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Transnationalism and the de-centring of belonging: minority media and the Russian diaspora

BY

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Abstract

Discussion about the dependence of diasporic minorities on their distant “homeland” is frequently oversimplified, glossing over the complexities of belonging and group loyalties. Using the Russian-speaking communities of Israel and Estonia as case studies, this research will investigate the dynamic relation of minority media outlets to the everyday lives of members of diasporic communities and, in particular, processes of inclusion and exclusion and their participation in the society of either the “native” or “host” country. Minority media production is a particularly relevant object of research within the study of diasporic identity as it reflects (to some extent) the cultural identity of diasporic groups (and their symbolic representation), a sense of loyalty to either the country of residence or native country, and interaction with the wider society and/or media culture of the country of residence. I focus here on the Russian-speaking communities of Israel and Estonia as those that have found themselves part of the Russian diaspora in very different circumstances: one gathered to a new homeland, and the other becoming a minority with the creation of independent states following the fall of the USSR. This research aims to facilitate a fuller understanding of the Russian diaspora, but also of transnational identity more generally and the possibility (and, indeed, inevitability in an era of globalisation) of alternative media models, beyond spatial and national boundaries. While this dissertation does not deal extensively with integration in its various dimensions, it serves as a springboard for further research into the role of media in the integration of diasporic populations.

Key words: diaspora media, identity, integration, transnationalism

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Aims of this study

Building on Louis Althusser's theory of "interpellation" (1971: 142-7, 166-76) – the process by which ideology, manifest in social and political institutions, gives individual subjects their identities – media theorist David Gauntlett posits that audiences obtain a sense of their own identity via the media products that they consume. Gauntlett (2002: 27) affirms that "interpellation occurs when a person connects with a media text [...] the text has interpellated us into a certain set of assumptions and caused us to tacitly accept a particular approach to the world." Taking this view of media as an integral part of identity construction as a starting point – though not necessarily viewing audiences as entirely passive – this dissertation aims to examine the possible links between news media consumption and identity formation among members of diaspora communities. In particular, I will focus on minority news media aimed specifically at diaspora populations, using the Russian-speaking communities of Estonia and Israel as case studies. A near unique case, Israel was established in an attempt to create a homeland for the worldwide Jewish diaspora yet, in uniting this Jewish diaspora under the Law of Return, Israel has in turn become home to members of numerous national diasporas. These two communities are of special interest and salience in light of prevalent discourses regarding Russian disinformation and increasing tensions surrounding Israel's territorial violations and foreign policy.

In this piece of research I seek to examine what news media consumption demonstrates about the relative isolation or integration of Russian-speakers in relation to the majority society in Estonia and Israel, what the similarities and differences are between these diaspora groups with regard to their news media consumption, and what this means in relation to identity: whether diaspora media facilitate segregation and affiliation with the former homeland, assimilation to the host society, or the construction of a new, hybrid identity. Through initial secondary research and subsequent primary research – content surveys, tone assessments, close readings and consumer questionnaires – I attempt to place my findings within their distinct cultural contexts, drawing and attempting to explain connections and contrasts

between the data sets, before assessing the potential of Russian-language media in advancing societal integration in both Estonia and Israel. In examining the identities inhabited by diaspora communities, I consider the consumption of diaspora media as a moment of transnational communication and reflect both on its production of complex cultural dynamics, de-centring of belonging away from a single physical locus, and the implications it holds for our understanding of alternative media models, which operate beyond spatial and national boundaries.

This dissertation encompasses extensive secondary research, and leans primarily on the foundations provided by work of Auksė Balčytienė (2005, 2012) on Baltic media cultures, Nelly Elias's research (2010) into the integration of Russian-speaking immigrants, and Myria Georgiou's endeavours to map diaspora media across Europe (2005) and to understand media as a space of communication and belonging (2005, 2014). My own evidence gathering was supplemented by recent research projects such as the Worlds of Journalism study (2012 – 2016) and the Media and Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe (MDCEE) project (2009 – 2013). In analysing the media systems of Estonia and Israel, I have found Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini's 2004 study *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics* an invaluable framework through which to understand the similarities and differences between the media landscapes of the two countries, and have taken Benedict Anderson's seminal 1983 work *Imagined Communities* as an illuminating base from which to consider the role of media in identity and community construction. The primary research segment of this dissertation sees me complete a quantitative analysis in the form of a media survey and tone-tracking assessment, together with a qualitative close-reading and web-based audience surveys. I outline my methodology in greater detail below in Chapter 1.4.

The remainder of this dissertation is set out as follows. In the rest of this chapter, I foreground my research by setting out the concept of diaspora and the importance of studying diaspora media, later detailing my methodology; in Chapter 2, existing literature is reviewed, providing insight into the media landscapes of Estonia and Israel and their minority (and specifically) Russian-speaking populations; Chapter 3 comprises my primary research, encompassing a two-week news study, a tone assessment, close reading and consumer

surveys; Chapter 4 attempts to draw links between the data sets and place them within their distinct cultural contexts, examining the data in relation to framing theory and the condition of hybridity; Chapter 5 sets out the key findings of my research, drawing conclusions about those factors which shape news media's impact on identity formation among diaspora populations; Chapter 6 reflects on limitations of the study and on possible avenues for future research.

