

## CHAPTER 5

# Which media channels are most effective at engaging with rural and urban communities in Lower Mekong and in China?

*This chapter examines media usage across the Lower Mekong Region, and potential media channels and influencers for engaging people with content related to preventing forest crime.*

## KEY MESSAGES

- Smartphones and televisions are the main media devices owned by people across the surveyed countries. Ownership of such media devices is clearly linked to the developmental stage of the country and access to consumer goods.
- People consume and trust information from a mix of mainstream news and social media sources particularly Facebook and Youtube for Lower Mekong countries and national newspapers for China. Also, top influencers for potential campaigns against illegal logging include family, friends, government officials and environmental protection NGOs.
- Respondents prefer to share information via their family, friends and social media channels.

PERCEPTIONS OF FOREST CRIME IN THE LOWER MEKONG COUNTRIES ARE FORMED FROM A MIX OF SOURCES, EXPERIENCES AND NORMS.

People's perceptions and interpretations of information presented to them shape their realities. If they do not consider illegal logging and trade to be serious issues, this becomes their reality. This survey showed that many respondents do not perceive the severity of forest crime to be particularly high, and believe that it is mainly the responsibility of governments and businesses to address it. These perceptions are influenced by a mix of factors such as experiences, social norms, access to information, and external influencers like family and friends.

The media, both traditional and social, plays a significant role in shaping perceptions regarding forest crime. Thus, understanding media usage in the region would be crucial for shaping these perceptions and highlighting the importance of combating forest crime. By identifying the channels and influencers that appeal to specific audiences, interventions can be designed to more effectively communicate the severity of forest crime and its impact on the environment, wildlife, and communities. Targeted messaging and engagement can also help shift perceptions, create a sense of urgency, and inspire responsibility for tackling forest crime. Educating the public through the media can foster action and build a collective commitment to protecting our forests and natural resources for future generations.

MEDIA USAGE IN THE LOWER MEKONG COUNTRIES AND IN CHINA

MAJORITY OF THE RESPONDENTS USE AND OWN SMARTPHONES AND TELEVISIONS

Across all countries the main devices owned were smartphones and televisions. Ownership is clearly linked to the developmental stage of the country and access to consumer goods. For example, personal computers and newspaper are also popular devices in China (Table 9). Meanwhile, media usage is dominated by television and the internet (Table 10).

TABLE 9. MOST RESPONDENTS OWN TELEVISIONS AND SMARTPHONES











	 TV	 RADIO	 NEWSPAPER	 LAPTOP	 SMARTPHONE	 PHONE
CAMBODIA	<b>60</b>	2	1	17	<b>93</b>	15
CHINA	<b>57</b>	23	34	70	<b>82</b>	20
LAO PDR	<b>95</b>	10	3	11	<b>75</b>	29
MYANMAR	<b>84</b>	20	12	16	<b>93</b>	16
THAILAND	<b>90</b>	28	18	39	<b>82</b>	70
VIET NAM	<b>91</b>	23	23	36	<b>70</b>	30

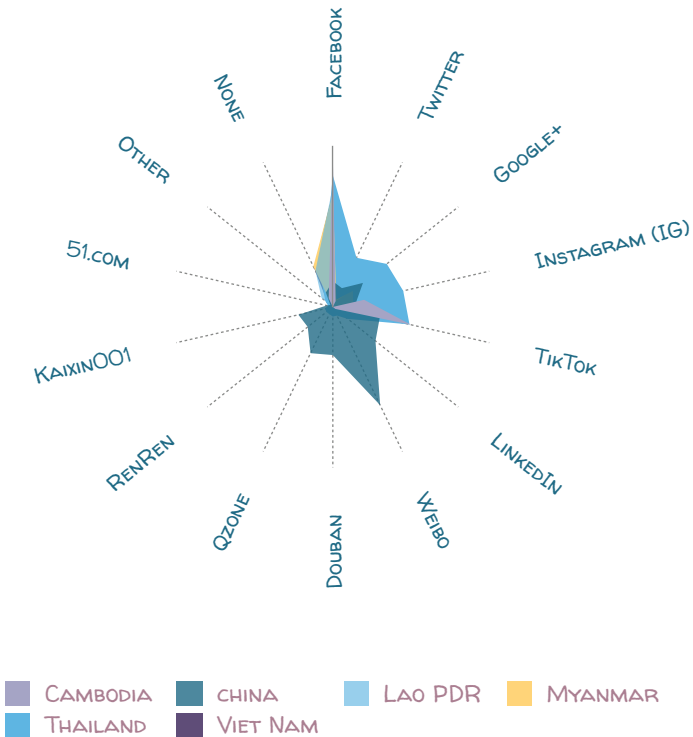
TABLE 10. MEDIA USAGE IS DOMINATED BY TV AND INTERNET.

