
Amal Jamal

***The Culture of Media Consumption
among National Minorities
The Case of Arab Society in Israel***



I'lam

Media Center for Arab Palestinians in Israel

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المجتمع العربي في إسرائيل

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1. ***INTRODUCTION***

In recent decades, the study of patterns of media consumption and of consumer satisfaction with media content has become a highly developed field of research. The increasing power of the media to shape public and political agendas, coupled with a massive increase in the avenues of transmission, has raised questions concerning media consumption, particularly its significance in societies composed of culturally, ethnically and nationally diverse groups. The relationship between media culture and socio-cultural diversity is one key to understanding political dynamics in multi-cultural societies (Norris 2000). The influence of the newspapers people read, the radio stations they listen to and the television networks they watch on people's daily life has become immense. The factors affecting media consumption patterns in general and the impact of media consumption in particular have thus attracted the analytic gaze of media researchers, sociologists and political scientists (McQuail 2004).

An important assumption in this field of research is that patterns of media consumption correlate with individual or group worldviews, cultural considerations and political

interests. Abundant research has established the salience of media consumption as an indicator of behavioral, cultural, political and economic trends. Patterns of media consumption, the contents consumed, the times of consumption, and the degree of satisfaction and reliance on the media as both a source of information and of entertainment constitute gauges of consumers' cultural, social and political identities (Thompson 1995). Media consumption thus serves as an important indicator of consumers' organization and exploitation of leisure time while simultaneously revealing socio-cultural affiliations and illuminating significant sociological processes. Many researchers maintain that the technological developments that have contributed to the growth of the media as a dominant social institution have diminished the influence of traditional social agents, such as the family or other modern agents, such as political parties. Simultaneously, these trends have contributed to the evolution of political and social identities that transcend the immediate boundaries of socio-cultural space (Anderson 1991; McNair 1998; Shrum 2002). The mediation performed by the mass media has thus altered social relationships, empowering those social groups that control media content at the expense of other groups (Cook 1998). These events explain why the issues of who controls the media and what contents various social groups consume are so important.

The analysis and understanding of media consumption patterns can reveal how different social groups construct their relationships with their environment. It follows that media consumption and satisfaction also provide indicators

of how consumers relate to the social, political and cultural actors in their environment. This is particularly true in multi-ethnic and multi-cultural societies where each social group develops its own unique media consumption pattern on the basis of existing constraints and opportunities. One of the main assumptions guiding this research is that media consumption patterns influence the individual's cultural and personal space while also reflecting rationally calculated preferences; hence, the description and comprehension of these patterns has become an important feature of sociological and political research in all societies.

Unlike some researchers, I do not assume that media consumption patterns are affected solely by rational considerations. Research on media consumption has long since demonstrated the influence of custom and structural constraints, for instance, of language limitations. Not only is media consumption often uncalculated, it may not even be conscious. Consumers do not perceive the media exclusively as a source of news; for them, it is primarily a medium for home entertainment, universally available. It follows that the entertainment aspects of the media are important and must be factored into an analysis of media consumption patterns. Yet, perceiving media consumption as a habit, characterized by consistent entertainment preferences, allows access to another important source of information regarding the role of dominance in a society's socio-cultural structure and of the transmission of dominant characteristics (Morley 1992). As demonstrated by research conducted at the Media Studies Unit at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Research, the University of

Birmingham, media consumption patterns occupy a central place in the creation of socio-cultural hegemony primarily due to the ideological encoding inherent in media content (Hall and Morley 1986).

It is important to bear in mind that media consumption has an economic dimension, particularly in societies where the media is privately rather than publicly owned. Whenever all or most of the media is a private sector endeavor, economic variables become salient. In the past few decades, the media has become a major industry and source for the accumulation of wealth in addition to being a cultural domain. Production of media content has therefore become a culturally grounded tool for accumulating wealth, as can be observed in examples such as **TIME WARNER**, **MBC**, **LBC** and Israel's **Channel 2**. Ownership of the media and the economic logic directing its operation has crucial implications for its socio-cultural role, on the one hand, and our understanding of its political role, on the other (Ezrahi, Goshen and Leshem 2003). The way in which the media shapes public opinion, varies in fact by type of ownership (Bagdikian 1997). If publicly owned, control over the media is direct and monitored; however, if privately owned, this control is more complex and surreptitious. Then its operations are directed primarily to increasing consumer ratings because increased ratings translate into increased profit. Media consumption patterns thus accrue economic relevance and, in addition to their political and cultural significance, constitute an integral part of society's mechanisms for amassing wealth (McQuail 2004).

The study of media consumption and use has become a very

established field in communication studies. We, therefore, find an increasing number of publications dealing with audience analysis: however, not much research has addressed the media consumption of national minorities. In Israel, many studies have been carried out on the culture of media consumption, particularly within Jewish society (Liebes 1997; Caspi 2001). These studies indicate trends in media consumption that support the above stated assumptions. Several studies have dealt in depth with factors such as cultural diversity among Israel's Jewish population and its relationship to media consumption patterns, and yet no such study has been carried out among the Arab population in Israel, which numbers over a million people.¹ This society differs from Israel's Jewish residents in terms of culture, language and nationality. In terms of citizenship, Arab society in Israel is part of the Israeli political space. In terms of culture and language, however this population belongs to the Arab national and cultural space that lies primarily beyond Israel's borders even though no direct contact was maintained with that space for many years. Just how Arab society copes with this national and cultural reality – or, to put it the other way around, the extent to which the media is a factor or sphere enabling Arab society to cope with the Israeli reality – constitutes an issue vital to our understanding of the media culture characterizing both this population and its relationship to the dominant culture in Israel. What, then, is the role of the media as a sphere in which Arab society in Israel can express its needs and desires? To what extent does the media facilitate contact between the Arab

1. We would like to draw the reader's attention to the fact that the phrases " Arab society in Israel", "the Arab population in Israel", "the Arab minority", "the Arab public" and "the Arab sector" are used interchangeably throughout.

population in Israel and the Arab world beyond its borders? These are questions that make the current research important and interesting, one with implications for comparative research to be conducted among other national and cultural minorities in multi-cultural states.

Since the end of World War II, minorities have become increasingly significant segments of various nation-states (Keating and McGarry 2001; Keiser and Underwood 2000). The phenomenon of national minorities demanding special rights in their countries of birth has become increasingly familiar. Although the strategies adopted in their struggle for equality differ from one country to another and one minority to another, a major subject of contention in this struggle is the media and the central role it plays in the public sphere (Browne 2005). Advocacy for better media representation of minority groups occupies a major place in the strategies adopted by these groups to cope with their minority status. Consequently, many minorities have established their own media outlets, in their own language, as channels for the expression of their culture and identity. Such strategies become more pronounced as relations between the minority and the majority deteriorate. Examples of groups adopting this approach are the Hungarian minority in Rumania, the Kurds in Turkey, the Maori in New Zealand, the Russian minority in the Baltic States and the Turkish minority in Germany. In light of the scope of this phenomenon, one may ask what media strategies Arab society in Israel uses to cope with its own reality. To what extent can the media consumption patterns exhibited by Arab society in Israel teach us about ethnic minorities' coping strategies? Research of these strategies can contribute to our

understanding of whether and /or minority groups develop their own unique media culture and how this culture supports the achievement of their macro-level goals.

The State of Israel has acted vigorously but unsuccessfully to dissociate the Arab population from its cultural space and historical past (Lustick 1980). Various strategies have been applied in this effort. Since 1948, institutions were developed that, while presumably serving the Arab population, actually served Jewish hegemonic interests (Mari 1978). Thus, in addition to the education system, a military government actively restrained civil and political activity as part of the effort to forcibly inculcate a new, government-dictated “perception of reality” in Arab society. Government-controlled newspapers have also attempted to shape this sector’s media agenda. **Al-Yom**, the newspaper controlled by Davar, the Histadrut newspaper, was established immediately after the end of the 1948 war with the intention of propagating official definitions of the new socio-political reality. This newspaper failed to draw sufficient Arab readership. It was therefore replaced by another Arabic newspaper, **Al-Anba’a** in 1968 that was intended to function in a more sophisticated manner in order to better succeed in penetrating Arab society and setting its public agenda.² Other Arab-language newspapers published by the Zionist political parties were aimed at increasing Zionist parties’ power in the Arab sector and garnering votes. In 1958, Kol Yisrael introduced broadcasts in Arabic; however, one again, programming remained in the hands of Jews, although of Arabic, Middle Eastern

2. See letter of intentions written by Samuel Bar-Haim regarding the issuing of newspaper in Arabic to the Arab public in Israel, 18 September, 1958. See file G 5498/12 in the Governmental Archives in Jerusalem.

origin. This radio service still operates and a considerable portion of Arab society listens to its broadcasts. Since the late 1960s, Israeli television has employed a similar strategy. The Israeli Broadcasting Authority (IBA), an ostensibly public body that manages and monitors domestic public television production was for quite a long time department in the Prime Minister's Office. It used transmissions in Arabic to shape the Arab population's media agenda and public opinion.

Arab society did not succumb to these efforts instead developing a strategy to cope with this complex situation (Jamal 2005a). One of the first stratagems applied was development of an oppositional media space, originally occupied by the newspaper *Al-Ittihad*, affiliated with the Communist Party, and other party-sponsored publications such the quarterly **Al-Jadeed**; these newspapers offered wide platforms for criticism voiced by the Arab public (Qahwaji, 1972).³ Similarly, in the late the 1950s and early 1960s, part of the Arab public was exposed to the publications of the *Al-Ard* (The Land) Movement. In the 1970's part of the Arab population read the newspaper **Al-Raya** of the Son of the Village Movement. This movement was established in 1972 and expressed Palestinian national views. **Al-Raya** newspaper was founded in an attempt to counteract the official endeavors to Israelize the Arab public in Israel. Historical research has revealed that during the early 1950s but especially after 1956, a large proportion of the Arab

3. No studies have been conducted on the press consumption culture and the effect of the Communist Party publications during the first decades of Israel's existence. For a general overview of this subject, see: Habib Qahwaji, *Al-'Arab fi Del al-Ihtilal al-Israili min 1948* (The Arabs in the Shadow of the Israeli Occupation since 1948) [Arabic] (Beirut: The PLO Research Center, 1972).

population listened to **Sawt Al-Arab**, the Cairo-based radio station that transmitted the speeches of Egyptian president Jamal Abd Al Nasser. This consumption pattern spread with increased access to media technology, such as transistor radios, that were readily affordable and enabled people to tune into such broadcasts from home.

The geo-political transformations following the 1967 Six Day War also played their part. After 1967, the Arab population in Israel acquired access to the Palestinian population in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The involuntary reunification of the two parts of the Palestinian people on the homeland soil had a deep impact on the Arab population in Israel. The latter became aware of the deep national and patriotic sentiments among the Palestinian population of the newly occupied territories. The interaction between the two communities quickly resulted in a constant rise in the national sentiment among the Arab population in Israel (Jamal 2004). Due to the Israeli-Egyptian peace agreement, contact between Arab society and Arabs abroad, particularly in Egypt, also became possible. These processes, which counteracted Israeli government influence, reduced the effectiveness of Israel's efforts to control the content of the public debate conducted in the Arab sector and as a result affected the media consumption patterns described below.

Major changes in the media scene of Arab society in Israel occurred during the 1980's and 1990's. Technological developments brought Arab TV channels from the Arab world into almost every Arab home in Israel. This process was accelerated by the development of the Arab satellite TV Channels in the 1990's. By the early and mid 1980's an

extensive network of Arabic language newspapers had also been developed. Weeklies such as **Assennara** (1983), **Kol al-Arab** (1987) and **Panorama** (1988) began to compete with the Communist party affiliated newspaper **Al-Ittihad**. These developments, in addition to some others that will be elaborated later, have markedly influenced media consumption patterns among the Arab population. Since no previous study in this field exists it is hard to trace the exact developments in media culture of the Arab population. Furthermore, since to our knowledge no other study has been done on a national minority's media consumption patterns, this study becomes important not only as a particular case study, but also as an instrument in breaking ground for other comparative studies of national minority media culture.

The media consumption patterns exhibited by Arab society in Israel therefore constitute an important subject for research. Their study enables us to gain insight into how the Arab minority, as a national minority living in an ethnically defined state, has responded to the complex factors that structure its existence. Many questions thereby come to the fore. The relevant questions to be explored herein pertain to the choice of the newspapers read by the Arab community, reasons for this choice and frequency. What are the radio stations that are most listened to and why? What are the TV channels that are most popular in the Arab community and why? How did the media consumption patterns of the Arab community in Israel arise and what are their possible implications for the future relationship between this community and the state? How does the Arab public perceive the media it consumes? What behaviors do the media support? How satisfied is the Arab public with the

media that it consumes? These are several of the questions that must be confronted if we wish to deepen our understanding of the media's contribution to the Arab experience in Israel. The aim of this research is to make initial progress on this long-neglected research path and contribute to the small stock of knowledge we have on national minorities' media culture and its impact on their relationship with their surroundings.

We should note here that the book is based on and informed by the results of a comprehensive survey conducted among a representative sample of Arab society in Israel. The data relate to the period in which the research was conducted – December 2004 to January 2005. The main assumption at its core is that during the last 50 years, media consumption has become an essential feature of all societies and an important indicator of cultural and political trends (Mazzoleni and Schultz 1999). The book thus presents data on the consumption of the various types of media and it rates them in order to obtain some knowledge concerning the media consumption culture, with a particular focus on consumer satisfaction and the reliability attributed to each medium. Given that patterns of media consumption generally do not change from one day to the next – we are not referring here to “zapping”, ordinary switching between networks and channels – the data represent a reliable basis for this analysis. The lack of comprehensive rating data makes it impossible, however, to identify long-term trends in Arab media consumption. The findings thus provide important foundations for research in this field, representing what we hope will be a series of follow-ups studies to be carried out on a regular basis.

2. **ABSTRACT**

This research is based on a comprehensive public opinion survey conducted among a representative sample of Arab society in Israel (594 respondents). The survey questionnaire consisted of 255 questions dealing with newspaper, radio, television and Internet consumption. It included questions related to the Arab public's satisfaction with and its trust in the media as a representative of its needs and interests.

The survey data reveals that media consumption in Arab society in Israel varies according to medium (i.e., the written press versus television). One prominent aspect was the diversity of media consumption, a trend expressed in the extensive use of all available media made possible by technological changes introduced in the last two decades. The majority of Israel's Arab population speaks at least two languages and belongs to several social, political and cultural groups; as a result, unique patterns of media consumption are evolving. The main characteristic of this culture is the blend of Israeli and Arab sources, in both Hebrew and Arabic, including media originating in Arab countries. Consumption patterns also vary according to location, producing both regional and national patterns. Reading local Arab-language

newspapers and listening to legal (e.g., Radio Al-Shams) as well as illegal, unlicensed local Arab radio stations is a dominant feature. As there is no longer a national television channel in Arabic, viewing patterns are divided between Israeli Hebrew channels and satellite-transmitted Arab channels. A substantial portion of the population reads local Arab- as well as Hebrew-language newspapers, listens to the radio, and watches local Israeli television channels as well as satellite-transmitted Arab television. This complex pattern reflects the location of Arab society in Israel as in dual sphere somewhere between the Israeli sphere and the larger Arab sphere.

The survey findings indicate that the proportion of weekend newspaper consumption is higher (45%) than daily newspaper consumption (9.3%). Because the majority of Arab newspapers are weeklies, it is clear that the reading public has adapted its consumption patterns to the structure of the Arab-language newspaper market. The survey reveals that the average Arab press consumer reads more than one Arab-language newspaper and clearly tends to shift between newspapers. Readership differs according to newspaper, with a clear distinction observable between the commercial and the party-affiliated press in terms of time invested, the degree of trust, and so forth.

Participants in the survey were asked to rank their first three preferences among the Arab newspapers available domestically. The findings indicate that the Arabic press was divided into four groups by consumer preference. Hence, some newspapers enjoy a relatively large readership: **Kol al-Arab** (29.5%) and **Assennara** (26.1%); some a moderate

readership: **Panorama** (13.5%) and **Al-Ittihad** (15.8%); some a low readership: e.g., **Sawt Al-Haq Wal Hurriya** (4.6%); while others have a minimal readership: e.g., **Al-Mithaq** (2.1%), **Al-Fajr Al-Jadeed** (1.9%), **Al-Ahali** (0.9%), **Hadith Al-Nas** (0.6%), **Fasl Al-Maqal**⁴ (0.4%) and **Al-Ahali** (0.2%). The gap between preferences thus appears to be quite wide.

Readership is influenced by demographic characteristics, political attitudes or ideologies, and social identities and because the different newspapers have managed to penetrate different population sub-segments, we can construct some tentative profiles of consumer types. Reading more than one newspaper indicates that, among some consumer segments, readers are dissatisfied with the information provided by a single newspaper. Moreover, the data indicate that the Arab public's satisfaction with the Arabic press is associated with how its needs, rights and identity are expressed therein. In other words, Arab newspaper consumers expect that the press will respond to their needs, represent their interests and voice their problems. In general, Arab consumers are only moderately satisfied with the Arab press. In this regard we should note the clear distinction exhibited between the commercial and party-affiliated press. While there is a high level of satisfaction with the party-affiliated press, consumers of commercial newspapers are moderately or less than moderately satisfied with the Arab-language publications in Israel. Respondents were divided according to their satisfaction with the manner in which the Arab population's problems are presented. A considerable percentage of the Arab

4. It is important to draw the readers' attention to the fact that the weekly *Fasal al-Maqal* renewed publishing in January 2005, while this research was taking place, after a long interruption. In light of this, the data concerning this newspaper may be negatively affected.

readership desires improvements in press representation of their interests and needs. It is important to note that the average time spent reading the commercial press is less than the average time spent reading the party-affiliated press.

The survey data also indicate a relatively low percentage of readers of the daily Hebrew-language press. Only 17.4% of the Arab public reads a Hebrew newspaper on a daily basis. As expected, **Yediot Aharonot** was the first choice (84.7%) of those respondents who stated that they read Hebrew newspapers. Despite the high percentage of **Yediot Aharonot** readers, respondents did not express great trust in this newspaper. The Hebrew newspaper assigned the highest trust rating among readers of the Hebrew press was **Haaretz**.

In the area of electronic media consumption, the findings indicate a clear trend toward viewing a very wide variety of Arabic and Hebrew television networks. The Arab public has taken advantage of technological developments, particularly access to Arabic-language programming available via satellite. The survey data indicate that Arab television viewers tend to watch programs originating in the Arab world as well as those from Israel. 81.7% of the survey sample responded that they watched television daily or almost daily. Most Arab television viewers (54.7%) watch television with their families. A very high percentage of the Arab public (80.7%) exhibited interest in televised news: the **Al-Jazeera** News Network was ranked in first place (29.6%); Israel's **Channel 2** (11%) in second place, the Dubai-based Arab **MBC** (10.2%) in third place and Israel's **Channel 1** (7.9%) in fourth place. The remaining channels were mentioned by marginal percentages of the respondents.

One major characteristic of television consumption is choice of the channel according to the subject matter. With respect to information on political and cultural issues, the Arab public tends to prefer news and family-oriented channels from the Arab world, whereas for information regarding practical areas of daily life, such as education, health and economy, the Arab public tends to prefer Israeli channels broadcast in Hebrew. In light of this trend, one can characterize the Arab population's television consumption patterns as divided by content and language into an Arab sphere and an Israeli sphere. These two spheres complement one another; they provide the Arab viewer with a wider choice, promoting greater capacity for appraising the information received. This trend in consumption reflects the duality of Arab society in Israel, as the two media spaces fuse to create a unique cultural reality. Media consumption thus expresses the complex character of Arab society while contradicting claims of an identity crisis. The extensive use of varied media in fact expresses a multi-layered identity.

With reference to radio, trends are similar to those of television viewing and newspaper reading patterns. Arab radio consumers listen to a wide variety of stations in Arabic, as well as Hebrew. This pattern reflects the Arab public's tendency to vary their sources and compare the information received from each. The survey findings indicate that the three most popular radio stations are: **Kol Yisrael** in Arabic (24.7%), **Al-Shams** (18.8%), and **Reshet Bet** in Hebrew (17%). Unlicensed radio stations have drawn a low percentage of the listening public.

The findings also indicate a very low level of satisfaction with the Hebrew media in all issue areas and across the board. Responses to questions regarding the survey participants' trust in the Arab or Hebrew press reveal a clear tendency to rank Arab-language above Hebrew-language newspapers. This finding is confirmed by data regarding the Arab public's satisfaction with Hebrew-language Israeli media in general. A relatively high percentage (58.4%) of respondents do not believe that the Hebrew media represent them. A still higher percentage of the Arab public believes that the Hebrew media represent the interests of Israeli authorities (64%) exclusively. These responses reflect the almost complete absence of issues pertaining to Arab society in the Hebrew media and the fact that when information or images are transmitted, they tend to be distorted. Content analysis of programming carried out in recent years confirms this impression (Jamal forthcoming; First 1998).

3. **METHODOLOGY**

The survey presented here was carried out using a representative sample (594 participants) of the Arab population in Israel. A proportional stratified model was used to ensure representation of the wide variety of groups comprising the mosaic of Arab society in Israel. Staggered sampling increases the accuracy of the parameter measure when the main characteristics of the research population are known. The research population is thus divided into homogeneous groups according to their proportion in the general population, with specific participants randomly selected by area of residence. Because 95% of Israeli families have a telephone, households were chosen according to the “Dvash Program”⁵, which selects households according to telephone number. Interviewees were randomly selected among household members according to age: 18 and older. The sample took into consideration the issue of gender, which will be referred to repeatedly when considering the research results. The estimated standard deviation for the sample is 2%; with a refusal rate of 31%, a level acceptable in research of this type. We should clarify that the model deliberately refrained from sampling Palestinian residents of East

5. The Dvash program is a statistical program that uses the phone number database in order to choose a random sample in a specific country.

Jerusalem or Syrian residents of the Golan Heights because these areas are Occupied Territories. Hence, the research population consisted of Arab citizens of Israel exclusively.

The research questionnaire included 255 items dealing with the consumption of written, broadcast and electronic media, including the Internet. The items were organized by subject and in a sequence that facilitated a follow-up to check the reliability of interviewees' answers. The interviews, lasting about 60–75 minutes, were carried out in December 2004 and January 2005. Participants throughout the country were interviewed by a team of specially trained professional interviewers.

Analysis of the data was carried out under the supervision of statisticians and experts on the design and execution of public opinion surveys. The data were analyzed according to demographic factors such as age, gender, religiosity, education, income, area of residence and ethnic affiliation. Ideological factors, such as political-national identity and voting patterns, were also considered.

Only a portion of the findings are reported here. Because the purpose of this book is to present the research to the general public, complex analyses of causal relationships are excluded; these will be presented in a separate publication. Yet, the basic data presented here facilitates construction of a broad understanding of the media consumption patterns exhibited by Arab society in Israel. Regarding the relationship between Hebrew newspaper consumption and demographic variables, the reader is advised to examine both the comparative analysis and the absolute figures.

It is important to note that the findings on media consumption are presented differently throughout the text for the purpose of clarifying the issues analyzed. When findings are presented in general terms, the percentages usually relate to the entire sample. Alternatively, when analyzing the effect of items such as demographic variables on media consumption or media rankings by location, the findings refer to the various sub-groups. For instance, when presenting findings on newspaper consumption according to age or area of residence, the data shown in the graphs refer solely to the indicated sub-group. This point requires stressing because one purpose of presenting consumption by age is to explore the level of penetration of the various media within the selected population. This explains why the percentages shown do not always add up to 100 percent.

4. *Media Consumption and Culture*

Research on mass media has evolved into a cornerstone of contemporary social science. This stems from the increasing power of the media and its crucial role in shaping the public agenda. This greater power has led to a lively debate amongst media researchers and theoreticians regarding both the effect of the content on the public and the effect of the means utilized to achieve media goals (Blumler and Kavanagh 1999).

As in other social sciences, the study of communication has developed in two principal directions that maintain a constant tension. One direction originated in political economics, the other in cultural studies. The first tradition is further divided according to liberal and Marxist perspectives. Liberals situate the media in the public arena, free from state control and operating according to the rules of any other product market. Within this theoretical model, the media is amenable to private initiative and control as well as for use as a vehicle for capital accumulation. As private ownership releases it from dependence on the state, media operating in such markets can readily criticize the government and set limits to its authority (Mill 2003).

Marxists, however, view the private media as an integral mechanism of control employed by the dominant classes (Bagdikian 1997; Kendal 2005; Schuster 2006). Media ownership has therefore been treated as an important variable when establishing the media's impact and explaining the interests governing its operation. Thus, while liberals stress the private media's role as the "watchdog of democracy" they promote the idea of the media as the only force capable of protecting the public against the excessive application of government power (Norris 2000). (This was one among many arguments used to support the opening of privately owned networks in Israel.) In contrast, Marxists have argued that private ownership of the media enables capitalists to simultaneously control political and media institutions (Cook 1998). Adherents of this view also maintain that media owners take advantage of their position to promote regulatory practices and legislation that enhance their power and economic strength (Herman and Chomsky 2002). The accelerating concentration of the media in fewer and fewer hands, primarily in the West, has provided much justification for this position (Bagdikian 1997).

Another tradition in media research emphasizes the cultural dimensions of communication (Curran and Morley 2006). This tradition views communication as cultural production, an approach demanding analysis of the contents transmitted together with their effect on consumers. Disagreement exists here as well between the liberals who stress the pluralistic content of the media and critics belonging to several schools who point to the homogeneity of that content. Marxists likewise argue that these contents reflect bourgeois, middle-class values.

According to the liberal pluralistic approach, the media constitute part of civil society and the media's function is: to limit the power of government and other political institutions (Habermas 1992; Calhoun 1994). This function is fulfilled by providing the public with reliable information deemed necessary to form an informed opinion. That is, the multiple sources of information provided by the media are deemed to support rational decision-making.

Within this context, Brian McNair points to the rapidly growing number of media producers and media contents (McNair 1998). To McNair, the multiplicity of avenues for communication counterbalances critics' fears about the concentration of the media's power in the hands of a few international conglomerates. According to McNair, the options provided by the mass media in democratic countries are far too numerous to allow any political or economic interests to gain sufficient power to control media content, as feared by critics. Stated otherwise, the level of media penetration acquired by various social actors is unparalleled in history and presents obstacles to political and economic actors wishing to control media contents. Accordingly, these trends have consequently strengthened democracy.

In contrast to this liberal position, Marxists and other critics stress the overridingly bourgeois ideology disseminated by privately owned mass media. This criticism is rarely mitigated by awareness of the entertainment functions of media, especially given the fact that consumption of this entertainment is a matter of choice (Gitlin 2002). Many media critics argue that the widening gap between the rising

multiplicity of means of communication and the declining number of media owners reinforces the media's power to set the public agenda and structure consumer tastes (Goodman and Goodman 2004; Ezrahi, Goshen and Leshem 2003). Taking this argument a step further, they link the competition supposedly characterizing the media market and its pluralistic content with the deception and dishonesty that the mass media employ to blind consumers. This relationship has yet to encounter any broad-based opposition. The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu summarizes this view in his book, *On Television*,

...journalistic products are much more alike than is generally thought. The most obvious differences, notably the political tendencies of the newspapers – which, in any case, it has to be said, are becoming less and less evident...– hide the profound similarities. These are traceable to the pressures imposed by sources and by a whole series of mechanisms, the most important of which is competition. Free market economics holds that monopoly creates uniformity and competition produces diversity. Obviously, I have nothing against competition, but I observe that competition homogenizes when it occurs between journalists or newspapers subject to identical pressures and opinion polls...(Bourdieu 1998: 24).

Bourdieu essentially argues for the de facto absence of a positive association between economic competition and ideational pluralism. In other words, the multiplication in media institutions does not automatically ensure diversity. Precisely the opposite is true: The greater the competition, the greater the equivalence in form and content as media

competitors seek the common denominator attracting wider audiences (Lampel, Shamsie and Lant 2006). This explains the increasing quantity of entertainment programming – movies, sitcoms, game and reality shows, for instance – as opposed to in-depth news coverage and analysis. “Soft” news programs are thus being aired at the expense of “hard” news programs (Anderson 2004; Herbst 1999). These processes increase the programming similarities that obscure the national and cultural differences dividing societies. In Israel, these same trends are demonstrated in the similarity of its two largest newspapers, *Yediot Aharonot* and *Maariv*, and the two main commercial television stations, Channels 2 and 10. The same can be said regarding the two main Arabic weeklies, **Kol al-Arab** and **Assennara**.

One way of approaching research on mass media is to define communication as a process consisting of various stages. The issue of identifying the most important of those stages has also divided the scholarly community. Some focus on the initial production phase, on message content and production per se. Others turn to distribution and the capacity of different agents to utilize diverse mechanisms in order to ensure that the communicated message reaches its target audience. Still others concentrate on consumption patterns, especially on the decoding of the communicated content as well as its next stage, the stage of cultural reproduction. This latter stage follows content consumption and focuses on the internalization and the employment of the communicated message, that is, on the mechanisms by which the content’s producers succeed in inculcating the dominant social ideology among media consumers (Jameson 1991).

Although the distinction between the various stages of the communication process is analytical rather than practical, research of each stage is crucial to an understanding of the media's impact.

Perceptions of the progression from one stage to the next impinge on how we view the entire process. The focus on message production emphasizes the process by which broadcast messages transmit subliminal codes that by-pass the recipients' cognitive filters. From this perspective, recipients are usually treated as predominantly passive (Walker and Herrmann 2005; Wolf 2000; Haeijer and Werner 1998). Research of the distribution stage delves into the structure of networks, media production and the technological infrastructure that facilitate message penetration. Stress on the consumption stage distinguishes between passive and active consumption patterns. While reading newspapers is considered by many students of communication to be active consumption, watching television is usually conceived as mainly passive consumption. One major explanation for this passivity is the power of televised contents, which contain multiple messages and effects. This multiplicity inhibits conscious and selective processes by the consumer (Gitlin 1980). The messages encoded in certain contents interfere with the consumer's capacity to decode and hence evaluate the media message, but also to integrate those messages within his or her own cognitive system (D'Angelo 2002).

Nevertheless, in recent years we have witnessed the development of a new analytical approach that assigns much

more power to the media consumer. Researchers point to the ability of quite large segments of the audience to consciously select and assess media contents and to structure those contents by means of cognitive categorization and filtering of all the media contents consumed (Ross and Nightingale 2003). This approach will be demonstrated in the next chapter.

Another recent school of research criticizes the previous analytic distinctions by stressing the dialectical relationship between the various stages of the communication process. This approach assigns primary importance to the interaction between the sender, the message, and the receiver, a process that captures the significance of interactive communication. Following this model, the producers of media messages are not independent entities existing in isolation from the cultural, social and (primarily) economic worlds of the media consumers to whom their messages are directed (Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes and Sasson 1992). Producers of media messages - whether owners, editors or writers - are also affected by their location in the cultural, social and economic web in which they operate, a factor having considerable impact on the formulation of messages (Patterson 1998). Producers of media content, primarily journalists, are perceived as belonging to an "interpretive community" whose members encode content into the media messages that construct the consumers' cultural world (Zelizer 1997). Media contents therefore constitute integral parts of the dominant culture a given society. Hence, media messages cannot be considered as separate from their senders or receivers. The respective interactions are dialectic; their

isolation is conceptual and conducted for analytical purposes only. Although this does not mean that producers and consumers of media contents have equal power, it is important to note that the relationships they maintain are not unidirectional.

Based on this interactive approach, the British culture and media scholar Stuart Hall has attempted to create a model of the encoding and decoding of media content. According to Hall, cultural and ideological messages are encoded in every message (Hall 1986). Encoding heightens the message's effect and promotes its penetration into the consumer's awareness. These codes, which contain the message's essence, open the cultural space to decoding or interpretation. Simultaneous with the encoding and formulating of messages, consumers – or as some of researchers prefer to call them, “readers” – initiate a process of decoding based on their cultural and ideological repertoires. Although this process rarely reaches the sophistication of encoding, the interaction between the encoder and the decoder nevertheless enables transmission of an entire world of meanings, one that is not necessarily coherent.

Decoding transforms the media consumer into a primary agent in this process. It is here that this school of media research becomes particularly relevant. In contrast to approaches that attribute a passive stance to the media consumer, the focus on interpretation – which remains intimately related to other aspects of the communication process – underscores the media consumer's active participation and his or her relationship to the content

consumed. Hall stresses that although media consumers interpret the message's contents, they do so with the analytical tools inculcated by the content's producers, who prefer to direct consumers to one rather than another interpretation (Hall 2001). By explaining the inequality between media producers and consumers in this way, Hall draws attention to the power and control inherent in communication as a process. Hall thus emphasizes the importance of the dialectic approach without negating the producer's latent power. His analysis demonstrates how ignoring the relationships maintained between the various components of the process simply obfuscate its understanding.

At this point it is incumbent upon us to recognize the fact that media contents do not have a direct and univalent relationship with the reality that they are supposed to represent; this is true especially for the medium of television. John Fiske, one of the most influential of media critics, argues that three great narratives address the relationship between the televised message and reality (Fiske 1991). The first of these is representation. According to Fiske, television does not represent reality or a revised version of reality; rather, television constructs reality. Reality is thus the product of a discourse. Television cameras and microphones do not capture reality; they encode it. This encoding creates a sense of reality reflecting a specific ideology. Hence, television does not transmit reality per se but the ideology on which its interpretations or representations of reality are based.

The second narrative is that of imitation. The image, Fiske states, is – or should be – a reflection of the object that inspired

it; i.e., its target. This narrative is based on the metaphor of transparency, which alludes to the camera's eye as a window through which the world is seen. Because windows filter or distort what we observe through them, they turn the image into something more important than the object. An entire industry is devoted to the manipulation of images complying with this narrative, wherein the image overpowers its now marginalized object. The image industry thus blurs the distinction between image and reality. Yet, despite the differences between these two narratives, reality in both has a certain relationship to the item represented. In this context, the television camera is an agent of false presentation.

The third narrative, subjectivity, expands the narrative of representation. According to Fiske, subjectivity theory argues that among other things, ideology functions through the media, primarily television, to create what can be termed a "false subconscious." The result of this narrative is the engraving (or encoding) of the message's sociopolitical ideology within the individual's innermost being, a process that transforms the ideology transmitted into a pattern of behavior and action. Accordingly, the ideology not only reproduces itself in images of reality, it also reproduces itself in the viewer's subjective awareness of these images, the space in which representations of reality function.

Fiske employs these three narratives (or theories) to elucidate the relationship between media discourse and reality as a basis for elaborating numerous theoretical insights, a discussion of which goes beyond the limitations of this book. What can be said here is that these theories indicate the

complexity of the interactions linking media discourse with the audience. Although media discourse constitutes an autonomous field of research, its understanding would not be worthy of much research effort if one did not assume that this discourse was a strong instrument for influencing consumers' perceptions. This influence need not – and in fact should not – be direct. It is important to recognize that media producers manipulate the media discourse in order for us to understand how the discourse penetrates the unconsciousness and affects consumer behavior (Gamson, et.al. 1992). The source of the present study's importance lies herein, in its attempt to explore the workings of the media discourse in Arab society. Although the study does not examine the impact of specific programs, it nevertheless seeks to provide a mapping of the culture of media consumption and its meaning for Arab society in Israel.

5. Audience Research and the Case of National Minorities

Research on media consumption is a weighty task due to the difficulties of defining the research population (specific media consumers), the research goals and the methodology employed. Prior to recognition of the consumer public as the primary target of communication research (Moore 1993), attention focused on the study of media contents and media effectiveness in relation to the formation of public opinion. In recent years however, new approaches to the study of the media-consuming population have been devised (Moore 1993; Mutz 2001). Development of these approaches was stimulated by the technological advances that enabled consumers to individually select media contents, an option that eliminated consumer dependence on a rigid infrastructure as well as on media producers and their agendas. This empowerment transformed research of the media consuming public into a highly complicated undertaking as the range of consumption decisions expanded. Moreover, the increasing sophistication of communication theories, effectively establishing the powerful influence of the media on public opinion and the public agenda, promoted this research domain into a primary focus for those wishing to understand the media's effect on

culture, social structure and individual behavior (Bryant and Zillmann 2002). From the vantage point of producers, the economic implications inherent in the massive increase in the size of the consumer public induced many profit-oriented firms to invest in public opinion surveys and research on media consumption patterns. These developments were, of course, based on the traditional acceptance of the public as the focal actor in a democratic process imbued with pluralist ideas.

The increasing salience of the media consuming public engendered new research challenges. The core issue of population definition is thus problematized: Should media consumers be treated as a unified group or as a collection of individuals who, other than consuming a specific media product, lack common characteristics? In other words, are media consumers an a priori recognizable "public" prior to their participation in media consumption or does media consumption produce a public by influencing preferences and constructing common identities? Responses to these questions vary. In order for media consumers to be considered a "public" in sociological research terms, they must meet certain criteria: for instance, the existence of social boundaries differentiating one group from another, self-awareness, a high level of face-to-face interaction and common norms and values. The weaker the compliance with these criteria, the stronger becomes the tendency to consider media consumers as a mass rather than a public. Alternatively, the stronger the compliance, the more appropriate it becomes to designate this group as a "public". Thus, in the context of communication research, relating to

a group of people as a mass rather than a public depends on the characteristics of their media consumption (Nightingale 1996). The greater the similarity of type and level of media consumed, the more one can relate to a group as a public. Alternatively, the fewer the shared consumption characteristics, the more one should relate to consumers as a mass.

Within the framework of this research, a central hypothesis was that the media consumption patterns in Arab society will demonstrate that, despite apparent obstacles, this society should be treated as a public. Israel's Arab population has a cohesive and clear national and cultural identity that precedes its categorization as a media consumer. To what extent is this assumption confirmed by the findings? It is assumed that the findings will support the argument that Arab society in Israel exhibits a relatively high level of homogeneity in its media consumption patterns. Yet, this homogeneity does not negate the existence of internal differences that divide this society into various sub-groups based on where they live, their level of education, age or other demographic characteristics.

Despite their basic designation as a public, conducting public opinion surveys to examine patterns of media consumption among the Arab population of Israel requires that its members be considered as a collection of individuals. This approach conforms with theoretical models that view patterns of public consumption as products of individual choice rather than social dictate. Nevertheless, public opinion research is not required to, nor can it ignore those shared characteristics that

identify individuals as members of a group, in this case, a national minority. Hence, despite the individualist assumptions underlying public opinion surveys, research on media consumption among minority groups – including national minorities – throughout the world has plainly shown that these groups develop distinctive media consumption patterns that differentiate them from the surrounding majority culture (Ross and Playdon 2001; Roio and Mohamed 2003). This finding tends to hold true especially in cases marked by open conflict between the majority and minority groups (Olzak and West 1991).

The literature on media consuming publics can be divided into two streams determined by the goals motivating two broad types of public opinion surveys. One group of studies focuses on the goals of the media industry, primarily in the private sector, which tends to conduct surveys to further its control of consumers and management of consumption. These surveys examine existing and potential consumption patterns and preferences that are considered as input for product development and advertising campaigns. In addition, these surveys are designed to identify new consumer markets, test acceptance of new media products and assess media efficacy in promoting these products.

The goals of the other group of studies center on the needs, interests and preferences of consumers themselves. Studies conducted for this purpose are usually initiated to empower consumers. These studies tend to test the media's acceptance of responsibility vis-a-vis consumers. In addition, these studies tend to focus on the expression of consumers' needs

in media content, consumer satisfaction with media content, as well as consumer trust in the media.

The current research adopts the second set of goals. The main research objective is to explore media consumption patterns among the Arab media public in Israel, assess its satisfaction with the media contents consumed and determine its trust in the media. Given that, the ultimate goal of the research is to improve our understanding of this public as a means to further its empowerment.