1.2 The concept of diaspora

Although contested, “diaspora” continues to be a relevant term in any discussion on the movement and dispersal of populations and their sense of collective identity (or lack thereof), taking on a new significance in an age of globalisation and technology-enabled communications. Building on the work of Robin Cohen (1997: 177) and James Clifford (1997: 249), Connie Carøe Christiansen (2004: 189) states that the term “diaspora” indicates the “dispersal of a population, which at one or another point in history has been united, or is at least assumed to have been so”. Derived from the ancient Greek verb διασπείρω (*diaspeirō*), "I scatter" which, in turn, derives from from διά (*dia*), "between, through, across" and the verb σπείρω (*speirō*), "I sow, I scatter", for the ancient Greeks diaspora referred to migration for the purpose of colonisation (Georgiou, 2003: 15). The term later developed, however, to refer to exile; the first mention of a diaspora born of exile can be found in the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament) (see Deuteronomy 28:25, New International Version) and, as such, subsequently came to be employed when referring to the historical movements of the dispersed indigenous population of Israel. With the Jews as the prototype, the term became used to signify what Cohen (1997: ix) terms “a collective trauma, a banishment” and the diasporic experience one “where one dreamt of home but lived in exile”.

Questions of belonging occupy a central position in the examination of identity (re)formation among diaspora populations. As Christiansen (2004: 189-90) affirms, the state of “ambivalence and double belonging” – a sense of belonging in multiple places, and yet nowhere – experienced by members of a diaspora stands counter to the rarely questioned system of sovereign nation states and therefore “exists outside [...] political codes of modern

citizenship”. The oft-assumed existence of a defined “homeland” is cast into question by the diaspora experience, while any such “homeland” may well not correspond to any nation state. With this noted caveat, I shall nevertheless, for practical reasons, refer to the “home country” as the country from which a person (or their parents/grandparents) has migrated, and the “host country” as their country of residence.

1.3 The role of media in identity formation among diaspora populations

As Georgiou (2003) argues, the continued significance of concepts such as the “nation-state” and the “homeland” to dispersed populations have been challenged due, not least, to improvements in communication technology. Among the most significant products of these advances (e.g. IT-enabled communications, satellite TV) is increased accessibility to a range of mass media, boosting flows of news media to diaspora populations and broadening the range of media outlets available to them. Sara Signer et al. (2011: 421–422) affirm that while of lower importance than the educational system in the integration process, the mass media are nonetheless instrumental in intercultural integration. In light of (often inflammatory) political and media discourse surrounding integration of ethnic minorities, notably the rhetoric surrounding the European refugee “crisis”, the role of media in processes of identity-construction and integration is particularly salient.

While many studies (Y. Shi, 2005; K. Rinnawi, 2012; C. Christiansen, 2004) on the role of media in identity-formation and integration among minority populations focus on the host country’s national media and their representation of/engagement with these populations or, instead, media originating in the distant homeland, this dissertation seeks to examine the distinct role of minority-language media serving particular diaspora populations from within the host country.

Taking Russian-language media in Estonia as an example, Maria Jufereva and Epp Lauk (2015: 53) assert that the principal objective of minority-language media is cultural and political self-representation. Moreover, media consumption aids the construction of what Benedict Anderson (1983) has termed an “imagined community”: a socially constructed community, imagined by the people who perceive themselves as part of that group. For

Anderson (1983: 6), the nation “is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members [...] yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion”. News media, among other genres, play a key role in processes of self-identification and representation; in their selection and framing of newsworthy issues, along with choice of language and images, news media outlets reflect, articulate and construct collective identities, often through the construction of both an in-group and an out-group. With this in mind, the study of media serving established minority populations (long-standing diaspora groups) offers valuable insight into their role in identity construction and integration vis-a-vis the “host country” and “homeland”.

This dissertation will focus on the Russian communities of Israel and Estonia in an attempt to compare populations that have found themselves part of the Russian diaspora under very different circumstances: one gathered to a new homeland, and the other becoming a minority with the creation of independent states following the fall of the USSR. A near unique case, Israel was established in an attempt to create a homeland for the worldwide Jewish diaspora yet, in uniting this Jewish diaspora under the Law of Return, Israel has in turn become home to members of numerous national diasporas. Despite the marked differences in the coming to being of these communities, they share a key commonality that renders them apt for comparison; Russian in both Estonia and Israel falls into the fourth category of minority languages, as set out in the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992): “languages spoken in communities constituting a minority in the nation state where they live that are majority languages in other countries”. These two communities are of special interest and salience in light of prevalent discourses regarding Russian disinformation campaigns targeting Russian-speakers and increasing tensions surrounding Israel’s territorial violations and foreign policy. This project will facilitate not only a fuller understanding of the Russian diaspora, but also of transnational identity more generally and the possibility (and, indeed, inevitability in an era of globalisation) of alternative media models, beyond spatial and national boundaries. This insight will, in turn, offer potential lessons for media policy planning.

1.4 Methodology

Using Georgiou's *Mapping Diasporic Media across the EU* (2003) project as an initial point of reference, this dissertation seeks in turn to map the parameters of Russian diasporic media culture in Estonia and Israel and their relationship to questions of identity formation and participation in the host society. As a methodology, it principally aims to collect descriptive data about the relevant populations and their media use. While it cannot deliver a comprehensive map of mediation and its impact on integration and identity, it charts the most significant dynamics of the media landscapes of Estonia and Israel and the Russian-language media that operate within these countries, touching also on their consumption and impact on the relevant populations and offering points of comparison across the two countries and the Russian-speaking populations. To this end, I have developed detailed case studies drawn from a combination of secondary sources and primary research. These are primarily content-focused, offering a comparison between different outlets and Russian-language news media in Estonia and Israel more broadly.

Ceren Budak, Sharad Goel and Justin M. Rao (2016: 251) note that it is a commonly held view in the academic and political communities that bias in media operates via two key mechanisms: selective coverage of issues (issue filtering), and how issues are presented (issue framing). These two mechanisms form the basis of my primary research, which takes the form of content analysis.

