



Dynamics of the Arab television space in the digital media era: A cultural analytical approach to the evolution of broadcasting and content

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Abstract:

Since the early 1980s, the Arab satellite broadcasting has witnessed profound transformations that have reshaped the structure of Arab media and its communication practices. Arab television broadcasting has moved from terrestrial to larger satellite space that extends political and geographical boundaries, establishing a new phase of cultural and media interaction. Technological advancements in satellites such as Arabsat, Nilesat, and Es'hailSat have contributed to a qualitative leap in communication and live broadcasting services, and have also given rise to new patterns of television production, financing, ownership, and content programming. This analytical study examines the evolution of the Arab satellite broadcasting at three interconnected levels: the structural and technological transformation of Arab satellite broadcasting, shifts in ownership patterns and the dominance of the private sector, and the development of satellite programming within the new digital era. The study aims at explaining how the technological revolution has determined the functions and the role of Arab media within the global cultural sphere. The findings show that despite of unlimited number and diversity of Arab satellite media, it remains controlled by the technical and content reliance which questions balancing the economic returns and its enlightening and cultural role

Keywords: *Arab Satellite Broadcasting, Digital Media, Satellites, Satellite Channels, Television Programming.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the early 1990s, the Arab world has witnessed an unexpected media bloom, emphasizing the Arab media as a crucial area for cultural, political, and economic interaction. Following the development of satellites and broadcasting systems, Arab media has become a central force in shaping meaning within Arab life and a tool for molding and guiding public awareness. Likewise, the Arab world took the same path as other nations regarding the field of satellite communications and broadcasting. Arab Satellite Communications Organization (Arabsat), was the first Arab satellite to be launched .

The idea emerged in a meeting of the Council of Arab Ministers in Bizerte, Tunisia, in 1967, following the Arab-Israeli War. After efforts and consultations, the meeting claimed "It is essential to adopt technological advancements in communication, particularly satellites, to support Arab media." Accordingly, on April 14th , 1976, an agreement was signed to establish the Arab Satellite Communications Organization (ARABSAT). The headquarters was established in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in collaboration with specialized companies and organizations as well as a communications exchange center for the Arab Radio Union in Tunisia. So, this is how the Arab Satellite Communications Organization was born, with the primary objective of providing an Arab satellite sector for general and specialized telecommunications services to all member of the League of Arab States.

This piece of work examines one of the most vital and sensitive areas in the contemporary Arab communication that is satellite broadcasting. Since the late 1980s and early 1990s, satellite broadcasting has become a directing tool of public opinion and formulating cultural, political, and media discourse in the region. Satellite channels are no longer simple mediums for transmitting information or entertainment, rather, symbolic systems that excides borders, producing images and messages, influencing the formation of Arab public consciousness, and redefining the relationship between media, society, and authority.

The Arab media went through rapid structural transformations in a relatively short period. While Arab television in the 1970s and 1980s was local in nature and limited in scope, Arab satellite media today has become a complex system where communication technology intersects with the economy and Arab identity. Therefore, the importance of this research lies in its attempt to understand this quantitative and qualitative transformation within its historical and technological context. This is achieved through an analysis of the evolution of Arab satellite broadcasting from its birth to date and deducing the factors that have contributed to its growth and transformation into a self-sustaining industry. Second filling gaps caused by relative lack of Arab analytical academic studies that have addressed the development of satellites from a comprehensive perspective that combines technical history, media ownership structure, programming strategies, and cultural shifts in reception.

1. Aims of Study

The study aims at:

1. Monitoring and analyzing the historical development of the Arab satellite broadcasting system since its first launch, highlighting the technical and institutional dimensions that accompanied this development.
2. Analyzing the transformations in the structure of Arab satellite channels in terms of ownership, funding, functions, and discussing the shift from public to private media, along with the changes in media values and content.
3. Studying the diversity of satellite broadcasting patterns and formats, including

open and encrypted broadcasting, and the transition from traditional broadcasting to online and interactive digital platforms, while assessing the impact of these transformations on reception and viewing patterns.

