

Audiences' View of Radio Talk Shows as a Space for Marginalized Voices: The Case of a 'Therapeutic' Show in Southern Ethiopia

Melisew Dejene

Lecturer, School of Language & Communication Study, Hawassa University, Ethiopia, East Africa, (E-mail melisewd@yahoo.com; etetu1978@gmail.com)

Abstract

Radio talk shows are proliferating in the Ethiopian media these days. Majority of the shows are of tabloid type dealing mostly with social issues. Exploring in to one call-in show of 'therapeutic' nature named 'Eriso Bihonu Min Yadergalu' (literally means what you would do if you were on the shoes of this person?) by South Radio & TV Agency, the study argues, though the therapeutic show has audience of interest to issues raised by it, the share of its loyal audience is only 53%. The study employed a triangulation of audience survey and an in-depth interview which was held with its long serving host and producer. Among the socio-demographic factors, age of the audience and the audiences' perception of the professionalism of the show are found to be strong determinants of listenership respectively yielding a P- value of 0.044 and 0.036 (where $P \leq 0.05$). This implies the older the person is, the more unlikely that s/he listens to the show. The study also revealed that the stronger the perception of the audience regarding the professionalism of the show; the more likely they attend to the show. It is the audiences' and its host belief that the show gives a space for marginalized voices as it is entertaining personal problems individual's do not dare to discuss openly. However, the findings suggest that issues raised by the show are not based on research.

Key words: Radio talk show, 'therapeutic' shows, Southern Ethiopia

1.1. Introduction

The recognition of media's role as a forum of public debate and as conduits between the public and government is as old as the commencement of the institutionalization of media. Taking this role of the media, some scholars like Altschull (1994) view the media as 'agents of power' in their ability to shape public policy. Though the recognition of media's role as conduits between the public and government and their

institutionalization is not a recent happening in Ethiopia, the talk show genre is a young phenomenon in the Ethiopian media.

In countries like Ethiopia where there are no organized periodic public opinion polls, the role of "Talk shows" is manifold in serving as forums of public debate and in giving space for marginalized voices. Now a day, the talk show genre is being recognized as an important constituent in the Ethiopian broadcast media –TV and

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Radio. There are some Talk shows both on TV and radio having a significant number of enthusiastic audiences who contribute to the issues raised by calling-in from their whereabouts.

Debut FM 100.9 is a radio station in Ethiopia owned by the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional Government (SNNPRG) beaming its programmes to the people of the region and some areas of neighboring regions especially The Oromiya Region. Debut FM 100.9 is established as part of Southern Mass Media Agency which was founded in 2005, now renamed as South Radio and Television Agency as of August 2014 after extending its satellite TV broadcast to 10 hours per day, in accordance with Proclamation No. 87/2005. Its Purpose of establishment as stated in the Proclamation is "...discharge its responsibility by making a close and wide coverage of the life of the society with the ever rising international need of swift information exchange" (Proc No. 87/2005:1). The vision of the Debut Mass Media Agency as articulated in its editorial policy is "to see our negative image of poorness and backwardness changed and national consensus created by disseminating quality and relevant information that accelerates the establishment of a democratic system within the region so as to change our image of poorness and backwardness in 2023" (Editorial Policy, August, 2011:2) (my own translation).

Currently, Debut FM 100.9 is said to have the largest transmitter capacity of 10 kw, in the Nation, at the Main Station situated in

Hawassa. Moreover, it has 8 re-broadcast stations (each with a transmitter capacity of 1kw). In addition to Amharic (the national language), Debut FM 100.9 broadcasts its programmes in more than 40 local languages (A promotion pamphlet, January, 2011).

The radio station hosts two talk shows-one of public discussion type –"TiyakeAlegn" talk show (Literally means 'I have a question'), and the other of therapeutic nature- "ErisoBihonu Min Yadergalu?" ('What would you do if you were on the shoes of this person/family...'). These two Call-in shows of Debut FM 100.9 are shows that offer a space to the public to call-in, raise and share ideas on economic, social and political issues mostly giving space for a lay public opinion. However, the success or otherwise and the challenges of these talk shows need to be studied, for the media to achieve one of its major objectives-giving space for marginalized voices and promoting public discussion.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The literature on talk shows is of divergent ideas, some being of diametric opposite to others in conceiving the role of talk shows. Some, subscribing to the Habermasian concept of the '**public sphere**' (Habermas, 1989), downgrade the role of Media talk shows arguing that they bar a rational and critical discussion and consensus being geared to institutional and personal interest. Others went to the extent of rejecting them; accusing them of destabilizing civic engagement.

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Talk shows, on the other hand, are recognized as important platforms for engaging the public in substantial debates (Livingstone and Lunt, 1994 cited by Lunt and Stenner, 2005), and “as opportunity for the expression of voices otherwise excluded from the media” (Gamson, 1998 cited in *ibid*: 3). The significance of such talk shows is very high, especially in countries like Ethiopia, where there are no organized public opinion polls in order to know the feeling and reaction of the public on different socio-political issues.

To that end, the success and the challenges of such talk shows should be studied in order to get the best out of them. A genuine public opinion, argues Habermas (1989), occurs when such platforms are protected from individual interests and the rationalization of institutional interests. To what extent Debub FM 100.9’s therapeutic talk show is successful in addressing marginalized voices? What are its challenges? A scientific research that attempts to address such questions is of benefit to the Radio station that has an objective to serve as a voice to the public.

2. Literature Review

This section attempts to give a bird’s eye view to some insights about talk shows from the literature reviewed. Hence, issues in relation to talk shows, scholars’ view of them and findings of previous research in the area are briefly discussed.

