Internet Influence and Regulation: A Case Study in Saudi Arabia

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By

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ABSTRACT

Transnational Communications: Internet Influence and Regulation in Saudi Arabia

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This study examines the influence and regulation of the Internet in Saudi Arabia. New information technologies such as the Internet have brought about social and economic changes in Saudi Arabia. This study focuses on the challenges posed by the Internet in Saudi Arabia. It discusses how the country embraces the new technology of the Internet and its attendant effects while at the same time protecting the values and traditions, which define the Saudi identity.

This study also examines a range of theoretical and contextual debates that are relevant to the issues addressed in this research. Among the debates examined are: globalisation, Internet influence, censorship and regulation, sovereignty as well as the tensions emanating from interactions between political spaces and cultural flows.

Materials for the study were collected through the use of in-depth interviews with top policy makers in Saudi Arabia as well as through the use of questionnaires to collect data on the views of the citizens of Saudi Arabia about their use of the Internet and views on Internet regulation in Saudi Arabia.

The findings in the study indicate that while there is widespread adoption of the Internet in Saudi Arabia, there is still a wide range of debates on the extent to which it should be allowed a free reign in the society. While the arguments continue, the introduction of the Internet in Saudi Arabia has opened up a number of social and political spaces that might not be available without the Internet.
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DEDICATION

To my beloved Mother—the source of my success.
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I am grateful for the support of my country Saudi Arabia. Thank you Lord for all the blessings you have bestowed upon me.
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<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>AED</td>
<td>New Academy for Educational Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APEC</td>
<td>Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation</td>
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<tr>
<td>BBC</td>
<td>British Broadcasting Cooperation</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCC</td>
<td>Direct Client-to-Client</td>
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<tr>
<td>DBS</td>
<td>Direct Broadcasting Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIT</td>
<td>Dabbah Information Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>GNP</td>
<td>Gross National Product</td>
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<tr>
<td>HDR</td>
<td>Human Development Report</td>
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<td>HRW</td>
<td>Human Right Watch</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information Communication Technology</td>
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<td>IAW</td>
<td>Internet Arab World</td>
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<td>ISOCNZ</td>
<td>The Internet Society of New Zealand</td>
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<td>ISP</td>
<td>Internet Service Provider</td>
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<td>ISPANZ</td>
<td>The Internet Service Providers Association of New Zealand</td>
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<tr>
<td>IRC</td>
<td>Internet Relay Chat</td>
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<tr>
<td>ITU</td>
<td>International trade Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KSA</td>
<td>Kingdom of Saudi Arabia</td>
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<tr>
<td>LDC</td>
<td>Less Developed Countries</td>
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<tr>
<td>KACST</td>
<td>King Abdul Aziz City for Science and Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KFSH</td>
<td>King Faisal Specialist Hospital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KFUP</td>
<td>M King Fahad University of Petroleum and Minerals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KSA</td>
<td>Kingdom of Saudi Arabia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCIT</td>
<td>Ministry of Communication and Information Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non Governmental Organisations</td>
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<tr>
<td>NIC</td>
<td>The Saudi Network Information Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation of Economic Cooperation and development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONI</td>
<td>OpenNet Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTT</td>
<td>Ministry of Post, Telegraph and Telephone</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPA</td>
<td>Saudi Press Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR</td>
<td>Saudi Riyal(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STC</td>
<td>Saudi Telecommunications Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Name</td>
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<tr>
<td>STV</td>
<td>Saudi Television</td>
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<tr>
<td>UPM</td>
<td>King Fahad University of Petroleum and Minerals</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNDR</td>
<td>United Nations Development Report</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation</td>
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<td>WLN</td>
<td>The Women Leaders Network</td>
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<td>WTO</td>
<td>World Trade Organisation</td>
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<td>WWW</td>
<td>World Wide Web</td>
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<td>World Summit on Information Society</td>
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Introduction

Background

Saudi Arabia emerged as a modern state in 1932 with the unification of Najd and Hijaz provinces by King Abdul Aziz Ibn Abdul Rahman Al-Saud. Before the unification, Saudi existed as a group of autonomous tribes and big families patched together under two clearly distinguishable regions: Hijaz and Najd (Vassiliev, 2000, Long 1997, Al-Farsy, 2003). Therefore, before 1932, there was no sense of a state or a separate Saudi identity. The overriding identity is that of Islam as expressed within tribal and family circles (Vassiliev, 2000, Long 1997, Al-Farsy, 2003).

The emergence of Saudi Arabia as a state marked the beginning of the development of another identity, the Saudi identity that is separate from the tribal and family identities that were in existence before the unification. Although Islam still provides the overall source of identity, it became more pronounced after the unification because the founding of Saudi Arabia was based on the religious justification provided by the Islamic scholar Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahab and King Abdul Aziz who led the war for the pacification of the country (Yamani, 2000; Al-Farsy, 2003). Therefore, in the case of Saudi Arabia there is a plurality of identities. The first sets of identities are those that existed pre-unification such as regional identity, tribal identity and family identity. The second sets of identities are those formed post-unification that is after the establishment of the Saudi as a state. These include the Saudi national and reassertions of tribal and family identities in the context of Saudi state.

Since the emergence of modern states following the Peace of Westerphalia treaty in 1648, they have served as the primary site for the articulation of separate identities. As argued by Everard (2000) states could be conceived as a platform for identity making “produced through practices that divide the idea of the Self from the idea of the Other” (Everard, 2000: 5). It could therefore be argued that states exist to aggregate plural identities within their geographical boundaries into one national identity often defined in terms of the inside (the state) against the outside (outside the geographical boundaries of the state) (Walker, 1993). While exercising their sovereignty, states put in place geographical boundaries and try to drive social,
political, cultural and economic resources towards the making and sustaining of one national identity. This is because in most contemporary states, there is normally a plurality of identities, complementing or competing against the national identity being fostered by the state.

Walker (1993) expanded the idea of plural and conflicting inside and outside identities of states in the challenge this poses for international politics. While this study will not engage with the complexities of the arguments raised in Walker’s (1993) inside-outside thesis, the proposition that identities within and outside states are not static is considered very relevant for discussing how the Internet is challenging a state’s exclusive control over identity formation within its territory. In respect of Saudi Arabia, this line of argument would be pursued by mapping Internet influence on traditional values and the efforts of the government to censor and regulate it.

From the mid-1980s through the 1990s into the 21st century, the role of states as conceived above is coming under increasing strain. Processes of globalisation are said to be transforming societies. These processes are challenging the exclusive rights of states to identity formation within geographically defined spaces as well as the idea of state sovereignties (Held, 1996). Sovereignty is said to reside in other actors below and above the state all exercising power in an increasingly interdependent world (Falk, 1994). In this regard, it has been argued that we are witnessing the erosion of state powers (Held, 1993, 1996).

New information and communication technologies, especially the Internet are now a major driving force of societal transformations between and across different countries. Significant progress has been recorded in the development of information and communication technologies in the last decade. The Internet is probably the most important of all. The Internet exhibits some unique features, in that it can be used in diverse ways. It allows individuals to voice their opinions and concerns, and it provides excellent platforms for the exchange of opinions. With regards to the Internet, Youngs and Kofman (2003) suggests that technology and social change are two of the central dimensions of diverse processes of globalisation. The role of the Internet in the penetration of geographical boundaries of states was particularly stressed as aptly described below:
...as societies and individuals and entities within the state operate via the Internet, whether through e-banking or business, email and chatroom activity, or political activism, the more they are caught in it, identified by and through the networks they are involved in and the information they contain about them. This is a situation where boundaries can easily collapse, and this goes much further than just the idea that the Internet crosses geographical and political divides, and separations between public (institutional) and private (personal) social spaces and places (Youngs and Kofman, 2003: 9).

This development brings about a technologically-induced interdependence and interconnections across different levels of the society with direct and indirect influence on the “fabric of society itself and challenging established patterns of conceptualizing, analysing and understanding it” (Youngs and Kofman, 2003: 9). The ability of the Internet to bypass the state to get to the society makes the case for Internet influence and the impact of the Internet in overriding geographical space by cyberspace an important one.

The influence of the Internet is generally attributed to the powerful influences traditional mass media are thought to exert in societies and their use for identity formation. McQuail (2000), for instance, stressed that the mass media are considered to have immense power of influence hence they are being used as vehicles for development and modernisation. Most governments also use the mass media for the promotion of national identities or the Self against the other (Lerner, 1958). However, with increasing global interconnectedness, new media such as the Internet are penetrating geographical boundaries of states, thereby challenging the state’s exclusive control of its territory. In this regard, Hirst and Thompson (1999) argued that new communications and information technologies have reduced the state’s exclusiveness of control of its territory, reducing its capacities for cultural control and promotion of national identities. In this way, the new media exert more powerful influence on states than traditional mass media such as radio, television and the print media.

With regard to the Internet, this raises important concerns about the relationship between the government and the people (Everard, 2000). This study will therefore examine these concerns as they relate to the influence of the Internet in Saudi Arabia.
and government efforts to control it. Two main arguments would be examined in this regard. The first one, as stressed by Smith (2003), relates to concerns from states on prospects of cyberspace providing another platform of identity for the people different from national identities fostered by states. This is an important challenge especially in societies such as Saudi Arabia working to actively promote one national identity.

As will be discussed later, Saudi Arabia is the birthplace of Islam and the custodian of the two most important religious sites for Muslims. Saudi Arabia as constituted at present is also a result of pacifist war led by a religious scholar Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahab and King Abdul Aziz Al-Saud, both united in their views on creating a state with a clear religious bent. Therefore, the role of the Internet in challenging the process of national identity formation as defined by the founding fathers of Saudi Arabia is an important one. In addition, there are general concerns that the Internet is another tool for developed nations to export their cultures and values to developing nations and it also has the potential of being misused. Hence, there have been several attempts to regulate it (Everard, 2000; Waters, 2001).

The second argument relates to the growing powers of the state to intrude more into the lives of the people in the form of regulating the Internet. Again, Smith (2003) remarks that the increased use of the Internet could be argued to “increase the power bases of some states.... governments themselves are using the Internet, CCTV surveillance and related technologies to monitor their populations even more closely” (Smith, 2003: 290).

Saudi Arabia is an oil rich nation and is governed according to Islamic principles. Until 1998, the use of the Internet was restricted to the health and academic institutions, when free access was granted to ordinary citizens. However, the state spends large sums of money to screen and filter unwanted sites to protect people from what it sees as the negative effects of this new technology.

In Saudi Arabia, for instance, stringent conditions were laid down for the use of the Internet Service Providers (ISPs). Among the conditions are: all Internet users in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia shall refrain from publishing or accessing data containing anything contravening a fundamental principle or legislation, or infringing the
sanctity of Islam or breaching public decency. Others include: anything contrary to the state or its system; reports or news damaging to the Saudi Arabian armed forces without the approval of the competent authorities; publication of official state laws, agreements or statements before they are officially made public, unless approved by competent authorities (ISU, 2001).

In addition to restrictions to protect the society, restrictions were also placed on materials that have political undertones. For instance, it is prohibited to publicise anything damaging to the dignity of heads of states or heads of accredited diplomatic missions in the Kingdom, or harms relations with those countries. It is also prohibited to publicise any false information ascribed to state officials or those of private or public domestic institutions and bodies, liable to cause them or their offices harm, or damage their integrity. Finally, Internet users are prohibited from propagating, through the Internet, subversive ideas or the disruption of public order or disputes among citizens; anything liable to promote or incite crime, or advocate violence against others in any shape or form and any slanderous or libellous material against individuals.

In spite of the effort by the government of Saudi Arabia to control the Internet, there are however arguments that show that by its nature, the Internet is a transnational medium; therefore there is a strong possibility that local regulation attempts are likely to fail (Everard, 2000). A study carried out by Zittran and Edelman (2002) documenting Internet filtering in Saudi Arabia suggests that the Saudi government maintains an active interest in filtering sites that were considered as a threat to the national Saudi identity.

Zittran and Edelman (2002) listed 1395 (the full list of sites that were blocked and the reasons provided for blocking them are included as Appendix 4G) web pages that were blocked and hundreds of thousands of link pages. The sites that had the highest number of blocked pages were those with religious and spiritual contents. The sites blocked in this category cut across all religions, among which were Muslim groups that were not considered mainstream groups, such as the Shia, Christian groups, Jewish groups, and others such as Bahai faith, Satan worshippers, as well as modern day spiritual groups. In all, 577 of such sites were blocked. The second highest
number of sites blocked was categorised as others. This includes sites whose contents ranged from Marijuana to cocaine, globalisation and translation services, Internet based social groups etc. In all, 512 sites with contents such as the ones described above were blocked.

The third highest number of sites blocked was sites with entertainment contents such as music and films. There were 125 of such sites blocked. Forty-one sites dealing with items such as leisure, swimming wears and bikinis were blocked. Thirty-seven sites that contained sexual materials were blocked. The same numbers of sites with political contents were also blocked. Thirty sites having homosexual materials were blocked, while two sites with pornographic contents were blocked. The other sites blocked were those with human rights contents, especially Amnesty International, 22 sites blocked, financial and gambling 12 sites and crime/terrorism seven sites.

While the above highlights a comprehensive Internet filtering system, it is arguable if this effort could be effective in curtailing the growing influence and ubiquity of the Internet; these are the issues this study engaged with.

Research Rationale

A review of literature discussed in the chapter that follows indicates that the connection between the influence of the Internet in the transformation of societies and its regulation by governments in different countries have been examined from very diverse perspectives. Among the perspectives have been the Internet as the driving force of a new network society (Castells, 2000 and 2002), the Internet as a site for struggles over different versions of identities (Everard, 2000), the Internet and the global homogenisation and heterogenisation debate, as well as the influence of the Internet in identity pluralism and challenges to state sovereignties (Everard 2000, Youngs and Kofman 2003, Smith 2003).

Within the general debate in the literature, three main themes are dominant. These are: Internet influence, Internet access, and Internet regulation. These three themes represent the main research themes for this study. Therefore as mentioned earlier, this study will have two main foci in respect of Internet influence and regulation in Saudi Arabia. The first will examine how the exclusive control of states over identity
formation and sovereignties within geographically defined boundaries is being challenged by globalisation processes such as the Internet. The second will examine how states are taking back their powers through Internet control and regulation.

Saudi Arabia puts a lot of effort into filtering Internet contents. It has very comprehensive rules and regulations regarding Internet filtering. The country has a very young population and the use of the Internet is increasing. In spite of the influence of the Internet in the transformation of societies, very few studies have been conducted on the impact of the Internet in Saudi Arabia and the efforts of the government to censor it.

The government of Saudi Arabia through the office of the Internet Services Unit (ISU) of the King Abdul Aziz City for Science and Technology conducted a pioneering study on Internet influence in Saudi Arabia in 2001 (ISU, 2001). Another study conducted almost in parallel to my own study by Saggaf (2004) on Internet influence in Saudi Arabia, especially, on how online communities are affecting offline communities in Saudi Arabia stressed that the Internet has had a number of positive impacts on the society, among which is open-mindedness, more awareness of the personal characteristics of individuals within the society and less inhibition about the opposite gender. While this study in a number of ways is similar to my own study, it is still different from mine because it did not examine the reaction of the Saudi state through regulation to Internet influence. This study is being undertaken to gain further insight into this growing research area.

The data used for the analysis in this study were collected through both secondary (literature review) and primary sources (official documentation and regulations, a questionnaire survey with Saudis, and interviews with top policy makers in Saudi Arabia). By examining the members of the public and policy maker’s views, the study aims to analyse the state of the Internet in the country and expectations from this new medium. The transnational nature of the Internet combined with rigorous filtering rules in Saudi Arabia, as well as the unavoidable influence of globalisation across the world make the study of Internet regulation in a strictly Islamic state such as Saudi Arabia a challenging but potentially valuable endeavour.
Organisation of Chapters

The first chapter discusses the background and the justification for the study. The chapter provides a general introduction to the study.

Chapter two provides a literature and theoretical review of models, debates and previous studies considered relevant for conceptualising, contextualising and analysing the primary data collected for the study.

Chapter three discusses the social, economic, political, cultural and historical factors that shaped the emergence of Saudi Arabia as a modern state. The chapter further highlights how these factors have been drivers of efforts to blend modernity with tradition in the pursuit of development goals of the government of Saudi Arabia. In addition, this chapter provides a brief overview of Saudi Arabia. While some of the historical, cultural and societal facts are introduced to set the scene, in depth analysis of some other topics such as modernity, Islam and Saudi Arabia are also included. These are considered as central to the concerns of the thesis.

Chapter four investigates the historical development of the mass media in Saudi Arabia. Briefly, at the beginning of the chapter, the developments of print media, radio, and television are discussed. Then, an analysis of the historical development and the current state of the Internet in the country is provided.

Chapter five discusses the research methodology used to collect primary data. Chapters six and seven discuss the study results reflecting both policymaker’s (interview) and public opinion (questionnaire) on Internet regulation in the light of data available in the literature to place Internet development and regulation in Saudi Arabia in a proper perspective.

Chapter eight discusses the results of the findings. The difficulties faced in the regulation of the Internet are also discussed in this chapter. Finally, the chapter discusses the conclusions of the study in relation to further research and policy options regarding Internet influence and regulation in Saudi Arabia.
CHAPTER ONE

Theoretical Framework

1.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework for the study. States traditionally represent the repository of power within geographically defined spaces where they also exercise sovereignty and control. The authority of states over the areas they have control of have come under increasing strain due to globalisation processes one of which is the increasing growth and influence of the Internet. There is a growing tension between geographical space as represented by states and cyberspace as represented by the Internet. In this chapter, I map the tension between the two and draw from the discussion analytical tools for examining the influence and regulation of the Internet in Saudi Arabia.

The chapter is divided into six sections. In the first section, I examine the concept of states and boundaries within the traditional concept of sovereignty. In the second section, I examine how this traditional view of the state and sovereignty is being challenged through globalisation processes, especially with the development of the Internet. In the third section, I examine the role of the media, especially the Internet, in the promotion of the debate about the homogenising and heterogenising influences of globalisation. In the fourth section, I examine the issue of Internet access and the bridging of digital divides in the context of the global initiative of the World Summit on the Information Society and the relevance of the issue for understanding Internet influence and regulation in Saudi Arabia. In the fifth section, I discuss how states are trying to reassert their sovereignty in the midst of the globalising tendency of the Internet through various forms of Internet regulation. In the sixth section I summarise the main arguments of this chapter and connect the arguments to the main research questions addressed in the interviews and questionnaire design.

1.2. Internet Influence and Disappearing Geographical Boundaries

One of the areas where the influence of the Internet has been profound is in the penetration of geographical boundaries of states and the transformation of societies. As stressed by Everard (2000) issues of Internet influence and regulation are situated
within a conception of globalisation that sees it as, above all, a social process. For Everard (2000), three processes are important in any analysis of the impact of globalisation and the global spread of the Internet. These are: “the disaggregation of the state as actor; Self/Other divide in the constitution of identity; and the operation of these processes in the maintenance of social and economic inequalities” (Everard, 2000: 10). The Internet and other globalisation processes bring in other actors into areas that states were previously the only legitimate actor.

The three processes identified by Everard (2000) raise anew the issue of the role of the state in identity formation, for instance the state presenting a particular identity distinct from the identity of others outside the state. Everard (2000) also suggests that the Internet offers the opportunity of challenging issues that border on social and economic inequalities as represented by the situation in different societies before the advent of the Internet and the new opportunities for reducing inequalities through bridging digital divides. Therefore, an important factor for understanding the influence and regulation of the Internet is the international society that is characterised by the elevation of non-state actors.

However, we are not witnessing the disappearance of states in relation to issues of identity. Rather, as Everard (2000) suggests, the state still plays important roles in the world today as important sites for the aggregation of ideas of individuals and formation of their identity. “Such ideas allow the domestic polity of states to subscribe to the idea of a national identity in ways similar to those that draw people together in online discussion lists in virtual communities” (Everard, 2000: 9). This is where the similarity ends. States and virtual communities engage in identity formations in quite different ways. In respects of states, identity formation is historically situated within geopolitical structures while that of virtual communities is characterised by the power of flows that is not bounded by political and geographical spaces (Lull, 2001).

As stressed further by Everard (2000),

a state identity is made visible through its cultural expression. Whoever controls the means to control or disseminate cultural products therefore has
substantial control over a state’s identity in the world. States are the by-product of discursive practices – they exist insofar as they are invoked qua states. States embody for their people an economy of values within a system of exchange. States embody a set of relations between people (Everard, 2000: 67).

The possibilities offered by the Internet, however, make it possible for others to challenge the exclusive control of the state over cultural production. The idea that states have monopoly over identity formation within and the legitimacy to project this identity outside because of its control over sovereignty makes the case of Internet challenge of the authority of states and states regulation of this medium an important one.

In spite of the influence of the Internet and the growing powers of other non-state actors, states still enjoy the exclusive right of authority and control over geographical entities. Walker (1993) suggests that in international law and international relations, a state is a geographic political entity possessing political authority. The state is therefore recognised as the only legitimate unit for political organisation within and outside a geographically defined space. As an identifiable entity, the state is defined in terms of the territory over which it exercises control. The concept of state is also connected to the idea of sovereignty, which means independence from external control, internal self-determination and freedom of action. Camilleri and Falk (1992) also pointed out that sovereignty covers the political identity of states based on their capacities to exercise power and authority internally and externally.

Walker (1993) views sovereignty as ability to impose laws and regulations within a territory. Sovereignty and jurisdiction, Walker (1993) states further, can only be comprehended in relation to territory and thus the principle whereby a state is deemed to exercise exclusive power over its territory is central to the development of international law. This is also the corner stone of the international system as represented in the charter of the United Nations (UN). Article 2 of the United Nations Charter stresses the principle of sovereign equality of all the states within the international system. The article also indicates that states are not allowed to intervene in what is considered as the domestic affairs of another state. This puts states in the driver’s seat of domestic identity making and international projection of identities
thus formed. Saudi Arabia fits this frame as it tries to promote a unique Saudi identity within the country and project this identity to the world outside through the mass media and other new media such as the Internet. Walker (1993) also conceptualises sovereignty as existing both inside a state and outside it. The meaning of sovereignty outside is however tempered by the anarchic nature of the international environment.

As explained by Youngs (1999), the realist perspective focuses on the state as the primary actor in the international system and maintains that states as political entities act rationally within the international system to maximize their power. This power is defined by the territorial boundaries over which states exercise power and within which a state has sole jurisdiction over its citizens and internal affairs. This perspective drives the mainstream thinking in international relations as illustrated in the UN charter cited earlier.

However, the realist perspective is under strain due to the role of other actors outside the state and the challenge of “location of identity in an increasingly globalised and wired world” (Everard, 2000:5). The state is no longer the sole power-container within the international system. This view of states by Everard (2000) connects well to the debates about sovereignty, which emphasises the diffusion of power in a globalising world. For instance, Walker and Mendlovitz (1990) stressed that states no longer exercise a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence in a specific territory. They argued further that “the most important forces that affect people’s lives are global in scale and consequence. Therefore, in spite of the strong arguments put forward to justify the primacy of the state in international affairs and appeals to national identity and the principle of non-intervention, questions about both the meaning and significance of state sovereignty are again firmly on political and scholarly agendas” (Walker and Mendlovitz, 1990: 1). The growing influence of the Internet has, perhaps, made this question more complex. This study will therefore examine how the debates bear on Internet influence and regulation in Saudi Arabia.

The view that other actors are challenging states exclusive control of developments within it is also shared by Youngs (1999) who contends that the state-centric prism offers no penetrating perspective on the dynamics of social contradictions or tensions, either within or beyond individual states. Youngs (1999) stresses further that this
approach is related to the way the concept of sovereignty defines political being or identity directly in terms of “territorialization” or territorial division.

Although writing from different theoretical backgrounds, Sassen (1996), Strange (1996) and Held (1995) also explored the idea of multiplicity of sovereignty. Sassen (1996 cited in Youngs, 1999: 2) suggests that it is necessary to look at the “new geography of power” shaping the transformation of the unitary view of sovereignty of states to that of multiples of sovereignties driven by many factors”.

Similarly, Strange (1996) writing from a political economy perspective suggests that the process of transformation of states is leading to a “diffusion of power” in circumstances where “the territorial boundaries of states no longer coincide with the extent or limits of political authority over economy and society” (Strange, 1996: ix, cited in Youngs, 1999: 2). Therefore, there are many factors and processes challenging the power of the state below and above it. Walker (1993) neatly captured this development in the exposition of three layers of sovereignty. Walker (1993) pointed out that there are three levels of sovereignty in a country due to the effect of globalisation. The first level is sovereignty at the level of the domestic society itself. This is followed by sovereignty at the level of the state and finally sovereignty at the level of international institutions and organisations.

This view also connects well to the concept of “deterritorialisation” discussed by Lull (2001). In the view of Lull (2001), “deterritorialisation” basically refers to the ability of citizens of a particular country or civilisation to recreate the symbols that give them their unique identity within a geopolitical space outside their country of origin. This also makes it possible for citizens within a geopolitical space to reorient themselves to events outside without leaving their countries.

Held (1991) also indicates that four processes are limiting the ability of states to exercise absolute sovereignty even within domestic polity. The first process is the internationalisation of production and financial transactions. The second process is international organizations. The third process is international law. The last process is hegemonic powers and power blocs.
This view is also supported by Agnew (2002) who, arguing from political geography perspective, suggests that the state-centric view of states is being challenged by globalisation dynamics and by actors that do not fit into state-centric perspectives. The established views of state as bounded within clearly defined spaces are being stretched due to the emergence of a new world where boundaries are becoming less relevant (Agnew, 2002). The world is on the way to becoming what Agnew (2002) describes as “a giant pinhead in which where you are counts for nothing, connectivity, interdependence, global culture, and cyberspace are displacing the bounded territorial spaces and grounded places....” (Agnew, 2002: 181).

While the arguments above show that other actors are challenging states exclusive control over sovereignty and that the concept of sovereignty could be looked at in its plural form, states still remain an important staple of the international system. Walker and Mendlovitz (1990) stressed that the state is still treated as either the only possible arena in which serious political life can take place or as a merely transient prelude to a universal community of humankind. This is a view shared by Hirst and Thompson (1999). They argued that “although the nation state’s capacities for governance have weakened, it remains a pivotal institution” (Hirst and Thompson, 1999: 257). For instance, ‘the state is still essential to the process of “suturing” power upwards to the international level and downwards to sub-national agencies’ (Hirst and Thompson, 1999: 262).

Further, the state is the “source of legitimacy in transferring power or sanctioning new powers both above it and below it”, (Hirst and Thompson, 1999: 259). Hirst and Thompson (1999) also envisage the state as a:

source of constitutional ordering in a world composed of diverse political forces, governing agencies and organisations at both international and national levels (which) will need an interlocking network of public powers that regulate and guide action in a relatively consistent way, providing minimum standards of conduct and relief from harm (1999: 260).

Nation states are also sometimes seen as imagined communities (Anderson, 1983) brought about by historical processes and legitimated by the international system of states. The emergence of alternative communities also legitimated by global processes
such as virtual, diasporic connection and universal values is making alternative interpretation of developments outside the prism of states possible.

Therefore, a single perspective (primacy of states in global relations or multiplicity of actors with a weakened state) is not adequate to capture the dynamic processes of global relations and the forces driving this development. Rather a combination of perspectives would provide a better insight into the processes. The combination of the perspectives will therefore be used in this study to examine the growing influence of the Internet and the efforts of states to regulate it. In this study, I will be discussing the role of the state in the development, influence and regulation of the Internet in Saudi Arabia. I will also be examining the same issue from the perspective of the people and groups within and outside Saudi Arabia whose perception and use of the Internet might diverge from that of the government.

The issue of the multiplicity of perspectives will be examined further in the discussion of homogenizing and heterogenizing effects of globalisation below. Before discussing these two perspectives and their relevance for this study though, some definitions and conceptualisations of globalisation will be discussed.

1.3. Conceptualising Globalisation

There is no consensus on what constitutes globalisation. Rather, different conceptions or definitions of globalisation have emphasised the factors shaping the process. Youngs (1999), for instance, views globalisation in respect of the outcome of the process. Therefore, globalisation is “the reshaping of political, economic and cultural boundaries” by a number of factors such as “the expansion of the world capitalist market and its production and consumption patterns, the growth of forms and networks of communications and the widening of political associations and movements” (Youngs, 1999: 1).

The idea that globalisation is reshaping political, economic and cultural boundaries is also taken up by many others in their conceptualisation of globalisation. Beck (2000) defines globalisation as denoting processes through which sovereign national states are “criss-crossed” and undermined by transnational actors with varying prospects of power, orientations, identities and networks (Beck, 2000: 20). Hence, globalisation
means that borders become markedly less relevant to everyday behaviour. The theme of how globalisation is transforming societies was also addressed by Giddens (1990) and Robertson (1992) who both suggest that globalisation involves relativisation and destabilisation of old identities whether of nation states, communities or individuals.

Globalisation as a concept has also been applied to a range of analytical situations. Scholte (2005) identified five different situations in which globalisation has been used as an analytical tool. The first sense in which globalisation has been used refers to globalisation as increases of interaction and interdependence between people in different counties. This refers to a situation of “internationalisation” of interactions. Scholte (2005: 55-56) pointed out further that “internationalisation” of interaction which symbolises a considerable rise in cross-border exchanges has indeed occurred in recent decades.

The second sense in which globalisation has been used signifies the breaking down of barriers inside and between countries. In this sense, a global world is one without, in many cases, regulatory barriers, to transfers of resources between countries. “In recent history we have indeed witnessed many reductions of statutory constraints on cross-border movements of goods, services, money and financial instruments. Hence, as with the first definition, it is understandable that people might associate globalization with liberalization” (Scholte, 2005: 56-57).

The third sense in which globalisation has been used refers to the process of popularity of universal values, such as human rights, democracy and concerns with the environment. In this regard, Scholte (2005) pointed out that “although more people and cultural phenomena than ever have in recent history spread to all habitable corners of the planet, moves toward ‘universalization’ are hardly new to the contemporary world. For instance, several world religions have for a thousand years and more extended across large expanses of the earth. Transoceanic trade has for centuries distributed various goods in ‘global’ (read world-scale) markets. Yet the pre-existent vocabulary of ‘universality’ and ‘universalization’ is quite adequate to describe these age-old conditions” (Scholte, 2005: 57-58).
The fourth sense in which globalisation has been used refers to globalisation as "westernisation". Scholte (2005: 58) suggests that this usage has arisen particularly in various arguments about "postcolonial imperialism". In this instance, globalization is often associated with a process of homogenization with the world becoming western, modern and, more particularly, American. The global influence of Hollywood films and McDonalds is usually cited as examples of this kind of globalisation.

All the four senses in which globalisation has been used above are considered as a misapplication of the term as they signify situations that have been described with different terms, such as 'internationalisation', 'universalism', 'cultural imperialism' as well as colonial and post-colonialism before the popularisation of globalisation term in the late 1980s (Scholte, 2005: 59).

The last sense in which globalisation has been used refers to the growth of supraterritorial relations between people. In this usage, globalisation refers to a far-reaching change in the nature of social space. This is the sense in which globalisation would be used in this study. It is in this sense that Giddens (1990), Robertson (1992) and Beck (1994) view globalisation as a major transformation of societies. It is also in this sense that the United Nations Development Project (UNDP) acknowledged that globalisation "is not new, but the present era has distinctive features. Shrinking space, shrinking time and disappearing borders are linking people's lives more deeply, more intensely, more immediately than ever before" (UNDP, 1999: 1). It is also in this sense that Youngs (1999) considers globalisation as the reshaping of political, economic and cultural boundaries. The conceptualisation of globalisation in this sense brings out the role of information technology, especially the Internet on the globalisation process. The role of the media, especially the Internet in the transformation of societies and reshaping of boundaries will be discussed in the next section.

Globalisation viewed from the above perspective is, in the words of Appadurai (2001: 5) "a world of flows" that is "...characterised fundamentally by objects in motion. These include ideas and ideologies, people and goods, images and messages, technologies and techniques."
Complementing the world of flows is the “world of structures, organizations, and other stable social forms” which are described as “devices for handling objects characterised by motion”. In the world of structures, the most apparent and stable is the “nation-state”, which is also characterised by “floating populations, transnational politics within national borders, and mobile configurations of technology and expertise” (Appadurai, 2001: 5). Therefore, examining how one of the elements constituting the world of flows (the Internet) is influencing a country is useful for understanding the functioning of contemporary societies.

While discussing the ways the Internet is shaping the working of contemporary societies, Lull (2001) also stressed that

...The Internet has evolved to become less a technological form and more a communications medium, which opens up limitless cultural possibilities. Rather than just reinforcing traditional structures of political-economic-cultural authority, information technology, the Internet, and mass media make those structures all the more porous (2001: 3).

One of the reasons that the influence seems to be profound is the disruptive influence the Internet is sometimes thought to have on the processes of governance within nation-states. Appadurai (2001) refers to this influence as “disjuncture” created by the world of flows. This view was also emphasised by Lull (2001) who argued that

...The global availability of ever more diverse and mobile symbolic forms emanating from the culture and information industries, when combined with increased access by individuals to micro-communication technologies, uniquely empowers many people. To conceptualise power in symbolic and cultural terms harmonizes theoretically with the indeterminate character of human communication processes overall (Lull, 2001: 3).

From the above discussion, it could be argued that the mass media, especially the Internet, are central to conceptualising and understanding contemporary societies. This study will examine how the Internet has shaped the Saudi society since its introduction and the efforts by the government to control it. Focussing on Internet influence also makes it possible to examine the changing meaning of the state when used in relation to territories. The section that follows examines in greater detail the role of the media in shaping contemporary understanding of societies.
1.4. Media and Globalisation Process

The role of the mass media in the globalisation process has received huge attention in the globalisation debate. Albrow (1996) examines the influence of the communication media in globalisation. He suggests that there is now:

a global institutional framework based on systems which function for everyday life very much as the old natural environment did, conceived as endless resource without boundaries potentially threatening but also a play area. This artefactual environment just like the natural is also a field of communication media and has been devised as such. Local cultural requirements are limited to variations which will not impair the standard worldwide operating base. Telephone, fax, personal computer cash dispensing machine all are part of a worldwide interactive system of communication. Together with global broadcasting and intercontinental transportation, they constitute the media of globalisation (Albrow, 1996: 139).

Albrow (1996) further pointed out that these media provide an “infrastructure for personalised and group innovative responses to the global age.... The tension between standardised media and individual styles becomes a main theme for cultural critics of globalisation. In all these respects globality has not made systems more remote from people. On the contrary, the end of the modern age may well represent a high point of abstract society from which we are now descending” (Albrow, 1996: 139).

Hirst and Thompson (1999) also dwelt on how these communications media are challenging the state exclusive control of its territory. They argued that:

the new communications and information technologies have loosened the state’s exclusiveness of control of its territory, reducing its capacities for cultural control and homogenization. It is commonplace that digitalized communications, satellites, fax machines and computer networks have rendered the licensing and control of information media by the state all but impossible, not merely undermining ideological dictatorships but also subverting all attempts to preserve cultural homogeneity by state force.... The state may have less control over ideas, but remains a controller of its borders and the movement of people across them (Hirst and Thompson, 1999: 265-267).

The claim by Hirst and Thompson (1999) that the communications media have rendered the state exclusive control of its territory almost impossible has some merit especially with regards to the Internet. However, as will be discussed in respect of the
official policy of the government to the Internet and communications media in Saudi Arabia, the government still exercise some control.

Waters (2001) also stressed that the mass media and the current developments in their technology of delivery bring out more clearly the evidence for time-space compression. Most of the mass media originate in developed countries such as the US and Europe as does much of their content. Waters (2001) listed three principal effects of cultural globalisation through the mass media. First, “media export cultural products from the centre to the periphery of the world system.... This is because most of the news, information, entertainment programming, sport, information and advertising flows in that direction.... Not only the programme producers but advertising agencies and news agencies as well as the companies that manufacture consumer products are owned in advanced capitalist societies” (Waters, 2001: 203).

Second, “as well as absorbing new nations into what some call the network of cultural imperialism, cultural flows via the mass media dissolve internal boundaries of that network and help to knit it together. These cultural flows are primary examples of trans-national connections, links between collective actors and individuals that subvert state frontiers” (Waters, 2001: 203). This is very true of the Internet because of its ability to break-down geographical barriers (Waters, 2001).

The third globalising effect of the mass media is “the one originally noticed by McLuhan.... In so far as the mass media convert contents of human relationships into symbols or tokens they can connect people across great distance. So effective can this process become that communities of interests or value-commitment can develop between people who have never met, much less joined together in a political event” (Waters, 2001: 204). This is also true of the Internet. For instance, some of the questions probe into how the Internet is fostering the development of a global cyber community by connecting Saudis to other cyber communities (Waters, 2001).

Among the categories of mass media influencing the process of globalisation, the Internet has been particularly profound. The significance of the Internet, Waters (2001) argues, is that it provides an “opportunity for the realization of simulated communities that can now develop out of trans-global patterns of interaction”
This highlights the growing role of the Internet in the multiplication of sovereignties within and inside the state. This also connects back to the argument about the effect of globalisation and the role of the Internet in the process. Generally, there are two main arguments in this regard. The first are arguments emphasising the role of the growing universalisation of values through processes encouraged by the Internet and other factors (homogenisation). The second are arguments emphasising struggles over particularisation of values and identities as promoted by the Internet and other globalisation processes. These two arguments will be examined in relation to the influence and regulation of the Internet in the section that follows.

1.5. Homogenisation and Heterogenisation Debate

As indicated earlier, while globalisation refers to the reshaping of political, economic and cultural boundaries, there are two main views on the impact and extent of boundaries restructuring due to globalisation. The first views globalization as the process of homogenisation in which the world is becoming similar due to the factors driving globalisation. The second views globalisation as a process of heterogenisation in which the world is becoming dissimilar in many ways due to globalisation. These two views will now be examined in relation to the restructuring of cultural boundaries and the place of the Internet in the process.

Globalisation is thought to have a dual effect. A number of scholars have engaged with arguments about both homogenising and heterogenising effects of globalisation. One of the proponents of global homogenisation debate, Giddens (1990) suggests that globalisation is making the world more homogenous through the “creation and intensification of worldwide social relations which link distinct localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring miles away and vice versa” (1990: 64). According to Wallerstein (1990) this process of growing interdependence on a global scale has been going on for a long time, but the technical revolution of the 1980s and a number of related economic, cultural and political developments have contributed to an intensification of both concrete global interdependence and consciousness of the global whole (Robertson 1992: 8).
Strange and Meyer (1998) also argue in support of the growing homogenisation of the world. They stressed that the revolution in communications technology is increasingly transforming the world into a 'global village', where messages from the most distant places reach us instantaneously. The cultural system, the very substance of Western modernity, promoted by the sciences and professions as well as the Western entertainment industry, facilitates the spread of Western values and beliefs on a global scale (Strange and Meyer 1998).

From the sense in which globalisation has been used as homogenisation above, it is possible to infer that globalisation is similar to the process of modernisation that took hold with the dawn of industrial revolution in Europe in the 19th century and its popularisation through colonial intervention and other international interactions between different states and groups of people in the world. In respect of Saudi Arabia, with no experience of colonisation, modernisation could be used interchangeably with globalisation to mean Saudi interaction with the world outside. It is in this sense that the two concepts are used throughout this study.

While bringing out the effects of globalisation as both a homogenising and heterogenising process, Waters (2001), puts forward five propositions. First, globalization he argued “is in general a differentiating as well as a homogenizing process... It pluralizes the world by recognizing the value of cultural niches and local abilities (Waters, 2001: 192). Second, it also “weakens the putative nexus between nation and state, releasing absorbed ethnic minorities and allowing the reconstitution of nations across former state boundaries” (Waters, 2001: 192). This is especially important in the context of states that are a confederation of nations of ethnic minorities.

Third, it brings the centre to the periphery. “In so far as globalization is sourced in Western modernity, it introduces possibilities for new ethnic identities to cultures on the periphery.... The vehicles for this cultural flow are electronic images and affluent tourism” (Waters, 2001: 192). Fourth, “it also brings the periphery to the centre.... An obvious vehicle is the flow of economic migrants from relatively disadvantaged sectors of the globe to relatively advantaged ones” (Waters, 2001: 192). Finally, it is
also "accomplished in so far as the mass media engaged in a search for the exotic to titillate audiences in search of variety. Previously homogeneous nation-states have, as a consequence, moved in the direction of multiculturalism" (Waters, 2001: 192).

