BROADCASTING IN SAUDI ARABIA

IN THE ERA OF GLOBALIZATION:

A STUDY OF LOCAL CONSTRAINTS ON TELEVISION DEVELOPMENT

BY

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

الحمد لله رب العالمين، والصلاة والسلام على خاتم الأنبياء والمرسلين،

" ... وقل رب زدني علما".

In the Name of Allah

**the Compassionate, the Merciful, Praise be to Allah, Lord
of the Universe, and peace and prayers be upon His final
prophet and messenger.
"...and Say: My Lord! cause me to grow in knowledge".**

**O Allah, forgive me for my frivolity, my overearnestness,
my faults and wrong intentions and all my shortcomings.**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis has been composed by myself, that it has not been accepted in any previous application for a higher degree, that the work of which it is a record has been performed by myself, and that all sources of information have been specifically acknowledged

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Abstract

This study examines the reasons for the Saudi media industry's dependence on imported foreign productions In a departure from traditional dependency theory, which emphasises the role of external factors in the context of the world system, this study explains the state of dependency and underdevelopment in a more locally grounded analysis which evaluates the role of Saudi media policies and regulatory functions in perpetuating this dependency status Two methodologies were applied firstly, content analyses of a two-week period of Saudi television programming on Channel 1 were carried out to examine the quantity and quality of both local and imported television fare in terms of genre and format Secondly, interviews were conducted with Saudi media officials, media policy makers, and independent local producers to ascertain, from their perspective, what exactly constrains the Saudi media industry and limits its potential, and why the Saudi media is dependent on imported television fare The results of the content analyses and interviews showed that political, professional and economic constraints handicap STV's performance This has led to output which is considered to be irrelevant to the needs and interests of the Saudi viewing population It has also led to an increase in imported foreign programming and DBS popularity, thus creating a cause of concern among culturalists and Islamists who object to content which, they argue, conflicts with the basic principles of the Islamic faith Recommendations are proposed to Saudi media policy makers in order to counteract the foreign competition and enhance indigenous, self-reliant development

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction

Television has gained a pre-eminent position as a cultural medium of global and national significance It is considered to outrank both print media and radio in terms of scope and popularity, and possibly in terms of public prestige and credibility (McQuail, 1994) It is a medium that has the capacity to be a major source of information and entertainment for viewers, both young and old, and has a potential power which, if wisely channelled, can be of immense benefit to a society In Saudi Arabia, where there are no other public entertainment institutions, for example, theatres and cinemas, Saudis perceive television to be the principal source of domestic entertainment and information According to Al-Oofy (1990), 82% of Saudis watch television for two to three hours a day

2. Statement of the Problem

The Saudi Arabian broadcasting media industry is heavily dependent on imported foreign television programmes The causes of this dependency and its perpetuation can be assigned to a combination of both external and internal factors, and are also based in Saudi media policy and practice, all of which have led to a suppressed and constrained national media production industry in the country and an increased reliance on imports However, the impact of imported foreign programming has been particularly significant in Saudi Arabia because many Islamists and moralists cannot reconcile foreign media content with their unique cultural and traditional values they believe that it contradicts and undermines Islamic doctrine and Saudi national and cultural identity A

large segment of the viewing population has therefore given foreign programming a hostile reception On the other hand, a substantial proportion of Saudi Arabians have grown disillusioned with the poor quality of Saudi television (STV) output, the causes of which are discussed and analysed in chapters VII-IX, and have demonstrated a growing preference for imported programming, thus creating a sizeable market

These conflicting interests are represented and defended to varying degrees by segments of the population referred to in this thesis as Islamists and culturalists, and who personify what Nordenstreng and Varis (1973) term 'the nonhomogeneity of the national state' Islamists can be defined as orators who lean heavily on Islamic teachings and advocate their full implementation in Muslim societies Most of their rhetoric, however, is often perceived as radical and zealous For example, Islamists will blame external as opposed to internal variables and conditions, as well as parties such as Zionists for conspiring to undermine the Islamic faith Moreover, Islamists, who are by and large distant from political power but retain a degree of influence on the populace, consider secularism and its advocates as enemies Culturalists, on the other hand, comprise the camp who defend local Arab culture and believe in its potential as a unifying factor among Arab states They do not necessarily incorporate Islamic doctrine in their rhetoric, but do share the Islamists' fears of outside intrusion on Arab and Muslim culture In general, the culturalists tend to adopt a less hostile and more moderate approach

This author believes in Islam and its workable and applicable teachings which advocate free-will and call for dialogue This author does not share the Islamists' opinion that Muslims and the Islamic world are the subjects of conspiratonal plots organised and

orchestrated by the 'outside world' Moreover, this author believes that internal variables may limit the potential of Saudi Arabia to compete in the international market, as demonstrated by the current performance of the media industry, and may thus contribute to a reliance on foreign imports and the subsequent influence of non-Saudi culture At the same time, the author does not agree with culturalists in their overemphasis on Arab nationalism and their treatment of it as an ideology per se This author advocates reform not only in regard to media policy but on all fronts in Saudi society, and calls for change without destabilising Saudi Arabia's national and cultural identity

The concepts of national and cultural identity are problematic to define and subject to sociological debate across the world Schlesinger (1991 173) defines the former as a particular kind of collective identity and distinguishes it from nationalism For cultural identity, various definitions have been proposed (Schlesinger, 1991 139-150) It can be perceived as 'the amalgam of elements which distinguish communities (of whatever size) one from another' (Pragnell, 1985, cited in Schlesinger, 1991 142) Aside from Pasha's (1993) analysis of Muslim cultural theory of political ideology and mass media, relatively little has been written about cultural identity in the Arab world In the case of Saudi Arabia, it can be seen as encompassing the common sense of Islamic identity and the defence and preservation of specific historical, religious and cultural qualities, norms and principles which shape and guide modern Saudi society In relation to the management of audio-visual space, Schlesinger (1991 150) contends that there is a widespread belief that 'the excessive importation of foreign cultural products, in this instance television programmes, can damage or even destroy identities'

This chapter outlines the various problems of dependency on imports and how it contributes to the suppression of local production and the perpetuation of the problem It then examines the reasons behind the reactions of Islamists, moralists and culturalists to imported media fare, and in particular to direct broadcasting satellite services

2.1. The Origin of the Problem

A number of political, economic, and social circumstances in Saudi Arabia have contributed to the current preponderance of foreign television programmes In the past, to evade Egyptian media influence, which was considered to be a radical influence in Nasir's era in the 1960s, the Saudi Arabian government allowed a substantial influx of Anglo-American media *Dr Kildare, Perry Mason, The Virginian,* and *The Fugitive* were shown on Saudi television screens almost every night (Tunstall, 1977) However, a heavy diet of foreign, Arabic and Western programmes in the late 1960s and 1970s could be disregarded since television was still in its infancy, and many of the production facilities and the skilled Saudi technical staff were not available at that time

Since 1975, the Saudi government has engaged in massive development plans to establish and modernise the infrastructure of all services, including the telecommunications sector Modern, state-of-the-art media facilities were set in place in 1982, and many critics felt that dependency on imported media fare should not be continued, especially when Saudi technical and artistic personnel became available Since the 1980s, however, Saudi television - and the second channel in particular as it broadcasts in English - has exhibited a high proportion of imported fictional television productions dominated chiefly by Anglo-American programmes, as well as Arabic entertainment fare Such

programmes are regular fixtures on the Saudi television programme schedule

2.2. Reliance on Imports

In Saudi Arabia, television broadcasting is based on general principles of public service broadcasting, that is, to transmit programmes that inform, educate and entertain By looking into the Saudi development plans which started in 1970 and Saudi media activities, one realises that despite the prominent position of the media in the development plans, such prominence has not yet been translated into a programming policy The systematic, heavy reliance on imported television programmes has, in fact, adversely affected indigenous national media operations while continuous dependency has contributed to the delay or the abandonment of any possible growth of local media production operations

Since its beginnings, Saudi television has been used primarily as an entertainment and government propaganda medium and its potential, especially for national development, is considered unfulfilled Little attention is given to informational and educational aspects of programming content, while the considerable emphasis placed on entertainment ultimately serves as a depoliticising agent In his study of Saudi television, Douglas Boyd (1982) observes that

> 'The programming on Saudi Arabian television is essentially entertainment oriented Little attempt was made to provide viewers with programmes of an educational nature, for various reasons the lack of production personnel and facilities, the absence of a programming philosophy by those who were responsible for programming, and the ease with which outside entertainment programming could be purchased ' (Boyd, 1982 120)

In the past few years, the inauguration of regional satellite systems such as ARABSAT

and, more recently, the Egyptian Nilesat, as well as the adoption of advanced satellite broadcasting technologies, such as 'digital compression' in the 1990s, have resulted in a proliferation of channels and an unsatiated demand for television programmes to fill air time However, technological achievement has not been accompanied by an increase in the volume of professional television production and a substantial part of this demand is satisfied by imported programmes Broadcasters utilising this new technology have been pressurised into filling the ever-increasing air time with low-quality production, compromising their continuous promises to provide their audiences with high-quality programming [1] DBS Networks, such as Orbit and Showtime, each comprise numerous channels and can be subscribed to reasonably cheaply These have become dumping grounds for American entertainment produced in the 1970s and 1980s, which were endlessly re-run on American networks until they became obsolete

Anglo-American programming dominates the Saudi media market because it is conveniently available, familiar and an inexpensive well-spun product at an affordable price The greater experience and resources of the American and British television production industries give their programmes a technical superiority which audiences come to demand for all material, including domestic production Other reasons for the persuasiveness of Anglo-American programmes include the high technical quality of the programmes, the simplicity of the story and the reliance on action, suspense, and on familiar celebrities These combine to make for their universal appeal (Katz and Wedell, 1978) Thomas Guback and Tapio Varis (1982) believe that

> 'American films abroad have cultivated patterns of public taste for
> decades, and this undoubtedly has facilitated the distribution of American
> television material ' (Guback and Varis, 1982 31)

Hollywood conglomerate production giants have played a key role in exerting American influence in Saudi Arabia, as Mankekar (1978) observes

> 'The MPEA (Motion Picture Export Association) accounts for 80 percent of the total US foreign sales of television programmes in West Asia, and Saudi Arabia is a special centre of American influence, where there are two television services one government-controlled, financed and constructed with the assistance of NBC, and the other by Aramco, an American Oil Consortium ' (Mankekar, 1978 72)

In addition to Anglo-American productions, Arabic shows have begun to flood the STV schedule as Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon are now considered to be the major exporters of television series, plays and feature films to neighbouring Arab countries Because Saudi Arabia has become an important market for these productions, much of the imported Arab entertainment fare is made with the requirements of the Saudi system in mind and with a degree of special religious and political consideration (Boyd, 1982) These latter production centres were hailed as a means to counterbalance the Western media flow, but by adopting the Western model they convey Western values and views that are believed to conflict with those of a Muslim world Consequently, Saudi Arabian productions are still noticeable by their absence from the schedules, despite recent developments in the international and Arab arenas, and Saudi television is still dependent on imported foreign entertainment fare Issues such as freedom of expression and independence from government censorship and control over media facilities, which are prerequisites to an active production industry, tend to be ignored In Saudi Arabia, the local production system is weak and handicapped by exactly these types of obstacles

2.3. Views on Saudi Television Output and Performance

2.3.1. Mass Communication Policy: The Media Scholars' Perspective.

Broadcast media suffered from the absence of a clear and precise information and communication policy until 1982, when the Supreme Council of Mass Communication actually formulated one The articulated objectives of the Saudi media are that they should be utilised as a tool to facilitate development plans and to preserve local Saudi culture Saudi media scholars and cultural critics argue that Saudi television performance is not consistent with, and deviates from the declared Saudi communication and information policy, especially in relation to cultural aspects of media performance The prolonged and continuous dependency on foreign-produced television programmes is at the centre of this debate (see Tash, 1995, Ashobaili, 1992, Yamani, 1995, Awis and Madkoor, 1990) The following views on two programme genres, children's programmes and entertainment, illustrate the current argument

In connection with children's programmes, an article from the policy document outlines how the media should cater for young viewers

> 'The Saudi Mass Communication Policy affirms the relationship between today's child and tomorrow's environment Thus, attention will be given to the guidance, educational and recreational programmes for children The programmes will be based on educational and scientific principles, and directed [sic] by highly specialised personnel' (Article IX of Saudi Mass Communication Policy, Ministry of Information, 1982 See Appendix B)

Saudi media scholars contend that this should be translated into action and that children's programmes should be written and produced with the needs of Saudi children in mind Ideally, programmes would draw on the Islamic heritage and introduce it visually into the language of television, they would convey more knowledge about the

country and its history, and would prepare youngsters to participate in building Saudi's future

In the sphere of entertainment, guidelines for certain elements of STV programming are also prescribed under the stated Saudi Mass Communication Policy Article III of the Mass Communication Policy (1982) reads

> 'All the information media seek to serve society by consolidating its precious Islamic values, firmly fixing its honoured Arabic traditions, keeping its gracious inherited customs and standing in opposition to everything that spoils its purity and harmony ' (Mass Communication Policy, 1982. See Appendix B)

Again, Saudi media scholars and culturalists believe that the principles of this article must be translated in decision-making processes about the entertainment content of Saudi television, which, they argue, should be geared towards performing an educational function and a role in the dissemination of traditional and Islamic values They maintain that STV should be exploited in the development plans and used as a tool to promote cultural identity (Alharithi, 1983, Bin Salamah, 1997[2])

Article VIII in the Saudi Mass Communication Policy states

> 'Saudi mass communication will give the family its due attention, being the essential unit in the society [ ] (Mass Communication Policy, 1982 See Appendix B)

A number of Saudi media researchers believe that a commitment to family life, as clearly articulated in this article should be reflected positively in STV entertainment output Their opinion of STV's current performance is rooted in their perception that STV has failed to fulfil the role assigned to it by the policy, with adverse consequences (Ashobaili, 1997) [3]

According to official media policy, the Saudi media are expected to reflect the culture and circumstances of their target audience The Saudi media, comparable to media anywhere, have the potential to showcase and inform Saudi society in a manner consistent with its cultural and religious values a potential which can be more fully realised if the media produce their own content It can be argued that a young country like Saudi Arabia which lacks sufficient technical expertise and know-how cannot produce high quality programmes the programmes that television viewers are used to everywhere It is perhaps premature to prejudge Saudi television before it has had the chance to prove itself The talent coupled with the 'reasonable' expertise that are readily available now are untapped resources which will continue as such as long as importation of media products at relatively low prices continues to flood the market Production quality, however, is only one indicator of programme quality The popularity of a programme is often derived from its indigenous ideas, the personalities involved, and from its local cultural flavour Thus, if audience appreciation is taken as another indicator, locally produced programmes meet the qualitative expectations of their audiences and are usually popular

2.3.2. The Problem from the Islamic Perspective

Culturalists and conservatives alike within Saudi society have had a significant influence on the shaping of domestic media output since the emergence of this industry The objections of religious scholars - known as *Ulama* - to some Saudi television programme content is well-documented There are, *in extremis*, some instances where *Ulama* have even made personal appeals to the King, voicing their concerns over specific programmes during weekly meetings Criticising this new technology and its 'corrupt

influence' on local culture has became the focus of much Islamic discourse in both written form and in audio-taped lectures, especially during *Jummah* orations (Friday sermons), and this influence is pervasive in almost every corner of the state Commanding a highly-respected status within Saudi's social structure, the *Ulama* continue to be a shaping influence on the Saudi media It is important to note here, however, that religious scholars and conservatives have never directly intervened in editorial policy decisions of the media, their concerns are restricted to broadcasts depicting 'liberal' scenes on the television The following section documents certain areas of the Islamic agenda

Imported Arab Serials

Among non-Arab populations there exists the mistaken assumption that all Arabs belong to the same culture However, there are vast differences in terms of the degree of faith in Islam and the social values held by each country Saudi society, unlike more Western-influenced Arab societies, is struggling to abide by and live according to the teachings of Islam, especially regarding such issues as gender roles, relations between opposite sexes and family values Under scrutiny, most countries' media products exported to Saudi Arabia cannot satisfy the social and moral criteria established by Islamic doctrine, and this is particularly evident in imported Arab serials which have in their content issues regarding family values or the status of women in society Although many of these imported Arab productions are designed for the Saudi market and are less 'liberal' than their DBS counterparts, the majority inevitably depict values, ideas and lifestyles which, Islamists believe, conflict with Islamic principles and are irrelevant to Saudi culture Foreign media products in general usually convey messages inconsistent with Saudi

Islamic values, as the next section explains

Sexual Imagery

A critical issue is the encouragement of sexual activity and underlying sexual themes Relationships between the sexes have always been a focus of reproach and consternation when portrayed in drama series, as Islamic laws state that immorality and immodesty constitute the sin of adultery or *zina*

> 'And come not near zina (unlawful sexual interaction) Verily it is a great
> and bad sin and an evil way ' (Quran, 17 32)

If a Muslim indulges in the preliminary build-up to *zina,* then there is the risk that s/he may succumb to it The preliminary actions themselves must therefore be avoided at all cost Prevention of *zina* (adultery) involves blocking the ways or means that can or may lead to it Islam prevents the spread of *zina* among followers by strongly advocating against free-mixing between opposite sexes, unrestricted social interaction between men and women is considered a precursor to *zina* Contrary to Islamic doctrine, many television entertainment shows, serials and plays - to which young Saudi viewers are exposed - depict the free mixing and dating of the opposite sexes in their plots as the norm and as acceptable behaviour, this is one of the grounds of Islamic objections

Dress Code

Muslim scholars and culturalists also object to the way in which the strict Islamic dress code is flouted in television content This applies to an Egyptian show analysed in chapter VI - *Alhub Wa Attoofan* ('Love and the Flood') - and to many current television programmes In Islamic ruling, clothes should be loose and should cover the area

between the navel and the knees for men, while for women the Quran says

> 'O Prophet, tell thy wives and daughters, and the believing women that
> they should cast their outer garments over their persons (when out of
> doors) That is most convenient that they should be known as such, and
> not be molested ' (Quran, 33 59)

This is aimed at preventing the provocation of desires and at directing such natural desires into 'legitimate' channels of fulfilment as opposed to letting them find 'forbidden' means of expression In the Quran (Surah Al-Ahzab, Verse 59), Allah orders the believing women to wear a *Jilbab*, which is defined in the commentaries on the Quran as a cloak that covers a woman's body from the top of her head to her feet (see Ibn Kathier and Aljalalein commentaries) and is worn when a woman is in the company of males to whom she is not immediately related Females in Saudi Arabia are trained, both at home and in school, to abide by these teachings regarding their appearance. However, Islamists maintain that these same women and children, as television viewers, are continuously exposed to contradictory televised messages

Marriage and Family Values

In Islamic terms, there are three main objectives of marriage firstly, to propagate the human race, and secondly, as the Quran says, to preserve a social sense of morality and chastity

> 'Among His signs is that He has created spouses for you from among
> yourselves, so that you may console yourselves with them He has planted
> affection and mercy between you, in that there are signs for people who
> reflect ' (30 21)

> 'Live a protected life in marriage, not indulging in illicit affairs nor having
> secret lovers ' (4 25)

The final objective is to provide mental peace and nurture love and affection The Islamists' concerns over the content of imported programming partly relate to messages

which, they allege, contradict these teachings For example, in an Egyptian series, *Alhub Wa Attoofan*, described in chapter VI, marriage is depicted as a practical step in the life of an aristocratic 'bad guy' in order to improve his trade and to forge the right social connections In the meantime, in most Egyptian-made dramas the postponement of marriage is depicted as acceptable provided the couple can see each other on a regular basis It is feared that this will encourage the type of socialisation which may lead to unlawful sexual relationships, as mentioned above In Egyptian society, with its population of more than 60 million, one of the obstacles to marriage is the search for accommodation 'a flat or a room on the roof or in the basement' is a common phrase However, it is an alien concept to Saudi Arabian society which enjoys higher living standards and housing facilities, and in which marriage at a young age has always been encouraged by Muslim scholars In contrast, in most of the imported foreign-produced shows, marrying at a young age is always portrayed as a great mistake but this concept is contrary not only to the Islamic teachings, but also to the strategic orientation of an underpopulated country such as Saudi Arabia

Children's Programmes: the Islamic Perspective

The prophet Mohammed said 'Every child is born on the fitrah, then his parents Judaise him or Christianise him or make him a Magus' (related by Al-Bukhari) The word *fitrah* refers to the innate character, but here it means the acknowledgement of the existence of Allah In Islamic doctrine, the young child is naturally inclined to goodness, a belief in and love of truth and a hatred of falsehood It is important to give the child the correct information, answer his questions and satisfy his curiosity and it is the parents' responsibility to ensure that the child has these rights [4] Parents are responsible for the

protection of their children's minds, hearts, and souls from the seduction and glamour

of evil, as illustrated by the following

> 'Every one of you is a protector and a guardian of his immediate charge
> and is responsible for the actions of those people who are committed to
> his charge A man is steward in respect to the family members of his
> house, a woman is steward in respect to her husband's house and his
> children ' (Sahih Al-Bukhari, 1996)

According to Manal Khreishi (1998) commenting on children's television programmes,

in general, the vast majority of television programmes flout Islamic principles Among

the most serious violations are those related to *tawhid* or monotheism and the *tawhid*

of Ruboobiyah or the 'Unity of Lordship' (meaning that Allah has no partners with him

in his Lordship over all the worlds) This is often seen as violated in children's

programmes with super heroes, for example, *Power Rangers, Superman,* etc, the former

of which is a long running show on STV Channel 2, while the Disney film *Hercules* is

a clear example of *Shirk* or polytheism (Khreishi, 1998 20) [5] Because children as viewers

have been ignored by Arabic drama series makers, they are exposed to a different set

of values through these imported messages [6] and are, in general, not fully aware of the

manner in which such ideas in these programmes conflict with Islamic teaching

However, given the lack of specialised writers and the policies adopted by STV

regarding the prices allocated to children's shows (see chapters VII-IX), among other

reasons, there is a continuing reliance on and preference by youngsters for Western and

imported material To counteract this there have been efforts by the Arab Council for

Childhood and Development to encourage cartoonists and artists in the Arab world to

create an Arabic cartoon character to replace, in the minds of Arab children, those

imported from Hollywood (see Appendix F, cartoon No 8) The ACCD has laid down

the conditions and requirements for this character and allocated a £20,000 award for the winning design

2.4. Objections to Direct Broadcast Satellite (DBS) Content

2.4.1. The Religious and Moral Perspective

While the concern for the preservation of cultural identity is not a new phenomenon, it has been given new impetus by manifestations of global media, such as DBS As a transnational television service it has triggered Islamists' concerns regarding this new 'invasion' as they call it, and DBS 'liberal' programming has met with fierce opposition from the Islamic elite and cultural critics who consider much of the content to be inconsistent with the prevailing Islamic beliefs and values system The Islamists' concerns focus on perceptions that such broadcasts contain both covert and overt inducements to rebel against Islamic culture and family values and, they claim, the content exposes women to a loose and liberal morality and to emancipatory propaganda Some observers and analysts of DBS content have concluded that it operates under a 'sex sells' banner and thrives on sexual taboos in the receiving societies

> 'Islam lays great emphasis on modesty, so much so that the Prophet
> Mohammad said "Modesty is a part of Iman (faith)". But television's
> emphasis on illicit, depraved and bestial immorality is the very negation
> of the Islamic concept of modesty and shame ' (Shakir, 1997 9)

What Islamists and moralists consider to be obscene and prurient materials are amply found in many DBS programmes Over sixty per cent of viewers believe that among the negative effects of DBS programmes is the encouragement of immorality and indecency, while 98% believe that the sexual content, in particular, provokes a sexual desire in them (Alabid and Alali, 1995) It is maintained by these viewers that DBS content often contains sexual themes manifest in both dress and script, and revealing shots, especially

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of female participants, such as singers, dancers and even presenters (see Appendix F, cartoon No 4) However, the perceived popularity of such programmes encourages their continued transmission

> 'There is a method to television's permissive madness Sex sells [ ] as
> the networks and production companies discover that they were titillating
> more viewers than they outraged, they have gradually increased the sales
> potential of their products by permitting more and more taboos to be
> broken in ever more explicit fashion '[8]

DBS drama and serial output is not subject to Saudi censorship procedures and this may increase its appeal One-time taboo topics, such as incest and sadomasochism, are now dealt with in televised series from Latin American countries, such as Brazil, Argentina and Mexico Dubbed into Arabic, they are beamed to viewers in Saudi Arabia and other Muslim countries for just $1,000 an hour [9] These imported Latin American soaps, such as *Casandra, Nano, Guadalupe, Marya,* and others, have become a fixed genre on most DBS channels but they attract criticism for their explicit sexual themes and for being vehicles for alien values which directly contrast with Islamic precepts (Tash, 1995, Adailj, 1995) [10] It is worthy of note that Islamists' criticisms have seldom been directed at the role of STV in contributing to the demand for such DBS content

Songs and Music

Apart from the 'All Music' channels such as ART 5, MTV and VH1, music and song programmes are one of the mainstays of Arab DBS channels, such as ESC, DSC, MBC and Orbit 2 (see Appendix A) The songs are usually accompanied by dancers or 'models' featured on what are known as 'video clips' Islamists believe that these dancers violate the Islamic dress code by appearing in revealing costumes, they object to the

'lasciviousness' of the performances, and the attention given to these performers in general According to Mustafa and Syrafi (1995)

> 'The concentration on singers' and actresses' news by the media is a contribution to the spreading of evil in Arab and Muslim societies The emphasis on lurid news of actresses provokes the lustful thoughts in the hearts and minds of the younger generation, which would drive them to imitate these celebrities and fall astray ' (Mustafa and Syrafi, 1995 202)

Overall, Islamists worry that if such things are tolerated it will lead to more desensitisation and indifference towards matters of decency and chastity (see Tash, 1995, Alamir, 1993) They are also concerned about the lack of an independent regulatory authority, especially since ARABSAT took the position of not interfering unless the content is a clear-cut case of pornographic material [11] On the other hand, Islamists who have voiced their concerns over the 'perils' of some DBS content have in turn been criticised by secular circles as being obstructivists - technological Luddites, who would try to stop the wheels of history from turning

2.4.2. General Criticism of DBS Content

DBS content is criticised and rejected for various reasons apart from the religious and moral reasons described above Ramzey (1997) and Wahbi (1996) believe it is disassociated from Muslim and Arab societies and fails to meet the specific needs of these viewers and has marginalised certain segments of the population in their drama representations Women, for example, have been portrayed in many Egyptian dramas as objects of pleasure and as irrational and dependent individuals (Ramzey, 1997) Religious groups have been depicted as backward and violent fanatics in a number of films such as *Alerhabi* ('The Terrorist'), *Almaseir* ('The Destiny'), *Almuhajer* ('The Immigrant') and *Alerhab Waalkbab* ('Terrorism and Kebab') and in Western films based

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on similar themes such as *The Siege, Under Siege, Executive Decision* and *True Lies*

Some media scholars believe that this type of production reinforces the misunderstandings and stereotypical ideas about Islam Rural populations have always been lampooned as examples of gullibility and naivety, particularly in the majority of Egyptian drama series (Wahbi, 1996) In general, many Arab broadcasters stand accused of conspiring against their own cultures and diverting Muslims away from the faith, as well as being merely 'bridges' for values which conflict with Islamic culture [12]

One of the main criticisms of DBS content is directed at its 'secular tendencies' Apart from the few 'question and answer' religious programmes, religion on almost all DBS channels has been reduced to compulsory rituals of a few minutes of recitations from the Quran at the start of transmission and at close-down Islamic values hold that life and human interaction should be subject to religious doctrine (Alqaradawi, 1973, 1974), and it is argued that a more secular approach will eventually emasculate the people's faith and religious beliefs (Kajak, 1987, Tash, 1995)

From a secular standpoint DBS is seen by culturalists and media scholars as capitalising on the conservatism of the national media in various Middle Eastern countries, including Saudi Arabia From this point of view, DBS is seen as part of a uni-directional information and cultural product flow from the West to Saudi Arabia, upon which Arab broadcasters remain dependent [13] A balanced reciprocal flow, culturalists believe, would reduce or eliminate the misunderstandings and stereotypical ideas between the two cultures by means of more factual media programmes which recognise each other's rights and deal with each other on a more equal footing [14] Apart from the few political

discussion programmes involving politicians and policy-makers from Western countries, mainly the UK and the US, such as MBC's *Agenda,* and Nile TV's *Monday and Cross Nations,* there are no other programmes dealing with this issue At the other extreme, some Arab broadcasters, such as the Libyans, are now adopting a hostile and radical anti-Western and anti-American discourse through selective programming Between such a radical, extremist approach and dependency on fictional Western-made materials, there is not yet a moderate and realistic 'third way'

On the other hand, Basyuni (1996) believes that 'DBS presented a civilisation challenge and Arabs are up to the challenge because of their confidence in their civilisation' [15] Other writers support this view and assert that the fears of determinists and culturalists of what has been called a 'cultural invasion' are just a myth, and that Muslim and Arab culture is not in such a weak and vulnerable position that it could be annihilated by other cultures [16] DBS is therefore a contentious issue, not only among the elite corps of the indigenous media, but amongst the public in general However, for a broad section of the public it presents a variety of programmes of both Arab and Western origin that have been produced without the impediment of local constraints which weaken and reduce the appeal of local production (Boyd, 1994)

3. Context of the Study

This study comes at a time of many serious political and social developments in Saudi Arabia and in the region as a whole, and at a time when Islamic revivalist movements are sweeping across most of the Islamic world In addition, the recent political turmoil in the Gulf region has two major implications for this study First, conflict in this corner

of the globe has awakened long-dormant, anti-Western and, more particularly, anti-American feelings These sentiments have been openly expressed by Islamists and nationalists on numerous occasions on some of the recently introduced DBS news channels, such as Aljazirah Second, the political and military instability of the region has had unavoidable repercussions for the already troubled economies of all states in its proximity - and that necessarily includes Saudi Arabia Moreover, attempts to impose a peace settlement as a solution to the Palestinian question are considered by many Islamists as both unjust and unfair, and certain rifts within the Islamic and Arab world have been widened as a consequence of the confrontation between the Iraqi regime and the American/British allied forces These factors have made the development of local media industries in the region an even more crucial issue

4. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the present study are thus, first, to investigate and explain the implications for Saudi culture of foreign-produced television programmes This entails the documentation and discussion of the culturalists' and Islamists' concerns over programme content, an examination of the perceived conflict between a number of DBS Arabic and non-Arabic channels with Saudi culture, and an analysis of the nature and perceived implications of this conflict Other questions addressed include the following Do perceived threats to local Saudi culture stem from the national television service which carries an element of pre-censored, imported, conservative programmes? Or do they emanate from the less-censored commercial DBS channels? Or is a subtle balance involved? Islamists, after all, have voiced their concerns over both, though they have reserved their harshest views for the DBS channels Can the concerns of Islamists and

their culturalist counterparts be justified? Why do they regard cross-border materials as posing a real threat to the prevailing local culture? This study also aims to contribute to an understanding of the role of local media and indigenous production in resisting and minimising the impact of what Islamists and culturalists perceive to be undesirable intrusions by foreign broadcasters It is hoped that this study contributes to contemporary knowledge and understanding of the believed effects of imported media programming on local culture in general, as well as contributing to research on the specifics of Saudi Arabia in this field It is anticipated that, in the final analysis, it may present practical suggestions and recommendations for Saudi television and local production companies to arrive at a workable compromise

A second objective is to explain Saudi dependence on the importation of foreign television This involves qualitative and quantitative analyses of Saudi television and a comparison with DBS offerings to highlight the shortcomings and attractions of each This is discussed in relation to the demand for foreign imports by a high proportion of foreign workers in Saudi Arabia, a general desire for a more global perspective in news reportage, and the key political, economic and professional factors which constrain local production and limit the potential of the Saudi media industry The latter requires an exploration into the role of local private production companies in at least minimising the reliance on foreign-made television programmes, screened by both Saudi television and DBS channels, by contributing to the development of indigenous talent and production

Thirdly, the study will aim to make conclusions and recommendations about the future development of Saudi broadcasting policy Since the problematic strong association of

the Saudi government with media operations is a major factor in shaping their organisational structure, output and performance, this study examines the thorny relationship between the government and media institutions, especially the policy issues and the appropriation of the television medium by the Ministry of Information By evaluating the Saudi national television service's offerings in the light of the stated Saudi government communications and information policy, this study aims to propose an alternative relationship in the interests of the country as a whole and in the interests of media system as well

Finally, the research aims to contribute to academic thinking on cultural imperialism and cultural dependency and to investigate the internal factors which stimulate a preference for foreign imports and which perpetuate this dependency These factors tend to be overlooked in dependency research relating to Saudi Arabia While cultural dependency and imperialism theory is part of the tradition in communication studies, it is often inadequate as it focuses on external factors within the global system In the present case, although relevant, it downplays the role of the Saudi government and internal forces in maintaining a dependency status and fails to examine the role of the relationship between internal and external factors in the dependency equation.

5. The Focus of the Analysis

Eschewing the shortcomings of some previous investigations into dependency theory and global communication flow, it is this author's intention to subject the Saudi broadcast media's policies and programming strategies to a searching, thematic analysis of programme content to identify their elements, values, and the messages they seek to

convey (see Varis, 1984) It should be noted here that this study is not particularly concerned with the effects of a specific programme type or genre on a sample of viewers but discusses the possible or assumed influences of foreign television materials on local culture in general It should also be clarified that the scope of this study, for obvious reasons, is confined to an investigation of the degree of dependency on foreign television programmes While other media products are not completely ignored, they are not the main focus

The majority of programmes aired by both DBS channels and Saudi television mainly comprise series, serials, songs, plays and films, and are generally classified under the genre of entertainment It is this sphere of broadcasting with which most culturalists are generally preoccupied and engaged and therefore provide the focus of this study's analysis Nevertheless, other genres, such as news and current affairs and their content will not be ignored as a consequence of this focus It is assumed in this study that the majority of Saudi television programmes are designed as entertainment, that invariably some imported entertainment has an inextricable ideological element; that ideas and values may be conveyed and promoted if packaged to appeal to a thirst for entertainment, and that it is therefore useful to analyse the content of Saudi television broadcasts

It is hoped that the content analysis and discussion of Saudi television programming policies, as well as the investigation of the state of the private production market, will provide a better understanding of the internal factors affecting the development of television in Saudi Arabia, and will generate intriguing questions and raise awareness of

issues which need to be addressed by - and discussed with - government policy-makers

It is also hoped that such an analysis will assist in the identification of the most important problems and, according to the findings of this study, suggestions and recommendations will be formulated to help the Saudi broadcast media, particularly television, to fulfil certain expectations and the promise invested in them to take a more influential and more serious part in the intellectual lives of the Saudi people

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CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Introduction

Issues surrounding the development of global communication have been dominated by the rapid expansion of the mass media in the latter part of the 20th century Technological progress has significantly enhanced numerous channels of communication in terms of capacity and proliferation, and there have been global movements for democratisation as well as changes in the execution of diplomacy and international politics These technological, socioeconomic and political forces have led to pivotal transformations in the mass media, and especially in broadcasting and television (Tehranian, 1982) Information is more easily accessible and communication is facilitated across the world, which has become, as Marshall McLuhan termed it, 'a global village' Commenting on this, McPhail (1989) stated

> 'Television without borders has the potential to unite the world in McLuhan's 'global village' where truth, cooperation and goodwill are the order of the day ' (McPhail, 1989 51)

2. Global Information Flow

Historically, notions of international information and communication flow have been significantly modified and re-evaluated among scholars, particularly in the aftermath of the Cold War, and major transformations in the spheres of global politics, economics and culture have led to radical reviews of previous communication and development theories Following the struggle for supremacy among superpowers, autonomous developing nations are now included in the dominance equation Many of these countries

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perceive themselves, or are considered as subdued by Western control over international economic systems and as victims of cultural invasions and electronic colonialism (Yamani, 1995, Aljabery, 1997,[1] Tash, 1995)

Ideally, communication is a continual exchange between reciprocally responsive partners However, advances in mass media technology have resulted in a flow of Western media content to developing countries, a flow which has been shown to be one-way, from a few industrialised nations to the rest of the globe (Ayish, 1992, Reeves, 1993) Varis (1984) stated that in the 1980s, imported programmes accounted for more than 50% of total programming in 39 developing nations, with the USA as the main exporter In general, the USA has been a key player in the flow of media products on both commercial and official levels This is evident in the role of the United States Information Agency (USIA)

> 'The USIA tries to influence public attitudes in other nations in support
> of American foreign policy objectives One of its methods is to make itself
> as useful as possible to the media in a host country To the extent wanted
> by the host country, USIA provides it with goods and services, [..] from
> sound-effects record libraries to advice on how to solve technical and
> organisational broadcasting problems [ ] to assistance in conducting
> seminars on mass communication '[2]

International television flow has been debated from three perspectives One is that television's impact is immense and pervasive, requiring immediate formulation of national media policies to cope with advancing influences A second perspective holds that there is a lack of empirical data, thus preventing the assessment of the degree and nature of television's impact This scarcity of research makes it difficult for policy makers to make informed decisions A third perspective puts the blame on national

communication policies in recipient countries and recognises the imbalance in the flow of television programming It contends that with time the process will correct itself (Mowlana, 1986)

The first empirical study to document the world wide flows of television programming was carried out by Kaarle Nordenstreng and Tapio Varis for UNESCO, and published in 1974 Nordenstreng and Varis identified two predominant trends in global television programming one-way flow from big exporters to the rest of the world, and the predominance of entertainment programming The leading producers and distributors were the USA, the UK, France and Germany (Nordenstreng, 1974, see also Varis, 1984) The study drew attention to global television traffic and acted as a springboard for more studies in this area

According to numerous UNESCO studies of television programme traffic, there are two trends which can be identified in the international flow first, there is one-way traffic from a few large exporting countries to the rest of the world, second, this flow is dominated by entertainment material As for the distribution of television news material, one study has found that it is also dominated by three world-wide agencies the British Visenews, the half-British, half-American UPI-IN, and the American CBS-Newsfilm services (UNESCO, 1973, 1988)

Recent progress in research into the development of international communication and information flow can be attributed to a number of factors vast technological improvement affecting the quality, quantity and nature of the flow, increased awareness

of the lack of equilibrium in information flow and its implications internationally, nationally and for the individual, more participants involved in communication and information transfer, creating a political, social and economic impact in trade, marketing, education and culture, more in-depth research into global advertising as well as corporate and public opinion, and finally, the issues surrounding the New International Economic Order (NIEO) and the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) (Mowlana, 1986)

Mowlana (1986) defines global information flow as

'[ ] the movement of messages across national boundaries between and among two or more national and cultural systems that should include both national and international dimensions ' (Mowlana, 1986 44)

It is when a nation or cultural system has equal access to this movement and is able to participate that political, economic and cultural dependency is reduced There is, therefore, an underlying notion of reciprocity essential to the communication process Reciprocity in the information and communication flow is determined not only by the direction of flow, but also by volume and content These, in turn, are dictated by technological, political, economic, cultural and legal factors which determine the quality and extent of the reciprocal relationship

3. New Global Order

Major upheavals across the globe in the latter quarter of the 20th century have created an impetus for individuals and nations to embark on a quest for new ideologies in political, economic and cultural spheres, and to review previous communication and development theories In this climate, the search for a new cultural order and the

environment in which this is being formulated are fundamental considerations Recent events in the Middle East, and the United States' involvement and intervention in this region in particular have illuminated the demand for 'a new information ecology with culture at its centre' (Mowlana, 1993) Mowlana postulates that

> '[ ] any discussion of a new world order must take into account the broader ecological/communication context as well as the diversities of global culture' (Mowlana, 1993 10)

Questions are raised as to whether a new world order and a new information/culture ecology will best serve the interests of the individual and global society, and whether they will effectively reduce or increase the dependence of developing countries

3.1. The New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) Debate

Almakaty (1995) documents the development of the New World Information and Communication Order in the 1970s, that materialised not only from the desire of Less Developed Countries (LDCs) for equal rights in the international communication and information flow, but also from the LDCs' recognition of their rights to self-determination of domestic communication policies (Almakaty, 1995) In aspiring to greater autonomy in information, economic, cultural and political systems, the LDCs required a formal international policy to restructure international information systems, media and communication Nordenstreng (1984) views the process as an action against imperialist policies which determine the nature of the flow, and a way to gain independence from imperialist powers The LDCs aspired to a reciprocal international communication flow which would faithfully represent their interests in an unbiased manner

This initiative by the LDCs to restructure international communications systems, and thus empower their own while disempowering that of the colonialists, effectively called for government control of the media It met with strong opposition from Western governments and media organisations The US government, in common with others, feared that the NWICO would result in a government monopoly and control of the mass media, countering journalistic precepts of free flow of information and a free press, while generally conflicting with Western principles regarding journalism and free market systems (Meyer, 1988)

A fundamental question is posed by Almakaty (1995) who asks 'Who owns and commands the dissemination of information and for what goal and ambition?' Mowlana (1993) stresses that it is not the technical and instrumental issues at stake here, but moral and ethical systems and human interaction, and it is these that will determine the effects of any developments in global orders This debate surrounding ownership of and autonomy within the dissemination of information is gaining a new perspective as the globalisation of media technology, such as the Internet and DBS, increases

3.2. An Islamic Global Order

Whether or not the emerging global information community can help or hinder the use of information in Islamic society is revealed by a comparison of the elements that constitute the Information Society Paradigm - the dominant model of the US and other countries - with those of a paradigm specific to the Islamic community (Mowlana, 1993) Characteristics of the Information Society paradigm are supersecularism based on the nation-state system, globalism, synergetic economy, and the provision by individuals of

the knowledge and expertise that this society demands (Masuda, 1981 cited in Mowlana, 1993) However, as Mowlana (1993) argues, these principles are irreconcilable with four main areas of the Islamic Community Paradigm the world view of *tawhid* - the unity of God, human beings and universe, and the brotherhood of mankind, the sociology of knowledge, the integrations of personality, and the meaning of society and the state

The first of these, *tawhid,* determines the boundaries and direction of information flow, and not vice-versa While other paradigms may promise spiritual growth contingent on intellectual growth, Islam is already founded on these principles Moreover, the Islamic Community Paradigm is seen as comprehensive and definitive, and cannot accommodate conflicting principles from other paradigms

The second notion is that of the sociology of knowledge If it is accepted that there can be no exclusive ownership by industrialised societies of information and knowledge, they should not be regarded as unique and individual entities, but as being at the core of technological and society development processes universally However, as Western innovations and models of development have been embraced and adopted by the Islamic countries, the latter have become subservient under the dominating systems of the West, and subject processes of 'disintegration and disunity' (Mowlana, 1993)

The third area is what Mowlana (1993 16) calls 'the integration of personality'. Partly underlying the clash between the Information Society Paradigm and the Islamic Community Paradigm is the fact that while the former is based on secularism, the latter is underlined by 'a religiopolitical, socioeconomic and cultural system based on an

elaborate legal code and jurisprudence' (1993 16) At the centre of the system are the *Ulama*, the religious scholars who guide the community in jurisprudence, law, economics, culture and religion Secular paradigms are therefore inapplicable to a society where religion and societal institutions are inseparable and are viewed as an integrative whole

Finally, the Islamic concept of the community - the *Ummah* - is that it is universal and not subject to limitations, whether geographical, territorial, linguistic, racial or nationalistic It is a world-wide society that cuts across attempts at demarcation and which is bound as a distinctive and unique social order by its commitment to Islam a total life system bounded only by itself With its emphasis on unity, any other paradigm based on a concept of a nation-state, such as the current global political system, is incompatible This polarisation has ramifications for information/cultural relations as it is culture-based What has occurred is that the Islamic rulers have failed to resist the current dominance of Western paradigms, bringing with them the global policies of frontierism and resulting in the fragmentation of Islamic society and an *Ulama* divided by geographical boundaries At the forefront of this conflict is a new order based on information and communication technology and its effects on the unity or disunity of Islamic society To sum up, what is required is a new perspective of the climate within which a new global information and communication order that is reconcilable with Islamic principles can grow and encourage a balanced, reciprocal global information flow

4. Communication for Development: Theories and Paradigms

Although communication scholars differ widely regarding the role of mass media in developing countries, they do agree that the mass media are important tools for nation building (Schramm, 1964, Rogers, 1983) Most studies which consider mass communication as a force for social awareness and national development conclude that the media are fundamental to rapid, successful, planned development, while Dwight W Allen and Philip Christensen (1973) share the opinion that mass communication is not merely an auxiliary element of development, but a fundamental source

Many authors who are concerned with the role of communication and culture in the development process set two paradigms next to or in opposition to each other modernisation and growth versus dependency and underdevelopment While the modernisation paradigm can be considered the oldest and most rooted in Western thought, the dependency theory has its origin in Latin America However, over the last few years a new vision, termed the 'multiplicity paradigm', has emerged Unlike earlier models, it focuses on many elements which had been previously overlooked or neglected, as discussed later in this chapter

4.1. The Modernisation Paradigm

Development is a long established and powerful Western idea founded in early nineteenth century philosophical writings The central element of this perspective is the metaphor of growth and the identification of growth with the Western idea of progress According to this paradigm, development is conceived as organic, immanent, direct, cumulative, irreversible, and goal-oriented (Lerner, 1958, Schramm, 1964)

The modernisation paradigm considers underdevelopment in terms of perceptible, quantitative differences between rich and poor countries Development implies, according to this view, bridging the gaps between traditional and modern sectors by means of imitation processes, and between the so-called retarded and advanced to the advantage of the latter The developing countries must gradually meet the 'qualities' of the industrialised countries

> 'Despite geographic, historical, and cultural heterogeneity, the countries in this group have one outstanding characteristic in common they are without exception transitional societies in which the process of social, economic, and political modernisation has proceeded far enough to profoundly disturb or even completely shatter traditional customs and institutions without, however, proceeding far enough to set them on the path of continuous and effective development ' (Adelman *et al*, 1967 44)

According to the modernisation paradigm, development is a spontaneous process that every society passes through Although various 'non-economic' factors, such as attitude change, level of education, and mass media, were introduced, the economic root has remained the essence of this paradigm (Tehranian, 1979)

4.1.1. Other Approaches

Everett Rogers arguably introduced the diffusion theory in the context of development Modernisation, according to Rogers, is a process of diffusion whereby individuals move from a traditional way of life to a more complex, more technically developed and more rapidly changing way of life Rogers stressed the systematic adoption and diffusion processes of cultural innovations and contended that the role of the mass media is concentrated on the adoption stage of the process (Rogers, 1962 99)

Apart from the diffusion model, one can distinguish between three more approaches

which are psycho-sociological, institutional and technological interpretations of communication and modernisation (Servaes, 1989) The psycho-sociological or behaviouristic perspective on communication and modernisation is concerned with individual values and attitude change Central to the view of Daniel Lerner (1958), one of the advocates of the communication for modernisation paradigm, is the concept of 'empathy', that is, the capacity to see oneself in the other's situation, which is an indispensable skill for people moving out of traditional settings 'High empathic is the predominant personal style only in modern society, which is distinctively industrial, urban, literate and participant' (Lerner, 1958 50) Mobility stimulates urbanisation, which increases literacy and consequently also economic and political participation The modern individual, in this context, relies on the mass media for world news, and prefers national and international news rather than sports, religious or local news

Building on Lerner, Wilbur Schramm took a closer look at this connection between mass communication and modernising practices and institutions In Schramm's view, the modern communication media supplement and complement as 'mobility multipliers' the oral channel of a traditional society He contends that '[ ] a developing country should give special attention to combining mass media with interpersonal communication ' He also argues that mass media perform at least three functions for change and modernisation, they are 'watchdogs', 'policy-makers', and 'teachers' (Schramm, 1964 263)

Another technologically deterministic approach to modernisation sees technology as a value-free and politically neutral asset that can be used in every social and historical context Four different points of view within this perspective can be distinguished A first

shares the conviction that the development and application of technology can resolve all the varied problems of mankind The second view holds that technology is the source of all that goes wrong in societies A third variant sees technology as the driving force in development The fourth regards technology as an inexorable force in development, an irresistible as well as an overwhelming force As Marshall McLuhan puts it 'Any technology gradually creates a totally new human environment' (McLuhan, 1964 iii)

4.1.2. A Critical Assessment of the Modernisation Paradigm

The most important point of criticism of the modernisation paradigm is that, empirically, the areas of study are primarily specific, quantitatively measurable, short-term, and individual effects that are generalised in a questionable manner (Schramm & Ruggels, 1967) Moreover, this approach starts from basic positivistic and behaviouristic positions which presuppose a linear, rational sequence of events, planned in advance and with criteria of rationality determined externally The process of communication through mass media is compared to the communication process in face-to-face activity, with a beginning and an end This concept, which is directly derived from the mechanistic information theory, is difficult to transfer to processes of human interaction where the context encompasses transmission as an integrated and substantial part of the overall process (Merril, 1974) In most Sender-Receiver type models the social context in which communication takes place is absent, and little attention is given to sociological and contextual factors except for commercial and ideological reasons The media motivate individuals to aspire to mobility and higher standards of living in programmes and editorial material (Servaes, 1989)

4.2. Cultural Imperialism and Dependency Theory

The static and historical manner of studying communication processes leads to the supposition of a stable social system where social harmony and integration prevail and where class struggles or social conflicts are non-existent (Servaes, 1989) From within this broad, critical framework, the specific model of 'cultural imperialism' argued that, far from aiding developing nations, the international flows of technology transfer and media hardware, coupled with the software flows of cultural products, actually reinforce dependency and prevent true development (Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1991)

Much of the research and literature relating to cultural imperialism and dependency theory predates the end of the Cold War and is therefore of limited relevance as it assumes a global ideological conflict which no longer exists Nevertheless, the following overview reveals the point of departure for the multiplicity paradigm and the need for an analysis which is more focused on the specific dynamics of Saudi Arabian culture and society and its media industry

Cultural dependency and imperialism analysis is predicated on the interrelatedness of economic (including technological) structural relations, and ideological-cultural relations, between advanced capitalist or industrial societies and those of most of Africa, Asia and Latin America (Golding, 1977) These theories have their roots in Lenin's classic formulation of imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism in which monopolists seek profitable investment abroad as a way of overcoming stagnation at home With the break-up of the colonial empires after World War II, and with the emergence of the United States as the dominant capitalist power, capitalism entered a neo-colonial or neo-

imperialist phase (Reeves, 1993) According to neo-imperialism, transnational corporations of the advanced capitalist economies are exerting ideological-cultural influence in order to maintain control for the ideological subversion or incorporation of indigenous ruling classes The neo-imperialist position attempts to locate ideological-cultural relations and mass media in a dynamic international political setting On the one hand, the underdevelopment or dependence of much of the world is essential for the development of the advanced capitalist world Following this, political and ideological-cultural relations both flow from and ensure that the primary economic relationship between the dependent and advanced parties is maintained

One of the central postulates of the imperialism/dependency model is that local cultural identity is subverted and destroyed so that the values of the dominant metropolitan economics and their transnational corporations can be adopted, or even imposed (Hamelink, 1983) It is also postulated that the social and economic policies in the dependent society are conditioned and constrained by the metropolitan capitalist centres (Reeves, 1993) People in dependent societies see their societies increasingly through modes of perception and categorisation substantially controlled by metropolitan capitalist interests, even to the extent of adopting and internalising the consumption patterns and values characteristic of the advanced capitalist societies which encourage them

In accordance with this, Herbert Schiller (1976) perceived cultural imperialism as

> '[   ] the sum of the processes by which a society is brought into the
> modern world system and how its dominating stratum is attracted,
> pressured, forced, and sometimes bribed into shaping social institutions to
> correspond to, or even promote, the values and structures of the
> dominating centre of the system ' (Schiller, 1976 9)

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Lee's and Boyd-Barrett's position, although inspired by Lenin's classic formulation of imperialism and subsequent Marxist revisions, is in fact distinct from them Political and ideological-cultural relations are viewed as a means of ensuring the maintenance of an economic relationship of exploitation This is the reason behind the importance of the media in both metropolitan capitalist countries and peripheral capitalist ones (Tunstall, 1977)

4.2.1. Media Imperialism

The main focus of the media imperialism thesis is on the relationship between ownership and control of the media and the power structure in society, the ideological signification of meaning in media messages and its effects in reproducing the class system (Curran et al, 1977) Straubhaar (1991) explains that media imperialism is the use of the mass media as ideological and economic tools of the capitalist world to dominate the economies and cultures of developing countries The mass media, with their typical, standardised programming, are the product of and shaped by the highly developed productive forces and cultural practices of advanced capitalist societies (Reeves, 1993)

Tunstall (1977) identifies the adverse effects of media imperialism as follows

> 'Authentic, traditional and local culture in many parts of the world is being battered out of existence by indiscriminate dumping of large quantities of slick commercial and media products, mainly from the United States '
> (Tunstall, 1977 57)

Boyd-Barrett (1977) similarly defines it as

> '[ ]the process whereby the ownership, structure, distribution or content of the media in any one country are singly or together subject to substantial pressure from the media interests of any other country or countries without proportionate reciprocation of influence by the country so affected ' (Boyd-Barrett, 1977 117)

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According to Boyd-Barrett, media imperialism is either the product of deliberate commercial or political influence or else disseminated unintentionally in a much more general process of political, social or economic influence This influence is absorbed and adopted by many of the dependent societies, which have also been forced to adopt the vehicles or the means of communication established in the advanced *dominating* countries Poor economic conditions have prevented recipient, helpless countries from indigenous development, thus high costs of local programmes have encouraged the importation of foreign ones The United States, as a pioneering industrial power, has been the major provider of technical equipment and expertise for developing countries, NBC International, for example, provided technical and operational assistance to Saudi Arabia to establish its television service in 1965 in a package of assistance which also included training schemes and programming for a number of years In the 1970s the French SECAM system was adopted by the Saudi Ministry of Information, despite its inferior technical quality and the availability of much better colour systems

The media imperialism thesis gave media content and market perpetration considerable attention and they were looked at as ideological vehicles, expressing positions in conflict with those of recipient societies Lee (1980) writes

> 'Television imperialism is characterised by first, television programme exportation to foreign countries, second, foreign ownership and control of media outlets, third, the transfer of the metropolitan broadcasting norms and institutionalisation of media commercialism at the expense of public interest, and fourth, the invasion of capitalistic world views and an infringement upon the indigenous way of life in the recipient nations '
> (Lee, 1980 75)

Different factors have contributed to such heavy dependency by developing countries on foreign assistance and media products, which go hand in hand Some of these could

be attributed to the internal economic and underdevelopment circumstances the developing countries experience In describing the state of dependency rather than justifying it, many media scholars believe that the real source, the real shaper of developing communication systems and the messages they produce is the West Most developing countries, including Saudi Arabia, for a variety of reasons which will be discussed in chapters VII-IX, lack sufficient technological expertise and the trained human resources that are required to institute domestic communication systems which would reflect their history, needs, concerns, values, and culture, so they must rely on the transfer of Western communication technology and software These are far cheaper to obtain than to have produced by domestic counterparts (McPhail, 1981) In a review in chapter V of the historical circumstances behind the installation of Saudi Arabia's television system, we find a number of examples which illustrate McPhail's argument

4.2.2. Cultural Penetration

Many media scholars believe that cultural dependency and the advancement of new communication technology have invited and facilitated the penetration of local culture by Western media products Moreover, it is claimed that this penetration in general has had a negative influence on a number of these cultures (Tash, 1995) Through media penetration the dominant Western media technologies have disrupted many countries' cultural sovereignty and jeopardised their national cultural security (Balgasis, 1992) This cultural penetration is, according to Aljabery (1997)

> '[ ] a status where the dominant political, economic, and cultural
> countries, take over the helpless Third World cultural institutions The
> most visible aspect of such domination is the cultural one Utilising
> modern technology, Western cultural patterns and values penetrate most
> of the Third World communication systems [3]

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McPhail (1981) explains how such penetration has been sugar-coated and presented as

a solution to some of the economic problems faced by developing countries

> '[ ](it) tended to foster a colonial-type dependence on the West, to
> aggravate an unbalanced distribution of benefits by concentrating new
> communication power in the hands of the ruling elite, and to create
> tensions and frustration in less developed countries by promoting
> inappropriate and inaccessible Western ideals and further expand the
> economic gap between the West and the least developed countries '
> (McPhail, 1981 79)

Herbert Schiller (1976) expressed his concern for local cultures He observed

> '[ ]the cultural integrity of weak societies whose national, regional, local,
> or tribal heritage are beginning to be menaced with extinction by the
> expansion of modern electronic communications, television in particular,
> emanating from a few power centres in the industrialised world [ ] '
> (Schiller, 1976 63)

In Saudi Arabia, the Westernised media model and the alien content of most of the

television programming are evident, and are the focus of concerns among cultural critics,

Islamists and media scholars over the influence and displacement effects of such

programme contents on Saudi cultural identity, as documented in chapter I However,

rather than advocating cultural solitude and isolation, benefits of this penetration could

be derived from cultural reciprocity and the free, 'balanced' flow of information as

defined by numerous UNESCO declarations (UNESCO, 1973)