2.1. Talk Shows as a forum public discussion and a space for Marginalized voices

A definition of talk radio by Rubin and Step (2000:636) goes “talk radio is characterized by conversation initiated by a program host with listeners who may telephone to discuss such topics such as politics, sports, finances, personal problems, or current events.” A more precise definition comes from Casamiglia et.al (1993) defining talk shows as “...shows based on a staging of discussion”.

Lynch (1993 quoted in Hollander, 1996:102) is noted to argue that talk radio has “partially restored the sense of two-way debate and opinion exchange”. Livingstone and Lunt (1994) argue that “the talk show genre emerges as a context of public participation and debate” (cited by Lunt and Stenner, 2005:3). Thornborrow (2007) suggested that talk shows especially TV talk shows serve as a context of discussion for “lay public opinion on a range of issues, from individual, personal dilemmas and family relationships, to broader social problems and concerns”(p 1436).

Some scholars, however, extend a grain of caution to the role of talk shows as forums of public debate and in forming consensus, emphasizing their proper management: “the formulation of consensus, of genuine agreement across lines of difference, requires people to put aside their personal interests and to give up control of public discussion” (Habermas, 1989 cited by Lunt and Stenner, 2005).

Some critics even charge talk shows as not important, arguing for “genuine, spontaneous and unmediated public deliberation”. But the question is “How can deliberation take place without

mediation given the logistical problems of coordinating the participation of large scale, geographically spread, diverse populations?" (Lunt and Stenner, 2005: 3-4). This argument may also be supplemented by the idea that talk shows might not always aim at reaching a conclusion let alone a consensus (ibid).

Fineman (1993, cited in Rubin & Step, 2000: 635) is noted to argue "talk radio offers a mediated interpersonal communication experience for its audience. It provides listeners with a sense of personal contact and a forum to discuss and to learn about societal issues". The quick note one can draw here from this position is that talk shows, more than any genre, are seen as a substitute to interpersonal communication given the difficulty to have a face to face stage due to the law of time and space. Armstrong & Rubin (1989 cited in Rubin & Step, 2000:636) consolidate this position and write, "Talk radio provides an accessible and conducive alternative to interpersonal interaction, especially for those listeners who find face to face interaction to be a less rewarding experience" (Armstrong & Rubin, 1989 cited in Rubin & Step, 2000:636).

Gamson (1999) contends that even though they are constrained spaces, talk shows serve as a good opportunity for "marginal voices" that would otherwise, may not get a chance to be voiced in public. Livingstone and Lunt (1994 cited by Lunt and Stenner, 2005: 5) see talk shows as "unusual and interesting public spaces" posing a logical question that "where else can a

politician be seen to talk to a house wife on a relatively even footing on a public occasion?" Another logical argument for one to subscribe is that such talk shows create a lively discussion "through juxtaposition: creating novel combinations of people who normally live separate lives and giving them the opportunity to express their opinions about an issue of topical concern and relevance to them" (ibid:6).

Talk shows can also be used for "therapeutic" interactions helping the discussants in showing some insights to solve their problems (Brunvante and Tolson, 2001). Such types of talk show are devoted to personal, familial or societal problems that impact the life of an individual or the public order at large.

One can draw from the brief preliminary discussion of the literature in the area that the role of talk shows is manifold. These include, but not limited to, a forum for public discussion, a context for marginalized voices, as forums of therapeutic discourse to solve individual and communal problems.

2.2. Talk Shows and Audience Gratifications

Cameron, Armstrong and Rubin (1989) are cited by (Hollander, 1996: 102) to identify various gratifications the audience reported to pursue, such as "need for entertainment, escapism, and relaxation". A study conducted in Jamaica on Talk Shows in the late 1980s added "information seeking" to the list (cited in ibid), and another survey by Tramer and Jeffres (1983) included "companionship" to the menu.

An early study by Turow (1974) hypothesized a gratification by audience of talk radio as “a forum of interpersonal communication”. His view is attributed to the idea that due to urbanization and individualized life style, people who could not get the chance for face to face interaction with others resort to gratify their need by calling to a radio/TV station (see O’Sullivan, 2005). O’Sullivan (ibid: 720) cited Goffman (1971) to describe talk shows as a different “genre”, as “a public setting for the presentation of the self”. Some audience members use it as a forum for self-expression. Studying callers of one tabloid Irish show-‘The Gerry Ryan Show’ O’Sullivan (ibid) identifies the callers of the show having “instrumental goals, such as problem-solving or support-seeking”. She also identified many of the callers of this show as “doing entertainment”.

Another orientation O’Sullivan (ibid: 722) puts citing a study by Jefferson and Lee (1981) is “troubles telling”. Such an audience is not seeking counseling and is “looking for emotional reciprocity rather than advice”. There may be others who call to a talk show just for “fun”. These callers do not have any other instrumental motive. They do the call just as an end in itself; “...they enjoyed the experience of speaking to the host on-air” (ibid: 728). There are other callers who are described as “connotive” by Crisell (1986). These callers are the ones who “...intend to influence the audience with their call”. Other type of caller identified is an “expressive” caller who is “concerned to reveal ...own personality and interests”. Crisell

(1986) name these callers as ‘emotive’ (Quoted in O’Sullivan, 2005:722). Another group of callers to Phone-in shows by Crisell (1994: 193) are “exhibitionist” callers. The purpose of this group is “...not much to vent ... opinions on a particular topic as to project ...personality, to become ...performer” (quoted in ibid).