4. Understanding the cultural and social transformations linked with the spread of satellite media and its role in remodeling the value systems in the Arab world

1.1. Technological Transformations of the Arab Satellite Broadcasting System

The Arab Satellite Communications Organization (Arabsat) launched the first Arab satellite on February 8th 1985, aboard a European rocket model "Ariane 3" at a cost estimated around 23 million dollars. The dream of having an Arab satellite communications network consisting of two satellites in space was realized, enabling communication between 22 countries that are members of the Arab League.

After the desired success of the first generation of Arabsat satellites, the second satellite of the first generation, "Arabsat B," was also launched on June 17th , 1985. It was linked to two ground stations, one in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in the Dirab area, and the backup control station in Tunis, the capital of Tunisia, at a cost estimated 270 million dollars, with a capacity of 25 transponder channels for television programs. The first space activity of the Arabsat satellite was the transmission of the Hajj rituals on August 22 of the same year. Initially, the satellite was operated by foreigners, but foreign expertise was eventually replaced, and Arabsat began operating with Arab hands in 1988.

On February 28, 1992, the third satellite of the first generation was launched, which covered all parts of the Arab world. In 1993, Arabsat purchased a previously used Canadian satellite for 14 million dollars, which was named the fourth Arab satellite in the first generation series. Since the lifespan of the satellite is seven years, which may extend to ten years, the third Arab satellite was used at the beginning of 1993 and its validity ended in 2007 (Al-Miqdadi, p. 169). The first Arab Satellite's second-generation satellites were launched on July 9th , 1996, the second second-generation satellites on November 14th , 1996, and the third second-generation satellites on August 27th , 1997. This satellite includes twenty channels dedicated to direct television broadcasting, and each channel can carry an increasing number of channels, up to ten channels using digital compression technology.

Arabsat launched its first fourth-generation satellites in November 2006, which carry 12 channels, thereby providing geographical coverage to more than a hundred countries in the Middle East, Africa, and most parts of Europe. It also launched the first fifth-generation satellites at the end of 2009, and the second fifth-generation satellites in early 2010 (Farid Izzat, 2018, pp 369-370).

After the success of many Arab television channels that were broadcasting via Arabsat in attracting a large audience and establishing communication with people, a group of Arab countries began to think about establishing widely broadcast satellite television stations, so that they reach all Arab peoples and the Arab communities abroad. These stations would serve as ambassadors for their countries, contributing to the dissemination of their news and culture, and becoming a point of contact for the citizens of these countries in their diaspora, wherever they are located. The need for Arab satellites, and not just one, began to emerge, and commercial investment in the field of satellite broadcasting and communications became attractive to the private sector, after being exclusive to the public sector in the Arab region.

The Arab Satellite Communications Organization suspended Egypt's membership in the organization. This decision came after Egypt signed the Camp David Accords. Consequently, Egypt began considering the launch of its first Egyptian satellite. On May 31, 1995, the Egyptian president signed a mandate for the Egyptian Radio and Television Union to prepare for the manufacture and launch of the first Egyptian satellite named "NileSat," in collaboration with a specialized French company. The agreement concluded with the International Telecommunication Union recognized Egypt's right to establish a satellite for direct television broadcasting, and it came into effect on January 1st, 1998, for a period of 15 years. The NileSat 101 satellite began operating in its designated area in Sixth October City on May 31, 1998 (Al-Bakri, 2003, p 91).

The second Egyptian satellite, Nile Sat 102 (Nile sat1), was launched on August 17th 2000, and began operating at the satellite station in Al-Hamam, Alexandria, on September 12th, 2000. Due to the increasing demand for Nilesat satellites, Nilesat Company agreed with Eutelsat Company to relocate one of Eutelsat's satellites (Hot Bird 4) to the Nilesat orbital position in the second quarter of 2006, making it the third Egyptian satellite, Nilesat 103, to meet the market needs in the Arab region. This would increase the available broadcasting capacities, and consequently the number of channels and services, without the need for any technical modifications to receive them. Additionally, it would provide greater coverage for Europe, allowing better communication with the Arab communities there. Subsequently, the Egyptian satellite Nilesat 201 was launched on August 4, 2010 (Farid Izzat, p 371).