Content analysis has been defined as “the systematic, objective, quantitative analysis of message characteristics” (K. Neuendorf, 2002: 1); in this research I have sought to employ content analysis techniques to discern the important traits of media coverage by Russian-language outlets in Estonia and Israel. This has taken the form of a two-fold quantitative analysis: using human-coding to complete a) a media survey across a two-week period in order to ascertain the “news agenda” (answering the question “What is the topic?”) and b) utilising search techniques to find specific articles relevant to the research question – here relating to the “homeland” (Russia) and to the host country (Estonia or Israel) – and tracking the tone of articles to discern whether the treatment of Russia and the host country is positive or negative.

This quantitative analysis is complemented by a qualitative close-reading, examining the framing of news stories and their use of language and images in relation to the homeland and host-country. Three events during 2018 generated plentiful coverage and valuable opportunities for such an examination: Putin's re-election in 2018 (covered in Russian-language media in both Israel and Estonia), Israel's victory in Eurovision, and Estonia 100th anniversary. Within this close-reading, I seek in particular to discern the employment (or lack thereof) of an in-group/out-group frame and positive or negative language in relation to the government of the host-country and homeland.

Lastly, I have conducted web-based audience surveys among the Russian-speaking populations of Estonia and Israel. Using a mixture of open and closed questions, these structured questionnaires aimed to provide information on the degree to which locally produced Russian-language media outlets are consumed by and important to Russian-speakers, along with data on audience motivations and intentions for consuming media and on personal identity. Using these results, I have attempted to ascertain the relationship (if any) between consumption of minority-language media and identity construction.

Chapter 2. Secondary research

2.1 An introduction to Estonia and Israel

First, I will outline the composition of the populations of Estonia and Israel, focusing in on the Russian diaspora and briefly examining the reasons for the presence of this population and general levels of integration. While the majority of the Russian-speaking population of Estonia are ethnic Russians, most data on the demographics of Israel groups those born across the former USSR into one group regardless of the contemporary state in which their birthplace is located. For this reason I will, for the purpose of consistency and clarity, make reference to the Russian diaspora while acknowledging that this group includes a broader Russian-speaking population.

As of the first half of 2018, the State of Israel has a population of approximately 8,855,000 inhabitants (“Population of Israel on the Eve of 2018 – 8.8. Million”, 2017). Some 74.5% are

Jews of all backgrounds (about 6,556,000), 20.9% are non-Jewish Arabs (approx. 1,837,000), while the remaining 4.6% (about 400,000) are defined as "others". Of the Jewish people living in Israel in 2015, approximately 891,700 (or 14.21%) were born in Russia or the former USSR and, as such, the Jewish Russian (former USSR) diaspora constitute a significant group within Israeli society and second in number only to those born within Israel itself ("Statistical Abstract of Israel", 2015). I am hesitant to label this population as a "minority" group, as they form part of the dominant Jewish population; we might, instead, term this population a "subgroup". In terms of country of birth, the following three largest subgroups within the Jewish population are made up of those individuals born in Romania (199,400), Poland (185,400) and France (7,500). In addition to those Jewish Israelis born in Russia/the former USSR, an additional large number of Russian/USSR-born Israelis of patrilineal Jewish descent or married to a Jew are not included in the 891,700 mentioned above. As such, as of 2017 there are up to 1.5 million Russian-speaking Israelis (A. Golubovich, 2017). By virtue of its pluralistic composition, Israel is one of the multilingual societies in the world. While Hebrew is the official language of the country, Arabic has special status, while English and Russian are the two most widely spoken non-official languages.

The vast majority of Russian speakers now resident in Israel arrived in the country following the 1950 Law of Return, which gives Jewish people the right to live in Israel (make "aliyah") and gain Israeli citizenship. In 1970, this law was extended to apply to anyone with or married to someone with a Jewish grandparent (M. Omer-Man, 2011). The first wave of mass emigration of Soviet Jews took place in the 1970s after the Soviet Union lifted its ban on Jewish "Refusenik" emigration and allowed Jews to leave the country for officially for "family reunification". In total, between 1970 and 1988, approximately 165,000 Soviet Jews migrated to Israel (M. Tolts, 2009). After Mikhail Gorbachev relaxed emigration rules in 1989, a new influx of Soviet Jews began, Between 1989 and 2006, approximately 979,000 Soviet Jews and their non-Jewish relatives and spouses migrated to Israel (J. Maltz, 2016).

According to scholarly research on the integration of Russian-speaking immigrants to Israel, the process of integration is hindered by a reluctance on the part of immigrants to cede

elements of their cultural background in favour of integration into mainstream Israeli society. Researchers on the languages of Israel Elana Shohamy and Bernard Spolsky (1999) note a "strong loyalty to their ethnic language" on the part of Russian-speaking immigrants (B. Spolsky, E. Shohamy, 1999), while Hayim Gordon (2007) affirms a widespread rejection of the Hebrew language among this population, including media consumption. Indeed, in 2013, approximately 27% of Russian immigrants to Israel barely spoke Hebrew at all (Y. Druckman, 2013). While Russian speakers can be found throughout Israel, Gordon (2007: 78) notes that immigrants from the former Soviet Union have often settled in close proximity to one another, leading to the formation of predominantly Russian-speaking neighbourhoods. Israel's fifth largest city, Ashdod, became home to more than 100,000 Jews from the former USSR between 1990 and 2001 ("Data of population in the city of Ashdod", 2001), with its southern Yud-Yud Gimmel neighbourhood dubbed "Israel's Russian ghetto" (T. Rotem, 2001). According to data released by Israel's central bureau of statistics, around 30% of immigrants arriving from the former USSR during the 1990s were not considered Jewish under orthodox law, a figure that had risen to 59% by 2005 (H. Sherwood, 2013); consequently, xenophobia towards Russian-speakers by other Israelis, including police violence and by elected officials, is fairly widespread. We note, for example, a 2013 campaign commercial from the Sephardic ultra-Orthodox party Shas as a clear illustration of widespread derision. The advert sees a native-born Israeli groom ask his Russian bride in shock "You're not Jewish?!", before ending with the words "To guard our heritage, vote Shas" (A. Borschel-Dan, 2016). Nevertheless, in terms of voting trends, integration appears higher, with Russian-speaking voters "less interested in political parties devoted to 'Russian issues'" and generally voting for mainstream (often right-wing) parties (H. Sherwood, 2013).

