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Young adults’ perceptions of satellite TV news services in Bahrain  

ABSTRACT  
This article investigates the relationship between university students’ consumption of satellite TV news services and their perceptions of news issues. It examined students’ general news consumption habits and their motives for the choices they make as well as the gratifications they obtain. A survey was administered to a random sample of 325 university students to determine the varying gratifications associated with satellite TV. The findings showed that time spent watching local TV channels was affected by the use of international TV services. Respondents received fewer programmes than they desired from local TV. The data also revealed that entertainment and surveillance needs were the most important gratifications obtained from satellite TV. Interestingly, students have abandoned Al Jazeera TV programmes in favour of other TV services. These findings are discussed in relation to the growing impact of satellite TV services and the emergence of new niche markets in news in Bahrain.  

KEYWORDS  
uses and gratifications  
motivations  
young Arabs  
Bahrain  
Arab satellite-TV  
Al Jazeera TV
News programmes have been seen as the most important services provided by different media platforms, although TV news has been seen as the most important of all (Gunter 2010; Rubin 2002). There has been some debate on whether television news is losing its audience due to an increasing choice of news suppliers. In the last two decades, new technological services have been adapted in TV services to produce a new quality of news content that could have an impact on modes of consumption (Al-Shaqui 2000). Past research on television news has indicated that TV news has provided viewers with primary awareness about new events or additional information on topics of which they may or may not be aware (Gunter 1987; Hamdi 2002; Yusri 2000). Traditionally, consumers seek out information about events and topics in the public arena and utilize that information in their everyday decisions. Moreover, individuals give different levels of attention to different news outputs. Yet it has been demonstrated that television features prominently in the lives of news consumers (Gunter 2005).

News TV plays a role by providing young consumers, for example, with news content for use in classroom discussions or by providing them with political knowledge (Blareshi and Gunter 2010). It has been found that college students have learned to process news more actively and reflectively by identifying biases in news and thinking about news information on the various channels. In terms of society, news TV also provides levels of communicatory helpfulness. Regardless of the age group under consideration, it has been found that watching news has been and continues to be the most regularly reported daily activity (Al-Asfar 2002; Gunter 2005, 2010). However, other investigators have indicated that news sometimes fails to give users the basic information they seek (Kohring and Matthes 2007).

News TV, which individuals obtain at certain points in time, may be functional in a variety of subsequent communicatory situations. News programmes, particularly TV, have been an important function of mass media (Chaffee and Frank 1996). There are specific media (e.g. Al Jazeera TV, Al Arabiya TV, CNN) that spend the majority of their time providing news programmes. Scholars (e.g. Gunter 2010) have argued that news programmes, and even the style of presentation carried by news television, have changed, resulting in great attention being paid to the screen medium from the beginning. Gunter (1987) states that, for most consumers, TV channels are identified as the most popular news sources in their lives. In general, a variety of research – in the Arab world and globally – has confirmed the power of television news to provide information and knowledge, especially on political affairs.

**MOTIVATIONS FOR TV NEWS**

Several studies have looked at how people select from among media news sources and what motivates them to seek out information (Atkin 1972; Cobb-Walgren 1990; McLeod, Scheufele and Moy 1999). It has been already stated that consumers utilize different platforms for different purposes, and they have different reasons for accessing news information from different news sources.

Motivations are controlled by people’s interests, including political affairs, knowledge and entertainment. Those more interested in sports programmes and events tend to watch more sports news and engage in more sports activities (Melican and Dixon 2008). Rubin (1981) pointed out that viewers have five primary motivations for watching television: passing time, information,
entertainment, social interaction and companionship. Relief from tedium was a strong motivation in those who watched TV to pass the time. He also found that consumers use information in order to find out what is going on in the world. In addition, due to their informational needs, young viewers indicated that they preferred viewing news programmes (Elareshi 2013). Furthermore, Kayany and Yelsma (2000) argue that different consumers utilize different media contents for different purposes and to satisfy and gratify different needs. Thus, the effect of one medium on another will depend on the particular motives of consumers that guide them to consume particular media content.

