

## **Arab elite evaluation of foreign Arabic-speaking websites coverage for Middle Eastern affairs**

**By**

**Dr. Areen Al-Zoubi**

Assistant Professor in Umm alquwain university

### **Abstract**

The study aimed to examine the perceptions of Arab elites regarding the use of foreign Arabic-language websites for news and information on Middle Eastern affairs, focusing on professional standards, sources of information, and methods of reporting. The results of the study showed that these websites generally provide accurate and unbiased coverage of conflicts in the Middle East, using simple language and avoiding personal opinions or judgments. Additionally, these websites rely heavily on their own correspondents and editors for news gathering, and have implemented new interactive methods such as live broadcasting during escalations of conflicts. The study also noted that the logos of these websites are often the same as those of their associated satellite channels, indicating a lack of editorial independence.

**Keywords:** assessment, news treatment, Arab elites, Arabic-speaking foreign websites, Middle Eastern affairs

### **Introduction**

The Middle East region is known for its high level of conflicts, wars and tensions. The media, particularly international media, pays close attention to the region, often with hidden agendas that serve the interests of their respective countries. They use all available resources to achieve their goals and gain influence. Observing the current conditions in the Middle East, one finds that it is a region plagued by regional tensions, internal conflicts, armed conflicts, and ongoing wars. These conflicts have led to increasing suffering for the people, both at the level of the Arab region from civil and sectarian wars, as seen in Syria, Iraq and Yemen, and at the regional level, as seen in the Turkish-Iranian, Saudi-Iranian, and Turkish-Saudi conflicts. Despite efforts to find solutions, these disputes, conflicts and crises remain unresolved. The high number and intensity of events in the Middle East region has also led to intense competition among foreign countries seeking to gain the attention of Arab public opinion and shape it according to their policies and goals, particularly those of the Western countries such as the United States.

### **The problem of the study and its questions**

The media landscape in the Arab region is filled with many foreign media outlets that are directed towards the region, presenting news and events from their own perspective and in a way that serves the interests and objectives of their affiliated countries. Each of these outlets reflects the policy of their respective country. The Middle East has recently seen many political conflicts and security tensions, both at the level of internal Arab conflicts and regional tensions between countries. This has made the region a rich source of media material for foreign media outlets, particularly those directed towards the Arab region. These outlets have allocated significant resources and dispatched correspondents to cover the current events in the countries at the center of the conflict. These foreign news sites in Arabic focus on covering the events of the Middle East.

## Previous studies

The Kafi and Mutahtheer (2016) study titled "The role of satellite news channels in shaping the knowledge and attitudes of the Yemeni public towards Arab issues and crises" aimed to examine the role that satellite news channels (Al-Jazeera, Al-Arabiya, Al-Alam) play in shaping the knowledge of the Yemeni public about Arab issues and crises, specifically the Lebanese political crisis. The study also looked at the ability of these channels to shape the public's agenda and attitudes towards these issues, using the theories of news frameworks and knowledge gap, and measuring the impact of variables that influence the public's knowledge and attitudes. The study focused on these channels as they represent three different perspectives on the Lebanese political crisis. The study was conducted on a sample of 400 individuals from the Yemeni public. The study found that:

- The Yemeni public tended to accept the news framework presented by the Al-Arabiya channel, which portrayed the Lebanese political crisis as a military coup by Hezbollah against Lebanese constitutional legitimacy, justified by the government's decisions and supported by Iran and Syria.
- 44.5% of the respondents reported being exposed to satellite news (sometimes)
- 55.6% of the respondents reported being exposed to satellite news channels for 1-3 hours daily.

The Al-Kasasbeh study (2015) titled "Evaluation of Jordanian media professionals for Al-Jazeera coverage of the events in Egypt (2011-2014)" aimed to assess the perceptions of Jordanian media professionals towards Al-Jazeera's coverage of the events in Egypt between 2011 and 2014. The study found that: There were differing views among Jordanian media professionals about the nature of Al-Jazeera's coverage of the Egyptian revolution and subsequent events. There were differing views among Jordanian media professionals about the news value of Al-Jazeera's coverage of the Egyptian revolution and subsequent events. There were differing views among Jordanian media professionals about the presence of professional standards in Al-Jazeera's coverage of the Egyptian revolution and subsequent events.

