

Perception of Media and Integration: Questionnaire Administration and Data Collection

Erisela MARKO

ASSISTANT LECTURER

DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES AND COMMUNICATION

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES, EDUCATION AND LIBERAL ARTS

EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY OF TIRANA

TIRANA ALBANIA

erisela.marko@uet.edu.al

Abstract

This paper explores the role of media discourse in shaping public perception regarding Albania's European Union (EU) integration through a comprehensive quantitative analysis. Based on a structured survey of 347 participants across six Albanian universities, the study investigates media consumption habits, platform preferences, and public perceptions of media credibility and influence in covering EU-related topics. The research employs a mixed-methods approach within a quantitative framework, utilizing descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and comparative methodology to examine attitudes across demographic and professional variables. Key findings indicate that traditional media, particularly television, remains the primary source for EU-related news (cited by 65% of respondents), though social and online media platforms are gaining significant traction, especially among younger audiences (18-25 age group). While 43% of participants acknowledge the media's constructive role in raising awareness and supporting EU integration, substantial concerns persist about misinformation—primarily attributed to social and online media platforms (68% of respondents). The study identifies critical challenges including political and economic pressures on media content, highlighting the urgent

need for comprehensive media training, enhanced ethical standards, and improved transparency in reporting. This research underscores the necessity for a responsible media ecosystem that effectively informs and meaningfully engages the public in EU integration discourse, with comparative insights drawn from similar processes in Western Balkan countries.

Keywords: *EU Integration, Media Discourse, Public Perception, Albania, Quantitative Survey, Media Credibility, Western Balkans, Democratic Transition*

Introduction

This study employs a quantitative methodology to enable the collection of numerical data and their analysis through statistical techniques. Quantitative research, according to Bouma and Atkinson (1995), is characterized by a “structural, logical, measured, and broad” approach (p. 208). This form of research allows for the gathering of accurate and reliable information through measurement tools such as questionnaires and surveys. The quantitative method is particularly useful for collecting objective data and conducting analyses aimed at identifying patterns and trends within a defined population.

One of the main methods used in this study is the administration of a questionnaire containing 23 closed-ended questions. These questions are structured to offer clear and measurable answers that can be processed statistically.

The questionnaire was administered in two ways: in person and electronically via Microsoft Forms, with the aim of reaching as many participants as possible and ensuring a broad and representative sample. Participants included university students and media professionals, allowing for a comparative analysis between two groups with different experiences and attitudes regarding media and Albania’s European integration.

In terms of research design, this study applies a comparative approach which, according to Bouma and Atkinson (1995), involves analyzing two or more groups simultaneously identifying differences and similarities (p. 117). In this case, the comparison was made between students at the European University of Tirana and individuals employed in the media, as well as those not directly connected to the media. The main objective is to identify differences in perceptions and attitudes among these groups concerning the media discourse surrounding Albania’s EU integration process.

The context of the study is the European University of Tirana, which served as one of the primary sources of participants. The questionnaire was distributed via Microsoft Forms and was also sent to other universities in Albania, such

as the Universities of Elbasan, Shkodër, Durrës, Vlorë, and Korçë, to include a broader range of individuals and ensure a more diverse sample. This selection of multiple universities and departments, including the Faculty of Humanities and the Departments of Journalism and Public Relations, allowed for the collection of data from both individuals with deep media knowledge and those outside the field, representing the public.

Regarding data collection, the questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section included general questions about participants' relationships with the media, such as basic information on media usage and preferences. The second section focused on the topic of Albania's EU integration and how these issues are reflected and discussed in both traditional and online media. Participants provided information about the types of media they follow, the time they dedicate to media, and the content they prefer, thereby enabling an in-depth analysis of their media consumption habits and their views on important political and social issues.

The questionnaire was administered from October through December 15, 2024. After the data collection period ended, all responses were processed and analyzed to draw final conclusions about the perceptions and attitudes of different groups regarding the European integration process and the role of media.

However, this study has some limitations. First, most of the participants came from universities and from specific departments such as journalism and public relations. The total number of participants is limited to 347 individuals, of whom 222 are part of the general audience and only 20 are media professionals. This number may not be sufficient to draw general conclusions applicable to the broader population. Furthermore, the study does not include a balanced sample of individuals employed in the media and students from other disciplines who may hold different perceptions (Budini, B., Idrizi, D. & Marko, E. 2025, pp. 67-83).

