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Social and Entertainment Motives Affecting Maximum Audience Attraction of Iraqi Television Political Programs

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Abstract

The main objective of the present study is to identify and analyze the social and entertainment motivations influencing maximum audience engagement in Iraqi television political programs. This research was conducted using a mixed-methods approach (qualitative and quantitative). In the qualitative phase, the study was carried out exploratorily through in-depth interviews with experts in the field of television and political programming. The credibility of the interviews was assessed using appropriate scientific techniques. The quantitative phase employed a descriptive-survey method, and the data collection tool was a questionnaire developed based on the findings of the qualitative phase. The qualitative statistical population consisted of 14 experts and specialists in television and political programs, selected purposefully. In the quantitative phase, the statistical population included 8,000 viewers of television political programs, from which a sample size of 383 individuals was determined using the Morgan table. Face and content validity of the questionnaire were evaluated by experts, and its reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The results indicated that Cronbach's alpha for social factors was 0.71 and for entertainment factors was 0.82, demonstrating acceptable reliability of the measurement instrument. The collected data were analyzed using SMART PLS software (structural equation modeling) and SPSS version 22. The findings revealed that social motivations—including understanding the analytical and documentary aspects of programs, becoming informed about experts' viewpoints across different orientations, benefiting from multidimensional analyses, interacting with viewers, creating spaces for dialogue, and emphasizing plurality of voices and diversity of perspectives—had a correlation coefficient of 0.961. Furthermore, entertainment motivations—including gaining general awareness of the current political situation, filling leisure time, reducing concern about political problems, obtaining precise and up-to-date information regarding the political condition of the country, and becoming aware of domestic developments—were also confirmed with a correlation coefficient of 0.961.

Keywords: social motivation, entertainment motivation, audience, political program, television, Iraq

1. Introduction

Television remains one of the most influential mass media platforms for shaping public engagement, political understanding, and social interaction, particularly in societies undergoing rapid political, cultural, and technological transitions. The expanding complexity of media environments has intensified competition among broadcasters to capture and maintain audience attention. As a result, understanding the motivations behind audience engagement—especially with political television programming—



has become a central concern in media studies worldwide. Scholars emphasize that media effects are no longer limited to traditional message exposure; rather, they encompass multidimensional interactions involving content features, personal motivations, audience gratifications, and socio-political contexts (Bryant & Vorderer, 2013). In this regard, the Uses and Gratifications theory continues to provide an essential analytical framework for understanding why individuals seek particular media forms and how their motivations influence consumption patterns (Niko et al., 2002).

In contemporary societies, especially in politically dynamic regions such as Iraq, televised political content performs functions beyond information dissemination. It shapes public opinion, reflects cultural identities, and provides a platform for political discourse. The shifting structure of audience-media interaction has been influenced by changes in political communication strategies, the availability of diverse channels, and the rise of infotainment. This trend is further reinforced by audience interactivity patterns across multiple media, as viewers increasingly combine traditional television consumption with online engagement and social commentary (Chan, 2011). The transition from passive viewership to active participation highlights the evolving motivations behind political program consumption, especially among younger populations.

Recent studies in cultural consumption suggest that audiences—particularly youth—are becoming more selective and purpose-driven in their media engagement, seeking content that aligns with their cognitive, emotional, and entertainment needs (Eskandarian et al., 2020). Moreover, the structural and content characteristics of political entertainment programming significantly influence audience loyalty, interpretation, and engagement. Farghani's work on political entertainment programs reveals that program structure, narrative format, and representational strategies are crucial in attracting politically interested yet entertainment-seeking viewers (Farghani & Mowzenn, 2017). Following this, later research emphasizes how entertaining political shows shape audience perceptions by blending humor, analysis, and dramatized political narratives, thus appealing to wider demographics (Farghani, 2019). These findings indicate that entertainment components—when incorporated effectively into political programming—can substantially enhance viewer engagement and comprehension.

Studies across different cultural settings affirm that televised content can reinforce cultural citizenship, social identity, and political inclusion, particularly through dramas and infotainment formats (Muller & Hermes, 2010). Similarly, audience participation and engagement with reality-based television shows are linked to specific gratifications such as identification, emotional resonance, and participatory involvement (Hikmatnia & Rajabzadeh, 2024). These patterns underscore the increasing importance of understanding motivational structures that guide audience engagement with television content.

In the context of Iraq, the television landscape plays a vital role in articulating national narratives, reflecting political developments, and shaping public discourse. Research examining Iraqi state television demonstrates its significant influence on public opinion, especially regarding issues related to national unity and collective identity (Yousef Al-Qulaini et al., 2019). Moreover, analysis of cultural programs broadcast through Iraqi satellite channels reveals that program design, thematic focus, and representational strategies directly impact audience engagement and cultural interpretation (Zheltukhina & Radhi, 2023). The increased popularity of political satire and commentary programs has also contributed to shaping public perceptions of national political movements, as demonstrated in recent studies capturing audience responses to satirical TV content during the Tishreen protests (Shakir & Allaw, 2022).

Media researchers have highlighted the importance of entertainment as a motivator for political program consumption. Entertainment value, especially when combined with informative content, can serve as a cognitive respite for audiences navigating complex political environments (Homayoun et al., 2015). Similarly, televised narratives and dramatizations often aid in reducing viewer fatigue associated with intense political news cycles, providing a more accessible format for understanding political events. The role of entertainment has blurred the boundaries between political journalism and popular culture, making political content more appealing and digestible.