The correlation between underlying motivations and media selection has been explained in different ways, such as through selective exposure theory. Finn (1997) mentioned that viewers are driven by their attention to different media content. Information orientation is guided by a stable interest in a specific subject. On the other hand, the motivation for using one medium in the domain of a particular content might lead someone to use another medium for the same content. People may watch television in the morning and later on read newspapers on the same topic to gather more information. For example, this may apply to a student who is interested in political topics. More specifically, if s/he is interested in one leader, s/he may follow the news by reading, watching, surfing news or even talking to others about that leader; this can be described as the motive of interest in politics (Blumler 1979). This research will focus on content-specific newsgathering habits among university students across different satellite TV channels and will explore the relationship between these news channels in the areas that are consumed by students.

The uses and gratifications approach has been used to gain novel insights into the meaning and determinants of consumer TV behaviour, such as students’ attitudes to the news (Dimmick, Chen and Li 2004; Miladi 2006), watching/reading news and satisfaction, and their gratifications. The model depicts the crowd as the primary element in understanding the mass media effect. It explains how audiences actively utilize the medium to gratify their own motives. Tewksbury (2003) explores how different motivations, such as consumption goals and political information, can direct consumers to evaluate or structure the information relative to political issues. News information is retained better by those who seek out news or information than by those who watch TV news for entertainment (Gunter, Furnham and Griffiths 2000; Kayany and Yelsma 2000). Cobb-Walgren (1990) argues that discussions with family, friends and co-workers on certain issues from news events can motivate people to follow a media context.

Evidence has demonstrated that different media platforms offer different gratifications to consumers (Bennett, Rhine and Flickinger 2008; Rosengren 1974). Gratifications are considered functions and utilities served by certain media in guiding personal selectivity (as a selective exposure approach). For instance, the uses and gratifications approach may be able to explain the kinds of relationship between one medium and another in terms of offering opportunities to these media to work together; for example, the Internet can now be shared between different platforms to reach a specific consumer (Ruggiero 2000). Bennett, Rhine and Flickinger (2008) stated that competition between mass media will occur when the media forms overlap. They indicated that if the media satisfy different desires, this may lead to a state of complementarity.
NEWS USE AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

University students make up a particularly important population through which to investigate news TV consumption patterns. Henke (1985) investigated patterns of news consumption and examined the role of the CNN service in the news media choices of college students. TV news provides a variety of gratifications and satisfies various needs in viewers such as entertainment, relaxation and as a substitute for community interaction (Jamal 2009). Kim and Rubin (1997) studied college students’ habits by emphasizing the three areas of information search, media habits and motivations. Respondents were asked where they obtained most of their information and where they could check multiple information sources. Predictably, it was found that old media were being abandoned by students in favour of new satellite TV services (Elareshi and Gunter 2012) and the Internet as important news sources. Students drew attention to the growing importance of the Internet as a source of information and as a job-seeking tool (Chung and Yoo 2008).

Those who adopted satellite TV services could obtain several gratifications such as entertainment, correlation, cultural socialization, surveillance and personality (Mulder 1980). Elareshi and Gunter (2010) indicate that young Libyan adults expressed a desire to see more coverage of political news and other news such as science and discoveries. Others have indicated that media choice is led by people’s desires, motives, behaviour patterns, media consumption, daily problems, discourse with others and the characteristics of society (Rosengren 1974). Jamal and Melkote (2008) state that individuals, identified as active processors of news and conscious receivers of content, select different genres of media programmes and apply techniques of exposure to obtain calculable satisfactions. Moreover, in her study of the importance and use of news media by college students, Henke (1985) found that media consumption and its perceived importance both increase among undergraduate students. Boyd and Shatzter (1993) found that TV was more important to viewers than radio and newspapers due to the growing use of satellites.