The Arab region has distinguished itself in the field of satellite broadcasting with notable progress, as 2010 witnessed the establishment of the Qatari Satellite Company, headquartered in Doha. The company works on providing and offering high-quality satellite services, especially as it relies on the latest technologies in this field.

The Es'hailSat Foundation launched its first satellite, Es'hail-1, in 2013, at its orbital position of 25.5 degrees East. It greatly contributed to the development and support of broadcasting companies in the region, especially Qatari ones like the BEIN Sports Group and Al Jazeera Media Network. After the success achieved by Suhail 1, and to enhance its positioning in the hot orbital points, Suhail Sat launched its second satellite, Suhail 2, in 2018, at its orbital position of 26 degrees East, where many channels and television packages began to migrate from Nilesat to Suhail satellites (<https://www.eshailsat.qa/ar/about-us>)

The rapid and continuous development of satellites in the field of transmission and reception in the Arab world has led to the launch of many satellite television channels. Satellite channels are considered "television stations that broadcast their signals via satellites to transcend the geographical borders of the broadcasting countries, allowing reception in other countries and regions thru special reception devices that capture signals from satellites like Arabsat, Nilesat, and others (Yousef Kafi, 2016, p 216)

The Arab satellite contributed to pushing Arab countries to launch many satellite channels, the number of which is increasing day by day, until it became Each Arab country has one or more satellite channels affiliated with the official television authority or directly with the Ministry of Information. Below is a chronological overview of the launch of Arab satellite channels:

The date December 12th , 1990, marks a significant milestone in the history of Arab satellite channels. In that year, Egypt launched the official and regular broadcasting of the first Arab government satellite channel, the Egyptian Satellite Channel (ESC), which served as the beginning for the broadcasting of numerous and diverse Arab satellite channels (Jamil Ismail, 2012, p 187).

The Egyptian Radio and Television Union signed an agreement with the Arab Satellite Communications Organization (Arabsat) on September 6th, 1990, to lease a high-power channel on the Arab Satellite Arabsat for three years at a cost of 2 million US dollars annually, with the capability of continuous broadcasting for 24 hours a day.

In 1996, the coverage of the Egyptian satellite channel included: 20 Arab countries, 27 African countries, 11 Asian countries, and 23 European countries, thus the broadcast of the Egyptian satellite channel covered the equivalent of four-fifths of the world (Al-Bakri, p 85) Egypt was then able to launch several specialized and general satellite television channels, including NILE TV, Nile International in 1994, and Nile Drama in October 1996, followed by the launch of several specialized satellite channels (Tala, 2014, p 243).

After this experience and the success it achieved, a number of Arab countries sought to establish their own satellite channels. Additionally, a group of Arab investors created private Arab satellite channels, most of which were based abroad due to the lack of laws in most Arab countries allowing the establishment of private satellite television stations, the weak technical capabilities, and the strict censorship of broadcasts, along with penalties threatening those who violate the prevailing regulations and laws in those countries.

In 1991, specifically on September 18th , the Middle East Broadcasting Center (MBC) was born. It is considered the first private Arab satellite channel. It began its satellite broadcasts from London to serve Arabs living abroad, providing good coverage of the Arab world, Europe, and North America simultaneously. With a capital of 300 million dollars and an annual budget estimated at 60 million dollars, it is owned by Saudi investors Sheik Walid Al-Ibrahim and Mohammed Al-Ibrahim, with support from the late Saudi King Fahd bin Abdulaziz. It later moved its headquarters to Dubai at the end of 2002 (Al-Touni, 2014, pp 49-50)

The success of the Middle East Broadcasting Center (MBC) and its ability to gain a large fan base motivated Saudi capital to invest more in this field. On October 18, 1993, Saudi billionaire Sheik Saleh launched the Arab Radio and Television Network (ART) from the Fucino Space Center in Italy, an international center for ground stations connected to many satellites. The channel was based on experiments and did not provide news broadcasts except for a single program, "With Hamdi Qandil," which started airing in September 1996. The channel later expanded. Several specialized channels emerged from it, including: ART2 for sports in November 1993, ART3 for children in December 1993, ART4 for movies in January 1994, and ART5 for music in July 1994 (Meziane, 2006-2007, p 62)