The relationship between media discourse and public opinion formation during democratic transitions and European integration processes has been documented in academic literature (Vltner, 2013; Bajomi-Lázár, 2014).

This study contributes to the growing body of research on media influence in EU enlargement processes by providing empirical evidence from Albania's unique context. Drawing on theoretical frameworks from political communication theory (Bennett & Pfetsch, 2018) and media systems theory (Hallin & Mancini, 2004), this research examines how different media platforms and formats contribute to public understanding and support for EU integration.

Methodology

Research Design and Philosophical Approach

This study employs a post-positivist research paradigm, utilizing primarily quantitative methods while acknowledging the interpretive dimensions of social phenomena (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The research design follows a cross-sectional survey approach with comparative elements, allowing for both descriptive analysis and inferential statistics to examine relationships between variables.

The methodological framework draws on Bryman's (2016) guidance for social research, emphasizing systematic data collection, statistical analysis, and generalizability within defined parameters. The comparative dimension of the study aligns with Lijphart's (1971) comparative method, focusing on "most similar systems design" by examining different demographic and professional groups within the same national context.

Population and Sampling Strategy

Target Population: The study targets Albanian university students, media professionals, and academic community members aged 18-65, representing approximately 250,000 individuals across the country's higher education institutions.

Sampling Frame: Six major Albanian universities were selected using stratified purposive sampling:

- European University of Tirana (primary site)
- University of Elbasan "Aleksandër Xhuvani"
- University of Shkodër "Luigj Gurakuqi"
- University of Durrës "Aleksandër Moisiu"
- University of Vlorë "Ismail Qemali"
- University of Korçë "Fan S. Noli"

(<https://www.instat.gov.al/sq/temat/tregu-i-punes-dhe-arsimi/arsimi/#tab2>)

Administration Methods:

1. Electronic Distribution: Microsoft Forms platform
2. In-Person Administration: Paper-based in selected classrooms

Data Interpretation: Analysis of the Questionnaire on Albania’s EU Integration and the Role of the Media

To analyze the data collected from the questionnaire regarding media discourse on Albania’s integration into the European Union (EU), it is essential to conduct comparisons and correlations among the variables and interpret the results accordingly. Our analysis focuses on the main trends emerging from the data, considering the types of media, audience habits, and varying perceptions of the media’s impact on the EU integration process.

This approach allows us to highlight how different factors—such as age, profession, and media preferences—influence the way messages about EU integration are perceived and communicated through the media. Furthermore, analyzing the role of the media helps identify both positive and negative influences these institutions have on shaping public opinion and their credibility regarding this important political and social process.

Overall, interpreting the data will provide a deeper understanding of how media discourse affects perceptions of Albania’s EU integration and will contribute to developing more effective communication strategies to improve public support and information dissemination in this field.

Participant Demographics

Category	Number	Percentage (%)
Students	256	73.8
Students & employed	53	15.3
Media Professionals	20	5.8
Other Employed	18	5.2

Age Distribution:

- 18-25 years: 68.3%
- 26-35 years: 19.6%
- 36-45 years: 8.4%
- 46+ years: 3.7%

Geographic Distribution:

- Tirana: 52.4%
- Elbasan: 14.7%
- Shkodër: 12.1%
- Other cities: 20.8%

Media Consumption Patterns and Platform Preferences

Television Channel Preferences: The data reveals concentrated viewership among leading commercial channels:

- TOP Channel: 40.1% (139 respondents) Known for investigative journalism and political programming
- KLAN TV: 39.2% (136 respondents) Popular for news and entertainment content
- RTSH (Public Television) & others: 20.7% (72 respondents) State broadcaster

Digital Media Consumption: Social media usage shows generational patterns:

- Facebook: 89.3% (daily usage)
- Instagram: 76.4%
- Twitter: 23.1%
- TikTok: 45.8% (primarily 18-25 age group)

Media Platforms for EU Integration Information

Media Channels Used for EU Integration News

- Television (highest)
- Online Media
- Social Networks
- Newspapers, Magazines, Podcasts (lowest)

Primary Information Channels:

1. Television: 67.4%
2. Online news portals: 54.2%
3. Social media: 48.7%
4. Newspapers: 23.6%
5. Radio: 18.4%
6. Podcasts: 12.4%

Perceptions of Media Credibility and Misinformation

Perceived Misinformation Sources: Survey participants identified misinformation prevalence across platforms:

Platform	Respondents Identifying Misinformation	Percentage
Social Media	236	68.0%
Online News Sites	176	50.7%
Television	69	19.9%
Print Media	45	13.0%

