the Gozitans the prices are very high, sixteen Maltese pounds for a one way flight and 26 Maltese pounds for a two way. Dr Alfred Sant reminded that even though the Labour Government worked to subsidize these prices, the request was not accepted.

The feature then reported another part of the visit made by Dr Sant. This took place at the Mgarr Harbour. A stand upper of the journalist saying that as soon as tourists arrive in Gozo what they find is a complete disaster. This is because the Mgarr Harbour project is not ready yet. She continues saying that it was the Nationalist government who once announced that the project was to be ready by 2003.

The news report referred to this project which originally was estimated to cost 8 million Maltese pounds but it was reported that it would cost 14.5 million Maltese pounds. The Labour leader said that the delay in the project is negatively effecting the business in Gozo.

The news feature presented a voice clip of Dr Alfred Sant saying ‘it is not acceptable that such things continue like this. I think that it is important that the Government declares that he will give absolute priority to this project in the interest of Gozo and we hope that by the end of this year all the project phases will be finished’

The feature then reported the activity in the industrial estate in Xewkija wherein Dr Alfred Sant reminded that it was Minister Giovanna Debono who had declared that the prospects for the Gozo industry are still behind. Within 4 years, the number of people working in the industrial estate in Xewkija reduced by 55%.

Another voice clip of Dr Alfred Sant was shown. He said that ‘one of the policies which will be used by the new administration is to identify and implement immediately the incentives under the EU rules which can be given to the industry in an island like Gozo’.

The journalist concluded the news feature by referring to the presence of the Labour candidates for the Local Council elections in Gozo.

Comments

- Issue being addressed

This news item focuses on Dr Sant’s visits to three sites in Gozo. It reported the three main activities of the Labour Party as party of the events diary. Dr Sant addressed three separate press conferences while in Gozo; first at the Gozo Heliport, then at Xewkija industrial estate and at the Mgarr Harbour terminal. The news feature reports these three items which mainly deal with Dr Sant’s criticism to the present Government’s administration.

- Narrative structure

According to the report, the viewer learns that Dr Sant visited Gozo Heliport and spoke about the lack of services around the heliport. The news item also reported the situation of employment in Xewkija Gozo and the visit at Mgarr Harbour. The first two events were reported by TVM in a separate item from the report on the MLP press conference at the Mgarr Harbour in Gozo. This item was not compared to the other political party station (Net TV) because it was completely left out from the Net news.

The item started with Dr Sant’s criticism about the helicopter service in Gozo due to the increase in prices for tourists and the Maltese people. Dr Sant addressed a press conference in the Gozo Heliport. Present for this press conference were the two MPs from Gozo and two other MLP spokespersons for industry and tourism respectively and other party officials and MLP candidates for the Local Council elections in Gozo.

When the report refers to the Mgarr Harbour, the journalist puts the scene and used a stand upper saying that, as soon as people arrive at Mgarr Harbour they find a ‘complete disaster’

(‘dizastru shih’) because the Mgarr Harbour project is still not ready even though the Government had promised that the project will be ready in 2003.

It is reported that the project which was estimated that would cost 8 million Maltese pounds will actually cost 14.5 million. It referred to Dr Sant’s comment that since this project is taking long to be finished, it is negatively effecting the business in Gozo. On this matter, Dr Sant’s voice clip was shown stating that it is not possible that things continue to go this way and the Government has to give absolute priority to this project in the interest of Gozo. He said that all the phases of this project should be ready by 2003.

The news item referred to the Xewkija industrial estate which Dr Sant spoke about and criticized Minister Giovanna Debono about the perspectives for the Gozo industries which are presently unreachable. Again another voice clip of Dr Sant was shown saying that the Labour administration would identify and implement those initiatives which can be possible for the industry in such a small island as Gozo

As seen above, this item can be divided in three parts, the first part giving information about the main ‘actor’ of the event - Dr Sant’s speech with regard to the Gozo Heliport service, Dr Sant’s criticism about the Mgarr Harbour project and the present situation of the employment in the industrial area at Xewkija in Gozo. The news feature was composed of two voice clips of Dr Sant as the institutional voice commenting about the Mgarr Harbour project and the current situation of employment in the Gozo industry and a stand upper of the journalist introducing the issue of the Mgarr Harbour.

- Discourse

This item moves from one event to another each time focusing on Dr Sant’s comments. The introduction gives the impression that the feature will be focusing on the negative situation in the Gozo heliport as described by the Labour leader, however, when the viewer listens to the full feature, one realizes that the report focuses on Dr Sant’s visit in three places in Gozo – Gozo heliport, Mgarr Harbour and the industrial estate in Xewkija.

It emphasized the point of view of the Labour party on these issues and this is clear from the journalist’s comments during the stand upper stressing the ‘disastrous’ state of the Mgarr Harbour. The use of the actual voice clips of Dr Sant during the various press conferences in Gozo, enhance the credibility of the event and stresses that Dr Sant is being the authoritative figure. Through these voice clips, the viewer could not make any distinction between Local Council elections and national elections because Dr Sant spoke about the ‘Labour administration’ and the initiatives it would take. It is not clear whether he was speaking on a Local council level or on a nationwide level. This reinforces the trend that in Malta in Local Council elections, the political campaign is very intensive and very often it goes up to a wider national level. In fact many political observers in Malta comment that Local Council elections are a mini national elections.

- What position does the writer takes?

The journalist reports this news item with a slant in favour of the Labour party. The stand upper of the journalist reinforces the point of the Labour Party argument and described the present situation as disastrous reinforcing the fact that the Mġarr Harbour project though promised was still under way. The viewer could conclude that the journalist was partisan in her comments.

The journalist gave prominence to Dr Sant's speeches during the different press conferences and Dr Sant's comments are got through in the news feature by the use of two voice clips.

- Visuals used

When ONE NEWS reported Dr Sant's press conference at Mġarr Harbour, it showed shots of Dr Sant's and the other officials' arrival at Mġarr Harbour indicating the present unfinished state of the Harbour and emphasizing that great parts of this harbour are under construction. Then a number of general long shots were used which pictured Dr Alfred Sant during the press conferences at the Gozo Heliport, at the Xewkija industrial estate and at the Mġarr Harbour. When showing the press conference at Mġarr Harbour, a 'pan shot' was used to show the Labour speakers and the other party officials and Local Council candidates who were present for this press conference.

- Theme

The theme is political focusing on three sites in Gozo. It gives prominence to Dr Sant's comments and criticism to the Government for failing to keep its promises on the Mġarr Harbour project, the lack of employment in Xewkija and the lack of services at the Gozo heliport.

- Sources

The main source in this news report is Dr Sant, the authoritative figure. ONE News report gives direct exposure to Dr Sant's comments and shows his actual comments during the press conferences in Gozo.

ONE NEWS 25th February 2006

ONE News gave prominence to this news item and showed it as the first item. It lasted 3' 11".

ONE News gave prominence to the worries of Sliema residents about Tigne project and in fact this issue was reported as the first item.

In the introduction presented by the newscaster, it was reported that just few days before the Sliema Local Council election, Minister Jesmond Mugliette held a consultative meeting with Sliema residents about Tigne project. During this meeting several Sliema residents showed their worries about what is proposed for Tigne and Qui Si Sana.

The news feature reported that the project as proposed for Sliema is worrying Sliema residents very much ('mhux fit'). Amongst the proposals for Tigne and Qui si Sana are the building of pedestrian zones, parking spaces, restaurants, bowling centre, shopping complex and a tunnel. During the meeting organized by Minister Jesmond Mugliette, Sliema residents showed their worries about the proposed project.

Voice clip male resident - Can you please make it very explicitly clear ('cara u tonda'). I do not want to see the site as car park. I am fed up seeing my country, seeing the few gardens we have and you change them into a building site or car park.

Voice clip male resident - In this development; I am seeing Mr Pullicino, because he is the promoter ('perçimes') of this development. (clapping of hands from those present) ...I do not know who is responsible for this project, if it is Mr. Mugliette or Mr. Pullicino but this project will destroy the last site which is pollution free for the expense of children, children are playing there...