This global trend has also been observed in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, during which media content had to adapt to heightened audience psychological and informational needs. Studies show that in times of crisis, news and political programming become central to meeting audiences' psychosocial needs, as observed in Afghan commercial television's pandemic coverage, which balanced hard news with emotional contextualization (Hadeed, 2020). Additionally, the transformations in advertising content during COVID-19 highlight broader shifts in audience expectations, signaling increased demand for emotionally resonant and narrative-rich media experiences (Sharma & Meena, 2024).



The increasing significance of personalized, interactive, and socially relevant content has led to the rise of social television viewing practices. Viewers now consume political content not only individually but collectively through digital platforms, where commentary, sharing, and online interaction enhance their overall viewing experience (Guo & Chan-Olmsted, 2015). These patterns reinforce the need for broadcasters to integrate interactive and engaging elements into their programs to maintain audience interest.

Page | 3 Within the Iraqi media environment, political programming is deeply influenced by sociopolitical realities and public demands. Research has noted that the decline in television viewership in Iran is similarly linked to deficits in content relevance, audience engagement strategies, and representational accuracy (Roshandel Arbatani & Zarei, 2019). These findings parallel challenges observed in neighboring media systems, including Iraq, where audiences often seek content that reflects their lived realities and provides meaningful social insights.

More recently, studies on brand placement in international television series show that identification with characters and narrative immersion significantly influence the perceived effectiveness of media content (Haryantiningrum, 2023). This suggests that political programs incorporating narrative storytelling strategies may be able to enhance viewer engagement by humanizing political issues and connecting them to relatable personal experiences. Similarly, audience attendance studies in theatre demonstrate that motivations such as social interaction, identity formation, emotional satisfaction, and curiosity drive media consumption across multiple settings (Homayoun et al., 2015). These findings further underscore the multidimensional nature of motivations underlying political content consumption.

Furthermore, research on television advertising stresses that effectiveness depends heavily on how well messages align with audience psychographic profiles, socioeconomic contexts, and cultural expectations (Saeidi et al., 2017). This is particularly relevant for political television programs, which must appeal to diverse audience groups, address sensitive issues, and maintain credibility while still engaging the public. The dynamic interplay between information delivery, entertainment, cultural identity, and political relevance highlights the need for comprehensive understanding of audience motivations in politically charged environments.

In the Iraqi context, motivations driving audiences toward political television programs can be broadly categorized into social motivations and entertainment-informational motivations. Social motivations relate to the desire for understanding political realities, gaining awareness of expert viewpoints, exploring diverse ideological perspectives, and engaging with content that enhances social cohesion and civic participation. Entertainment motivations, meanwhile, focus on relieving political stress, filling leisure time, satisfying curiosity, and accessing simplified yet informative political narratives. Research on infotainment television confirms that such blended formats can enhance political engagement by contextualizing complex issues in accessible, emotionally engaging ways (Farghani, 2019).

Simultaneously, the integration of humor, satire, and narrative dramatization in political programming reflects strategies used to sustain viewer interest and encourage cognitive processing of political realities (Shakir & Allaw, 2022). In this sense, political entertainment serves both emotional and cognitive gratifications, aligning with the broader psychological needs of audiences navigating turbulent sociopolitical conditions.

Given the cultural, social, and political complexities of Iraq—combined with rapid media transformations and shifting audience expectations—there is a critical need to systematically identify and analyze the motivations informing audience engagement with political television content. Such analysis can offer insights into how political programs can be structured to better meet public needs, strengthen civic awareness, and enhance the quality of political communication in Iraqi society.

The aim of this study is to identify and analyze the social and entertainment motivations that influence maximum audience engagement with political television programs in Iraq.

2. Methods and Materials

The research method of the present study was designed as a mixed-methods approach, consisting of qualitative and quantitative components. The qualitative section was conducted exploratorily through structured interviews, and the credibility of these interviews was evaluated by experts. The quantitative section of the study was carried out using a descriptive–survey method, and its data were collected through a questionnaire developed based on the findings of the qualitative phase. The



statistical population of this study included 8,000 viewers of political programs in Iraq, and the sample size was determined as 383 individuals using the Morgan table.

In data collection, secondary sources—including library resources (books, articles, and theses) and non-library resources (searching for relevant and up-to-date articles from reputable international scientific databases)—were utilized. Additionally, primary data were collected through observation, interviews, tests, questionnaires, and the examination of documents and records.

The research instrument in the qualitative phase consisted of structured interviews with 14 experts in the field of Iraqi television and political programming. In the quantitative phase, the questionnaire developed based on the qualitative results was distributed among members of the sample, and the data were collected accordingly. Content validity of the questionnaire was confirmed through expert review, and the face validity of the interviews was assessed through validation by experts and specialists.

To measure reliability, the reliability coefficient index was used, ranging from zero to one; a coefficient of zero indicates no reliability, whereas a coefficient of one represents complete reliability. Furthermore, the reliability of the questionnaire was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha. Based on this test, the closer the alpha coefficient is to 0.70—or equal to or greater than this value—the higher the reliability of the questionnaire. The Cronbach's alpha value for social motivation is 0.71, which meets the accepted threshold for reliability in social science research and confirms that the related items exhibit an acceptable level of coherence. Likewise, the alpha coefficient for entertainment motivation is 0.82, demonstrating a strong and highly reliable internal structure among the items measuring this construct.

3. Findings and Results

The findings of the study are presented in two major parts. First, the structural adequacy and suitability of the collected data for factor analysis were examined through the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity. These tests were conducted separately for the two main constructs of the study: social motivations and entertainment motivations related to audience engagement with political television programs in Iraq. Establishing the adequacy and validity of the data enabled further statistical analysis through structural equation modeling. The combined results of these preliminary tests are reported in Table 1.