Rubin & Step (2000:636) have also cited other researchers who have noted various societal functions of talk shows as in “mobilizing others on issues” (Crittenden, 1971), “anonymously announcing one’s views” (Tramer& Jeffers, 1983) and “Keeping connected society” (Turow, 1974).

Another position, contrary to some research findings regarding talk shows, is the one by Hofstetter and Gianos (1997) that is noted to comment “political talk radio listeners exhibited greater political and social participation than did nonlisteners” (Cited in Rubin and Step, 2000: 637).

Avery & Ellis (1979) who are among the pioneers in talk show research see talk show as “personality driven.” They extend their argument and write, “[i]t has strong participatory quality, as listeners move through stages of attraction to talk radio, from curiosity to participation” (cited by Rubin and Step, 2000: 637).

Another gratification talk shows give to their audience as documented by A.M Rubin & Rubin (1985) is “... opportunity for conversational and interpersonal involvement” (in Rubin and Step, 2000: 637). This involvement is manifest itself in listeners motivation, interpersonal interaction

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to the host, and parasocial interaction with the host” (in *ibid*). Parasocial interaction refers to the “quasi-relationships” the audience members exhibit with media performers (journalists and hosts) as “social friends”. The audiences “feel that they know and understand the personae. They feel comfortable with the personae, as they do with a friend” (Rubin and Step, 2000:639). Another study (M.R. Levy, 1979) is cited to suggest that Parasocial interaction to develop over time and was rooted in effective ties to media personalities” (*ibid*).

A research identified another purpose or gratification by the audience to listen talk shows. That, according to Armstrong and Rubin (1989), is “to seek companionship, release information, and exciting entertainment”. Audience members who are frequent callers of talk shows are noted to seek companionship (Hollander, 1996). Coming up with a personal problem an audience member of a talk show wants to make sure that others are there to share his/her concerns, problems and in the end he/she gets a “solution”.

As detailed in the literature, the gratifications the audiences seek from talk shows are as many as there are listeners of the talk shows. This makes the programming and designing of talk shows a challenging one as appealing to the needs of its audience of divergent interests entails audience needs analysis to the least. Talk shows need periodic audience research more than any other genre so as to gauge the manifold and ever changing needs of the audience.

2.3. Talk shows and Topic/Subject matters they entertain

Lunt and Stenner (2005: 7) identified three formats of talk shows. These, according to them, are: “public discussion, therapeutic and conflict talk shows” (p 7). The public discussion talk shows stage discussion on issues pertinent to public concern. The issues may be political, social or economic. The second variant of talk shows is therapeutic shows that “take an explicitly therapeutic approach to personal problems” (*ibid*). Such shows raise an individual or community problem and entertain others’ views in looking for a pertinent “solution” for the problem the individual or the community faced. The third type of talk shows is “shows that focus on conflict and emotive secrets” (*ibid*).

A range of topics could be entertained by talk shows based on their purpose and kind of audience they aim to target. A 1998 Gallup Poll indicates that Americans get 23% of their news from TV talk shows (Newport & Saad, 1998). Based on a study on an African-American radio station, Squires (2000:73) writes, “...African American community members and listeners use the station as a public forum wherein traditional political concerns, as well as identity politics, are aired and discussed”. Talk shows also entertain issues that focused on managing “conflict between experts and people” (Wood 2001 cited in Lunt and Stenner, 2005:6) where the principle of an act as perceived by experts does not

commensurate to the people's belief and life style.

2.4. Critics on Talk Shows

American talk shows are criticized for focusing on Entertainment and soft issues (see Greenberg and Smith, 2008). Baum (2005 cited Kovach & Rosenstiel, 1999) to further an argument that due to external pressures like competition and given their ambition to have a significant niche of audience media are sacrificing good journalism that is based on "independence, inquiry and verification" in the search for an 'impressive' content that appeal to the audience 'interest'.

Lunt and Stenner (2005: 8) suggested "...there are normative pressures on emotional expression that create a tension between, on the one hand, giving an opportunity for the expression of deeply felt interests, on the other, the risk that emotional expression will overflow and disturb the balance of the expression or discussion" (Lunt & Stenner, 2005:8). The other position views talk shows "... as a fragile social situation in which emotionally committed expression threatens both the potential for rational critical discussion and the balance in the expression of different points of view" (P8-9). In line with this goes the Habermasian argument that genuine discussion may not be manifest as the direction for discussion is usually outlined by the individual or the media institution who hosts the discussion (see Habermas, 1989).

3. Research Design and Methodology

This research uses both quantitative and qualitative data. Using these

methods in triangulation is applauded in a way that the quantitative method is appreciated for breadth and this, however, can better be supplemented by the qualitative that addresses the issue of depth.

As the study deals with a talk show programme of Debub FM 100.9, non-probability sampling especially purposive sampling is employed to engage those audience members who claimed to listen to the two talkshows- *Eriso Bihonu Min Yadergalu?* (a therapeutic talk show dealing with personal problems an individual faced with). 112 Questionnaires were distributed.

The study focused on four areas in Hawassa City (the Capital of Southern Regional State) and the neighboring towns. Data was collected from Hawassa, Wondo Genet, AletaWendo and Yirgalem towns which are within 30 to 60 km from Hawassa city. A total of 107 questionnaires were collected of which 33 were from Hawassa town, 28 from Aleta Wendo, 26 from Yirgalem and 20 from Wendo Genet. Among the questionnaires collected 106 were valid and 1 was invalid resulting in a return rate of nearly 95.53%.