The journalist reported that the Government is saying that no building will be built above street level but the plans are clearly showing that the development will take place opposite the sea front.

Male resident – Not only residents of Qui Si Sana but all Sliema residents, who come in this open space. This is the last open space in Sliema and it will almost be lost, it will almost be lost. Why? This is done to accommodate one developer and his pocket at the expense of our damage, the residents and all the Maltese people.

The news feature reported that Sliema residents are worried because of this project described as a massive one. The Sliema residents did not like at all the fact that there was no environmental impact assessment of the project. Amongst the main arguments which were raised during the meeting was mainly that of parking problems.

Female residents – How are people going to work? Where would they leave their cars? The bus service is hopeless, I use it just to go to Valletta, everything is hopeless. Now if you want to accomodate Midi in everything, I hope that their votes will put you in power. Good luck to you, you cheated on us, you cheated on us ('dhaqtu bina'), you took us for a ride ('tmejiltu bina').

The news report concluded that a decision will be taken about this proposed project in 30 days time from the cabinet.

Comments

- Issue being addressed

A consultation meeting was held by Minister Jesmond Mugliette with Sliema residents in order to address the worries of the residents due to Tigne project.

- Narrative structure

The introduction while reporting that Minister Jesmond Mugliette organized a consultation meeting, immediately points out to the worries of Sliema residents with regard to Tigne Project.

The news feature emphasizes the worries of Sliema residents and this is reported by the journalist herself and also through voice clips of Sliema residents who were present at the meeting and who gave their views about how this project would effect them negatively. All the voice clips, (three Sliema residents) shown passed negative comments and harsh criticism against the Government particularly Minister Jesmond Mugliette and Minister George Pullicino.

- Discourse

Negative discourse, mainly that, of worry is prominently used throughout the news feature. The report shows the contrast between what Minister Jesmond Mugliette is saying with what the actual plans show. According to this report, while the Minister is saying that there would not be any building above street level, the project plans show that this is not the case.

Also ONE News briefly lists what is being proposed as part of the project and emphasizes the point that the residents have every right to be worried because there would be no free space if this project is done. When the viewer hears that the project consists of a restaurant, a shopping complex, a bowling centre and a car park, the viewer would conclude that the residents have every right to complain that they will end up with no free space for their children to run around.

In the news report ONE News shows the residents themselves expressing their worries through a number of voice clips of the residents. The way the news feature is edited gives space to the Sliema residents to voice their worries. The voice clips mainly show the worries of the Sliema residents that they are against the idea that some free space will be taken up by a car park. None of the voice clips shown by ONE News show any positive reactions or positive feedback to the project. Also the last voice clip shown is particularly interesting because the female resident says ‘you cheated on us, you cheated on us (‘dhaqtu bina’), you took us for a ride (‘tmejiltu bina’). This phrase was very used by Labour party Leader and party officials during the electoral campaign because the Labour Party was continuously trying to show the supporters that the Government particularly led by the Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi is cheating on the people and taking the citizens for a ride. In fact very often Dr Gonzi in several posters and during TV clips and political spots is shown by the Labour Party as continuously laughing and smiling giving the impression that he is ignoring the people’s worries and complaints and going ahead with his plans. Such portrayal indicates that the Prime Minister is cheating on the people.

- What position does the writer take?

The journalist sides with the Sliema residents exposing their worries through showing a number of voice clips. Through this news feature the journalist hints that this was the only meeting held as a run up for the Sliema Local Council elections.

- Visuals used

The visuals which are used in this news feature mainly focus on the audience who are present for this meeting and who are the Sliema residents who would be effected from Tigne project. The camera shots show people present raising their points and arguing with the speakers of the meeting and amongst them was shown the Chief Executive of the Malta Transport Authority. All the shots are the actual coverage of the meeting.

There were also several close ups of one of the Member of Parliament for the Nationalist Party, Robert Arrigo. Sometimes Robert Arrigo was shot in extreme close ups or zoom outs from his face to a wider shot. There was a zoom out from Robert Arrigo when in one instance he was caught mumbling something to himself. Apart from Robert Arrigo, Minister George Pullicino was also visualized and shown in close ups, particularly when one male resident mentioned him during one of the voice clips which was chosen in the news item. He was caught laughing when this resident said “I am seeing Mr Pullicino, he is the promoter of the project...”. Minister George Pullicino and Robert Arrigo were sitting near each other amongst the residents present for the meeting.

All the voice clips show angry residents who wanted to make out their point about the project. The intervention of a male resident was edited with a ‘white flash wipe’ separating one part of the intervention from the other. This was done to edit the intervention because probably it was much longer. However, through editing the resident’s argument still made sense and continued with his previous point he raised. The female resident whose voice clip was also shown and who said ‘you cheated on us’ was shot in a close up and her expressions were very clear to the viewer. Even here the technique of editing the voice clip with a white flash wipe was used because probably her intervention was also longer. When she said ‘you cheated on us’, One News showed the entire clip and the viewer could hear the clapping of the audience present during the meeting.

One particular female resident was pictured several times during the news feature. In one instance there was a zoom in on her when she was seen clapping to the comments of the male resident whose voice clip was heard in the news report. This confirmed that she was also one of the residents who were not in favour of the project. In another instance, the lady is seen arguing without the microphone as if arguing with one of the speakers of the meeting.

- Theme

It has a political theme focusing on a local issue. Although this project might effect other people apart from Sliema residents but the main people hit from this project is the Sliema residents.

- Sources

ONE NEWS item is a straight reporting, referring to the meeting of Sliema residents with Minister Jesmond Mugliette. One News directly uses the comments of the Sliema residents as the most prominent source.

- Absence in the news report

If this news item is compared to the news item aired on Net News which report the same event, one sees a clear distinction between the two news items.

One has to point out that amongst the residents pictured, there was no one who seemed to be in favour of the project as was reported by Net News. According to Net News the residents were divided between those in favour of the project and those against the project, however, this is not reported or shown on One News. The confrontation mentioned by Net News between two sides of residents from two zones was never mentioned by One News.

Also the script between One News and Net News varies considerably. While Net News reported that this activity was a public debate', One News reported that it was a 'consultative meeting, held few days before the Local Council election in Sliema.' According to Net News Minister Jesmond Mugliette participated in the debate while One News reported that the meeting was organized by Minister Jesmond Mugliette.

ONE NEWS 8th March 2006 6th item

This item was placed as the 6th item and lasted 1' 55".

The introduction read by the newscaster reported that the 'campaign of lies' of the Nationalist Party continues. The Prime Minister chooses to continue with the lie about Rabat and goes against what was said by Minister Francis Zammit Dimech.

The feature referred to the political activity in Fgura which 'saw many supporters leaving without waiting for the arrival and the speech of the Nationalist Leader'. As happened during the last weeks, the Nationalist Party continues with the campaign of lies about Rabat. In the last weeks Gonzi alleged that St Paul's Grotto in Rabat had been damaged because tar seeped through it. Here it was reported that 'in reality' the experts confirmed that rainwater with soil not tar seeped in. Minister Francis Zammit Dimech sustained this and in Parliament he confirmed that water and mud seeped in the grotto because of damage in water pipes beneath St Paul's Grotto. It was reported that from information gathered by ONE News, the Water Services Corporation has the responsibility for the maintenance of these pipes, but notwithstanding these confirmations and even though a Nationalist Minister is emphasizing that it was water and mud, the Nationalist Leader is 'insisting on the lie'.

Journalist's question – 'Zammit Dimech in Parliament confirmed that it was not tar but water with soil which seeped in. What are your comments?'

Dr Gonzi's answer – 'The responsibility of Rabat mayor is huge because due to his lack of attention a very important monument in Rabat has been damaged'.

The feature ends up saying that this declaration goes against what Minister Francis Zammit Dimech said in Parliament. Thus this indicates that on the eve of the local elections there is lack of disagreement within the Nationalist cabinet.