Media Regulation and Ethical Concerns

Media Platforms Needing Regulation and Ethical Codes

- Social Networks (highest)
- Television
- Online News Sites

Media Impact on EU Integration Awareness and Attitudes

Perceived Media Influence on EU Integration Support:

- 43.2% believe detailed media coverage raises public awareness
- 38.9% see media as influential in shaping public opinion and policies
- 56.8% agree media reports impartially on EU institutions' transparency
- 52.7% recognize media's role in educating citizens on EU policies

Statistical Relationships: Correlation analysis reveals significant relationships between media consumption patterns and EU integration support:

- Television news consumption positively correlated with EU support
- Social media consumption shows weak negative correlation
- Professional media background strongly predicts EU integration knowledge

The Ratio of Students to Media Professionals

According to the data, 256 participants are students, while 53 are both employed and students. Most of participants belong to the media audience, with only 20 individuals identified as media professionals. This distribution reflects the

predominance of students and young individuals in the study, suggesting that they are more likely to consume media passively without professional engagement.

In this context, comparing the groups of students and media professionals can provide valuable insights into the impact of media on audiences not directly involved in the media profession versus those who are part of the media industry. Media professionals may possess a deeper understanding of media content and discourse, which could influence their perceptions differently from those of the general audience.

Media Trust Patterns:

- Media professionals show higher skepticism toward social media
- Students demonstrate more platform diversity in information seeking
- Both groups express concerns about political influence on media content

Preferences for Television Channels and Social Media

Forty-nine percent of participants follow TOP Channel, while 39% watch Klan TV, with the remaining audience tuning into RTSH. These data indicate the dominance of certain traditional channels, such as TOP Channel and Klan TV, which are preferred by the audience. This may reflect a tendency to consume news and information through television, which remains a primary source of information for many individuals, despite the growing presence of social media.

This information can be compared with the results from question 5, where social media platforms are reported as more frequently followed (250 responses), suggesting a trend toward diversification in media consumption. Social networks now hold an increasingly important position, especially in individuals' daily lives.

The creation of the internet made necessary not only the invention of new techniques but also of new social processes (Maigret, E. 2012, p. 321). As E. Maigret argues, the internet is a medium in the narrow sense of the term, a technical support for communication. Its possibilities are linked to its character as a multimedia tool that combines sound, image, and text, allowing us to find what we want (pp. 299–301).

Time Spent on Media and Use of Online Media

Responses to question 6 show that a large portion of respondents spend between 1- and 2-hours consuming media, while a significant group (30%) spend more than 3 to 4 hours engaged with media content. This result confirms the tendency of avid media consumers to be influenced primarily by the opportunities offered by online media and social networks, which are more accessible and loaded with diverse and abundant content.

Perceptions of Misinformation in the Media

Misinformation is a key issue reflected in the responses to question 8, where 236 participants believe that social media is the primary source of misinformation, while 176 perceive this phenomenon mainly in online media. This indicates a widespread perception of the impact of misinformation within these two media groups, which are more present in individuals' daily lives. On the other hand, only 69 participants consider television to be a source of misinformation.

This perception may be linked to the nature of information disseminated on social media, which is often more ambiguous and less filtered than the content provided by traditional media outlets.

Selection of Media for Information on EU Integration

In question 7, which examines the primary sources of information regarding Albania's EU integration process, television emerges as the most selected medium, followed by online media and social networks. This result aligns with the trend observed in the data on television channel viewership, where TOP Channel and KLAN TV dominate. Television has been described as "the modern version of the campfire, around which the family gathers to listen to news and various stories." It is a medium that provides a complete package of news through both images and audio. As the number of information channels increases, viewers can select a single, specialized channel—one with specific themes—that confirms their personal worldview and corresponds to their lifestyle (Bergstrom, B. 2010, pp. 79–80).

Social media is also utilized, primarily for discussions and the rapid dissemination of news that may offer a more immediate and possibly more direct experience for the audience.

This supports the idea that television remains a key source of information for significant national topics such as EU integration, while also playing an important role in shaping public opinion.

Perceptions of the Role of the Media and Transparency

Responses to questions 12, "How does the media help increase awareness and support for European integration?" and 13, "What are the impacts of media information on public opinion and integration policies?" reveal that a large portion of respondents believe the media can enhance awareness and support for EU integration by providing detailed and analytical information.