Prior research tells us that young, new consumers make for an important sample of news use. This is because new consumers are essential in the change of socialization to news media habits during a dramatic and predictable change in the life cycle. Highly-educated people are in a period of socialization in which they use mass media that provide information about social roles (Choi, Watt and Lynch, 2006; Elareshi 2013). Similarly, a study by O’Keefe and Spetnagel (1973) found that surveillance needs, the need for learning and the need for understanding are the most important reasons for media choices, and this increases with age, suggesting a growth into adult media-use patterns during the college years. University students have access to the normal sources of information such as newspapers, satellite TV channels, the Internet, and word of mouth among family and friends. It seems important, therefore, to understand the students’ perceptions of programmes since young adults may be driven by different motivations and gratifications. Therefore, this study is driven by the uses and gratifications framework.

On the other hand, it was found that some individuals, for different motives, may not be interested in watching news TV (Katz 1959). Marghalani, Palmgreen and Boyd (1998) indicated that a sample of Saudi Arabians demonstrated that religious beliefs, western commercialization and counter-culture content are the main factors deterring people from watching some satellite TV channels. A person belonging to a liberal party would seek information
from more liberal sources while another following a different ideology would seek information from the appropriate ideological sources (Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch 1973).

News habits in the Arab world have been the subject of several studies that sought to determine the factors that drive this behaviour and the relationships between news sources and exposure (Al-Asfari 2002; Al-Shaqqi 2000; Ayish 2001; Karam 2007; Miladi 2006). Elkeliny (1997) studied how the viewing of satellite TV services reflected social trends among young Egyptian adults. A sample of 260 young people aged between 18 and 38 was surveyed. Satellite TV services were more popular than local ones. Respondents preferred to watch movies, news, songs, entertainment and concerts. They watched more western TV channels than local ones. Moreover, a study by Abdul Jalil and Moawad (2000) examined the role of satellite TV channels among Kuwaiti university students and found that 85 per cent of respondents watched Arab satellite TV channels while 60 per cent reported that they watched international channels. The Lebanon LBC channel was the preferred platform among students, followed by Future TV and the Egyptian satellite TV channels. Al Jazeera TV was ranked second after Kuwaiti TV in terms of viewing popularity, followed by Dubai TV and Abu Dhabi TV.

Another study was undertaken by Yusri (2000) to identify the most common uses of satellite TV services by young Egyptians. A random sample of 100 young people who live in prosperous socio-economic communities in Cairo and Elgiza was targeted. Yusri found that young females were more likely than males to watch satellite TV channels. Several motivations (e.g. entertainment, to pass time, relaxation and escapism) led respondents to view satellite TV. Hamdi (2002) examined the teenagers’ motives for using satellite TV services to identify the gratifications obtained from watching them. Four-hundred respondents from the 15–20 age range were surveyed. Satellite TV channels were preferred by the sample for several reasons, such as finding out what is going on in the world, seeking knowledge, passing the time, entertainment and choosing topics to discuss with others. The study found that MBC, Future TV, ART and LBC were the most watched channels. Respondents were interested in consuming music songs and youth programmes.

Motahar (2010) investigated the motives of young Gulf and Yemeni viewers for watching governmental satellite TV channels and the gratifications obtained. He noted that governmental TV channels were facing tough competition from private and international TV services. The study concluded that the reasons for abandoning local governmental TV channels were the superiority of programmes and news professionals provided by private and international TV services. In the same vein, several studies elsewhere have produced similar results, such as Al-Shaqqi (2000) in Oman, Al-Asfari (2002) and Elareshi and Gunter (2010, 2012) in Libya, Jamal and Melkote (2008) in Kuwait, and Johnson and Fahmy (2008), Auter, Arafia and Al-Jaber (2004, 2005) and Karam (2007) in several Arab countries.

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This article investigates the consumption of TV programmes across different satellite TV news services. It aims to examine the link between young adults’ consumption of these services and their perceptions of different TV news services in Bahrain by investigating how university students’ motivations for consuming news TV differ. It will also be worth finding out which news media
are the most popular among young Bahrainis. Accordingly, the following research questions have guided this article:

- **RQ1**: What are the most watched channels?
- **RQ2**: What types of programmes do students prefer to watch?
- **RQ3**: What are the viewing habits of university students?
- **RQ4**: Why do students follow satellite TV services?
- **RQ5**: Are there any differences between demographic variables and viewing of TV news, TV news favourites and time spent?