4.2.3. The Dependency Paradigm

Using cultural dependency and imperialism theory as a springboard, the dependency

paradigm developed in a Latin American context As a result of the general intellectual

revolution that took place in the mid 1960s, the Eurocentric look of the modernisation

paradigm on development was challenged by Latin American social scientists and the

theory of 'dependencia' was born (Servaes, 1989) The dependentistas were primarily concerned with the effects of dependency in peripheral countries, but implicit in their analysis was the idea that development and underdevelopment must be understood in the context of the world system Paul Baran, an American considered to be the father of 'dependency theory', was one of the first to articulate the thesis that development and underdevelopment are interrelated processes, that is, they are two sides of the same coin In Baran's view, the production of socio-economic and political structures at the periphery is followed by continued imperialist dependence, and this is in accordance with the interests of the centre powers (Cardoso & Faletto, 1969, Sunkel & Paz, 1970) According to this theory, this is the main cause of the chronic backwardness of developing countries, since the minimum interest of Western monopoly capitalism was to prevent, or at least to slow down and to control the economic development of underdeveloped countries All dependentistas agree with the basic idea exemplified in the following definition by Dos Santos (1970)

> 'Dependence is a conditioning situation in which the economies of one group of countries are conditioned by the development and expansion of others A relationship of interdependence between two or more economies or between such economies and the world trading system becomes a dependent relationship when some countries can expand through self-impulsion while others, being in a dependent position, can only expand as a reflection of the expansion of the dominant countries, which may have positive or negative effects on their case The basic situation of dependence causes these countries to be both backward and exploited Dominant countries are endowed with technological, commercial, capital and socio-political predominance over dependent countries [ ] and can therefore exploit them, and extract part of the locally produced surplus Dependence, then, is based upon an international division of labour which allows industrial development to take place in some countries while restricting it in others, whose growth is conditioned by and subjected to the power centres of the world ' (Dos Santos, 1970 231) (see also Chilcote and Edelstein, 1974, Portes, 1976, Cardoso, 1977, and Valensuela and Valensuela, 1979)

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An important aspect of the dependency analysis is its emphasis on the role of extra-national forces and factors that create and support the maintenance of underdevelopment in certain countries According to dependency theory, the most important hindrances to development are not the shortage of capital or management, as the modernisation theorists contend, but are rooted in the present international system The obstacles are both internal and external This means that development in the centre determines and maintains the underdevelopment in the periphery To remove these external obstacles, dependentistas argue, each peripheral country should dissociate itself from the world market and opt for a self-reliant development strategy To make this happen, most scholars advocate that a more or less revolutionary political transformation will be necessary (Tunstall, 1977, Schiller, 1973, 1976) The dependency paradigm, in general, places an emphasis on external factors and regional contradictions, a polarisation between development and underdevelopment, a subjectivistic or voluntaristic interpretation of history, and a primarily economically-oriented analytical method It contends that the maintenance of subordinate dependency of developing countries on developed ones has become increasingly essential to improve or at least maintain the current living standards

Dependency theory is of some relevance to Saudi Arabia's relations with Western powers, and especially with the USA Since the 1930s, the presence of major oil companies, such as Standard Oil of California and later ARAMCO, in the Eastern region of Saudi Arabia guaranteed a steady supply of cheap oil to the USA, a supply which lasted for decades It was only in the late 1970s that Saudi Arabia started to gain some control over oil sales and the subsequent revenue was used in the 1980s to finance

its development plans Similar relations still exist, especially in the form of arms deals and are manifest in partnerships with Western multinational corporations which have been awarded major contracts worth billions of dollars to execute Saudi development plans, often with influential local partners Many of these transnational corporations have a firm foothold in Saudi Arabia through partnership deals with local businesses who, in most cases, act as facilitators, promoters and sales agents for giant corporations ranging from fast food chains to major defence contractors These transactions are tied to advertising and the extension of consumerism of products which interest middle classes, and help deepen the penetration of the dependent societies (Sauvant, 1979)

4.2.4. A Critical Assessment of the Dependency Paradigm

Many scholars, including dependentistas themselves, criticise the dependency paradigm for a variety of reasons Jan Servaes (1989) criticises it on the grounds that there is a lack of analyses of internal class and state variables within the periphery It is therefore impossible to develop explanatory models without looking at the development of the global framework of power relations as a whole in connection with the television industry Moreover, analyses of the dependency situation in Saudi Arabia have so far failed to examine the internal forces at work which effectively constrain local television production of quality and result in increased cultural dependency on imported media fare Secondly, argues Servaes, narrowly focused or static approaches are often unable to explain and account for changes in underdeveloped economies over time These static views largely ignore the historical manifestations of imperialism and are in danger of becoming merely empty and highly abstract formulae Thirdly, he believes, it has a naive view of production forms which locates the force of capitalist development and

underdevelopment in the transfer of the economic surplus from the periphery to the centre, and therefore fails to differentiate capitalist from feudal or other pre-capitalist modes of controlling the direct producer and appropriating the surplus

An over-emphasis on external variables as the cause of underdevelopment and dependency tends to focus on the metropolis and international capital (the so-called existing international division of labour), as they are 'blamed' for poverty, stagnation, and backwardness, instead of on local class formation Such views tend to overlook the local socio-political factors and dynamics which constrain development in general, and the media in particular These local factors and the ways in which they encourage dependency will be dealt with in the course of this study

In general, most dependentistas take for granted that, together with the high volume of Western media messages and products, a conservative and capitalistic ideology and a consumption culture is transmitted and established simultaneously In this sense, they challenge the point of departure of the modernists and, in particular, those of the diffusion theorists who assume that the media play an important role in processes of social change For this reason, the dependency theory can, with its stress on external explanatory factors, be considered the antithesis of the endogenously-oriented modernisation paradigm However, the difference is minimal in regard to the content of development, as both mainly use economic variables

4.3. The Multiplicity Paradigm

In contrast with the more economic and politically oriented views of the modernisation

and dependency paradigms, the central idea of the multiplicity paradigm is that there is no universal development model Development is an integrally multidimensional and dialectical process that can differ from society to society This implies that the development problem is a relative one and that no individual nation can contend that it is 'developed' in every respect This does not mean, however, that it is not possible to define the general principles and priorities on which a development strategy can be based Jan Servaes (1989) cited six criteria, and this author believes that they are particularly pertinent in the case of Saudi Arabia Servaes' principles can be summarised as follows

- *Basic needs* being geared to meeting human, material and non-material, needs It begins with the satisfaction of the basic needs of those, dominated and exploited, who constitute the majority of the world's inhabitants, and ensures at the same time the humanisation of all human beings by the satisfaction of their needs for expression, creativity, equality and conviviality and to understand and master their own destiny This criterion gives rise to issues of equality and freedom of expression and the notion that the media should be the voice of the people

- *Endogeny* stemming from the heart of each society, which defines in sovereignty its values and the vision of its future Since development is not a linear process, there could be no universal model, and only the plurality of development patterns can answer to the specificity of each situation

- *Self-reliance* implying that each society relies primarily on its own strength and resources in terms of its members' energies and its natural and cultural environment Self-reliance acquires its full meaning only if rooted at the local level of each community The overwhelming dependency tendencies which have been encouraged and

sustained by the Saudi government plans have cast Saudis as passive recipients of development projects executed by millions of imported foreign expatriates - a situation not without its problems for Saudi social life

- *Ecology* utilising rationally resources of the biosphere in full awareness of the potential of local ecosystems, as well as the global and outer limits imposed on present and future generations It implies the equitable access to resources by all as well as careful, socially relevant technologies

- *Participative democracy* as the true form of democracy Not merely government of the people and for the people, but also, and more fundamentally by the people at all levels of society

- *Structural changes* to be required, more often than not, in social relations, in economic activities and in their spatial distribution, as well as in the power structure, and in decision-making by all those affected by it, from the rural or urban community to the world as a whole

What is new in the multiplicity development discussion is the 'eco-system approach' which differs at almost every point from the modernisation paradigm From the ecological perspective, a country must not compare itself with other, more 'developed' examples for its development policy, but must proceed from its own ecology and culture

In the case of Saudi Arabia, development could be attained without resorting to compromising Islamic values These values are, in fact, a safeguard for a balanced development incorporating equality and justice two of the main principles of Islam Also important is the notion of self-reliance which is multi-dimensional and open to many

interpretations In this context self-reliance is used as the counterpart to dependency, as

a sovereign and autocentric strategy for development on the basis of a community's own

capabilities and needs, and the capacity of autonomous goal-setting and decision making

The political, social, cultural and communicative aspects of the strategy should be

emphasised, and local, national, regional and intermediate levels should be combined

and distinguished to acquire a strategy based on this principle of self-reliance The social

reforms necessary for the movement from dependency to self-sufficient development

raise the problems of participation, decentralisation and autonomy In this context, the

idea of selective participation has been launched, a participation that is based on

equality and sovereignty As Michael Green (1991) puts it

> 'Media develop and are developed by changing publics and needs, and in
> this conception media should be looked upon as cultural forms in which
> groups, communities, and societies articulate their diversity ' (Green,
> 1991 28)

Contrary to the more economically and politically oriented views of the modernisation

and the world system approaches to dependency, the central idea in a 'new' multiplicity

paradigm is that there is no universal path to development Development must be

conceived as an integral, multidimensional and dialectic process which can differ from

one country to another In other words, every nation must define development for itself

and seek its own strategies (Servaes, 1989) At the same time, this also implies that the

problem of development is a relative one Thus, development should be defined as needs

oriented, indigenous, self-reliant, ecologically sound and based on participatory

democracy and structural transformation (Servaes, 1989)

This study contends that the multiplicity paradigm can provide a useful backdrop for the

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current utilisation of broadcast media in Saudi Arabia By acknowledging that development is a multidimensional process which is unique in nature to each society, the multiplicity paradigm, in a more applicable and eclectic rationale, accommodates some of the specifics of Saudi Arabian society and its need to harness the media to help preserve the country's individual profile throughout the development process This author believes that Islamic teachings which advocate free-will and dialogue can be drawn on to direct and validate changes on all fronts in Saudi society that are necessary to increase its self-reliance In promoting self-reliance, factors such as social awareness, national responsibility, motivation, and mobilisation of the people become the fundamentals of genuine development, and they are what has been missing in Saudi development Mass media, utilised wisely, can help to solve problems such as these (Alharithi, 1983) The Saudi media have themselves been part of the problem because of their reliance on imported programmes and the manner in which they avoid addressing pressing issues of importance to the Saudi people

The above review of development theories and paradigms highlights that the emerging multiplicity paradigm may best help explain some of the economic, political, and social development problems in Saudi Arabia However, what is essentially required is a more Saudi-centred analysis Models which are based in post Cold War theories rely on now obsolete concepts of an imperialist struggle between superpowers and tend to ignore internal and local factors, such as the role of government departments, which create current situations of dependency These models, therefore, can be regarded as outdated or even irrelevant Paradigm shifts from dependency and media imperialism theories in the 1970s did in fact establish recognition of the role of internal factors in the

dependency equation (Nordenstreng and Schiller, 1979 Preface) However, there has been no in-depth analysis of the relationship between dependency and national or local factors from an Islamic perspective with specific reference to the performance of the Saudi media, and of television in particular Purely secular paradigms fail to acknowledge the specifics of an Islamic society and the nature of the religious and cultural forces and their roles in development processes Paradigms rooted in political or economic theory do not have a broad enough perspective and are often static Importantly, most theories fail to take into account internal factors and local constraints on development which create the situation of media dependency in Saudi Arabia

This author believes that there is a dual existence of both external and internal factors that are inter-related and create such dependency, as argued by Nordenstreng and Schiller (1979) Realistically, however, internal impeding factors should be the focus of analysis and the subject of change An increase in pressure on policy makers and decision-making bodies to implement such change would, in turn, help to alleviate some of the external variables, as well as provide the necessary support for more balanced relations with others

5. Electronic Media in the Arab World

While the previous section demonstrates the abundance of general research and theories relating to cultural dependency and the media, little research has been carried out on the effects of electronic media in the Arab world, and even less in Saudi Arabia Boyd (1982) comments on this point as follows

'Arab television broadcasters get little or no formal scientific feedback from the audience It is not the practice of these broadcasters to undertake

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either studies providing information about programme preferences or research exploring the uses of television among viewers Most reliable data came from surveys commissioned by manufacturers wanting information about consumers' brand preferences ' (Boyd, 1982 47)

Extant research is generally qualitative, includes a number of audience studies and is focused on the development and effects of broadcasting systems and video cassette recorders The first to pioneer research into Saudi Arabian broadcasting systems were Shobaili (1971) and Boyd (1970, 1972), who established the development of these systems in their political, social and cultural background Further research has been conducted by Saudi graduates and by international researchers, in addition to studies conducted by radio broadcasting companies such as the Voice of America (VOA), Radio Monte Carlo Middle East (RMCME), and the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), which have tried to measure and assess listenership in the region

5.1. The Development of Electronic Media

This section is concerned with prior research into the development of electronic media, its application and impact, as well as audience research in Saudi Arabia In addition, it examines previous research into international and transnational broadcasting media in the Arab world Finally it looks at other studies dealing with the penetration, application and ramifications of DBS in the Arab world, with particular reference to Saudi Arabia

As mentioned, the earliest research into the evolution and growth of the Saudi Arabian television system was carried out by Shobaili (1971) The study was then developed to include radio and television, the press and Aramco television, the first company to broadcast in Saudi Arabia While he mainly concentrated on the infrastructure of the

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media's organisation, administration, programming and technology, he related these to contemporaneous issues, such as the cultural and societal factors which affected programming features and the role of the government in the development of the media

In 1982, Najai conducted the first study of young Saudi audiences in Riyadh The purpose of his research was to discover the cognitive and affective effects of watching television on youngsters, and to ascertain the reasons for their viewing In analysing the results from 300 males and 300 females, Najai concluded that males watched television for more hours than females, and did so mostly out of a desire to understand and learn

A 1983 study by Alharithi into the effectiveness of Saudi broadcasting had significant results His study of the Saudi media content and functions concluded that the mass media were not expediting national development nor raising social awareness for a number of distinct reasons a lack of professional expertise, a lack of indigenous manpower, overuse of imported productions, government domination, and the absence of a formal coherent policy This ineffectiveness was intensified by the political, economic and religious climate at that time, as well as the social issues which impeded the potential of the media As a result of this study, Al-Harithi was able to propose significant recommendations for broadcasting purposes Some of the deficiencies that relate to the Saudi broadcast media will be revisited in the course of this study to examine whether they still exist, and whether the new DBS challenges have had any impact on Saudi television performance

Shaikh (1989) compiled a study of the effects of imported programming on Saudi

television by analysing programme content and interviewing Saudi television officials His results showed that imported programming accounted for 26% more broadcasting than local productions (63% against 37%) The main source of the English-language productions was the USA, while the main source of Arab programmes was Egypt His study also revealed that these programmes were imported because of their quality Importantly, a significant finding was that the imported productions contained scenes and messages which were inconsistent with the traditional and cultural standards of Saudi society Such inconsistencies, this study will show, are still present and have intensified with the proliferation of DBS channels

In 1990, Al-Oofy carried out research into the usage, status and effects of VCR on other forms of media and the impact on Islamic consciousness The methods adopted for research purposes were primarily quantitative and qualitative analyses His findings demonstrated that in areas where people had more access to the media, there was a tendency to record more televised productions and watch fewer rented videos Female viewing was higher than male, while the under 20s proved to be the main users of VCR equipment Many of the people interviewed, however, claimed to have altered their VCR viewing habits The subjects interviewed also revealed that watching videos had either increased their knowledge of the world and other cultures, or discouraged them from reading In conclusion, Al-Oofy recommended that the broadcasting system in Saudi Arabia be de-centralised, that training provision for technical and artistic personnel be vastly improved, that censorship be reduced, transmission of Saudi television should be increased, and that there should be more co-operation between Saudi television and members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Al-Oofy

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postulated that ownership and use of both VCR and satellite dishes would be affected by the new Islamic awareness in Saudi Arabia

Hudson and Swindel (1988) used a content analysis approach to analyse Saudi television Channel 2 news programmes during May, 1992 The results of their research showed that 23 9% of all the time allocated to news bulletins was actually spent on news about the Saudi royal family, and 63 3% of the stories were borrowed from other news broadcasting sources The limitation of their study lay in the fact that it was confined to Channel 2 output, it lacked details regarding the application of their methodology, and the period studied was not justified

Zamakshari (1994) investigated the attitudes of Saudi Arabian parents towards television and examined their concerns regarding the possible adverse effects of television on their children Through group discussions and surveying a sample of 672 Saudi parents in various cities, his findings concluded that parents showed some concern about the impact of foreign culture on their traditional life

Almakaty (1995) provided a descriptive study of the technical, legal and cultural aspects of Direct Broadcasting Satellite in the Arab world, and specifically in Saudi Arabia The reason for his focus on that country, he contended, was its unique status in the Islamic world and the cultural ideology of its people The establishment of DBS has led to intense debate publicised through the mass media and through interpersonal communication since the 1980s In his study he investigated the socio-cultural perceptions of DBS among a sample audience of male Saudis Three types of people were identified

type 1 were moderate protectionists, type 2 were high protectionists, and type 3, cautious adaptors Type 1 Saudis believed that DBS may present a threat to Saudi society as well as to the Saudi broadcast media Type 2 people strongly believed that DBS represents a critical cultural threat Type 3s, however, saw no serious cultural threat from DBS and regarded it as helping to promote more international interaction and understanding

Habib (1997) carried out a study of the news service in Saudi Arabia and contrasted it with those of a number of DBS broadcasters He focused on the treatment of news regarding five major events which occurred at the time of the study The events are the Arab-Israeli peace settlement, the Bosnia-Herzogovina conflict, incidents in Yemen, the problems in Algeria, and finally the Iran crisis The results showed that Saudi television news neglected some of those incidents which were covered by all the DBS services In this study, Habib concluded that the introduction of DBS has not encouraged Saudi television to improve its traditional news programmes and there is a great deal of scope for improvement

5.2. Penetration and Utilisation of Transnational Broadcasting

Transnational media have a major influence on ideas and opinions, on values and life-styles and therefore on change, for better or worse, in different societies (MacBride et al, 1980) Thomas McPhail (1981), referring to the cultural effects of transnational media, calls it 'electronic colonialism' He describes it as

> 'The dependency relationship established by importation of communication hardware, foreign-produced software, along with engineers, technicians, and related information protocols, that vicariously establish a set of foreign norms, values, and expectations which, in varying degrees, may alter the domestic cultures and socialisation processes ' (McPhail, 1981 20, Citing Read, 1976, and Tunstall, 1977)

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The typical content of transnational media channels will have been chosen with a view to international transmission, even if it was originally designed primarily for a domestic market This will usually imply a downgrading of cultural specificity in themes and settings and a preference for formats and genres which are thought to be more universal Because of the influence of the United States on audio-visual and music production, transnational content is sometimes considered as culturally North American in character The general direction of effect is assumed to be towards displacing the original culture of receiving countries and/or causing them to imitate the international model (McQuail, 1994) The transnational media corporations are exerting considerable influence through programme sales, technology, professional models, marketing patterns and the direction and volume of the flow of entertainment material

> 'Privately-owned organisations in the communication field wield a power
> in setting patterns, forming attitudes and motivating behaviour This power
> is exercised in various ways
>
> (a) ownership of media and other communication means, or investment
> in telecommunication channels,
>
> (b) production of software and distribution of various kinds of programmes and
> contents,
>
> (c) advertising and marketing,
>
> (d) various indirect ways of influencing the production of messages ' (MacBride
> *et al*, 1980 118)

The popularity of regional and international media among Saudi audiences has been investigated in a number of surveys Radio audience research carried out in 1972 by the United States Information Agency (USIA) indicated that 70% of Saudis listened to Radio Cairo a minimum of once a week, 53% to the Voice of the Arabs, 73% to the BBC, and 62% to Radio Kuwait 54 6% of Saudis tuned in to foreign broadcasts Radio

Monte Carlo Middle East (RMCME) news proved popular among Saudis, which is attributed to the fact that during the 1973 Arab-Israel war it presented pro-Arab news (Boyd, 1982)

In analysing the importance of radio broadcasting to the Arab world, Acord (1979 388) concluded that 'Radio is an invaluable tool to break up hardened ground ' He also looked at the issue of Muslim-Christian relations and highlighted the potential of radio for pre-evangelism He observed that cautious and responsive productions sensitive to Muslim requirements could do much to improve association between the two religions

Boyd (1983) named Trans World Radio (TWR), Far East Broadcasting Association (FEBA), Radio ELWA, Vatican Radio, and Station WYFR as five Christian broadcasters transmitting in Arabic In total their output amounts to 51 hours a week. In 1989, the International Broadcasting Association (IBA), and High Adventures (HA) joined their ranks (Warren, 1990)

During the Iran-Iraq war, Boyd and Asi (1991) surveyed a sample of 2,000 male and female undergraduates attending various universities in Saudi Arabia. The purpose of the survey was to investigate listening habits among transnational radio audiences during this time The results showed that both the BBC and RMCME were rated highly, the former by men over 20 and the latter by women under 25, while older students expressed a preference for VOA Much of RMCME programming is music-based with frequent advertising of day-to-day consumer goods and news summaries, while the BBC and VOA are more information and news directed Radio listenership in the Arab world

is one of the areas which calls for more updated research in the light of the new DBS phenomenon, and in particular the channels devoted to news and documentaries such as Aljazirah and ANN

5.3. DBS - Its Social and Cultural Impact

One recent form of communication technology which has provoked controversy and debate in the international arena is the Direct Broadcast Satellite (DBS) service which, during the last few years, has been a vehicle for television signals carrying a diversity of programming, mainly Anglo-American, to many parts of the world DBS is a powerful and versatile system that transmits a signal *directly* to an inexpensive receiver, thus many developing nations fear that this technology has resulted in the unwanted and unregulated reception of foreign programming and, they believe, poses serious threats to indigenous culture and national sovereignty These perceived threats fall into the categories of propaganda, commercial domination and cultural intrusion

Since their establishment by the Soviets in 1957, and the USA in 1958, communication satellites have become the most effective means of enhancing global radio and television, and have also been used as political propaganda weapons in the struggle between the superpowers Despite the cost of this technological warfare and the issues raised by world public opinion, projects are still designed for the purpose of global domination through cultural invasion via satellite communication (Yamani, 1984)

Yamani (1984), in describing this phenomenon of electronic colonisation, identified DBS as a means of dominating popular thought and highlighted the prospect of cultural

dependency for developing countries faced with this technological onslaught He warned

'[ ] those who own advanced communication technology are those who have the power of cultural invasion and who are capable of launching the most dangerous imperialist attack in the current age ' (Yamani, 1984 32)

Al-Makhlafi (1986) also examined DBS networks and satellite communications and their functions as weapons for cultural imperialism and dependency In analysing the notion of information flow and dependency, he pointed out that ARABSAT (the Arab Satellite organisation) could be used as a mouthpiece to champion the Muslim cause

In Labeb's (1990) study, which dealt with the technical aspects of direct television broadcasting, he identified four groups of direct broadcast satellites for communications or services, for direct broadcasting, for direct television broadcasting, and Middle East satellite communication He examined the Arab states' allegation that DBS transmission of foreign programming can have an adverse effect on Arab cultural and social identity and traditional values and concluded that research confirmed this to be true The principal concern therefore is the protection of these elements of Arab societies

Alamir (1993) analysed the social effects of DBS and mass media, and their conceptual and technical developments In examining the impact of DBS from a number of perspectives, social, economic, political, health, ideological, cultural and security, he concluded that it poses a much greater cultural threat to Arab societies than other forms of mass media

Yamani (1984), Labeb (1990) and Al-Makhlafi (1986) have produced studies loaded with rhetoric describing the imminent danger of the so-called 'cultural invasion', but they fail

to focus on the weaknesses inherent in official Arab media which contribute to the popularity and appeal of transnational media Such failings and the misuse of national media systems in Arab countries tend to be ignored in these studies

Bait-Almal (1993), in his study of DBS use and socio-cultural perspectives, surveyed 201 regular users of direct television satellite, living in Riyadh He categorised his subjects into three groups according to their standpoints the first group comprised those who believed DBS fostered interaction and understanding between cultures and nations, the second group regarded DBS as an imperialist weapon for cultural invasion and for increasing consumerism of Western products in developing nations, the third group of people perceived the detrimental effects of DBS, but did not give weight to them They were convinced that with some adaptation, the challenges posed would be surmounted as in the case of radio, television, and VCRs Among those surveyed, the Middle East Broadcasting Centre (MBC), the Egyptian Satellite Channel (ESC) and Dubai Satellite Channel (DSC) were the most watched, chiefly because the broadcasts were in Arabic, and the subjects tended to watch news and cultural programmes as opposed to entertainment The popularity of DBS channels is reflected in the defection of many national television channel viewers to DBS networks

Marghalani (1997), applying a 'uses and gratifications' method, investigated the gratification sought from the adoption of DBS by 495 Saudi Arabians resident in Riyadh In this study, Marghalani found that 72% of the respondents owned and/or had regular access to satellite dishes In addition, satellite dish owners spent more hours watching satellite channels than watching the local government channels The Saudi television

Channel 1 ranked tenth in mean number of hours viewed weekly Marghalani also demonstrated that there are a number of factors dictating the adoption of satellite dishes These include the heavy government control over television programming content, the limited programming on the two government-run channels, and the lack of alternative forms of entertainment in Saudi Arabia He also found that the motives underpinning avoidance of DBS adoption include religious beliefs, sex and violence content, and Western commercialisation

5.4. The Islamic Media

As described, since the commencement of broadcasting services and the subsequent adoption of DBS in the Arab world there have been a number of studies concerning this phenomenon (see Alamir, 1993, Bait-Almal, 1993, Ashal, 1994, Alabid and Alali, 1995, Ayish, 1994) These studies have dealt with the effects and viewership of DBS in a number of Arab countries There are also, however, a growing number of cultural Islamists' writings regarding what is being called the 'Islamic media' or 'Alelam Alislami' Based on religious discourse, the constant feature among these writings is the call for media systems, broadcasters and practitioners to observe their responsibilities, as dictated by Islam, in their programme ideas and subject matter and content of entertainment They believe these should reflect the Islamic identity of their societies (see Ashanqeeti, 1991b, 1994, 1996, Sini, 1991, Mohammad, 1983, Kaheel, 1985, Tash, 1995, Arrikabi, 1992) Most of these writings draw upon Islamic values and principles which they see as a remedy for the dependency on un-Islamic imported media products and reliance on an authentic Islamic message that should be directed at all humanity (Ashanqeeti, 1994, Mohammad, 1997[4])

6. Conclusion

This chapter has described much of the research that has been carried out in this field What is apparent is that the various cultural and dependency theories have acknowledged the role of internal or local class and state conditions which effectively constrain local production and create a preference for foreign media imports, but this tradition needs to be extended to cover the specific situation of Saudi Arabia Many studies fail to adequately consider the unique characteristics of Saudi Arabia in terms of its religious and cultural heritage What is therefore required is an extension of traditional and simplistic imperialism and dependency theories and the formulation of a model that is appropriate and applicable to media dependency in Saudi Arabia, a model which considers the shortcomings of the Saudi media as a causal factor in the dependency equation

While previous research has not qualitatively analysed local and foreign media content in sufficient depth, this study attempts to do just that at a time when a new generation of television services is bombarding Saudi viewers These services undoubtedly have an impact on Saudi television, on viewing patterns and on viewers' preferences Saudi Arabia is a clear example of a situation where local constraints on production, as described in chapters VII-IX, have resulted in a preference for imported programmes of higher technological and artistic quality, and with more stimulating content Previous studies, as described, have generally acknowledged that shortcomings and constraints exist and some researchers, such as Marghalani (1997), have attempted to diagnose the problem However, their scope is confined to limited cross-sectional analyses which fail to encompass a broader perspective There is a lack of research into the constraints and

shortcomings of Saudi television within the macro picture of media interaction with local

culture, and a need for further research within communication for development theories

Previous studies, being mostly descriptive, have not engaged in critical thinking and

therefore have not apportioned any responsibility for these shortcomings In the absence

of private sector television companies in Saudi Arabia, STV falls within the domain of

the government, but its role as sole controller of Saudi television and the ways in which

it impedes Saudi media development and potential effectiveness have not been

examined Finally, previous research has not assessed the quality of the programming

produced as a result of these limitations, nor the quality of the programming offered by

foreign broadcasters which, as demonstrated, is perceived as more appealing, but

perpetuates Saudi Arabia's dependency on foreign cultural products

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CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

1. Data Collection Techniques

This study attempts to identify and discuss the impediments to the development of local television production in Saudi Arabia which effectively increase its dependency on foreign programming It also aims to analyse local and foreign programme content to determine the nature of the preference for foreign media products In conducting the research required for this investigation, a combination of methodologies is applied They include content analysis of Saudi television schedules, interviews with policy-makers and television producers, and a survey of the visual production market It also conducts an overview of DBS programme offerings and considers the implications of DBS policies

In order to obtain the relevant data, the author embarked on two field trips to Saudi Arabia, the first from February to April, 1997, the second during the same months of 1998 During these trips, three main cities in Saudi Arabia were visited for the purpose of carrying out interviews Riyadh - the capital, Jeddah and Dammam In the course of the first trip, this author seized the opportunity to attend the 5th Annual Gulf Television Production Festival held in Manama, Bahrain, between the 17th and 20th of March, 1997 In addition, in order to explore the local, 'independent' television production market, a survey was conducted among 20 private production companies operating in Saudi Arabia, in the anticipation that such a survey would provide this study with useful data regarding the practicality and the mechanisms of the local production market

1.1. Sampling

To conduct this quantitative and qualitative research, the subjects of analysis, that is, television programmes and key informants in the Saudi media facilities and in the local video production market were purposefully sampled on the basis of what Lecompte and Preissle (1993 69) call 'criterion-based selection' The samples were extracted during the period from 1st March, 1997 to 14th March, 1997 These sampling procedures enabled this author to deliberately select particular persons and units of analysis to provide essential information that could not be obtained from other sources

2. Content Analysis

In agreement with Deacon *et al* (1999 115-7), this author acknowledges that the view of content analysis as providing a completely value-free insight into the study of content is highly questionable However, bearing in mind that content analysis is not well-suited to studying in-depth questions about textual and discursive forms and their meanings (Deacon *et al*, 1999), this author applied this method to produce a more expansive picture and to draw inferences from Saudi television output in order to provide a general analysis

This data has been organised into themes and issues as a way of categorising the analysis This includes issues such as the proliferation of DBS and its presumed impact on national television services and local production industry, the rules and regulations applied by the Ministry of Information relating to the production process of visual materials in Saudi Arabia, and how these rules may affect the progress of visual production This study also shows the range of themes that are present in news and

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entertainment shows and highlights the shortcomings of Saudi television output

The techniques of content analysis employed here are designed to identify the carriers of meaning in both fictional and non-fictional texts In analysing news programmes, newsworthiness and news value were identified and inferred through the ranking of news stories and a calculation of the comparative time devoted to each story In fictional presentations, dramatic shows were looked at with regard to the storyline, the subject matter of episodes, the language used and the attire of the performers An additional guidance for content analysis of DBS and STV is to identify in the programme content whether or not they contain any 'objectionable' elements, for example, scenes, messages, and ideas that are considered incompatible with Islamic precepts Such 'objectionable' items are, in fact, identifiable and frequently singled out as such in most of the Islamists' writings STV programmes in particular were looked at in terms of their conformity and consistency with the Saudi Communication and Information Policy, which was formulated by the Supreme Council for Mass Communication in 1982 (see Appendix B)

2.1. Quantitative Analysis

In evaluating the extent of dependency on foreign imported television production by Saudi television, and in calculating the ratio of domestic to imported material, there is an initial application of quantitative analysis In a two-week television schedule where no special programming has been incorporated, shows are classified into two broad categories, imported versus local There is a further, more specific classification according to the country of origin or the source of imported programmes, and programme genre entertainment and non-entertainment The former includes

programmes such as music, sports, plays, dramatic series, and serials, children's programmes, and comedy The latter encompasses, news and news magazines, talk shows, current affairs, and religious programmes

The researcher has ensured that the sample weeks reflects normal weeks of programming where there are no special events taking place, such as a soccer tournament, or religious rituals which are usually covered by the medium extensively through a special programming schedule In order to identify and realise the competitive television environment the Saudi television operates in, a panoramic picture of television programme offerings in the sample is presented by providing a description of the programme content of the major satellite television channels They are the Middle East Broadcasting Centre (MBC), Arab Radio and Television (ART), Dubai Television, the Egyptian Satellite Channel (ESC), and the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation International (LBCI) The analysed sample of satellite channel programmes was collected during May 1998, and over a subsequent period (see chapter V and Appendix A) It was therefore not limited to the same two-week period as the STV sample The analysis emphasises programme content, the financial aspects and apparent programming policy

Saudi television programmes on channel 1 are considered in terms of whether they are imported or home-grown, whether the programmes are designated as entertainment or are ostensibly serious, and which audiences they intentionally target Imported shows are classified by country of origin as well as by language and, once such categorisation has been effected, calculations follow where possible and significant

2.2. Qualitative Analysis

At the conclusion of the aforementioned quantitative analysis of schedule content, a qualitative appraisal follows which addresses variables such as programme theme, character, gender, relationships, sexual intrigue and use of language The prevailing characteristics of the televised content are evaluated for the quality of production and its potential appeal and value to Saudi audiences, juxtaposed with an investigation into alternative offerings

In order to identify the subject matter of Saudi television programmes, imported and local, and to study the programmes' philosophies and assumptions, and to identify their textual features, values and messages they mean to convey, initial empirical documentation precedes an analysis of a sample of Saudi television programmes in two time slots early afternoon hours, and prime-time The former is traditionally dominated by shows targeted at children, while the latter consists of peak viewing hours which are usually directed at adult viewers Prime-time viewing commences with the main news bulletin at 9 30 and continues until close-down, an hour or two past midnight A representative sample of these programmes on video tapes is documented in this study The generated data is used as a basis for assessing these programmes' conformity with the Saudi media policy At this point it should be emphasised that while the media policy can be regarded as the minimum standard for a better media, its limitations, such as its inflexibility, must also be acknowledged

The data is also used to assess the programmes' possible positive, negative or neutral 'interactions' with localities of Saudi culture and Saudi society A different set of criteria

is applied in assessing these possible effects or 'interactions' The first of these examines the Islamic point of view regarding the role of the media and their potential as a tool for heightening people's awareness of different social issues in an Islamic country Islam is always looked upon as the base of Saudi government legitimacy, and the Islamic point of view cannot be ignored, either by the government or by any sound scholastic analysis After all, this Islamic thinking and the opposition to any form of cultural dependency can be traced back to the early days of broadcast media operations in Saudi Arabia The Islamic point of view functions as a framework in which the identified values and ideas of imported television fare are measured

In explaining the Islamic point of view, the author has opted to draw extensively on his knowledge and interpretations of the Islamic heritage, both the Quran and Sunnah and their commentaries, as observed by prominent Muslim jurists and scholars It should be noted that Islam is not just a faith but an entire social system It provides a set of values and laws that govern all personal, social, economic and political conduct

In the fictional material, the study looks at key story lines relating to moral and ethical values and at the structure of plots and dramatic action, appearance and attire of actors and actresses, as well as relations between the characters

For analytical reasons, imported and local television shows are examined under the following criteria

● Programme message the focus of the main theme and the ideas and values that it tries to impart

• The frequency of the television programme's airing daily, weekly, etc, over what period of time months, weeks, etc, for how long the programme is running, and whether it is a new production or a rerun

• The depicted role or the characters that actors and actresses try to portray, for example, the 'hero' or 'heroine' and their interactive relationship

Programmes are analysed thematically in terms of their values, ideologies, images, and ideas that could be inferred or identified A grouping method is applied to accommodate these representations To explore whether these collective representations are in harmony or in conflict with local culture, those inferred from the sample, are assessed and gauged according to their local counterparts Samovar and Porter (1985) defined 'culture' as

> '[ ] the deposit of knowledge, experiences, beliefs and values, attitudes, meaning hierarchies, religion, timing, notes, spatial relations, concepts of universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a large group of people in the course of generation through individual and group striving ' (Samovar and Porter, 1985 19)

Culture has necessarily been broadly defined for the purposes of this study as incorporating people's ways and patterns of living which encompass verbal utterances, gestures, ceremonial behaviours, values and belief systems References to 'non-local culture' or 'alien culture' allude to non-Saudi contributions, both Arab and non-Arab, to television content

Following this, a discussion about the prevailing culture and dominant value system in Saudi Arabia and their similarities to, or deviations from the imported ones is presented Since Islam is the prevailing religion, its doctrines and teachings are utilised as a framework or gauging instrument

Another criterion, besides the Islamic perspective, is the cumulative development literature of scholars who have devoted considerable attention to investigate how media should be utilised in different settings around the world Special attention is given to the Saudi media scholars' literature pertaining to media usage

The cumulative views about communication for development and cultural dependency are considered in the assessment and the evaluation of broadcast media purposes and use, and serve as explanatory tools to assist in understanding the history of cultural dependency Although the media imperialism thesis is consulted, this study eschews some of the shortcomings of previous studies, for example the lack of investigation into the local class and state roles in impeding local production, and the lack of detailed qualitative analysis of local and foreign programming, both of which could provide a comparative framework from which to assess the preference for foreign imports By providing results of investigation into local constraints and qualitative analysis of programming, this study also exceeds the mere crude statistics and quantitative description of the phenomena of dependency and imperialism in the television programming sphere

3. Interviews

Interviews with media officials, policy-makers, the owners and executives of private production companies and independent producers were administered primarily in the second half of this investigation The independent producers were selected for their unique ability to be informative because of their involvement in the problem that this author is attempting to investigate They are considered as key players in the local

television production scene and are therefore in a position to provide this study with the information required to answer some of the research questions Their willingness to do so must be acknowledged To avoid the element of partiality in selecting interviewees, a key factor in the selection process was the relevance of the interview and the representation of the point of view of the informants

3.1. Difficulties in Soliciting and Obtaining Information

The current climate in Saudi Arabia is not conducive to obtaining information for research purposes The country has substantial experience of cultural and demographic isolation, and as a consequence its peoples are essentially protectionist - disciplined to subordinate their individual and personal needs and opinions to those of their families, clans, tribes and communities (Najai, 1982) It must therefore be recognised from the outset that compared to research activities in other countries, a study such as this is limited by the social, political and religious circumstances of Saudi Arabia, thus conducting media research in Saudi Arabia is a difficult undertaking Public officials, respondents and citizens are usually reluctant to reveal information or voice their opinions Najai (1982) refers to this too

> 'Saudi Arabia has experienced an extensive period of isolation and self-
> contained discipline which generally predisposed the individual to
> subordinate his (sic) needs and opinion to the collective interests of
> family, tribe and the community at large ' (Najai, 1982 10)

Alkheraiji (1990) describes his own experience as a challenging exercise in patience and often accompanied by disappointment and frustration The nature of this present study, the accessibility of media facilities and the availability of media officials has constituted a distinctive challenge For example, although this author was 'armed' with a letter from

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the Director of King Abudlaziz University addressed to the Deputy Minister of Information, requesting co-operation from and access to intended interviewees, the letter was treated as yet another paper petition to be passed along the bureaucratic chain for a number of days Numerous attempts by this author to gain a positive response from the Deputy Minister proved unsuccessful Thus, in order to gain access to Saudi television facilities and to Ministry of Information officials for interview, this author has had to rely on a chain of personal connections with former colleagues and acquaintances who actually work there Their role was to facilitate entry to the premises and to introduce the informants Such efforts were vital in gaining trust, and breaking down the barriers which may prohibit government officials from disclosing or revealing information Since interviewing as a method has the capacity to range over multiple perspectives on a single topic, all interviews in this study are used as heuristic tools Information gathered in one interview has led to new perspectives and new questions in later interviews In the interviewing process, leads have been followed in order to expand on questions and to acquire as precise and as detailed a response as possible

Communication policies and media regulations are important factors in shaping media operations, therefore, the issue of communication and information policy deserves attention In this study, this author has chosen to investigate communication and information policy with the supreme authority responsible for planning and formulating media policies in Saudi Arabia, and has therefore conducted a number of an open, unstructured interviews with members of the Supreme Council of Mass Communication The outcome of these interviews is the object of textual interpretation and provides vital data in evaluating the SCMC's authorities, responsibilities and performance It is also

beneficial in identifying this body's current agenda and priorities in terms of policies and plans for local media productions and their future in a fast changing media world

The availability of the necessary data to understand better the issues surrounding communication policy and independent and in-house Saudi television production activities and operations dictates the number of interviews and the number of informants

3.2. Interviewees, Topics and Conditions

A total of 46 interviews were conducted as follows

● Interviews with members of the Supreme Council of Mass Communication

● Interviews with managers, heads of various departments in Saudi TV and top officials in the Ministry of Information

● Interviews with independent producers who own local production firms

All of the interviews with media officials were conducted in Saudi Arabia within the confines of their offices or adjacent venues, such as meeting rooms, unless it was their express wish to meet at a remote location Anticipating interruptions, many of the interviewees requested that incoming calls be diverted for the duration of the interview, which lasted approximately an hour Since the majority of independent producers operate their companies on a part-time basis and mostly at evening time, these particular interviews were conducted at company headquarters during these hours after arrangements had been made over the phone Interviews with members of the Supreme Council for Mass Communication, who are responsible for the formulation of media policy, were conducted in various venues These members, with the exception of the

Secretary General, who works full-time, are engaged in their own permanent jobs in widespread locations For instance, one member works for the Ministry of Information, another works as a general director of a publishing firm and another is employed as a lecturer at King Saud University Each member was contacted and a suitable meeting place was discussed and agreed upon

All of these interviews were audio-taped and transcribed in note-form at the same time unless the interviewee expressed his objection to the use of a tape recorder, as four did Other interviewees made gestures during the course of interview to stop the recording in order to reveal sensitive information which they did not wish to be taped Taping resumed after that At the end of each interview the transcription was presented to the interviewees for approval It was anticipated that some Saudi television officials and/or local production company representatives would decline an invitation to be interviewed, whilst others would opt to proceed under the blanket of anonymity Mindful of the sensitivity of such issues and the possible repercussions of a breach of trust, this author has categorically honoured any agreement to ensure the perpetual confidentiality in such circumstances and has assiduously avoided attributing comments or specific information which would implicate, embarrass, or otherwise compromise contributors

Topics discussed in the course of these interviews included the following

● The existing broadcast media's organisational structure (facilities, equipment, and staff)

● Plans for the future of media in the light of the latest development in communication technologies, (technical, coverage, new services, new programming policies, for example)

● Local television production status and the possible ways to develop it, for example through subsidisation and finance, revision of the rules and regulations affecting

television production, joint ventures, and how it could be fostered and protected from the competition of foreign programmes

In 1995, Dr Fouad Alfarsy was appointed as the new Information Minister A few months later he gave his directions to the Ministry officials to form an ad hoc committee to investigate the status of Saudi television The committee consisted of senior Ministry officials, including deputy ministers for broadcasting affairs and senior directors and producers, in addition to heads of some Saudi television departments Members of this committee were interviewed in order to acquaint the author with their responsibilities and their agenda In interviews with media officials, issues to be addressed included

- Human resource development

- The accessibility of media institutions to writers and intellectuals

- The broadening of contributorship to foster new talent

- The lack of audience research

- The Ministry of Information rules and regulations pertaining to the local private video industry and whether it is adequate to foster local independent production

- The assumed shortcomings of the Saudi media in addressing and debating local issues which interest their audiences

Finally, there is a lamentable dearth of studies concerning the influence and effects of transnational media - including imported television programmes - on television audiences To support the research objectives, the author conducted as much as is practicable of the programme of informal supportive interviews with fellow researchers, academics and media practitioners Such informal contacts provide the study with additional and unforeseen insights into the topics under investigation

3.3. Survey of Television Production Entities

During a visit to the Ministry of Information in July, 1996, this author was able to obtain a list of major licensed television production firms operating in Saudi Arabia The list comprises more than 80 names and mailing addresses Some of these firms are well-known established production companies with a reputation in the television market in Saudi Arabia and abroad In this author's view, these companies could be a viable source of information about the status of the local production market, the factors and the forces shaping local production operations and its prospectus

To obtain clear relevant answers, the author conducted a total of twenty interviews with independent producers to investigate their role and the perceived hindrances for the development of local production from their own perspective A further twenty-six interviews were carried out with top officials from STV including the Deputy Minister and other heads of departments within STV Finally, agents, representatives and operators from TV networks in Saudi Arabia, such as First Net, Showtime, and Orbit TV Network, were interviewed

The interview questionnaire deals with the local television production market, its current situation, its future and any obstacles it faces Subjects were asked to identify from their own perspective what they viewed as obstacles hindering the development of the local production market, and the ranges of co-operation between subjects and the Ministry of Information Since the aim was to explore the respondents' opinions regarding local production market economics, respondents were encouraged to include any comments or ideas they wished to add This data has been collected, interpreted and analysed

The local production companies nominated as subjects for research are, potentially, entirely capable of weaning Saudi television from its dependency on foreign programme-makers Yet, to date, their capabilities have not been fully utilised and have remained unexploited There is, clearly, an investigative challenge to discover precisely how the Ministry of Information instructs such companies, how the laws are framed and how they are interpreted and administered Lastly, as well as investigating the gamut of deterrents to free trade in Saudi broadcasting, the author addresses the dearth of inducements such as subsidies which are a spur to investment and creativity in more hospitable media environments

The insights gleaned from the data collection and analyses and the outcome of the interviews has facilitated the formulation of follow-on questions relating to the rules and regulations of the Ministry of Information, and the addressing of those issues which emerge as being worthy of discussion with media officials

4. Research Questions

Research questions addressed in the methodologies described above include

- Quantitatively, to what extent is Saudi television Channel 1 dependent on imported television programmes?

  How is that evident from the ratio of local to foreign-made materials?

- What are the roles of Saudi television's in-house production and private video production facilities?

  How effective are these two mechanisms in minimising dependence on foreign media products?

  What are the obstacles, if any, to eradicating this phenomenon?

- How do the censorship methods applied by Saudi authorities affect the selection and broadcast of television programmes?

- How justifiable are the concerns of culturalists and Islamists over the DBS channel contents which, presumably, are perceived as posing threats to Saudi culture?

In addition, the main questions this study investigates are

- Qualitatively, what, in broad terms, are the collective values represented by these shows, and how might they intrude on indigenous culture?

- How effective is the censorship of Saudi television, by its selection and editing of foreign-made programmes, in enforcing conformity with values compatible with Islamic ideology?

- What are the obstacles and hindrances to the development of in-house and independent local productions?

The following chapter provides an historical, cultural and societal context for these

questions in a detailed description of Saudi Arabia, past and present In defining the

elements which constitute Saudi Arabia's national identity it is possible to identify the

societal components, such as institutions and values affected by the forces of

modernisation, the advancement of media technology and, for reasons outlined

previously, the importation of foreign media products

CHAPTER IV

SAUDI ARABIAN SOCIETY, CULTURE AND MODERNITY

1. Introduction

In order to assess the impact of modernisation, bringing with it the inception of television, on Saudi Arabian society, and to gain a deeper insight into the concerns over imported programming, it is important to consider the origins and culture of a people deeply rooted in traditional and religious beliefs and the societal values based on these This will provide the reader with an essential frame of reference leading to a better understanding of the issues raised in this study

There is often a great deal of emphasis placed on the power struggle between the forces of tradition and those of modernity In this instance, tradition can be defined as adherence to and defence of the basic principles of the Islamic faith, culture and values, while modernity is perceived as rapid economic growth and the execution of development programmes (Alfarsy, 1990) Modernity implies imported Western technology and with it, imported Western values, which can be perceived as a threat to the traditional foundations of the Kingdom It is apparent, however, that in Saudi Arabia the two forces of tradition and modernity interact closely On the one hand, it can be contended that the system requires defending from negative, un-Islamic influences On the other hand, it is necessary to modernise and to accept change One view is that the Saudi system is too closed and too defensive, but it can also be argued that in an age of global media, culture, politics and economics it is not possible for any country to totally isolate itself What emerges, therefore, is the need for a progression and development

that reflects and complements modern Islamic values and allows a flexible application of Islamic doctrine

Despite the discovery of oil in the country in the late 1930s, the Kingdom did not witness any real economic and social development until the early 1950s Since the 1960s, Saudi Arabia has been engaged in a movement to reform, develop, and modernise all aspects of Saudi life Using its substantial oil revenues, the government's aspiration to modernisation has led Saudi Arabia to effect great improvements in its infrastructure Within only a few decades, this isolated, tribal, desert land has evolved into a modern state (Alharithi, 1983)

In the 1970s, the Saudi government employed itself in the building of the country's infrastructure almost from scratch Earlier, King Abdulaziz, father of the present state, applied the mechanisms of education and the physical organisation of an infrastructure in his development model The plans have not been challenged on Islamic or traditional grounds and have remained the basic guidelines for an acceptable political, cultural and societal development In these plans, the King maintained a balance between the conservative and the most progressive views in the country (Vassiliev, 1998)

The massive influx of oil revenues and the resulting effect on the Kingdom's economy have enabled it to formulate and execute extensive programmes of rapid development which have catapulted this society into an era of modernisation in every direction To gain an in-depth insight into the nature of the transformation that has taken place, it is necessary to examine the many facets of Saudi Arabian society prior to, during and since

its metamorphosis, in terms of its history, politics, economic situation and religious heritage Against this backdrop, the subsequent conflict between modernity and tradition can be fully comprehended, as can the consequences of and social reaction to the television broadcasting industry

2. The Physical Setting

Comprising almost 80% of the Arabian peninsula, Saudi Arabia is bounded by the Arabian Gulf, the UAE and Qatar in the east, Kuwait, Iraq and Jordan to the north, Yemen and Oman in the south, and the Red Sea to the west (see Figure No 1)

Its geographical features include a coastal plain, Tihama, which extends from west to east Stretching into the northwest region of the country is the Najd Plateau East of this is the Nafud Desert, encompassing 57,000 km sq A strip of desert, known as Dahna, connects the Nafud Desert with the Rub Al-Khali (the Empty Quarter), the largest sandy desert in the world, covering an area of 650,000 km sq The Dahna also separates the Najd Plateau from the eastern province The latter is a flat area which slopes gently into the Arabian Gulf (Khattab, 1982) The geographical diversity of the Kingdom and the relative sparseness of its population underlines the potential role of the media for national communication and in promoting the people's involvement in national development

Figure No. 1. Saudi Arabia and Surrounding Countries.
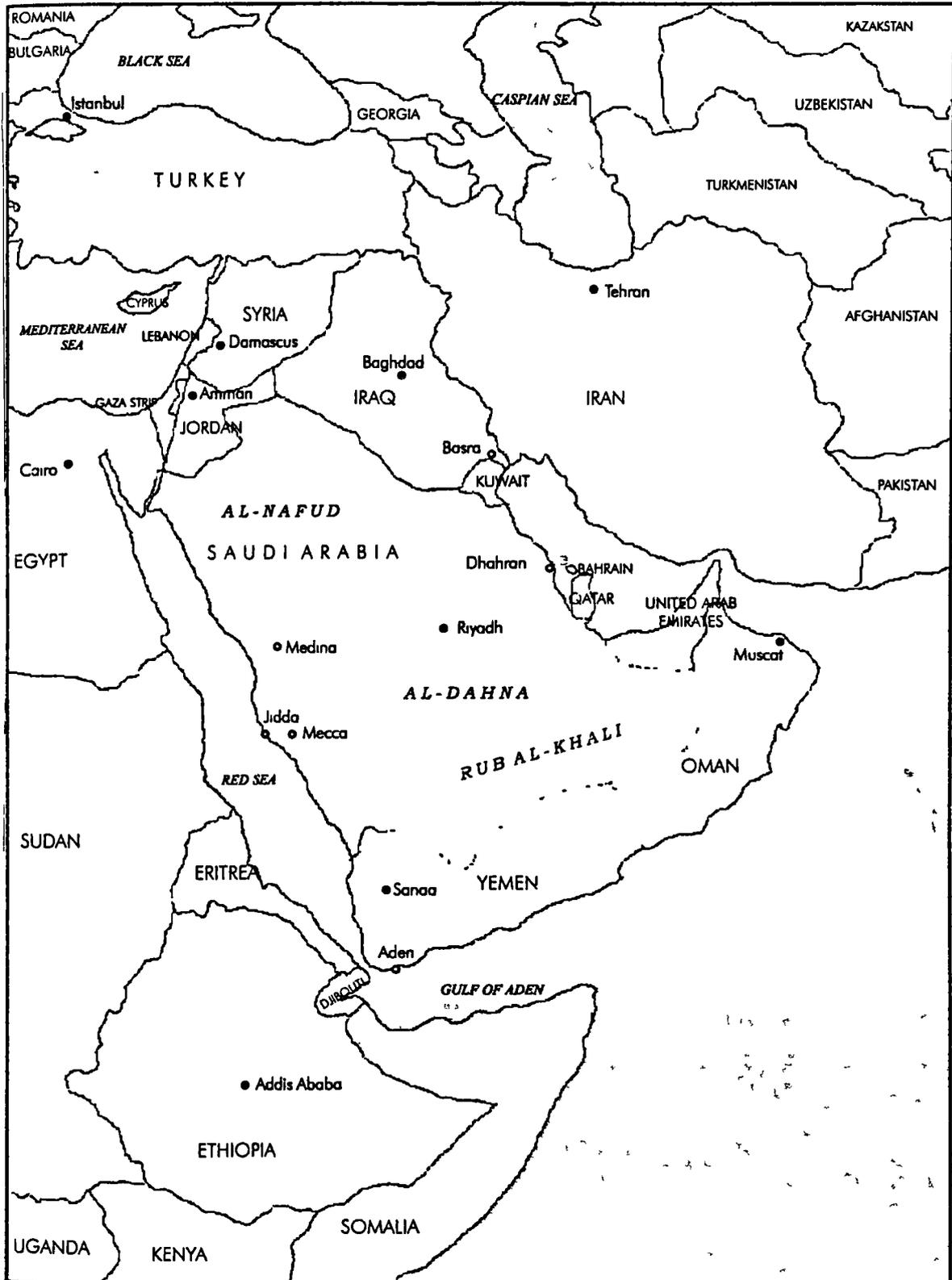
Source: Vassiliev, A. (1998), *The History of Saudi Arabia.* London: Saqi Books.