	 TV	 RADIO	 NEWSPAPER	 INTERNET	NONE
CAMBODIA	<b>46</b>	3	2	<b>93</b>	<b>3</b>
CHINA	<b>65</b>	32	41	<b>73</b>	<b>7</b>
LAO PDR	<b>89</b>	1	1	<b>72</b>	<b>0</b>
MYANMAR	<b>57</b>	4	9	<b>68</b>	<b>9</b>
THAILAND	<b>77</b>	12	15	<b>77</b>	<b>1</b>
VIETNAM	<b>89</b>	28	31	<b>58</b>	<b>1</b>

DIFFERENT SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS ARE POPULAR IN CHINA THAN IN THE LOWER MEKONG

Chinese respondents reported subscriptions to numerous social media platforms that are not widely used in the other countries such as Weibo, Qzone and Douban. In the Lower Mekong countries, Facebook is by far the most popular social media platform, followed by Tik Tok and Instagram.

FIGURE 24. FACEBOOK, TIKTOK AND WEIBO ARE THE MOST WIDELY USED SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM ACROSS THE CHINA AND THE LOWER MEKONG COUNTRIES

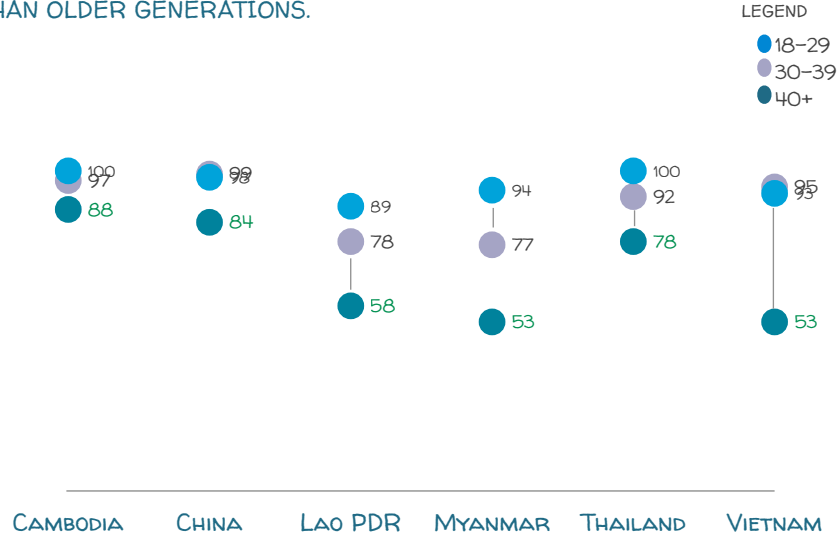


Not surprisingly, across all countries, younger people and urban dwellers use social media significantly more relative to older people and rural dwellers.

FIGURE 25. URBAN DWELLERS USE SOCIAL MEDIA MORE OFTEN THAN RURAL DWELLERS.