**RESEARCH METHOD**

**Sampling**

The main data set out in this article were obtained from a questionnaire distributed to 325 students at the University of Bahrain, the largest university in Bahrain, in May 2013. A random sample of students was drawn with the aim of matching the known profile of the university population. A self-completion questionnaire was administered in classroom settings with either the principal author or an assistant as moderator. The questionnaire was completed by 325 students. After all questionnaires had been returned, five were rejected because they were incomplete.

The questionnaire comprised sixteen questions including details of respondents' personal demographic attributes and study details. A range of other questions enquired into respondents' favoured programmes, topics preferred, motives for watching and gratifications obtained from watching different satellite TV channels. Respondents were also asked to state how often they watched different satellite channels associated with consumption of different TV programmes on a three-point scale ranging from often to don't watch. The list contained:

- TV news services including Al Arabiya, Al Jazeera, Iranian Al Alam Today, Saudi El Khabar, Lebanon Al Mayadeen, Russia Today (Arabic) (RTV), Al Hurra, France 24 (Arabic), Egyptian El Nile, Sky News (Arabic) and BBC (Arabic);
- Entertainment TV services including Melody Movies, Lebanon LBC, Saudi MBC and Rotana;
- Religious TV services including Saudi Eqra and Al Majd; and
- Regional and local TV services including Al Bahraini TV and Kuwaiti Al Resalah.

**RESULTS**

A total of 320 responses were analysed for this study. Overall, almost two-thirds of the sample were female (64.7%) and more than one-third was male (35.3%). 30% reported having an arts faculty background, 27% were from the law faculty, 24% were from the education faculty and 21% were from the physical education and physical therapy faculty. 39% reported that they were first-year students, 38% of them were second-year students, while 23% were in their third or further years. Respondents indicated that they watched satellite TV services quite often (43.1%), with more female students (43.5%) than males (42.5%) claiming to consume satellite TV services.
Respondents were asked to specify in more precise terms the sources to which they turned for their information and news. The most watched satellite television stations were Al Arabiya (94%), MBC (74%), Al Jazeera (65%), France 24 (31%), Al Bahraini TV (30%), Al Hurra (16%), Al Alam (14%), LBC (12%) and Al Mayadeen (11%). Moreover, less than one in ten (8%) of the respondents were interested in other satellite TV services, which related to their age, including Rotana, BBC (Arabic), El Khabariya, Eqraa, Al Majd, Melody Movies, RTV and Al Resalah.

**VIEWING HABITS AND PROGRAMMES**

The study attempted to assess which types of programmes respondents prefer to view on satellite TV channels. Initially, this study found that respondents were quite interested in some TV programmes but not in others. In this context, respondents were asked to evaluate a list of TV programmes in terms of their preferences.

Looking at the percentages of respondents in terms of their interests, the highest-rated programme topics were news programmes (84%), followed by religious (72%), sports (57%), culture (56%), films and serials (54%), variety and songs (50%), talk shows (34%), women’s programmes (30%), adverts (27%), education (26%) and plays (23%).

There were a number of significant gender differences in regard to TV programmes. Such differences emerged for five programmes out of twelve: news, sports, culture, talk shows and women’s programmes. Respondents clearly indicated that they were more interested in satellite TV news services than in other services. As shown in Table 1, male respondents (91%) were more likely than females (41%) to follow TV news programmes. While females (47%) were more likely than males (24%) to watch cultural programmes, males (67%) were more interested than females (25%) in watching sports programmes. Surprisingly, female respondents (18%) were less likely than males (35%) to watch talk show programmes.

