



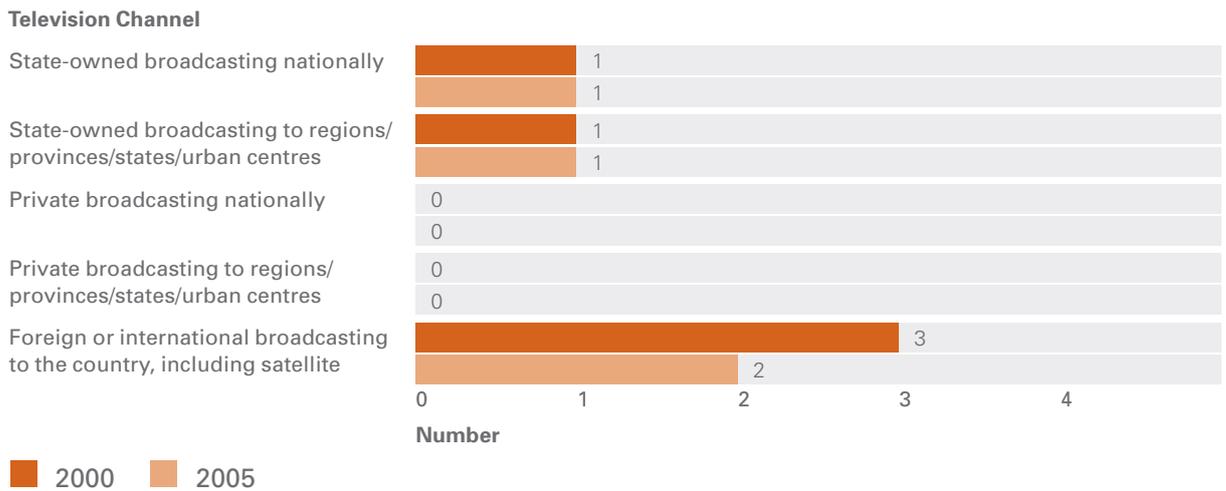
6. Television

According to the law, TV users are supposed to register their sets with the state-owned broadcaster Ethiopian Television (ETV). However, many users do not register their sets. According to the Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey in 2000, only around 2% of households owned a television (CSA, 2000). The distribution of TV sets is concentrated in major urban centres, where relatively more people can afford the cost (the average price of a TV set is US\$421) and where electrical power is more available. According to InterMedia surveys, 33% of the population had watched television by 2003 and by 2005 this had risen to 51%¹¹ (InterMedia, 2003; InterMedia, 2005).

Ethiopian Television (ETV) was established in 1964, during the time of Emperor Haile Selassie, with the technical help of the British firm, Thomson. ETV was initially established to highlight the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) founding heads of state meeting in Addis Ababa in that same year. Colour television was introduced in 1982 by the military government in order to commemorate the founding of the Workers' Party of Ethiopia (WPE). Since its establishment, ETV has remained in the hands of government, with its operations and content regulated by government. These days the common complaint about ETV is of a gradual decline in the quality of its programmes (Simon, 2005). Some viewers, especially in Addis Ababa, subscribe to the South African-based MultiChoice Africa DStv satellite pay-TV service and the ArabSat satellite service.

¹¹ Percentages based on the number of people who have watched TV at least once.

Figure 7: Broadcasting and Ownership Status of Television Stations



Source: Author personal research, 2006

6.1 Key changes and developments in the television marketplace in the past five years

There have been few significant changes in the television marketplace in the past five years, with the state-owned broadcaster ETV retaining its monopoly on domestic free-to-air TV. A South African private TV company signed an agreement with ETV to broadcast its programmes on ETV Channel 2, but this programming eventually stopped due to problems within the company. ETV Channel 1, which broadcasts in Tigrigna, Oromiffa, Amharic and English for around eight hours each day except Saturdays and Sundays. On weekends, the broadcast hours increase to a total of more than 16 hours.

The only regional/local free-to-air channel is ETV Channel 2, which broadcasts to the capital city Addis Ababa in Amharic for about four hours per day. This is owned by the Addis Ababa regional government.

No new free-to-air TV services have been launched in the past five years. One service, TV Africa, which was contracted from a South African company, has gone off-air.