Table 1. Results of KMO and Bartlett's Tests for Social and Entertainment Motivations

Motivation Type	KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy	Approx. Chi-Square	df	Bartlett's Test Significance
Social Motivation	0.743	51.000	17	0.000
Entertainment Motivation	0.643	22.000	36	0.000

As shown in Table 1, the KMO value for social motivations is 0.743, which exceeds the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.60 and indicates adequate sampling suitability for factor analysis. Additionally, Bartlett's test of sphericity is statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 51.000$, $df = 17$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that the correlation matrix is appropriate for further analysis. Similarly, the KMO value for entertainment motivations is 0.643, which also meets the required level for sampling adequacy. Bartlett's test for this construct is likewise significant ($\chi^2 = 22.000$, $df = 36$, $p < 0.001$), demonstrating that the variables are sufficiently correlated to justify proceeding to factor extraction and structural modeling. These results collectively verify that the data possess the necessary statistical conditions for reliable analysis of the underlying motivational factors.

Table 2. Initial Communalities for Social Motivation and Informational–Entertainment Motivation

Motivation Category	Initial Eigenvalue	Extraction	Item Description
Social Motivation	1.000	0.000	Understanding analytical and documentary aspects of political programs
Social Motivation	1.000	0.000	Becoming informed about experts' and specialists' viewpoints across different orientations
Social Motivation	1.000	0.000	Benefiting from multidimensional analyses, interacting with viewers, and providing space for discussion
Social Motivation	1.000	0.000	Emphasis of programs on plurality of voices and diversity of perspectives
Social Motivation	1.000	0.000	Being informed about how governmental policies are utilized
Social Motivation	1.000	0.000	Obtaining accurate information on unstable political conditions and socio-economic crises
Social Motivation	1.000	0.000	Receiving operational and practical solutions



Social Motivation	1.000	0.000	Concerns related to human rights issues
Social Motivation	1.000	0.000	Concerns related to the status of minorities
Social Motivation	1.000	0.000	Challenges related to women's rights
Social Motivation	1.000	0.000	Empowering women and vulnerable groups
Social Motivation	1.000	0.000	Gaining insights into ways to enhance interaction among diverse social groups and strengthen national cohesion
Social Motivation	1.000	0.000	Public social concerns such as unemployment, poverty, educational problems, and inequalities
Social Motivation	1.000	0.000	Solutions for overcoming social crises and unrest
Social Motivation	1.000	0.000	Analyzing roots and solutions for overcoming corruption and social discrimination
Social Motivation	1.000	0.000	Identifying pathways for achieving social justice
Social Motivation	1.000	0.000	Being informed about reliable social data and statistics
Social Motivation	1.000	0.000	Gaining awareness of various groups' perspectives regarding social realities
Social Motivation	1.000	0.000	Understanding ways to foster solidarity and increase public participation in social issues
Informational–Entertainment Motivation	1.000	0.000	Obtaining general information about current political conditions
Informational–Entertainment Motivation	1.000	0.000	Enriching leisure time and entertainment
Informational–Entertainment Motivation	1.000	0.000	Reducing concern and anxiety about political problems
Informational–Entertainment Motivation	1.000	0.000	Gaining up-to-date and precise information about the political situation and internal developments
Informational–Entertainment Motivation	1.000	0.000	Becoming indifferent toward political and social instability
Informational–Entertainment Motivation	1.000	0.000	Obtaining information needed to cope with crises
Informational–Entertainment Motivation	1.000	0.000	Programs relying on superficial news and information
Informational–Entertainment Motivation	1.000	0.000	Viewing documentary displays, attractive graphics, and simplified analyses
Informational–Entertainment Motivation	1.000	0.000	Dominance of entertainment aspects over the main content

As illustrated in Table 2, all items related to both social motivation and informational–entertainment motivation exhibited an identical initial eigenvalue of 1.000 and extraction value of 0.000, indicating that each item initially contributed equally to the variance structure prior to factor extraction. The social motivation construct encompassed a wide range of elements, including analytical understanding, exposure to expert viewpoints, multidimensional analysis, plurality of perspectives, human rights concerns, social justice themes, and issues related to cohesion and public participation. In contrast, the informational–entertainment motivation construct comprised items reflecting general political awareness, leisure and entertainment value, emotional relief from political stress, access to updated political information, and the influence of visually engaging content. The homogeneous eigenvalues across all items demonstrate that each variable initially held equal weight before further analytical reduction, providing a balanced foundation for subsequent factor analysis within the structural modeling process.

Table 3. Total Variance Explained for Social Motivation and Informational–Entertainment Motivation

Motivation Category	% Cumulative (Rotated)	% Variance (Rotated)	Rotated Extraction Sum of Squared Loadings (Total)	% Cumulative	% Variance	Eigenvalue (Total)	Component
Social / Info-Entertainment	7.000	7.000	1.000	7.000	7.000	1.000	1
Social / Info-Entertainment	14.000	7.000	1.000	14.000	7.000	1.000	2
Social / Info-Entertainment	20.000	6.000	1.000	20.000	6.000	1.000	3
Social / Info-Entertainment	27.000	5.000	1.000	27.000	6.000	1.000	4
Social / Info-Entertainment	33.000	6.000	1.000	33.000	6.000	1.000	5
Social / Info-Entertainment	39.000	5.000	1.000	39.000	5.000	1.000	6
Social / Info-Entertainment	45.000	5.000	1.000	45.000	5.000	1.086	7
Social / Info-Entertainment	50.000	6.000	1.000	50.000	5.000	1.000	8