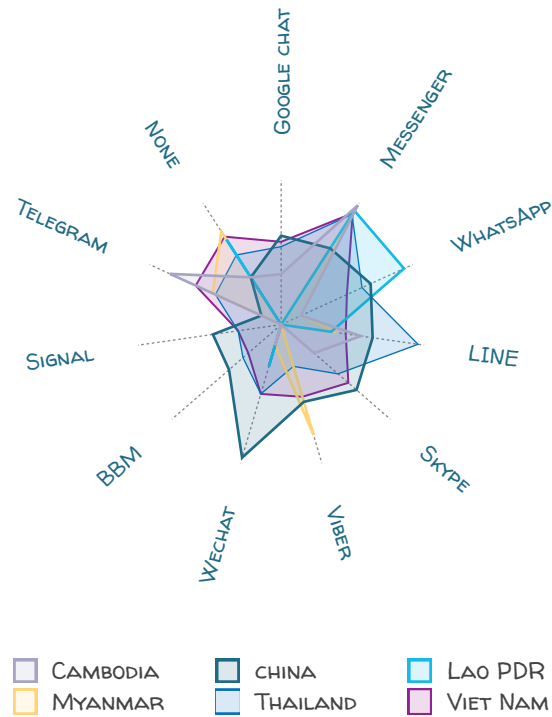
FIGURE 26. YOUNG PEOPLE USE SOCIAL MEDIA MORE SIGNIFICANTLY THAN OLDER GENERATIONS.



WECHAT, MESSENGER AND LINE ARE THE MOST POPULAR ONLINE CHAT SERVICES

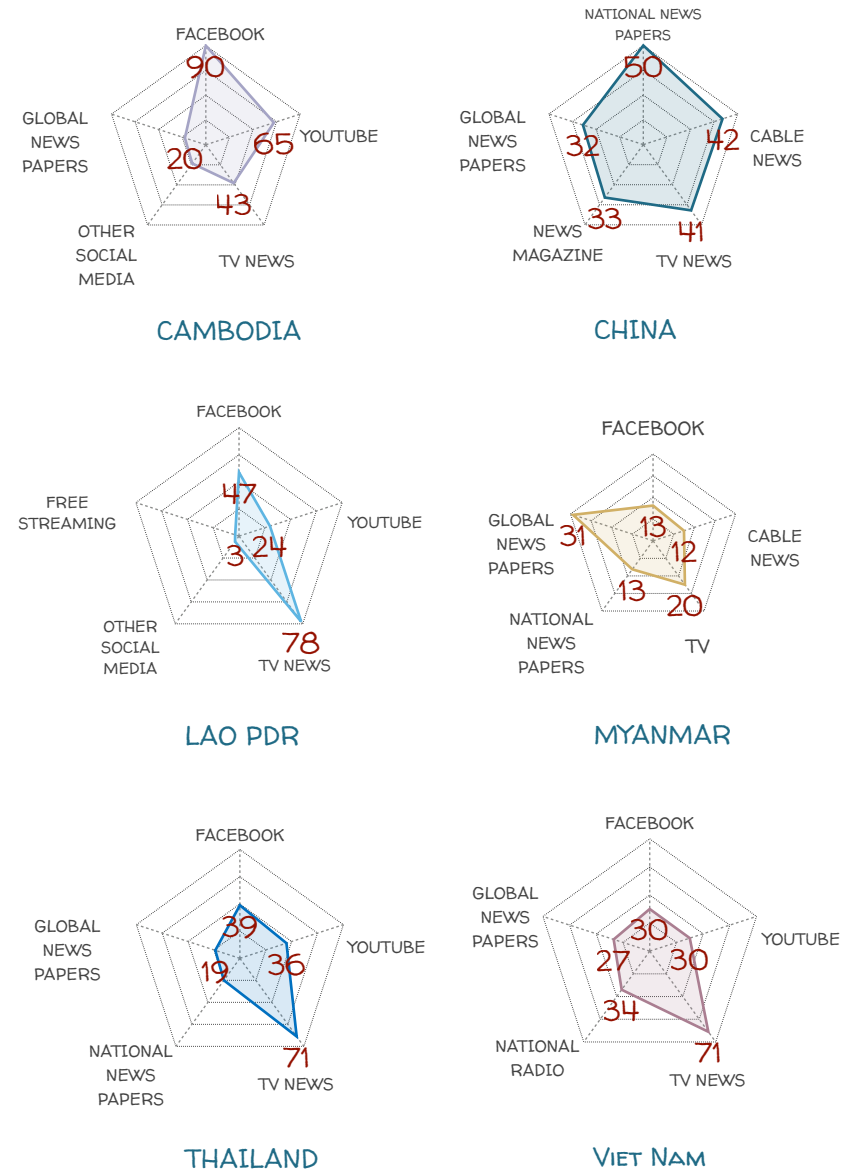
The usage of online chat services varies across countries. In China, respondents reported using WeChat much more than other chat services. In the Lower Mekong countries, Messenger is by far the most popular online chat service, followed by LINE and Telegram (Figure 27).