Respondents within different faculty groups had different relationships with satellite TV programmes (see Table 2). For example, law students were particularly interested in religious programmes, news, talk shows, sports, variety and songs, and films and serials. These levels of interest were significantly higher than those expressed by physical education, education and arts students. Physical education students were more interested in following news, cultural programmes, and films and serials.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
<th>Chi-square</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male (%)</td>
<td>Female (%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News</td>
<td>91.2</td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td>58.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>67.3</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>39.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>47.3</td>
<td>39.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk shows</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s programme</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>20.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*P = 0.001   ***P = 0.000

*Table 1: Types of TV programmes favoured by gender.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Law (%)</th>
<th>Physical education (%)</th>
<th>Education (%)</th>
<th>Arts (%)</th>
<th>Chi-square</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>98.5</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>284.755**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>62.1</td>
<td>72.7</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>114.540**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News</td>
<td>73.6</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>97.687**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk shows</td>
<td>73.6</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>172.354**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>62.1</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>153.064**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>73.6</td>
<td>63.6</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>122.039**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>93.853**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Films and serials</td>
<td>73.6</td>
<td>87.9</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>218.474**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plays</td>
<td>57.5</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>149.502**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety and songs</td>
<td>73.6</td>
<td>72.7</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>188.086**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ads</td>
<td>55.2</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>112.876**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**P > 0.001

Table 2: Types of TV programmes favoured by faculty.

Respondents were also asked whether they followed news topics on satellite TV. Seven different news topics were given: political, cultural, sports, military, economic, medicine and variety. Among all respondents, the data indicated that the most closely followed topics were political (93%), medicine and variety (both 60%), sports (55%) and military (31%).

In all cases, respondents registered statistically significant differences in the news topics they followed. Male respondents (41.3%) were relatively more likely than females (24%) to follow news on political topics. Males (20%) were also more likely to watch sports topics than females (14.4%). About 13.3% of males reported watching military topics, which was more than the level of female interest (7.2%), while females (23%) followed more variety topics than males did (6.7%). Females (22%) also watched more medicine topics than males (9.3%). Finally, slightly more females (10.2%) watched economic news (9.3%) ($X^2 = 20.247; df = 5; P < .001$).

In order to understand the viewing habits of university students, respondents were required to identify their personal preferences in terms of how much time they spent watching satellite TV services. The results are summarized in Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours spent</th>
<th>Male (%)</th>
<th>Female (%)</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30mins–1hr</td>
<td>60.5</td>
<td>62.3</td>
<td>61.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1hr–2hrs</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2hrs–3hrs</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3hrs–4hrs</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Number of hours spent daily viewing satellite TV services.
Young adults’ perceptions...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male (%)</td>
<td>Female (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morning (6:00am-12:00pm)</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afternoon (12:01pm-5:00pm)</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evening (5:01pm-10:00pm)</td>
<td>63.2</td>
<td>44.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late (10:01pm-6:00am)</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>31.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Time slots when satellite TV is watched most.

Respondents here indicated that they spent a considerable amount of time watching satellite TV channels. Several significant differences regarding time spent watching satellite TV were quoted. Most of them (females 62.3% vs males 60.5%) said they spent around thirty minutes to one hour watching satellite TV programmes. Interestingly, male respondents (32%) were twice as likely as females (16.2%) to spend time (from one hour to two hours) following different programmes and topics on satellite TV ($\chi^2 = 11.73; df = 3; P > .01$).

As shown in Table 4, the prime-time period for TV viewing was from 5:01 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. (50.2%). Male respondents (63.2%) watched more satellite TV in the evenings (5:01 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.) than females did (44.3%), while females (32%) were more likely than males (25%) to watch late-night programmes (from 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.).

**MOTIVATIONS**

A further stage in this analysis was performed to establish the reasons for watching satellite TV services. Respondents here were asked to identify their reasons for watching satellite TV services generally. Ten reasons were given for watching satellite TV: ‘to gain more knowledge about others’ culture and lifestyle’; ‘to keep up with current issues and events’; ‘to gain new experience and information’; ‘to solve community’s problems’; ‘to gain knowledge about the world I am living in’; ‘to discuss things on TV with others’; ‘for entertainment’; ‘to pass time when I am bored and have nothing to do’; ‘to relax’; and ‘to escape from daily life problems’.