Questionnaires were distributed to only those of the respondents, who after being approached, claimed to listen to the two talk show under study- "*Eriso Bihonu Min Yadergalu?*"

With an aim to elucidate on the data collected quantitatively and with an aim to have an in-depth insight to issues for cross-reference, an in-depth one-on-one interview was held with the host and producer of the talk show program under study.

The data collected quantitatively was analyzed using SPSS version 14.0.

3.1. Objectives Of the study

The study has the following objectives

1. To study the audience's and host's perception towards the therapeutic talk show '*erso bihonu min yadergalu?*' in giving space for marginalized voices
2. To identify socio-demographic factors that determine listening to this therapeutic talk show- '*erso bihonu min yadergalu?*'
3. To identify the audience's perception of the quality of the therapeutic call-in show

4. Results and Discussion

This section is devoted to presenting the findings of the survey and the key informant interview. In an attempt to investigate in to the role of the therapeutic call-in show by Debub F.M. 100.9, the biggest government-owned media organization in Southern Ethiopia, as a voice for the marginalized, those who claimed to listen to the show are approached to fill in the self-administered questionnaire. An in depth interview was also held with the long serving producer and host of the show.

4.1. Findings of the Survey

The Audience and the host's view of the therapeutic show- *Eriso Bihonu min Yadergalu*

Eriso Bihonu min Yadergalu? Talk show which literally means '*what would you do if you were on the shoes of this person...*' is a therapeutic type weekly talk show which is focused on a problem a certain individual faced in life. The host (s) presents the case to the audience representing the person who is said to face social problems. The problem could be familial, marital or of romantic relationship nature. By listening to the cases presented by the host/s, the audience call-in to forward their lay opinion on the issues.

This section is an attempt to assess the audiences' frequency of listening to the show, the audience of the show by socio-demographic characteristics, the audiences' view on the professionalism of the hosts, the audiences' trust on the contents (issues) of the show, audiences' calling and text messaging habits to the show, reasons for listening and respondents' view of the therapeutic show as a voice for the marginalized.

Table 1- Respondents by Socio- demographic Information

Characteristics	Number	Percent
Sex		
Female	37	35.5
Male	69	64.5
Respondents by Age		
15-25	41	38.7
26-35	39	36.7
36-45	22	20.7

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46-55	2	5.9
above 51	2	1.8

As one can view from table-1 above, 64.5% (n=69) of the respondents are male and the rest 34.6 % (n=37) are female.

With regard to their age, as the above graph depicts, 38.31 % (n=41) of the respondents are aged between 15 and 25; 36.44 % (n=39) are aged between 26 and 35 and 20.56 % (n=22) are aged between 36 and 45. This indicates majority, 74.76 % (n=80), of the respondents who claimed to listen to the talk show under study are the youth with in the age of 15 and 35. This may imply that addressing youth focused issues to be discussed by this call-in show may be productive appealing to the majority of its audience who fall under this niche.

Respondets by phonig and text messaging habits to Debub FM 100.9

The sustainability of such a call-in show is subject to having audience who are willing to phone or SMS to the station on regular basis either to tell their stories or to forward their ideas on issues under discussion. A significant majority, 58.49% (n=62), of the respondents claimed they phone to Debub F.M. 100.9 radio station where as 41.51% (n=44) responded that they do not. Hence, majority of the audience listening to the talk show and participate in the discussion. Having audience groups who are willing to call-in and participate in any issue of concern is a pre-requisite for the success of such a talk show.

Another crucial issue in programme design of any media is to understand the audiences’ preference when it comes to programme types and their trust towards each. A question was posed to learn the respondents view to that end.

Table 1- Respondents by their most trusted programme types

Programme types	Yes		No	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Entertainment	33	32	8	7.8
News	10	9.8	1	0.9
Talk shows	40	39	4	3.9
Other	3	2.9	3	2.9

As the above table depicts, among the different types of programs Debub F.M. 100.9 broadcasts, 30.84% (n=33) of the respondents reported that they trust the Entertainment programs most; only 9 % (n=10) of the respondents reported that they trust the News by

Debub F.M. 100.9 most. Surprising enough, a significant share of the audience, 37.38% (n=40), said they trust the talk shows most; this is a big figure counter to studies conducted in the West where radio talk shows take the least trust in

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terms of getting news/information (see Newport and Saad,1998).

Table 2- Respondents listening to *Eriso Bihonu* by frequency

How often do you listen to <i>Erisobihonu Min Yadergalu</i> talk show?	Frequency	Percent
Always	20	18.7
Usually	36	33.6
Valid Sometimes	36	33.6
Rarely	12	11.2
Total	104	97.2
Missing System	3	2.8
Total	107	100.0

Asked how often they listen to ‘*Eriso Bihonu Min Yadergalu?*’ talk show, 18.7 % (n=20) claimed they ‘always’ listen to the show; 33.6% (n=36) reported they ‘usually’ listen to the show. 33.6 % (n=36) of the respondents said that they ‘sometimes’ listen to ‘*Eriso Bihonu Yadergalu?*’ talk show and 11.2 % (n=12) reported they ‘rarely’ listen to the therapeutic show. This

implies that the radio station has a big assignment to strive so as to increase the share of its ‘loyal’ audience as a significant share of the audience, 44.8% (n=48) of the respondents are not regular listeners of the show. This is a challenge for the sustainability of this therapeutic call-in show.