Comments

- Issue being addressed

The activity which was supposed to be reported is a party political activity which took place at the PN Club in Fgura where the Leader of the Nationalist Party Dr Lawrence Gonzi addressed the PN supporters. However, the item focused on the lack of agreement between Minister Francis Zammit Dimech and the Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi about the damage in St Paul's Grotto in Rabat. It is not clear whether the Prime Minister did refer to the issue during his speech. But this issue was put forward by One News journalist to the Prime Minister as he was entering the PN club for the political activity.

- Narrative structure

One News again used the method of comparing what was said by one politician some days ago and the comments made by another politician in the actual coverage for this news item. This 'comparison method' is used when reporting the Nationalist speakers to put them in a negative light showing that there is a discrepancy between what has been said by one speaker as opposed to another speaker.

The introduction to the news feature already puts the viewer into perspective because it shows the editorial view which One News wants to achieve. The introduction starts off by reporting that the campaign of lies by the Nationalist Party continues and the Prime Minister 'is choosing' to continue with lies. This partisan comment made by the station is a form of electioneering and propaganda against the campaign of the Nationalist Party and in favour of the Malta Labour Party. The narrative discourse stresses on 'the campaign of lies' and describes that this campaign had been going on in the last week, while emphasizing that Minister Francis Zammit Dimech is contradicting what the Prime Minister is saying. One News highlights this lack of agreement indicating that the disagreement is present within the Nationalist cabinet of Ministers. While Minister Francis Zammit Dimech is reported to have said that water and soil has been entering St Paul's Grotto; One News reports that Dr Lawrence Gonzi is 'insisting' that it is not mud but tar which is seeping in the Grotto. When Dr Gonzi was interviewed and reported in this news item, he only said that the Rabat mayor is responsible for the damage on an important historical monument in Rabat. However, the viewer notes that the Prime Minister did not refer to any tar seeping into the grotto and was quite diplomatic in his reply. He referred

only to ‘damages’ in the Grotto but did not specify how these damages were caused. This emphasizes that this item is highly partisan and propagandistic because One News commented only on the fact that the declaration made by Dr Gonzi goes against what Minister Francis Zammit Dimech is saying about the type of damage in the Grotto. However, both Nationalist speakers are saying that there was damage caused in St Paul’s Grotto, but according to the report they are not agreeing on the type of damage.

Apart from highlighting the point that there is disagreement between a Minister and the Prime Minister (leader of the Nationalist Party), the news feature first described the scene as witnessed by the journalist and reported that ‘several supporters’ left before the arrival and the speech of the Prime Minister. Through such reportage the reporter gives the impression that the Nationalist Party supporters were ready to wait for the Prime Minister’s arrival and speech.

Then the feature focused on the issue of St Paul’s Grotto and the news item repeated what had already been reported in the previous news bulletins. It reported what the Nationalist Party was alleging about the damage in the Grotto and what Minister Francis Zammit Dimech revealed in Parliament. The news feature wanted to show the contrast of what Dr Gonzi had said previously with what Minister Zammit Dimech was saying about the damage. The news item did not refer anything about Dr Gonzi’s speech during the political activity.

- Discourse

The terminology used in the news item further stresses the point of the journalist that there exists a contradiction between what Minister Francis Zammit Dimech is saying and the Prime Minister. Verbs like ‘sustains’ and ‘insists’ (‘sostna’ u ‘insista’) describes what Minister Francis Zammit Dimech said about what caused the damage in the Grotto. But when referring to the Prime Minister, the journalist mainly focuses on the Nationalist campaign and describes it as the ‘campaign of lies’.

The comment made by the Prime Minister during the short interview was shown by ONE NEWS to highlight the lack of agreement between the Prime Minister and Minister Zammit Dimech. The viewer gets the impression that this comment reinforces what the news feature; reports that the Prime Minister ‘is insisting on a lie’ and this terminology is used throughout the news feature.

- What position does the writer takes?

The journalist is being an extension of a political campaign for the Labour Party in that she reports that the Nationalist Party is continuing with the ‘campaign of lies’. The journalist is trying to make the Prime Minister comment about Minister Francis Zammit Dimech’s statement and indicates to the Prime Minister that Minister Zammit Dimech is contradicting what the Prime Minister said in the previous days about the causes of the

damage. The point which the journalist wanted to get out from Dr Gonzi is already reflected in the question itself.

- Visuals

While the journalist reported that ‘several supporters left’ the PN club, however, the actual coverage on site, only showed two couples leaving the PN club and about five other supporters were outside indicating that they were waiting for someone (probably the Nationalist Party leader). From the shots shown to report this, the viewer can notice that the cameraperson filmed this while carrying the camera in his hand and was not officially filming the situation. The supporters outside the PN club probably thought they were not being filmed. In fact apparently the camera was placed very low, and the viewer could only see low angle shots showing just the legs of the supporters. In fact, the supporters could not be identified. Such footage is very similar to the footage which is taken by a hidden camera.

It has to be noted that what is absent from the visuals for this news report is that there were no shots showing the actual activity/speech which was held at the PN club in Fgura.

When the news report referred to the issue of the damage in St Paul’s Grotto, archive footage showing the inside of St Paul’s Grotto was shown with the cameraperson being the ‘narrator’. The inside of the Grotto is seen from the point of view of the cameraperson who slowly walks inside the Grotto and films this historical site. This archive footage did not indicate at all what type of damage there was in this Grotto but only gives general shots of the Grotto from inside.

When Minister Francis Zammit Dimech was mentioned in the news script, he was shown in two instances through the same archive footage. The Minister is seen during a talk which is completely separate from this political activity which is mentioned in this news feature.

- Theme

The feature has a political theme with a slant towards propaganda or electioneering. While it refers to a local issue – the damage in St Paul’s Grotto in Rabat, which turned into a national issue; it is more of a way of electioneering on a wider level showing two members of the Nationalist Party cabinet – the Prime Minister and a Minister, not agreeing with each other.

- Sources

One News used three types of news sources in this news report – the Prime Minister himself, the statement made by Minister Zammit Dimech in Parliament and other ‘information gathered by One News’ with regard to the remit of the Water Services Corporation about the maintenance of water pipes.

The comment of the Prime Minister is actually shown on tape so the viewer is hearing the comment from the institutional voice, even though the Prime Minister did not directly answer the journalist's question.

To report Minister Zammit Dimech's reaction, One News referred to his declaration in Parliament, however, this declaration was not broadcast through a voice clip.

The third source is not official because One News reports that 'from information gathered by One News'. Thus this is not clear whether this information was officially gathered from the Water Services Corporation or whether they had another source who passed such information.

NET NEWS 25th February 2006

This item which lasted 2'12" was placed as the 10th item.

In the introduction presented by the newscaster reported that a debate about the proposed project of the Tigne point was held in Sliema. Minister Jesmond Mugliette, who participated in the meeting, was reported saying that the project offer a balance between everyone's needs and gives priority to the residents' needs.

The news feature reported that the project as proposed for the Tigne point offers balance between the needs of the citizens who visit this site but puts forward the residents' needs. The Minister for Urban Development and Roads Jesmond Mugliette during a public debate with Sliema residents spoke about the proposals for the development of Tigne. According to Net News journalist the arguments in the debate developed in a confrontation between Tigne residents on one side and residents of Bisazza Street and Tower Road on the other side. Tigne residents argued against the development because they were arguing that it will effect them negatively due to a big influx of commuters and traffic. On the other side the other residents spoke in favour of the project because it will decrease the traffic from their streets. Net News reported that the main worry of the residents, although not the only worry is where to park their cars if the streets will be turned into pedestrian zones. The news feature reported in detail Minister Mugliette's speech saying that these consultation meetings are organized so that the residents' worry will be shared and suggestions will be heard. Minister Mugliette denied allegations that Tigne development is done to give advantage to the MIDI consortium. He said that it makes sense that Tinge point and other sites in Sliema are developed. In this way the influx of commuters will be facilitated, not only around Tigne point but this will also help the business activity to spread. In his intervention, Minister George Pullicino said that the developer of Tigne project is committed to provide free parking space to residents who live opposite the project because the actual development had reduced their parking space.