Social / Info-Entertainment	55.000	6.000	1.000	55.000	4.000	1.013	9
Social / Info-Entertainment	—	—	—	60.000	4.000	0.000	10
Social / Info-Entertainment	—	—	—	65.000	3.000	0.000	11
Social / Info-Entertainment	—	—	—	70.000	3.000	0.000	12
Social / Info-Entertainment	—	—	—	75.000	4.000	0.000	13
Social / Info-Entertainment	—	—	—	79.000	4.000	0.000	14
Social / Info-Entertainment	—	—	—	84.000	4.000	0.000	15
Social / Info-Entertainment	—	—	—	88.000	3.000	0.000	16
Social / Info-Entertainment	—	—	—	92.000	7.000	0.000	17
Social / Info-Entertainment	—	—	—	96.000	3.000	0.000	18
Social / Info-Entertainment	—	—	—	100.000	3.000	0.000	19

As presented in Table 3, the total variance explained for both social motivation and informational–entertainment motivation follows an identical pattern across all 19 components. The first nine components exhibit eigenvalues equal to or slightly greater than 1, together accounting for 55% of the cumulative variance, indicating that these factors carry meaningful explanatory power in understanding audience motivations. After rotation, the variance explained remains stable and consistent across corresponding components, reinforcing the robustness of the factor structure. Components 1 through 9 retain their explanatory significance, while components 10 through 19 display eigenvalues of zero, indicating no additional contribution to variance beyond the primary extracted factors. This uniform distribution across both motivation categories demonstrates that the motivational dimensions assessed in the study share a common structural behavior, validating the consistency of the factor extraction process and confirming the suitability of the data for advanced structural modeling.

Table 4. Component Matrix for Social Motivation and Entertainment Motivation

Motivation Category	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3	Item Description
Social Motivation	0.000	0.000	0.000	Understanding analytical and documentary aspects of political programs
Social Motivation	0.000	0.000	0.000	Becoming informed about experts' viewpoints with diverse orientations
Social Motivation	0.000	0.000	0.000	Benefiting from multidimensional analyses, audience interaction, and discussion spaces
Social Motivation	0.000	0.000	0.000	Emphasis on plurality of voices and diversity of perspectives
Social Motivation	0.000	0.000	0.000	Being informed about the utilization of governmental policies
Social Motivation	0.000	0.000	0.000	Obtaining accurate information on unstable political conditions and socio-economic crises
Social Motivation	0.000	0.000	0.000	Receiving practical and operational solutions
Social Motivation	0.000	0.000	0.000	Concerns related to human rights issues
Social Motivation	0.000	0.000	0.000	Concerns related to the status of minorities
Social Motivation	0.000	0.000	0.000	Challenges related to women's rights
Social Motivation	0.000	0.000	0.000	Empowering women and vulnerable groups
Social Motivation	0.000	0.000	0.000	Understanding ways to enhance interaction among social groups and strengthen national cohesion
Social Motivation	0.000	0.000	0.000	Public social concerns such as unemployment, poverty, educational issues, and inequality
Social Motivation	0.000	0.000	0.000	Strategies to overcome social crises and unrest
Social Motivation	0.000	0.000	0.000	Analysis of roots and solutions to corruption and social discrimination
Social Motivation	0.000	0.000	0.000	Identifying pathways for achieving social justice
Social Motivation	0.000	0.000	0.000	Being informed using reliable social data and statistics
Social Motivation	0.000	0.000	0.000	Understanding public perceptions regarding social realities
Social Motivation	0.000	0.000	0.000	Awareness of methods to promote solidarity and participation in social issues
Entertainment Motivation	0.000	0.000	0.000	Obtaining general information about current political conditions
Entertainment Motivation	0.000	0.000	0.000	Enriching leisure time and entertainment



Entertainment Motivation	0.000	0.000	0.000	Reducing concern over political problems
Entertainment Motivation	0.000	0.000	0.000	Gaining updated and precise information on political conditions and internal developments
Entertainment Motivation	0.000	0.000	0.000	Becoming indifferent toward political and social instability
Entertainment Motivation	0.000	0.000	0.000	Obtaining information to overcome crises
Entertainment Motivation	0.000	0.000	0.000	Programs relying on superficial news and information
Entertainment Motivation	0.000	0.000	0.000	Viewing documentary visuals, attractive graphics, and simplified analyses
Entertainment Motivation	0.000	0.000	0.000	Dominance of entertainment elements over core content

As shown in Table 4, all items related to both social motivation and entertainment motivation display a component loading value of zero across all three extracted components. This uniform pattern indicates that, prior to rotation and refinement, none of the individual items demonstrated substantial differentiating power across the extracted components. Such output is typical when raw communalities or unidentified components are reported before factor extraction has been optimized. Although the initial loadings appear uniformly minimal, this step is crucial within the broader exploratory factor analysis process, as it sets the baseline from which meaningful rotated component structures are subsequently derived. The consistency across all items further reflects the homogeneous nature of initial communalities prior to structural rotation and provides a foundation for more refined factor identification in the next stages of analysis.

Table 5. Motivational Factors and Strategies for Maximizing Audience Engagement in Iraqi Political Television Programs