Table 3- Respondents by trust on issues of ‘*Erisobihonu Min Yadergalu?*’

Do you trust issues entertained by ‘ <i>ErisoBihonu Min Yadergalu?</i> ’ talk show?	Frequency	Percent
Valid Yes	87	81.3
No	17	15.9
Total	104	97.2
Missing System	3	2.8
Total	107	100.0

As it can be seen from the above table, 81.3 % (n=87) of the respondents said that they trust the issues entertained by *Eriso Bihonu Min Yadergalu* talkshow. Whereas, 15.9 % (n=17) reported that they do not trust issues being entertained by

Eriso Bihonu Min Yadergalu talk show. It seems paradoxical that there are audiences who still listen to *ErisoBihonu Min Yadergalu* talk show though they ‘do not have trust’ on (they do not believe the issues as real) the issues being entertained.

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Table 4- Respondents listening to ‘Eriso Bihonu Min Yadergalu?’ by sex

Do you listen to ‘ErisoBihonu Min Yadergalu?’		Sex of respondents		Total
		Male	Female	
Yes	Count	62	36	98
	% within sex of respondents	91.2%	100.0%	94.2%
No	Count	6	0	6
	% within sex of respondents	8.8%	.0%	5.8%
Total	Count	68	36	104
	% within sex of respondents	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests value of assumption of significance = 0.066 However, 0.066 is the value of the chi-square at 0.06 (where $p \leq 0.05$), we can conclude that gender and listening to this specific talk show do not have a significant relationship. The implication for design here is that the programme producers may not need to worry much about gender in selecting issues to be entertained though it is the norm to appeal to both sexes in most cases.

According to the above cross tabulation, 100% (n=36) of the female respondents reported that they listen to ‘ErisoBihonu Min Yadergalu?’ talk show; 91.2% (n=62) of the males also claimed the same. Hence, for this particular sample of 104 respondents, we can conclude that there is an association between gender and listening to ‘Eriso bihonu Minyadergalu?’ talk

Table 5- A cross tabulation of Respondents listening to ‘ErisoBihonu Min Yadergalu?’ by age

Do you listen to ErisoBihonu Min Yadergalu?’		Age of respondents					Total
		15-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	above 55	
Yes	Count	35	37	22	2	2	98
	% within age of respondents	85.4%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	94.2%
No	Count	6	0	0	0	0	6
	% within age of respondents	14.6%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	5.8%
Total	Count	41	37	22	2	2	104
	% within age of respondents	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests value of assumption of significance = 0.044

As portrayed in the table above, 100% of the respondents aged 26-35 (n=35), 36-45 (n=22), 46-55 (n=2),

above 55 (n=2) and 85.4% (n=35) of the respondents aged between 15 - 25 respectively reported that they listen to ‘ErisoBihonu Min Yadergalu?’ talk show. Based on this, for this sample of 104 respondents, we can conclude that

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there is an association between age and listenership of this therapeutic talk show. A chi-square significance test was run yielding a value of 0.044 (where $p \leq 0.05$). This implies there is a significant relationship between age of the respondents and their listenership to 'ErisoBihonu

Min Yadergalu?' suggesting that there is a need to work to appeal to the interests of those aged between 15-25 as the cross tabulation yielded 85% of them listening to it.

Table 6- Respondents listening to 'ErisoBihonu Min Yadergalu'? by occupation

Do you listen to 'Erisobihonu Min Yadergalu'?		Occupation of respondents				Total
		Students	Self employed	Employee	House wife	
Yes	Count	32	28	32	6	98
	% within occupation of responders	86.5%	100.0%	97.0%	100.0%	94.2%
No	Count	5	0	1	0	6
	% within occupation of responders	13.5%	.0%	3.0%	.0%	5.8%
Total	Count	37	28	33	6	104
	% within occupation of responders	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests value of assumption of significance =0.085

As depicted in the above table, 100 % of the respondents who are self-employed (n=28) and the respondents who are housewives (n=6) respectively claimed that they listen to the therapeutic show, 'ErisoBihonu Min Yadergalu?' This figure is seconded by those who are

employees, 97.0 % (n=32) followed by those who are students by occupation, 86.5% (n=32). This indicates that there is an association between occupation and listenership to this specific therapeutic show. Having a look at the Chi-square value at 0.085 (where $p > 0.05$), however, there is no significant relationship between occupation and listening to the show.

Table 7- Respondents' view of the professionalism of 'ErisoBihonu Min Yadergalu' by trust

How do you evaluate the professionalism of Eriso bihonu Min Yadergalu talk show in general?		Do you trust the issues entertained		Total
		Yes	No	
Very professional	Count	29	1	30
	% within do you trust the issues raised	33.3%	5.9%	28.8%
Professional	Count	34	9	43
	% within do you trust the issues raised	39.1%	52.9%	41.3%
So so	Count	18	3	21
	% within do you trust the issues raised	20.7%	17.6%	20.2%

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I don't know	Count	6	4	10
	% within do you trust the issues raised	6.9%	23.5%	9.6%
Total	Count	87	17	104
	% within do you trust the issues raised	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