With regard to comments made about the building of a tunnel instead of a road along the Tigne front, George Pullicino explained that this decision was taken so as part of the Tigne front can still be enjoyed.

Comments

- Issue being addressed

The issue refers to a meeting held by Minister Jesmond Mugliette with Sliema residents to discuss the project proposals for the development of Tigne point.

- Narrative structure

The news report refers to the meeting held regarding Tigne Point development and reports that this project targets everyone's needs. According to Net News report during this meeting there was a confrontation between Tigne residents on one side and the residents of Bisazza Street and Tower Road. The news item reports that Sliema residents were divided about this project and were not agreeing about the influx of cars in the area if this project had to be carried forward. According to the report this is one of a number of consultation meetings which Minister Mugliette is organizing to get feedback from the residents who would be effected by the project. However, in one instance the journalist reports that the residents are worried. This indicates that even though Net TV is a party political station which might tend to be partisan, in this instance, the journalist gives an indication that the Sliema residents are not happy with this project. However, the journalist refers to the lack of parking space as their main worry, which according to the residents, will have to face when this project is built. To this the journalist reports what Minister George Pullicino said that the developer of Tigne project is committed to provide free parking space to residents.

Thus the news report ends up positively and it offers a solution to the worries of the residents. Net News reported Minister Pullicino's intervention during this debate wherein he explained certain aspects of the project to continue to put a positive note to the news report.

- Discourse

This news item, though in one instance, did mention that Sliema residents were worried because of this project, however, it mainly reported what was answered by the speakers particularly Minister Mugliette and Minister Pullicino. It was reported that Minister Mugliette denied the point raised by residents that the project will accommodate MIDI and explained that other Sliema zones will be developed in order to increase the commercial activity in the zone. Then Minister Pullicino was reported saying that the developer of the project is restricted to provide free car park for residents.

Net News mainly reported the two Ministers and the reply they gave to the residents while One News focused on the worries of the residents without reporting what was replied to them.

- What position does the writer take?

The journalist reports Minister Mugliette's reaction for the project but also highlights the worries of Sliema residents, which according to the journalist, are divided between the Tigne resident and the other residents living in Bisazza Street and Tower Road.

From the script the viewer notes that the journalist might not have been partisan or biased, however, if one compares this news item to the item on One news one concludes that there are huge differences between the two and might conclude that both stations had their separate message to convey.

- Visuals used

For this news item Net News uses a lot of archive visuals showing the site where the proposed project is to be built. General shots of the present car park and other general shots are used in the news feature including the Sliema front, showing the area which will be taken up by the project. This might give the viewer the impression that from such an area, this project will give a new dimension to this Sliema site. Such visuals might have been used to pass on a positive message.

The visuals used at the start of the news feature show the actual coverage of this activity, a general shot of Minister Mugliette who is seen addressing the audience present. One notes that this was the only time Minister Mugliette is shown. Even Minister George Pullicino is pictured speaking during this meeting. When he was pictured in a general shot, the viewer could see that he was amongst the audience and not amongst the speakers.

The residents who were pictured when giving their intervention on the microphone during this meeting, were not seen to be very argumentative and angry. A male resident is shown to make his point without being 'aggressive'. Another male resident, who was seen also in One News, was pictured by Net News. On One News he was shown to be rather angry, however, Net News pictured him for much less time. When he was shown, the next visuals showed two residents, standing up all of a sudden. The male resident had the microphone and seemed to be waiting for his turn to speak up, while the female resident, who was pictured by One News for several times, was pictured when being angry and addressing comments to the speakers. The way this part was edited, that is, showing the angry female resident just after the male resident spoke up, gave the impression that the female and the male resident were arguing to what the male speaker shown in the earlier shot, has just said. And this would have emphasized the point made in the script of Net News that the Sliema residents from two different zones argued between each other about the proposed project.

Amongst the residents who spoke during the meeting, Net News showed Michael Briguglio who is a councillor for the Green Party in the Sliema Local Council. He is pictured in a general shot making his point.

- Theme

It has a political theme focusing on a local issue. Although this project might effect other people apart from Sliema residents, however, the way the news script is prepared mainly interests Sliema residents.

- Sources

This news report mainly takes the speech and reaction of Minister Jesmond Mugliette as the main source. Also the residents' opinions who were present during the meeting were taken into consideration and were reported as the main source.

NET NEWS 8th March 2006

The news item was placed 3rd in the news bulletin and lasted 3' 36".

In the introduction presented by the newscaster the report said that the Labour Party is not providing any solutions to the problem caused at St Paul's Grotto by the Rabat Local Council administered by a Labour majority. It reported that the damage was caused after the Local Council hastily authorized tarmac in College Street. It was reported that the Local Council not only did not provide any solutions but the Labour leader in his comments to Net News tried to ridicule the issue when he answered in an irrelevant way. Dione Borg (Net News journalist) spoke to Labour leader.

The news feature started by reporting that the Labour Party is still not assuming any responsibility for the damage caused by the Rabat Local Council with a Labour majority at St Paul's Grotto wherein water with tar and mud seeped in after the Local Council authorized tarmac on the street above the grotto. According to the news report, because of this tarmac the first heavy rainwater seeped in through St Paul's grotto together with tar and mud and left signs on the wall of this national heritage. The footage confirms that the water contained tar and mud but the Leader Alfred Sant, the Rabat Labour Mayor Frank Fabri and the Labour speaker Charles Buhagiar, who is reported as being also the architect for the Rabat Local Council denied this evidence. Net News spoke with the Labour Leader Alfred Sant about this issue.

(This is a transcript of the actual interview shown in the news feature)

Journalist – Dr Sant, obviously the Rabat Local Council was in the news about St Paul's Grotto. What would be the solution which would be offering the Local Council after water with tar and mud seeped in the grotto?

Dr Sant – Tar did not seep in. Let me tell you ...

Journalist – Water seeped in and with it tar and mud, tar and other particles seeped in as well.

Dr Sant - I refer to the reply given by a Minister who said that it wasn't tar but mud.

I think that you cannot neglect this truth.

Journalist – Dr Sant, water has seeped through for the first time. At least do you confirm this ?

Dr Sant - There were broken pipes belonging to the Water Services.

Journalist – Why did they break? When did they break?

Dr Sant – The water pipes of the Water Services are the responsibility of the Water Services.

Journalist – The water pipes broke when the tarmac was made by the Labour Local Council, do you confirm this?

Dr Sant – Tar did not seep through.

Dr Sant – Was there tar?

Journalist – Did water seep in? The water seeped in and carried with it tar

Laughing of the crowd

(Dr Sant heard saying) ‘Was there tar? Was there tar?’

(And seen laughing with the rest of the supporters and one of the supporters softly was heard saying ‘come on’)

Journalist – it is not a laughing situation, it is not a laughing situation, it is not a laughing situation ... it is very dangerous that you have a community...; damage has been done to a site of national and historical importance. It should not be a laughing situation, definitely not a laughing situation.

Journalist – Dr Sant, these are the facts, I am trying to do a question.

Journalist – Do you at least confirm that when water seeped in, mud and tar have also seeped in and this has never happened before? This is the point. This is the whole point.

Dr Sant – the world is round and not flat.

Journalist – I am not speaking to you about the world, Dr Sant, I am speaking to you about a historical grotto, did water seep through?

Dr Sant – the world is round and not flat.