3. Population

According to the census of 1974, the total population was measured at 7,012,642, of which 5,128,655 were classified as settled and 1,883,987 as nomadic A census in 1992 estimated a total population of 16,929,294, while an estimate made in 1994 measured it at 17 8 million Roughly 38% of the population are aged between 20 and 44 (Khattab, 1982) In 1975 the population consisted of the Bedouins, who represented 10%, the rural population at 47%, and the urban population at 43% (Census Department, 1976) A series of Five- Year Development plans, described later in this chapter, created a shift in this distribution Records from 1980 show 42% living in urban areas, 12% in towns and the rest in rural areas The latest study, of 1985, estimates the urban population at 72% The fact that a large proportion of the population consists of people under the age of forty-five has significant implications for the future of Saudi society in relation to the process of modernisation and the influence of the media on the relations between the old and new generations, the work ethic, and on the traditions and values of Saudi society These will be discussed in detail further on in this chapter

4. Historical Background

Prior to the seventh century A D , the Arabian Peninsula was populated by a nomadic, polytheistic people, divided by numerous rival tribal factions. It was not until the 4th century that the peninsula's position along the major trade routes from west to east led to the building of towns such as Makkah and Madinah In the 7th century A D came the pivotal change with the introduction of Islam to the region Despite diverse tribal factions and disparate influences, Islam was to prove a unifying force and Makkah became a major cultural centre for the Islamic world In the 16th century the peninsula

came under the control of the Ottoman Empire, whose domination of the region continued up to the First World War (Vassiliev, 1998) Meanwhile, one family, who had been acquiring resources and gaining leverage, had started to effect changes on the social and political structure of the region This family, which can be traced back to the 15th Century, were called the House of Al-Saud

4.1. The History of the House of Al-Saud

The mid-18th century was a time of religious cleansing led by Mohammad Ibn Abdulwahab, an Islamic leader and revivalist In 1744, a meeting took place between this leader and Amir Mohammad Ibn Saud, in which the latter agreed to join forces and work for the Islamic revivalist cause Prior to this, the population of the peninsula had begun to indulge in superstitious and esoteric practices while the mosques stood unfrequented and ruined (Stoddard, 1967) The aim of these two leaders was to reconcile these people with the authentic Islamic faith Mohammad bin Abdulwahab was not content merely to preach Islam, but was determined, with the help and support of Amir Mohammad Ibn Saud, to build a society where Islam in its undiluted purity would be embodied as a practical scheme of life

Ruling jointly over the city of Al-Diriyah, Mohammad Ibn Abdulwahab and Mohammad Ibn Saud took the titles of Sheikh and Imam, respectively According to Rentz (1980), the two collaborated closely, forming a strong partnership which led to the conquest and capture of Najd The House of Al-Saud was then faced with the archetypal problem of expansionism - consolidating its rule, a problem which was to lead to years of turmoil

Mohammad Ibn Saud's work was continued by his son, Abdulaziz Ibn Mohammad, who managed to capture Riyadh in 1773 and then to conquer the rest of Najd (Alfarsy, 1990) until finally extending his authority over most of the peninsula Confrontation ensued with the Ottomans, who still retained control over Makkah and Madinah in the west In 1818, during a power struggle over the region, Al-Diriyah fell under siege By the following year, the Al-Saud family members had been captured and the House of Al-Saud was forced to surrender control temporarily (Hopwood, 1972)

In 1824 Turki Ibn Abdullah, an Al-Saud family member, recaptured Riyadh, where he ruled until his assassination in 1834 when he was succeeded by his son Faisal, who retained power until his expulsion to Cairo in 1838 by the Ottomans In 1843, Faisal escaped from Egypt to begin his second reign of the peninsula Despite recovering much of the land that had previously belonged to his family, Makkah and Madinah still eluded his control His rule, lasting until his death in 1865, and the subsequent years were times of grave internal dissension within the family However, power struggles with the House of Al-Rashid forced the ruling member of the Al-Saud, Abdulrahman Ibn Saud, and his son, Abdulaziz Ibn Saud, into temporary exile in Kuwait in 1897 (Vassiliev, 1998)

By the beginning of the 1900s the major powers in the region, including the Al-Sauds, the Ottomans, the Hashimates and the Al-Rashids, were again staking their claims Inevitably, this conflict of interests was to lead to more friction and internal warfare

4.2. The Unification of Saudi Arabia

In 1902, Abdulaziz Ibn Saud managed to oust the Rashid family from Riyadh and spent

the next ten years consolidating his rule over the region and unifying the people of the

Najd This was no small feat, to do this he had to totally annihilate the control of the

Al-Rashid family as well as the Turkish army in these regions (Shobaili, 1971) The

demise of the Ottoman power during the First World War removed it from the equation

Eight years later, defeating the last of the Rashids, Ibn Saud extended his territory north

to the border with Iraq and Transjordan He then sent his son Faisal southwards to

control the region of the Asir, between the Hijaz and Yemen Finally, Ibn Saud turned

to the region in the West and by 1925 he had assumed complete rule of this area too,

including Makkah and Madinah The following year he was proclaimed King of the Najd

and Sultan of the Hijaz In 1932 total consolidation of Saudi Arabia was announced in

a Royal Order which began as follows

> 'With reliance on God and on the basis of the telegrams sent from all our
> subjects in the Kingdom of the Hijaz and of Najd and its Dependencies,
> and yielding to the desire of public opinion in our land, and wishing to
> unite the parts of the Arab Kingdom, we have ordered the following
> Article 1 The name of the Kingdom of the Hijaz and of Najd and its
> Dependencies shall be changed to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and our
> title from now on shall be King of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia ' (Rentz,
> 1980 30)

Unlike other Arab nations which bore the brunt of Western imperialism, Saudi Arabia

thus escaped the injurious effects of occupation by a Western power Moreover, Ibn

Saud had succeeded in uniting together four regions previously torn apart by rampant

disorganisation and diverse tribal customs, traditions and interests

It was during these years that Saudi-Western relations were formed (Alkheraiji, 1994)

> 'Saudi-British relations from 1915 through till 1950 were mainly concerned
> with the fulfilment of boundary agreements concluded between them,
> while Saudi-American relations remained purely commercial This can be

largely attributed to America's policy of isolation and non-involvement in
World affairs at that time ' (Alfarsy, 1980 35)

Abdulaziz continued to build on his relations with the west until his death in 1953 It was

during his reign that a group of Californian geologists realised that the whole peninsula

was floating on oil With the discovery of oil in Eastern Saudi Arabia by an American

company in 1938, the economic transformation of Saudi Arabia and the process of

modernisation was about to begin

Following his death, Ibn Saud was succeeded by his sons, Saud, Faisal, Khalid and Fahd

Saud abdicated in 1964 in favour of Faisal who had had considerable control over

foreign and economic policy during Saud's reign After Faisal's assassination by his

nephew in 1975, Khalid assumed control and on his death in 1982, Fahd became King

5. The Constitution

In a position with few parallels in the modern world, Saudi Arabia has no formal,

written constitution

> 'Saudi Arabian culture, civilisation and socio-political organisation are
> coterminous with Islam Only when this is understood can the essence of
> the Saudi policy and the pervasive intensity of the unbroken Islamic
> continuum be appreciated ' (Alfarsy, 1986 9)

Religion, therefore, is the very core of the Saudi Government's existence Since the

formation of the Kingdom in 1932, the Quran has been accepted by the Saudis as the

fundamental constitutional document This became established in the eyes of the world

in 1992, when King Fahd issued three royal decrees instituting a Basic Law which

defined the systems of government and set up a Consultative Council (Majlis Al-Shura)

In a further move to create a political infrastructure, King Fahd also announced the

creation of a provincial consultative council and defined the government structure, the means of succession of future rulers and domestic and foreign policy In the same document, he formally declared that Saudi Arabia is an Arab and Islamic Kingdom, with its own language Arabic, its own religion Islam, and its own constitution the Quran and the teachings of the Prophet Mohammad These works embody not only the constitution but the main tenets of the Islamic Shariah Islam therefore defines the government's ideological basis

6. Government Structure

6.1. The King

As an absolute monarch with centralised power, the King is Head of State, Prime Minister, Commander-in-chief of the security and military force, and Imam - leader of the Muslims His power is limited only by the Shariah and the norms of the society he reigns over

6.2. The Ulama

The *Ulama* are the political core and religious backbone of the Saudi government When it is considered that the formation of Saudi Arabia began in the fifteenth century with a political/religious liaison, it becomes clear that religious leaders are central to the political system Consisting of a non-hierarchical group of religious men and with a long history in the socio-political and legal systems of the country, it is chiefly responsible for the judicial system With the power invested in them they may issue a *Fatwa*, and any legal judgement which is passed is issued by this body, whose authority is endorsed in the Quran 'O true believer, obey God and obey the prophet and those who are in

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authority among you' (3 59) According to Alfarsy (1990), the *Ulama's* role in Saudi

society also includes the implementation of the principles of *Shariah*, provision of

religious jurisprudence, guidance and education, the spreading of the Islamic message

outside Saudi Arabia and supervision of the mosques

> 'The Ulama can be defined as a religious and conservative group,
> traditionally conceived of by the government as the guardian of the Islam
> orthodoxy in governmental political decisions ' (Najai, 1982 34)

While the country's leaders advocate obedience to the *Ulama,* the *Ulama* upholds

allegiance to them in return This alliance has ensured political and social stability during

times of crisis, such as the Gulf War when the *Ulama* issued a *Fatwa* which gave the

King power to appeal for foreign military assistance, with the support of the *Ulama* he

was able to maintain a consensus

6.3. The Council of Ministers

Headed by the King, the Council of Ministers is the highest authority in the country it

is through this body that the King's power is discharged Under King Abdulaziz, the

administration of the country was divided into two geographical regions Central and

East, and the Western Province To govern the Western Province, the King created two

bodies, the Consultative Council and the Council of Deputies The latter, however, was

replaced in 1953 by the Council of Ministers This new body then underwent a series of

modifications over the years to finally arrive at its present state Currently comprising

twenty-eight members, the Council is appointed by the King and has responsibility in

both legislative and executive affairs Although the council strictly adheres to a principle

of majority rule in its voting procedures, the King, in his capacity as Prime Minister, has

the power of veto, which can be exercised within thirty days of any decision At present,

the Council is headed by King Fahd while Crown Prince Abdullah acts as First Deputy Prime Minister, and Prince Sultan is the Second Deputy Prime Minister

6.4. The Consultative Council (Majlis Al-Shura)

The Consultative Council, in its original state, was established by King Abdulaziz, but was suspended some years later In 1993, developing historical circumstances and the need for a degree of political participation necessitated the re-establishment of the Council in a new form In July, 1997, King Fahd declared an increase from sixty members to ninety members plus chairman They include retired senior officers from the armed forces, dignitaries, retired senior civil servants, academics, administrators, journalists and writers, two members of the Shia minority, religious conservatives and religious progressives These members are chosen by the King for their wisdom, specialised knowledge and expertise in issues important to Saudi Arabia In the belief that a Western-style democracy was inappropriate for the Saudi people, King Fahd stated

> 'The free vote system is not suitable to our country because the Kingdom
> is the symbol of Islam and the two holy mosques Democracy is suitable
> to the West but not the whole world ' (Alkheraiji, 1994 73)

The Shura serves as an advisory body to the King on various issues related to domestic and foreign policy and carries out an inspectorate function with government agencies and departments According to Saudi law, new members will be added every four years with half the previous members remaining

6.5. The Judicial System

In 1927, a Royal Decree effected the union of the judicial system in Saudi Arabia Since

then, despite legislation in 1952, there has been little change to the basic system The law

of Islam (Shariah) is the law of the land and is administered by the courts The primary

concern of these courts is family inheritance and property Then there is a commercial

court the Committee for the Settlement of Commercial Disputes In addition, there are

specialised courts, each with its own individual area One deals with labour and

employment matters, there is the Negotiable Instruments Committee, which is concerned

with financial matters, and the Board of Grievances, which handles cases involving the

government and its agencies, and foreign court judgements

6.6. Regional Government

In 1993, thirteen provinces were designated, each governed by an Amir with ministerial

rank As stipulated in the Basic Law of 1992, each province has a consultative council,

the Majlis Almantiqa, which meets quarterly In addition, Saudi Arabia is divided into

five administrative regions with each one governed by a Governor or a Prince This

demarcation was necessitated by the modernisation process to ensure that each region

is given equal attention in the development programmes Alfarsy (1990) outlines the

objectives of the Fifth Development Plan (1990-95) for each region

> '[ ] to realise a balanced development between the different regions of
> the Kingdom, through 1 considering the development centres as a basis
> for regional development, according to the defined standards, 2 complete
> utilisation of the services and utilities in the different regions of the
> Kingdom ' (Alfarsy, 1990 51)

It is the role of the five regional governors to ensure that this materialises in their

individual territories

7. The Economy: The Development Programmes

Until the oil revenues began to pour in, the Saudi approach to building an economic infrastructure was virtually non-existent Its main source of income was the annual Hajj to Makkah and there was therefore no need to provide for other revenues Suddenly, in the 1950s, the situation required a radical rethink The ways and means by which to import, export and store crude oil needed vast improvement Seaports, airports and refineries had to be constructed With a massive influx of oil-based wealth, Saudi Arabia had become more and more dependent on imports, which placed a further strain on the transport and communications systems New ministries were established to deal with this, and so a more modern economic infrastructure began to take shape (Lackner, 1978)

According to El Mallakh (1982 141)

> 'Ideas about planning in Saudi Arabia date back to 1958 when it was
> found necessary to inject rationality into the economy after the crisis
> which occurred in 1955-7 '

The economic crisis to which he refers came about after gross over-spending on development projects by the government led to a large borrowing requirement from the SAMA - the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency The deficit led to inflation and a fall in the exchange rate of the Riyal The government then ran up debts with American banks to the sum of 92 million dollars, resulting in a general lack of confidence in the economy Businessmen withdrew their interests King Faisal, therefore, took corrective action, persuading ARAMCO to act as guarantors, he managed to delay the debt repayment He then cut back extra government spending, financial aid to other Arab countries and introduced the first national budget (Lacey, 1987, El Mallakh, 1982) Having successfully stabilised the economy, in 1958 he adopted a more proactive

approach and formed an economic development committee which paved the way for the

first phase of economic development

The chosen model for economic development was the Five Year Plan, a concept which

had its origins in the post World War II period in the West In the 1970s these plans

were imitated by a number of developing countries, but the financial limitations of these

countries and their political instability led to the plans' failure In contrast, development

programmes in Saudi Arabia were supported by oil-derived wealth, and stability

7.1. The Five-Year Development Plans

King Faisal's perception of the development of his country is revealed in his own words

> 'Our religion requires us to progress and advance and to bear the burden
> of the highest tradition and best manners What is called progressiveness
> in the world today, and what the reformers are calling for, be it social,
> human or economic progress, is all embodied in the Islamic religion '
> (cited in Alfarsy, 1980 38)

7.1.1. The First Five-Year Plan (1970-1975)

The profound meaning of the First Five-Year Development Plan was encapsulated by

King Faisal when he asserted

> 'Like it or not, we must join the modern world and find an honourable
> place in it ' (Gaskill, 1967, cited in Alfarsy, 1980 118)

Thus, in 1970, the government formulated the first of a series of Five-Year Plans

spanning a total of twenty years at the cost of $800 million and financed entirely by oil

revenues The primary objective was to build and improve the country's infrastructure,

encompassing agriculture, industry, energy, labour, transport, commerce, mining, defence,

education, and national security, among other aspects of the society This first plan was

also aimed at cultural and religious conservation, improving living standards, and maintaining economic and social stability, and focused on increasing the productive capacity of the economy (El Mallakh, 1982) These aims were achieved in part by increasing the growth of Gross Domestic Product and developing human resources

7.1.2. The Second Five-Year Plan (1975-1980)

When this development plan was formulated, the main goal was to reduce the dependency on oil revenues through the establishment of new industries $142 billion dollars was spent on economic and social development, defence, administration and foreign aid As a result of this plan there were further developments in human resources and non-petroleum industries (Alfarsy, 1986)

7.1.3. The Third Five-Year Plan (1980-1985)

The third plan was devised in order to redress the economic balance even further Still heavily dependent on oil revenues, the country required changes in the economy to conserve its fuel resources and to ensure long-term economic stability in this particular export The idea was that the potentially steady supply of revenues would then finance current and future development projects One such project was the development of the petrochemical, pharmaceutical and other heavy industries and the exploitation of their potential in foreign markets Under the control of the Saudi Arabian Basic Industries Corporation (SABIC) these industries advanced dramatically during this period Attention was also given to agricultural progress The Saudi people were encouraged to participate in the progress of their country on both national and regional levels by a greater focus on social welfare lower income groups were taken into consideration too

with improvements in social services (Alfarsy, 1990)

7.1.4. The Fourth Five-Year Plan (1985-1990)

This plan was to devised to build on aspects of the previous one Firstly, there was a focus on making economic use of the country's resources and developing viable alternatives Secondly, more attention was given to production in various industries at local and secondary levels, there was also a drive to ensure that foreign contracts were awarded to local companies Next, a plan formulated to reduce the number of unskilled foreign workers was put into effect Finally, the development plan was targeted at the private sector to encourage it to invest in economic development (Alfarsy, 1990)

7.1.5. The Fifth Five-Year Plan (1990-1995)

The objectives of this plan were somewhat different from earlier development drives At the centre of attention was the need to bridge the gap between tradition and modernity so that while the principles of the Shariah were still advocated, the people were encouraged to receive training, cultural awareness and information This in turn would support earlier plans to promote the human resource element of the society and maintain a qualified and experienced indigenous workforce

7.1.6. The Current Five-Year Plan (1995-2000)

This plan continues the emphasis on developing the private sector and aims at the increased growth and indigenisation of the workforce Saudi Arabia has gradually been forced to depend more and more on foreign manpower in order to implement earlier plans and to provide the necessary skills and expertise required to resource its expanding

industries However, this is not without negative consequences for the economy and the society Affecting the economy, foreign workers often require foreign imports, undermining the policy to reduce dependency in this area In an attempt to reduce Western influence the government has adopted a shifting policy to establish links with other competing firms in developing countries rather than the West (Lackner, 1978) Many of these new workers are politically neutral and are not looking for residency Meanwhile, the development of the indigenous workforce is an on-going issue Other areas being dealt with are Saudi Arabia's defence capacity, balanced economic development and the protection of the environment

Media facilities and communication network infrastructure were the targets for ambitious development plans but what has been missing is the use of the media as a platform to encourage Saudis to participate in the development of their country, and as tools for raising awareness In addition, the media have not been harnessed to catalyse support and backing for government policies and actions

8. Education

The educational system is free and provides not only education but also books and a health service The standard practice is for a child to be enrolled first at primary school for six years, followed by three years at intermediate school and then three more at high school before progressing to university or college There are two types of high school one offering arts and science subjects, the other, vocational training Girls are educated separately from boys In 1995, there were 815,000 pupils enrolled at intermediate school, 447,000 at high school and 9,578 enrolled for vocational training In addition, there are

4,550 pupils attending one of more than thirty special schools for children with special educational needs As far as further education is concerned, in 1996 it was estimated that there were 2,343 adult education centres and seven universities These institutes are attended by over 90,1207 students Finally, the adult literacy rate is just under 62% (Statesman's Yearbook, 1998-1999)

Prior to unification in 1932, education had been concentrated in religious schools, either Katatib (writing schools) or Halagat (seminar style schools) and lesson content revolved purely around the Quran The process of modernisation, however, demanded a more modern educational system which could train and empower the Saudis to participate in the development of their society Furthermore, the government aimed at reducing levels of illiteracy In conjunction with the Five-Year Plans, it hoped to develop scientific and technical capabilities in the new generation, thereby training Saudi people to take over the tasks of the foreign workforces The educational reforms which took place were facilitated and expedited by a number of components the import of educational technology, training abroad for students and teachers, positive encouragement from the government in the form of free education, and the financial investment into the construction of schools and the purchase of equipment and materials

In order to succeed in their reforms, the government had to surmount a number of impediments The first of these was the fact that the nomads, the indigenous population of Saudi Arabia, are a people who are rooted in their traditions and would not succumb readily to change The next problem was a lack of educators and trainers in Saudi Arabia In addition, there was strong objection from the religious element to a modern,

Western form of education, and objection from the conservative element who feared that public education would result in discontent and unrest, and especially opposed the establishment of girls' schools believing this would divert them from their duties as wives and mothers This opposition ignored the fact that the Quran advocates the search for knowledge for all Muslims To resolve these issues, the government integrated the Bedouins through projects promoting a more sedentary way of life, set up teacher training colleges and reformed the educational system The conservative element conceded opposition to education contradicts the teachings of the Quran and is therefore against the constitution They too began to co-operate with the government

9. Islamic Tradition, Culture and Modernisation in Saudi Arabia

Giddens (1989) stated that the concept of culture comprises the values held by the members of a particular society or group, the accepted norms that they follow and what the group creates in terms of material products It is also consists of the ideas and habits which are learned, shared and diffused through generations It is a collection of shared concepts To surrender any one of these components would amount to surrendering a part of the society's unique social identity

> 'Most developing countries of the world risk the loss of their cultural identity while modern transformation takes place Alien societal norms and values inconsistent with these nations' heritage and cultures seem to overwhelm indigenous values ' (Alfarsy, 1986)

> 'Napoleon's invasion of Egypt, in 1798, dramatically introduced French liberal thought into the Middle East This invasion posed a direct challenge to the peoples of the Middle East and revealed the wide cultural chasm between Europeans and Easterners ' (Salem, 1973 3)

Although some Arab writers have unlimited faith in modernisation as a mood of change

in their backward societies, they tend to confuse it with Westernisation, which they then

import and implement in a rather mechanical fashion Elie Salem (1973) contributes to

the defining of modernisation In his opinion

> 'Modernisation is defined as the process by which a country adopts, transforms, or replaces its traditional institutions and patterns of life under the influence of the new science and technology that arose during the renaissance in Western Europe ' (Salem, 1973 2)

In fact, the process of adopting and implanting any modern ideas or practices does not

always necessitate the compromising of local beliefs, values and culture, especially when

there are few contradictions arising as a result of this adoption process

The call for cultural authenticity is not necessarily the rejection of all that modernity has

to offer As Lee (1997) states

> 'The cry for authenticity does not usually reflect a wish to halt spread of modernity and restore a traditional society that disappeared long ago Rather, it wants the tiger tamed, it seeks a modernity rendered less arbitrary, less vicious, more comprehensible, and above all, more productive of lifestyles people would recognise as spiritually as well as materially satisfying ' (Lee, 1997 75)

Faced with the apparent dichotomy between forces of modernisation - bringing with

them imported Western ideology - and forces of religious principles and Islamic

tradition, the people of Saudi Arabia vary in their views and opinions Modernists claim

that the two are not irreconcilable but that the religious element and the *Ulama* are

perhaps too rigid and should reduce their influence The Islamists believe that religion

must be the overriding factor shaping the society Sayed Ali, Head of the Islamic Affairs

Committee in the Egyptian parliament, maintained that

> 'Islam is not against modernisation, but when modernisation aims at fulfilling only materialistic needs while disregarding moral matters, it always ends up breaking down the structure of society ' (Bashir, 1991 55)

Nevertheless, economic and global communication developments have made it inevitable that the Saudi people are and will be exposed to and influenced by Western values and ideologies The question is whether the two can be reconciled Islamist movements do criticise certain disagreeable aspects of modernity, but they criticise tradition too and attempt to fit modernity into their definition of authentic Islam 'Authentic thought constitutes a revolt against both modernity and tradition' (Lee, 1997 75) Society is seen as being under threat of saturation with materialism, consumerism and moderation The danger implies indulging in a sensual materialistic life with the relentless struggle to maximise the pleasures and to be possessed by the need of pleasure and the industry that perpetuates it An alternative viewpoint is presented by Mansfield (1981), who described the modernisation of the peninsula thus

> 'In the Arabian Peninsula, an impoverished semi-nomadic society is being
> transformed in a single generation into one that can deal with the
> advanced industrial nations of the world on an equal footing Moreover,
> the attempt is being made to carry out this monumentally difficult task
> without the loss of the people's identity or the essential values The past
> of the New Arabians is important to them because of their lively
> awareness of their place in the mingled strands of Arab and Islamic
> history ' (Mansfield, 1981 151)

To develop some insight into what exactly is being influenced or even, as conservatives would claim, threatened, it is useful to examine some of the components, past and present, that make up the society, the sources of its religious and cultural values, habits and traditions, and to see what measures are being taken by the society and its institutions to resolve ideological warfare, and to reconcile the forces of tradition and modernity

9.1 Islam

Saudi Arabia is considered by Muslims as the repository of Islam, the birthplace and the keeper of the faith for the entire Muslim world. Under King Abudulaziz, the unification of the peninsula tribes took place and Islam was the unifying factor which led to the formation of one cohesive nation (Alfarsy, 1986). As stated earlier, the Quran and the laws of Shariah provide the religious, legal and political systems of the country.

9.1.1. The Constitutional Sources

The Quran

> 'If we had sent down this Quran upon a mountain, you would have seen it humbled, split asunder out of fear of Allah.' (Quran, 59:21)

There are two main sources of social legislation in Islam. One is the Quran, the text of which is a record of the revelations that came to the Prophet Muhammad. Its final compilation is attributed to the third Caliph Uthman, who collected and incorporated the records in one volume soon after the Prophet's death. It contains a comprehensive system of ideas which range across the whole of life, the worship of God, the nature of man, and the way he should live. It also serves as a guide for the individual, the family and the community to the way in which they should conduct their affairs. When the issue of conflict between Islam and modernity is addressed, 'There is no value for any judgement or exposition not based on genuine Islamic concepts and the Shariah' (Alqaradawi, 1995:28). The Quran says, in this respect: 'If you differ on anything among yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger, if you do believe in Allah and the Last Day' (4:59). The Quran has been protected from changes and manipulations and kept literally and verbatim the way it was revealed to the Prophet Mohammad. The Quran says: 'We have, without doubt, sent down the message; and we will assuredly guard it

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[from corruption]' (15 9) However, the Quran is not a limited instruction, there are guiding principles open to any number of valid interpretations and many Muslim societies aim to re-express Islamic ideology in modern terms It is this inherent quality that has enabled Saudi society to ensure continuity of faith in the midst of change There is a firm belief amongst many Muslims that the Quran is as capable of making its contribution to the advancement of man today as it was in the early centuries The manner in which the Quran has been successfully implemented to provide an Islamic foundation for manifestations of the modernisation process will be discussed in the next sections

Islamic principles derived from the Quran define most aspects of the judicial system The recommendations and prohibitions on business and financial dealings are founded in Islamic law These include principles of taxation (*zakah*), social welfare, quality control of manufactured goods, transfer of goods, economic transactions, and laws of property succession, among many other aspects of business and property law A breach of the law can therefore be equated with religious transgression The law thus has an extra force witnessed in few other nations rather than opposing or hindering the new system, Islamic law defines and reinforces it

There are no contradictions between Islam and advanced technology and science The search for knowledge is a duty in Islam and Islamic law defends the right to be educated This can also be interpreted as fostering, even encouraging innovation In the Quran, innovation is not prohibited provided it is for the good of society and provided that justice and morality prevail

The Islamic model of economic growth implies that the basic needs of all members of

society must be provided for, there should be a system of reward for those who

contribute the most and, as development takes place, values must be preserved The

Islamic economic order is founded on private ownership and free enterprise, with

safeguards against monopoly, corruption, and illegitimate trade practices, so is the Saudi

economic system

The Sunnah: The sayings and the deeds of the Prophet Mohammad

> 'Referring every aspect of life to Allah and to His Messenger, which
> means referring them to His Book, the Quran, and to the Sunnah of the
> Prophet ' (Alqaradawi, 1995 86)

The second source of social legislation is the *Sunnah*, the 'custom' of the Prophet his

words and his actions His personal life was recorded in detail by his companions Each

of his sayings is known as a *hadith* It provides a constant and consistent guide to

prevent misinterpretation of the divine law The Quran says

> 'If you differ on anything among yourselves, refer it to Allah and His
> Messenger, if you do believe in Allah and the Last Day ' (4 59)

Without such authentication based on Shariah, there would be too many opinions

reflecting personal interests and human prejudices The Quran says

> 'If the truth had been in accord with their desires, truly the heavens and
> the earth and all the beings therein would have been in confusion and
> corruption ' (23·71)

9.1.2. The Five Pillars of the Islamic Faith

The route towards spiritual development rests in *iman* or faith, Islam literally means

'submission, obedience and surrender' referring to man's submission to the will of God

and an undertaking to live his life according to His commandments and His will Five principles, known as the 'Pillars' which form the basis of Islam define the basic duties of every Muslim

Shahadah - This pillar concerns the first and foremost duty, the profession of faith by which one becomes a Muslim, which means the believing and pronouncing of the *Shahdatin* as follows

> 'I bear witness that there is no God but Allah and Mohammad is his messenger '

This profession in its utterance affirms that a Muslim is entering not only a spiritual community, but also a sociopolitical community with legal and moral obligations *Shahada* relates to the principle of *tawhid*, the unity of God and is a form of witnessing that there is no God but Allah According to *tawhid*, God is the Creator, Sustainer and Master of the universe and of everything that exists in it Life and the control of life have been given by God and it is He who decides the purpose of man's existence and determines the limits of authority *Shahada* is not the payment of lipservice but confirmation of belief in and commitment to these tenets

Salah - This refers to prayer to bring man in communion with God Muslims must pray five times a day in order to maintain and enhance their consciousness of remembrance, fear, love, divine commands, and to prepare them for obedience to God In *salah*, a Muslim reiterates these tenets and increases his spiritual and religious awareness As a community religion, *salah* should be carried out not only individually but with other members of the congregation to foster the spiritual development of the community Prior

to the practice of Salah, *wudu* or 'ablution' must be performed, thus *salah* is prayer, discipline and hygiene, spirituality and practicality, knowledge and virtue

Soum (The Fast of Ramadan) - The ninth month of the Muslim calendar is the month of fasting From sunrise to sunset, neither food nor water may be taken It is a time of discipline and reflection, a time when rifts are healed and families are brought together at sunset for prayers and to break the fast During this time, each Muslim is trained individually and as part of a community in righteousness and self restraint It serves as a leveller in society, a time when both rich and poor experience hunger and hardship in order to please God Rather than impose a temporary cessation to all entertainment during this month, the broadcasting industry complements the tone of Ramadan by incorporating appropriate programmes into their schedules during the day and, increasingly, during the evening As a consequence, evening schedules have become saturated with entertainment shows which, in the opinion of the Islamists, are excessive and contain themes which are inappropriate to this month The issues surrounding the programming schedule for Ramadan will be analysed in chapter VI At the end of Ramadan, the yearly payment of alms or *zakah* is paid This is known as *zakah elfitr*, an obligation on every Muslim, irrespective of age, who has sufficient means to distribute food or the equivalent amount of money to the poor and needy at the end of Ramadan

Zakah - In addition, there is a further almsgiving or *zakah* to be paid, not necessarily during Ramadan, but annually, and this is an obligation to distribute a certain percentage of annual savings or capital in goods or money to the poor and needy The traditional

percentage is 2 5% on accumulated wealth and on invested capital, 5-10% on agricultural produce, and 20% on certain mineral products The purpose is to develop in both the individual and in the community a sense of mutual sacrifice, love, sympathy and co-operation Although it is often described as a tax, the underlying spirit differs from taxation altogether, the real meaning of *zakah* is sublimity and purification, reflecting the perception that poverty and misery are caused, in part, by the evil in human souls Thus, the donation that a Muslim gives, if he is inspired by a true love of God as opposed to obligation, will help to uplift and purify his soul In recent years *zakah* has played a large part in plans for an Islamic economic order and a tax system consistent with Islamic tradition

Hajj - This last Pillar of Faith relates to the pilgrimage to Makkah - to be performed once in a lifetime by every Muslim who possesses the physical ability and the financial means Every year, roughly two million people from all over the world, including dignitaries from other Muslim states, congregate at Makkah to fulfil their duty to go on a pilgrimage or *Hajj* to the holiest city The King moves from Riyadh to lead the pilgrimage, and government headquarters are transferred here to ensure that the season passes safely and smoothly The spirit of *Hajj* is one of total sacrifice, sacrifice of personal comforts, pleasures, acquisition of wealth and personal appearance, pride relating to social background, and so forth *Hajj* also signifies the brotherhood of all Muslims as demonstrated in this huge international assembly Saudi Arabia, as host to this poignant occasion, has an enormous responsibility to maintain its own standards as the flagship of Islam in this respect Every year, all *Hajj* activities are broadcast live and free of charge from the holy sites via satellite systems to any country wishing to

rebroadcast the events Another significant outcome of the reciprocal relationship between Islam and progress occurred in the 1980s, when the wealth from the oil revenues enabled the government to embark on a programme of building to complete the expansion of the Great Mosque in Makkah and the Prophet Mosque in Madinah to admit hundreds of thousands of worshippers in their courts at one time

9.1.3. Islam as a Complete and Comprehensive Way of Life

Islam signifies a complete way of life which cannot be subdivided and cannot function smoothly unless a Muslim lives his whole life in accordance with it The Shariah prescribes the code for such aspects of life and social order as economic, political and judicial affairs, morals, habits and personal character, religious rituals, family and social relationships, administration, rights and duties of the individual, and national and international relations

> 'In contrast to Christianity, Islam is not merely private communion with God and individual solution in the hereafter, but is public as well as private, social as well as individual, demanding that every aspect of society be moulded in conformity with very definite and specific cultural patterns ' (Jameelah, 1967 272)

An important aspect of Islam is its universality, an Islamic community is multi-national, polyglot and comprises individuals who are not just Muslims, but Christians and Jews, etc, living together under the legal and social system of Islam As a religion, Islam does not adopt a contradictory attitude towards other God-sent religions God's guidance has been disseminated through a succession of messengers and prophets who are all acknowledged and revered by Muslims, but Islam is seen as the consummation of all religions

However, the main aspect of Islam in its additional meaning of 'salvation and peace' is that it does not distinguish between the spiritual and the secular but aims to shape the individual and society to establish peace and contentment in the world - the Kingdom of God on earth Anyone, if he believes in God and accepts the guidance of the Prophets as the law of his life, can become a member of this community and will have equal rights and social status regardless of race, nationality, language or class distinctions Islam, therefore, is a social order which transcends cultural and geographic boundaries and barriers Those who do not accept the creed or moral code are regarded with tolerance as sharing the common ties of humanity and are guaranteed universal fundamental rights

Islam is an ideological society, uniquely different from those founded on race, colour or territory, and the Islamic way of life reflects a distinct concept of man's place in the universe The belief is that all human beings are equal and form one brotherhood The Quran says

'O mankind, We have created you all of a male and a female, and have
made you races and tribes, that you may recognise one another ' (49 13)

In essence, everyone originates from this couple While Islam does not ignore diversification or differences in ideas, beliefs and principles, it does not accept prejudices based on gender, colour, race, language and nationality, nor superiority founded on these As human beings we are all descended from the same parentage, all men and women are brothers and sisters and therefore equal and guaranteed the same basic human rights The concept of equality is reflected in the Islamic desire to remove obstacles to security, success and prosperity While there is no equality in wealth or material possessions, and in fact, Islam believes in natural inequality, there is equality

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in opportunity to access these with effort and ability

Regarding social justice, everyone is entitled to be treated fairly, irrespective of differences Individuals have equal rights to freedom and to live and work in peace Islam recognises that individuals are subject to limitations and may lack the necessary means and abilities to succeed Through its moral injunctions, Islam guarantees assistance to the weak and weary, to people who are unable to take part in economic competition, for example, in the form of *zakah*, as mentioned earlier This guarantee is a form of social insurance which safeguards members of the Islamic community from being forced into unacceptable conditions of labour for fear of starvation, and ensures that proper medical care is available to all In addition, there is an obligation enforced by the Islamic state on every Muslim to deal fairly and honestly with those he conducts business with, those he employs and the community as a whole

Islam also promotes individuality and individual freedom within the community to foster the development of personality, intellect, talent However, the aim is the growth of the community and therefore Islam does not sanction the misappropriation of wealth nor any act performed at the expense of the good of the community

Islam has adopted the middle course of moderation freedom from extravagance and extremes The individual manoeuvres himself within the accepted moral and social framework within which he has complete freedom Virtue is seen as achieving the balance The Quran says

> 'Thus we have made you a moderate nation that ye may be witness over
> all nations ' (2 143)

Excess and deficiency signify imbalance and are not permitted The Quran says

'Who created everything, then ordained for it a measure [   ]'(25 2), and
'Keep up the balance with equity and do not make the measure deficient '
(55 9)

Idle luxury, wastefulness and arrogance are seen as flouting principles of moderation and are therefore not permitted, thus consumerism and materialism are strongly discouraged Islam advocates freedom to earn wealth only by means through which a person offers a genuine and useful service to the community Engaging in prayer is seen as an opportunity for man to detach himself from material indulgence and embrace spiritual purity At the opposite end of the moderation spectrum, asceticism and monasticism are also prohibited as not being conducive to the unity of the Islamic community or the practice of *tawhid*

The spirit of moderation with regard to fasting means that fasting is not total abstinence but a short period of deprivation during which an individual may still pursue material and physical needs while working towards spiritual growth The right path constitutes the enjoyment of things which are beautiful, pure and good within the limits of Shariah, an action which is regarded as an act of piety and signifies faith in Allah

In issues of morality, Islam aims to establish an ideological society with a high level of moral awareness The family is an essential cornerstone of the Islamic social order and many tenets of the Islamic faith are designed to protect this social unit Extra-marital sex, *zina*, is forbidden and punishable, all routes to *zina* are obstructed, and whatever facilitates the path to *zina* is eliminated For this reason, promiscuity is prohibited as is indiscriminate contact between opposite sexes The *hijab* prescribes essential regulations

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which are meant to protect Muslim females from gazing males and to cover their beauty and attractiveness, which must not be revealed to male strangers Thus, Islam advocates proactive and reactive measures including social rules, moral persuasions and punitive solutions, in order to preserve the moral code and protect the family from corrupt influences This raises the issue of sexual themes in television programmes which, as described in chapter I, Islamists believe may provoke lustful thoughts, stimulate the contemplation of illegal acts, or encourage viewers to indulge in unlawful sexual contact Such content will be examined and discussed in the content analysis chapter

9.1.4. Entertainment: an Islamic perspective

Time in Islam is of great importance In fact, so much importance is attributed to it that Almighty Allah in the Quran takes an oath by time and says *Wal-Asri* - 'By the token of time' A Muslim is not permitted to waste time, more so when the wasting of time on an activity or pastime involves interference with or neglect of one's duties to Allah and man (Shakir, 1997) The main purpose of creating a human race and jinns (genies), according to the Quran, is to worship Allah The Quran says

'I have only created jinns and men that they may serve me ' (51 56)

Everyone is held accountable and responsible for his time and his wealth before Allah Islam does not tolerate futility nor idle sport and amusement This is based on the belief that amusement and entertainment divert one's attention from the remembrance of Allah or *Diker* It also interferes with one's worship causing neglect of prayer, in general, and the congregational prayers The Prophet Mohammad said

'A servant of Allah will remain standing on the day of judgement until he
is questioned about his life and how he spent it, and about his knowledge

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and how he utilised it, and about his wealth, and from where he acquired
it and in what way he spent it, and about his body as to how he used it '
(At-Tirmidhi, 1980 220)

This is one of the principal concerns reiterated by Islamists when discussing the

entertainment aspect of television Amusement and entertainment which Islam describes

as *Lahw wa Laib* make a person indolent, negligent and irresponsible The Quran says

'The life of this world is but play and amusement (Lahw wa Laib) and the
abode of the hereafter is best for those who fear Allah ' (6 32)

It is also reported in the Sunnah that

'Every sport or amusement that a Muslim occupies himself with is a
"Baatil" (baseless, null and not permissible) except three his practising
with a bow and arrow, training a horse and playing with his family ' (Ibn
Majah 2/132, No 2267)

The Prophet also strongly condemns chess and backgammon in the following hadith

'Whosoever plays with chess and backgammon is like one who has dyed
his hand with the flesh and blood of swine ' (Muslim 4/122, No 5612)

Islamic scholars, by analogy, have extended this rule to apply to other activities in

modern times, including watching television (Shakir, 1997)

9.2. Tribal and Family Values

Originally a nomadic culture, many Saudis are still affiliated to their tribes and identified

within them, thus tribal and family values underpin many of Saudi Arabia's traditions

The individual is responsible to the family, which is responsible to the tribe or

community, and loyalties to both tribe and family have always been steadfast Within

these social units, children receive social education and learn about the traditions and

values of their country

Traditionally, the extended family formed an essential societal unit The larger the

family, the more able they were to manage the land they lived on and to produce food It therefore had an important economic function, while its political function was concerned with the preservation of its territory, that is, defending it from tribal attack Finally, the larger the family, the higher their status Urbanisation has therefore induced a breakdown in the extended family as a societal unit and in tribal traditions The nuclear family is much more commonplace and consequently there is less tribal or kinship influence The more the society is urbanised, the less binding extended family ties become Coupled with the growth of social welfare and the expanding role of government agencies and businesses, many family functions are now redundant, for example, economic cooperation has decreased and there are more marriages outside the family In addition, the adoption of new technology in the home has afforded the family more time to spend with each other and with members of the larger family

According to tribal values, while the tribe was ruled by a Sheikh, there was a hierarchy of respect and power according to age The youngest members of the family must show respect to the eldest, which is consistent with Islamic ruling

> 'In primitive (let's say earliest) societies, the fact that as people get older they pass through socially recognised statuses is usually of much greater structural significance than in industrial societies, and, as a result, is usually symbolically recognised ' (Bilton *et al*, 1987 47)

However, the new generation are assimilating a different, more Western set of values and principles through exposure to the media, and particularly to imported television content The resulting confusion is inevitable as they are influenced by different persuasions This exposure to Western life has also created a cultural gap between generations and within society and the family unit Advances in technology are regarded as essential for development but there is widespread fear of the retrogression in

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character that often seems to accompany it While the older generations perceive some aspects of modernisation as a possible threat to their values and traditions, the new generation believe it is necessary to embrace it if they are to survive in a modern world The continued influx of foreign media can thus be seen as an essential part of perpetuating the development drive, but brings with it increased dependency Furthermore, while traditionalists strive to protect the culture and instil a sense of cultural identity in the new generation, the youth feel the pressure of materialistic options, competition, and alternative cultural options Paradoxically, exposure to alien cultures is necessary if Saudi society is to function in a modern world, yet to preserve its own values, it has to draw and maintain cultural boundaries The manner in which the Saudi government and the Ministry of Information have approached this dichotomy, and the tensions which have resulted, will be examined in the course of this study

With the educational reforms and the inception of the media, children are now exposed to different and varying influences As far as formal education is concerned, the government has had to develop their human resources through education and training to indigenise the workforce, but traditional work ethics prevail Traditionally, manual labour is regarded as degrading, Saudi people generally aspire to employment in government administration The new generation is therefore perceived as not being sufficiently motivated or socially prepared to participate in more manual work The influx of wealth has partly removed the desire of some Saudis to work for a living, as has the fact that there is an ever-present foreign workforce performing manual tasks instead The modernisation process has been literally and metaphorically described as 'a jump from a camel's back into a Cadillac' (Philip, 1984 xiii) This passion for cars has

motivated many Saudis to become mechanics, electricians and engineers, but they could not perform these tasks without education and training Again, the problem emerges that development and technological advancement require the assistance and input of foreign expertise in the training of the indigenous workforce The consequences of this, as previously discussed, include an increased dependency on the more developed nations which impart their knowledge, the importation of foreign products, including media content, and the subsequent dependency on imported resources in order to continue the development process Finally, as described earlier in this study, the increased dependency on foreign media content stimulates conflicting viewpoints among the Islamists, culturalists and modernists, and puts pressure on the government to attempt to please all the people all the time From the point of view of local production in Saudi Arabia, the resulting constraints partly serve to stymie its potential This issue is examined in more detail in chapters VII-IX

In taking proactive measures to minimise any negative effects of the infiltration of alien values, the government has ensured that from the moment children start school, traditional values and principles are upheld and taught, not only by the educational institution but by society and the family too, in order to build a firm foundation The Fourth Development Plan (1985-1990) made the household accountable for disseminating and nurturing the cultural, religious and social education of the children The mosques, schools and media are expected to sustain and guide family life in these areas In this way, there is an ubiquitous diffusion of Islamic laws, beliefs, tribal concepts and traditional values and while this does not eliminate confusion, it establishes the norm to be followed, and the points of departure However, the success or failure of

these institutions is contingent upon a number of circumstances related to management and appropriate allocation of resources, as well as the effective use of the media

9.3. The Role of Women

> 'Due to the vast intercultural chasm which separates West from East, the position and treatment of women in Saudi society have been sensationalised by a judgemental Western press ' (Parssinen, 1980 152)

The traditional place of women in Muslim society is a prominent one, and undue restrictions are generally matters of social custom as opposed to coming from the religion itself According to the Quran, women are equal to men but different in their role In Saudi Arabia, the role of women is rooted in the nomadic cultural tradition that defines many other aspects of Saudi society, and differs greatly from their role in industrialised societies Men and women are separated physically and socially, but women are allowed to own and inherit property and to run their own businesses and work, albeit with restrictions on the type of employment they undertake Economically, both sexes are equal and receive the same salary for the same work A woman, however, is not responsible for the financial maintenance of her family, that is her husband's job or the responsibility of any mature male member of the family The man is also responsible for chaperoning the female members of his family and transporting them to their places of work or study

As with many societies, the woman's duty is to take care of the home However, opportunities for women's employment improved with the implementation of the Fourth Development Plan (1985-1990), which took into account recent advancements in the computer industry and made provisions for women at home to participate in information

technology, allowing them to fulfil their traditional role at the same time In this way, the possibility for women to take part in and contribute towards the development of the country increased Indigenisation of the workforce has further enhanced employment opportunities for women, but their traditional role is preserved as far as possible

Regarding education, in 1960, the government assumed responsibility for introducing a system of public schools for girls throughout the Kingdom (Parssinen, 1980) As part of their reluctance to adopt new ideas, conservatives opposed female education on the basis of nomadic and tribal values After a few years, this resistance abated and the original opponents of female education began a desperate search for public school places for their daughters Women's education is currently given high priority by the government in Saudi Arabia Women may attend university and there is a growing body of skilled professional women There are also literacy programmes which have been developed to target older women but the media have not been involved in the promotion of these projects

Concerning religious practice, women and men have equal rights and equal duties As described briefly in chapter I, the Quran clearly advocates modesty of dress and behaviour for men and women

> 'Say to the believers that they cast down their eyes and guard their private parts, that is purer for them God is aware of the things they work And say to the believing women, that they cast down their eyes and guard their private parts and reveal not their adornment save such as is outward, and let them cast their veils over their bosoms, and not reveal their adornment save to their husbands, or their sons, or their husband's sons, or their brothers or their brother's sons, or their sister's sons, or their women, or what their rights hands own, or such men as attend them, not having sexual desire, or children who have not yet attained knowledge of women's private parts, nor let them stamp their feet, so that heir hidden

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ornament may be known And turn all together to God, O you believers, haply so you will prosper ' (26 30, 31)

'O Prophet, say to thy wives and daughters and the believing women, that they draw their veils close to them, so it is likelier they will be known, and not hurt God is all-forgiving, all-compassionate ' (33 59)

The object of wearing a veil, or *hijab,* is not to restrict women, but to protect them from harm and molestation, and to maintain values of honour, good faith and chastity In Saudi Arabia it is an upheld tradition and exists because those who wear it feel that they are obeying Allah and it has become a part of their tradition and part of their lives, without preventing them from making a social contribution, for example they are still able to work as teachers, nurses and doctors

Women substantiate their role within modern society as the guardians of family observance, in particular the spiritual and moral education of their children If a woman's role is therefore to act as the protector of traditions and morals and safeguard the moral well-being of their children, this role has gained added significance in view of the clash and interaction between tradition and modernity The driving force of 'liberation' for women has had implications for the role of women in Saudi Arabia On the one hand, many fully accept their role in society, and therefore do not perceive imitation of the Western idea of a woman's role as 'liberating' A number believe that there is no need to pursue the Western concept of equality between the sexes, which they feel means erosion of both the importance of motherhood and of loyalty to Islam, and may contradict the perception of being female The female population find a balanced formula for partnership which takes into account their responsibilities, their aptitudes and their potential for contributing to the advancement of society The Quran

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supports this by saying

> 'And their Lord hath accepted of them, and answered them Never will I
> suffer to be lost of the work of any of you, be he male or female Ye are
> members, one of another [ ] ' (2 195)

If women are prevented from doing so it is due to the neglect of religious precept in

political, social and financial institutions and, above all, it is a result of being made

captive to tribal traditions

9.4. Ethnic and Linguistic Homogeneity

Prior to its unification, Saudi Arabia was divided by numerous tribes with diverse

customs and traditions Alfarsy (1990) describes how, these differences notwithstanding,

the population is homogeneous and the people share the same religion, the same

heritage, speak the same language and practise almost identical traditions That is not

to say that there have been no changes, the nomadic population has been transformed

through semi-nomadic stages and settlement and it is now estimated that the Bedouin

population is possibly less than 5% of the total as the government further encourages

urbanisation Nevertheless, there are no minority groups, no minority conflicts and a high

level of homogeneity

> 'In terms of ethnic and linguistic homogeneity, Saudi Arabia is ranked
> 112th among the nations of the world with 94% homogeneity (on an
> ascending scale in which North and South Korea are ranked 135th with
> 100% homogeneity and Tanzania 1st with 7% homogeneity) ' (Kurian,
> 1987 1695)

Arabic in Saudi Arabia exists in two forms classical and colloquial Classical Arabic is

the language of the Quran and the means of formal communication, literary expression,

poetry and oration Preservation of linguistic homogeneity is essential to maintain Saudi

Arabia's cultural and social identity

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'The nature of cultural objects can only be understood in relation to talk
It is accepted by everyone that there is a close relation between culture,
language and communication The relation should be understood in terms
of this basic role which talk plays in the generation and sustaining of the
meaning ' (Giddens, 1989 101)

As a country which has never been colonised, Saudi Arabian society does not have the

vestiges of colonial rule and has not experienced imposed radical change

'Saudi Arabia's cultural, religious, linguistic and ethnic homogeneity is
unmatched by other systems The political system of Saudi Arabia has
emerged in about half a century without the disabilities of strong colonial
traditions ' (Braibanti, in Alfarsy, 1986 foreword)

While modernity may result in the introduction of other languages, for example through

English and French broadcasting, there is also a drive to support classical Arabic in the

media Inevitably, there has to be change, for example, a new lexis has to be

incorporated into any language to talk about manifestations of modernisation and

technological advancement, and new languages have to be learned in order to participate

in the global economy, but the classical language is still valued, preserved and promoted

as far as possible

The pressing problem is the fact that the country has a crucial need for foreign relations

and manpower The investment of vast amounts of wealth to modernise the country has

brought in millions of skilled and unskilled workers But foreign workers bring with them

their own customs, beliefs and social norms, as well as their own language (Al-Hodaif,

1992) The government's dilemma lies in whether to allow the entry of foreign workers

essential for its development now and in the future, or whether to limit the influx and

preserve cultural homogeneity

'It was not possible to prescribe an exact formula for solving this critical problem But an important factor which helped to minimise the impact of alien social customs and norms was that once the purpose of each individual or group had been accomplished, their services would be terminated In other words, there would be a pre-designed policy for their dispersal rather than allowing them to settle permanently in the country Another recommendation was the maintenance of a fixed and balanced ratio between the inflow of foreign manpower and the total population This would serve to control leverage against the spread of alien social norms, and thus help the Kingdom to preserve its existing way of life ' (Alfarsy, 1990 210-211)

These are simplistic solutions to a complex issue While unable to eliminate the problem - it has to have a foreign workforce if it is going to achieve its objectives - in its development plans the Saudi government has adopted a policy of strict immigration control and restrictions on foreign workers, and implemented educational policies to train Saudi nationals With these measures it can go some way towards preserving ethnic homogeneity Inevitably, there has been and will be an impact, and foreign visitors will leave their mark, whether to the detriment or for the benefit of Saudi society, but this is a sacrifice that has to be made if the society aspires to any of the advantages of modernisation

10. Conclusion

Various innovative changes have been met with strong opposition from religious elements and conservatives However, modernisation in Saudi Arabia has taken place in carefully controlled conditions and with consensus from all sides constantly being sought, and this has ensured a smooth and gradual transition despite the short space of time In this way, the Kingdom has been able to strike a balance between its religious and cultural identity, and the desire and impetus to modernise The government has

succeeded in driving the country forward while preserving the essential religious and cultural characteristics which to a great extent comprise its identity

If modernisation is to take place, it implies the surrender of some traditional characteristics of social, political and economic institutions The price paid is the replacement of culture, values and beliefs However, it has been demonstrated that modernity and tradition are not entirely inseparable nor incompatible and modern orders can be founded on traditional ones, while they in turn may define new socio-political structures There is an opposing argument which states that modernity based on traditional precepts is purely cosmetic In order to function effectively, a society which aspires to modernisation needs to retain its cultural foundations and build on them so that the two complement each other It has to bridge the gap between tradition and the assimilation of Western values In Saudi Arabia, the attempt to bridge this gap has been relatively successful in certain areas of its society, as illustrated by its economic growth which is based on an Islamic model, and the role of Islam in its systems and institutions

Confusion and challenges to the fundamental principles of Saudi culture remain unavoidable as lifestyles have undergone major transformations, people have become more urbanised, are able to exercise choice through purchasing power and have more time for social, cultural and leisurely pursuits Social change, or as Hedebro describes it, 'Alterations in the organisation of a society, in its structure, or in the functions performed by different groups and units within it', is inescapable (Hedebro, 1982 5) Nevertheless, many elements have been preserved and even strengthened The quest continues for answers to social and global problems that are consonant with Islamic

tradition, neither merely reactions to nor adaptations of Western ideology and influence Throughout this, the government has maintained national unity and social stability, and despite exposure to foreign influences, it has so far managed to avert certain negative aspects, such as drug culture, gang warfare and high crime rates It has retained its position as the host to millions of Muslims on pilgrimage by promoting its religious and conservative values In a unique approach, called 'maintaining tradition within change' in the Fifth Development Plan (1990-1995 20), the Saudi government has endeavoured to maintain its own culture and understand others as it promotes aspects of technological change However, new developments in telecommunications, as discussed below, have allowed for more exposure to alien cultures and ideas, and have awakened the concerns of the Islamists for their culture and values once again

11. Implications for Television Broadcasting

From this chapter some key points arise which have a direct bearing on the Saudi mass media in general, and on television in particular A society which is founded on the amalgamation of varied tribes and dispersed factions is at risk of being threatened by forces of modernisation which may accentuate diverse interests and widen any existing rifts between religious and cultural entities in society If harnessed wisely, the media have the potential to facilitate the unity of the nation and to showcase the country in the interest of national solidarity and common interest The successes and failures of Saudi broadcasting are considered later in this study in the light of these issues

Regarding the constitution, if programme content in television offerings directly conflict with Islamic precepts as written in the Quran and the Sunnah, it amounts not only to

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religious transgression but is representative of unconstitutional notions and therefore has legal implications

From the perspective of economic development, a foreign workforce in Saudi is an essential prerequisite if skills and technology are to be exchanged and development is to continue However, a foreign workforce brings with it a demand for foreign imports including media in general and television in particular, to which the local population are also exposed and for which they may begin to develop a preference. These workers are then targeted by the media in their programming For example, there are some new DBS commercial services included in ART's 1stNet network and they comprise imported channels from India and the Philippines to satisfy the demands of the expatriate workforces from these countries While the Saudi government has clearly demonstrated a strong desire to promote development and align itself with the modern world, the content of foreign imported and DBS channel programmes has the potential to influence and affect key elements of Saudi Arabia's religious and cultural identity One important consequence of this content is that foreign news and current affairs programmes serve to counter the depoliticising effects of shows designed essentially for entertainment. In sum, as in other areas of society, the problem posed is how to achieve a fine balance between the conservation of tradition and the drive towards modernisation

This chapter has also discussed the importance of Saudi Arabia as a flagship for the Muslim world For this reason there is an increased onus on the Kingdom, more than on other Arab states, to conform to the expectations of the Muslim people and to strictly adhere to religious protocol The implications for televised broadcasting are clear, that

is,programme content considered by Islamists to be unsuitable or 'un-Islamic' meets with strong opposition, particularly the content of many imported and Western items Content inconsistent with Muslim culture is also unwelcome Thus, on the one hand the government has to be flexible in its interpretation and implementation of Islamic doctrine in order to promote local media production and resist the penetration of global media On the other hand, it is in the difficult position of having to reconcile radically conflicting religious and cultural forces, which emanate from the various Arab, Muslim and foreign factions, in its programming policy

CHAPTER V

THE MEDIA IN SAUDI ARABIA

1. Introduction

This chapter examines the introduction of the media to Saudi Arabia, with a focus on the broadcasting industry and television as a major part of Saudi Arabia's development process As a means of educating and informing the people, the media have a significant active role to play in the socio-economic development of Saudi Arabia In this and the following chapters, this role will be analysed to determine whether the media have, in fact, facilitated the modernisation process, and whether they have exacerbated the clash of traditional and modern forces and the manner in which this has happened Whether television was introduced to Saudi Arabia as part and parcel of new technology arriving from the West, or whether it has actually been successfully exploited to fulfil the aims of the development plans and facilitated cultural self-reliance will also be considered

The following discussion describes firstly, the reasons for and the development of broadcasting in general and of television in particular, together with an overview of programming, government policies and an examination of the social reaction to broadcasting, with specific reference to television

2. The Introduction, Development and Expansion of Broadcasting.

2.1. The Functions of Broadcasting

This section examines the general theories which attempt to explain why media were first introduced to the society and the functions they were perceived to serve It then

becomes apparent why, despite opposition, the government chose to incorporate broadcasting into the Saudi way of life

Firstly, the main criterion of whether it was economically affordable was satisfied Saudi Arabia had acquired vast wealth from the oil revenues and so the establishment of a broadcasting industry was sustainable financially Secondly, it was perceived that the foreign media were producing propaganda which was not being successfully countered in Saudi Arabia According to Shobaili (1971), the government recognised that it was necessary to introduce television to counter the propaganda that the Saudi people were receiving on the radio Politically, if used as a government mouthpiece, television could be a direct source of information about Saudi Arabia, information which could be channelled throughout the country and abroad This would serve two functions it would effect a greater sense of unity and identity and it would promote the image of Saudi Arabia internationally Later on it was realised that if these aspects of television could be made compatible with Islam, it would assist Saudi Arabia in maintaining its position as the major centre of Islam and would enable it to vie with other broadcasting industries in the Gulf region (Al-Usmani, 1984) Thirdly, as Boyd (1972) believes, the introduction of television was a way for the government to fulfil their commitment to the people to supply entertainment, distribute information, and provide a source of education, there was a high rate of illiteracy at that time and television could provide what books could not (Shobaili, 1971) Finally, Lasswell (1971) identifies another function of media applicable to television the transmission of socio-cultural heritage from one generation to another These reasons for the introduction of broadcasting are reflected in the following account of its development in Saudi Arabia

2.2. The Historical Background

During the early years of this century the populace was almost totally illiterate King Abdulaziz recognised the potential of radio to reach the people throughout his vast country, but it was not until 1949, in the face of bitter disapproval from religious leaders, that he was able to establish the nation's first local broadcasting station, located in Makkah In a Royal Decree to his son, Faisal, he laid down the standards to be met in the creation of the first radio station and, to appease the irate conservatives, he supported his decree with the insistence that readings from the Quran be regularly broadcast

> **Royal Decree No. 7.3.16.3997:**
> From Abdulaziz Ibn Saud to our son, Faisal Peace be with you, his grace and blessings Our advisors have discussed with us the matter of radio broadcasting in Jeddah We view the following First a director shall be selected to be in charge of the station and its administration work including preparation of talks and news which are to be scrutinised, prepared and broadcast, the work for improving these programs, and the training of personnel Second, a program shall be supervised by you and be executed after your approval Third the programs should consider
>
> 1 The dissemination of foreign news as it is, ensuring that nobody is offended as well as avoiding libel or improper praise of anyone
>
> 2 In domestic news, facts should be presented, following our way of broadcasting what we usually want to publish and not broadcasting when we usually prefer silence on issues
>
> 3 Select from what can be broadcasted from the Holy Quran, religious preaching and lectures from the history of Islam and the Arabs (Saati, 1992 35)

The final argument that seemed to stem the flow of opposition was the statement 'Can anything be bad which transmits the Word of Allah?' (Boyd, 1982) In this way, King Abdulaziz also determined the benchmarks which were to form the basis of future media regulation and policy

While it was King Abdulaziz who set the tenor of Saudi Arabia's utilisation of the electronic media, it was his son, King Faisal, who established the governmental machinery that allowed these media to come of age In 1953, King Saud (1953-64), Faisal's elder brother, issued a decree establishing the first mass media regulatory agency, the General Directorate of Broadcasting, Printing, and Publishing In 1963, a cabinet-level office was established to replace this agency, which became the Ministry of Information It is this Ministry that has supervised the considerable development of broadcasting in Saudi Arabia in terms of facilities and coverage. Faced with stiff competition from other Arab radio stations, Saudi broadcasting had to expand the technology of its radio facilities and improve their quality in order to attract listeners (Boyd, 1982)

2.2.1. The 1960s - the Introduction of Television

By 1963, society in Saudi Arabia was psychologically prepared to accept the medium of television People were eagerly looking for a new means of recreation and entertainment which did not conflict with the Muslim faith The population, especially women and children, were willing to see what was going on in the world and emerge from social isolation (Shobaili, 1971) The social, cultural and political needs of the nation justified the introduction of television to Saudi Arabia In line with the basic functions of television as described, the government believed that television could provide information, news and entertainment, it could counter foreign propaganda, especially from Egypt, it could promote unity among the Saudi people, and it could provide health education and help tackle the literacy problem

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Although the Saudi government had launched its television project on a large scale in 1965, the Eastern province of the country had, in fact, experienced this medium since 1955, when the United States Air Force Base in Dhahran established its own English language television station, begun on June 17, 1955, for base personnel (Boyd, 1971) Two years later, the Arabian American Oil Company (Aramco) began a television service for its 9,000 employees, also in Dhahran. The range of coverage of these two services was therefore limited to the Eastern part of Saudi Arabia

In 1962, in a ten-point programme, Crown Prince Faisal formally established the introduction of television throughout Saudi Arabia. Initially, Saudi Arabia would receive technical assistance and training from the United States (Shobaili, 1971; Boyd, 1972) On January 6, 1964 the Saudi government and the US government signed an agreement to establish two one-half kilowatt stations in Jeddah and Riyadh. The agreement stipulated that the U S government '[.]shall assume responsibility for contracting for the training of operating personnel, and for the initial operation of the stations' (Shobaili, 1971) It also stated that the US Army Corps of Engineers would carry out those responsibilities on behalf of the United States government In 1964, during a visit by the Saudi Minister of Information, it was decided that the original plan to build two stations with 0.5 kw power each be extended to create a more powerful and efficient transmission. If the stations' power were increased to 2 5 kw power each, they would produce a more reliable and clearer signal. During the same visit the Radio Corporation of America (RCA) and the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) were chosen as potential subcontractors to the Corps of Engineers There was also a provision for training management officers to ensure proper coordination of all training requirements, both on

the job and in the US (US Corps of Engineers, 1968, cited in Shobaili, 1971)

After a successful tender, the contract for the construction of the interim television facilities at Riyadh and Jeddah was awarded in July, 1964 to the American firm of Paul Hardeman, Inc. The facilities were completed in approximately one year, after which telecasting operations began. Signal tests were first carried out in Jeddah and Riyadh on July 17, 1965, with no more than slides, music, and occasional Mickey Mouse cartoons. Nevertheless, vast numbers of people flocked to view the American, European and Japanese sets on display on the market area (Boyd, 1972). Because of the lack of experienced technicians who could produce live shows, the initial stages of operation and live telecasts were kept to a minimum. However, as soon as the first two government television stations became operational in Jeddah and Riyadh, watching television became the great common denominator of the people in Saudi Arabia and their main leisure-time occupation.