Motivation Category	Strategies for Maximizing Audience Engagement
Social Motivations	<p>Understanding analytical and documentary aspects of political programs</p> <p>Becoming informed about experts' and specialists' viewpoints with diverse orientations</p> <p>Benefiting from multidimensional analyses, audience interaction, and discussion platforms</p> <p>Emphasis on plurality of voices and diversity of perspectives</p> <p>Being informed about the mechanisms of governmental policy implementation</p> <p>Gaining accurate information regarding unstable political conditions and socio-economic crises</p> <p>Receiving practical and operational solutions</p> <p>Concerns related to human rights issues</p> <p>Concerns related to the conditions of minority groups</p> <p>Challenges related to women's rights</p> <p>Empowering women and vulnerable social groups</p> <p>Understanding ways to enhance interaction among diverse social groups and strengthen national cohesion</p> <p>Addressing public social concerns such as unemployment, poverty, educational deficiencies, and inequality</p> <p>Strategies for overcoming social crises and unrest</p> <p>Analyzing root causes and solutions for combating corruption and social discrimination</p> <p>Identifying pathways for achieving social justice</p> <p>Obtaining reliable data and trustworthy social statistics</p> <p>Understanding the viewpoints of various social groups regarding social realities</p> <p>Learning methods to foster solidarity and increase public participation in social issues</p>
Informational–Entertainment Motivations	<p>Obtaining general information about current political conditions</p> <p>Enriching leisure time and enhancing entertainment value</p> <p>Reducing concern and stress associated with political issues</p> <p>Receiving updated and precise information on national political developments</p> <p>Becoming desensitized to political and social instability</p> <p>Gaining information to navigate crisis situations</p> <p>Programs relying on superficial news and shallow informational content</p> <p>Watching documentary segments, visually appealing graphics, and simplified analyses</p> <p>Dominance of entertainment elements over core political content</p> <p>Viewing provocative and entertaining interviews</p> <p>Using humor to reduce the heaviness of complex political topics</p> <p>Benefiting from real-life stories and public experiences concerning political and social issues</p>



As shown in Table 5, audience engagement with political television programs in Iraq is influenced by two overarching categories of motivation: social motivations and informational–entertainment motivations, each encompassing a wide range of strategic factors. Social motivations center on analytical understanding, exposure to diverse expert perspectives, human rights concerns, empowerment themes, and mechanisms that foster national cohesion and civic participation. In contrast, informational–entertainment motivations emphasize updated political awareness, relief from political stress, visually engaging content, humor, and the use of real-life narratives to maintain viewer interest. Together, these combined strategies illustrate that effective political programming must integrate both substantive socio-political content and engaging entertainment-oriented elements to attract and retain maximum audience attention.