The news feature reported that the allegations made by Alfred Sant that the water with mud and tar seeped through due to the damage caused in water pipes and thus the responsibility falls on the Water Services Corporation was denied by the corporation. In a press release issued by the Water Services Corporation, it was said that there exist an agreement between the Corporation and the Local Councils, that before tarmac is done, the Corporation would be informed so that if the need arise the water pipes would be changed. The journalist reports that it resulted that the Rabat Local Council never informed the Water Service

Corporation about the work being done on the street above the underground Grotto and so all damage caused falls under the responsibility of the Council. The investigations made by the corporation confirmed that there were no water leakages coming from the pipes of the corporation before the tarmac was given as ordered by the Rabat Local Council with a Labour majority.

Comments

- Issue being addressed

The news report refers to the alleged damage of St Paul's Grotto, a historical site and the criticism to the Labour Party and the Rabat Local Council administered by a Labour majority because they did not offer any solutions/remedies for the damage caused.

- Narrative structure

The news report immediately starts criticizing the Labour Party for not providing any solutions for the damage which is alleged to have been caused by the Rabat Local Council to the Grotto of St Paul's when tarmac was given on a road above the Grotto. Then the introduction leads the viewer to what happened when Net News journalist interviewed Labour Party leader. In the introduction, Net News described Dr Sant's comments as ridiculing the situation and the Labour Party leader, according to Net News, presented the issue as irrelevant.

Again the news feature stresses that the Labour Party is not assuming any responsibility for the damage in the Grotto. It pinpoints particularly Dr Alfred Sant, the Rabat Mayor Frank Fabri and the Labour Party speaker Charles Buhagiar. This first part of the news feature is a repeat of what had been already reported a couple of times in the previous Net TV news bulletins. It reports the damage caused and how it is alleged to have happened. What is new in this news feature is the interview made by Net News journalist to Dr Alfred Sant. This is the trend used mainly by the political party stations wherein they report an issue more than once but generally the journalist preparing that particular news item would add something new to the news item giving the impression that it has a news value criteria.

The journalist insists with his question asking Dr Sant if he admits that water with mud and tar have seeped through the Grotto. Dr Sant at first replies to his questions by referring the case to be the responsibility of the Water Services Corporation about the maintenance of the water pipes in the street above the Grotto of St Paul's; but then Dr Sant is shown as deviating from the question by answering "the world is round and not flat".

After showing this interview, the news feature reports the press release issued by the Water Services Corporation denying that there was no damage in the water pipes and this case is in no way the responsibility of the Water Services Corporation. This contrast to what Dr Sant is shown replying to Net News journalist, thus putting the Labour Party in a negative light to the viewers. To emphasize that the Rabat Local Council is to blame, the journalist reports how the procedures are taken as explained by the Water Services Corporation

before every road project, and that according to what is reported the Rabat Local Council did not follow such procedures with the Corporation.

- Discourse

The news report while putting the blame on the Local Council for the damage caused in St Paul's Grotto is pointing the finger to the Labour Party for this. The news report is actually blaming the Labour Party that it is avoiding any responsibility and is not offering any solutions for the damage caused. The allegations around the issue of St Paul's Grotto, that is, the damage caused due to the irresponsibility of the Rabat Local Council were presented as facts in this news report.

As already indicated above, there is a repetition of what damage was caused to the Grotto of St Paul's in the news feature. To stress this point Net News shows the same visuals/footage which was also shown in previous news bulletins and are used as evidence of what had been reported. The journalist actually says that "The footage confirmed the water with tar which had seeped through....".

The interview conducted by Net News journalist, Dione Borg lasted 1' 30" and from what is shown in the news item, Net News showed the entire interview which actually happened on site. The viewer could see how the journalist started the interview, he went on Dr Sant while he was walking with the political supporters. The viewer could also see how this interview ended; with Dr Sant seen moving away from the journalist and the cameraperson hinting that on his part the interview was over. The interview focused first on any solutions which might be planned by the Rabat Local Council and which would be taken to solve the alleged damage in the Grotto

After the first question, the journalist was demanding and wanted to make Dr Sant admits that water with tar and mud seeped through the Grotto. The viewer might feel that the way the journalist is putting the question is being arrogant even though there are no element of doorstepping. However, after the fourth question wherein the journalist insisted to Dr Sant to admit that water with mud and tar had seeped through, the interview ended up being a 'tit for tat' situation with Dr Sant also asking the question "was there tar?, was there tar?" to the journalist. At this Dr Sant laughed and was portrayed as if he was enjoying this chat because he was putting the journalist in an uncomfortable position. Net News probably interpreted this and reported that Dr Sant ridiculed the situation. This interview was done in front of the Rabat Mayor, other Local Council candidates and a group of Labour Party supporters. When the crowd was seen laughing together with the leader of the Labour Party, the journalist addressed the group of supporters while he scolded them because they were laughing about a "serious matter". This might sound that the journalist wanted to entice the political supporters to react to the way he was behaving. In this interview the journalist is portrayed as being very partisan in the way he puts the questions and is seen an extension of the other political party propaganda. However, when Dr Sant walks away after his comment that "the world is round and not flat" the journalist did not persist to ask more questions.

Throughout the news feature, it is emphasized that the Rabat Local Council is administered by a Labour Party majority and thus this type of reporting stresses the partisanship of the news reports. It specifically mentioned a number of times that the Local Council is administered by a Labour Party majority, thus hinting that it is this administration to blame for the damage caused in St Paul's Grotto.

- What position does the writer take?

The journalist takes the sides against the Rabat Local Council which is specifically described as being administered by a Labour majority. The journalist reports that by the use of footage and visuals used in this news report, the viewer can conclude what type of damage had been caused due to the irresponsibility of the Rabat Local Council. Furthermore, the journalist is being partisan in the way he criticized Dr Alfred Sant about the way he answered to the journalist's question when he was being interviewed about the solutions which the Rabat Local Council will take to make up for the damages caused in the Grotto.

- Visuals used

The news feature consists of many archive repeated visuals of the damage in St Paul's Grotto with still shots and camera pans of the alleged damage on the wall of the Grotto showing black tar which is alleged it had seeped in the Grotto. In a particular instance there was a close up of a small 'boulder' which presumably is part of the Grotto with black tar on it. However this was an extreme close up and the viewer cannot tell whether this was pictured in the Grotto. At first glance it seems that this shot is taken out of context because it is filmed in an extreme close up. Apart from the interview which is part of this news feature, the visuals to this news feature consist only of several shots taken from different angles of the damage caused in the Grotto. The last shot which ends the news feature is different and shows a general shot of the Church of St Paul from outside and the entrance to the Grotto can be seen on the right hand side of this long shot.

The interview with the Leader of the Labour Party, is shown throughout without any editing in between the questions. The camera points to the interviewee, in this case Dr Sant, and pictures him in a close up while some of the candidates and Labour Party supporters are still seen in the picture. In the first part of the interview the close up shows Dr Sant and the Rabat Mayor Frank Fabri who was beside Dr Sant. The Rabat Mayor was shown smiling when the journalist said that water with mud and tar seeped through the Grotto but then when Dr Sant started to answer the question, the shot closed onto Dr Sant's face in a close up showing prominence on the interviewee. Afterwards the supporters together with Dr Sant were shown laughing, the journalist insisted that he was trying to do a question. On this point the close up opened up further and the journalist asking the question is put into the picture with Dr Sant facing him. The viewer could tell that the interview finished because visuals show Dr Sant starting to walk away from the journalist together with the supporters following him. The filming continued and showed Dr Sant smiling while he continued to walk away.

One can comment on the decision to conduct such an interview, that is, the journalist stopping Dr Sant during his walk about around Rabat accompanied by the Rabat Mayor, other Labour Party candidates and the party supporters. This can be seen as very strategic because the journalist would be the only one out of all the people gathered at that moment that would allege that the damage at the Grotto was done due to the irresponsibility of the Rabat Local Council. Obviously the journalist knew even before he started the first question that the party supporters would side with their Leader and would very probably show their expression of support towards their Leader.

- Theme

The theme is mainly local politics and focuses around an issue which involves the locality of Rabat. Even though St Paul's Grotto is a national historical site, however, the way the news item was presented mainly interests the people of Rabat because they can form an opinion on the attitude of the Rabat Local Council which is reported to be administered by a Labour majority.