On May 25th , 1995, the official broadcast of Orbit TV began. It is a member of the Saudi Resources Company group, which consists of 17 Arabic and foreign television channels. The network has two dedicated channels and broadcasts a number of encrypted channels. Orbit TV has its headquarters in Rome, and its transmission is particularly received in Egypt and Saudi Arabia. It purchases programs produced by other American or European television stations or Arab production studios. However, due to the airing of a critical report about Saudi Arabia,

Orbit TV disappeared after being caught with smuggled or pirated decoding devices (Bouali, 2003, p. 63) Kuwait began its experience with the KTV satellite channel in July 1992, and in October of the same year, the UAE launched the DUBAI TV channel. A month later, it established the ABU DHABI TV satellite channel (Tala, p 245).

As for the Maghreb region, Tunisia introduced satellite broadcasting in October 1992 with the launch of the Tunis 7 satellite channel. Satellite transmission in Morocco began on March 3rd, 1993, with the launch of the Moroccan satellite channel. In Algeria, satellite broadcasting started with the experimental transmission of the Algerian satellite channel ALGERIE N TV on August 20, 1994, followed by the official launch on October 1st, 1994, when it was renamed Canal Algérie. As for Mauritania, it experienced satellite broadcasting for the first time thru the Mauritanian satellite channel TM in December 1994 (Tala, p 244).

As for Cham region, Syria launched its first satellite channel in July 1995, while Lebanon began broadcasting its government satellite channel LBC in March 1996, airing 24 hours a day. Its coverage includes all Arab countries and parts of Asia, Africa, and Southern Europe (Makawi, 2003, p. 5.) Other Arab countries also gradually launched a series of satellite channels, such as Al-Iraqiya channel in 1998, the Palestinian satellite channel, the Omani satellite channel in May 1998, and others (Tala, p 253)

Arab satellite channels developed significantly in the 1990s, especially in the late years of the 20th century. This development included a number of satellite channels and their specializations, marking a new shift in media. Every day, we hear and see the launch of a new satellite channel in our media. Starting from 1996, a new trend emerged led by the private sector, which established specialized Arab stations for wide broadcasting via satellites, but this time toward Arab countries. The specialization began in the news field and later expanded to other areas such as music, movies, and more. Thus, in late 1996, specifically on November 1, Al Jazeera channel was launched from Qatar. It is a non-governmental channel based in Doha, distinguished by its specialization in the news field, using the Arabic language, and employing journalists and correspondents from all over the world. It currently owns a group of specialized channels. And from the womb of the Middle East Broadcasting Center (MBC), and after the events of September 11th, 2001, the Al Arabiya news channel was launched in 2008 from Dubai, specializing in delivering news from an Arab perspective. The Moroccan MEDISAT channel was also launched, becoming the first news channel in the Maghreb region (Al-Touni, pp 47-49)

Satellite communication satellites have witnessed technological developments since the establishment of the first communication satellite. This orbital situation of Arab countries has resulted in many outcomes, including the proliferation and diversity of Arab channels in terms of their nature—specialized or general, public or commercial. In terms of their goals and functions, they now play an educational role for all educational stages and have established channels dedicated to scientific research and other specializations. The Arab citizens can possess satellite television reception antennas, leading to the emergence of other satellite projects, including cable television services. Compressed digital transmission via satellites covers subscribers to the channels for a monthly or annual fee. Additionally, advancements in digital broadcasting capabilities thru digital radio waves have intensified these transformations and allowed for greater exploitation of this development in transmitting and receiving images.