While Israel experienced an increase in its Russian population as a consequence of immigration from other parts of the world, Estonia's ethnic Russian population exists largely as a result of governmental policy and political change. According to Statistics Estonia ("Rahvaarv rahvuse järgi, 1. jaanuar, aasta", 2017), the population of Russians in Estonia is estimated at 320,000, comprising 24.9% of the population in 2017 (compared to 68.7% Estonians). Far less diverse than that of Israel, Estonia's population further comprises 1.8% Ukrainians, 0.9% Belarusians, 0.6% Finns and 2.9% "others". The majority of Russians

moved to Soviet Estonia due to migration and russification policies boosting mass immigration of industrial workers from other parts of the Union, which also saw many Estonians sent to other regions. While, as Maria Jufereva and Epp Lauk (2015: 52) note, Russian constituted a shared official language throughout the Soviet Union and ethnic Russians and Estonians shared a single Soviet citizenship, ethnic Russians found themselves living as a minority when Estonia regained independence in 1991; the integration of this minority, a non-issue during the Soviet era, now became a question of central importance.

In contrast to Israel's Russian population, the vast majority of whom enjoy citizenship (and, indeed, emigrated largely because they were eligible for it), following the disintegration of the Soviet Union ethnic Russian residents of Estonia were not automatically granted citizenship but were offered a separate kind of passport for "non-citizen residents" (Jufereva and Lauk, 2015: 52) and the option to acquire citizenship via a naturalisation process. The Citizenship Act of 1992 saw all ethnic Estonians but just 15% of Russophones become citizens, bolstering the division of society along ethnic and linguistic lines (Jufereva and Lauk, 2015: 52). As all former citizens of the Soviet Union were able, until the end of 2000, to apply for citizenship of Russia under the provisions of the law "On RSFSR Citizenship" – a far easier process than the notoriously challenging Estonian-language test – many ethnic Russians in Estonia opted to take up Russian citizenship. Despite alterations to the language exam following recommendations by the Council of Europe in 2006 ("Estonia: Linguistic minorities in Estonia: Discrimination must end", 2006), Amnesty International reported in 2015 that 91,000 people (approximately 6.8% of the population) remained stateless, with the vast majority being Russian speakers (S. Tambur, 2015). Given that non-citizens cannot vote in non-local elections, the discrepancies in citizenship rates between ethnic Estonians and Russians has strong implications for the political integration of the latter.

Regarding political integration of those ethnic Russians with voting rights within Estonia, a level of segregation nevertheless exists at the level of party politics. The Estonian Centre Party has become by far the most popular party among Russians, with 74% approval by Russian speakers reported in October 2018 (D. Cavegn, 2018). The party is the sole major political group in Estonia to regularly address a Russian-speaking audience, and has well-

known historical ties to Russia's ruling United Russia party. The degree of political division between ethnic Russians and Estonians was well demonstrated following the controversy and riots surrounding the 2007 relocation of the Bronze Soldier of Tallinn, a Soviet Second World War memorial. Following the unrest, the Centre Party (critical of the relocation) was supported by 74% of non-Estonians, and by only 7% of Estonians (K. Kallas, 2008: 45).

Division also occurs at the spatial level; today most Russians in Estonia live in either the major northeastern cities of Narva, Kohtla-Järve, Jõhvi, and Sillamäe, which all have significant Russian majorities, or in the capital, Tallinn. While Tallinn has an Estonian majority, ethnic Russians represent a significant minority of 36.4%. In 2011, University of Tartu sociology professor Marju Lauristin found that 21% were successfully integrated, 29% showed partial integration, but that 51% were unintegrated or demonstrated low levels of integration (K. Koort, 2014).

Jufereva and Lauk (2015:52) note that although knowledge of Estonian has remarkably improved, 16% of the Russophone population still claim that they have no knowledge of Estonian (Vihalemm T., 2011: 115). Numerous studies have affirmed that the main sources of information for non-Estonian speakers in Estonia are Russian media channels (M. Kirch, 1997; V. Jakobson, 2002; P. Vihalemm, 2011). However, up to 71% of Russophones also regard Estonian produced Russian media as important sources of information on Estonian issues (P. Vihalemm, 2011: 159). With this in mind, the state integration strategy for 2000–2007 and 2008–2013 (“Estonian Integration Strategy 2000–2007”, 2007; “Estonian Integration Strategy 2008–2013”, 2008) placed special emphasis on the significance of media and journalists as agents of “linguistic-communicative integration in society”, meaning “the re-creation of a common sphere of information and Estonian-language environment in Estonian society under conditions of cultural diversity and mutual tolerance” (“Estonian Integration Strategy 2000–2007”, 2007:6).

2.2 The media landscapes of Estonia and Israel

In order to understand the context in which media serving the Russian diaspora in Estonia and Israel operate, it will be useful to briefly map the media landscape more generally in

these countries. While it is not within the scope of this dissertation to describe in detail the stages in the historical development of the media systems since the establishment of the states of Estonia and Israel, I will endeavour, where possible, to reflect on the legacy of historical factors on these media systems and journalistic cultures.

Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini's landmark study *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics* (2004) sets out a comprehensive framework for the comparison of media systems in Western Europe and North America. Through analysis according to four dimensions¹ — *structure of media markets, political parallelism, development of journalistic professionalism, and the role of the state* — Hallin and Mancini conceptualised three models of media system: the *Mediterranean or Polarised Pluralist Model*, the *North/Central Europe or Democratic Corporatist Model* and the *North Atlantic or Liberal Model*. A number of studies have attempted (fairly successfully) to apply Hallin and Mancini's framework beyond their "most similar systems" design to media systems in non-Western contexts. As such, while Estonia and Israel may not fall neatly into one of the three models proposed by Hallin and Mancini, examining the media systems according to the major variables that underlie these models and placing them loosely in relation to the models will provide a deeper understanding the context in which media serving the Russian diaspora in Estonia and Israel operate.

Turning first to Estonia and the first dimension of comparison, as conceived by Hallin and Mancini: media markets and their structure. As Aukšė Balčytienė (2009: 40-41) notes, the media markets of the Baltic states are among the smallest in Europe, with Estonia's population standing at just 1.32 million (World Bank Data Catalogue). According to Henrik Örnebring's Estonia country report as part of *Media and Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe* (2011a: 11), newspaper daily reach in Estonia was 62% in 2009, which can be credited to a strong tradition of print media dating from the late nineteenth century (2011a: 10). TV broadcasting is regarded as a more trusted medium than the press, through which viewers would rather consume their news (A. Nugaraitė, 2009; V. Zelče, 2009; U. Loit,

¹ Following the identification of these four dimensions, Hallin and Mancini identified five further core dimensions through which to examine the wider political contexts of media systems. It is not within the scope of this dissertation to assess these further five dimensions with regard to the Baltic states.

2009). This phenomenon can be linked to a lack of clear demarcation between sensationalist and quality press, which Balčytienė & Halliki Harro-Loit argue is tantamount to “hybrid content” (A. Balčytienė and H. Harro-Loit, 2009: 510) in print media and online. The prevalence of such hybrid content is indicative of the level of domination that the market exerts over the media system.

While regional media outlets thrive in Estonia, where five of the top ten daily newspapers are local or regional (Örnebring, 2011a: 12), the media market of Estonia is more characterised by linguistic than regional segmentation. In Estonia, a Russian-language media market exists in parallel with Estonian-language media. Approximately 26% of Estonia’s population speak Russian as their first language, and the two linguistic communities maintain two largely separate media spheres with little overlap in terms of audience or journalistic personnel (Örnebring, 2012: 9; Jufereva and Lauk, 2015: 51). Jufereva and Lauk assert that Russian-language journalists in Estonia perceive themselves as mediators between the two communities (2015: 61), noting that, when asked about the most important aspects of their role, 94% of Estonian journalists listed discussing and explaining the problems of Estonian society as among the most crucial aspects, with 83% reporting that helping the Russian-speaking population feel part of Estonian society formed a significant part of their role. This inclusive outlook is also reflected in the country’s Russian-language broadcasting, of which national public service broadcasting delivers part (channel ETV+).

Hallin and Mancini’s first dimension also incorporates the influence of bordering countries on the national media system. It should be stressed that Scandinavian countries, rather than Russia (as might be inferred from the findings above) exert the greatest influence on the Baltic nations. The Swedish-owned MTG group is among the biggest commercial actors, providing Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania each with a TV3 channel (Örnebring, 2011a: 13; Örnebring, 2012: 13; Örnebring, 2011b:7). In Estonia, the dominant commercial actors also include Norway-based Schibsted (which owns Kanal 2 and the digital Kanal 11). At first glance, it is striking that no major Russian media company is a significant player on the Estonian market. However, according to an investigative report by Riga-based Re: Baltica - The Baltic Centre for Investigative Journalism (“Russkiy Mir”, 2012), a large majority of the

Russian-speaking population across the Baltic states watch First Baltic Channel (PBK). Run by Baltic Media Alliance, the Latvia-based channel is, in fact, owned by Russian-born Latvian businessman Oleg Solodov and Russian citizen Alexei Plyasunov (Jufereva and Lauk, 2015: 56). Of particular concern to national broadcasters is the fact that a large part of PBK's content is made up of reruns of shows produced by Russian state media. Indeed, in 2014 the channel was temporarily blocked in Lithuania for broadcasting unbalanced coverage of the Ukraine crisis. According to Jufereva and Lauk (2015: 56), the appearance of state-run Estonian Russian-language channel ETV+ represented an attempt to attract the Russian-speaking audience away from such Russian-produced content and towards national television. When examining Hallin and Mancini's first dimension alone, therefore, the media market of Estonia seems to sit most comfortably, in terms of liberal regulation, market focus and high levels of foreign influence, within the Liberal model.

Hallin and Mancini's second dimension, political parallelism, refers to the "fact that media in some countries have distinct political orientations, while media in other countries do not" (2004: 27). According to Örnebring's Estonia country report as part of MDCEE, the fact that nearly all of Estonia's major daily newspapers are broadly centre-right but none are officially linked to a particular party, while there are no left-wing or nationalist dailies, suggests that political parallelism in Estonia is generally weak (Örnebring, 2011a: 10-12). Örnebring contends that any weak political parallelism that exists in Estonia is "negative", meaning that it manifests in critical coverage of political rivals rather than favourable coverage of allies (2011a: 10). As such, Estonia would fit somewhere between Hallin and Mancini's Democratic Corporatist and Liberal models.

Coming now to Hallin and Mancini's third dimension, journalistic professionalism, the Worlds of Journalism study confirms that both Estonian journalists perceive themselves to have a high degree of professional autonomy, with internal factors (e.g. supervising editors) far more compromising than external factors (e.g. government censorship) in journalists' exercise of press freedom (H. Harro-Loit and E. Lauk, 2016: 2). Recent scholarship (Lars Arve Røssland, 2005: 21) points to rather weak – or at least vague – professional norms and identities in the Baltic states, spurred by rapid commercialisation in the wake of the fall of the

communist regime and the consequent market-focused logic. This pattern of weak professional values and low levels of institutional professionalism place the media systems of Estonia most comfortably within the Polarised Pluralist model in this regard.