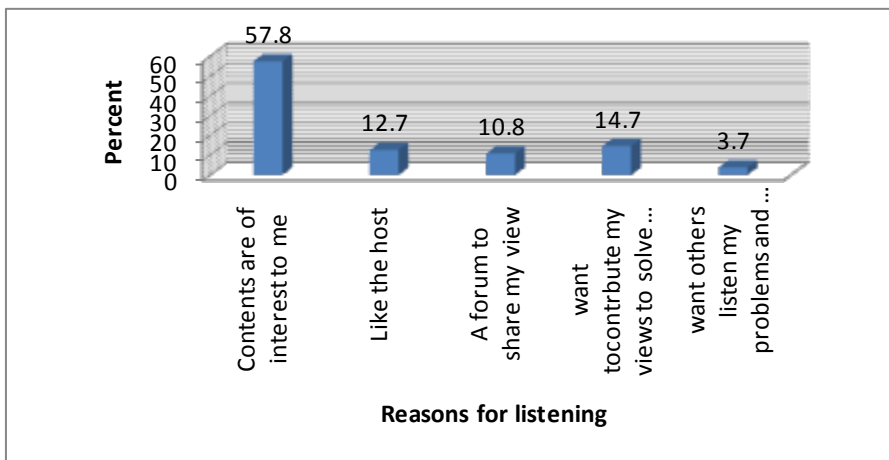
Chi-Square Tests value of assumption of significance =0.036 As conveyed in the above table, there is an association between the professionalism of *Eriso Bihonu Min Yadergalu* Talk show with the trust the audience put on it. Those respondents who reported to trust the issues entertained by the therapeutic show said they view the show in general as very professional and professional (33.3% (n=29) and 39.1% (n=34)) respectively.

A cursory view on the value of the Chi-Square test, which is 0.036 (where $p \leq 0.05$), reveals that there is significant association between the trust people have on the issues entertained by this Debub FM 100.9's therapeutic talk show and its professionalism.

The sustainability of a call-in show significantly relies on having a

committed audience who are willing to call regularly. With that in mind, a question was included to know what portion of the respondents, who identified themselves as listeners of this talk show, have a habit of calling-in to suggest their views. Majority, 71% (n=74), of the respondents claimed that they do not have; where as 29% (n=30) of them said they have the habit of calling-in. The other alternative to sustain a call-in show of this kind is having a significant portion of the audience who are willing to SMS their views if not calling-in to the show. 78% (n=83) of the participants of this study reported that they do not send text messages to the show. 22% (n=23) of the respondents, on the other hand, claimed they SMS the show.

Fig 1- Audience by their reasons to listening for *Eriso Bihonu Min Yadergalu* talk show



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Asked to point out their reasons for listening to ‘ErisoBihonu Min Yadergalu?’ talk show of Debub FM 100.9 under study, 57.84% (n=59) reported that it was because they found the contents (issues) of ‘interest’ to them. 14.71 % (n=15)

responded that they ‘wanted to contribute their views to solve others’ problems. 12.75 % (n=13) said that they like the hosts of the show. Only 3.7 % (n=4) replied that they wanted others to listen to their problems and suggest a remedy which is the essence of most therapeutic talk shows.

Table 8- Respondents’ view of the professionalism of the hosts of ‘Erisobihonu Min Yadergalu?’

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	I believe, they are effective in managing the discussion	72	67.3
	I think, they have the professional skills	21	19.6
	I don't think they are effective in managing the discussion	11	10.3
	I don't think they have the professional skills	1	.9
Total		105	98.1
Missing System		2	1.9
Total		107	100.0

Majority of the respondents 67.3 % (n=72) reported that they believe the hosts of ‘Eriso Bihonu Min Yadergalu?’ are effective in managing the discussion. Whereas, 10.3% (n=11) do not believe that the hosts are effective in managing the

discussion. 19.6% (n=21) believe the hosts have the professional expertise. To further shed light on the discussion, a cross tabulation of key variables was run suggesting the results below.

Table 9- Respondents’ view of the professionalism of hosts of Eriso Bihonu Min Yadergalu by their listening habit

‘How do you evaluate the professionalism of the hosts of Eriso Bihonu Min Yadergalu talk show?’	Count	Do you listen to ‘ErisoBihonu Min Yadergalu?’ call in show of Debub FM 100.9			Total
		Yes	No	Missing	
I believe, they are effective in managing the discussion	56	9	2	67	
% within do you listen to Eriso Bihonu Min Yadergalu talk show of Debub FM 100.9	64.4%	90.0%	100.0%	67.7%	
I think, they have the professional skills	20	1	0	21	
% within do you listen to Eriso Bihonu Min Yadergalu call-in show of Debub fm 100.9	23.0%	10.0%	.0%	21.2%	
I don't think they are effective in managing the discussion	10	0	0	10	
% within do you listen to Eriso Bihonu Min Yadergalu call-in show of Debub fm 100.9	11.5%	.0%	.0%	10.1%	
I don't think they have	1	0	0	1	

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the professional skills					
	% within do you listen to <i>Eriso Bihonu Min Yadergalu</i> call-in show of Debub fm 100.9	1.1%	.0%	.0%	1.0%
	Count	87	10	2	99
Total	% within do you listen to <i>Eriso Bihonu Talk show of Debub FM 100.9</i>	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests value of assumption of significance =0.69

As indicated in the above crosstab, 87.4% (n=76) of those who believe in the professionalism of the hosts of ‘*Eriso Bihonu Min Yadergalu?*’ talk show claimed they trust the show. It indicates there is

association between the professionalism of the host(s) of the show with the trust the audience put on it. The chi-square test, on the other hand, yielded a P value of 0.69. This suggests that there is no significant association between the professionalism of the host and the audience trust on this show.