2. The Development of Arab Satellite Channels and Broadcasting Styles:

The emergence and development of satellite broadcasting in the Arab region came as a result of a set of factors and events, the most important of which can be mentioned:

- The events and developments that the Arab region witnessed during the 1990s significantly impacted the course of Arab media. Notably, the Gulf War and Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, along with the subsequent events in 1990 and 1991, were crucial factors in the evolution of Arab satellite broadcasting. The second Gulf War, also known as Operation Desert Storm, brought about major transformations in the field of Arab satellite broadcasting and an unprecedented visual flow. The dramatic events related to that crisis became suitable and entertaining content for television programs. Arab satellite channels managed to break the Western media's satellite colonialism, especially in the news sector, and provided the Arab audience with an Arab news window that conveyed news from an Arab perspective, enriching the Arab viewer's experience compared to foreign counterparts (Alterman, 2003, p 61).
- The Arab satellite institutions Arabsat and Nilesat played a vital and fundamental role in enhancing the Arab presence in the television broadcasting space at both the regional and global levels, thru the broadcasting services they provided and the large number of satellite hours they offered for broadcasting (Hassan and others, 2019, pp 85-86).
- The emergence of Arab broadcasting and media production cities that facilitated the entry of investors into the field of satellite broadcasting, including the Egyptian Media Production City established in 1997, which transitioned to operate under the free zone system in 2001. We also mention Dubai Media City, which was established in 2001 in the same year.
- The launch of the Jordan Media City in the capital, Amman (Makawi, 2003, p 5.)
- The development of digital broadcasting technology has contributed to the proliferation of Arab satellite channels and their increase day by day, the emergence of private and specialized Arab satellite channels, and the intensification of competition among them, which has led them to enhance their performance to gain the trust of their audience and meet their needs.
- The tremendous surge in the number of foreign television channels, the public's enthusiasm for watching them, and the growing impact of foreign television broadcasts on the Arab viewer, who is exposed to their media messages with unknown orientations or sources, or those without an identity, funding, goal, or policy, and the effects they leave behind or changes in ideas or even behaviors. To counter this massive invasion of foreign television broadcasts and their messages, many Arab countries have sought to confront the assault of foreign satellite channels and their cultural and social influences that do not align with Arab values and traditions, by establishing satellite television channels that broadcast what they deem appropriate and suitable for the nature of Arab society (Jamil, p 241)
- The quantitative expansion and qualitative diversity of Arab satellite channels, the lack of control over their content, and the efforts of many Arab governments to intervene in order to regulate the performance of Arab satellite stations in line with the vision, philosophy, and ideology of Arab society. The first initiative dates back to a complaint submitted to the meeting of the Gulf Cooperation Council's media ministers on

October 1, 1999, to discuss what Al Jazeera was broadcasting. The second initiative was the issuance of a document setting out principles for regulating the work of satellite channels, which had a significant impact on the growth of Arab satellite channels and the regulation of their work, as it gave Arab governments the right to shut down any television channel that undermined Arab national unity or security. This initiative was backed by Egypt and Saudi Arabia and was approved by 20 out of a total of 33 countries. The document contained 12 points, stipulating that Arab satellite channels are obliged to protect values and meet the needs of their audience, as well as to provide objective and honest audio-visual content, respect the dignity and national sovereignty of countries and peoples, and refrain from disparaging or insulting their rulers or national and religious symbols. The document approved the formation of media councils that would issue codes of ethics to monitor the degree to which these satellite channels fulfill their social responsibilities (Jamil, pp 241-242).