Hallin and Mancini's fourth dimension highlights the role of the the political system in shaping the structure and functioning of media systems. The characteristics examined within this dimension include censorship, media ownership, and media regulation (2004: 41). The media system of Estonia is characterised by high levels of press freedom, with Estonia placed 12th out of 180 in the 2017 Reporters Without Borders Worldwide Press Freedom Index. Hallin and Mancini assert that the "most important form of state intervention is surely public broadcasting" (2004: 41); as public service broadcasting was present in each country of Western Europe and North America examined by Hallin and Mancini in *Comparing Media Systems*, so it is present in Estonia. The Estonian state's primary activity in the media market, in the form of a public service broadcaster – Eesti Rahvusringhääling (ERR), which broadcasts two television channels and five radio stations – has been funded exclusively from the state budget since 2002 (Örnebring, 2011a: 9), with ERR prohibited from carrying advertising. Örnebring's report, posits, somewhat paradoxically, that the state's total control over ERR's funding actually reduces the state's impact on the Estonian media market, leaving ERR a relatively weak organisation, serving only nominally as a public service broadcaster (Örnebring, 2011: 14). Coming to media regulation, Balčytienė (2009: 40-41) asserts that liberal media regulation and weak accountability characterises the media system of Estonia. Hallin and Mancini (2004: 228) assert that countries with a Liberal media model are, "by definition, those in which the social role of the state is relatively limited". In Estonia, the role of the state – in terms of media regulation, press subsidies and freedom of speech – are very limited, and as such its media system resembles the Liberal model.

In assessing the Israeli media market in relation to Hallin and Mancini's first dimension, *structure of media markets*, Israel's media landscape comprises varied print, broadcast, radio and online outlets, reflecting the country's pluralistic composition in terms of language, religion and ethnicity ("Israel Country Report", 2016). TV is the most popular medium, with commercial networks leading in the ratings. Following the closure of the Israel Broadcasting Authority in 2017, the Israeli Public Broadcasting Corporation provides the country's public

service media via three state-managed Hebrew-language television channels (four including the Parliament Channel) and eight radio stations. With a market share of just 3.5% (S. Jędrzejewski, 2017: 506), however, public service media loses out to private free-to-air and cable TV channels, which include dozens of national and international channels in a range of languages (including Arabic, Russian, French and English) that better reflect Israel's linguistic makeup. As such, public-service and commercial television markets are to some extent segmented along linguistic lines. While channels based inside Israel are run by Israeli companies, digital and satellite broadcasting has opened up the airwaves to media from neighbouring Arab countries and global channels operating in Arabic. According to H. Nimrod, H. Adoni and G. Nossek (2015: 374), 61.3% of the Israeli population read a daily newspaper, which is far above the average for many European countries. Taking into account the private ownership of all newspapers, high levels of newspaper circulation and strong market-orientation, Israel fits within the Liberal media model.

Continuing on to the questions of political parallelism and journalistic professionalism, Yoram Peri (2004) draws a link between a weakening of the "party state", including the shift from newspapers being run by political parties to being owned by media corporations, and a move towards professionalism and professionalisation of journalists. Following the adoption of the Freedom of Information Law by the Knesset (parliament) in 1999, political instrumentalism gave way to detachment vis-a-vis politicians and political parties, while journalists developed a culture of "critical expertise". These findings are corroborated by the Worlds of Journalism study, which found that Israeli journalists on the whole place low importance on supporting government policy and portraying political leadership in a positive light and generally see their role as that of an objective reporter (Z. Reich, A. Barnoy, and L. Hertzog, 2016: 2). At the same time, the proportion of journalists obtaining academic qualifications in journalism and developing connections with professional organisations abroad has grown sharply since the 1990s. In terms of professional ethics, however, Israel is some distance from the Liberal model; more than half of the respondents of the Worlds of Journalism study (*ibid.*: 3) stated that what is ethical in journalism depends on the specific situation, while close to half of the journalists affirmed it is acceptable to set aside moral standards if circumstances require it. While low levels of political parallelism suggest Israel's

movement towards the Liberal model, the pattern of weak professional values indicates shared characteristics with the Polarised Pluralist model.

Turning briefly to the role of the state, while in legal terms the power of the state to interfere in the media has decreased, Peri asserts that the particularities of the conflict context – the “ongoing state of emergency” in Israel – heightens public pressure for media to be restrained in its criticism of the national leadership. Although just one tenth of journalists reported the influence of political government officials as being high (ibid.: 4), it is not the state that obstructs free and critical media, Peri (2004: 306) argues, but the divergent orientations of journalists and the public regarding the role of media (with regard to the state) in conflict scenarios. In addition to public pressure, Freedom House’s Press Freedom Index (2016) notes frequent military censorship, which saw Israel ranked 87th in the index. Peri (2004: 77) claims that the Israeli media system might have continued its movement toward the Liberal model, if not for war and the “culture of national security”; as it stands, the contemporary Israeli media system may be positioned between the polarised Pluralist-Mediterranean model and the Liberal model.

This fairly brief examination of Estonia and Israel’s media systems demonstrates that these systems possess attributes characteristic of Hallin and Mancini’s Liberal and Polarised Pluralist models. On one hand, in their “laissez-faire” approach to media policy, their market-driven logic and high levels of newspaper circulation, these media systems most resemble the Liberal model. On the other, weak journalistic professionalism (despite growing professionalisation) in both countries is most reminiscent of the Polarised Pluralist model.