In 1967, two years after the opening of the Jeddah and Riyadh stations, a second television project was completed a series of microwave relays were built to send Jeddah station signals to transmitters in Makkah and Taif [1] In 1968, three more television stations equipped with the latest technical facilities were built at Madinah, Qassim and Dammam (Boyd, 1972) One of the most difficult problems that Saudi Arabia faces, in terms of expanding television transmission, is that Saudi Arabia encompasses a large area of about one million square miles throughout which the population is thinly and sparsely distributed Initially, in order to expand the television signal coverage, the Saudi government installed numerous micro-wave relay stations at

different locations throughout the country.

2.2.2. The 1970s - the Introduction of Satellite and Colour Transmission

In 1972, two satellite ground stations were completed in Jeddah and Riyadh and linked to the INTELSAT system receiving the signal from satellites in orbit over the Atlantic Ocean and Indian Ocean regions, respectively These stations have helped meet the telecommunication needs of the country and have been used to receive and transmit television signals internationally [2] Additionally, Saudi Arabia has been an active participant in the ARABSAT project - headquartered in Riyadh - in which Arab countries participated in the costs of launching satellites to improve all forms of communication among Arab states, including the distribution of broadcast signals

On September 24, 1976, Saudi television started its colour transmission in the French SECAM-3B system, and in 1977, a new television facility was opened in Abha city, in the southern province The station is used to broadcast the national television service and is equipped to produce local programmes

2.2.3. The 1980s - the Centralisation of Television

In 1983, television transmission was centralised in the capital Riyadh and a second television channel started broadcasting in English, with daily news reports in French In the same year, the construction of the Riyadh Central Television Complex was completed This complex, which cost about £680 million, is the largest and most advanced television facility in the Middle East According to a Ministry of Information report, the complex consists of three transmission studio units with telecine, video and

control rooms annexed to them In addition, there are three news studios, with annexes for video, film and general administration There are also five production studios and a film production studio, technical facilities, a film processing laboratory, and production and exhibition theatres By and large, materially speaking, the Saudi television system is one of the most technologically advanced, but like any other mass medium, television is judged by its production and output, and by its ability to attract audiences, not by its luxurious physical facilities

The Saudi government, represented by the Ministry of Information, has evidently placed remarkable emphasis on the foundations, the infrastructure arrangements and hardware preparations, with little attention being paid to software, programming and personnel training As Douglas Boyd remarks

> 'Since the setting up of the television stations and setting up the television equipment were the dominant thoughts for Saudi officials, the content of programs was a secondary matter ' (Boyd, 1972 226)

It is this disregard of content and quality that has provoked the intense debate over media output among the various elements of Saudi society

3. Social Reactions to the Establishment of Broadcasting Media

Despite its apparent success, there were, and still are, strong objections to the establishment of television services Nevertheless, even hostile confrontations with the Saudi government did not weaken the government's determination to firmly establish and expand its television service After a number of unsuccessful attempts to persuade the conservatives to accept the new medium, the Saudi government finally resorted to exercising its authority to establish what it viewed as necessary for the nation's well-

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being Reassuring sceptics and concerned objectors, the late King Faisal stated

> 'This public service is charged with great responsibilities, since it has
> access into every house and comes in touch with every individual and
> every group of people What is being broadcast or publicized through this
> service must serve our religion, our homeland and our people This service
> has to present only what is beneficial to our nation and to our
> countrymen, it must guide citizens to what is in their own and their
> country's interest ' (Saudi Arabian TV In its first decade, 1975 Preface)

However, when women began to appear on Saudi television, in 1965, there was an attack

on the television station in Riyadh King Faisal settled the issue by resolving that Islamic

principles and Saudi values would be respected in the future The pacifying effect was

short-lived A second incident took place, this time at the Holy Grand Mosque in

Makkah A group of armed fanatics took over the Mosque, locked the gates and used

the loudspeaker system to announce their demands pertaining to the un-Islamic content

of television programming After fifteen days, negotiations collapsed, the Mosque was

stormed by armed forces, was finally liberated and the fanatics were captured This

incident was a turning point for the Saudi media One of the consequences was the

reduction of women's appearance on television and restrictions placed on the roles they

performed and their attire (Beayeyz, 1989)

Al-Usmani (1984) believes that the advent of television served to expedite socio-

economic progress in the country because the society aspired to it, but that the religious

element delayed the process by taking exception to television, apart from objections to

content, as described in chapter I, they believed that it could not promote the principles

of the Islamic faith The government managed to satisfy all concerned by allowing the

importation of television provided that programmes did not subvert Islamic ideology and

practice The objections and concerns were contained at the time by cautious religious

programming and the careful selection and censoring of imported television shows
However, while increasing broadcasting hours, a rather relaxed censorship on television
imports was adopted by the Ministry of Information a situation which often resurrects
the concerns of the Islamists Despite attempts by the government to pacify them with
hours of religious broadcasts to demonstrate firstly, that television can support their faith
rather than undermine it, and could be applied usefully to the benefit of Saudi society,
many still remain unconvinced These concerns awakened and resurfaced after Saudi
Arabia and the neighbouring countries became the focus of DBS services, as
documented in chapter I

Nevertheless, viewing habits reflect the general acceptance of television by the Saudi
people In the early years, radio listeners defected to the new medium, and during
broadcasting hours television quickly dominated leisure time activity (Shobaili, 1971) It
was apparent to any observer in Jeddah and Riyadh, that street traffic was very light
during telecasting hours People tried to accomplish their chores to free themselves to
watch television 'Some people used to crowd the store fronts to get a glimpse of
something which was to change their social pattern profoundly' (Boyd, 1971) In a few
months, television became a dominant medium of communication, and an important
source of leisure for the people (Shobaili, 1971) A survey in 1972 revealed that 87% of
those questioned owned television sets and 52% watched it every day (Boyd, 1993) A
survey carried out by the BBC in 1992 revealed that 88% of Saudi adults watched
television daily Even when it is taken into account that many viewers may approve only
of those programmes which are vehicles for Islamic messages and values and that, in
general, there is a large viewing population, that does not necessarily equate with total

approval of all programme content Perceptions differ there is a large segment of the population who do not see television as a cultural threat but believe that through advertising it can have a detrimental effect on national development Other viewers, however, believe it can enhance the modernisation of the country and be a positive economic force (Almakaty *et al*, 1994) Whether these perceptions are accurate or not depends on the nature and quality of media output, STV programming policy and the suitability of television content for the needs of Saudi society

4. Television

4.1. The Structure of Television Affairs

Television broadcasting activities in Saudi Arabia are managed by the office of the Assistant Deputy Minister for Television Affairs, who is appointed by and directly responsible to the Minister of Information The former's duties comprise the control of eleven different departments and offices, as well as the supervision of numerous subsections within this infrastructure (Zamakshari, 1994) These departments and subdivisions deal with the commercial, administrative, technical, production and research aspects of television broadcasting as well as the implementation of each channel. Inevitably, such a complex system affects the bureaucratic efficiency of the department as a whole As described in chapter VII, attempts to reach decisions regarding scheduling and content involve such lengthy processes that the production potential of both STV and local production companies is inhibited and hindered by delays and maladministration

In addition, as Zamakshari (1994) points out, an imbalance of influences results in

administrative considerations taking precedence over artistic and technical factors Above all, programming policy overrides any other factors The force of administrative and political slants on programming policy means that the decision-making process depends on the political agenda and on the discretion of top officials as opposed to being based on audience research or on artistic merit and production quality One of the main criteria of programming policy relates largely to censorship regulations and procedures which, as described in chapter VII, may be arbitrarily executed Inevitably, the quality of STV output is affected

One major area of television broadcasting policy, which can arguably be regarded as negatively affecting STV potential is that of centralisation, which, as stated earlier, occurred in 1983 Zamakshari (1994) mentions a number of benefits arising from this policy He contends that initially it was economically viable to centralise television operations as it reduced the number of foreign and native personnel needed for administrative and technical functions There are also economic advantages to the construction of one station network as opposed to several individual stations in remote areas of the country Nonetheless, it is nevertheless apparent that a focus on the centre has diminished the importance of branch stations, which, while adequately equipped, lack the manpower and expertise required to allow them to function to their full potential Such regional stations, if fully operational, would enable the various and more remote parts of Saudi Arabia to influence the media and allow television to reflect their regional identities and requirements At present, however, there is a distinct lack of regional representation Moreover, the absence of a clear strategy defining regional media operations means that branch stations lie dormant and there is no competition

between them Moreover, while healthy competition between networks and stations encourages better quality programming and production, the absence of regional television activity in Saudi Arabia has stymied a potentially creative impetus Finally, the centralisation of television affairs serves to intensify the concentration of government control over media operations, and consequently over STV scheduling and programming

4.2. Television Programming

In the early days of television, the two television stations at Riyadh and Jeddah broadcast similar two-hour long programme schedules Programmes started at sunset with fifteen minutes of readings from the Holy Quran and sayings of the Prophet Mohammad, followed by readings from the daily newspaper for ten minutes The rest of the time was divided between children's programmes, cartoons, slides, music, documentary films, and songs When television was first introduced to Saudi Arabia there were no theatres or performing arts institutions, and therefore no available professional television performers, artists or producers Television schedules therefore had to rely on imports Gradually, the programme schedule was extended, but with more air time to fill and a dearth of home produced material, there was an increased reliance on imported programmes from different sources Programmes purchased from other neighbouring Arab countries, programmes purchased or leased from Western countries and a very small percentage of amateurish local efforts still comprise the nightly schedule At present, the Saudi television daily schedule consists of 16 to 18 hours on the 1st channel and 10 hours on the 2nd, most of which is imported. Egypt is the main country from which Saudi Arabian television purchases its entertainment programmes, with Syria and Lebanon not far behind Western programmes, on the other hand, are

supplied primarily by American and British companies.

For a long time STV depended heavily on an unalterable programming format consisting of cheap imports; mostly re-runs of children's animations, and adult entertainment in the form of family sagas and love stories. Confronted with recent strong competition from DBS broadcasters, the need has arisen for STV to produce a more appealing format in order to draw and increase local viewership.

Like radio before it, television programme seasons, or cycles as they are called in Saudi Arabia, are set every three months. The regular programming in these cycles is changed during the two holy seasons; Ramadan (the month of fasting) and Tho-Alhaja (the month of pilgrimage), to allow for scheduling relevant and appropriate religious programmes in place of some entertainment programmes.

Since 1985, advertising has been permitted on Channel 2 and was subsequently introduced to Channel 1 in 1986 (Alkheraiji, 1994). Until 1999, advertisements were broadcast in three time blocks with no programme interruptions, but since November of that year, new policies have been proposed to allow insertions during certain programmes. Saudi television, however, is not allowed to use the advertising revenue; all the income generated is transferred directly to the Ministry of Finance and National Economy as a national income.

Saudi television currently operates within a complex system of microwave relays, cable and satellite connections which have expanded its coverage. This system has enabled the

majority of people to receive signals from neighbouring countries. If they own satellite equipment, the choice of DBS channels is even wider. Inevitably, this has consequences for media regulation and information policy, the responsibility of the Ministry of Information.

5. The Ministry of Information

The Saudi media came under the control of a centralised government agency for the first time in 1953, when the government established what was called 'the General Directorate of Broadcasting, Press, and Publication' to organise, coordinate, control, and supervise broadcasting, the press, publications, and all other mass media means, and to disseminate books and informational pamphlets. In 1962, as a result of the development of media and due to the expansion of its responsibilities, the Directorate was elevated by royal decree to the full status of Ministry. It is now called the Ministry of Information (see Figure No.2). The main function of the Ministry is to plan, control, supervise and finance all informational projects such as radio and television broadcasting, to guide press establishments, produce informational books and operate the Saudi Arabian News Agency.[3] The Ministry is also in charge of censoring any print, audio, or visual material at the country's entry points - borders, airports, and seaports. It has the additional responsibility of issuing licenses to printing presses, as well as video and audio retail and rental outlets. Functioning within the framework of the government and according to its rules and regulations, the Ministry of Information is financed by the Ministry of Finance and National Economy and is obliged to prepare and submit its annual budget to the Ministry of Finance, which has the authority to accept, modify, subtract from, or even reject proposals.

Figure No.2. The Saudi Ministry of Information.
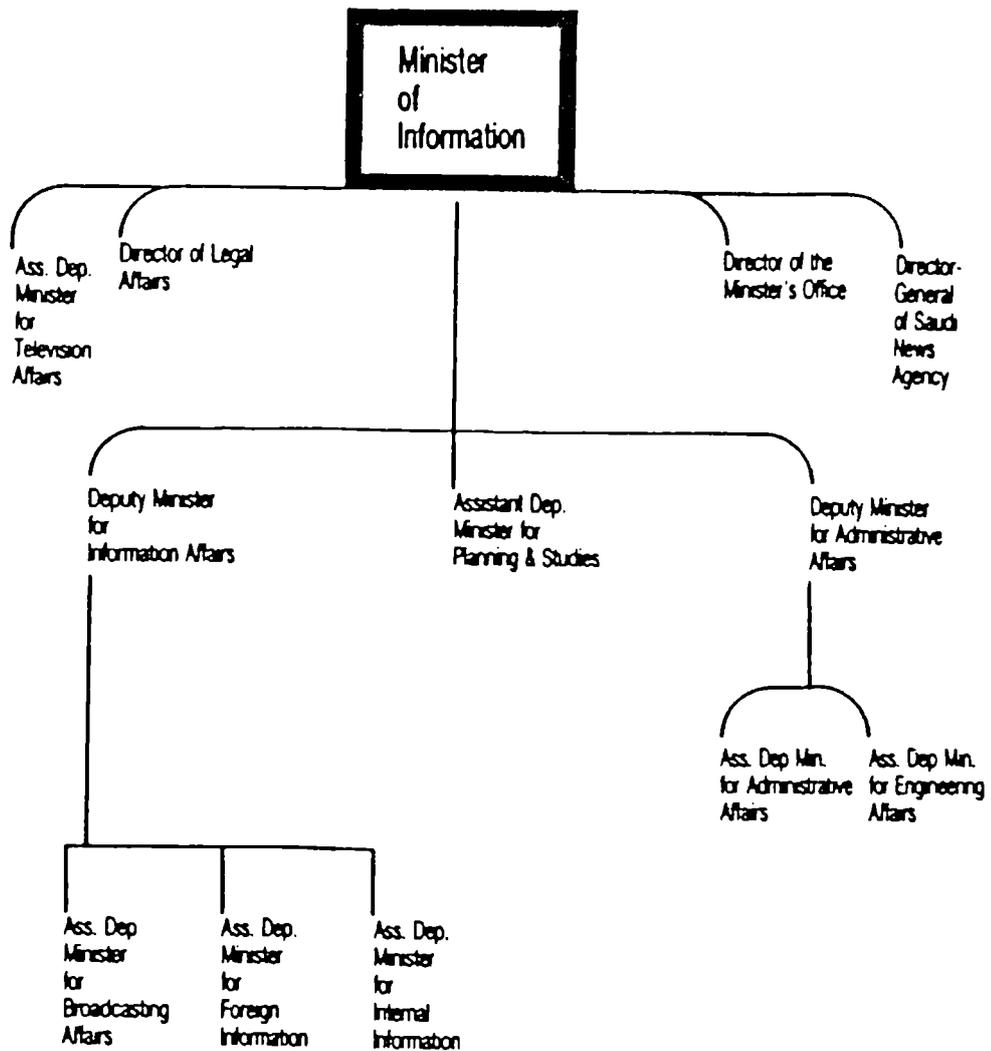
The Ministry of Information is headed by a minister who is in charge of all its activities and who is directly responsible to the Council of Ministers. Two deputy ministers and seven assistant deputies work in close liaison with him (see Figure 2). The total number of Ministry employees is 5,553, of whom Saudis make up 89 percent.[4] However, the system is subject to typical government bureaucracy and authoritarian practices. The Ministry of Information has expanded its operations and has now become a huge bureaucratic institution which suffers from many managerial and financial problems that hamper the media's performance and application. It is seen as lacking the administrative and financial flexibility which permits the accurate and speedy decisions required by media operations on a day to day basis. A detailed analysis of these constraints on media production will follow in chapters VII-IX of this study.

5.1. Ministry of Information Personnel

Management, as we shall see later, is one of the weaknesses of the Saudi media system. One of the causes is the fact that staff members in media facilities, because they work for a governmental organisation, are civil servants and they do not see their role in primarily professional terms (Shobaili, 1971). They experience indifferent treatment by the Ministry of Information and the absence of incentives and personnel support essential to a stable and creative workforce. This treatment, in fact, poses problems to the national broadcast media. Shobaili's observation about staff treatment in his 1971 study was then considered astute, and it is still relevant in the late 1990s. The few existing talented members of staff have felt that they are not fully appreciated in their 'civil service' and are seeking more lucrative jobs in the flourishing Direct Broadcast Satellites (DBS) 'private' services; a situation which can be described as a 'talent drain'.

5.2. The Ministry of Information and Audience Research

Saudi Arabia's perception of mass media use is associated with sender-based communication systems, the premise of which is that information suppliers determine what information to supply and how the public will use it. It is a vertical, unidirectional structure where messages descend from top (the government) to bottom. This system assumes that people are passive viewers who accept whatever is given to them; it also considers people to be an undifferentiated mass who think and act alike and who do not know what they need and like (Alharithi, 1983). There is no evidence that this observation has altered significantly in the new competitive environment of the media in the 1990s (see Appendix F, cartoon No.6).

The Ministry of Information, the sole body responsible for media, print and broadcast operations has not appeared to account for audiences' responses nor expectations from broadcast media. Since the inauguration of the television service in 1965, the Ministry of Information has not conducted, sponsored or initiated any large-scale audience research, with the exception of a study carried out by the Mass Communication Department at King Saud University more than ten years ago (Bait-Almal *et al*, 1994). There are, however, some small-scale and limited audience 'studies' conducted by some media scholars as part of their academic work. Applying different sampling procedures, these studies were designed to obtain data regarding media usage among small populations of Saudis, and their results cannot be generalised to all Saudi viewers (see Najai, 1982; Al-Attibi, 1986). Producers and programmers usually rely on their own judgements in determining their audiences' choices and preferred programming. There are no feedback mechanisms or arrangements, even after Saudi television started

carrying commercials in 1982, a factor often thought to be a strong motive for audience research and ratings.

6. Media Regulation and Information Policy

The first Saudi Information Policy was issued by Royal Decree by King Abdul Aziz, following the proposal of introducing radio broadcast to the Kingdom in 1949 for the first time. In essence, the policy prescribed general directions as to the manner in which this new medium should be operated. It states:

> '[...]foreign news should avoid bias, insults and defamation of anyone [...] the local news should broadcast facts and the viewpoint of the Saudi Government, while remaining silent on issues not usually made public.' (Shobaili, 1971:188)

The radio output at that time - the early 1950s - consisted of religious programmes whose content was based on readings from the Quran and talks about Islamic and Arab history. Such programmes helped to alleviate the concerns of the religious elements in society and absorbed their objections to the new medium. However, once King Saud had succeeded his father, in order to clarify certain clauses, he issued a Royal Decree to dissolve this policy (Alamoudi, 1984).

The introduction of television in 1965, and the opposition it encountered from certain religious groups in the country, dictated the need for modifications appropriate to the nature of the new medium. These modifications and the addition of new clauses were designed to control the appearance of women on televised programmes. As a result, women's appearances were confined to certain roles and certain types of programmes, for example as hosts or guests in children's or women's shows. Women appearing in these programmes were required to observe the strict Muslim dress code; they had to

cover their hair and wear loose clothing to ensure that their bodies were fully covered down to the wrists and ankles in order to prevent them from being exposed to viewers (Zamakshari, 1994).

To screen and censor the content of foreign made programmes, a censorship department was established. Its responsibilities included and still include the screening and editing of scenes and language in imported and locally-made programmes to be more suitable and consistent with the Islamic norms of Saudi society. However, the heavy dependence on imported television productions and the relatively relaxed censorship rules, among other reasons, contributed to a number of violent reactions from the religious element, including the siege of the Holy Mosque in Makkah, described earlier in this chapter. Before the occurrence of these events, Saudi Arabia did not have an aggressive information philosophy, and so the 'silence' policy, which prevailed at the time, was conducive to the spread of rumours and speculation about the siege, on national and international levels. The treatment of this incident by the Saudi media and their hesitation to reach a decision regarding the announcement of the development of the event, led to the formulation of the current policy. Soon after this, Saudi authorities implemented a ban on Western films and television serials or series on Channel 1. This ban is still in force and any non-Arabic productions have been restricted to Channel 2. The Supreme Council of Mass Communication, established in 1981 by Royal Decree, finally formulated a media policy and it was approved by Royal Decree in May, 1983.[5]

This legislation regarding television is part of the current Saudi Information Policy, as

formulated in 1982 by the Supreme Council of Mass Communication, a task force committee consisting of academics and top officials at the Ministry of Information, chaired by the Interior Minister, Prince Naif Ben Abdul Aziz. The policy refers to the principles, goals and objectives of print and broadcast media in Saudi Arabia. Emanating from Islam and based on its laws and beliefs, the policy aims at establishing belief in Allah, and raising the intellectual, cultural and moral levels of the Saudi citizens. The policy also prescribes broad guidelines by which its objectives and aims are to be achieved, and covers areas such as news, education, public awareness, entertainment and cultural programmes. [6]

Currently in effect, this policy is the most comprehensive one and provides general guidelines and frameworks for media operations. Its execution was, understandably, a life-line for the decision makers and practitioners within the media, both print and broadcast. As one of the founding fathers of this policy indicated to this author:

> 'This is a complete and workable masterpiece which just needs to be implemented. Its execution is in the hands of the management which actually runs the media on a day-to-day basis.' (Ashobaili, 1997)[7]

In addition, the policy contains articles that assert the need for harnessing the media to numerous goals, such as preserving the country's cultural identity and protecting the primary interests of the citizens first. It also gives the family, children, women and teenagers the importance they deserve, and directs the media, especially broadcasting, to respond to their needs and concerns through specially made programmes: '[...] attention will be given to the guidance, educational and recreational programmes for children [...]'. Another article states: 'The Saudi mass communication will give the family its due attention, being the essential unit in society [...]'.

Given the fact that illiteracy rates are high in the country, the policy confirms the need to eradicate the problem:

> 'Realising its significant role, mass communication will deal directly and effectively to abolish illiteracy by adopting educational and scientific principles, dedicating educational programmes to meet the needs of every age and mentality.' (Article XVII, Saudi Media Policy, see Appendix B)

The policy has stated that the media should seek to be objective in presenting the facts and should avoid exaggerations while guaranteeing freedom of expression to all.

What is significant about this media policy is that it is the first written policy to describe how the Saudi media *should* be used. Previous policies were merely prohibitive ones, that is, they stated what the media *should not* do rather than spell out their responsibilities (Alharithi, 1985). It also contains articles that highlight the need to encourage local production, albeit without prescribing what exactly should be done to encourage it. Nevertheless, in short, the existing Saudi media policy is considered as a complete and workable policy which covers a great deal of the media issues and areas of concern. Executing this policy is a different matter and this poses a difficult challenge to media executives and practitioners. Whether this policy, or parts of it, have been applied to media operations or whether the media deviate from this policy, and finally, the nature of the obstacles that stand in the way of fulfilling this policy, are the issues that will be examined in more depth in later chapters.

6.1 Censorship

Although a number of government bodies are involved in the regulation and censorship of the media, ultimately, it is the Ministry of Information who has control over the monitoring of the national news agency, radio and television broadcasting, and the

enforcement of censorship laws and regulations. This government control was first established in 1953, when King Saud issued a press decree giving authority to the General Directorate of Broadcasting Press and Publication to supervise and manage media performance. Commissioned to oversee all aspects of mass media in the Kingdom, it was also to act as a government information source for the press agencies and to supervise all facets of media broadcasting. [8] The General Directorate was not given the function of a pre-censor but it was required to scrutinise information for potentially offensive items. Messages or sentiments considered to be anti-royal, contradicting Saudi foreign policy, actively pro-Zionist or not in accordance with the Islamic faith would result in the withdrawal of the publication.

In 1963, again under Royal Decree, the General Directorate relinquished its office and the Ministry of Information assumed its control of press and media regulation. The high status of this cabinet office is indicative of how vital the Saudi government deemed information regulation to be during this period. This is confirmed by the fact that the Press and Publication law was created at the same time in order to regulate the media even further.

The force and application of this law is still in effect today. While affording the press some privacy and protection from government interference, the underlying principle is to safeguard 'general welfare' or *pro bono publico*, but this objective remains undefined in legal terms. However, the effect is to eliminate certain items and features that can potentially create discord between the ruling bodies and the population, in the interests of 'each citizen's duty towards his religion, country and community'.[9] Potentially

offensive issues remain the same: anti-royal, anti-government or un-Islamic messages are withdrawn.

The present role of the government includes the appointment of members of licensed press establishments, whose duty is to supervise all editorial activities. Without a license, a newspaper cannot publish. At the same time, editors and chairpersons of individual publications are also government appointed and answerable to these committees. The government therefore has the final decision on the 'hiring and firing' of committee members and editorial executives, while having the power to suspend publication at any stage.

6.1.1. Television Censorship

As mentioned above, in 1982, an information policy which also dealt with television was formulated. As with previous legislation, the policy aims to prohibit items which may cause friction within Saudi society from the social, moral, religious and political points of view. Television in Saudi Arabia is thus subject to prior censorship and programmes are screened, censored and sometimes edited in advance. Imported films, television programmes and series are controlled by a Censorship Committee in the Censorship Department, which in turn comes under the direct supervision of the General Director of Television, who also appoints its members. The prior screening is necessary in order to decide what is or is not acceptable to be broadcast from a social, political, or religious perspective. In some cases there are occasional written instructions but generally, censorship relies heavily on common sense rules (Shobaili, 1971; Najai, 1982; Al-Garni, 1991).

Censorship practices include the banning of scenes which contain any depiction of or allusion to the drinking of alcohol or the taking of illegal substances, impingement of Islamic dietary laws, nudity, physical or sexual encounters between opposite sexes, and anything that is purportedly un-Islamic or aimed at promoting other religions. Dancing is also prohibited unless it is national or traditional and the performers, who are male, must be appropriately dressed. The policy also forbids the communication of any message that contradicts, opposes or criticises Saudi rulers, the government and its principles and national policy. A list of general guidelines is given to programme suppliers who deal with Saudi television. Although not exhaustive, this list provides an overview of the specific scenes or subjects prohibited on STV:

● All scenes that arouse sexual excitement of whatever kind.

● Women appearing 'indecently dressed' or appearing in overt love scenes with men or dancing.

● Women appearing in athletic games or sports.

● Scenes relating or alluding to the consumption of alcohol.

● Downgrading reference, whether explicit or implicit, to any of the heavenly religions.

● Treatment of other countries with praise, satire, or contempt.

● Reference to Zionism or any activity practised by Zionists.

● Scenes which threaten to expose the monarchy.

● All 'immoral' scenes.

● Scenes showing betting or gambling.

Although these guidelines were first formulated in the 1970s, they are still applied and followed when dealing with televised materials. Regarding current censorship laws, Rampal describes the situation thus:

'A censorship committee, comprising officials of the judiciary, the Publications Department of the Ministry of Information, and the Department of Education, reviews and censors all national and foreign publications according to the policies of the state, including the 1958 censorship decree.' (Rampal, 1994:255)

This censorship regime will be discussed as one of the local constraints on media industry development in chapter VII.

6.1.2. Video Censorship

Videos are also subject to rigorous control in accordance with government policy. Statistics from 1980 reveal that over half the population had access to video material, while the latest data show that there are three million video cassette recorders in Saudi Arabia.[10] The government, therefore, has had to apply similar control and regulation over videotape as it has with other forms of media. Consequently, legislation was brought into effect by the Ministry of Information in 1980 with the following guidelines: firstly, video rental/sales shop owners must be over 18, full-time operators and have no criminal convictions; secondly, the shop must be situated away from a mosque and on a main road; finally, women are forbidden to enter these shops. The same criteria on which are based the guidelines of the regulation and censorship of the media also apply to video sales and rental; the objective of these materials should be 'the dissemination of culture, knowledge and innocent entertainment'.[11] Any video or tape material, whether locally produced or imported, which impinges on the values stated in the censorship legislation may be withdrawn and retail or rental outlets can have their licenses revoked.

7. The Arrival of Satellite Services in Saudi Arabia

7.1. ARABSAT

In the aftermath of World War II, the need was recognised for a unifying body to promote the interests of the Arab States - the major impetus behind the creation of the Arab League. From the very start, one of the League's chief considerations was to have communications systems to link the states culturally and educationally, and to enable these states to have a greater degree of independence in telecommunication technology. In 1967, the Ministers of Information and Culture resolved to set up a system by which the cultural and social activities of the member states could be integrated by satellite. This was one of the reasons why, in 1969, the Arab States Broadcasting Union (ASBU) was established (Almakaty, 1995). In its early recommendations, the Union stressed the need for the Arab League to join other leading nations in the field of space communication technology; an issue later supported in a UNESCO recommendation for community television. After some years of deliberation, the League of Arab States decided to create the Arab Satellite Communications Organisation, which would own and operate a joint satellite service. A Constitutive Agreement was subsequently drawn up and signed and on April 14th, 1976, ARABSAT was founded with the necessary capital provided by all the League member states.[12]

After a number of successive and successful tenders, AEROSPATIALE of France constructed a series of satellites and by 1985, ARABSAT became an operative service (Almakaty, 1995). Its first transmission was a broadcast from Makkah during the Islamic pilgrimage (Hajj) in August, 1985. Since then, satellites 1A and 1B have completed their operational lives, while satellite 1C is expected to stay in operation until 2002.[13]

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According to Turkistani (1988), the first two satellites were not economically viable as they were not exploited to their full capacity. The Ku-Band, for instance, was not used until 1993, when it was leased by the Egyptian Satellite Channel (Ashal, 1994). Furthermore, the absence of an agreed policy among the Arab nations regarding the use of community television meant that satellite television potential was not realised until much later (Abu-Argoub, 1988). Still its capacity is not fully capitalised on as telecommunication relations are dictated by political, social and economic factors. The upshot is that those states with good diplomatic relations are more likely to reach a reciprocal agreement regarding the exchange of programmes. Meanwhile, in May 1990, during the thirteenth session of the General Assembly of ARABSAT, which took place in Algiers, a major development occurred: amendments to the agreement were introduced, effectively permitting ARABSAT to have greater flexibility and enabling it to offer its services to the commercial market. It currently attracts users from both members and non-members of the League as well as from the private sector.[14] The combined service of the remaining first generation satellites now covers North Africa and the Middle East, and extends to the Indian sub-continent.[15]

In order to meet the rapidly growing demand for new satellite services, ARABSAT decided to improve on the capacity, power, coverage and lifetime of the first generation. These second generation satellites have enabled ARABSAT to meet the demand for new telecommunications services and at the same time support the existing service.[16] The next stage, that is, the launch of the third generation of satellites, will be dedicated primarily to direct-to-home digital television and special discounts have been granted for multiple transponder and long-term leasing.[17]

7.1.1. ARABSAT Services

Article 3 of the Constitutive Agreement outlines the main objectives for ARABSAT as:

> '[...] securing public and specialised services in the field of space communication for all members as well as other users in accordance with the appropriate technical and economical standards.'[18]

In fulfilling its goal, ARABSAT has further enhanced its Regional Television Broadcasting Services by designing and installing two transponders in its satellites. A leasing service guarantees infallible use of its satellite system. While the service is mainly used to transmit major events across the Arab states, it also facilitates an exchange of television programmes among the member states themselves. ARABSAT also leases out the satellite transponders to provide local/domestic services, direct television and radio transmission and multi-purpose use.[19] The use of second generation satellites vastly amplified the diversity of the services that ARABSAT provided, and so the organisation investigated the possible potential of adding new services to the existing ones.

The services provided by ARABSAT are employed by a wide range of parties, both Arab and international. The users of the first generation satellites currently include all telecommunications administrations of every ARABSAT member state; space television channels of Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait, Oman, Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, Syria, Sudan, Mauritania, the Arab States Broadcasting Union (ASBU), and MBC, ART, ORBIT, CNN, Radio of the Orient, and the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation (LBC). Second generation satellite users include those of the first generation, as well as Libya, Yemen, Qatar, along with CFI, TNBC, Future Vision and FEN (see Table No. 1a-c).[20]

Table No. 1a. Television Channels on ARABSAT 2A: (Ku-Band)

Trans	Leased Station	Polarisation	Frequency (MGHZ)
9	ART	H	12685,06
3	ART	H	12562,77
11	ART	H	12720,00
5	Jordan TV	H	12604,53
7	Kuwaiti TV	H	12646,30
1	Qatar TV	H	12521,00
10	Libya TV	V	12700,06
4	Syria TV	V	12577,77
6	Abu Dhabi TV	V	12619,53
12	MBC	V	12735,00
8	IQRA	V	12685,00

Source: ARABSAT, Riyadh, 1998.

Table No. 1b. Television Channels on ARABSAT 2A: (C-Band High Power)

Trans	Leased Station	Polarisation	Frequency (MGHZ)
16	Dubai SC	Circular/Left	4057,50
18	MBC	Circular/Left	4098,50
20	Oman TV	Circular/Left	4139,50
22	Yemen TV	Circular/Left	4180,50
15	SARA Vision	Circular/Right	4043,75
17	SARA Vision	Circular/Right	4084,75

Source: ARABSAT, Riyadh, 1998.

Table No. 1c. Television Channels on ARABSAT 2A: (C-Band Medium Power)

Trans	Leased Station	Polarisation	Frequency (MGHZ)
2	ART	Circular/Left	3740,75
4	ART	Circular/Left	3781,75
6	Bahrain TV	Circular/Left	3822,75
8	Future TV	Circular/Left	3863,75
10	Sudan TV	Circular/Left	3904,75
12	Qatar TV	Circular/Left	3945,75
1	Mauritania TV	Circular/Right	3720,25
3	Egyptian SC	Circular/Right	3761,25
5	Nile TV	Circular/Right	3802,25
7	CNN	Circular/Right	3843,25
9	Morocco TV	Circular/Right	3884,25
11	STV 1	Circular/Right	3925,25
13	STV 2	Circular/Right	3978,25

Source: ARABSAT, Riyadh, 1998.

Since 16th July, 1998, ARABSAT has broadcast for free a number of Arabic channels to Europe through Hot Bird 4 on 13°E on digital compression. The channels offered are: Saudi TV Channel 1, Ashariqa TV, Libyan TV, Kuwait TV, and Bahrain TV. ARABSAT has stated that there will be more channels in the future.[21]

ARABSAT now has three types of communication satellites; fixed satellite systems (FSS); broadcasting satellite systems (BSS); and direct broadcasting systems (DBS); which affect the balance of television viewership in Saudi Arabia. The fact that DBS can be received directly by small dishes or antennas increases its accessibility, a factor of

particular relevance to this study: access to uncensored international satellite transmissions cuts across all the censorship regulations constraining STV performance.

7.2. The Development of the DBS Market

The value and potential of DBS was not fully realised until the 1970s. Up to this point, television signals had been transmitted via microwave towers; a system that proved costly due to atmospheric conditions and the vast geographical area that the towers had to serve. The other option was to adopt the satellite system. With this purpose in mind, many Arab nations became members of INTELSAT, and INTELSAT transponders were even leased out to Saudi Arabia and Sudan to provide a link with their own television transmitters. The early 1990s saw a number of broadcasters using ARABSAT transponders. [22] Thus DBS television signals were finally delivered directly to homes in a number of Arab countries.

Despite a ban, the beginning of the 1980s saw the arrival of the first satellite dishes into Saudi Arabia. Ashgie (1992) documents the installation of the first satellite dish in Riyadh at this time. In the early years, ownership of satellite dishes was restricted to members of the Royal family and prominent businessmen, but as the popularity of satellite television grew, mainly out of an urgent need for news on the Gulf crisis of 1990, more dishes were purchased and installed. [23] At the beginning of the 1990s, wealthy families in most Arab countries started to acquire large satellite dishes to receive unencrypted signals such as CNN. However, it was Arabic language news and entertainment that the audiences wanted. Soon, every Arab country would have a satellite service, if only broadcasting domestic programming (Boyd, 1998). Estimates of

the number of satellite dishes owned in the mid-90s vary from 150,000 to 400,000 (Morad and Al-Marshed, 1993) (see Appendix F, picture No.1).[24] The viewing population was estimated by one source to be 2 million.[25] By 1994, dishes were being openly sold even after the ban, issued in March of that year. The ban never took effect and possession of a satellite dish gave its owner some degree of kudos. In an attempt to regulate the accessibility of foreign produced programmes, a further decree stated that it was forbidden to import both dishes and devices that receive non-Saudi channels. This ban was extended to decoders and prohibited the manufacture of satellite dishes or their parts (Almakaty, 1995). A breach of the law would result in a $133,000 fine, but this was never enforced and the equipment (dishes and receivers) has always remained available.

According to the Council of Saudi Ministers, the Ministry of Information was to act as a filter, to sieve through the array of programmes available on satellite television and select what was deemed suitable viewing for the Saudi population, in accordance with Islamic rulings and Saudi social values.[26] The final selection would be transmitted by cable. Prior to these restrictions, the price of a locally manufactured dish had plummeted as low as $530. Since the decree's enforcement, the cost has more than doubled, while installation charges have increased from $800 to $1,866, and receivers, essential for decoding, have risen in cost from $227 to $400 (Almakaty, 1995). Nevertheless, satellite dishes are still widely available.

Confusion as to whether the decree was retroactive, or whether there would be some kind of amnesty for those already in possession of forbidden satellite items, led the Ministry of Interior to issue the following declaration:

'In accordance with Decree No.128 of the Council of Ministers issued on March 10, 1994, regarding the organisation of the operation of satellite television reception in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which stipulates a ban regarding an alternative method that the state will provide and which will be under the supervision of the Information Ministry, while forbidding any other quarters from dealing in these matters; and because of numerous queries that the authorities continue to receive from citizens regarding this issue, the Interior Ministry would like to clarify, in the following statement, everything that relates to the definition of the foundations and rules which will be implemented regarding all issues related to satellite television transmission and within the framework mentioned in the decree, as follows:

First, with regard to satellite dishes and unused ancillary equipment that is actually in the possession of individuals, shops and warehouses, their owners will be allowed to export them officially through all air, land and sea outlets and anywhere abroad in accordance with the wishes of the beneficiary party within a maximum deadline of one month as from the issuance and the enforcement of this statement. Failing this, and following the lapsing of the deadline defined in the first article, any equipment found in the possession of individuals or commercial shops will be confiscated and the offender will be subjected to fines as stipulated by the decree of the Council of Ministers.
     a. All sizes and models of satellite dishes
     b. All types and sizes of receivers used for satellite television reception
     c. Decoders
     d. Low Noise Block Down Converters or LNBs
     e. Feed-horn equipment
     g. All other equipment and accessories used in the installation and operation of satellite dishes.

Second, it should be particularly stressed that citizens must not deal or trade in the banned items which have been defined in this statement and in the content of the previous decision of the Council of Ministers.'[27]

Statistics show that there is currently a huge potential for DBS in the Arab states as shown by Saudi Arabia and Egypt, which currently have around 4 million and 8.5 million TVHH (TV households) respectively. Circumstances which have helped in DBS utilisation are improved economic conditions which entail a higher income per capita, and increased availability of domestically manufactured and assembled receiving equipment in the Arab world.

7.3. DBS Offerings: The Scale of the Competition Faced by STV

Analysing the threat to STV and local production posed by DBS, Ali Najai, Assistant

Deputy Minister of Information for Television Affairs, comments:

> 'Saudi television does not fear competition from satellite television
> channels because of Saudi television's unique approaches and objectives -
> it represents Saudi society and Islamic values. There are many people
> inside and outside the kingdom who regularly watch Saudi television
> channels because they like its conservative approach.'[28]

Others conclude that, given the choice, most viewers with access to satellite programmes

would choose to watch these on a regular basis. As previously mentioned, this can be

attributed to the effect of stringent censorship laws on Saudi entertainment and news

programmes; the dearth of Saudi nationals, especially women, appearing on these

programmes; and an over-dependence on foreign productions (Marghalani, 1997).

DBS currently offers a vast array of stations and networks as described in Appendix A,

while the region receives hundreds of satellite services from the West and East, both

clear and encrypted. On offer at present are 11 American channels, 12 British, 14

French, 10 Turkish and 15 from Hong Kong, besides a multitude of encrypted,

subscription based networks such as Orbit and Showtime.[29] Currently, the most popular

DBS channel is MBC, with ESC, DSC, and CNN International following close behind

(Bait-Almal, 1993) but with the continuing establishment of new satellite channels and

with new products being made available, competition to attract and poach viewers is

fierce. The availability and accessibility of DBS can offer a wider variety and an

alternative discourse with a better quality of production than previously obtainable from

the local, national television system. It was inevitable that this would have a profound

effect on both the popularity of local transmissions and on the performance potential

of local production companies in Saudi Arabia. The following examples of DBS offerings demonstrate its appeal.

Entertainment in the form of drama, songs and music, and game shows, for instance, dominates most of DBS output. On some channels it exceeds more than 90% (ART 4; ART 5; MTV; and VH1), while on other channels entertainment occupies a substantial share of the airtime. These imported soaps influence Arab production in both style and content. The Egyptian drama *Hwanim Garden City*, which was shown on ESC in January 1999, is one example of recent attempts to emulate such soaps with a local twist and flavour. The appeal of Syrian soaps lies in their ability to draw on historical and Arab nationalism themes and the adoption of 'out-of-studios' production techniques. Strict censorship laws in Saudi Arabia limit the quantity and quality of music programmes on STV, but DBS offers a wide variety of these, both Arabic and Western, for instance, MBC's *Top of the Pops,* ART'S *Top 10,* DSC's *Sebag al-aghani* ('The Chart Show'), and Nile TV's *Nile Hits* and *Nile DJ,* among others.

The problems and shortcomings of STV news reportage are documented in the following chapter. In contrast, MBC was voted as one of the best news services among the DBS channels in 1997.[30] Its news operations rely on correspondents in Arab and European capitals and in various parts of the world where events are unfolding. Aljazirah provides a line-up of news bulletins every half hour as well as a number of dynamic current affairs, discussion and commentary programmes. In asserting its independence it does not succumb to pressures from Arab governments and it has adopted a high-risk approach in opening closed files and in tackling sensitive issues, such as relations with

the West, political participation, democracy, human rights and civil liberties in Arab totalitarian societies. This approach is adopted in both its news programmes and in its other investigative journalism features, such as *Serri Lilghaya* ('Top Secret'), and *Nogta Sakhina* ('Hot Spot'), and in similar dialogue and discussion programmes, for example *Alitijah Almouakis* ('Opposite Direction') and *Akthar Min-rai* ('More than One Opinion'). These programmes allow for a great deal of viewer participation and have become platforms for opposition leaders and subversive opinions which are less than popular with certain governments. Aljazirah's perceived credibility, objectivity and independence have made it one of the most popular news services in the Arab world. This author has learned recently that a number of conservative Saudi viewers, who were strictly opposed to DBS, have begun to install receiving equipment just to tune in to Aljazirah programmes. STV's news services are still limited by a reliance on ready-made stories and an inability to compile impartial and informative reports independently.

DBS channels offer a number of political shows which contain interviews with influential decision makers, thinkers and analysts who can provide valuable and genuine contributions. Shows of this kind include *Akthar Min-rai, Alitijah Almouakis, Bila Hdood* ('With No Frontiers') and *Shahid ala Alasir* ('A Witness at the Time'), all of which are Aljazirah programmes. Similar productions also include *Roaya* ('Vision') on DSC, *Agenda* on MBC and *Kanadeel Fi Addalam* ('Candle in the Darkness') on ANN. They encourage and emphasise viewers' participation by means of telephone calls or fax and frequently publicise their e-mail addresses, telephone and fax numbers for viewers, who are invited to pose direct questions to the guests, or to voice their comments and opinions. Aljazirah programmes, in particular, are renowned for their frankness and

candour in their treatment of certain topics which are considered sensitive or taboo areas and are generally avoided on STV talk shows.

Other talk shows on certain DBS channels are more sensational. They follow a tabloid style in format and content, and emulate American talk shows such as *Jerry Springer* and *Oprah*. *Yahala* ('Welcome') and *Alylah* ('Tonight') on ART, and *Ashatir Yahky* ('Who Dares to Speak?') on LBC are examples of these. These shows, produced in Egypt and Lebanon, are usually recorded with an audience present and also receive calls from viewers.

DBS channels also offer a variety of medical and counselling shows. This category includes productions such as *Bsaer* ('Insights') on Dubai S.C., *Fadaya Clinic* ('ESC's Clinic') on ESC, and *Sihatak Bedonya* ('Your Health is Important') on MBC. As their titles suggest, they are designed to provide answers relating to health issues raised by concerned callers. There are no similar programmes on STV and treatment of medical issues is generally confined to government achievement only.

There are two kinds of religious programmes on DBS. The first is the conventional, traditional question and answer format, similar to STV offerings, and features *alem* - a religious scholar - who answers the viewers' questions regarding their religious duties. *Deen wa dunya* ('A Religion and a Life') on ESC is an example of this type of show. The other approach is extended to encompass Islamic views and solutions to contemporary political and social dilemmas, such as JSC's *Asharia wa Alhayah* ('The Shariah and Life'). This type of contemporary religious discourse is unparalleled on STV.

Despite the objections of Islamists and moralists to certain aspects of DBS services, these examples demonstrate a broader scope and a better quality of programming unconstrained by the same limitations that currently reduce the potential of STV, as described in chapters VII-IX.

8. Conclusion

The arrival of television in Saudi Arabia arose partly from a desire of foreign residents in Saudi Arabia to gain a broader perspective of global developments and partly from a desire by the indigenous population for a more informative media service, and one that would facilitate the development of the country. In satisfying these requirements, the government acknowledged the potential of the media to effect a greater sense of national unity, and to inform, educate and entertain. Nevertheless, it can be argued that while trying to enhance cultural self-reliance and development, Saudi Arabia has increased its technological and cultural dependency on imported foreign products and expertise at the expense of local media production.

The arrival of satellite services renewed conflicts between various societal elements, such as the Islamists and modernists, in effect undermining the government's attempt to promote national unity and has increased the dependency on foreign imports as supply meets demand in a perpetuating spiral.

As discussed in chapters VII-IX, the establishment of the 1982 Media Information Policy constituted an attempt to regularise media output to appease the various factions, but coupled with stringent censorship practices and additional constraints, this has led to

further limitations on local production, again increasing dependency on and preference for foreign media output.

The following chapter examines quantitatively and qualitatively the local and foreign television content on STV to which Saudi viewers are being exposed. This facilitates a comparison of quality and appeal with alternative, DBS offerings, as described, which in turn underlines the reasons for viewers' preferences for imported fare.

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CHAPTER VI

STV: QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS

1. Introduction

This chapter closely examines Saudi television and its policies with both quantitative and qualitative analyses of its programming, including an extensive discussion of its position and role in relation to the DBS phenomenon and its programming policies. First, the extent and magnitude of dependency in the domain of media - and of television in particular - will be quantitatively assessed and documented. Following this, the analysis and discussion of Saudi television performance will be carried out in the light of the traditionally held professional views regarding how a broadcast medium should operate and be operated in a developing country with its own specific needs and priorities.

2. Content Analysis: Quantitative Presentation

The following data are based on a calculation of percentages of all programmes broadcast by STV Channel 1 in the period from 1st to 14th March, 1997. STV broadcasts an average of thirteen hours a day. On some days, such as weekends (Wednesday and Thursday nights), for instance, broadcasting is extended until well beyond the usual close down, often until 3:00am. On all weekdays, except Friday, transmission starts at 7:45am and ends in the early hours of the next day at 2:00am or 3:00am. A total of 173 hours of programmes were analysed, which constitutes the total of STV broadcasting in the fourteen-day period under investigation. Programmes were classified according to their source and origins, genre and presentation format. As Table No.2 shows, during this period, 53.8% of STV programmes were locally produced shows, mostly religious talk

shows and variety shows. 30.6% of all STV output comprised Arabic productions, 3% were jointly produced shows, 10.7% were foreign (non-Arab) productions and 1% were of unknown origin. 80.5% of the non-Arabic productions are imported from the United States, almost all of these being animated cartoons for children and these American produced cartoons are broadcast in English. 8.2% of the foreign, non-Arab programmes are from the UK and 11% are from Japan. Both of these are dubbed in Arabic (see Table No.2).

Table No.2   Origin of all Saudi television   output:

ORIGIN			TOTAL IN MINUTES	%
Local production			2750	53.82
Joint production			155	3
Arab production			1564	30.60
Non-Arab foreign production			549	10.74
US	UK	Japan		
80.5%	8%	11.4%		
Unknown			92	1

Source: Table contents calculated from STV Channel 1 programme cycle for Autumn, 1997 (Appendix C).

Table No.3 Source of drama by country of production:

A.

EGYPT	
Total minutes	%
659	47.48

B.

SYRIA	
Total minutes	%
381	24.44

C.

KUWAIT	
Total minutes	%
255	18.37

D.

LEBANON	
Total minutes	%
93	6.70

E.

LOCAL (SAUDI)	
Total minutes	%
0	0

Source: Table contents calculated from STV programme cycle for Autumn, 1997 (Appendix C).

Arabic productions are predominately drama series and serials; 47.4% are Egyptian series and plays, Syrian shows take second place, occupying 27.4% of all Arab

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productions and partly consist of dramatic series. 18.3% are Kuwaiti productions and 6.7% are imported from Lebanon (see Table No.3).

2.1. Programme Format

Table No.4 Saudi television programme format:

PROGRAMME FORMAT	DURATION IN MINUTES	%
Direct/Lecturing	321	9.59
Animation/Cartoon	437	13.06
Participatory	75	2.24
Talk/Discussion	230	6.87
Multiple format	631	18.86
Dramatic	1584	47.36
Music	66	1.97

Source: Table contents were calculated from STV Channel 1 programme cycle for Autumn, 1997 (Appendix C).

2.1.1. Direct lecturing

As shown in Table No.4, 9.5% of Saudi television programmes are of the direct lecturing format where a speaker/presenter sits in front of the camera in a studio and either reads a 'written speech' from a paper or ad-libs for the whole duration of the programme. In each case, videos of any sort are absent both before and during the show. Religious programmes are the predominant example of such a format.

2.1.2. Interactive Programmes

Unlike DBS channels, which allow for a great deal of viewer feedback and participation, only 2% of STV programmes allow any kind of viewer involvement. In such programmes, although calls are always monitored, viewers can phone in with their comments and/or questions. This kind of participation is seen on *Face to Face*, where viewers can talk to celebrities or government officials. An additional programme, 'An Answer over the Phone' receives viewers' inquiries on religious matters, they, in turn, receive a response by means of an audio recording of a religious opinion from a scholar, with the help of a mediator.

2.1.3. Drama Format

As Table No.4 shows, 47% of Saudi programmes consist of dramas. These are, essentially, daily or nightly serials imported from other Arab countries, such as Egypt or Syria. There are, however, short developmental messages produced in a dramatic format. They are jointly produced within the GCC Joint Production Establishment and offer advice regarding road safety and health matters. Due to their short nature, they usually lend themselves to be used as 'fillers' shown repeatedly between programmes.

2.1.4. Animation Format

More than 13% of STV output is made up of cartoons which account for the bulk of children's programmes (73%). As mentioned earlier, with the exception of one daily 20-minute Japanese show which is dubbed in Arabic, they are all imports featured in the original language.

2.1.5. Music Format

Shows which feature only songs and music account for just 2% of STV productions. Most of the songs featured are called 'national songs' and are used as inserts or 'fillers' in the few minutes before the main news bulletin or after the showing of an inauguration project. They are used to complement features which praise the country's leaders and their achievements. These songs are often accompanied by videos showing aspects of modernisation and material progress. Other songs with different themes are incorporated in variety shows or randomly scheduled during the course of the day. A significant point is that since 1981 STV has not featured any songs performed by female singers.

2.2. Programme Genre

61% of STV output consists of entertainment shows, both local and foreign. The imported programmes are mainly entertainment shows such as plays, series, serials and cartoons. 4% of the imported programmes are of an educational nature, primarily imported from the United States and the United Kingdom. Dubbed into Arabic, they deal with the environment, space, global weather trends and related issues. STV has no locally produced educational or documentary programmes, neither within its production units nor supplied by local independent or non-local production firms.