Globalisation process is also often presented as bringing out the tension between global-local interactions, or what Appadurai (2001) described as disjunctures created by the interaction between the world of flows and world of structures. Barber (1992) and Huntington (1996) also view the interaction as conflictual, a tension of "McWorld" of homogenizing globalization versus a "jihad world" of particularizing "lebanonization" (Barber, 1992); or "a clash of civilisation between the West and the East" (Huntington, 1996). Indeed, Barber (1992) defines globalisation as the opposite of localization. This view of globalisation emphasises the triumph of the global (or universal) over the local (or particular).

Underlying the debate about global homogenization and heterogenisation is the issue of the effect of globalisation process on global-local interactions. The debates about global homogenisation have tended to assume that it is a process, which overrides locality. This view however as argued by Robertson (1995), "neglects the extent to which what is called local is in large degree constructed on a trans- or super-local basis. In other words, much of the promotion of locality is in fact done from above or outside. Much of what is often declared to be local is in fact the local expressed in terms of generalized recipes of locality" (Robertson 1995: 26).

Robertson (1995) argues further that in numerous contemporary accounts, then, globalizing trends are regarded as in tension with "local" assertions of identity and culture. Thus, ideas such as the global versus the local, the global versus the 'tribal', the international versus the national, and the universal versus the particular are widely promoted. In the words of Robertson (1995):

In the perspective of contradiction the tension between, for example, the universal and the particular may be seen either in the dynamic sense of being a relatively progressive source of overall change or as a modality which preserves an existing global system in its present state (Robertson, 1995: 33).
However, rather than look at the global and local as being in tension with each other, it is necessary to transcend the debate about global homogenisation versus heterogenisation (Robertson, 1995).

It is not a question of either homogenisation or heterogenisation, but rather of the ways in which both of these two tendencies have become features of life across much of the late-twentieth-century world. In this perspective the problem becomes that of spelling out the ways in which homogenising and heterogenising tendencies are mutually implicative (Robertson, 1995: 27).

Robertson (1995) sees globalisation more in the light of local interaction with global processes. The term glocalisation is traced to the local Japanese term dochakuka (which is derived from dochaku which means living on one’s own land). Glocalisation, in its original form, means “the agricultural principle of adapting one’s farming techniques to local conditions, but also adopted in Japanese business for global localization, a global outlook adapted to local conditions. More specifically, the terms ‘glocal’ and ‘global’ became aspects of business jargon during the 1980s, but their major locus of origin was in fact Japan” (Robertson, 1995:28). According to The Oxford Dictionary of New Words (1991:134 cited in Robertson, 1995:28) “the term ‘glocal’ and the process noun ‘glocalization’are ‘formed by telescoping global and local to make a blend’” (Robertson, 1995:28).

Robertson (1995) uses the general idea of glocalisation to make a number of points about the global—local problematic. First, it was suggested that “there is a widespread tendency to regard this problematic as straightforwardly involving a polarity, which assumes its most acute form in the claim that we live in a world of local assertions against globalizing trends, a world in which the very idea of locality is sometimes cast as a form of opposition or resistance to the hegemonially global” (Robertson, 1995: 29).

Second, the use of the term glocalisation has arisen mainly from what is considered to be major weaknesses in much of the employment of the term globalisation. Robertson (1995) de-emphasises the tendency to cast the idea of globalisation as inevitably in tension with the idea of localisation. Instead, he maintained that globalisation - in the broadest sense, the compression of the world - has involved and increasingly involves
the creation and the incorporation of locality, processes which themselves largely shape, in turn, the compression of the world as a whole.

Therefore, for Robertson (1995) the notion of glocalisation actually conveys in every sense globalization. For instance, the concept of globalisation “involves the simultaneity and the interpenetration of what are conventionally called the global and the local, or - in more abstract vein - the universal and the particular” (Robertson, 1995: 30).

Robertson (1995) also suggests that globalisation conveys a sense of the local interacting with the global in a way that the local protects its identity and values while at the same time energising the local with the global. This is relevant for discussing the influence of the Internet in Saudi Arabia. The Internet represents a global phenomenon that has penetrated a local space, Saudi Arabia. The efforts of the Saudi Arabian government to regulate and control the Internet indicate a glocalisation of the Internet. The government cites the need to protect local values as one of the reasons for regulating the Internet. Hence, in a way, Internet influence and regulation in Saudi, conveys the process of the interaction of the global with the local. Robertson’s (1995) problematisation of the local and global in interactions is useful for examining the influence of a medium originating from another country on Saudi Arabia whose values and institutions are derived essentially from Islam.

From the above discussion of the factors driving globalisation or the flow of globalisation processes, it could perhaps plausibly be argued that there are probably two conceptions of globalisation as it relates to Internet influence on cultural flows and social institutions. On the one hand is the view that globalisation is a logical follow-up to the world-system, one world process leading to the emergence of a homogeneous world. On the other hand is the view that globalisation is a multidimensional process leading to profound changes in societies and bringing about a variety of worldviews leading to a heterogeneous world. These two views are important for this study because they would be useful for discussing how the Internet is making it possible for Saudi people to connect to a growing global cyber culture while at the same time providing analytical tools for looking at how the government
of Saudi Arabia is reacting to this development by trying to control access to and the content of the Internet.

1.6. Regulating the World of Flows: Internet Censorship and Regulation

Appadurai (2001) suggests that the 'disjuncture' created by the world of flows such as the Internet is bringing about tensions in relationships within nation states. As will be discussed in this section, some contents of the Internet are seen as disruptive to social-cultural orders in a number of states. This is often used as a reason to justify its censorship. To have a sense of how this works, it is useful to once again examine the argument made earlier that the nation-state plays a primary role in identity formation and in promoting and sustaining particular identities.

Lull (2001) explains that the nation "works as a fundamental cultural resource because it gives people a shared sense of difference that is endlessly reinforced, even outside conscious awareness, through the routines and rituals of everyday life, and through symbolic displays of the values and traditions especially as they are expressed in a dominant language" (Lull, 2001: 153). Nation-states, though viewed as "imagined communities" (Anderson, 1983) also function as a "defining, unifying, reinforcing, reassuring socio-political and cultural resource of extraordinary importance" (Lull, 2001: 153).

As put by Lull (2001) "the nation is a formalised, relatively stable, homogenising social space that citizens encounter every moment of their everyday lives" (2001: 153), but it is also an 'imagined community’ that is “sufficiently polysemic to allow personal interpretation and commitment to a cultural space that we share in common. This represents the crucial blending of ideology and state with culture and community in the building and maintenance of the nation” (Lull, 2001:153).

Governments therefore make efforts to promote and reinforce a particular identity by exerting their sovereign authority. This function is often invoked to justify the censorship of the media, especially the Internet. As argued by Everard (2000) “at a philosophical level, Internet censorship...is about boundary making and subjectivity. It is about construing sovereign state as Subject, as against the other of the international community of states” (Everard, 2000:147).
Everard (2000) further pointed out that issues that need to be addressed in this regard include “access and control, the politics of language and identity, and changes in fundamental perceptions and beliefs about the human condition that influence the conduct of a domestic polity’s way of life” (Everard, 2000: 67-68).

As a way of recapturing ground lost to Internet penetration therefore, governments all over the world introduced mechanisms for Internet regulation. In respect of Internet censorship in Saudi Arabia, a study was conducted by the US-based Harvard University’s OpenNet Initiative (ONI) over a three year period.

The ONI (2004) study selected roughly 60,000 Web addresses in 2002, 2003, and 2004 to discover what content Saudi Arabia blocks and attempted to access those Web addresses as if using the Internet within Saudi Arabia. According to the ONI study, the most aggressive censorship focused on pornography, drug use, gambling, religious conversion of Muslims, and filtering circumvention tools. The ONI study found that the Kingdom’s filtering focuses on the following types of content: pornography (98% of these sites tested were blocked), drugs (86%), gambling (93%), religious conversion, and sites with tools to circumvent filters (41%). In contrast, Saudi Arabia shows less interest in blocking sites on gay and lesbian issues (11%), politics (3%), Israel (2%), religion (less than 1%), and alcohol (only 1 site).

The study found substantial blocking of provocative attire, Bahai faith, Holocaust, free Web hosting, opposition political groups, and Islamic extremist sites, but the lower filtering rate in this area indicates the ISU does not attempt to prevent access to all such content. It also found out that Saudi Arabia blocks pages on gay/lesbian/bisexual issues, sexuality, women’s rights, Israel, politics, and the occult.

The study also suggests that the policies, procedures, and philosophy for Saudi Arabia’s Internet censorship system regarding such filtering are relatively transparent and documented on the website of the Internet Service Unit (ISU). For instance, users who try to access forbidden sites get a message informing them that the site is prohibited. It was pointed out that Saudi Arabia filters these topics only when particular sites were brought to the government’s attention rather than by taking active
steps to find this material and to block access to it. In spite of the comprehensiveness of filtering, sites that appear to fall outside stated prohibited topics were not blocked.

ONI’s (2004) study corroborated the findings of earlier research undertaken by Zittran and Edelman in 2002 on Internet filtering in Saudi Arabia. The ONI study cited above as well as that of Zittran and Edelman (2002) that precedes it connects back to the argument of Everard (2000) that regardless of how the individual debates are carried out, there remains the issue of national security. By developing mechanisms for controlling information on the Internet, these mechanisms can be called into play in other arenas should national security warrant such action (Everard, 2000: 150).

Outside the government, there are usually other people and groups that might have responsibilities for Internet censorship in a country. Again, Everard (1997) traces this situation to the fact that the Internet reflects greater society and emphasise the importance of education rather than unenforceable, redundant legislation for the regulation of the Internet.

Everard (1997) stressed that whatever poses danger to society in general or to minors in particular are available in different format in daily life including pornography, paedophile or recipes to make bombs. Hence, the usefulness of any legislation that targets specifically Internet content without targeting these crimes that originate in the society is questionable. For instance, against any criminal activity, there are laws and those laws are applicable to any offence committed on the Internet. In addition, most of the dangers can be overcome through a proper education and specific software that can target or block obscure sites.

Everard (2000) also suggests that the European experience has taken the regulation debate beyond national boundaries into multilateral forums. But these are still based on improving cooperation between national law enforcement agencies. As put by Everard (2000) “despite the Internet being a transnational issue, those issues arising from regulation are still carried out at the nation-state level. A number of policy issues arise from this” (Everard, 2000: 150).
Australia also enacted some State and national legislation based on the broadcast media model. Again, in the words of Everard (2000) “... the national legislation follows the broadcast media format, but encounters contradictions in relation to currently existing legislation concerning telecommunications. These contradictions will need to be resolved before Australia can enact viable national-level legislation” (Everard, 2000: 150).

An Australian government White Paper published in 2002, cited by Electronic Foundation Australia (EFA) www.efa.org.au/Issues/censor/cens3.html, grouped the policies of governments in relation to Internet regulation into four categories. In the first category is “the policy to encourage Internet industry self-regulation and end-user voluntary use of filtering/blocking technologies. This approach is taken in the United Kingdom, Canada, and a considerable number of Western European countries. It also appears to be the current approach in New Zealand where applicability of offline classification/censorship laws to content on the Internet seems less than clear” (www.efa.org.au/Issues/censor/cens3.html).

In these countries “laws of general application apply to illegal Internet content such as child pornography and incitement to racial hatred. Content "unsuitable for minors" is not illegal to make available on the Internet, nor must access to same be controlled by a restricted access system. Some (perhaps all) such governments encourage the voluntary use of, and ongoing development of, technologies that enable Internet users to control their own, and their children's, access to content on the Internet” (www.efa.org.au/Issues/censor/cens3.html).

In the second category is “the policy of adoption of criminal law penalties (fines or jail terms) applicable to content providers who make content "unsuitable for minors" available online”. This approach is taken in “some Australian State jurisdictions and has been attempted in the USA (although no such US Federal law is presently enforceable, and to the best of EFA’s knowledge nor is any such US State law)”. In these countries, in addition, “laws of general application apply to content that is illegal for reasons other than its unsuitability for children, such as child pornography” (www.efa.org.au/Issues/censor/cens3.html).
In the third category is the "policy of government mandated blocking of access to content deemed unsuitable for adults". This approach is "taken in Australian Commonwealth law (although it has not been enforced in this manner as at 2002) and also in, for example, China, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, the United Arab Emirates and Vietnam. Some countries require Internet access providers to block material while others only allow restricted access to the Internet through a government controlled access point" (www.efa.org.au/Issues/censor/cens3.html).

The fourth category is "the policy of government prohibition of public access to the Internet. A number of countries either prohibit general public access to the Internet, or require Internet users to be registered/licensed by a government authority before permitting them restricted access" (www.efa.org.au/Issues/censor/cens3.html).

In addition to the efforts of states to regulate the Internet, the people residing in the country have important roles to play too. Again, Everard (2000) suggests that in a post-modern world it has become crucial for each person to take responsibility for their own actions.

In a world of surfaces, responsibility can no longer be abrogated to a ‘universal’ value system. This is not a nihilist denial, rather a recognition of each individual as an active participant in society, with responsibilities to all other members of that society (Everard, 2000: 150).

Thus, while the Internet “continues to reflect wider society there will be distasteful elements. There is pornography on the Internet, as there is in cities. Consequently any controls applied in cyberspace must reflect those currently enforced within wider society” (Everard, 2000: 134). Therefore, concerns about the Internet reflect deeper concerns within societies for the stability and security of personal and social identity. In addition, the Internet can be used effectively in education, so long as the focus remains on educating the child to become a more effective reader of complex multimedia texts (Everard, 2000).
1.7. Internet access and societal transformation: The Case of the Digital Divide

The advent of the Internet has brought about a lot of transformations in society. Castells (2000) suggests that the Internet has had a profound influence on the social, economic, political and cultural constituents of society. Youngs and Kofman (2003) also stressed the "exponential transformations involving the Internet in all spheres of human and social interaction" (Youngs and Kofman, 2003: 11). The transformative power of the Internet is generally traced to the ways in which the Internet facilitates a sphere of exchange, which "crosses boundaries of time and space, importantly those related to states, present profound challenges to established notions of international relations and their historically predominantly state-bound constraints" (Youngs and Kofman, 2003: 11). The transformative power of the Internet also figured in the new opportunities afforded to the people, perhaps at the expense of the government. As described by Youngs and Kofman (2003):

"...While the economic success of states becomes significantly linked to digital advances of varying kinds, growing numbers of citizens are also offered via the Internet an interactive political sphere that extends well beyond the traditional state setting. Reflexive processes impacting on political affiliations and identities are increasingly likely to reflect these expanded circumstances (Youngs and Kofman, 2003: 11).

One of the ways the Internet and other information and communication technologies have transformed societies is the increasing cooperation among governments, international organisations, non-governmental organisations and individuals working together to promote an information society. One unique feature of this society is the ability to take on board some of the points earlier raised in respect of the activities of states and other non-state actors in the international system. An example of this development is the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) held in Geneva in December 2003 and in Tunis 2005.

The WSIS justified the need for organising the summit on what was considered as the fundamental ways ICTs changed the way people think, behave, communicate, work and earn their livelihood. "ICTs have forged new ways to create knowledge, educate people and disseminate information. It has restructured the way the world conducts economic and business practices, runs governments and engages politically" (WSIS, 2004).
Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have an immense impact on virtually all aspects of the lives of people across different countries.

The rapid progress of these technologies opens completely new opportunities to attain higher levels of development. The capacity of these technologies to reduce many traditional obstacles, especially those of time and distance, for the first time in history makes it possible to use the potential of these technologies for the benefit of millions of people in all corners of the world (WSIS, 2004).

However, the benefits of this development are not evenly distributed. WSIS states that “while the digital revolution has extended the frontiers of the global village, the vast majority of the world remains unhooked from this unfolding phenomenon.” The WSIS also stresses that “the benefits of the information technology revolution are today unevenly distributed between the developed and developing countries and within societies”. It therefore works to “turn the digital divide into a digital opportunity for all, particularly for those who risk being left behind and being further marginalised”. It was considered that “building an inclusive Information Society requires new forms of solidarity, partnership and cooperation among governments and other stakeholders, i.e. the private sector, civil society and international organizations. This is expected to require strong commitment by all stakeholders, both at national and international levels” (WSIS, 2004).

Therefore, in recognition of this challenge, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), following a proposal by the Government of Tunisia, resolved at its Plenipotentiary Conference in Minneapolis in 1998 to hold a World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and place it on the agenda of the United Nations. In 2001, the ITU Council decided to hold the Summit in two phases, the first from 10 to 12 December 2003, in Geneva, and the second from 16 to 18 November 2005 in Tunis (WSIS, 2004).

One of the highlights of the WSIS process is the recognition of the need for the satisfaction of the aspirations of the people in the context of sovereign authorities of states over geographically defined spaces. For instance, the declaration of principles
entitled *Building the Information Society: a global challenge in the new Millennium* expressed the desire and commitment of the WSIS to

build a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society, where everyone can create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge, enabling individuals, communities and peoples to achieve their full potential in promoting their sustainable development and improving their quality of life, premised on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and respecting fully and upholding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (WSIS, 2004).

The Summit also recognises the need to protect the right to freedom of opinion and expression as outlined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers. Communication is considered a fundamental social process, a basic human need and the foundation of all social organization and something that is central to the Information Society (WSIS, 2004).

However, while the two statements of principles by the WSIS strengthen the role of the people and other non-state actors against the state, it also stressed that the statements were made in the context of rededication of participants to upholding the principle of the sovereign equality of all States. The statement of principles also stressed that “it should not be construed as impairing, contradicting, restricting or derogating from the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, any other international instrument or national laws adopted in furtherance of these instruments” (WSIS, 2004).

Another key feature of the WSIS document that is relevant to this study is the recognition of cultural diversity as the common heritage of humankind. Thus while ICTs such as the Internet promote a homogenising world for which campaigns are being mounted for the eradication of digital divides, there is also an awareness of the need to promote divides in respect of cultures because such diversities and divides are considered as enriching human cultural heritage (WSIS, 2004).
Therefore, it is argued that

the Information Society should be founded on and stimulate respect for cultural identity, cultural and linguistic diversity, traditions and religions, and foster dialogue among cultures and civilizations. The promotion, affirmation and preservation of diverse cultural identities and languages as reflected in relevant agreed United Nations documents including UNESCO's Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, will further enrich the Information Society (WSIS, 2004).

The WSIS further suggests that the development of local content suited to domestic or regional needs will encourage social and economic development and will stimulate participation of all stakeholders, including people living in rural, remote and marginal areas (WSIS, 2004).

The preservation of cultural heritage is also seen as a crucial component of identity and self-understanding of individuals that links a community to its past. Therefore it is argued that the “Information Society should harness and preserve cultural heritage for the future by all appropriate methods, including digitisation. Cultural and linguistic diversity, while stimulating respect for cultural identity, traditions and religions, is essential to the development of an Information Society based on the dialogue among cultures and regional and international cooperation. It is an important factor for sustainable development” (WSIS, Declaration of Principles 2004).

The WSIS process is considered relevant for this study because it incorporates most of the arguments examined earlier in respect of Internet influence within the framework of globalisation. The WSIS is a state-led process to take stock of how best to harness the potential of this medium (Internet) for development. It also shows that the people in general are put as the central focus for harnessing the benefits of the Internet. It also highlights the role other non-state actors could play in harnessing the potential of the Internet. Another major highlight of the WSIS process is the promotion of an ideal of Internet governance where other stake-holders, in addition to the government join hands to effectively harness the potential of the Internet. This is considered relevant for mapping the influence and regulation of the Internet in Saudi Arabia.
With regards to the place of the Internet in the globalisation debate, Sharma (2004) stressed that the advent of the Net represents the beginning of the end of the old dichotomies about how the world is constructed in our minds and theories. She suggests that

...The Internet makes it possible to think beyond the old categorisation of the world into East-West and the “Rest,” developed-developing-underdeveloped, and traditional-modern-post-modern. It is possible to conceptualize the world in terms of what is common to people irrespective of geographical distance (Sharma, 2004: 9).

Sharma (2004) stresses further that traditional theories of culture assume that culture as a social organization has a set of endogenous properties that are central to a group of people, which binds them together. “This notion of culture is directly called into question by the free-floating and digitally mediated symbolic exchange of ideas, goods, and services. First, the Internet opens up the public domain, making the boundaries of cultural groups more permeable” (Sharma, 2004: 9). Thus, cultural practices no longer remain the domain of the elite and the few who have the resources to participate in them. Second, “the recipients of cultural materials are no longer passive subjects, simply engendering the cultural influences and passing them on to the next generation. Internet has given mass access to the public forum and the ability to circulate and mediate the symbolic goods of any culture.... Therefore, the rise of the Internet is having tremendous impact on the social and cultural landscape by diversifying the channels of cultural diffusion at Internet speed” (Sharma, 2004: 10).

One of the strengths of the Internet is that it offers virtually unlimited access to places around the world. In the words of Sharma (2004), “we all assume floating identities when we are communicating by e-mail, pretending that we are totally certain that the message sent will be received at the other end” (Sharma, 2004: 11). This also corresponds to the conceptualisation of the world of flows by Appadurai (2001).

1.8. Case Studies: Access and Digital Divide
The discussion above highlights the continuing influence of the Internet in bringing people, groups and cultures together in an online or virtual community in ways that could not be imagined without the Internet. In respect of Saudi Arabia, the Internet
has made it possible for people whose identities are defined by a milieu influenced by Islamic culture to orient themselves to the cultures, values and developments outside their immediate socio-cultural frame of reference. In this section, I will examine previous studies that discuss Internet influence in bridging the digital divide and providing access to ideas and opportunities that might not otherwise be available.

In the context of the WSIS, digital divide is taken to mean the gaps that exist between developed countries and developing countries with regards to availability of computers, telephone lines to connect the Internet and the necessary connection speed. Efforts are also being put into assisting developing countries to achieve the level attained by developed countries in respect of digital availability. Digital divide is also used to signify the way the Internet is filling ideational gaps between different societies through what Giddens (1990) described as ‘time-space compression’. In this study, I use digital divide in the two senses above. In the first sense, I examine the gaps in terms of access to computers, telephone lines and connection speed existing in Saudi Arabia in relation to other developing countries. In the second sense, I examine the ideational gaps existing between Saudi Arabia (as shaped by Islam) and the outside world. In this section, I will be discussing studies that bear on digital divide conducted in different countries and in Saudi Arabia. These studies provide the basis for some of the issues raised in the interview and questionnaire design.

Some of the cases mentioned here were cited by Castells (2002). The US Commerce Department’s National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) conducted a number of studies on the impact of the Internet and digital divide in the US between 1995 and 2000 using the survey of a representative sample of the US population. The study found out in August 2000 that for the population aged 3 and older, 41.5% of households and 44.4% of individuals in the United States had access to the Internet, with 51% of households having computers at home (Castells, 2002: 248).

In terms of income, while 70.1% of people earning 75,000 dollars and above had Internet access, the percentage was 18.9% for those with less than 15,000, 18.4% for those between 15,000 and 24,999, and 25.3% for those between 25,000 and 34,999. Education also matters: among people with a bachelor’s degree or higher, 74.5% had
access to the Internet, but the proportion fell to 30.6% among high-school graduates, and to 21.7% among those not having graduated from high school. There was also an age divide: only 29.6% of people over 50 years had access, in contrast to 55.4% for the age group 25-49, 56.8% for the group 18-24, and 53.4% for the group 9-17. Thus teenagers, as a group, had almost twice as much access as individuals over 50. Not being in the labour force was also a major discriminating factor in lowering access to the Internet: 29% in contrast to employed individuals at 56.7% (Castells, 2002: 248).

Castells’s (2002) also pointed out that by August 2000 the gender gap had all but disappeared in America in terms of access: among individuals, 44.6% of men and 44.2% of women were Internet users. In fact, other surveys indicate that in the United States in 2000 there were more women than men on the Internet, and women spent more time on-line than men.

Using household data, three other sources of differences in Internet access appear. One is family status: non-family households (single or unmarried) are the least likely to have Internet access (28.1% in contrast to 60.6% for married couples with children), although female-headed households with children are also at a disadvantage (30%).

The second source of division refers to geography: urban areas are more likely to have Internet access, in contrast with futurologists’ predictions concerning the electronic cottage: 38.9% of rural households had access in 2000, 2.6% points below the national average. There is also a significant gap in access to the Internet for children from different income groups, and this could have considerable consequences for the future (Castells, 2002: 248). This study highlights the phenomenal influence of the Internet on people and their lifestyles in the US. The study also indicates that the debate about the Internet bridging the digital divide is complex, as the Internet is shown to be bridging the gap in some areas and widening it in some others.

The study by Kiselyova and Castells, (2000) (cited in Castells, 2002) of Internet use in Russia also indicates the influence of the Internet in reinforcing the divisions in the society through such developments. The study showed a significant divide in terms of age, class, gender, and territorial disparity with Moscow and St Petersburg accounting
for about two-thirds of Internet users in the mid - 1990s. Yet, the trends in 1998-2000 seem to mirror those in the United States, albeit with much lower penetration rates, and with a slower pace in the reduction of inequalities. For instance, the diffusion of the Internet in the Russian regions was proceeding rapidly in 1998-2000, and Moscovites had lost their overwhelming dominance in the population of Internet users. Similarly, Russian women were making substantial strides (Castells 2002: 254).

The Stanford Institute for the Quantitative Study of Society (cited in the 2001 ISU study on Internet Influence in Saudi Arabia) also initiated a study in 2000 to find out the usage of Internet and its effect on social life in the US. It considered a number of issues such as where Internet is accessed from, how many hours it is used for work/fun, average number of hours of access, and the relative amount of time spent on other activities. The key findings of the survey are as follows:

With respect to Internet access, 55% of the population has access to the Internet. 38% over the age of 18 access the Internet from home. In respect of the activities carried out on the Internet, the study found out that the most common activity is email. The Internet is also often used as an information search utility. Other uses include the Internet as a source of entertainment. The study also found out that all users are involved in at least five distinct types of activities (ISU, 2001).

Regarding the time spent on the Internet, the study found out that the length of time use is proportional to amount of use, i.e., people with most experience in using the Internet spend maximum time online. The more the people use the Internet, the more they lose contact with their social environment. The Internet reduced the time spent with TV and other traditional media. Most users spent more time working at home than their office. Finally, with regard to factors causing the digital divide, the Stanford study found out that the important factors facilitating/inhibiting Internet access are education and age, while demographic differences don’t affect Internet usage (ISU, 2001).

The University of California at Los Angeles (also cited in the 2001 ISU study on Internet Influence in Saudi Arabia) also launched a comprehensive study entitled “Surveying the Digital Future” in 1999 to explore the societal changes brought about
by the Internet, Information Technology and their users. This study surveys computer
users as well as non-users in the US, Singapore and Italy. The study developed a basic
profile of behaviour and attitudes of the users within the US. Their five main areas of
concentration are a) Internet users and nonusers, b) Media use and trust, c) Consumer
behaviour, d) Communication patterns and, e) Social aspects.

Among the findings of this study pertaining to Internet usage and social aspects are
the following: For Internet usage, while the number of Internet users remained almost
the same (around 70%), the average time spent online increased from 9.8 hours
(2001) to 11 hours (2002). Internet access from home substantially increased. Email
and Instant Messaging is the most popular Internet activity, followed by web
browsing and reading news. The trend of new users versus online users with respect
to online activities was mostly the same (ISU, 2001).

Regarding the social effects of Internet usage, most users believed that the time spent
online has no influence on the time they spend with families and friends. Almost all
the adults say that the Internet has no effect on children’s interaction with their
friends. Two-third of the users agree that Internet at work makes them more
productive. With regards to using Internet for communication, the users are quite
satisfied with their skills and capability of best utilizing the Internet (an average of 4
on a scale of 5) (ISU, 2001).

Common to all the studies mentioned above is the concern with how the Internet is
bridging or increasing the divides in the society. As stressed by Castells (2002) the
fact that the rise of the Internet took place in conditions of social inequality in access
everywhere may have lasting consequences on the structure and content of the
medium, in ways that we still cannot fully comprehend. This is because users shape
the Internet to an even greater extent than any other technology because of the speed
of transmission of their feedback, and the flexibility of the technology. Thus, first
users may have shaped the Internet for the latecomers, both in terms of content and of
technology, in the same way that the pioneers of the Internet shaped the technology
for the masses of users in the 1990s. As the technology of access becomes more
complex with more sophisticated technologies (for example, graphic user interface), it
may slow down the rate of adoption among less-educated groups (Castells’s 2002: 255).

Castells (2002) argued further that while the libertarian strand that created the Internet provided a world wide web of opportunity (albeit at the price of some cultural elitism), it could, however, be that the largely commercialized uses of the Internet in the late 1990s, following a model of consumption and social organization anchored in the affluent groups of the most advanced Western societies, may have biased the practice of the Internet in specific ways, still to be revealed by future investigation (Castells, 2002).

A number of studies conducted in the Arab world also indicate the profound influence of the Internet on Arab societies. Najwa Abdul Salam (1998) conducted a study, investigating the habits and the reasons behind Internet usage among the Egyptian youths. The study found variations in the subject matter individuals sought through the Internet. 61% used the Internet as a source of scientific information, Arts information (40%), Sport (26.2%), Political and economical (18.8%), Mother and child (13.4%), Trade (14%). 81.2% from the study sample stated that obtaining information via the Internet was easy whilst 15% considered it difficult. The study results found that 58% of the youth had been using the Internet for more than 6 months whilst 20% had been using it for only 3 months. As for Internet habits of Egyptian youths, 51.7% of those polled said they had their own private subscription and 18.8% used it through their place of work whilst 20.8% through Internet Cafes and 12.4% via organizations and scientific centers.

A study carried out by Fahmy (1998), looked at the use of the Internet amongst the 18-35 age group in Egypt. The results showed that 58% had been using the Internet for more than one year whilst 22% had been users for more than 6 months. The study also showed that 57.8% of those polled obtained their Internet service via private companies, 10.7% from their workplace, 8% from the Council for the Ministers and 5.4% via the higher council of universities. The main use of the Internet by these users was stated as being to obtain information.
Tayie (2000) conducted a study about the use of Internet in the Arab world. The study indicates that 363 students (72.6%) out of 500 used the Internet. The study shows that newspapers are the main source of information regarding the Internet, closely followed by magazines (71.3%) however men and women differed on this matter. Also, 56.2% of those asked said they learnt about the Internet from friends with both men and women agreeing on this. The family was counted as the fourth source of information about the Internet (28.9%) with the university following closely behind. Interestingly the study did not show any substantial variations among those polled in different Arab countries. Having said that, personal, one-to-one information about the Internet was higher among the Egyptian youth in comparison to other Arabs. Of those polled, 72% used the Internet, this ratio is slightly lower in Egypt compared to that of other Arab nations. The results showed that evenings are the most popular time to browse the Internet with 94.2% of people saying they used it then. Social Science students made more use of Internet facilities than did the Science based students.

With regard to how long those asked had been using the Internet, the study showed that Bahrain and Emirates were among the first to use the Internet followed by Egypt, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. The Internet was shown to be a very important source of news and information (91.5%) as well as entertainment (88.7%). In respect of the type of information sought, 62% sought scientific information, 56% social and cultural information, 52% entertainment, 45% arts. The study also showed 45.5% of those asked used the Internet for internal communications (e-mail) while the use of email for international communication was limited to only 13.8% and 1.9% for shopping.

Al Saied (1997) carried out a study to explore the services that the Internet provides and the demands of its users. The study aimed to understand the effects of the Internet on the traditional methods of communication and to explore the characteristics of the public using it. The main focus was on the national network for information as an example for communication networks. The study aimed to discover the individuals using the network, what they use it for and the need this use satisfies as well as the influence of using this service on the rates of exposure to visual display units (VDU). The study sample consisted of the 110 subscribers to ‘Enstinet’ service.
provider as at 10th June 1996. A selected sample from the list of subscribers who were still using the service at the time of the study has risen to 173 at the time of the study. Also samples of 150 random Internet users were selected. The researcher adopted the survey methodology and distributed a questionnaire to both samples. It was concluded that the majority of the users was from the youth and of a high educational, economical and social level. The study also showed the effect of social and psychological variations of the individual on the use of the Internet. The electronic email was the most common use. The researcher also concluded that the reasons behind using the Internet differs by age, sex, profession and education. However, despite all the differences amongst those sampled, they agreed on the reasons behind using electronic email. The study confirmed that the use of Internet has not affected the rates of exposure to VDUs.

Abdul-Gani (2003) carried out a study to measure the moral effects of the Internet on Egyptian university students and how these effects related to the social, cultural and environmental differences among the students. The study also measured to what extent the Internet had affected conduct/moral views among the students. The study adopted the theory of education as a guiding frame. It therefore examined the influence of the Internet on the education of Egyptian students. It used a questionnaire to collect data of which the most important results were:

1. The phenomenal growth of Internet usage within Egyptian society with more than 1 million users.
2. The users of the Internet in Egyptian society, until now, were from higher social classes whose income was high and of which 39% lived in exclusive areas. Although the aim is for the Internet to reach the grassroots, the majority do not as yet have access to it.
3. Egyptian students used the Internet for mainly basic purposes i.e. email, chatting, listening to music and down loading ring-tones for mobile phones.
4. Respondents identified dangers resulting from the abuse of the Internet in such areas as culture, politics, health, religion and discipline.
5. Pornographic websites were by far considered as the main danger by all the respondents.
6. The majority of dangers identified by the young people related to Internet content.
7. Respondents called for a review of the ways of discipline and upbringing due to the negative influence the Internet is thought to have on the morality of the society. 

8. The respondents also indicate that the difficulties facing countries in monitoring the Internet increase the pressure on families to monitor their children whilst using the Internet to protect them from its negative influence.

The Internet Services Unit (ISU, 2001) of the King Abdul Aziz City for Science and Technology also conducted a pioneering study on the Internet influence and penetration in Saudi Arabia. The study came out with the following interesting findings with respect to the age, gender, job, organization, education and place of residence of users of the Internet.

The study indicates that three-quarters of the respondents (who are Internet users) are in the age group of 16-35. However, the trend of number of respondents of age group 16-25 decreased, as the majority of respondents in the first period were students in educational institutions.

With regard to gender, males have more opportunities accessing the Internet than the females, whether it be from home, work place or Internet cafés. However, during the two years there was a slight increase in the number of female respondents. According to Dabbah Information Technology (DIT), these results are not surprising, as they represent early stage patterns, common in the middle-east region. A survey done by them earlier in 1996 showed that the early users of Internet to be male, young and working in some part in of computer/technology business.

With respect to Internet access in the Kingdom in relation to the type and nature of job, majority of the Internet users who responded are students, as compared to people in other professions. During the first half of the project duration, more than 50% respondents were students, but this trend stabilized to about 30% in the remaining periods. Also, except for the first six-month period, the trends for different occupation remained quite stable.

The next factor is the level of education of the respondents. The levels varied from 'High School' to 'Doctoral and Professional Degree'. 'Vocational Training' and
'Some College Education' were also included. About 65% of the respondents possessed high school or college education.

Pertaining to area-wise distribution of Internet users, majority of Internet users reside in major cities, i.e. Jeddah, Riyadh and Dammam. There is a lack of Internet facilities in the rural areas.

The Internet is used in work places maximum for 10-20 hours per week. Percentage of users using the Internet for work for few hours/week is increasing. While Internet usage for more than five hours per week shows a fluctuating trend, the number of people spending the minimal 1-5 hours/week online shows a consistent upward growth. This is most likely due to the steady integration of Internet technologies into Saudi work culture, wherein one would expect novice employees to use the Internet minimally.

With regard to hours/week spent by respondents on the computer/Internet for leisure, more than one-third of the respondents do not spend more than five hours per week online as a means of entertainment. Significantly, the 1-5 hours per week usage has decreased gradually while there is a slightly upward trend for 10-20 hours. Patterns for both the 5-10 hours and 'over 40 hours' segment remain more or less the same. This strongly indicates the growing use of Internet at home and for leisure purposes, as people expectedly would not be using the Internet facilities at work for fun or play.

With regards to the various types of Internet services that are most popular and widely used, the respondents were allowed to select more than one choice. Three services, namely ‘Usenet, Listserv, Discussion Forums’ (chatting), ‘Internet Phone’, and ‘Streaming Audio’ (music) are used by more than 40% of the respondents. Except for the first six-month period, the trends of these services remain more or less the same and no significant pattern is observed. The most common activity users do online is to look up information about computer hardware and software. This is affirmed by more than 60% of the respondents. Online chat/discussion is the next most common activity.
Understandably, given the Internet’s wide scope of application from work to leisure, its use is bound to affect user’s other activities. More than one-third of the users (37.6%) tend to reduce the time spent viewing television with daily Internet access. Other activities affected by the Internet on a daily basis are ‘reading books, magazines, and newspaper’ as well as sleeping.

On a weekly and monthly basis, the activity most affected by the Internet is ‘going out or socializing’ followed by ‘reading books, etc’. Interestingly, the activities that are never affected by the usage of Internet are playing card or board games. A possible reason for this might be that some card/board games are specific to the Saudi country/culture and don’t have an online equivalent.

The study indicates that Internet usage patterns in Saudi organizations are changing, thereby affecting the way people work. Moreover, besides work, Internet/computers are steadily becoming a mainstream medium for fun, leisure and play. The Internet in various cases is replacing other traditional media such as the television. It also affects other daily, weekly and monthly activities. Users are involved in a range of online activities from discussion forums, streaming media to online chatting and searching information on numerous issues. From a more direct social perspective, the Internet helps in connecting with people from different parts of the globe, eliminating geographical boundaries and creating new online social groups based on common interests.

1.9. Conclusion

This chapter has examined a range of concepts that are considered as useful analytical tools for discussing the remaining chapters in this thesis. The review of literature indicates that the theme of this study, Internet influence and regulation, cuts across a range of topics. The first of these concepts is the idea of nation-states as bounded entities carrying out a range of functions. Nation-states are taken as the recognised political unit responsible for exercising sovereign authority over a geographical space or territory. This is the basis of the international system. In addition to its political expression as the sovereign authority within a defined territory, states are also cultural expressions actively engaged in identity making within territories and projection of such identities outside its territory.
The review of the literature also indicates that many factors are challenging the exclusive claims of states at the level of political expression and cultural expression. In the words of Appadurai (2001), the "world of flows" are challenging the "world of structures" and thereby creating "disjuncture" in the international system. While nation-states are still the only internationally recognised unit for political and cultural organisation within the international system, the challenge posed by these developments to cultural and political authorities within states is a significant one. As stressed by Anderson (1983) nation-states are imagined communities that evolve from struggles over different identities within historically specific milieu. Therefore, possible alternative interpretation of historical identities could pose a significant challenge to the cohesiveness of nation-states.

The review of literature also indicates that a number of factors driving globalisation processes have potentially destabilising effects on states. The Internet is acknowledged as one of the factors with the most profound effect on the exclusive claims of nation-states to influence over identities and political engagements within and outside particular territories. A number of definitions of globalisation examined in this chapter emphasised the influence of the Internet. This influence is profound because of the Internet's ability to penetrate geographical boundaries and thereby challenge the meaning of territoriality. The Internet has also given expression to concepts such as deterritorialisation and emergence of virtual communities that cut across geographical boundaries.

This chapter also examined the influence of the Internet on cultural identities. It considered the cultural variant of globalisation as most relevant for understanding the influence and regulation of the Internet in Saudi Arabia. Within cultural globalisation, concepts such as glocalisation and hybridisation were considered particularly useful as analytical tools for gaining insights into Internet influence and regulation in Saudi. The challenge imposed on sovereignty by developments such as glocalisation and hybridisation were also discussed as were the approaches of different countries to Internet regulation.
From the review of literature, the Internet comes across as the most important influence on the transformation of societies in the late 20th century and the beginning of 21st century. It could, therefore, be argued that the Internet has become a site of intense struggle between many power contenders. Although the state mediates this struggle for power through regulation, the Internet still represents a vehicle for major transformation of the society. In the remaining chapters, I will map the impact of the Internet in Saudi Arabia and the reaction of the government to this development.
CHAPTER TWO
Saudi Arabia: A Blend of Tradition With Modernisation

2.1. Introduction
This chapter provides a comprehensive review of the country, Saudi Arabia, where this research was conducted. It discusses the role of tradition and modernisation in the development of Saudi Arabia. These two factors are considered useful for analysing and understanding the dynamics that lie behind social, economic, cultural and political developments in Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia combines two unique features. It houses the most important symbols of the Islamic religion. This makes the country a focus of attention for the promotion of Islamic religion. At the same time, Saudi Arabia is the largest oil producer in the world. This makes the country an important global energy power. This chapter discusses how Saudi Arabia balances the two features above in relation to the development and influence of the Internet in the country.