At the same time, it is important to note that a considerable group thinks the media can also have a negative impact by increasing confusion and uncertainty. This perception is related to the possibility that media outlets may be influenced by political interests and specific group agendas.

Recommendations for Improving Media Support for EU Integration

In question 21, “How can the media be supported to improve quality and ethics in reporting on European integration?”, participants suggest that the media should benefit from training and resources to enhance reporting standards and support EU integration. This highlights the need for education and the improvement of professional capacities to report objectively and impartially, which could increase media credibility and help disseminate accurate and reliable information about the integration process.

In summary, the data from the questionnaires reflect a broad and complex picture of the media landscape and its impact on public perception of Albania’s EU integration. They show that traditional media, such as television, remain dominant, but the use of social media is also rising, bringing new implications for shaping opinion and perceptions of transparency and the integration process.

Some key recommendations arising from the questionnaire include improving journalists’ professional skills, ensuring balanced and accurate information, and safeguarding media independence through adherence to ethical codes and self-regulation processes.

FIG.1

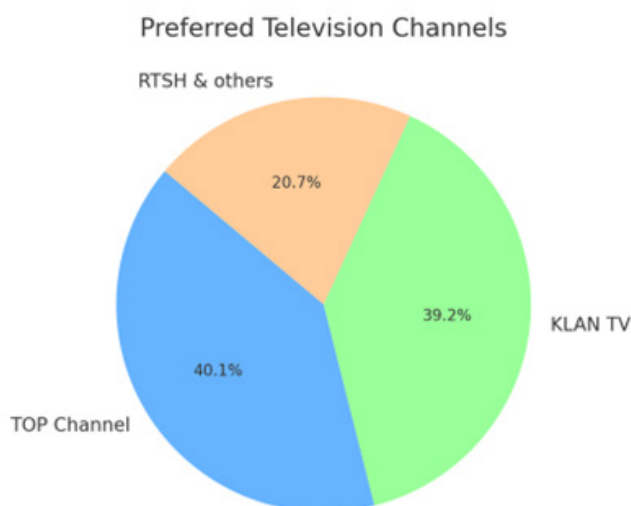


FIG. 2

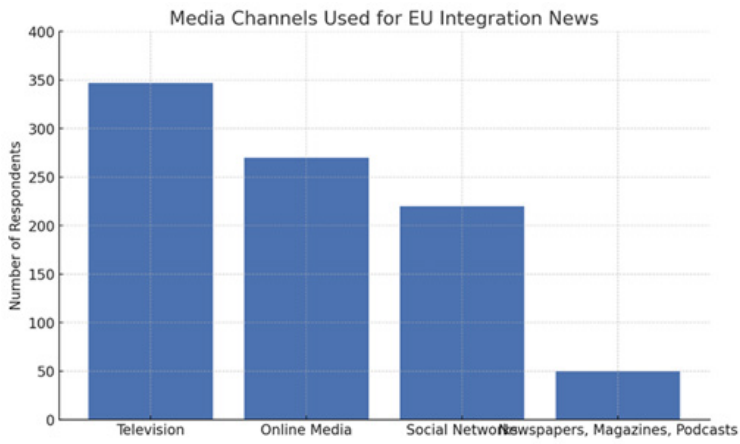


FIG. 3

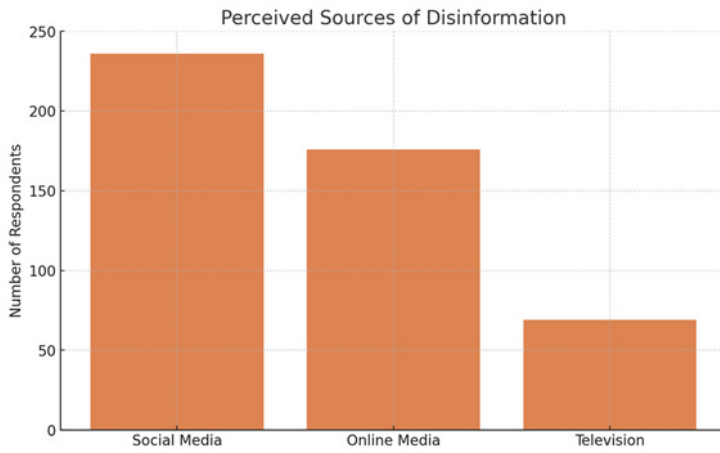
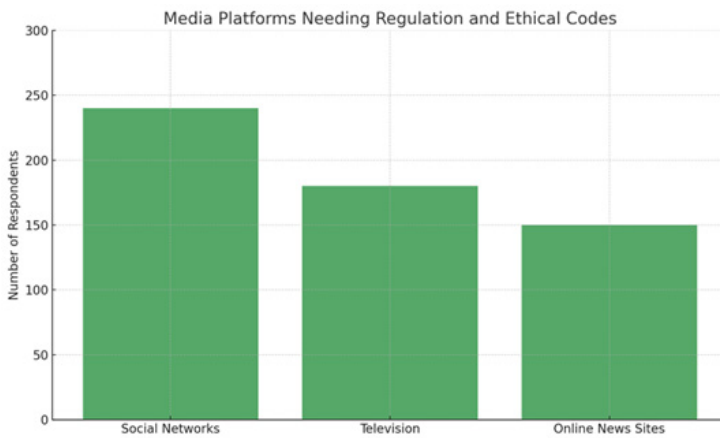