Table No.5 Daily programme percentage by genre:

DAY GENRE	Saturday		Sunday		Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday	
	min	%	min	%	min	%	min	%	min	%	min	%	min	%
Religious	53	6.46	34	4.53	56	7.34	45	5.75	53	6.55	21	2.85	109	21.54
Sport	0	0.00	0	0.00	19	2.49	30	3.84	28	3.46	101	13.70	57	11.26
Drama	265	32.32	245	32.62	250	32.77	244	31.20	284	35.11	143	19.40	70	13.83
Children	124	15.12	122	16.25	75	9.83	81	10.36	62	7.66	93	12.62	45	8.89
News	108	13.17	128	17.04	115	15.07	131	16.75	134	16.56	132	17.91	142	28.06
Development	16	1.95	93	12.38	51	6.68	49	6.27	99	12.24	99	13.42	13	2.56
Documentary	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Variety	120	14.63	42	5.6	61	8	00	0.00	00	0.00	00	0.00	59	11.66
Music	0	0.00	14	1.86	19	2.49	15	1.92	44	5.4	7	0.95	11	2.17
Cultural	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	68	8.70	0	0.00	61	8.28	0	0.00
Education	30	3.66	41	5.46	44	5.77	38	4.86	24	2.97	0	0.00	0	0.00
Talk	104	12.68	0	0.00	50	6.55	58	7.42	29	3.58	47	6.38	0	0.00
Women	0	0.00	32	4	23	3	23	2.94	52	6.4	33	4.4	0	0.00
TOTAL:	820	100	751	100	763	100	782	100	809	100	737	100	506	100

Source: Table contents were calculated from STV Channel 1 programme cycle for Autumn, 1997 (Appendix C).

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2.2.1. Religious Programmes

Religious programmes amount to 8% of the total STV output. In their traditional, conventional form, they essentially consist of didactic and directive discourse including: recitations from the Quran at the opening of transmission and just before close down; live transmission of the call for evening prayers and the actual praying from the Holy Mosque in Makkah; direct lecturing or 'talk' programmes regarding Islamic history and traditions as well as Muslim duties and religious obligations; and finally, question and answer programmes presented by more than one scholar regarding social and marital relations communicated to the programme by viewers, either by telephone or facsimile or by mail. The only other format religious programme is *Kisa Wa Aayah* ('A Story and a Verse') - a twice weekly, 21-minute Egyptian show which is a dramatic representation of a moral or ethical issue mentioned in the Quran.

The majority of these religious programmes are studio-based; a scholar comes to the facility and has the episode taped for production in STV's main studios in Riyadh or in one of the six studios in other major cities. These 'religious' programmes restrict themselves to explaining religious duties to Muslims, without indulging in any philosophical, economic or contemporary political issues. In their limited form, they are not conducive to the innovation of new ideas or interpretations. Some DBS programmes such as *Alsharia'a Wa Alhaya* ('Life and Shariah'), which is shown on Aljazirah, a Qatar-based satellite broadcasting channel, have provided this touch. A respected Egyptian scholar called Yusif Alqaradawi, a jurist who has a great deal of insight into current religious issues, provides answers to viewers' questions pouring in from Europe and the Middle Eastern countries, including Saudi Arabia. STV used to present a similar popular

religious programme for years, until recently. It was called *Noor Wa Hedaya* ('Light and Guidance'); following the same format this programme was presented in an ad-lib, spontaneous style by Shaikh Ali Tantawi. A mixture of Islamic and literary encyclopaedic knowledge presented with a sense of humour in answering viewers' questions, which he received in letters, contributed to this programme's success for more than twenty years. The programme was discontinued because the unique personality of the presenter could not be replaced.

Since Friday is a special spiritual day to Muslims and is a holiday in Saudi Arabia, the number of religious programmes are increased three-fold on this day, they are more directive in nature and have very similar formats. There is, however, plenty of scope for the visualising of the Islamic knowledge through dramatisation or dialogue and discussion of contemporary issues or of topics derived from the Quran and from Sunnah's books and studies, with the aid of appropriate video materials. The approach of these programmes could be varied to target viewers of certain age groups or levels of education, making the message more tangible and appealing. For example, an entirely different and more simplified approach would be more suited to young children. There are, however, some reservations among religious conservatives regarding animated or cartoon depictions of Islamic characters, symbols or prophets, which arise from their conviction that these representations are degrading, blasphemous and deemed inappropriate for religious education.

2.2.2. Sports Programmes

Sports programmes account for 5% of the total STV output. Traditionally, Thursday

afternoon, which is a holiday in Saudi Arabia, is the slot for 80 minutes of sports programmes dominated by football matches, results and comments. Another show is a weekly, 30-minute slot of American wrestling, broadcast late on Wednesday nights. For years this programme has been accompanied by an Arabic commentary given by a distinguished commentator in his own unique style. STV has always maintained live transmission of key football matches from the three major national football tournaments; The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques Premiership, the Saudi Football Federation Cup and the Tournament of the Crown Prince Cup. There is also a weekly, half-hour report on equestrian sports on Wednesday afternoons and a live transmission of a major horse race on Friday afternoons during the season. Finally, Thursday mornings see the transmission of 20 minutes of aerobics and stretching exercises which are designed to involve the viewers at home.

Sports programming on STV has failed to reflect the enormous progress achieved in the realm of actual sports activities in Saudi Arabia. Vigorous policies and support to clubs, and the building of modern stadiums have yielded their fruit. Saudi Arabian teams in various games have been competitive and successful participants in regional and international sports events, but such successes have not inspired STV to develop and enhance its sports programmes, neither in quantity nor quality. In general, the main sports programme, that is, the 80 minutes on Thursday afternoons, is considered a very long one. Besides, it places great emphasis on the studio based interviews with the players, relies heavily on videos from previous weekend games and is lacking in analysis and commentary. It is inferior both in topic content and artistic quality to the more sophisticated and analytically rich sports programmes found on DBS channels. For

example, most of the DBS channels produce daily sports news bulletins to report sports news from all over the world. Other DBS channels are devoted entirely to sports, such as ART2, which is keen on providing its subscribers with live coverage of football and boxing matches among a wide variety of other sports. This coverage is accompanied by more commentary and analysis than is currently found on STV.

2.2.3. Drama

Drama is one of the genres most shown by STV. As Table No.4 illustrates, in the period under examination, more than 47% of STV time was devoted to the transmission of dramatic series; most of these being imports from Egypt (47%), Syria (27%), Kuwait (18%), and Lebanon (7%). These are shown immediately after the nightly news bulletin, which is considered to be the peak hour and prime time. This slot has always been occupied by nightly episodes of imported drama series. There is an additional drama slot after the final news bulletin at 12.30, when dramas from Egypt, Syria or Kuwait are shown. STV programmers usually 'shoe-horn' clusters of adverts into the minutes before and after the nightly dramas. Local drama is very scarce and local production is mostly exhibited during the Ramadan month only. This is the month when many broadcasters in the Arab world believe that television viewership reaches its peak, not only in Saudi Arabia, but across all of the Arab states. This presumption has been questioned by some observers.[1] Patterns of exposure are apparently changing as people tend to spend evening hours outdoors, in public cafes, in all-night markets or on family visits where the television simply provides background noise.

Other forms of non-entertainment drama that can be seen on STV are the jointly

produced development/directive programmes. Lasting between 2 and 5 minutes, these programmes provide some advice and practical tips regarding health and safety issues. In these few minutes, viewers are informed of the benefits of breast-feeding, or perhaps urged not to litter, to keep their cities clean or are offered tips on road safety. Most of these programmes are produced by the Gulf Countries Cooperation Council (GCC) Joint Production Establishment and are the result of efforts by information ministers at the GCC. The essential drawback of these programmes, and one that could undermine their overall message and appeal, is the fact that they are produced in a standardised fashion; there is a profound lack of creativity and alternative discourse; they are repetitive and lack variation; and there is no policy to research or update the information. The viewer is likely to dismiss these programmes as predictable and uninformative.

2.2.4. Variety Programmes or 'Magazines'

About 9.5% of STV programmes are of the magazine type, where the programme consists of interviews with celebrities in show business, actors, singers and sportsmen, and the showing of taped materials, such as excerpts from plays, series, films or songs (see Table No.6). These programmes take on different forms, the most notable being a show where viewers can make requests and direct their questions to the celebrity in the studio. Viewers are invited to interview these guests by phone or fax, and to ask them about their careers, prospective new shows, albums and plans. *Ahla Alayaly* or 'The Sweetest Nights', produced by STV in its main studios in Riyadh, is one example of this format and is shown for one hour a week. The interviews are interspersed with inserts or videos which serve as 'breaks'. A variation on this is also seen in *Shaksayat Wa Arqam* or 'Celebrities and Numbers', a 40-minute programme which also carries this

format. The basic idea behind this show is for celebrities to be interviewed, and then to have a quick chat with a 'guest' in a selected location outside the studio where they are asked the following question: *What is your favourite number?* The guest then tells the interviewer their number and a video with the corresponding number is chosen from the television library. The guest must then tell the viewers why this number is significant, for example, it could be a birth date, a wedding date or simply a randomly chosen figure. The presenter then asks the guests what they expect to be on the video tape bearing this number, for example, it could be a song, a clip from a film, an old football match, or endless other possibilities. The presenter is also a comedian and performs his own act in the form of short monologues between the interviews.

2.2.5. Music and Songs

STV devotes only 1.34% of its time to music and songs. This relatively low percentage represents all music and songs which are independently broadcast, as opposed to inserts within other programmes. Known primarily as 'national songs', they take the deeds and accomplishments of the country's leaders as their subject matter and are often accompanied by videos showing the country's modern developments, progress and capabilities, such as industrial plants, hospitals, motorways and military equipment. Since the ban placed on female singers in 1981, these songs have been performed by male singers only.

A second music programme on STV is called *Ma Yatlboho Almushahidoon* or 'Viewers' Requests'. A weekly, 40-minute programme, its basic idea, as the title suggests, is to invite viewers to write or fax requests for their favourite songs, albeit from a selection

already chosen by the producer. These 'requests' are then dedicated to relatives or friends. There are an average of four songs in each programme. The presenter reads some of the viewers' names, while additional names are seen on a generic line at the bottom of the screen as the song is played. Unlike the songs that are commonly played on DBS channels, STV is forbidden to show female dancers or singers, especially Saudi nationals. In addition, special versions of certain songs are produced to take into account the STV censorship rules and are usually commensurate in quality with the low price which STV offers (see chapters VII and IX).

2.2.6. Talk Shows

Chat shows account for about 5% of STV output, as illustrated in Table No.6. At present, *Dayf Alshasha* or 'The Guest of the Screen' and *Wajhan Lewajh* or 'Face to Face' are two talk shows scheduled on a weekly basis. The former is based around an interview with a guest, either in his own residence or in the studio, and is a pre-recorded show of 45 minutes, while 'Face to Face' is a live, 55-minute show in which viewers can direct relevant comments or questions by phone or fax to a panel; the questions relate to a specific topic, usually social. Both of these programmes are STV productions. Another item in this category is entitled *Almamlaka Fi Ayoon Alaalm* or 'The Kingdom in the Eyes of the World' - a weekly, 30-minute panel discussion, in which a number of journalists engage in an exchange regarding a certain aspect of the country's foreign policies or its relations with other countries. The panellists usually concentrate on positive national and international media coverage of Saudi Arabia and its leaders. In this type of programme, tightly organised ranks of participants sit around a table and engage in a discussion which is strictly controlled by a host, who directs the exchange

towards carefully selected areas. In general, talk shows on STV eschew the immediate

burning issues and deal with non-controversial or so-called 'safe' topics with an approach

that overtly emphasises the positive aspects only.

Table No.6 Weekly programme percentage by genre:

DAY / GENRE	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Mean	STDEV
Religious	6.46	4.53	7.34	5.75	6.55	2.85	21.54	7.86	6.21
Sport	0.00	0.00	2.49	3.84	3.46	13.70	11.26	4.96	5.40
Drama	32.32	32.62	32.77	31.20	35.11	19.40	13.83	28.18	8.15
Children	15.12	16.25	9.83	10.36	7.66	12.62	8.89	11.53	3.23
News	13.17	17.04	15.07	16.75	16.56	17.91	28.06	17.79	4.79
Development	1.95	12.38	6.68	6.27	12.24	13.42	2.56	7.63	5.02
Documentary	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Variety	14.63	5.6	8	0.00	0.00	0.00	11.66	9.49	4.23
Music	0.00	1.86	2.49	1.92	0.00	0.95	2.17	1.34	1.03
Cultural	0.00	0.00	0.00	8.70	0.00	8.28	0.00	2.43	4.14
Education	3.66	5.46	5.77	4.86	2.97	0.00	0.00	3.25	2.42
Talk	12.68	0.00	6.55	7.41	3.58	6.38	0.00	5.23	4.49
Women	0	4	3	2.9	6.4	4.4	0.00	2.95	2.15
TOTAL:	99.99	99.99	100	100	100	100	99.98	99.99	51.26

Source: Table contents were calculated from STV Channel 1 programme cycle for Autumn, 1997 (Appendix C).

3. Content Analysis - Qualitative Presentation

3.1. Introduction

For organisational purposes, STV output is categorised and analysed under the following main groups: Children's programmes; News Programmes; and Entertainment. The programmes are analysed in relation to their conformity to the Saudi Media Information Policy, and whether it satisfies the preferences of or offends the Saudi television audience. Following this there is an examination of the alternatives available and the implications of this for STV.

3.2. Children's Programmes

STV output of children's programmes can be examined from a number of perspectives, these include the educational value of their content - especially considering the lack of other educational resources in Saudi Arabia; and their suitability for various age groups.

3.2.1. Sources of Children's Education in Saudi Arabia

Due to the complex nature of child psychology and the numerous influences on child behaviour, the effect of television on children is one of the most vehemently debated areas among media scholars. Despite the important presence of television in the lives of youngsters, there are always other influential factors, such as peer pressure, school teachers and parents, which are believed to affect children's behaviour and attitudes. There is some agreement among scholars regarding the importance of television as an education and entertainment medium (Home, 1993; McQuail, 1987). According to M. Ayish, a leading mediologist and academic from the UAE, children's programmes suffer from a lack of good writers who understand children's psychology. He believes that

television authorities in the Gulf countries do not devote enough attention or proper consideration to the importance of these programmes. The results are that many programmes are cheaply made, based on little creative effort, and their main goal is to entertain as opposed to enhance the children's (or viewers') knowledge (Ayish, 1994). This factor is especially significant when one considers the dearth of other educational resources in Saudi Arabia, particularly in non-urban areas.

Schools, which should provide for a major part of children's educational and social needs, have not been sufficiently developed to function as social institutions, rather, they act as places where youngsters learn how to read and write, and little else. Under continuous pressure on government spending, as demonstrated by the ever-growing need for more schools to be built to keep up with the increasing population, the idea of having proper playgrounds, gymnasiums or swimming pools built is considered an unnecessary luxury.

Children's cinema and theatre are absent from Saudi cultural life, even within extra-curricular activities. Children in rural or less advantaged areas are deprived of these, as well as of sports facilities, parks and safe playing spaces; the few recreational areas that exist are operated as business franchises and are centralised in major urban regions leaving towns and villages without any outdoor leisure facilities. Television, therefore, has a particular prominence as an educational resource in this society, yet is not being exploited to its full capacity.

This problem is compounded by a lamentable dearth of children's books on the Saudi

literary market. The print media targeted at children chiefly consists of Arabic versions or translations of well-known magazines and story books, such as *Batman* or *Superman*. *Hassan* had been the only Saudi magazine published for children until it ceased publication some years ago; *Ashibl* ('Youth'), *Basem* (the name of a character) and *Arrow* are three other struggling magazines. Publishing for young readers is part of a more complicated and profound phenomenon in Saudi society, based in economic and cultural issues. Reading as a habit has not met with enough encouragement among Saudi Arabia's young nor among its adults. It is apparent that Saudi society has leapt forward to the electronic age without dwelling in its predecessor - the print age. In today's societies, children do not only have unlimited access to conventional sources of knowledge such as printed texts, but also have increasing access to Internet-linked computers, from where information on any imaginable subject can be readily retrieved from Websites. The Internet is due to be available in Saudi Arabia in 1999, but still faces a number of obstacles pertaining to methods of censorship and the policing of Web content. Meanwhile, access to computers by youngsters at schools is still, for many, just a hope.

According to the 1992 census, the Kingdom's total population is 16,929,294.The number of Saudis is 12,304,832,comprising 72% of the total population. It is estimated that half of those Saudis are under 16 years of age (Statistical Yearbook, 1994). This means that the young population is around 6 million. As the following analysis demonstrates, this statistical fact has not been recognised or appreciated by the broadcast media in the form of specially planned and designed indigenous television programmes.

3.2.2. Description of STV Children's Programmes

Saudi television exhibits three types of children's programmes: locally-produced in-house shows; a joint production, and imported cartoons (see Table No.7).

Table No.7 Children's programmes on STV Channel 1:

PROGRAMME ORIGIN	TOTAL MINUTES	%
Local	57	9
Joint	111	17.70
Foreign	459	73.2

Source: Table contents based on STV offerings during the 2nd week of March, 1997 (Appendix C).

Locally Produced Shows

As Table No.7 shows, 9% of children's programmes are indigenous productions. They consist of two, weekly, 30-minute programmes called *Baraem* ('Blossoms') and *Multaqa Al-Atfal* ('Kids Get Together'). These are STV in-house, studio-based productions, usually produced by one of the main STV branches based in Riyadh, Jeddah, Madinah, Dammam and Qasiem in rotation. The basic idea of the show is to gather a number of participating children of all ages - from pre-schoolers to early teenagers - in one of the studios, together with a host/presenter. The latter is usually a female, part-time, free-lancer, with a background in the teaching profession, and she presents the show with a younger co-host selected from among the children themselves. The show does not follow a strict format, but a typical episode comprises a combination of games, quizzes and competitions in which the children/audience participate and win prizes. A considerable

part of the show is topic-based and consists of the giving of directions and advice to youngsters on issues related to social etiquette and positive behaviour at home and in school. Other relevant issues such as road-safety and educational hints are also dealt with. Such advice is relayed to the audience by the show's host in an authoritarian, teacher-pupil setting. The programme occasionally contains a number of choral songs performed by trained child volunteers, usually accompanied by a musical instrument such as a keyboard. It also includes some video shots pertaining to the subject matter of the songs.

Although in description these programmes are apparently appropriate and child-centred, they do have major failings. *Multaqaa Al-Atfal* was designed to involve a young studio audience and to encourage them to participate in playing the games and to answer questions for prizes. In fact, the huge number of children confined in the small area of a studio - normally more than forty or fifty - creates a chaotic atmosphere which does not prove conducive to constructive participation. In addition, a topic of potential relevance will suddenly give place to a rather obtuse propagandistic report about one of the governments developmental achievements. These reports are dry in presentation and unaccompanied by visual aids, materials or footage, rendering their content unsuitable and inappropriate for a programme designed to entertain children. For example, in one of the episodes during the period under investigation there is a visit to a doctor's surgery; disregarding the educational potential of such a visit, the doctor will launch into a speech praising the generosity of the government. A further example of unsuitability of message can be seen in the featuring of an item directed at young viewers regarding the importance of immunisation. In general, such programmes are

rudimentary and inferior in quality and discourse to DBS output to which Saudi children could readily be exposed. This is especially true of those channels devoted to youngsters, such as ART3, Nickleodeon, and others, that incorporate a wide range of appealing characters, puppets and animations, which are liked by children and attract them.

Co-productions

One programme that does deserve recognition is a co-produced children's programme, a brainchild of the Gulf Countries Cooperation Council (GCC) in the eighties, with technical support provided by a New York based, specialist production firm called CTW - Children's Television Workshop. Originally this 30-minute Arabic version of the famous American production *Sesame Street* was entitled *Open Sesame*, but it has recently been renamed *Iftah Ya Watani Aboabak* or 'Open your Doors my Country!' This programme, with its appropriate title, the clever application of puppets and its simple dialogue and the use of music and songs, was initially aimed at pre-schoolers, and has grown in popularity among generations of children. But still, despite its educational value and success, this venture has met with criticism on a number of grounds; it is accused of dealing with generalities which do not necessarily pertain to the requirements of Saudi children while its Western slant does not integrate any Islamic values in its fabric (Dosooqui, 1984).

Cartoons

Of the 11.5% of STV's output targeted at children, as illustrated in Table No.6, 73% of all children's programmes on STV are imported, animated cartoons, originating from the United States (80%) and Japan (11%). Since the inception of STV, cartoons have been

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a constant programme type throughout the history of Saudi television, while Hollywood animated productions made in the 1980s have occupied a significant amount of the time allocated to children's programmes. In the period under investigation in this study, STV exhibited a daily amount of about one hour of American cartoons, featuring famous characters such as Bugs Bunny, Popeye and Tom and Jerry. On a daily basis, immediately following the start of transmission, cartoons take over and are shown for another 35 to 40 minutes during the early afternoon. These cartoons are almost always telecast in their original language, that is, English, without translation, dubbing or comment, and are the only programmes in English to be shown on Channel 1. They are rarely part of another programme, nor are they accompanied by any comments in Arabic before or after their transmission. Such cartoons contain a fair amount of gratuitous violence and reflect the values of their country of origin. In addition to these foreign imports, there is a Japanese cartoon production entitled *Yanabi Almarifah* or 'Springs of Knowledge'. This particular programme is featured in the afternoon and is dubbed into Arabic. As its name suggests, this show consists of posed questions regarding discoveries, nature, animals, and so forth, and through narrative form accompanied by visual animations, it provides all the answers.

3.2.4. Comparison with DBS Alternatives

The failings of STV to cater for young viewers are accentuated by the growing number of DBS channels, such as Nickelodeon, Disney channel, ART3 and Teletoon. Although these channels show more sophisticated and appealing productions, continual exposure to such shows has, in fact, raised the demands and expectations of young viewers, so that when they compare what they watch on satellite television with what is available on STV

they soon reject the local transmissions. The impact of imported cartoons on Saudi society is evident in the fact that as a consequence of the relentless promotion of the US cartoon culture, a Warner Brothers store recently opened in Jeddah - the product of a joint enterprise with a Saudi company. The store specialises in the sale and promotion of around 7,200 products pertaining to American cartoon characters and is the first branch to be opened by Warner Brothers in the Middle East. Since then, other branches opened in various areas of the Gulf region, such as Kuwait, Bahrain and Dubai.[2] This is just one of the ways in which dependence on foreign programming is pervading other areas of Saudi society, as discussed in chapter II.

Satellite television has little concern, if any, regarding watershed boundaries, nor with the suitability of televised material to children at all. It is now commonplace for children to stay up and watch satellite television until well after midnight. There has also been a marked increase in the number of children watching adult movies or Mexican and Brazilian dubbed soaps, which are scheduled at inappropriate times on DBS channels. Weak parental supervision and the lack of control over television viewing are negative factors which are increasing at an alarming rate. Children are often not prevented from being exposed at all hours to violent scenes and a contradictory mix of messages inconsistent with Saudi values systems, as described in chapter I.[3]

Finally, there is concern among media scholars and child welfare groups in the Arab countries regarding the new trend of dubbing cartoon animations imported from the Far East and the West. According to the outcome of a specialised symposium held in Cairo to discuss writing for the young and future prospects, the situation now is like 'pollution'.

This refers to the flood of cartoon shows containing behaviour and conveying messages that, Islamists and culturalists believe, contradict Saudi values and undermine local culture, and which are believed by some researchers to have a profoundly negative impact on our children.[4]

Nevertheless, among the plethora of inferior options there are a number of commendable productions which attract interest in alternative offerings, and in DBS in particular. Recognising the difficulty in sustaining the young viewer's concentration and interest for the duration of a full 30-minute broadcast, certain shows have tried to encourage a sense of involvement. These programmes, which invite young viewers to participate and to express themselves, either in the studio or at home, have proved to be extremely popular. Certain satellite television programmes, such as ART3's *Asdiqaa Farah Wa Marah* ('Friends of Farah and Marah'), and LBC's *Kayf Wa Laysh* ('How and Why') allow and encourage young viewers' involvement and participation, over the phone in the case of the former, and in the studio in the case of the latter.

In addition, there are other examples of quality Arab productions. Jordanian Production is a leader in this field and is renowned for its quality. Shows, such as a joint production by Jordanian TV and CTW called *Almanahil* ('The Springs') with their educational and entertainment values take into account the developmental needs of young viewers.[5] STV, as a result of political differences with Jordan, has implemented an undeclared boycott on Jordanian productions. The consequence of this is a dearth of Arabic children's shows and a continuous dependency on imported American-made cartoons.

3.2.5. The Audience's Perspective and the Implications for STV

With the current inferior quality of standards caused by various constraints, as discussed in chapters VII-IX, children and youth are not satisfied with so-called children's programmes, and it is safe to suggest that there has been a sharp decline in the viewership of these programmes among many children in Saudi Arabia. The lack or total absence of other forms of leisure or entertainment means that children spend more time at home, increasing the likelihood of their watching television. With the scarcity of quality programmes on STV, children and their families are deprived of constructive and entertaining viewing time.

Children's opinions regarding programmes are invariably ignored by broadcasters. The idea that STV might conduct regular research studies among all age groups to identify viewers' preferences is remote. In an opinion poll conducted by *TV Magazine* among young viewers in different countries in the Arab world, the majority of children said that they were dissatisfied with what is being offered on Arabic satellite and national television. Furthermore, children in Syria, Egypt and Jordan were not happy with 'the way programme producers are treating them'. A great number of the children surveyed could not find programmes suitable for their age and interests. A common feature of children's programmes on Saudi television is that they tend to ignore age differences among their viewers. Pre-school children, for instance, need certain subjects and agendas to help prepare them for school and need to have these conveyed to them in a more direct and simple way. Use of computer-generated graphics and characters would add to the interest value of the programmes, as would further use of puppets, or songs and music which occupy special places in the hearts and minds of young children. Older

children, on the other hand, require more stimulating and thought-provoking subject matter, but the heavy use of cartoons, which are cheap to buy, has squeezed out many factual and drama programmes more suitable to an older age group. As one put it: 'They insult our intelligence' when referring to the banality and lack of variation in topics in the context of national and satellite television. The poll has shown that many young viewers are tired of cartoon shows and would prefer factual programmes, dramas or game shows.[6] Very few children's programmes and films have proved successful and this is demonstrated by the fact that in television and film festivals, the prize in the children's programmes category is usually withheld. There are no outstanding works to be rewarded and this was apparent in the Children's Film Festival held in Cairo in 1997, and in the 4th Gulf Television Production Festival held in Bahrain in March, 1997.[7]

The Saudi Media Policy clearly stipulates the guidelines for informative, watchable programmes which would be educational and entertaining. A successful informative programme can provide young people with valuable impetus and the necessary guidelines to demonstrate how they can effectively and productively utilise their leisure time. Such productions would have the potential to generate new hobbies, broaden the children's range of reading material and kindle interests which may become important and satisfying pursuits in years to come.

However, young viewers are still treated marginally, the policy is not translated into action and the result is a plethora of imported, cheap programming which, while economically more viable, does little to develop local production of quality to compete with foreign imports.

3.3. News Programmes

In Saudi Arabia about 45% of the domestic audience is literate whilst more than 90% of Saudi homes have radio and/or television sets (Nyrop *et al*, 1982). As a consequence, Saudi broadcasting has great potential for disseminating news and information to a large number of people. Newscasts on Saudi television have been the subject of academic studies in the past. Douglas A. Boyd, in his Ph.D. thesis on Saudi television, penned in 1972, provided a general descriptive account of the news programmes at that time without actually analyzing the content. Other Saudi scholars, such as Alharithi in 1983 and Najai in 1982, followed suit. Later, in a study by Jerry Hudson and Steve Swindel which was published in 1988, the authors concerned themselves with news story subject and story origination in news programmes presented by the Second Channel - which broadcasts in English. But they totally ignored Channel 1 news programmes. According to the previous studies mentioned above, Saudi television has 17% to 20% of its output devoted to news programmes (Bait Almal and Ibrahim, 1994:351).

News programmes currently amount to 18% of the total STV output. There are three news bulletins at 3:00pm, 9:30pm and 12:30am, and three five-minute 'News-in-Brief' slots in the daily schedule every weekday, except for Thursdays and Fridays, while at the weekend there is a news programme called 'the Televised Newspaper' or *Aljareeda Almuswara*. In addition, everyday except for Saturday sees the transmission of another news programme called *Min Arjaa Alwatan* or 'From all Parts of the Nation' which barely differs from the former. Both programmes focus on the local scene and are composed of news reports from different cities in the Kingdom concerning government officials and government agencies and activities in these localities. An additional weekly,

25-minute programme called 'The Event of the Week' or *Hadath Alesbu* is, in essence,

a re-reading of the main news stories broadcast in the news bulletins during that

particular week, without any commentary or analysis.

The three newscasts each commence with the main news, succeeded by news from

sources of local origin. Saudi television has an obligation to protect and maintain the

status quo, which explains why it is that ceremonial news about government officials

and/or members of the Saudi royal family have priority over the local news. There is

no set length for the newscasts but they range from 30 to 45 minutes and could reach

a maximum of 75 minutes depending on the length of 'local' stories. According to what

the Glasgow Media Group (1980) calls 'viewers' maxims', it is understood that the items

which are featured first on television news are the most important and that, generally,

items receiving more time are also more important (McQuail, 1994:272).

Their findings can be related to Saudi news reports where the position or rank in

government of the subject of the report is, self-evidently, a factor determining the

positioning of the news item in the schedule. News involving the King is invariably

transmitted first, followed by items about the Crown Prince, and then by the Second

Deputy, the Minister of Defence and Aviation. Only later comes news pertaining to

those other princes who are the governors of the main provinces in the country. These

are followed by other reports concerning relatively minor government officials and

ministers. The daily activities of the King and the Crown Prince constitute some 40% of

the local news stories screened. In fact, Hudson and Swindel (1988:1005) in their study,

found that 23% of the Saudi stories focused on the royal family. In the international

news section, Arab heads of state are prioritised, followed by news from the Islamic

world and Western and Eastern Europe, succeeded by news from developing countries.

Bait-Almal and Ibrahim (1994), found that 55.8% of all news stories they analyzed were

political. In the present study, almost 59.7% of the stories were political news, with

nature and violence, accidents and disasters amounting to 8%, economic news

constituting 5% and science and technology 4%. The Palestinian question and the peace

process were given priority over other stories in almost all news bulletins.

3.3.1. Results and Discussion

In this particular research the main focus is the discussion and investigation of the

overall Saudi television performance in the light of Saudi Arabia's declared policy on

Communication and Information. Therefore, the totality of the news programme analysis

should be examined as an integral part of the overall discussion and evaluation of Saudi

television performance. Content analysis was selected as the most apt method of

qualitative research for the purposes of this study. The content of the main nightly

newscasts presented by Saudi Channel 1 for the week Saturday 8.3.1997 to Friday

14.3.1997 was video-taped at 9:30 p.m. and at 12:30 a.m. The units of analysis consisted

of news story subject and news story origination. Several traditionally accepted

definitions of what makes news indicate that the following qualities should be present:

it must be circulated as quickly as possible after the event, be of wide interest, contain

information which the audience has not received before, represent a departure from the

everyday pattern of life and contain information that is useful in reaching decisions.

(MacBride *et al*, 1980:156)

News, according to Denis McQuail (1987), '[...] is the core activity according to which a large part of the journalistic profession defines itself'. News programming has become part of the culture of every society which embraces television, as well as a vital source of information for many audiences (McQuail, 1987:203).

> 'If individuals are to play their part as responsible citizens in the community at the local, national and even international level, they must be adequately informed, possessing sufficient facts on which to base rational judgements and select courses of action. A full understanding of the events and issues which affect individuals can be attained only by the simultaneous supply of a variety, even controversial if necessary, of background data, information and facts.' (MacBride *et al*, 1980:156)

All in all, the judgement must be based on the value of the news story, its significance in social, economic or political or human terms, and its likely interest to the audience (Hetherington, 1985). Although these criteria are usually applied in determining what is 'news', it is argued that the criteria vary according to the needs and cultural perception of different societies. In this study, the content of the news items and their order and prominence in the newscast were looked at as an indication of news priority and newsworthiness attributed to news items by Saudi television.

Evaluation of the Quality of News Reportage

There is an old English saying that 'No news is good news'. The converse, that 'any news is necessarily bad news', may not be universally true but, unfortunately, if one is evaluating production values in Saudi Arabia, that tends to be the case. Quality counts, and it may be inappropriate to evaluate the output merely on the basis of statistics which might be misleading if taken out of context. Nevertheless, around 50% of newscasts are devoted to news related to government officials and such statistics are self-explanatory.

During the ceremonial news, which relates to governmental officials' receptions and departures, there is invariably a lengthy video depicting the event accompanied by orchestras and symphonic music. These videos are churned out for what seems an interminable period (but is typically 'just' 7 to 10 minutes) without a spoken word from the anchor. This a practice which, apart from failing on an elementary elucidatory level, detracts from the programme's potential impetus and continuity. In his book *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, Postman (1994) asks:

> 'What has music to do with news? It is there for the same reason music is used in the theatre and films to create a mode for entertainment. If there were no music, as in the case when any television program is interrupted for a news flash viewers would expect something truly alarming. But as long as the music is there, the viewer is comfortable in believing that there is nothing to be greatly alarmed about.' (Postman, 1994:130)

When Saudi news reportage is analyzed in relation to these news theories a number of arguments for improvement or even radical reform are raised, and flaws are revealed. After years of total dependence on ready-made news stories fed to Saudi Arabia by news agencies and other television channels, Saudi television has come to realise during the late 1990s that its news reports must be independently compiled away from foreign sources and influences whilst employing its own reporters. In this author's opinion, this is a crucial development, despite the fact that the reporters who work for Saudi television are usually freelancers and not Saudi nationals, and that they work as part-timers. At present, Saudi television has 16 diverse correspondents in different countries who can and do supply it with 70% of its news programme (Habib, 1997). The 'stringers' or itinerant reporters working for Saudi television are usually Arab expatriates with a journalistic background and their main task is to provide taped vocal narrative accompanying the video footage. Rarely do they conduct interviews or provide live

reports. Technical assistance to feed these reports is provided by World Television News, which also receives the reports at its base in London and then relays them to Saudi television (Habib, 1997).

In addition, there are other general characteristics of note. Most of the Saudi television news is official and supplied by the government via spokespersons, press releases, etc. Saudi television has not exerted any noticeable effort in the pursuit of news stories. It simply takes and repackages what is already in the news domain. In doing so, STV allows foreign sources of news to dictate their decisions regarding newsworthiness instead of applying a home-grown, indigenous editorial policy.

Besides such shortcomings, news stories from Muslim and Arab countries are frequently not accorded the attention their importance deserves. A small proportion of stories, 9.7% in fact, originate from elsewhere within the Islamic world and include national disaster news from Iran and Pakistan. This is a clear indication that the news exchange amongst Islamic countries is rather minimal; a situation which is inconsistent with the Saudi communication policy and that of Muslim and Arab countries as declared after each conference (Arab States Broadcasting Union, 1995). As Attieb Saleh (1984), an Arab writer and culturalist puts it: '[...]we know much about skiing resorts in Switzerland and we know about a fire outbreak in Texas but we know very little about our neighbours...' (Saleh, 1984:140). Even when there is a major news story, the coverage is still marginal. On one day of the week under investigation in this study (Saturday, 8.3.97) there was a story about a major earthquake which struck parts of Iran. Despite the immense loss of human life and the magnitude of the destruction which left thousands of villagers

homeless, Saudi television scheduled this as the 21st item in the main news bulletin with mere seconds of aerial views of the massive devastation, preceded by trials, visits, political turmoil in Albania and other news stories. The reading of a cable of condolences sent by the King and another by Crown Prince to the Iranian leaders were the first and second news items, respectively, in the programme. Meanwhile, an item from Southern Lebanon concerning Israeli air-raids and shelling of small townships, made 18th place because it was a little more graphic and exciting. This is the kind of practice which may undermine perceptions of professionalism in broadcasting. The lack of consistency and unswerving allegiance to the credibility of any medium which happens to provide information runs counter to the process of getting the facts right in every circumstance. The desire to air the truth is, of course, a fundamental journalistic principle, yet, in Saudi Arabia the media - whether one looks at print or broadcasting - fall short of this goal. Many of its staff are well aware that their work lacks credibility because it cannot be construed as either impartial or objective. In a study complied by this author in 1991, 38% of Saudi media practitioners believed that Saudi media suffers a credibility problem, a result of restrictively compiled reports (Al-Garni, 1991:83). This is especially true when Saudi itself features centrally in international news, and several examples illustrate this rather effectively.

A prime example in the local domestic arena concerns the event in 1979, described previously, when a group of fanatics occupied the Holy Mosque in Makkah for 15 days. For days the authorities hesitated over whether to announce the incident or not. As a consequence of this trepidation, foreign news media, such as BBC radio, reported the happenings before the Saudi media. This particular incident had far-reaching

implications on Saudi information policy and resulted in the formulation of the existing information policy (see Appendix B). The duty to inform the audience in the domestic arena of political, social, economic and criminal news, and even accidents, many of which affect viewers directly, vies with overseas stories which bear less immediate relevance. Even after the adoption of the current media policy, on the domestic level STV is barred from broadcasting news about accidents and crime. Nor is it permitted to report any damage or loss caused by natural calamities. There have been numerous occasions when torrential rain and flooding have caused substantial destruction to parts of the country where villages are isolated and bridges and trunk roads have been swept away. STV crew have not been allowed by local authorities to provide either coverage of the Civil Defence rescue operations or reports of the damage visible in the aftermath. Ironically, the print media have been there and have reported the stories over the subsequent days.

The second example was an incident which had great significance and far-reaching implications on Saudi's information policy. It took STV two days to announce the invasion of Kuwait in 1991, and then the STV was used simply to relay CNN's coverage. Some, if not most, of Saudi's media at that time hardly played a significant role in informing and explaining to the local Saudi audience what was happening along their own borders (Mustafa, 1997).

A third and rather more recent example is the civil war in Yemen, which lies at the Southern end of Saudi Arabia. In 1996 the Yemen army was engaged for several weeks in a war against Southern separatists who were, as their name implies, resisting the

unification of their country. Although it is true that this was strictly an internal Yemeni

affair, it was hard to ignore because of the proximity and the possible, if not probable,

consequences of the event. Political differences between the Saudi government and that

of Yemen as a consequence of Yemen's position during the Gulf war in 1991 presumably

played a role in this wilful blindness. Again, foreign news media were there, and this

time with Arabic satellite channels. The news story about the collapse of the Soviet

Union was broadcast by STV as the 5th item after local and national news (Ashobaili,

1997).[8]

These examples of restricted content, inadequate technical support, delays in reportage

and poor coverage of significant events demonstrate how the Saudi media has repeatedly

faltered in its duty to provide impartial and informative reportage of events that occur

either locally or externally, and this has subsequently increased the preference for

foreign news media.

3.3.2. Local News Reporting

On a local level, news bulletins, documentaries, current affairs and discussion

programmes provide an essential forum for public debate, without which the general

public would be ill-equipped to participate in shaping its destiny. News programmes in

Saudi television usually eschew the immediate burning issues and deal with what could

be named the 'safe topics' or the noncontroversial local issues. This practice has helped

promote a false impression that Saudi society is a 'perfect' one with no addressable

issues, thus leaving the Saudi audience easy prey for foreign news media, which can be

accused of sugar-coating its propaganda and presenting it as 'objective' news reporting

(Ashobalili, 1992:45). The key failure of Saudi television news is that it has failed to make what professionals would consider to be an elementary distinction between fact and opinion; what is a factual news item and what is the official opinion of the government. Were news programmers equipped to make this distinction, their output would be more able to fulfil their viewers' rightful need to know and at the same time they would be able as professionals to remain faithful to their inherited, but hard-to-discharge, obligations to maintain the *status quo*.

What the viewers therefore receive in the form of news is essentially a main nightly news bulletin which is possibly stalled for several minutes while its anchor team awaits the outcome of a regular routine meeting of cabinet ministers. In addition, it is common for reports on official visits to be spun out for as long as 20 minutes. As Ashobaili (1992) observes, in most of the Arab broadcasting media, a typical news story regarding a visit by an official will be more concerned with the ceremony and the formality of the visit, preoccupied with such trivia as when the official is scheduled to arrive and who is to accompany him, who met him at the airport, and the invariably 'warm' welcome he received. If anything else is deemed worthy of mention, it is wrapped in banal and redundant expressions such as 'bilateral relations between the two nations were discussed' or 'this visit was successful and the dialogue was constructive' (Ashobaili, 1992:45). STV's news programmes contain a great deal of foreign news but there has not been an attempt to put it in context as to how it would affect its viewers. This type of coverage understandably incites the local populace to seek more substance-orientated coverage with details and explanations as one has come to expect from the foreign news media. Saudis cannot expect live interviews in their programmes, something which

citizens everywhere enjoy as a right, and must instead make do with slides and pre-recorded video material as the only visual aid. Nor are there such things as computerised graphics, maps or charts to enhance reportage, only pre-recorded materials which are fed by satellite or via microwave link.

STV newscasts lack certain features seen in modern news formats. There are no 'off the beaten track' or general human interest stories included. Close to the end of the programme, there is usually a 'news belt' of short items and less important stories. All this is presented in too formal an atmosphere. Thus, further criticism can be aimed at the news reader's presentation which, across the board, far from being punchy and dynamic in its style, is ingrainedly official and po-faced. There appears to be no intimation that underlying their frosty veneer is a capacity to deal with a soft, fluffy and touchy-feely human interest story at the end of the programme, for example. No doubt the pervading belief is that such a departure would tarnish the credibility and respectability of the service, though in truth the converse is more likely to be the case. The news bulletin is often read as if it were intended for radio medium as opposed to a television audience in terms of tone, style, eye contact of the anchors, and the synchronisation of video footage. Considering these shortcomings, Saudi television news programmes have, nevertheless, made good use of video footage to complement news items, both domestic and imported, in the period under investigation, statistics show that more than 80% of news stories were accompanied by video. However, there were problems such as the wrong use of captions, and negligence in the accurate labelling of used footage, such as 'recent pictures', 'archive pictures', etc.

The unsatiated need for news and information by local audiences is, in fact, the commercial logic underpinning the thriving of foreign news media in the region, facilitated by both radio and satellite television. The proliferation of satellite television channels represents a significant addition to the amount of broadcast journalism available to Saudi viewers.

A recent entry to the news market is Aljazirah - a satellite broadcasting channel currently just over two years old, based in Qatar. This channel is a replacement for the BBC's Arabic Television Service, which used to be part of Orbit Television Network (Orbit Communications), and was cancelled on 21st of April, 1996, as a result of an editorial dispute (see BBC news release, Appendix E). Aljazirah's service has seen considerable success and a growth in popularity amongst viewers in the Arab world and in Europe, based as it is on what is largely a compilation of news, current affairs and documentaries. It broadcasts on ARABSAT AII to the Middle East and North Africa, and on EUTELSAT II and HOTBIRD 3 to North Africa and Europe, and on Echostar to the US from February, 1999. It is also available on cable systems in a number of Arab and European countries. What is significant about Aljazirah's service is its high standard of professional news and methods of investigative journalism, qualities which had been confined to Western media in the past. Another important breakthrough is that Aljazirah has managed to establish and maintain a good relationship with Israeli politicians and journalists, who have been interviewed on the programmes numerous times -a phenomenon which has never happened in any Arab news media in the past. Aljazirah's treatment of news has not been welcomed by certain Arab regimes; Kuwait, Bahrain, Morocco, Jordan and others have all expressed their displeasure with the way in which

they are treated in Aljazirah's taboo-breaking news and current affairs programmes. In a recent development, the Jordanian government asked Aljazirah to cease operations in Jordan and to close its bureau in Amman after an interview with a Syrian researcher who landed an attack on the Jordanian government's position regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict. The programme had in fact, in fairness, interviewed the last Jordanian Minister of Foreign Affairs in order to allow him to respond. Qatar, the host country, who, in a recent move abolished the Ministry of Information altogether, has always endeavoured to nurture and maintain Aljazirah's independence.

3.3.3. The Challenge of Foreign News

When trend shifts in popularity of certain news media are considered, it is evident that STV needs to radically improve its newscasting service to stave off the competition. There is a long tradition of Arabs listening to radio broadcasts from the West and numerous surveys have documented that Saudis are avid listeners to Arabic broadcasts of British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Voice of America (VOA), and Radio Monte Carlo Middle East (RMCME). Arabic is second only to English as the most used international radio broadcasting language (see Boyd, 1998; Al-Oofy, 1994). This tradition assumed another form with the advent of satellite as the new mode of delivery to television signals. CNN - Cable News Network - has gained important prominence in the region since its extensive coverage of the 2nd Gulf war in 1991. It subsequently became one of the main sources of news among Saudi viewers in general and among the elite in particular. In a study conducted by Ayman Habib (1997), CNN was rated higher than all foreign news media. 56% of Saudi television personnel working in news departments stated that they rely on CNN as a main news source, followed by MBC - Middle East

Broadcasting Centre - at 32%, while the BBC is rated third highest with 16% (Habib, 1997). If Saudi news broadcasting intends to retain or increase its audience, a radical overhaul is required in the production areas mentioned above.

The Gulf region takes third place after Europe and South Africa in the BBC's World Service television coverage. The BBC broadcasts on the PANAM4 satellite system and is available on cable systems in Dubai and Qatar, and on terrestrial Bahrain transmission, which can be received in the Eastern province of Saudi Arabia.[9] Euronews started to broadcast in Arabic to the Middle East and North Africa on EUTELSAT II N1 on 15th of April, 1997. According to its Arabic Service director, Euronews is now watched by 86 million viewers throughout Europe and in the Mediterranean area.[10] ANN (Arab News Network) is the latest addition. A satellite delivered news service broadcasting from London, the network is owned by a Syrian business entrepreneur close to Asad, president of Syria and emulates the same style as Euronews. This kind of DBS Channel news programme has had a slight influence on Saudi television news programmes to the extent that there are signs that they are beginning to induce change, borne from a perception that to do so is crucial to survival.

There are, sad to say, no other news or current affairs programmes within Saudi television's output that warrant further analysis. The 'Events of the Week' programme amply demonstrates this. It claims to be a 'news' programme yet is merely a re-reading of some of the now-stale stories broadcast during that particular week - together with another show concerned with readings from the press. There are neither commentaries nor any in-depth analytic news programmes that seek to explain or interpret events in

a way which would enable the public to comprehend them in context and form opinions which could be fed back into policy-making.

3.4. Entertainment

Television drama and entertainment programming are at the heart of every broadcasting schedule. They inspire, entertain, criticise and amuse. STV is no different: entertainment is the largest quantitative component of its output. Entertainment formats generally include quizzes, dramas, game shows, and variety shows, but since STV shows little else but imported dramas and serials in this genre, these are the focus of this section.

3.4.1. Soaps and Series

Drama is traditionally the most expensive genre to produce due to the high costs involved. Growth of local production of television fare has always been rather slow and inefficient, partly due to the fact that since the inception of STV in 1965 it has become dependent on imported entertainment from the United States and the United Kingdom, as well as from Arab countries such as Egypt, Syria and Lebanon. The proliferation of television channels and the widespread use of satellite to deliver television signals has created a huge demand on television programme production. Imported series are used to fill out the schedule and the consequence is that viewers see the world interpreted in terms of these images, which often convey un-Islamic values, as described in chapter I. As Peter Meech observes:

> 'Ideological effects are by no means restricted to those television programmes or newspaper articles which aim first and foremost to provide information. Indeed, it is often argued that such effects may be strongest where least expected, namely in items that are normally labelled as 'entertainment', for example, newspaper features, cartoons, comedy shows and soap operas.' (Meech, 1985:36)

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Arabic Dramas: Egyptian, Syrian and Kuwaiti Drama Series

The abundance of DBS channels has created an unprecedented demand on the production of Arabic dramas, with which the Egyptians alone, who are prolific producers of such serials, could not cope, encouraging the production of dramas by other Arab countries. Some of these have filtered through to STV in response to the viewers' desire for a change in content. In the period under investigation, four nightly series financed by Egypt, Kuwait and Syria were shown, as well as a 72-minute, two-part drama, also imported from Egypt.

One Egyptian series is a prime-time show following the main news bulletin, and therefore attracts high viewing rates. Called *Alhub Wa Attoofan* or 'Love and the Flood' and with each episode lasting for 40 minutes, it is typical of low budget productions which invariably revolve around the themes of love, family feuds and class struggles in Egyptian society.

The plot is based on the life of a wealthy business man who is faithful to the old traditions in his life and who is trying to similarly influence the lives of his two sons and his daughter. After a terminal illness and a fight for her life, his wife dies; there is then the need for someone to take care of their mansion and their daily affairs. A rescuer appears on the scene in the form of a middle-aged woman who, after a violent, armed robbery incident against her husband, is left penniless, vulnerable and a single mother. She is forced to swallow her pride and succumb to the merciless demands of her daughter - a student at college. They have some support from an aristocratic accountant who works for the wealthy business man, but he soon dies too, and the woman is

subsequently employed by the business man himself as a resident housemaid/nurse. This triggers off hostile feelings towards her from the high-class daughter and one of her brothers. The newcomers' vulnerability and their neediness encourage the harassment and exploitative behaviour of the greedy, bullying son who tries on a number of occasions to rape the maid's daughter. A machiavellian type, he will go to any length to maximise his trade and profits in the family business. To counter this there is, of course, the 'good guy' - the second brother - who arrives on the scene as a saviour and protector of the young lady. Their feelings for each other develop into a romantic relationship, entailing secret trysts. At the same time, the father - the wealthy businessman - has developed similar feelings towards the mother and another romantic relationship evolves. After several domestic disputes regarding the high-class and low-class conflicts in the relationships, a happy ending concludes the episodes, everybody fulfils their desires, despite the class barriers, and the message is that these barriers in society should be overcome.

A general weakness of Egyptian dramas lies in their repetitiveness and redundancy of topics which deal with the specifics of Egyptian society. Acknowledging that there is still great potential for Egypt in the drama production market, they have built their 'production village' known as '6th of October City' - the Hollywood of the Middle East. With advanced digital production capabilities it has been described as second only to Universal Studios.[11] Whether this will facilitate their success in the competition to produce quality drama remains to be seen.

Syrian drama series, which take second place in STV scheduling, have met with relative

success when compared to the competition. This can partly be attributed to the support given to them by the Syrian Government in various ways, ranging from the provision to the industry of marginal freedom of expression as well as financial assistance and production facilities. These dramas deal with topics and subjects which differ in context from those of their Egyptian counterparts. There is a clear slant towards an historical perspective resulting in the showing of dramatic depictions of their national movement and struggle against the Turks, and more recently, the French. *Aljwareh* or 'Birds of Prey' and *Ikwat Alturab* or 'Brothers of the Nation' are two examples of successful Syrian works which have appealed to the Arab masses among the DBS viewers. These dramas have been aesthetically enhanced by the wise application of outdoor video operations since the Syrian production teams took full advantage of outdoor shooting opportunities to film 'authentic' settings. Despite their quality, very few Syrian dramas have actually appeared on STV. The chief reason for this is that the bulk of them are produced with the DBS related censorship rules in mind and therefore cater to the satellite television market, rendering them less suitable for Saudi television as they are not up to Saudi censorship standards.

Kuwaiti drama is, in fact, the 'poor relation' among the Arab dramas and is struggling to maintain its place on the schedules of both Arab national television and DBS channels. Its lack of suitability for Saudi TV can be put down to the fact that although there are cultural similarities between the two countries, there are also profound differences, especially in issues concerning women's roles in society. In Kuwait, women can receive a university education in a co-educational setting and are allowed to participate in the employment market. These and other features of Kuwaiti society

conflict with Saudi cultural values and affect the success of any Kuwaiti drama which contains such topics.

3.4.2. Channel 2 Entertainment

There is a dearth of research into the Saudi television market, and especially into Channel 2 entertainment, which is primarily intended for English-speaking expatriates working in Saudi Arabia. The fact that Channel 2 broadcasts entirely in English has created a climate not enjoyed by Channel 1 but the former is not regarded as an autonomous and separate entity from the latter. For example, Channel 2 is consistently used by STV as a substitute for Channel 1 when a scheduled news bulletin on the latter coincides with a live transmission. Channel 2 entertainment programmes consist of imported series, serials and films, most of which are American. Shows which include children's cartoons, *Phyllis, St. Elsewhere, You Asked for it, Only in Hollywood, Minder, Sportworld, Evening Shade, Believe it or not* and *Candid Camera* are the mainstays of Channel 2 output. This channel also features films every Thursday night, most of which are Hollywood productions. Although these materials are subject to the application of heavy censorship practices, still there are practices depicted in these programmes which are considered inconsistent with the basic tenets of Islamic faith. Meanwhile, the continual output of such entertainment increases the reliance on imported fare.

3.5. General Summary of STV Output

The consistency and conformity of the content of 'all' television output is, it can be argued, a prerequisite for the survival of the society as a whole if it is to promote its own national media industry and lessen its dependence on foreign imports. In turn this

will help to preserve its religious and cultural identity and resist penetration by foreign values. Analysis has shown that STV has a sizeable challenge to achieve this consistency. Discrepancies between media messages and Islamic law are considered contradictions and disparities. However, the programme content described contains a few examples of inconsistencies, irrelevancies and un-Islamic values contained in STV output, and which are not of the kind that deal with different aspects of Saudi life adequately or in a manner conducive to increasing the popularity and appeal of STV output in general, and local productions in particular.

While certain items on STV are censored, others cannot be, and this allows un-Islamic ideas, practices and values to filter through. Although the Ministry of Information is keen to enforce strict censorship rules on what STV can show, still the analysis of these imported shows reveals that there is a great deal to be concerned about. Censorship policies and practices as they stand show evidence of a lack of informed and knowledgeable decision making. This problem of un-Islamic or inappropriate message is considered a result of STV's reliance on imported entertainment, produced in other societies of different character and with different values. While on the one hand, STV is criticised by Islamists for not being 'pure enough' in its programming policy, it is the demands of the religious element in society and the censorious effects of the system which encourage other viewers to turn to imported products. This dependence on imported programming is reinforced by a lack of local productions with which to fill air time on STV.

As far as Islam is concerned, there is nothing else deemed un-Islamic or contradictory

other than the previously discussed moral issues depicted in entertainment fare. On the contrary, Islamic doctrine actively encourages the media to play a constructive and informative role by any means and in any form. Freedom and justice are two main principles of Islam, as well as objectivity, fairness and tolerance in dealing with controversial issues. Every individual in Muslim society is accountable and responsible for his/her own actions, be it in a governing or governed capacity. The collective interest of the society as a whole takes precedent over parochial self interest. These principles could be integrated in media messages and operations and be translated into programming. The absence of these guiding principles for STV output, and the continued nullification of Saudi Mass Media Policy provisions have undermined the role of STV and driven Saudi viewers to DBS channels in the search for alternative sources of news, information and entertainment.

4. Conclusion: Discussion and Critical Comments on STV

In addition to the more detailed analysis in the preceding sections, and in order to provide a further critique regarding STV scheduling and programming strategies, this section will summarise previous discussions in this chapter as well as throw light on programme genres which were not included earlier, either because they were scarce and marginally treated by STV, or because they were totally absent from its schedule. Despite a recent move by the Ministry of Information to establish what is called the 'Programmes Improvement Committee', an ad hoc body formed from top management in STV, the best that this committee has achieved is a series of face-lifting and cosmetic measures only, such as rescheduling some programmes and renaming others. These measures are merely 'quick fixes', like bandages rather than cures, and far from being

genuine reform measures they are simply placebos. It is clear from the comments which follow that effective measures are urgently required if STV is to hold its own against its competitors and provide a worthwhile service to Saudi society and its viewers.

• There is a serious dearth of educational programmes; the few that are transmitted are Western imports translated into Arabic, and they often bear no relevance to the specific situation in Saudi Arabia. There are, of course, programmes that deal with scientific or neutral issues that add to the viewers' understanding and general knowledge of the natural sciences, but STV generally relies on old films which deal with irrelevant topics.

• As the analysis of so-called 'religious' programmes reveals, they were originally broadcast as isolated programmes that take into account the Islamic teaching and philosophy in the messages that they convey to the viewers, but the conformity to Islam is undermined and dissipated, resulting in conflicting programme content. Despite the didactic nature of so called 'religious' programmes, there is insufficient guidance for the young viewer, who is left perplexed as to whom to believe and what to follow.

• There are no factual current affairs programmes nor documentaries, nor in-depth news analysis included in STV scheduling (see Appendix F, cartoon No.3). Noticeable, too, is the absence of informative quiz shows. Viewers who are looking for such types of programmes have to turn to other broadcasters, who, of course, are not concerned with current affairs in Saudi Arabia nor local cultural issues. Many programmes on satellite channels receive telephone calls from viewers in Saudi Arabia who wish to participate in the discussions or answer quiz questions or even ask questions pertaining to the topics

dealt with in particular programmes. However, local issues and immediate concerns of local viewers are left unaddressed.