It begins with an overview of the historical evolution of Saudi Arabia. It then discusses the factors that shaped the development of the country since its founding. The chapter examines the role of oil wealth, religious, cultural and political factors in the development of the country. Finally, the chapter discusses the relevance of these developments to the understanding of the influence and regulation of the Internet in Saudi Arabia.

2.2. An Overview of the Historical Evolution of Saudi Arabia
Before the formation of present day Saudi Arabia, “the Arabian peninsula was politically unstable and in a state of chaos” (Vasilliev, 2000: 50). Saudi Arabia, which derived its name from the Al-Saud family, came into being when the Al-Saud family united the country and maintained a state of order in the land. A brief history of the political structure of the area by Vasilliev (2000) describes the region as ‘the centre of anti-Ottoman sentiments’ during World War I, during which period the British had a commanding presence in the eastern and southern coasts. The founder of Saudi Arabia, Abd al-Aziz ibn abd al-Rahman al-Sa’ud, controlled the centre and north, while the Hashemite Sherif of Makkah controlled the west coast. However, large areas of the west coast were held together under the control of various local sheikhs.
Although Ibn Saud never achieved his ultimate goal of unifying all Arab nations under one umbrella, he emerged as the undisputed ruler in the east, while Sherif Hussein ruled in the West. When Hussein declared himself Caliph (successor to the Prophet Mohammed as the spiritual leader of Islam) following the deposition of the Ottoman Sultan, Ibn Sa’ud responded with a successful challenge, achieving control of the Western Kingdom in 1926 and integrating the two kingdoms into today’s Saudi Arabia in 1932.

Prior to its unification, Saudi Arabia was divided into numerous tribes with diverse customs and traditions. Al-Farsy (2003) suggests that in spite of the differences, the population of Saudi Arabia is homogeneous and the people share the same religion, the same heritage, speak the same language and practise almost identical traditions. This does not mean that there have been no changes. Kurian (1987) states that there has been a dramatic transformation in the nomadic way of life of Bedouin Arabs. They have moved from a nomadic population through to semi-nomadic stages and then settlement. It is estimated that the Bedouin population is possibly less than 5% of the total as the government further encourages urbanisation (Kurian, 1987).

Arabic is the official language in Saudi Arabia and it exists in two forms: classical and colloquial. Classical Arabic is the language of the Qur’aan and the means of formal communication, literary expression, poetry and oration. Preservation of linguistic homogeneity is essential to maintaining Saudi Arabia’s cultural and social identity. As argued by Giddens (1989):

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

One of the reasons why Saudi Arabia is able to maintain its linguistic homogeneity is failure of any of the colonial powers to colonise the country in the period of colonial occupation of most countries in the world. Saudi Arabia is a country which has never been colonised, does not have the vestiges of colonial rule and has not experienced imposed radical change. As put succinctly by Braibanti (1986):
Saudi Arabia’s cultural, religious, linguistic and ethnic homogeneity is unmatched by other systems. The political system of Saudi Arabia has emerged in about half a century without the disabilities of strong colonial traditions (Braibanti, in Al-Farsy, 1986: foreword).

The political and economic foundation of modern Saudi Arabia came into existence during King Abdulaziz’s era. In 1932, when Abdulaziz was crowned, he pursued a culturally oriented policy and maintained religion as the backbone of both the society and the state. King Saud was the first to succeed his father and ruled from 1953 to 1964. King Faisal ruled from 1964 to 1975. King Faysal's reign (1964-1975) brought about lots of developments to the country (Vasilliev, 2000). During this period, the economy of the country depended mostly on oil wealth and it was geared to the development of business, health and education services. There was also a policy of balancing the socio-economic and technological changes the country was experiencing with the strengthening of the Islamic moral code in the society. This reinforced the traditional values of the society in the midst of significant structural transformation of the country. Cultural and religious norms probably, more strongly shape the essence of government control in Saudi Arabia than in other countries of the region. An elaborate welfare system was introduced, guaranteeing free health insurance and free education to Saudi citizens, especially to support people who did not benefit from business opportunities and social change (Al-Farsy, 2003; Vasilliev, 2000; Kostiner, 1997).

The developments initiated by Faysal were continued by his successor, King Khalid (1975-82). Following the death of King Khalid, King Fahd was sworn in as the new King on 13th June 1982. King Fahd pioneered a number of developments in Saudi Arabia. Among these were the restructuring of the system of government such as the introduction of a regional administration and new larger Shura council as well as a council of ministers with limited tenure in office. Similarly, a massive programme of internal development to bring health, education and communications to all and a multi billion dollar extension and renovation project to the two holy mosques were embarked upon (Ministry of Information, 2003).

While discussing the drivers of change in Saudi Arabia, Obaid (2001) stressed that it is appropriate to claim that oil formed a bridge between traditional Saudi Arabia and
the industrial world. Thus Saudi Arabia could be said to occupy an important place in
the world. It serves as the gateway between the Islamic world (being the birthplace of
Islam) and the industrialized world (mostly non Islamic) due to its control of a
significant amount of the world’s oil reserve. The country therefore fits into the model
of global interdependence discussed in the last chapter. This also provides a good
background for discussing the interaction between a product that originates from the
industrialized world (the Internet) and a society, such as Saudi Arabia, that takes pride
in defending the values of Islam.

2.3. Factors that influenced Development of Saudi Arabia
Two main factors influenced the development of Saudi Arabia. The first factor is the
role of oil wealth and the modern transformation of Saudi Arabia. The second factor
is the role of Islam in the promotion and protection of traditional values in Saudi
Arabia. The influence of the two factors on the development of Saudi Arabia is
mapped in the diagram below. Oil wealth brought about a number of developments.
The first one is increased urbanisation that transformed the lives of Bedouin Arabs
from mostly nomadic to settled ones. It also made it possible for the state to
underwrite basic infrastructural and social services such as hospitals and education. It
also made it possible for an increasingly educated and financially well-to-do class of
Saudis to mount campaigns challenging the authority of the government. Islam, like
the oil wealth also exerted its influence on the country different ways. Islam
influenced the system of government, educational policies and the society (especially
in the relationship between Saudi’s and the outside world). Each of these factors (role
of oil wealth and Islam in the development of Saudi Arabia) will now be discussed
more elaborately in the sections that follow.

2.3.1 Oil Wealth and the Modernisation of Saudi Arabia
Oil is the main driving force of the economy (Obaid, 2001). Saudi Arabia is the
world’s largest producer and exporter of crude oil. The table below indicates a steady
flow of income from the exportation of crude oil from 1988 up till 2001. Oil wealth
transformed many Saudi traditional cities to modern ones with excellent
infrastructures. It also brought about massive rural urban migration.
To appreciate how oil wealth transformed Saudi Arabia, it is useful to discuss briefly
the topographical scape of Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia covers an area of 865,000
square miles (Al-Farsy, 2003). Despite its massive size, large parts of the country are
uninhabitable, resulting in population concentrations in the littoral regions, mountains,
and oases. The settlements, many grown into cities, are mainly founded with great
efforts to settle the Bedouin in the Arabian Peninsula during the first quarter of last
century (Ministry of Information, 2003).

However, as stressed by Long (2003) urbanization has changed the face of the
country. In the 1960s, the population lived predominantly in small towns and villages.
Jeddah, then the largest city, had a population of about 250,000, and Riyadh had about
200,000. Today, the great majority of Saudis live in urban areas; Riyadh now numbers
over 3.5 million, and Jeddah over 3 million (Long, 2003).

The growth of towns is characteristic of all countries in the East in the twentieth
century, but in Saudi Arabia urbanization was connected with industrialization to
some degree. The percentage of the urban population grew rapidly: it stood at 48.7%
in 1970, 58.7% in 1977, 66.8% in 1982, and 77.3% in 1990. Modern towns sprang up
as industrial, administrative and cultural centres. The area of Riyadh had increased
from some 110 sq. km in 1968 to 1,600 sq. km by 1992. Its population rose from
160,000 to 2 million over the same period. The capital changed beyond all recognition
(Vassiliev, 2000).

**Figure 2.2. Oil Revenues of Saudi Arabia, 1988-2001 (million US$)**
Source: (Al-Farsy, 2003: 125)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total revenue</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total revenue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>252,768</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>397,230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>181,500</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>509,932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>284,625</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>599,943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>443,032</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>299,992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>464,996</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>391,676</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>482,962</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>804,090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>358,143</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>1689,681</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N.B. The figure above shows the most up to date statistics in Saudi Arabia
provided by the Office of Statistics in Saudi Arabia as at 2002. The records are
updated by the Office of Statistics every five years.
Jeddah, the industrial and commercial heart of the country, had an area of 1,200 sq. km and a population of more than 1 million in the early 1980s (risen from 350,000 in 1970). Other cities and towns had much lower populations: the total population of Dammam, al-Khobar and Dhahran was some 350,000, al-Taif 330,000, Buraidah 184,000, Hail 92,000, Anaiza 68,000 and Najran some 60,000. Makkah and Medina were adorned with magnificent new buildings in the 1970s and 1980s (Vassiliev, 2000: 459).

In addition to physical transformation, Saudi Arabia also experienced lots of social changes that were driven by oil wealth and the government’s commitment to modernization. In the past fifty years, the Kingdom has spent billions of dollars on social, physical and economic infrastructure, including modern education, transportation, communications, health care and sanitation. As a result of this, Saudi demographics have changed dramatically. Modern health care created a population explosion of an estimated 3.5% a year. Saudi Arabia's population increased from about 2 to 4 million in the 1960s to about 16 million by the end of the century (Ministry of Information, 2003; Long, 2003).

Most recent estimates put the population of the Kingdom at 22 million. Male population of the Saudi national population is 50.4% compared to 49.6% female. More than half of the population were under 20 years of age. Recent figures indicated that the average GNP per person is approximately $6200. Two thirds of the population dwell in the cities (Saudi Statistical Year Book, 2002).

The need for development and catching up with modernization, in terms of education of the people, and the well-being of the people of Saudi Arabia has led to a considerable improvement in the educational sector (Saudi Statistical Yearbook, 2002). The educational infrastructure has increased and a 2002 estimate showed that there were 6,206 primary schools, with more than 1 million students and 177,000 teachers. There were 1,716 intermediate schools, with 491,000 students and 43,565 teachers. The number of secondary schools reached 1,571 with 365,560 students and 30,516 teachers. Also unlike the past, the Kingdom has been very careful to try and expand girl education standards. The 2002 estimate also indicated that 20% of entire female population in the country was under some form of formal education. A total
of 400,000 male and female students are attending eight universities in the Kingdom. These eight universities provide nearly 170 faculties of religious, arts, social, scientific, medical and economic studies, in addition to a number of colleges for teachers, health and technology (Saudi Statistical Yearbook, 2002).

The educational system is free and provides not only education but also books and health care service. The standard practice is for a child to be enrolled first at primary school for six years. This is followed by three years at intermediate school and then three more at high school before progressing to university or college (Ministry of Information, 2003). The policy of encouraging Saudis, both males and females, to enrol in schools and the massive investments of the government in educational infrastructures show that there is the possibility of Internet use (where Internet is introduced) being adopted by students enrolled in the schools. The influence of the Internet among students would form one of the main line of investigation that will be pursued in this study.

Prior to unification in 1932, education had been concentrated in religious schools, either Katatib (writing schools) or Halagat (seminar style schools) and lesson content revolved purely around the Qur’aan (Vassiliev, 2000). The process of modernisation, however, demanded a more modern educational system which could train and empower Saudis to participate in the development of their society. Furthermore, the government aimed at reducing levels of illiteracy. In conjunction with the Five-Year Plans, it hoped to develop scientific and technical capabilities in the new generation, thereby training Saudi people to take over the tasks of the foreign workforce. The educational reforms which took place were facilitated and expedited by a number of components: the importation of educational technology; training abroad of students and teachers; positive encouragement from the government in the form of free education; and the financial investment in the construction of schools and the purchase of equipment and materials (Ministry of Information, 2003; Al-Farsy, 2003).

In order to succeed in their reforms, the government had to surmount a number of impediments (Vassiliev, 2000). The first of these was the fact that the nomads, the indigenous population of Saudi Arabia are a kind of people who are rooted in their traditions and would not succumb readily to change. The next problem was a lack of
educators and trainers in Saudi Arabia. In addition, there was strong objection from
the religious element to a modern, Western form of education, and objection from the
conservative elements that feared that public education would result in discontent and
unrest. They opposed, especially, the establishment of girls’ schools believing this
would divert them from their duties as wives and mothers. This raises the issue of
modernisation versus tradition. Islam has played an important role in shaping
developments in Saudi Arabia. The next section discusses the role of Islam in shaping
public and private lives in Saudi Arabia. The tension between modernisation and
tradition provides good analytical tools for examining how Saudis interacted with the
new media of Internet as well as the process of Internet influence and regulation in
Saudi Arabia.

2.3.2. Role of Islam
Historically, Saudi Arabia has occupied a special place in the Islamic world, for it is
towards Makkah and Islam’s most sacred shrine, the Ka’abah (located in the Holy
Mosque there) that Muslims throughout the world turn devoutly in prayer five times a
day. And, “at least once in their lives, all Muslims who are not prevented by personal
circumstance perform the Hajj, the pilgrimage to Makkah” (Al-Farsy, 2003:10).
Therefore, an overview of the role of Islam is therefore essential for a genuine
understanding of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, its Islamic heritage and its leading
role in the Arab and Muslim worlds (Saudi Arabia Ministry of Information, 2003).

Islam has also influenced, in a significant way, the history and development of the
Arabian Peninsula and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in particular. In the 18th century,
a religious scholar of the central Najd, Muhammad Bin Abdul Wahhab, joined forces
with Muhammad Bin Saud, the ruler of the town of Diriyah, to bring the Najd and the
rest of Arabia back to the original and undefiled form of Islam. The Kingdom of
Saudi Arabia is the heartland of Islam; the birthplace of its history, the site of the two
holy mosques and the focus of Islamic devotion and prayer (Ministry of Information,
2003).

The basis of the constitution in Saudi Arabia is the Shariah (Islamic law). The
presence of Shariah also necessitates a class called Ulema which is responsible for the
implementation of religious laws in every aspect of life in Saudi Arabia. Amin (1985) defines the *Ulema* as follows:

The *Ulema* can be defined as a religious and conservative group, traditionally conceived of by the government as the guardian of Islam orthodoxy in governmental political decisions (Amin, 1985: 34).

The *Ulema* has considerable power in day-to-day decision and on long term policy making. Their powers are asserted through the issuance of Fatwa or legal decision by *Ulema* (Vogel, 2000: 10). The *Ulema* hold weekly meetings with the King and are in charge of setting and the implementation of the moral standards across the Kingdom. The administration is carried out by the Council of Ministers, consisting of 28 members. It serves as an instrument of the government in both legislative and executive matters. Therefore, it could be argued that in Saudi Arabia Islamic culture provides the basis for governance.

Giddens (2001) stated that the concept of culture comprises the values held by the members of a particular society or group, the accepted norms that they follow and what the group creates in terms of material products. It also consists of the ideas and habits which are learned, shared and diffused through generations. It is a collection of shared concepts. To surrender any one of these components would amount to surrendering a part of the society’s unique social identity. Al-Farsy (1986) argued that most developing countries of the world risk the loss of their cultural identity while modern transformation takes place. Alien societal norms and values inconsistent with these nations heritage and cultures seem to overwhelm indigenous values (Al-Farsy, 1986). Hence, the Internet, seen as one of the processes of modernisation, has the potential of offsetting and challenging local customs. As discussions on homogenisation and heterogenisation shows, there is no one way effect of modernisation.

Salem (1973) defined modernisation as:

the process by which a country adapts, transforms, or replaces its traditional institutions and patterns of life under the influence of new science and technology that arose during the renaissance in Western Europe (Salem, 1973:2).
As implied in Salem’s (1973) definition, the process of adopting and implanting any modern ideas or practices does not always necessitate the compromising of local beliefs, values and culture, especially when there are few contradictions arising as a result of this adoption process.

Economic and global communication developments have made it inevitable that the Saudi people are exposed to and influenced by Western values and ideologies. The question then is to what extent can these values be reconciled with the traditional Islamic values that have defined most of the identities in Saudi Arabia pre and post unification? From the earlier discussion of the homogenising and heterogenising effects of global interactions, there are possibly two answers to the question. The first answer might probe how Saudi Arabia and its people are embracing the changes brought about through global interactions and how they are adapting their traditional lives accordingly.

Mansfield (1981) who supports the first view described the modernisation of the Arabian peninsula thus:

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

The second answer might probe how the new trends brought about by global interactions are being seen as something that should be challenged and resisted due to the perceived undermining effects they might have on existing traditions and cultures in the society. These two questions will now be discussed in relation to the influence of the Internet and reactions to this development by both the government and people of Saudi Arabia.
2.3.3. Cultural Life in Saudi Arabia

Another factor that has shaped the development of Saudi Arabia is cultural values, which are also influenced by Islam. As stressed by Vassiliev (2000) culture here refers to the whole complex of material and nonmaterial things that explain the specific way of life in a country. Although the rapid growth of modernisation and economic development visibly accelerated the decline of a number of traditional structures of the society, Saudi Arabia has managed to preserve its traditional way of life. In Saudi society family values, respect for elders, supporting family members is very much valued (Vasilliev, 2000).

The nomadic culture is one of the main sources of the present Saudi culture, and it is a recognised social unit in the society where people identified within tribes in which the Sheikh is the head. The family is the strongest unit of the tribe where child socialisation and tradition and value education takes place. Age is the basis of respect and power within the family. Male is the ‘man’, the carer, and women are subordinate to him. The tribal concepts and values are still in existence and taught in schools. Ties of kinship are still very strong. “Usually each individual in the family has to consult his father or eldest brother about important decisions” (Vasilliev, 2000: 112-118). It would be interesting see in what direction the introduction of the Internet has influenced these established traditions of family, tribal as well as male and female interactions in Saudi Arabia.

Modernisation brought about by oil wealth has led to not only noticeable physical changes in Saudi Arabia, it has also brought with it changes in social values. For instance as pointed out by Al-Farsy (2003) the family size has decreased and approach to professions and jobs have been different. Individuals travel more, which is brought about by improved road networks and income. The importance of education was understood as the number of students within the society increased. In 2001 the total number of student enrolment was close to 6 million, at about 23,000 schools and eight universities. It has been a great challenge, therefore, for the government and the society to maintain the culture while fostering economic and technological change.
The Saudi Development Plan indicates that both the society and the government are well aware that economic and technological advancement can lead to different paths that cannot be projected. It is believed that confusion and challenges to the traditional values of Saudi Arabia prove to be inescapable as a result of change. The society has more material choice than ever before. This wealth enables society to move from the level of necessity to one of increased economic freedom and standard, and there has been an increase in the available time for social and cultural activities. While this is the case, the government is keen to safeguard cultural heritage under rapidly changing conditions as the government believes that the cultural coherence is a must in order to understand and overcome the shocks and dislocation of lifestyles in economic progress (Saudi National Development Plans, 1970-1990). Hence, it is useful to examine how the Internet is affecting the social and cultural landscape of Saudi Arabia and the response of the government to this development.

This is important because the experience in Saudi Arabia did not support the widely held view that the influence of tradition in a society reduces as the society modernises. As argued by Long (2003) “despite rapid modernisation and the transformation of Saudi Arabia from a desert backwater to a modern country, tribal and familial attachments are proving impervious to the influence of modernity” (http://www.saudi-american-forum.org/Newsletters/SAF_Essay_09.htm) [accessed 04:30, 14/05].

In spite of moving to the cities, members of Saudi extended families still tend to live in close proximity to each other whenever possible, and when not, they do a great deal of socializing with other members. In addition, many families retain homes in their hometowns as well as where they work. Long (2003) stressed that “a major reason for the resilience of the traditional extended family structure is the extraordinary strength of traditional Islamic social, economic and political values. Although behavioural patterns have changed these basic values are deeply held and are not likely to change rapidly over time” (http://www.saudi-american-forum.org/Newsletters/SAF_Essay_09.htm) [accessed 04:30, 14/05]. The central role that families play in Saudi Arabia is obvious in three areas.
Firstly, elders play pivotal roles in the family. Saudi Arabia has a patriarchal society, where there is an acknowledge respect for age and seniority. The wisdom and authority of elders is seldom challenged, and younger men and women must wait their turn, often until their sixties or older, before they are accorded the role of family patriarchs and matriarchs (Long, 2003).

Secondly, there are clearly defined gender roles in Saudi Arabia. Traditional gender roles in Saudi society share a number of common characteristics with other traditional societies, the most notable of which is that men's roles are outside the home as family providers, protectors, and managers and women's roles are in the home. Men are predominant outside the home -- in business and public affairs and women are, to a large degree, predominant within the home, particularly in parental decisions.

Women substantiate their role within modern society as the guardians of family observance, in particular the spiritual and moral education of their children. If a woman’s role is therefore to act as the protector of traditions and morals and safeguard the moral well-being of their children, this role has gained added significance in view of the clash and interaction between tradition and modernity. The driving force of ‘liberation’ for women has had implications for the role of women in Saudi Arabia. On the one hand, many fully accept their role in society, and therefore do not perceive imitation of the Western idea of a woman’s role as ‘liberating’. A number of them believe that there is no need to pursue the Western concept of equality between the sexes, which they feel means erosion of both the importance of motherhood and of loyalty to Islam, and may contradict the perception of being female. The female population find a balanced formula for partnership, which takes into account their responsibilities, their aptitudes and their potential for contributing to the advancement of society (Lemu, 1978). Increasingly, however, the lines of distinction are being blurred. For example, as the population explosion has greatly reduced the per capita income, many young wives are finding employment outside the home, and husbands are assuming duties in the home unthinkable a generation ago (Long, 2003).
Finally, the family plays important roles in the decision-making process. The traditional method for reaching and legitimizing group decisions in Arabia is through consultation (Shura) among those within the group whose opinions are considered important. From consultation emerges consensus (Ijma'), and is binding on all members of the group. Within the extended family, the principal consensus makers are senior members or elders (Long, 2003). All these factors have played an important part in public discourses in Saudi Arabia and they have also been examined as factors for analysis in the discussion of the impact of Internet in Muslim societies in general and in Saudi society in particular.

Saudi Arabian government reinforces this role of the family in the society by placing a huge responsibility on the family with respect to the education of children. Article 8 of the Saudi Information policy viewed the family as the main cell in the society’s structure and as the first school where children receive knowledge and guidance, hence its importance as a means of preventing children from the evil contents of the Internet (Information Policy in Saudi Arabia, Ministry of Information, 2002)(included as Appendix 4A).

Perhaps as recognition of the role of the family in Saudi Arabia, the Fourth Development Plan (1985-1990) made the household accountable for disseminating and nurturing the cultural, religious and social education of the children. The mosques, schools and media are expected to sustain and guide family life in these areas. In this way, there is diffusion of Islamic laws, beliefs, tribal concepts and traditional values and while this does not eliminate confusion, it establishes the norm to be followed, and the points of departure. However, the success or failure of these institutions is contingent upon a number of circumstances related to management and appropriate allocation of resources, as well as the effective management of the use of the media, such as the Internet.

2.3.4. Politics and Government in Saudi Arabia

As indicated earlier in this chapter, the system of government in Saudi Arabia is heavily influenced by Islamic religion. The constitution of the country is based on the Shariah, the Islamic legal system. There was no written constitution in Saudi Arabia until March 1992, Saudi religious law embodied in Shariah as well as Bedouin
customs were used as the de facto constitution (Amin, 1985). The written constitution in 1992 emphasised the system of government.

As outlined in the constitution, all the power is in the hands of the King as long as the King takes Shariah and the tribal customs into consideration when ruling. The King’s power extends beyond being political power; the King is also the spiritual leader and the Commander-in-Chief. Since its formation, the transfer of power from one king to another has been smooth indicating that there is political maturity and consensus for the political system in the country (Amin, 1985).

Saudi Arabia is a society that is based on tradition. For instance it is ruled by an absolute monarch with no tradition of public participation that common in Western societies. In the words of Long (2003),

“Saudi Arabia has often been characterized as an absolute monarchy with no public participation in the political process. It is not democratic in a Western sense, but neither is it absolute. There are two principal constraints on the ruler. First, the constitutional system of Saudi Arabia is based on Islamic law, and the ruler is not above the law. Second is the consultative nature of decision-making” (Long, 2003) (http://www.saudi-american-forum.org/Newsletters/SAF_Essay_09.htm) [accessed 04:30, 14/05].

This traditional structure of government in Saudi dates back to the political process in seventh century Arabia, at the dawn of Islam. Under this system, Long (2003) stressed further

tribes were led by a chief (Sheikh) who was selected by a consensus of his peers that is the heads of leading clans or families. These elders formed an advisory council (Majlis) within which the tribal chief exercised his leadership and authority. Then as now both the political leader was as much consensus-maker as chief executive. Then as now, the consensus makers were the elders of the extended families and clans. Saudi Arabia is not a country of individuals ruled by a single, absolute monarch, or even an autocratic royal family ruling over a country of individuals. It is a system whereby the patriarch of an extended royal family rules with the consent of leading members of groups of extended families” (Long, 2003) (http://www.saudi-american-forum.org/Newsletters/SAF_Essay_09.htm) [accessed 04:30, 14/05].

Even with modernisation, the traditional structure still retains its relevance in the society. For instance, a Saudi Consultative Assembly (Majlis al-Shura) established in
2002 "is not an embryonic secular legislature. It is a modern institutionalisation of a tradition of consensus extending back to the seventh century and beyond. There were suggestions that it could become an elective body, and if it continues to evolve, there is a possibility of its duties being expanded to include formulation of enabling decrees for government operations. But however it evolves; it will be a reflection of an extended family structure and the Islamic values of Saudi society (Long, 2003) (http://www.saudi-american-forum.org/Newsletters/SAF_Essay_09.htm) [accessed 04:30, 14/05]

The system of government in Saudi Arabia has been fairly stable for nearly one hundred years. For instance, there has been smooth transfer of power from successive kings. A number of unsuccessful oppositions have been mounted against the government. There were four main trends of opposition to the Saudi government since the Kingdom was established. The four trends are illustrated in the figure 2.2 below on the political opposition scape in Saudi Arabia. The trends are categorised as pressures on the government for political reforms. Some of the pressures are internal, that is from within Saudi Arabia itself, while others are external, in that they are coming from outside Saudi Arabia. Some others are both internal and external pressures. Each of these pressures will now be examined in greater detail.

The first trend is opposition for religious reforms. The pressure for this comes from inside Saudi Arabia. Those in this category condemned the present system of government in Saudi as a corruption of the pure Islamic system. For this group, the first opposition came from the tribal groups referred to as Ikhwan who were opposed to the hegemony of King Abdul Aziz ibn Abdurrahman al-Sa’ud in the 1920s (Long, 1997). In the late 1970s, a group from among this category also seized the Holy Mosque and demanded a return to pure Islam.
In the second category is sectarian opposition especially from the Shia minorities in the Eastern part of Saudi Arabia. This falls under both external and internal pressures. The fall of the Shah in Iran and the rise to power of a theocratic government with Shia leaning in Iran gave this group the impetus to come out to challenge the Saudi government in the 1970s. There were series of protests and violent clashes between this group and the government. In the 1970s developments regarding the fall of the Shah in Iran and the emergence of the theocratic government in Iran with Shia leaning had an impact in Saudi Arabia (Vasilliev, 2000).

The third category is power seeking princes. Although opposition from this group is rather mute now, it posed a big challenge to the government when some of those who opposed the government managed to get the support of princes. This was very prominent in the mid 1960s through the 1970s. This is also both internal and external pressures because some of the princes actually engaged in campaigns for political reforms from Saudi Arabia (Vasilliev, 2000).

The last category of opposition is political reformists. This category consisted of a variety of groups such as the liberal secularists, Saudi Communists, Islamists and West-based human rights group such as Amnesty International. In this group are those seeking an end to the current form of government and a more open Islamic form of government such as Islamists as well as those seeking a reform of aspects of the constitution and government to move it closer to a more liberal western secular system such as liberal secularists, communists and international human rights organisations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch (HRW).
Opposition from the Islamists became more sustained from the 1990s just after the end of the first Gulf War. Like its predecessors it questioned the existing state order and gave its own interpretation of Wahhabi Islam (Vasilliev, 2000). The pressure for this category of opposition is also both internal and external. The groups brings together strange bed fellows such as Islamists, liberal secularists and human rights NGOs all united in their opposition to the political system in Saudi Arabia. Human rights NGOs such as Amnesty International and HRW use annual reports and special reports about specific cases of human rights violations in Saudi Arabia to campaign for political reforms in the country.

The challenge from the Islamists has been more strident both within and outside the country. Due to the continued challenge to the government by the Islamists and the opportunities made available by Internet to this group to reach people they might not otherwise be able to reach, this group (the Islamists) will be examined in greater detail. The Islamists opposition's most important characteristic has been its educational and socio-economic base. Its members were neither lower class nor tribally identified. Instead, the common denominator was membership in the new middle class: higher education graduates working as professionals or administrators (Vasilliev, 2000).

The Islamists were the product of an affluent era of oil boom in Saudi Arabia. The careers and occupations of some of the main activists in the fundamentalist opposition reflect this economic development. The mode of operation of this group, broadly called the Islah (Reform) Movement, is twofold. In the first group were those who operate from outside, such as the UK. In the second group were those who operate from inside Saudi Arabia. Generally, the two groups work together. Among those who operate within Saudi Arabia, there were two leading spokesmen. They are Safar al-Hawwali and Salman al’-Awda. Safar al- Hawwali, a preacher with his own following, was a lecturer and then head of the religious department at the Islamic University in Medina. Salman al’-Awda, studied both natural sciences and law before becoming a lecturer in religious studies at the Imam Muhammad University, Qasim Branch, in the city of Burayda.
The Islamists also organise as a diaspora. For instance, the office of one of the opposition groups, the Committee for the Defence of the Legitimate Rights (CDLR) (Lajnat Difa' 'an al-Huquq al-Shari'yya) was in London. The organisation's leaders are Muhammad al-Mas'ari, a physicist, and Sa'd al-Faqih, a lawyer and former head of the Saudi Board of Grievances. A study by R.H. Dekmejian (cited by Kostiner, 1997) showed how academics and religious sages mingled: the signatories of two petitions presenting Islamic-fundamentalist demands to King Fahd (52 signed in May 1991 and 107 in September 1992) were backed by a group comprised of about 60% academics and almost 40% holders of religious posts (Vasilliev, 2000; Kostiner, 1997).

The Islamists opposition is the most formidable of all the opposition groups. This is because, in the words of Kostiner (1997), they “had a clear Islamic agenda and a definite Islamic purpose”. The Islamists argued further that

... the yardstick for measuring government's policies was how it followed the law. Since, the government was found wanting in this regard, it argued that the remedy was full implementation of the Shari'ah and Islamic goals. In the 1992 memorandum and other CDLR publications, implementation of the Shari'ah, as an integral part of the virtues of Islamic equality and morality, a guarantee of untainted appointments, prevention of illegal indirect taxes, and controlled social services constituted the main demands of the opposition (Kostiner, 1997).

The Saudi government also took the opposition from the Islamists in its strides. It adopted a range a measures to reduce the influence of the Islamists in Saudi Arabia. According to Kostiner (1997), the government responded to the Islamists opposition in several ways.

The Saudi police initiated arrest campaigns after each outburst of opposition activity, accompanied by restrictions of movement and the banning of preaching cassettes. The activists' movements were also put under surveillance, and meetings dispersed and banned. In October 1994, the King announced the establishment of a Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs (al-Majlis al-A'la lil-Shu'un al-Islamiyya), led by Minister of Defence Sultan, and a few days later the Council for Islamic Call and Guidance (al-Majlis lil-Da'wa wal-Irshad) led by the Minister of Islamic Affairs, Religious Guidance and Endowments, 'Abdullah al-Turki. These two new bodies were made responsible for guidance for Saudis abroad, moral behaviour and proper conduct of mosque functionaries, and mosque activities at home. This was a clear attempt to regulate Mosques, over and above the incumbent 'Ulama's authority (Kostiner, 1997).
In addition to the repressive measures, the Saudi government also made efforts to reform the political system by establishing a consultative assembly to widen political participation in the country. The extent of political participation that the largely appointed consultative assembly would provide is, however, arguable. As stressed by Kostiner (1997):

The establishment of a sixty-member appointed Consultative Council (Majlis al-Shura), which began operating in 1992, was a way of placating the professionals who constituted 60% of the Council, with institutionalized advisory rights. However, the Consultative Council was merely a fig-leaf, part of a basic law stressing the King's legislative and executive authority (the judicial bodies being subjected only to the Shari’ah) and his responsibility for choosing his Crown Prince from among the Royal family. Another law underlined the position of regional governors, Umara, in the provinces. These laws’ main purpose was to reaffirm the Royal family’s authority and particularly that of the King, as paramount ruler (Wali al-Amr) over the entire country (Kostiner, 1997).

Unlike the other categories of opposition, one of the strengths of the political reformist group discussed above is the fact that it could organise as a diaspora. This is one of the effects of globalisation. It made it possible for the group to continue its struggle against the Saudi government in a different country using the Internet to connect Saudis to the activities of the opposition that were not allowed within the country. The use of the Internet in this way made it possible for the opposition based outside the country to penetrate Saudi boundaries to challenge the sovereignty of the government. This level of organising and the visibility the members of the political opposition now enjoy were not possible before the introduction of the Internet in Saudi Arabia.

Again, this brings out the relevance of Everard’s (2000) argument about the link between Internet influence and sovereignty. As pointed out by Everard (2000) globalisation brings out the tension between individuals and state sovereignty (Everard, 2000:55) over the struggle to control the means of cultural expression and therefore the identities existing in a state. Thus, while the state controls the means of cultural expression, such as the mass media within its geographical boundaries, the
possibilities offered to the opposition by the Internet make it possible for them to challenge the exclusive control of the Saudi state over cultural production.

This development also poses a significant challenge to the security of the country. Everard (2000) stressed that one of the reasons why governments try to regulate or control the Internet is the need to protect the sovereignty and security of the country. The Internet is considered as a security threat because of its ability to penetrate geographical boundaries irrespective of obstacles put in place by the government.

For instance, the ONI study on Internet use and regulation in Saudi Arabia cited earlier indicates that Saudi Arabia blocks several sites opposing the current government along with a minority of sites discussing the state of Israel, or advocating violence against Israel and the West, and a small amount of material from Amnesty International and Amnesty USA. The figures below show the trend of blocking of perceived opposition websites.

As indicated in the ONI study, Saudi Arabia blocks some Web sites of organizations that oppose the country's government. The ISU selects these sites to block locally since there is no applicable SmartFilter category. The blocked sites include:

**Figure 2.3 The trend of blocking of perceived opposition websites.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Locally Blocked Site</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.miraserve.com/">http://www.miraserve.com/</a> (3 pages tested)</td>
<td>Saudi opposition political organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.demon.co.uk/cdlr/saa.doc">http://www.demon.co.uk/cdlr/saa.doc</a></td>
<td>Discussion critical of prospects for privatizing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Saudi Arabia's national airline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.amnesty-usa.org/countries/saudi_arabia/morenewsandreports.html">http://www.amnesty-usa.org/countries/saudi_arabia/morenewsandreports.html</a></td>
<td>Amnesty International reports on Saudi Arabia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.saudiinstitute.org/">http://www.saudiinstitute.org/</a></td>
<td>Promotes freedom in Saudi Arabia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (ONI Study, 2004)
The last group of websites blocked are those of groups considered extremist in their thoughts. Sites included in this category are those belonging to organisations labelled as terrorists.

**Figure 2.4 The trend of blocking of perceived opposition websites.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total Sites Tested</th>
<th>Block Rate - All Sites</th>
<th>Block Rate - Sites Not Categorized by Smart Filter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top/Issues/Terrorism</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEMRI list of Islamist Web sites</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (ONI Study, 2004)

**2.4 Discussion**

The discussion of the factors driving the blending of tradition with modernisation in Saudi Arabia indicates that the two processes need not to be in conflict with each other. As suggested by Robertson (1995) it is useful to consider the extent to which what is called local is in large degree constructed on a trans- or super-local basis. In other words, much of the promotion of locality is in fact done from above or outside (Robertson 1995: 26). For instance, oil wealth made it possible for the government of Saudi Arabia to transform vast swathes of desert lands into modern cities with infrastructures comparable to those available in the West, while at the same time keeping the cultural values of the society in the areas of public-private in interactions and in interactions between the people and the government.

Therefore, as stressed further by Robertson (1995), “… it is not a question of either homogenization or heterogenisation, but rather of the ways in which both of these two tendencies have become features of life across much of the late-twentieth-century world” (1995: 27). The challenge therefore becomes that of correctly mapping the influence of this process in each society. These issues will be examined further in the findings chapters.

In addition, the information revolution has also had an impact on the Saudi society, finally eradicating the physical isolation that has historically shrouded most of the country. Personal computers are now commonplace, and even small children can now
be seen (and heard) walking with their elders in modern shopping centres with mobile phones in their hands.

News from around the globe is instantly available, and Saudis living and studying abroad are in daily communication with home. It is less easy to control information than in the past, not only about what is happening in Saudi Arabia, but about events impacting on the Kingdom from around the world (Long, 2003).

Further, the new generation are assimilating a different, more Western set of values and principles through exposure to the media, and particularly to imported media contents, such as made available through the Internet. The resulting confusion is inevitable as they are influenced by different persuasions. This exposure to Western life has also created a cultural gap between generations and within society and the family unit.

Paradoxically, exposure to other cultures is necessary if Saudi society is to function in a modern world, yet to preserve its own values, it has to draw and maintain cultural boundaries. The manner in which the Saudi government and the Ministry of Information have approached this dichotomy, and the tensions which have resulted, lies at heart of the debate over regulation of the Internet and this will be examined in the chapter on the result of interviews with policy makers.

Saudi Arabia is a unique country ruled mainly by tradition and religion. Saudi Arabia is also a dynamic country with its tradition and conservative life style. The country has achieved great successes in social and financial sectors since it was founded and managed to look after its population's welfare through the income raised from oil. Its ethnic and cultural homogeneity do not offer potentials for diversity expected from dynamic, vibrant society, heterogeneous societies.

Saudi Arabia is located in one of the world’s most volatile regions. The Kingdom has large oil resources and neighbouring countries that have either internal or external conflicts. Since its foundation, the Kingdom has enjoyed relative peace and security compared to its neighbours. However, the external and internal threats always have been a big issue for security officials. In addition to rich oil reserves, Saudi Arabia is
the house of Islam's most holy places. Every year millions of pilgrims visit the country as part of their annual pilgrimage. Hence, combined with its geography, rich oil reserves and holy places, security is one of the fundamental issues that must be overseen by the government. This is also used as one of the justifications for Internet control by the government.

2.5 Conclusion
This chapter provided an overview of the context of study in the light of the often conflictual relationship between traditional values and the forces of modernisation in Saudi Arabia. The chapter argues that Islam provided the basis for the founding of Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia is also the birthplace of Islam and home to two of the most important places of worship for Muslims all over the world. This chapter also explored the emergence of the modern Saudi state and the role of oil wealth and the government as underwriters of infrastructures and essential social services. The manifestations of this modern transformation of the country were examined in the light of changes to the educational system and urbanisation. The political dimension of this development was also briefly discussed.

The chapter also provides the background for discussing the media environment in the next chapter as well as the chapters on the findings from interviews and questionnaire survey.
CHAPTER THREE

The Mass Media in Saudi Arabia

3.1. Introduction
This chapter discusses the historical development of the mass media in Saudi Arabia and how different governments have responded to the development. It serves as the background for discussing the growth of the Internet, the influence of the Internet and the regulation of the Internet in Saudi Arabia. The chapter provides an overview of the history of the mass media such as the print and broadcast media in Saudi Arabia. It then discusses the development and regulation of the Internet in Saudi Arabia.