As indicated in the previous chapter, many media scholars, particularly those associated with the school of cultural criticism, tend to view the media consuming public as a primarily passive recipient of media messages. This public is perceived as prey to media industry manipulation. A related assumption is that, despite their oppositional media consumption, media consumers internalize communicated messages. These assumptions have motivated theorizing regarding the formation of consciousness by members of the Frankfurt School and other researchers belonging to the critical tradition, such as Raymond Williams, Todd Gitlin and Noam Chomsky (Marcus 1968; Chomsky 2002; Williams 1990; Gitlin 1980). Based on this perspective, the respective theories stress the ideological, cultural and political manipulation that media producing firms employ to maintain their hegemony. The research conducted by proponents of this approach therefore focuses on media production and the ideologies they serve. Consumers' autonomy is consequently marginalized. The mass media audience is characterized as having "popular" taste

(preferences) and consuming low – as opposed to high – culture.

In contrast to this view, this study hypothesizes that media consumers are at least partially active. The consumer's activity is exhibited in the free choice of contents, varying levels of attention paid, differing reactions to media contents and numerous patterns of decoding (interpreting) messages (Hall 1987). This study demonstrates that active media-consuming publics, such as the Arab public in Israel, are capable of resisting - again, at least partially - the techniques of persuasion and manipulation the media employs. This assumption leans in part on theories addressing the role of the spectator that date as far back as the era of classical Greek and Roman theatre (McQuail 1997). Technological developments, primarily digital technologies, reinforce the public's ability to control their selection of the mass media contents offered, although not necessarily the contents themselves (we currently leave aside blogs, iPods, ham radio transmissions, indymedia, etc.). Technology is thus perceived as a factor empowering media consumers in some ways, in a market characterized by strong ratings competition (Mutz 2001). This conjunction between attitudes and technology has generated theories and research approaches that try to place the average media consumer at the center (Blumler and McQuail 1968).

Much of the research conducted in multiethnic societies has adopted this point of departure when testing the media's contribution to minority group integration into the majority society (Mahtani 2001). Other research has explored media

practices aimed at maintaining the minority group's unique national, cultural, linguistic identity. The present study belongs to this general trend dealing with how minorities cope with the communication-related, structural and cultural conditions of their environment. With respect to these aims, the questions address the patterns of media consumption, the reasons for choosing the media consumed, the reasons for choosing the contents consumed, and the public's satisfaction with and trust of the contents it consumes.

Hence, this study examines the extent to which Arab media consumers are active and have an impact – if only a limited one – not only on the media contents they wish to consume but also on how media contents are decoded. It considers to what extent the audience understands that the messages are encoded. The study assumes that Arab media consumers consciously implement consumption strategies and have clear opinions, often very firm ones, about media contents. If these assumptions become evident in the findings, this will support the position that minorities may turn the media structure available to them into an opportunity instead of viewing it as a trap.

Media consumption may rest on varied and wide-ranging motivations. Before reviewing existing explanatory models, we should note Denis McQuail's comment that the complexity and multiplicity - i.e., the existence of overlapping media-consuming publics - of consumption patterns preclude the possibility of constructing a simple or single explanatory theory or model (McQuail 1997). One can speak of two traditionally accepted approaches, dominant

in explaining media consumption patterns and the creation of a consumer public. The first, the structural approach, focuses on the effect of various factors and media institutions on consumption patterns. The elements of social structure included in the current research pertain to demographic characteristics – age, level of education, income, religious affiliation, region of residence and so forth. A major stream belonging to this approach stresses the components of communication: the media available, the options available and the accessibility of message contents. The interaction between these components gives rise to what Weibull terms media orientation (Weibull 1985). This stance, constructed on the joint foundations of social background and previous media experience, is reflected in the consumer's loyalty to particular media or media contents, preferences and interests, consumption routines and expectations of media quality, among other factors. Media orientation is further influenced by the media's structure, which can be broken down into the contents offered at the time of consumption, consumption features (e.g., quantity of time devoted to media consumption) and the social context of media choice, manifested by the influence of family or social environment on consumer behavior.

In contrast to structural models, behavioral models focus primarily on individuals: their preferences, needs, expectations and drives. Behavioral research was born in the 1940s. Members of this school have identified the principal motivations for media consumption as entertainment and gratification of emotional needs, acquisition of information to fulfill cognitive needs, social needs – primarily identity –

and mood management, the total of which supports programming geared to escapism and similar contents (Lazarsfeld and Katz 1955). Although the present research does not examine the individual's motivations for media consumption, it does investigate some of the motivations directing the Arab public's choice of media contents in Israel.

One of the behavioral models exerting the greatest influence in the field of propaganda and media consumption research is that constructed by Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler and Michael Gurevitch (Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch 1974). They argue that media choice is determined by the viewer's socio-psychological background, which arouses expectations. These expectations motivate individuals to expose themselves to specific media that, in turn, gratify individual needs. Although this model belongs to the individualistic stream, it admits that consumers display collective characteristics, primarily common expectations and needs, derived from a shared social background. It is these factors that help to transform individual consumers into a public or alternatively, an audience (Babrow 1988).

In his 1997 study of media consumers, McQuail proposed an integrated model to explain the motivation to consume media (McQuail 1997). He associated media consumption with specific social situations rather than solely with structural or behavioral factors. His is a pragmatic model, similar to that of Weibull, but according to McQuail, the integration of factors characterizing the consuming public and media structure is the key to understanding media consumption patterns. He therefore stresses the media

consumer's social and cultural background as well as demographic characteristics - e.g. age, level of education, and media-related needs, such as knowledge accumulation, compliance with personal preferences, entertainment and leisure time routines, as well as level of self-awareness. As regards the media itself, McQuail argues for the significance of the operative media infrastructure, observed in features such as number of channels, technological integration capabilities, the structure of need satisfaction, types of message content, the media's popularity, programming and the extent to which programs fit the consumer's schedule. The interaction between these two dimensions – consumers and the media – creates consumption patterns that spur the development of distinctive media consuming publics. As we will show, the factors that McQuail proposes can in fact be identified as influencing media consumption patterns among the Arab population in Israel.

Turning to the particularities of the population of interest to us here, other factors enter the picture, beyond those cited in the above models. Arab society in Israel represents a minority residing in a country defining itself in national and cultural terms that are foreign or even hostile to the Arab population. This requires the introduction of two additional sets of variables. The first relates to the minority's national affiliation, cultural identity and history. Based on findings from studies conducted elsewhere, this factor can be expressed in the following question: To what extent does national affiliation affect media consumption patterns? (Rios and Gaines Jr. 1998), It was hypothesized that it strongly influences the creation of a distinctive media consuming

public, separate from the Jewish media consuming public. In this context, it is important to note that the national and cultural affiliations of the Arab population are manifested in a shared interpretive repertoire that promotes the development of common attitudes toward media contents. Such repertoires have been identified by media consumption research conducted among other minorities (Holtzman 2000). Hence, it was hypothesized that media consumption does play an important role in expressing and maintaining social, national and cultural identity (Becker, Kosicki and Jones 1992; Frachton and Vargaftig 1995).

Minorities tend to develop unique media consumption patterns that help them to construct their identities. Minority consumers perceive the media as a repository of their identity and culture, so that it functions as a symbolic milieu. As the current findings show, the Arab population in Israel follows this pattern. Consumption patterns clearly indicate a media orientation in which contents are consumed that support the Arab population's national and cultural identity, even if consumers are often critical and dissatisfied (Gillespie 1995). Also similar to the findings from other research, the current findings indicate that the Arab minority has developed consumption patterns and interpretations that deviate from those intended by a media controlled by the majority.

The second unique factor to be considered in this context is Arab society's exposure to two separate and even opposing media systems: one Israeli, the other Arabic. Differences between these two systems begin with language and expand to envelope other aspects of culture and politics. This factor

prompted the following questions: How much of the media transmitted by each respective system does the Arab population consume? What are the contents of consumption for Arabs from each system? As the goal of the research is to understand the culture of media consumption of the Arab minority in Israel, an important question would be how this minority utilizes the split media structure and to what extent it manages to turn this into an opportunity instead of a trap?

In order to explore the Arab population's media consumption patterns within the conceptual framework presented herein, a comprehensive survey of a representative sample of the entire population of adult Arab society in Israel was conducted. Public opinion surveys have been conducted since the early nineteenth century. For approximately 100 years, these surveys queried the dominant elite under the assumption that this group had the greatest impact on public opinion and directly reflected the general public's attitudes. Since the end of the nineteenth century however, with the increasing importance of "public opinion" as a factor in political decision making, surveys addressing ever-widening population segments gradually became more acceptable as instruments of scientific study. With the behavioral revolution of the 1950s and 1960s, the survey became the principal tool in assessing public attitudes and opinions on a broad range of issues (Gallup and Rae 1940) and spanning increasingly large populations (Dalton 2002).

This trend was reflected in media producers' behavior, with surveys employed primarily by newspapers to ascertain public opinion, chiefly during elections. Eventually, the number of surveys increased as the aims altered. In addition

to their traditional objectives, surveys were now used to reinforce the credibility of the information transmitted by the media (Goren 1993; Weiman 1982). This trend had widespread ramifications. One positive result was that surveys have become more transparent. Yet, as the perception of them as credible instruments for the measurement of public opinion improved, their influence on the opinions they are intended to measure has grown. In the end the frequency of surveys reduced their credibility, particularly given growing public awareness of the manipulation of survey results by politicians and the media itself (Herbst 1998). The revelation of bias in survey methodologies in the area of consumption (Tsfati 2001) for the benefit of business and economic interests has also damaged their credibility as scientific tools. Despite the convergence of these negative impacts along with the objective limitations of the method - evidenced by sampling error, scheduling defects and limited reliability (Fuchs 1998) - no alternative to public opinion surveys has been found for gathering the given information on such a large scale.

The importance of the findings presented herein derives in part from the fact that the survey was conducted by researchers who have absolutely no direct, personal economic interest in the media beyond it being a sector demanding scholarly research. Application of this method, within the aforementioned technical limitations, complies with the scholarly character of this research.

6. *The Arab Minority in Israel and Its Media Space*

Arab citizens of the State of Israel who, as a result of the 1948 war, found themselves a defeated minority in a new state that defined itself in Jewish ethnic terms, still do not control their own political, social or media systems. Since 1948, they have been a marginal factor in Israeli's public space and in terms of geography and communication, they were for a long period of time cut off from their brethren and the Arab cultural landscape extending beyond Israel's borders. Their minority status has been controlled by a military government established in 1948 that continued to be in effect until 1966, residual mechanisms of which continue to be employed today. Cultural controls have divorced the present population from its past and from its natural geopolitical space. This chapter presents a short review that focuses on the communication space inhabited by Arab citizens in order to place the research findings in an appropriate context.

Following the 1948 war, the Palestinians lost control over their national and cultural institutions. During the war, the Arab political, cultural and economic elites were exiled, and all Arab urban centers destroyed (Jiryis 1976; Lustick 1980; Rouhana 1997; Gahnem 2001; Zureik 1979; Haider 1995;

Shafir and Peled 2002). As a result, the majority of Arab public institutions collapsed, including those vehicles of mass communication that had developed up to then (Qabha 2004).⁶ We should note that since the first decade of the 20th century, the number of journalists active in Palestine had continually increased. Many newspapers were published, principally in the major urban centers such as Jerusalem, Jaffa, Haifa and Acre. These newspapers expressed the feelings of the Palestinian people as they anticipated the approaching threat, posed primarily by Zionist immigration and settlement in Palestine. Among the most widely disseminated and well-known newspapers of that era we can list *Filisteen*, **Al-Karmel**, and **Al-Mufid** (Khalidi 1997).

In the wake of the war, a deep cultural and communication vacuum suddenly appeared that severed the local population from Palestinians and Arabs living in neighboring countries as well as the surrounding Arab landscape. This isolation intensified the population's sense of crisis and powerlessness. Geographic factors exacerbated the predicament: Because the majority of Arabs remaining in Israel were rural peasants, they became totally dependent on the information that the Israeli propaganda machine disseminated, excluding those few who owned transistor radios. All Arabic newspapers, excluding **Al-Ittihad**, the organ of the Communist Party, ceased operations. Due both to the pressure the government exerted on the opposition Communist Party, a political home for Israel's Arab citizens at the time, and to the fact that only a small percentage of the population was literate in Arabic, the

6. Under the British Mandate, a broad network of Arab newspapers developed that manifested the cultural and political wealth of Palestinian society before al-Nakba.

party's newspaper, **Al-Ittihad**, had limited influence, oftentimes being reduced to a very small circle of readers. In this atmosphere of fear and defeat, especially in light of a developing collaborator culture – that is, Arab citizens who collaborated with the Israeli military and the General Security Services (Shabak) – most members of Arab society did not dare to openly show that they listened to radio programs broadcast from Arab countries or that they read **Al-Ittihad**.

Until the abolishment of the military government in 1966 and the 1967 war, the small group of educated Arabs in Israel was sustained primarily by **Al-Yom**, an Arabic-language newspaper that the Histadrut (General Federation of Labor) began publishing immediately after 1948. **Al-Yom** was published out of the offices of the now defunct Filisteen, a newspaper published prior to the 1948 war. After **Al-Yom** ceased publication in 1968, it was replaced by **Al-Anbaa**, which continued **Al-Yom**'s agenda, but in a more sophisticated form. These two newspapers, together with several other party newspapers – e.g., **Al-Marsad**, published by the Mapam (United Labor) Party – succeeded in attracting many Arab journalists although the majority of articles repeated the State's propaganda lines. Local broadcast information was available in Arabic only after 1958, when **Kol Yisrael** (The Voice of Israel) initiated radio news and other limited programming.

Like other hegemonic regimes, the State of Israel transformed the media into one of its principal socializing mechanisms, second only to the education system. The re-socialization policy was controlled by the Prime Minister's office, which

worked rigorously to inculcate awareness and acceptance of the new reality throughout the Arab population for the purpose of quashing dissent. The official media policy therefore attempted to construct an Arab collective memory divorced from its cultural environment and historical past. Moreover, the elite-affiliated media made great efforts to extol the cultural supremacy of Jewish society, messages that implied the cultural, economic and social backwardness of Arab society. All these ploys were contrived to justify the cultural, political, and military colonization of Arab society and its geographic space.

As a result of the geopolitical changes initiated by the 1967 war, in tandem with the technological advances and transformations that overtook the Israeli media, the conditions of Arab society within Israel's media space altered, but not necessarily for the better. As noted, no autonomous Arabic media institutions were in existence. Israel's expansion into the West Bank and the establishment of the Israel Broadcasting Authority (IBA), altered the media environment. The dwindling number of Arabic-language newspapers published by Zionist political parties did not mean that a serious change in Israeli media policies was taking place. Control of the collective Arab memory continued to occupy the attention of those in charge of Israeli media policy and practice. This policy received added impetus when Israeli television was introduced within the framework of the IBA. The Israel Broadcasting Authority Law (1965), the institution's legal foundation, expounds on the official position regarding the Arab audience. Section 3 of the law refers to Arabic-language broadcasts to be conducted for the benefit of "Arabic-speaking residents,"

as well as to promote and support mutual understanding and peace with neighboring countries.⁷ The law's wording does not refer to "Arab citizens," but to "Arabic-speaking residents," as determined by State policy. That is, the establishment of this media channel was not targeted at filling the needs of Israel's Arab citizens, but was rather to ensure the Arab population's loyalty and control by means of a hegemonic media regime.

In time, Arab society adapted itself to Israel's media map. This process was driven by increasing levels of education and integration into Jewish Israeli society, observed in the ubiquity of spoken Hebrew among the Arab population. Yet, like other accommodations, the spread of Hebrew was not by choice; it was the outcome of total political and economic dependence on state institutions and the Jewish economy. The number of Arab readers of Hebrew-language newspapers increased, as did the number of Arab listeners to Hebrew-language radio broadcasts. Arab viewers of news broadcast on **Channel One**, the sole Israeli channel operating until the early 1990s, increased as well. Similar to trends in media consumption surfacing elsewhere, and in Jewish society in particular, radio and television became the principal sources of information about events transpiring locally and internationally. The strength of **Kol Yisrael** radio and Israeli television broadcasts in Arabic derived from this fact. The only competitors to these sources of information originated in the Arab world, primarily **Sawt Al-Arab** (Voice of the Arabs) radio broadcasts from Cairo, and television broadcasts from Jordan, Egypt and, until the civil war erupted in 1975, from Lebanon. The attraction of Egyptian and Lebanese

7. Israel Broadcasting Authority Law (1965).

television broadcasts decreased however, with the decline of Nasserism and the Lebanese civil war. Jordanian television thus became the primary Arab provider of programming to Arab viewers in Israel for many years serving as the only bridge linking Arab society in Israel to the Arab world prior to the satellite era.

As for the printed press, literate Arab citizens were sustained, as noted, first by the weekly **Al-Ittihad** and then by the daily **Al-Anbaa**. These newspapers continued to attract relatively large groups of readers. **Al-Ittihad** was widely read amongst Communist Party members and supporters, whose numbers increased steadily. This newspaper became a unique voice on the Israeli media map, articulating the Arab population's heart and soul. It served as a platform for the intellectuals and cultural commentators excluded from the Israeli press. Unfortunately, even though **Al-Ittihad** began daily publication in 1984 and served as a school nurturing generations of Arab journalists with nationalist political leanings, the newspaper was unsuccessful in garnering broad popular support. It generally remained limited to social circles close to the Communist party. On the other hand, some people in the Arab community were exposed to other local national publications, such as the newspaper circulated irregularly by Al-Ard Movement in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and the newspaper of the Abna'a Al-Balad (Sons of the Village) Movement, **Al-Raya**, which was circulated in small numbers in the early 1970s. Despite the importance of these publications in terms of content, they never enjoyed widespread distribution, mainly because of policies of the Israeli authorities towards them. Al-Ard publications were never legalized, and had to come out as

sporadic and separate one-time publications, a production format that allowed the publication to forgo the procurement of licensing required under Israeli law. The efforts of Al-Ard movement to acquire a license to issue a regular newspaper were rejected by the Interior Minister, who is empowered to legalize the publication of newspapers in Israel (Jamal 2005b: 97-121). The Producers of **Al-Raya** were persecuted by the Israeli authorities and its readers were beleaguered by the Israeli intelligence services, the Shabak. This treatment eventually led to the closing of the newspaper.

In contrast, **Al-Anbaa** was an establishment newspaper, financially supported by official sources. It was distributed among political groups close to the ruling Labor Party and to teachers who were indirectly forced to read it. The newspaper, which experienced severe economic problems with the decline of the Histadrut and the beginnings of privatization and liberalization of the Israeli economy, ceased publication in 1984.⁸

In 1983, the appearance of a new weekly newspaper in Nazareth, **Assennara**, carved out a new location in the Arab media landscape. Although **Assennara** began as a marketing vehicle for a large Nazareth advertising company, it gradually developed into a weekly newspaper providing information and news. **Assennara**'s success as a private commercial weekly blazed the way for the foundation of two similar weekly newspapers, **Kol al-Arab**, founded in 1987, and **Panorama**, which began publication in 1988. These three weeklies gradually dominated the Arab newspaper market. No substitutes for Al-Ittihad, the

8. On the financial difficulties Al-Anba'a see file number GL 17084/13 in the governmental Archives in Jerusalem.

three represent a different type of press, one that strives to adapt itself to the competitive market conditions now characterizing the local, as well as global economy.

Arab society, located at the margins of the Israeli economy, has adopted economic patterns of behavior that are considerably influenced by norms dominant in Jewish society. Improvement in the quality of life of Arab society in Israel, accompanied by the growth of a large lower-middle class, has enabled the spread of consumer culture. The three weeklies just referred to provide clear indications of this trend. They are more commercial than informative - that is, almost 50% of the space is allocated to advertising. The format of these newspapers is similar to that of popular Israeli newspapers such as **Yediot Aharonot** and **Maariv**. Tabloids in character, they present news with a sensational twist. They do not conduct their own in-depth, investigative reporting but mostly publish short reports, some of which are obtained from recognized news agencies or from the electronic media, especially the Internet. Despite these limitations, their distribution is relatively wide, especially when compared to party-affiliated newspapers. The three newspapers have thus successfully restructured the Arab media landscape, which is distinct from the Hebrew media landscape both in language and in the subjects addressed.

A market spirit and profit considerations inform the management of the three weeklies. Their status as privately owned enterprises, free of any ideological commitments, has turned them into "supermarkets" for news-seekers. Notwithstanding their commercial bent, the owners of all

three newspapers profess to represent the interests of the Arab society, each according to his style and outlook. The language of national consensus that leaps from the pages of the commercial press should, however, be considered, at least partially, as a mechanism for the accumulation of wealth rather than as a vision. Content analysis of the texts appearing in the newspapers indicates that they do represent Arab society, but rather superficially. The language of national commitment and the demands voiced for the rights of Arab society as a national minority tend to be motivated by pragmatic interests. Indications of this attitude can be seen in the space allotted to official announcements emanating from the Government Publications Bureau (Lapam). The latter controls the government publications market, which serves as an important source of income for Arab newspapers due to the weakness of the Arab advertising market. In order to obtain advertising contracts, the Arab press often succumbs to the Bureau's demands. The Bureau utilizes its economic power to pressure Arab newspapers into softening nationalistic language and minimizing criticism of governmental policies. This acquiescence allows the Arab commercial press to benefit from close to 1% of all advertising expenditures in Israel, including its share of the rather paltry government publication budget (Jamal 2005b: 97-121). This tiny piece of the advertising pie fuels the raging competition for clients engaged in by the commercial press in the Arab sector, a phenomenon increasingly blatant in recent years.

Since the early 1990s, the number of Arabic-language newspapers published has steadily increased. In 1989, **Sawt**

Al-Haq wal-Hurriya, published by the Islamic Movement, began appearing. **Al-Midan** (1994), **Fasl al-Maqal** (1997), **Al-Ain** (1999), **Hadith Al-Nas** (1999), **Al-Akhbar** (2001), **Al-Ahali** (2004) and **Al-Fajr Al-Jadeed** (2004) followed. In addition to these newspapers, a chain of local newspapers and monthly magazines began publication, among them **Al-Manbar**, **Lilac** and **Lady**, though with a more limited circulation. The last two monthly magazines are owned by the same advertising firms that publish **Assennara** and **Kol al-Arab**, respectively.

Evidence of the disparity in growth between the Jewish and Arab economy in Israel is found in the stagnating market share of advertising for the Arabic press. Growth in advertising volume, when combined with the continuing marginality of advertising in the Arabic press, has accelerated competition and made the battle for advertising, circulation and reputation highly aggressive. For instance, the two most widely read Arab weeklies, **Kol al-Arab** and **Assennara**, are engaged in a bitter struggle over market share. These transformations affect Arab society as much as they are affected by Arab society. These developments explain why an analysis of the Arab public's attitudes toward events transpiring in its environment, processes fed by the media's transformation, is so important, perhaps even more important than the attempt to understand specific patterns of Arab media consumption.

Radio and television have also undergone enormous changes. The liberalization of the Israeli economy brought about the media's empowerment, and turned it into a separate market niche. Numerous regional radio stations

have joined **Kol Yisrael** and **Galei Zahal** (the IDF Airwaves), as a consequence of Israel's Second Broadcasting Authority Law (1990). A not inconsiderable number of illegal radio stations have also sprung up. Israel has therefore witnessed a revolution in television broadcasting during the last two decades. At the close of the 1980s, cable television was introduced into the country, adding a long list of channels to the media system. At the beginning of the 1990s, after a short experimental phase, **Channel 2** began to broadcast and **Channel 10** was added in 2002. With the advent of satellite broadcasting, television transmitted from all over the globe came into many, if not most Israeli homes.

These technological as well as regulatory changes made it possible to receive television broadcasts originating in Arab countries, with previously unknown clarity, and on a very broad range of subjects. Although exposure to Jordanian and Egyptian television had begun in the early 1970s, only official channels were received. In contrast, today's Arab audience is exposed to dozens, perhaps hundreds, of private Arabic-language television channels. Among the most notable is **Al-Jazeera**, the Arabic equivalent of **CNN**, which has become the most widely watched channel by the Arab population in Israel. Many channels broadcast programming aimed at the entire family that provide leisure entertainment with well-known icons among the Arab population being the **Orbit** and **ART** networks and their affiliates. Availability of these broadcasts has inaugurated a revolution in the media consumption patterns of Arab society in Israel. Yet, despite these changes, Arab society does not enjoy the status of partner in the determination of policy pertaining to radio or television in Israel, or further afield. Without such

participation, neither broadcasting system takes account of its unique needs.

The impact of these changes on the Arab population's attitudes toward the media as well as the changes in its media consumption patterns have yet to be studied in-depth. This comprehensive study was designed to fill some of the gaps in this knowledge. In-depth interviews were thus conducted with members of this population as well as with media owners and Arab and Jewish editors and journalists. Regarding the latter, our objective was to examine attitudes and views of members of the press as well as clarify the factors having the greatest effect on their performance. The findings that appear here are therefore part of a broader research effort that includes a content analysis of the Hebrew- and Arabic-language media.

7. *The Press – An Overview*

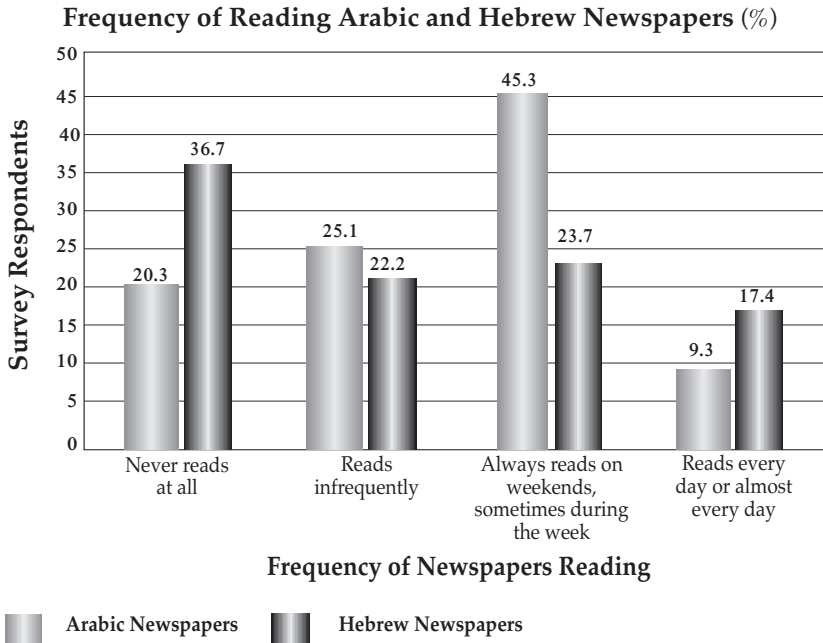
Print media have generally provided the most meaningful indicators of any society's media consumption culture. The publication of newspapers, the oldest means of mass communication, requires greater skill as regards the processing of content when compared to the electronic media. Newspapers were the first means of communication to provide Arab citizens of Israel with an independent voice, a platform from which to express themselves politically and culturally in their native language and free of government intervention. Thus, patterns of press consumption, satisfaction with the press and trust in its messages are important subjects for research. This study delves deeply into these factors, examining them from various perspectives.

The research findings indicate that the Arab public in Israel has developed a unique culture of newspaper consumption, adapted to the structure of the Arab newspaper industry, though a considerable gap exists between the percentage of the Arab population exposed to the press and the percentage that actually reads newspapers. Responses to the question regarding frequency of newspaper consumption – “How often do you read a newspaper?” –

revealed that Arabic- and Hebrew-language newspapers are read daily by only 9.3% and 17.4% of the population, respectively. Many more read Arabic-language newspapers on the weekend (45.3%). The difference between daily (9.3%) and weekend (45.3%) consumption of Arabic newspapers reflects the supply structure. The dominant Arab newspapers are weeklies, a format dictated by financial factors and the availability of advertising revenues. The main type of news provided is “soft” news, items lighter in nature, because these providers cannot compete with the electronic media and daily newspapers in transmitting “hard” news (current events). “Soft” news is, consequently, the most widespread type of news consumed by the Arab newspaper-reading public.

It should be noted that according to the data, 25.1% of the respondents who read Arabic newspapers do so infrequently, as do 22.2% of those who read Hebrew newspapers. This difference between the amount of time invested in reading newspapers and the frequency with which newspapers are read (the number of times a week the respondents read a newspaper) constitutes an important factor when discussing the public’s exposure to the print media. The high percentage of occasional readers prevents drawing clear conclusions about exposure to the press in general, and specific newspapers in particular. Furthermore, the data indicate that 20.3% of the participants in the survey do not read Arab newspapers at all. Similarly, 36.7% of the participants never read Hebrew-language newspapers.

Figure 7.1



Various factors can account for the differences in the number of people who read newspapers daily and those who read them on the weekend. One factor is the news values expressed in the reports printed in the daily press. Quite possibly, the two daily newspapers, **Al-Ittihad** and **Al-Fajr Al-Jadeed**, do not fulfill the Arab public's media needs. The fact that **Al-Ittihad** is affiliated with Hadash, the Communist Party, may distance many potential readers and limit its readership to party supporters. In addition, **Al-Ittihad** has become a very slim newspaper in the past few years, no longer having the capacity to provide a wide range of news items and analyses. Its financial difficulties have likewise hampered its ability to compete with new media and

technological challenges. In contrast, the low percentage of **Al-Fajr Al-Jadeed** readers can be attributed to the fact that it is new actor in the Arabic press industry.⁹ Moreover, its limited journalistic resources, the absence of a skilled, professional staff and a dependence on secondary sources of information such as the Internet - conditions clearly reflected in its copy - damage its credibility. It may therefore be difficult for the newspaper to attract a wider readership.

Although these arguments are germane, they remain inadequate to elucidate in-depth the newspaper consumption patterns exhibited by Arab society in Israel. Accordingly, additional explanations of the differences encountered in newspaper consumption must be sought in the objective and subjective aspects of the print environment.

One major feature of this environment is the inability of the daily press to compete in a timely fashion with the significant increase in the number of electronic media providing breaking news. Newspaper consumption patterns have adjusted to this fact. Another factor to be considered is the access to a vigorous daily Hebrew-language press, which attracts a small percentage of Arab readers (17.4%). This availability has negative repercussions on the circulation of Arabic-language dailies. In this context, it is important to note that the low proportion of the Arab population that reads Hebrew newspapers daily can be associated with the considerable alienation felt by the Arab public with respect to the Hebrew press. This alienation results from the refusal of the Hebrew press to treat the Arab

9. The newspaper Al-Fajr Al-Jadeed began publication in August, 2004 and was relatively new when the survey was conducted in December 2004 and January 2005.

population as legitimate active participants in Israeli society.

Under such circumstances, we may ask, why the weeklies do not expand their operations and publish daily, an option that might raise their revenues? The answer to this question can be inferred from the experiences of **Assennara**, which started to publish a second edition on Tuesdays. This experiment was very short-lived because the second edition was unprofitable. We may therefore conclude that the weekly readership patterns that initially represented responses to the structure of newspaper supply later served to reinforce that structure, perpetuating a pattern of low daily newspaper consumption. If this conclusion is correct, competition from the electronic media only reinforces that pattern.

Another factor preventing development of a daily readership may be the character of the news provided by the weeklies. These newspapers are primarily tabloids, dealing in yellow journalism. They may be considered “supermarkets,” selling a wide range of news items in small doses, written in simplistic language. This approach creates a sense of superficiality and lack of seriousness. Although it can be argued that the lack of daily newspaper reading habits in Arab society may prevent expansion of the daily Arabic-language press, the character of existing publications is the principal factor preventing any change in consumption. Yet, the weekly press evidently reflects its Arab readers’ preferences for light news on weekends. That is, it allows Arab readers to feel informed about what is happening without requiring them to invest any special effort in obtaining that information. The entertainment value of these weeklies is thus an important factor in their circulation

among Arab consumers, just as it is in other national markets (Viswanath and Arora 2000).

Another factor affecting consumption is the fact that the weeklies fulfill the Arab population's need to be informed about what is happening in its immediate environment, primarily local Arab society. Such information cannot be received from any other source, with the exception of Radio **Al-Shams**, which began broadcasting only in 2004. The weeklies' competition with the dailies over local coverage, and their fear of Radio **Al-Shams**' success, effectively demonstrate the contribution of the weeklies to the continuity of current newspaper consumption patterns. We would suggest that the continued rise in the level of education in Arab society will alter this trend.

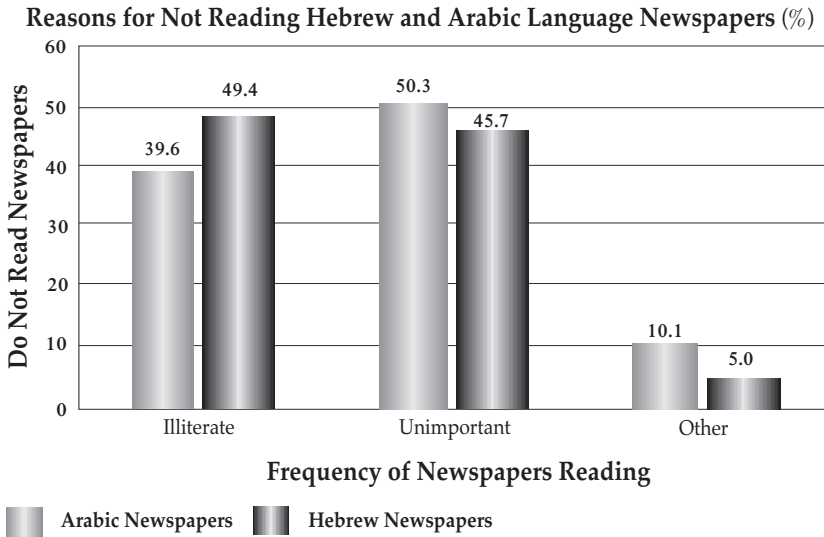
As can be seen in Figure 7.1, the trend of low consumption of the Arab daily press is repeated in the case of Hebrew newspapers. Only 17.4% of the respondents stated that they read Hebrew newspapers on a daily basis. Thus, daily consumption of Hebrew newspapers in Arab society is less than half the level of daily consumption rates in Jewish society, which can be as high as 40% (Haim Herzog Institute for Media 2003: 7). Of note is the significant increase in the percentage of Arabic-language newspaper consumption rates on the weekend, which reached 45.3% among the survey participants, as compared with the low rate of Hebrew newspaper consumption on weekends (23.7%).

These findings indicate a significant difference in the consumption patterns of Arab newspaper consumers who

read the Arab press, and those who read the Hebrew press; i.e., the former tend to read newspapers only on the weekends. At the same time, most Arabs do not read Hebrew newspapers at all. Numerous factors account for the relatively low consumption rate. Among the most important of these reasons are, perhaps, the fact that Hebrew is considered a foreign language in Arab society, the feelings of antagonism and alienation Arab consumers experience toward the Hebrew media, and the lack of orderly Hebrew newspaper distribution in Arab villages. We should note that the percentage of Hebrew speakers among the Arab population continues to be several percentage points higher than the percentage of Hebrew daily press readers. Thus, it is unlikely that the principal cause for the high percentage of Arabs who do not read Hebrew newspapers is difficulty with the language, although this reason was indicated by almost 50% of the respondents who stated that they do not read Hebrew newspapers.

The second reason given for not reading Hebrew newspapers among this group was lack of interest or time (45.7%). A more likely reason, we would argue, for the relatively low rate of readers of Hebrew daily newspapers is alienation from the Hebrew press. The Hebrew press is perceived as biased, too Zionist in orientation and filled with political propaganda regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Accordingly, the Arab public's trust in Hebrew newspapers is not high (see pp. xxx).

Figure 7.2



Yet another explanation for the low percentage of Arab consumers reading the daily press is linked to transformations in media consumption in general due to the increasing significance of broadcast media. Since its development, television has captured a steadily increasing share of the media market around the world. This phenomenon is based on the electronic media's capacity to provide up-to-date information in a timely fashion and to transmit multiple stimuli simultaneously, without demanding any special effort on the part of consumers. With the advent of television, the picture reached a pinnacle of popularity, leaving the printed press in an inferior position. Radio and television consumption do not require any skills beyond a basic understanding of one's native language and in the case of television, even that is not always necessary.

These developments shed light on the media consumption patterns exhibited by the Arab population in Israel. They are, perhaps, the primary reasons for the differences between the rate of consumers reading newspapers in their own language, and the rate of those listening to radio or watching television. The character and accessibility of broadcast media provide solutions for the relatively large proportion of adults in Arab society who are illiterate. In addition, the broadcast media provide valuable entertainment coupled with information about events transpiring in the immediate environment. The tremendous success of Radio Al-Shams, achieved in a relatively short time, is a good illustration of the broadcast media's power to fulfill multiple needs.

The survey data reveal that although 9.3% of the adult population in Arab society read newspapers daily, 52% listen to the radio daily while 81.7% watch television daily. This distribution demonstrates Arab society's reliance on the broadcast media for its news and entertainment. Thus, in response to the question "What is the medium that you rely on most to obtain news?", 75.3% of the respondents replied "television". Only 9.9% replied that newspapers are their primary source of news, whereas 10.6% stated it was radio. The remainder, 4.2%, indicated that their main source of news was the Internet. We should remember, however, that the Internet, like the written press, requires reading skills in addition to computer access and operating skills.

A noteworthy difference was found in the percentages of respondents stating that they do not read any Arab newspapers (20.3%) and those stating that they do not read

any Hebrew newspapers (36.7%). Many factors can explain this gap. The findings show similarities in the rates of respondents uninterested in reading newspapers, whether in Arabic or Hebrew (see Figure 7.2). Of those who stated that they do not read Arabic-language newspapers, 50.3% indicated a lack of interest or time, with 45.7% indicating the same reasons for not reading Hebrew-language newspapers. The similarity in rates sheds light on attitudes prevalent in Arab society. If we add those uninterested in reading newspapers to those who read infrequently or do so by chance, the total indicates that a very significant percentage of the Arab public is uninterested in the print media. This phenomenon may be explained by the newspaper coverage, which has been unsuccessful in arousing interest in broad segments of Arab society. Yet, one would expect that the Arab population, as a national minority coping with daily political, economic and social difficulties, forced to protect itself from discriminatory State policies, would display a great deal of interest in the press.

Two important comments are warranted regarding illiteracy as a reason for not reading newspapers. One pertains to the difference between the high level of literacy among the respondents who do not read newspapers as compared to the level of illiteracy reported in the sample. Of those who do not read Arabic newspapers, 39.6% said it was due to illiteracy, but only 8.1% of the total sample reported that they are illiterate. That is, the majority of Arabs in Israel are literate; yet, despite that, a large percentage are uninterested in reading newspapers. A similar pattern, though at even higher proportions, is observed amongst those stating that

they were not literate in Hebrew. Among the group that does not read newspapers, 49.4% stated that they were not literate in Hebrew, but only 18.2% of the entire sample stated that they were not literate in Hebrew. The data thus indicate that the percentage of the Arab population literate in both languages is high. Hence, illiteracy cannot be the principal factor causing the low percentage of newspaper consumption. Apparently, lack of interest and other reasons, which the respondents were not asked to provide, are more relevant for explaining the high percentage of Arabs in Israel who do not read newspapers.

The second comment refers to the difference in the percentages obtained for those who do not read Arabic-language newspapers because they are not literate in Arabic and those who do not read Hebrew newspapers because they are not literate in Hebrew. Although the difference is almost 10% (39.6% and 49.4% for Arabic and Hebrew newspapers, respectively), if we take into account the fact that Arabic is the respondents' native language and that Hebrew is considered a foreign language, we must conclude that the difference in percentages is relatively low.