- Arab satellite channels are characterized by their comprehensiveness and diversity. In terms of ownership, there are public channels that are funded and managed by Arab governments, and private Arab satellite channels that are managed and funded by Arab capital investments. They also vary in terms of the nature of their content, with some satellite channels specializing in a single program area and targeting a specific audience, known as specialized channels. We also find generalist channels, or what are known as comprehensive channels, which are channels that do not limit themselves to a single type of content but rather focus on comprehensive content, meaning that their programs cover different areas of interest and a variety of topics. These channels have different objectives and target a diverse audience. Satellite channels also vary in terms of their satellite broadcasting system, as there are open and encrypted satellite channels (Hizawi, 2008 p 07).
- In recent years, the Arab satellite scene has undergone successive transformations and developments, both qualitatively and quantitatively, with the audiovisual arena witnessing a media flood in terms of the number of Arab satellite channels. Dr. Mohamed Farid Ezzat described the Arab satellite scene in his book *Communication and Traditional and Technological Mass Media* as a "satellite market," with Arab countries competing to launch satellite channels. The significant quantitative growth of these channels has made it difficult to accurately count them, especially since there are many channels that begin trial broadcasts and then disappear completely without warning, or are shut down without justification, and other television channels appear under a certain name, and then change that name and continue broadcasting without any indication of this. In addition, information about the identity of Arab satellite channels is scarce, both in specialized magazines and on their websites, where we often find the phrase "not ready yet," confirming that this is more of a fad than real media. All this and much more has left viewers with numerous and confusing choices, compounded by the technical and financial burdens of pursuing these choices (Farid Izzat, pp 372-373)
- However, despite these obstacles and according to the latest statistics on Arab satellite broadcasting in the report issued by the League of Arab States in 2023, there are currently at least 1,079 channels with multiple objectives and genres in the Arab satellite sector. The number of Arab entities broadcasting these satellite channels on their networks has reached 578, including 46 government entities and 532 private entities. Government networks include 190 channels, of which 120 are specialized

channels and 70 are general channels. Private networks include 899 channels, of which 194 are general interest channels and 829 (<https://arabsatellitebroadcasting.net>) are specialized channels, as shown in the table below:

Table (1): shows statistics on Arab satellite channels by type and ownership. established by the researcher

Satellite channels broadcast or rebroadcast by Arab networks				Coefficient	
Private Sector Network		532	Public Sector Network		46
Specialized Channels		General	Specialized Channels		General Channels
829		194	28.05		70
Sum : 899 Private Channels			Sum : 190 Public Channels		
Total number of satellite channels broadcast or rebroadcast by Arab networks: 1,079 channels					
The total number of networks is 578 Arab bodies.					

The source: Prepared by the researcher

The table above shows that the general characteristic of the Arab television landscape is, first, the decline of Arab public channels in favor of private and international channels targeting the Arab region. The latest statistics indicate that there are 199 Arab public channels compared to 899 private channels, which deepens the neglect of public media, with its public service mission, in a space communication space increasingly dominated by commercialism and profitability, given that the television industry has become a lucrative investment field, with most private Arab satellite channels seeking fame and investing money in easy and profitable projects, as well as launching numerous satellite channels and turning them into media platforms to promote the work of political and party figures and commercial institutions. What distinguishes the Arab satellite scene is that it is dominated by multifaceted foreign international channels that address Arab audiences in Arabic to serve the agendas of official governmental such as the US Congress or the French Foreign Ministry. It is noteworthy that the number of these channels is constantly increasing, especially after the events of September 11, 2001. According to 2023 statistics, there are 18 foreign public channels in the Arab satellite sky directly targeting the Arab audience. As for the broadcasting system, 709 private channels rely on the open broadcasting system, while 199 channels rely on encrypted broadcasting. In contrast, there is only one public Arab channel that relies on encrypted broadcasting, which is Dubai Sports 2 (<https://arabsatellitebroadcasting.net>).

The figures provided by the monitoring service in the table below, which lists Arab satellite channels and classifies them according to their specialization, show that specialized private Arab channels accounted for the lion's share, with 695 specialized private Arab channels compared to 120 specialized public Arab channels. Statistics on specialized channels in the public and private sectors are available, as shown in the following table.

Table (2): Distribution of private and public Arab satellite channels by specialty

Channels	Private Sector	Public Sector	Sum
General Channels	194	70	264
Drama	234	7	241
Religious channels	132	9	141
Sport Channels	63	34	97
News Channels	114	10	124
Service, educational	152	60	212
Sum	889	190	1079

The source: Prepared by the researcher

Prepared by the researcher

The statistics in the table above show that one-third of Arab public channels are general interest channels, while the others are specialized channels. In first place, with 60 channels, are educational and cultural channels, followed by news channels with 10 channels, and then religious channels, which number no more than seven. We also note the limited number of

There are no more than seven public channels specializing in drama and entertainment. These results can be interpreted to mean that Arab regimes use these channels primarily as a mouthpiece for the ruling regime and its ideology and ideas. Under the official government media, which allows only a narrow margin of freedom, these channels are unable to meet the needs and interests of the Arab public, as many issues and topics are taboo and prohibited, causing them to focus their attention on sports and education.