- Source

The source of this news item is mainly the authoritative figure which is interviewed in this news report, the Leader of the Labour Party. The main focus is the reaction given by Dr Sant. But the news report also refers to the statement issued by the Water Services Corporation as a reaction to what the Labour Party was saying about the damage in the water pipes.

NET NEWS 9th March 2006

This item was placed 3rd in the running order and lasted 2'05''.

The introduction read by the newscaster referred to the results announced three years ago. It was reported that according to Alfred Sant, partnership won. It was emphasized that 'it was exactly 9th March 2003' when, even though the referendum in favour of EU membership was won with a majority of more than 19,000 votes, Alfred Sant urged people to go in the streets and in a mass meeting in front of Super 1 complex in Marsa, he declared that Partnership won.

The news feature again reported that, three years ago today, the Opposition Leader Alfred Sant went out saying that partnership won. It was the day after the referendum for EU membership, and while the Maltese people were celebrating the YES result, the Labour Party leader did not accept the electoral result and urged people to go down in the streets. On 9th March 2003 'precisely three years ago today', the referendum result was announced. The news feature referred to some electorate statistics saying that almost 144,000 or 54% of the Maltese and Gozitans voters voted in favour of EU membership while 46% voted NO. The majority in favour of YES amounted to more than 129,000 votes. But in a mass

meeting which was broadcast on the Labour Party television station and was held in front of Super 1 complex in Marsa, Alfred Sant declared that the partnership won.

Voice clip Dr Sant – A new Labour Government will respect the clear result of the good electoral majority ('lampanti') who did not say YES.

Voice clip Dr Sant - So from now onwards we can say that our country can walk on the steps of partnership.
(different from previous one).

The news feature reported that even though there was no need for any interpretation of the electoral result, and even the deputy Leader Dr George Vella himself declared that the result clearly showed a YES result, Dr Alfred Sant urged people to go down in the streets where he held a mass meeting in front of Super 1 complex in Marsa. The journalist reported that in front of a group of Labourites who were heard asking each other why they came to Marsa, Alfred Sant stressed that partnership won. The Labour Party station had broadcast Dr Sant's speech and with the use of graphics, even during the programmes, a caption was shown which read 'Partnership won'. As was revealed after an executive meeting of the Labour Party which was held two days after the referendum to analyse the result, executive members objected for the position taken by Dr Sant when he tried to give the impression that the referendum had been won, by the NO votes, when in fact it had been lost.

Comments

- Issue being addressed

The third year anniversary since the result of the referendum on EU membership was held in Malta. This reported the way the Labour Party interpreted the referendum result which according to Dr Sant, Partnership had won over full EU membership.

- Narrative structure

The introduction immediately portrays the partisan element of the news report because the focus of the news report is not on the third anniversary of the result of the EU referendum but it reports the point of view which was taken by Dr Alfred Sant during the EU referendum. In fact in the introduction itself, it is reported that even though the YES result won, Alfred Sant "called for people in the streets" and declared that Partnership had won.

The news feature reported that Dr Sant did not accept the YES result and called for supporters to go out and celebrate in the streets. To show that there was no reason why Alfred Sant called the people into the streets, the reporter cited the exact figures and percentages of the referendum votes showing that the YES result got the highest figures. The news feature depicts two different voice clips of Dr Sant, one dated 9th March 2003

while the other voice clip had no date to indicate when this happened. However, most probably this was the first reaction of Dr Sant together with the two Deputy Leaders of the Labour Party. The news feature emphasized again on the fact that Dr Sant interpreted the referendum result even though the other Deputy Leader George Vella admitted that the result did not need any interpretation. The news feature reported what the Labour Party television station showed on the day of the referendum result, particularly the fact that graphics on the screen was stating that Partnership won.

- Discourse

This news item is intended to remind the viewers about the interpretation which Dr Sant had given to the result of the EU referendum. It does not contain any news value or does not reveal any new story, so it is purely used for propaganda or electioneering purposes.

The phrase used a number of times within the news feature that “Dr Sant called for people in the streets” might indicate that people went down protesting. It also might also indicate that the people called in the streets might be violent or aggressive. This is commonly used by the Nationalist Party in Malta, when describing the Labour Party supporters portraying them as violent or aggressive and this dates back to the past years when the Labour Party in Malta was projected to be the violent party. Also the phrase that the people were called on the streets, gives the impression that they were forced in a way and they themselves do not know why they were asked to celebrate. The news item indicates that it was Alfred Sant alone who prepared the supporters to attend a mass meeting which is reported to be held in Marsa, in front of Super 1 complex - a place which is never chosen as a mass meeting place.

The news feature shows a highly partisan element when the journalist reports “that the Maltese people were celebrating the YES vote”. It shows the journalist being partisan when describing that “everyone was celebrating this result”. In effect, and this is also shown in the same news report, 46% of the people voted NO for EU membership, thus by the description used above the journalist shows a high element of electioneering for the Nationalist Party which was the party in favour of EU membership.

The news feature also report what is described as the lack of agreement during an executive meeting held by the Labour Party after the referendum results. However, these reports refer to unidentified sources and reports that “members” of the Labour Party Executive were against the decision taken by Dr Sant when interpreting the referendum result.

- What position does the writer take?

The position the journalist takes is partisan in the sense that the news item does not commemorate the three years from the referendum result, but reports the ‘commemoration’ of the decision taken by the Leader of the Labour Party when he argued that the Partnership had won.

- Visuals used

The news feature uses archive footage showing political party supporters from both political parties celebrating the referendum results. Other archive footage was taken from Super 1 TV transmission showing a programme which was being aired during the day of the referendum result. Other archive footage used in the news feature showed Dr Sant addressing a press conference three years ago.

The news feature opens with archive footage, a general shot of Dr Sant addressing the mass meeting when he declared that the Partnership had won. This footage shows Dr Sant in a particular way which might lead to ridicule. His body language and the way he gesticulates making him look humorous. These are the only visuals taken from the mass meeting referred in this news report.

Several other archive shots, general shots and close ups of Labour Party supporters celebrating the result which was interpreted by Dr Sant as a win for partnership. Some shots are chosen in a way as to ridicule the Labour Party supporters. These shots depicts old supporters and a particular male supporter who is topless, possibly drunk and is filmed doing funny gestures. These shots can be compared and contrasted with shots taken from a high angle position showing an enormous crowd of Nationalist Party supporters celebrating the YES result and this continues to highlight the partisan element of this news item.

The first voice clip showing Dr Alfred Sant probably during a press conference shows how Dr Sant was being filmed during such press conferences. Dr Sant is filmed in a close up with lot of headroom and is seen on the left hand side of the screen giving the impression that the speaker will fall out from the screen. These visuals ridicule the Leader of the Opposition in the way they are filmed and put him in a position which is not dominant as a political leader.

The second voice clip shows a long shot of the Labour leader and the two deputy leaders giving a televised message. Net News takes this shot directly from Super 1 transmission in fact; the televiewer can see the logo of the station underneath the logo of Net News. Visuals from this press conference are shown in the last part of the news feature and show an unprofessional pan from Dr Alfred Sant showing the voting document to a close up of Net News journalist, Dione Borg. Again Dr Sant is filmed from the side but again almost out of screen (from the left) with a lot of headroom. However, the last shots used in this news feature are also taken from the same press conference but Dr Sant is well framed and shot from the front in a long shot.

In the news feature a snippet of the Super 1 TV programme aired three years ago when the referendum result was announced was also shown to indicate the graphics which was shown during the same said programme. Though no audio is heard, the four presenters during the programme are shown to be in a very positive mood.

- Theme

It is a national political theme, mainly an electioneering item shedding negative light on the Labour Party, in particular on its leader.

- Sources

There is no official source to this news item, however, the news item reports the official statistics of the referendum result held in 2004. The rest of the news report is all editorial commentary with an element of propaganda against the Labour Party.