● A constant feature of all STV programmes is their official tone and authoritarian, top-to-bottom nature of discourse. No consideration is given to viewer interaction whatsoever, nor to feedback (see Appendix F, cartoon No.6). There are no interviews with people who could voice their concerns or present their opinions regarding issues which affect their lives. This situation raises the question of accessibility of television to the people. There is also a significant absence of programmes on STV that survey the views and opinions of ordinary people on issues such as television programme content and scheduling, current issues and trends. Little importance is given to allocating a facsimile or telephone number through which viewers can relay their reactions to these aspects of Saudi life. Viewers, the intended targets of all media messages, and their opinions, are totally ignored.

● As regards scheduling, STV programmes are poorly scheduled on a day-to-day basis and throughout each season. On the daily or weekly basis, sports programmes, which are predominantly scheduled for Thursday afternoons, are considered very long - roughly 80 minutes. However, this is the only sports programme that concerns itself with sporting events taking place in the country for the whole week. More than eight football matches are played during each week of the football season. These matches are played on Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays in different cities in the country. Such sports events require more coverage and more in-depth reports to sum up the events on the same day of play, and should perhaps be scheduled later in the evening.

An examination of scheduling on a seasonal level reveals that locally produced dramas are usually scheduled during the month of Ramadan, a boosting move by the Ministry of Information and STV operators to encourage local production. Packing local productions into this month while leaving the remaining eleven months without a single Saudi drama show has adversely affected local production. They simply overexpose and deprive the viewers of alternative, more balanced schedules.

A further point regarding scheduling is that STV programme schedules are subject to a short notification of change, and occasionally no notice is given at all. The coverage of ceremonial events involving the presence of government officials inaugurating a project, or visiting a particular part of the country will replace the regular programme which had been announced. There are instances when regular programmes are delayed, cancelled or re-scheduled to another day because of what are called 'special' programmes. Such sudden shifts in programme times will result in an inconsistent and unreliable service, affecting viewership, viewing habits and patterns of exposure to STV output.

● Until 1999, STV applied advertisement block-programming tactics. This entailed the showing of advertisements in blocks instead of dispersing them between or during programmes and meant that advertisements were played back-to-back during the day and night, cramming ten or more advertisements together. Inevitably this diminished their appeal and perhaps increased the level of boredom among the viewers. An alternative approach to advertisement programming would have improved STV's position in the advertising market against DBS rivalry. However, it is only recently that under economic pressure, and after experiencing a sharp decline in advertising revenue that

STV has changed tactics. In a drive that is expected to enhance its position in the media advertising market, STV has decided to insert advertisements during programmes and to reduce the minimum available advertising space from 60 to 10 seconds.[12]

● The majority of STV productions are of a studio-based nature. Religious programmes, talk shows, women's programmes and variety shows are all produced in-house by STV. The advent of the portable video camera has made this type of production outmoded. Authentic talk shows and religious discussion programmes can be produced only in the studio, but viewers' participation may be taped elsewhere. Showing relevant videos could provide a break away from the monotony of having a person talk to viewers for half an hour or more in a manner more appropriate to radio broadcasting.

● A constant deficit in STV programmes is that they seem to be compiled in a hasty and unprofessional manner and are often lacking in proper research regarding the topic at hand. If sufficient preparation and survey were carried out, it would enrich the programme and give it more balance. The professional handling of a television programme requires the programme producer to go back and read, or carry out some video library research, or delve into archives in order to produce a watchable and authentic production. Viewers today expect television output to contribute to their understanding and enhance their knowledge.

● STV programmes are also very traditional; they have had the same contributors, presenters and style for years. There are no significant innovations despite the rivalry presented by satellite services. The 'summer' programmes, for instance, are intended to

boost local domestic tourism and attract people to parts of the country which have milder weather during the summer season. In general, they consist of interviews with officials in their offices, welcoming the holiday makers and assuring them that all the services they require are available, followed by another interview, or two, with holiday makers praising the efforts by local authorities and by the central government. These are accompanied by relatively old videos showing some scenic views of the immediate vicinity and the region. The potential to showcase the area more effectively and to ensure tourism makes a more substantial contribution to the economic well-being of the region is being overlooked.

● Apart from two programmes targeting farmers and teachers, there are no programmes geared to addressing segments of the viewing population who may have special interests, nor to particular age groups. As discussed in the section relating to children's programmes, the 8-14 age group do not have any programmes that they are attracted to or could benefit from. Such viewers have special requirements and are the future of the nation. Yet, they are left easy prey for some of the satellite channels producing programmes that convey un-Islamic messages. Pre-schoolers also tend to be neglected by STV. The only programmes directed at this group are the daily 40-60 minutes of imported cartoons. There are no programmes that could provide practical advice or assistance to viewers in areas such as home improvement or DIY for example.

● STV does not show any promotional features for new or future programmes, for instance, there are no trailers for forthcoming programmes. Instead, announcers 'read' the names of the daily programmes and the time that they will be shown at the

beginning of transmission, and another reminder is given after some hours of broadcasting. There are no reminders at short intervals of broadcasting to keep viewers informed and updated with the line of upcoming programmes and their content. This failure to inform will serve to distance the viewer, and increase the likelihood of that they will be more inclined to switch to other channels after a short time.

4.1. Programming, Relevance, Tasks and Accessibility

Robert McLeish (1994) proposes a set of criteria which enhance a programme's appeal:

'The qualities which people enjoy and which will attract them to a particular programme are:

● Humour that appeals

● Originality that is intriguing

● An interest that is relevant

● A clearness which can be appreciated

● Simplicity - a non-confusing message

● Good technical quality (sound and picture).' (McLeish, 1994:112)

As the description of STV programme content and the critical comments have demonstrated, STV has not been keen to address local issues and concerns of its viewers, neither in news programmes or entertainment and drama, nor in documentaries and talk shows. Avoidance of the immediate and relevant issues has been a constant feature typifying the majority of STV programmes. In fact, the domestic arena as a whole is noticeably absent or out of focus.

Numerous local and international cultural organisations have great confidence in the

importance of the so-called 'localisation' of the media. The first measure is to minimise the dependency on foreign-produced, cultural materials, and that includes television programmes, by encouraging local production and alleviating local constraints. The next measure is to utilise the national media system to deal with issues that have a practical bearing on the lives of the audience. In the words of one media scholar:

> 'It is well established that the effectiveness of any media discourse is contingent upon its credibility and its relevancy to the people's needs.' (Ashanqeeti, 1991)

In this regard, Saudi TV could focus its attention on issues such as unemployment, health and education, local environmental problems, public safety, and socially-based obstacles to development such as tribalism or adherence to traditions.

Each and every one of the aforementioned issues deserves its due consideration. When Saudi television puts education on its agenda, for instance, it will logically follow that the national school curriculum and teachers' qualifications and performance will come under scrutiny. Experts and educators could be interviewed or invited on to talk shows to debate such aspects as the status of public (as opposed to private) schools and the suitability of their physical environment to accommodate pupils. This is currently a central issue in educational development; the situation at present is such that Saudi Arabia relies on rented accommodation for schools and these are often unsuitable in that they are mostly cramped, inadequate teaching areas with limited or no access to computers, playing areas or sports facilities. However, there are no television talk shows which could be effectively exploited to provide a public forum to discuss these issues, shed some light on the current situation and inspire other solutions.

The same can be said about health institutions, the rapid trend towards privatisation in the health, education and utility services and the implications of this for Saudi citizens. Safety standards and precautionary measures in workplaces, homes, schools and streets are other fields of inquiry fit for consideration on STV. These issues are not placed at the top of STV's list of topics for priority treatment and there is a discouraging climate for further projects. In programmes on the environment, for instance, methods of refuse disposal, domestic and industrial waste dumping, and whether the current system is environmentally friendly are areas open for discussion. Other matters worthy of discussion and deliberation include recycling schemes and the need for STV to campaign for the introduction of accessible, practical recycling points. The importance of this type of journalism is summarised by Lent (1993):

> 'Development journalism in its original form was an honourable attempt by independent journalists to report comprehensively and accurately the development story of a nation in a way that it related to and benefited the masses.' (Lent, 1993:247)

Consideration is not given to the environment in terms of the endangerment to wildlife and there is little evaluation of the government's measures to preserve some preferred, privileged species. The importance of the environmental and the local ecosystems necessitates the programming of local shows depicting local wildlife and the results of human interference with it. Hunting practices, the use of vegetation cover and over-pasturing are related topics that could be examined in this context, but from the viewpoint of people with perceptions derived from either a nomadic or tribal existence. The plight of animals being wiped out as a result of ignorance or apprehension, or simply destructive farming practices could be brought to the attention of Saudi people to inform them of their own wildlife and natural habitats.

There are, of course, other areas of importance which directly affect the citizens' lives and well-being, and which do not receive media attention in Saudi Arabia. Road accidents are one clear example. Fatal road accidents are the biggest killer in Saudi Arabia and are the cause of 81% of deaths, while the injured victims occupy 20% of hospital beds. Between 1974 and 1996, 65,000 people were killed in such incidents.[13] Efforts to control the situation are currently in the hands of the traffic police alone. Television in particular could play a vital role in conveying road safety messages in different formats and they could be made the subject of various programmes, not just during 'Traffic Safety Week' - an annual occurrence in Saudi designed to raise awareness of road safety, but at more frequent intervals. For example, there could be factual programmes about roads, driver behaviour, the roles of the police and paramedics, etc. This problem could be approached from different angles to sensitise viewers to both causes and solutions. At present, STV's only offering on this subject consists of 5-minute long 'directive' programmes, which are the products of joint efforts with the Gulf Countries Cooperation; STV also produces *Hadith Wa Ebrah* - 'An Accident and a Lesson' a 30-minute programme shown once a week. *Hadith Wa Ebrah*, however, fails to deliver the road safety message because it always places the blame on the motorists alone. This programme is meant to be presented in an 'on the spot' style, interviewing the drivers involved in intercity road accidents and the police officers attending the incident. Despite this programme's tendencies to fault the motorists without questioning safety measures on that particular road or inadequate policing for instance, it is still the only programme recorded outside the television studios with a sense of spontaneity.

Short 'directive' programmes on STV convey standardised awareness messages which are

aimed at all the Gulf States. The high rate of road accidents is a common problem across the board, but each country has its own characteristics. Saudi Arabia is individualised by its topography and unique circumstances and the measures required by the government to minimise or eradicate the road accident carnage must be designed with these specificities in mind. One solution may be to lift the current ban on screening and announcing accidents which has been imposed on STV, and to raise public awareness of all the aspects of this issue.

Besides communicating the standard safety message, STV could work in conjunction and in close cooperation with specific local elements to design special campaigns. This type of orchestrated work could approach the problem from a number of angles, such as the responsibilities and behaviour of the road users - both motorists and pedestrians. The responsibilities of the authorities involved - the police, the municipalities and educational institutions - is another theme to be tackled. This is in direct keeping with the Islamic Shariah, which is based on protecting and preserving five fundamental necessities: one's religion, self, mind, offspring and wealth.

In conclusion, it can be argued that the magnitude and consequences of the high road accident rate in Saudi Arabia have not been adequately reflected upon by STV. The reliance on the standard safety message is not enough since it does not take into consideration the individual characteristics of Saudi Arabia, differences which set it apart from the other Gulf States and which require individual treatment. This is demonstrated by the fact that the death rate has remained static.

The Saudi media in general can also be accused of failing to deal with the unemployment problem with any seriousness or conviction. Unemployment figures are rising every year, but little is being done to bring this problem to the forefront of the national agenda. The Saudi government is the main employer through the Civil Service Bureau, which is responsible for announcing the government's limited needs and fulfilling its employment quota with suitably qualified applicants. In addition, the government has made concerted efforts to utilise the education system to cater for the needs of the job market, and in the process it has established a number of vocational, technical and training institutes in many cities in the country.

The free-market employment policies adopted by the government, combined with the private sector's need for cheap labour has led to a massive influx of foreign and expatriate workers from many countries. According to the recent census of 1992, the foreign population in Saudi Arabia currently stands at 4,624,459 (The Census of Population, 1992, Statistical Yearbook, 1994). There are, however, unofficial estimates which put it at roughly 6,000,000.[14] Saudi Arabia is therefore in the position of being one of the countries most dependent on a foreign workforce in the world. Saudi's special circumstances do have some influence on these statistics; every year hundreds of thousands of visitors flock to the holy sites and a substantial number of these 'pilgrims' do not leave the country on completion of their religious duties. They stay on as illegal immigrants in search of work. The seriousness of this syndrome has caused the Ministry of Interior to engage in a massive crackdown campaign to expel the illegal immigrants, resulting in the departure of more than 752,000 people up to May, 1998.[15]

Despite the ambitious and successful nationalisation of the job market in the public sector, the private sector is still highly dependent on foreign labour. This dependency has implications for Saudi Arabia's security and economy. Regarding the former, according to recent statistics published by the Ministry of Interior, there is an increase in the crime rate with most offenses being committed by foreign workers and illegal immigrants. These include crimes which are usually alien to Saudi society, such as armed robbery and car theft (Statistical Yearbook, 1994). On the economic front, financial transactions by expatriates amount to 48% of the nation's oil revenue, that is, 51.7 billion Saudi Riyals, the equivalent of $13.9 billion (US).[16]

The Saudi government's policy regarding the issue of unemployment is based on a principle of non-interference in the private sector's employment choices. Rather, it attempts to influence it by appealing to big businesses and multi-national and national corporations to assist in accommodating the influx of job seekers, whose numbers are soaring annually. Certain government agencies have worked closely with universities to organise a 'Careers Day'. This annual event, which takes place in some universities, involves meetings where executives and prospective employers discuss their essential needs and inform the universities of what these needs are. In this way the universities can respond accordingly by introducing modifications in their curriculums. Despite these efforts, the private sector in Saudi Arabia is still heavily reliant on foreign workforces. The potential role of the media has, evidently, not been fulfilled. What STV in particular could offer is active engagement in addressing the issue, documenting the private and public sectors' employment policies and working as a platform on which both sides could mediate and attempt to resolve this growing problem. What is of relevance here is that

STV, as demonstrated in the programme content analysis section in this study, has not been involved, as if unemployment rates were not of any great concern.

4.2. Dissemination of Knowledge and Information

As the analysis has shown, STV has not been an active source of information on local domestic issues, nor on international ones. Information is a vital commodity in contemporary societies and an essential requirement if citizens are to have qualified opinions or make informed decisions. Moreover, it is a guaranteed right of the public to be adequately briefed and empowered by knowledge. Saudi Arabian citizens need to know more about events and happenings taking place in their vast country. Until there are local media outlets in each region of the country, it is up to the central television system to bring the various parts of the country closer to each other. The truth of the matter is that unless there is a top official involved in the making of an event, very little or nothing is reported about it. This de-linking or disassociation of STV from the local scene has, unfortunately, become the norm. There is clear evidence that Saudi Media Policy is aware of the value of the task at hand. Article VI states:

> 'All the mass communication will seek to strengthen the bond among the citizens by informing them of the numerous parts of their country.' (Media Policy, Ministry of Information, 1982)

In adherence to this policy, STV could adopt a more analytical approach to the news by offering explanations and commentary and lessen the harsh official propagandistic tone in news programmes. With the advent of modern technology, news from outside Saudi Arabia has become more widely available. What is missing, however, is an interpretation of the events so that viewers are aware of the impact that such developments may have

and how certain events may influence the interrelated and interconnected world economies.

Further opportunities for STV's role in the dissemination of knowledge are revealed when one considers the paucity of information derived from local government agencies regarding their activities and their services. The roles of the public relations departments could be expanded and be made more effective if there were closer links with the media. STV could adopt initiatives to make information more readily available to the public, especially to those who are illiterate. Saudi citizens need to be made aware of their right to information. For example, they need to know how government services will be affected by privatisation and how this trend is going to affect the population as a whole. Regarding the economy on a local level, there is a distinct lack of output by STV on local economic or business news, apart from a brief run-down on currency rates and oil prices. Again, Saudis are not made aware of the immediate effect of these changes.

Moreover, the people need and are entitled to independent, unbiased advice to enable them to make informed decisions in the face of commercialisation and unratified claims made in advertising. It is imperative that there is a voice advocating and defending their rights as consumers, and again this is a role that should be fulfilled by their media.

On the international arena, STV again fails to provide sufficient information. Unless there is news about a major disaster or an official visit, little is communicated about the outside world. News and reports about the Muslim and Arab world are rare. Knowledge about other countries, their way of life, culture, customs and needs are not depicted on

STV, in spite of the emphasis which Saudi media policy lends to this particular aspect of media. Article XX in the Media Policy states:

> 'The information media will seek to bring closer all the Muslim people, their countries, potentials and capabilities.' (Media Policy, Ministry of Information, 1982)

4.3. Access and Participation

Feedback from the public regarding the government's actions, policies and services has never been accommodated by STV. Development plans do not account for the citizens' opinions. The people are simply cast as passive recipients who have no say in the progression towards modernisation and development. Council and municipal services could discover a great deal about the success of their projects and the success of their performance in their professional capacities once there is a chance to find out the reactions and views of the citizens whom they try to serve. This authoritarian stance is reflected in STV. Content analysis has demonstrated that STV programme content is uni-directional, comprising top-to-bottom discourse relayed in an authoritarian tone. No consideration is given to its viewers' opinions or preferences.

In a fast moving television market with appealing services, STV needs to pause for a moment and assess its performance. The growing need for audience research instead of relying on broadcasters' perceptions of viewers' preferences and requirements must be satisfied. Recent studies suggest that STV is at the bottom of viewers' choices (Al-Oofy, 1994). Such alarming facts should induce STV policy and programme makers to ask 'why?' As the analysis has shown, one major influential factor is that STV programmes do not allow a sufficient degree of viewer participation, nor are their views reflected to

any extent in programme content. The actual social life of Saudi citizens and their interactions have not been depicted by STV. This can be attributed in part to the influx of foreign entertainment shows, but it can also be put down to the absence of a will to focus on the local scene with all its complexities and its very individual nature.

Because of the centralisation of media facilities and operations, participants, writers and presenters of STV programmes have been the same for years and there have been no attempts made to widen the circle to incorporate new ideas, new faces and new approaches. Naturally, this has resulted in content which can only be described as boring and redundant. The obvious consequence is that the situation will be exploited by other media services, and this is what has happened. Direct Satellite Services such as Arab Radio and Television (ART) and MBC, for example, have invested in the production of programmes about Saudi social life and have provided an outlet for some local productions which cannot be accepted by STV. This is despite the fact that they tend to gear the content to a more universal appeal, suitable for Arab viewers all over the globe and with a predominantly entertainment oriented content. Customs and traditions from all over Saudi Arabia were exhibited by ART in more than one programme, for example, *Treasures of the Tradition*. Thus viewers were able to see performances by singers and actors, and even factual programmes dealing with unique marriage ceremonies.

Analysis of STV programmes reveals that the majority are studio-based productions with inferior artistic quality. The portable camera has revolutionised the making of television productions. STV producers should make use of such technology and produce shows that

depict a more realistic portrayal of the Kingdom from various locations within it. A vast country with diverse demographic and social characteristics, as Saudi Arabia is, should be the source of ideas for factual information and documentary series. This is STV's domain and territory which will enable it to distinguish itself from other broadcasters, and this is what will give STV its unique character and flavour. Such a task should not be delegated to MBC, ART or any other DBS service.

There are distinct segments of the Saudi viewing population which are under-represented in STV scheduling and programming; women, children and the rural population among them. Their individual requirements and concerns have not been addressed by STV and there is little opportunity for them to communicate. So-called 'women's' programmes consist of a 30-minute show screened three times a week. Their primary concern is with the urban housewife and her interests while the content is limited to housekeeping tasks and cookery. They do not accommodate the fact that the female viewer may have other interests and they fail to sustain a broad view of women's interests as a whole.

With regard to children, as they grow up and become more receptive to the world around them, their inquisitive minds constantly lead them to question 'how?' and 'why?' These are the questions that STV should endeavour to answer through informative children's programmes designed to stimulate interest and broaden the outlook of individual children. At the same time the children will be encouraged to learn about science, for instance, or other areas of particular interest. Until STV are able to offer informative and educational programmes in accordance with the Media Policy, foreign imported programmes will continue to be more appealing.

In addition, the accessibility of the media in general, and television in particular, by the peripheral and geographically remote regions is limited. Although STV has branches in seven regions, they consist of production studios and equipment which have not been utilized to successfully fulfil the function they were designed for, namely, to provide an opportunity for local, regional production and to communicate the unique character of that particular region or province.

4.4. The Illiteracy Problem

The illiteracy rate within Saudi Arabian society is still relatively high. UNESCO estimates it to be between 44% and 55%.[17] Yet, there is no apparent effort being made by STV to deal with such a problem nor to assist illiteracy campaigns. Illiteracy does not only imply the inability of a person to read or write, it also relates to the deficit of information and knowledge acquired by an individual. Many can read and write but lack the necessary information to form an opinion or to make an informed decision. A lack of information or possession of misinformation are other ways in which illiteracy manifests itself and which require STV programmers to acknowledge and to take action to alleviate it. The popularity and ability to reach the masses of the medium of television should inspire planners, educators and broadcasters to exploit its potential. Through programmes of different genres; news reports, documentaries, current affairs and talk shows, if viewers' interests are put first, they could become far more enlightened and be made much more aware.

In fairness, the Saudi government does in fact allocate a large amount of its revenue to building new schools and establishing educational projects in every part of the country -

an effort that STV has not managed to illustrate and reflect on in any meaningful way. Without a doubt, illiteracy is a great obstacle in the path of any genuine development. In Saudi Arabia a substantial segment of the population is deprived of any type of formal education, a problem which has prevented these people from participating constructively and effectively in the projects which target them. They have been unable to reap the benefits of national development plans and remain marginalised outside mainstream Saudi society. This is especially true of the rural community. The ability to make discerning, rational demands for facilities and services and to make full use of these has been hampered by the inability of these people to read or write, let alone think positively about what is essentially required to improve their living standards and conditions. The way to inform them of their rights and to realise their potential is by empowering them with knowledge. However, Saudi television does not broadcast a single programme that could be useful in this respect. In a developing nation where illiteracy is high and social awareness remains minimal, informative and educational programmes are urgently needed - not imported entertainment. Through years of observation and monitoring of Saudi television's performance, Saudi media planners and programmers have not recognised the problem of illiteracy and the lack of information and knowledge among the people. This is despite the articulated emphasis in the Saudi media policy on combating illiteracy (see Article XVII, Appendix B). Continuous education programming and the recommendations of numerous regional conferences outline the point that recognition alone, if not coupled with actions, is worth nothing (Hussain, 1988). If Saudi television could make use of its potential for high penetration and expanded coverage, some headway could be made in solving the illiteracy problem.

The discrepancies and variations between the formally stated Saudi Communication Policy and the actual media operations and output is a major drawback. Article XVI of the Saudi Media Policy reads:

> 'Realising its significant role, the media will deal directly and effectively to abolish illiteracy by adopting educational and scientific principles, dedicating educational programmes that meet the needs of every age and mentality.' (Ministry of Information, 1982)

Yet analysis of STV output reveals that there are no such programmes and this has been the situation for years. In an interview with two members of the Supreme Council of Mass Communication, both agreed that such a discrepancy exists. The Saudi Mass Media Policy is 'a masterpiece' according to the Deputy Minister of Information. He added:

> 'but the people who have articulated it have nothing to do with the media, they are intellectuals and literate: they did not give much thought as to how this policy could be carried out.'[18]

This task is left to television executives who have failed to translate those general guiding policies into actual programmes.

5. Implications for Dependency

When STV's deficiencies are examined in the wider context of Saudi Arabia as a developing society with a highly individual character, it is possible to detect how the problems which Saudi has encountered in its growth and development are mirrored in the difficulties which have arisen in the attempt to establish a successful local media industry. These problems can partly and similarly be attributed to the clash of traditional and modern forces which dictate media content. However many of the media's shortcomings relate to specific problems within the Saudi media industry itself which, as described in the following chapters, limit its ability to be self-reliant and produce content of high production quality.

When STV operations and output are analysed in isolation, the shortcomings of the Saudi media industry can be perceived quite clearly. However, when this analysis juxtaposed with an analysis of available imported alternatives, it becomes apparent that the strength of foreign competition and more economically viable media imports, as well as the appeal of better quality production accentuates the deficiencies of STV programming content. Saudi television has the transmission and reception infrastructure but it has failed to make any consistent or substantial effort to produce or co-produce quality home-grown programmes. As a result, it has been accused of belittling its audiences by dismissing and marginalising their interests. Boyd (1982) attributed the scarcity of reliable audience research in the Arab world, and particularly in Saudi Arabia, to a perception that broadcasters do not consider it necessary or worthwhile to sample audience preferences, opinions or behaviours.

The causes of STV's failings, as discussed in the following chapters, contribute greatly towards STV's present inability to sustain a captive audience for indigenous production and a failure to provide a viable alternative to imported programming. In this way, a preference emerges for foreign media products, such as DBS offerings, which are considered by a large segment of the Saudi viewing population to be more appealing. Despite the legislative stipulations, DBS is not limited by the same political and economic constraints which currently reduce the growth of national television systems and local production. As discussed in chapter II, while this may foster interaction and understanding, it may also be considered as contributing towards a dependency on imported programming and perpetuate the failure to develop local production.

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CHAPTER VII

POLITICAL AND CULTURAL CONSTRAINTS

1. Introduction

The constraints which thwart the development of the local media industry and local production companies also ensure the perpetuation of poor quality STV output in terms of skilled production, artistic quality, and stimulating content, thereby increasing the preference for foreign imported programming. These constraints are interrelated and there are aspects which overlap. As a result, it is difficult to rigidly separate them. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this discussion, they will be dealt with as distinct entities.

Table No.8. Local production constraints as perceived by 20 local producers

CONSTRAINT	%
STV censorship rules	98
Ministry of Information bureaucracy	95
Lack of artistic professions	90
Economic hardship and Ministry of Information pricing tariffs	96
Lack of resources and sponsorship	95

In interviews, twenty independent local producers described the constraints as they perceived them (see Table No.8). These include political constraints, such as censorship

rules and government bureaucracy; and constraints related to professional and artistic arrangements and to institutions in Saudi Arabia, which inevitably encompass recruitment policies and training schemes adopted by the Ministry of Information. Other impeding factors appertain to economics and to the pricing policies implemented by the Ministry of Information; advertising revenue, budgetary allocations, and so forth.

1.1. The Establishment of Local Production

More than 25 years ago, Saudi television produced the majority of its programmes (70%), by itself, as in-house productions.[1] Despite its lack of expertise and limited experience, local indigenous shows were on the Saudi television screen every season, along with a number of American, British and Arab productions, consisting of soaps, movies and plays. Skilled producers and directors, as well as talented Saudi actors and actresses popular at that time, were working close to, and within, the television facilities, despite the humble payment schemes and wages being offered.[2]

In the mid-eighties, 'the years of change' in all aspects of Saudi life, the Ministry of Information sought the discontinuation of made-for-television drama, in particular, so as to concentrate on producing religious talk shows, news programmes, 'variety' shows, and 'directive/informative programmes' - those which are designed to publicise the government's plans and efforts to develop the country (eight years ago, the latter was also delegated to ARA - an independent producer). At the same time, the Ministry of Information granted the necessary permission and encouraged senior actors to establish private production entities which could satisfy television's need for drama series and shows. These entities, as we shall see, have faced, and are still facing, a number of

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difficulties, which prohibit them from fulfilling their envisaged role. A number of complex social, economic and political factors were - and still are - responsible for this failure.

In discussing and evaluating Saudi media policies - the regulatory foundations and their role in preserving Saudi culture and eradicating or minimising dependency on foreign produced television materials (which might have cultural influences on Saudi society) - the role of these local production houses has to be investigated. This role seems to have slipped through the net of past enquiry pertaining to Saudi media. In order to understand the role local producers could play and before any judgement is made, one should investigate the legal, social, economic and political circumstances within which these producers are functioning. Such investigation is vital if we are to understand the reasons for any shortcomings.

The discussion which follows in this and the next two chapters is primarily based on the outcome of a survey conducted on local independent producers, media officials and policy makers. The constraints to be discussed are, according to the producers, the main hindrances to the fulfilment of their envisaged role:

> 'The biggest hurdle television in the Third World has faced hitherto has been the lack of interest local governments have shown in the technical and journalistic quality of national television. So long as television was politically tamed and could be used as a kind of government public system, those holding the reins were quite content.' (Berwanger, 1998:200)

Besides the problems arising from irrelevant and un-Islamic content amply found in these and other imported programmes, imported television fare presents a number of more complex issues. These include a tendency towards the denial of the opportunity

for local production companies to accumulate artistic and creative experiences and traditions, which could be the weapons to defend national identity against overwhelming floods of foreign produced materials (Tash, 1997).[3] Inevitably, this cycle perpetuates itself. The important role that home-produced materials has to play in Saudi culture is clearly acknowledged:

> 'Despite all fashionable talk about global culture, home-made mass communication seems to be preferred because it is valued for its cultural identity.' (Kivikuru, 1993)

> 'Indigenously produced material is still considered as offering more "identification poles".' (Desaulniers, 1987:122)

Despite the importance of STV's cultural role in Saudi society, a number of political and religious factors have contributed to the situation where local producers in Saudi Arabia are currently not being given the chance to reflect on and deal with the tremendous changes Saudi society has witnessed in the past, and is still experiencing on a day-to-day basis. Censorship in all of its forms is the most notable factor but all of these impediments and difficulties will be the subject of the following discussion.

2. Censorship

2.1. Background and Principles

In 1982, an information policy which dealt with television was formulated. As with previous legislation, the policy aims to prohibit items which may cause friction within Saudi society from the social, moral, religious and political points of view. When Shaikh (1989) put the following question to the censors in STV: 'Are there any formal or informal rules or guidelines on what to look for when deciding to approve or reject a particular programme or film?', all of the respondents answered, 'Yes.' Their responses

can be summarised as follows: the content of imported programmes should be compatible with the religious principles of Islam, that is to say, modesty and the maintenance of the Islamic traditions and values should be observed. The guidelines and rules can be categorised according to the areas with which they are concerned.

The religious line concerns itself with scenes or programmes that contradict the principles of the Islamic faith. Any programmes that show scenes of abuse of Islamic people, that expose the Prophet and his companions to disrespect, or that depict nudity, physical or sexual encounters between the opposite sexes, scenes aimed at promoting other religions, the depiction of or allusion to the drinking of alcohol or the taking of illegal substances, impingement of Islamic dietary laws, gambling, immodest women, and so on, are rejected; scenes featuring music and dance are also rigorously vetted.

There is a political line which states that 'Any scene that is derogatory toward the policies of the Saudi government and other countries, as well as leaders of Islamic and other nations will be censored.' Thus, the communication of any message that contradicts, opposes or criticises Saudi rulers, the government and its principles and national policies is forbidden.

The social line stipulates that 'Whatever conflicts with the traditions and customs of Arabic nations will be censored.' The technical aspects of the programmes, such as the actors' performances, dress, subject matter, objectives and direction are also scrutinised. In addition to the aforementioned guidelines and values, the general taste and trained good sense of the censors are also taken into account (Shaikh, 1989). The effects of the

interpretation of the censorship policies will be examined in the following discussion.

Compounding the restrictive effects of the censorship laws on Saudi media is the fact that Saudi media operations are constantly under pressure from different elements in Saudi society. The most formidable pressure comes from politicians and religious people; both groups exert their influence for different reasons. Some local provincial authorities scrutinise and even manipulate STV programme content produced in their region. Certain local governments try to exploit the media, both print and broadcast, to communicate a favourable picture of their province in the periphery of the country, regardless of the reality of the situation. Any producer who comes to that region has to engage in a 'prior arrangement' with local authorities, which inevitably limits the choices and discussion of the producers. This 'prior arrangement' also necessitates the obtaining of 'permission' and requires that a civil servant from that particular governorship accompanies the television crew throughout the shooting to 'facilitate' their task and to ensure that things are going according to the 'prior arrangement'. In such an atmosphere, producers usually show no resistance and succumb to pressures. As one producer informed this author: 'The ghost of the censors is always over our shoulders.'

2.2. The Role of the Censoring Committee

At present, censorship laws are customary practice and comprise excessively wide, vague and loose terminology. The manner in which the censors interpret these laws represents a formidable threat to the freedom of expression in view of their vast potential for abuse of power. A constant concern among all producers is that censorship decisions are arbitrary and based on personal judgements and preferences which are subject to the

censors' moods and whims. Producers complain about the parochial, over-conservative and short-sighted censorship decisions, which are neither constant nor realistic. The censorship rules affect every aspect of the 'work': the story-line, the characters involved, the language used, the dress codes and even the names used in the dramatic shows are subject to rigorous scrutiny. Decisions made by a censorship department cannot be contested and are final; in other words, there is no chance of appeal by the producer. Some decisions, when applied, can mutilate a story and disrupt the sequence of the scenes, with the end result being a useless and worthless show. Many of the producers interviewed by this author are not happy with the censorship rules. One producer has told this author that every producer is aware of the sensitivities of the country and therefore adheres to censorship regulations by self-censoring, but that the problems arise from the 'censor's interpretations of what is being said'. He adds: 'We know and observe what our religions require us to do, it is in the Quran'. He quoted the following verse:[4]

> 'Those who love (to see) scandal, published or broadcast, among the believers, will have a grievous penalty in this life and in the hereafter: Allah knows and ye know not.' (Quran, 24:19)

There is a common complaint among all producers regarding the arbitrary and subjective interpretation of members of the censorship committee and their lack of 'adequate knowledge,' as more than one producer has put it.[5] The censorship department has to examine the work twice; initially, as a proposal on paper and finally, when it is completed on tape. Each process often takes a long time. Conformity and total agreement are not always achievable. There has to be a unanimous decision by the censoring committee regarding any issue raised in the proposals of new shows, serials or series. If one member of the committee has 'reservations', the proposal could be

rejected out of hand. Some have called for 'a more realistic and wise censorship', arguing that there must be an emphasis on the quality of the censors and there have to be clear standards that could be applied to minimise the reliance on personal and subjective evaluations of programme content.

The process of censoring new proposals is, conclusively, a time-consuming and lengthy one. What could further delay the decision is the fact that some of the committee members are not from the television profession, or they may work for STV on a part-time basis only. Inevitably, the delay in the decision making process adversely affects local production companies. Not only do they have to conform to ambiguous censorship laws, but they are forced to await the outcome of their efforts to produce a suitable production.

Censorship has always been the main concern of independent producers and creators in other countries as well, and many are clear about the measures which have to be taken:

> 'To face the potentially negative effects of foreign media on local cultures, national media censorship laws have to be lifted without compromising moral and decency obligations.' (Ayish, 1994:52)

At the 5th Television Production Festival in the Gulf States, which took place in Bahrain from the 17th to the 20th of March, 1997, independent producers, media decision-makers and directors from Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and the six Gulf States (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman and the United Arab Emirates) attended symposiums to discover the effects of censorship on the advancement and progress of television production in the Gulf States. These independent producers were against censorship practices and expressed a belief that it is an outdated and useless practice which, some

contend, should be abolished completely.

Included in the duties of the censors is the assessment and evaluation of the artistic quality of the production. Such a task could not be left to television critics or the general viewers. This evaluation by the censors directly influences the rates of production, which ultimately affects the price the Ministry of Information will offer to that particular programme.

2.3. The Religious Line

A suitable production which considers the censorship regulations over religious issues must take into account the fact that it is not permissible, according to the majority of Muslim scholars, to personify prophets or their companions in any televised work. This is to preserve the high regard in which they are held and the respect they are given. Muslim scholars in Saudi Arabia have widened this ban to encompass not only many Islamic subjects and stories but also any religious symbols from other faiths, such as Christianity or Judaism. Producing an animated show based on an Islamic story, for instance, even though it may be an educational and informative tool, especially for younger viewers, is not acceptable by STV standards.

A production acceptable to the censoring committee must also take into account the religious constraints on music and dance, which are controversial areas in STV. Muslim scholars are divided regarding the issue of legality of music and singing. The majority of scholars believe that they are illegal and they base their decision on their understanding of the following Quranic verse:

'And amongst men, are those who purchase idle tales without any knowledge; so that they may mislead (men) from the path of Allah; and they are the ones for whom there is a disgraceful punishment; and when our laws are rehearsed to them, they turn away in pride as if they did not hear them; as if there are plugs in their ears. Give them the news of a dreadful punishment.' (31:6)

Commentators of the Quran, such as Mujahid, understand this verse to forbid music, singing and novels. The reason for the prohibition on music and singing, according to this view, is that such futility and nonsense (*Lahw*) causes a diversion from the remembrance of Allah, and may revoke lustful thoughts which could lead to the practice of sinful acts (Alawdah, 1990; Sultan, 1992). The other school of Muslim thought, which includes some contemporary scholars, legitimises music and listening to songs as long as the lyrics do not allude to vanity and indecency (Alqaradawi, 1995). Despite external pressure, STV does not impose a total ban on singing or music. Songs are carefully selected to be appropriate for male singers only, and with no overt love themes, nor accompanied by female dancers. As a result of censorship rules, and specifically those pertaining to songs and movies featuring women, many of these materials have become obsolete while others have been offered to other broadcasters.

2.4. The Political / Moral line

Concerning political and moral issues, the Saudi media policy of 1982 states:

'The media should seek to be objective in presenting the facts and avoid exaggerations, and should guarantee freedom of expression to all.' (See Article XXVI, Appendix B).

Freedom of expression is also a guaranteed right in Islam and it is the obligatory duty of the Muslim state to inform the public (Mohammed, 1983). However, censorship laws are equally stringent when dealing with these non-religious aspects of Saudi society in

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the media, with the result that not only have censorship rules in STV affected almost all aspects of its operations and programming but also they have effectively diminished freedom of expression. Local producers find it difficult to reconcile the Islamic principle of freedom of speech with the constraints imposed by censorship laws:

> 'STV censorship wants local producers to actively engage in depicting Saudi society as an ideal one. They want a rosy picture to be painted about Saudi Arabia and Saudi people. They want us to show the Saudi citizen as if he or she were an angel, an infallible person, which is not a realistic picture at all.'[6]

> 'We were banned from dealing with what we believe are very important issues affecting our daily lives; issues such as drug addiction and its dreadful consequences for the people involved and for society as a whole; the reliance on so-called traditional healers' by some desperate patients whose faith in modern medicine is low and who fall as prey in the hands of some sorcerer or dishonest 'healers' who will rip them off, taking advantage of their desperate situation. [...]too many topics that we could deal with in a positive way, and yet we always stumble in the prohibition mentality of censorship.'[7]

The existing censorship rules and the way they are interpreted and applied has not encouraged local production to any degree at all. As one producer puts it:

> 'It is as if you chain an athlete and ask him or her to race free competitors on the track. We cannot compete with other broadcasters in the region nor with DBS from a distance under such restricting rules.'[8]

Most of the producers surveyed have their moments with the censorship laws.

> 'It is the hope of many journalists, producers and engineers in the TV stations of the Third World that international competition will at last force their governments to give them the freedom they need.' (Berwanger, 1998:200)

According to 98% of local independent producers, censorship rules constitute the main obstacle to the development and advancement of local production (see Table No.8). There are rare instances when censorship rules have not been applied, for example, to the local serial *Tash ma Tash* ('Enough or Not?'). This particular show has been in the

early evening slot for the last four Ramadans and during this time it has become a distinctive early evening ritual for viewers. It is important to note that viewership during Ramadan is different from the rest of the year: friends and family gather shortly after sunset every day of the month to break the fast and, of course, to watch television. *Tash ma Tash* has cultivated enormous popularity not only in Saudi Arabia, but also in the neighbouring Gulf States. The producers of this show tackled, in a rather satirical, critical and humorous way, a number of issues, such as government bureaucracy and unnecessary time-consuming routines, the lack of certain essential services, such as the availability of telephone lines, and inadequate health and municipal related services. Ironically, STV itself became the subject of criticism in one of the episodes. The show grew in popularity and was re-run on a number of DBS channels, such as ART, MBC and Dubai satellite channel and other national television services during 1998. It has proved that local producers, with the help of favourable conditions and prices, can produce appealing and entertaining competitive shows. The producer of this show has revealed that, due to the personal intervention of the Minister of Information, the strict censorship laws were relaxed and thus he attributes the show's success to this factor.[9] It enabled the comedy duo, A. Sadhan and N. Gasabi, who write stories and scripts and act at the same time, to tackle issues which were formerly taboo for other producers. The basic thematic elements include the contradictions in Saudi social life, modes of modernity, government bureaucracy, and the routine its offices pursue in carrying out their various services to the citizens. The milieu in which the stories take place, the types depicted, the language spoken and the themes are all topical. Moreover, they reflect contemporary issues and refer to the Saudi milieu through critical realism. The viewers can, therefore, vicariously relive all the irritations and frustrations of everyday life as the

protagonists do and say what the viewers themselves would do and say, but in a humorous way. This privilege has not been enjoyed by other producers, who have criticised this favouritism and believe it has put them in a disadvantageous position: they ask for a level playing field and equal opportunity in regard to censorship rules and their application, and the price offered. Their complaints are justified: *Tash ma Tash* has been awarded prizes in a number of television production festivals, for example, in Bahrain in 1997 and in Cairo in 1998. If the suggestions of the censorship rules were to be considered by the producer, it would ruin the work and it could not be sold to other television stations in the Gulf Area or to the DBS service. When it finally agrees on the work, STV will unilaterally edit and cut parts of the show. This particular action will minimise the show's duration and that directly affects the amount of money STV pays the producer. This is one of the points of contention in the relationship between the independent producers and STV. Such concern has been raised by a number of producers and has adversely affected any future cooperation between the two parties.[10] Nevertheless, the rules are still applied:

> 'Because of the traditional culture of this Islamic country, programming in Saudi Arabia is unique. Programmes which are imported from Western countries and from other Arab countries are censored to ensure that they are what the government believes to be acceptable to the majority of viewers.' (Boyd, 1972:227)

Censorship, it can be argued, has been, and still is, as a counter-productive measure which hampers the free flow of ideas and news in society when it is most needed. It is claimed to cause the credibility of the media to be strained and minimises the potential of the media as a resistance tool for foreign cultural influences. When we speak of censorship, we do not mean the clear, obvious exclusion of unacceptable topics or

scenes. We are talking here about very small details. For example, censorship has prohibited the showing of a corpse in one of the shows. It also refused to let an actor pronounce the word 'cancer' and objected to a depiction of a patient dying in a government hospital for fear that this could be interpreted as a case of malpractice by the hospital or the medical staff. Uninformed and blind application of censorship rules with reference to depictions of sex on television has always been an issue, even relating to wild-life shows which sometimes depict the sexual behaviour of a species. In an Australian wildlife show aired by STV Channel 2, words used by the original commentator to describe this innate behaviour were censored and deleted. Censors apparently considered such words to be vulgar and indecent. Producers of entertainment fare in Arab countries always observe the special requirements of STV. As one Egyptian producer stated:

> 'The rich markets for state TV are in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf, and we will not produce anything that will alienate the Saudis. Like all Arab governments, they want to preserve the status quo, so that is what we give them.' (Tracey, 1985:24)

There are exceptions; when it comes to gratuitous violence in most of the imported shows, the same rules are not rigorously applied. STV Channel 2 shows clear examples of productions which have too much violence in their content. According to the censorship agenda, the censorship of ethical and moral imagery receives a higher priority rating than violence. This system of ranking potentially censorable items reflects the viewpoint of the religious element in society who do not object to depictions of violence as much as other scenes in the belief that it is less threatening to Islamic values.

2.5. Censorship Targets

2.5.1. Participation of Women

There is an unfavourable attitude in Saudi culture towards females carrying out certain jobs in the performing arts: acting, singing and musical careers are stigmatised, discouraged by many families and have never been appreciated by the conservative lobby in Saudi Arabia. These views are based in Islamic teachings which call for strict moral codes, especially regarding women. The underlying principles are that any action or activity which may potentially lead to 'sin' must be avoided. A woman's role in the workforce should therefore, they believe, be restricted to necessity only. For example, if a woman is widowed with children and is forced to become a 'breadwinner', then it is permissible for her to earn a living. She should, nevertheless, carry out only the work that is essential in order to sustain her family and meet their requirements. If a woman has professional skills that are needed by other women or society as a whole, then it is permissible for her to practise her profession outside her home provided that she adheres to the conditions prescribed by *Shariah* and has the permission of her legal guardian.[11] Evidence for such an opinion can be found in the fact that at the time of the Prophet, midwives used to attend women in labour, and skilled women used to practise nursing for the wounded. This indicates that it is acceptable for a woman to practise her profession, but permission is granted only on the condition that the work does not affect her duties at home regarding her husband and children, and that she has her husband's consent. These duties are her obligations and take precedence over her responsibilities towards the community. Where there is any conflict of interest, her individual duties must come first.[12]

This view, coupled with the bad reputation given to acting and singing, has contributed to the recent 'repentance' of a number of famous actresses, dancers and singers in Egypt. Although such a phenomenon has been understated by some media critics in Egyptian society, it came about as part of what is termed 'Islamic awakening', which means a major return by young individuals to their faith and the application of Shariah laws to their personal affairs. This also includes the return to the widespread use of the *Hijab* (the women's veil) and Islamic mode of dress across the Muslim world.

Opposition to female employment is, nevertheless, not as strong as it used to be and such conservative attitudes are dissipating slowly. At present, the participation of women in the Saudi workforce is still minimal and limited to specific domains, namely, the medical profession and education in girls' schools. According to the latest statistics, Saudi females employed in the medical field number 11,195, which represents 17% of the total female workforce (Statistical Yearbook, 1994). In addition, modifications have been made to the workplace in order to segregate the sexes. Cultural and social circumstances have thus stymied the potential of Saudi women to participate in the workforce.

One of the factors which in the past has restricted employment opportunities for females was the lack of formal education for girls, officially introduced years after male education. Initially, a large segment of the Saudi population were reluctant to educate their daughters, but attitudes changed and female education is currently widespread and operates from primary to tertiary level. At present, girls are enrolling at universities in their tens of thousands. The estimated number of female graduates from university in the Sixth Development Plan (1995-2000) is 782,000 (Statistical Yearbook, 1994).

Educational reforms notwithstanding, there is still a current shortage of employment opportunities for women. As a result, the Saudi Government has prompted a shift to the private sector. Saudi women are encouraged to form their own private enterprises or to work for private clinics, translation services and related corporations in accordance with the laws of Shariah.[13] But still there are a number of bureaucratic hurdles which have to be surmounted before any significant difference can be perceived. Saudi Arabia remains dependent on large numbers of the female work force in the health profession and, to a lesser extent, in education.

Despite the paucity of Saudi females working in the broadcast and print media, there are some female writers and columnists employed by newspapers and magazines and, in particular, by STV Channel 2. However, in its English and French news programmes, STV is dependent on non-Saudi, female newsreaders who originate from other Arab countries and who are fluent in these two languages. There are also a limited number of female presenters whose contribution to television is confined to children's and women's programmes. In recent years, to overcome the objections to the appearance of females on television, there have been attempts by some producers to include women's participation over the phone, without the necessity for video-recording them. In this way, women are enabled to voice some of their concerns over family, education or cultural matters.

In the field of performing arts, there are very few Saudi actresses and singers, and so local producers have to depend on actresses from other Arab states, for example, Egypt, Syria, Kuwait and Bahrain. The problem with this is that it is difficult for actresses from

other countries to imitate the vernacular and so producers subject them to some sort of training before filming. Actresses from the Gulf States are generally preferred because of their ability to master the Saudi accent. It is, however, becoming increasingly inconvenient for local producers to invite foreign actresses to Saudi Arabia because of the strict immigrations laws and requirements.

Apart from these examples of female participation in the arts, there are also a number of female singers in Saudi Arabia who perform mainly at female gatherings, such as wedding ceremonies and ladies-only events. Some of these singers have progressed to radio and television. After the ban on STV of female songs in 1981, a few of these singers chose to reside in other countries, such as in Egypt and Kuwait, where they could sing in more welcoming and favourable environments.

2.5.2. News and Journalism

Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights stipulates freedom of expression and freedom to receive information from any source. It follows that the public of every country is entitled, as a right, to receive news, information and views, without interference and regardless of frontiers (MacBride *et al*, 1980). The right of freedom of expression, including the right to seek, receive and impart information is a valuable human right which is essential for the enjoyment of other fundamental freedoms in society. It is also a prerequisite for meaningful social, cultural, economic and political development. 'The rights of interpretation and fair comment are valuable not only to the profession but also to readers, listeners and the entire public' (MacBride *et al*, 1980:240). Yet, despite these views, one major result of the censorship regulations has

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been to curtail freedom of speech in news reportage and journalistic features. Journalists are responsible to sub-editors who have overall responsibility for any breach of the law, and offenders 'accused of breach of regulations are tried by emergency courts' (Rampal, 1994). As a consequence of the application of these rules to news programmes, a producer is unable to provide impartial and adequate coverage of any story and is expected to exercise extreme caution in handling any news item: 'It is like working in a minefield. You have to be careful not to offend anybody; not only that, you have to please everybody all the time' (see Appendix F, cartoon No.3).[14]

Given that one journalistic function is to inform society, overt or covert censorship is a measure which drastically limits the journalist's capacity to carry out his/her professional function effectively. A climate of fear can insidiously result in self-censorship and a failure to deal adequately with social problems. This will result in a defiance of any influential role by the media and, inevitably, will result in an absence of cultural congruence, thus widening the gap between the state and society.[15]

> 'Active pursuit and disclosure of facts which are of public interest is one of the criteria by which to judge a journalist's professional capacities. The role of the investigative journalist is to question and to probe the actions of all those in authority and to expose them wherever there is abuse of power, incompetence, corruption or other deviations.' (MacBride *et al*, 1980:234)

Undermining this principle is the degree of immunity to criticism and accountability which is 'given' to all incumbents of public offices in Saudi Arabia. Such unwarranted immunity has encouraged wrongdoing and abuse of power, especially in the absence of any form of watchdog organisation in society.

2.5.3. Print

Print medium is also subject to censorship. In accordance with press and publication laws, newspapers and magazines undergo censorship screening at post-publication stage. In order to publish a book, an author has to submit a manuscript to the Ministry of Information to be scrutinised and has to have it 'cleared' before printing. The complex and difficult procedures which have to be followed in order to obtain a permit for a broadcasting station or a publishing house in many Arab countries have been the main reason for many Arabic newspapers, publishing firms, and broadcasting organisations to base themselves in Western capitals. London in particular, chiefly for political reasons, is home to many new and 'migrant' newspapers and magazines.

2.5.4. Advertising

Censorship rules are also applied to advertisements on STV. Guidelines for advertising procedures are clearly specified and can be referred to by the censoring committee in the publication *The Principles and Basic Rules for Commercial Advertising on Saudi TV*, produced by the Department of Commercial Advertisements. Under the section entitled 'The Main Principles', a number of articles explicitly define the boundaries within which the advertisers may operate. The underlying principles include: 'To avoid criticising religion or religious men and their dignity or their prestige.' Moreover, 'It is not allowed to advertise for non-alcoholic brews or liquors such as alcohol-free beer and champagne. Such an action may initiate an undesirable reaction within the Muslim soul.' Further on it states: 'It is not allowed to use vulgar expressions during advertisements. Exaggeration should also be avoided.' Finally: 'It is not allowed to advertise for any film or play before having been submitted to the Ministry of Information's Censorship Department,

and the other concerned departments. It is also not allowed to advertise for contests involving gambling or lottery.' Section 3 of the same publication rules: 'Both form and content of the commercial advertisement are subject to the censorship of those responsible for such in STV. They may accept or reject, without giving reasons, any advertisement item not complying with the given rules and standards.'

The principles and basic rules of advertising on STV also dictate the boundaries of the role of women in this field. A section which delineates advertising procedures stipulates that: 'Female figures are to be restricted to advertisements relating to home and child affairs. Modesty in voice, appearance, movement and attire is to be observed.' The two articles which follow this rule that: 'A suitable, nice-looking head-dress is to totally cover the women's hair' and 'Children as well as adults are not to wear short dresses rising above the knee. (Females).' Articles 19, 22, 24, and 25 in the same section provide further guidelines as follows: 'It is not allowed to show bathing scenes, be they performed by males or females. A hand-douche and a bath robe, on the other hand, can be used to imply the bathing process' and: 'It is forbidden to show a woman dancing or singing, whether individually or within a group of a singing chorus, in sound or picture'. It adds: 'When advertising for cosmetics and perfumery, the emphasis must be laid upon the product, a commentary by the female sound is OK, and in the case of advertising for products bearing female figures on covers, such are only allowed within the limits of modesty, a (close-up) shot though, is not allowed.' Finally, this section also rules that: 'Modesty in female attire means that the clothes must cover all the body save the face and hands. Sports clothing is not allowed.' Such rules have, in fact, deterred some major advertisers, especially those dealing in cosmetics, perfumes and health and beauty

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products. They believe that the editorial climate is unfavourable towards featuring their goods and this is one of the reasons why sizable advertisers are demonstrating preference for DBS channels, where there is less rigidity in moral censorship.

2.5.5. Information Technology / WWW

Information technology is also affected by the censorship screening process. In 1996, the cabinet of ministers agreed to the introduction of the Internet to the country. Nevertheless, the WWW (Internet) is still not widely accessible in Saudi Arabia. The King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology was authorised by the cabinet to ensure that service providers would comply with a number of censorship requirements, which include 'any illegal usage which contradicts social, cultural, political, religious and economic values of Saudi Arabia'.[16] Although the service has been available since January 1996, the adoption and usage of the Internet is affected by the relatively high subscription rates resulting from the high tariffs set by the national telephone network which is monopolised by a private enterprise free from competition. Recently, what are known as 'Internet clubs' or 'Internet Cafes' have increased in number and continue to spread. It is not yet known how many visitors they attract and what kind of usage is sought.

2.6. The Effect of Media Censorship on Saudi Society

'Censorship is a matter which is seldom far from the surface in considering

television's role in society' (Paterson, 1998:67)

Strict censorship rules have, in effect, presented obstacles and impediments to the freedom of expression in the elementary, prerequisite form of creativity. Such rules have

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obfuscated the progress and development of ideas in Saudi society. The manner in which censorship laws have stymied the political empowerment of the people and limited their awareness of pertinent issues is equally clear.

According to Fouad Mukhaimar (1998):

> 'Muslim rulers have to let the reformers direct them and their nations freely to the benefits of the whole people and society [...] then the ultimate goal will be obtained, which is stability and security in Muslim countries.'[18]

However, the common people's views - the *Vox Populi* - cannot be recorded unless it is a sheer commendation to the government services and its policies. A climate of fear prevails. Even when there is a chance to voice concerns or opinions, members of the public and officials are reluctant to do so, knowing that he/she will be subject to censorship laws.

In the few instances on STV phone-in programmes when viewers could voice their opinions regarding STV programmes, callers to live broadcasts have frankly criticised the absence of analytical and free discussion regarding contemporary relevant matters, and have expressed their unhappiness with news programmes in particular. One caller said: 'Your news is just about welcoming and bidding farewell to officials on visits, and nothing more'.[17]

Islam has made it a duty of the people to put things right in society. The Prophet says:

'He who witnesses any vice should change it.' (Al-Bukhari, 1996)

Objective and constructive criticism is, in fact, an Islamic tradition, although every Muslim individual has a duty, under certain conditions, to abide by a 'no naming, no shaming' code of practice. Traditionally, *Jummah* orations (Friday sermons) have been

used to criticise any negative situations, policies or behaviour in the Islamic community, and to offer advice and reform measures to policy makers and to all members of society equally. In modern times, with financial assistance from charity organisations, such sermons have been taped onto audio-cassette and duplicated in great numbers in order to be used as alternative discourse. In Islamic countries, this phenomenon is on the increase: there are special stores which sell audio-cassette tapes among other products, such as perfume. This new medium has, in fact, been encouraged and has flourished as a result of the shortcomings of national media systems which are impermeable to any diverse opinion. Sermons could be exploited as an effective tool for educational inspiration and change. When utilised correctly, they could also be constructive in forming strong Muslim individuals and structuring communities. Preachers usually deliver these sermons to large numbers of congregations in all Mosques, not only to urge the congregation to abide by Islamic moral standards and observe their duties in worshipping, but also to encourage them to be more responsible and more productive in their lives. According to Islamic doctrine, there are no restraints on the content and topics of preachers' sermons (Ashanqeeti, 1994).