3.2. Print Media
The history of the mass media in Saudi Arabia is relatively new with the exception of newspaper which dates back to Ottoman rule (Al-Sudairy, 1994: 35). The first print medium, *Al-Hegaz* newspaper started its life in 1918 during the reign of the Ottomans. Although few other newspapers were also published, due to heavy dependence on subscription coupled with low circulation, the survival of these newspapers could not be maintained for long. The estimated price of a daily newspaper was around £0.5. Therefore, it has been true that the print media were always dependent on subscription sales and government subsidies. However, dependence on government subsidies has been decreasing, since the newspapers receive most of their revenues from advertisement. In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the biggest subscriber is the state as the state employees receive their daily newspapers for free (Ministry of Information, 2003).

The low sale figures and the literacy level in Saudi Arabia has affected over dependence on government subsidies. Before the founding of the Kingdom in the 1930s, the literacy level among the population was very low and education service was provided by Qur’anic schools. However, most of these schools provided religious education, mostly memorisation of the Qur’anic verses. Hence, the students were unable to read and write. Consequently, this illiteracy created a weak print media (Al-Farsy, 2003).
Since the unification of the country by Al-Saud, the print media flourished because of the political stability brought by successive Kings. In addition, the discovery of oil provided extra resources to the state to fight illiteracy. Because of these two factors, the number of newspapers and their circulation increased. There are several daily newspapers in circulation at present in the Kingdom. The papers are being published both in Arabic and in English. The total circulation volume of these dailies reached 573,000 according to 1992 statistics. In other words, there were 45 dailies per 10,000 inhabitants. The print media are regulated in accordance with the laws of the land (Al-Farsy, 2003). Figure 1.3 provides the circulation figures for both Arabic speaking and English language speaking newspapers in Saudi Arabia.

Figure 3.1 Saudi Dailies published in Arabic and English and their circulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Saudi Dailies published in Arabic and English and their circulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Al-Riyadh</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Jazirah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Madinah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okaz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Nadwah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Bilad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Yaum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Watan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Saudi Dailies published in Arabic and English and their circulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arab News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Gazette</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riyadh Daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Saudi statistical yearbook 2002
3.3 Radio

After the formation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by King Abdulaziz, the King was with the view that the public in the Kingdom should have access to good welfare and the Kingdom should not be isolated from the rest of the world. In accordance with these principles, the King ordered the establishment of Saudi radio in 1948 (Al-Sudairy, 1994: 40). Initially, strict opposition from the Ulema met the idea of radio broadcast. The Ulema were very suspicious of this new innovation. However, the King was determined to set up a radio station. In the 1930s and 1940s, most of the population had a nomadic life style. Hence, it was not possible for the state to reach all the people that reside within it. In addition, there was no means for the state to voice its concerns in international arena.

Besides, radio was used to improve education and other aspects of life. In 1948, the King, despite severe criticism from the Ulema launched the Saudi radio broadcasting by reciting some Qur'anic verses. This was meant to remind Saudis that this new innovation can be a useful tool in the right hands. The early days of radio broadcasting also witnessed the basis of regulation issues as outlined by King Abdulaziz in a letter addressed to his son. The King outlined three major issues for the regulation of radio (Ayish, 2001).

The first issue was that programmes shall be supervised and approved before being broadcasted. The second issue was that foreign news shall be disseminated as long as they did not insult anybody and they avoid deformation or undue praise of anyone. The last issue was that in local news, the government expects facts to be followed, to make sure that what it (the government) considered as the tradition of keeping quiet on some issues considered sensitive will be kept.

3.4 Television

After the initial objections that trailed the introduction of radio, the Saudi society was psychologically prepared to accept the medium of television when it was introduced in 1965. People were eagerly looking for a new means of recreation and entertainment which did not conflict with the Muslim faith. The population, especially women and children, were willing to see what was going on in the world and come out of what they consider as social isolation (Shobaili. 1971). The social, cultural and political
needs of the nation justified the introduction of television to Saudi Arabia. The government believed that television could provide information, news and entertainment; it could counter foreign propaganda, it could promote unity among the Saudi people and also provide health education and help tackle the literacy problem (Al-Garni, 2000).

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

The process of the introduction of television in Saudi Arabia began in 1962 through a ten-point programme, launched by Crown Prince Faisal. According to the ten-point programme, initially, Saudi Arabia would receive technical assistance and training from the United States (Shobaili 1971: Boyd 1972). On January 6, 1964 the Saudi government and the US government signed an agreement to establish two one-half kilowatt stations in Jeddah and Riyadh. The agreement stipulated that the U.S. government ‘[...] shall assume responsibility for contracting for the training of operating personnel, and for the initial operation of the stations’ (Shobaili, 1971). It also stated that the US Army Corps of Engineers would carry out those responsibilities on behalf of the United States government. In 1964, during a visit by the Saudi Minister of information, it was decided that the original plan to build two stations with 0.5 kw power each be extended to create a more powerful and efficient transmission. This was meant to enhance the Stations’ power of broadcast and to make it more reliable with clearer signals (US Corps of Engineers, 1968, cited in Shobaili, 1971: 188).

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

In 1983, television transmission was centralised in the capital Riyadh and a second television channel started broadcasting in English, with daily news reports in French. In the same year, the construction of the Riyadh Central Television Complex was completed. The Saudi government, through the Ministry of Information, has evidently placed remarkable emphasis on the foundations, the infrastructure arrangements and hardware preparations, with little attention being paid to software, programming and personnel training. As Boyd (1972) remarks:

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

It is this disregard of content and quality that has provoked the intense debate over media output among the various elements of Saudi society. Despite its apparent success, there were strong objections to the establishment of television services. Nevertheless, even hostile confrontations with the Saudi government did not weaken the government’s determination to firmly expand its television service. After a number of unsuccessful attempts to persuade some people considered as conservatives to accept the new medium, the Saudi government finally resorted to exercising its authority to establish what it viewed as necessary for the nation’s well-being. Reassuring sceptics and concerned objectors, the late King Faisal stated:

This public service is charged with great responsibilities; since it has access into every house and comes in touch with every individual and every group of people. What is being broadcast or publicized through this service must serve our religion, our homeland and our people. This service has to present only what is beneficial to our nation and to our countrymen; it must guide citizens to what is in their own and their country’s interest. (Bait –Almal and Ibrahim, 1994: 345)
However, when women began to appear on Saudi television, in 1975 there was an attack on the television station in Riyadh. King Faisal settled the issue by resolving that Islamic principles and Saudi values would be respected in the future. The pacifying effect was short-lived. A second incident took place this time at the Holy Grand Mosque in Makkah when a group of armed fanatics took over the Mosque, locked the gates and used the loudspeaker system to announce their demands pertaining to the anti-Islamic content of television programming. After fifteen days, negotiations collapsed, the Mosque was stormed by armed forces, was finally liberated and the fanatics were captured. This incident was a turning point for the Saudi media. One of the consequences was the reduction of women’s appearance on television and restrictions placed on the roles they performed and their attire (Beayeyz, 1989).

It is also argued that the advent of television served to expedite socio-economic progress in the country because the society aspired to it, but that the religious element delayed the process by taking exception to television; apart from objections to content, they believed that it could not promote the principles of the Islamic faith. The government managed to satisfy all concerned by allowing the importation of television programmes provided they did not subvert Islamic ideology and practice. The objections and concerns were contained at the time by cautious religious programming and the careful selection and censoring of imported television shows (Al-Usmani, 1984).

However, while increasing broadcasting hours, a rather relaxed censorship on television imports was adopted by the Ministry of Information: a situation which often resurrects the concerns of the Islamists. Despite attempts by the government to pacify them with hours of religious broadcasts to demonstrate firstly, that television can support their faith rather than undermine it, and could be applied usefully to the benefit of Saudi society, many still remain unconvinced. These concerns awakened and resurfaced after Saudi Arabia and the neighbouring countries became the focus of Direct Broadcasting Service (DBS).

Nevertheless, viewing habits reflect the general acceptance of television by the Saudi people. In the early years, radio listeners defected to the new medium, and during
broadcasting hours television quickly dominated leisure time activity (Shobaili, 1971). It was apparent to any observer in Jeddah and Riyadh that street traffic was very light during telecasting hours. People tried to accomplish their chores to free themselves to watch television.

A 1972 survey revealed that 87% of those questioned owned television sets and 52% watched it every day (Boyd, 1993). A survey carried out by the BBC in 1992 revealed that 88% of Saudi adults watched television daily. Even when it is taken into account that many viewers may approve only of those programmes which are vehicles for Islamic messages and values and that, in general, there is a large viewing population, that does not necessarily equate with total approval of all programme content. Perceptions differ: there is a large segment of the population who do not see television as a cultural threat but believe that through advertising it can have a detrimental effect on national development. Other viewers, however, believe it can enhance the modernisation of the country and be a positive economic force (Almakaty et al, 1994). Whether these perceptions are accurate or not depend on the nature and quality of media output, Saudi Television (STV) programming policy and the suitability of television content for the needs of Saudi society.

3.5. Video

Video is getting more and more widespread among developing nations, particularly among those with high per capita income (Ayish, 2001). The popularity of the video can be easily understood from the fact that it cannot be controlled by state authorities as easily as TV broadcasting. As argued by Ayish (2001) as the level of income in a country goes up, the VCR ownership increases too. In the case of oil rich countries, presence of foreign workers stimulates dispersion of VCR ownership in the society (Ayish, 2001). The poor quality of programmes also led people to alternative media such as video. As a matter of fact, 75% of households with TV sets also possess VCRs and Saudi Arabia is known to be one of the world’s largest video hardware and software markets. The introduction of video to the country also created great concerns in respect of its negative effect on society’s norms (Ayish, 2001).
3.6. Satellites

The 1980s witnessed the rapid expansion of satellite use in industrial countries such as Japan, USA, and Europe. Satellite broadcasting by its nature is not limited to a specific region, but has a transnational nature. Direct broadcasting by satellite started as early as 1985 with the launch of Arab Sat which was planned to cover 22 Arabian countries (Ayish, 2001). Arab Sat has the capacity to provide up to 7 TV channels, 25 radio channels and 8000 TV circuits (Al-Sudairy, 1994: 49). It was planned to use the satellite for entertainment and education. But because of political differences in different Arab countries, the project failed. Despite the failure of Arab Sat, the private initiative, the Middle East Broadcasting Centre, launched another satellite in 1991 to provide programmes to Arabic nations as well as Arabs living in Europe. Its main funding comes from advertising and sponsorship.

The free flow of broadcasting from one country to another brought the concern over sovereignty and its relation to control over information (Ayish, 2001). In addition to debate over national sovereignty, some concerns were expressed over the content of programmes that are available on satellite channels. However, these concerns have merit but the family has the duty to safeguard the negative effect of any undesirable programmes. In addition, as he rightly pointed out, not only people in Saudi Arabia are complaining about the content of TV programmes, but also publics in Europe, Japan and USA have their concerns regarding this matter (Ayish, 2001).

3.7.1. History of the Internet in Saudi Arabia

As discussed earlier, the WSIS represents an important landmark in the development of the Internet. The WSIS process led to cooperation among all the stakeholders in the area of the Internet such as states and other non-state actors. As a part of the WSIS process, the Saudi Arabia Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (MCIT) presented a report on the history and state of Internet development in Saudi Arabia. The discussion in this section is based on the report to the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) prepared and presented by MCIT on Internet development in Saudi Arabia at the WSIS summit held in Geneva in December 2003.

The MCIT report is considered useful for this study because it is the most comprehensive and authoritative overview of the history the Internet in Saudi Arabia.
In spite of its usefulness though, the report was a one-sided view of the way the
government perceived Internet development in Saudi Arabia. While the report
provides an overview of Internet development in Saudi Arabia, I also used
independent studies, such as the ONI study on Internet filtering in Saudi Arabia as a
counterweight to the official government report.

The King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals (KFUPM) in Dhahran was the
first institution to connect to the Internet in 1993 through the College of Computer
Sciences and Engineering (Al-Turki, 1998: 62). Two DNS domain names
kfupm.edu.sa and kfupm.edu were reserved and KFUPM’s direct connection to the
Internet utilised the X.25 network protocol arranged with the Portal company of the
US. The set up for the X.25 connection over 9.6 kbps was established by the College
of Computer Sciences and Engineering, and due to its low speed, only e-mail was
provided to the KFUPM community. In 1995, the Portal company stopped supporting
the connection based on the X.25 protocol. The KFUPM connection was then
switched to King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology (KACST) (MCIT
Report to WSIS, 2003).

In May 1994, KACST was registered as the (sa) domain manager to coordinate
Internet services within the Kingdom. In January 1996, KACST implemented a pilot
project in which some dial-up connections were made available to KACST and an
interagency government commission was appointed to consider the benefits and
problems of public Internet access. The evaluation process was extensive and dealt
with both national security and social issues. The commission recommended that
public access be allowed via proxy servers to be maintained by KACST to reduce the
possibility of Saudi residents accessing “inappropriate” information. By December
1996, KACST converted its Gulfnet Bitnet links to TCP/IP protocols. In April 1997,
the Council of Ministers approved these recommendations, and the Ministry of PTT
was directed to coordinate with KACST to establish local Internet services and in
May 1997 commissioned the National Library Network.

The KACST plays a central role in regulating the use of Internet in Saudi Arabia. It is
governed by a Supreme Committee, which is chaired by the Prime Minister (the King)
and is composed of the ministers of the major ministries -to which science and
technology are of greatest relevance-as follows (other details about KACST are included as Appendix 4D):

1-Prime Minister (Chairman)
2-Deputy Prime Minister (Vice Chairman)
3-Minister of Defence & Aviation & Inspector General (Member)
4-Minister of Interior (Member)
5-Minister of Higher Education (Member)
6-Minister of Agriculture & Water (Member)
7-In addition, the Prime Minister nominates three other members.
8-Minister of Industry & Electricity (Member)
9-Minister of Petroleum & Mineral Resources (Member)
10-Minister of Planning (Member)
11-Minister of Finance & National Economy (Member)
12-Head of General Intelligence (Member)
13-President of KACST (Member)

Source: (ISU, 2004)

In addition to the committee, an interagency standing committee for the security of information was established, presided over by the Ministry of Interior, with membership of a number of agencies. The Committee is entrusted with the control and regulation of issues relating to the management and security of information. The Committee issues regulations governing the use of the Internet in the country. It also has the responsibility of protecting the Saudi society from materials on the Internet it considers violate Islam or encroach on the traditions and culture of the country. The Committee has the mandate to decide which sites are immoral, such as pornographic sites and others. The Committee normally bars subscribers from entering such sites. This mandate was approved by Saudi Arabia's Council of Ministers when it called for a firewall, maintained by the KACST, to keep the public from accessing "inappropriate" information.

The Public Internet service started in Saudi Arabia in 1998 following the Council of Ministers’ decision 163 of 4 March 1997 authorizing the provision of the service under certain controls aimed at making the service available to customers to benefit
from the great potential of the internet, while, at the same time, protecting the values and Islamic beliefs of Saudi society.

In January 1999, Saudi Arabia began allowing its public to access the Internet through local service providers. It did so while promising to implement what was described as the region’s most ambitious plan to block the flow of "undesirable" data online. Although Saudi Arabia has had an Internet connection since 1994, it restricted its use to state academic, medical, and research institutions. Saudi citizens and residents were allowed, however, to purchase computers and modems, and could connect to the Internet through dial-up service to foreign ISPs, and launch web sites on foreign servers (MCIT Report to WSIS, 2003).

Some state institutions were first connected to the Internet in 1994. KACST uses a 64 kbps channel from King Faisal Specialist Hospital (KFSH) in the capital of Saudi Arabia (Riyadh). KFSH was connected to the US over a T1 line (1.5 Mbps) to Baltimore’s Johns Hopkins Hospital for tele-medicine and health education. In late 1998, KACST was connected directly to the Internet through the Saudi Telecommunications Company (STC). KFSH did provide and still provides some governmental organisations with Internet connectivity, such as the Ministry of Higher Education and others (MCIT Report to WSIS, 2003).

KACST also offers services to the country’s academic and research communities, while commercial ISPs were licensed to provide public access services. KACST commenced operations by creating a department called the Internet Service Unit (ISU) in 1998. ISU was given responsibility for providing Internet service in the KSA in cooperation with the STC and Internet service providers from the private sector (ISU, 2002; The Internet in KSA).

Saudi oil company ARAMCO acquired Internet connection directly from the US through a 64 kbps leased line in 1995. As at 1998, the Internet in Saudi Arabia was characterised as experimental. That meant that less than one in a thousand Saudis had access to the Internet and then only for official purposes. The private sector had to connect to the Internet outside the Kingdom via a long distance telephone call. The Internet use was localised in the capital and there was only one link between KACST,
which would provide Internet connections to Saudi ISPs, and the Internet in the United States (Al-Turki, 1998: 62-73). The entire network is controlled by KACST. The users access the Internet through their local ISP. These ISPs are connected to a modem pool. The data is then transferred to ATM network before it then goes to KACST where extensive filtering takes place.

Although the ISU is responsible for providing Internet service in KSA, it does not provide connectivity or support to end-users. The ISU, in fact, only provides Internet connectivity to universities and licensed commercial ISPs, which in turn provide the service commercially to individuals, companies, organisations and government agencies (Al-Tawil, 2001: 626-32). One of the ISU’s tasks is to prepare and disseminate regulations related to Internet services in KSA. KACST, represented by the ISU, coordinates with other government agencies in KSA, such as the Ministry of Commerce, and the Ministry of the Interior, to prepare and amend regulations and policies that ensure proper and smooth operation of the service in the Kingdom, both administratively and technically.

The Saudi Network Information Centre (SNIC) in KACST administers the name space for the KSA by level domain (sa) (MCIT Report to WSIS, 2003). The ISU does not impose technical restrictions on the type of connection between the ISP and its customers. The Saudi Telecommunications Company (STC) hosts a number of access servers at its telephone exchanges and it routes incoming calls to the ISP over their ATM network. ISPs are required to have registered and routable IP addresses in order to connect to the ISU. IP addresses can be supplied by the ISU or they can be obtained by ISPs through their own means. When IP addresses are supplied by the ISU, they are considered the property of ISU and must be returned to ISU at the end of the contract between the ISP and the ISU (MCIT Report to WSIS, 2003). All ISPs are required to maintain a database of their users. This database is used to authenticate users during the login process to the access servers. For security reasons, ISPs are required to keep a one-month log of user access to their network (Al-Tawil, 2001: 626-32).

The Internet has a unique architecture in Saudi Arabia. KACST handles the management and control of ISPs, while the STC provides Internet physical
communication infrastructure. Internet communication is structured on three levels as follows: ISPs are commercial companies that provide Internet access to the public, government and private sector through dialup and leased lines (Al-Sarami, 1999; Saudi Gazette, March 13, 1999). ISPs are connected to the ISU through the National ATM Backbone. The National Backbone is being developed by the STC as a high-speed network (currently ATM) to most parts of the Kingdom. Currently, the main regions of the Kingdom are covered by this backbone with expansion planned for the remaining regions.

The ISU and all ISPs are connected to the National Backbone, responsible for inside the Kingdom. The International Link connects the National Backbone to the International Internet. The International link is operated by the ISU and all Internet connection to the Kingdom is required to go through this link. Currently there is more than 155 Mbps bandwidth connecting the ISU to the Internet (Salah, 1998).

In order to launch a successful Internet service in Saudi Arabia, the ISU conducted a market study of potential as well as actual Internet users in the Kingdom. When KACST opened the door for the commercial sector to provide Internet services and form ISPs in 1999, about 170 companies applied to provide these services. Only 39 were approved as ISPs out of which only 26 ISPs were providing Internet services to the public in the major cities of the Kingdom in 2000. These range from very small companies with about 500 subscribers to large ones providing Internet services to over 5000 users (Al-Tawil, 2001: 626-632).

The MCIT report highlighted a number problems faced in the development of the Internet in Saudi Arabia, especially the one that borders on public access. The first problem was the limited international bandwidth of initially two E1 lines (about 4 Mbps), resolved now by expanding the bandwidth to high speed lines, providing over 155 Mbps capacity for international Internet traffic to and from Saudi Arabia. The second problem, which several ISPs faced, has been limited access to the Internet backbone provided by STC. The switches connecting each ISP to the Internet national backbone can provide a very limited number of subscribers with reasonable access speed. The modems provided to each ISP can support at most 2000 subscribers, and
some large ISPs have overloaded these modems leading to occasional congestions (MCIT Report to WSIS, 2003).

The third major problem is limitation of a single Internet gateway to the country as all Internet traffic has to come through KACST due to security and control issues. The ISPs that provide Internet services are all connected to this single international Gateway. The resultant centralisation is widely considered to be a major bottleneck to the process of Internet connection. Another problem some ISPs faced in providing better customer services is that all ISPs are connected to switches controlled by their competitor STC.

3.7.2. Saudi Policy on Internet Development

The MCIT report also suggests that successive governments of the Kingdom have been greatly enthusiastic in modernising the country and promoting the use of new technologies. Computer and the Internet use have been the result of this enthusiasm. Until recently, there were great constraints on Internet use, partly due to technical drawbacks and legal shortcomings. Networking used to be restricted by the insufficient and out dated telephone system. The government tried to improve on the services provided through additional investment in expansion.

There are several indicators used in measuring the transformation of any society to an information society. Most of these depend on measuring the penetration of ICTs within a given society. The most important indicators used for this purpose include the density of fixed-line and mobile phones, the number of personal computers, and the number of Internet users/100 inhabitants. This reflects the level of penetration of these technologies in the society, which in turn reflects the level of penetration of information interchange techniques, as well as an indication of the size of the information industry and information companies (MCIT Report to WSIS, 2003).

The MCIT claims further that the Saudi government is looking into the possibility of a further expansion of the telephone network by another 4.6 million lines. As a result of this development, there is a flourishing computer industry in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. There was a suggestion that 40% of the whole computer sales in the Middle East ended up in Saudi Arabia (Independent, 17 June 2001, World Report: Saudi
Arabia. The estimated figure indicated that Saudis spent SR 3 billion in 1999 and this spending rose to SR4 billion in 2000. The rapid growth of the computer industry is related to the increased use of the Internet. In fact, 100,000 new Saudi computer users were predicted to sign up to the Internet annually (MCIT Report to WSIS, 2003).

In 1998, telephone density amounted to 6.7%, representing 36.96% of the number of households in Saudi Arabia. This figure kept its upward trend to reach 12.3% in 1999. At present, teledensity amounts to 15% of the number of inhabitants, and household penetration amounts to 91.64% (MCIT Report to WSIS, 2003). A number of factors are responsible for this development one of which is the pattern of rural to urban concentration of Saudi population. The population is split unevenly between the rural and urban areas in Saudi Arabia with rural areas accounting for only 13% of the population while urban areas take 87% (Ministry of Planning, Saudi Arabia, 2000).

In keeping with the tradition of most developing countries, Saudi Arabia adopted policies aimed at making the country catch up with the pace of infrastructural development in the developed countries. One of the ways these policies were implemented, as discussed earlier, was through year-specific development plans. In respect of the development of the Internet, the seventh development plan in Saudi Arabia includes a clear vision of the role of information technology in the country.

The plan sets the country’s vision for bridging the technological gap between Saudi Arabia and the developed world by 2020. Hence, strategies were developed for investing in the use of information technology for human development along the lines of international standards in order to enhance local capabilities to handle modern technologies (MCIT Report to WSIS, 2003).

The Council of Ministers, on 8 July 2002, also approved the national policy for science and technology paper, which had been prepared jointly by the Ministry of Planning and the King Abdul Aziz City for Science and technology (KACST). The paper contains ten strategic principles, each encompassing a number of mechanisms and programmes for the implementation of the country’s science and technology
policy. The tenth principle focuses on the availability of and accessibility to scientific and technological information, through the application of a number of steps, i.e.

- Development, strengthening and facilitating accessibility to national scientific and technological databases,
- Development of national programmes to encourage the production, dissemination, and exchange of information, and to facilitate the application and accessibility of such information, with a view to integration in the information age,
- Developing mechanisms for the security and protection of information,
- Strengthening the use of the Arabic language in the information technology,
- Development of a national information plan in support of global development in the country,
- More focus on the adaptation and national development of information technology with a view to enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the use of information in the country (MCIT Report to WSIS, 2003).

From the above objectives, it is possible to discern two clear patterns for the development of information technology in Saudi Arabia. On the one hand, the government wants to promote the adoption of information technology in all the facets of public life, while on the other hand, it wants to promote the use of Arabic language as a medium of Internet and information technology communication. Therefore, the government of Saudi Arabia paid a lot of attention to information technology development in its development plan perhaps because of the recognition of the important role of information and communication technology in advancing the social and economic development objectives of the country.

For instance, the Seventh Development Plan

...envisages that by the year 2020 the level of development of ICTs in Saudi Arabia would parallel those of the developed countries. The establishment of the Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Technology highlights the attention given by Saudi Arabia to this important field. Also, the Telecommunications Authority in Saudi Arabia has been restructured in order to create the proper environment for growth and to open new horizons in this field (MCIT Report to WSIS, 2003).
The government has also taken several initiatives to support the ICT sector. Examples of areas where ICT has been introduced included the e-Government programme, the Saudi project of electronic information interchange “aimed at securing speed and transparency in business, and the Saudi system for speedy money transfer within the framework of a wider initiative for electronic financial and banking services, the smart card project, the Omrah project for streamlining the process of issuing visas electronically, etc” (MCIT Report to WSIS, 2003).

The foregoing discussions illustrated how the Saudi government adapted to technology-led development in all facets of national life through the embrace of information technology. However, in spite of the promotion of Internet development, measures were also introduced to protect the Saudi society and reduce what was termed the harmful effects of the introduction of the Internet. As discussed earlier in this chapter, this is done through the creation of agencies to regulate Internet use in Saudi Arabia as well as official policies indicating the desire of the Saudi government to protect the cultural values of the society.

3.8. Media Regulation

Censorship and media control have been very familiar issues to Saudi society. The first Saudi Information Policy was issued by Royal Decree by King Abdul Aziz, following the introduction of radio broadcasting to the Kingdom in 1949 for the first time. In essence, the policy prescribed general directions as to the manner in which this new medium should be operated. It states that “foreign news should avoid bias, insults and defamation of anyone… the local news should broadcast facts and the viewpoint of Saudi government, while remaining silent on issues not made public” (Shobaili, 1971:188).

The radio content at that time- in the early 1950s- consisted of religious programmes whose content was based on readings from the Qur’an and talks about Islamic and Arab history. Such programmes helped to alleviate the concerns of the religious elements in society and absorbed their objections to the new medium. However, once King Saud succeeded his father, he issued a Royal Decree to suspend this policy (Alamoudi, 1984).
The introduction of television in 1965, and the opposition it met from certain religious groups in the country, dictated the need for modifications appropriate to the nature of the new media. These modifications and the addition of new clauses were designed to control appearance of women on televised programmes. As a result, women’s appearances were confined to certain roles and certain types of programmes, for example as hosts or guests in children’s or women’s shows. Women appearing in these programmes were required to observe strict Muslim dress code; they had to cover their heads and wear loose clothing to make sure that their bodies were completely covered down to the wrists and ankles in order to prevent them from being exposed to the audience (Zamakshari, 1994).

To screen and censor the content of foreign made programmes, a censorship department was established in the Ministry of Culture and Information. Its duties included the screening and editing of scenes and language in imported and locally made programmes to be more suitable and consistent with the Islamic norms of Saudi society.

The heavy dependence on imported television productions and relatively relaxed censorship rules, among other reasons, led to a number of violent reactions from the religious groups, such as the siege of the Holy Mosque in Makkah. Immediately after the siege on the Holy Mosque in Makkah in protest against programmes deemed as insensitive to Islamic values and cultures, Saudi authorities implemented a blanket ban on Western films and television serials. Restrictions were also put on women’s appearance on television and placed on the roles they performed and their attire (Zamakshari, 1994). These restrictions are still in effect and any non-Arabic productions have been restricted to Channel 2 (Ministry of Information, 2003).

Before this incident, the information policy in Saudi Arabia was much more relaxed, and therefore the ‘silence’ policy, which prevailed at the time, was conducive to the spread of rumours and speculation about the siege, on national and international levels. The treatment of this incident by the Saudi media and their hesitation to reach a decision regarding the announcement of development of the event led to the formulation of the existing policy formulated in 1983 (known as the Information
Policy and included as Appendix 4A) by the Supreme Council of Mass Communication, established in 1981 by Royal Decree.

The current broadcasting policy was formulated in 1982 by the Supreme Council of Mass Communication, a task force committee consisting of academics and top officials at the Ministry of Information, chaired by the Interior Minister, Price Naif Bin Abdul Aziz. The policy deals with the principles, goals and objectives of print and broadcast media in the Kingdom. Emanating from Islam and based on its laws and beliefs, the policy intends to establish faith in Allah, and raise the intellectual, cultural and moral levels of the Saudi citizens. The policy also prescribes broad guidelines by which its objectives and aims are to be achieved, and covers topics such as news, education, public awareness, entertainment and cultural programmes (Ministry of Information, 2000).

Currently, this policy is the most comprehensive one and provides general guidelines and frameworks for media operations. The policy contains clauses that assert the need for harnessing the media to numerous objectives, such as protecting the country’s cultural identity and protecting the primary interests of the citizens first. It also gives the family, children, women and teenagers the importance they deserve, and directs media, particularly broadcasting, to respond to their needs and concerns through specially made programmes. For instance one of the articles states that: ‘attention will be given to the guidance, educational and recreational programmes for children. Another article states: “The Saudi mass communication will give the family its due attention, being the essential unit in society” (Ministry of information, 2000).

Despite the involvement of several governmental departments in the censorship of the media, ultimately, it is the Ministry of Information that has control over the monitoring of the national news agency, radio and television broadcasting and the Internet.

The censorship, which cuts across all categories of the mass media including the Internet include the banning of scenes which contain any deception of or allusion to the drinking of alcohol or taking illegal substances, impingement of Islamic dietary laws, nudity, physical or sexual encounters between opposite sexes, and anything that
is purportedly un-Islamic or aimed at promoting other religions. Dancing is also prohibited unless it is national or traditional and the performers, who are male, must be appropriately dressed. The policy also forbids the communication of any message that contradicts, opposes or criticises Saudi rulers, the government and its principles and national policy. Although not exhaustive, the list below provides an overview of the specific scenes or subjects prohibited on Saudi television, some of which include:

- All scenes that arouse sexual excitement of whatever kind.
- Women appearing ‘indecently dressed’ or appearing in overt love scenes with men or dancing.
- Women appearing in athletic games or sports.
- Scenes relating or alluding to the consumption of alcohol.
- Downgrading reference, whether explicit or implicit, to any of the heavenly religions.
- Treatment of other countries with praise, satire, or contempt.
- Scenes which threaten to expose monarchy.
- All ‘immoral scenes’.
- Scenes showing betting or gambling (Ministry of Information, 2003).

As mentioned by Paterson (1998) censorship is a matter which is seldom far from the surface in considering media’s role in society:

Strict censorship rules have, in effect, presented obstacles and impediments to the freedom of expression in the elementary, prerequisite form of creativity. Such rules have obfuscated the progress and development of ideas in Saudi society. The manner in which censorship laws have stymied the political empowerment of the people and limited their awareness of pertinent issues is equally clear (Paterson 1998: 67).

This view is reinforced by Mukhaimar (1998) who argued that “Muslim rulers have to let the reformers direct them and their nations freely to the benefits of the whole people and society, then the ultimate goal will be obtained, which is stability and security in Muslim countries” (Mukhaimar, 1998: 55).
3.9. Internet Regulation in Saudi Arabia

The materials used to discuss the regulation of the Internet in Saudi Arabia in this section were taken from the report of the OpenNet Initiative (ONI) study on Internet use and regulation in Saudi Arabia discussed earlier in chapter two. Materials from the ONI study were considered useful because they provided an independent but comprehensive overview of the process of Internet regulation in Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia has an effective and reasonably transparent Internet filtering regime. “The Kingdom achieves its control over the content users can access by placing proxy servers between the state-owned Internet backbone and servers in the rest of the world. Requests from Saudi ISP users must travel through these proxies, where they can be filtered and blocked. The Internet Services Unit (ISU) of the King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology (KACST) maintains the firewall and its content filters. Saudi Arabia is open about filtering Internet content, and provides relatively expansive details about the content it blocks and the methods it employs, although it does not offer a list of blocked Web sites. The ISU describes its filtering system explicitly on its public website:

KACST maintains a central log and specialized proxy equipment, which processes all page requests from within the country and compares them to a black list of banned sites. If the requested page is included in the black list then it is dropped, otherwise it is executed and then the request is archived. These black lists are purchased from commercial companies and renewed on a continuous basis throughout the year. This commercial list is then enhanced with various sites added locally by trained staff. If a Saudi Internet user tries to access a page blocked by the government, the requested page is "dropped"; instead of showing the page, the user's computer displays a "block page" stating that [a]ccess to the requested URL is not allowed! (ONI, 2004) (An example of a block page is attached as Appendix 4I).”

“Previous research by ONI collaborators identified Secure Computing's SmartFilter software as the commercial filtering technology Saudi Arabia uses as a source of "black lists" and method of blocking access. The Saudi filtering system uses default rules for blocking access - if a specific URL is not listed in the black list, but its parent domain or directory is blocked, the filtering system will block that URL” (ONI, 2004).
“Saudi Arabia targets specific categories of contents for blocking. Pursuant to the 2001 Council of Ministers decree, the ISU prohibits "pornographic web pages... [and] pages related to drugs, bombs, alcohol, gambling, and pages insulting to the Islamic religion or the Saudi laws and regulations." The ISU identifies pornography as the "most noteworthy" topic, claiming that 95% of all blocked pages fall within this category. Under the heading "Usefulness of Filtering," the ISU justifies its blocking efforts by citing the Qur’aan and invoking an American law review article correlating restrictions on pornography with reduced rates of murder and rape. However, the justifications do not extend to non-pornographic content; the ISU simply states that "non-pornographic sites are only blocked based upon direct requests from the security bodies within the government" (ONI, 2004).

“The government of Saudi Arabia controls Internet access through a sophisticated filtering system that draws upon commercial software from the United States (Secure Computing’s SmartFilter) for technical implementation and site blocking suggestions, expert local staff for operations and additional site identification, and Saudi citizen input to suggest over- or under-blocking according to stated filtering criteria” (ONI, 2004).

3.10. Conclusion
This chapter has provided an overview of the media environment in Saudi Arabia with particular emphasis on the development and regulation of the Internet. The discussion in this chapter indicates that the introduction and growth of the Internet in Saudi Arabia followed a familiar pattern of initial shock and opposition to the new ‘innovation’ and eventual total embrace and the deployment of such media to promote the Islamic values on which the country was founded.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is mainly ruled by tradition while being open to technological developments and modernity. Therefore, the impact of domestic factors on Internet regulation in Saudi Arabia offers an excellent model to assess the effect of this new medium in a predominantly conservative society such as Saudi Arabia.

The government of Saudi Arabia embraced the new media of the Internet by investing in infrastructures to support the development of the Internet in Saudi Arabia. It also
put in place a comprehensive regulation system to make the Internet operate within the vision of what the government considered as good for the country.

Saudi Arabia has some unique features that make the growth and regulation of the Internet a phenomenal development. These include young population structure, family structure and influence, low profile public lives of women, restrictions on male-female interactions, and hosting of Islamic holy sites. All these characteristics imply that domestic factors might have significant impact on the regulation of the Internet in Saudi Arabia. This is important, especially viewed from the background of the findings of Saggaf (2004) that the Internet has had a number of positive impacts on the society.

While many countries value contributions of different cultures in their societies, Saudi Arabia has not provided the opportunity for other cultures to flourish. It has been able to do this over the years through its strict control over the media of communication. In the current global environment, trying to keep society unaffected from changes seem to be a futile effort as it does not have viability both in terms of political as well as technological grounds.

For instance, in respect of the Internet, sovereign states such as Saudi Arabia put measures in place to censor undesirable use of the Internet. Needless to say, such efforts will take society’s chance away to introduce Saudi people’s aspirations to present their values to a global community as well as being affected from them. Considering its history and culture, the new technologies such as the Internet can be introduced in a constructive manner through involving the public in the decision-making process, which does not seem to happen in Saudi Arabia. Although recently founded, the Shura signals signs of change, however, more efforts needed to be put in to change traditional patriarch society.

New media such as the Internet, might be used to initiate debates and introduce new ideas. In some instances, the Internet has been credited with altering the operating environment under which a vast array of intermediary institutions, including the state operates. It could then be argued that for a society such as Saudi Arabia, change is inevitable both forced through internal dynamics as well as by the forces of
globalisation process. The chapters that follow discuss how Saudi Arabia wades through this wave of development.
CHAPTER FOUR

Methodology

4.1. Introduction
This chapter discusses the steps followed to collect and analyse primary data for this study. The choice of research method is important, as the correct method is vital to the success of any study. The research method should be one that enables the appropriate information to be extracted to answer the research question, and the thorough examination of all the circumstances outlined within the literature review. It should minimise the bias of information given and be reliable. That is, the results should be repeatable if someone else were to use the same method with the same population. There are a variety of methods available to get the primary data required in this study. Possible options were examined before appropriate ones were selected.

4.2. Research Questions and Summary of Data Collection Method
This section examines the research questions addressed in this study. The five research questions were derived from two main strands of debate covered by this study. These are: how the exclusive control of states over identity formation and sovereignties within geographically defined boundaries is being challenged by globalisation processes such as the Internet: and how states are taking back their powers through Internet control and regulation. The first two research questions addressed the issue of Internet influence among a haphazardly selected sample in Saudi Arabia while the remaining three questions addressed the issue of Internet regulation among the same sample in Saudi Arabia. What follows are the five research questions:

RQ1. What is the extent of Internet use in Saudi Arabia?
This question seeks to examine the growth of the Internet among the sample of haphazardly selected respondents in Saudi Arabia.

RQ2. What are the characteristics of Internet users in Saudi Arabia?
This question seeks to examine the demographic characteristics of Internet users among the sample selected for this in Saudi Arabia. By collecting data on
demographic characteristics of respondents, the study aims to map the pattern of Internet influence among the sample used for this study in Saudi Arabia.

**RQ3. How is the Internet regulated in Saudi Arabia?**

This question examines the laws put in place to regulate Internet use in Saudi Arabia, the people and institutions responsible for Internet regulation, as well as the role of the users in Internet regulation.

**RQ4. What factors influence Internet development and regulation policy in Saudi Arabia?**

This question examines the role of domestic political, social and economic factors in the formulation of Internet regulation policy in Saudi Arabia as well as the role of the international environment in the formulation and implementation of Internet regulation policy in Saudi Arabia.

**RQ5. How effective is Internet regulation in Saudi Arabia?**

This question examines the effectiveness of the implementation of Internet regulation.

**4.2. Research Approaches**

Research methods are the systematic way of data collection and analysis adopted by a researcher. There are basically two research approaches in the social sciences; these are quantitative and qualitative approaches. Clarke (2001) observed that it is common to find the two approaches presented as representing divergent and opposing research traditions in the social sciences. This situation was described as positivistic and interpretative. “The difference emerged when emphasis is placed on the differences in the philosophical assumptions made about the nature of social reality and the relationship between the researcher and the researched by the two traditions” (Clarke, 2001: 32).

According to the positivist tradition, “there is an objective, external world that exists independent of human perception, which is amenable to quantitative measurement” (Clarke, 2001: 32). Therefore, the positivist tradition “aims to develop valid and reliable ways of collecting facts about society, which can then be statistically analysed in order to produce explanations about how the social world operates” (Clarke, 2001:
32). For example, the social survey provides descriptive documentation of sample populations from which it is possible to make generalisations to the wider population (Clarke, 2001: 32). This approach is considered appropriate for this study. It was adopted to collect primary data, through survey questionnaire, from an anonymous group, selected from among the members of the public.

The interpretativist tradition is based on a different set of philosophical assumptions concerning the nature of reality and the role of the researcher. This tradition “rejects the positivist notion that there exists a single, objective reality or truth which can be discovered by scientific investigation”. According to this perspective, “truth is a much more elusive concept. Individuals and groups construct their own version of reality” (Clarke, 2001: 33). This approach is also considered appropriate for this study. It was adopted through the use of interview technique to collect primary data from officials responsible for Internet policy and regulation in Saudi Arabia.