We may interpret this small difference as indicating that the Arab population in Israel is, for the most part, bilingual, with the percentage of those speaking both languages equally well, higher than the percentage of those who speak Arabic exclusively. This finding demonstrates some of the changes taking place in Arab society in Israel. The language barrier, which is perceived by many as the main obstacle to integration of the Arab population into Israeli society, is

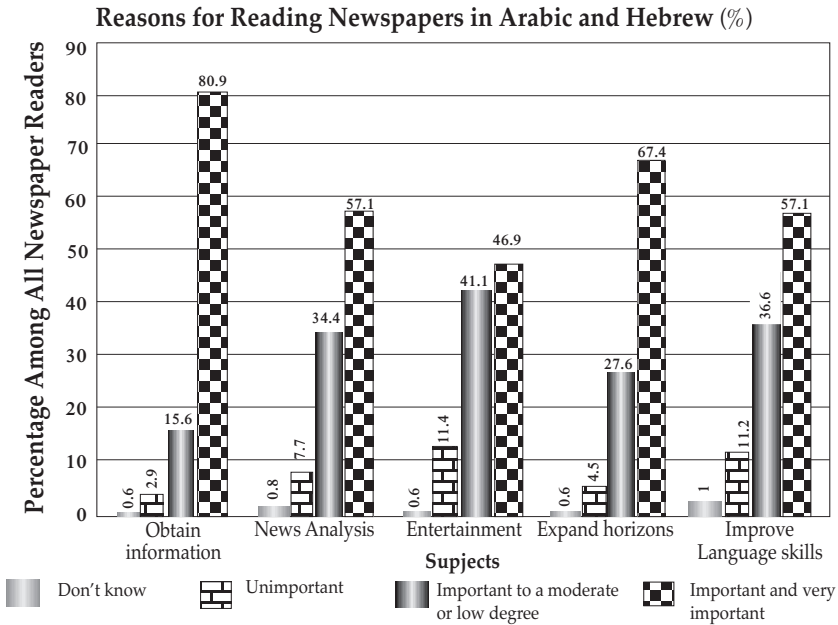
disappearing. Language difficulties can therefore no longer be used as alibis for maintaining the socio-economic gaps dividing the two sectors.

Furthermore, we should note two salient aspects of newspaper consumption patterns indicated by the data. The first: A significant percentage of the Arab population reads both Arabic and Hebrew newspapers, another indication that most Arabs in Israel are bilingual. The second: Consumption of the Arabic-language press is broad and distributed over a large number of newspapers. It should be added that most Arab readers of the Hebrew press read the most popular newspaper in Israel, that is, **Yediot Aharonot**. These findings point to a common aim among Arab newspaper consumers: to balance the information they receive from Hebrew newspapers with information from Arabic newspapers and to balance the information they receive from the Arabic newspapers with other Arabic sources. Although the percentage of daily readers of newspapers is low, the consumption of weeklies is characterized by rationality, based on comparison of information, similar to the trend observed in other media. At the same time, the need to peruse more than one Arabic newspaper might reflect the weaknesses of Arabic weeklies and their inability to gain the trust of their readers, reflected in the search for other sources of information. The conclusion that may be drawn from this finding is that many members of Arab society of Israel read more than one Arabic newspaper precisely because newspaper quality is poor and because readers adopt a more active stance when consuming the print media, something that is supported by the data that will be presented later (see page xx).

Another important question to be raised in this respect concerns distribution: To what extent would these patterns of information comparison and reading more than one newspaper be sustained if Arabic-language weeklies were sold from newspaper stands rather distributed gratis at gas stations? Does reading more than one Arab newspaper stem from an overly cautious approach to the print media or might there be an entirely different explanation? This study cannot provide unequivocal responses to these questions. The relevance of these questions increases however, if we consider the fact that among the same respondents, few read more than one Hebrew newspaper. That is, it appears that the majority of the respondents who read the Hebrew press are satisfied with one exclusive source. This observation supports our conclusion that the level of trust in Arabic newspapers among Arab readers is not especially high. Data on the Arab public's trust in the Arabic press, presented below, supports this argument (see p. xxx).

In order to deepen our understanding of the media consumption culture exhibited by Israel's Arab society, the reasons for reading newspapers among those who do so were explored in the research.

Figure 7.3



As can be seen in Figure 7.3, the principal reason given for reading newspapers is to obtain news (80.9%). This finding indicates that a portion of the Arab public views newspapers as an important source of news. This segment of consumers is apparently dissatisfied with television or radio as sources of news, and thus makes sure that it is updated by the press. This finding further supports the point made above: that Arabic-language newspapers provide local news pertaining to Arab society in Israel that cannot be obtained from any other source. The second most important reason for reading newspapers in the eyes of the Arab public is to expand horizons (67.4%). This segment of consumers appears to take advantage of the fact that most Arab newspapers are

“supermarkets” for items that cover a very wide variety of subjects, from “hard” weekly news to “soft” entertainment news. Two reasons – news analysis (57.1%) and improvement of language skills (57.1%) – tie for third place in importance. These factors support the claim that newspaper readers view the deeper analysis of events to be one benefit of newspapers not readily obtainable from the broadcast media. Another factor we should not forget is that reading newspapers represents a significant leisure time activity.

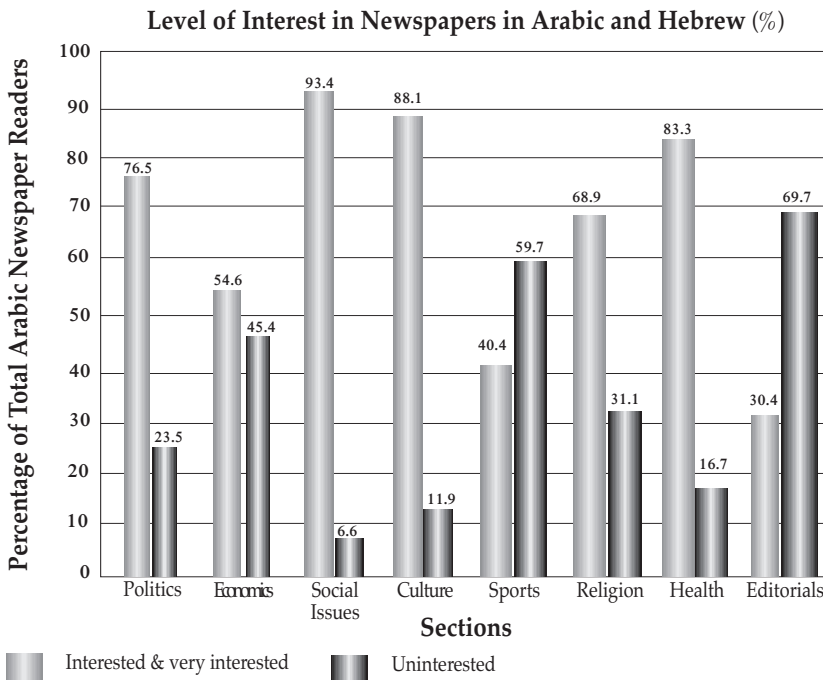
Similar to other newspapers, Arabic weeklies are divided into niches, by topic. Not all subjects enjoy identical treatment in the various newspapers. Usually, each newspaper has a clear policy that determines its layout in all but unusual cases. To illustrate, the daily newspapers give greater space to political news than they give to cultural subjects. Furthermore, the majority of the general newspapers, including the weeklies, exhibit clear preferences in the placement of items, so that political news precede economic news, and both take precedence over cultural news in most newspapers. Literature on the effect of the media’s agenda on the public agenda indicate that the order in which subjects appear in newspapers and the degree to which they are stressed affects their readers’ assessments of an issue’s salience.

This observation raises several questions about the importance attached to various topics by the newspaper-reading public. Does an association exist between the agenda of the newspaper that a person reads and the salience that person attaches to specific topics? Much research has

explored this issue from the perspective of theories addressing the media's construction of its agenda and that agenda's effect on the media consuming public. Although the present study ignores the issue of agenda construction, questions were put to interviewees that attempted to elicit responses regarding Arabic-language newspaper readers' preferences for the different sections of the newspapers they read, based on research indicating that newspaper readers exhibit varying preferences for specific sections. A list of topics was therefore presented to the interviewees, including politics, economics, social news, culture, sports, religion, health and editorials. Respondents were then asked to rate their preferences for the sections focusing on each category of news. Although we cannot state with any certainty the level of association between a newspaper's agenda and the reader's order of preferences, based on the literature, we can nonetheless posit some hypotheses about this association.

At this point, we would like to note that in preliminary interviews held with journalists who write for the weeklies, the poor working conditions and the meager resources available for well-researched or investigative reporting became evident. These conditions influence the nature of the items reported in the weeklies. Still, the goal of increasing circulation has steered weeklies towards providing news unobtainable from other media sources. Writers and editors have consequently stressed the importance of local news, particularly on political and social matters, as the main topics reported in the weekly newspapers. These factors should be considered when interpreting the data reported in Figure 7.4.

Figure 7.4



The distribution of Arab newspaper readers' preferences between the various newspaper sections supports previous assumptions. A large percentage of respondents (between 54.6% and 93.4%) are interested or highly interested in all but two sections of the newspaper; i.e., sports and editorials with less than 40% of the respondents expressing interest in these sections. The section dealing with social topics was ranked first (93.4%), followed by the section dealing with cultural topics (88.1%). The area ranked third (83.3%) in interest was health.

These interests resemble the publication policy of the Arabic weeklies expressed in their coverage and layout of topics,

as our content analysis of the commercial newspapers indicate (Jamal 2006). The findings thus support those theories that suggest an association between media policies and the reading public's preferences for various topics. Considering the fact that the social and cultural news in these weeklies displays a drift toward entertainment and in many cases gossip, the findings indicate that the Arabic newspapers fulfill their readership's need for local Arab news, an area neglected by other media. Due to their inability to compete with the hard political news addressing Israeli national and regional politics in the Hebrew-language press and television, the weeklies have stressed the provision of soft news and items ignored by the other media. This, in turn, appears to have affected the level of interest that consumers display in the topics covered by the Arabic newspapers.

Despite the fact that politics was expected to be the topic of highest interest to the Arabic newspaper-reading public, because of the complex political reality in which the Arab minority finds itself, the data indicate politics as ranking only fourth in readers' interest. This finding requires explanation. A possible logical explanation would be the pattern of news coverage in the Arabic newspapers. As stated, these weeklies cannot compete with daily newspapers regarding news. Therefore, they tend to concentrate on presenting news on local political, social and commercial matters; however, since they do not invest in a professional journalistic team, they tend to be superficial in their coverage of these issues. These newspapers lack writers and journalists with established reputations, or political commentators capable of providing daring, coherent analyses that might raise readers' interest

in their columns. As a result, the weeklies tend to provide news based on economic calculations of gain and loss, a tendency that limits their ability to develop an investigative journalistic tradition. This leads Arab readers to obtain hard news on national matters from other media outlets. .

The fifth topic in readers' interest is religion (68.9%), followed by economics (54.6%). Sports attract relatively little interest (40.4%), and is ranked seventh. The low level of interest in sports can be explained by the Arabic weeklies' inability to compete with alternative sources of information on this topic. Television and the daily Hebrew press provide more immediate and comprehensive sports coverage. At the bottom of the scale are editorials, including commentaries (30.4%). Almost 70% of Arab newspaper readers are uninterested in reading editorials, and 81.5% are uninterested in commentaries. This supports a general belief that Arabic-language newspapers are not good sources of news analysis or seriously engaged in influencing public opinion on political and social issues.¹⁰ The explanation that Arab newspaper readers are less interested in obtaining news analyses because they believe that such analysis is less relevant to their daily lives is not supported by the data. As indicated earlier almost 80% of the newspapers' readers are interested in news and a high percentage (57%) claimed that news analysis is important and even very important to them.

Therefore a possible realistic explanation for the low interest in editorials is the distance between newspaper editors and their readers. Low reader interest in commentaries of the editors may be

10. See separate forthcoming report in this research series analyzing the editorials of the three most widespread Arabic weeklies.

accounted for by the fact that Arabic newspapers have no effect on Israeli policy and decision makers. As a result, the opinions and analyses of the editors of these newspapers appear to have no great value. Editors and columnists are therefore incapable of fulfilling their traditional goals of opinion dissemination to ensure their influence on the public agenda concerning subjects they believe to be significant . The data describing newspaper readers' opinions about the role that Arabic newspapers fulfill, and about the perceived level of interest in the needs of Arab society as expressed in the Hebrew press, and presented in the next section, support these conclusions.

8. The Arab Press: Reading Patterns, Satisfaction and Trust

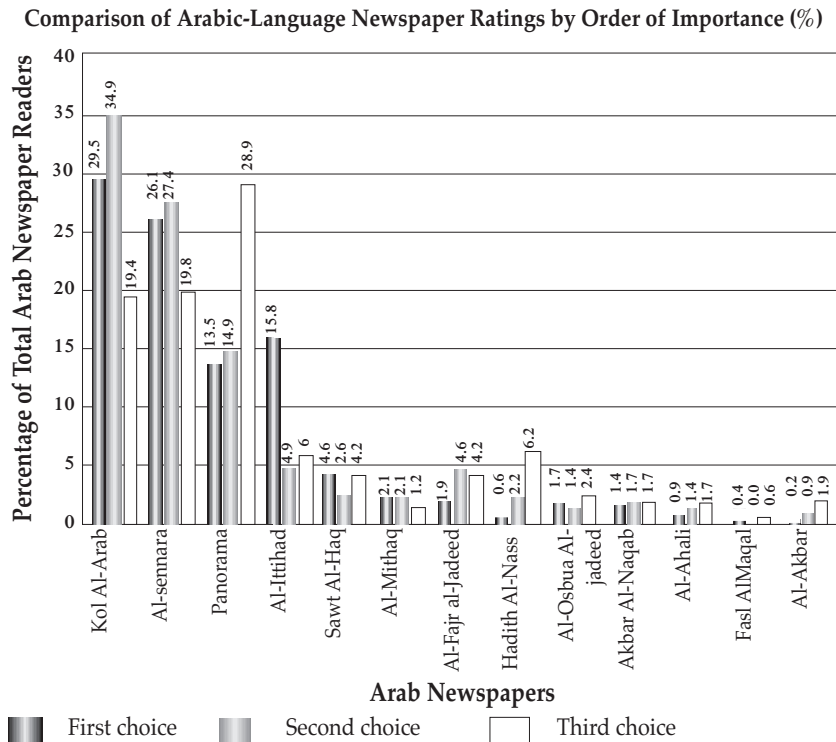
In preparation for this study, preliminary interviews and studies were conducted. These inquiries clearly showed that the Arab newspaper consuming public reads more than one newspaper. Although such a reading pattern could be anticipated with respect to weeklies, this finding compelled us to ask participants in the study to rank the newspapers they read. Participants were therefore asked to rank the three newspapers they read with the greatest frequency by order of importance. This question was designed to examine newspaper consumption patterns in greater depth on the one hand, and more precisely rank each newspaper's importance on the other.

The research findings support the preliminary study's findings: The majority of consumers are exposed to more than one newspaper. A very high percentage of respondents mentioned two or three newspapers. Various explanations can be offered for this behavior. One assumes that Arab newspaper readers try to balance their sources of information by perusing more than one paper. This explanation is reinforced by the in-depth interviews conducted with various focus groups.¹¹ Nevertheless, the ready availability of weekly newspapers (as indicated earlier, they are distributed gratis at gas stations) should be taken into

11. In-depth interviews were conducted with groups of students at the Western Galilee College.

account as a significant factor contributing to this behavior. Another factor to be considered is that reading Arab newspapers on weekends has become part of the culture of leisure in the Arab community, and as elsewhere, a means of passing the time for a not insignificant proportion of the population. Many readers of the various Arabic-language newspapers noted that the principal reasons for choosing the newspapers that they read were availability (40%), habit (18.3%), and entertainment (29%). In contrast, 26% stated that they chose a specific newspaper because of how it reported news about Arab society, while 19.2% stated that an important reason for reading Arab newspapers was their reflection of the general atmosphere in Arab society, 20% mentioned the newspapers' objectivity (see Figure 8.1).

Figure 8.1



As indicated earlier, the interviewees in the research were asked to name the newspapers they read most, according to importance. The interviewees were given the opportunity to name up to three newspapers. Therefore, when analyzing the data we established a hierarchy of three consecutive ranks. The analysis that follows compares the readership percentage of the different newspapers in the three rankings. This analysis was considered to be the best way to mirror the patterns of newspaper reading in the Arab community in Israel and do justice to the different newspapers, especially because of the possible financial implications that the data may have on advertising revenues.¹²

The data show that the ratings of Arab newspapers change according to readers' preferences; thus, a considerable difference exists in readers' first choice of newspapers. Certain newspapers were ranked in first place by numerous respondents whereas others were ranked as first by a small or negligible percentage of readers. Thus, consumption of Arabic newspapers can be divided into four main categories. The first includes **Kol al-Arab** and **Assennara**, which have relatively large readerships. Of those who read Arabic newspapers, 29.5% ranked **Kol al-Arab** in first place and 26.1% ranked **Assennara** in first place. In the category of moderate readership, 15.8% ranked the daily **Al-Ittihad** in first place and 13.5% ranked **Panorama** in first place. In the third category, containing newspapers with low circulation, 4.6% of the respondents ranked **Sawt al-Haq wal-Hurriya** first, 2.1% ranked **Al-Mithaq** first, 1.7% ranked **Al-Osboa al-Arabi** in that position, and 1.4% ranked **Akhbar al-Naqab** first. The fourth category,

12. It is important to note that the newspaper *Kol Al-Arab*, that was found to rank first among readers in the Arab community, launched a public relations campaign using the data of the research to increase its advertisement business .

characterized by newspapers with extremely low readerships. 0.9% ranked **Al-Ahali** first and 0.6% ranked **Hadith An-nass** first. **Fasl Almaqal** which reappeared in mid January 2005, after the research had begun and after a recess in publication - was ranked first by 0.4% of the respondents whereas only 0.2% ranked **Al-Akhbar** first.¹³

As can be seen from Figure 8.1, the rankings of some newspapers vary when we consider the second preferences of their readers. These changes derive primarily from the requirement that readers rank the newspaper according to importance. The percentage of respondents ranking **Kol al-Arab** in second place rose to 34.9% among all those who read Arabic newspapers. **Assennara** and **Panorama** also rose slightly in rank, to 27.4% and 14.9% respectively. In contrast, **Al-Ittihad** descended drastically in rank, with only 4.9% ranking it first among newspapers in the second preference category. This decline indicates that **Al-Ittihad** remains the first choice of its loyal readers, perhaps due to familiarity, and that it is the second choice of a much smaller group of readers. This trend in the changing rankings of newspapers when going from first to second-level preferences continues for newspapers with limited circulation. For example, **Sawt Al-Haq wal-Hurriya** declined to 2.6% of the respondents

13. It is important to note that some of the newspapers included here are distributed only locally; hence, the percentage of their readers is much smaller than that of regional newspapers. Moreover, the fact that the comparative analysis was done nationally further emphasizes the differences between national and local newspaper consumers. However, because the research was not aimed at ranking newspapers themselves but at assessing the effect of media consumption as reflected in public opinion, the analyses throughout were conducted on the national level. Those interested in information about the percent of local newspaper circulation in their region can obtain that information directly from the I'lam Center.

whereas **Hadith Al-Nass** rose to 2.2%. These changes indicate the considerations guiding Arabic newspaper readers, who display loyalty to the newspapers they consider most important and turn to other newspapers only after they have completed reading their preferred newspaper.

A similar pattern was observed when ranking third-order preferences: **Kol al-Arab** declined to 19.4% and **Assennara** to 19.8%. Despite these declines, both newspapers maintain wide circulation. A more glaring change occurred in the ranking of **Panorama**. That newspaper jumped to 28.9% in the third preference ranking, which indicates that it enjoys wide circulation and has numerous readers but only as a second or third choice. Compared with this increase, the data indicated a steep decline in the readership of **Al-Ittihad**, which was ranked far above **Panorama** in the first-order of preference category but received very low rankings in the second and third preference categories: 4.9% and 6%, respectively. **Sawt Al-Haq wal-Hurriya**, which was ranked 4.6% in the first preference category, declined to 2.6% in the second preference category but ascended to 4.2% in the third preference category. These shifts indicate varied patterns reader preferences: Some prefer a specific newspaper but do not limit themselves to reading it exclusively and yet, a larger percentage of readers may choose the same newspaper as a third, rather than second alternative.

These findings indicate the advantages of providing a choice of alternatives when inquiring into Arabic newspaper reading patterns. A research design that had presented only one choice to participants would have misled us in regard to newspaper reading patterns in Arab society. Such a

research design would have overlooked the tendency of Arabic newspaper readers to read more than one newspaper, and would thereby have led to wrong conclusions concerning the culture of newspaper reading. The possibility of choosing more than one alternative clearly revealed that the percentage of people exposed to a given newspaper is usually greater than the percentage of those indicating a newspaper as their first choice. Even if a given newspaper is preferred by a certain percentage of readers, this does not detract from the importance of other newspapers to those same consumers, or to a portion of them. This also explains why the cumulative percentage of readers preferring a newspaper in any category exceeds 100% on occasion: Readers of a given newspaper are also counted as readers of other newspapers.

Another significant question examined in this study referred to the mix of newspapers read by Arab consumers. Such information may explain specific patterns of newspaper reading and shed light on the reasons for changing preference rankings. Within this context, it is important to note that the competitive wars waged between the newspapers take on a different coloration when the study's findings are analyzed; the fact is that readers of one newspaper are also the readers of another. For example, as can be seen in Figure 8.2, 68.4% of those who ranked **Kol al-Arab** in first place also read **Assennara**. Although they might have ranked **Assennara** in second or third place, these readers may quite possibly be interested in both newspapers equally, attitudes that would explain the high percentage of readers who read both newspapers. The figure also shows that 44.9% of **Kol al-Arab** readers also read **Panorama**, a

figure which indicates **Assennara**'s advantage over **Panorama** among readers of **Kol al-Arab**. Furthermore, the data illustrated in Figure 8.2 show that a relatively large percentage (23.2%) of **Kol al-Arab** readers also read **Al-Ittihad**. Yet, as the figure also shows that fewer readers of **Kol al-Arab** read other newspapers to any significant degree.

Figure 8.2

Distribution of Kol Al-Arab Readers Consumers of Other Newspapers (%)

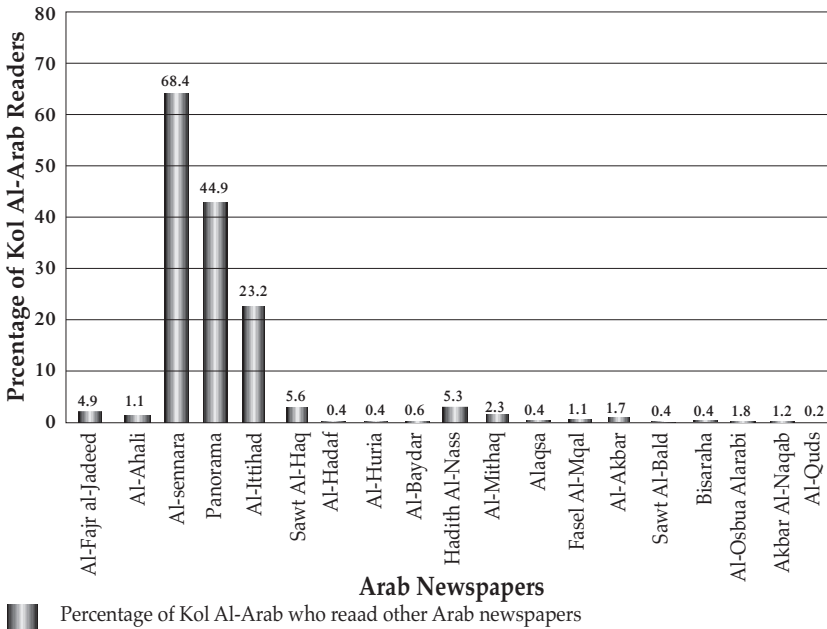


Figure 8.3 shows the percentage of readers who indicated **Assennara** as their first choice. As can readily be seen, 76.6% of those who ranked **Assennara** in first place also read **Kol al-Arab**. The data show that more readers who ranked **Assennara** in first place ranked **Kol al-Arab** in second than vice versa, that is, rank **Kol al-Arab** in first place and **Assennara** in second. This difference may explain the sharp

increase for **Kol al-Arab** among those who ranked this newspaper second as compared to those who ranked it first. As noted earlier, 29.6% of Arabic newspaper readers ranked **Kol al-Arab** as their first preference, whereas when looking at the second preference we find that 34.9% indicated that they read this newspaper. Figure 8.3 demonstrates also that among those who ranked **Assennara** first, 37.9% responded that they also read **Panorama** while 18.4% noted that they also read **Al-Ittihad**.

Figure 8.3

Distribution of Assennara Readers Consumers of Other Newspapers (%)

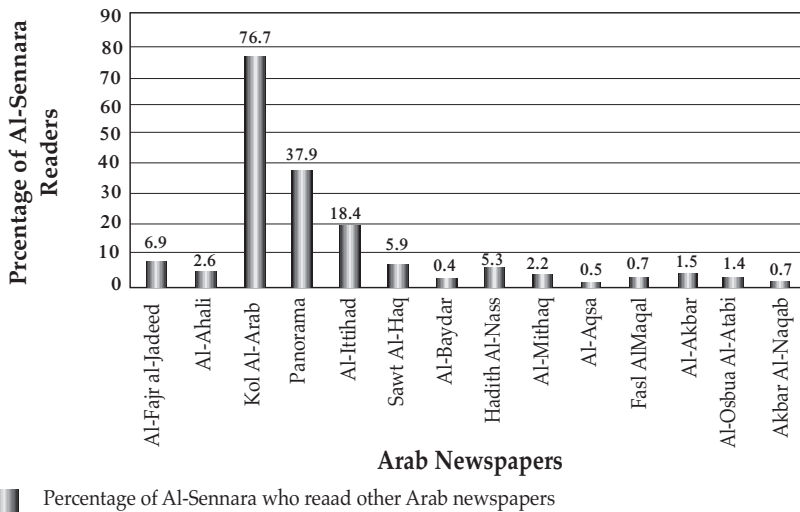
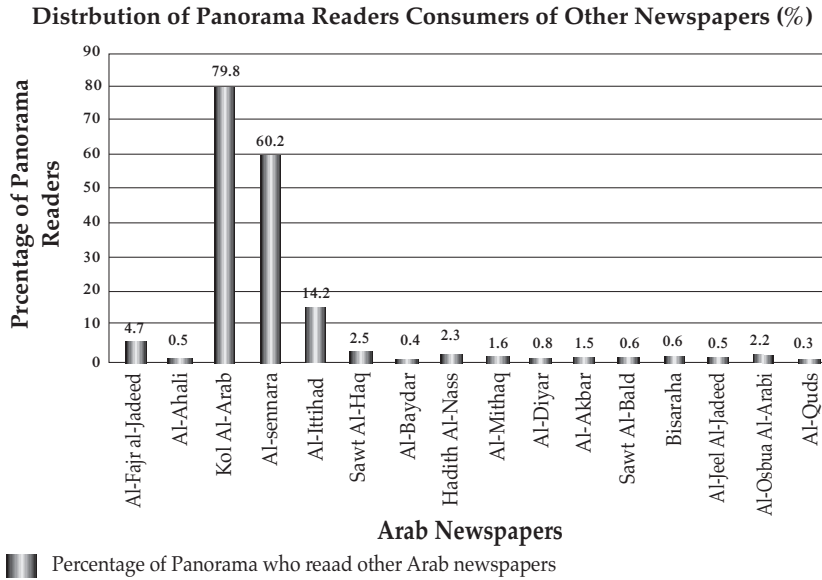


Figure 8.4 shows that among those who ranked **Panorama** first, 79.8% also read **Kol al-Arab**. This finding indicates a difference in preferences between readers of the two newspapers. While readers of **Panorama** ranked **Kol al-Arab** as their second choice, readers of **Kol al-Arab** did not rank **Panorama** as a second choice to the same extent. A similar

pattern, although with varying percentages, is discerned with respect to the relationship between **Panorama** and **Assennara**. Figure 8.4 shows that 60.2% of **Panorama** readers also read **Assennara**; however, only 37.9% of **Assennara** readers also read **Panorama**. This difference partially explains the position of **Panorama** as the third choice for readers of **Kol Al-Arab** and **Assennara**. The differences in the findings underscore the achievements of **Kol Al-Arab** and **Assennara** with respect to readership as well as the failure of **Panorama** to make much additional headway despite its success in penetrating the market and becoming a widely circulated commercial weekly.

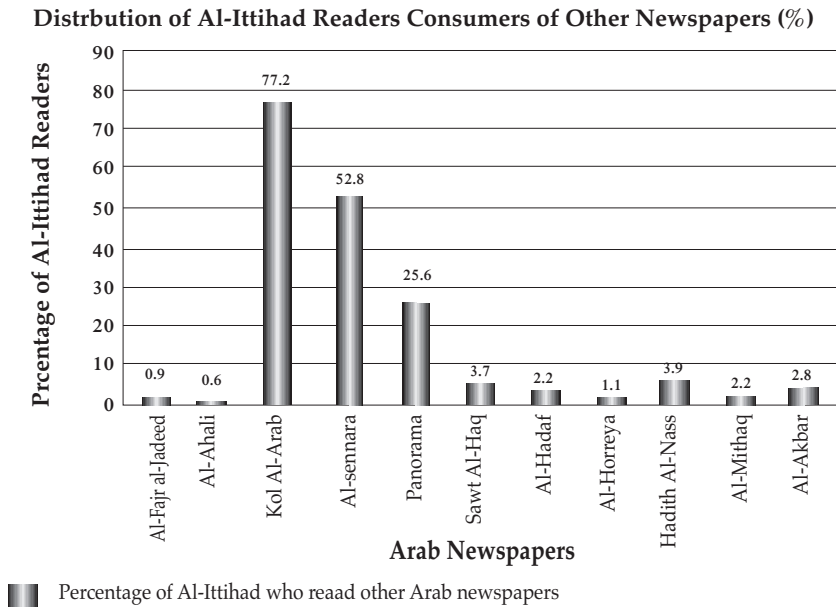
Figure 8.4



The same trend can be observed among readers of **Al-Ittihad**. As can be seen in Figure 8.5, 77.2% of the readers who ranked **Al-Ittihad** first also read **Kol al-Arab**. In contrast, only 52.8%

of those who ranked **Al-Ittihad** first also read **Assennara** whereas 25.6% read **Panorama**. These findings support the conclusions regarding differences between newspaper readers in general and illustrate that while the commercial weeklies constitute the main alternatives in readers' eyes, the differences in consumer's rates that do exist favor **Kol al-Arab**, which maintains its dominance as the most widespread newspaper in Arab society.

Figure 8.5

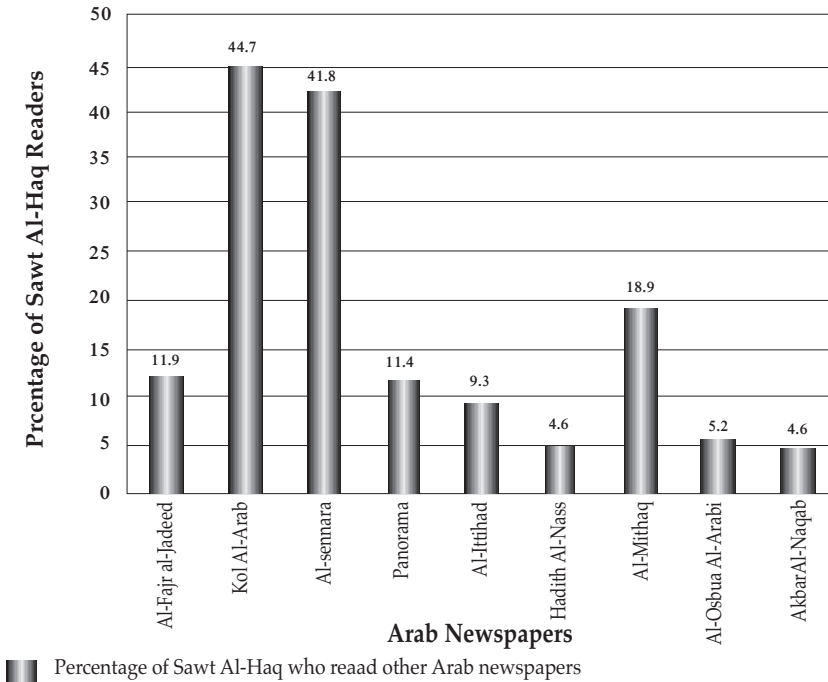


Among the readers who ranked **Sawt Al-Haq wal-Hurriya** first, 44.7% also read **Kol al-Arab**, 41.8% **Assennara** and 11.4% **Panorama**. It is interesting to note that according to the data illustrated in the graph, a relatively high percentage (18.9%) of **Sawt Al-Haq wal-Hurriya** readers also read **Al-Mithaq**, which is identified with the faction of the Islamic

movement that competes with the same faction that issues the weekly **Sawt Al-Haq wal-Hurriya**. Moreover, 9.3% of **Sawt Al-Haq wal-Hurriya** readers also read **Al-Ittihad**, which is identified with the Communist party, whose ideology is secular and critical of religious belief that is promoted by **Sawt Al-Haq wal-Hurriya**. The data in figure 8.6 demonstrate that unlike the readers who placed other newspapers first and who read mainly another one or two of a limited number of newspapers, the readers who placed **Sawt Al-Haq wal-Hurriya** first in their ranking exhibit greater plurality in their reading patterns of other newspapers.

Figure 8.6

Distribution of Sawt Al-Haq Readers Consumers of Other Newspapers (%)

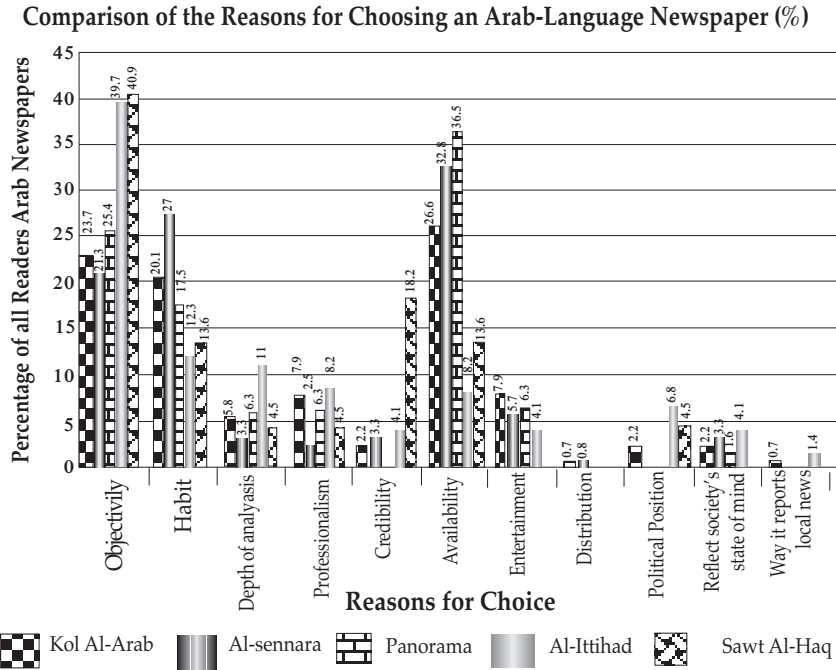


The obvious advantage of the commercial newspapers when compared to the party-affiliated newspapers in the eyes of Arabic newspaper readers can be deduced from the preceding figures. The data clearly show that the percentage of those who placed party newspapers as their first choice and still read commercial newspapers is much greater than the percentage of readers of commercial newspapers who also show interest in reading party newspapers. This difference indicates that the majority of commercial Arabic-language newspaper readers are content with the newspapers they read as their source of news. However, this should not necessarily imply that the level of public trust (confidence) or satisfaction with those newspapers is higher than the trust in party-affiliated newspapers. The preference given to commercial newspapers may be related to availability or convenience rather than to satisfaction from or trust in the content of these newspapers. Having said that, the data of the last several figures demonstrate clearly that the Arab public has adapted its reading patterns to the structure of the Arab newspaper market that is characterized by being predominantly a weekly market.

8.1 *Roots of Arab Newspaper Preference*

The research attempted to distinguish the fundamental reasons for preferring one or another newspaper among the array published in Arabic. Careful examination of the reasons for reading a specific newspaper can be expected to reveal the variables or characteristics that link newspapers with their readership, and thus contribute to our understanding of the media consumption culture of Arab society in Israel. We assumed that ideological as well as practical factors explain the observed consumption patterns. Other causes for differences in consumption may also be associated with the contents offered and availability. We therefore asked the participants in the research to list not only the names of the newspapers they read, but also the reasons for reading a specific newspaper. Based on our review of the research literature, we provided a list of twelve possible reasons and asked the respondents to select three primary reasons. The findings do indeed enable a more penetrating look into the culture of print media consumption of the Arab population in Israel.

Figure 8.7



As clearly indicated by Figure 8.7, there are three primary reasons for choosing a particular newspaper: objectivity, availability, and habit. The factors of availability and habit are straightforward, but objectivity is a complex concept that takes on different meanings with different readers. However, it is important to note that in Arabic, the language used in the interviews, the concept's interpretations are rather limited and tend to focus on a more tangible meaning that is subject-matter oriented.

Analysis of the data revealed that the reasons for reading newspapers affiliated with a political party are different from those given for reading commercial papers. The most salient reason for choosing the two party newspapers, **Al-Ittihad** and

Sawt Al-Haq wal-Hurriya, were their objectivity, with 40.9% assigning that reason for choosing **Sawt Al-Haq wal-Hurriya**, and 39.7% for **Al-Ittihad**. In contrast, the principal reasons for choosing the commercial newspapers were availability. Of those who read **Kol Al-Arab**, 23.7% cited objectivity as the reason; as did 21.3% of those who read **Assennara** and 25.4% of those who read **Panorama**. On the other hand, availability was indicated by 26.6% of **Kol Al-Arab** readers, 32.8% of **Assennara** readers and 36.5% of **Panorama** readers. Habit was the reason given by 20.1% those who preferred **Kol Al-Arab**, 27% **Assennara** readers and 17.5% of **Panorama** readers. These differences support the hypothesis that the relationship between readers and the party-affiliated newspapers is based on different factors than those motivating the relationship between readers and the commercial newspapers. As can be seen from the figures, a reader who chooses a specific newspaper develops certain expectations of that newspaper. While readers of the party organs expect those newspapers to supply them with objective news, they do not expect the same level of objectivity from the commercial newspapers. The availability of a commercial newspaper is apparently enough of a reason to read it. The fact that Arab commercial newspapers are available, especially through their distribution at gas stations, increases the number of readers. If availability were restricted and the commercial newspapers were not distributed freely, one could speculate that the readership of these newspapers might decline.¹⁴

The figures given above reflect the

14. Convenience sampling of a number of gas stations owned by Arabs in the Galilee indicated that each station distributes an average of 600-700 copies of commercial newspapers every week (**Kol Al-Arab**, **Al-sennara**, and **Panorama**). When taking into account the number of gas stations, which is around 40, this figure can add up to thousands of copies of each newspaper, which in turn increases its readership, and simultaneously provides an explanation for the fact that people read more than one newspaper.

possible gap in the attachment of readers to the newspapers they read. Despite the fact that party affiliated newspapers are less read, their readers are still more loyal to them when compared with the loyalty of the readers of commercial newspapers to the newspapers they read.

Analysis of the separate indices revealed the specific factors that differentiate between the newspapers in each category. Objectivity was rather consistently indicated as the most important factor determining the choice of a party-affiliated newspaper as opposed to a commercial newspaper. Small, statistically insignificant differences were found between the responses listing objectivity as a factor in reading the three commercial newspapers, **Kol al-Arab**, **Al-Sennara** and **Panorama** (23.7%, 21.3% and 25.4%, respectively). Availability was clearly a factor for reading the commercial as opposed to the party newspapers. However, differences between the three newspapers do exist: Availability is the most salient factor for **Panorama** readers (36.5%), less so for **Al-Sennara** readers (32.8%), and further less for readers of **Kol Al-Arab** (26.6%).