The Gharaibeh study (2014) entitled "Attitudes of Jordanian Journalists towards Foreign Satellite Channels Directed to the Arab World" aimed to investigate the attitudes of Jordanian media professionals towards foreign satellite channels. The study used a survey method, with a sample size of 280 media professionals working in various Jordanian media institutions. The results of the study found that 71.2% of Jordanian media professionals watch foreign channels directed towards the Arab world, and that these channels are sometimes considered credible in their coverage of current events in the Arab world and international events. The study also revealed that news programs are the preferred program style among Jordanian media professionals. The Agiza Study (2012) entitled "Elite Assessment of the Role of Modern Electronic Communication in Shaping Public Opinion towards the Egyptian Revolution" aimed to investigate the role that modern electronic communication played in shaping the attitudes of the Egyptian public towards the January 25th revolution, as viewed by members of the Egyptian elite (political, media, academic). The study found that 73.3% of the respondents followed modern electronic means of communication (always). The study also found that Facebook was ranked first in the list of modern means of communication, followed by news websites in second place. The study also found that respondents considered modern electronic means of communication as a good source of information about the events of the revolution, and that what most attracted their attention to electronic means and made them play a role in the revolution is that they are "a personal means liberated by citizens". The study also

found that modern electronic means of communication had the ability to mobilize politically (52%) and that these means of communication were superior to traditional ones during the time and course of the revolution, with a rate of 647%.

## Study methodology

The study utilizes a descriptive research design, and employs the sample survey method on 200 members of the Arab elite (media, political, and academic). The study tool used in the research is a questionnaire, which was used to collect data from the original sources. The questionnaire was designed using a five-point Likert scale.

**Table (1)** *Likert scale for the study tool*

approval	degree	term	period	the scale
Low score	Strongly disagree	0.79	1-1.79	1
	not agree	0.79	1.80-2.59	2
Medium degree	neutral	0.79	2.60-3.39	3
	OK	0.79	3.40 -4.19	4
great score	Strongly Agree	0.79	4.20-5	5

## Stability test

The researcher employed a method of measuring reliability through internal consistency, by analyzing the correlation between each item of the questionnaire to determine if they revolve around the same central theme. This is done by calculating the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of stability. This type of stability test was applied to questions consisting of phrases and paragraphs in the questionnaire. The table below shows the level of reliability for each axis.

**Table (2)** - *The stability test of the study tool*

Cronbach's alpha value (stability coefficient)	Number of statements	the hub
% 94	5	Professional values
%95	6	The nature of the treatment
%90	5	Information sources
%89	3	Interactive media
%90	6	Content output
		Methods
%91.6	25	grand total

Table 2 shows the results of the internal consistency test used to measure the stability of the study. The results show a stability value of 91.6%, indicating a high level of stability. This suggests that the statements in the study are consistent and coherent.

## Results

The first axis is professional values. Table 3 shows the assessment of the Arab elite for handling foreign Arabic-speaking websites for Middle Eastern affairs based on professional

values. The data in Table 3 indicate that the Arab elite have a neutral view towards the professional values of foreign Arabic-speaking websites in their coverage of Middle Eastern conflicts. The overall average is 3.25, according to the scale of the study. The results also show that statement number 5, which states that "the news treatment of Middle East conflicts on foreign Arabic-language websites is characterized by accuracy," has the highest mean value of 3.8, indicating that the Arab elite view this as the most important professional value.

<b>mattress</b>	<b>Class</b>	<b>direction</b>	<b>occupational values</b>	<b>Occupational values</b>
the second	big	OK	3.88	The news treatment of Middle Eastern conflicts on foreign Arabic-speaking websites is stripped of personal opinions and emotional feelings in presenting news and information. The Arabic-speaking foreign websites, while dealing with the events of the Middle East conflict, are neutral in dealing with the websites, and content themselves with providing information in a narrative and descriptive manner. Foreign Arabic-language websites, while dealing with the events of the Middle East conflict, present all points of view on the topic raised, and it is not enough to present one point of view. Foreign Arabic-language websites are interested in news related to Middle East conflicts by presenting the scoop without verifying the validity of the information received.
Third	Big	OK	3.60	The news treatment of the Middle East conflicts on foreign Arabic-language websites is characterized by accuracy, by mentioning the whole truth of the event without deletion that disturbs its context, in addition to the correctness of the details contained in its journalistic materials such as names, dates, and others.
Fourth	Medium	neutral	2.87	
Fifth	Weak	Strongly disagree	1.66	
The first	big	I agree	4.27	
-	Medium	neutral	3.25	overall average