2.3 Minority-language media in Estonia and Israel

Having mapped the broader media landscapes of Estonia and Israel, I will briefly outline the minority-language media originating and operating within the borders of the countries (i.e. not transmitted via satellite from other nations).

As mentioned above, in this dissertation I apply the term “minority language” to Russian spoken in Estonia and Israel as a language falling into the fourth category set out in the

European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992): “languages spoken in communities constituting a minority in the nation state where they live that are majority languages in other countries”. While this term is imperfect and highly debated in its use to refer to media produced in minority languages – some scholars, including Anne-Katrin Arnold and Beate Schneider (2007), instead give preference to the terms “ethnic media” and “ethnic journalists” to distinguish the media of large immigrant communities from mainstream media – I employ the term “minority language media” in alignment with the ideas of Mike Cormack (2007), who privileges the role of language in identity and value formation.

As Cormack and Niamh Hourigan set out in their book, *Minority Language Media: Concepts, Critiques and Case Studies* (2007), the media play a pivotal role in the protection and development of minority languages. Among the crucial functions of minority language media are, according to Cormack and Hourigan, legitimation of the minority language’s existence and the fostering of a public sphere within the particular linguistic community. In addition, Cormack and Hourigan (2007: 52-87) argue that minority language media empower minorities to represent their community, both inwards to the community itself and outwards to wider society; communicate cultural products; and bring attention to the discursive practices at play in identity construction.

In her research into the experiences of immigrants from the former Soviet Union to Israel, Nelly Elias (2011: 87) highlights the importance of mass communication in processes of integration and identity formation. She refers in particular to Young Yun Kim's assimilation “Theory of Cross-Cultural Adaptation” (2001: 36, cited in N. Elias, 2011: 87), which holds that media consumption has a strong bearing on an immigrant’s adjustment to the host society and identity construction: “adaptation of an [immigrant] individual to a given cultural environment occurs in and through communication.” The relation between the immigrant and media consumption is, as Elias (2011: 88) asserts, multidimensional; in contrast to the view dominant in the first half of the twentieth century, which held that minority media aimed at immigrants simply acted as “cultural brokers” that provided newcomers with connections to the culture of the host society, recent research focuses on the propensity of minority media to

both “hold [...] the host society together by creating a common culture” and enable the “preservation of cultural differences between immigrants and the hosts”. In addition to familiarising new arrivals with the host culture, for example by providing news about current affairs in the host society in the mother tongue of the new arrivals, minority media may also strengthen intra-group solidarity and connections to the home language and culture.

As Cormack (1998: 56) argues, the number of language speakers is a key factor in the potential success of minority language media. In order to maintain the full range of media, he posits that a population of one million is the approximate minimum size. While this research does not principally aim to assess the “success” of minority language media, it will be useful to bear in mind the sizes of the Russian-language media markets in Estonia and Israel, as noted earlier: 320,000 in Estonia, and up to 1.5 million in Israel (Golubovich, 2017).

2.4 Russian-language media in Estonia and Israel

Andres Jõesaar, Salme Rannu and Maria Jufereva (2013: 123) posit that, after a turbulent transition period following the collapse of the USSR, relative stability was achieved in the Estonian market of Russian-language press by the end of the 20th century. In terms of the number of outlets, the local Russian-language press reached its peak in 2001, when there were 17 newspapers with a circulation of at least 1,000 each. As was the case across many of the world’s media markets, the economic crisis of 2007–2011 had a severe impact on Estonia’s Russian-language press landscape. In 2011, for instance, there was just one daily, *Postimees na russkom yazyke* (with circulation standing at around 11,600), two general weeklies, one business paper and one pan-Baltic weekly. The circulation of all six local newspapers was between 1,000 and 40,000 each (ibid.: 124). Concurrent with the demise of national Russian-language press outlets was the arrival of online news portals on the media landscape, several of which were created on the basis of existing print publications (e.g. *Postimees na russkom yazyke*, *Rus.Delfi*) and began to replace the function of Russian-language national dailies in Estonia. Today in 2018 *Rus.delfi* has 200,000 unique readers per week. The second most popular Internet-portal in the Russian language, *Rus.postimees.ee*, has approximately 90,000 readers each week (Estonica).

The most popular TV station among Russian speakers in Estonia is Perviy Baltitskiy Kanal (PBK/First Baltic Channel), which is owned and operated by a Latvian independent legal entity and available in all Baltic countries. It primarily re-transmits content from Russian government-controlled TV channel Channel One, but also includes a daily newscast produced locally in each country in the format of Channel One's principal news programme (*Vremya*), which I will examine firsthand later in this research. Thus the main channel made for the Russian diaspora in Estonia is not Russia-based, but nevertheless comprises largely Russian-produced content. According to Integration Monitoring 2011, over 80 % of the Russophone population regularly watches PBK, while Estonian media channels are generally regarded as much less trustworthy by the majority of their total Russian-speaking audience (Vihalemm P., 2011: 162).

The Saar Poll ("Current Events and Different Sources of Information", 2014:7) research institute found that TV is the most important source of information among Russian speakers in Estonia – and therefore one to which we should pay close attention – and reports that for 72% of the Russian-speaking audience Russian television channels (PBK, RTR Planeta Baltic, NTV Mir and Ren TV Estonia) are the most important sources of information. In 2014, these four channels represented more than 50% of Russian speakers' viewing time. The programming of the Estonian private broadcasters (Kanal2 AS and TV3 AS) and Estonian Public Broadcasting were, in contrast, not popular among Russian speakers (TNS Emor, 2016), despite enjoying high viewing rates among Estonians.