The views of Clarke (2001) were reinforced by Bryman (1988) when he argued that quantitative research is deductive. In the quantitative approach, researchers deal directly with operationalisation, the manipulation of empirical variables, prediction, and testing. Quantitative research therefore places great emphasis on methodology, procedure, and statistical measures of validity.

The most fundamental characteristics of qualitative research, on the other hand, is its “express commitment to viewing events, action, norms, values, etc. from the perspective of the people being studied” (Bryman, 1988: 61). This approach clearly involves a preparedness to empathise with those being studied, but it also entails a capacity to penetrate the frames of meaning with which they operate.... The basic message that qualitative researchers convey is that whatever the sphere in which data are being collected, we can understand events only when they are situated in the wider social and historical context. Dealing with human behaviour which is not predictable and which might need a lot of observation to unravel the mysteries it covers up (Bryman, 1988: 61).

From the foregoing, it is logical to assume that different methods are better suited to different circumstances; therefore, it is important to consider the most appropriate
method for any particular research task. There are no exclusively best method of data collection, what is most important is that whatever method is chosen is most appropriate for the kind of study one is carrying out and adequate to answer the main research questions. This study adopted the two approaches to data collection: quantitative and qualitative methods. It considered the characteristics of the two research approaches in the design of questions and the actual collection of primary data.

The literature review highlights the roles of individuals and governments in the globalisation debate as it relates to the Internet. With respect to Saudi Arabia, it is considered useful to examine the views of individuals and government in discussing the influence and regulation of the Internet. This chapter discusses the procedure for the operationalisation of the research questions of this study as depicted in the diagram below. Figure 4.1 shows that the choice of methodological approaches adopted was influenced by the kind of data needed to answer the research questions outlined above. This includes the policy level. Consequently, the officials responsible for Internet policy making and implementation were considered as potential sources of data. They also represented the public or government dimension of the research questions and a qualitative approach was adopted to collect data from this group. This approach also involves looking at the smaller picture at the level of individuals who were haphazardly selected from a possible Saudi population sample.

**Figure 4.1 Research Approaches**

![Diagram of Research Methodology](image-url)
Before embarking on actual data collection, it is important for any researcher in the social sciences to address a range of issues that could have significant bearing on the success or otherwise of the study. The first among these is ethical issues. Blumer (2001) suggests that ethics is a matter of principled sensitivity to the rights of others. The social researcher faced with potential ethical problems in the conduct of research may have resort to guidance from codes of ethics and ethical guidelines provided by professional associations (Blumer, 2001).

Blumer (2001) argues further that one general principle that runs through much of the discussion is the need to strike a balance between society's desire, on the one hand, to expose the hidden processes at work in modern society and, on the other, to protect the privacy of individuals and groups and to recognise that there are private spheres into which the social scientist may not, and perhaps even should not, penetrate. The ethical dimension peculiar to each of the research techniques selected for this study will be addressed in the later sections.

Access to sources of data is another important consideration in the collection of data. Without access to relevant people or documents that could yield relevant and useful information, it would be difficult to gather primary data for the study.

The last of the issues are those of reliability and validity of the techniques selected. Here reliability refers to the consistency of one measurement to the other, while validity refers to how adequately the instruments measure the concept. The sections on the two research techniques also address the question of reliability and validity of each.

4.2.1 The Data Collection
Any research will involve the collection of data and a variety of methods and techniques may be used for data collection. This study uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative research approaches. Before discussing the two methods adopted in detail, a brief discussion of case studies will be undertaken.
4.2.2 Case studies

This study examines Internet influence and regulation using Saudi Arabia as a case study. Researchers use the case study approach when they need to study and understand a certain phenomenon. They resort to different sources of information with a view to making a systematic study of an individual, a group, an association or an event. Case study is commonly used in the field of applied science such as medicine and psychology, besides anthropology, administration and history (Tayie, 2001).

Case studies are the study of a phenomenon through the analysis of an individual case. The case may be one person, a group of people or a process. In case studies, all information regarding the case is gathered and organised into a logical manner in relation to the case. The strength of the case study is that the topic being investigated is examined intensively (Tayie, 2001). This method of research often reveals information that less intensive methods fail to do. This method is best suited to the study of how globalisation processes, through Internet influence and regulation, shape developments and events in a particular place such as Saudi Arabia.

Other strengths of case studies include the opportunity to explore new areas. They are considered the best type of research used to obtain preliminary information of a phenomenon to be used in further studies because they are important for identifying the causes of a phenomenon (Tayie, 2001). Since there are very few studies on Internet influence and regulation in Saudi Arabia, this approach is considered appropriate. Another advantage of case studies is that they afford the researcher the opportunity for dealing with a huge amount of information and data, which can be obtained by the use of several approaches such as the historical approach, regular interview, direct observation and even conventional surveys (Tayie, 2001). All these approaches can be used within the framework of case study. Therefore, case study approach is consistent with the use of interviews and survey questionnaire, the two main research methods adopted for this research.

Case studies have some drawbacks though. The disadvantage of case studies is that it is assumed that the case being investigated is typical of all cases of that type. For this study, this disadvantage is particularly relevant. This is an exploratory study of the influence and regulation of the Internet in Saudi Arabia among a haphazardly selected
sample of respondents. This therefore limits the general applicability of the findings of this study to the whole of Saudi society in general. However, in the context of this study, the case study of sample selected for this study would reveal a preliminary data that could be used to map out bigger future study into Internet influence and regulation in Saudi Arabia. The next section examines the two methods, interviews and questions, used within the case study of Saudi Arabia.

4.2.3. Interview

Interview is a method of data collection. Berger (2000) identified four kinds of interviews. The first is informal interviews. In informal interviews there are few controls; they just take place and are not organised or focused, and are generally used to introduce researchers to those being studied. Therefore, informal interviews are, in essence, conversations that serve the purpose of helping the researcher gain the confidence of his or her informant. This approach is not considered appropriate for this study because, the nature of the primary data required makes it important to make a formal approach to the interviewees.

The second is unstructured interviews where the researcher is focused and is trying to gain information, but he or she exercises relatively little control over the responses of the interviewee. This kind of interview is considered most appropriate for this study because, the interviewees were the main Internet policy makers and implementers in Saudi Arabia. They have access to the kind of information which might not be available to others and over which the researcher has little or no control.

The third is semi-structured interview where the interviewer has a written list of questions to ask the informant but tries, to the extent possible, to maintain the casual quality found in unstructured interviews. This kind of interview is not considered appropriate because the unstructured interview would yield more information and original insights which might not be part of questions originally put forward by the researcher.

The fourth is structured interviews. In this kind of interviews, the researcher uses an interview schedule of a specified set of instructions that guide those who ask respondents for answers to questions. Questionnaires that are self-administered are classified as structured interviews (Berger, 2000: 111-112). This approach is
considered more in detail in the survey section as it is more appropriate for getting data from members of the public.

This study used in-depth interview with an unstructured question format. This involves direct interaction between the researcher and a respondent or group. It differs from structured question approach such as questionnaire in several important ways. First, although the researcher may have some initial guiding questions or core concepts to ask about, there is no formal structured instrument or protocol. Second, the interviewer is free to move the conversation in any direction of interest that may come up. Consequently, unstructured question approach is particularly useful for exploring a topic broadly.

The study adopted an in-depth approach focusing on a small number of interviewees and allowing substantial time for these interviews with the emphasis on quality rather than quantity of information. This is appropriate for this case study because in in-depth interviews, Tayie (2001) suggests, researchers use a small sample. Three people directly responsible for formulating and implementing Internet regulation policy in Saudi Arabia were interviewed. These were the Minister for Interior, the Head of Naif Arab Academy and the Head of Internet Services Unit in Kind Abdul Aziz City for Science and Technology. In-depth interviews help researchers collect huge amounts of information and it lasts for longer period ranging from one hour and over. In in-depth interviews, the researcher enjoys a good deal of liberty and flexibility, where he can ask different questions, depending on the different answers of the researched. These qualities of in-depth interviews were put into good use in conducting interview with two of the interviewees in Riyadh.

In-depth interviews have a number of advantages and disadvantages as well. Most important of the advantages is getting a big amount of information, and also getting more accurate and sensitive information that cannot be obtained in other ways. The relationship that arises between the researcher and the researched provides the opportunity to get sensitive information. Besides, interview can be the only way for the researcher to get information from certain groups such as public personalities and top professionals from whom information is impossible (Tayie, 2001). This is particularly relevant in Saudi Arabia because of the system of government, which
privileges few people to be responsible for policy formulation and implementation in the country.

4.2.4. Interview Sample

It was important to identify key government sections responsible for the Internet. The first organisation is the Ministry of Interior. The Ministry of Interior is responsible for security as well as protection of lives and property in the country. As discussed earlier, the threat to security is one of the reasons why states are concerned about the Internet and therefore want it to be regulated. In addition, with respect to Saudi Arabia, the Minister of Interior is responsible for an agency called the Supreme Council of Information that is responsible for monitoring, controlling and regulating the mass media in Saudi Arabia. This body is also responsible for regulating the Internet in Saudi Arabia. The Ministry of Interior is also responsible for a number of other agencies. These agencies have varying degrees of responsibilities in respect of Internet control or regulation in Saudi Arabia. Among the bodies are the King Abdul Aziz City for science and technology (KACST), the Internet Service Unit ISU is part of KACST-, the Naif Arab Academy for Security Sciences, the Information Security Centre, the Board of Investigation and Public Prosecution. Other bodies outside the Ministry of Interior with varying degrees of oversight function over Internet regulation include the Ministry of Islamic affairs, Endowment, Call & Guidance and the Ministry of Culture & Information.

The work of all these bodies with regard to Internet regulation is coordinated by the Ministry of Interior under the leadership of the Minister of Interior and a committee known as the Internet Security Committee. This committee consists of a number of government organizations headed by the Minister of Interior. It is responsible for issuing the list of blocked sites as well as regulating Internet use and security in Saudi Arabia. It is also responsible for Internet use policy in public areas, rules and regulation for anti-hacking (pending approval) and in-house developed programmes to automate building the filter list of the ISU proxy. The other responsibilities of the Committee include blocking and unblocking requests, security check visits to ISPs and signed agreements with a number of companies to provide anti-virus software to local (governmental or commercial) entities (Al-Furaih, 2001).
Since the Ministry of Interior is central to the process of Internet regulation in Saudi Arabia, I considered the Minister, His Highness Prince Naif bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud, a key interviewee.

While the Ministry of Interior through the Internet Security Committee is responsible for policy formulation, the actual implementation of the policies rests on two agencies. The first of these agencies is the Internet Service Unit (ISU), a department at King Abdul Aziz City of Science and Technology (KACST). Therefore, after the Ministry of Interior the next important agency in respect of Internet regulation in Saudi Arabia is the ISU. The ISU is responsible for providing Internet services in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in cooperation with Saudi Telecommunication Company (STC), the Communications and Information Technology Commission (CITC) and a number of Internet Service Providers (ISPs) from the private sector. Therefore, due to the role of ISU in the development and operation of the Internet in Saudi Arabia, I considered it necessary to interview its Head, Dr Ibrahim Saleh Al-Furaih.

After the ISU, the other agency responsible for Internet regulation in Saudi Arabia is Naif Arab Academy for Security Science (NAASS). NAASS was established to fulfil the needs expressed by Arab Law Enforcement Agencies for an academic institution that would promote research on security issues, offer postgraduate programmes, and conduct short-term training courses that can contribute to the prevention and control of crime in the Arab countries. At NAASS I interviewed Dr Colonel Abdul Azeem Al-Salih, Director of the organisation.

4.2.5. Access
After identifying these organisations, I wrote a letter to them explaining my study and the reasons why I wanted to conduct interviews with them. When I didn’t get any response from all of them, I tried to contact them by phone. I succeeded in getting two of them. These were the heads of ISU at KACST and NAASS. They agreed to grant the interviews. I made an appointment with them for 6-7 January 2001. I travelled to Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia to conduct the interviews with them. I conducted the interview with the Head of ISU KACST. The interviews were conducted between January 2001 and February 2001. All the interviews were conducted in Riyadh where
the offices of the organisations were based except that of Prince Naif that was conducted in Makkah during the month of Hajj when Prince Naif came to Makkah.

The interview with Prince Naif, the Interior Minister was conducted in Makkah on 22nd February, 2001. It was difficult getting an appointment with him. I wrote a letter to the Minister which was followed up with several telephone calls to arrange an interview appointment. I did not get any response. I was asked to direct my enquiries to the public relations department. However, I considered the views of the Minister central to the main questions being asked by this study. After trying unsuccessfully to get an appointment, I tried an informal channel through one of my relatives that works in the protocol office of the Minister and was responsible for organising the appointments of the Minister with visitors.

Through my relative, I managed to get an appointment for the interview. The interview was held in the house of the Minister in Makkah. I went with my relative who took me to his house. I was taken to his Secretary who took us to Prince Naif. My relative made the introduction, after which I spoke about the purpose of my study. I began by asking him questions on the main theme of this study. He responded, though briefly, to all the questions. I recorded the interview on tape. After the interview, the tape was taken from me by people working in his office. They transcribed the tape and expanded on the views he expressed during the interview before they handed the tape back to me within one week. The interview lasted for about 25 minutes.

The interview with Dr Ibrahim Saleh Al-Furaih, the Head of ISU at KACST was held on 6th of January, 2001. I was welcomed into the ISU by Dr Al Furaih. Before we started the interview he took me round the organisation and informed me about how the place functions. After this, we went back to his office where we had the interview. It lasted for about 90 minutes. The interview was recorded on tape which I then transcribed and translated for analysis.

The next interview was with Dr Colonel Abdul Azeem Al-Salih, Director of NAASS. I went to the NAASS on 7th of January, 2001. I was received by Dr Al-Salih. I started by talking to him about the purpose of my study after which we started the interview.
It lasted for about 65 minutes. The interview was recorded on tape which I then transcribed and translated for analysis. A copy of the letter requesting for the interview is attached as Appendix 2. Most of his answers were straight to the point.

4.3. Survey Method (Questionnaire)

Wiseman and Aron (1970: 37) defines survey research as “a method for collecting and analysing social data via highly structured and often very detailed interviews or questionnaires in order to obtain information from large numbers of respondents presumed to be representative of a specific population” (cited in Berger 2000: 188).

There are two kinds of surveys. These are descriptive and analytic. Descriptive survey seeks to obtain information about demographic factors such as age, gender, marital status, occupation, race or ethnicity, income, and religion and to relate this information to opinions, beliefs, values, and behaviours of some group of people. Analytical surveys seek to find out why people behave the way they do. It attempts to determine whether there are causal relationships between certain kinds of behaviour and various social and demographic characteristics of people. Each of the questionnaires used for this survey is also divided into two sections. The first section asked questions that were descriptive in nature while the second section asked questions that were analytical in nature. Questionnaires are also conventionally understood to be lists of questions given or sent to people who are asked to answer the questions and return the questionnaires to the senders. That is, they are self-administered surveys (Berger, 2000: 189).

Questionnaires are also considered as, perhaps, the most popular of the methods used in social research. Survey questionnaires are used in many walks of life and for a variety of different types of research. Denscombe (1998) stressed that questionnaires are considered appropriate in a number of situations such as when used with large numbers of respondents in many locations or when what is required tends to be fairly straightforward information – relatively brief and uncontroversial. Other situations include when there is a need for standardized data from identical questions without requiring personal, face-to-face interaction; when time allows for delays caused by production, piloting, posting and procrastination before receipt of response; and when
the respondents can be expected to be able to read and understand the questions – the implications of age, intellect and eyesight need to be considered (Denscombe, 1998).

Questionnaires have some advantages, which make them appropriate for this study. First, they are cheaper compared with other approaches, as regards the huge amount of knowledge that can be obtained from surveys. At the same time, the researcher can control the cost through deciding on the type of survey to be made – postal or through television or personal interview or a meeting with a group of researched at a time (Tayie, 2001). Another advantage is that survey questionnaire helps the researcher to get a huge amount of data and at the same time, he can study a number of variables. These data can be subjected to statistical analysis to help interpret them and find their significance (Tayie, 2001).

Questionnaires also have some drawbacks. For instance, pre-coded questions can be frustrating for respondents and, thus, deter them from answering. Pre-coded questions can also bias the findings towards the researchers’ rather than the respondent’s way of seeing things. In respect of questionnaires that are administered by post, there is little opportunity for the researcher to check the truthfulness of the answers given by the respondents (Oppenheim, 1992, Denscombe, 1998). However, as stressed by Oppenheim (1992) we cannot judge a questionnaire unless we know what job it was meant to do. This means that we have to think not merely about the wording of particular questions but, first and foremost, about the design of the investigation as a whole (Oppenheim, 1992:10).

The most relevant drawback of questionnaires for this study is the ability to put the questions in a way that would bring out the required information from the respondents. On this point, Tayie (2001) suggests that the formulation of the language may not be good enough which may make it difficult to understand or it may lead to some sort of bias that faces the researcher to select a certain responses to a question, in a specific way. This study paid attention to some of these limitations of questionnaire technique in its design; hence most of the concerns were taken care of.
4.3.1. Questionnaire Design

Survey questionnaires are generally categorised into two analytic and descriptive surveys. It follows, therefore, that the data collected from questionnaires are generally categorised into two. These are facts and opinions. Factual information does not require much in the way of judgement or personal attitudes on the part of respondents. It just requires respondents to reveal (accurately and honestly) information: their address, age, sex, marital status, number of children etc. Opinions, attitudes, views, beliefs, preferences etc. can also be investigated using questionnaires. In this case, though, respondents are required to reveal information about feelings, to express values, to weigh up alternatives etc., in a way that calls for a judgement about things rather than the mere reporting of facts.

These two areas are reflected in questionnaire design. For instance, it contains both personal information, usually considered to be factual, and opinions, which represent the views of the respondents on particular issues. (Denscombe, 1998). I therefore divided my questionnaire into two sections. The first section required the respondents to give factual information about their person. To start with, some basic questions were asked to gather details on the socio-cultural background of the users. These included age, gender, education status of the participants and their marital status. The basic questions were followed by questions assessing the participants' familiarity with the Internet, such as computer ownership, the venue for Internet access and the time that participants spend on the Internet.

The second section required the opinion of the respondents in respect of certain statements. All the questions in this section were open-ended to allow the respondents the space to freely express themselves on the issues raised in the statements. The respondents were asked about their views on Internet regulation. Where appropriate, options were provided in the questionnaire. However, most of the questions were open-ended, therefore the participants were encouraged freely express their views.

4.3.2. Sampling Frame

After discussing the questionnaire with my supervisor, I translated the questions from English to Arabic. The questionnaire was given to a professional translator to achieve
the closest translation possible. After the translation, I made 1500 copies available for distribution.

In the survey of Internet users for this study, I focussed on the most populated areas in Saudi that are geographically far from each other, hence questionnaire is the most realistic way of gathering materials from such diverse locations. Five cities were selected for the administration of the questionnaire. These cities were Makkah, Madinah, Jeddah, Riyadh and Dammam. These cities were selected because they were highly populated. By including populated areas, it was hoped to reach diverse individuals in the population. Each of the cities selected also have universities which were used as sites for the distribution of the questionnaires. I travelled to each of these cities myself to administer the questionnaires between December 2000 and March 2001. I stayed in each city for two days where the questionnaires were administered at universities in those cities. The university refectories were chosen because the Internet being a new technology, and the most familiar people with technology was believed to be the students. However, the study’s aim was not to conduct the study exclusively on university students. Hence, when the questionnaires were distributed, distinction regarding people’s profession was not made and the questionnaires were distributed randomly.

Three hundred copies each were distributed in each of the five cities selected as my sample. However, the response from the female respondents was poor. I had only fourteen questionnaires returned by them. The reason for this might be connected to the restrictions of male-female interactions in Saudi Arabia discussed in chapter three. Therefore, I had to devise another strategy to gather more responses from female respondents. The questionnaires for the male respondents that were filled in on the spot were returned back to me by hand. The questionnaires that were taken away with a promise to return them back by post to me were never returned back.

During my visit to Saudi Arabia between August and September 2004, I administered more questionnaires to female respondents. I did this through the help of female relatives in three out of the five original cities selected in the earlier sample. These were Makkah, Jeddah and Madina. The questionnaires were administered at Umm Al Qura University in Makkah, King Abdul Al-Aziz’s University in Jeddah and the
imam University in Madina and at girls only High schools in the three cities. In all 500 copies were distributed in these three cities out of which 206 were completed and returned on the spot.

4.3.3. Ethical Consideration and Access

To encourage people to complete the questionnaire, the volunteers were assured about their anonymity. Wimmer and Dominick (2003) argued that anonymity is one of the ways of guaranteeing privacy in a survey. A promise of anonymity is a guarantee that a given respondent cannot possibly be linked to any particular response. This encourages respondents to be honest and candid in their answers (Wimmer and Dominick, 2003: 74). The promise of anonymity is particularly relevant in Saudi Arabia because, culturally, people do not normally reveal much about themselves. To increase the number of respondents, where appropriate, the researcher actively involved in conversation about the objective of the work with the respondents to persuade them to complete the questionnaire, hence detailed explanation was given about the nature of the study. As stated earlier, to be able to get as wide contribution as possible, the questionnaires were distributed in different settings, such as universities, Internet cafes and busy city shopping centres.

4.3.4. Data Analysis

The interview data and the questionnaire data raised different kinds of challenges that would have to be taken into consideration in the analysis of the findings. As mentioned earlier, a major advantage of the interview is its adaptability. A skilful interviewer can follow up ideas, probe responses and investigate motives and feelings, which the questionnaire can never do. The way in which a response is made (the tone of voice, facial expression, hesitation, etc.) can provide information that a written response would conceal. Questionnaire responses have to be taken at face value, but a response in an interview can be developed and clarified.

There are problems with interviews also. Interviews are time-consuming, therefore, analysing responses can present problems, and wording the questions is almost as demanding for interviews as it is for questionnaires. Moser and Kalton (1971) describe the interview “as a conversation between the interviewer and the respondent.
with the purpose of eliciting certain information from the respondent” (Moser and Kalton, 1971: 271).

For this study I transcribed the interviews and then translated them into English. As pointed out by Berger (2000) after getting all the materials transcribed, the next step is to make sense of the materials. One way of doing this is to classify and categorise the material. It is also possible to look at how interviews categorise things by looking at patterns and themes prevalent in the interview. The purpose of looking for classifications and categories used by interviewees is to get a sense of how their minds work, how they make sense of the world (Berger, 2000: 120-121). I also identified the patterns and themes prevalent in the views expressed by the Saudi officials interviewed. The discussion of the interviewees was then categorised along the line of the pattern identified.

In respect of the questionnaire, overall, 462 questionnaires were available for analysis; 242 from male respondents and 220 from female respondents. The questionnaire responses were translated into English by me and by a person who is an English and Arabic speaker. This process was required in order to minimise the level of misunderstanding originating from differences in the language. Once this was done, the questionnaires were ready for an analysis.

The level of participation was lower than expected. This could be due to several reasons. Firstly, although the Internet use is expanding greatly in recent years, the legacy of ban and restrictions placed upon this new media in Saudi Arabia presumably caused some reluctance on the part of respondents. Secondly, the low participation rate could be related to the lack of interest on this issue. In Saudi Arabia, as discussed previously, people are rarely asked their opinion. This is due to strict familial bonds and patriarchal nature of the society, which makes the elders take decisions on behalf of younger members of the family. Although the feudal bonds are not as strong as before, men still have more privileges than women in the society. In addition to family structure, the political organisation of the country does not encourage people to express their opinions. As stated earlier, the King rules the country and his authority is absolute, there is no mechanism for individuals to voice their wishes.
CHAPTER FIVE

Internet Influence and Regulation in Saudi Arabia: Findings from policy documents and interviews with Policy Makers

5.1. Introduction

In chapter two, I examined how the emergence of the Internet had brought out the dilemmas inherent in the widespread adoption of information technology and its attendant global homogenisation effect as well as how countries are fighting back to keep their cultures, values and identity. In this chapter, I explore the impact of these two trends in respect of the development of the Internet in Saudi Arabia and the views of the officials responsible for Internet policy formulation and regulation in Saudi Arabia.

The increasing influence of the Internet and other factors which Appadurai (2001) described as objects of flow has created situations of "disjuncture" or tensions which are challenging conceptions of concepts such as the state, territoriarity, deterritorialisation and sovereignty in contemporary times. This development has a significant impact on the authority and sovereignty of states to successfully control developments within their geographically defined boundaries, hence, the concern among some states in particular to control the use of the Internet through regulation.

In this chapter, I discuss various official policies and methods used to regulate the Internet in Saudi Arabia. The data that were used in this chapter were collected through analysis of in-depth interviews with officials responsible for the formulation and implementation of policies on Internet regulation in Saudi Arabia. In the interviews, I tried to understand how the Internet is regulated in Saudi Arabia. I was concerned with knowing what laws were put in place to regulate Internet use in Saudi Arabia, the people and institutions responsible for Internet regulation, the role of the users in Internet regulations.

Secondly, I tried to identify the factors that have influenced, over the years, Internet development and regulation policy in Saudi Arabia. Thirdly, I tried to examine the extent of the effectiveness of Internet regulation in Saudi as well as how this impacted
on the sovereignty of Saudi Arabia. The sections that follow report the findings and analyses of the responses of the interviewees.

5.2. Internet Regulation
The discussion in chapter four highlighted the phenomenal growth of the Internet and the concerns this growth has raised in respect of Saudi Arabia. This section examines how these concerns were dealt with through policies and activities of the government of Saudi Arabia. The discussion in this section is based on the interviews conducted with three people who are directly responsible for Internet regulation in Saudi Arabia. These are the Minister for Interior, Prince Naif bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud, Dr Colonel Abdul Azeem Al-Salih, Director of Naif Arab Academy for Security Sciences under the Ministry of Interior and Dr Ibrahim Saleh Al-Firaih, Head of Internet Unit at King Abdul Aziz City for Science and Technology.

In the view of the Minister of Interior, Prince Naif Ibn Abdul Aziz Al-Saud, the government of Saudi Arabia adopted a range of measures to regulate the Internet. However, the government is guided by the belief that in spite of laws, self-regulation after the proper education of the public and users seems to be the most effective way forward. The Interior Minister stated that:

... despite the presence of many laws regarding regulation of the Internet, in practice, the government is putting emphasis on prevention of certain Internet sites through awareness rather than active follow up of individuals that are violating the laws, which is obvious from the fact that so far nobody has been charged with violations of the Internet laws. This is perhaps due to the fact that in reality such practice is too expensive and time consuming.

In spite of the efforts to encourage self-regulation through education, the Minister provided a broad view of the range of measures adopted to regulate the Internet in Saudi Arabia. These are:

- Firstly, publicising and spreading awareness among users regarding the regulations and the benefits drawn from their existence plus the damages caused by their absence.
- Secondly, encouraging self and parental controls.
- Thirdly, assigning qualified and knowledgeable personnel to monitor violations of the set regulations and rules.
- Fourthly, utilising electronic resources (hardware/software) to filter and avoid as much as possible the people having access to contents considered as negative.
- Fifthly, criminalising and punishing irresponsible users for wrong doings.

From the view of Prince Naif above, Internet regulation is approached through the use of law, education, electronic and human monitoring and punishment of violators of laid down rules. As the statement above demonstrates, the precautions for Internet regulation are quite comprehensive. On the one hand, it relies on parental control, on the other it utilises electronic resources, and criminal punishment is not spared either. The presence of parental control can have a negative effect on the dispersion of Internet use in the community since parents might perceive the Internet as something that must be avoided. Besides, there is no set rule for what is criminal and punishable and what is allowed and accessible. The implication of this point is beyond the specific issue of Internet regulation and it extends to the particular nature of Saudi society.

The views expressed above regarding the role of the family in the education of children against the abuse of the Internet reinforces the discussion in chapter three of the role of family and tribal values in the Saudi society. For instance, in spite of the adoption of a policy of modernization by Saudi Arabia, tribal and familial attachments are proving impervious to the influence of modernity.

In addition, to be able to comprehend Prince Naif’s response, more in depth analysis is needed, which should not only take local, regional changes into consideration but also the recent global currents. Prince Naif’s response demonstrated that the government approaches regulation of the Internet in a limited way. In the light of recent developments in the world and the region this was not surprising. So far, political change has been slow in the Middle East including in Saudi Arabia. When any change was implemented this was as a result of uncontrollable pressures from outside. Therefore, the implication of recent events for Internet content regulation in the Kingdom is that, the world is changing with greater pace than at any other time in history, and once again, the government is responding to pressures from outside.
One of the interviewees, Dr Ibrahim Saleh Al-Firaih, Head of Internet Unit at King Abdul Aziz City for Science and Technology, also dwelt on the dangers posed to the security of the state and the moral fabric of the society by the Internet in general and by computer hackers in particular. In his view computer crimes are:

...bad crimes as they affect the national security or affect foreign relations of any other country. Lack of regulation exposes the state to danger and harm.... Technically, Internet service in Saudi Arabia is the same as in abroad. But there are some protocols that should be followed, services that shall be available and issues considered as being common for other people and us. The only difference between Internet service in Saudi Arabia and other people Internet services is that we attempt to protect our human values and our people from immoral sites. I can say that immoral sites are responsible for 99% of damage and King Abdul Aziz City for Science and Technology attempt to deactivate those sites. Examples of such sites are sexual sites as well as sites that propagate drugs, sites that deal with gambling and the extreme web sites that no body can benefit from.

The views of Dr Al-Firaih, reflect an awareness of the dangers that unlimited access to the Internet could pose to a country. Hence, he identified computer hackers as the main enemy against which the society should be protected. Further in the interview, he pointed out that the main goals of the hackers included, curiosity and self-identity, cheating and trickery, vandalism, stealing data, forgery, and reprint of books and documents of other people. Although, so far none of the computer hackers identified in Saudi Arabia were thought to be motivated by terrorism objectives, there is still a widespread view among the officials interviewed that if left unregulated the Internet has the potential to be used for terrorist objectives.

The views of Dr Al-Firaih above seem to reflect his responsibility as the official responsible for one of the centres designated for Internet regulation in Saudi Arabia. From the views of the Minister for Interior and Dr Al-Firaih, it could be argued that the Internet is considered an important tool the impact of which, if used in a negative manner, could undermine the basis of the state itself (such the state security and society’s moral fabrics).

This is perhaps one of the reasons why a 2001 Council of Ministers Resolution prohibits users within the Kingdom from publishing or accessing certain content on the Internet.
Identifying the Internet as capable of posing a threat to the state and the society seems to echo the fears over the Internet already raised by many other countries. For instance, the European Union telecommunications council paper on “Illegal and harmful content on the Internet” (EURIM, 1997) probably best sums up the fears of governments more generally about the Internet:

- National security (instructions on bomb-making, illegal drug production, terrorist activities);
- Protection of minors (abusive forms of marketing, violence, pornography).
- Protection of human dignity (incitement to racial hatred or racial discrimination).
- Economic security (fraud, instructions on pirating credit cards).
- Information security (malicious hacking).
- Protection of privacy (unauthorised communication of personal data, electronic harassment).
- Protection of reputation (libel, unlawful comparative advertising).
- Intellectual property (unauthorised distribution of copyrighted works, software or music) (EURIM, 1997: Online)

This is also one of the reasons why a range of approaches was adopted for Internet regulation in Saudi Arabia. The first approach is law and edicts issued by the government. The second is education of the citizens. The third is Internet filtering and imposition of fines and punishment for violators of the law. The fourth approach is through the composition of a superintending committee that oversees the regulation of the Internet in Saudi Arabia. These approaches will now be discussed in turns based on the views of the officials interviewed.

5.2.1. Law

In respect of using law or legal framework to regulate the Internet in Saudi Arabia, the most important document was the resolution of the Ministers’ Council (163) dated 24/10/1997 permitting the Internet services in the Kingdom and assigning specified tasks and responsibilities to governmental agencies to prepare and organise the commencement of the service.

5.2.2. Education

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Saudi society is a traditional society whose values were defined by Islamic religion. In this society, religious scholars, *Ulama*, and
the family play important roles in the education of the society and this is perhaps one of the reasons why the responsibility for the education seems to be placed on the Ulama, the family and the citizens' sense of what is considered morally acceptable in the society. The responsibility of the individual is also emphasized by Dr Al-Faraih:

Misuse of Internet can occur by two things: visit of bad and filtered sites that requires specific penalties that shall be applied upon users of such sites. User of such deactivated sites harm himself only and till date there is no specific penalty that can be applied to him.

5.2.3. Filtering and Imposition of Fines

The King Abdul Aziz City for Science and Technology was charged with the responsibility of filtering the Internet and blocking unwanted sites. Although this responsibility looks simple, however, from the opinion of Dr Al-Faraih, it is not as easy as it seems. He pointed out that

Internet has many negative aspects just like other mass media and we, in King Abdul Aziz City for Science and Technology, attempt to reduce these negative aspects by filtering. Although there are many bad sites on the Internet, there are many useful sites such as news channels, trade sites, information and tools that could be benefited from. Practically, there are some people in Saudi Arabia that do not know the filtered sites. This is because they do not attempt to enter such bad sites. On the other hand, some people complain against deactivating bad sites, but when they are asked to nominate those sites they become shy, shameful and change the subject.

Dr Al-Faraih also mentioned that the King Abdul Aziz City for Science and Technology had two approaches to filtering; these were the white list and black list approaches: Under the white list approach, the King Abdul Aziz City for Science and Technology activate the sites they considered proper and deactivate the ones they considered improper. In respect of the black list, it means that everything is allowed except what has been stated down in this list such as pornographic and opposition websites (The procedure and official policy for Internet filtering were included as Appendix 4F). The way this worked was explained further:

In Saudi Arabia, we enter Internet from one gate so called “Gate Y-I” that enable us filter sites well. Of course, there are many approaches that can be used to by pass it. Most of the sites were deactivated due to complaints submitted by users of Internet. Actually, no sites shall be deactivated unless
one of our control team notices what requires to be deactivated. Of course, there are many good sites that contain pictures that might otherwise be banned but which are being used for a scientific purpose, so these sites are not deactivated.

As a way of making filtering effective, the King Abdul Aziz City for Science and Technology made sure that those in charge of the filtering process have a very good command of English language, because control process that depends on watching is not enough. Tools (developed internally) that also give those in charge of filtering an idea about the bad sites and their different categories were also used.

The figure below shows the categories of items blocked by the ISU according to the 2004 ONI study.

**Figure 5.1 Categorisation of the sites blocked by ISU according to the ONI study**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total sites</th>
<th>Blocked</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>741</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porn</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambling</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enonymizer/Encryption</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humour</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Events</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provocative Attire</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homosexuality (not porn)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex Ed</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hate speech</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hacking</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blogging Domain</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Famous Bloggers</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminism</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filtering sites</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free web space</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion (fanatical)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion (normal)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search Engines</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translation sites</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weapons/Violence</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misc</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Rights</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: ONI study 2004)
The approach of KACST to the regulation of Internet in Saudi Arabia covers both content as well as technical issues. The people working at this institution are well equipped on the issue of regulation. Most of them have good command of English and therefore are able to follow recent developments about debates on Internet regulation. As mentioned before, the official line in KACST was that the Internet was a very useful tool and it should be used for public good. Hence, KACST view was in favour of regulation. The justification for regulating the Internet was related mainly to two main subjects, exclusion of morally harmful sites and protection of strategic sites, such as official, financial as well as personal sites from hacking. The technical means of regulation such as filtering is being intensively used to eliminate and block sites from Saudi Internet users. In addition, through social awareness, KACST plans to alert people about proper use and misuse of this medium (MCIT Report to WSIS, 2003).

5.2.4. Penalties

In spite of the mechanisms, such as law, education and filtering put in place to make regulation effective, there have been instances when all these measures were breached. In the view of the Minister for Interior:

… it is very difficult to cite precisely the most prevalent law abuses due to the varying degrees of how the Internet is subjected to in each country. However, the common abuses are mainly illegal accessing (hacking), posting immoral contents, planting destructive programmes (viruses), publishing and copying offensive and immoral contents

The Minister also cited the formation of the Persistent Security Committee for Internet in Saudi Arabia. It was established as a Security Committee under the presidency of Ministry of Interior. “The Committee is responsible for the design, regulations, rules and penalties for use of Internet in Saudi Arabia since the foundation of King Abdul Aziz City for Science and Technology. The Security Committee is an executive body that is responsible for providing and organising Internet services in Saudi Arabia. The committee is made up of members drawn from Ministry of Interior (Mohammad Abdul Rahman Al-Shinaifi), King Abdul Aziz City for Science and Technology, the Ministry of Islamic Affairs and the Ministry of Information.
In respect of penalties for those who break the laws put in place to regulate the Internet, there are different approaches. Dr Al-Faraih pointed out that “the King Abdul Aziz City for Science and Technology deals with hackers in two ways according to the cabinet resolution no 632 issued upon the founding of King Abdul Aziz City for Science and Technology. In the first instance, hackers were forbidden from services for a period of six months. In the second instance, hackers were forbidden from services for a period of a year and there are further penalties.”

The views of officials responsible for Internet regulation policy formulation and implementation in Saudi Arabia show that while the government demonstrated its willingness to embrace the benefits of the Internet, it wants to do this in a way that its continued hold on power as custodians of the traditional values of the society is not compromised.

The approach adopted by Saudi Arabia reflects some of the approaches to the Internet regulation adopted by different governments discussed in chapter two. The government of Saudi Arabia is responding to the influence of a borderless media by reasserting itself through laws and fines imposed on legal boundaries as defined by the state. As Everard (2000) stated Internet censorship is connected to the issue of boundary making and subjectivity.

5.3. Factors Influencing Internet Development and Regulation

In chapter two, I examined how the Internet has contributed to two strands of debates about globalisation. The first debate borders on the homogenising influence of the Internet and the efforts of states to reclaim their spheres of influence lost to a medium unrestrained by geographical and physical barriers. The second borders on the heterogenising influence of the Internet and the efforts of different states and groups to use it to project their identities to a global audience. In this section, I examine the views of officials responsible for Internet policy formulation and implementation in Saudi Arabia as they relate to the above arguments.

In a robust defence of the regulation of the Internet in Saudi Arabia in view of the overwhelming advantages brought about by the Internet, the Minister for Interior
stressed that the Internet undoubtedly provides great and efficient resources of information, applications and services that are of multiple usage and benefit to mankind.

...However, it is, at the same time, characterised as an open and borderless electronic media that are available world-wide to some irresponsible users and others who have different beliefs and moral standards. These kinds of users can utilise the Internet to publish and exchange different types and forms of information and applications that might be offensive, damaging or harming depending on how they are perceived and received. Additionally, it can be utilised for committing crimes and drugs handling. For these reasons and others, regulating the Internet in the Kingdom must be in place.

The defence of Internet regulation in Saudi Arabia as offered by the Minister of Interior touched on the protection of the traditional values of the society from attacks against it through the Internet. It could then be argued that protection of the fabric of the society against ideas foreign to it, and exposure of Internet users to immoral contents were the main concerns shaping the laws regarding Internet regulation. Dr Colonel Abdul Azeem Al-Salih, the Director of Naif Arab Academy for Security Sciences, also echoed this point. He suggested that the reason for Internet regulation in Saudi Arabia was the need to punish those who think they can mess around, or cause mischief or damage the public treasury by criminal gangs using the Internet. However, pointedly, he identified the values of Islam as the main factor guiding Internet regulation in Saudi Arabia. He stated that:

We as a security body in this country that decided to adhere to the Islamic religion apply Islam in our life by mission, recommendation, enlightenment, and educating people in Saudi Arabia as a first step. The corrupters will be held accountable, answerable and will be punished. Allah’s messenger (may peace be upon him) said: No mischief and no reciprocal harming that is why the custodian of the two holy mosques government established the security committee in 1997. This committee is to put the regulation required for the use of the Internet from ISPs to home user. This regulation is meant to stop those who wanted to harm themselves or harm the others. They are, I think, working on this project but we do not have yet any output so I can not give you any further details. There is no doubt the Internet is an instrument like any other instrument. People should use it in the right way and get benefit from it. I do not think any Muslim will go to or view bad sites, the most important concern or problem in my opinion and which cause embarrassment with other countries is hackers.
In spite of the defence put up for regulation of the Internet above, the ability of the Internet to penetrate borders and for people using the Internet to operate outside the geographical boundaries of a country puts the efficacy of Internet regulation arguably in the spotlight. For instance, a nation cannot enforce its law abroad and thus a nation has plenary enforcement jurisdiction over persons and property within its borders but little if any beyond.