FIGURE 27. CHATTING THROUGH WECHAT, LINE AND MESSENGER IS VERY POPULAR AMONG RESPONDENTS



TRUSTED INFORMATION SOURCES VARY BY COUNTRY, BUT GENERALLY A MIX BETWEEN MAINSTREAM TV AND SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

FIGURE 28. FACEBOOK AND YOUTUBE ARE AMONG THE MOST TRUSTED CHANNELS IN ALL COUNTRIES SURVEYED.



The top five trusted news sources listed by respondents varied by country. Mainstream TV news is most trusted in Lao PDR, Viet Nam and Thailand. It is worth noting that in Lao PDR, announcements through government loud speakers are effective in reaching audiences, however this was not covered in the standard questions in the survey. In China national newspapers, cable news and mainstream TV news are most trusted. In Myanmar, international newspapers are reported to be most trusted. Facebook and Youtube are trusted across countries (Figure 28).

#### FAMILY, FRIENDS, GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION NGOS ARE THE TOP INFLUENCERS FOR POTENTIAL CAMPAIGNS AGAINST ILLEGAL LOGGING

In China, respondents reported that friends and government officials are the most influential on them, followed by journalists and environmental protection NGOs. Respondents in Cambodia reported relatively high levels of influence from a wide range of stakeholders, although family and environmental protection NGOs were at the top of the list. Levels of influence were reported to be generally low by respondents in Lao PDR and Myanmar, but friends and family as well as environmental protection NGOs were reported to be somewhat influential. In Thailand, family was said to be most influential, followed by government officials and environmental protection NGOs. In Viet Nam, family members were most influential, followed by the police and local government officials, but senior government officials and environmental officers were less so.

“PERSONALLY, IF SOMEONE INVITES ME TO JOIN EFFORTS TO PREVENT ILLEGAL LOGGING, I WILL JOIN AS I FEEL DEPLORED THAT A LARGE TREE HAS BEEN DESTROYED. WE SHOULD PRESERVE THE FOREST FOR COLLECTING MUSHROOMS AND WILD VEGETABLES AND ALLOW WILD ANIMALS TO LIVE”.

(MALE RESPONDENT, RURAL LAO PDR)

#### PEOPLE PREFER TO SHARE INFORMATION WITH THEIR FAMILY AND FRIENDS, AS WELL AS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Respondents across all countries listed friends and family among their top preferred channels for sharing information. Social media was also a preferred place to share information. Notably, community meetings were universally less preferred than social media as a place to share information.

“YES, I WILL JOIN EFFORTS TO STOP ILLEGAL LOGGING. BECAUSE IT'S ABOUT PROTECTING ENVIRONMENT, I WILL HELP WITH EXPLAINING AND SPREADING AWARENESS. I WILL HELP BY DOING WHATEVER I CAN.”

(FEMALE RESPONDENT, RURAL MYANMAR)

#### CONCLUSION

Building on the analysis of Lower Mekong media usage and influencers provided in this chapter, the next chapter will examine the findings of the knowledge, attitude and practice score to identify country-specific gaps that can inform and track the development and implementation of country-specific campaigns and interventions.