Not inconsiderable differences were found for habit as a factor for reading the various newspapers. Again, habit was most salient with respect to the reading of commercial newspapers. Readers of **Al-Sennara** (27%) most often listed habit as their main reason, followed by readers of **Kol al-Arab** (20.1%), **Panorama** (17.5%), **Sawt Al-Haq wal-Hurriya** (13.6%) and **Al-Ittihad** (12.3%). The relatively high proportion of party newspaper readers who listed habit as the main factor determining their reading of these newspapers makes this factor particularly relevant for

understanding media consumption habits in Arab society. Habit as the cause for continued reading of a newspaper is a phenomenon known from research in other societies. However, habit is not a strong factor in explaining the differences in consumption between commercial and party newspapers among Arab readers.

The differences in the data obtained between the various commercial newspapers do not enable unequivocal conclusions to be drawn. Nonetheless, if we compare the data and then compare commercial to party-affiliated newspapers, a clear difference appears in the factors determining the relationship between commercial newspapers and their readers. Clearly, the reading of one or another of the commercial newspapers is not necessarily dependent on their contents; the main factor is availability. That is, distribution affects the level of commercial newspaper readership. The findings thus point to a weak relationship between commercial newspapers and their readers; in other words, these newspapers have failed to establish significant emotional or ideological links with their readers. The basic determinant of consumption remains pragmatism. This invites another question: If Arab commercial newspapers were not so readily available, would the Arab reader seek them out and be willing to pay for them? This issue demands further research.

8.2 Level of Trust in Arab Newspapers: Commercial and Party-affiliated Newspapers Compared

In order to deepen our analysis of the Arab public's attitudes to Arabic-language newspapers, we examined the level of the Arab public's trust in the news reported by the various newspapers by type. The survey's participants were asked to indicate how much they trusted the newspaper they had ranked as their first preference into categories ranging from very high to very low trust. The most obvious result of the ranking is the finding that the Arab newspaper readers place less trust in commercial newspapers than in political party-affiliated newspapers.

Figure 8.8

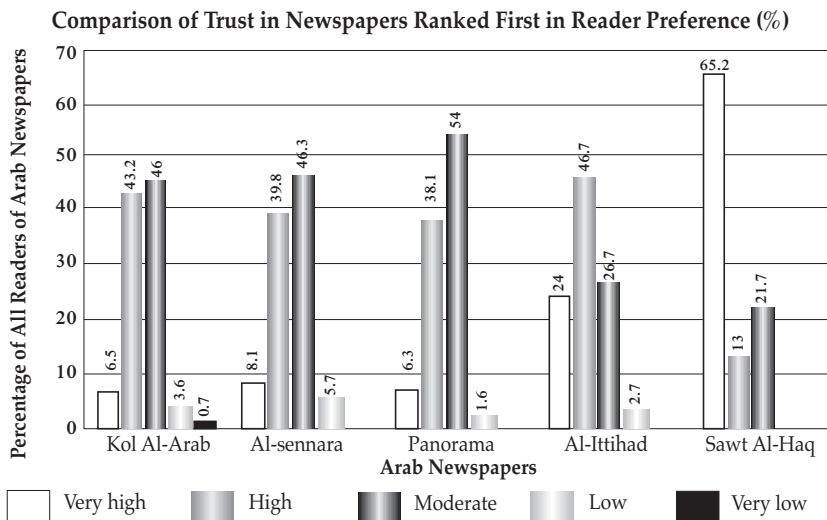


Figure 8.8 illustrates how readers relate to the commercial newspapers compared to how they relate to the party-affiliated ideological newspapers with respect to trust. The data confirm one of the study's underlying assumptions, i.e., that the readers tend to trust party newspapers more than they trust commercial newspapers. While the dominant position among readers of **Al-Ittihad** and **Sawt Al-Haq wal-Hurriya** are high and very high, respectively, the dominant position among readers of the three commercial newspapers is moderate. The differences in trust ratings demonstrate the slight skepticism with which readers view the commercial press. These findings were consistent regardless of whether the newspaper was ranked in first, second or third place. Thus, the average level of trust in the party newspapers ranked in all three preference categories (first, second and third) was regularly higher than the average level of trust in the commercial newspapers. **Sawt Al-Haq wal-Hurriya** was rated first in trust by newspaper readers, regardless of its preference rank; **Al-Ittihad** was rated second. 78.2% of **Sawt Al-Haq wal-Hurriya** readers claimed that they very highly or highly trust what they read in that newspaper, and 70.7% of **Al-Ittihad** readers claimed the same. In contrast the three commercial newspapers, **Kol Al-Arab**, **Al-Sennara** and **Panorama** received ratings of less than 50% when it comes to very high and high levels of trust.

Contrary to expectations, a comparison of the data shown in Figure 8.8 with the data on the distribution of the different newspapers, demonstrates that the level of trust in a newspaper does not affect readership. Despite the high level of trust in the party newspapers and the moderate level of trust in commercial newspapers, the public prefers to read

commercial newspapers to a significant extent. This pattern confirms the results of other research recently conducted on this subject (Tsfati and Cappella 2005)¹⁵ The first possible germane factor explaining this phenomenon is the availability of the commercial newspapers. As stated, large numbers of these newspapers are distributed gratis at gas stations (as long as drivers purchase a specific amount of gas. The amount is not identical in all stations). This distribution tactic spurs their acquisition and reading. But interviews with a over 100 students, chosen randomly, show that this exact form of distribution turns the relationship between readers and specific newspapers into something occasional and pragmatic.¹⁵ Readers do not develop any attachment or loyalty to a specific newspaper. Most students admitted that they view the newspaper as a gift given to them for being loyal to the gas station rather than to the newspapers themselves. A second possible explanation for the gaps in trust for the party-affiliated versus commercial newspapers among their readers has to do with the political and ideological affiliation of the readers of the former. These readers are usually loyal to the party and therefore to its newspaper as well. This explanation is insufficient however, since it cannot explain the widespread distribution of commercial newspaper, despite the low level of trust in them. This leads us to the third explanation and that is the fact that the commercial newspapers provide news items that cannot be found elsewhere. As a result, they meet readers' needs irrespective of the deepness or thoroughness of the news they provide. A fourth possible factor contributing to the relatively low trust in commercial newspapers may be the fact that these newspapers are

15. The interviews were conducted with students of the Western Galilee Academic College.

“supermarkets” for news, a characteristic that prevents development of a high level of attachment and thus trust.

Delving further into the data reveals differences in the levels of consumer trust for a given commercial newspaper. The gaps in trust ratings are not uniform. The smallest gap between high and medium trust ratings was exhibited by **Kol Al-Arab**, the largest by **Panorama**. Among **Kol Al-Arab** readers, 46% stated that their trust in its news was moderate, whereas 43.2% stated their trust was high. Comparing these results with the data for **Al-Sennara** indicates that the gaps in trust were again not great. Among the **Al-Sennara** readers, 46.3% indicated that their trust in its news was medium and 39.8% stated that it was high. In comparison, 54% of **Panorama** readers indicated that this newspaper arouses medium trust although 38.1% gave it a high rating. The high difference in the medium to high levels of trust among **Panorama** readers implies that this newspaper has the greatest difficulty in inspiring its readers' trust.

We now turn to the political party-affiliated newspapers. Among readers of **Al-Ittihad**, 26.7% rated the newspaper as inspiring a medium level of trust, with 46.7% rating it as high. Another 24% rated the newspaper as inspiring a very high level of trust. The data confirms the argument that the general level of trust that readers have in **Al-Ittihad** news items is much greater than the mistrust. Only 2.7% of the readers expressed the view that they have low trust in the newspaper's news. None have expressed the view that they have very low trust. This data emphasizes the importance of the opposing views between party-affiliated and commercial newspaper readers. A similar yet even more acute picture is drawn by the responses of readers of **Sawt Al-Haq wal-Hurriya**: 65.2% rated their trust in this

newspaper as very high, 13% as high, and only 21.7% as medium. The very high and high levels of trust enjoyed by this newspaper indicate this newspaper's unique position in the newspaper market. This is supported by the fact that not one of its readers rated their level of trust in the newspaper as either low or very low, a finding that distinguishes it from all other newspapers.

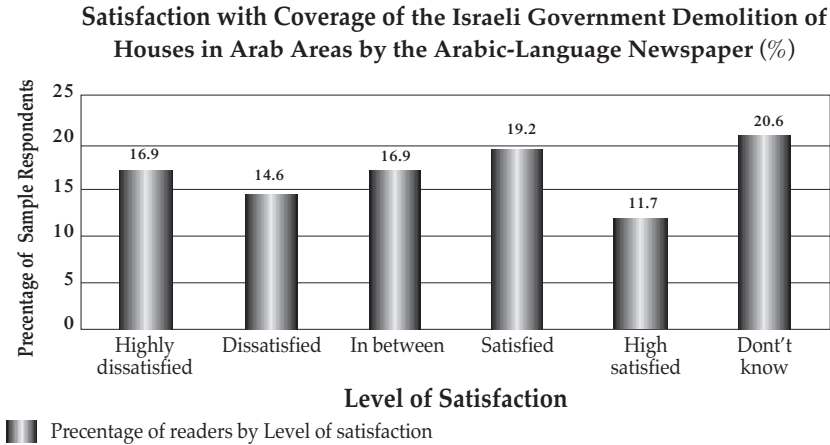
Another variable explored on the road to understanding newspaper consumption patterns in Arab society was reader satisfaction with the scope and quality of coverage on important topics in the Arab public agenda. The survey participants were asked to indicate their satisfaction with the newspapers they read regarding coverage of the following subjects: Arab political leadership, the Israeli government's policy of demolishing Arab houses, and coverage of Arab protests against the government's discriminatory policies.

Figure 8.9



The first issue examined was satisfaction with coverage of the Arab society's political leadership. As readily seen on Figure 8.9, 24.1% of the research participants assigned a mid-point level of satisfaction (neither satisfied, nor dissatisfied) to Arabic newspapers' coverage of this topic. In contrast, 22.2% said they were moderately satisfied, 6.8% said they were very satisfied, 15% said they were moderately dissatisfied, and 9.2% said they were very dissatisfied. Another 22.6% responded that they did not know, equivalent to having no opinion. Combining the categories to achieve a clearer picture of the results indicated that low and very low levels of satisfaction was expressed as frequently as high or very high levels combined. This data mirrors a relatively low level of satisfaction characterizing the Arabic public's assessment of Arab newspapers' coverage of its political leaders. This finding is particularly salient given that there are a relatively large number of party-affiliated newspaper readers among the respondents. On the other hand, figure 8.9 reflects a certain type of normal curve when those who had no opinion are taken out. This interpretation of the data allows one to say that the average the readers of Arabic newspapers accept the way in which their political leadership is represented in the newspapers. This data becomes even more important when we add that a content analysis examination of the commercial newspapers coverage of Arab leadership showed that their representation is relatively low. Arab leadership is marginal on the agenda of the commercial newspapers. The data of the current research show that the readers of the commercial newspapers are relatively content with this coverage. This position should raise questions regarding the Arab leadership's behavior which does not lead to more coverage as well as to a general indifference towards these leaders on the part of newspaper readers (Jamal 2006).

Figure 8.10

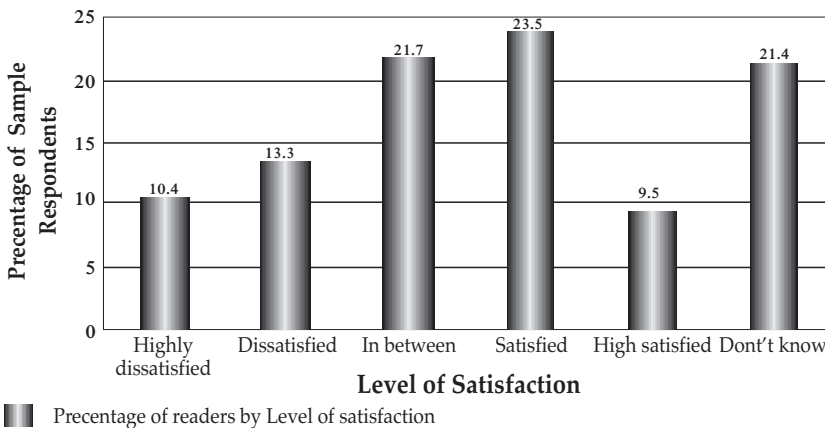


Regarding Arab newspaper coverage of the Israeli government's policy of demolishing houses in Arab areas, opinions were once again not very decisive. A total of 30.9% of the participants in the survey noted that they were satisfied or very satisfied with coverage of this topic, whereas 31.4% said they were not very satisfied or totally dissatisfied with the coverage. However, if we add those indicating a mid-point level of satisfaction to the percentage of those dissatisfied, we can conclude that the majority of readers were not particularly satisfied with coverage of this topic in the Arabic press. These findings are understandable if we consider the meager coverage by the majority of newspapers, particularly commercial newspapers. That is, although the Arab press criticizes this policy and provides coverage of such incidents, it toes the general line set by the Hebrew press: The issue is raised only in connection with specific cases of policy implementation. In a content analysis survey of the three most widespread commercial newspaper, **Kol al-Arab**, **Al-Sennara** and **Panorama**, in a period of 5

consecutive months we found that the newspapers published very little on this topic. The survey found 41 short articles out of thousands of articles related to this topic during the 5 month period under study. This means that each edition of these newspapers had less than one article on the average on the topic. When the size of these articles was examined we found that on the average size of the articles that dealt with the issue of house demolition took up 25% of a page. The small number of articles, their small size and the fact that they appear only when the authorities demolish a house makes the marginality of this topic in the agenda of the commercial newspapers even more apparent. Having said that, it should be noted that in contrast to the Hebrew press, which emphasizes the legal aspects of the event and provides a platform for government spokesmen as opposed to Arab stakeholders and victims, the Arab press focuses on the human aspects and the grave infringement to basic human rights this policy represents. Arab commercial newspapers do represent the interests of the Arab community and criticize the authorities heavily concerning this policy.

Figure 8.11

Satisfaction with Coverage of Arab Protest Activities by the Arabic-Language Newspapers (%)



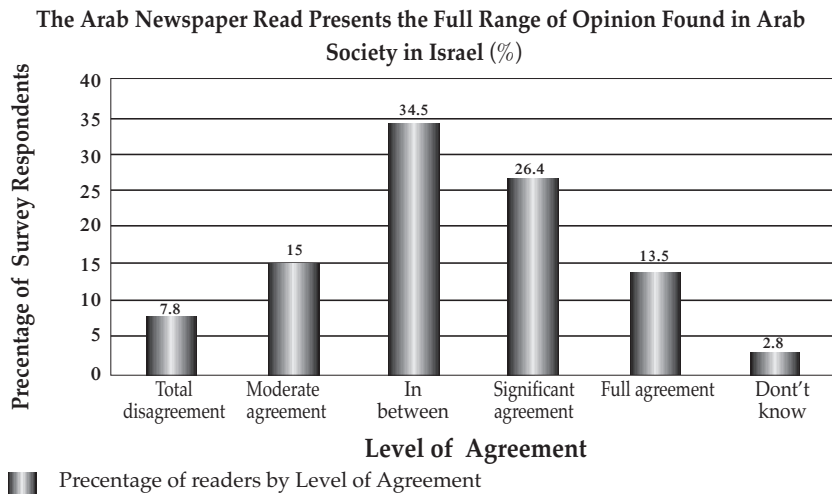
Arab newspaper consumers were also not very satisfied with the coverage of Arab protest activities against Israeli government policies in various areas. As seen from Figure 8.11, although 33% of the respondents stated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the topic's coverage, one can see that 45.4% expressed direct or indirect dissatisfaction. One should note that 21.7% expresses a mid-point position that represents a certain measure of dissatisfaction. The data, which represents the ambivalence of the Arab public, demonstrates that the Arab readers of the Arab newspapers are split and do not take a firm position reflecting satisfaction with the coverage of the protest activities.

In addition to the three topics mentioned, the survey participants were asked to indicate how they perceived the Arab newspapers' role in the public debate on the major issues affecting Arab society. The Arab press in Israel claims to provide a platform for the Arab population, which is forced to defend its rights daily and remains the object of discrimination by the government and other residents of the country in which they live. As research on the minority press in other parts of the world has revealed, minorities usually expect their newspapers to actively defend their rights and advocate positions that strengthen the minorities' positions on crucial issues (Gross 1998). These conclusions apply even more strongly in cases where the minority press is published in a separate language. In other words, the minority press functions both as a vehicle for maintenance of cultural identity and a means for recruiting members for collective action (Rios and Gaines Jr.1998) Hence, its readers expect this press to do more than express community hopes, dreams

and interests. Obviously, if the minority press intends to strengthen its position and attract a broader readership, it has to meet its public's expectations.

Following this argument, the research attempted to examine the Arab public's position regarding several of these issues. For example, to what extent does the Arabic press reflect the range of opinion found in Arab society, deepen the reader's sense of belonging (community) and defend the community's rights? Responses to these questions represent measures of the Arab readership's satisfaction with the press as a minority advocate. Although a wide variance of opinion was expressed, the general level of satisfaction with Arab press in these areas was not high.

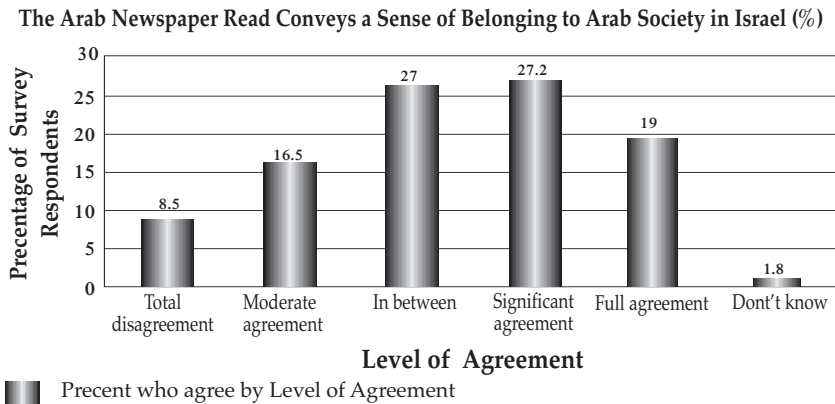
Figure 8.12



As Figure 8.12 shows, survey respondents were not particularly pleased with the extent to which Arab newspapers represent the range of positions present in Arab

society in Israel. A mid-point level of satisfaction was the most prevalent response among interviewees; that is, consumers of Arabic newspapers are skeptical regarding the accuracy with which these newspapers articulate the range of opinions found in Arab society. Although 40% of the respondents agreed significantly or fully with the statement that Arabic newspapers express the full range of opinions in Arab society, 34.5% expressed an ambivalent answer. When adding this answer to those that disagreed or totally disagreed we reach 57.4%, implying that the Arab public would like to see greater pluralism represented in the Arab press.

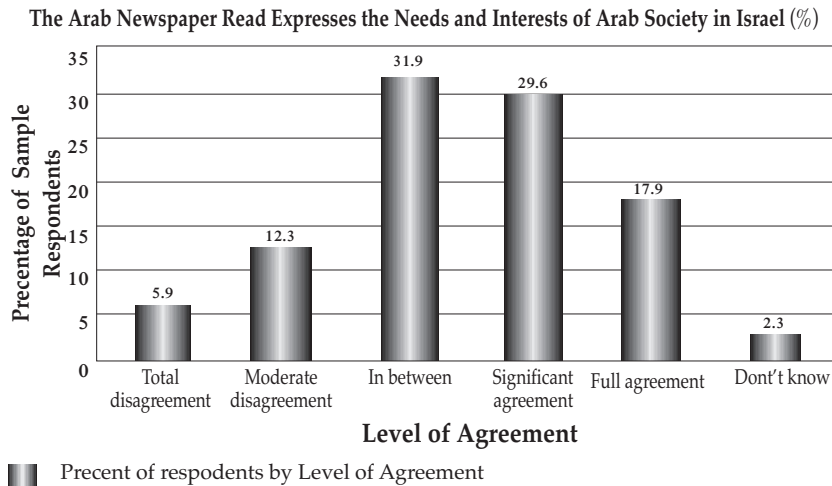
Figure 8.13



A similar pattern emerges regarding the role that the Arab press plays in providing its readers with a sense of belonging or membership in a community (see Figure 8.13). 27% of Arabic newspaper readers expressed a mid-point level of satisfaction, whereas 46.2% expressed a positive opinion (agree or highly agree) when asked if the Arab newspapers support communal

identity. In contrast, 52.2% expressed mid-point to very low satisfaction with the Arab press in this regard. In other words, a considerable proportion of newspaper consumers view the Arabic-language press as positively supporting a sense of belonging and Arab identity. However, the majority of respondents appeared to have doubts about Arab press, effectiveness in these matters. Such a position can be interpreted as critical with respect to the public's expectations of the Arab press as fulfilling a more patent role in building national identity and reinforcing internal solidarity. Nevertheless, we may also suggest that some respondents did not view the press as an institution whose task it is to reinforce a sense of belonging, a position expressed in negative responses to the question asked in this regard.

Figure 8.14



The slight skepticism alluded to by the responses regarding how well the Arabic press provides a sense of community recurred, but more emphatically, in responses to the question:

“To what extent does the Arabic press express the needs and interests of Arab society?” On this issue, too, the most popular response was the mid-point choice; that is, the respondents appear to be a bit skeptical of the role that the Arab press plays in this area. The findings indicate that 50.1% of the Arab public is dissatisfied to some degree with the way that the Arab press voices communal needs and interests (see Figure 8.14). Stated differently, the Arab public does not appear to view these newspapers as institutions responding to the public agenda; hence, they do not articulate the public’s opinions or protect Arab society’s interests as much as might be expected from them. Nonetheless, one notes that 47.5% (almost 50%) expressed a firm positive view with regard to the role the press plays in expressing the needs and interests of Arab society in Israel.

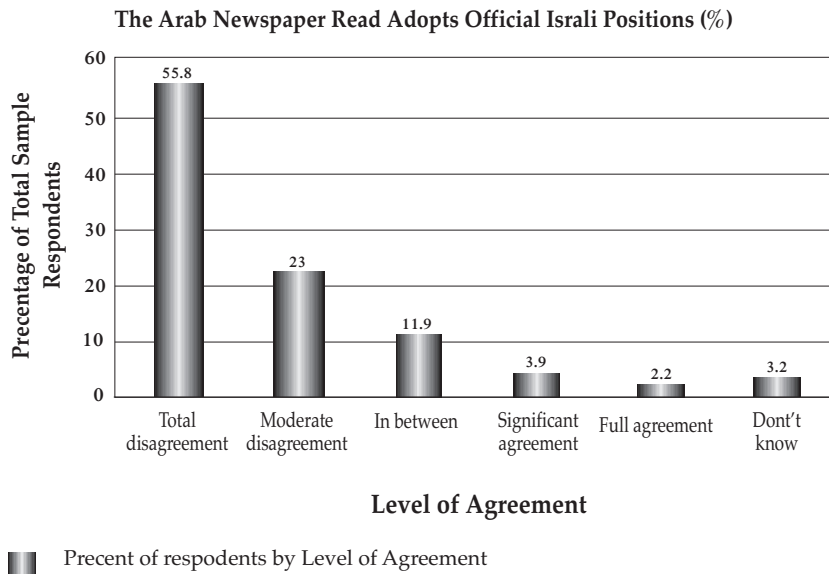
Figure 8.15



The survey respondents also expressed slight dissatisfaction with the role that the Arab press plays in defending Arab rights. Although a considerable percentage of the

respondents (46.3%, see Figure 8.15) agreed to a great or very great degree with the statement that the Arab press defends the Arab minority's rights, more than 50% expressed a mid-point to very low level of satisfaction. The trend observed in these responses clearly indicates that the Arab press does not meet the expectations of a large portion of the Arab public nor does it fulfill the roles that part of its readers have assigned to it.

Figure 8.16

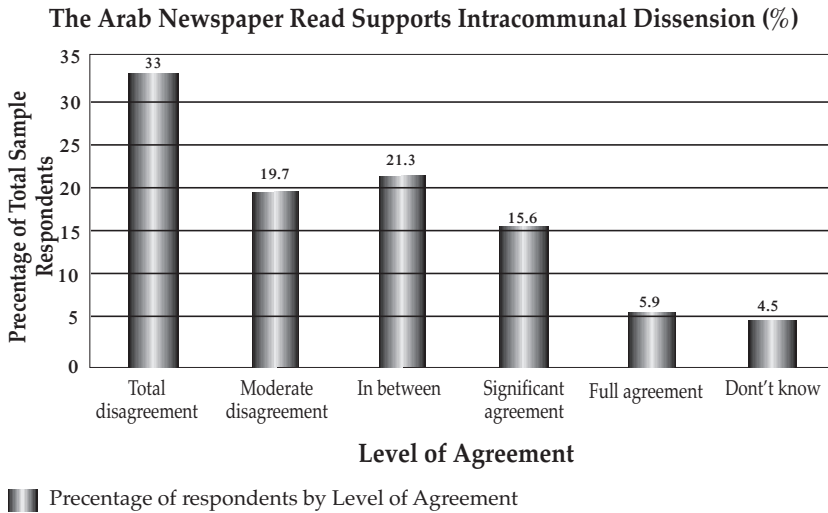


In order to verify that the Arab public's expectations of the press are not exaggerated and thereby ascertain whether the public ignores or underestimates the functions that the Arab press does fulfill, interviewees were asked to indicate whether they agreed to a series of negative statements about the Arab press. The findings indicate that in contrast to the

criticism leveled against the Arab press on the specific issues surveyed, the consensus was almost unanimous that the Arab press does not necessarily play a negative role. For example, the research participants were asked to indicate whether the Arab print media represents official Israeli positions (see Figure 8.16). The most common response was rejection of this possibility, with 33% decisively rejecting this statement and an additional 19.7% moderately disagreeing with the statement. Alternatively, a considerable minority (21.5%) stated that they significantly or fully agreed with the statement, a result that should raise questions and concern among newspaper publishers.

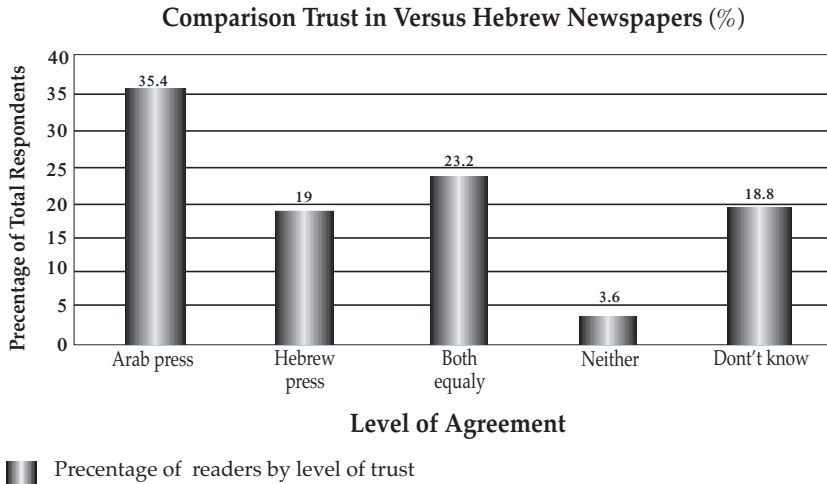
A relatively large proportion of the respondents adopted a mid-point position regarding Arab press expression of official Israeli positions. When this stance is added to those who significantly and fully agreed with this proposition it indicates considerable discontent and implies expectations of change. The cumulative percentage of respondents who expressed mid-point to total agreement with the statement was 42.8%. This relatively high percentage is indicative of public suspicion or dissatisfaction with the Arab press. This critical stance is evidence to the public's desire that the press adopt a clearer and more resolute nationalist position in defense of Arab society's interests.

Figure 8.17



A decisive majority of the respondents (78.8%) did not agree with the statement that the Arab press plays a negative role in Arab society, such as encouraging internal social or ethnic strife (see Figure 8.16), despite their criticism of Arab press deficiencies in the area of advocacy. We may conclude that this finding reflects the Arab public's dissatisfaction with the role played by Arab newspapers. At the same time, this view reinforces Arab society's pragmatic view of the press and the predominantly commercial character of the Arab weeklies.

Figure 8.18



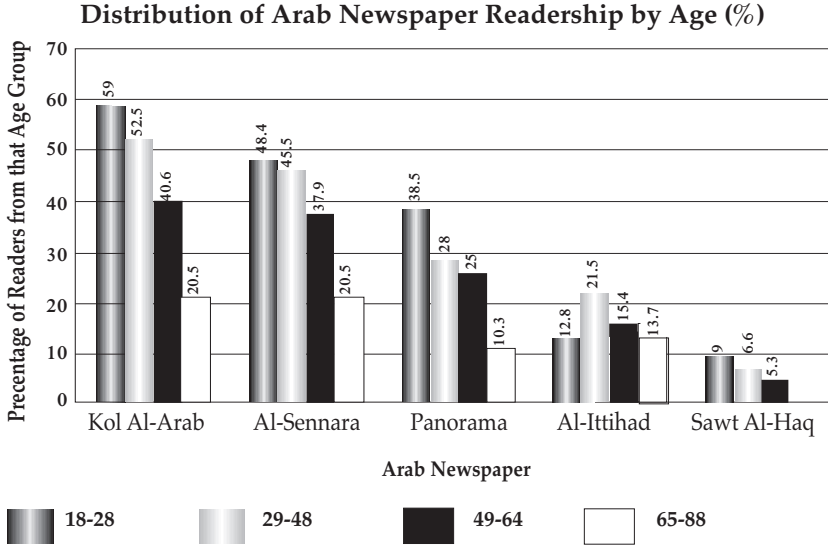
For the purpose of obtaining additional insight into the level of trust that Arab society exhibits toward the Arab press, the research participants were asked to compare their trust in the Arab press with their trust in the Hebrew press. As can be clearly seen from Figure 8.17, the percentage of respondents who expressed the opinion that the Arab press is more credible than the Hebrew press is greater than those who expressed the opposite. While 35.4% stated that the Arab press was more credible, only 19% stated that Hebrew press was more credible. This gap indicates that a considerable proportion of newspaper readers take a decisive position regarding the credibility of the Arab press as opposed to the Hebrew press. Yet, 23.2% of the respondents stated that they trusted both types of newspapers equally. This is almost half the percentage of respondents who expressed clear trust of either the Arabic or Hebrew press (54%). In contrast, only 3.6% stated that they equally distrusted the Arabic and

Hebrew press. However, a significant percentage of respondents (18.8%) indicated that they had no opinion. These findings indicate that the criticism leveled against the Arab press by its readers has not greatly affected the public's trust in those newspapers when compared to the Hebrew press. Nonetheless, if we take into account that only 35% of the survey participants replied to this question, the responses continue to reflect a high level of skepticism. As will be clarified below, the relatively low percentage of total responses serve as a further red light to Arab newspaper publishers, editors and journalists.

8.3 Demographics and Arab Newspaper Reading Patterns

Demographic characteristics are considered to be major factors influencing newspaper consumption. We therefore examined this association by asking participants in the study to provide information on characteristics such as age, gender, income, religious affiliation, religiosity (intensity of religious fervor and practice), and so forth. Several thought-provoking associations were revealed between these characteristics and Arabic-language newspaper consumption patterns. On the basis of these findings, preliminary, yet partial profiles of reading patterns could be constructed. We could thus conclude that some newspapers had succeeded in attracting a unique audience even though the same characteristics also appeared among consumers of other newspapers due to the widespread tendency to read more than one newspaper. The data presented below refer only to the newspapers with sufficiently wide circulation to enable statistically significant analyses. It is important to note here that the data presented in the figures represent the percent distributions of the specific demographic measures. This explains why the total in each category does not necessarily reach 100%.

Figure 8.19

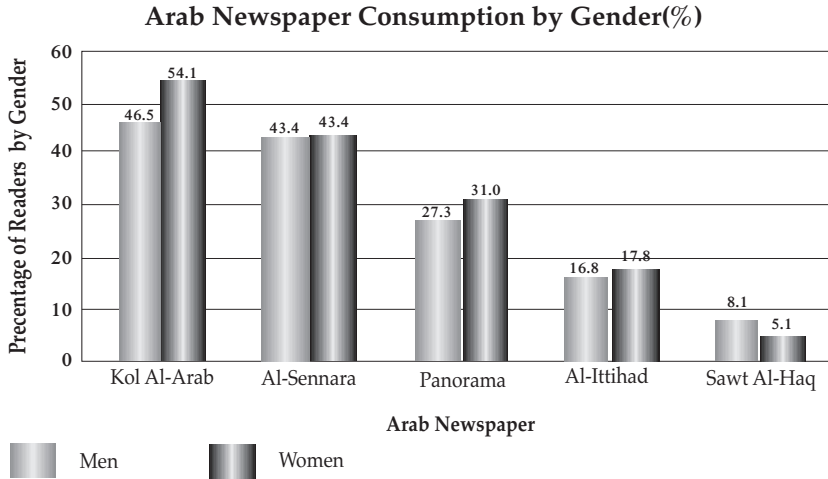


As shown in Figure 8.18, among all the age groups, the youngest group (18-28) was found to contain the highest percentage of readers for four out of the five newspapers: **Kol Al-Arab**, **Al-Sennara**, **Panorama**, and **Sawt Al-Haq wal-Hurriya**. **Al-Ittihad** exhibited the highest readership only in the 29-48 age group. It is the least read newspaper among the youth (18-28). It is also highly read in the older age group of 65-88. This pattern may indicate that despite some decline in the readership of the newspaper, it has managed to acquire the loyalty of a considerable proportion of an important generational segment of the Arab population (29-48). This group difference may reflect the rise and decline in support for the Communist party reflected in its popularity variances among the different age groups in Arab society. The data also indicated that as age increased, the number of people who read newspapers decreased, with the exception of **Al-Ittihad**

readers. While 83.4% in the 18-28 age group read all five newspapers, only 36.8% of those aged 65+ read all five newspapers. In other words, the level of total newspaper penetration is highest in the younger age groups. If habit is an important determinant of consumption, this finding is likely to have important ramifications for newspaper consumption in the future. It is clear from the data that the three commercial newspapers are mostly read among youth (18-28) when compared with other age groups. This data may be explained by the fact that the three newspapers address youth issues and run internet websites oriented clearly to the youth demographic. Furthermore, one has to note the fact that there are no youth magazines in Arabic, other than the ones run by these newspapers. These two last points mirror the efforts made by these newspapers to win over the young generation by new means, by hoping to adapting themselves to the technological development taking place in their surroundings.

The extent to which gender determines Arab society's culture of media consumption was also examined. Almost no difference was found between the two genders regarding the frequency of Arab newspaper consumption, with 19.9% of the men and 20.9% of the women in the sample responding that they do not read newspapers at all. Of those who stated that they read newspapers daily, the percentage of women was slightly higher than that of men (10.4% and 8.1%, respectively). But the findings regarding frequency of Hebrew newspaper reading were very different: 24.8% of the men and 48.6% of the women stated that they did not read any Hebrew newspaper. Of those who did read Hebrew newspapers daily, the percentage of men was much higher than the percentage of women (26.8% and 7.8%, respectively).

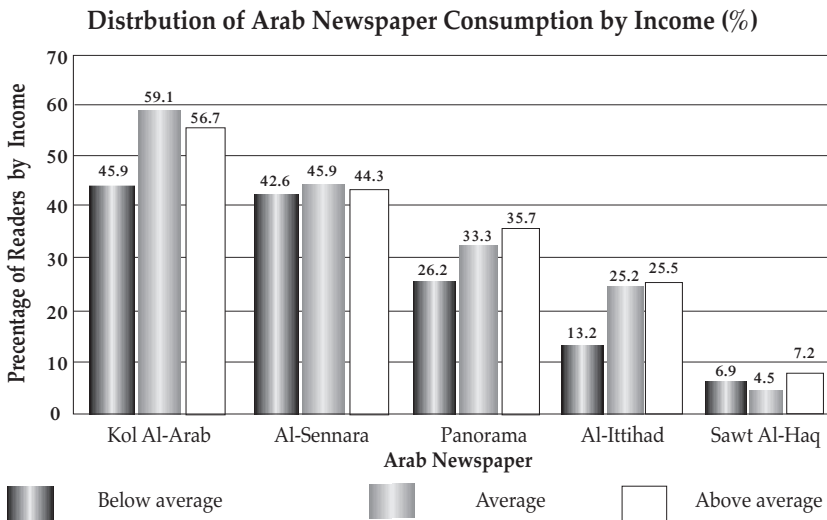
Figure 8.20



The association between gender and newspaper consumption demonstrates that the effect of gender, though considerable, is not uniform. Figure 8.19 shows that **Kol Al-Arab** is more widely read by women than by men: 54.1% and 46.5% respectively. A similar trend appears with respect to **Panorama**: 31% of the women and 27.3% of the men in the sample. We may venture that these newspapers, more than the others, provide information or address issues that interest women. This does not necessarily mean that they better represent women affairs. The examination of the news sections in the three most widely spread newspapers in Arab society – **Kol Al-Arab**, **Al-Sennara**, **Panorama** – demonstrate that women are hardly represented. The content analysis research conducted by this author found that women’s affairs were very marginal on the news agenda of these newspapers (Jamal and Diab 2006). In contrast, the data indicated that **Al-Sennara** and **Al-Ittihad** were read almost equally by both genders: 43.4% of the men and women in the sample read **Al-Sennara**

while 17.8% of the men and 16.8% of the women indicated that they read **Al-Ittihad**. The newspaper **Sawt Al-Haq wal-Hurriya** was read by slightly more men than women: 8.1% and 5.1% respectively. We may explain this trend by the fact that this newspaper is the organ of a religious political movement dominated by men, a characteristic that finds expression in the newspaper's contents.

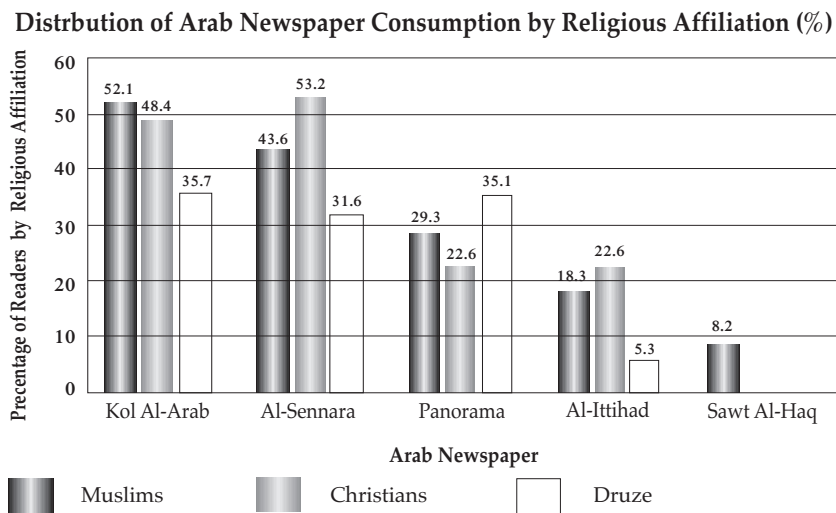
Figure 8.21



The data indicated that the effect of income on the distribution of Arab newspapers consumption was not uniform. Differences were found in the circulation of **Kol al-Arab** and **Al-Sennara**, both of which were read primarily by respondents having average incomes. With respect to readership by income, 56.7% of the respondents with above average incomes, 59.1% with average incomes and 45.9% with below average incomes read **Kol al-Arab**. The distribution was smoother among readers of **Al-Sennara**: 44.3% of the

respondents with above average incomes, 45.9% with average incomes and 44.3% with below average incomes read that newspaper. In examining **Panorama**'s readership, we found that as income rose, more people read **Panorama**. Thus, 35.7% of the respondents with above average incomes, 33.3% with average incomes and 26.2% with below average incomes read **Panorama**. A somewhat similar trend was observed for **Al-Ittihad**: 25.5% and 25.2% of the respondents with average and above average incomes, respectively, but only 13.2% with below average incomes read **Al-Ittihad**. In contrast, **Sawt Al-Haq wal-Hurriya** was read more widely by respondents with below average and above average incomes (6.9% and 7.2%, respectively) but was less read among respondents with average incomes (4.5%).