As for the private sector, we see hundreds of specialized TV channels that far outnumber the general private channels, which have managed to attract the attention of Arab viewers. We note, first and foremost, the dominance of drama, entertainment, and music channels among the private channels. We also note that the private sector has tended to invest in channels that public channels avoid broadcasting, such as religious and ideological channels that do not serve the agendas of Arab governments. Among the television channels that are of interest to the private sector are news channels, which have been given the opportunity to raise topics that were considered taboo in the public satellite sector.

All these efforts, which have been and continue to be made by Arab satellite channels, have led to major changes in Arab satellite broadcasting from one year to the next. Among the developments in Arab satellite broadcasting are its keeping pace with digital technology, the expansion of communication, the provision of the Internet, mobile phone services, and high-definition television (HDTV). Digital technology applications, on the one hand, and the abandonment of the monopoly of many Arab countries on wired and wireless broadcasting, on the other, have contributed to the astonishing proliferation of satellite television channels. Arab organizations have also sought to take advantage of the unified Arab broadcasting system in cooperation with various satellites, enabling them to provide comprehensive coverage and deliver their messages to Arab audiences in different languages, in addition to utilizing television coverage via the Internet Protocol Television (IPTV) protocol, which is one of the

most prominent services provided by the Arab States Broadcasting Union to its member Arab radio and television organizations. All these efforts have contributed to the distinction of Arab satellite broadcasting, enabling it to reach a respectable position and confirming its prominent presence in the global satellite broadcasting system.

Arab Television Programming

Television programs are embodiments of diverse ideas that rely on visual imagery, emphasizing their informative, educational, and entertainment purposes. It covers various program types, such as:

- Live Talk Shows: where different topics are addressed through news broadcasts.
- Talk Shows: characterized by spontaneity and interaction, where success depends on the presenter's ability to guide the conversation.
- Seminars and Discussion Programs: which contribute to broadening viewers' horizons through multiple viewpoints and provide an opportunity for public expression (Muawad, 1967, p 200)
- Entertainment and Variety Programs that offer diverse content to attract audience interest.
- Highlight Programs: which present topics comprehensively with analysis and discussion (Al-Samri and Wahba Allah, 1993, p146) Television stations organize their programming throughout the year, requiring a balanced distribution that aligns with the rhythm of daily life and viewers' needs (Fattah Allah, 2001, p 113). It reflects specific programming trends and how these interact with the audience, highlighting the importance of marketing strategies to attract attention and achieve the objectives of various programs. It is an art that demands balance and creativity in planning and organization.

Programmers' Features

The programmer is a vital figure in the media and television industry, playing a strategic role in managing the programming schedule of media organizations. Their role includes analyzing the needs of the target audience and understanding their behavior, which helps in making strategic decisions to attract viewers and foster positive engagement. A programmer must possess leadership and innovation, designing programs that meet audience expectations and employing effective strategies to build a strong programming network

The foundations of programming include understanding viewership ratings, using advanced analytical strategies to study the television production market and channel competition, as well as the impact of advertising and advertiser pressures on the program schedule. They must also manage the programming calendar according to available financial and human resources (Fattah Allah, 2001, p111).

The programmer also interacts with the rhythm of life, adapting programs according to the season and changes in audience lifestyles, especially during the summer. Finally, the channel's political identity and social role significantly influence the quality of its programming, shaping its direction and content based on its overall policy (Laayadi, 1998, pp 16-85)

➤ **Programming Techniques in Arab Satellite Stations**

The increasing number of Arab satellite channels has intensified competition, prompting many to revamp their television programming strategies. While some channels have reached maturity, others are still in the experimental and developmental stages. This competition has encouraged channels to refine their programming techniques and adopt modern technologies to enhance the Arab television landscape.

➤ **Reverse Programming**

The first introduction of this technology was used in the 1984 and 1985 "Berlusconi" company, which was a new company in the 1990s. The company was a major player in the Arab market, but its growth was influenced by the economic crisis and the rise of the Arab economy. The company's new software, "MBC", was developed to address the economic crisis and the rise of the Arab economy (Alaris, 2001).