6.2 Investment and growth in the television sector in the past five years

As mentioned above, InterMedia studies have found a gradual increase in television viewing, from 33% of the population in 2003 to 51% in 2005 (InterMedia, 2003; InterMedia, 2005). However, the percentage of viewers who had watched television in the past seven days remained almost unchanged between 2003 and 2005, going from a figure of 13.5% in 2003 to 13.8% in 2004/5.

InterMedia (2005) found that ETV was watched by around 25% of the population in 2004/5, up from 18.9% in 2003 (see Table 2 below).

Table 2: Television Audience Share

Television channel	2003 (%)	2004/5 (%)
ETV	18.9	25.4
CNN	0.7	0.6
BBC World	0.6	0.5
SABC	0.0	0.2
Sky	0.1	0.2
MTV	0.1	0.2
TV Africa	3.3	0.0

Sources: InterMedia, 2003; InterMedia, 2005

Subscriptions to international pay-TV services – such as DStv, operated by South Africa’s MultiChoice Africa – are expensive for the ordinary Ethiopian. One has to be able to afford a satellite receiver dish and decoder as well as the monthly subscription fee of about US\$750. DStv provides channels such as CNN, BBC World, Sky and MTV. These services are not re-broadcast on ETV, and are only available on subscription packages. Little information is available on subscription numbers to international TV services, because people acquire reception through various means, including illegal means.

There has been no significant investment in television over the past five years. Some organisations, such as those working on development issues and entertainment, have started programmes by buying air-time on the state ETV channels. Most of these are NGOs working on development and advocacy issues. Others, such as Fasil Dan Communication, work in conjunction with ETV to prepare talk shows and similar programmes. The income from such endeavours is not, however, significant for ETV, and such organisations complain about the lack of studios and necessary equipment made available by ETV for their programmes.

6.3 Plurality, ownership and control

There is no non-state free-to-air TV in Ethiopia. ETV is owned and controlled by the government, as is the second ETV channel, known as ETV Channel 2, serving Addis Ababa. TV Africa, which was contracted from a South African company, used to appear on the channel now used by ETV Channel 2, but TV Africa has discontinued its services. ETV Channel 2 is primarily used by the Addis Ababa City government.

The only significant private stake in the Ethiopian TV sector is the local agent for South African-based MultiChoice Africa’s international DStv satellite TV service.

6.4 Diversity

ETV broadcasts in three Ethiopian languages (Amharic, Oromiffa and Tigrigna) and in English. The station has one regular and standing programme on women, youth and children. Some academic studies indicate that government elites get privileged access to express their ideas on ETV. Religious issues do not have permanent programmes on ETV, as it is a national policy that religion is a private matter.

As mentioned above, some organisations buy air-time on ETV to broadcast talk shows on social and cultural issues. Some of these talk shows have become popular and it seems there is a growth in popular participation in these programmes. These talk shows, such as *Tea Coffee (Shay Buna)* or *Fifty Lemons (Amsa Lomi)* and the like, are believed to give ordinary people the chance to express their views. These shows focus on social issues, including HIV/AIDS.

6.5 Quality of television output and programming

Quality can be seen from two angles. The first has to do with picture quality and logistics. In this regard, ETV has shown an improvement. Pictures are clearer, as the cameras and other editing machines are of the latest technology. The second aspect of quality is that of content and journalistic practice. Most of the programmes are made to promote the government's policies, and the quality of journalism is often weak.

6.6 Specific challenges

All the challenges cited for radio also apply to the television sector. The fact that establishing a television station is expensive and the advertising market is small may discourage investment, and there is a chronic shortage of TV professionals.

Key findings

- The state-owned/controlled ETV remains the only Ethiopian free-to-air TV broadcaster.
- ETV has a national channel, Channel 1, and a regional channel, Channel 2, which targets the capital city Addis Ababa.
- Possible inhibiting factors for private investment in the TV sector include the high cost of setting up a TV station and a small advertising market.
- ETV channels are dominated by content promoting the views and actions of government, with the exception of some current affairs shows sponsored and produced by NGOs and other social organisations.
- The main satellite pay-TV service is the South African-based MultiChoice Africa DStv bouquet of channels, which is expensive and consumed only by the elite.