Figure 8.22



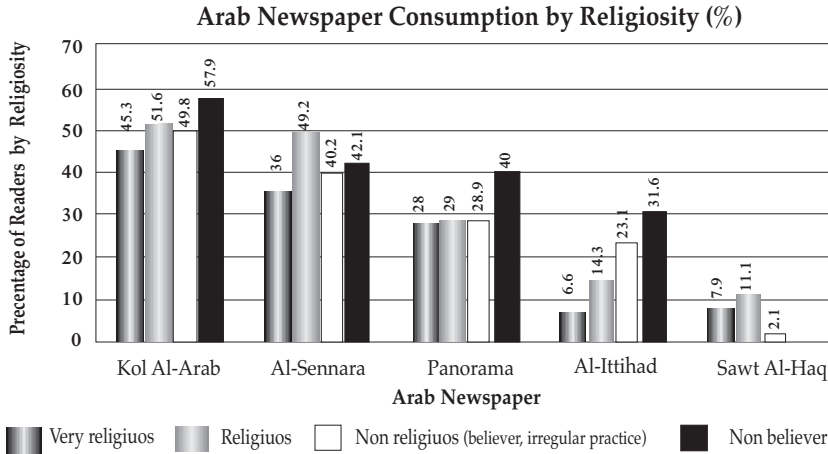
Religious and ethnic affiliation has been shown to affect newspaper consumption in multiethnic societies throughout the world. We therefore sought to determine whether these affiliations also affected the media consumption patterns of Arab society as a minority composed of various ethnic and religious groups. The data collected during the research indicated that religious affiliation did not suffice to explain consumption choice of Arab newspapers readers, for it was not the sole factor responsible for the newspaper consumption patterns of the various Arab communities. In fact, regression analysis performed on the data indicated that religious affiliation had no effect on Arab newspaper reading patterns. Although Figure 8.21 shows that the consumption of the different newspapers varies by religious affiliation, those differences are more strongly related to other demographic variables, such as region of residence, age and education, among others factors. This argument is supported by the data regarding television and radio consumption, discussed later. Given that, it can be argued that the results of this study disprove the thesis that religious affiliation is an important factor in explaining behavioral differences between the various religious groups that constitute Arab society in Israel. If media consumption provides a significant indication of cultural preferences, then the study's data refutes the thesis that attributes real importance to religious affiliation. It seems that religious and ethnic affiliation are externally imposed explanatory factors, used to promote the policy of divide and conquer.

To summarize, the research revealed only marginal differences in Arab newspaper consumption between the

various ethnic or religious groups. Quite possibly, some of these differences can be attributed to personal preferences; others may be associated with other demographic variables. For example, it was found that newspaper consumption patterns among Druze readers were not much different than those found among other ethnic or religious groups in Arab society.

The percentage of Druze readers of **Kol al-Arab** and **Panorama** was almost identical, 35.7% and 35.1%, respectively, and only somewhat higher than the percentage of Druze who read **Al-Sennara** (31.6%). Figure 8.21 also shows that the differences in consumption between Muslim and Christian readers were minor and inconsistent. Although the rate of Muslim readers of **Kol al-Arab** was larger (52.1%) than that of Christian readers (48.4%), this difference was not statistically significant, especially when compared with the associations found between other demographic characteristics. The difference in penetration of **Al-Ittihad**, like **Kol al-Arab**, was very similar in Christian and Muslim communities (22.6% and 18.3%, respectively). In contrast, more significant differences were found in the percentage of Christian and Muslims reading **Al-Sennara** (53.2% and 43.6%, respectively). This difference requires a broader explanation than one rooted in personal preferences or demographic characteristics. One possible explanation for the almost 10 percentage point gap is differences in the newspaper's circulation due to the regional location of the respective religious communities. Another explanation might be the fact that **Al-Sennara** is more comprehensive in its coverage of the Christian leadership, a topic that may attract more Christian readers.

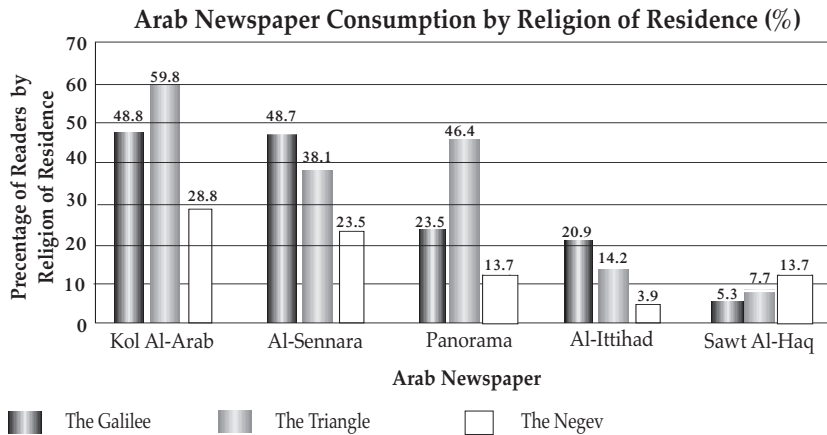
Figure 8.23



The research also explored whether religiosity (or secularity) affects Arabic newspaper consumption patterns. The findings indicated that intensity of religious belief did have an effect on these patterns, perhaps more than religious affiliation per se. As Figure 8.22 shows, secular readers tend to read **Kol al-Arab**, **Panorama** and **Al-Ittihad** more than do religious readers. A clear, statistically significant association was found between level of religiosity and consumption of **Al-Ittihad**; thus, the more religious a person, the less likely he or she is to read **Al-Ittihad**, and vice versa. **Al-Ittihad** was read by 31.6% of those who defined themselves as not at all religious (i.e., fully secular), 23.1% by those who defined themselves as believers but not religious, 14.3% of those defining themselves as religious but only 6.6% of those defining themselves as very religious. **Panorama** was found to be most widely read paper among respondents who defined themselves as secular (40%). This percentage is much higher than the approximately 29%

among the newspaper's readers identifying themselves with the three other religiosity categories. In contrast, *Kol al-Arab* was widely read by secular respondents, but the differences between them and the other three groups were not large. Figure 8.22 also shows that *Al-Sennara* penetration was higher among religious respondents (49.2%) but not significantly below *Kol al-Arab*'s penetration in this group (51.6%).

Figure 8.24

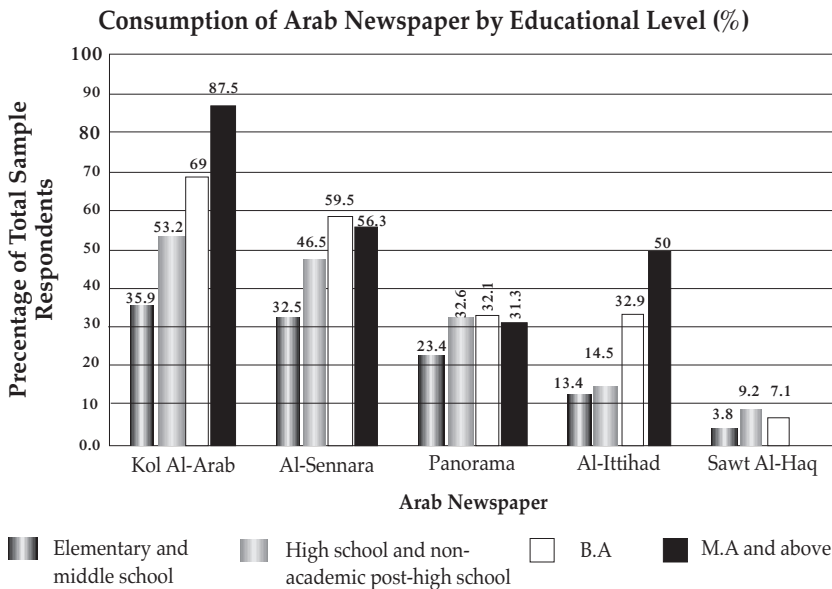


The association between region of residence and Arabic-language newspaper consumption was likewise explored (see Figure 8.23). It was found that region of residence – especially if other demographic factors and the amount of a newspaper's coverage devoted to regional news are considered – did have an effect on newspaper consumption although it was not uniform for all newspapers. Interestingly, the circulation of all five Arabic newspapers – with the

exception of **Sawt Al-Haq wal-Hurriya** – in the Negev was very low compared to their circulation in the Galilee and the Triangle. As Figure 8.23 clearly shows, **Kol al-Arab** and **Panorama** did better in the Triangle than in the other two regions. Among the readers of Arab newspapers in the Triangle, 59.8% of the respondents indicated that they read **Kol al-Arab**, 46.4% **Panorama** and only 38.1% **Al-Sennara**. **Al-Sennara** and **Al-Ittihad** were more widely read in the Galilee, than in the Negev or the Triangle. As for **Al-Sennara**, 48.7% of readers of Arab newspapers in the Galilee, 38.1% in the Triangle and 23.5% in the Negev stated that they read this newspaper. Regarding **Al-Ittihad**, 20.9% of the respondents from the Galilee but only 14.2% of the respondents in the Triangle and a mere 3.9% of the respondents from the Negev read this newspaper. A comparison of rates in the Galilee showed that **Kol al-Arab** (48.8%) and **Al-Sennara** (48.7%) appear to have identical circulation. **Sawt Al-Haq wal-Hurriya** was most widely read in the Negev (13.7%) but least read in the Galilee (5.30%). These findings about **Sawt Al-Haq wal-Hurriya** were supported by the data regarding this newspaper's distribution among religious communities: Christian and Druze readers, the majority of whom live in the Galilee, did not read this newspaper at all. Instead, individuals living in the Negev were this newspaper's main readers (13.7%). This region's population also has the lowest education and income average, two factors that may influence the increase in support for the Islamic Movement in this region. The Negev Arab population in Israel is the most deprived and segregated Arab group when compared to all other population groups in Israel. This fact feeds support for the

Islamic Movement who provide social and economic services to poor families in the area. This fact may explain the readership rates of the mouthpiece of the Islamic Movement in the area. Having said that, one should not over estimate the data regarding **Sawt Al-Haq wal-Hurriya**, for it remains a narrowly read newspaper even in the Negev region when compared with the rates for commercial newspapers that are distributed there.

Figure 8.25



As the data in Figure 8.24 show, educational level had a decisive effect on Arab newspaper reading patterns even though the contents of the various commercial newspapers are not significantly different. Still, the penetration of each newspaper varied by the reader's level of education. It is important to note that although the number of participants

in the research holding MA or PhD degrees was very small in absolute terms, this category was included for illustrative purposes; care should therefore be taken in drawing definitive conclusions about this group.

The significant effect of educational level on the percentages of those reading the commercial newspapers was illustrated in the different rates of respondents indicating they read **Kol al-Arab** as compared to **Panorama**. As for **Al-Sennara**, it was more popular with holders of BA degrees (59.5%) than with holders of MA or PhD degrees (56.3%). The percentages of its readers with elementary and high school educations were lower, 46.5% and 32.5%, respectively. As is clear from Figure 8.24, **Kol al-Arab** was most popular among readers at every educational level, with readership increasing with educational level: 87.5% of readers with MA or PhD degrees read **Kol al-Arab** as did 69% with BA degrees, 53.2% with high school educations and 35.9% with elementary school education. Conversely, the trend in **Panorama** readership was nearly identical percentages for readers from all educational levels, with the exception of readers with only an elementary school education. Thus, 31.1% of those with an MA or PhD degree, 32.3% of those with a BA degree, 32.6% of those with a high school education, but only 23.4% with an elementary school education read **Panorama**. As for the party-affiliated newspapers, **Al-Ittihad** was clearly the newspaper chosen by the educated: 32.9% of those with BA degrees and 50% of those with MA or PhD degrees read this newspaper, whereas only 14.5% of high school graduates and 13.4% of respondents who completed elementary school read **Al-Ittihad**. Because a respectable percentage of the educated elite prefers this newspaper, **Al-Ittihad** has

achieved considerable influence in forming Arab public opinion. Turning to **Sawt Al-Haq wal-Hurriya**, this newspaper was most widely read among those with a high school education (9.2%), and less by those with a BA degree (7.1%), a PhD degree (0.0%) or an elementary school education (3.8%). This data could be easily related to what has been said about the regional distribution of the newspaper.

8.4 Comparing Reading Patterns: The Party Affiliated versus the Commercial Press

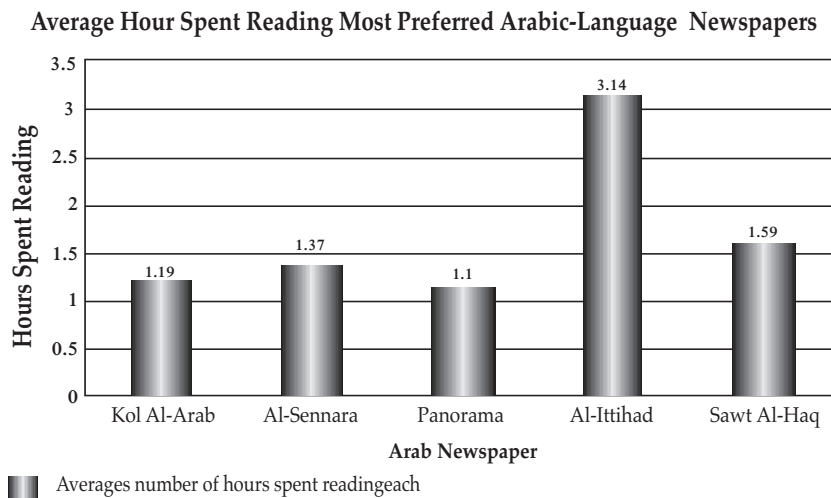
A decisive difference has always existed between political party-affiliated newspapers and the commercial press (Limor and Mann 1997). Party newspapers function to spread ideology and recruit adherents for the political parties that sponsor their publication. Commercial newspapers, in contrast, have generally been published for profit, usually by wealthy individuals. Thus, the two types of press are based on different ideological and economic foundations. Despite these differences, both inherently aim at setting the public agenda and influencing their readers' viewpoints.

Although this is not the place to expand on these issues, it is important to note that the party press, in the form of the Communist Party newspaper, **Al-Ittihad**, written in Arabic, has existed since before the establishment of the State of Israel. The commercial press only appeared on the scene in the early and mid-1980's, when the weekly **Al-Sennara** began to publish and therefore gained a wide circulation in the Arabic community. Hence, **Al-Ittihad** and **Al-Sennara** were trendsetters that introduced two new schools of journalism and heralded the founding of other party and commercial newspapers in the Arab community. Newspapers representing these two schools have continued to address

different audiences despite their endeavors and attempts to expand their readership.

In this section, we compare data in an attempt to better understand diverging patterns of consumption between the two main forms of newspaper. The research findings indicate that differences between the party-affiliated and commercial newspapers were manifested, for example, in the average amount of time devoted to reading these two kinds of Arab newspapers. Other differences were expressed in the Arab public's relatively greater trust in the party newspapers as opposed to the commercial newspapers. The party press was perceived as more reliable and the news that it provided as more credible. These differences support one of the study's principal conclusions; i.e., that the relationship maintained by readers of commercial newspapers to these newspapers are instrumental, based on cautious skepticism regarding the information they provide.

Figure 8.26

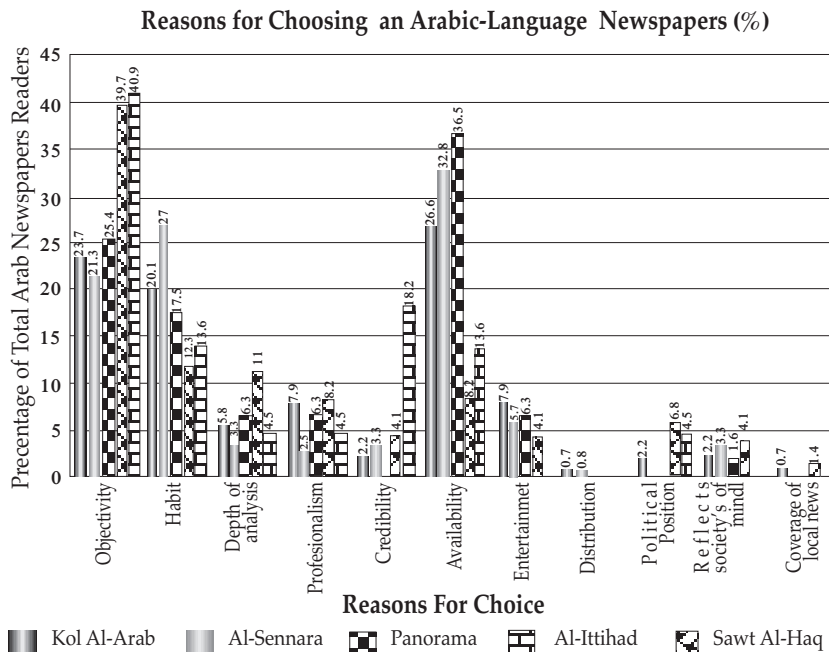


As can be seen from Figure 8.25, while differences in the amount of time spent in reading the various commercial newspapers was relatively small, a larger difference was found between the amount of time devoted to the party newspapers when compared with the time spent reading all three commercial newspapers. **Al-Sennara** readers devoted an average of 1.37 hours weekly to the reading of that newspaper, **Kol al-Arab** readers spent an average of 1.19 hours weekly and **Panorama** readers devoted an average of 1.099 hours weekly. In contrast, readers stated that they devoted an average of 3.139 hours weekly to reading the party newspaper **Al-Ittihad** while an average of 1.59 hours weekly was devoted to reading **Sawt Al-Haq wal-Hurriya**.

Various factors can explain the large difference in time devoted to reading **Al-Ittihad**, as compared with the other newspaper, including **Sawt Al-Haq wal-Hurriya**. For instance, **Al-Ittihad** is a daily newspaper; its readers are party supporters who actively participate in the various debates conducted in its pages. Based on the data reported previously, it was found that **Al-Ittihad** readers were more educated – a factor decisive in its influence on the average time devoted to reading newspapers. The amount of time spent reading a newspaper also indicates the importance the reader attributes to its contents. Another possible explanation for the large difference is that **Al-Ittihad** readers might have exaggerated their estimates of the time spent. This caveat derives from the considerable difference in newspaper size, as **Al-Ittihad** is a slim newspaper containing very few sections devoted to daily news.

If we take into account the number of pages in the party newspapers (few), and the number in the commercial newspapers (they can reach 100 or more with the magazines), the relative difference in time devoted to reading party-affiliated as opposed to commercial newspapers becomes greater. This indicates that while readers of the party newspapers may have read the items and columns in-depth, commercial newspaper readers simply skimmed. This suggests significant differences in readers' perceptions of each type of newspaper and its contents.

Figure 8.27



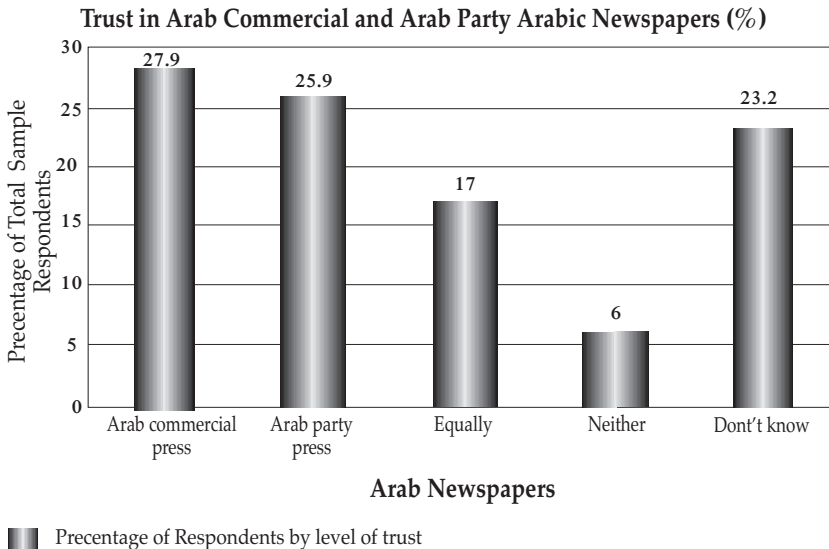
In order to further explore the factors inducing the differences in readers' attitudes toward the commercial versus the party newspapers, the research participants were asked to select

the principle reasons for reading one or another newspaper from a list provided to them (see Figure 8.26). The data indicated clear differences in the reasons cited. Availability was more important than objectivity as a reason for readers of commercial newspapers: 36.5% of *Panorama* readers indicated availability as an important factor, as did 32.8% of **Al-Senara** readers and 26.6% of **Kol al-Arab** readers. On the other hand, 23.7% of **Kol al-Arab** readers, 21.3% of **Al-Senara** readers and 25.4% of **Panorama** readers indicated objectivity as the main factor for choosing these newspapers. In contrast, a reverse trend was found among readers of party newspapers: objectivity was more important than availability. 39.7% and 40.9% of the readers of **Al-Ittihad** and **Sawt Al-Haq wal-Hurriya**, respectively, indicated objectivity as a main factor for reading these newspapers. Only 8.2% and 13.6%, respectively, of the readers of these two newspapers indicated availability as central factors for their choice. A similar trend was revealed regarding habit, as indicated in Figure 8.26. Habit was a dominant reason cited by readers of commercial newspapers while credibility was a more important factor for readers of the party newspapers.

The research also examined the level of trust in newspapers by category (see Figure 8.27). Participants were asked to compare the trust they attached to the party newspapers in comparison with the commercial newspapers regarding the newspapers' coverage of Arab society in Israel. Among the respondents, 27.9% stated that the commercial press was more trustworthy. On the other hand, 25.9% indicated that the party press was more trustworthy, 17% claimed that both were equally trustworthy, 6% stated that neither was trustworthy to the same extent and 23.2% responded that they did not know (no opinion). Such small differences in perceived

trustworthiness between the two types of newspapers do not enable us to make sweeping generalizations. Despite the different level of readers' trust in the specific newspapers, slightly more trust was expressed regarding the commercial (27.9%) as opposed to the party newspapers (25.9%). Although the difference falls within the fault range of the research, this data raises to mind two important points. The first is that in general the Arab public trends to suspect the party-affiliated newspapers. It accepts the assumption that, whereas these newspapers mirror the interest of the parties they speak for, the commercial newspapers reflected the general public interest. The second point is that, if we control for the considerable differences in the percentage of readers or circulation enjoyed by each type of newspaper, the data can be interpreted as indicating that the party newspapers are considered more trustworthy.

Figure 8.28



We should recall here the previous comment regarding the effect of circulation on the interpretation of the results. A difference of only two percentage points in the level of trust attributed to the commercial newspapers as opposed to the party newspapers does not appear to be significant. When we consider the sizable differences in the number reading the respective newspapers, the scale appears to swing towards favoring the party newspapers, which are read by a relatively small percentage of the respondents but enjoy a relatively high level of trust. This conclusion is supported by the findings, presented above, regarding the credibility that the respondents attributed to the news items printed in each newspaper. As noted, credibility of the items printed in the commercial newspapers was lower than for those printed in the party newspapers. If placed on a continuum from very low to very high trust, the level of trust receiving the highest frequency was the moderate trust attributed to the commercial newspapers. In contrast, the party newspapers **Al-Ittihad** and **Sawt Al-Haq wal-Hurriya** received more in the way of high and very high trust attributions, respectively.

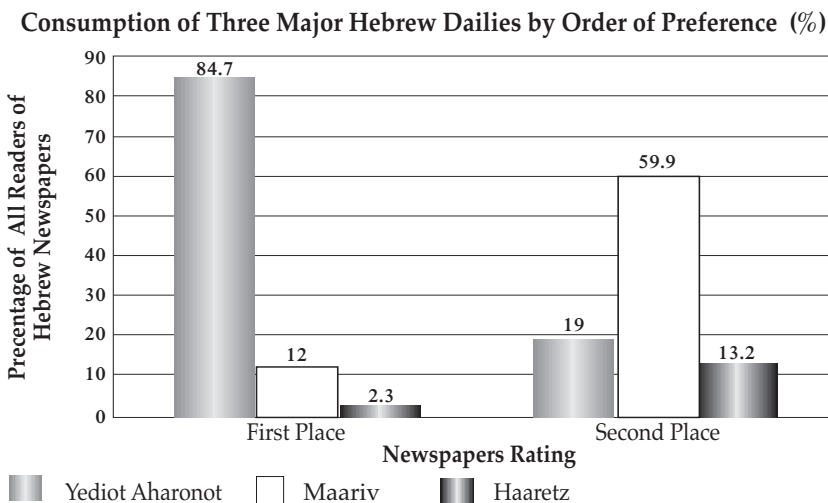
9. *The Hebrew Press: Reading Patterns, Satisfaction and Trust*

Before beginning our analysis of consumption of the Hebrew press by the Arab public in Israel, it is important to note that Hebrew is in effect a foreign language for members of Arab society. Although a significant proportion of the Arab population of Israel speak Hebrew, it is not their native language. It is more than likely that this fact has a considerable impact on the way Arab society relates to the Hebrew press. Another important factor to consider is that studies on the content of the Hebrew press, particularly regarding the way in which Arabs are represented, have found that very few items on issues of importance to the Arab community are reported. Furthermore, when such reporting does appear on the pages of Hebrew newspapers, it is usually negative (First and Avraham 2004). The coverage creates a negative image of Arabs and tends to present them as lawbreakers who shirk their legal obligations to the State (Aburayya, Avraham and Wolfsfeld 1998). This type of reporting serves Jewish society's need to know about what is happening in the minority population, yet the same articles do not attempt to express the opinions, positions, processes, or state of mind of this minority as an integral segment of Israeli society. Although such images doubtlessly affect readership among the Arab population, this particular issue was not examined in-depth in the present study.

Moreover, the fact that Hebrew newspapers are not regularly distributed in every Arab residential area cannot be ignored. Distribution undoubtedly affects Arab readership rates for these newspapers. When interpreting these data, we should also recall that these percentages do not represent absolute numbers: They reflect trends among the populations reading the specific newspapers in question, and not the view of the Arab population at large.

As noted in our introduction, the Arab public is exposed to the Hebrew press together with the Arabic press. Yet, the research findings show that only 17.4% of the Arab population in fact read Hebrew newspapers daily, with another 45.9% reading the Hebrew press irregularly, whether during the week, on weekends, or only infrequently. It was also found that 36.7% of the respondents do not read any Hebrew newspaper. Lack of knowledge of the language (49.4%) and lack of interest (45.7%) were the main reasons cited for not reading the Hebrew press.

Figure 9.1



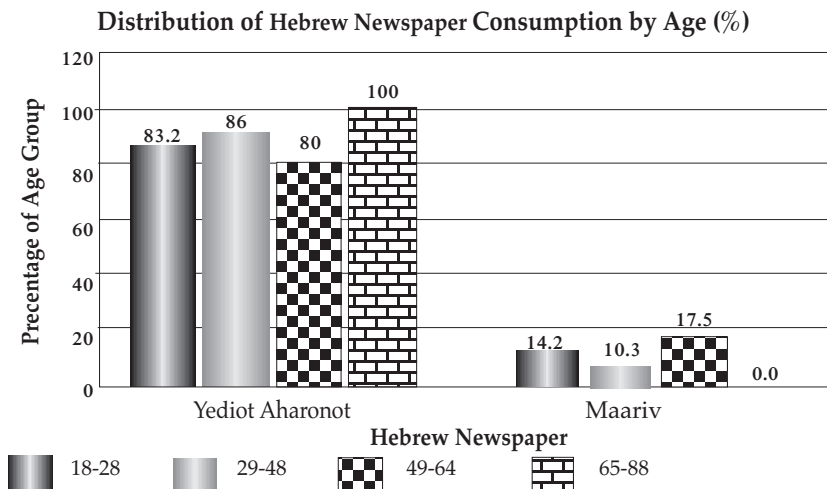
The study surveyed readership of Israel's three major dailies, **Yediot Aharonot**, **Maariv** and **Haaretz**. Among these newspapers, the respondents preferred Yediot Aharonot to the other two, which resembles the reading habits of Israel's Jewish society. Of those who did read Hebrew newspapers, 84.7% rated **Yediot Aharonot** in first place, compared to 12% for **Maariv** and 2.3% for **Haaretz** (see Figure 9.1). As to second place, the percentage preferring **Yediot Aharonot** fell to 19% while the percentage preferring **Maariv** increased to 59.9%; that is, **Maariv** is considered a substitute for **Yediot Aharonot**. The preference rating for **Haaretz** also rose among the newspapers in second place, to 13.2%; that is, **Haaretz** is the less-preferred substitute for **Yediot Aharonot**. These data should not lead to the conclusion that a considerable proportion of the Arab public reads two Hebrew newspapers at the same time; rather, the findings indicate which newspapers are likely to serve as alternatives for each other. Thus, in the case of **Yediot Aharonot**, if its readers cannot obtain that paper, they are much more likely to choose **Maariv** than **Haaretz**.

The findings also show that the average amount of time devoted to reading Hebrew newspapers is different from the average amount of time devoted to reading Arabic newspapers. Based on the findings, among those who read Hebrew newspapers, it became clear that an average of 2.16 hours per day were devoted to reading **Yediot Aharonot**, 1.81 hours to **Maariv** and 2.05 hours to **Haaretz**. The research data demonstrates that the average time devoted to reading Hebrew newspapers is greater than the average time devoted to reading Arabic newspapers (see p. xx). In all likelihood, the main reason for this finding is that the Hebrew newspapers are dailies; hence, their readers are accustomed to reading them on a daily

basis. In contrast, most of the Arab newspapers are weeklies and the political news they report is rather marginal. What remains to be read in the Arabic newspapers on a weekly basis is local news pertaining to Arab society, and general news, primarily in the areas of entertainment and leisure.

The influence of demographic factors on Hebrew press consumption patterns was also examined. Here, too, interesting results were found that indicate significant demographic effects on these patterns. Before continuing, it is worthwhile reiterating that the demographic data presented in this section relate to Hebrew newspaper readers exclusively. Therefore, the percentages shown in the various figures do not necessarily total 100%. Furthermore, to maintain a high level of statistical reliability, data for **Haaretz** have been excluded from several of the following analyses because its readership rates among the sample group for this study are too low to conduct any reliable or valid statistical analyses with respect to those issues.

Figure 9.2

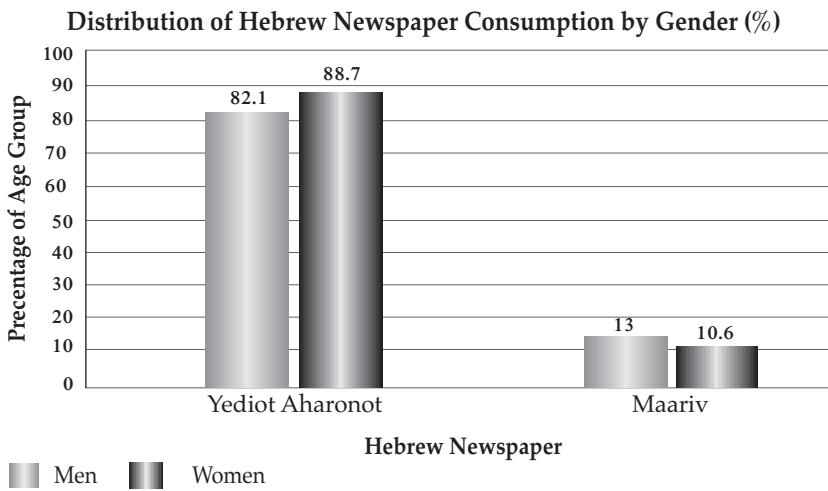


The first factor examined for its effect on newspaper consumption was age (see Figure 9.2). The study sample was divided into four age groups: 18-28, 29-48, 49-64 and 65+. As Figure 9.2 shows, large gaps appear between the proportions reading **Yediot Aharonot** and those reading **Maariv** in each age group. The figure also clearly shows that the highest proportion of **Yediot Aharonot** readers belonged to the oldest age group: 100% of those aged 65+ who read Hebrew newspapers read **Yediot Aharonot** exclusively. The proportions were similar throughout the different age groups, with the 29-48 age group showing the highest rate (86%) after the 65+ age group. A certain decrease in **Yediot Aharonot** readership was observed in the 49-64 age group (80%), with a concurrent increase in the rate reading **Maariv** (17.5%). Similarly, a low level of **Maariv** readership was noted for the 29-48 age group (10.3%), with a concomitant higher rate of **Yediot Aharonot** readership (86%). These data indicate which newspapers substitutes for one another in the various age groups.

Gender was also found to have an effect on Hebrew newspaper reading patterns (see Figure 9.3). Large differences were found in the respective frequencies. Among men, 24.8% stated that they do not read Hebrew newspapers at all whereas 48.6% of the women gave the same answer. Among men, 27.9% said that they read Hebrew newspapers three to four times a week; 19.6% of the women gave the same answer. Among men, 26.8% stated that they read Hebrew newspapers daily, while only 7.8% of the women did. Differences in gender-related employment patterns may explain these findings. Employment involves, among other things, leaving the village to work in Jewish cities, where

Hebrew newspapers are readily available; men are more likely to work outside their villages. The observed gaps in the frequency of reading Hebrew newspapers were not reflected in the frequency with which men and women read Arab newspapers; there, the gaps were barely discernable (see p. xx).

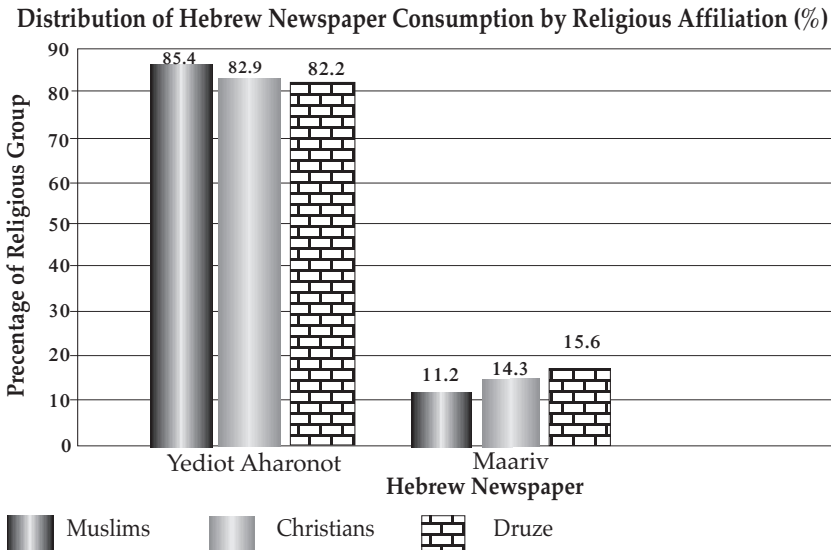
Figure 9.3



As can be seen from Figure 9.3, although gender was an important factor in the Hebrew newspaper reading patterns, the gaps between men and women were not significant. As to the penetration of particular newspapers among newspaper readers belonging to each gender, the findings revealed that among females the percentage of those choosing to read **Yediot Aharonot** is higher (88.7%) than among men (82.1%). The trends reversed for **Maariv**. This latter newspaper is read more by men (13%) than by women (10%). Although the gaps in readership between the genders

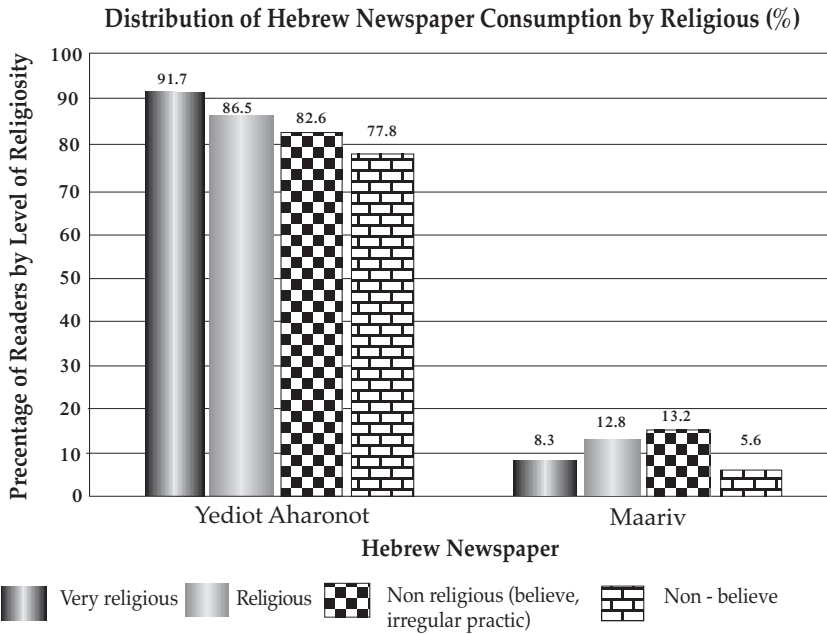
were relatively small, the reasons for the gaps, among others things, may be the availability of each newspaper to each group and the positions that each takes on inter-gender relationships.

Figure 9.4



The data on consumption of the two Hebrew newspapers indicated no significant effect due to religious affiliation (see Figure 9.4). This finding indicates sizeable similarity in reading Hebrew press among the three religious communities in Arab society. This further reinforces the view that ethnic and religious differences are marginal factors in Arab society in Israel, and the three groups composing Arab society actually have more in common nationally and culturally when it comes to consumption of the Hebrew media. These data substantiate the study's claim that policies aimed at the ethnic and religious division of Arab society have not affected the culture of media consumption.

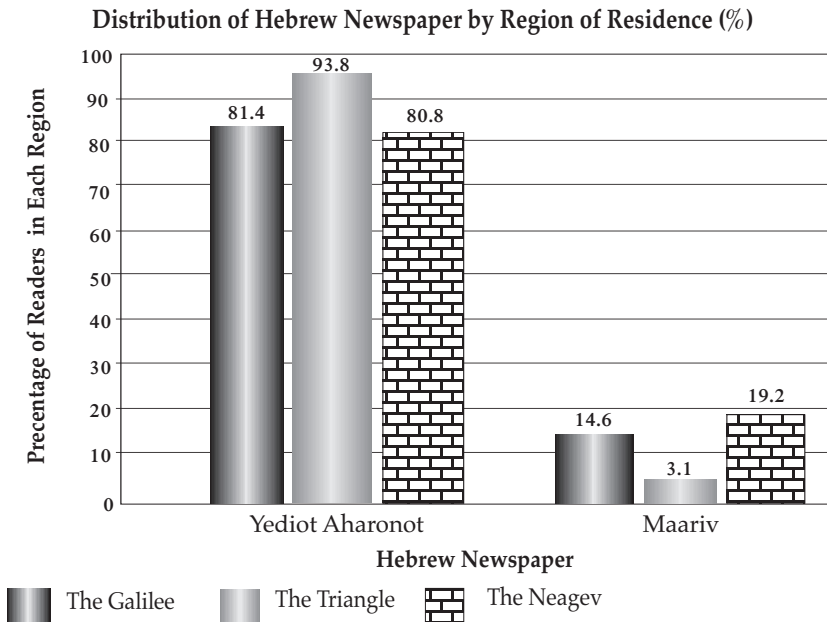
Figure 9.5



Continuing the analysis, the effect of religiosity on the consumption of Hebrew newspapers is shown in Figure 9.5. What is interesting here is that contrary to expectations, as the level of religiosity increased, **Yediot Aharonot** readership also increased. This newspaper is more widely read by those who defined themselves as very religious (91.7%) than by those who defined themselves as secular (77.8%), but the readership rates were relatively high for every level of religiosity. It was difficult to find a factor explaining this phenomenon although it may be related to the variable of age: As shown previously, **Yediot Aharonot** is read more widely by the older age groups, a population tending to define itself as religious. In contrast, younger groups can be expected to define themselves as secular. However, this phenomenon does not explain the entire picture portrayed

by the data because the respondents who defined themselves as religious and very religious are less open to alternative sources of information, such as the Internet. Thus, religious and older individuals depend more on newspapers for news than do more secular and younger people. The situation regarding **Maariv** is more complex. The newspaper was more widely read by the religious (12.8 %) and not religious (13.2%) than by the very religious (8.3%) and the secular (5.6%). In other words, among Arab readers of **Maariv**, individuals of average religiosity were more likely to read this Hebrew newspaper.