TVM Bondi + (current affairs programme) 7th March 2006

The presenter stopped from the discussion in the studio and introduced the prepared feature which lists the Carnival participants' complaints. The presenter said, '.....but not everything is plain sailing. ('ward u zahar' literally meaning 'roses and blossoms'). We were seeing them happy, speaking about the work they do which is a great satisfaction for these people. But they also have their complaints. Let's see the complaints of the people who organize the Carnival, the participants...

This is the transcript of the clip of the short comments/interviews of the participants and the Minister for Culture which was chosen in the chosen clip for analysis:-

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Charles Briffa comments - | nowadays, we had difficulties but these are increasing instead of helping us. If they are stressing ('being stubborn') that we ought to pay water and electricity bills, I have doubts whether we will be organising the Carnival for next year. |
| Minister Francis Zammit Dimech - | until now no one was made to pay the water and electricity bills but obviously we have to understand that as always in this country once and for all, the water and electricity bills are bills which have to be paid by everyone. |
| Charles Curmi - | the prize is LM1,000 for the big float, such material of such floats would cost LM4,000 (laughs). There is 'advance money', they give you something, about LM300 before (laughs) and you keep them even if you don't win. But if you win the LM300 will be deducted from the prize. Eh. |
| George Farrugia - | Last year I took money out of my pocket.... |
| Minister Francis Zammit Dimech - | If we calculate the reasonable expenses on water and electricity, and if we add the fund of prizes we are giving financial help even for this expense. |
| Pawlu Curmi - | big expenses, help us, help us, because we really need, we really need, there are a lot of expenses. |

- Minister Francis Zammit Dimech - Nowadays to do a costume, and the expenses for the Carnival company would amount to LM800.
- Minister Francis Zammit Dimech - The Carnival feast is the most popular which is held in our country during the year and with some attention, and with some good sense we have to find other means to get additional funds to organise the Carnival.
- Charles Briffa - if Carnival wasn't our real hobby, no one would come down here, not only me, but even my other colleagues who work in St Elmo. Here we have big problems, as you know we work in the third storey of five feet and you have to hang down the work and one has to prepare the work which makes it possible to pass through the doors of St Elmo.
- Charles Curmi - to pass under the tunnel, you have seen how we passed through the door, with great risk and when we succeeded, we were relieved because we have to use the crane to make it pass through the door of St Elmo.
- Minister Francis Zammit Dimech - We agree, we completely agree, that the site is not an adequate site and we ought to find an adequate site.
- Pawlu Curmi - they are thinking of taking it (the warehouse) from me. Ok they can take it, here is not mine but not in that manner, with the letter they sent me. After I don't know how many days they want the keys back. No I did not deserve it, I don't deserve it, a man who gave my whole life for Carnival.
- Minister Francis Zammit Dimech - Every time there is a project and people are using a particular site will effect them but naturally we have to follow the procedures which as a Government has to follow. If whenever we have a site which we can offer it as an alternative site, then the Government is ready to consider seriously the proposal.

Comments

- What issue is being addressed?

The discussion programme discussed the Carnival in Malta. In the studio there were four guests – Pawlu Curmi, a veteran participant in Carnival, Laurence Coleiro, another participant in Carnival, Ronald Briffa, a participant in the Carnival of Nadur in Gozo and George Zahra the co-ordinator of the Carnival Committee.

The clip chosen for textual analysis is taken from a feature which was presented during the 1 hr 30 mins programme. The feature consisted from a number of short interviews with Carnival participants who spoke about their difficulties they face when preparing for each Carnival. This clip also presented the views of the Minister of Tourism and Culture,

Francis Zammit Dimech who answered about difficulties and problems mentioned by the Carnival participants.

- Narrative Structure

The presenter stopped the discussion in the studio and introduced the feature which dealt with the complaints and difficulties of the Carnival participants. The presenter introduced the feature saying that even though the discussion seems that everything is well for the Carnival participants, however, they have their complaints which the producers felt the need to put forward in the feature.

In the feature, five Carnival participants were chosen and they all spoke about their difficulties when preparing their Carnival floats. They pointed out to the issue of water and electricity bills, the expenses, the prizes, the money the floats cost them, the Carnival village and a good site where to place the floats because of the problems they face due to inadequate position of their warehouses.

The feature also showed Minister Zammit Dimech commenting on the participants' complaints and announcing the Government policies and decisions with regards to the issues pointed out by the participants.

- Discourse

The feature in many instances belittle the comments made by the Carnival participants because to every complaint, the Minister's comment is put forward and finds a reason behind each complaint. It feels that the producer/presenter deceived the televiewer because he introduced the feature saying that it will present and show the complaints put forward by the Carnival participant. In actual fact, when one sees the feature, one realizes that while the complaints are known, however, the Minister is 'ready' on the alert to answer their complaints. In the introduction to the feature it was never said that the viewer will also find the Minister's intervention who will reply and seems to give a solution to all their complaints.

The fact that the Minister is portrayed and answers all the complaints, sends a message that the Government is the superhero and acts upon each complaint keeping in mind that each action is taken by the Government or by the Ministry if it is in the interest of the country.

The way this feature is produced is very partial because the Minister was prepared and had all the time for himself to find an answer to all the complaints raised by the Carnival participants. Obviously the Minister knew from the interviewee the Carnival participants' complaints beforehand. It would have been more just if the Minister was invited in the studio during the live discussion and will be facing the participants' complaints on the spot. In a way the Minister would have been more credible and showing him in a much less comfortable way away from the direct criticism of the participants.

- What position does the writer take?

The producer/presenter seems to be showing the Carnival participants as contributing to the Maltese culture with regard to keeping alive the tradition of Carnival. The presenter at first gave the impression that the Carnival participants treat the Carnival as their great hobby, even though they suffer a lot because of all the hard work it involves. However, after few seconds since the start of the feature the viewer realizes that the producer's intention is to show that amidst all the several complaints due to different issues of the Carnival participants, the Government is working hard to keep the participants happy so as to make them continue with this type of tradition.

- Visuals used

In this clip the producer did not use particular emphasis on the visuals. All the interviewees are pictured in close ups. The main difference between the pictures showing the Carnival participants being interviewed and the Minister being interviewed is that the participants are interviewed on site. In the background the viewer can see the Carnival floats which they were working on. In fact it can be seen that the interviews were done in the warehouses where the work on the floats was underway. On the other hand, the Minister was interviewed standing up which might indicate a sense of prominence over the issues discussed and was visually shown very comfortable in one of his offices. Behind him there was a big picture frame and a nice cabinet. In some instances the Minister as well as the Carnival participants were filmed in extreme close ups.

When the Carnival participants spoke about the difficulties they encounter because of the site they have to work in, footage shows a group of participants including one who was interviewed carrying the float out of a particular door. In this instance the interviewee was speaking about the difficulty they have to face to carry a big float through a small door. The footage shows a number of participants working hard while trying to push the float out of the warehouse.

During some comments of the participants, archive shots of the Carnival parade at Valletta were shown. These were general shots and hinted the end product of these Carnival participants which is the end result of a very hard work.

The comments are divided into sections and the producer indicates the subject of each issue by a caption shown on the right hand side. The subjects were 'the present situation' ('sitwazzjoni bħalissa'), 'electricity, water and prizes' ('dawl, ilma u premjijiet'), 'expenses' ('spejjeż'). 'St Elmo' ('Sant Jiermu'), 'warehouses' ('l-imħażen').

- Theme

The theme of the clips chosen for the analysis is the difficulties the Carnival participants face.

- Source

The producer gives the opportunity to the Carnival participants to speak about their difficulties and their constraints when preparing the Carnival floats and costumes. It is the participants themselves who speak of such problems. Then the producer interviews the Minister of Tourism and Culture to directly answer to the difficulties presented by the Carnival participants.