The data in Table 3 shows that statement number 5, "the news treatment of Middle East conflicts on foreign Arabic-language websites is characterized by accuracy, by mentioning the whole truth of the event without deletion that disturbs its context, in addition to the correctness of the details contained in its journalistic materials such as names, dates, etc." has the highest

arithmetic mean value of 4.27 and by comparing this average with the scale of the study, we find that it falls within the trend of strongly agreeing, indicating that the majority of the Arab elite strongly agree with this statement. The second highest value is statement number 1, "the news treatment of Middle Eastern conflicts in foreign Arabic-speaking websites is stripped of personal opinions and emotional feelings in presenting news and information" with an arithmetic mean of 3.88, which falls within the agreeing direction, indicating that a majority of the sample approve this statement.

The data in Table 3 shows that the Arab elite highly evaluated the adherence of Arabic-speaking websites to objectivity as one of the standards of professional values while dealing with the events of the Middle East conflict. Statement number 2 "The Arabic-speaking foreign websites, while dealing with the events of the Middle East conflict, are neutral in dealing with the sites, and they only provide information in a narrative and descriptive way" ranked third with an arithmetic mean of 3.60, falling within the acceptable trend, indicating that majority of the study sample tend to agree with this statement. This indicates that the Arab elite highly evaluated the adherence of Arabic-speaking websites to neutrality as one of the standards of professional values while dealing with the events of the Middle East conflict. The statement number 3, "Arabic-speaking foreign websites, during their treatment of the events of the Middle East conflict, presents all viewpoints on the subject raised, and is not satisfied with presenting one point of view" ranked fourth, with an arithmetic mean of 2.87, falling within a neutral trend. This indicates that the Arab elite evaluated the adherence of Arabic-speaking websites to balance as one of the standards of professional values during their treatment of the events of the Middle East conflict, to a moderate degree. As for statement number 4, "Arabic-speaking foreign websites are interested in news related to Middle East conflicts by presenting the press scoop without verifying the validity of the information received," it ranked fifth with an arithmetic mean of 1.66, falling within Strongly disagree direction. This average shows that the Arab elite evaluated the adherence of Arabic-speaking websites to the journalistic scoop when dealing with the events of the Middle East conflict with a weak degree.

## **The nature of news processing**

The data of Table No. (4) shows the axis of the nature of the treatment of foreign Arabic-speaking websites for the events of the Middle East conflict, as the general average was (3.79), and by comparing this average with the general scale of the study, we find that it falls within an agreeable trend. The results show that phrase No. (1) topped the list with the highest arithmetic average of (4.30) and by comparing this average with the main measure of the study, we find that it falls within a strongly agreed trend, indicating that the vast majority of the Arab elite agreed very much with this statement. The study results indicate that the Arab elite evaluated the nature of Arabic-speaking websites' handling of the events of the Middle East conflict with simplicity and providing evidence and evidence to a large extent. While phrase No. (3) and (6) ranked lower, indicating that the Arab elite evaluated the nature of Arabic-speaking websites' handling of the events of the Middle East conflict as showing the negative side and providing incorrectly or misleadingly interpreted information.

**Table No. (4)** - *Assessment of the Arab elite for the treatment of Arabic-speaking foreign websites of issues of the Middle East conflict based on the nature of the news treatment*

<b>mattress</b>	<b>Class</b>	<b>direction</b>	<b>SMA</b>	<b>The nature of news processing</b>	<b>#</b>
The first	big	Strongly Agree	4.30	Foreign Arabic-speaking websites present the events of the Middle East conflicts in a simple way, by answering only the main questions, without issuing judgments or comments.	.1
second	big	Strongly Agree	4.22	The Arabic-speaking foreign websites, when dealing with the events of the Middle East conflicts, are characterized by providing a lot of information, backgrounds, statements and predictions through explanatory and opinion materials.	.2
Fifth	Medium	neutral	3.34	The treatment of foreign Arabic-speaking websites regarding the events of the Middle East conflicts is considered hostile, by presenting information that is interpreted incorrectly or misleadingly.	.3
sixth	Medium	neutral	3.29	Foreign Arabic-language websites, while dealing with the events of the Middle East conflicts, bias one side of the conflict, but without offending or distorting the other side.	.4
Third	big	OK	4.05	Foreign Arabic-language websites provide information and news while dealing with the events of the Middle East conflicts with the aim of influencing and controlling the attitudes and attitudes of the public.	.5
fourth	big	OK	3.56	The foreign Arabic-speaking websites, while dealing with the events of the Middle East conflict, focus on highlighting the negative issues, attitudes and trends in the event, and neglecting the positive aspects.	.6
-	<b>big</b>	<b>OK</b>	<b>3.79</b>	<b>overall average</b>	