Further, the response of Dr Colonel Abdul Azeem Al-Salih, director of Naif Academy for Security Affairs, Ministry of Interior, must be evaluated from a broader perspective. His views reflect a traditional and conservative approach towards the Internet.

When Dr Colonel Abdul Azeem Al-Salih views are analysed in the light of recent developments in the Kingdom, it reflects the stand that the state takes. On the one hand, he acknowledges the usefulness of the Internet, while on the other hand, he mentions the corrupting influence of the Internet.

As a matter of fact, it could be argued that Saudi government is aware of the impact of information technology on transcending geographical and political barriers. Saudi government have also allocated the necessary funds and adopted appropriate policies and incentives, together with national programmes, to encourage the information technology industry and strengthen its research institutions.

5.4. Discussion and Conclusion
This chapter has discussed the views of officials responsible for formulating and implementing policies on the Internet in Saudi Arabia. Their views were discussed in the light of theoretical debates about Internet influence and regulation in the literature review chapter. This discussion of the views of officials responsible for Internet policy formulation and implementation in Saudi Arabia shows that the way Internet develops in a country is a reflection of the system of government in the country.

While the literatures on Internet regulation examined in chapter two indicate that both the government and the people in a country play important roles in Internet control and regulation, this study shows that in addition to the government, the society as
represented by religious establishments and other factors such as family values and tribal traditions play important roles in Internet influence and regulation in Saudi Arabia. This is due in part to the role of Islam in Saudi Arabia.

From the discussion in this chapter it is therefore possible to identify the stakeholders in Internet development and influence in Saudi Arabia. The first is the government. The government is playing an important part in both Internet development and regulation in Saudi Arabia. The government invested a lot of money in the infrastructures that made the development of Internet in Saudi Arabia possible. The government also actively engaged in regulating the Internet through blocking of sites that were considered antagonistic to the values of the society and authority of the government.

The second important stakeholders are the religious institutions. In Saudi Arabia, religious scholars play a very prominent role in public affairs. The country itself was founded through the efforts of Sheikh Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahab and King Abdul Aziz Ibn Abdul Rahman Al-Saud. The country is also home to two of the holiest sites of Islam. The constitution is based on Islam and the government derives its legitimacy from the protection of Islamic values. The religious establishments see their role as that of protection of the Islamic values and traditions of the country. The representatives of religious establishments were also given prominent roles in the Internet Security Committee. In addition, most of the sites blocked (included as appendix 4E) by the ISU are those whose contents were at variance with the Islamic views of mainstream religious establishment in Saudi Arabia.

The third important stakeholder is the society. The discussions in the earlier chapters indicate that the Saudi society has some characteristics that mark it out from other societies. The first characteristic is the prominent role being played by factors such as family ties, tribal ties, private-public divide between men and women, where women have very restricted public roles. However, urbanisation and Internet development have blurred some of these clear-cut distinctions.

The last stakeholder as far as the discussion in this chapter is concerned is the opposition. Opposition is used here to refer to a broad range of people and groups
who use the Internet to challenge the Saudi authorities on one hand (these are mainly
groups led by Saudis in diaspora) and those who challenge both the Saudi system of
government and the Saudi society. The Saudi government has, arguably, not been that
successful in preventing unwanted Internet content to get to the people because in a
number of cases the people were able to access materials from oppositional sites
through other means. This shows that the Internet has the power to penetrate
geographical boundaries of states.

The Internet highlights how citizens of a country, no matter where they are in the
world, have a voice, input and political representation in international affairs, in
parallel with and independently of their own governments. An example is the growing
influence of the Internet in Saudi Arabia as deployed by members of the opposition.
For instance, it gave more visibility and organisational powers to Saudi opposition
groups based abroad. The Internet makes it possible for them to organise both within
Saudi and in diaspora; something that could not be imagined before the advent of the
Internet.

As this chapter has highlighted, the issue of regulation in any single country cannot be
comprehended without linking it to the global nature of the Internet. Although a
workable regulation policy should take cognisance of individual country
circumstances, it is not an overstatement to suggest that there are pressures for
countries to obey the rules of the globalisation rather than expecting to adapt and tame
the Internet.
CHAPTER SIX

Internet Use and Regulation in Saudi Arabia: The Views of Saudis

6.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed the views of policy makers on Internet use and regulation in Saudi Arabia. In this chapter, I will discuss the views of members of the public in Saudi Arabia on Internet use and regulation in the Kingdom. The data used for the analysis were collected through the use of questionnaire survey as discussed earlier in the methodology chapter. The survey was conducted between December 2000 and March 2001, as well as in August 2004. Two thousand questionnaires were distributed to members of the public in major cities including Riyadh, Jeddah, Makkah, Madinah and Dhahran. This makes it possible to reach diverse individuals in the population. The population of Saudi Arabia is split unevenly between the rural and urban areas with rural areas accounting for only 13% of the population while urban areas account for 87% (Ministry of Planning, Saudi Arabia, 2000).

Out of the 2000 questionnaires administered, 462 were returned correctly and completely filled, therefore, the analysis was based on the 462 questionnaires collected. The questionnaire responses were translated from Arabic into English by the researcher and by a person who is an English and Arabic speaker. This process was required in order to reduce the level of misunderstanding originating from differences in the language. Once this was done, the questionnaire results were ready for analysis.

The questionnaire was divided into two sections. In the first section, I asked general questions about the bio-data of the respondents. In the second section, I asked the respondents to respond to certain statements on Internet use and regulation in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, I divided the analysis in this section into two. In the first section, I did a quantitative analysis of the personal data about respondents. In the second section, I did a qualitative analysis of the views of the respondents on Internet influence and impact in Saudi Arabia.
6.2. Quantitative Analysis of Data

In this section, I report the findings of the questionnaire survey. The findings are also discussed in the light of the social, political and economic factors influencing Internet development in Saudi Arabia. Where necessary, I also compared my findings to the findings of similar studies conducted in Saudi Arabia and other countries.

6.2.1. Age of the Internet users in Saudi Arabia

The respondents ranged from ages 15 to 46 and above. All respondents indicated that they use the Internet although the degree of use varies. As indicated in Figure 6.1 below, although there are some similarities in the findings from both male and female respondents, there are some significant differences between them in some areas. Most of the respondents, 44% for males and 37% for females fall between ages 19-25. The second significant age group for respondents is 26-35. In this category there are 37% for male respondents and 31% for female respondents. Therefore, according to this study, most of the Internet users in Saudi Arabia fall between ages 19 and 35, with 81% for male respondents and 68% for female respondents. The findings also indicate that there were 13% more male Internet users than there were female users in the 19 to 35 years age bracket. The reason for this might be because males have the opportunity to access the Internet in public places such as Internet cafes; an opportunity that is not available to females as will be explained in the later section.

Figure 6.1 Result according to age in Saudi Arabia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group for (Male)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15-18</td>
<td>9% (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-25</td>
<td>44% (107)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>37% (90)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>8% (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-up</td>
<td>2% (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100% (242)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group for (Female)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15-18</td>
<td>19% (42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-25</td>
<td>37% (82)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>31% (67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>10% (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-up</td>
<td>3% (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100% (220)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The findings of my study have some correlation to the structure of Saudi population. A 2004 estimate put the population of the Kingdom at 22,673,538 million (Statistical Yearbook, 2002). Out of a population of 22 million, half was under the age of 20. The findings of my study also indicate a ratio of male to female that is similar to the male female ratio in the Saudi population, which is 1.36% for ages 15-64 (CIA, 2004). A 2003 study conducted by the Internet Services Unit (ISU) on Internet use in Saudi Arabia also found that three-quarters of the respondents (who are Internet users) are in the age group of 16-35 (MCIT Report to WSIS, 2003).

However, my findings indicate that not all the people that fall under 20 years age bracket use the Internet at the same rate. For instance, those that fall under the 15-18 years old group formed 9% of Internet users for males. The female respondents have a higher percentage with 19% of Internet users. This age group can be regarded as one with potential for development in terms of Internet use. The effort to increase Internet use at secondary and high school levels is relatively recent. There are currently intense efforts to connect all schools to the Internet. At the moment, the government encourages the use of online educational materials (Al-Abdulkader, 2003).

The introduction of the Internet in educational institutions is a significant factor in Internet use among respondents. This perhaps accounts for the large number of respondents within the 19-25 years bracket as well as 26-35 years bracket. Most of the people who belong to this group are university students who have access to the Internet in their institutions or university graduates who were familiar with the Internet while at school and possibly continue to use the Internet upon graduation.

The smallest percentage of respondents were in the age brackets 36-45 and 46 years and above. For instance 8% of the male respondents and 10% of female respondents were within the 36-45 years age bracket while only 2% of male respondents and 3% of female respondents were over the age of 46 years. Even taking into consideration the fact that free Internet use was allowed quite recently, the low number of Internet users among 46 and over group may indicate the reluctance of this age group to use this new technology.
One other factor that might be responsible for the low number of respondents in the 15-18 and 36 and above categories might be the mode of administration of the questionnaires. These were administered at places such as Internet cafes, shopping centres and universities that are patronised more by people in the 19-35 age groups than the remaining categories of people.

Although my survey represents a relatively small random sample group in relation to the Saudi population as a whole, the age structure of the respondents is consistent with the age structure of the Saudi population. The young population structure of Saudi society offers a fertile ground for an increase in the number of Internet users and a potential for the empowerment of the youths as the Internet provides an alternative avenue for self-expression which otherwise cannot be realised through traditional and mainstream communication media. The speed of access to information in the Internet has no comparison to other forms of mass media. In addition to the speed, the comprehensiveness of the information in any subject can attract the young generation’s appetite for this new technology.

An on-line Internet user survey conducted among 260 users between July-September 1999 in Riyadh, Jeddah, Dammam and Makkah by AwalNet, a local Service Provider, also mirrored my findings about Internet users in Saudi Arabia. This study indicated that compared to my own findings of more than 85% of the total respondents that were Internet users, 83% of Internet users were made up of mainly 19-35 years old age bracket. Among the users, 5% were less than 20 years old. The remaining 12% were between ages 36 and 50 years old (Saudi Internet News, May 6, 2002).

The young population structure of Saudi Arabia combined with the continuing high birth rate (Statistical Year Book, 2002) point to some of the potential challenges lying ahead in respect of Internet influence and regulation. Although, there are several benefits of the Internet, there has been a consensus about the protection of its users, particularly youngsters, from the adverse effects of the new technology from pornography, and adverse publicity against faiths, by official circles including KACST, the Ministry of Post, Telegraph and Telephone, Communication Ministry, and Internal Ministry as discussed in the last chapter.
The effect of age on Internet use is not unique to respondents to my survey. Stanford Institute for the Quantitative Study of Society reached similar conclusions in its study on the social impact of the Internet in the US conducted by Nie and Erbring (2000). The findings of the Stanford study are similar to the findings in my own survey. The Stanford study indicates that by far the most important factors facilitating or inhibiting Internet access are education and age, and not income nor race/ethnicity or gender, each of which account for less than 5 percent change in rates of access and are statistically insignificant. Age indeed reflects generational differences, and thus shows what to expect in the future.

Ironically, the asymmetry between the nation’s wealth and the level of technological development in Saudi Arabia, in spite of the country’s conservative outlook, can be overcome with the assistance of technology transfer. As a large portion of the population is young and undergoing formal education, there is greater possibility to train and educate this section of the society for the utilization of modern technologies such as the Internet.

### 6.2.2 The education level of Saudi Internet users

![Figure 6.2 The education level of Saudi Internet users](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary School</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>1% (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary School</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>15% (33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>34% (83)</td>
<td>22% (48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University or College</td>
<td>58% (140)</td>
<td>51% (112)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master</td>
<td>4% (10)</td>
<td>9% (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>4% (10)</td>
<td>2% (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100% (242)</td>
<td>100% (220)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As indicated in figure 6.2 above, the majority of the users 58% for male respondents and 51% for female respondents were found to have a bachelor’s degree, whereas 34% of male respondents and 22% of female respondents had high school certificate or 2-year college education. The level of education among Internet users varied considerably. As the level of education increased, the degree of Internet use went up. It was clear that people with a university degree required or used the Internet more
often than the rest of the public. Also, it can be argued that the respondents among university graduates could easily access Internet facilities.

The number of respondents with Masters and doctorate level education were 4% for male respondents and 9% for female respondents in respect of masters’ degree holders and 4% of male respondents and 2% of female respondents in respect of PhD holders. Although, these numbers were small, the proportion of people with Masters and Doctorate degrees is not high in the general population either.

In respect of gender, there were slight differences between the male and female respondents. None of the male respondents had only primary or secondary school education, while 1% of female respondents had only primary education and 15% had only secondary education. This signifies an important gender gap in education, especially if this also reflects the situation in the society at large. The Internet and other information and communication technology (ICT) provide an opportunity to bridge the education divide between males and females in Saudi Arabia. Youngs (2000) vividly demonstrated in her study on the application of ICT to lifelong studies situations how this could be achieved. She pointed out that ICTs deepen possibilities in both individual and collective contexts and, again in both, facilitate new learning strategies, some of which are integral to the building of new linkages across political, societal and cultural boundaries.

Regarding education, in 1960, the Saudi government assumed responsibility for introducing a system of public schools for girls throughout the Kingdom (Parssinen, 1980). As part of their reluctance to adopt new ideas, conservatives opposed female education on the basis of nomadic and tribal values. After a few years, this resistance subsided and the original opponents of female education began a desperate search for public school places for their daughters. Women’s education is currently given high priority by the government in Saudi Arabia. Women may attend university and there is a growing body of skilled professional women. There are also literacy programmes, which have been developed to target older women but the media have not been involved in the promotion of these projects (Ministry of Planning, Saudi Arabia, 2000).
The opportunities offered by the Internet have also been put into good use with regard to the education of women. For instance, an ongoing United Nations Development Project (UNDP) programme is looking into how to enhance women’s education in Saudi Arabia through Internet-based distance learning training. This is particularly significant because the project has the potential of overcoming the barrier of women’s access to education due to family and other responsibilities that make it difficult for them to go out freely (UNDP, 1999).

With regards to high school and university qualifications among male and female respondents, there is not a huge gap between high school and university leavers in my survey results. Perhaps, the huge investment of the government in Internet access at the universities in Saudi Arabia and the equal opportunities provided both males and females to avail themselves of these partly explains why the gender gap is not that significant in respect of respondents with university education.

This result reflects the overall literacy level in Saudi Arabia. For instance, the difference between both sexes is not considerably different at the overall population level, although the number of female students at higher education colleges is much less than the number of male students (Statistical Year Book, 2002).

In the AwalNet online survey, mentioned earlier, it was found that 56% of the respondents had a bachelor’s degree, while 19% had high school certificate and 13% had a 2-year college certificate. A comparison of this survey to my own survey indicates that people educated at university level constitute the predominant Internet users. However, it was also clear that people with secondary level and high school certificates were increasingly using the Internet.

According to the survey conducted by Stanford University mentioned earlier, a college education boosts level of Internet access by well over 40 percentage points compared to the least educated group, while people over 65 show a more than 40 percent point drop in their rates of Internet access compared to those under 25 (Nie and Erbringe, 2000).
Considering that the Internet was made available initially to academic circles following its development, and used for scientific communication between research laboratories first, the high level of Internet use among university graduates in Saudi Arabia is expected. When the use of the Internet was banned in general, the universities and certain hospitals were enjoying this facility in the country. The level of Internet dispersion in the country could be further enhanced through policies targeting schools similar to those that were introduced in the UK, such as provision of every school with Internet facilities, free use of the Internet in public libraries, and community centres (The Guardian, 2001).

6.2.3. The Venue where Internet is accessed

**Figure 6.3 The Venue where Internet is accessed**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal computer at home</td>
<td>65% (158)</td>
<td>80% (176)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work place computer</td>
<td>11% (26)</td>
<td>16% (35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet café computer</td>
<td>19% (47)</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend's computer</td>
<td>4% (10)</td>
<td>4% (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1% (3)</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100% (242)</strong></td>
<td><strong>100% (220)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding the venue where the respondents access the Internet, the result of my survey in Figure 6.3 above demonstrated that an overwhelming majority 65% of male respondents and 80% of female respondents accessed the Internet from their personal computers at home. This suggests high computer ownership. This also demonstrates that there is a core group that is highly educated, equipped with their own personal computers.

The significant number of female respondents who were able to access the Internet from home might be suggestive of the ways females in Saudi Arabia are trying to make up for the lack of Internet facilities for them in public places such as Internet cafes. It also reflects the nature of Saudi society, which places a lot of responsibilities at home on the females. It is a patriarchal society where males play more dominant roles in the public than females, though males are also seen as heads of the home and are responsible for maintaining the members of the family.

Studies in the US indicated that the gender gap in Internet access and computer ownership is being bridged (Castells, 2001). My findings also suggest that with the
significant number of female respondents accessing the Internet from home, it is also possible for the Internet to help bridge the gender divide in Saudi Arabia. The home and the family are two institutions that are heavily influenced by Islamic values, which place males at the helm of leadership of homes. Although the bridging of this divide might not be apparent (at least in the public) in the near future. It is clear that the Internet is setting in motion a process of social change in the way the females interact with the world with the opportunity provided by Internet access.

The gender divide in Internet use among the respondents also reflected in the number of respondents who access the Internet from Internet cafes. The second most common place for Internet access was found to be Internet Cafes, 19% for male respondents. As indicated in Figure 3.6 above, only male respondents access the Internet from Internet Cafes. None of the female respondents access the Internet from Internet Cafes. In Saudi Arabia, free mixing of males and females is not encouraged, especially at public places, except among family members. Internet cafes are public places where male-female interactions are not encouraged and none of the existing Internet cafes have provisions for female only surfing areas. This problem is therefore indicative of the nature of the general Saudi society.

This use of Internet cafes to access the Internet demonstrates its socialising effect. Despite high levels of ownership among respondents, some people still use the Internet Cafe to access the Internet. This is perhaps due to the fact that most Internet Cafes in Saudi Arabia provide a range of activities in addition to Internet access. For instance, most Internet cafes also provide coffee and other fast food services, public television viewing centres and other recreational facilities, which provide a means of socialising especially for the youths.

As discussed in the last chapter, there has been much concern about the Internet among official circles in respect of the operation of Internet cafes. This concern was reflected in the closure of a few Internet Cafes mainly used by university students. For example, the authorities in Makkah, in western Saudi Arabia, shut down a women-only Internet Cafe for reasons of public morality (BBC, 17 April, 2000). The official in charge of the closure stated that 'what was uncovered was against both our religion
and our traditions’ (BBC, 17 April, 2000). Clearly, this statement has little impact on people’s appetite to make use of such locations as one of their primary access points.

The third most common place for Internet access was places of work. That workplaces came as the third most important place where respondents access the Internet came as no surprise. This is because as mentioned previously, Internet was introduced first in public institutions such as King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals (KFUPM) in Dhahran, King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology (KACST), the National Library Network, King Faisal Specialist Hospital (KFSH) in Riyadh, Ministry of Higher Education and other Ministries (Al-Turky, 1998, Al-Farsy, 2003). When the government allowed public access from 1997, many other private and public sector organisations also introduced the Internet thus affording their staff the opportunity to access the Internet from their workplaces.

The gender difference with regards to access at places of work is not really significant. This time around, more females (16%) than males (11%) access the Internet at places of work. This is a curious twist to the narrative of a patriarchal society, which is Saudi Arabia. Although the findings from the respondents could not be said to represent the society as a whole, one reason why more female respondents access the Internet at work places than male respondents might be to make up for the gap in their lack of access from Internet cafes.

### 6.2.4. Time Spent on Internet browsing

**Figure 6.4 Time spent on Internet browsing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of hours used to browse the Internet /Daily</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 hour</td>
<td>10% (24)</td>
<td>5% (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>5% (12)</td>
<td>12% (27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>65% (158)</td>
<td>59% (130)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3% (7)</td>
<td>5% (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>15% (36)</td>
<td>10% (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6+</td>
<td>2% (5)</td>
<td>9% (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100% (242)</td>
<td>100% (220)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

143
Figure 6.4 above shows the results of my survey, which revealed that an overwhelming majority of the respondents 83% of male respondents and 74% of female respondents were using the Internet every day between 3 to 5 hours a day, while 15% of the male respondents and 17% of female respondents used it 1 to 2 hours everyday. The duration of the Internet use among all the respondents is quite high. The use of Internet for such long time may indicate that a large proportion of the respondents used Internet for chat rooms and other leisure time activities. If this is so, there might be an urgent need to educate the users to provide some guidance about the way to get optimum benefit from the Internet. These findings exhibit potential side effect of the Internet in Saudi Arabia. The time every individual desires to spend is up to his or her personal preference. There is very little the government can do about this matter except by making available proper guidance and this does not constitute a reason to restrict the use of the Internet.

6.2.5. Purpose of Internet Use

In my survey, with regard to the purpose for which the respondents use the Internet, they gave a wide range of reasons as indicated in figure 6.5 Majority of the respondents, 46% of the male respondents and 34% of female respondents, use the Internet to access the e-mail service, while 24% each of male and female respondents use it for the purpose of information. Another significant use of the Internet was for free time activities such as chatting and games; 19% of the male respondents and 26% of female respondents use the Internet for this purpose. Other activities the respondents use the Internet for included shopping with 6% for male respondents and 3% for female respondents, bookings for holidays (travel and hotels) 2% for male respondents and 1% for female respondents; for studies such as home work 2% of male respondents and 10% of female respondents. The Internet was also used for other activities such as discussion forums and making international telephone calls. Hence, it might be possible to argue that the Internet was used mainly to send and receive e-mails, for finding out information and for other free time activities.
The result of my findings mirrors that of the study carried out by Stanford University. The Stanford study found that sending and receiving e-mails is by far the most common Internet activity carried out by respondents, with 90% of all Internet users claiming to be e-mailers. As stressed by Nie and Erbringe (2000) in the Stanford study, the most widespread use of the Internet today is as an information search utility for products, travel, hobbies, and general information. Virtually all users interviewed responded that they engaged in one or more of these information-gathering activities. A little over a third of all Internet users report using the web to engage in entertainment such as computer games (such as online chess, role games, and the like). Thus, the current Internet is also emerging as an entertainment utility. Chat rooms are for the young and the anonymous. While a quarter of Internet users claim to have used chat rooms, this activity substantially decreases after age 25. And the chatters report that the overwhelming portion of their chat room interaction is with anonymous others whose identities remain unknown. Consumer to business transactional activity, purchasing, stock trading, online auctions, and e-banking, are engaged in by much smaller fractions of Internet users, with only a quarter reporting they make purchases online and under fifteen percent doing any other transactional activities (Nie and Erbringe, 2000).

My research findings indicate that there are two main trends in respect of Internet use among the respondents. In the first instance, it is reinforcing social values as indicated by the use of the Internet by more than one person at home. For instance, the presence of the Internet at home means that not only the owner was using the computer but also other people sharing the accommodation, presumably family members who were also
utilising the same computer. It was indeed the case as the results in figure 6.6 below demonstrated.

Figure 6.6. Computer sharing and Internet access at home

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of people sharing computer and Internet access at home</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>6% (26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>22% (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>21% (97)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>36% (165)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 4</td>
<td>15% (70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100% (462)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is a high level of computer and Internet sharing among the same members of a household as indicated in figure 6.6 above. An insignificant minority 6% indicated that they do not share their computer use with others. On the other hand, most of the respondents share the use of their personal computers with two or more members of the household. For instance, 22% indicated that two people share the use of computers and Internet access within the household. At the same time, 21% indicated that three people within the household share the use of the Internet and personal computers, while 36% of respondents indicated that four people share the use of Internet and personal computers. Finally, 15% of the respondents indicated that more than four people share the use of the Internet and personal computers.

The findings also indicate that the use of the Internet, especially in Internet cafes is challenging some long held traditions in the country. For instance, among the youths, the Internet is becoming increasingly popular as a means of chatting and getting in touch with the anonymous other. This has added another dimension to the public-private divide through online services such as chatting usually carried out between men and women who are not related to each other in any way. In some instances, chatting also made it possible for people dispersed from their tribal affiliations by urbanisation to keep in touch with other members of their tribe through chat groups. The findings of this study as well as that of the ISU study indicate that the use of chat rooms is one of the most important uses to which Saudis put the Internet. In respect of Internet usage this way, this pattern is gender neutral, which reinforces the findings from the study conducted by Stanford University cited earlier.
Stanford's study also demonstrated negative effects between the duration of Internet use and socialising (Nie and Erbringe, 2000). This effect is noticeable even with just 2-5 Internet hours in a week, and it rises substantially for those spending more than 10 hours in a week, of whom up to 15 percent report a decrease in social activities (Nie and Erbringe, 2000). Even more striking is the fact that Internet users spend much less time of talking on the phone to friends and family: the percentage reporting a decrease exceeds 25 percent - although it is unclear to what extent this represents a shift to e-mail even in communicating with friends and family, or a technical bottleneck due to a single phone line being pre-empted by Internet use (Nie and Erbringe, 2000).

### 6.2.6. Marital Status of Internet users

#### Figure 6.7 Marital status of the Internet users in Saudi Arabia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital status</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>52% (126)</td>
<td>21% (46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>48% (116)</td>
<td>79% (174)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100% (242)</td>
<td>100% (220)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The large proportion of the Internet users was found to be single 48% of male respondents and 79% of female respondents as opposed to married 52% of male respondents and 21% of female respondents (Figure 6.7). This is particularly significant in the case of female Internet users as 79% of them were single. The marital status of Internet users indicates that the majority of them were not married.

Most of the single respondents access the Internet from schools and for male respondents from Internet cafes for an average of four hours a day. However, unlike the married respondents who use the Internet purposively, the respondents that were single used the Internet to keep in touch with friends and to fill what they perceived as free time. While they also seem to welcome a limited regulation, they mainly favoured unrestricted access to the Internet.

A report published in *Okaz* a newspaper in Saudi Arabia in 2002 equally confirmed that the majority of Internet users in the Kingdom were singles, and most of those singles were female users, citing a Riyadh, Saudi study (*Okaz*, 2002: 14).
explanation for this situation is that singles were in a position to spare more time for
the Internet. Alternatively, it could be suggested that single people have the extra
income to spend on what some would be considered as a luxury. Alternatively, it
could be explained as a reaction to attitudes of parents who might see the Internet as a
threat to their family values and as a result, placed restrictions on the use of the
Internet within their homes, leaving young members of the family, that are often not
married, with little or no option than to use Internet cafes or other means of access.

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

A cross-tabulation of purpose of Internet use, time spent using the Internet and the
marital status of the respondents, indicate that most of the married respondents access
Internet from homes and for an average of three hours a day. Most use it to send e-
mails, get information on home improvement and healthy living, and keep up with the
education of children and for shopping. While the Internet had a significant impact on
their lifestyles such as on shopping and what sort of information they could access
from the comfort of their homes, it is also instructive that all of them want the Internet
regulated. The need to protect the moral values of the society was the often cited
reason for regulation. This view added another dimension to the Internet regulation
debate. Discussions on Internet regulation seem to emphasise the role of the
government in the process. However, as argued by Everard (2000) and confirmed by the respondents, the people do play or have some role to play in Internet regulation. However, as discussed in chapter three, the views of the people regarding regulation to protect moral values in the society would have to be interpreted in relation to the role Islam plays in the lives of Saudis and in the society generally.

6.3. Qualitative Analysis of the views of Respondents on Internet Use and Regulation in Saudi Arabia

In this section, I will be discussing my assessment of the views of the respondents to specific statements on Internet use and regulation in Saudi Arabia. In the questionnaire, eight questions (Q10-Q17) explored the attitudes of the respondents to Internet influence and regulation in Saudi Arabia. Out of the eight questions, the responses to two were quantified. These were questions 10 and 13. The two questions were quantified because the respondents were given two options to pick from. Out of the remaining six questions, question 17, which is the last question was not analysed because none of the respondents answered it. Some of the respondents who managed to fill in question 17 considered it a repetition of previous questions. The remaining five questions were open-ended and were therefore analysed. The five questions were grouped into two sections namely; Internet influence and Internet regulation. Questions 10 to 12 addressed the issue of Internet influence while questions 13 to 15 addressed the issue of Internet regulation. The responses to question 10 were quantified to provide a whole picture of the views of the respondents. Samples that were indicative of the views expressed by most of the respondents were also taken for questions 11 and 12. The responses to question 13 were also quantified. Samples that were indicative of the views expressed by most of the respondents were also taken for questions 14 and 15.

As discussed in the methodology chapter, one way of analysing qualitative data is by identifying the prevalent patterns and themes. I used this approach for the qualitative analysis of the views of Saudis on Internet influence and regulation. I first tried to identify a pattern in the responses of the respondents; I then put the responses in an identifiable category to make analysis easier. The analysis that follows, which was done manually, therefore presents a selection of the views of the majority of the
respondents to open-ended questions that gave the respondents flexibility in their answers.

6.3.1. Internet Influence

The respondents were asked about their views on the Internet, especially its positive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internet is Useful</th>
<th>Internet is Harmful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>69% (320)</td>
<td>31% (142)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6.8 Respondents Views on the Nature of the Internet

(useful) nature and negative (harmful) nature.

About two thirds of the respondents considered the Internet to be useful. About one third considered the Internet to have negative or harmful consequences for the users. Therefore, the majority of the respondents agreed on the usefulness of the Internet.

The broad content range of the Internet is clearly appealing to people from various backgrounds. A group of participants, mainly university students, expressed the view that the Internet was a great resource in terms of obtaining new information in their subject area. The search engines were used quite extensively. The Internet was a main source of acquiring news from various alternative sources, other than news reflected in the local media. The university students also utilized the Internet to send and receive e-mails. The exchange of e-mails between male and female students was also common and the use of chat rooms was very popular for this group.

There was palpable concern, though, among some of the university students with regard to the Internet being used as a tool to corrupt Saudi and Islamic culture. While I would assess their concerns about the content of the Internet and the calls for regulation were influenced by their Islamic values and culture, in terms of practice, it was clear that some aspects of their life had already been transformed by the Internet such as their ability to have access to alternative sources of information and the use of the e-mail.

On the other hand the respondents mainly composed of professionals, most of whom had families, believed that the Internet was useful because they could do price comparison for different products, do shopping, and access sites relating to education
and health. These participants thought that learning how to use a computer and having access to the Internet were the necessities of the modern day and they encouraged their children to learn computer use.

Among the respondents who considered the Internet to be positive, a range of views was canvassed on why the Internet is considered useful. Individuals evaluated the usefulness of the Internet according to their personal point of view. While most of the respondents emphasised the usefulness of the Internet from a community viewpoint, some participants thought that the Internet was useful as a tool to connect people, or to enhance their lifestyles such as for shopping. For instance, some of the respondents underlined the usefulness of the Internet from an educational point of view and particularly for religious education. This group believed that the Internet contained some useful sites regarding Islamic education as well as general education. Others believed that the Internet was beneficial because it brought convenience to shopping and communication. Question 11 asked the responses to explain why they considered the Internet to be useful. Below are excerpts from their responses:

*The Internet is very useful as it is a huge source of information. It also aids communication in world trade (26-35 married male, university graduate).*

In a country such as Saudi Arabia with the strong influence of Islam, the government and family, the Internet provides an important challenge to the traditional sources of information Saudis are used to. In addition to opening up alternative sources of information, it also provides an opportunity for the users of the Internet to connect to others in other parts of the world for commerce or trade. This represents an important landmark in the relationship between Saudis and people from other countries.

A respondent within the age range of 19 to 25 considered the Internet to be:

*useful for obtaining new information, as well as news as it happens. It can help to meet new people (19-25 single male, University graduate).*

The Internet also provides an opportunity for people to connect to people from outside their family or immediate environment. Traditionally saudis have tended to relate more within families, with businesses and marriage often carried out within the family. The family has an overbearing influence on the development of the Saudi
personality. Therefore, by providing the respondents the opportunity to “meet new people”, the Internet seems to be assisting Saudis who participated in my survey the opportunity to open new frontiers of communication and relationships.

Another respondent within the age range of 19 to 25 considered the Internet as having limitless benefits:

The web is definitely useful and its benefits are countless, for example, obtaining information and in particular medical information and also the concepts and beliefs of others. It is also useful for communication and marketing purposes (19-25 single male, High school leaver).

Before the introduction of the Internet, the main sources of information was the mass media (newspapers, magazines, radio, television and satellite television). However, compared to the Internet, people have little or no control over the mass media. The print media, while largely privately owned are censored by the government and they don’t normally publish things that challenge the traditional institutions in the society or antagonise the government. The broadcast media are largely owned by the government and they seldom broadcast things that could challenge the society or antagonise the government. However, the Internet is an open medium that provides the users with the opportunity to challenge views and long-held traditions. In addition to learning about new things, people and their beliefs, the Internet, according to some of the respondents, also provided the users the opportunity to reinforce their existing values and beliefs. A married male university graduate within the age range of 36 to 45 considered the Internet to be good for listening to religious lectures and following world news.

Yes, I believe the web is useful for gaining different types of information as well as communicating via electronic mail. It is also good for taping and listening to religious lectures and following world news (36-45 married male, University graduate).

While the Internet provides new opportunities for users to learn new things and connect to others who might not share their beliefs and values, it could also serve to reinforce already held beliefs and values. For instance according to the respondent, the Internet is good for “taping (sic) (recording) and listening to religious lectures (which in this case are Islamic lectures) and following world news"
A single, female university graduate within the 26 and 35 age range considered the Internet to be useful also because it makes available the latest technologies and news.

There is no doubt that the Internet is useful. All the latest technologies are available to you and the news can be accessed at the touch of a button no matter where you are. Browsing the web can also be a pleasurable pastime and means of keeping up to date with technology and civilisation (26-35 single female, University graduate).

This emphasis on ease of access to news supports the argument of Giddens (1990) that globalisation, especially the processes facilitated by the Internet, makes it possible for people who are far apart from each other to reorient themselves to things that might be happening thousands of miles away.

The respondent also indicates that the Internet makes it possible to keep “up to date with technology and civilisation” while also providing a means of passing time. The views expressed by this respondent echoes similar views expressed by other respondents. The Internet is used as a social resource by many users. It provides a means of entertainment and passing time.

The respondents were also asked in question 12 (Q12) to freely express their views on what they considered to be the negative effects of the Internet. As indicated in Figure 6.8 a little over one third (31%) of the respondents considered the Internet to have negative or harmful effects.

The negative effects of the Internet were considered to lie in its content. Mixed views were expressed concerning the negative impact of the Internet among the 31% of respondents. The majority of them believed that it was impossible and illogical to restrict the use of the Internet to useful and advantageous information. Pornographic sites were identified as the most negative form of content. The participants also thought that excessive use of ‘chat rooms’ was a negative side of the Internet. Obviously, there was an acceptance of this service, but opposition to it came from its misuse rather than its content or the format. The views on pornography were in line with global concern over pornographic use of the Internet. But still many think pornographic use of the Internet does not justify regulation of the Internet on its own.
single female, high school leaver within the 19 to 25 age range blamed users for the way in which they use the Internet in this regard.

There is harmful material for those who seek it, however there is good and bad in everything (19-25 single female, high school leaver).

The views expressed by the above respondent challenge the prevailing view among government officials in Saudi Arabia that the Internet is potentially the negative effect of which the people should be protected from. In the view of the respondent above rather than blame the Internet, it is the people who seek out the bad sites that should be blamed. Therefore, it is the people who have the tendency to visit bad sites that should be blamed for the negative effects of the Internet. This view also supports the Everard’s (2000) view that the Internet is a mere reflection of the society. The respondent also indicates that the argument for Internet regulation is neither here nor there because just like the Internet, there is good and bad in everything that people do. It is therefore down to individuals to take decisions of what they consider as good for themselves.

A single female respondent, high school leaver within 15-18 year age bracket commented:

I believe the web can be harmful, depending on the way it is used. Every individual can decide what he or she browses (15-18 single female, High school leaver).

Therefore whether Internet is negative or not depends on the way it is used.

Respondents were also more specific in what they considered as the negative effects of the Internet. A married male university graduate was of the view that:

There is harmful material, such as pornography. These sites are not regulated or controlled in any way (26-35 married male, University graduate).

Another respondent said:

The harmful aspect of the Internet can be narrowed down to pornography and the chat rooms chatting” with strangers who may mislead unsuspecting individuals. It is also detrimental in its advertisement of drugs and other anti social habits (26-35 single male, University graduate).
Therefore, basically to these respondents, the negative effects of the Internet come from the unrestricted availability of pornographic materials on the Internet as well as from the dangers of falling into the traps of strangers in chat rooms. As discussed in the literature review chapter, the availability of pornographic materials on the Internet is one of the justifications used by governments to regulate the Internet. Pornography is a major issue of concern in Saudi Arabia. This is one of the reasons why Saudi Arabia developed a system of filtering that blocks access to any site with pornographic connotations. In a country where all aspects of life are regulated according to the divine inspirations from Islam’s holy book of Qur’aan, expecting any level of flexibility for pornographic material is equivalent to rejecting traditions of Islam.

Interestingly, none of the respondents raised getting information from websites that are either antagonistic towards the values of the Saudi society or towards the government in Saudi Arabia as part of the negative effects of the Internet. Yet, out of the 1395 sites blocked by the Saudi government according to Zittran and Edelman (2002) only two sites with pornographic contents were blocked. The sites with the highest number of blocked pages (577 in all) were those with religious and spiritual contents. The second were those with contents such as Marijuana, cocaine, globalisation and translation services, Internet based social groups etc. In all, 512 sites with contents such as the ones described above were blocked.

From the views of the respondents on what they considered as the benefits of Internet, the opportunity provided by the Internet to get information about other beliefs and civilisations is considered as one of the ways in which the Internet is useful. Therefore, the position of the Saudi government to ban sites considered beneficial by the respondents might be something that negates the freedom of choice that the Internet provides to users but which has been taken away by the government. Significantly, this situation tends to support the position of Lull (2001) cited in the literature review that “....the Internet has evolved to become less a technological form and more a communications medium, which opens up limitless cultural possibilities. Rather than just reinforcing traditional structures of political-economic-cultural
authority, information technology, the Internet, and mass media make those structures all the more porous" (2001: 3)

6.3.2: Respondents Views on Internet Regulation

The next set of questions 13-15 explored the views of respondents on Internet regulation. Question 13 asked the respondents to express their views on whether they want restricted or unrestricted access to the Internet. As illustrated in Figure 6.9, less than one third of the respondents, 27%, said there should be unrestricted access to the Internet while more than two thirds, 73% said there should be restricted access to the Internet. Therefore, in terms of the regulation of the Internet, most of the participants agreed on regulation rather than a total ban of the Internet. The respondents thought that banning the Internet would bring no benefit to the society. The respondents emphasised the importance of education for proper use of the Internet. A major role was attributed to the government and education campaigns. Respondents also emphasised the importance of the media for promoting a public awareness on some of the negative effects of the Internet while also highlighting some of the benefits.

Figure 6.9: Views of Respondents Access to the Internet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unrestricted Access</th>
<th>Restricted Access</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27% (125)</td>
<td>73% (337)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The respondents were asked to explain the reason why there should be restricted or unrestricted access to the Internet. Most of the respondents coupled the calls for regulation of the Internet with the need to protect people, especially vulnerable adults and children from pornographic sites.

One respondent said:

... there are needs for laws and regulations as well as penalties for those who publish pornographic images on the net and those who deal in gambling sites, money laundering or any other uses harmful to national security (26-35 married male, University graduate).

The views expressed above highlight the challenges brought about by growing adoption of the Internet all over the world. While a country can introduce measures to restrict the way the Internet is used within its geographical boundaries, it is doubtful if
it is within the powers of a state to control the way the Internet is used outside its geographical boundaries. Therefore, in a situation where sites respondents wanted regulated originated from other countries, it would be nearly impossible to stop them except through site filtering or blocking.

The difficult challenge of regulating Internet use was acknowledged by another respondent:

Although it is very difficult to control the Internet, the existence of laws and regulations is beneficial (26-35 single female, University graduate).