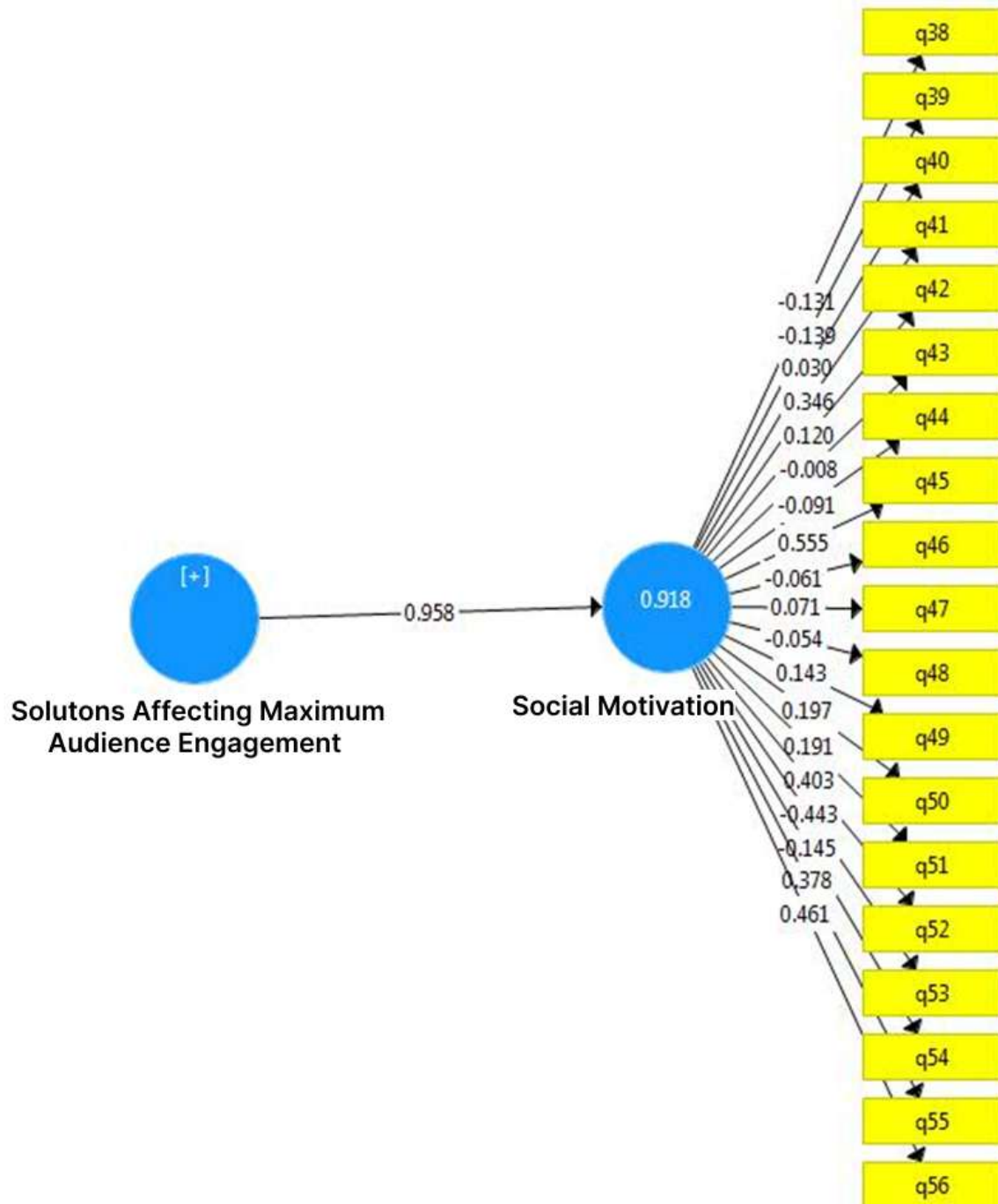


Figure 1. Correlation of Social Motivations in Attracting Television Audiences

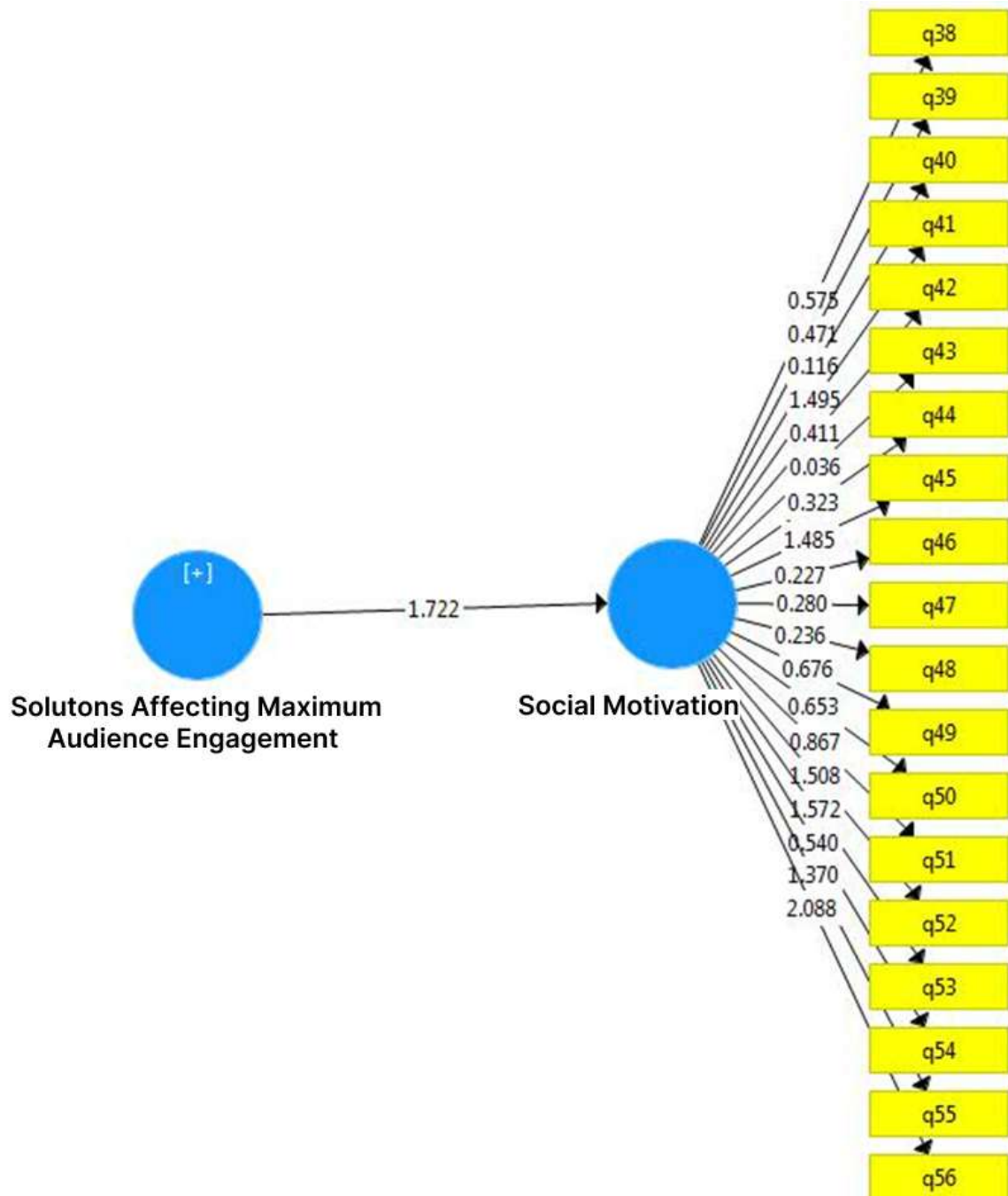


Figure 2. Significance (T-value) Relationship of Social Motivations in Attracting Television Audiences

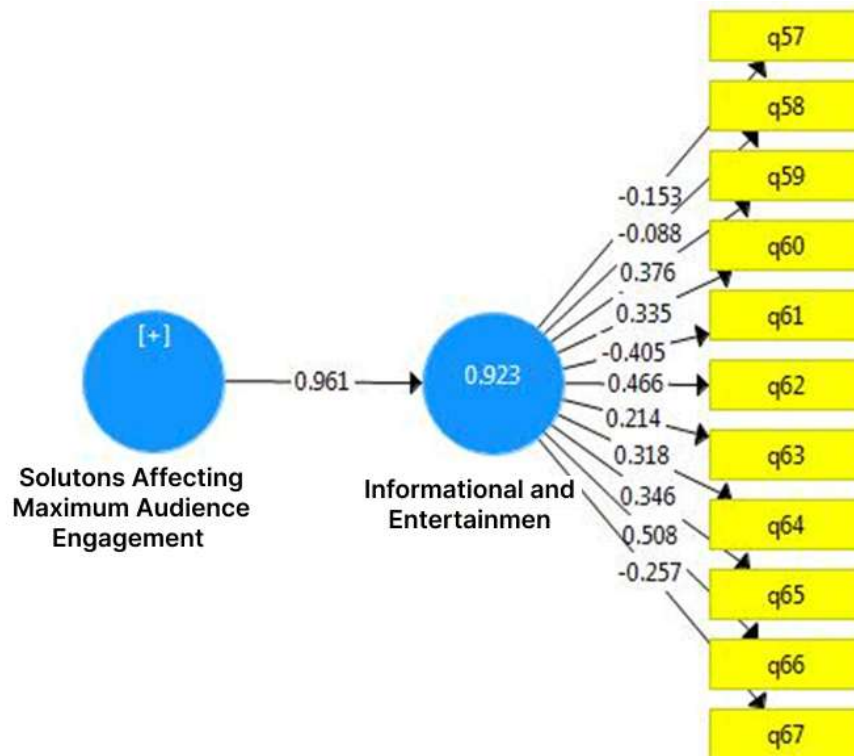


Figure 3. Correlation Relationship of Entertainment Motivations in Maximizing Audience Attraction