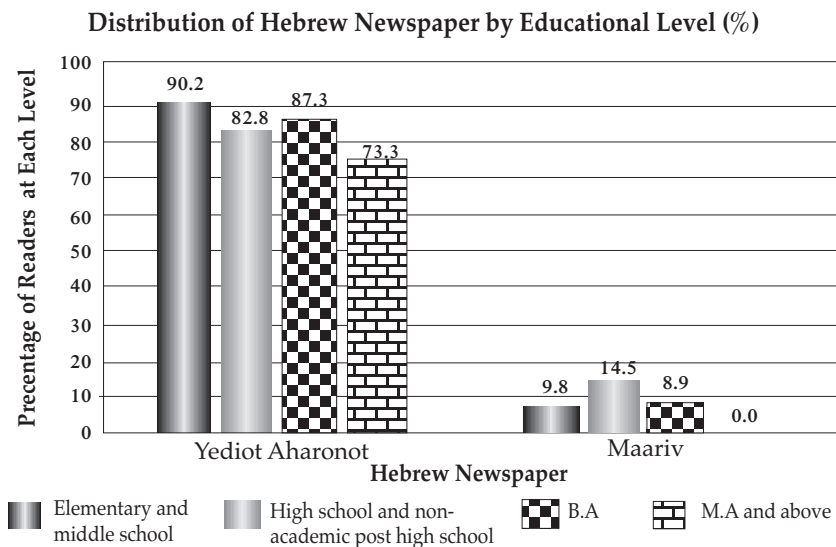
Figure 9.6



When data on Hebrew newspaper consumption were examined in association with region of residence, almost identical rates of **Yediot Aharonot** readership were found

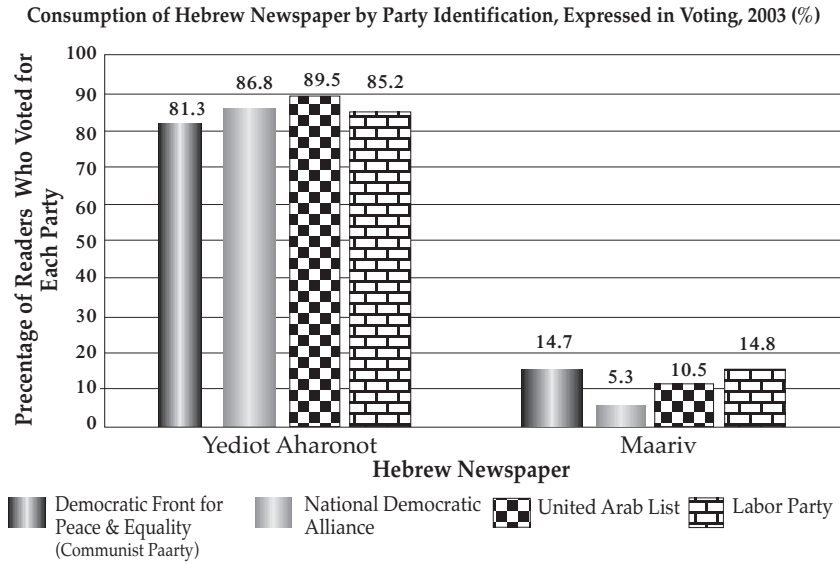
for the Galilee and the Negev (see Figure 9.6). Among Hebrew newspaper readers, 81.4% of those living in the Galilee and 80.8% of those living in the Negev read **Yediot Aharonot**; in the Triangle, 93.8% of Hebrew newspaper readers read **Yediot Aharonot**, a rate higher than that for the other two regions. A possible reason for this difference may be the newspaper's distribution, which is more efficient in the Triangle: the region is closer to Israel's center than are the Galilee or Negev regions where there are many remote villages to which newspapers may not arrive regularly. In contrast, the percentage reading **Maariv** (3.1%) was much lower in the Triangle than in the Galilee (14.6%) or the Negev (19.2%). This data reinforces the point that these two newspapers replace each other among Arab readers of the Hebrew press.

Figure 9.7



From the data shown in Figure 9.7, which presents the distribution of Hebrew newspaper consumption by educational level and newspaper, we find no clear or consistent association, a phenomenon similar to that observed with respect to Hebrew-language radio listening, described below. Among members of the sample who had obtained an elementary school education and read Hebrew newspapers, 90.2% read **Yediot Aharonot**, followed by those with BA degrees, (87.3%). Among those with MA or PhD degrees, consumption of **Yediot Aharonot** declined to 73.3%. In contrast, **Maariv** has succeeded in penetrating the group of Hebrew newspapers readers having completed a high school education: 14.5% of this group read **Maariv**. However, **Maariv** has not succeeded in reaching the more educated, with only 8.9% of those with BA degrees who read Hebrew newspapers reading **Maariv** and it has no readers at all among respondents with MA or PhD degrees. The explanation for this may be the high percentage of **Haaretz** readers in this group, which was nonetheless numerically quite small. Another reason for this specific data is that the Arab academic elite tends to be more politically and nationally committed. Knowing that **Maariv** takes an extreme nationalistic Jewish position leads Arabs to refrain from reading this newspaper. This position may be explained by the level of trust devoted to the different Hebrew newspapers among the Arab public.

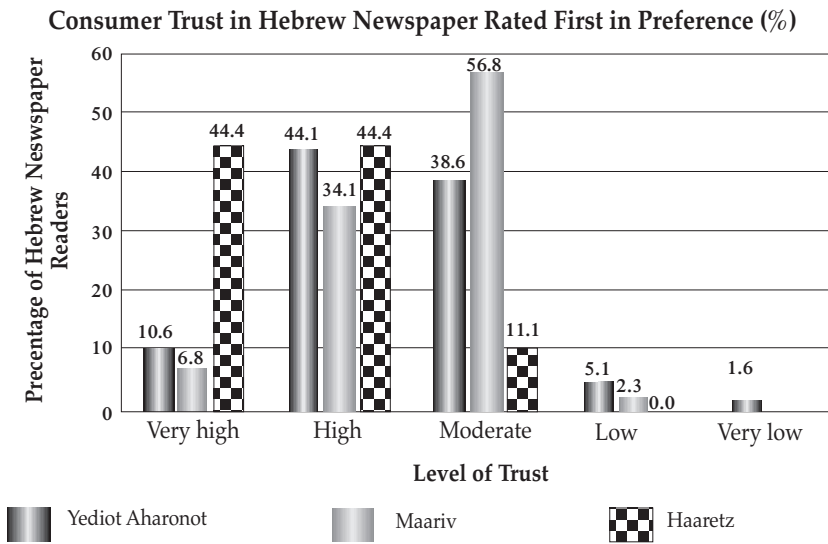
Figure 9.8



As can be seen from Figure 9.8, which describes the relationship between voting patterns and Hebrew newspaper reading, the differences between voters for the different parties among readers of the two newspapers were not especially significant. **Yediot Aharonot** was read by voters for all the parties. It was read most by those who voted for the United Arab List (Ra'am, 89.5%), and least by those who voted for the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (Hadash, 81.3%). Quite possibly, **Al-Ittihad**, the Arabic daily identified with Hadash, provides an alternative to **Yediot Aharonot** for that party's voters and thus explains the lower circulation of **Yediot Aharonot** among its voters. The differences in percentages were fairly low in any case. **Maariv** was read most widely by Labor Party (14.8%) and Hadash (14.7%) voters. The number of **Maariv** readers was lowest

among voters for the National Democratic Alliance (Balad, 5.3%). This data may be added to support our previous explanation that the national commitment among the Arab academic elite translates into a lesser likelihood of reading **Maariv**. The voters of Balad party, which is known as a nationalist party, tend to refrain from reading **Maariv** more than voters of other parties.

Figure 9.9



A further issue explored was trust. The participants in the research were asked to indicate the level of their trust in the news they obtain from the Hebrew newspapers they read. The data presented in the Figure 9.9 summarizes their responses regarding the newspaper that they had ranked as first in preference. We preface the analysis by noting that the respondents were also asked several questions relating to their trust in the Hebrew press in general. In addition,

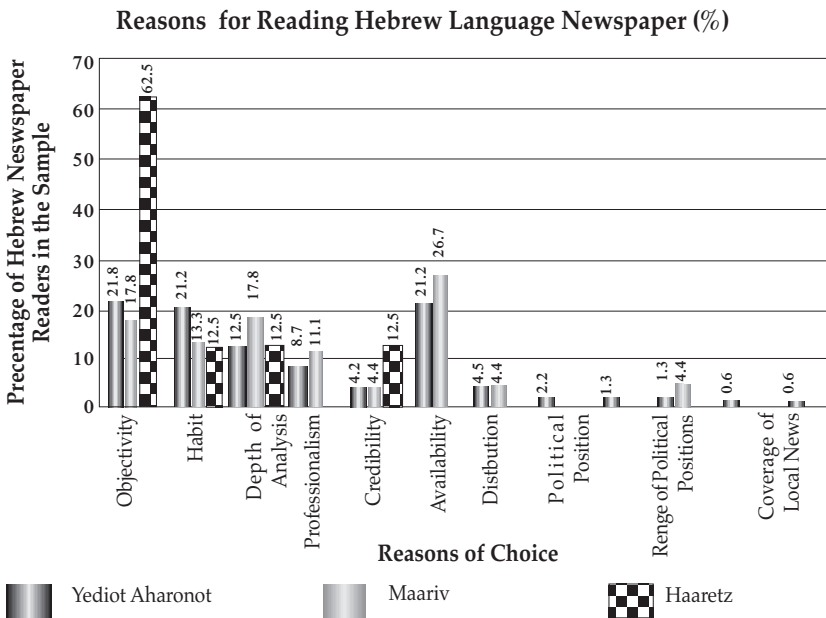
they were requested to compare their trust in the news printed by **Yediot Aharonot** with that printed by the Arab newspaper **Kol Al-Arab**. As can be seen from the findings shown in Figure 9.9, which we address again later, the respondents expressed low confidence in the Hebrew press in general. Furthermore, the data showed that the respondents placed greater trust in the news provided **Kol Al-Arab** than in the news provided by **Yediot Aharonot**. In light of this finding, the finding shown in Figure 9.9 – that 54.7% of the respondents stated that their trust in **Yediot Aharonot** was high or very high – perhaps reflects respondents' perception of the news in the newspaper they generally read and not necessarily their confidence in how **Yediot Aharonot**, as a Hebrew newspaper, covers news about Arab society in Israel, coverage that is usually marginal and negative. This conclusion can be derived from the comparison between the level of trust placed in the news printed by **Kol Al-Arab** as compared to the level of trust in the news printed in **Yediot Aharonot**, something we address later (see p. xx).

Figure 9.9 demonstrates that among those who read the Hebrew press, the highest level of trust was placed in **Haaretz**: 88.8% of those who read that newspaper said that they placed high or very high trust in **Haaretz**, with another 11.1% stating that they placed moderate trust in that newspaper. In contrast, 54.7% of **Yediot Aharonot** readers stated that they placed high or very high trust and 38.6% stated that they placed moderate trust in that newspaper. As to **Maariv**, this newspaper enjoyed moderate trust among 56.8% of its readers and high or very high trust among

another 40.9%. This data demonstrates again that trust does not influence the chances of newspaper reading. As indicated earlier people consume the mass media despite their distrust in it (Tsfati and Cappella 2005).

Respondents were also asked their reasons for choosing a specific Hebrew newspaper. The findings shown in Figure 9.10 reflect readers' attitudes toward the Hebrew newspapers they read.

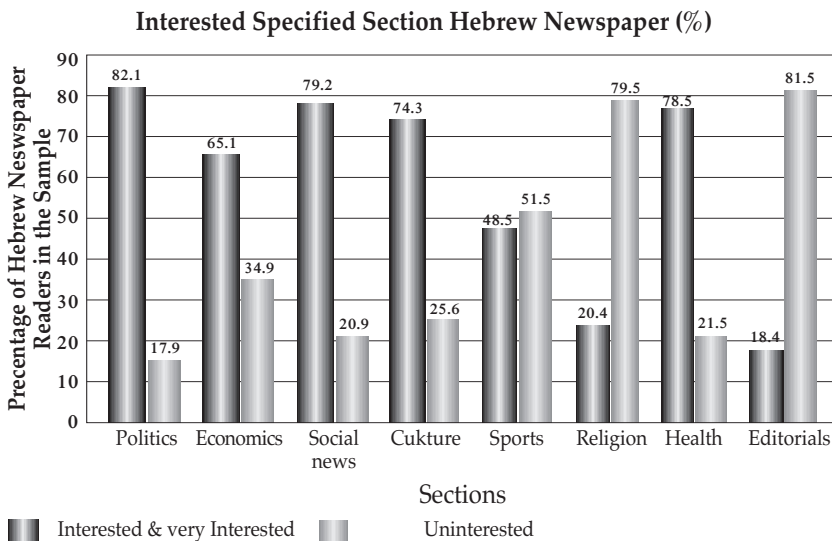
Figure 9.10



Among readers of **Haaretz**, 62.5% stated that objectivity was their principal reason for choosing that newspaper. In contrast, 21.8% of **Yediot Aharonot** readers listed objectivity as their main reason, with only 17.8% of **Maariv** readers

indicating this reason. Yet, Figure 9.10 indicates that 26.7% of **Maariv** readers mentioned availability as an important reason for reading that newspaper, compared with 21.2% of **Yediot Aharonot** readers. Not a single **Haaretz** reader mentioned availability as a reason for reading that newspaper. These differences indicate that **Haaretz** enjoys high levels of trust among its readers despite the relatively low readership. Moreover, the data showed that **Yediot Aharonot** readers assigned almost equal weight to its availability (21.2%) as they did to its objectivity (21.8%). **Yediot Aharonot** readers also indicated that habit was important for reading that newspaper (12.5%), which helps explain Yediot's high readership. Alternatively, depth of analysis was given as an important reason for reading the newspaper by 17.8% of **Maariv** readers.

Figure 9.11



A picture, similar to that obtained for readers of Arabic newspapers, regarding level of interest in the various sections, was found in Hebrew newspapers (see Figure 9.11). The Arab public is uninterested in the editorials (81.5%) and items on religious subjects printed in Hebrew newspapers (79.5%). In contrast, interest in politics and social issues is quite high, with 82.1% and 79.2% interested in those two topics, respectively. Readers of Hebrew newspapers were highly interested in the sections on health, culture and economics, with 78.5%, 74.3% and 65.1% reading each of those sections, respectively.

9.1 *The Arab Public's Trust in the Hebrew Press*

Within the framework of the study, we attempted to examine the Arab public's perception of the Hebrew media in general, and the Hebrew press in particular. It must be stressed here that the Hebrew press represents Israel's dominant Jewish majority and its language. The relationship between the Jewish majority and Arab society is complex and problematic. Arab society is a deprived indigenous minority that must cope with discriminatory policies on this part of the majority society; with the latter taking advantage of the minority's resources at the same time that it prevents the minority's enjoyment of any equality. The Hebrew media, particularly the print media, are integral components of the majority's efforts to control this minority. Therefore, examination of the trust placed by the minority in the majority press and the positions it takes can bring into focus various dimensions of the convoluted relationship between the two groups. In order to fulfill our purposes, questions similar to those posed about readers' perceptions of the Arabic press were put to the study's participants. Several major issues were selected, with the respondents asked to express their level of satisfaction with the coverage by the Hebrew press of these issues. The issues chosen were: coverage of Arab leaders in Israel, the house demolition policy and Arab protests against government policies. In

addition, the respondents were asked to indicate which source they believed or had trust in when the Arab and Hebrew media reported on the same event, given the different points of view of Arab society. The survey elicited responses worthy of special attention.

In general, high levels of distrust and dissatisfaction with the Hebrew press were indicated. The Arab public is highly critical of the Hebrew press, an attitude that reflects Arab society's severe alienation from Israeli society and its disappointment with the Hebrew press. This criticism, which differs from the participants' criticism of the Arab press regarding the same issues, is much more pointed.

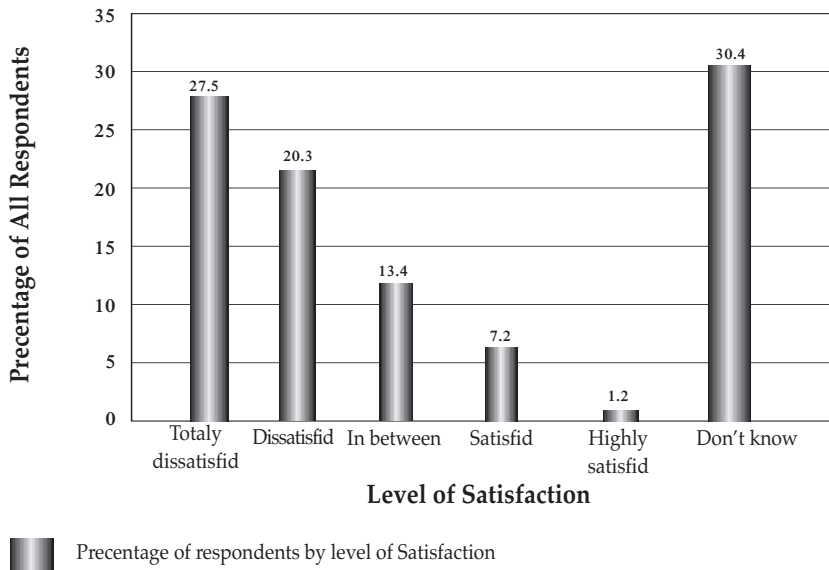
Despite this critical view, the Arab public has not abandoned nor entirely boycotted the Hebrew media. As noted above, reading Hebrew newspapers daily is certainly widely practiced by the Arab population, as is listening to Hebrew radio broadcasts and watching Hebrew television channels. As mentioned, our findings are similar to those obtained by Israeli researchers who examined Jewish society, which also expresses criticism of the media to no small degree (see p. xx) (Tsftati and Cappella 2005). Yet, rates of reading newspapers, listening to the radio and watching television remain high. One fact important to remember when considering the difference in consumption patterns between the Arab and the Jewish public with respect to the media is that the Jewish public does not have an alternative in Hebrew, whereas the Arab public has access to media originating in the Arab world. Thus, a considerable portion of Arab society supplements its Arabic-language media consumption with sources from beyond Israel's borders. Arab consumption of the Hebrew press is therefore

based on the need to know what is happening daily in its immediate environment; primarily, the positions, debates and arguments developing among the Jewish majority. A similar pattern emerges concerning consumption of television, which is discussed later.

The first issue examined was the Arab public's level of satisfaction with the coverage of Arab leaders in the Hebrew press.

Figure 9.12

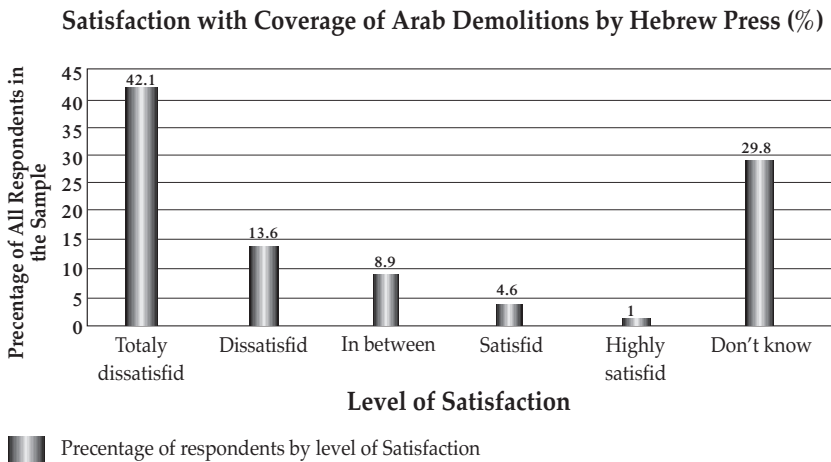
Satisfaction with Coverage of Arab Leadership by Hebrew Press (%)



The distribution of responses by readers of the Hebrew press regarding the coverage of its political leadership indicates a high level of dissatisfaction (see Figure 9.12). Among the study's participants, 47.8% responded that they were dissatisfied or

strongly dissatisfied with Hebrew press coverage of Arab political leaders. Only a small minority, 8.4%, expressed satisfaction with that coverage, with another 13.4% expressing a mid-point position, and 30.4% stating that they did not know (or had no opinion). These findings express negative expectations of how the Hebrew press will cover the Arab political leadership. This criticism contradicts Israeli declarations maintaining that the Arab leadership does not faithfully represent the Arab public's views. The Arab consumer's alienation and dissatisfaction with the way the Hebrew press covers the Arab political leadership undermines the Arab public's confidence in Hebrew newspapers on this issue.

Figure 9.13

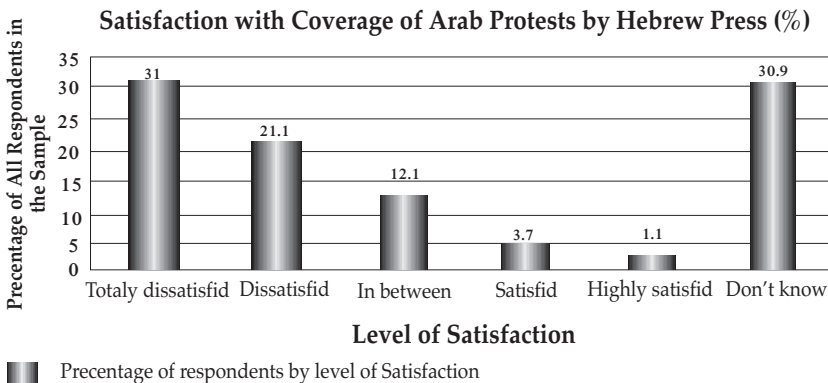


A similar trend was observed regarding satisfaction with coverage of house demolitions. The Israeli government's policy of destroying houses in Arab areas is one of the most painful issues disrupting the relationship between the State of Israel and the dominant Jewish majority on one hand and

Arab society in Israel on the other. Every year, dozens of Arab homes are demolished. Although the imbroglia surrounding the reasons for such demolitions (alleged illegal construction) goes beyond the limitations of this book, we should note that from the perspective of the Arab population, this policy is part of a broader official policy aimed at impeding infrastructure development and other housing-related issues (Yiftachel 1996)¹⁶.

Against this background, the results of Figure 9.13 show that 55.7% of the readers of Hebrew newspapers were dissatisfied with the coverage of this policy, with only 5.6% indicating that were satisfied. One source for this critical view is the fact that the Hebrew press reflects the official police position – the Arab homeowners involved are treated as criminals endangering State land (Wolfsfeld, Abraham and Aburayya 2000; First 1998) – with respect to these actions. Thus, the popular Hebrew press – specifically, Yediot Aharonot and Maariv – stresses the legal aspects exclusively while never addressing the serious harm done to basic civil and human rights as a result of these acts.

Figure 9.14



An almost identical picture is repeated with respect to Hebrew press coverage of Arab opposition or protests against the government's discriminatory policies (see Figure 9.14), another painful issue for Arab society. Experience has shown that the State's reaction to protests by Arab citizens is quite different from its reaction to Jewish protests. The most recent traumatic example was the police response to the protests held in October 2000, when the main road through Wadi Ara in the Triangle was closed. During those events, the police directly fired into the Arab crowd and killed 13 protesters. Police responses to the Jewish settlers who blocked the country's main arteries in protest to the 2005 disengagement plan never approached that level of violence, irrespective of similar behavior. The coverage found in the Hebrew newspapers thus reflects the dichotomous treatment of social protests, which depends on the identity of the participants.

Figure 9.14 shows that 52.1% of the respondents were dissatisfied with Hebrew press coverage of Arab protests, and only 4.8% were satisfied with that coverage. These data add another layer to the level of alienation separating Arab society in Israel from the Hebrew media in general and, the Hebrew press in particular.

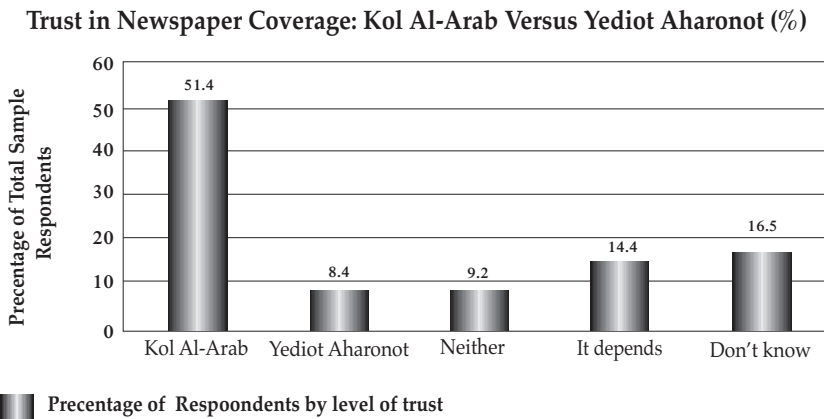
To carry the investigation a step further, the research participants were asked to express their opinion regarding which newspapers – Arab or Hebrew – they were more likely to believe or trust in when both reported the same incident. To elicit the responses, the following scenario was presented:

The newspaper **Kol Al-Arab** reported an incident in which an Arab citizen was shot and killed in the Triangle by a

member of Israel's Border Police. The **Kol Al-Arab** article stated that the policeman did not appear to have any reason justifying the use of live ammunition. The Hebrew newspaper **Yediot Aharonot** also reported the incident but explained the policeman's motivation, writing that the Arab citizen had endangered the policeman's life.

As noted, the research participants were asked to state which newspaper they trusted more for an accurate account of the incident.

Figure 9.15



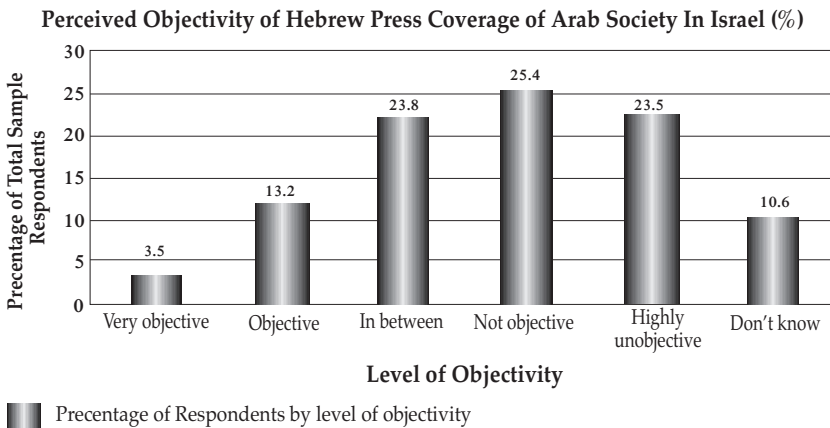
The data shown in Figure 9.15 clearly demonstrates that 51.4% of the respondents placed greater trust in the Arab newspaper **Kol Al-Arab**, while only 8.4% trusted the report in **Yediot Aharonot**. Neither newspaper was believed by 9.2% of the respondents, although 14.4% responded that it depended on the case. This difference clearly indicates the Arab public's low level of trust in the Hebrew press in cases where an alternative Arab source is available.

The responses to this question shed further light on the data presented earlier regarding the Arab public's trust in the Hebrew press in general. The different responses relate to the type of question asked. In the previous questions, the research participants were asked about the general level of trust they placed in the newspapers they read, which were named. In the present case, they were asked to compare the reports about the same event provided by two specific newspapers. The clear preference for the version of the news printed in **Kol Al-Arab** as compared to that in **Yediot Aharonot**, and at such significant rates, reflects Arab society's selective trust in Arab newspapers, as opposed to Hebrew newspapers. However, the crux of the message transmitted by Figure 9.15 rests not simply in the comparison found; it also lies in the high level of suspicion revealed in matters pertaining to the coverage of events that touch upon the relationship maintained between official Israeli institutions and the average Arab citizen. Bitter past experience with the police, especially as a result of the October 2000 events, and the coverage of these events in the Hebrew media but especially the Hebrew press¹⁷, greatly increased the skepticism felt by Arab citizens vis-a-vis the Hebrew press (Dor 2004). Therefore, when news mirroring the relationship between Arab citizens and the Israeli police is reported in the press, the tendency of most Arab citizens is to question the Hebrew press reports and believe the Arab press reports. This tendency recurs with respect to television reporting, to be discussed later.

17. In a study conducted by Dr. Yariv Tsafti of Haifa University, the results of which were published recently, it was found that despite the fact that the Israeli public has a low level of confidence in the Israeli media, particularly in the written press, a relatively high percentage of that same public reads the newspapers.

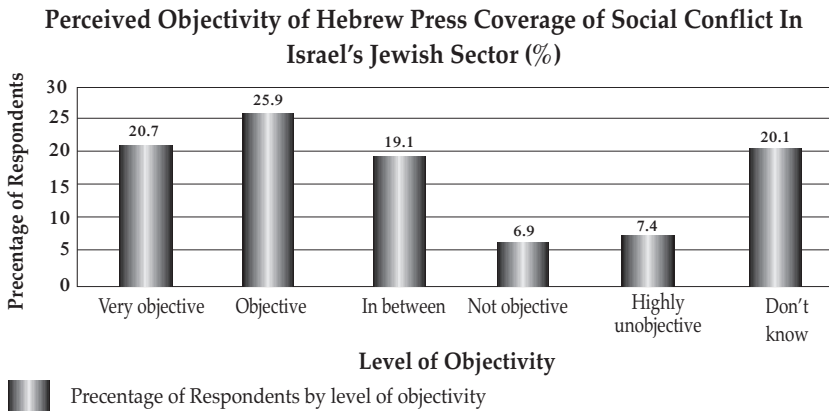
The Arab public's critical view of the Hebrew press is reinforced when the data on attitudes toward Hebrew press coverage of other issues are examined. Respondents were asked whether Hebrew press coverage of Arab social issues was objective. The distribution of answers regarding the Hebrew media's (including press, radio and television) level of objectivity regarding coverage of the Arab population in Israel appears in Figure 9.16. As the figure shows, the dominant response was that the Hebrew media lacks objectivity in the coverage of social issues current in Arab society. Among the respondents, 48.9% stated that the Hebrew media is either not objective or extremely not objective. Only 16.7% of the study's participants answered that the Hebrew media is objective or extremely objective in that coverage. The mud-point view was expressed by 23.8% of the respondents, with another 10.6% replying that they did not know (had no opinion).

Figure 9.16



In addition, the respondents were asked to indicate their assessment of the objectivity displayed by the Hebrew media regarding internal social conflicts in Jewish society for purposes of comparison with the Arab media consumer's perceptions coverage of their own society.

Figure 9.17



The data shown in Figure 9.17 indicate a polar opposite view of the coverage when compared to Figure 9.16. Almost half of the respondents, 46.6%, stated that the Hebrew media was objective or very objective in the coverage of social conflict within the Jewish society, while only 14.3% stated that the Hebrew media was not objective in its coverage of these conflicts. Among the respondents, 20.1% stated that they did not know (had no opinion).

The difference in the Arab media consumer's views of the Hebrew media's coverage of conflict in the two societies reflects the unfairness that the Arab public attributes to the Hebrew press in its coverage of matters important to Arab

society in Israel. Thus, the Arab public believes that the Hebrew media is fair only in its coverage of issues important to Jewish society. In effect, the Arab respondents were conveying that the Hebrew media is biased. This view supports and further explains this community's alienation from and disappointment with the Hebrew media.

The findings reported in this section help support the conclusions to be drawn from the responses to the question: "To what extent do you think that the Hebrew press represents Arab citizens of Israel?"

Figure 9.18

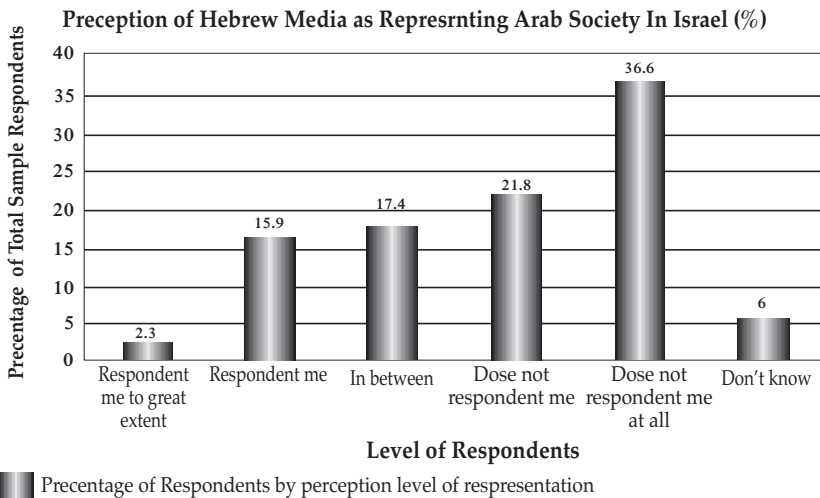


Figure 9.18 presents the distribution of responses to this respective question. A majority of the respondents (58.4%) indicated that the Hebrew media does not represent them. Only 18.2% of the Arab public in Israel thought that the Hebrew media does represent it, and 17.4% did not express an unequivocal opinion (i.e., they expressed the mid-point

position). Contrary to the responses to previous questions, only 6% of the respondents said that they did not know (or had no opinion). Arab media consumers therefore tend to have unambiguous opinions of how the Hebrew media relates to their society, and thus tend to make more definitive assessments of the extent to which that media represents or, more precisely, does not represent them. These responses therefore provide additional indicators of the degree to which Arab society is marginalized in the Hebrew media (Abraham, First and Elfant-Lefler 2004).

These data acquire added salience when we consider the findings regarding the extent to which Arab media consumers perceive the Hebrew media as representing official positions. The Hebrew media developed in complex interaction with the state. Although today's leading Hebrew newspapers were founded as private newspapers and have consistently functioned from that position, their relationship with the state, formed through informal as well as formal administrative and institutional arrangements, has created an impression of partnership, if not cooptation. This has been demonstrated, for example, by the policy and activities of the Council of Editors, the forum of daily newspaper editors that essentially regulates newspaper policy. The relationship between the Hebrew media and defense institutions has been particularly blatant (Jamal 2005b: 97-121). Hence, given this context, it was important that we survey the Arab public's view of the Hebrew media with respect to official government positions.

Figure 9.19

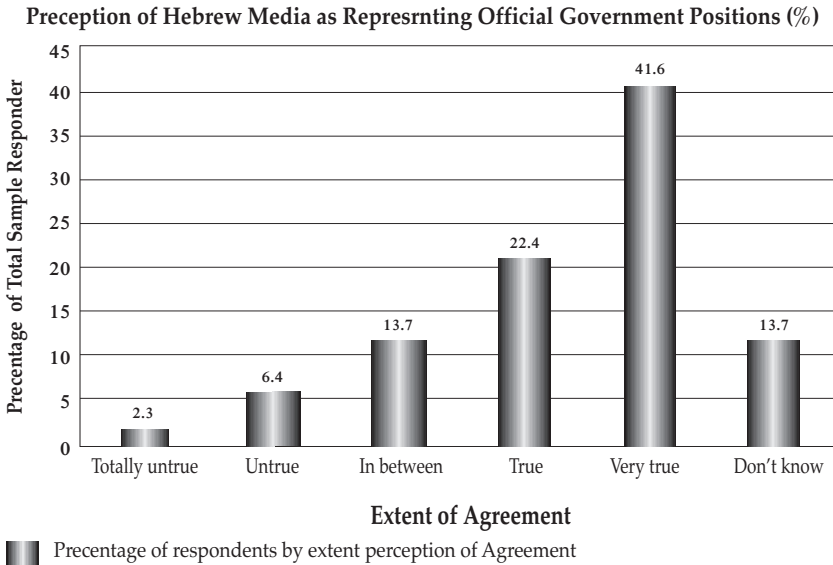
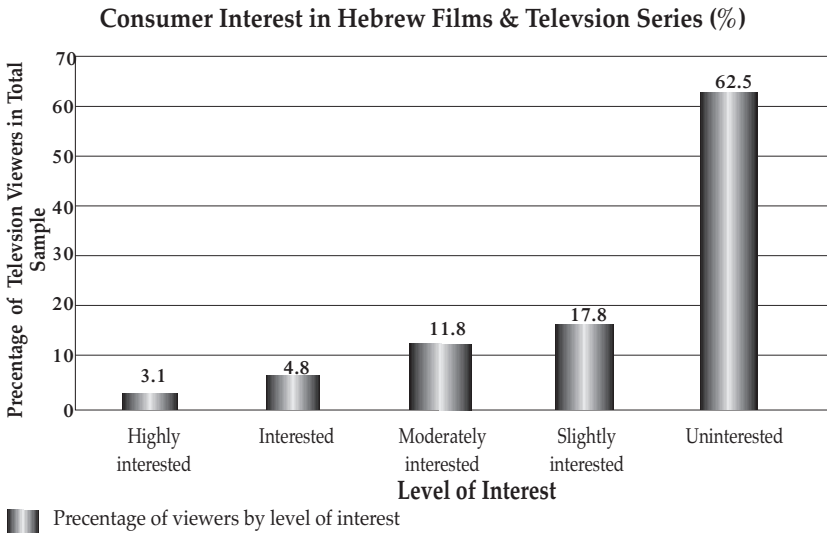


Figure 9.19 shows the responses received on this issue. A clear majority of the respondents (64%) indicated that, from their perspective, the Hebrew media represented official government policy. Only 8.7% did not agree with that statement 13.7% did not express an unequivocal opinion, with the same percentage responding that they did not know (had no opinion). One can therefore conclude that Arab media consumers in Israel do not believe that the Hebrew media operates as a free and open arena, divorced from state dictates, as many liberal media critics would have us believe. Instead, they view the Hebrew media as part of the state's ideological apparatus - a mechanism for expressing Israel's goals and furthering its interests. Based on these findings, we can conclude that Arab society does not expect much from the Hebrew media.

Figure 9.20



The data reflecting the Arab public's level of interest in Hebrew cultural programs shows the degree of alienation the Arab public feels from the Israeli media's programming, primarily cultural programming. As Figure 9.20 shows, a high percentage (62.5%) of the respondents indicated that they were not interested in Hebrew films and television series. A much smaller percentage (17.8%) responded that they were interested, 11.8% stating that they were moderately interested, and only 7.9% stating that they were very interested in this type of programming. These findings essentially repeat the trends previously reported. They capture the deep sense of alienation felt by Arab society. The discriminatory policies and the Hebrew media's negative role within the context of state-minority relations are sufficient to explain these findings. It should be added that Hebrew films and television series are inherently foreign to Arab society, both culturally and linguistically, which further

reinforces the Arab population's sense of alienation and isolation from mainstream Israel's Jewish culture and society. As long as Hebrew films and television series continue to deal with issues and dilemmas that touch only on the Jewish majority and ignore the existence of Arab society as part of Israeli society, these attitudes will prevail.

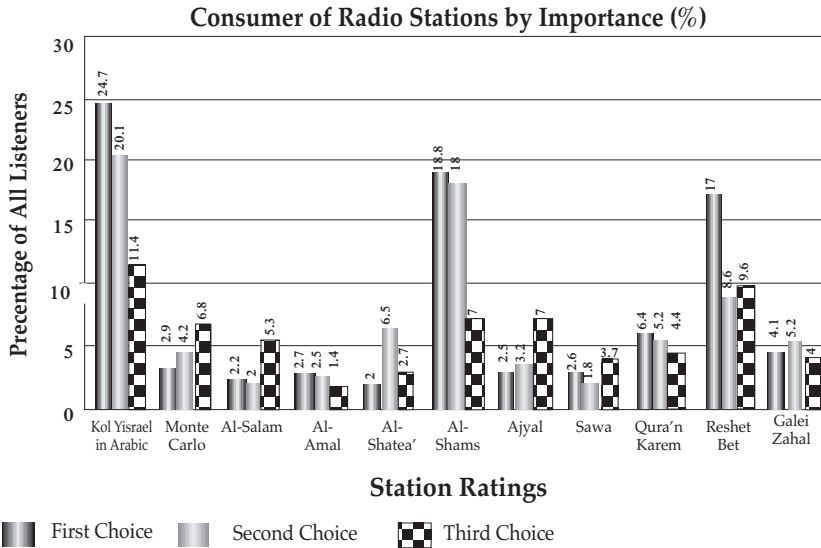
10. Radio: Listening Patterns, Satisfaction and Trust

Consumption of other media was also surveyed. Here we explore patterns of radio listening and the reasons for choosing the various stations. Radio holds a central place in Arab media consumption patterns. **Kol Yisrael** (the Voice of Israel) in Arabic has been operating for many years broadcasting news and other programs directed towards Israel's Arabic-speaking public. Since its establishment, this station has functioned as an extension of the state's propaganda apparatus, one of the mechanisms used to control the Arab public's political agenda and re-socialize Arab society in line with Jewish interests. Nevertheless, the illegal (locally called "pirate") Arab radio stations that have cropped up in the past few years have continued to increase in number, in parallel with the legally licensed Arab radio stations. **Radio 2000** was the first legal station but it ceased operations, ironically enough, in 2000. Among the new legal stations, **Radio Al-Shams**, pursuant to its license, has been broadcasting to the Galilee regions, the Triangle but not the Negev.