Table 10- Respondents view of *Eriso bihonu Min Yadergalu* as a space for marginalized voices

	‘ErisoBihonu Min Yadergalu?’ talk show gives space for voices otherwise marginalized	Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	36	33.6
	Agree	46	43.0
	I don't know	19	17.8
	Disagree	5	4.7
	Total	106	99.1
Missing System		1	.9
Total		107	100.0

Majority of the respondents 76.6% (n=82) believe ‘*Eriso Bihonu Min Yadergalu?*’ talk show gives space for voices otherwise are marginalized. This is because the show is of a therapeutic nature dealing with issues individuals do not dare to discuss openly. These include challenges individuals face in their marital life, relationship, or at personal level and keep them as their top secrets. In a country like Ethiopia, where there is a profound culture of secrecy with respect to discussing one’s problems (personal secrets) in the open, calling-in such

a talk show and sharing one’s problems being anonymous could be a good option for a participant. Some people call-in with issues that they never shared it to anyone.

Asked an open-ended question as to why they prefer to listen to the therapeutic talk show of Debub FM 100.9, if they do; majority of the respondents reported that they listen to talk shows by this media because:

1. it entertains relevant social and economic issues
2. it serves as a forum for diverse issues
3. it is participatory

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4. it entertains issues pertinent to everyday life
5. it addresses challenging individual problems and help decision making
6. they want to listen to others' views
7. they want to share their secrets being anonymous
8. they learn from others' views and experiences

Two open-ended questions were also included regarding the talk show under study. One of the questions focused on the audiences' suggestions to the hosts, and the other asked the respondents' suggestions for a better performance of the talk show under study.

Some of the respondents who responded to these questions believe that the hosts are competent to manage the talk shows and to facilitate discussion. A few, however, commented that the hosts, sometimes, try to impose their views and they finish the show before they wind-up the discussion. Some also suggested that the hosts need to update themselves on current affairs so as to lead the discussion competently. The critic a few filed against the hosts is the issue of time management.

The other concern forwarded by a few of the respondents is the monotony of issues raised by the therapeutic show under study- '*Eriso Bihonu Min Yadergalu?*' They claim that it usually entertains marital/romantic issues and the issues are mostly discriminatory focusing on the youth only. A few more also suggested that sometimes the issues entertained do not seem real. They argue that the issues at times seem fictitious.

The other critic few respondents file against this talk show is that the callers are usually a few people that the audiences identify by name. A respondent also opines that it may be because some, for example, students may not have the money to telephone to the shows. He suggested for a toll free line.

4.2. Results of the interview

4.2.1. The Purpose and Contents of the Talks Show

"*Eriso Bihonu Min Yadergalu?*" talk show under study is therapeutic in nature. It deals with problems and challenges faced by individuals and stage deliberations among participants who call-in to suggest views and to throw 'remedies'. As outlined by its longtime host and producer, the purpose of the show is "to help individuals bring issues they encountered in life, issues that are their top secrets and they do not dare to discuss openly but complicated and made them indecisive." The show, according to its host, focuses on "personal problems and secrets" that actually have an impact on the lives of the wider public. The individual seeks others' hand to solve them. Issues raised by this show are usually on 'love and relationships', 'marital life' and 'friendship'. '*Eriso Bihonu Min Yadergalu?*' (literally means 'what would you do if you were on the shoes of the person in problem?') talk show, as the name entails, aimed at helping the individual to share his/her problem anonymously. According to its host and producer, '*Eriso Bihonu Min Yadergalu?*' talk show has three main purposes:

1. An individual who is in problem and who could not see or could not dare to see a doctor or a psychiatrist should have a space to share his/her views and get a pertinent 'remedy'.
2. Issues that are tabooed in the society but still affect the wellbeing of the individual should be exposed and discussed.
3. The issues discussed should respect societal norms. Ethiopian culture respects the secrets and privacy of others. The show believes we can still look for 'remedies' to individual's problems without intruding the individual's privacy.

4.2.2. Challenges faced by the Talk show as viewed by its host and producer

The host of the therapeutic show- *ErisoBihonu Min Yadergalu* found it difficult to note a challenge faced by the talk show he hosts except that the limited potential of their studio lines in terms of staging a discussion with many audience a time. A probing question was raised for him with regard to the credibility of the issues entertained by the show as some claim that most of the problems the show discusses are 'fictitious'. He rejected the idea that there was no need to fabricate problems living amidst of plenty of problems with the society.

The host, however, reveals that the show does not have a research team to investigate in to issues they entertain. He even said that the station as a whole had not conducted any audience satisfaction research in

the past seven years since its establishment. But the question was how they could choose issues to entertain.

The host of '*ErisoBihonu Min Yadergalu*?' is with a view that he and his team do not need to go to the society. For one thing, he opines that individuals call and tell them their problems; some others write a letter to the same effect. Moreover, he argues, he lives with the society and he feels their problems in his surrounding, while walking on the road and in a taxi.

4.2.3. '*Eriso Bihonu Min Yadergalu*?' as a forum for Discussion

The host of the therapeutic show, '*Eriso Bihonu Min Yadergalu*?', argues the show is inherently a forum for individuals and the public at large to discuss and share their views. He believes that the show has been inculcating the culture of debate and discussion. Its host opines that the show has diverse audience: the youth, old people, males and females. The audience would not leave an issue though it was not involving them. As the name of the show suggests they share their views believing what would happen if they were on the shoes of the person in problem. Hence, according to its host, it succeeded in involving everyone.

Eyeing the future, the host and editor of the therapeutic show said that there is a plan to strengthen the show by boosting the capacity of the telephone lines of the studio to serve six people at a time from its present capacity of serving two at a time. The other issue is increasing the number of hours allotted for the

show. He contends that they have increased it from its previous stay of 70 minutes to the present 120 minutes. According to him, there may be a need to increase the number of days from one to two.