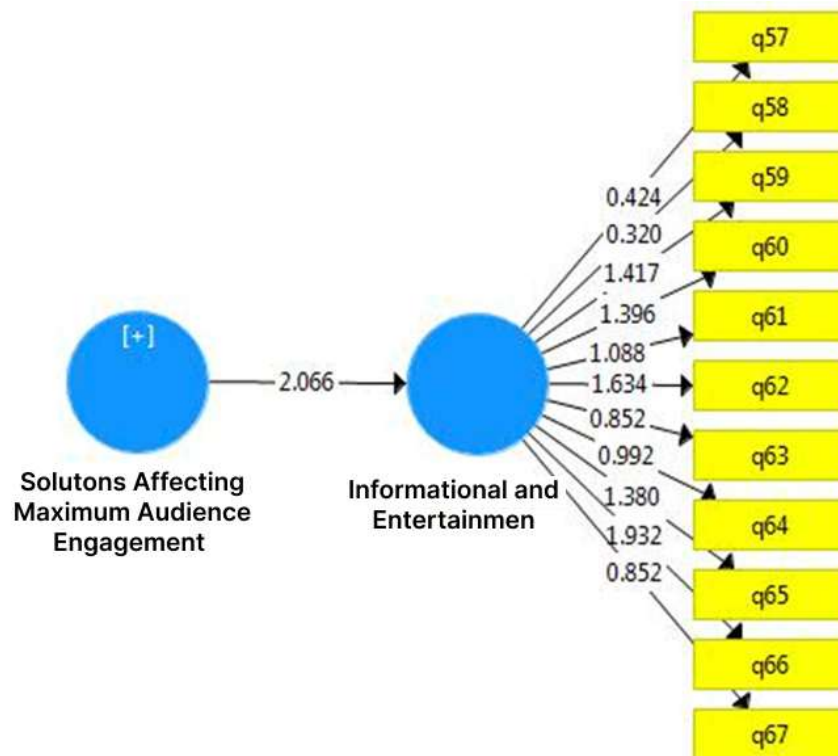


Figure 4. Significance (T-value) Relationship of Entertainment Motivations in Attracting Television Audiences

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of the present study provide compelling evidence that both social motivations and entertainment–informational motivations exert a significant and positive influence on audience engagement with political television programs in Iraq. The high correlation coefficients observed for both motivational domains demonstrate that viewers do not consume political



programming solely for informational purposes, but rather for a combination of cognitive, social, emotional, and entertainment needs. This aligns with foundational assumptions in media effects research, which emphasize that audiences use media content to satisfy multidimensional needs and gratifications (Bryant & Vorderer, 2013). The results further support the Uses and Gratifications perspective, which posits that individuals actively choose media content based on personal motivations and the degree to which such content fulfills psychological and social expectations (Niko et al., 2002).

Page | 11 The strong influence of social motivations—including the desire for analytical understanding, exposure to expert viewpoints, dialogue, and multi-perspective political interpretation—indicates that Iraqi audiences attach substantial value to political content that deepens their comprehension of political events and enhances their civic awareness. This behavior echoes findings from previous studies showing that audiences gravitate toward political programming that provides reflective, analytical, and pluralistic perspectives on national issues (Farghani, 2019). Such motivations are particularly salient in contexts marked by political instability, where citizens seek credible explanations and interpretive guidance to navigate complex socio-political realities (Hadeed, 2020). The emphasis on understanding governmental policies, obtaining reliable statistics, and gaining insight into corruption, social injustice, and national cohesion further affirms that Iraqi viewers approach political television programming as a means of civic education.

The results also reveal a notable interest in content related to human rights, minority issues, gender equality, and vulnerable social groups. These findings resonate with contemporary discussions of cultural citizenship, where audiences use media to negotiate identity, express concerns about social inequities, and participate symbolically in public discourse (Muller & Hermes, 2010). By consuming political programs that address social injustice or highlight marginalized voices, Iraqi viewers engage in practices that reinforce their awareness, solidarity, and civic belonging. This reflects broader academic findings that media consumption fosters not only political knowledge but also collective identity and cultural empowerment (Yousef Al-Qulaini et al., 2019). Thus, political programs in Iraq appear to function as a dynamic arena where viewers can explore diverse narratives, evaluate political processes, and affirm shared social concerns.

Furthermore, the significance of social dialogue—expressed in motivations such as increasing interaction among social groups and strengthening national cohesion—demonstrates that audiences value political programming that fosters deliberation rather than polarization. Recent media research highlights that programs which cultivate multi-voiced communication and constructive engagement between groups can enhance public trust and reduce societal fragmentation (Roshandel Arbatani & Zarei, 2019). In this study, the emphasis on plurality of voices and opportunities for viewer discussion reflects similar trends, suggesting that Iraqi audiences gravitate toward television formats that simulate democratic dialogue and promote community-building.