The notion of diffusion of tension and the maintenance of peace and stability in society are related to the amount of freedom of expression that the media in that society is able to enjoy. Strict censorship rules have contributed to the production of redundant, unappealing and repeated themes over and over again. Hamdy Qandeel (1997), a mediologist and broadcaster, explained in a television programme:

> 'Despite the relative improvement in the freedom of expression that some
> government controlled television services were forced to introduce to be
> able to compete with DBS channels, the majority are still acting as trustees
> in the minds of their people.'[19]

To face the influence of DBS on local culture, STV should be more open to diverse ideas, for example in news and in entertainment, and to be more caring about its viewers by giving them facts and true information. It needs to instil self-confidence to enable the viewer to be more equipped to make informed decisions. As Turki Alhamad (1996) when evaluating the media systems in the Gulf States termed it: '[...] excessive propaganda and ostrich-like practices'.[20] The opinion of members of the public adds to the coverage of a topic and could provide a valuable contribution from a unique perspective. If such opinions are constantly excluded, undoubtedly, the ensuing discourse will be imbalanced and incomplete. However, with the advancement of new technology and means of imparting information, the State's censorship and power over information has been diminishing gradually and may further diminish in the future (Tash, 1995).

3. Bureaucracy

Many local producers surveyed have presented a number of proposals for a variety of indigenous programmes, but these proposals are always circumscribed by the complicated standards of the lengthy bureaucratic decision making process, which can last months or even years. For a number of reasons, these local producers are finding it increasingly difficult to follow up their proposals through the web of red tape inside the Ministry of Information. Producers in cities far from the centre, with no contacts inside the Ministry of Information, cannot leave their own city headquarters and live for any length of time in Riyadh, where media facilities and decision makers are based. Should a producer risk this venture, there is no key contact point or liaison office where they can enquire about the outcome of their proposal. As one producer indicated: 'There is no clear answer and we do not know whom to talk to'.[21] Besides, the nature of the Ministry of Information

offices makes them inaccessible and there are difficulties in entering the facility, for security reasons. Although there are branches for the Ministry of Information in two other major cities: Jeddah, in the Western province, and Dammam, in the Eastern province, there is no authorization to make any decisions regarding local production proposals. Any major determinations have to be made in the centre. The difficulties resulting from government bureaucracy and convention were acknowledged in the 'Symposium for Television Production in the Arab World' held in Tunisia in 1983, where there was a recommendation to establish production units which could be independent from government administrative hurdles, and be more able to respond to the dynamics of the production processes (Masmoudi *et al*, 1987).

The intricacies and delays of the bureaucratic procedures affect other areas of production. For example, local producers find it an arduous and difficult task to obtain the necessary permission to shoot in public locations; there are five or six different parties, including the police, traffic wardens, and municipal authorities, and the producer has to obtain permission from each. This is a time consuming process.[22]

Routine also affects STV in-house production. Because the infrastructure revolves around a model of centralised administration, producers at STV have to engage in a lengthy process of paperwork and follow a chain of commands to acquire a piece of equipment for their project. Decisions relating to a spare part for a camera, or a decorative piece for a placard which is urgently needed, for example, have to pass through a slow, bureaucratic process which can take days or even months before reaching the centralised decision-making circle and being acted upon. Inevitably, this

delay adversely affects production. To be responsive, day-to-day broadcasting operations require more speedy decisions.

The same applies to any proposal for a new local production; its route traces the following course: Firstly, there is the submission of the written script with detailed information about the new work to the censorship department to be scrutinised. If approved and cleared by censorship, the 'work' is referred to a committee for evaluation and rating. Following this, it is directed to another committee called the 'Programmes Development Committee'. The work is then transferred to the Director of Channel 1 and subsequently directed to the Deputy Minister of Information for Television Affairs. Next, the Minister of Information is approached to sign the approval. Finally, the work is passed to the Deputy Minister for Administrative and Financial Affairs, from where the matter is directed to the Finance Department to arrange for money allocations, according to their annual fiscal plan.

In order to expedite the various stages of this painstaking process it is essential that the producer has some connections inside the Ministry of Information and in STV. A clear example of the benefits of having the right connections is illustrated by one local production company which was provided with numerous facilities and exempted from the tedious red-tape procedures; it was also given access to a wide range of locations and granted use of Civil Defence helicopters. The company was owned by an influential man who had links with the royal family; not a privilege enjoyed by every producer.

Some producers have suggested that there are also financial irregularities within the STV

circles and that certain officials are abusing their positions in cases where there might be a conflict of interests. One of the Ministry of Information's problems is that the rules pertaining to local production are heavily influenced by the personal discretion of top officials. 'These rules are subject to changes whenever a new official is parachuted in.'[23]

Ali Najai, the Deputy Minister of Information for Television Affairs is convinced that: 'Media operations in our developing country should not be subject to the administrative and financial routines applied in other governmental organisations because they are different from media operations' (Najai, 1996:162). Obviously, holding such a view could not, and did not, alter the reality. STV is a rigid, centralised, bureaucratic system of administration weighed down by inertia and resistance to innovation and change.

4. Conclusion

Interviews with local producers have revealed that religious, political, moral and social principles underpin media censorship practices but these are executed in an arbitrary, inconsistent and subjective manner. Moreover, the pressure from different elements in society ensures that producers will continue to see their work subjected to this treatment and this, they claim, has a profoundly discouraging effect and detracts from production quality. In addition, the unnecessarily long and involved procedure entailed in submitting a production acts as a further deterrent.

This chapter has also revealed inconsistencies in both censorship and pricing policies which relate to relations within the industry itself, with STV policy makers and with the various government departments. As a result, productions are being made to satisfy the

censorship and bureaucratic criteria rather artistic, innovative or informative ones. As demonstrated by *Tash ma Tash*, local production companies have enormous potential for development if only these restrictions were lifted. These factors contribute to the disillusionment of local production teams, the absence of quality programmes on STV and the continued preference for and reliance upon imported media fare.

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CHAPTER VIII

PROFESSIONAL CONSTRAINTS

1. Introduction

'The development of a core of trained communicators and a creative community is as vital to a communication infrastructure as the mechanical aspects of the system.' (MacBride *et al*, 1980:210)

The following discussion examines professional constraints and their implications for the development and effectiveness of the media in Saudi society. These restricting factors include not only the approach by the Saudi government to recruitment and training, but also its policies regarding professional and artistic arrangements, its attitude towards women's role in the media, its inadequacy in attracting talent in the absence of lucrative payment schemes and the establishment of cultural organisations, which could have enormous potential, but are circumscribed by rigid constraints and what could be perceived as questionable motives.

2. Training

A fundamental prerequisite for the development of culture and the arts in any society must be the provision of adequate training in the form of direct instruction, the availability of the means and channels to gain experience, opportunity to practise and apply the skills acquired, and equal opportunity for all. Motivation is a key factor, thus appropriate incentives, both professional and economic are vital in maintaining a cultural community.

Article 18 of the Saudi Media Policy states that: 'The media should encourage and nurture new talents until they reach high levels' (Saudi Media Policy, Appendix B). In

reality, this obligation has been delegated. There are currently no arts schools or training institutions in Saudi Arabia. Meanwhile, university theatres are the main source for talent spotting: the few skilled individuals who have made it in show business are the windfalls from university theatre groups or from activities carried out by the Saudi Arabian Society for Culture and Arts (SASCA) (see Table No.9). Suggestions have frequently been made by intellectuals and media scholars that arts schools should be established within the country, but nothing of this nature has ever happened. In fact, many local producers list the shortage of actors and actresses and supporting artistic careers as a main impediment to the development of local television production.

Table No.9   Training workshops in theatre, organised by The Saudi Arabian Society for Culture and Arts (SASCA) during the period 1973 - 1988.

CITY	NUMBER OF WORKSHOPS
Riyadh	3
Alahsa	0
Jeddah	4
Taif	3
Dammam	4
Abha	3
Qasim	2
Madina	0

Source: SASCA Report, 1988.

The idea of establishing a training organisation dates back to 1966, when a study was proposed by Abbas Gazzawi, then General Director of Radio and Television, for the

establishment of 'a radio and television school' consisting of up to three training courses in the fields of engineering, programming and production. The idea of this 'proposal' was not adopted by the Ministry of Information, largely owing to financial considerations and 'the need to study the proposal with other government agencies' (Ashobaili, 1992). Writers to this day are still appealing to the Academy of Arts to establish a domestic form of training and nationalise it.[1]

The quality of any system is largely determined by the calibre of its operators. In the television business, training at all levels and in all forms is of paramount importance and the demand for skilled staff is always there. Of particular importance is the training and development of creative and artistic individuals and groups for all aspects of television work. There is a growing need for training among STV staff in particular; a need which has been expressed to this author by many in the upper management of STV. Hasan Alhamdan, the Head of Drama in STV, believes that staff need on-job training. He adds that it is the most suitable and fruitful way of training, where actual working conditions could be present all the time. He recalls a successful training scheme years ago which was designed to provide knowledge and expertise for crews broadcasting live sports. The focus was on camera technique replays and on-the-spot production methods.[2]

Although at present, STV does not engage in any form of on-the-job instruction, the importance of training to keep up with changing technology and equipment is recognised by STV controllers. Najai (1996) writes:

> 'Training in new technologies in operating and maintaining modern equipment will enable trainees to fully utilise the potentials of such new technologies.' (Najai, 1996:162)

Despite STV's elaborate, state-of-the-art facilities and the financial incentives offered to producers to encourage their application, many producers are reluctant to use them because of the dearth of experienced operators. As more than one producer remarked:

> 'There are no qualified staff to operate the equipment and the producer has to struggle to keep the available less-motivated staff together. Remember, they are civil servants who are bound by specific work hours.'[3]

Limited training in technical and engineering aspects of broadcasting is usually provided by the two colleges of telecommunications in Riyadh and Jeddah. These are training schemes for broadcast transmission and studio engineering only (Saati, 1992). In an interview with Dr. Abdulrahman Ashobaili, a member of the Higher Council for Mass Communication, he indicated conclusively that:

> 'STV is not taking professionalism seriously. This has resulted in very poor in-house produced programming. Thirty years ago STV was producing much better quality.'[4]

According to Turki Alhamad (1996):

> 'Lack of professionalism is a common feature amongst all media operations in the Gulf region, despite the tremendous importance of such activity which is directly responsible for the shaping of public opinion and attitudes [...] Both decision makers and practitioners in the communication process are mainly unqualified to do a proper 'job' and are unaware of the critical task at hand.'[5]

One source of instruction can be found in the Mass Communication Departments in five of the seven universities in Saudi Arabia. These departments, although emphasising the theoretical aspects of media studies, also provide a small dose of basic training for students wishing to specialise in broadcasting. The input they receive is not enough to start a career in this sphere and they are usually in need of additional training. There are no industry-based training providers available in the country and anyone interested in gaining practical experience has to travel abroad, but this could be a foundation to

build on. Training abroad is limited to the Arab Training Centre for Broadcasting, based in Damascus, Syria, and affiliated to the Arab States Broadcasting Union.

Among the Gulf countries, there is a news anchor exchange scheme, organised by Gulf Vision, by which each country in the GCC sends a news reader and receives one from that particular country for ten days. Many consider such a scheme as a token one which has limited value. Nationally, there are some training schemes in two other institutions; first in the Institute of Public Administration, which offered instruction in areas such as censorship, maintenance supervision, and public relations; and second, in the Institute of Diplomatic studies, in fields such as International Relations, Gulf Studies, Information Affairs and Diplomacy Conduct.[6] Both institutes rely on taught courses without any type of actual practical coaching.

3. Recruitment and Payment Schemes

After completing the STV infrastructure in 1964, fifty four Saudi people were recruited and trained in the United States and, in 1970, the Corps of Engineers trained 105 Saudis in the USA (Boyd, 1972; Alkheraiji, 1990). These trainees have returned and become the nuclear operating staff at STV along with employees transferred from radio. The total number of STV staff currently amounts to 914 employees: 96 in administration, 494 technicians, 258 cultural and social staff, 25 craftspersons, 8 operational staff and 33 professionals.[7] The impression formed after numerous personal contacts with STV personnel is that these members of staff suffer from low morale. From observing STV performance it can be gathered that STV professionals are constrained by a comprehensive set of standards and they adhere to them rigidly. They are underpaid civil

servants who, in order to receive promotion, are bound to the rules and regulations of the Bureau of Civil Service. In addition, they are lower paid than their counterparts in DBS. Although STV staff used to be paid extra bonuses and overtime for any work performed outside normal working hours, these payments were axed following budgetary reconsiderations.

The situation is that the emphasis among Arab media systems has always been on the hardware facilities, which consume the lion's share of the available funds allocated to media facilities, and there is no matching emphasis on software, human resources or training schemes (Tash, 1996). The Deputy Minister for Information Affairs states that the emphasis in the past was on building and completing the media infrastructure, while training and development of human resources was neglected. [8] This malaise within the industry is exacerbated by an arbitrary demarcation of duties, for example, technicians are also weighed down by administrative responsibilities. Nor is there any form of union for actors, technicians, and artistic professionals which could represent their interests or be used as a policy platform.

An apparently minor, yet significant professional constraint on Saudi media is the great importance placed by STV and radio on the classical Arabic language, sometimes at the expense of other important qualities. Saudi communication policy emphasises this, and there are strict rules which demand of news anchors, programme presenters and even participants that they use this form of language as opposed to the vernacular. Proficiency in the classical Arabic language is one of the main criteria required of applicants wishing to work for STV or radio. This explains why there are a number of anchors, especially

in radio, who are originally Arabic language teachers now employed as cooperating part-timers.

Regarding recruitment policies, the Ministry of Information does not have clear strategies for 'head-hunting' talent, and on STV there are no programmes that could feature new performers. The Ministry of Information and STV's staffing requirements are usually satisfied through the Bureau of Civil Service recruitment schemes. Job seekers submit their credentials and CVs to the Bureau, who already possess information regarding the different governmental organisations' and institutions' needs. In recent years, due to budgetary considerations, very few applicants have been provided with jobs, not only in the Ministry of Information, but in all branches of government administrations. [9]

Independent local production entities are, as a consequence, now dependent on production teams and performers from other countries, such as Egypt, Jordan and Syria. Saudi television in particular lacks the necessary domestic talent and professionalism for drama production. Since for a long time this was never high on STV's list of priorities, there was no cultivation of such careers, and therefore no training or recruitment schemes. Local producers compensate for this by seeking foreign talent; actresses in particular are sought from other Gulf States for the similarities in accent. However, inviting artists from abroad to reside in Saudi Arabia for an indefinite period of time is costly and burdens the local producer with additional expenses. It happens when the story or plot necessitates it and when actresses are needed. To cut these additional costs, local producers tend to squeeze the production and the staff time. [10] Sometimes local

producers along with Saudi actors have to travel abroad where talent and suitable production arrangements can be found. Since Saudi actors are frequently involved in other careers, they have to request a holiday from their work in order to be able to participate.

In order to encourage and assist Saudi actors to participate in television shows produced in other Arab countries, STV states that any production which includes Saudi actors will enjoy an additional amount (around £900 for each actor), once it has been decided to purchase a particular production. According to a number of local producers, this policy has been abused by Arab producers and the intended goal has not been achieved. In order to take advantage of such an incentive, Arab producers include in their shows trivial and unimportant roles for Saudi actors. Many local producers and actors were strongly opposed to such marginal participation. [11]

Some actors value such an experience and are keen to participate. They believe that it will provide them with an opportunity to gain experience from well-known performers, and will increase their exposure in many Arab countries, thus gaining publicity and increasing their own fame. Nonetheless, there are some actors who are reluctant to take part in certain productions where their roles have to be performed in an Egyptian or Syrian accent. Apart from the difficulties they encounter when trying to master a foreign dialect, they find it distasteful and unnecessary. [12]

This system of artistic exchange within the Arab countries is not necessarily as successful in other arts and media spheres. Many producers believe that there is a lack of Saudi

script and scenario writers, and such a task cannot be supplemented by scenario writers from other countries. They believe that scenario writers have to originate from the same culture in order to understand the use of the language and apply it properly. Writing for theatre and radio is as old as the radio service itself. Hussain Seraj, a pioneering Saudi poet and intellectual from Hejaz, has written a number of plays such as *Addalem Nafsuh* or 'Injustice to Oneself', in 1932; *Jameel Buthina* or 'Buthina's Lover Jameel', in 1942; and *Gharam Wallada* or 'The Adoration of Wallada', in 1952.[13] Other famous writers include Hussain Arab, and Abdullah Balkhair.[14] At present, however, the situation is that local producers write the dialogue and scenarios themselves. According to a number of producers, it would be a great improvement if specialised writers were to be given these tasks as it would vastly increase the touch of professionalism.[15] But as noted by Mohammad A. Yamani (1984):

> 'The prerequisite for any creative writing is a cultural atmosphere that fosters and encourages such writings, including a theatrical and publishing movement and a cinematic industry. Such a movement will also thrive and flourish on television in a reciprocal relationship.' (Yamani, 1984:72)

4. DBS Channels

There is a specific problem for those Saudi television directors presenters, cameramen and technicians who, by virtue of their positions as civil servants, are bound by government legislation. Compounding the effects of the constraints imposed by these regulations is the fact that they are paid substantially lower salaries than their counterparts working in the private sector or for the satellite channels. Personnel and their salaries are controlled by government regulations and regulatory bodies. The Head of the Production Unit in Saudi television revealed that: 'There are not enough incentives to attract or even to keep the remaining staff.' The low salaries paid by STV,

for example £12,000 for a director, have compelled talented professionals to seek work with lucrative satellite broadcasters instead. Underpayment and bureaucracy in national television systems in different Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia, have now caused what has been referred to as a 'talent drain'.

In recent years, the satellite channels have opened new opportunities for local talent and producers. After years of dependency on Saudi television as the only buyer, some Saudi producers have found a new potential outlet in the DBS channels with the participation of local actors. The demand for drama has increased and a number of local producers have entered into a co-production agreement with ART (Arab Radio and Television) and the MBC (the Middle-East Broadcasting Centre). The flexible rules, regulations and the relaxed censorship have opened new horizons for some Saudi producers and actors. A recent example broadcast in January 1998 coincided with the Ramadan month - the high season for drama in all Arab television services. It is called *Awained Yagzoo Almadinah* or 'Awained Invades the City'. Filmed mostly within the city of Jeddah, it is based on a young villager's experience of living in a big city with different norms and diverse lifestyles. Recently, a local producer managed to have his work, a serial called *Ayn Atareeq* or 'Show Me the Way', featured by MBC and Future TV, as well as by Bahrain TV and Kuwaiti TV.[16] Since the cooperation between the Saudi producers and satellite channels is a recent venture, it is premature to evaluate this experiment.

Recent years have therefore witnessed what could be called a 'mass exodus' from all state-run television stations in the Arab countries to the satellite broadcasting market. News anchors, directors, producers, sports commentators and actors have all found

themselves lured by appreciative employers to more lucrative positions, as one popular sports commentator publicly revealed. The flexibility these broadcasters as employers have in the decision-making process, certainly as regards recruitment and payment practices, is what the government-run media facilities lack.

5. Cultural Organisations

An investigation and appraisal of the existing cultural organisations in Saudi Arabia reveals an enormous handicap to the development and success of media and the arts. In the first instance, the number and size of the organisations dedicated to culture and the arts is so minimal as to dilute any substantial effect they could possibly have. A more in-depth evaluation uncovers a school of thought which believes that while some bodies are virtually disabled by their individual constraints, others' duties are, in effect, more concerned with policing the arts instead of fostering them.

5.1. The Saudi Arabian Society for Culture and Arts (SASCA)

The Saudi Arabian Society for Culture and Arts (SASCA), a governmental organisation established in 1973, gathers together all sports and cultural activities in the country. This society has seven branches in different cities and it operates under the General Directorate of Youth Welfare. Included in this body's responsibilities is the adoption and support of actors, singers, folk-dance groups, theatrical performances as well as the organisation of public literary lectures. Among the SASCA goals is its aim to foster and support new talent in all these areas. In each branch of SASCA there is a theatre committee whose task is to encourage and promote theatrical performances and provide support to theatrical movements in general. It organises workshops and training sessions

in various aspects of theatre such as directing techniques, the art of performing, and so on.[17] The problems facing such an ambitious project is that the actors and performers are hobbyists who engage in such activities on a part-time basis only. They are always busy with their own careers and full-time occupations and are usually summoned by SASCA to participate in seasonal festivals and local and national celebrations and ceremonies after little or no rehearsal. A second significant problem is that very often these actors and performers are called to act time and time again by the same producer because they are friends, regardless of their ability to perform or suitability for the role. As one producer stated: 'If you tell me who the producer is, I can tell you the names of the participating cast'.[18]

The General Directorate for Youth Welfare oversees and supervises sports and cultural activities in Saudi Arabia. It seems that managing sport federations and organising tournaments in different sport activities has overwhelmed its cultural responsibilities.

5.2. Cinema

Cinema theatres are not allowed in Saudi Arabia, but many years ago there was instituted what could be called a 'mobile cinematic venture'; an illegal, underground 'cinema'. It comprises a risk taking entrepreneur, who owns or rents a projector and hires a suitable venue. He then crams as many people as he and his assistants possibly can into the 'cinema' to watch a James Bond film, for example, or an Egyptian production. The audience consists of film goers, mainly youngsters, who are eager to see such films. Such viewing experiences are often interrupted by a raid of so-called religious police, whose task is to observe and maintain morality and modest behaviour in society.

They normally confiscate the projector, if they can get hold of it before it is smuggled out through the back door and used to restart the venture elsewhere. The absence of a cinema culture in Saudi Arabia places further professional constraints on the development of indigenous talent, and reduces the potential for professional development in this art form. The consequences are the 'talent drain' referred to earlier, where local producers and performers will seek opportunities in cinema industries outside Saudi Arabia, and a continued dependency on televised foreign films as potential Saudi expertise remains an untapped resource. Should Saudi Arabia decide in the future to encourage the development of a local film industry, it would effectively increase its dependency on film-producing nations in the West, such as the USA and Britain for production and directing techniques, technological expertise and professional training.

5.3. Theatre

It has been said that 'Theatre is the father of the whole arts.' Theatre, as a cultural institution, is absent from Saudi cultural life. There are no private theatres and the only theatrical performances can be found in amateur experiments within some universities and at SASCA, under the auspices of the General Directorate of Youth Welfare. The creators, actors and directors involved are far from being professionals and the majority take part simply as a hobby. The first attempt to establish a private theatre was in 1961, when Ahmad Asobai, a progressive Saudi intellectual, submitted to the Ministry of Information his request to open a theatre in the city of Makkah. He called it 'Dar Quraish Litamtheel Aleslami' or 'Quraish's Islamic School for Acting'. The Ministry granted him permission and he embarked on its construction and organisation, initially by building the stage. He then established a drama school and annexed it. A week

before the inauguration of this ambitious project, conservative elements in Saudi society intervened: they approached King Saud with the intention of scuppering the plans for the theatre and in the hope that they could persuade the King to veto the proposal. They succeeded. The motive behind the intervention of these religious elements was their fear that the theatre could harbour futile, un-Islamic activity (Alkhateeb, 1987). After the infanticide of this brainchild, there were no more attempts until the establishment of SASCA in 1973.

In the same year, SASCA was given sole responsibility of cultural activities, including theatrical performances. Following this, a number of plays were performed on its stages in different cities, the most notable being *Tabeeb Bilmishaab* or 'A Doctor by Force' and *Akher Elmishwar* or 'The End of the Road'. More than forty plays were acted out in the years that ensued and many were featured at theatre festivals in a number of Arab countries, but few were televised and no apparent reason was given. During these years, STV continuously featured Arab produced serials and plays, but very little attention was paid to local productions. Local producers began to sense this indifference and it left them feeling both discouraged and demotivated. After such a passionate and successful start, the theatre movement in Saudi Arabia is now dissipating for a number of reasons: firstly, because of the absence of clear planning and the total lack of encouragement given by STV to local producers, then because of the dependency in the 1980s and 1990s on cheap television shows imported from Arab countries such as Egypt and Syria. Alhamdan, the Head of the Drama Department in STV, observes that: 'The absence of theatre from our cultural life has its impact on the development of local drama production'.[19]

In addition to the problems described, the one major impediment to the success of local production, whether it be theatre or television drama, is nepotism. Once a producer has succeeded in securing a deal with STV, the participants or actors chosen for the prospective show, especially if it is drama production, will be his close friends. Each producer has a number of acquaintances who work with him, despite their suitability for the roles. There are frequently cases when the plot and scenarios are modified to fit such participants.

6. Conclusion

To conclude, the lack of artistic and creative personnel and the absence of cultural institutions are major impediments to local production. Recognition, encouragement, and financial rewards and incentives are crucial to boosting creativity and productivity among practitioners in all aspects of the media and this is what has been lacking in STV.[20] The unsuccessful private theatre project, the ban on cinema, and the non-existence of schools dedicated to the performing arts have contributed to the dearth of talent currently pervading Saudi society. Local producers, in light of this, are now dependent on hired staff from other countries. STV recruitment practices and the lack of practical training, along with the paucity of incentives have been the principal obstacles in the way of realising the potential of its elaborate facilities, equipment and arrangements. Many producers have hopes for theatre, but they believe that the efforts exerted by SASCA to encourage theatre are not enough. It is vital that a plan be formulated to revive it: a plan which includes a mechanism whereby other countries' experiences in theatre could be used and exploited. Some producers and actors suggest that until there are specialised arts schools, visiting experts in theatre arts could be invited to Saudi Arabia

to conduct workshops and seminars for local talents as a first step in this direction.[21]

More flexible recruitment, training schemes and incentives for television staff, and the close co-operation through co-production with satellite companies are also essentially needed.

In the sphere of the broadcasting media, the current performance of STV in general, and its news reporting programmes in particular, leaves a great deal of scope for improvement.

> 'STV is required to have confidence in local production, and has to exert efforts to discover Saudi talent, and has to play a more positive role in encouraging local production and use its capabilities. Importation and dependency on foreign produced television materials has negatively affected local creativity and harmed Saudi talent.' (Ashobaili, 1992:73)

For the local Saudi production companies to prosper and play a significant role in eradicating the cultural inconsistencies in foreign-made television materials, the Ministry of Information rules and regulations have to be reformed and revised.

However, the broadcasting industry suffers from the same constraints as the arts industry as a whole: a lack of incentive and inadequate training schemes and facilities. These have resulted in limited indigenous human resources and weak production teams leading to poor quality output. This has not only helped to continue the reliance on imported media fare and foreign human resources, but also encouraged Saudi actors and producers to look outside Saudi Arabia for professional development, draining the country of its native talent with which it could develop a self-reliant media industry.

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CHAPTER IX

ECONOMIC CONSTRAINTS

1. Introduction

The economic constraints on STV activities can be seen to pervade every facet of its production potential. The following discussion examines how sources of funding for STV are monopolised by the Government and looks at the ramifications that this lack of financial independence has for STV itself and for local producers. While this funding would naturally include direct government subsidies, it also encompasses income derived from advertising and sponsorship on STV itself. This chapter also considers how the absence of consistent pricing policies and arbitrary budgetary considerations have led to ill-conceived programming schedules, the featuring of poor-quality productions and limited the production capacity of STV's facilities; factors which have served to discourage and deter local producers from attempting to negotiate with STV.

2. Economic Constraints on Artistic and Technological Capacity

STV possesses the latest in equipment and technology and maintains elaborate facilities. For example, it has on-line studios and advanced sound-mixing systems with off-line suites. The production department comprises five studios between 350 and 500 square metres, and a purpose-built theatre stage equipped to suit live, televised broadcasts. It has a capacity for an audience of 900, camera and light control rooms, and make-up and dressing rooms attached. STV also has a complete cinematic production unit with a special film development and exposure laboratory. A number of mobile transmission vans have all the equipment necessary to provide on-the-spot, live coverage of unfolding

events. There is also a production services department with all the vital support units of workshops and accessories needed for any production process (see Table No.10). These advanced studios are, in fact, available for local, private producers who wish to use them at a 20% to 25% discount of the original agreed cost.

Table No.10. Saudi Television Studios

SAUDI TELEVISION STUDIOS			
STATION	STUDIO NAME	AREA	PURPOSE
Riyadh	A	500 sq.m	Production
Riyadh	B	326 sq.m	Production
Riyadh	C	326 sq.m	Production
Riyadh	1	150 sq.m	News
Riyadh	2	150 sq.m	News
Riyadh	1	42 sq.m	Continuity
Jeddah	1	200 sq.m	Production
Dammam	1	225 sq.m	Production
Dammam	2	8 sq.m	Continuity
Madinah	1	150 sq.m	Production
Alqasim	1	150 sq.m	Production
Abha	1	150 sq.m	Production

Source: Ministry of Information 1997.

Although STV has this production potential, it limits itself solely to the making of studio-based religious talk shows, the daily news bulletins, special programmes on National Day, for example, and the broadcasting of ceremonies and sports events.[1] One of the consequences of the economic constraints on technological and artistic training is the profound lack of skilled technicians and artistic professionals who could operate such equipment and facilities to their full capacity.

3. STV Funding

Despite the introduction of advertising in 1986, STV operations are subsidised not from the advertising revenue, but by a budget directly from the government. This is due to the centralised fiscal system by which any revenue generated from a Government-run institution, including oil exports, must be deposited with the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency (SAMA), which acts as a central bank. These revenues come directly under the control of the Ministry of Finance and National Economy. The budget of the Ministry of Information, as of any other government body, is allocated according to its perceived forecast needs for the fiscal year, in line with the proposals prepared by the Finance and Administration Department, which belongs to the Ministry of Information. As with other government bodies, such proposals are subject to negotiation and deliberations between officials from both Ministries. The need for such negotiations and the axing process that often follows have been common practice in recent years because of the sharp decline in government revenues caused by a depreciation in oil prices. Oil sales are the mainstay of all government funding, accounting for 80% of the national income. Recent studies completed by the Centre for Energy Studies, based in London, anticipate that this trend will continue in 1999 and beyond.[2] According to 'The Economist',[3] Saudi Arabia's

revenue in 1997 was $45 million and will be around $30 million in 1998, with a deficit that could reach 13 million US dollars. Such financial difficulties have, in fact, affected not only media operations but also all other areas of government and non-government spending.

3.1. Sponsorship

The financial hardship experienced in the 1990s caused STV officials to consider other non-government sources of funding. In 1994, an ad hoc, task force sub-committee was formed to explore new avenues of funding to subsidise some of the programmes and to minimise the dependency on government funds. The current members include the Director of Channel 1 STV and the Head of the Communications and Advertising Department, as well as the directors of various other departments at STV. Together, they outlined a number of strategies designed to lure advertisers to sponsor programmes in exchange for broadcasting their advertisements (Alkheraiji, 1994). Since then the committee has managed to find sponsors for a number of programmes, such as an equestrian show, which is sponsored by the Ford Cars Dealership in the Central region; a so-called family programme - a house-keeping show directed primarily at women and sponsored by a commercial firm who provided a complete kitchen in order to have its name publicised before the programme started; and a children's programme. Certain sports programmes have been sponsored by the Gillette Corporation and the Visa Credit Card Company. The committee completed a draft of a contract agreement with terms and conditions applicable to STV and to any potential sponsor, and referred it to the management for ratification. It is also hoping, according to the minutes of its meetings, to attract more sponsors for a wider range of programmes to reduce the strain on the

Ministry of Information expenditure. [4]

3.2. Pre-advertising

In 1969, when STV was undergoing a management overhaul, the potential of advertising

as a source of income was examined. In advocating the adoption of an administrative

system similar to that in the United States, Shobaili, Head of AVCO staff at the time,

offered the following advice:

> 'Commercial broadcasting operates on the principles of supplying the
> greatest number of viewers to an individual advertiser, therefore
> commercial revenues are vital to the success of commercial television in
> the United States. In Saudi Arabia, the TV network can operate with the
> American method of management successfully without the requirements
> of satisfying the advertiser, or some public group.' (Shobaili, 1971:224)

This was a giant step away from a government monopolised television station towards

the establishment of a public corporation partly funded by advertising revenue. In 1972,

Shobaili requested the endorsement of advertising on television. In his proposal he

highlighted the fact that advertising revenue could partly relieve the government of the

financial burden incurred by media funding, but it was ignored.

Since 1970, STV has incorporated advertising in the form of another type of production

sponsorship. The committee members initially appointed to deal with this were the

Deputy Minister for Planning Affairs, Mr. Shehab Jamjoom; and then the Deputy

Minister for Television Affairs, Mr. Mohammad Haidar Mushikh. The project has

encouraged businessmen and national enterprises to endorse certain productions by

supplying equipment in return for credit and acknowledgment:

'The only occasional type of TV commercial used in Saudi Arabia is that where a station is supplied with props or prizes for drama and quiz shows and in return the station broadcasts at the end of the programme the source of materials furnished by a dealer or company.' (Shobaili, 1971:241)

Advertising opportunities increase during the month of Ramadan when national corporations and local enterprises are invited to sponsor the four quiz programmes shown at this time. The advertiser's name is displayed for a few seconds before the show begins. The financial management of these shows is the responsibility of the Deputy Information Minister. His office stipulates the deadline for submission of applications for advertising, which is usually around 15 days before transmission. However, the decline in the oil revenue and its repercussions on international economies has reduced the willingness of these potential advertisers to participate in production sponsorship.

There are still problems pertaining to the programming of advertisements before and after a sponsored programme, for example, no interruptions are permitted; a long standing practice by STV which is believed to deter and discourage this form of sponsorship.

3.3. Advertising

Support for television advertising began in the early 1980s among officials in the Ministry of Information, the Supreme Council for Mass Communication and certain business circles. The print media were used as a mouthpiece to advocate the need for television commercials and to convince decision making bodies of the potential benefits to the economy that advertising would bring. Alkheraiji (1994) describes a proposal aimed at encouraging the Government to take action, put forward by *Okadh*, a daily

newspaper. He summarises its suggestions as follows:

1. Introducing advertising would not mean that the Government would be unable to support the broadcasting system in Saudi Arabia, and that the Government's generosity could continue.

2. Regulations such as those found in other countries might be applicable to STV so as to protect the media from abuse by advertisers.

3. Twenty minutes a day would be a reasonable share for advertisers, any greater time allocation might deviate television from its educational and social responsibilities.

4. Strong regulations would give TV stations the upper hand in protecting children and viewers form any advertising abuse.[5]

In 1983 the Minister of Information was granted permission by Royal Decree to establish the introduction of television advertising, albeit with restrictions, to Channel 2. He set up a committee to expedite this process and to outline the necessary directions and procedures. 'The go-ahead for the English-only channel indicates some significant policy assumption to do with the preservation of control over Saudi culture' (Alkheraiji, 1994:141). In August 1983 a committee meeting took place, the outcome of which is outlined by Alkheraiji (1994) as follows:

1. That television stations do not have either the manpower, the experience or the facilities to deal directly with advertisers or to handle the advertising procedure and filing.

2. As an alternative, the committee agreed that STV should contract the largest advertising agencies to perform the marketing within the limited time allowances and prices set by STV.

3. Advertising agencies would be responsible for ensuring that all advertisements shown on STV are within the set regulations, and would protect the consumer from anything misleading.

4. Advertising should, in the beginning, be carried on the second channel only (English channel), and the time allocation for advertisements should not exceed 15-20 minutes a day; to be divided into three periods during the day.

5. The committee studied the prices set by Egypt, Lebanon, and the Gulf

States, and had taken into consideration the population, the number of television sets, the national income and individual Saudi's standard of living, and suggested that STV advertising prices should be double those in Kuwait. (Alkheraiji, 1994:141)

The prices which were originally suggested have been modified. Nevertheless, the cost of advertising on STV is still considered to be higher than on any other television company.[6] There are also two systems of rates currently in effect, one for national industries and the other for international industries (see Table No.11 and Table No.12). The committee also proposed that revenue derived from advertising should be invested in television production, but this suggestion has never been adopted and all advertising revenue has to be absorbed by the government as part of the national income (see Table No.13).

Table No.11

Rates of commercial advertising on both channels for national industries.

TIME IN MINUTES	TIME IN SECONDS	MORNING PERIOD	REGULAR PERIOD	DISTINGUISHED PERIOD	SPECIAL PERIOD
One quarter	12 - 18	CH.1 1750	CH.1 3500	CH.1 5250	CH.1 6300
		CH.2 1225	CH.2 2450	CH.2 3150	CH.2 4200
One half	25 - 35	CH.1 2800	CH.1 5600	CH.1 8400	CH.1 10.500
		CH.2 1750	CH.2 3500	CH.2 5250	CH.2 7000
Three quarters	40 - 50	CH.1 3850	CH.1 7700	CH.1 11.200	CH.1 8400
		CH.2 2450	CH.2 4900	CH.2 7000	CH.2 8400
One minute	55 - 60	CH.1 5250	CH.1 10.500	CH.1 14.000	CH.1 17.500
		CH.2 3150	CH.2 6300	CH.2 8400	CH.2 10.500

10 Saudi Riyals = £1.66

Source: The Principles and Basic Rules for Commercial Advertising on Saudi TV, 1996.

Table No.12

Rates of commercial advertising on both channels for international industries.

TIME IN MINUTES	TIME IN SECONDS	MORNING PERIOD	REGULAR PERIOD	DISTINGUISHED PERIOD	SPECIAL PERIOD
One quarter	12 - 18	CH.1 2500	CH.1 5000	CH.1 7500	CH.1 9000
		CH.2 1750	CH.2 3500	CH.2 4500	CH.2 6000
One half	25 - 35	CH.1 4000	CH.1 8000	CH.1 12.00	CH.1 15.000
		CH.2 2500	CH.2 5000	CH.2 7500	CH.2 10000
Three quarters	40 - 50	CH.1 5500	CH.1 11000	CH.1 16.000	CH.1 20.000
		CH.2 3500	CH.2 7000	CH.2 10.000	CH.2 12.000
One minute	55 - 60	CH.1 7500	CH.1 15.000	CH.1 20.000	CH.1 25.000
		CH.2 4500	CH.2 9000	CH.2 12.000	CH.2 15.000

10 Saudi Riyals = £1.66

Source: The Principles and Basic Rules for Commercial Advertising on Saudi TV, 1996.

Table No.13

Saudi Television Advertisement Revenue (1986 to 1997) in Saudi Riyals.

YEAR	AMOUNT (In Riyals)
1986	44,297,101
1987	139,015,529
1988	168,350,116
1989	202,157,144
1990	161,674,684
1991	181,032,104
1992	241,348,556
1993	226,554,581
1994	213,439,850
1995	174,066,003
1996	128,320,490
1997	110,989,450

Source: Figures obtained personally from the Department of Administration and Finance at the Ministry of Information, 1997.

According to an unpublished study on advertising expenditure by the media in Saudi Arabia, carried out by the Pan Arab Research Centre in 1998, STV revenues from advertising have been decreasing since 1995 (see Table No.14).[7] The rates of advertising on STV are considerably higher than the rates offered by DBS covering the Saudi market. Such high rates, when coupled with poor output and unpopular productions, as well as the ill-conceived programming strategies adopted by STV, have created an unwelcoming and discouraging editorial climate which is unable to lure advertisers. Although the Saudi market advertisement expenditure was the highest of all GCC countries in 1997 at $340 million (29.8%), STV's share was only 9.5% as opposed to 62.5% for newspapers, 17.5% for magazines and 10.5% for outdoor activities.[8]

Increasingly, major advertisers targeting the Saudi market are now by-passing STV and are dealing with DBS channels such as LBC, Future TV, MBC and ESC, not only in placing advertisements on these channels but also in sponsoring their programmes (see Table No.14).

Table No. 14 Advertising expenditure by media showing annual changes in percentages (Figures in US$-000's)

MEDIA	Jan-Dec 1994	Jan-Dec 1995	%	Jan-Dec 1995	Jan-Dec 1996	%	Jan-Dec 1996	Jan-Dec 1997	%	Jan 1997	Jan 1998	%
Saudi Media												
STV 1	53630	45283	-16	45283	40787	-10	40787	30803	-24	2675	1772	-34
STV 2	3107	2330	-25	2330	1734	-26	1734	1134	-35	39	7	-82
Total STV	56737	47613	-16	47613	42521	-11	42521	31937	-25	2714	1779	-34
Magazine	47179	55713	18	55713	62977	13	62977	59592	-5	5463	6461	18
NEWP	160053	165512	3	165512	185433	12	185433	212755	15	22117	22335	1
OUTDOOR	0	0	0	0	37776	100	37776	30135	-20	3002	2719	-9
Pan Arab Media												
MBC	41296	40344	-2	40344	49832	24	49832	55881	12	4106	5835	42
ESC	16314	16519	1	16519	15156	8	15156	14844	-2	1325	4411	233
DXB	2996	3305	10	3305	6183	87	6183	10990	78	660	2717	312
ART	5044	15315	204	15315	17584	15	17584	13399	-24	2702	6777	151
JORDAN	265	480	81	480	83	83	83	1283	1446	6	58	867
LBC	0	0	0	0	13740	100	13740	104826	663	4824	10811	124
FTV	0	0	0	0	602	100	602	41614	6813	1462	9163	527
A.DHABI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5441	100	0	2021	100
SYRIA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	561	100	0	8	100
AL JAZIRAH	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2284	100	0	609	100
Total satellite	65915	75963	15	75963	103180	36	103180	251123	143	15085	42410	181
MAGAZINE	49583	61112	23	61112	81475	33	81475	86106	6	6668	6155	8
NEWP	8449	10791	28	10791	11982	11	11982	12913	8	1122	1009	10
MBC FM	0	8076	100	8076	12636	56	12636	10732	-15	1312	691	47

Source: Unpublished study conducted by PARC, Pan Arab Research Centre (1998)

4. Subsidy of Independent Local Production

Although nobody was willing to discuss the financial aspects of the private companies' operations, one can infer quite easily that they are not flourishing and are struggling on shoe-string budgets. The majority of these independent production companies are without sufficient sustainable resources. The instability of the market caused by low demand does not allow for the regeneration of capital and profits: a situation which leaves these companies extremely vulnerable. A delay in the production process by the Ministry of Information's crippling rules and lengthy bureaucracy brings the producers to the verge of bankruptcy. Local production has not been successful in gaining subsidies from Saudi investors and their capital. As Dr. Aljasir, the Deputy Minister of Information and member of the Supreme Council of Mass Communication, has indicated to this author: 'Local business people prefer to invest and deal in the tangible materialistic goods and not in any form of cultural products.'[9] This is mainly because of their lack of expertise in this area and the element of high risk involved. With a few exceptions, local production companies are chiefly operating on the windfalls from the personal savings of their owners, without real investment or stable financial arrangements.

5. Pricing Policy

The existing pricing policy for television programmes dates back to 1982 when it was last revised (see Appendix D). In the absence of fixed rates and prices, if work is acceptable and fits the criteria for the Ministry, it will be rated as either 'excellent' or 'good' by an evaluation committee. This system of production rating directly affects the price offered and consequently invites the producer to engage in a haggling process with the Ministry.

The Ministry usually pays for what Saudi television actually broadcasts, not for the whole 'approved' work. Besides, these rates and prices are indiscriminately based on the screen-hour as a unit, with no serious consideration of the quality of the broadcast.

In more detail, the current system is such that production companies, whilst dealing with STV, could choose to submit a programme proposal (a written script, a production plan and a budget) or a 'finished' ready-made programme on tape, known as 'available production'. In both cases, Ministry of Information approval must be obtained. The so-called 'available production', if it conforms to the Ministry of Information's conditions, can fetch 30,000 Saudi Riyals for one televised hour. This type of production involves a considerable risk to the producer, as more than one producer has indicated to this author, since the approval and acceptance of the Ministry of Information has to be obtained at a very late stage after the actual production has been completed. Censorship and budgetary considerations are the most obvious criteria which form the basis for the Ministry's decisions. There are instances when STV arbitrarily and unilaterally edits the 'available production'; a process which happens at a very late stage and directly affects the quoted price and the amount of money the producers will receive because of the Ministry's price per broadcasting hour policy. There are also cases where the Ministry of Information asks the producers to replace these edited materials, burdening the production with additional costs.[10] This right that the Ministry reserves for itself is also applicable to other forms of production.

Producers frequently engage in a time-consuming haggling process in an attempt to convince the STV authorities. One producer, in a personal interview, told this author

that her programme proposal was circulated through the bureaucratic decision-making avenues for more than two years, finally to be rejected on budget grounds. After a time-wasting bargaining and haggling process, the projected proposal was dropped, only to be picked up later by one of the satellite channels. According to the producers, the Ministry of Information is using their authority to dictate the prices that suit their budget.[11] The rates and prices adopted by the Ministry of Information are indiscriminately based on the screen-hour as a unit, with no proper consideration of the production quality. Many producers believe that such a criterion does not do justice to the quality shows and programmes which may be of a superior nature. Some producers believe that there should be a tiered price tariff with fluctuations based on different criteria such as production quality and actual production cost.[12] They also feel that the insensitive pricing policy has actually encouraged the production of cheap low-quality shows designed to be budgeted to those prices and to allow for some extra profit.

The dated and arbitrary pricing policy, coupled with lengthy bureaucratic processes, deters many producers from making new proposals. They believe it is time for these rates and tariffs to be revised. Under the present 17-year old tariff, the Ministry pays 8,000 riyals an hour for a children's programme, the equivalent of £1,300. Drama is traditionally the most expensive genre and quantitative analysis shows that STV devotes about 47% of its time to imported dramatic shows (see chapter VI). According to some producers, STV spends around 15 million Riyals annually on imported drama shows.[13]

STV officials have declined to discuss its financial matters. Nevertheless, this author has learned from au courant inside sources that STV allocated 40 million Saudi Riyals to

satisfy its programming requirements and the payment of royalties for copyrighted material in 1996, and 30 million Riyals in 1997 (10 Saudi Riyals = £1.66). According to Dr. Ali Najai, the Ministry of Information Deputy Assistant for Television Affairs, STV has spent not more than 2 million Saudi Riyals annually on local production in past years. But in 1997, STV spent 10 million Riyals on locally produced programmes supplied by local independent production companies.[14] The availability of funds enabled STV to acquire and feature 7 locally produced shows, mostly dramas, in the month of Ramadan, 1418 (1997). The backlash effect of budgetary considerations in the programming of locally produced shows usually manifests itself during this month. Due to the apparent absence of long-term budgetary plans, the Ministry of Information will commission a number of local producers to prepare and submit programme proposals at short notice and within a limited time frame. It has become a tradition every year, during the month of Ramadan (the fasting month), for Saudi television to exhibit a more locally produced show. This amounts to a high number of shows in a one month period. When investigating this issue, it was found that the Ministry wished to provide the opportunity for as many producers as possible to prove themselves. In the last few years, as more than one producer has indicated, producers have been contacted by STV and asked to prepare a drama series or a situation comedy for the Ramadan month as quickly as possible and only one or two months prior to scheduled screening. Local producers find it too difficult to put together a watchable quality show when given such short notice. However, the reason for this last minute approach is also attributed to the availability of money allocated by the Ministry of Finance. In 1997, seven local productions were shown in the month of Ramadan; *Tash ma Tash* ('Enough or Not?'), *Kalek Mai* ('Bear with Me'), *Asaraha Raha* ('Frankness is a Good Thing'), *Khoud wa*

Hat ('Give and Take'), *Mataeb Dahika* ('Comic Endeavours') and *Athareeb* or

('Obstacles').[15] Of these, only two proved popular: *Tash ma Tash,* a 20-episode, 30-

minute, nightly comedy and *Kalek Mai,* a drama series based on real-life situations.

There is a great deal of similarity between all of these shows and they all demonstrate

an inherent weakness created by hasty production methods as producers are rushed into

premature, ill-written and badly planned shows. In Ramadan of 1998, STV featured only

two indigenous productions: *Tash ma Tash* sequence 4, and another show called *Aylat*

abo Rwaished ('Abo Rwaished's Family').[16]

In a rare incident where the Ministry disregarded this pricing policy, the outcome was

one of the most successful indigenous comedy shows in the history of local production.

The show, *Tash ma Tash,* after special personal intervention by the Minister of

Information himself, was offered double the normal average price: 140,000 Saudi Riyals

per hour, equivalent to £23,000, with some of it payable in advance. This factor alone

may have contributed to its success. It is unclear why such a show was given such

preferential treatment, and producers have expressed to this author their demand for a

level playing field and equal opportunity, not only regarding the price offered but also

in the degree of freedom enjoyed by this show in tackling certain taboo subjects.

Apart from this exception, the Ministry of Information move to encourage local

production has, in effect, backfired: 'It would be much better if we were given enough

time to produce more mature work and have it scheduled in after Ramadan', one

producer contends. He adds: 'There is not a single locally produced show during the rest

of the year'.[18] The idea of cramming in too many local shows and spending 12 million

Riyals in one month has not, in fact, aided local production. It would be better, according to some producers, if the Ministry had a plan by which the shows would be evenly dispersed throughout the year.[19] This plan would enable the producers to devote more time and effort to their work and would relieve the pressure of time constraints.

6. Dependency

Although the production companies are independent enterprises, the Ministry of Information is the government agency which supervises regulates and provides permits for their operations. Almost all of these companies are dependent on STV as the main purchaser of their productions, with the exception of the few well-organised, well-financed ones, such as the ARA Production Company and Asharika Alarabiah, which have managed to expand the market and have established relationships with some of the satellite broadcasters. Some producers believe that any television programme initially produced for STV which must conform to it rules and conditions cannot be marketed to other broadcasters because of these rules.[20] Dependency on STV has been recognised by some producers as one of the problems facing local production. As one producer put it: 'STV has its unique editorial climate, requirements and obligations.' He adds: 'To independent local producers, drama is the most wanted genre, and it is where most of the clashes with censorship lie. Why not explore some other genres?' He gave as an example a cookery show he had produced and had managed to promote easily among many broadcasters in the Arab world.[21]

7. Conclusion

This chapter has described how, far from being a lucrative industry, local media

production in Saudi Arabia is constrained by government practices regarding out of date and inconsistent pricing policies, limitations on advertisement expenditure and the lack of economic support for training media personnel, among other factors. Combined with the political and professional constraints investigated in the previous two chapters, it becomes apparent why local production companies are unable to develop their potential and are cornered into producing programmes of poor quality in terms of both production and content in attempt to satisfy all the criteria of censorship, bureaucracy, STV policy, and so forth. It is inevitable that the appeal of foreign programme of quality, which is not subject to the same constraints, increases in this context and facilitates the situation of dependency on foreign imports.

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CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A Summary of the Overall Problem

The Saudi government, since 1970, has embarked on an ambitious plan of development which affects all aspects of Saudi life. Enormous revenues derived from oil resources have been utilised to build up Saudi Arabia as modern 20th century nation; its building and development programme is large and its achievements are abundantly visible in every corner of the country. The infrastructure: communication systems, roads, airports, hospitals, schools, and higher education institutions, was targeted for major development projects and completed in the 1980s.

Thus Saudi Arabia's material progress is obvious, but, unfortunately, it was built in record time and this presented a number of disadvantages principally relating to readjustment. Although Saudi Arabia possesses state-of-the-art mass media technology, it has not been exploited as a tool to explain the government's ambitious plans, nor to encourage the Saudis to assume important and effective roles in these development projects. Social awareness, national responsibility, motivation and mobilisation of the people are the key principles underpinning genuine development - and yet they are the missing factors in Saudi development. The media do not identify the needs of the people, nor do they act as feedback mechanisms, and the Saudis have been cast as mainly passive recipients to all these innovations from the outset. Indeed, the development plans are on-going and Saudi Arabia is in the process of carrying out its sixth five-year development plan for the period from 1995 to 2000. Yet, still, the media

are excluded from the development equation. For a variety of reasons, this failure to take full advantage of radio and television for development purposes is common to many developing countries (see Schramm, 1964). Vertical, unidirectional and authoritarian media messages flow from the top downwards. This is transmission without communication - a fundamental failing to utilise the potential of the medium.

Saudi viewers have become all too easily persuaded and swayed by an illusory sense of completeness and perfection projected by a fast-moving consumer television market with unprecedented channel exploitation. They have also become exposed to waves of misinformation and antagonistic views. The days of monologue discourse, when messages were designed only to please their creators are over; the adoption of paternalistic, 'big-brother' information policies has proven to be futile and inconsistent in today's satellite age.

1.1. Involvement in Cultural Life

In most developing countries, the media's role in society is misinterpreted. Most of these countries have assigned their media systems, particularly broadcasting, to entertain the public. Saudi Arabia is no different: from its inception in society, television has been envisaged by policy-makers and politicians as a source of innocent diversion. As this study demonstrates, broadcasting media in Saudi Arabia have devoted a substantial amount of time to entertainment materials, comprising serials, soap operas and variety programmes, etc. To the conservative element in Saudi society, these are slick, vapid types of shows dominating the output with alien problems and alien values which might be in conflict with the Saudi Muslim culture. Topics often discussed in the few 'home-

made' programmes on Saudi television are often far removed from current affairs and government policies. Because of this emphasis on entertainment, broadcasting media have not been used to an appreciable extent as agents either to broaden the policy dialogue or to widen the horizons of Saudi citizens.

This failing could be of vital importance to the country in its pursuit of development on individual, local and national levels. At a time when teachers in schools and preachers in mosques are urging their pupils and their congregations, respectively, to abide by Islamic teachings, because in so doing they will achieve success, the nightly television dramas demonstrate the opposite and contradict such discourse. Of course, entertainment is a legitimate end in itself in today's stressful world but, in the light of current performances, it has become the main function of all media at the expense of other important functions, such as informing, enlightening and educating the public.

The largest quantitative component of broadcasting, entertainment is regarded as neutral from a political and developmental point of view (Katz and Wedell, 1978). In Saudi Arabia, it comprises politically 'safe' programmes, mainly because more serious topics might provoke disciplinary action by the Ministry of Information. However, this is not conducive to fostering in Saudi viewers a sense of self-knowledge or knowledge of the immediate environment. Neither are social, political, and economic developments in their country and around the world made explicit. Unfortunately, development objectives, as articulated by social thinkers and Saudi planners, have not yet been integrated in media operations.

1.2. Dependency

This problem will be perpetuated as long as STV is dependent on foreign productions to fulfil its quota of entertainment. This dependency has been partly engendered by problems inhibiting the development of a local, indigenous production industry which include insufficient infrastructure, a shortage of materials and services that keep a broadcasting system in operation, as well as a lack of incentives for trained technicians, actors, producers and other essential staff. STV is dependent on 'canned' Anglo-American programmes, and they would rather acquire these programmes at a lower cost than build their own local production and distribution system.

This heavy dependence on importation has not only exacerbated existing problems but also created new ones. As the analysis of the programme content of the imports illustrates, inconsistencies and even conflicts with Islam and the values and own interests of Saudi society are apparent. By avoiding relevant and pressing issues, important to Saudi viewers, and substituting them with 'void' alien shows, and by discussing marginal and trivial issues, an artificial climate has been created on Saudi television which fails to appeal to a large segment of the viewing population. What is missing in Saudi television is the flavour and character of local culture, and programmes that reflect nation's identity.

1.3. Bureaucracy

In addition, a number of specific problems limit the appeal of STV and inhibit the development of local production. As described in chapters VII-IX, bureaucratic processes constitute a major obstacle. Historically, the government, through the Ministry of

Information and other governmental organisations such as the Saudi Arabian Culture and Arts Society, retains full control and supervision of all production and creative aspects in the cultural sphere. This entails lengthy, centralised, bureaucratic measures in the decision making process regarding literary production or artistic performances. However, it is observable that those productions rigorously vetted for suitability and conformity with local standards (through the censorship rules applied by the Ministry of Information on imported television) are generally the least watched stations (Bait-Almal, 1993; Al-Oofy, 1995). These decisions are usually based on vague authoritarian criteria open to a multitude of interpretations and are designed to maintain a close monitoring system on such activities. Under this centralised government regime there is no room for initiatives from individuals nor from non-governmental agencies. In the case of local production companies and independent producers, surveys show that one of the most frustrating obstacles is the lengthy and unnecessary bureaucratic procedure which is involved in the making and submission of a production. Proposals for new shows submitted to the Ministry of Information are circulated and shuffled from one committee to another for months and even years (see chapter VII). Producers have to wait for long periods of time for decisions to be made regarding their work while independent producers are usually left in the dark and unless they have personal connections within the decision making authority, there is little chance of it arriving at a favourable conclusion.

1.4. Finance

Financial constraints pose further problems. STV is dependent on government subsidies but this monetary system, as illustrated in chapter IX, has its lengthy procedural methods

for funding which do not suit the nature of the broadcasting business. Broadcasting operations cannot be delayed or suspended in order to wait for such administrative procedures to take effect over weeks or months. STV advertisement revenue, under this monetary system is deposited directly to the national income treasury with the Ministry of Finance and National Economy. STV has no right, according to this system, to make use of any of this revenue. It is simply treated as a 'milch cow'. Finally, the pricing policy of local independent production is seventeen years old and many producers surveyed in this study have indicated that the policy is outdated and does not take into account the rising costs of television production.

1.5. Management and Recruitment

Weaknesses in management and recruitment create further limitations on STV output. As shown in chapter VIII, STV's human resources are civil servants who are expected to return a certain number of hours' work for a fixed monthly salary. As in any other government organisation, STV personnel abide by the rules and regulations of the Bureau for Civil Service in recruitment and promotions. A centralised system such as this does not provide an iota of flexibility for STV to recruit talented people; nor does it offer encouraging incentives or bonuses for the existing workforce.