4.3. Discussion and Conclusion

4.3.1. Discussion

Radio talk shows are proliferating in the Ethiopian scenario. Almost all of the FM radio stations seem to flock in that direction. We are witnessing many tabloid talk shows hosted by the media organizations themselves or others who lease air time. How successful the shows are in serving as a forum of discussion and voicing the voiceless among others is determined by the purpose of the shows, issues they entertain, how they frame the issues, the professionalism of the shows, the perception and the trust the audience put towards the issues.

'ErisoBihonu Min Yadergalu?' talk show is four year young. The problem is that almost all of these talk shows were started without conducting proper audience needs analysis. What is more, none of these shows have had held an impact assessment and/or audience satisfaction research since their cradle. The therapeutic talk show this study attempts to investigate made about three changes on its broadcast time. It started as a weekday programme broadcasted Tuesdays 11:00 a.m. to 1 p.m. It was later re-scheduled for Saturdays 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. It is now being broadcasted Sunday evening 8:10 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. It was argued by one of the hosts of the show that all these three changes were made due to audience

questions. Asked how they were able to assess the audience needs, he said they learnt it from people who filed suggestions via telephone and letters. He extended his argument that it is scheduled for Sunday evening because telephone charges are on about 50% discount this time (being happy hour by the Ethio Telecom) making it reasonable for callers to join the discussion. All of the decisions are based on common sense.

The findings of the study indicate that talk show programmes of Debut FM 100.9 are more preferred and trusted to other programmes, even, more than news; 38.83% (n=40) of the respondents reported that they trust talk shows. Whereas, only 9.34% (n=10) said they trust 'news'. This is also supported by the finding of this study suggested the talk show has a significant share of audience as, with this sample of 107 respondents, 92.5% (n=99) of them claimed to listen to *Eriso Bihonu Yadergalu*. This seems contradicting to the findings by the Gallup study that documented radio talk shows as one of the least trusted programmes from the menu of American Media programmes(see Newport and Saad, 1998).

In a country like Ethiopia where there is no institution that hold organized public opinion poll, talk shows could be instances of learning the opinion of the public though not with the same external validity like that of massive polls covering a significant majority. A big assignment ahead for of the show, however, is that it should work hard to win a more loyal audience as 44.8% of '*Eriso Bihonu Min Yadergalu*' are non-regular listeners

where 33.6% (n=36) and 11.2% (n=12) of the respondents respectively tune into the show 'sometimes' and 'rarely'.

A mechanism to boost the number of loyal audience could be achieved by making the show professional and the issues entertained trustworthy. This is attested by the findings of this study where there is a significant relationship between the professionalism of the show and the trust the audience put on it ($p=0.036$). The limitations of the show may be that the story holders (the subjects of discussion in the show) do not personally witness the story is theirs. One way to do this could be hosting them to the studio while the live discussion is going on.

The findings of the study also suggested relationship between age and listenership to 'Eriso Bihonu Min Yadergalu?'. The association between these two variables with respect to this therapeutic talk show is exhibited to be significant where the chi-square test yielded a p value of 0.044 ($p \leq 0.05$). Hence, the producers of 'Eriso Bihonu Min Yadergalu' Talk Show should tailor their programmes to appeal to different age groups. A few respondents also filed a comment to this show that it always deals with the issue of the youth especially that of 'romantic relationships'.

According to the findings of the study, a significant majority, 57.84% (n=59) of *Eriso Bihonu Min Yadergalu* reported that they prefer the show, for their contents are of interest to them. Hence, working on relevant contents is vital for the show.

Regarding its being a space for marginalized voices, the talk show

is rated positively by the majority. 76% (n=82) of the respondents said 'Eriso Bihonu Min Yadergalu?' talk show is successful in entertaining voices that are marginalized. This idea of being marginalized could better be understood that issues addressed by the show are usually personal secrets of individuals that they do not dare to discuss them in the open even with a professional at times.

4.3.2. Conclusion

This study based on the findings of the questionnaire and the interviews concludes with all its limitations, for instance, without using organized audience research and having a few common people who are usually the callers to argue and suggest, the two talk show under study- 'Eriso Bihonu Min Yadergalu?' is attempting to serve as forum for public discourse and as a voice for the marginalized. It can also use the opportunity of promoting a culture of dialogue which is at embryonic stage in our cultural scenario. Its present seemingly positive achievement, however, may be because it is an interactive show that gives the audience a chance to have a say. Hence, common sense judgments based on discussions in the newsroom and deliberations at the editorial meetings, though helpful, could be a handicap.

In line with various previous research findings (Brunvante, Tolson, 2001; Gmason, (1999); Lunt and Stenner (2005); O'Sullivan (2005)) this talk show of Debut FM 100.9 is contributing as forum for public discussion and marginalized voices. The callers of this Debut FM 100.9 talk show are those who

seek to listen to others' views to solve their personal problems and those who want to contribute their views.

The therapeutic show, however, is in a challenge that the share of its loyal audience is below average. Given that its audience tune to it more because they like the issues it entertains than less because they like the hosts, a periodic audience research and satisfaction assessment should be conducted to identify issues that appeal to the interest of the audience. Moreover, the show could win the attention of the audience if it could be professional in picking up issues that are trustworthy. Bearing in mind that there is competition from other media, a lot has to be done to retain 'loyal' audiences.

This study is based on the views of the audience and one of its long serving hosts of the therapeutic show. It could by no means give the full picture regarding the talk show. Hence, it is worth undertaking a content analysis of issues entertained by the show. Moreover, documenting the profile of the talk show host in the Ethiopian case is an assignment ahead.

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