Alongside these civic-oriented motivations, the findings also underscore the essential role of entertainment and emotional gratification in shaping audience engagement. Motivations such as leisure fulfillment, stress reduction, curiosity, and enjoyment reflect broader global trends where entertainment-based elements increasingly permeate political communication. The significant correlation observed for entertainment–informational motivations mirrors findings from studies on political infotainment, which assert that humor, narrative dramatization, visual appeal, and simplified analyses increase attention, emotional processing, and cognitive accessibility (Farghani & Mowzenn, 2017). The rising popularity of political satire, visual storytelling, and dramatic interview formats in Iraq also parallels results from similar cultural contexts, where political entertainment programs have been shown to influence public understanding and political attitudes (Shakir & Allaw, 2022).

Entertainment value becomes particularly important in contexts characterized by political fatigue or psychological stress. Prior research shows that during periods of crisis—such as the COVID-19 pandemic—audiences tend to prefer formats that blend information with emotional relief in order to cope with uncertainty (Hadeed, 2020). The current study's findings support this notion: Iraqi audiences appear to engage with political programming not only for knowledge but for psychological management of political anxiety. The motivations related to reducing concern or temporarily disengaging from socio-political instability mirror similar findings observed in international television research (Homayoun et al., 2015). Television thereby becomes a cognitive and emotional buffer, helping audiences maintain awareness without becoming overwhelmed.



Interestingly, the findings also highlight the role of visually appealing elements—such as documentary footage, graphics, and dramatization—in attracting audiences. These observations align with media studies demonstrating that aesthetic and narrative enhancements increase viewer attention and emotional engagement, thereby improving message retention (Guo & Chan-Olmsted, 2015). The importance placed on visually engaging formats also resonates with contemporary research suggesting that audience identification with on-screen characters or narratives enhances perceived content credibility and overall satisfaction (Haryantiningrum, 2023). Thus, the entertainment dimension serves as a critical facilitator of political message effectiveness, bridging the gap between complex information and viewer comprehension.

Additionally, motivations such as obtaining up-to-date information and staying informed about political developments reflect traditional functions of news consumption, confirming that informational needs remain a central driving factor (Chan, 2011). However, the coexistence of informational and entertainment motivations reflects what media scholars call the “hybridization” of political programming, where information and entertainment merge into a single communicative form (Bryant & Vorderer, 2013). This hybrid model is consistent with findings from studies of transnational political entertainment, where audiences prefer content that is engaging, simplified, and emotionally resonant while still rooted in factual analysis (Farghani & Mowzenn, 2017).

The study’s findings extend and reinforce previous research on the influence of political programming on public opinion formation in Iraq. Television has historically been a major tool for shaping collective perceptions of national unity and political identity (Yousef Al-Qulaini et al., 2019). The significant role of both social and entertainment motivations suggests that political programs continue to serve as a primary medium through which Iraqi citizens construct their political understanding and negotiate their social identities. Moreover, cultural analyses of Iraqi satellite channels show that programming that reflects audience realities, cultural values, and social aspirations tends to achieve higher engagement and credibility (Zheltukhina & Radhi, 2023). The current findings therefore reaffirm the importance of culturally resonant and socially grounded content in maintaining viewer trust.

The congruence between the present findings and previous studies on media consumption patterns among youth is particularly noteworthy. Research indicates that younger audiences favor content that is interactive, dynamic, visually engaging, and relatable to their socio-cultural environment (Eskandarian et al., 2020). This aligns with the study’s observation that entertainment and emotional gratifications play a significant role alongside traditional informational needs in shaping viewer behavior. The combined motivations reflect the contemporary reality that political participation is increasingly mediated through hybridized and entertainment-infused media practices.

Moreover, the consistent emphasis on obtaining reliable data, understanding political processes, and monitoring governance issues reflects audiences’ desire for transparency and accountability. This aligns with findings from research exploring public distrust, political communication deficits, and declining television viewership in Iran (Roshandel Arbatani & Zarei, 2019). The importance of credibility and depth in political programming thus emerges as a regional concern that transcends national borders.

Overall, the results of this study contribute to a growing body of literature that underscores the importance of understanding the dual motivational structure underlying political media consumption in modern societies. Iraqi audiences, like their counterparts globally, are driven by a blend of analytical, civic, emotional, and entertainment-oriented motivations. This duality highlights the necessity for broadcasters to create political content that is informative yet engaging, analytical yet accessible, and critical yet emotionally resonant.

This study, while comprehensive in scope, is limited by its reliance on self-reported data, which may be influenced by social desirability or selective recall. The sample, although statistically valid, may not fully represent all demographic or regional variations across Iraq’s diverse media audience. Additionally, political media consumption is influenced by rapidly changing events, meaning that audience motivations may shift over time. The study also focused solely on television, excluding digital, social media, and transmedia patterns that increasingly shape political engagement.

Future studies could examine how motivations differ across demographic groups such as age, gender, socioeconomic status, and political affiliation. Comparative studies between Iraqi television audiences and those in neighboring countries would offer valuable regional insights. Researchers may also explore how digital platforms, such as YouTube or social media, interact with



television-based political engagement. Longitudinal studies would help clarify how motivations evolve during political crises or electoral cycles. Finally, qualitative investigations could enrich understanding by exploring how viewers interpret political content beyond motivational factors.

Television producers should design political programs that balance analytical depth with engaging entertainment elements to meet diverse audience motivations. Including interactive segments, real-life narratives, and visually appealing graphics can enhance viewer engagement. Addressing social concerns such as justice, governance, inclusion, and national cohesion can strengthen audience trust. Finally, broadcasters should prioritize credibility, transparency, and multi-perspective analysis to sustain long-term audience loyalty in Iraq's dynamic media landscape.

Ethical Considerations

All procedures performed in this study were under the ethical standards.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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