Due to the variety of accessible stations, the study attempted to discern patterns of radio consumption, including the stations listened to, and the frequency and time of listening. Participants in the research were asked to rank the radio stations to which

they listened according to number of hours and types of programs. Similar to the questions asked about the press, respondents were asked to rate the three principal radio stations to which they listened by order of preference.

Figure 10.1



The findings show that just over half the respondents (52%) listened to the radio, whereas the remainder (48%) did not. Of those who did listen, 54% responded that they listened to the radio at home for the most part; 36.7% stated that they tended to listen while driving, and 9.3% said that they listened primarily while at work. In addition, the majority of listeners spent 1-2 hours daily tuned in to the radio. It was also found that consumption patterns varied by radio station, whether in Arabic or Hebrew. For example, among listeners to Radio **Al-Shams**, 50% also listened to **Kol Yisrael** in Arabic and 33.3% to **Reshet Bet** in Hebrew. Moreover, listening patterns varied between entertainment stations, which broadcast mostly music, and

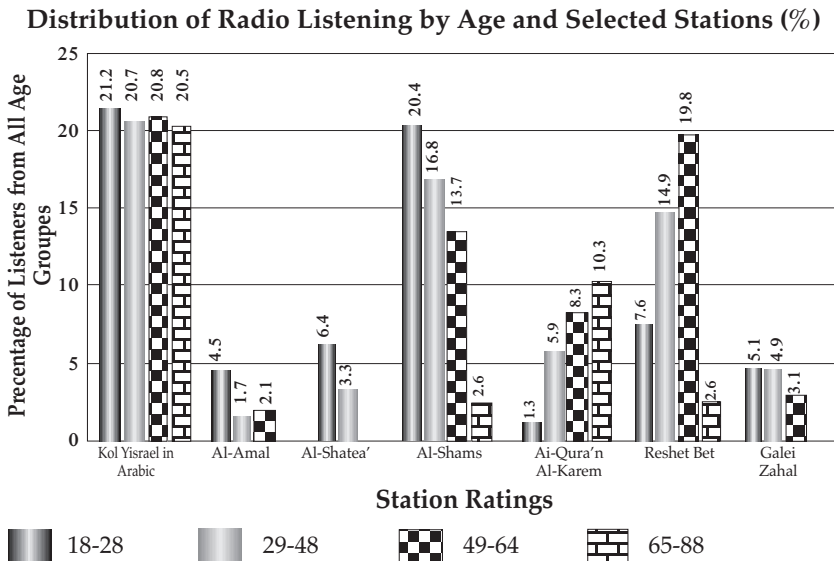
general stations, which integrate news and entertainment. The data indicate that a considerable portion of Arab radio consumers listen to illegal stations, similar to the pattern found in Jewish society in other studies. The Arab public also listened to non-Israeli stations. To illustrate, Radio **Monte Carlo** enjoys a number of Arab listeners, as does Radio **Ajyal**, broadcast from Ramallah in the occupied West Bank.

When it came to examining the patterns, radio listening the participants in the research were asked to rank up to three stations they listened to most. Figure 10.1 shows that **Kol Yisrael** in Arabic, Radio **Al-Shams** and **Reshet Bet** are the three radio stations that have the highest rates of listeners and most favorable rankings. Among radio listeners, 24.7% ranked **Kol Yisrael** in Arabic, 18.8% ranked Radio **Al-Shams** and 17% ranked **Reshet Bet** in first place. The same stations were also ranked in second place – **Kol Yisrael** in Arabic (20.1%), Radio **Al-Shams** (18%) and **Reshet Bet** (8.6%) – and third place – **Kol Yisrael** in Arabic (11.4%), **Radio Al-Shams** (7%) and **Reshet Bet** (9.6%). When the available data are calculated according to average exposure, the results show that among all radio listeners, 40% were exposed to **Kol Yisrael** in Arabic, 31.5% to Radio **Al-Shams**, and 24.8% to **Reshet Bet**. We should note, however, that these percentages do not directly indicate the frequency (number of hours) with which listeners tuned into the specific stations.

As indicated by the data, a large number of radio stations have captured relatively small proportions of the listening audience. These included **Al-Qura'an Al-Kareem**, (10.5%), **Galei Zahal** (8.4%), Radio **Monte Carlo** (7.3%), **Al-Shatea'** (6.4%), **Ajyal** (6.4%), **Sawa** (4.7%), **Al-Salaam** (4.7%) and **Al-Amal** (4.6%).

As mentioned, despite the high rate of listening to **Kol Yisrael** in Arabic, the relatively new station, Radio **Al-Shams**, followed it in first and second place rankings. The consistently high rates indicate that Radio **Al-Shams** has managed to attract a permanent listening audience in a short time. If we take into account the fact that Radio **Al-Shams** is not received in the Negev, that it is most popular amongst younger age groups (see Figure 10.2), and that **Kol Yisrael** in Arabic is popular among all age groups, we can anticipate that Radio **Al-Shams** listening rates will grow even further in the future. This does not, however, necessarily imply, although it may, that the station will draw listeners away from **Kol Yisrael** in Arabic. The association between demographic characteristics and the type of radio stations listened to was also explored in order to deepen our understanding of the radio consumption culture prevailing in Arab society in Israel.

Figure 10.2



A clear association can be observed between the different age groups and the percentage of those listening to Radio **Al-Shams**, **Reshet Bet**, and Radio **Al-Qura'an Al-Kareem** (see Figure 10.2). A negative association was found between age and listening to Radio **Al-Shams**; i.e. as age increased, the listening rate decreased; indicating that Radio **Al-Shams** attracted younger listeners. This finding is likely to work in favor of the station in the future given the effect of habit as a factor in media consumption patterns. A similar phenomenon holds true for Radio **Al-Shatea'**, where a negative relationship was also found between age and percentage of listeners: as age increased, the percentage listening to that station decreased, meaning that this station also attracted younger listeners. The same pattern was observed for **Galei Zahal**: as the age of the respondents rose, listening to this station declined. In contrast, a positive relationship was found between listening and age regarding the radio stations **Reshet Bet** and **Al-Qura'an Al-Kareem**, that is, as age increased, so did the listening rate.

Figure 10.3

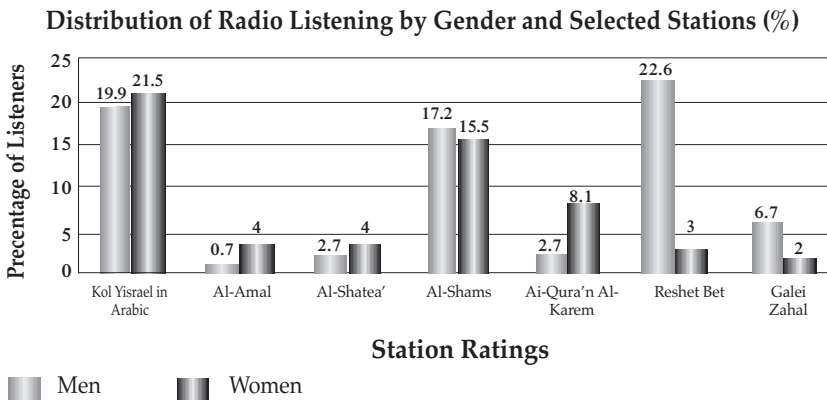
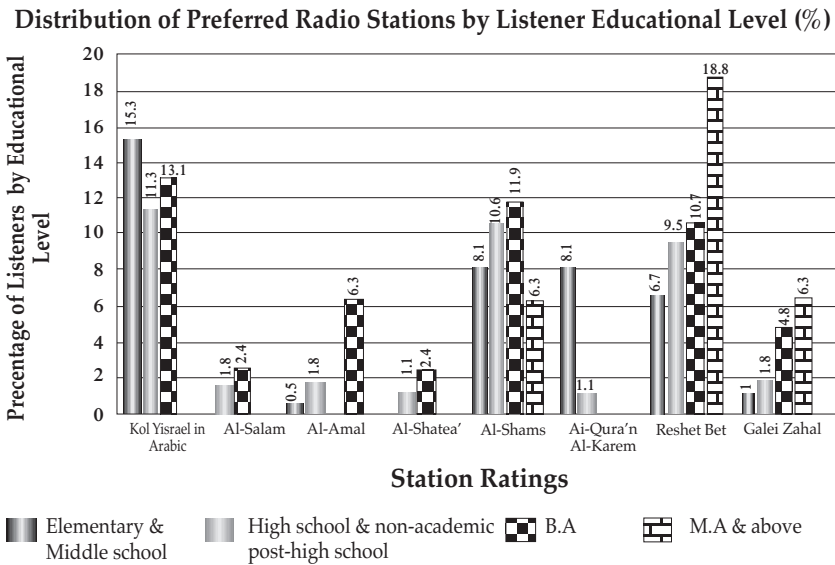


Figure 10.3 illustrates the data indicating the meaningful effect of gender on listening to some radio stations. This conclusion did not hold for Radio **Al-Shams** and **Kol Yisrael** in Arabic where no significant differences were found in listening rates between the genders. Radio **Al-Shams** was listened to more by men than by women (17.2% and 15.5%, respectively) while **Kol Yisrael** in Arabic was listened to more by women than by men (21.5% and 19.9%, respectively). In all likelihood, the principal reason for this difference is that the content of the news broadcast by Radio **Al-Shams** speaks more to men than to women. In contrast, 22.6% of the men in the radio listening audience listened to **Reshet Bet**, while only 3% of the women did. The reason for this difference may be that this station broadcasts primarily news in Hebrew, which according to findings in the television viewing patterns, and elucidated further below, tends to attract more men than women. A similar phenomenon characterized **Galei Zahal**, that is, more men (6.7%) than women (2.0%) listened to that station. Among the other stations surveyed – **Al-Shatea'**, **Al-Amal** and **Al-Qura'an Al-Kareem** – each had larger female than male audiences. Regarding **Al-Shatea'** and **Al-Amal**, these stations address women's affairs more than men's issues and broadcast primarily music, something that may attract more young women than young men. According to the age data, **Al-Qura'an Al-Kareem** station attracted an older age cohort, with more housewives apparently listening.

Figure 10.4

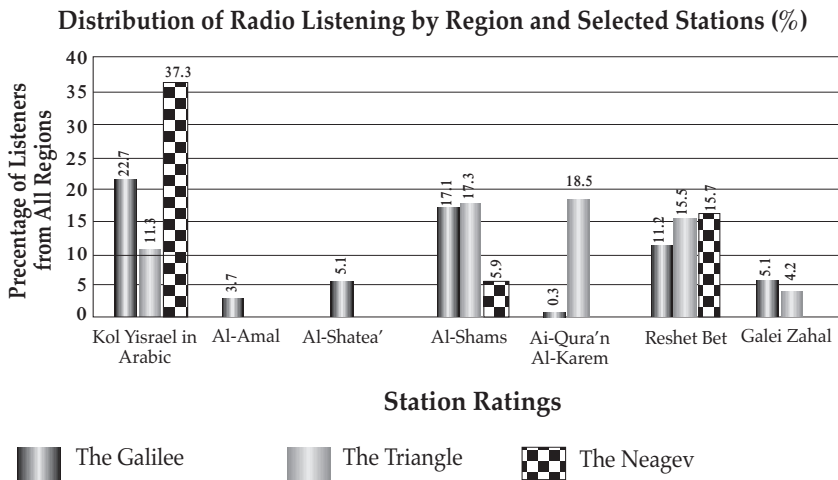


Educational level was likewise found to have an effect on listening patterns (see Figure 10.4). Regarding Reshet Bet, Galei Zahal, Radio Al-Shams and Al-Shatea', a positive association was found between educational level and listening rates: As educational level rose, the listening rate for each of those stations rose as well. The findings regarding Reshet Bet and Galei Zahal may be explained by the fact that education enables individuals to master the Hebrew language and thus facilitates their exposure to news and commentaries broadcast in Hebrew. A positive association between educational level and listening rate was also observed with respect to Radio Al-Shams: 10.6% had completed high school and 11.9% held a BA. The association between educational level and listening to Kol Yisrael in Arabic was nonetheless unclear: The percentage distribution of listeners to this station was similar for those who had completed an elementary education (11.30%), a high school education (13.10%)

and a BA (15.3%), although the data indicated no listeners who had obtained an MA or higher degree.

The sharp decrease in listening rate for **Kol Yisrael** in Arabic at the MA or higher level, and the decrease in listening for **Radio Al-Shams** among individuals having completed an elementary education, as well as those holding an MA or higher degree indicate that these groups apparently prefer to consume programming broadcast in Hebrew. This conclusion is supported by the listening rates for **Reshet Bet** and **Galei Zahal**. In other words, higher educational level was found to have a positive statistical association with listening to programs in Hebrew while lower educational levels appeared to have a positive association with listening to programs in Arabic. A possible explanation for this pattern is that educational level may affect interest in current events; hence, the more-educated listen to the Hebrew radio stations in order to keep abreast of what is happening in the Israeli political arena.

Figure 10.5



Before entering into a detailed analysis of the data on regional listening patterns, it is important to note that not all radio stations are received throughout Israel. The stations enjoying limited reception but nonetheless included in the research were Radio **Al-Shams**, as mentioned, as well as Radio **Al-Amal**, **Al-Shatea'** and Radio **Al-Qura'an Al-Kareem**.

Considerable differences were found in listening rates for the various radio stations by geographic area of residence; i.e., the Galilee, the Triangle and the Negev. As Figure 10.5 indicates, the audience for **Kol Yisrael** in Arabic in the Negev was greater than in the Galilee and the Triangle. Thus, among all radio consumers in each region, 37.3% from the Negev listened to **Kol Yisrael** in Arabic compared to 22.7% from the Galilee and 11.3% from the Triangle. Reshet Bet was successful in the Negev as well, with 15.7% of the audience listening to that station, followed by 15.5% from the Triangle and 11.2% from the Galilee. **Galei Zahal** had no listeners from the Negev but a higher rate of listeners in the Galilee (5.1%) than in the Triangle (4.2%). This data demonstrates that the existence of alternative and plural media outlets may change listening patterns. This explains the difference in listening rates to **Kol Yisrael** in the three regions. The Negev Arab population does not have many alternatives when compared to the Triangle and Galilee populations. Whereas the former receives radio services from the West Bank, in addition to the illegal stations in the area, the latter can listen to radio stations in Lebanon as well as to illegal stations. This difference may explain the high percentage of listeners to **Kol Yisrael** in the Negev.

With respect to the stations having regionally limited

transmission, Radio **Al-Shams**, which is not received in the Negev, enjoyed almost the same percentage of listeners in the Galilee as the Triangle (17.1% and 17.3%, respectively). We should note that although Radio **Al-Shams** is not received in the Negev, three Negev residents mentioned the station in their responses. It is possible that they listen to the station in their cars, when traveling to and from the center of the country, or that they live near the development city of Rahat in which the station is partially received; yet, because their numbers were so few, they had no effect on the statistical analysis. Two “pirate” radio stations, Radio **Al-Amal**, which broadcasts from Yarka in the Western Galilee, and **Al-Shatea’**, which broadcasts from Haifa, are received only in the north; naturally, they had zero listeners in other parts of the country. Radio **Al-Qura’an Al-Kareem**, received in the Triangle, enjoyed a relatively high listening rate (18.5%) there.

Data were also collected to elucidate patterns of listening to news programs broadcast on the radio. Here too, important results were obtained. In response to the question: “What is the language of the news broadcasts you listen to?” among those listening to news on the radio, 60% responded that they customarily listened to the news in Arabic, 24.3% stated they listened to the news in Hebrew and 15.5% that they did not listen to any news broadcast. Comparing the disparate levels of trust that the Arab public attributes to the news broadcast by **Kol Yisrael** in Arabic compared to the trust attributed to the news broadcast by **Al-Shams**, a clear tendency to trust Radio **Al-Shams** was observed: Among listeners, 21.8% stated that they placed greater trust in the news broadcast by Radio **Al-Shams**, 15.6% in the news

broadcast by **Kol Yisrael** in Arabic; 5.2% trusted both stations equally and 10.2% trusted neither. Almost half the listeners, comprising 47.2% of the study participants, stated that they did not know (had no opinion). That percentage was similar to the percentage of those answering that they did not listen to the radio at all (48%).

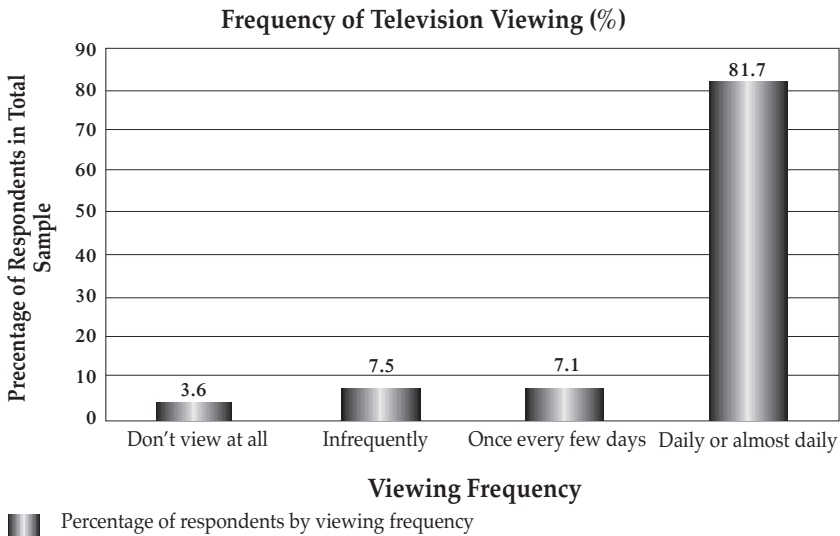
11. *Television: Viewing Patterns, Satisfaction and Trust*

During the last half of the twentieth century, television became the most widespread communications medium enjoyed throughout the world, to the point where some have designated the television century. The importance of examining television consumption patterns derives from its strength. Television's penetration into daily life has changed social relationships in general, and the face of politics in particular, especially during elections. It has thus contributed to more than the disintegration of the family entertainment patterns that characterized the nineteenth and early twentieth century (Bourdieu 1998). Television has become the principal broker in the public space, surpassing the power of many traditional mediating social institutions, including the family. It has mortally wounded the role of political parties as intermediaries placed between voters and state institutions. Television has personalized politics to the point of becoming the primary arena in which candidates and ideas wage political contests. As a result, it has weakened democratic society's main representative institutions. Moreover, by transforming the relationship between reality and fiction into an even more complex, multidimensional phenomenon, television has escalated the force of image in all of life's spheres. Finally, as a result of the sheer size of the viewing audience, television has become an object of economic competition between international conglomerates. To further increase their

profits, accomplished through the control of programming contents and the distribution of related forms of popular culture, conglomerates have attempted to “sell” audiences to advertisers. To these television barons, audiences have lost their subjectivity and are now treated as commercial goods.

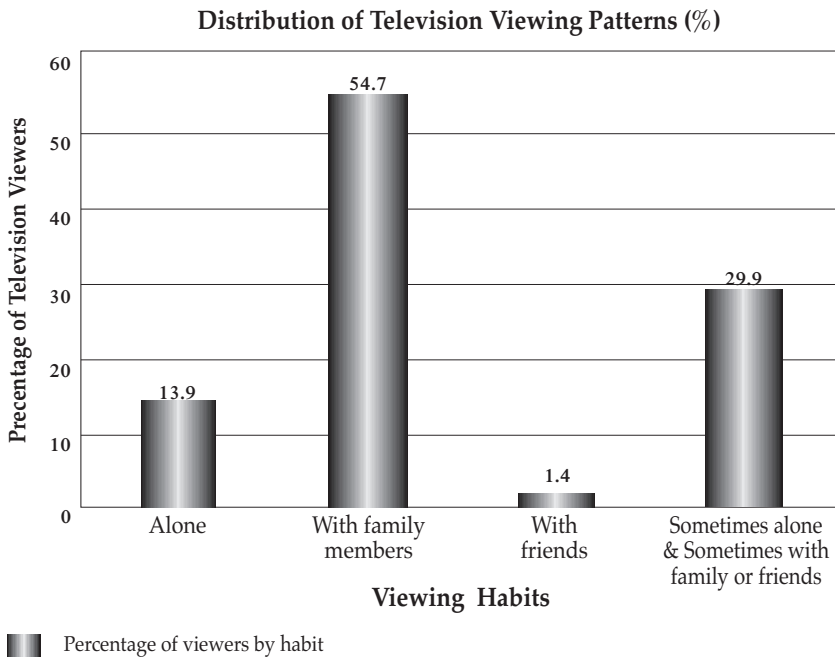
Clearly, in a study such as this one, it is difficult to examine all of the ramifications of television’s penetration into Arab society. Nevertheless, the study’s results can indicate general trends in various spheres. Before describing television consumption culture in Arab society, we should note that with respect to this medium as with the other media, we again see the Arab public’s consumption of a wide range of options, that is, of programs broadcast by different television channels, including family entertainment, news and more. They consume a mix of television programs in Hebrew and in Arabic, broadcast by channels originating in Israel, Arab countries and other areas in the world, broadcast via satellite.

Figure 11.1



The findings thus present a multifaceted picture. As is clear from Figure 11.1, 81.7% of the Arab public watched television daily or almost every day. Another 7.1% watched television every few days and 7.5% watched infrequently. Only 3.6% of the Arab society did not watch television at all. Among the last group, 41.9% indicated that they did not own a television set, and 30.2% stated that television did not interest them or that they did not have the time. When rates of television viewing were compared with rates of daily Arabic (9.3%) and Hebrew (17.4%) newspaper reading, a large difference was found in the frequency of consumption of the respective media.

Figure 11.2

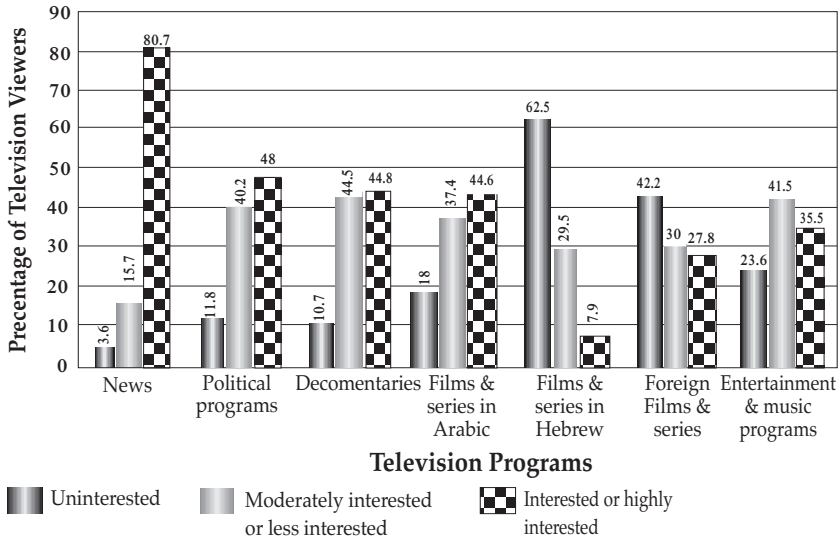


Among the respondents who did watch television, 54.7% did so in the company of family members, 13.9% watched alone, and 29.9% occasionally watched alone or with their families. Comparing these responses with what is known about viewing habits in Western societies, it appears that the penetration of television into the Arab household, despite the inflation in the number of channels broadcast and improvements in the standard of living, has not caused a massive increase in individual viewing, isolated from family participation. The majority of the Arab population in Israel still perceives television viewing as a joint family experience. Yet, the findings indicated that 75.3% of the respondents preferred television to newspapers, radio or the Internet as a source for news. This preference has transformed television into a fundamental socializing agent in the cultural and political arena, far and away more influential than all the other media.

Before delving into the Arab public's television consumption patterns in terms of distribution of viewing among the different channels, it is important to note the different types of programs of interest to Arab viewers. These preferences may greatly help us in understanding the variety of contents consumed in Arab society. In order to obtain this information, the interviewees were presented with various programming categories and asked to rate their interest in each category.

Figure 11.3

Interest in Viewing Selected Types of Television Viewing Programming (%)



The findings shown in Figure 11.3 could have been anticipated considering the fact that Arab society is a minority maintaining a complex relationship with the majority Jewish society and its institutional structures. Hence, news programs are of greatest interest to the Arab public: 80.7% responded that news programs interest them, 15.7% expressed only a moderate or lower interest, and only 3.6% stated that they were totally uninterested in such programs. Programs focusing on political commentary were also of interest to most Arab television viewers: 48% of the respondents stated that they were interested or very interested in such programs, 40.2% indicated that they were moderately interested or less and only 10.7% responded that were uninterested. Entertainment programs were also watched by a high percentage of the Arab public. Almost

half of the study's participants (44.6%) responded that they were interested or very interested in televised Arabic films and series, 37.4% were moderately interested or less, and 18% were uninterested. In contrast, the category of least interest to the greatest number of Arab viewers was televised films and series in Hebrew: 62.5% of Arab television viewers are not interested in Hebrew films and series, 29.6% were moderately interested or less, and only 7.9% responded that they were positively interested. Also evident in Figure 11.3 is the lack of interest in televised foreign films and series.

Given its relationship to the majority society, the lack of interest in televised Hebrew films and series indicates the alienation and distance from Jewish culture felt by the Arab sector. As will be seen shortly however, these findings do not mean that Arab television viewers entirely avoid Israeli television. The viewing patterns observed indicate that the Arab public relates to Israeli television programs as a source of information required for maintaining its current lifestyle.

The data obtained on viewing patterns also indicate that the Arab public consumes contents from the full range of Israeli and Arabic television channels available. This mix clearly indicates the Arab consumer's tendency to sample from both spaces, the two being perceived as complementing, rather than opposing one another. The dual positioning – consumption of broadcasts from two television spaces – illustrates the hybridization of the Arab public. Hybridization, a component in the identity of many minority groups, has been studied by many cultural researchers (Bhabha 1994; Aschroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 1989). This

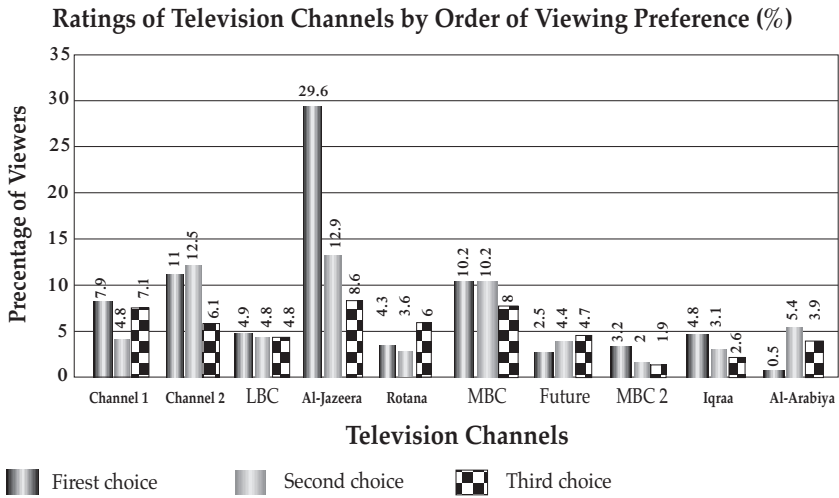
intricate pattern of media consumption, drawing from two different cultures, manifests a minority's cultural "in-betweenness", which entails taking advantage of the cultural spaces open to it in order to fulfill its social, cultural and political needs. Arab society too, expresses this conscious, strategic choice; one that maintains a dialectic relationship with a hybrid space and allows a group to circumvent its place in conventional time and space, by linking up to a digital world providing the cultural contents that fulfill their multiple needs.

We thus find that the Arab public consumes a considerable amount of Israeli television broadcasts in Hebrew. At the same time, they participate in massive consumption of Arab television broadcast via satellite. Arab consumers in Israel thus clearly distinguish between programming areas. These distinctions express the high level of confidence and satisfaction with the contents on politics, nationality, cultural and sociolinguistic identity provided by Arab channels. For political items, such as news addressing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, culture, and entertainment, Arab television viewers tend to watch Arabic-language television channels from the Arab world. Alternatively, for contents touching on areas of everyday life – education, economics, health and so forth – Arab viewers are more likely to watch Israeli television. Their objective is to obtain the greatest benefits and amounts of information available from all the options offered in digital space. Consumption of this type also enables Arab viewers to be involved in two political and cultural spaces simultaneously. Because the Arab population in Israel lives within the larger framework of

Israeli society, Israeli politics and social developments are important for planning their daily life. Simultaneously, members of Arab society in Israel view themselves as participating in regional Arab politics and culture, an identity that demands consumption of Arab television. Hence, the entertainment, films, series, music programs and talk shows viewed on Arab television speak to them. This perception of television programming is then translated into the broad distribution of viewing among numerous channels.

Due to the very low viewing of some channels, rates that might introduce bias, we were unable to include all channels within the statistical analysis. The criterion for including a television channel in our analysis was a viewer rating of at least 2%. In addition, relatively few channels appear in the analysis because the respondents were asked to limit themselves to ranking only the three television channels that they watched most. Had the participants been allowed to indicate all the channels watched, the list obtained would have been more comprehensive, but not amenable for statistical analysis with demographic and other measures. Figure 11.4 therefore presents the ten channels that met the basic consumption criterion, even though still fewer channels were included in the demographic analysis, again for said methodological reasons.

Figure 11.4



The study participants were asked to rank the three television channels that they watched most (see Figure 11.4). The findings indicated that the Arab television audience in Israel watched a large number of different channels, the most popular being: **Al-Jazeera, Channel 2, MBC, Channel 1, LBC, Rotana, Future, Iqraa, Al-Arabiya, MBC2, Channel 10, Jordan TV, the Sports Channel, the Film Channel, and the Abu Dhabi Channel**; At least 2% of the respondents ranked most of these stations in first place. The range of contents broadcast by these channels was very rich, including news, family, film, sports and religious matters. This range exhibits the pluralism characterizing Arab media consumption on the one hand, and selectivity on the other. Some channels originate in Israel and are broadcast in Hebrew, while others originate in the Arab world and are broadcast in Arabic. This potpourri of preferences also reflects the impact of technology on media consumption

patterns. Many of the most popular channels are broadcast from places such as London and the Persian Gulf, a fact that reflects the media's globalization, as well as the increasing erosion of government control over national media and cultural spaces (Price 2002).

The high rate of viewing of television channels originating outside the Israeli media space primarily stems from the Arab public's national and cultural affinity with the Arab world, which provides contents unavailable on Israeli television. Yet, it is important to note that television consumption from Arab sources likewise reflects the absence of a local station that responds to this sector's programming needs in its native language. Since the introduction of television into Israel and until the time of writing, an Arabic-language channel has yet to be established in Israel. The Israeli television Channels 1, 2 and 10 each allocate a sliver of non-primetime space to Arabic programming. These programs do not attract a large audience, and programming is not controlled by members of the Arab society. One ploy used in official calculations of the time allotted to Arabic-language broadcasts is to include programs that are subtitled in Arabic within this category. As a result, only a miniscule number of programs in Arabic and produced by Arabs are broadcast.

One blatant disadvantage to this situation is that the Arab population in Israel has no possibility of influencing the programming that it consumes. This fact nurtures a certain amount of alienation between Arab consumers and the channels, but at the same time precludes any obligation to watch a given channel. For instance, Arab society has absolutely no influence on the contents that Israeli television

channels broadcast to it and about it. The networks make those decisions in isolation from their Arab audience. Nor does it exert any influence on the contents of satellite broadcasts from the Arab world. Therefore, despite the high consumption of programs broadcast by Arab satellite channels, a considerable proportion of the Arab public in Israel (33.8%) stated that these channels do not represent them.

The research found that **Al-Jazeera** was preferred by more Arab television viewers than any other channel. Among the respondents, 29.6% ranked it in first place, 12.9% in second place, and 8.6% in third place. It was also found that 50.9% of all television-viewing respondents watched **Al-Jazeera** at varying frequencies. **Channel 2**, the leading Israeli channel watched by the Arab public, was ranked in first place by 11.5% of the respondents, in second place by 12.5% and in third place by 6.1%. A total of 29.4% of all television-viewing respondents reported that they watched **Channel 2** at varying frequencies. These data indicate the popularity of this channel and its penetration into Arab society despite alienation from the contents and the criticism leveled at its programming. It is likewise important to note that 84.5% of **Channel 2**'s viewers also reported that they watched **Al-Jazeera**. A similar finding was obtained among **Channel 1** viewers, 79.5% of whom also watched **Al-Jazeera**. This pattern indicates a tendency to balance several alternative sources of broadcast information. The Arab public thus watches the news broadcast by **Al-Jazeera**, as well as the news broadcast by the Israeli channels. Consumers are thereby able to construct a more well-rounded view of the events after comparing the information obtained about regional developments, primarily regarding Israeli policies in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The advantage

provided by the opportunity to compare alternative sources of information is unavailable to Jewish society in Israel, a fact that diminishes its ability to balance the information received.

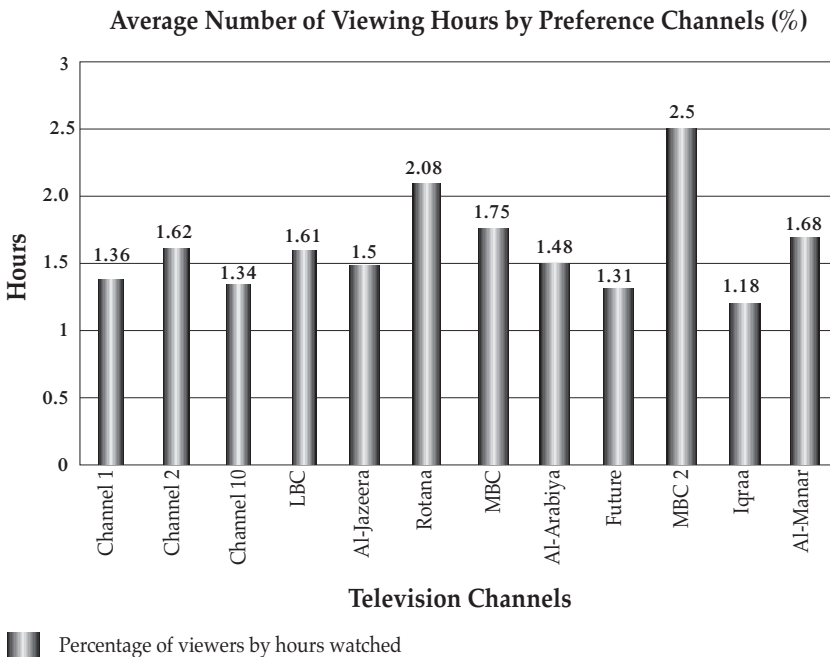
Another channel that achieved a respectable ranking by Arab viewers in Israel was **MBC**, formerly broadcasting from London and recently moved to **Dubai**: 10.2% ranked it in first place, 10.2% in second place and 8% in third place. These rankings indicate this channel's stability within its niche. In all, 28.3% of all television viewers watch this channel at different viewing frequencies. **MBC**, the oldest satellite television channel received by Arabs in Israel, is a general channel, mixing news with Arab cultural and comedy programs such as "Who Will Win the Million?", and many series in Arabic that originate in Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia. The channel is conservative in style and appearance. This combination may be what helped it become the third most-popular channel among Arab viewers in Israel. Israel's **Channel 1** is the fourth most popular channel, ranked in first place by 7.9% of all television-viewing respondents. A total of 19.6% of all television viewers watch this channel at different viewing frequencies.

Among the other channels that attracted a stable viewing audience were the Lebanese Channel **LBC**, with 4.8% of television viewers ranking it in one of the three leading places, and a total audience of 14.4%. **LBC** has thus obtained a regular viewing audience. The fifth most popular channel, ranked in first place by 4.8% of the Arab public, was the religious channel, **Iqraa**, although only 3.1% and 2.6% of the respondents ranked it second and third, respectively. The findings indicate that religious viewers prefer this channel;

they did not view alternative channels or, perhaps, those alternatives did not meet their needs. The music channel **Rotana** was ranked in first place by 4.3% of the viewers, and in third place by 6%. Overall, 13.7% of all television viewers watch this channel at different frequencies, a relatively high percentage for a music channel. **Rotana's** increased rating in third place indicates its choice for leisure time viewing.

In order to identify differences not only in frequency of viewing, but the time spent watching the various channels, the respondents were asked to note the average number of hours that they watched each channel.

Figure 11.5

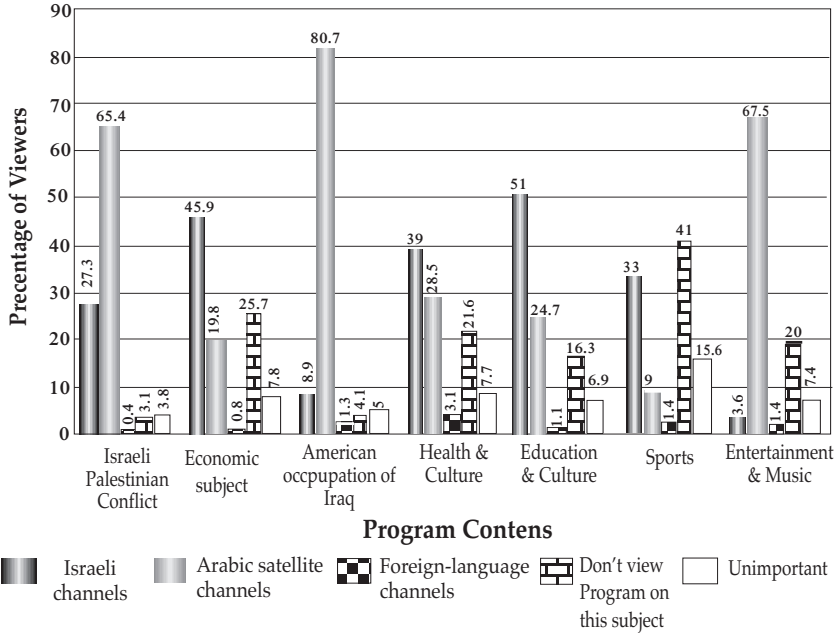


An analysis of the average number of hours viewed daily for each of the channels ranked in first place indicated that entertainment channels lead in terms of viewing time (see Figure 11.5). The average number of hours spent viewing each channel, as indicated by the respondents, were: **MBC2**, a film channel – 2.5 hours; **Rotana**, a music channel that broadcasts video clips and entertainment news – 2.08 hours; **MBC** – 1.75 hours; **Al-Manar**, **Channel 2** and **LBC**, channels that mix news and entertainment – 1.6 hours. Figure 11.5 clearly shows that the average amount of time devoted to watching entertainment and family channels was greater than the amount of time devoted to watching news channels even though **Al-Jazeera**, the news channel, was viewed more than any of the others.

Based on previous studies conducted on the subject, the respondents were asked to categorize the television channels they watched according to the type of programming the channel broadcast. The purpose of this question was to ascertain which contents were viewed by the Arab public and to attempt to explain why this was.