Another respondent argued that:

The Internet is harmful to society and in particular to vulnerable groups such as young adults. It is useful only for businessmen hence it should be regulated in such a way that it benefits commercial purposes and exchange of knowledge and ideas (36-45 married male, University graduate).

This view acknowledges the dangers posed by the Internet to vulnerable groups and adults in the society. However, in the same way it recognises the huge potential of the Internet to assist in closing the gaps in the areas of ideas and knowledge, especially for commercial purposes. This gives the impression that in spite of the perceived dangers, there is still a meeting point for users of the Internet. In the case of this respondent, it is in the use of the Internet for commercial purposes.

One respondent stressed the long term negative effect to the social make up of the society that accessing pornographic sites might cause. He advocated a preventive approach whereby the government will introduce laws to prevent access to pornographic sites in the first place.

There should be laws to stop individuals accessing pornographic sites as is no benefit in them and indeed may cause long term social damages (19-25 married male, University graduate).

Another respondent said:

There should be laws to stop and close down pornographic sites (26-35 single female, University).
And another said:

Laws and controls are very important for the protection of the individual and of society. In particular vulnerable groups such as children and young adults (36-45 married male, University graduate).

Such views indicate the two-way influence of the Internet. The first one is the influence at the level of individual user of the Internet, while the second is the overall long-term effect of the Internet on the society. This view about the influence of the Internet on the society aligns with one of the reasons given by government officials in Saudi Arabia for regulating the Internet. This is the protection of the Islamic values and tradition of the Saudi society. This argument also mirrors the debates about how states are trying to fight back the erosion of their powers by Internet penetration.

Another respondent urged the introduction of laws and regulation of a medium he considered as a form of intellectual invasion. Again, the respondent considered pornographic websites as the main reason why the Internet should be controlled.

There must be laws and regulations, as I believe that the Internet is a form of intellectual invasion. This control might not be absolute but it would help control the pornographic websites. (26-35 single male, University graduate)

The last sample in this category is that of a female high leaver within the age range of 15 to 18. Her views were similar to the ones canvassed by other respondents analysed previously. However, considering her age, her views seem to echo a concern among a group considered most vulnerable to Internet influence. Like other respondents, she considered pornographic sites and other sites (she did not name) as being potentially harmful to individual users in particular and the society generally. Again this respondent identified two levels at which the Internet could have negative influence. The first level is that of the individual and the second level is that of the society. Below are excerpts from her views:

The control and filtering should be centred on pornographic sites and other sites potentially harmful to individuals and society. . (15-18 single female, High school leaver)
The next question asked respondents who considered Internet regulation unnecessary to explain the reason for their views. I provide five views indicative of the general responses below.

One respondent was of the view that regulating Internet sites would not be effective. Instead of regulating the Internet, he suggested that the government should make a point of identifying the dangers of the Internet to the users. Although the respondent was silent on what he wanted the government to do after identifying the dangers of the Internet, it could be implied that he wanted the decision as to which websites to visit to be at the discretion of the Internet user.

I do not believe regulating Internet sites will be effective. However the authorities should point out every aspect of its dangers. (36-45 married male, High school leaver)

Another respondent suggested that the users Internet should have the freedom to use the Internet subject to restrictions imposed by the Islamic Shariah (legal codes). It could also be implied from the views expressed by this respondent that the government (except where it is enforcing the Shariah) should not be responsible for regulating the Internet. Rather it should be the responsibilities of individual users who will sel- consciously implement the Shariah.

Regulating should be within the Islamic Shariah. However there must be freedoms and restrictions should be only on those things God has forbidden (19-25 single male, University graduate).

Another respondent emphasised the overriding importance of obtaining information and knowledge from the Internet, over whatever laws or regulations might be introduced by the government to restrict access to the Internet. It could be inferred that this respondent places individual freedom and the need to satisfy a particular need above other concerns normally used justify Internet regulation.

Laws and regulations are vital but should not come at the expense of obtaining information and knowledge. Technology should not be monopolised (26-35 married male, University graduate).
Another respondent also stressed the need for education and self-censorship over and above government regulation. She argues that self-censorship is more effective than censoring of particular sites.

I think there is no need for regulations; however we need to increase our understanding of the damage caused by harmful material. We need to create a society which observes self control rather merely censuring particular sites. (26-35 married female, University graduate)

Another respondent argued like others that proper education rather than laws and regulations is a more effective way of facing the challenge of the negative influence of the Internet.

The issue can be resolved by the proper education of society. It is not a matter of simply placing laws and regulations, although they are important. However you will never create the perfect society to eradicate the problem completely. (26-35 single female, University graduate).

The view that education and self-censorship are two of the most effective ways of facing the challenge of negative influence of the Internet as pointed by the respondents above aligns with the views of Everard (1997) that because the Internet reflects greater society, education rather than unenforceable, redundant legislation for the regulation of the Internet is a more effective way of handling Internet influence. As stressed by Everard (1997) whatever poses danger to society in general or to minors in particular is available in different format in daily life within the society itself. Therefore, the usefulness of any legislation that targets specifically Internet content without targeting these crimes that originate in the society is questionable.

In respect of question 16 the respondents were asked about their awareness of legal restrictions to Internet use in Saudi Arabia. All the respondents agreed that there are laws in Saudi Arabia that regulate the use of the Internet in the Kingdom. Opinion however differs as discussed earlier over whether government censorship or self-censorship is the most effective way of confronting the challenge of the negative impact of the Internet.

The last question 17 was not analysed because none of the respondents answered it as they thought it was a repeat of question 16. Question 17 is follow-up question to
question 16. It asked respondents who were aware of legal restrictions regarding Internet use in Saudi Arabia to comment on whether regulation is effective.

6.4. Conclusion
This chapter has discussed the findings from data collected through the questionnaires. The findings indicated a high level of Internet penetration among the respondents to the survey; especially among the 19-35 age group. The findings also indicate that the level of education is a significant factor in Internet use among the respondents. The degree of usage and place of accessing the Internet varies among the respondents. The findings indicate that more females than males access the Internet from homes and work places. Perhaps the reasons for this might are the emphasis placed on women’s role in the private rather than public sphere in Saudi Arabia as well as the lack of facilities for women to access the Internet from Internet cafes. In summary, the findings indicate that the Internet, since its introduction, has had a tremendous influence among the respondents to this survey in Saudi Arabia. The patterns of Internet use in these findings also tend to reflect those of other societies in terms of age, education and gender. Notable in this regard are the limited gender differences in Internet use among the respondents in this traditional Islamic society.

It could therefore be argued that the Internet is potentially transforming lifestyles of the respondents in Saudi Arabia in a number of areas. Further, some of the respondents claimed to have used the Internet to support their Islamic values. The projection of these values via the Internet in the wider world also represents a kind of hybridisation manifested through Islamic cyber culture.

One of the significant findings of the survey is the support of the respondents for Internet regulation. It is interesting to note that some of the respondents were willing to compromise their right to access the Internet for regulation to protect their Islamic values. They therefore supported Internet regulation to protect what they considered as the values of the society and against Internet vices such as pornography. Accepting regulation signifies the desire to make relevant to local circumstances the Internet and its contents. This development arguably reflects the nature of the Saudi state. It is a state founded on the promotion of Islamic values.
unlike many contemporary states, there is no separation between religion and the state. Indeed, it is a state where scholars play the role of moral guardian or protector of the society. This might also explain the reason why the respondents were willing to compromise their freedom to unfettered access to the Internet.

This survey indicates the ubiquitous nature of the Internet. Internet access is available to Saudis almost anywhere, from homes, schools, workplaces and Internet cafes. It is also used for a variety of reasons: information, education and projection of the image of Islam.
CHAPTER SEVEN

Discussion and Conclusion

7.1. Introduction
The discussion of Internet influence and regulation with particular reference to Saudi Arabia cuts across a number of concepts, which were considered as useful analytical tools for understanding Internet influence and regulation in the country. Primary data collected through official government publications, interviews and questionnaires as well as secondary data from relevant literature were drawn on. This conclusion is divided into two sections. The first examines Internet influence in Saudi Arabia in the light of theoretical debates and primary and secondary data on Saudi Arabia collected for this study. The second section examines Internet regulation in Saudi Arabia in the light of theoretical debates reviewed in chapter two and primary and secondary data on Saudi Arabia collected for this study.

Processes of globalisation are challenging the powers of states by breaking into geographical spaces defined as states thereby eroding state powers. At the same time, states are making efforts to recapture ground lost to globalisation processes through legislation and regulation. This study has examined how the dynamics have unfolded in respect of the development of the Internet in Saudi Arabia with regard to Internet influence and regulation in Saudi Arabia.

7.2. Internet Influence in Saudi Arabia
The description of the condition of most societies in the developed countries as “network society” by Castells (2000) indicates the way the Internet is influencing societies. The depth of the influence was also captured in the definitions of globalisation that seem to highlight the role of the Internet in the process. For instance, the conceptualisation of globalisation as “shrinking space, shrinking time and disappearing borders that are linking people’s lives more deeply, more intensely, more immediately than ever before” (UNDP, 1999: 1).

From the discussion of the secondary and primary data, I identified several factors as having had an influence on the development of the Internet and the adoption of a
regulation policy in Saudi Arabia. The development of Saudi Arabia has been influenced by the need to blend tradition with modernisation. Saudi Arabia is home to the most important sites of Islamic religion. This makes the country a focal point for Muslims all over the world. At the same time, Saudi Arabia is the largest oil exporter in the world. This makes it possible for Saudi Arabia to have the resources to embark on modernisation projects that have transformed desert communities into modern cities. The Internet represents one of the sites where worldwide interactions are carried out. The Internet has also made it possible for countries that are thousands of miles apart from each other to interact with each other instantaneously, thereby challenging state and cultural boundaries.

As discussed throughout the study, access to computers and Internet connectivity is one of the primary goals of many countries since the emergence of personal computers and the Internet. In some countries such as the United Kingdom, there is a government policy of introducing free access to the Internet at public places such as public libraries to reduce what is considered as the digital divide. The government of Saudi Arabia encouraged the public use of the Internet in Saudi Arabia since 1998 when it officially allowed the public use of the Internet in the Kingdom. The government also included as part of the objectives of its national development plan, the development of infrastructures for Internet development to match the level of developed countries within 20 years. My findings indicate that the Internet is widely used in public places in Saudi Arabia, especially in universities. Most of the respondents to my questionnaires were also university students and university graduates. The results of my survey of Internet users indicate varied locations of users of the Internet. Such locations include homes, places of work, universities, and Internet cafes across the country.

There are several indicators used in measuring the transformation of any society to an information society, most of which depend on measuring the penetration of ICTs within a given society. The most important indicators used for this purpose include the density of fixed-line and mobile phones, the number of personal computers, and the number of Internet users/100 inhabitants. Such figures reflect the level of penetration of these technologies in the society, which in turn reflect the level of penetration of information interchange techniques, as well as an indicator of the size
of the information industry and information companies. Currently, the tele-density for households in Saudi Arabia stands at 91.64% (MCIT Report to WSIS, 2003).

There are two clear dynamics for the development of information technology in Saudi Arabia. On the one hand, the government wants to promote the adoption of information technology in the facets of public life, while at the same time it wants to promote the use of Arabic language as a medium of Internet and information technology communication.

The recognition of the important role of information and communication technology in advancing the social and economic development objectives of developing countries led to the special attention the Saudi Arabian government paid to information technology development in its seventh development plan (2000-2005).

Before the advent of the Internet, states were conceived in relation to territory and thus the principle whereby a state is deemed to exercise exclusive power over its territory is central to the development of international law. This is also the cornerstone of the international system as represented in the charter of the United Nations (UN). The Internet has, however, had a significant influence on states in carrying out this responsibility.

As indicated in the study, the Internet is driving what could be described as a global process of cultural interactions. I compare the findings of this study to the findings of similar studies conducted in other countries such as the US. It shows that the Internet is really bridging the gap between countries that are very far apart from each other. For instance, the findings of my study are similar to the findings of the study conducted in the US by the Stanford Institute (cited earlier) with respect to the age, education, and gender of Internet users. The findings of my study are also similar to the findings of studies on the influence of the Internet in Saudi Arabia conducted by two different organisations and at different times. It shows similarities in the age, education, gender, marital status, Internet access and the purpose for which Internet is used. The effect of age on Internet use is not unique to Saudi users. Similar conclusions were reached by Stanford Institute for the Quantitative Study of Society in its study on social impact of the Internet conducted by Nie and Erbring (2000).
The influence of the Internet cuts across most of the sectors of the society as indicated in this study. This perhaps provides one of the justifications for the concern of the government with the contents of the Internet and why efforts are made to regulate or censor this important medium.

7.3. Internet Regulation: The Case of Saudi Arabia

In contemporary times states are recognised as the only legitimate unit for political organisation within and outside a geographically defined space. This power is defined by the territorial boundaries over which states exercise power and within which it has sole jurisdiction over its citizens and internal affairs. It is also defined as a “platform for identity making” or cultural expression by states “produced through practices that divide the idea of the Self from the idea of the Other” (Everard, 2000: 5). It is in the two senses above that the idea of state sovereignty, which means independence from external control, internal self-determination and freedom of action, was explored in this thesis. With respect to the Internet, states exercise this power of sovereignty through Internet regulation.

From the discussion of the literature review and the findings, calls for Internet regulation have been influenced by two factors. First, there are concerns over the contents of the Internet. This has been used by different countries to justify the regulation of the Internet. Second, the Internet is seen as encroaching on spatial and cultural boundaries challenging the powers of the state and the society. The effort to address the issues posed by Internet penetration has therefore led to different forms of regulation of the Internet. My study shows how the government of Saudi Arabia approached the issue of regulation. This involves the use of law, education, filtering and imposition of fines and penalties. My study also shows how respondents to my survey are also contributing to the regulation of the Internet especially with respect to Internet contents. Therefore, the regulation of the Internet is carried out at two levels: the government and the public both fuelled by the need to protect societal values and state power.

The working together of the people and government in the regulation of the Internet in Saudi Arabia reinforces the argument that the nation gives people a shared sense of difference that is “endlessly reinforced, even outside conscious awareness, through
the routines and rituals of everyday life, and through symbolic displays of the values and traditions especially as they are expressed in a dominant language” (Lull, 2001: 153). This perhaps explains why both the government and the people in Saudi Arabia work together to protect societal values and state authority against the rampaging influence of the Internet.

In spite of the promotion of Internet development, measures were introduced to protect the Saudi society and reduce what was termed the harmful effects of the introduction of the Internet. This was done through the creation of agencies to regulate Internet use in Saudi Arabia as well as official policies indicating the desire of the Saudi government to protect the cultural values of the society.

There has been a monumental growth of the Internet and this has led to concerns about the erosion of sovereignty of states. Due to the virtually borderless and transnational nature of the Internet, the impact of Internet influence on state sovereignty is one of the common justifications used to support regulation of the Internet. The approach adopted by Saudi Arabia bears some similarities to the approaches of other governments. In common with other governments, Saudi Arabia is responding to the influence of a borderless media by re asserting itself through laws and fines imposed on legal boundaries as defined by the state.

The views of officials responsible for Internet regulation policy formulation and implementation in Saudi Arabia show that while the government has demonstrated its willingness to embrace the benefits of the Internet, it wants to do this in a way that its continued hold on power and as custodians of the traditional values of the society is not compromised. The need to protect the people and societal values from the negative impact of Internet contents is often cited a one of the reasons for Internet regulation.

My study also probed the justification for Internet regulation this time from the point of view of the users. Generally speaking Saudis used the Internet for a range of purposes. While there is widespread use and application of the benefits of the Internet by both the government and members of the public in Saudi Arabia, concerns were expressed regarding some of the contents of the Internet such as pornography, use of
Regarding regulation, there were different views, ranging from indifference to the government efforts to regulate the Internet to satisfaction with regulation and views that there was too much regulation. Interestingly, some of the respondents were prepared to sacrifice their freedom for regulation to protect the values of the society.

In addition to legal means, Saudi Arabia also controls the Internet through use of filtering. The study investigating the scale of the filtering in Saudi Arabia by Zittrain and Edelman (2003) cited earlier, found that out of 64557 analysed sites 2038 were blocked by the Saudi filtering system implying the efficiency of the control. The Saudi government allocates large budgets for the execution of the filtering service and the scale of its operation in this area is one of the largest of its kind. The government of Saudi Arabia also approaches Internet regulation through education and voluntary self-regulation, and my findings indicate that this has effect as the public and the government share to some extent the same concerns about protection of societal values.

The Saudi government seems to be aware of the impact of the information technology on transcending geographical and political barriers and it has allocated the necessary funds and adopted appropriate policies and incentives, together with national programmes to encourage the information technology industry and strengthen its research institutions.

There is no doubt that globalisation is introducing a modern and vital cultural change, which is appropriate for the level of new technologies and will provide something very different from the experiences of the past or those available at present. There is, however, a long way to go yet. The use of this new medium, with all of its modernity and appropriateness to the times, can threaten the old and outdated values, customs and traditions, which can no longer cope with the high intensity of this age of change, not only in the Arabic and Islamic societies, but also in all other societies.

As no country can rule out the impact of globalisation, the Saudi policy makers might need to have a change of policy in the near future emphasizing more the powerful roles of the Internet and less its threats. A shift in emphasis to treating the Internet less
as a threat and more as a powerful tool for strengthening the ability of the government to deliver services and messages would include the benefits of savings in investment in unnecessary filtering.
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Appendix 1

Letter accompanying each questionnaire.
Dear sir,

First of all, I would like to thank you very much for helping me in conducting this research. I am a PhD student from Leicester University in the Mass Communications Research Centre, and my research topic is on the regulation of the Internet in Saudi Arabia. As an integral part of my research, I would like you to answer my questions. Your answers will be used for the purpose of this research only and will be confidential. Please answer the following questions. Your co-operation is appreciated. Thank you again.

Osman Bakur Gazzaz
PhD student in
Mass Communications,
University of Leicester,
England
Please tick the information appropriate to you and where indicated write your answer to the space provided.

Q1: Age: Please tick the option suits you.

15-18
19-25
26-35
36-45
46 and over

Q2: Sex: Please tick as appropriate
Male   _______
Female _______

Q: Single or Married (underline appropriate option)

Q4: Profession. Please write which profession you are engaged with.

Q5: Education: Tick the appropriate option.

Primary School

Secondary School

High School

University

Master

Doctorate
Q6: Do you have access to Internet? Please indicate the option that suits you.

Yes ☐ No ☐

Q7: If answer is yes, where do you access to Internet from? Please tick one of the options provided below.

From my own computer ☐

From my work place computer ☐

From Internet café computer ☐

From a friend’s computer ☐

Others (please specify) ☐

If you have access to Internet at home, please write how many other people use your computer in your household?

Q8: How often do you access to Internet and for how long?

Q9: What purpose do you use the Internet for? Please chose options that suit you (can be more than one)

For e-mail ☐

For shopping ☐

For finding out information ☐

News ☐

Travel ☐

Homework ☐

Free time activity ☐

Others (please specify) ☐
Q10: Do you think the content in WWW is useful or harmful? Please feel free to write your opinions onto the space provided. Please use ✓ for your selection.

Useful  Harmful

Q11: If you think the content of the Internet is useful, what do you find useful and why? Please feel free to write your opinions onto the space provided.

Q12: If you think it is harmful, what do you think it is harmful and why? Please write.

Q13: Do you think there must be laws restricting access to certain sites or should it be left to users? Please write.

Q14: If you think there is a need for law, please explain why.

Q15: If you think there is no need for law to regulate the Internet, please explain why.

Q16: Are you aware of any legal restrictions regarding Internet use in Saudi Arabia? Please give details and examples if you know any.
Q17: If your answer is yes, do you think these laws are helping their purpose?
Please write your opinion.

Thank you for filling this questionnaire.
Appendix 2
Letter to officials
Dear Sir,

I am a PhD student from Leicester University in the Mass Communications Research Centre, and my research topic is on the regulation of the Internet in Saudi Arabia. As an integral part of my research, I need your opinion regarding Internet laws and their implementation in the country. I would be grateful, if you could spare some time to answer my questions in an interview, as there is going to be some more interactive and interrogatory questions. Also you may be asked to add other points you may think that is relevant to the issue concerned.

I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Yours truly,

Osman B. Gazzaz,

PhD student in

Mass Communications,

University of Leicester,

England
Appendix 3

Letter sent to some ministries and Internet services providers to ask for more information about Internet policy and regulations.
Dear Sir,

I am a PhD student from Leicester University in the Mass Communications Research Centre, and my research topic is on the regulation of the Internet in Saudi Arabia. I need some figures regarding the number of people subscribed to the Internet through your company. These figures most recent ones as well as data belonging to past few years will be a great value for my research. By using this information, I will be able to estimate the number of Internet users in the country as accurately as possible. Figures of past years will also enable me to forecast the growth of the Internet business in Saudi Arabia. In addition to these figures, I will be delighted if you could share your predictions on the Internet growth and negative and positive influence of the Internet on the society in Saudi Arabia with me.

I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Yours truly,

Osman B. Gazzaz, BA, MA

PhD student in
Mass Communications,
University of Leicester,
England
Appendix 4

Official documents
Internet Regulation in Saudi Arabia

4A: The Information Policy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Introduction

The information policy refers to the principles and goals that constitute the foundations and requirements of information in Saudi Arabia. This policy emanates from Islam, in doctrine and law, which is the national religion. It aims at establishing belief in God, raising the intellectual, cultural, and perceptual level in the citizens, and at dealing with social problems. It seeks to stress the concept of obedience to God, His Prophet, and the legal guardian. It exhorts Saudi Arabians to respect the law and to carry it out contently. It includes the broad outlines that govern Saudi information; thus accomplishing the goals by means of education, guidance, and recreation. This policy is considered a part of the country’s general policy, and is specified in the following articles:

Article 1

Saudi information has its obligation to Islam exclusively. It seeks to keep the tradition of this nation, and to exclude all that contradicts God’s laws which He gave to the people.

Article 2

Saudi mass communication will oppose all destructive elements, atheistic inclinations, materialistic philosophies, and all attempts to distract the Muslims from their beliefs. It will further expose their falsehood and dangers to the individuals and societies, and will stand up to every challenge, which does not concur with the general policy of the country.

Article 3

All information media seek to serve society by consolidating its precious Islamic values; firmly establishing its honoured Arabic traditions and preserving its gracious inherited customs; and seek to stand in opposition to everything that threatens its purity and harmony.
Article 4

All mass communication will seek to serve the existing policy of the Kingdom, protecting the primary interests of the citizens first, then the Muslims and Arabs in general. This will be done by the adoption of this policy and its presentation with full documentation, supported by precedence and facts.

Article 5

All mass communication will seek to present the unique and distinctive characteristics of Saudi Arabia on national and international levels, emphasising its stability and safety, and progress in various domains, by embracing Islam as the constitution of the government and the law of life, placing upon her shoulders the responsibility to serve the sacred Islamic places.

Article 6

All mass communication will seek to strengthen the bond among the citizens by informing them of the numerous areas of their country and the significant aspects pertaining to them, thus demonstrating the complementary nature of these regions.

Article 7

All mass communication will seek to enhance loyalty to the country, bringing to light the capabilities and potential bestowed upon it, and reminding its citizens of its greatness, past and present. As the citizen is made aware of his responsibility to his country, he will be urged to contribute to its progress, advancement and protection.

Article 8

The Saudi mass communication will give the family its due attention, being the essential unit in the society, and the first school where children learn and are guided, where their personalities are developed and enriched.
Article 9

Saudi mass communication affirms the relationship between today's child and tomorrow's environment. Thus, attention will be given to guidance; educational and recreational programmes for children. The programmes will be based on educational and scientific principles and directed by highly specialised personnel.

Article 10

Recognising the innate quality which women have, and the duty which God has given them, mass communication will provide special programmes which will assist women in performing their innate duty in society.

Article 11

Saudi mass communication will give special consideration to teenagers, realising the importance of the period of adolescence. Therefore, special programmes will be designed to deal with their problems and meet their needs; thus preparing them adequately in religion and behaviour.

Article 12

The mass communication will seek, through the use of audio-visual facilities, to be informative in all that pertains to the history of the Kingdom by means of documentaries and recordings, both within the Kingdom and outside it.

Article 13

The Saudi mass communication will seek cooperation with educational and social organisations and research centres to conduct communication studies.
Article 14

The mass communication will design programmes which will appeal to the highly educated to keep them informed of all the educational and intellectual studies and scientific publications.

Article 15

The mass communication will seek to promote and encourage scholarship in all fields of specialisation. This can be accomplished at a high level of religion, science, awareness, and dedication, having all conditions favourable.

Article 16

Realising its significant role, mass communication will deal directly and effectively to abolish illiteracy by adopting educational and scientific principles, and by dedicating educational programmes to meet the needs of every age and mentality.

Article 17

Mass communication in Saudi Arabia must maintain standard Arabic as the vehicle of Islam and the reservoir of its education. Consequently, the following points are emphasised:

1. Authors and writers of programmes will be directed to follow closely the rules of grammar and syntax, as well as adhere to correct expression and pronunciation.

2. Newscasters, programme directors and club sponsors will be directed to use standard Arabic to avoid making mistakes in pronunciation, and to conform to the rules of proper execution.

3. It is essential to be highly selective and avoid all that is derogatory or downgrading to standard Arabic.
4. There must be an effort to gradually raise the level of the programmes that use colloquial Arabic, and replace it with simplified standard Arabic.

5. There must be active support for all programmes, plays and series which utilise standard Arabic to make it desirable to the public.

6. There should be a focus on teaching standard Arabic to non-Arabic speakers in Islamic countries, utilising the most advanced methods and technology.

**Article 18**

The Saudi mass media currently support educational and scientific movements in the following ways:

1. By encouraging researchers, scientists, and intellectuals in every way possible, which includes the publishing of their scholarly works and giving them opportunities to express their views.

2. By guiding young talents, encouraging and sponsoring them until they reach the desired level.

3. By holding scholarly discussions and literary and scientific conferences among the educated in the Kingdom, as well as with others outside; thus, presenting the educational and scientific capabilities of the Kingdom.

4. By encouraging specialised periodicals which are published in Saudi Arabia and the Arab world.

5. By supporting national publishing houses so that they may publish serious Saudi writings, and by sponsoring book exhibitions, thus demonstrating the rank which Saudi Arabia has attained in the scientific and educational spheres.

**Article 19**

The Saudi information media stress the significance of tradition and the need to revive it. It performs this role by accomplishing the following:

1. Encouraging the preservation of tradition materially and morally by:
   
b. Publishing materials concerning tradition, with government funding, and making it available to everyone.
Facilitating the availability of these publications to the parties concerned.

2. Resisting every effort which seeks to destroy tradition or scorn it.

3. Encouraging programmes which draw on books about tradition, especially in the areas of study, drama series and literary biographies.

4. Exhibition of masterpieces of tradition, introducing the public to their forebears’ efforts and accomplishments in many fields of knowledge and inviting them to bridge the gap between the past and the present of this nation.

Article 20

The information media will seek to bring all Muslims closer by means of introducing the Islamic peoples, their countries, potentials and capabilities; and to instigate cooperation among these countries.

Article 21

The Saudi information media seeks:

1. Unity and cooperation among all Arabs, avoiding all antagonistic tendencies.

Defense of their cases especially those dealing with their destinies, urging them to support Islam at every opportunity that avails itself.

Article 22

The Saudi information media affirms the standing invitation to God among Muslims and others until God inherits the whole earth. Thus the Saudi means of communication participates in this obligation in all wisdom and advice, seeking to communicate with intellect while respecting the privacy of others.
Article 23

The Saudi information media, in cooperation with their counterparts in the Islamic world in general, and the Arab world in particular, will seek to adopt a unified programme which serves the religious and secular interests of all Muslims and will attempt to represent their cultural and intellectual unity.

Article 24

The Saudi information media affirms its respect of the rights of everyone individually and collectively. Simultaneously, it seeks to create an atmosphere of harmony, unity, and cooperation among all, informing everyone of his direct responsibility for the whole society.

Article 25

The Saudi information media seeks to be objective in presenting the facts, avoiding exaggerations, valuing the honour of an individual’s word and the need to protect it and raise it above every suspicion.

Article 26

The Saudi information media desires that freedom of expression be guaranteed within the national goals and values of Islam.

Article 27

The Saudi information media advocates respect for the dignity of man— to exercise freedom in his land; to disapprove of every act of violence towards individuals or peoples; to fight all expansive intentions; to stand by righteousness, justice, and peace— and to rise against injustice and racism.
Article 28

The Saudi information media affirms the import of human expert resources capable of accomplishing the goals of Saudi communication, and entrusts these resources with training by making necessary adjustments.

Article 29

The Saudi information media encourages local production of materials which are in accordance with its policy.

Article 30

The information media of Saudi Arabia shall comply with this policy and the execution of all its rules and regulations.
4B: Council of Ministers Resolution on Internet

All Internet users in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia shall refrain from publishing or accessing data containing some of the following:

1. Anything contravening a fundamental principle or legislation, or infringing the sanctity of Islam and its benevolent Shari’ah, or breaching public decency.
2. Anything contrary to the state or its system.
3. Reports or news damaging to the Saudi Arabian armed forces, without the approval of the competent authorities.
4. Publication of official state laws, agreements or statements before they are officially made public, unless approved by the competent authorities.
5. Anything damaging to the dignity of heads of states or heads of credited diplomatic missions in the Kingdom, or harms relations with those countries.
6. Any false information ascribed to state officials or those of private or public domestic institutions and bodies, liable to cause them or their offices harm, or damage their integrity.
7. The propagation of subversive ideas or the disruption of public order or disputes among citizens.
8. Anything liable to promote or incite crime, or advocate violence against others in any shape or form.
9. Any slanderous or libellous material against individuals.

Furthermore, certain trade directives stipulate that all companies, organisations and individuals benefiting from the service shall observe the following:

1. Not to carry out any activity through the internet, such as selling, advertising, or recruitment, except in accordance with the commercial licenses and registers in force.
2. Not to carry out any financial investment activity or offer shares for subscription, except when in possession of the necessary licenses to do so.
3. Not to promote or sell medicines or foodstuff carrying any medicinal claims, or cosmetics, except those registered and approved by the Ministry of Health.
4. Not to advertise or promote or sell substances covered by other international agreements to which the Kingdom is a party, except for those with the necessary licenses.
5. Not to advertise trade fairs or organise trade delegations visits or tourist tours or trade directories except with the necessary licences.

All private and government departments, and individuals, setting up websites or publishing files or pages, shall observe and ensure the following:

1. Respect commercial and information convention.
2. Approval of government authorities for setting up websites or publishing files or pages for or about themselves.
3. Approval of the Ministry of Information for setting up of media-type websites which publish news on regular basis, such as newspapers, magazines and books.
4. Good taste in the design of websites and pages.
5. Effective protection of data on websites and pages.
6. All government and private bodies, and individuals shall take full responsibility for their websites and pages, and the information contained therein.
The Resolution refers to a set of regulatory and technical procedures aimed at ensuring the safety of the constituents of the national network (the internet inside the Kingdom) through effective programming and mechanical means. These include the following:

1. Service providers shall determine internet access eligibility through access accounts, user identification and effective passwords for the use of the access point or subsequent points and linking that through tracing and investigation programmes that record the time spent, addresses accessed or to which or through which access was attempted, and the size and type of files copied, whenever possible or necessary.
2. The use of anti-virus programmes and protection against concealing addresses or printing passwords and files.
3. Endeavour to avoid errors in applications that may provide loopholes that may be exploited for subversive activities or to obtain data not permitted for use for whatever reason.
4. Restriction of the provision of internet services to the end-user through the internet service unit at King Abdulaziz city for sciences and technology.
5. Keep a manual and electronic register with comprehensive information on end-users, their addresses, telephone numbers, purpose of use, and private internet access accounts, and provide the authorities with a copy thereof, if necessary.
6. Not to publish any printed directories containing subscribers’ and end-users’ names and addresses, without their agreement.

Council of Ministers Resolution 12 February 2001
Source: (Al-Watan newspaper 21/11/1421)
4C: Internet Security Committee: Internet Regulation of Use in Saudi Arabia

This document states Internet Regulations of Use in Saudi Arabia prepared by Internet Permanent Security Committee that is under presidency of Ministry of Interior and Membership of a number of Governmental bodies.

1. Informational and Commercial Awareness:

Internet Services users in Saudi Arabia are not allowed to spread or enter information that includes the following:

1. Whatever breaches the Islam and its honourable Sharia (Jurisprudence) or scratches the public politeness.
2. Whatever contradicts with the system of Saudi Government.
3. Reports and news that affect the Armed Forces of Saudi Arabia unless otherwise having permission from the concerned bodies.
4. Spread of rules, agreements, treaties or official information of the country before it has been officially announced unless otherwise having the consent of the concerned bodies.
5. Whatever affect the dignity of countries presidents or presidents of approved diplomatic missions in Saudi Arabia or whatever affect the relations with such countries negatively.
6. Whatever is affiliated to officials in the country or in local public or private institutions and corporations of false news that affect such institutions and corporations and its dignity.
7. Propagation for vastated principles, convulsion of public security or separation of citizens.
8. Whatever emphasises crime or aggression against others.
9. Whatever includes vilification or calumniation.

Commercial instructions state that on using Internet, all companies, establishments and individuals shall oblige as follows:

10. Not practicing any commercial activity such as vending, buying, advertisement, employment or any other similar activity unless otherwise having valid licenses or commercial registrations.
11. Not practicing any financial investments or shares except for people who have the required licenses for such purpose.
12. Not propagating or vending medicaments or foodstuff that have medical description or cosmetic except for items registered and approved by the Ministry of Health.
13. Not propagating or advertising or vending of materials subjected to the international treaties that Saudi Arabia is involved in except for the licenses.
14. Not announcing commercial fairs, organising visits for commercial delegations visit or tourist journeys except for people who have the required licenses for such purpose.
1. Creating Sites, Spread of Files and Web Pages:

Upon creating sites, spread of files and web pages, Internet users in Saudi Arabia shall comply with the following:

1. the informational and commercial bodies for creating sites, spread of files and web pages.
2. Having the consent of the governmental bodies for creating sites, spread of files and web pages.
3. Having the consent of Ministry of information for creating informational sites that casting news such as magazines, newspapers and books regularly.
4. The quality of design for sites and pages.
5. Paying attention on informational protection for sites and pages by using the effective methods.
6. Any entity shall be responsible for its sites, pages and information includes in these sites and pages.

2. Utility from internet Services:

1. Compliance with informational and commercial awareness.
2. Compliance with good usage of internet connection point/ points.
3. Respect of privacy of information exchanged through Internet as a result of dealing of many parties inside of Saudi Arabia and abroad.
4. Respect of publication rights, local and international patent and having the consent of publisher if you want to read or copy the published texts if required.
5. Not using E-mail for exchange of any information contradicts with the Islamic religion and national regulations.
6. Taking required precautions on downloading any programme from Internet and making sure that such program is not infected with any virus as far as possible.
7. Taking care of any penalties that users shall suffer on committing any act contradicts with our true religion.
8. Taking care towards children and adolescence on using the Internet.
4D: King Abdulaziz City of Science and Technology (KACST)

King Abdulaziz City for Science & Technology (KACST) is an independent scientific organization of the Saudi Arabian Government, established in 1977 under the name of Saudi Arabian National Centre for Science & Technology (SANCST) and later in 1985 renamed as 'King Abdulaziz City for Science & Technology (KACST)'.

KACST is governed by a Supreme Committee, which is chaired by the Prime Minister (the King) and is composed of the ministers of the major ministries to which science and technology are of greatest relevance as follows:

1-Prime Minister (Chairman)
2-Deputy Prime Minister (Vice Chairman)
3-Minister of Defence & Aviation & Inspector General (Member)
4-Minister of Interior (Member)
5-Minister of Higher Education (Member)
6-Minister of Agriculture & Water (Member)
7-In addition, the Prime Minister nominates three other members.
8-Minister of Industry & Electricity (Member)
9-Minister of Petroleum & Mineral Resources (Member)
10-Minister of Planning (Member)
11-Minister of Finance & National Economy (Member)
12-Head of General Intelligence (Member)
13-President of KACST (Member)

Source: (ISU at http://www.isu.net.sa accessed 17.7.05)

VISION:

To be a world-class research organization vital to Saudi Arabia's future and a vital source of S&T for national societal mission which combines technology with human touch.

From its inception in 1977, KACST had been carrying out its mission in the promotion of science & technology in the Kingdom by coordinating and cooperating with various universities, agencies and institutions concerned with research and technology, and encouraging Saudi experts to undertake research that will help promote the development and evolution of the society. Besides this, KACST, through cooperative agreements with international science and technology institutions/organizations, encourages closer ties with friendly countries. The cooperative research programs have successfully completed several solar energy research projects, the establishment of a Saudi Centre for Remote Sensing, the establishment of national observatory and an aquaculture research station and other projects. KACST has established several national research institutes. Among the institutes are the Institute for Petroleum and Petrochemicals Research, the Institute of Energy Research, the Institute of Natural Resources and Environmental Research, the Institute of Arid Lands Research, the Institute of Astronomy and the Institute of Atomic Energy Research, etc. (ISU at http://www.isu.net.sa accessed 17.7.05)
4E: Sites that Saudi’s Access Regularly

The following are the most popular sites visited by Saudi users

http://www.mubasher.com.sa
http://www.google.com.sa
http://download.windowsupdate.com
http://loginnet.passport.com
http://www.tadawul.com.sa
http://liveupdate.symantecliveupdate.com
http://www.elaph.com
http://www.microsoft.com
http://www.yahoo.com
http://arabia.msn.com
http://netad.marafi.com.sa
http://media.fastclick.net
http://4alarb.com
http://gmail.google.com
http://download.microsoft.com
http://windowsupdate.microsoft.com
http://www.aljazeera.net
http://forum.hawaaworld.com
http://www.tdwl.net
http://www.hotmail.msn.com
http://members.lycos.co.uk
http://www.islammemo.cc
http://www.alshashah.com
http://www.arank.com
http://ads.maktoob.com
http://www.geocities.com
http://www.jang.com.pk
http://radio.launch.yahoo.com
http://www.samba.com
http://www.ndtv.com
http://alsaha.fores.net
http://www.maasah.com

(Source: ISU http://www.isu.net.sa accessed 17.7.05)
4F: Filtering

Local content filtering procedure

All incoming Web traffic to the Kingdom passes through a proxy farm system implementing a content filtering software. A list of addresses for banned sites is maintained by this filtering system. This list is updated daily based on the content filtering policy.

A list of pornographic sites is provided periodically by the filtering software provider. However, this list is not comprehensive due to the high proliferation and diversity of pornographic sites.

Therefore, KACST maintains a web-based form that users can fill-out to report sites they feel should be blocked. Hundreds of requests are received daily.

A team of full-time employees at KACST study these requests and implement them only if justified. As for non-pornographic sites, KACST receives orders to block them from related government bodies (refer to content of filtering policy).

Local Content Filtering Policy

Pursuant to the Council of Ministers’ decree concerning the regulation of use of the Internet in Saudi Arabia, all sites that contain content in violation of Islamic tradition or national regulations shall be blocked.

A security committee chaired by the Ministry of Interior was formulated. One of the tasks assigned to this committee is the selection of sites to be blocked and the oversight of this process. However, due to the wide-spread and diverse nature of pornographic sites, KACST was commissioned to directly block these types of sites.

Other non-pornographic sites are only blocked based upon direct requests from the security bodies within the government. KACST has no authority in the selection of such sites and it’s role is limited to carrying out the directions of these security bodies.
4G: Sites Barred by Saudi Authorities
Listed below are sites blocked in Saudi Arabia through the filtering system at ISU according to the study carried out by Zittran and Edelman (2002) on the documentation of Internet filtering in Saudi Arabia.

The listings below give specific web pages found to be blocked in Saudi Arabia. Where available, each page's listing includes its HTML title as well as META keywords and description; its first Yahoo Directory category classification and its Google Directory classification; its inbound link count (according to Google); and information about past snapshots of the page available in the Internet library archive.org. These details are as retrieved in June 2002 (Zittran and Edelman, 2002).