➤ **Simulation of Identification Programming**

The role of television network producers in countering rival channels through the use of imitation programming is crucial. The challenge lies in offering different or even opposing content, often by mimicking successful programs. This has led to a significant similarity in the content of programs on Arab channels. A prime example is women's programs with similar titles, such as "Women Don't Know How to Lie" and "Women's Talk," which are imitations of the popular program "Soft Talk." The aim of this imitation is to compete with the channel broadcasting the original program and attract its audience to increase advertising revenue, despite the challenges of achieving the same level of popularity (<http://e-learning.univ-tebessa.dz/moodle/course/info.php?id=3337>).

➤ **Increasing Technique**

This technique is based on adopting a marketing strategy by using the presence of a successful and famous TV star on another TV program to help him increase the number of views. Many Arab TV channels have also become dependent on celebrities, including artists, actors, and social media influencers, to present TV programs for profit without regard to the basic principles of media work.

➤ **Accordion Technique**

This technology makes programming like a musical accordion that expands and contracts. It expands in the field of news if international events are heated and contracts if some calm prevails, and returns to its status as a comprehensive channel (Al-Rashad, 2003). If this technology has succeeded in its news aspect, thanks to the scarcity of professional field journalists, it has discovered its limitations over time due to its financial cost and its inability to compete with the specialized news channel and the comprehensive channel at the same time.

Technological advancements have impacted television programming, forcing Arab satellite channels to reconsider their previous programming foundations to adapt to the new challenges posed by the digital world, which offers diverse media options. They have leveraged the characteristics of new media for both broadcasting and marketing their programs to retain their audiences.

Arab satellite channels have resorted to using social media platforms as a competitive tool. Programs are advertised on these channels' pages across various social media platforms. This technique aims to attract viewer's attention, especially since it relies on engaging advertising methods. These methods include using trailers, announcing the program's theme, or encouraging viewers to guess the guest. All of these techniques are designed to attract viewers, enhance their interest, and encourage them to stay tuned.

The arose of private Arab television channels evoked commercial mindset in television production and programming, leading to what is known as "trash TV." This type of programming focuses on entertainment, superficiality, and sensationalism in its negative sense, prioritizing generating maximum revenue by satisfying advertisers, regardless of the content presented.

The period of the Arab Spring uprisings witnessed a surge in heated political talk shows that escalated the tone of political discourse in the media. Many television channels incorporated programs based on tense media trends, turning Arab satellite channels into arenas of conflict and chaos. However, many of these programs subsequently began to lose their audience and viewers due to a perception that they lacked credibility and incited violence. Consequently, Arab satellite channels sought to regain their audience by shifting to a more positive and calmer programming schedule. They expanded entertainment and leisure programs in an effort to moderate the Arab media discourse, focusing on programs offering diverse segments, including artistic, educational, and informative content. This helped the Arab public to release tension and escape the political programming that dominated Arab television screens during the Arab Spring. Therefore, television programming is both an art and a science, requiring scientific tools and capabilities, as well as a keen awareness of the surrounding environment and society.

II. Conclusion:

This article aims to analyze the dynamics of the Arab television space in the context of the digital media era through a cultural-analytical approach focusing on the evolution of satellite broadcasting and television content. The study begins by examining the technological transformations that have affected satellite transmission and contributed to reshaping the communicative structure of Arab television, moving it beyond traditional broadcasting models toward a more complex digital media environment.

The article also explores the evolution of Arab satellite channels within an increasingly competitive media landscape, highlighting how these channels have redefined their organizational and editorial strategies in response to technological change and market pressures. Furthermore, the study addresses the development of television programming patterns, particularly in terms of format diversification and adaptation to new audience practices characterized by interactivity and multi-platform consumption.

The article concludes that understanding the dynamics of the Arab television space in the digital age requires linking technological transformation, institutional evolution, and programming changes within a comprehensive cultural framework capable of addressing both innovation opportunities and cultural challenges.

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