FIG. 4



1. **Preferred Television Channels** – Pie chart showing TOP Channel (40.1%), KLAN TV (39.2%), and others (20.7%).
2. **Media Channels Used for EU Integration News** – Bar chart with Television leading, followed by Online Media, Social Networks, and lastly Newspapers/ Podcasts.
3. **Perceived Sources of Disinformation** – Bar chart showing social media as the top source, followed by Online Media, then TV.
4. **Media Platforms Needing Regulation and Ethical Codes** – Bar chart with Social Networks rated highest for need of regulation, then TV, then Online News.

Key Findings Summary

This comprehensive analysis of media discourse surrounding Albania's EU integration reveals several critical insights:

1. **Media Platform Hierarchy:** Television maintains primacy as the most trusted source for EU-related information, while social media platforms face significant credibility challenges despite widespread usage.
2. **Generational Digital Divide:** Clear age-stratified differences in media consumption patterns suggest evolving information ecosystems that require platform-specific communication strategies.
3. **Misinformation Concerns:** Widespread perception of misinformation, particularly on digital platforms, indicates urgent need for media literacy initiatives and platform accountability measures.
4. **Professional Knowledge Gap:** Significant differences between media professionals and general public in EU integration understanding highlight the importance of effective knowledge transfer mechanisms.

Conclusion

The study underscores the significant role of media discourse in framing Albania's EU integration process. Television remains the most trusted source, although social media is extensively used despite concerns over misinformation.

Political polarization within Albanian media creates divergent narratives that affect public trust and perception.

Efforts to improve media independence, regulate misinformation, and foster balanced reporting are essential to support Albania's EU integration journey and democratic development. Future studies should explore longitudinal trends and

broader demographic samples to deepen understanding of media's role in political integration processes in transitional democracies.

This research contributes to the growing body of literature on media systems in transitional democracies and EU enlargement processes. By providing empirical evidence from Albania's unique context, the study enhances understanding of how media discourse shapes public opinion in candidate countries, offering insights relevant to both academic researchers and policy practitioners working on European integration and democratic development

References

- Bajomi-Lázár, P. (2014). *"Party Colonisation of the Media in Central and Eastern Europe"*. Central European University Press.
- Bergstrom, B. (2010). *"Bazat e komunikimit pamor"*. UET Press, Tiranë
- Bennett, W. L., & Pfetsch, B. (2018). *"Rethinking political communication in a time of disrupted public spheres"*. *Journal of Communication*, 68(2), 243-253.
- Bouma, D. G. & Atkinson, G. B. J. (1995). *"A Handbook of Social Science Research: A Comprehensive and Practical Guide for Students"*. Oxford University Press.
- Bryman, A. (2016). *Social Research Methods* (5th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Budini, B., Idrizi, D. & Marko, E. (2025). *"Nga izolimi te integrimi. Ligjërimi mediatik për integrimin e Shqipërisë në BE"*. UET Press. OMBRA GVG
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (5th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Lijphart, A. (1971). Comparative politics and the comparative method. *American Political Science Review*, 65(3), 682-693.
- Maigret, E. (2012). *"Sociologjia e komunikimit dhe e mediave"*. Botimet Papirus, UET Press, Tiranë
- Hallin, D. C., & Mancini, P. (2004). *"Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics"*. Cambridge University Press.
- Voltmer, K. (2013). *"The Media in Transitional Democracies"*. Polity Press.
- <https://www.instat.gov.al/sq/temat/tregu-i-punes-dhe-arsimi/arsimi/#tab2>