Title: Absolute Swimwear, Mix & Match Bikinis
URL: www.absoluteswimwear.com
Blocked on: May 14, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Business and Economy > Shopping and Services > Sports > Swimming and Diving > Gear and Equipment > Apparel
Description: Upscale designer swimwear & bikini fashions. Includes tops and bottoms sold separately for unique selection and easy sizing. You pick the color, the top style, the bottom style for bikinis & one-piece swimsuits.
Keywords: bikini, bikinis, swimwear, bathing suits, bathing suit, string bikinis, g-string bikinis, g string bikinis, one piece swimsuits, one piece swimwear, string bikini, tonga bikinis, tongas, tonga, thong bikinis, thongs, Outdoorgirl, thong bikini, swimsuit, s...
Inbound Link Count: 50 linking pages
Archive: index, as of -1/1/2000 (1 distinct snapshot among 3 archives since 8/31/2001)

Title: äda 'web, welcome
URL: www.adaweb.com
Blocked on: May 15
Yahoo: Regional > U S States > New York > Cities > New York > Entertainment and Arts > Artists > Collectives
Google: Arts > Digital > Net Art
Description: adaweb is a research and development platform, a digital foundry, and a journey. Here, artists are invited to experiment with and reflect upon the web as a medium, and as a means of distribution for their work. While we produce most of the projects you ex...

Title: Adult Newsstand
URL: www.adultnewsstand.com
Blocked on: May 15
Yahoo: Business and Economy > Business to Business > News and Media > Magazines > Magazine Subscription Services

Title: Angling Fishing Articles, Advice, Steelhead, Trout, Travel, Pictures Free Coffee
URL: www.adventureangling.com
Blocked on: May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Google: Recreation > Outdoors > Fishing > Magazines and E-zines
Description: Fishing Articles and pictures by Pros from around the world and the Pacific
Northwest

**Title:** Angling Predatorial Marketing: Angling resource center with up to date reports on rivers in the US and the latest Fishing News
**URL:** [www.adventureangling.com/chd/webring.htm](http://www.adventureangling.com/chd/webring.htm)
**Blocked on:** May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
**Google:** Health > Conditions and Diseases > Cardiovascular Disorders > Heart Disease > Support Groups
**Description:** Predatorial Marketing is a Fishing portal for the Latest Angling News, Fishing tackle, charters and guides directory, In depth daily updated Fishing Reports on all major rivers, lakes, oceans in the and around the US.

**Title:** Affiliateprogram.com - the best and most productive affiliate programme sponsors on the net!
**URL:** [affiliateprogram.com](http://affiliateprogram.com)
**Blocked on:** May 18, May 19, May 22, May 27
**Description:** We link you to the best high performance collection of affiliate programs on the net. Review our affiliate programs first! High payouts, guaranteed checks, and great conversions!

**Title:** Arab American Roman Catholic Community
**URL:** [www.al-bushra.org](http://www.al-bushra.org)
**Blocked on:** May 16, May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
**Yahoo:** Society and Culture > Religion and Spirituality > Faiths and Practices > Christianity > Denominations and Sects > Catholic > Organizations > Al Bushra
**Google:** Society > Issues > Human Rights and Liberties > Advocacy Organizations > Middle East

**Title:** 0iraq
**URL:** [www.al-bushra.org/iraq/0iraq.htm](http://www.al-bushra.org/iraq/0iraq.htm)
**Blocked on:** May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
**Yahoo:** Society and Culture > Religion and Spirituality > Faiths and Practices > Christianity > Denominations and Sects > Catholic > Organizations > Al Bushra

**Title:** christians
**URL:** [www.al-bushra.org/latpatra/christians.htm](http://www.al-bushra.org/latpatra/christians.htm)
**Blocked on:** May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27

**Title:** 0palestine
**URL:** [www.al-bushra.org/palestine/0palestine.htm](http://www.al-bushra.org/palestine/0palestine.htm)
**Blocked on:** May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27

**Title:** AboutIsa.com - What Do You Know About Isa?
**URL:** [www.allahsassurance.com](http://www.allahsassurance.com)
**Blocked on:** May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
**Yahoo:** Society and Culture > Religion and Spirituality > Faiths and Practices > Islam > Opposing Views

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Title: Amnesty International: Saudi Arabia campaign website
URL: www.amnesty.org/ailib/intcam/saudi/issues/migrant.html
Blocked on: May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27

Title: Amnesty International: Saudi Arabia campaign website
URL: www.amnesty.org/ailib/intcam/saudi/issues/main.html
Blocked on: May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27

Title: Amnesty International: Saudi Arabia campaign website
URL: www.amnesty.org/ailib/intcam/saudi/issues/dp.html
Blocked on: May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27

Title: Amnesty International: Saudi Arabia campaign website
Blocked on: May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27

Title: Amnesty International: Saudi Arabia campaign website
URL: www.amnesty.org/ailib/intcam/saudi/briefing/7.html
Blocked on: May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27

Title: Amnesty International: Saudi Arabia campaign website
URL: www.amnesty.org/ailib/intcam/saudi/briefing/5.html
Blocked on: May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27

Title: Amnesty International: Saudi Arabia campaign website
URL: www.amnesty.org/ailib/intcam/saudi/briefing/3.html
Blocked on: May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27

Title: Amnesty International: Saudi Arabia campaign website
URL: www.amnesty.org/ailib/intcam/saudi/briefing/2.html
Blocked on: May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27

Title: Amnesty International: Saudi Arabia campaign website
URL: www.amnesty.org/ailib/intcam/saudi/briefing/1.html
Blocked on: May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27

Title: Amnesty International: Saudi Arabia campaign website
URL: www.amnesty.org/ailib/intcam/saudi/appeals/muha.html
Blocked on: May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27

Title: Amnesty International: Saudi Arabia campaign website
URL: www.amnesty.org/ailib/intcam/saudi/report.html
Blocked on: May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27

Title: Amnesty International: Saudi Arabia campaign website
URL: www.amnesty.org/ailib/intcam/saudi
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27

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Title: Amnesty International: Saudi Arabia campaign website
URL: www.amnesty.org/ailib/intcam/saudi/briefing/6.html
Blocked on: May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27

Title: Amnesty International: Saudi Arabia campaign website
URL: www.amnesty.org/ailib/intcam/saudi/appeals/hani.html
Blocked on: May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27

Title: Amnesty International: Saudi Arabia campaign website
URL: www.amnesty.org/ailib/intcam/saudi/briefing/4.html
Blocked on: May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27

Title: Country Page - Saudi Arabia - More News Releases
URL: www.amnesty-usa.org/countries/saudi_arabia/morenewsandreports.html
Blocked on: May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27

Title: Country Page - Saudi Arabia
URL: www.amnesty-usa.org/countries/saudi_arabia
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Description: Recent AI Publications on Saudi Arabia

Title: ÇâñéÇâ ÜñÉ
URL: www.anahena.com/home.html
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27

Title: Anahena.com
URL: www.anahena.com
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27

Title: AncientWeb.com - Free Daily Horoscopes | Ancient Anomalies
URL: www.ancientweb.com
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Description: FreakAstrology @ AncientWeb!, Free Daily Horoscopes that don't suck at all, Daily Rants, Rate your Lover, Ancient Anomalies, Hab Theory...
Keywords: Free Daily Horoscope, Thought of the Day, AncientWeb. Ask the witch, romance ratings, panet and sign info, Horoscopes, Taurus, Astrology, Zodiac, aries, pisces, gemini, cancer, leo, scorpio, sagittarius, capricorn, libra, virgo aquarius, sphinx, pyramids,

Title: Solid Rock Photo Gallery, Solid Rock Christian Church, Boca Raton, Florida
URL: www.angelfire.com/fl5/SOLIDROCK/photo/photo.html
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Description: Solid Rock Christian Church of Boca Raton, A family church.
Keywords: Solid Rock Christian Chuch, Boca Raton, Florida, God, Jesus, born again, born-again, love, faith, hope, word, preaching, softball,

Title: Queer Muslims Home Page
URL: www.angelfire.com/ca2/queermuslims
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Description: Resources and frequently asked questions for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered Muslims and allies.

Title: Solid Rock Christian Church, Boca Raton, Florida
URL: www.angelfire.com/fl5/SOLIDROCK
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Description: Solid Rock Christian Church of Boca Raton, A family church.

Title: Bikini Swimsuit & Swimwear, from Thong Bikini's, String Bikini, or Teen Bikini.
URL: www.angels-sexy-bikini.com
Blocked on: May 14, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Description: Bikini swimsuit and swimwear, whether you want a thong bikini, teen bikini, string bikini or just a bathing suit Angel's Sexy Bikini online can help. Sexy and practical bikini's for all ages.

Title: New IP Address, New Internet ID, Private Confidential WWW Access.
Anonymous Mailing, Browsing.
URL: www.anonymize.net
Blocked on: May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27

Title: Anonymizer.com -- Online Privacy Services
URL: www.anonymizer.com
Blocked on: May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27

Title: VATICAN CITY - Pontifical Millennium Time Capsule - Jubilee Year 3000
URL: pub.anonvmizer.com/~300ad
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Description: Description

Title: CYBERPASS - Anonymous and personal account services. Shell accounts, San Diego area dialup access, anonymous shell accounts and services. Anonymous web page publishing.anonymous shell account anonymity anon personal e-mail email telnet mixmaster remailer
URL: pub.anonvmizer.com
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Description: Cyberpass anonymous and personal accounts.

Title: VATICAN CITY - Pontifical Millennium Time Capsule - Jubilee Year 3000
URL: pub.anonvmizer.com/~300ad/Jubilee_3000_Letter.html
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Description: Description
Title: (untitled)
URL: www.ivillage.com
www.anonymizer.com
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27

Title: Anonymous Access.net
URL: www.anonymousaccess.net
Blocked on: May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Description: text/html; charset=iso-8859-1

Title: Scrutinizing Rumors And Exposing Hoaxes
URL: answering-islam.org/Hoaxes
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Description: A good many rumors have been created by Muslims to support the credibility of Islam this site is to collect and comment on / expose what is false.

Title: Testimonies of Muslims who became Christians
URL: answering-islam.org/Testimonies
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Description: A collection of testimonies of former Muslims who became Christians and describe their experiences and reasons for the conversion.

Title: About "Women in Islam" -- A Resource Page
URL: answering-islam.org/Women/inislam.html
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Description: A comprehensive collection of links to information on the position of women in Islam as it is available on the WWW.

Title: The Holy War
URL: answering-islam.org/Nehls/Ask/war.html
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27

Title: Christians Ask Muslims: Table of Contents
URL: answering-islam.org/Nehls/Ask
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27

Title: The Five Pillars of Islam
URL: answering-islam.org/Gilchrist/Vol1/7c.html
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27

Title: (untitled)
URL: answering-islam.org/Gilchrist/eid.html
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27

Title: (untitled)
URL: answering-islam.org
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Title: Comparative Index to Islam: SHI'A; SHI'ITE; SHIITE; SHI'TE
URL: answering-islam.org/Index/S/shiite.html
Blocked on: May 16, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27

Title: Al-Mi'raj: The Alleged Ascent to Heaven
URL: answering-islam.org/Gilchrist/Vol1/3d.html
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27

Title: (untitled)
URL: answering-islam.org/BehindVeil/btv2.html
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27

Title: Books by John Gilchrist
URL: answering-islam.org/Gilchrist
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Description: Ahmed Deedat is the Muslim prime champion in attack on Christianity, Bible bashing and Scripture twisting. Here a comprehensive list of what is available by Deedat on the Internet and the rebuttals to his charges.

Title: Did King Offa Become a Muslim?
URL: www.answering-islam.org/Hoaxes/offa.html
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Description: Does the Islamic creed on a coin by king

Title: Eid-ul-Adha: Abraham and the Sacrifice
URL: www.answering-islam.org/Gilchrist/eid.html
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Description: The meaning of the sacrifice of Abraham's son.

Title: Answering Islam, A Christian-Muslim Dialog and Apologetic
URL: www.answering-islam.org
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Society and Culture > Religion and Spirituality > Faiths and Practices > Islam > Opposing Views

Title: Antifart.com
URL: www.antifart.com
Blocked on: May 14, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Entertainment > Humor > Tasteless > Bathroom Humor > Farting
Description: Daily fart cartoon, farting advice column, sounds of farts, videos, chat and more.

Title: Altar of Unholy Blasphemy: Heretical Degradation of The Christian Lord From the Feral Will of Apostate Souls
URL: www.anus.com/altar
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Society and Culture > Religion and Spirituality > Faiths and Practices > Satanism
Description: The Altar of Unholy Blasphemy uses apostate technologies and blasphemy
to destroy Judeo-Christian moralism and judgmentalism, favoring transcendental blasphemy with unrepentant apostasy as the fist of Satanism as violent heresy in the face of insane relig...

Title: Altar of Unholy Blasphemy: Heretical Degradation of The Christian Lord From the Feral Will of Apostate Souls
URL: www.anus.com/altar/index.html
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Society and Culture > Religion and Spirituality > Faiths and Practices > Satanism
Description: The Altar of Unholy Blasphemy uses apostate technologies and blasphemy to destroy Judeo-Christian moralism and judgmentalism, favoring transcendental blasphemy with unrepentant apostasy as the fist of Satanism as violent heresy in the face of insane relig...

Title: mock Him productions
URL: www.anus.com/mock
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Description: mock Him productions, an independent Web studio, offers up this homepage to anyone interested in quality web design with rebellious intent.

Title: American Nihilist Underground Society [ Home ]
URL: www.anus.com
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Society and Culture > Cultures and Groups > Web Directories
Description: description

Title: Blasphemy Bookmarks: Unholy Links
URL: www.anus.com/altar/worlds.html
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Society and Culture > Religion and Spirituality > Faiths and Practices > Satanism > Web Directories
Description: Blasphemy at the Altar of Unholy Blasphemy creates discussion of satanic topics and other heretical works against the Judeo-Christian or Christian 'God' and all of his mighty and stupidly destructive ideas.

Title: (untitled)
URL: www.anythingthatmoves.com
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Regional > U S States > California > Cities > San Francisco > Community > Cultures and Groups > Lesbians Gays and Bisexuals > News and Media > Magazines
Google: Society > Transgendered > Activism > Allies

Title: Adams poop page
URL: members.aol.com/AdamA97/adam.html
Blocked on: May 14, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Entertainment > Humor > Tasteless > Bathroom Humor
SPECIAL NOTICE

THE FOLLOWING PAGES 220 TO 135 CONTAIN TEXT THAT IS OUT OF ALIGNMENT AND THE BEST POSSIBLE SCAN HAS BEEN TAKEN.
Title: Women In Islam
URL: members.aol.com/AlHaqt4u/womeng.html
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Description: women, man, male, female, sex, Muslim, Islam, Hadith, scholars, history, Qur'an, Koran, Quran, religion, prophet, Muhammad, Mohammed
Keywords: global

Title: Mission Statement
URL: members.aol.com/runes3/mission.htm
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27

Title: The Burning Times
URL: members.aol.com/runes3/burn.htm
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Society and Culture > Religion and Spirituality > Faiths and Practices > Paganism > Traditions and Paths > Wicca and Witchcraft > History > Burning Times

Title: (untitled)
URL: members.aol.com/ahlaur
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27

Title: The page that you requested was not found in AOL Hometown
URL: hometown.aol.com/ladysaudia
Blocked on: May 16, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27

Title: ---Domain Strategy Inc.---
URL: www.apexsid.com
Blocked on: May 15

Title: www.buystuff4u.com
URL: www.apostikane.com
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Society and Culture > Religion and Spirituality > Faiths and Practices > Christianity > Bible > Bible Studies > Biblical Prophecy > End Times
Description: Your one stop shop for online products and services, and local entertainment
Keywords: Clothing, Shoes, Entertainment, Videos, Television, Loans, Insurance, Sporting Goods, Golf, Art, Auction, E-bay, Automobiles, Betting & Gambling, Flowers, Astrology, Online Dating, Employment, Credit Cards, Books, Children, Menswear, Womens Clothing.

Title: The Van Dyke Arabic Bible in PDF Format
URL: www.arabichistie.com/bible/pdf_bible.htm
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Description: Arabic Bible translated by Van Dyke. This is the most popular and widely used translation among Arabic Christians in the Middle East and across the world. The ministry of the Good Way typed the entire Arabic Bible and offered it as an on-line copy
Title: Christian Doctrine Explained for Muslims
URL: www.arabicbible.com/islam/christian_doctrine.htm
Description: Arabic Bible Outreach Ministry is dedicated to proclaim the Love of God as revealed in the Holy Bible the Injil to all Arabic speaking people on the Internet. The following is description of the Christian work in each Arabic Country.
Keywords: Arabic, arabic, Arabs, arabs, Islam, islam, Muslim, muslim, Christian, religion, religious, resources, directory, search, engine, study, devotionals, Church, church, Bible, bible, Gospel, gospel, Injil, injil, christian, Issa, issa, Jesus, jesus, Christ,

Title: Saudia Arabic
URL: www.arabicbible.com/ac/saudi/saudi.htm
Description: Arabic Bible Outreach Ministry is dedicated to proclaim the Love of God as revealed in the Holy Bible the Injil to all Arabic speaking people on the Internet. The site serves as a central meeting place for the Arabic Christian Evangelical community across...
Keywords: Arabic, arabic, Arabs, arabs, Islam, islam, Muslim, muslim, Christian, religion, religious, resources, directory, search, engine, study, devotionals, Church, church, Bible, bible, Gospel, gospel, Injil, injil, christian, Issa, issa, Jesus, jesus, Christ,

URLs Blocked in Saudi Arabia - Highlights
Documentation of Internet Filtering in Saudi Arabia
The listings below give specific web pages found to be blocked in Saudi Arabia. Where available, each page's listing includes its HTML title as well as META keywords and description; its first Yahoo Directory category classification and its Google Directory classification; its inbound link count (according to Google); and information about past snapshots of the page available in the Internet library archive.org. These details are as retrieved in June 2002.
Title: #1 Marijuana Seeds.com - marijuana seeds (cannabis seeds) shipped worldwide.
URL: www.1-marijuana-seeds.com
Blocked on: May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Google: Regional > North America > Canada > Ontario > Localities > T > Toronto
Health
Description: #1 Marijuana Seeds - where to order seeds online
Keywords: marijuana seeds, marijuana
Inbound Link Count: 6 linking pages

Title: Arab American Roman Catholic Community
URL: www.al-bushra.org
Blocked on: May 15, May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Society and Culture > Religion and Spirituality > Faiths and Practices >
Christianity > Denominations and Sects > Catholic > Organizations > Al Bushra
Google: Society > Issues > Human Rights and Liberties > Advocacy Organizations >
Middle East

Title: AltaVista- World / Translate
URL: world.altavista.com
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Description: AltaVista provides the most comprehensive search experience on the Web!
Keywords: translate, translation, translation services, machine translation, language
translation, Babel Fish, babelfish, Bable Fish, bablefish

Title: Amnesty International: Saudi Arabia campaign website
URL: www.amnesty.org/ailib/intcam/saudi
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27

Title: Country Page - Saudi Arabia
URL: www.amnesty-usa.org/countries/saudi_arabia
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Description: Recent AI Publications on Saudi Arabia
Keywords: Amnesty International USA

Title: Queer Muslims Home Page
URL: www.angelfire.com/ca2/queermuslims
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Society and Culture > Religion and Spirituality > Faiths and Practices > Islam >
Cultures and Groups > Lesbians Gays and Bisexuals
Google: Society > Transgendered > Race and Ethnicity
Description: Resources and frequently asked questions for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and
transgendered Muslims and allies.
Keywords: muslim, moslem, islam, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, transgender,
queer, genderqueer, bigendered, ftm, mtf, transsexual, arab, arab-american, dyke, fag,

Title: Anonymizer.com -- Online Privacy Services
URL: www.anonymizer.com
Blocked on: May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Business and Economy > Shopping and Services > Communication and
Information Management > Internet and World Wide Web > Software > Privacy
Inbound Link Count: 3270 linking pages

Title: Anonymous Access.net
URL: www.anonymousaccess.net
Blocked on: May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Business and Economy > Shopping and Services > Communication and Information Management > Internet and World Wide Web > Software > Privacy
Google: Computers > Security > Internet > Privacy > Tools and Services
Description: text/html; charset=iso-8859-1
Keywords: The only completely anonymous internet access and anonymous surfing.

Title: Answering Islam, A Christian-Muslim Dialog and Apologetic
URL: www.answering-islam.org
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Society and Culture > Religion and Spirituality > Faiths and Practices > Islam > Opposing Views

Title: American Nihilist Underground Society [ Home ]
URL: www.anus.com
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Society and Culture > Cultures and Groups > Web Directories
Description: description
Keywords: keywords

Title: Arabic Bible Outreach Ministry Home Page قلیلا قلینهی نشئی دیه
URL: www.arabicbible.com
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Google: Society > Religion and Spirituality > Christianity > Bible > Various Languages
Description: Arabic Bible Outreach Ministry is dedicated to proclaim the Love of God as revealed in the Holy Bible the Injil to all Arabic speaking people on the Internet. The site serves as a central meeting place for the Arabic Christian Evangelical community across...
Keywords: Arabic, arabic, Arabs, arabs, Islam, islam, Muslim, muslim, Christian, religion, religious, resources, directory, search, engine, study, devotionals, Church, church, Bible, bible, Gospel, gospel, Injil, injil, christian, Isa, issa, Jesus, jesus, Christ,

Title: asshole magazine
URL: www.asshole.org
Blocked on: May 15
Yahoo: Regional > Countries > Sweden > News and Media > Magazines > Alternative
Description: asshole magazine
Keywords: asshole magazine, paul bowles, paul kenny, maria leona, heinz-dieter, freddie mercury, bulsara, marocko, tangier
Inbound Link Count: 56 linking pages
Title: GayToday
URL: gaytoday.badpuppy.com
Title: The Bahá'í Faith
URL: www.bahai.com
Blocked on: May 14, May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Society and Culture > Religion and Spirituality > Faiths and Practices > Bahá'í Faith
Description: What is the Bahá'í Faith and who is Bahá'u'lláh? We cordially welcome you to visit our site.
Keywords: Bahá'í Faith, Bahá'í Faith, baha'i faith, bahá'i faith, BAHÁ'Í FAITH, BAHAI FAITH,

Title: The Baha'i World -- Official Site of the Bahá'í Faith
URL: www.bahai.org
Blocked on: May 14, May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Society and Culture > Religion and Spirituality > Faiths and Practices > Bahá'í Faith
Google: Society > Religion and Spirituality > Bah%C3%A1%27i > Introductory Information
Description: The official presence of the Bahá'í Faith on the Web. Comprehensive body of authentic material

Title: BAYSWAN: Prostitution-Exotic Dancing-Adult Film - Providing Information about Sex Worker Rights and Issues
URL: www.bayswan.org
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24
Yahoo: Regional > U S States > California > Cities > San Francisco > Community > Government > Law Enforcement
Description: Sex work issues from a rights perspective including discussions about trafficking and prostitution, police abuse and prostitution, pornography, exotic dancers, strippers, legalization of prostitution, decriminalization of prostitution, pornography and more.
Keywords: Prostitution, Prostitutes, Rights, Decriminalization, Legalization, Escort, Penet, Carol Leigh, Scarlet Harlot, Exotic Dancers, Escort, Trafficking, Escort Service, Whore, Prostitute, Pimp, Street Walker, Sex, Sex Work, Sex Worker, Pay for Sex,

Title: Islamic Cultural Library
URL: home.bip.net/hyla
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Description: Official Homepage of Islamic Cultural Library
Keywords: library, muslim, maktabah, biblioteket, imamia, sverige, ahlulbait, ahlebeit, arabic, shiaa, sweden, shia, islam, profet, mahammad, allah, koran, imam, alshia, religion, hijrah, salat, lag, drog, islamisk, arabisk, arab, sunna, wilaiah, mahdi,
Title: Blue Sky Swimwear-bikinis, bathing suits and swimwear
URL: blueskyswimwear.com
Blocked on: May 14, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Business and Economy > Shopping and Services > Sports > Swimming and Diving > Gear and Equipment > Apparel
Google: Regional > North America > United States > Florida > Localities > D > Daytona Beach > Business and Economy > Shopping > Clothing
Description: Blue Sky Swimwear-Designers of High Fashion American made Swimwear. Blue

Title: Boy OR Girl? - FAMILY MATTERS - Baby Gender Solutions
URL: www.boyorgirl.com
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Business and Economy > Shopping and Services > Religion and Spirituality > Divination > Astrology > Chinese
Description: Family matters. Predict the sex of your future baby online.
Keywords: boyorgirl,family,matters,mother,month,pregnancy,boy,girl,child,baby,

Title: CacheEraser.com. Software to Protect your privacy online.
URL: cacheeraser.com
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Description: Internet privacy software: protect your surfing privacy.
Keywords: online privacy, privacy software, internet privacy, online security
Inbound Link Count: 6 linking pages

Title: CANNABIS.COM - Cannabis, Marijuana, and Hemp Information
URL: www.cannabis.com
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Health > Pharmacy > Drugs and Medications > Specific Drugs and Medications > Marijuana
Google: Recreation > Drugs > Cannabis
Description: Marijuana, cannabis, and hemp all describe the same plant cannabis sativa. Our mission is to distribute accurate and unbiased information about marijuana, cannabis, and hemp.
Keywords: marijuana, medical, marijuana, cannabis, sativa, cannabis, information, pictures, canabis, cannibus, cannibis, canibus, growing, hemp, seed, drug war, marihuana, THC, drug testing, urine test, urinalysis, creatinine, delta-9, tetrahydrocannabinol, marinol...

Title: Anne Frank House
URL: www.channels.nl/amsterdam/annefran.html
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Regional > Countries > Netherlands > Provinces > Noord Holland > Cities > Amsterdam > Entertainment and Arts > Architecture

Title: Crack Cocaine
URL: www.cocaine.org
Blocked on: May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Health > Pharmacy > Drugs and Medications > Specific Drugs and Medications
Cocaine
Google: Recreation > Drugs
Description: crack cocaine delivers an intensity of pleasure beyond the bounds of normal human experience

Title: Holywood Parish Church
URL: ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/cken
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Regional > Countries > United Kingdom > Northern Ireland > Counties and Regions > County Down > Cities and Towns > Holywood > Community

Title: Karaite Judaism Information Page
URL: ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/AQanai_Ktav/kjahomep.htm
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 27
Yahoo: Society and Culture > Religion and Spirituality > Faiths and Practices > Judaism > Cultures and Groups > Karaite

Title: Crazyshit.com, satisfying all your needs for outrageous pictures, funny cartoons, jokes and much more.
URL: www.crazvshit.com
Blocked on: May 14, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Entertainment > Humor > Tasteless
Description: Loads of funny pictures, funny adult pics, a weekly funny picture where you pick the caption, daily jokes, our joke of the day, an archive featuring blonde jokes, adult jokes, redneck jokes, sick jokes, tasteless jokes, cartoons, games, nasty jokes. joke
Keywords: funny pictures, funny adult pictures, crazy pictures, picture, pics, movies, crazy shit, jokes, sounds, adult humor

Title: Create-A-Fart
URL: www.createafart.com
Blocked on: May 14, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Entertainment > Humor > Tasteless > Bathroom Humor > Farting
Google: Recreation > Humor > Bizarre > Farts
Description: Break Wind In Cyberspace! Choose from custom fart-sounds or create your own, then e-mail your fart to a friend. It's a gas!
Keywords: fart,pass gas,gas,farting,break wind,flatulence,arse,bum,poot,pull my finger,fart sound,fart joke,fart email,email fart,virtual fart,fart books

Title: Crime Library: crime stories on serial killers, the mafia, terrorists, spies, assassins and gangsters
URL: crimelibrary.com
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Society and Culture > Crime > Types of Crime > Homicide
Google: Society > Crime
Description: Stories on: crime, gangsters, serial killers, terrorists, spies, assassins and classic crime stories
Keywords: stories, classic crime, gangsters, outlaws, gunmen, serial killers, terrorists, spies, assassins, dark horse multimedia, dark, horse, multimedia
Title: Cures not Wars.org
URL: www.cures-not-wars.org
Blocked on: May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Regional > U S States > New York > Cities > New York > Health > Organizations
Google: Society > Issues > Health > Drugs > Illegal > Pro-Legalization > Marijuana > Medical Purposes

Title: Dictionary.com/Translator
URL: www.dictionary.com/translate
Blocked on: May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Description: Free online translations: English to French, English to German, English to Italian, English to Portuguese, English to Spanish, French to English, French to German, German to English, German to French, Italian to English, Portuguese to English, Spanish to
Keywords: translations translator interpretation interpreter machine translation English Spanish French German Italian Latin Greek Portuguese Sanskrit foreign languages learning online

Title: Corpses For Sale
URL: distefano.com
Blocked on: May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Entertainment > Humor > Tasteless > Morbid Humor
Google: Business > Industries > Arts and Entertainment > Equipment > Props > Creatures and Characters > Bodies and Parts
Description: Lifesize, realistic, decayed corpses for

Title: Islam Challenges Christianity ... and the Tougher Answers
URL: debate.domini.org/newton
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Society and Culture > Religion and Spirituality > Faiths and Practices > Islam > Cultures and Groups > Women
Description: This site is a Christian response to many Islamic web sites attacking Christianity.
Keywords: Christian, Muslim, Christianity, Islam, history, Bible, Qur'an, Koran, Quran, religion, dialog, holy, scripture, prophet, Jesus, Christ, Muhammad, Mohammed, apologetics, faith

Title: DrugSense : Drug Policy Reform
URL: www.drugsense.org
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Regional > U S States > California > Cities > Porterville > Health
Google: Society > Issues > Health > Drugs > Illegal > Pro-Legalization
Description: DrugSense works to ensure more balanced and accurate

Title: Women In American History
URL: women.eb.com
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Science > Space > Astronauts > Individual Astronauts > McAuliffe Christa
Title: Fox Searchlight Pictures
URL: www.foxsearchlight.com
Blocked on: May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Business and Economy > Business to Business > Entertainment and Media Production > Film and Video > Studios and Production Companies > Studios > Fox Entertainment Group > Divisions
Description: The official website of Fox Searchlight Pictures includes information about Searchlight’s current and upcoming movie releases. An extensive movie archive and original short films will be coming this summer.

Title: GayChina.com Official Site for Gay Chinese and Asian
URL: www.gaychina.com
Blocked on: May 15
Yahoo: Society and Culture > Cultures and Groups > Lesbians Gays and Bisexuals > By Region > Countries > China

Title: Being Muslim and Homosexual in Malaysia; Gays and Moslem Society
URL: www.gavreading.com/lifestyles/muslim.html
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Society and Culture > Religion and Spirituality > Faiths and Practices > Islam > Cultures and Groups > Lesbians Gays and Bisexuals

Title: God loves Gays
URL: www.godlovesgays.com
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Society and Culture > Religion and Spirituality > Lesbians Gays and Bisexuals
Google: Society > Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual > Religion and Spirituality

Title: Israel Defense Forces
URL: www.idf.il
Blocked on: May 16, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Regional > Countries > Israel > Government > Military > Israeli Defense Forces
Google: Society > History > By Topic > Wars and Conflicts > Regional > Israel
Description: The Israel Defense Forces Army Spokesperson's Office, Providing the latest objective, accurate and timely information from the Middle East.

Title: the farting contest
URL: farting.isAwesome.net
Blocked on: May 14, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Entertainment > Humor > Tasteless > Bathroom Humor > Farting
Description: page about the farting contest
Title: Israel.com - A Website 5,762 years in the Making!
URL: www.israel.com
Blocked on: May 16, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Regional > U S States > Florida > Cities > West Palm Beach > Community > Religion and Spirituality > Judaism
Google: Regional > Middle East > Israel > Guides and Directories

Title: iVillage.com: The Women's Network -- busy women sharing solutions and advice
URL: www.ivillage.com
Blocked on: May 15, May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Google: Society > Support Groups > Women
Description: iVillage.com offers busy women a community in which to share advice. Join other women like you to talk about, books, parenting, careers, computers, diet/fitness, food, money, pets, relationships, beauty, shopping, travel and working from home.

Title: The Neopagan Religious Archive
URL: www.lysator.liu.se/religion/neopagan
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Society and Culture > Religion and Spirituality > Faiths and Practices > Divination
Google: Society > Religion and Spirituality > Pagan > Search Engines and Directories

Title: Church of Gnostic Luminism
URL: www.luminist.org
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Society and Culture > Religion and Spirituality > Faiths and Practices > Gnosticism > Organizations

Title: The Sputnik Drug Information Zone
URL: nepenthes.lycaeum.org
Blocked on: May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Social Science > Anthropology and Archaeology > Cultural Anthropology > Ethnobiology > Ethnobotany > McKenna Terence 1946 2000

Title: Magazines and Magazine Subscriptions : Magazine City: the Web's Largest Subscription Source!
URL: www.magazinecity.net
Blocked on: May 15
Yahoo: Business and Economy > Business to Business > News and Media > Magazines > Magazine Subscription Services
Google: Shopping > Publications > Magazines
Description: Magazine subscriptions at at discounts up to 92%. Publisher authorized, best prices on over 1,500 magazine subscriptions. Free Gift Cards, International delivery & learn the truth about

Title: The Marijuana Reform Party
URL: www.marijuanareform.org
Blocked on: May 15, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Google: Regional > North America > United States > New York > Society and Culture > Politics > Parties

Title: Megaproxy: Surf privately with Megaproxy Anonymous Web Surfing proxy
URL: www.megaproxy.com
Blocked on: May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Computers and Internet > Software > Internet > World Wide Web > Servers > Proxies
Description: Megaproxy offers free secure and fast anonymous web proxy service with advanced privacy features. Surf the Web anonymously!

Title: Abiding Faith Lutheran Church's Home Page
URL: abiding.home.mindspring.com
Blocked on: May 18, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Regional > U S States > Texas > Cities > Fort Worth > Community > Religion and Spirituality > Christianity > Lutheran
Google: Regional > North America > United States > Texas > Localities > F > Fort Worth > Society and Culture > Religion > Lutheran

Title: Agudath Israel Etz Ahayem
URL: agudath.home.mindspring.com
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Regional > U S States > Alabama > Cities > Montgomery > Community > Religion and Spirituality > Judaism
Description: An affiliate of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, Agudath Israel Synagogue in Montgomery, Alabama, seeks to reflect the philosophy of the Conservative movement which holds Judaism as a vital and dynamic faith, capable of lending meaning and di...
Keywords: agudath, israel, etz, ahayem, synagogue, sephardic, judaism, jewish, montgomery, alabama, conservative

Title: Holy Spirit Catholic Church - Macon, GA
URL: holyspiritchurch.home.mindspring.com
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Regional > U S States > Georgia > Cities > Macon > Community > Religion and Spirituality > Christianity > Catholic

Title: Mail.Liberal-Judaism Home Page
URL: www.mljewish.org
Blocked on: May 16, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27

Title: An Introduction To Scientology
URL: www.modemac.com/cos
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Society and Culture > Religion and Spirituality > Faiths and Practices > Scientology > Opposing Views
Google: Society > Religion and Spirituality > Opposing Views > Scientology
Description: For the curious and the uninformed:

Title: Marijuana Policy Project
URL: www.mpp.org
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Regional > U S States > Washington D C > Community > Organizations > Domestic and World Affairs
Google: Society > Issues > Health > Drugs > Illegal > Pro-Legalization > Marijuana
Description: Marijuana Policy Project (MPP) - advocating harm reduction-based marijuana policies since 1995

Title: router configuration main page
URL: www5q.biglobe.ne.jp/~hamamura/isdnp/mainpage.html
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27

Title: Hofesh ('freedom' in Hebrew)
URL: www.hofesh.org.il
Blocked on: May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Regional > Countries > Israel > Society and Culture > Religion and Spirituality > Church State Issues
Description: A site dedicated to fighting religious laws enforced on the secular citizens of Israel.

Title: Porn-Free.org - HOME - Free info on breaking porn and sex addiction.
URL: www.porn-free.org
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Health > Diseases and Conditions > Pornography Addiction
Description: Help and hope for people affected by sex addiction. Site provides free info, prayer, help for spouses of porn addicts, free e-magazine, books, links, Bible studies, tips on avoiding porn, steps to breaking addiction, daily devotions, real stories, links

Title: QueerNet - Email Communities for the gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgendered, HIV/AIDS, and leather/S&M communities
URL: www.queernet.org
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Society and Culture > Cultures and Groups > Modern Primitives
Google: Society > Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual > Computers and Internet > Mailing Lists

Title: OCRT: An agency promoting religious tolerance as a human right
URL: religious_tolerance.org
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Society and Culture > Religion and Spirituality > Faiths and Practices > Christianity > Commentaries
Google: Society > Religion and Spirituality > Religious Tolerance
Description: An agency promoting religious tolerance, freedom, and understanding
Title: OCRT: An agency promoting religious tolerance as a human right
URL: www.religioustolerance.org
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 27
Yahoo: Society and Culture > Religion and Spirituality > Faiths and Practices > Christianity > Commentaries
Google: Society > Religion and Spirituality > Religious Tolerance
Description: an agency promoting religious tolerance, freedom, and understanding

Title: RollingStone.com
URL: www.rollingstone.com
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Entertainment > Music > Genres > Rock and Pop
Google: Arts > Music > Magazines and E-zines > R
Description: VBScript

Title: Saudi Institute -Transparency - Human Rights – NGO's
URL: www.saudiinstitute.org
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Description: Microsoft FrontPage 5.0

Title: Sex Addiction Recovery Resources-Sex, Sex Addiction, Counseling, Sex Books, Sex Videos
URL: www.sexaddict.com
Blocked on: May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Regional > U S States > Texas > Cities > Fort Worth > Business and Shopping > Business to Business > Health Care > Mental Health
Google: Society > Sexuality > Sexual Addiction
Description: SEX ADDICTION RECOVERY RESOURCES: provides telephone counseling with national sex addiction expert Douglas Weiss Ph.D. as well as the leading books and videos in the field of sex addiction to date. The spouse and partners of sex addicts are also included

Title: SilentSurf
URL: www.silentsurf.com
Blocked on: May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Business and Economy > Shopping and Services > Communication and Information Management > Internet and World Wide Web > Software > Privacy
Inbound Link Count: 94 linking pages

Title: St. Mildred's Church
URL: www.stmildreds.org
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Inbound Link Count: 2 linking pages

URL: www.submission.org
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Society and Culture > Religion and Spirituality > Faiths and Practices > Islam > Holidays and Observances > Ramadan
Description: This is the Best source for Islam on the internet. It covers all issues of interest for the Muslims and non-Muslims. Issues like, Quran, Islam, (Submission), Muhammed, Jesus, Hadiths & Sunna, Miracle of the Quran, Heaven, Hell & death, women, Jews, Fa...

Title: 1001 Tasteless Jokes
URL: www.tasteless-jokes.com
Blocked on: May 14, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Entertainment > Humor > Tasteless
Google: Recreation > Humor > Jokes > Tasteless Jokes

Title: PPFA | teenwire - Sexuality and relationship info you can trust from Planned Parenthood Federation of America
URL: www.teenwire.com
Blocked on: May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Society and Culture > Sexuality > Teen Sexuality
Google: Kids and Teens > Teen Life > Teen Sexuality

Title: A Shamanic Path
URL: www-personal.umich.edu/~airvn/shamanic
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Society and Culture > Religion and Spirituality > Faiths and Practices > Shamanism
Inbound Link Count: 38 linking pages

Title: Family Bible Hour
URL: www.vaxxine.com/fbh
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Society and Culture > Religion and Spirituality > Faiths and Practices > Christianity > News and Media > Radio > Programs
Inbound Link Count: 30 linking pages

Title: Warner Bros. Records
URL: www.wbr.com
Blocked on: May 14, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Business and Economy > Shopping and Services > Music > Labels
Google: Arts > Music > Record Labels > Major Labels > Warner

Title: OA§IS - for gay Christians thinking about their sexualities
URL: yours.at/ajinsg
Blocked on: May 18, May 19, May 22, May 24, May 27
Yahoo: Regional > Countries > Singapore > Society and Culture > Religion and Spirituality > Faiths and Practices > Christianity > Cultures and Groups > Lesbians Gays and Bisexuals
4H. Example of Block Page in Saudi Arabia

Access to the requested URL is not allowed

Please, fill out the form bellow if you believe the requested page should not be blocked

Form for URL Unblocking request

Please, send other sites you feel should be blocked using the following form:

Blocking request form