In regard to the average level of respondents’ motivation, there were similar results in terms of the relative popularity of different types of motivations for watching satellite TV. Respondents watched satellite TV services for several motivations or reasons. Among all respondents, the survey data indicated that the most popular reasons, which were mentioned by a solid majority of two-thirds or higher, were entertainment (98.2%), keeping up with current issues and events (89%), discussing things on TV with others (87%), passing time (73%), gaining experience and new information (69%), and gaining information about the world one is living in (67%). Slightly less popular reasons, but still with a sizeable number of mentions by half or fewer of the respondents, were solving community problems, relaxation, escapism and gaining more knowledge about others’ culture and lifestyle.

Furthermore, when respondents were asked about the gratifications they obtained from watching satellite TV services, several were highlighted. The most popular were as follows: gaining more information and knowledge (95%), understanding the nature of events (94%), learning from others
(91%), using TV contents to understand reality (84%), discovering facts about life (84%), and discussing TV contents with others (77%). However, only a minority of the respondents (40% or less) indicated that they watched satellite TV services because they did not want to be alone, or because the TV services helped them to build self-confidence, engage with their communities, solve problems, and escape stress and fatigue.

**DISCUSSION**

This study investigated the responses of university students, exploring their habits, motivations for watching satellite TV services, and the gratifications they obtained. The findings of the study are discussed to expand our understanding of the habits and reasons for watching satellite TV services. The use and gratifications approach hypothesizes that individuals actively use the media to satisfy and gratify needs ranging from surveillance to entertainment, escapism and relaxation.

This study began by looking at watching-TV habits. The study found that satellite television is still the principal medium used by Bahraini students and other young Arabs for news and information. These findings confirm those of several Arab studies that young adults watch more satellite TV channels than other platforms (Abdul Jalil and Moawad 2000; Elareshi and Gunter 2010; Hamdi 2002; Yusri 2000). There has also been a dramatic expansion of news provision in the Arab world in the last decade, and this has been especially manifested on TV. The appearance of new satellite TV services is clearly posing a threat to local TV services (Elareshi 2013). It is now much easier for Arab audiences to escape boring contents in specific media because there are multi-platform channels available to them (Sakr 2000). However, young Arabs may have different preferences for satellite television associated with their reasons for consuming different programmes such as news TV (Pew Research Center for People and the Press 2002). This study attempted to explore whether Bahraini students will continue to watch regional and local TV channels. This depends on the extent to which those services can survive against the tough competition for specific audiences in Bahrain, however.

Commonly, the most frequently watched satellite TV channels (until late 2010) among Arab audiences were Al Jazeera, Al Arabiya, MBC, Egyptian Satellite Channel, Dubai, Lebanese Future, LBC and Abu Dhabi (Al-Asfar 2002; Al-Shaqqi 2000; Elareshi and Gunter 2010; Hamdi 2002; Jamal 2009; Karam 2007; Marghalani, Palmgreen and Boyd 1998).

A close look at the findings, presented previously, revealed that TV news services were more likely to be watched than local and non-local TV services. It was expected that respondents would report varying satellite TV consumption patterns. Interestingly, it is noted that Al Arabiya TV was preferred to Al Jazeera. This may have been the first time that Al Jazeera was watched less than Al Arabiya since its launch in 1996. This may be related to Al Jazeera's news coverage of the Bahraini uprising in early 2011. Cottle (2011) and Elareshi (2013) point out that although Al Jazeera was one of the most watched channels before and during the Arab uprisings, this does not mean that it offers fair coverage to all Arab countries. For example, the coverage of the Bahraini uprising was clearly slanted in favour of the Bahraini government and went beyond mere reporting to support the current government (Barakat 2011; Lynch 2012).
A handful of studies have specifically examined the consumption, habits and credibility of Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya (e.g., Aufer, Arafa and Al-Jaber 2004, 2005; Ayish 2001; Elareshi and Gunter, 2010, 2012; El-Nawawy 2003; Fahmy and Johnson 2007; Johnson and Fahmy 2008, 2009). These studies have concluded that Al Jazeera TV was perceived as a more consumed and credible channel than other satellite TV services. However, this view may have changed— at least in the eyes and minds of young adults—since the uprisings took place in the Arab world, late 2010.