## Sources of information

The data of Table No. (5) refer to the axis of sources of treatment of foreign Arabic-speaking websites for the events of the Middle East conflict, as the general average was (3.41), and by comparing this average with the general scale of the study, we find that it falls within an agreeable trend.

**Table No. (5) - Assessment of the Arab elite for the treatment of Arabic-speaking foreign websites on issues of the Middle East conflict based on information source**

<b>mattress</b>	<b>Class</b>	<b>direction</b>	<b>SAM</b>	<b>Information Sources</b>	<b>#</b>
The first	big	Strongly Agree	4.32	Foreign Arabic-speaking websites focus on their own sources of delegates, correspondents and editors in providing news related to Middle East conflicts.	.1
the second	big	OK	3.71	Foreign Arabic-speaking websites draw their information and news from international news agencies while dealing with the events of the Middle East conflicts	.2
fourth	Medium	neutral	3.19	Foreign Arabic-speaking websites try to diversify their sources of information while dealing with the events of the Middle East conflicts.	.3
Third	big	OK	3.69	Foreign Arabic-language websites stay away from Arab sources of information while dealing with events related to Middle East conflicts. Some of the news related to the conflicts of the Middle East in the	.4
Fifth	weak	not agree	2.17	Arabic-speaking foreign websites did not specify the sources from which the news was derived.	.5
-	big	OK	3.41	overall average	

The data in Table No. (4) shows the axis of the sources of information used by Arabic-speaking foreign websites when covering events related to Middle East conflicts. The overall average was (3.79), which falls within an acceptable trend according to the study's scale. Phrase No. (1), which states that these websites focus on their own sources, such as correspondents and editors, received the highest average of (4.32) and a strong agreement from the Arab elite. Phrase No. (2), stating that they use international news agencies, also received a high average of (3.71) and agreement from the majority of respondents. Phrase No. (4), stating that they move away from Arab sources, also received a high average of (3.69) and agreement from the majority. Phrase No. (3), stating that they try to diversify their sources, received a moderate average of (3.19) and a neutral trend. Phrase No. (5), stating that some news sources were not specified, received a low average of (2.17) and a strong disagreement from the Arab elite.

### **The fourth axis - interactive means**

The data in Table No. (6) shows the axis of interactive methods in the treatment of foreign Arabic-speaking websites for the events of the Middle East conflict. The general average was (3.30) and by comparing this average with the general scale of the study, it is

found that it falls within a neutral trend. For each phrase separately, the results show that phrase No. (2), which is (during the escalation of conflict events in the Middle East, foreign Arabic-speaking websites resorted to developing new interactive methods to serve recent developments, such as live broadcasting) topped the list of interactive means with the highest arithmetic average of (3.84). This indicates that the vast majority of the Arab elite agreed with this statement. The results also show that the Arab elite evaluated the nature of interactivity in Arabic-speaking websites' handling of the events of the Middle East conflict as being fairly good, diverse and with some unnecessary methods being presented to a moderate degree.