Figure 11.6

Distribution of Television Viewing by Subject and Viewer Attitudes (%)



In comparing the viewing patterns for Israeli channels with those for Arab satellite channels, a clear division in the television spheres was found. This division reflected the duality of the media landscape, as noted previously, in addition to the various functions that each television sphere plays in Arab society's culture of media consumption. Thus, Arab television consumers, who display significant interest in current events, watch news outlets on Arab satellite channels, as well as news on Israeli Hebrew channels. Among the respondents, 80.7% stated that they were interested in news to a great or very great extent, and 74.2% expressed interest in political programming, although this high level of interest was manifested in varied viewing patterns.

A high percentage of Arab television viewers preferred to watch programs dealing with political issues – such as the Israel-Palestinian conflict or the American occupation of Iraq – on Arab news channels, the most outstanding of which was **Al-Jazeera**. Among Arab television viewers, 65.4% preferred to watch news about the Israel-Palestinian conflict on Arab channels compared to 27.3% who preferred to watch Israeli channels on this subject. Regarding the American occupation of Iraq, 80.7% preferred to watch Arab channels as compared with 8.9% who preferred viewing Israeli channels. One of the main reasons for this viewing pattern is the stance that the Arabic satellite channels take. They address these issues more deeply and also level criticism at Israeli policies in the occupied territories and American policies in Iraq. In contrast, the Israeli channels are more sympathetic toward the two countries' policies and tend to justify whatever actions are taken by them. The Arab public therefore places little trust in the Israeli channels regarding this sphere, and great trust in the Arab channels; attitudes to be further clarified below.

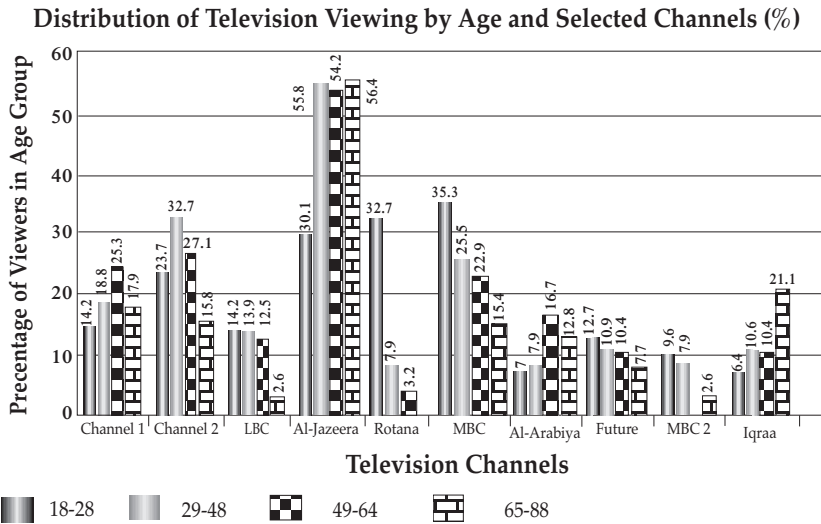
We obtained a similar picture with respect to cultural, entertainment and music programs: 67.5% of Arab television viewers in Israel watch such programs on Arab channels, whereas only 3.6% watch such programs on Israeli channels. The principal reasons for these trends are the identification of these viewers with the Arab world and its culture, coupled with the remoteness felt towards Jewish society and the

culture that it has produced a culture that is foreign to the Arab Middle Easterner in general, and to local Arab society in particular.

On subjects directly related to the conduct of daily life – e.g., education, the economy, health, the environment and sports – a large percentage of the Arab public watches Israeli channels. Among the respondents, 45.9% preferred to watch economic news on Israeli channels, compared with 19.8% who preferred to do so on Arab channels; 39.0% preferred to watch Israeli channels for programs on health and the environment, compared with 28.5% who preferred to watch such programs on Arab channels; 51.0% preferred Israeli programs on education, compared with 24.7% who preferred Arab programs; and 33.0% preferred Israeli channels for viewing sports, compared with 9% who preferred to watch sports on Arab channels. Comparison of the data on subjects which did / did not interest viewers indicated that political programming was much preferred to economics and sports programming, with entertainment and leisure programming preferred as well.

Like research in other areas of media consumption, an attempt was made here too, to identify any associations existing between television viewing patterns and demographic variables. Special attention should be given to these findings. Of particular interest was the significant association observed between age and television viewing patterns.

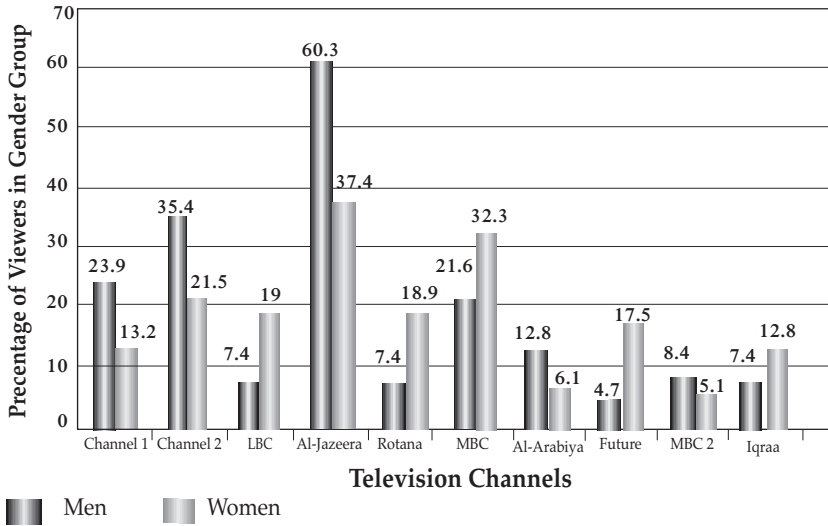
Figure 11.7



As can be seen from Figure 11.7, entertainment and Arabic family-oriented channels such as **Rotana**, **MBC2**, **MBC**, **LBC** and **Future** enjoyed higher viewing rates among younger than older viewers. In general, as age increased, the rate viewing these channels decreased. The obverse was observed regarding **Al-Jazeera**, **Al-Arabiya** and **Iqraa**: Viewing among older viewers was greater than among younger viewers. However, the intermediate age groups represented the audiences viewing the two Israeli channels the most: **Channel 1** was viewed by 25.3% of the respondents in the 49-64 age group whereas **Channel 2** was viewed by 32.7% of the respondents in the 29-48 age group.

Figure 11.8

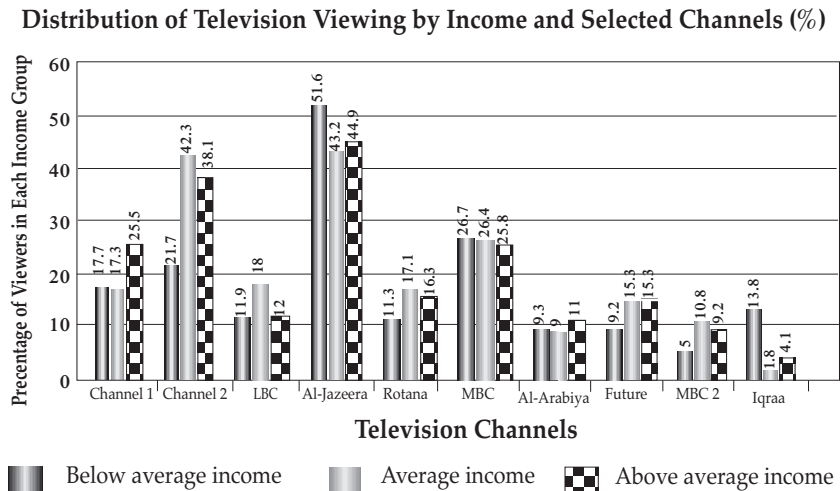
Distribution of Television Viewing by Gender and Selected Channels (%)



Analysis of the relationship between gender and television viewing revealed clear associations between the two variables. Some channels were viewed more by men than women, and some more by women than men. Among viewers of the Israeli **Channels 1** and **2** and the Arabic channels **Al-Jazeera** and **Al-Arabiya**, the percentage of male viewers exceeded the percentage of female viewers. In contrast, more women viewed **LBC**, **Rotana**, **MBC**, **Future**, **MBC2** and **Iqraa**. Two explanations can be offered for the differences, both related to content. The four channels preferred by more male viewers provide heavy content. News in an area full of conflict and war is characteristically a masculine sphere of interest, and so we could expect more men to view channels focusing on news. On the other hand five of the six, channels preferred by women provide family or entertainment programming enjoyed by an audience

dominated by women. The Lebanese channels LBC and Future, for example, which enjoy a sizeable female audience, broadcast social and informative programs in every sphere of life. We should add however, that these programs are broadcast primarily during the morning hours. Given the large percentage of Arab women who do not work outside the home, more women than men are able to watch them.

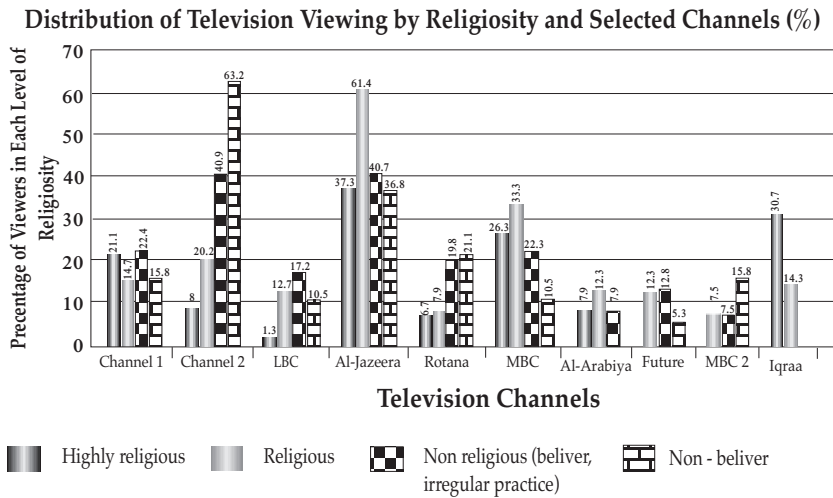
Figure 11.9



Analysis of the association between income level and television viewing patterns revealed that **Al-Jazeera** enjoyed the highest rating among viewers having below-average incomes (see figure 11.9), individuals who usually have less education and so poorer Hebrew language skills, a requirement for understanding the news broadcast on the Israeli channels. **Iqraa** is also watched primarily by people with below-average incomes. In contrast, the Israeli **Channel 2**, **Rotana** and **MBC2** were watched mainly by the middle class individuals, those with average incomes who generally lead secular, bourgeois lifestyles. Israel's **Channel**

1 was watched mainly by individuals with above-average incomes. Although these findings indicate an association between income and viewing patterns for several channels, it is nevertheless difficult to draw unequivocal conclusions from them regarding all television consumers. As Figure 11.9 demonstrates, the association between income and consumption is not identical for all channels of a similar type, which indicates that the association might not be significant.

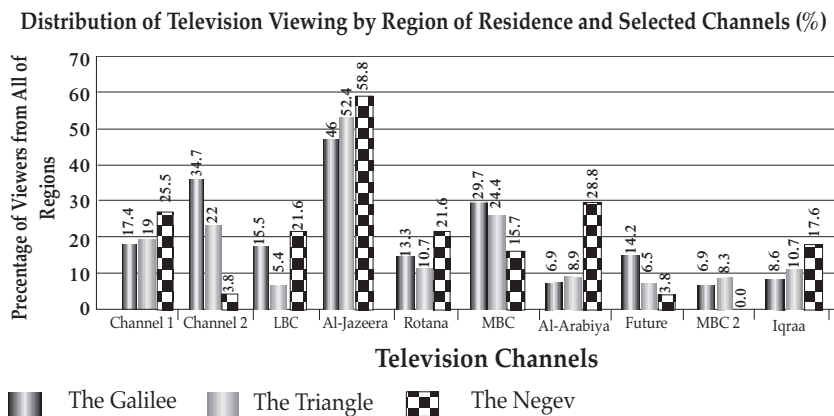
Figure 11.10



Similar to the analysis regarding other aspects of media consumption, the research investigated whether an association existed between level of religiosity and television viewing (see Figure 11.10). The research participants were placed into one of four categories – ranging from not religious at all to very religious – according to their self-reports. An association was found between level of religiosity and viewing rate for Israel’s **Channel 2**: That is, the more secular a person, the greater the likelihood that he or she would watch **Channel 2**. Thus, among

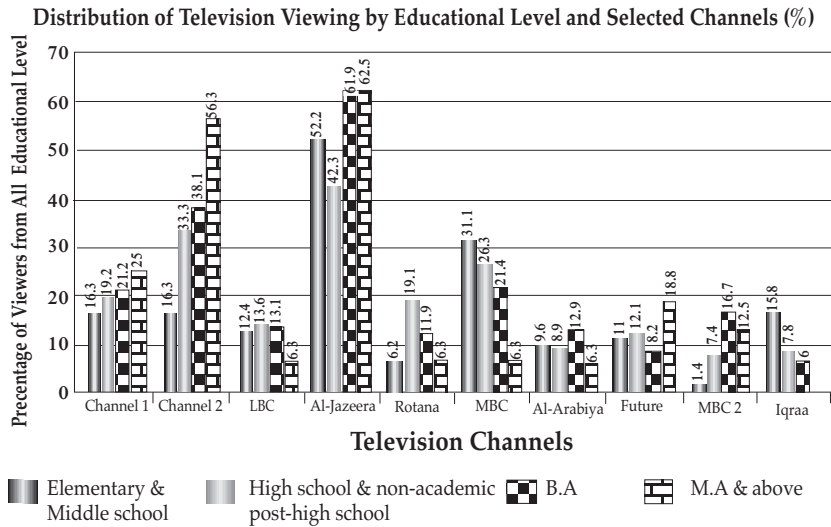
those who defined themselves as not religious, 63.2% watched this channel. In contrast, only 8% of those who defined themselves as very religious watched **Channel 2**. **Al-Jazeera** enjoyed the highest viewing rate of any channel among respondents who defined themselves as religious. Respondents in the other three categories watched **Al-Jazeera** at approximately the same rate (36.8% to 40.7%). A similar pattern recurred in the case of **Al-Arabiya** and **MBC**, which have likewise managed to penetrate religious rather than other segments of the viewing public. The viewing rate for **Iqraa** was highest among respondents who characterized themselves as religious (14.3%) or very religious (30.7%). Secular respondents did not watch this channel at all. An interesting finding related to viewers of the music channel **Rotana**. Here, a negative association was found between level of religiosity and viewing rate: The higher the level of religiosity, the lower the viewing rate, similar to the case of Israel's **Channel 2**. In this case, the channel's contents – popular music exclusively – can explain the viewing patterns.

Figure 11.11



With respect to the regional distribution of viewers and geography's impact on television viewing patterns, a statistically significant association was found between living in a specific region and watching specific channels (see Figure 11.11). It is important to note that the findings do not represent absolute rates but only the level of penetration into a region, that is, the percentage of total viewers in each separate region. To illustrate, the percentage of Al-Jazeera viewers is highest in the Negev although the absolute number of viewers may be lower than in the other regions. The findings indicate that Al-Jazeera, Channel 1, Al-Aribiya, LBC, Rotana and Iqraa enjoyed higher viewing rates in the Negev than in the other regions; other channels were viewed more in the Triangle than in the Galilee. Alternatively, the viewing rates for Future and MBC were higher in the Galilee. The findings shown in Figure 11.11 might appear surprising because contrary to expectations, viewing rates for Israel's Channel 1, Al-Jazeera, Al-Aribiya and Iqraa were higher in the Negev than in the Galilee or the Triangle. When interpreting the data for the Negev, we should remember that the entertainment channels originating in Lebanon and Syria cannot easily be received in the Negev; in all likelihood, this is the reason for the significant increase in the percentage of viewers of news and Israeli channels in that region.

Figure 11.12

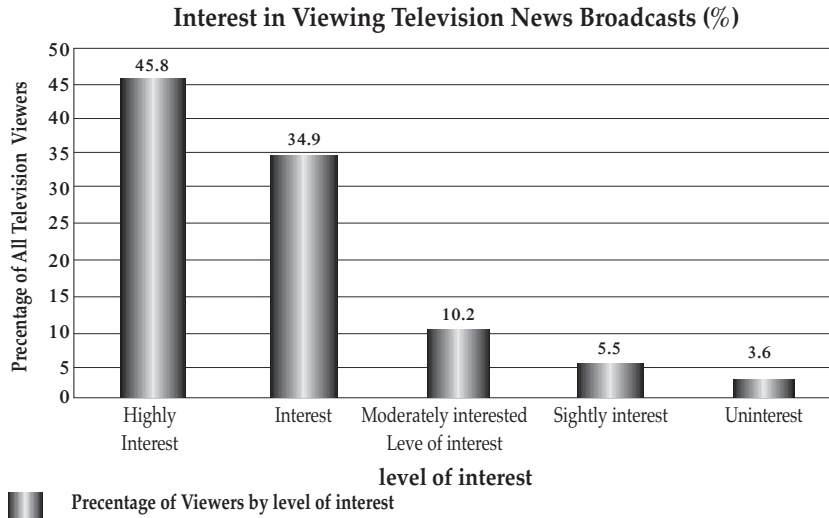


Based on the data, the association between education and television viewing choices should be delved into more deeply. A positive association was found between educational level and viewing rates for Israeli channels: As Figure 11.12 clearly shows, as educational level rose, so did the rates of viewing Israeli channels, a trend similar to the one found among radio listeners. This phenomenon is related to two different factors. The first relates to language: Individuals with more education have better mastery of Hebrew, making it easier for them to listen to the Hebrew news and watch Hebrew programs. The second factor relates to interest and involvement in politics, government policies and public life in Israel, all of which affect Arab society. Importantly, the second factor is directly associated with education: The more educated a person, the more interested

and involved he or she will be in events transpiring in Israel's public sphere. Hence, the rates of viewing Israeli television channels increase with rising educational level. This should not be construed to mean that educated Arab citizens and intellectuals prefer to consume media in Hebrew, whether written, aural, or visual. Rather, the viewing rates observed for the Israeli channels indicate a high level of interest in political and civil matters despite – not because – these contents are provided in Hebrew. The opposite trend was conspicuous among MBC and Iqraa viewers: These two channels were more successful in penetrating groups with less education. Regarding the other channels, no clear relationship was found between educational level and viewing, with the exception of Al-Jazeera, which succeeded in attracting more holders of a BA (61.9%) and an MA or higher (62.5%) among Arab television viewers.

As has been shown, Arab media consumers in Israel view a large variety of television channels. Two of the salient issues in media research pertain to the channels that the public prefers for viewing the news and how much trust they place in the news broadcast by the specific channels. To delve into these issues, the respondents were asked questions regarding their news program viewing pattern and their trust in the news broadcast.

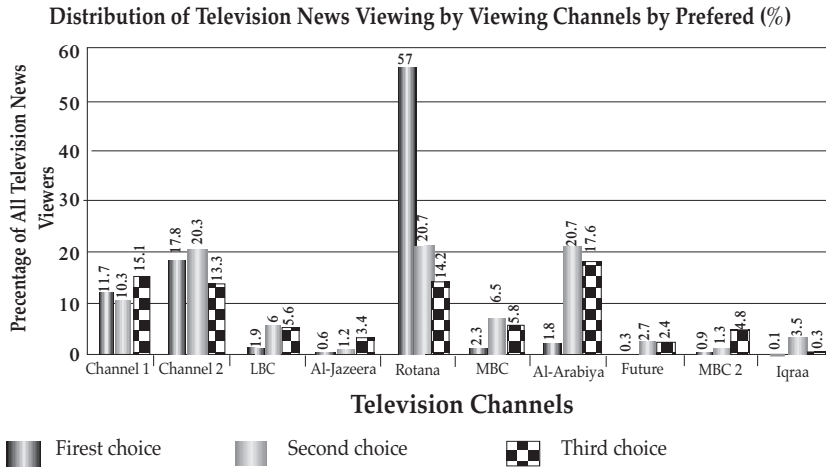
Figure 11.13



As seen from Figure 11.13, the research indicated that a very high proportion of Arab television viewers are interested in the news. Of those who watched television, 80.7% stated that they were interested or very interested in news broadcasts. Only 9.1% responded that they were uninterested in the news, with another 10.2% indicating that they were only moderately interested in such programs.

Respondents were also asked to distinguish between the channels they preferred for watching the news. On this issue as well, the study participants were asked to rank the three channels that they preferred or watched the most.

Figure 11.14

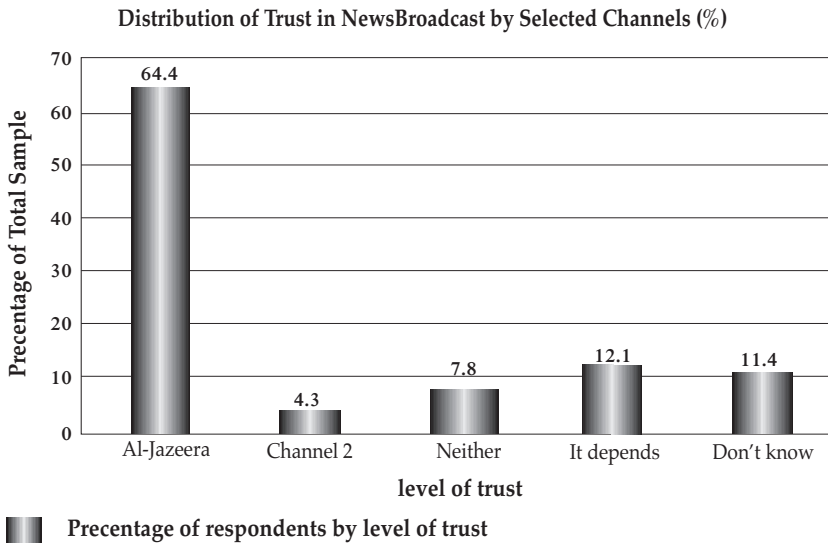


As can be readily seen in Figure 11.14, 57% of the respondents ranked **Al-Jazeera** as their first choice, far beyond all the other channels. **Al-Jazeera** maintained its precedence in the second and third choice categories as well, with 20.7% of the respondents naming it as their second choice and 14.2% as their third choice. Although **Al-Arabiya** received few responses as a first choice (1.8%), the findings indicated that it was a strong alternative to **Al-Jazeera** among viewers of televised news, with 20.7% of respondents designating this channel as their second choice, and 17.6% as their third choice. Israel’s **Channel 2** also served as a substitute for **Al-Jazeera**: 17.8% indicated this channel as their first choice, 20.3% as their second choice and 13.3% as their third choice. Figure 11.14 also indicates that Israel’s **Channel 1** has lost its drawing power as a provider of news not only among the Jewish population, but also among the Arab population. Of the study participants who watched television news,

11.7% stated that **Channel 1** was their first choice, 10.3% their second choice, and 15.1% their third choice. Analysis of the data therefore indicated that **Channel 1** represents a substitute for other channels only as a second or third choice. We can therefore conclude that **Al-Jazeera** is the principal provider of news to those members of Arab society who watch televised news, although a high proportion of this public watches more than one channel, while balancing between Arab satellite channels and Israeli channels.

As stated, the Arab public's trust in the news broadcast was a subject of great interest. In order to examine this issue, respondents were asked to compare their level of trust in the news provided by Arab satellite channels, primarily **Al-Jazeera**, with their level of trust in the news provided by the Israeli channels, (primarily **Channel 2**, due to its higher preference rating (as outlined in Figure 11.13) among viewers of Israeli news programming). Similar to the question on trust in newspapers (p. xx), a hypothetical scenario was presented. In this scenario, **Al-Jazeera** reported on the death of two Palestinians in the Gaza Strip from Israeli army fire. Alternatively, **Channel 2** reported the same incident but claimed that the Palestinians were killed when an explosive device that they were preparing blew up. The respondents were asked to indicate which channel's report they would believe.

Figure 11.15



As Figure 11.15 shows, given this scenario, 64.4% of the respondents said that they would believe **Al-Jazeera** compared to 4.3% who would believe **Channel 2**. Only 12.1% responded that the trust placed in the two channels would depend on the circumstances. This sizeable gap in the level of trust attributed to the news broadcast by the two channels indicates a crisis of confidence in Israeli television on the part of Arab society in Israel, particularly regarding new reports related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Arab population of Israel does not trust Israeli media these broadcasts that, as previously stated, they perceive as partial to the government's position. The Arab public also believes that Israeli television promotes the government's positions by legitimating its occupation policies. Such attitudes seriously interfere with trust and represent factors driving viewers to alternative channels, principally **Al-Jazeera**, which provides comprehensive and in-depth coverage of development in the occupied Palestinian territories.

12. *The Influence of Arab Satellite Television on Arab Society*

The findings on Arab society's television consumption patterns reported so far indicate a clear trend, i.e., high consumption of contents and programs broadcast by Arabic satellite television. In light of this trend, the question arises as to whether and how much the Arab public believes that the contents broadcast by these channels affect the community's self-image and perceptions of its political and cultural environment. In order to explore these issues, the participants in the research were asked to answer a number of questions regarding the effect of satellite television on these variables. One of the questions asked related to the extent to which they believed that Arab satellite channels represent the respondents, their identity, views and interests.

Figure 12.1

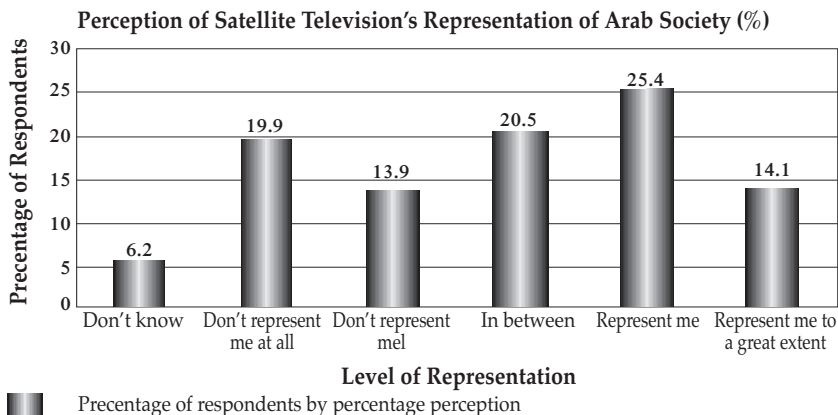


Figure 12.1 shows that 39.5% of the respondents replied that the Arab satellite channels represented them, with an additional 20.5% being non-committal; i.e., adopting the mid-point position. Among the remainder, 33.8%, answered in the negative; i.e., they did not believe that the Arabic satellite channels represent them, whereas 6.2% did not know (had no opinion). These responses indicate that the Arab public is divided on this issue although the majority tends to believe that satellite television does, in fact, represent them.

In order to better understand the Arab public's position on this issue, several statements were presented to the respondents, who were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with their contents. The findings indicate that the satellite television channels do have a considerable impact on Arab public opinion regarding various areas, such as their self-awareness, political positions and interest in cultural matters.

Figure 12.2

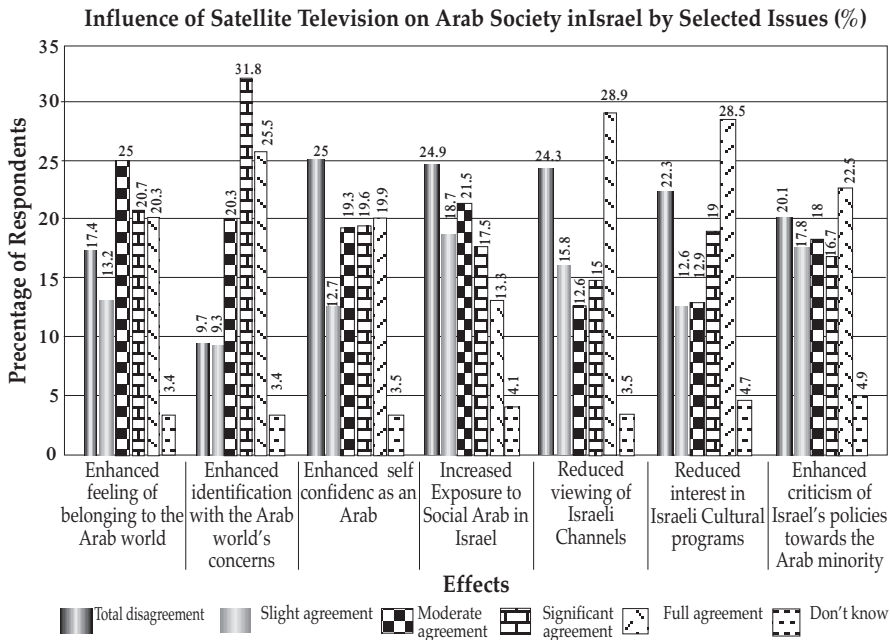


Figure 12.2 shows that the Arabic satellite broadcasts helped maintain a sense of belonging to a great, or very great extent for 40.7% of the respondents, however, 17.4% did not share this view and 38.2% replied that they agreed with this statement only to a small or very small degree. This distribution indicates that the large majority of the Arab public in Israel clearly agrees that the Arab satellite broadcasts reinforce their sense of community with the Arab world, at least to some extent. It should be stressed that one explanation the strong sense of belonging to the Arab world felt by many of the study's participants and evidenced in the findings precedes the onset of Arab satellite broadcasting. The availability and programming of these broadcasts can be assumed to have enhanced the existing feelings.

Another statement presented was: "Arab satellite broadcasts influenced my identification with problems in the Arab world." Among the respondents, 57.3% answered that these channels did in fact do so. An additional 29.6% of the respondents stated that they were affected by these broadcasts to a moderate or small extent. Only 9.7% of the respondents replied that they did not agree with the statement at all. These findings provide support for the characterization of Arab society in Israel as a sector viewing the Arab space as an object of national, cultural and emotional affinity.

The respondents were also asked to address the effect of Arab satellite television broadcasts on their self-confidence as Arabs living in Israel. The responses were as follows: 39.5% stated that the broadcasts did reinforce their self-confidence,

32% answered that the broadcasts reinforced their self-confidence to a moderate or small degree and 25% replied that the broadcasts did not reinforce that feeling. On this issue as well, it is possible that some of the respondents had felt very self-confident as Arabs before the availability of Arab satellite broadcasts and that they therefore did not believe that the satellite broadcasts could enhance that attitude to be enhanced further.

A statement addressing the influence Arab satellite channels had on the rates of viewing Israeli television in Arabic received these responses: 43.9% affirmed that these broadcasts had an affect, with 28.4% stating that their viewing of Israeli television was affected to a moderate or small degree while 24.3% reported no effect. A similar, even clearer picture emerged regarding the effect of these broadcasts on the rate of viewing Israeli cultural programs: 47.5% responded that the Arabic satellite broadcasts reduced their viewing of Israeli cultural programs, 25.5% responded that their viewing was affected to a moderate or small degree while 22.3% stated that the broadcasts had no effect.

The total picture emerging illustrates the changes taking place in the media consumption culture of Arab society in Israel. The Arab satellite channels have not only provided solutions for the deficiencies in television programming previously available due to the absence of a local channel controlled by Arabs, they have also reinforced the strong link between Arab society in Israel, and events taking place in the greater Arab world. These channels have opened the surrounding Arab societies and their problems to Israel's

Arab population. At the same time, they have responded to many of the Arab public's needs by broadcasting contents formerly inaccessible in the local media landscape. As a result, Arabic satellite television broadcasts have had a strong impact on the Arab media consumption culture, on the way leisure time is spent, and on this sector's consumption of Israel's Hebrew broadcasts. In the long run, this trend may deepen and may have growing effects on the general relationship between the Arab minority and the state of Israel.

13. *Internet Use*

The present research was unable to explore Internet consumption to the same degree depth that it explored consumption of the other media. This medium is relatively new and requires the kind of advance preparation that went beyond the capacity of the current project. Therefore, with the understanding that the Internet is a growing medium that will play an increasingly important role in the lives of the younger generation of Arab society in Israel as elsewhere, a number of questions were posed to the study's participants. The participants were asked about their computer use in general and, based on their replies, whether they used the Internet. The research found that 39.5% of the respondents made use of a computer. Of these, 72.4% used a computer at home, 20.4% at work, 4.4% at the university and only 1% at Internet cafe's. With respect to Internet use, 29.7% of the respondents stated that they use the Internet. To understand the reasons for Internet use, the study participants were asked to indicate three reasons for using the Internet, based on their importance. Despite the fact that the results did not add up to 100% – due to the need to indicate three reasons – they are still very informative. The findings therefore indicate that the majority of Internet users turn to this medium for

work-related needs (38.6%). Others do so for study (33.3%) or entertainment (17.4%) purposes, while the remainder (10.7%) do so for a variety of reasons, e.g., commercial purposes, email communication or chatting. Differences in frequency of use were also revealed, a finding deserving greater attention. Among Internet users, 29.9% did so daily, 22.4% did so between four and five times a week, 28.9% between two and three times a week, 11.1% once weekly with another 6.8% infrequently. Only 0.9% did not provide a response to this question.

These data indicate that for those who do use the Internet, the majority access it frequently, which makes this medium a major source of communication for about one-third of the Arab population of Israel. Nevertheless, relatively few rely on the Internet as a source of news (4.2%). The respondents who did follow the news on the Internet were asked to rank the trust placed in the news posted on the Arabs48 site as compared with the news posted on **Ynet**. The majority, 61.2%, responded that they did not know (had no opinion). It is possible that some of the respondents followed the news on other sites, even though these two sites are thought to be the most widely known in Arab society in Israel. However, among respondents who expressed their opinion, the responses indicate that more individuals trusted the news posted on **Arabs48** (11.6%), than on **Ynet** (8%). 5% replied that they trusted both equally, and 14.2% responded that they did not trust either.

14. *Conclusions*

The study's principal findings will not be repeated here; they have been presented at length throughout this report. Instead, we will summarize our main findings by noting that the data presented in this book clearly indicate that Arab society in Israel has developed a unique media consumption culture that stems from its place in the Jewish Israeli landscape on the one hand, and the Arab landscape on the other. By means of their media consumption patterns, this community demonstrates the duality of its location in the complex media spaces that cross the borders of concrete space to penetrate a border-crossing virtual space. Arab society in Israel therefore expresses its socio cultural "in-betweenness" by taking advantage of the diverse media opportunities available among the plethora of accessible newspapers, radio stations and television channels. The Arab public mixes consumption of Israeli media, primarily news on practical subjects, with consumption of Arab media from the wider Arab space, behavior facilitated by the development of satellite communications during the last decade. This pattern of behavior clearly contradicts any assumptions or hypotheses about an identity crisis in Arab society in Israel. Instead, it indicates deliberate, rational

behavior, manifesting the complex, multi-layered and variegated nature of Arab identity. That is, the identity of Arab citizens of Israel, which entails a Palestinian identity containing dimensions affected by the Israeli reality, is constructed from a broad cultural repertoire encompassing at least two languages, and a broad expanse of contents and images.

Arab media consumers in Israel have thus located themselves in the cultural space of the Arab world even though these consumers have no influence on the contents broadcast by the Arab media, and are not adequately represented by them. The considerable amount of time spent daily in consumption of media contents broadcast from the Arab world enables the Arab public to overcome the physical obstacles that separate it from Arab society in other countries. Television consumption patterns, as noted herein, signify the collapse of borders symbolizing the state's sovereignty and intensify the potential for cultural cohesion among members of Arab society. The study's findings thus support the theory arguing that the traditional concept of state sovereignty, in the form known to us for the last 400 years, is undergoing transformation.

Although the State of Israel has never finalized its geopolitical boundaries, it has exerted considerable effort to control the political and cultural awareness of its citizens. In everything concerning Arab society in Israel, Israel has acted energetically and utilized its ideological mechanisms to inculcate the dominant Jewish worldview amongst this minority's members. The State attempted to discipline Arab

society by colonizing the Arab mind after it had succeeded in controlling the Arab economy and political system. One of the obvious expressions of these efforts is the image of the "Israeli Arab." In order to accomplish this aim, use was made of the media broadcast in Arabic, as well as in Hebrew.

However, as the research has demonstrated, that success has been very limited. Arab society in Israel has culturally and politically crossed the borders of the official Israeli state. Arab society has thus located itself in a unique space, integrating the Israeli and the Arab landscapes, while placing the contents of its choice within it. The process, culminating in Arab society's "in-betweenness," demonstrates not only the weakness of the Israeli state in the face of global processes, it also illustrates the potential for excluded minorities to overcome or bypass state mechanisms to reach beyond and connect with more authentic cultural spaces.

The process we have observed gains added dimensions when we focus on the disappointment and alienation that the Arab public feels vis-a-vis the Israeli media and its cultural contents, despite the fact that consumption of Hebrew media continues to no small degree. Yet, it is important to note here that the fact that Arab society in Israel consumes Arab media contents does not necessarily mean that its national awareness is strengthened. However, because this public consumes various media contents, including the political news that informs it of the difficulties and problems that Arab societies in other countries are forced to contend with, it can be assumed that over time, these contents will have an increasing impact on its positions and

attitudes. The barriers placed by the State of Israel for the purpose of separating Arab society within, from the Arab world outside are collapsing. Unique relationships are therefore being constructed that rely in great part on consumption of the media.

We can thus summarize the research by stating that Arab society in Israel is interested in receiving political news broadcast on radio and television in Israel on the one hand and political news broadcast on television but originating in the Arab world on the other. One important implication of this survey is, that the unique situation of Arab society in Israel contributes to its increased consumption of news. However, there appears to be greater interest in television news than in print news; witness the higher rate of television viewing in comparison to newspaper reading. As the data collected show, the percentage of daily newspaper readers does not reach one-fifth the rate of daily television viewers. Within the sphere of print media, it was found that the party-affiliated Arabic-language newspapers enjoy greater trust than do the commercial newspapers even though consumption of commercial newspapers is higher than is consumption of party newspapers.

Another clear conclusion derived from the study is that the various commercial newspapers do not manage to attract a defined and loyal readership. This conclusion stems from the finding that newspaper readers are not content to read only one newspaper; they prefer to read two or more. One conclusion to be derived from this trend is that the commercial newspapers do not meet the minimal demands

of their readers for news, which forces them to seek additional sources. In addition, the character of Arab commercial newspapers and how they deliver news does not encourage daily Arab newspaper reading. These factors may also explain the Arab public's moderate satisfaction with the Arab commercial press. They may likewise explain why readers of these newspapers rank sections containing news as fourth in their reading agenda, whereas television viewers rank news broadcasts as first in their viewing agenda.

Another important finding is that media consumption patterns among members of Arab society in Israel do not always betray a clear association between the level of trust in a specific media provider medium and the level of its consumption. In today's electronic world, media consumers "uplink" to accessible contents that reply to their needs, irrespective of the source and the criticisms leveled at those same and other media providers. The criticism that a large proportion of the Arab public expressed towards the Israeli media did not induce it to abandon these media but, rather, to selectively and critically consume the contents. Moreover, it is important to note that the media consuming public is not always aware of the gap between its level of satisfaction and the quantity of media consumed. Thus, despite dissatisfaction with certain sources, such as Arab commercial newspapers, consumption remains relatively high.

Another clear tendency identified is that Arab media consumers consume more television contents broadcast from the Arab world than from Israeli channels. This tendency

manifests the power of globalization and technology, as well as the collapse of state control over the media. The community's alienation from the Israeli media, reflected in the high level of consumption of Arab media, thus reduces consumption of, as well as trust in, the Israeli media. A further result of this trend is the focus on practical program contents originating in the Israeli media. Alternatively, the Arab public in Israel appears to believe that Arab satellite channels fulfill many of its needs, including the strengthening of its sense of belonging to the Arab world. Hence, if media consumption patterns provide measures of broader cultural trends, phenomena that necessarily entail political judgments, the media consumption patterns evinced by Arab society in Israel indicates the development of a polarized space, with links between Arab society and its Jewish environment and increasing identification with the Arab communities living in the neighboring Arab countries.

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