Further, the findings have important implications for local news as data revealed that the student audience has been drawn away from the local TV services (Al Bahaini TV was ranked fifth in this scale) as a consequence of the spread of pan-Arab satellite channels in the earlier 2000s (Al-Shaqqi 2000; Amin 2003; Aufer, Arafa and Al-Jaber 2004). As reviewed previously, this result supports Amin’s (2003) view that there was a shift in the preferences of Arab audiences from local state-run media to recently launched pan-Arab satellite TV services and western media.

With regard to TV programmes, this study found that news programmes were the most preferred TV programmes by the respondents. Similar results have been found. For example, prior research found that other university students preferred news programmes to other types (Al-Asfar 2002; Al-Shaqqi 2000; Elareshi 2013; Oner 2009). Several Arab and western world studies (e.g., Al-Asfar 2002; Chaffee and Frank 1996; Elareshi 2013; Jamal & Melkote 2008; Karun 2007) have been largely consistent with the finding that men are more likely than women to follow news programmes. This result can be seen as an indication that men were heavier consumers of satellite TV programmes than women were.

It has been already noted that, due to the schedules and busy lifestyles of young people, some of whom have their own businesses, young adults do not spend much time consuming media outlets (Etefa 2005; Huang 2009; Kellermann 1990). However, a study by Etefa (2005) found that Arab respondents reported spending an average of 3.3 hours daily watching Arabic satellite TV.

Further, due to their schedules, young adults watched satellite TV at different times, mainly during the evening period. Previous research (e.g., Al-Asfar 2002; Al-Shaqqi 2000; Etefa 2005) have confirmed this finding and indicated that most young Arab people watch TV in the evening period. Young people are found to watch satellite programmes most during the period from 6:00 p.m. to 12:00 a.m. (Al-Shaqqi 2000). Television was heavily watched during this time slot (evening) because major newscasts, series and movies are broadcast during this time (Al-Shaqqi 2000), and students are mostly at home at this time.

Satellite TV was least viewed during the early periods of the day (6%) because students at that time are occupied with their own studies and the contents of the early period may not appeal to their interests. Late-night viewing (from 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.) was also noted to be more prevalent among females than males. This is an unexpected result as it was thought that males would be more interested in watching late-night TV programmes such as movies (Al-Shaqqi 2000).

More important, motivations for satellite TV viewing explained variances in viewing of satellite TV news services. Consistent with previous uses and gratifications studies (e.g., Atkin 1972; Jamal and Melkote 2008; Kayany and Yelsma 2000; Motahar 2010; Rubin 2002; Tewksbury 2003; Yusri 2000),
findings of this study support an active audience approach to understand attitudes and viewing habits of satellite TV services. In addition, different motivations were given for watching satellite TV services (e.g. for entertainment, surveillance, discussion, passing time, escapism and knowledge). Thus, this study demonstrated the applicability of the uses and gratifications module framework in studying audience habits (Ruggiero 2000). Knowledge and learning from others, understanding the nature of events, understanding reality, and discovering facts about life were the most gratifications obtained from watching satellite TV services. The results here were consistent with several previous studies of Arab media, which examined media-related motivations and measured gratifications among Arab audiences (Abdel Rahman 1998; Al-Shaqsi 2000; Elareshi 2013; Marghalani, Palmgreen and Boyd 1998; Yousef 1999).

CONCLUSION

This article has given an account of the reported use of different satellite TV services by Bahraini students. The surveyed respondents reportedly watched different news topics on different satellite services because these services gave them the information they needed. However, it was found that the pan-Arab TV services were considered more attractive suppliers than the local one for several reasons. The pan-Arab TV services, Al Arabiya and Al Jazeera, while both more popular than the local one, were not equally well received. Al Arabiya was ranked differently from the others. In that respect, this article adds a new chapter on news consumption which is different from the findings of earlier studies on Arab news consumers (Auter, Arafa and Al-Jaber 2005; Elareshi 2013; Rugh 2004; Zayani 2009).