**Table No. (6) - Assessment of the Arab elite for the treatment of Arabic-speaking foreign websites for issues of the Middle East conflict based on interactive means**

<b>mattress</b>	<b>Class</b>	<b>direction</b>	<b>SMA</b>	<b>Interactive media</b>	<b>#</b>
the second	big	OK	3.76	The methods and methods of interaction used during the handling of foreign Arabic-speaking websites for Middle Eastern issues are considered fairly good.	.1
The first	big	OK	3.84	During the escalation of conflict events in the Middle East, foreign Arabic-speaking websites resorted to developing new interactive methods to serve recent developments, such as live broadcasting.	.2
Third	Medium	neutral	2.87	There was a wide variety of interactive methods used during the treatment of Middle Eastern issues by foreign Arabic-language websites ✓	.3
fourth	Medium	neutral	2.76	Some non-essential interactive methods and means are presented with the accompanying informational material on topics related to the events of the conflict in the Middle East	.4
-	Medium	neutral	3.30	The overall average	

## **Directive methods of media content**

The data of Table No. (6) shows the axis of output methods in the treatment of foreign Arabic-speaking websites for the events of the Middle East conflict, where the general average was (3.18). By comparing this average with the general scale of the study, we find that it falls within a neutral trend. For each phrase separately, the results show that phrase No. (1), which is (The logo of foreign Arabic-speaking websites is the same as the logo of its satellite channels, which indicates that the website is not independent of the satellite channel) topped the sources of output methods with the highest arithmetic mean of (3.69). By comparing this average with the main measure of the study, we find that it falls within the direction of agreement, which means that the vast majority of the Arab elite agreed to a large extent with this statement. The arithmetic mean of this expression confirms that the Arab elite evaluated the output style of foreign Arabic-speaking websites as not being largely independent of their affiliated channels. As for the second place, it was occupied by the phrase No. (2), which is (the news materials related to the events of the Middle East lack various typographical elements) with an arithmetic



mean of (3.42). By comparing this average with the main scale of the study, we find that it falls within an agreeable trend, which indicates that this phrase obtained a percentage of approval from the majority of the sample. This arithmetic mean indicates that the Arab elite evaluated the output style of foreign Arabic-language websites as lacking demographic elements to a large extent. While phrase No. (5), which is (the foreign Arabic-speaking websites did not resort to using colors in the title while dealing with the events of the conflict in the Middle East) ranked third with an arithmetic average of (3.26), and by comparing this average with the main scale of the study, we find that it falls within a neutral trend.

**Table No. (7)** - *Assessment of the Arab elite for the treatment of Arabic-speaking foreign websites of issues of the Middle East conflict based on the directive methods of media content*  
*The data of Table No. (7) refer to the axis of the media content's output methods for dealing with the events of the Middle East conflict on foreign Arabic-speaking websites.*

<b>mattress</b>	<b>Class</b>	<b>direction</b>	<b>SMA</b>	<b>Directive methods of media content</b>	<b>#</b>
The first	big	OK	3.69	The logo of foreign Arabic-speaking websites is the same as the logo of its satellite channels, which indicates that the website is not independent of the satellite channel.	.1
the second	big	OK	3.42	News articles related to events in the Middle East lack diverse typographical elements	.2
fourth	Medium	neutral	3.06	The font size is appropriate to the content of the accompanying media material.	.3
Fifth	weak	not agree	2.49	The use of the nature of archival images prevails over the rest of the types during the treatment of foreign Arabic-speaking websites of the conflicts of the Middle East	.4
Third	Medium	neutral	3.26	Foreign Arabic-speaking websites did not resort to using colors in the title when dealing with the events of the conflict in the Middle East	.5
-	<b>Medium</b>	<b>neutral</b>	<b>3.18</b>	<b>overall average</b>	

## Results

### *The study reached a number of results, the most important of which are*

The above statements appear to be a summary or a list of key findings or conclusions from a study or research on the treatment of Middle Eastern conflicts on foreign Arabic-language websites. They seem to indicate that the majority of the Arab elite surveyed agreed that foreign Arabic-language websites are characterized by accuracy and simplicity in their coverage of Middle Eastern conflicts, and that they rely heavily on their own sources of information and interactive methods to report on recent developments. Additionally, it is stated that the logo of the website is the same as the logo of its affiliated satellite channels, indicating that the website is not independent of the satellite channel.

## Study recommendations

*Based on the results reached, the researcher recommends the following*

1. Ensuring that news treatment is free from personal opinions and emotional feelings in presenting news and information, and avoiding any form of bias.
2. Providing a neutral and descriptive narrative when reporting on conflicts and crises in the Middle East.
3. Presenting all viewpoints on a subject matter, and not being satisfied with presenting only one perspective.
4. Prioritizing accuracy and verification when reporting on press scoops or breaking news.
5. Maintaining a clear and consistent visual identity that differentiates the website from its affiliated channels and enhances its credibility.

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