1.6. Local Independent Production Companies

Internal defects in local and independent production companies, as revealed by my survey and first-hand observation, exacerbate the development problem. There is a strong reticence to produce and offer a wider variety of genre while drama is so highly priced and sought after; this genre has become their main focus. Nepotism, as mentioned

in chapter VIII, is also one of the major shortcomings in local production companies. Finally, the majority of producers and actors are not dedicated or committed to their work but treat it as a hobby while concentrating more on their own permanent and more secure jobs.

It is therefore inevitable that if STV and local production fail to attract the Saudi audience, other broadcasters, such as DBS, will succeed by monopolising on their weaknesses while the Saudi viewing population will welcome the diversity and often superior quality of production. Some writers hailed the new Arab satellite system as a solution to the cultural dependency on Western media products, but an examination of the current programme content of Arab television leaves us with little hope. The ever-increasing number of distribution channels offered by satellites has strengthened the demand for television programmes. A study conducted by the Arab States Broadcasting Union (ASBU) on the Arabic satellite channels concludes that these channels have no clear strategy, apart from the aim of making a profit, and that they are heavily dependent on foreign produced programmes. [1]

2. Recommendations for the Ministry of Information

Policies and regulations for the development of local, indigenous production.

This author believes that there is no reason for not utilising the media as an institution with considerable importance as a means of expression in actual programming; the technical apparatus is now in place and the qualified staff could be made available. It is hoped that the Saudi broadcast media, and television in particular, could be utilised to sustain and nurture the Saudi endogenous culture. It is essential that those countries

such as Saudi Arabia whose governments control media operations, give the media, with its great potential, the attention it deserves and utilise it in a constructive way to solve problems of national unity and development. Until the impediments and constraints are removed, however, this possibility is remote, to say the least. Nevertheless, a number of possible solutions as outlined below, would effect positive changes in the current system.

To make television more appealing to audiences, and to make it an effective developmental and nation-building tool, Saudi television programmers have to immerse themselves in their own national heritage and in their own culture to generate appealing and informative programmes: programmes that retain the distinctive features of Saudi society using local cultural symbols, stories, and characters. One way to strengthen and underpin the values of Saudi culture is to produce or facilitate and encourage the production of home-produced, indigenous entertainment which is in keeping with Islamic values and the requirements of Saudi society. Such productions will suitably tackle serious ideas and contribute to the advancement and the modernisation of Saudi social life. However, if local production is going to develop into a successful industry, the Ministry of Information needs to take into careful consideration the factors, described above, that impede or facilitate the flow of television programmes from one country to another and create dependency in its own.

History teaches us that there will be no adequate and satisfying progress made under such a system and there is an essential need to unleash the creative power of individuals and institutions, including the broadcast media, to be able to compete with other broadcasters. As the Saudi Arabian representative to UNESCO puts it: 'The only way

to face the transnational broadcasting which contains unfavourable messages is to "explode" the local creativity and eliminate the chains that cripple free thinking'.[2] The total abolition of the Ministry of Information in some neighbouring countries and the relative amount of freedom subsequently enjoyed by a number of formerly government controlled and operated broadcast media in the region should inspire the Saudi government to relinquish at least some of its control over the media. Meanwhile, critics and civil liberty advocates should not stick to an 'all or nothing' standpoint but should act flexibly and responsibly accordingly.

Concerning bureaucratic constraints, if the Ministry of Information radically cut down on unnecessary routine this would expedite the processing of new proposals by a contact or liaison office where enquiries regarding these proposals can be directed. Expediency entails the introduction of a complete, autonomous commercial department, specialised in fostering and promoting local production and independent from the Ministry of Information bureaucracy. Such a department, ideally, would be easily accessible to producers and responsive to the changing climate and vicissitudes of the wider market of visual production.

In respect of financial constraints, there is no impediment to the trend of privatisation, which was successfully adopted by Saudi Arabia in communication and utilities sectors, encompassing the broadcast media. Such a move would be necessary and consistent with this global era in which government control and manipulation of information are deemed futile. It is in the collective interest of the country that the present grip is loosened without delay. On a more specific note, many believe it is time for a complete

review and revision of the seventeen-year old pricing policy to adequately reflect today's economics. Finally, a fraction of the advertising revenue could be invested in financing local production operations and used to lubricate the wheel of STV's economy. This is one of the new trends in the region. In 1995, Qatar announced that it would grant full administrative and financial independence to its broadcasting system. The Jordanian government has also given total financial and administrative autonomy to its broadcast media since the beginning of 1998. Under this new system, the media will be able to use all advertising revenue generated by both radio and television. In the past it had been deposited in the National Treasury.[3]

In matters of management and recruitment, STV should be granted independence and freedom to make decisions based on its immediate needs and according to its unparalleled circumstances. Training schemes are noticeable by their absence. Incisive, hands-on training for artistic and technical personnel is absolutely crucial if STV is to make its mark on the broadcasting industry. Reform should apply equally to the fossilised management structure which, given its civil service status, is immune from close scrutiny and appraisal, and therefore continues to remain unmonitored. The management team at STV has been there for an over-long period of time; new blood and fresh impetus is needed for the innovation of novel ideas and modern, up-to-date practices.

Local independent production companies require radical improvements in organisation and infrastructure and in their own technological resources to enhance production. These solutions are contingent on financial resources which could be derived from mergers

which, in turn, could strengthen and consolidate the position of these companies. Issues relating to the lack of diversity in genre production could be tackled if local producers endeavour to produce a wider variety of genres, such as cookery, and nature shows, as well as programmes suitable for children. Nepotism could be undermined by a system of advertising based on principles of 'equal opportunities', and impartial auditioning, interview and selection processes. Finally, if the local production industry is to develop, there must be adequate funds and grants for production companies and schools to sustain programmes of artistic development and training. Above all, there should be an outlet at the end to which the new talent may apply their knowledge and expertise, with adequate financial support. If there is a consistent and continuing demand for local production, this will inevitably provide this outlet, as well as the necessary funds to sustain it. In turn, this will require a greater degree of professionalism and commitment from those involved in the industry.

By enhancing the performance of the local television and production industries, it is possible that dependency on foreign television production will decrease. Abdullah Aljasir (1995)[4] proposes that governments must act in this respect. He contends that there must be joint venture projects between Arab governments and local private production companies to be able to compete with their Western counterparts and produce appealing local television programmes. It is this author's opinion that the undeniable professional superiority of imported television production has the potential to inspire Saudi television producers and independent 'private' producers alike to emulate them in style and format with an authenticity that relates to the indigenous Saudi viewers. The alleged popularity of American action and comedy shows should not justify their screening. Home-made

programmes almost always win in the popularity stakes. As one writer puts it, '[...] in local production the characters are familiar and identifiable, the setting is recognisable, and the problems are real' (Katz and Wedell, 1978:122).

In analysing the dilemma engendered by the wide adoption and utilisation of DBS in Saudi Arabia, this author believes that there are signs that the novelty will begin to fade. Should this be the case, the DBS channels that would still be in a position to attract and retain viewers are the ones that would respect those viewers' genuine need for information, insights, and high quality entertainment. Imposing a ban on DBS reception is unworkable and an unrealistic policy for the 21st Century in the era of globalisation and the super-highway of information. The negative and helpless position taken by some Saudi media officials resulting in an unwillingness to compete with DBS channels should be radically modified. At the same time, the Saudi media industry is incapable of competing with DBS while restricted by an inflexible media policy. Once STV frees itself from unnecessary and undue pressure, often self-imposed, there will be enough room for it to manoeuvre and compete. Competition should be inspirational and a driving force for reforms on all fronts; administrative, artistic, technical and, of course, intellectual. But the Saudi media industry has to improve its production by being better resourced and less bureaucratic in order to achieve this.

3. A Final Word

It is in the nature of the technological mass media to facilitate educational, social, and economic growth in developing countries. These nations tend to view the mass media as a vital means of moving toward economic prosperity and political stability. Radio and

television are often seen as a way to mobilise a country's population to participate in social change. It is not this author's view that the media are a panacea for all of the ills of Saudi Arabian society, but surely, when effectively managed and directed, they could make a difference.

STV's image, however, is currently at an all time low. By isolating itself from mainstream Saudi society, and because of the absence of a well-defined programming policy and the constant importation of foreign-made television shows, Saudi television suffers from what could be termed an 'identity crisis'. It simply has no case to advance and no cause to champion other than maintaining the *status quo* and occupying its remaining loyal viewers with cheaply-made, irrelevant television imports.

It is vital that there is a plan to improve its image, but first the Saudi broadcasting authority has to recognise and admit this image problem. There must be genuine reform measures, not just placebos, and these must be supported by a political will. Central to these measures, STV should distance itself as far as possible from the harsh governmental advocacy tone and put its viewers' interests first. In an interview with the Secretary for the Higher Council of Mass Communication, Abdulrahman Alabdan, he revealed to this author that there is a directive from the Chairman of the Council, Prince Naif bin Abdulaziz, to the broadcast media to lessen their propagandistic overt content which had become redundant in media discourse.[5] Through the above alternative policies and programming strategies and not through bans on DBS reception equipment, albeit not vigorously implemented, local Saudi viewers will be persuaded to keep in touch with their own national media.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

DBS Services

At present, DBS provides a vast number and variety of channels to the viewing population of the Arab world. These are described under the categories of Stations, News and Networks.

1. Stations

Egyptian Satellite Channel (ESC)

Utilising a combination of transponders, ESC provides coverage for the whole of Europe and North Africa and can be received by dishes from 80cm to 2.40 metres. Since 1996, ESC has been available through terrestrial broadcasting to viewers in the USA. Parts of Saudi Arabia in the North and East, Bahrain, Morocco and Kuwait also receive ESC signals, as do Angola, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Tunisia and the UAE. In 1993, a second ESC channel, Nile TV International, commenced operation, broadcasting in English and French. Since then, the project has vastly expanded. In April, 1998, Egypt launched its own satellite, Nilesat 101. The satellite carries 24 television transponders with 72 channels transmitting in digital compression. This venture extended ESC's broadcasting capacity to include ANN (Arab News Network), Showtime Network, Oman TV, Iraqi, Libyan, Sudanese and Syrian satellite channels and six Egyptian specialist channels.

Middle East Broadcasting Centre (MBC)

MBC aims to complement television services in the Arab nations and to inform viewers of international events and developments by means of a more Western format and high calibre production. [1] MBC provides a wide range of programme genre, including family

entertainment such as daily features programmes; children's programmes; drama and music. In addition, it broadcasts documentaries; sports coverage; films; current affairs and international news.

Dubai Satellite Channel (DSC)

This service is renowned for its acquisition of recent and expensively produced Arab entertainment fare.

Lebanon Broadcasting Corporation (LBC)

With a strong focus on Lebanese productions of light entertainment, LBC programming includes popular music shows and drama, features which generally attract conservative Gulf viewers (Boyd, 1998). However, this type of offering has met with criticism and accusations of being too progressive in programming content, evident in 1992 when LBC became the first television station to broadcast Mexican dubbed soaps. It was strongly reproached for this by many critics.[2] LBC programming also includes innumerable hours of comedy, children's fare and drama, over 300 hours of sports programming every year, and various local drama series.

Future TV

In 1994, Future TV began to broadcast on satellite as a competitor to LBC and with very similar programming, consisting of news, variety shows, soaps, serials, and song and music programmes.

2. News

Aljazirah Satellite Channel

Aljazirah is considered by many to be a unique broadcasting service and is believed to have ended the Western news media's monopoly on franchising.[3] Enjoying a reasonable margin of freedom which allows it to tackle important issues considered taboo by other broadcasters, what distinguishes Aljazirah's programmes is their openness to diverse adherence and non-adherence to any political persuasion. All of Aljazirah's programmes are presented in a slick, professional manner and it is currently considered to be one of the most popular sources of Arabic news and information, not only in the region itself, but also among Arab expatriates all over the world.

Arab News Network (ANN)

Although the main programming comprises news and current affairs features, with three main news bulletins and a brief every half hour, it also features interviews with Arab writers and artists who reside in Britain and in other European countries, such as in *Kanadeel Fi Addalam* ('Candle in the Darkness'), and produces shows which deal with environmental issues. At present, ANN, along with Aljazirah, are thought to be the main sources of news and information for Saudi viewers and Arab viewers in general.

3. Networks

Saudi Cable TV System

The initial idea of this country-wide cable system project developed as a solution to the widespread utilisation of DBS in Saudi Arabia. According to A. Ashamey, one of the project's executives, the project is totally owned by the Ministry of Information in Saudi

Arabia.[4] The initial service offered 20 channels of which 17 were subject to pre-censorship to ensure that their content conformed to the 'values' and 'traditions' of Saudi society.[5]

Orbit Communication Company (OCC)

Subscribed to by numerous television channels and radio stations, OCC is arguably the largest privately owned broadcasting company in the Arab world. Inaugurated in 1994, with a showing of the classic film *The Jungle Book,* it now has more than 40 channels and broadcasts 24 hours a day to 23 countries. What follows is a brief description of the television channels comprising the first OCC services.

1. Al Oula

Essentially a film channel, Al Oula selects and presents original Arabic films, as well as international films which are dubbed into Arabic for the first time.

2. Al Thania

This is a general programming channel specifically targeting a family audience of any age group throughout the Arab world. It broadcasts entertainment productions from both the Arab and non-Arab countries, including documentaries, comedies, drama, children's productions and fashion features.

3. BBC World Service Television Arabic Language Channel

This 24-hour channel initially broadcast domestic and international news, weather, Arabic current affairs, business news, science and technology programmes and documentaries. However, two years after commencement it was discontinued and the agreement with Orbit was terminated in May, 1996, following a disagreement over the BBC's editorial policy (see Appendix D, BBC News Release).

4. All News Channel

Another 24-hour television news service, the All News Channel provides the same service as the BBC World Service Television Arabic Language Channel, as well as political and financial news and world events. Its main objective is to present a viewpoint which is different from other news channels.

5. Orbit News Channel

A third 24-hour national and international news channel, Orbit derives its news material from the original American networks; ABC, CBS and NBC. It also gleans financial news from the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Asian Wall Street Journal*. In addition, it features certain shows from the USA, such as CBS's *This Morning* and ABC's *Good Morning, America*.

6. CNN International

With 550 broadcast affiliates across the globe and focusing mainly on international developments, CNNI provides a 24-hour service to 210 countries, reaching 140 million households.

7. The Hollywood Channel

As its name suggests, the Hollywood Channel is dedicated to providing an insight into Hollywood life by means of interviews and game shows, concerts, award ceremonies, features on the top stars and health and fitness programmes

8. America Plus

Aimed at providing entertainment for all age groups, this channel broadcasts many of the most popular American series, such as *Seinfeld*.

9. Egypt 1

This channel is dedicated to presenting the best of Egyptian entertainment television;

games shows, mini-series and an array of national productions.

10. Egypt 2

Egypt 2 serves a similar purpose to Egypt 1 but with a greater focus on shows, films and sports. Again, these are all derived from Egyptian television.

11. Super Movies

In conjunction with Warner Brothers, the Super Movies channel shows original Home Box Office (HBO) films.

12. Orbit-ESPN Sports Channel

Offering a 24-hour sports coverage service, this channel provides coverage of both international and national sports events.

13. Music Now

A first in the Arab world, Music Now is a pioneering channel. With Arab speaking presenters, it features a range of music from all over the world.

14. The Discovery Channel

This service offers 24 hours of nature, culture, wildlife, science and technology programmes.

15. The Fun Channel

Despite its title, this channel's main objective is to couple entertainment with educational experience through animation and live action. Its target audience consists of both children and adults.

16. C-SPAN

For those interested in American congress and politics, this channel offers a unique service presenting live coverage of the US government in session and detailed daily analyses of the legislative developments.

17. Warner Family Channel

This channel offers movies, series and cartoons aimed at entertaining the whole family. All items are taken from the Warner Brothers television and film library.

18. French Channel

With a substantial number of French-speaking viewers living in North Africa, this channel aims to offer them entertainment programmes

19. Home Shopping Network

This channel represents the first attempt to introduce home shopping via television in the Arab world. The target audience is able to watch advertisements and order any product by telephone.

20. Pay-Per-View

Programmes for the Pay-Per-View channel can be ordered from the Orbit Billing Centre in Cyprus. This channel represents another first for the broadcasting industry in the Arab world.

21. New Channels

In April, 1997, Orbit included the Disney Middle East Channel and Orbit Express Shop. Further to this, in October, 1997, Orbit signed an agreement with World Vision by which Orbit could receive more than one thousand hours of Western entertainment shows including *Beverly Hills, Melrose Place, Sunset Beach,* etc. In other recent developments, Orbit has made an agreement with Warner Brothers to show the latest Warner Brother films on Orbit Super Movies channel and to have access to the Time Warner and Turner film libraries. This deal has enabled Orbit to premier 450 films for its subscribers in December, 1997.[6] In April, 1997, Orbit included among its offerings Sky News, Viva Cinema, Channel 5 International, NBC, CNBC, and Fox Kids.[7]

Showtime

Showtime offers a direct-to-home satellite pay-TV service for the Middle East with programme offerings controlled and monitored in London. There are 9 customised channels which make up the Showtime bouquet and which cater for specific age, gender and genre interest groups as follows:

1. **Nickelodeon,** which features cartoons and games shows for children. Research conducted by Middle East Market Research Bureau revealed that this channel was the leading regional children's television channel.[8]

2. **TV Land**, a channel of fast action, adventure and drama programmes.

3. **The Movie Channel**, which shows an uninterrupted selection of Hollywood hits and exclusives, 24 hours a day.

4. **VH-1**, which provides a mix of classic rock and pop music videos;

5. **The Paramount Channel**, which broadcasts comedies, dramas, soaps and mini-series for the whole family;

6. **Bloomberg Information TV**, a channel which, as its name suggests, broadcasts global news, sports, finance and weather services;

7. **MTV Europe,** which shows Europe's latest rock and pop videos, live concerts and youth lifestyle shows;

8. **Style**, a channel exclusively designed for women, featuring drama, fashion, health, childcare tips, lifestyle discussions, general chat, food and travel programmes;

9. **Discovery Channel**, as described previously.

These channels being offered to date are 'highly focused' and 'tightly defined'.[9] This definition means that audiences can be carefully targeted and advertisers are offered more value.

Arab Radio and TV (ART)

ART offers seven channels which target all social classes and are dedicated to different genres. ART IV, the movie channel, transmits 24 hours a day and includes film reviews and critiques featuring and involving producers, critics and actors. ART III, the juniors' channel transmitting 14 hours a day, incorporates educational, cultural and entertainment programmes in its schedule. A third channel, ART II, dedicated to sports, concentrates on both Arab and International sporting events and achievements, both recorded and live. ART V is a music channel featuring Arabic songs. Other channels include *Almaarif* ('Knowledge'), which provides an educational service, and *Alakifak* ('Your Choice'). Finally, there is a variety channel which focuses on Arab cultural activities: festivals, literary symposiums, entertainment programmes and theatre, and is used as a window to showcase its other sister channels.

Instead of aiming at financial gain or competing with other satellite networks it strives to deliver only suitable entertainment and to lure viewers away from channels which are deemed inappropriate. [10]

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APPENDIX B

Mass Communication Policy in Saudi Arabia.

Introduction

The information policy refers to the principles and goals which constitute the foundations and requirements of information in Saudi Arabia. This policy emanates from Islam, in doctrine and law, which is the national religion. It aims at establishing belief in God, raising the intellectual, cultural, and perceptual level in the citizens, and at dealing with social problems. It seeks to stress the concept of obedience to God, His Prophet, and the legal guardian. It exhorts Saudi Arabians to respect the law and to carry it out contently. It includes the broad outlines which govern Saudi information; thus accomplishing the goals by means of education, guidance, and recreation. This policy is considered a part of the country's general policy, and is specified in the following articles:

Article I

Saudi information has its obligation to Islam exclusively. It seeks to keep the tradition of this nation, and to exclude all that contradicts God's laws which He gave to the people.

Article II

Saudi mass communication will oppose all destructive elements, atheistic inclinations, materialistic philosophies, and all attempts to distract the Muslims from their beliefs. It will further expose their falsehood and dangers to the individuals and societies, and will

stand up to every challenge which does not concur with the general policy of the country.

Article III

All information media seek to serve society by consolidating its precious Islamic values; firmly establishing its honoured Arabic traditions and preserving its gracious inherited customs; and seek to stand in opposition to everything that threatens its purity and harmony.

Article IV

All mass communication will seek to serve the existing policy of the Kingdom, protecting the primary interests of the citizens first, then the Muslims and Arabs in general. This will be done by the adoption of this policy and its presentation with full documentation, supported by precedence and facts.

Article V

All mass communication will seek to present the unique and distinctive characteristics of Saudi Arabia on national and international levels, emphasising its stability and safety, and progress in various domains, by embracing Islam as the constitution of the government and the law of life, placing upon her shoulders the responsibility to serve the sacred Islamic places.

Article VI

All mass communication will seek to strengthen the bond among the citizens by

informing them of the numerous areas of their country and the significant aspects pertaining to them, thus demonstrating the complementary nature of these regions.

Article VII

All mass communication will seek to enhance loyalty to the country, bringing to light the capabilities and potential bestowed upon it, and reminding its citizens of its greatness, past and present. As the citizen is made aware of his responsibility to his country, he will be urged to contribute to its progress, advancement and protection.

Article VIII

The Saudi mass communication will give the family its due attention, being the essential unit in the society, and the first school where children learn and are guided, where their personalities are developed and enriched.

Article IX

Saudi mass communication affirms the relationship between today's child and tomorrow's environment. Thus, attention will be given to guidance; educational and recreational programmes for children. The programmes will be based on educational and scientific principles and directed by highly specialised personnel.

Article X

Recognising the innate quality which women have, and the duty which God has given them, mass communication will provide special programmes which will assist women in performing their innate duty in society.

Article XI

Saudi mass communication will give special consideration to teenagers, realising the importance of the period of adolescence. Therefore, special programmes will be designed to deal with their problems and meet their needs; thus preparing them adequately in religion and behaviour.

Article XII

The mass communication will seek, through the use of audio-visual facilities, to be informative in all that pertains to the history of the Kingdom by means of documentaries and recordings, both within the Kingdom and outside it.

Article XIII

The Saudi mass communication will seek cooperation with educational and social organisations and research centres to conduct communication studies.

Article XIV

The mass communication will design programmes which will appeal to the highly educated to keep them informed of all the educational and intellectual studies and scientific publications.

Article XV

The mass communication will seek to promote and encourage scholarship in all fields of specialisation. This can be accomplished at a high level of religion, science, awareness, and dedication, having all conditions favourable.

Article XVI

Realising its significant role, mass communication will deal directly and effectively to abolish illiteracy by adopting educational and scientific principles, and by dedicating educational programmes to meet the needs of every age and mentality.

Article XVII

Mass communication in Saudi Arabia must maintain standard Arabic as the vehicle of Islam and the reservoir of its education. Consequently, the following points are emphasised:

1. Authors and writers of programmes will be directed to follow closely the rules of grammar and syntax, as well as adhere to correct expression and pronunciation.

2. Newscasters, programme directors and club sponsors will be directed to use standard Arabic to avoid making mistakes in pronunciation, and to conform to the rules of proper execution.

3. It is essential to be highly selective and avoid all that is derogatory or downgrading to standard Arabic.

4. There must be an effort to gradually raise the level of the programmes that use colloquial Arabic, and replace it with simplified standard Arabic.

5. There must be active support for all programmes, plays and series which utilise standard Arabic to make it desirable to the public.

6. There should be a focus on teaching standard Arabic to non-Arabic speakers in Islamic countries, utilising the most advanced methods and technology.

Article XVIII

The Saudi mass media currently support educational and scientific movements in the following ways:

1. By encouraging researchers, scientists, and intellectuals in every way possible, which includes the publishing of their scholarly works and giving them opportunities to express their views.

2. By guiding young talents, encouraging and sponsoring them until they reach the desired level.

3. By holding scholarly discussions and literary and scientific conferences among the educated in the Kingdom, as well as with others outside; thus, presenting the educational and scientific capabilities of the Kingdom.

4. By encouraging specialised periodicals which are published in Saudi Arabia and the Arab world.

5. By supporting national publishing houses so that they may publish serious Saudi writings, and by sponsoring book exhibitions, thus demonstrating the rank which Saudi Arabia has attained in the scientific and educational spheres.

Article XIX

The Saudi information media stress the significance of tradition and the need to revive it. It performs this role by accomplishing the following:

1. Encouraging the preservation of tradition materially and morally by:

    a. Preparing programmes identifying sources of reference and their locations.

    b. Publishing materials concerning tradition, with government funding, and making it available to everyone.

c. Facilitating the availability of these publications to the parties concerned.

2. Resisting every effort which seeks to destroy tradition or scorn it.

3. Encouraging programmes which draw on books about tradition, especially in the areas of study, drama series and literary biographies.

4. Exhibition of masterpieces of tradition, introducing the public to their forebears' efforts and accomplishments in many fields of knowledge and inviting them to bridge the gap between the past and the present of this nation.

Article XX

The information media will seek to bring all Muslims closer by means of introducing the Islamic peoples, their countries, potentials and capabilities; and to instigate cooperation among these countries.

Article XXI

The Saudi information media seeks:

1. Unity and cooperation among all Arabs, avoiding all antagonistic tendencies.

2. Defense of their cases especially those dealing with their destinies, urging them to support Islam at every opportunity that avails itself.

Article XXII

The Saudi information media affirms the standing invitation to God among Muslims and others until God inherits the whole earth. Thus the Saudi means of communication participates in this obligation in all wisdom and advice, seeking to communicate with intellect while respecting the privacy of others.

Article XXIII

The Saudi information media, in cooperation with their counterparts in the Islamic world in general, and the Arab world in particular, will seek to adopt a unified programme which serves the religious and secular interests of all Muslims and will attempt to represent their cultural and intellectual unity.

Article XXIV

The Saudi information media affirms its respect of the rights of everyone individually and collectively. Simultaneously, it seeks to create an atmosphere of harmony, unity, and cooperation among all, informing everyone of his direct responsibility for the whole society.

Article XXV

The Saudi information media seeks to be objective in presenting the facts, avoiding exaggerations, valuing the honour of an individual's word and the need to protect it and raise it above every suspicion.

Article XXVI

The Saudi information media desires that freedom of expression be guaranteed within the national goals and values of Islam.

Article XXVII

The Saudi information media advocates respect for the dignity of man; to exercise freedom in his land; to disapprove of every act of violence towards individuals or

peoples; to fight all expansive intentions; to stand by righteousness, justice, and peace; and to rise against injustice and racism.

Article XXVIII

The Saudi information media affirms the import of human expert resources capable of accomplishing the goals of Saudi communication, and entrusts these resources with training by making necessary adjustments.

Article XXIX

The Saudi information media encourages local production of materials which are in accordance with its policy.

Article XXX

The information media of Saudi Arabia shall comply with this policy and the execution of all its rules and regulations.

APPENDIX C

Programme Cycle, Autumn 1997

Source: Saudi Arabian Television
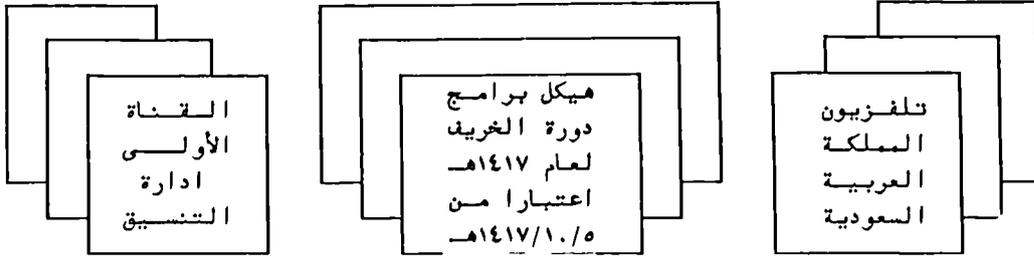
الجمعة	الخميس	الاربعاء	الثلاثاء	الاثنين	الاحد	السبت	المدة	الوقت
الجمعة	الافتتاح .. السلام الملكي..القرآن الكريم..دعاء الصباح						١٥	٧ ٤٥
	برنامج المملكة هذا الصباح						١٢٠	٨ ..
الافتتاح القرآن	الرسوم المتحركة						١٥	١٠ ..
رسوم كرتون	الكرتون المدبلج	المسلسل الصباحي					٤٥	١٠ ١٥
	موجز لأهم الانباء						٥	١١ ..
في ظلال القرآن	الرياضة للجميع	أو الوثائق جدة	العائلة الدمام	الوثائق الرياض	العائلة المدينة	العائلة الرياض	٢٠	١١ ٠٥
إنّاء على الهاتف	سواعد سعودية	برنامج علمي					٤٥	١١ ٢٥
اذان جمعة الرياض	لوحة اذان الرياض .. فآية أو حديث						٢	١٢ .٧
حديث الجمعة	سؤال و جائزة	متابعة البرنامج العلمي					١٢	١٢ .٩
نقل أذان و خطبتي وصلاة الجمعة		منهاج الصالحين	الحقوق في الاسلام	الدين النصيحة	في ظلال السيرة	في رحاب العقيدة	١٢	١٢ ٢٢
	رفع اذان ظهر مكة المكرمة .. فدعاء						٥	١٢ ٢٥
	الاعلانات التجارية الصباحية						١٥	١٢ ٤.
	الميدان التربوي	مسلسلة الظهيرة					٥٥	١٢ ٥٥
الافتتاء	أهم الأنباء						٥	١ ٢.

تحرير ١١/١٠/١٤١٧هـ

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البرنامج	المدة	الساعة : الدقيقة
الرسوم المتحركة — متابعة البرنامج — (معكم على الهواء)	١٥	١ : ٢٥
مسلسل الكرتون المدبلج — الفترة الرياضية	٢٠	١ : ٥٠
ضيف الشاشة ‖ مايطلبه المشاهدون ‖ احلى الليالي ‖ وجها لوجه ‖ مع الناس	٥٠	٢ : ١٠
نشرة الأخبار المصورة الأولى .. تتضمن النشرة الجوية	٢٥	٣ : ٠٠
برنامج اعلامي	٢٠	٣ : ٢٥
رفع اذان عصر مكة المكرمة .. ثم خدمات عامة	١٠	٣ : ٥٥
اعادة مسلسلة السهرة — رسالة الفروسية (جدة) — في البحر في الارض في جو	٥٠	٤ : ٠٠
ملتقى الاطفال ‖ مسابقات الاطفال ‖ حكاية للاطفال ‖ افتح ياوطني ابوابك — المسلسلة	٣٠	٤ : ٥٥
آفاق تربوية ‖ في رحاب الاسلام ‖ نافذة على الفكر والثقافة ‖ ارضنا الخضراء ‖ فنون شعبية ‖ مسابقات خفيفة — براعم	٢٠	٥ : ٢٥
لوحة أذان مغرب — حديث المجتمع ‖ درب الرياض	٢	٥ : ٥٥
من ارجاء الوطن — اعادة لخطبتي الجمعة	٢٢	٥ : ٥٧
نقل أذان وصلاة المغرب من المسجد النبوي الشريف بالمدينة المنورة فدعاء	٢٥	٦ : ٢٠
الاعلانات التجارية العادية	٥	٦ : ٤٥
المسلسلة المسائية	٢٢	٦ : ٥٠
لوحة أذان عشاء الرياض .. فآية أو حديث	٢	٧ : ٢٢
الجريدة المصورة .. ثم موجز الانباء — حادث وعبرة ‖ حدث الاسبوع	٢٥	٧ : ٢٥
نقل أذان وصلاة العشاء من المسجد الحرام في مكة المكرمة .. فدعاء	٢٠	٧ : ٥٠
ابطال الارادة ‖ ابحاث علمية ‖ برنامج اعلامي فنون شعبية ‖ من المسئول ‖ آية واعجاز ‖ المجلة الاسلامية — منكم واليكم المملكة في عيون العالم	٢٠	٨ : ٢٠
افراح وتهاني ‖ مسائل مهمة ‖ برنامج الفروسية ‖ شهادة تقدير ‖ مدارات معاصرة	٢٠	٨ : ٥٠

١١/١٠/١٤١٧هـ

		وقت	وقت
	نشـيد وطني / الاعـلانـات التجاريـة الممتـازة	١٠	٩ ٢٠
	نشـرة الأخبـار المصورة الثانيـة .. تتضمن نشرة الأحوال الجويـة	٤٥	٩ ٢٠
رسـالة الفروسية	الاعـلانـات التجاريـة الممتـازة	٢٠	١٠ ١٥
الاعلانـات	تمثيليـة — المسلسلـة اليوميـة	٤٥	١٠ ٢٥
	الاعلانـات التجاريـة الممتـازة	٥	١١ ٢٠
المسلسلـة اليوميـة	اضـواء علـى برامج الغـد	١٠	١١ ٢٥
العـرض أهـل الخليج	احسـى الليالي / المصارعة الحرة / مايطلبه المشاهدون / ضيف الشاشة / مع الناس / وجهـا لوجـه	٤٥	١١ ٣٥
	أغنيـة مختـارة	١٠	١٢ ٢٠
	نشـرة الأخبـار المصورة الأخيـرة	٣٠	١٢ ٣٠
مسلسلـة السهرة	همس النسيم / مسرحية أو تمثيلية — أغنيـة مختـارة	١٥	١ ٠٠
	فيليم أو تمثيلية / مسلسلـة السهرة	٤٥	١ ١٥
الموجز والصحف	شخصيـات وارقـام / الموجزوالصحف — موجزلأهم الانبـاء..يتضمن مطالعـات الصحف	١٠	٢ ٠٠
القرآن الختـام	القرآن / الختـام — القرآن الكريم/الختام/السـلام الملكي	١٠	٢ ١٠

APPENDIX D

Television Programme Prices

H.E. The Deputy, Ministry of Information Affairs

According to what His Excellency, the Ministry Assistant Deputy for Radio and Television, has said in his letter No.1083, dated 21.8.1401 H. (7.1981), regarding the revision of television programme prices, the following is approved:

First: Category (A) Available Saudi production

The sum of (30,000) thirty thousand Saudi riyals will be paid for one televised hour if the following conditions have been met:

1. The work presented is the product of a Saudi company or establishment.

2. The production must be in compliance with the censorship rules and conditions applied to Saudi television.

3. The Saudi company or establishment will stipulate in a written contract, and acknowledge therein, that the work in question is actually theirs. The company should guarantee their ownership of any artistic, literary or financial rights which may be contested by a third party. A penalty condition must be included in the contract stating that, in case it is subsequently proven that the work is not the property of this company, calculations for adjustments may be made, based on current prices for non-Saudi production, and that, in addition, a fine may be imposed in the amount of 10% of the original contract value and all transactions with this company will cease for a period not to exceed one year for the first offence, and to cease indefinitely in the event of any further infraction of such copyright laws.

Second: Category (B) Distinguished Saudi production

The sum of (40,000) forty thousand Saudi riyals will be paid for each television hour if the following conditions are met:

1. The work submitted should be the product of a Saudi company or establishment.

2. The work submitted should be in compliance with the censor's conditions and rules applied to Saudi television.

3. The company or establishment will stipulate in a written contract, and acknowledge therein, that the work in question is actually theirs. The company should guarantee their ownership of any artistic, literary or financial rights which may be contested by a third party. A penalty condition must be included in the contract stating that in case it is subsequently proven that the work is not the property of this company, calculations for adjustments may be made, based on current prices for non-Saudi production, and that, in addition, a fine may be imposed in the amount of 10% of the original contract value and all transactions with this company will cease for a period not to exceed one year for the first offence, and to cease indefinitely in the event of any further infraction of such copyright laws.

4. The consent of any concerned individuals represented in the television production should be secured in writing, prior to submitting the summary of the story. This will not lessen the responsibility of the producer to ensure the proper production standards in all artistic or censoring aspects.

5. The Ministry of Information (for television production) must give its prior consent to the names of all participants in major roles.

6. The work should be of good quality in general, as far as the components of production are concerned. However, if the Department concerned with examining and

controlling production reports that the production is of average standard and can be accepted, it will be dealt with according to category (A) prices based on average current prices for Saudi production.

7. The first production copy is to be forwarded to the Ministry of Information, the Department of Saudi television and the Department will assume the privilege of showing the materials for a duration of six months subsequent to the submission date of the work.

Third: Category (C) Private production

The sum of (65,000) sixty five thousand Saudi riyals will be paid for each television hour if the following conditions are met:

1. The programme must be Saudi in context, and contain the appropriate religious, moral, social and psychological constructs which will be compatible with Saudi society. The programme may be historic or Arabic, must exhibit high moral values and, on certain occasions, the Department of Saudi television may request a company to make a special production of the above type.

2. Written approval must be obtained from the Department of Saudi television regarding the context and dialogue of possible television productions. This will not lessen the responsibility of the producer to ensure the proper production standards in all artistic or censoring aspects.

3. A number of Saudi actors should participate in the performance, however, the individuals, their appropriateness for the roles will be reviewed by the Ministry, and assignments will be subject to its approval.

4. A number of distinguished Arabian actors should participate in the performance,

especially those who have been recognised significantly as excellent artists and unequalled in the field; however, the Department of Saudi television must give prior written approval to the names and the number of Arabian candidates.

5. Production should be made outside the Department of Saudi Television; however, if the Department provides the studio, equipment and production instruments, 25% of the stated price for one television hour will be deducted.

6. The production will become the property of Saudi television; the producer has no right to market it for others, nor to dispose of it in any way. The Department of Saudi television shall have the right to dispose of the production in any manner that it deems appropriate. The company or establishment will stipulate in a written contract, and acknowledge therein, that the work in question is actually theirs. The company should guarantee their ownership of any artistic, literary or financial rights which may be contested by a third party. A penalty condition must be included in the contract stating that, in case it is subsequently proven that the work is not the property of this company, calculations for adjustments may be made, based on current prices for non-Saudi production, and that, in addition, a fine may be inflicted in, the amount of 10% of the original contract value and all transactions with this company will cease for a period not to exceed one year for the first offence, and to cease indefinitely in the event of any further infraction of such copyright laws. A further condition must be inserted in the contract, stipulating the penalties to be inflicted if the producer disregards the copyright prerogatives of the Department without having first obtained the written permission of the Ministry of Information, regardless of whether or not any monetary value was received, and the calculation of the production value shall be revised in accordance with the average current prices of Saudi production (A) or the distinguished Saudi production

prices of category (B), according to individual circumstances. The Department of Saudi television will charge the producer with the value of the difference in price, and all transactions with the offending company will be terminated for one year.

Fourth: Category (D) Available non-Saudi production

This is the type of production which may be carried out by a non-Saudi company or establishment. A maximum sum of (14,500) fourteen thousand, five hundred Saudi riyals will be paid for each television hour if the supplier is non-Saudi; and the sum of (16,500) sixteen thousand, five hundred Saudi riyals will be paid if the supplier is Saudi.

Fifth: Category (E) Programmes produced by TV stations which have agreements with the Department of Saudi television

Programmes which will be produced by foreign TV stations having agreements with the Department of Saudi television governing their direct marketing without interference from other production companies or distributors, will be subject to the above two-party agreements, which will stipulate that the maximum price for each television hour will not exceed the average production price previously referred to in Category (D), i.e. to a Saudi supplier, unless the production is a private or joint venture, in which case the agreement will stipulate its price.

Sixth: Plays

1. If the play is a Saudi production, the price will be (30,000) thirty thousand Saudi riyals for each television hour provided that the duration of the play does not exceed two and a half hours.

2. If the play is a non-Saudi production, the maximum price with be (20,000) twenty thousand Saudi riyals for one television hour if the supplier is non-Saudi, and (22,000) twenty-two thousand Saudi riyals if the supplier is Saudi, provided that the duration of the play does not exceed two and a half hours.

3. The Assistant Deputy of the Ministry of Information will fix the price of those which are considered distinguished plays and which include the acting talent of famous stars within the Arabian theatrical profession, after having come to a prior agreement with the producing company or the company which holds the right of distribution.

Seventh: Cultural programmes in general production

1. This category includes films and programmes which contain subtitles or commentaries in Arabic. The maximum television hour price will be (5000) five thousand Saudi riyals.

2. TV discussions and talks which are recorded outside the Department of Saudi television studios will be given a maximum of (6000) six thousand Saudi riyals per television hour.

Eighth: Song programmes of general production

Programmes in this category will be treated in the same manner as those programmes which require other acting skills, with the possible incorporation of an additional percentage in the price, which will be stipulated by the Assistant Deputy of the Ministry of Information, in accordance with the importance of the work and the professional standards of the participants. This percentage should not exceed 25%. Any further amount should be submitted to the Minister of Information for review.

Ninth: Individual songs of available production

The price of each minute will be between 250-500 Saudi riyals. The TV will determine the price within these limits according to the singers popularity and the excellence of his work, provided that it abides by the rules of censorship.

Tenth: Children's programmes in general production

1. This category includes educational programmes for children. The price of one television hour will be (12,000) twelve thousand Saudi riyals, and a percentage of 25% will be added if it is produced by a Saudi company.

2. The price of children's cartoon programmes, which are either dubbed in Arabic and/or which provide commentary via ventriloquist dummies will be (8000) eight thousand Saudi riyals per television hour. If the programme is produced by a Saudi company, the price per television hour will be increased by 25%.

Eleventh: General Gulf production

In accordance with the recommendations of Gulfvision, and as an encouragement to Gulf production, the price of one television hour for series and plays produced by Gulf companies will be determined at (18,000) eighteen thousand Saudi riyals if the supplier is non-Saudi, and (20,000) twenty thousand Saudi riyals if the supplier is Saudi. The Assistant Deputy of the Ministry of Information may increase the price of any distinguished works to a maximum of (22,000) twenty-two thousand Saudi riyals per television hour if the suppler is non-Saudi, and (24,000) twenty-four thousand Saudi riyals if the suppler is Saudi. Any further amount should be submitted to the Minister of Information for review.

Twelfth: General provisions

1. Without violating the contents of the two previous items (the First and Second provisions), if a company or an establishment submits a production and claims that they possess the exclusive right to market it, and it is subsequently discovered by the Department of Saudi television that it is actually the production of another company, or that the marketing company has no right to do so, that company's entitlements will immediately cease and the value given will be recharged to the offending company. No transactions will be conducted with this company for the period of one year. If this infraction is repeated, all transactions whatsoever with this company will cease.

2. If the production standard is less than that which is required, and if the Department of Saudi television believes this can be proven, the price will be reduced to a percentage which will be determined by the Department and additionally, written consent will be taken from the establishment or company concerned in acceptance of the reduction percentage before the materials may be shown on the screen.

3. If the above television material can be made acceptable after some of the contents have been eliminated, these portions will be deducted from the original quoted price.

Thirteenth

The above instructions will be in effect from the date of their issuance, and they will replace the previous instructions, issued in the Minister of Information's letter No.M/W/576, dated 12.4.1401 (1981).

Minister of Information
Mohemed Abdu Yamani
His Excellency, The Assistant Deputy, Radio and Television, regarding necessary action.
(Translated from the Arabic)

news release

BBC
WORLDWIDE
TELEVISION

PRODUCTION OF BBC ARABIC CHANNEL ENDS

BBC Worldwide Television confirmed today (Sunday 21 April 1996) that Orbit Communications has ceased broadcasting the BBC's Arabic language news and information channel (BBC Arabic Television) to Orbit subscribers across the Middle East and North Africa.

As a result, the BBC has stopped production of the eight hour per day channel at BBC Television Centre.

Issued by:
BBC Worldwide Television Press & PR
Weekday Tel:+ 44 181 576 2339
Out of office hours, contact the BBC Corporate Press Office: + 44 181 576 1865

Sunday 21 April 1996

Note to Editors:

BBC Arabic Television was launched on 20 June 1994. Initially a two hour per day channel, it moved to an eight hour daily schedule of international news, business and factual programmes presented entirely in the Arabic language on 23 September 1994   It has been provided under contract by BBC Worldwide Television to Orbit Communications, a Rome-based company owned by the Mawarid Group of Saudi Arabia.

BBC Worldwide Television is a commercial division of BBC Worldwide - the commercial and international arm of the BBC.

APPENDIX   F

Pictures   and   Cartoons

Picture   No.1
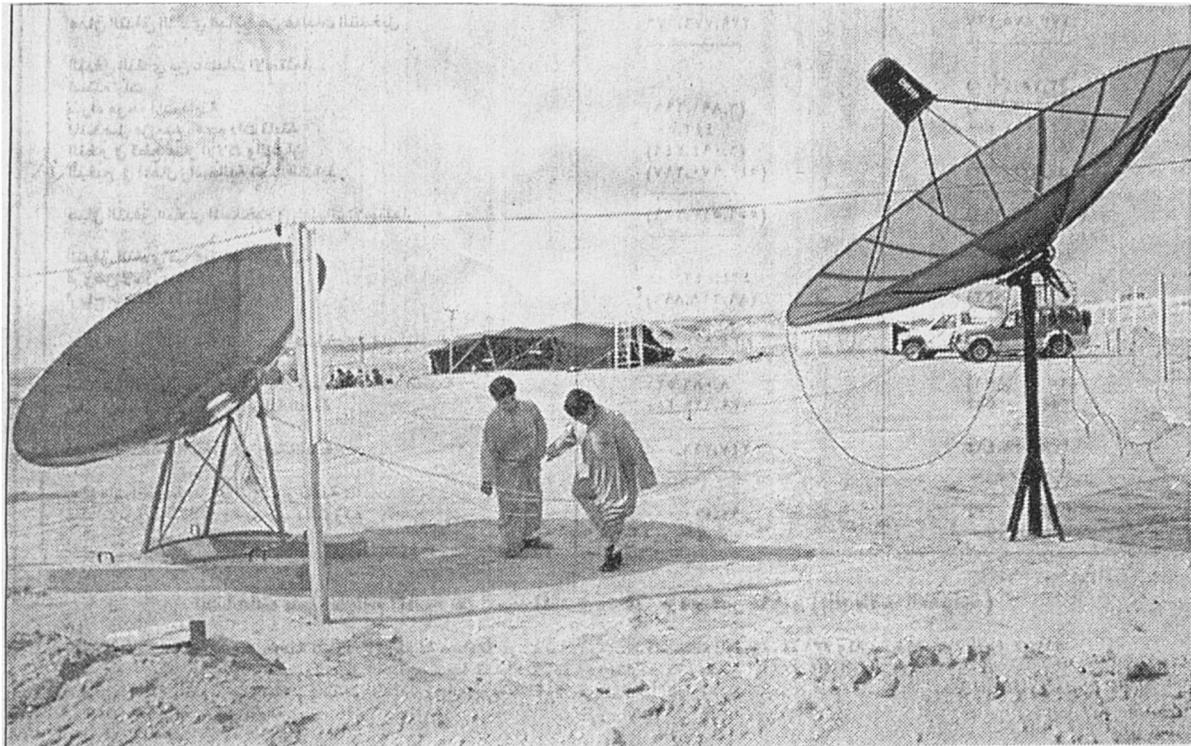
A permanent   presence   for satellite   receiving   equipment,   even   at weekend   camping   sites   outside   Riyadh.

Source: Okadh,   issue   10813, 21.3.1996.

'These satellite channels have spoiled you !

The wife complains to her husband after he has refused a cup of traditional coffee

for a fizzy drink.

Source: Arriyadh, issue 10487, 11.3.1997.

'We continue our credible news with the tea-leaf reader.'

Source: Asharq Alawsat, issue 7029, 25.2.1998.

A severe punishment for a young girl who has tried to emulate one of the female announcers by wearing a short skirt.

Source: Aljazirah, issue 8987, 7.5.1997.

'Don't worry, with a few connections and recommendations it will be shown on every DBS

channel!'

Words of comfort to a seemingly depressed writer of bad drama.

Source: Asharq Alawsat, issue 6995, 22.1.1998.

'*As requested by our viewers, we now repeat the historical interview with the great leader on the screen¹ - " The leader's satellite channel".'*

Source Asharq Alawsat, issue 6957, 15 12 1997

Poems of love and courtship inspired by attractive DBS channel presenters

Source Aljazırah, 25 4 1996

Some Arabic cartoon characters drawn by Arab animators in an attempt to provide a replacement for established Western counterparts.

Source: Al-Seyassah, issue 2214-2320, 2.3.1998.

APPENDIX G

Pictures of the latest fashion in printed clothing.
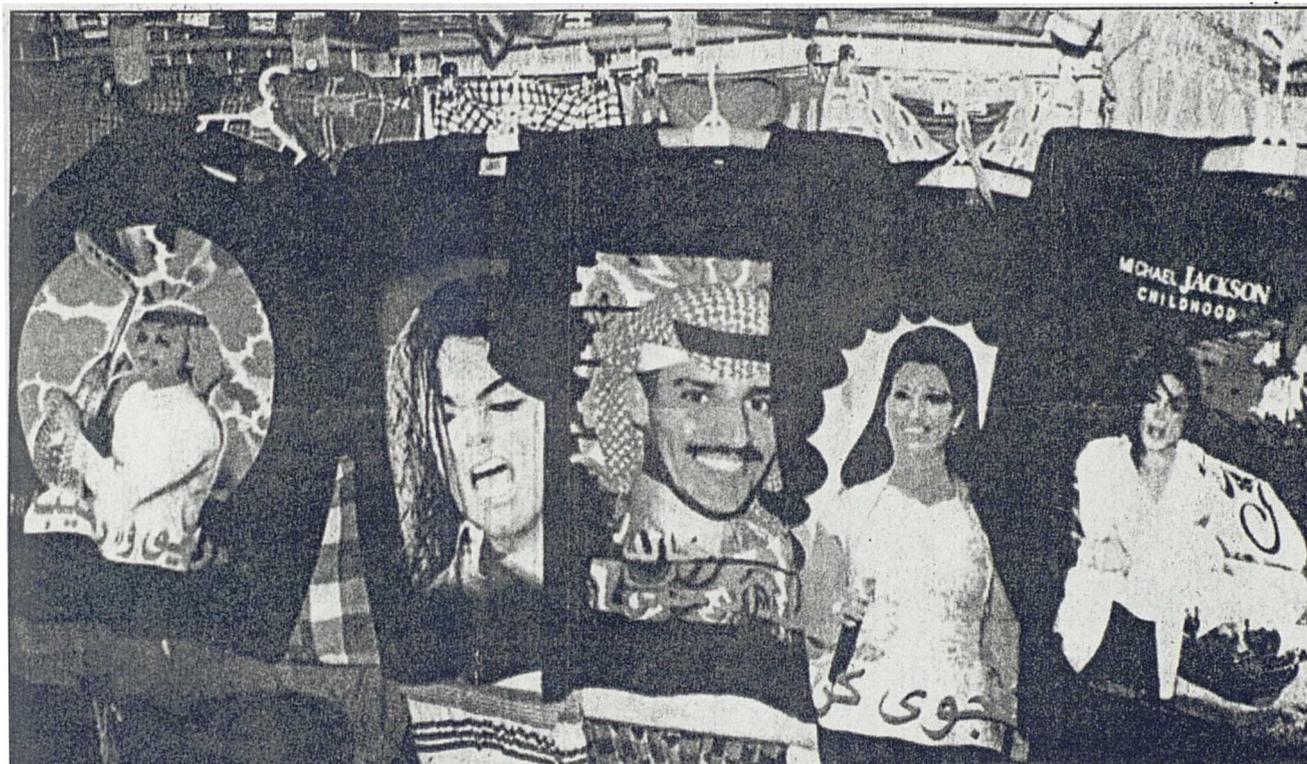
Famous Arab and Western celebrities pictured on T shirts. It has become
fashionable for youngsters to wear these.

Source: Okadh, issue 11478, 19.1.1998.
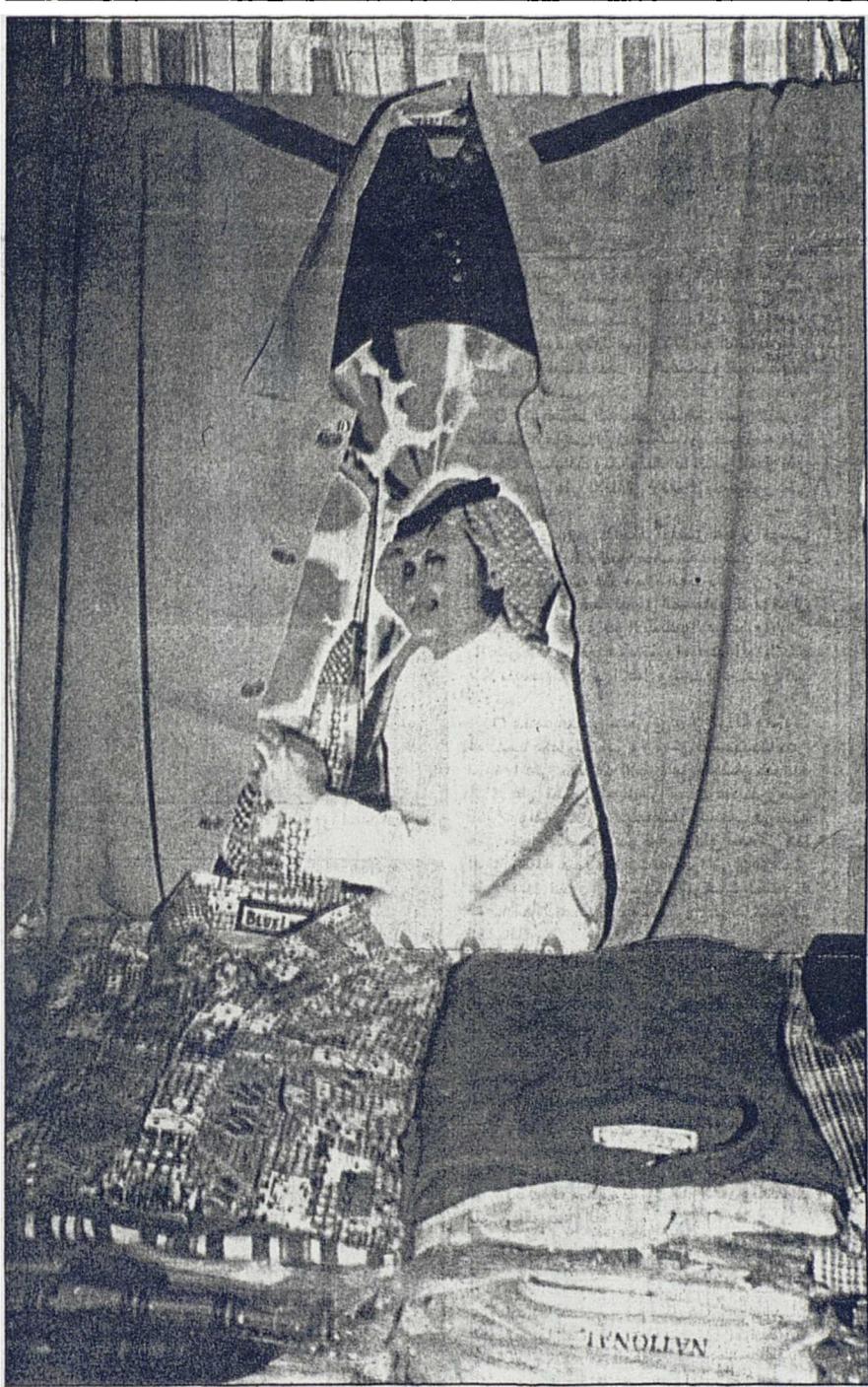
عبدالمجيد على ثوب نسائي

A famous Saudi singer's picture on a lady's dress

Source: Okadh, issue 11478, 19.1.1998

هكذا تتصدر الملابس واجهات المحلات
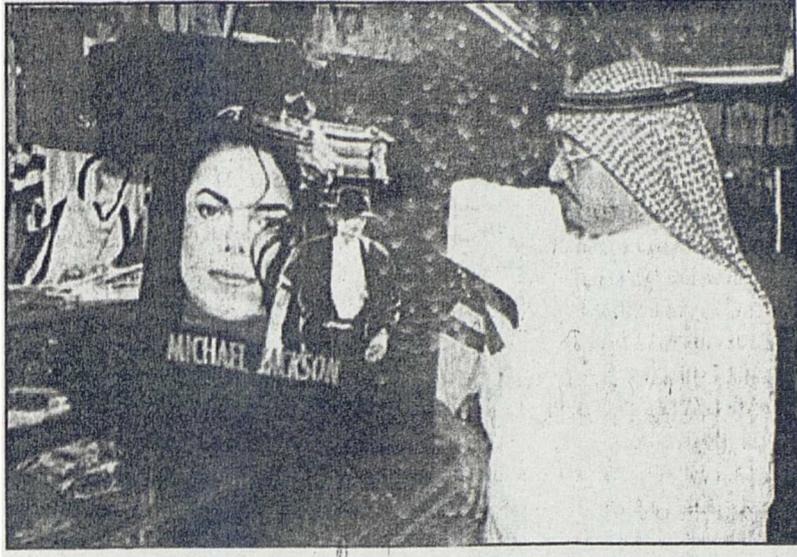
مايكل جاكسون اشهر الازياء

محاولات للفت النظر ومايكل صغير

An attempt by youngsters to identify with Western Culture. Media influence was held responsible for this.

Source: Okadh, issue 11478, 19.1.1998.