LIST OF TABLES

Maltese Broadcasting Scenario

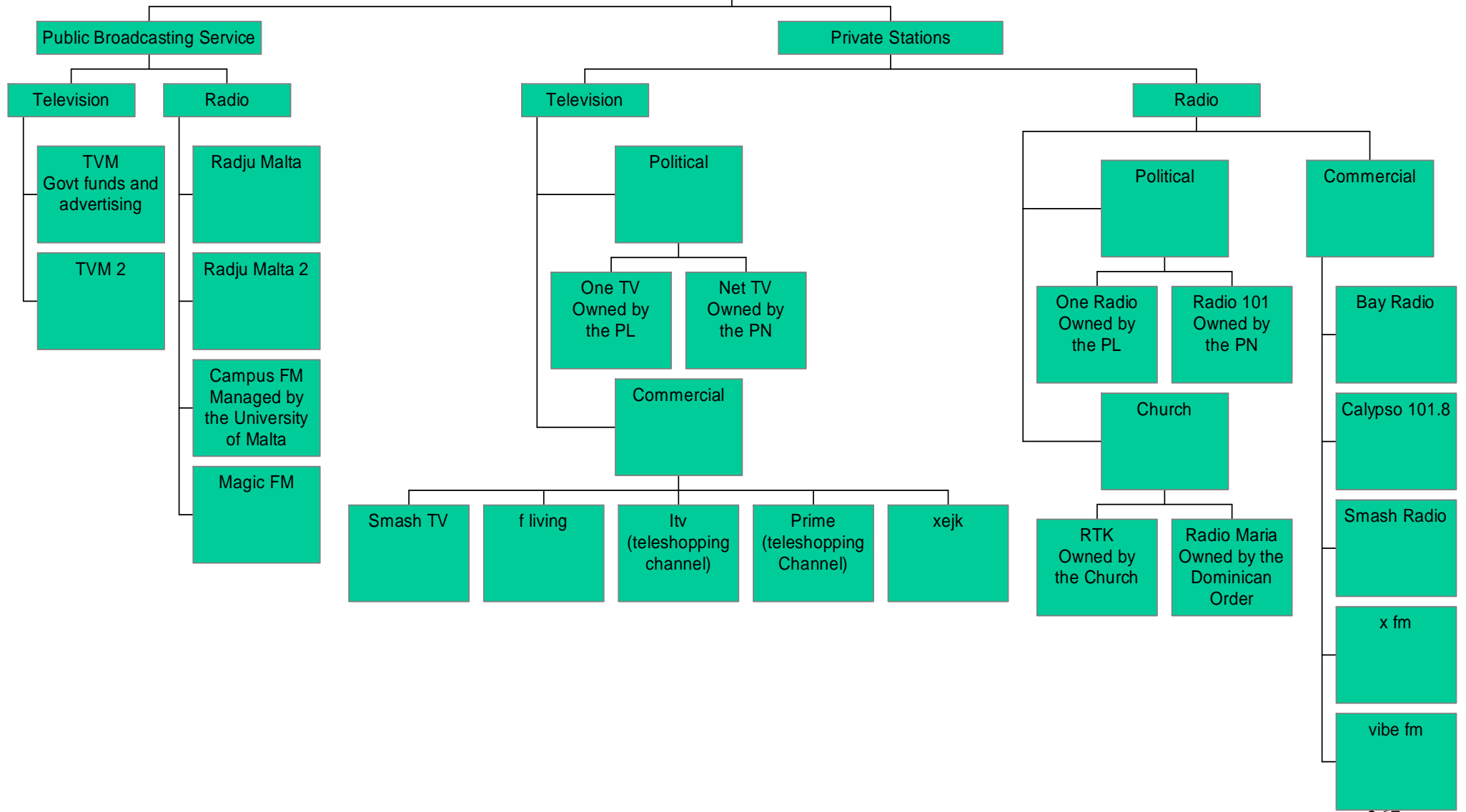


Table A: Radio stations in the Maltese mediascape as at 2005

<i>Type of broadcaster</i>	<i>Station</i>	<i>Ownership</i>	<i>Audience share (as per audience survey January – March 2005)</i>
<i>Public service broadcaster</i>	Radju Malta	Government owned.	16.3%
	Radju Parlament	Government gives LM500,000 yearly. Other income comes from advertising	2.4%
	Magic FM		
	Campus FM	Managed by the University of Malta and funded by the Government	0.4%
<i>Party owned politically</i>	Super Radio ²⁷³ 1	Owned by MLP	15.1%
	Radio 101	Owned by PN	9.1%
	Capital Radio	Owned by Alternattiva Demokratika*	7.5%
<i>Religious</i>	RTK	Owned by the Church	13.1%
	Radio Maria	Owned by the Dominican Order	10.3%
<i>Commercial</i>	Smash Radio		5.2%
	Xfm		3.2%
	Calypso 101.8		Was not yet operating
	Bay Radio		10.7%
	A3FM		0.8%

The percentages above do not add up to a 100% because the audience survey includes also community radios (6%).

* In July 2005, there was a change in ownership. Capital Radio licence was transferred to Capital Communications Ltd

²⁷³ After the branding campaign in October 2006, Super 1 Radio started to be called One Radio

Table B: Television stations in the Maltese mediascape as at 2005

<i>Type of broadcaster</i>	<i>Station</i>	<i>Ownership</i>	<i>Audience share(as per audience survey January – March 2005)</i>
<i>Public service broadcaster</i>	TVM	Government owned. Government gives LM500,000 yearly. Other income comes from advertising	35%
	Education 22	Administered by the Minister of Education. Fully funded by the State.	(in the survey this station is included with any other station which amounted to 7.7%. Such percentage also includes any other foreign stations, excluding the Italian channels and Mediaset channels
<i>Party politically owned</i>	One TV	Owned by MLP	16.3%
	Net TV	Owned by PN	10.8%
<i>Commercial</i>	Smash TV		1.6%

As seen above the audience share for the Maltese television stations does not add to 100% because the audience survey commissioned by the Broadcasting Authority also includes the audience share of Italian television channels, particularly Media Set and Rai and other stations which are Discovery Channel, MTV, BBC Prime, BBC World and other foreign stations. For the sake of clarification I am reproducing only the table showing the figures for the TV audience share.

Table C: Radio stations in the Maltese mediascape as at 2013

<i>Type of broadcaster</i>	<i>Station</i>	<i>Ownership</i>	<i>Audience share (as per audience survey January – March 2013)</i>
<i>Public service broadcaster</i>	Radju Malta	Government owned.	10.8%
	Radju Parlament		0.57%
	Magic FM		8%
	Campus FM	Managed by the University of Malta and funded by the Government	1.07%
<i>Party politically owned</i>	ONE Radio	Owned by PL	17.79%
	Radio 101	Owned by PN	4.83%
<i>Religious</i>	RTK	Owned by the Church	7.74%
	Radio Maria	Owned by the Dominican Order	4.81%
<i>Commercial</i>	Smash Radio		3.24%
	Xfm		4.33%
	Calypso 101.8		7.72%
	Bay Radio		22.16%
	Vibe FM		4.73%

The percentages above do not add up to a 100% because the audience survey includes also community radios and local digital radio stations

Table D: Television stations in the Maltese mediascape as at 2013

<i>Type of broadcaster</i>	<i>Station</i>	<i>Ownership</i>	<i>Audience share(as per audience survey January – March 2013)</i>
<i>Public service broadcaster</i>	TVM		35%
	TVM 2		1.66%
<i>Party politically owned</i>	One TV	Owned by PL	20.88%
	Net TV	Owned by PN	10.98%
<i>Commercial</i>	Smash TV		0.53%
	Favourite TV (now fliving)		0.2%
	Calypso TV (now Xejk)		0.38%
	ITV	Teleshopping channel	0.05%

As seen above the audience share for the Maltese television stations does not add to 100% because the audience survey commissioned by the Broadcasting Authority also includes the audience share of Italian television channels, particularly Media Set and Rai and other stations which are Discovery Channel, MTV, BBC Prime, BBC World and other foreign stations. For sake of clarification I am reproducing only the table showing the figures for the TV audience share.