Bahraini students revealed that they were rather more interested in news, religious and sports programmes than in other programmes. This became obvious when respondents indicated they watched satellite TV news services much more than other TV services. In this context, the most popular TV services were Al Arabiya, MBC and Al Jazeera. These news services have been able to capture the attention and interest of student news consumers. This study also revealed that the local channel was ranked fifth amongst other satellite services. This means, however, that the channel is not the most watched channel among viewers of satellite services (Boyd and Shatzer 1993). It should be noted that several studies conducted in the Arab world have concluded that satellite TV services have drawn audiences away from their national TV services (Abdel Rahman 1998; Abdul Jalil and Moawad 2000; Al-Asfar 2002; Al-Shaqsi 2000; Bait-Almal 1992; Elareshi and Gunter 2010). According to this result, Al Bahraini TV has to improve the technical and professional aspects of its programmes in order to retain its viewers. For example, the channel should pay more attention to social issues and openly discuss matters that concern the public.

However, the leading news service in the Middle East, Al Jazeera, was ranked third among its younger audience. It seems that highly educated people were less satisfied with the performance of Al Jazeera TV. This is in contrast to the findings obtained by Elareshi (2013), which indicated that Libyan university students ranked MBC as their most watched channel, followed by Al Jazeera and then Al Arabiya. In this sense, although Al Arabiya and Al Jazeera target the same audiences, supposedly representing Arabic interests and mostly serving audiences of Arabic origin, they were perceived
very differently in the eyes of Bahraini students. It is evident that, when it comes to news and current affairs, Arab viewers are not limited to one platform; they can also tune into other platforms, even for the same news values (Ghareeb 2000; Rugh 2004).

The study found that respondents were more likely to follow political programmes than other programmes (e.g. sports, economic, military, medicine and variety). The differences between males and females were highly significant. News and political programmes appeared to be the most watched programmes by all university students. Apparently, most of the news and political news programmes watched by the respondents were on Al Arabiya, which has come to be regarded as providing more comprehensive news coverage of the Arab Spring than Al Jazeera. This result is consistent with the findings of Rubin (1983), who reported that habit is a primary television viewing motivation. Similarly, Huang (2009) confirmed that many students tend to pick up the habit of watching news routinely.

There were several important motivations and gratifications that led university students to watch satellite TV services. Entertainment and surveillance motivations were the most important reasons for watching satellite TV (O'Keefe and Spethnagel 1973). A Bahrain study by Al-Eid (2006) found that 56.5% of young people in the age range of 20–30 reported that they were interested in watching TV to gain knowledge and information and to find out about current events. The uses and gratifications approach of this study, therefore, does much to illuminate important reasons for the rapid adoption of satellite TV channels in Bahrain. This study found evidence that traditional motives such as entertainment, surveillance, relaxation and information are still important for attracting young highly educated individuals to watch satellite channels. For instance, the respondents watched satellite services to keep up to date with news and events around them and to learn useful information, which satellite TV could provide. Moreover, young people still watch satellite TV for entertainment or when something important or interesting is happening.

LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH
The generalization of this study is limited by the sample of respondents and, therefore, the findings are limited to the University of Bahrain. However, 325 participants may have provided a reasonable cross-section. Neither news nor radio nor news in print has been exhaustively covered. It is also important to take into consideration the data collection because the data were intended simply to shed light on why highly educated people in Bahrain follow satellite TV. Although this method was quite similar to those used in various studies (Diddi and LaRose 2006; Jamal and Melkote 2008; O'Keefe and Spethnagel 1973; Vincent and Basil 1997), a more comprehensive measure of how people watch satellite TV services might have resulted in different findings.

Given the limitation of this study, further research might investigate the perceptions of news media among different demographics. This should include different classes from young adults to older adults. It would also be worth studying the effects of international media such as Al Jazeera TV on local media. As various local media tend to use the Internet, it would be meaningful to explore the effects of new media on traditional ones. Thus, it would be interesting to consider the differences between new satellite TV services and old ones in terms of programmes.
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