Together with the general orientation of the Russian-speaking audience towards Russia's media channels (which are easily accessible to most Russian speakers in Estonia) rather than those of Estonia (Cormack, 1998), the Russian dominance of even regional Russian-language media suggests that the Russian-speaking population of Estonia is more integrated into the Russian information field than that of Estonia. In light of Cormack and Hourigan's arguments regarding the importance of locally-produced minority media, this state of affairs doubtless presents significant hurdles for societal integration and the cohesion of Estonian society. In light of Russian-produced diaspora media's serving of the Russian state's policy of "protecting Russian minorities abroad" (M. Laurelle, 2019: 67), the role of Estonian-

produced Russian-language media appears even more important in supporting integration and social cohesion.

The wealth of Russian-language TV channels available via satellite and cable networks, together with the decrease of Russian-language programming on Estonian public service channels ETV and ETV2 offer the principal explanation for a decline in Russian-speaking viewership of ERR programming in the first 15 years of the 21st century. The possibility of launching a Russian-language PSB channel – criticised as an expensive and unnecessary endeavour – was only taken seriously following the controversy and riots in Estonia surrounding the 2007 relocation of the Bronze Soldier of Tallinn and the Ukraine crisis in 2013/14, in light of potential national security risks originating in Moscow (Jõessaar, 2017: 56). As inferred above, research by Saar Poll (2014) indicates that two distinct information fields exist in Estonia: the Estonian-language information field promotes “European” values, while the Russian-language field promotes the actions and interests of the Russian government. With this in mind, in November 2014 the Estonian parliament approved funding for a Russian-language TV channel as a subsidiary of the public broadcaster, with an additional €2.53 million added to the Estonian Public Broadcasting’s 2015 budget for the project.

In its aim, as set out by Jõessaar (2017: 45), to be a “local” TV station that “talks about and with local people about the lives they live, the issues they care about” and appeals to a Russian-speaking audience, ETV+ has enjoyed some success. An analysis of the first months of ETV’s operation since its launch in September 2015 shows that the channel’s weekly reach among Russian speakers increased steadily, reaching 40% in May 2017, but representing only 1.5% of viewing time among the Russian audience. The channel has, however, made progress in the bringing together of the Russian- and Estonian-language information spheres; with all shows broadcast with Estonian subtitles, approximately 10% of Estonians also tune in to ETV+ each week (ibid.: 45).

In addition to television, the internet represents an important medium in terms of the communication of news; according to a 2016 Eurobarometer survey, 56% of Estonia’s

population use the internet as their primary source of information (Standard Eurobarometer 86 “Media use in the European Union”, 2016: 41). While Saar Poll’s study (2014) affirms, on one hand, that TV is the most important source of information among Russian speakers in Estonia, the internet, on the other, offers a particularly promising avenue for the integration of the Russian- and Estonian-language information spheres. A key example of this potential integration lies in the *Delfi* news portal, operated by the Express Group, which offers news in both Russian and Estonian and is the most visited online news site among both Russian and Estonian speakers in Estonia.

In stark contrast to Estonia, where Estonian- and Russian-language media are the only major players in the media market, Israel’s media landscape is highly varied and dynamic, reflecting diversity in language and religious or ethnic identity. Along with media in the country’s predominant language, Hebrew, there are media outlets operating in a number of other languages, including Arabic, Russian, English, French, Polish, Yiddish, Amharic and Farsi. Second only to Arabic in its audience and scope, Russian-language media in Israel one domestic television channel and four cable channels broadcast from Russia, two domestic radio stations, one daily newspaper, and dozens of weekly magazines (N. Elias, D. Lemish, 2011: 1247).

Larissa Remennick (2011: 111) posits that two key channels allow Russian arrivals to Israel maintain their link with Russian culture: transnational links with Russia (and other countries of the former Soviet Union) and the establishment of an active Russian cultural and media market within Israel itself. Along with the many Russian television stations imported to Israel via cable and satellite, approximately 20 newspapers and magazines are published in Russian within Israel. This number represents a significant reduction in comparison to the state of affairs two decades ago, when four dailies, nearly 60 weekly and local papers, 43 monthlies and bi-monthly papers and ten other periodicals were published (D. Caspi et al., 2002: 543).

The most popular Russian-language newspaper and the last remaining Russian daily is *Vesti* (“The Press in Israel, 2006”). While, as Remennick argues, Russian-language media has a growing focus on Israeli society and current events pertinent to Israel, *Vesti* (together with

many Russian-language publications) is heavily dependent on recycled news from Russia-based publications and has connections with outlets in Russia. Dan Caspi et al. (2002: 551) assert that considerable reliance on recycled material – a common feature due to the lower production costs involved – “divert[s] readers’ attention from the public agenda and ultimately intensifies alienation from the Israeli society”; moreover, the disparate agendas of the Hebrew- and Russian-language print media has served to crystallise the dividing lines between the communities. This said, in a later piece of research N. Elias argues that, while Russian-language newspapers in the early 1990s did indeed bolster “the cohesion of the immigrant community and highlighted the boundaries between the newcomers and their hosts” during the early 1990s (N. Zilberg, 1995 in N. Elias, 2011: 89), the second half of the decade saw news columns of such newspapers become near analogous to those of the Hebrew dailies, in this way familiarising readers with Israeli current events. Furthermore, Elias (2011: 89) notes that the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa Intifada in 2000 led to further and more consistent emphasis of current events in Israel by Russian-language newspapers.

Indeed, Elias suggests that the Al-Aqsa Intifada represents a pivotal moment in the viewing habits of Russian speakers in Israel. It was then that many first “discovered” the news programmes on offer on Hebrew-language Israeli channels, which very quickly became the most popular Hebrew media consumed by Russian speakers. All participants surveyed by Elias’ research reported their greater confidence in news broadcasts on Israeli channels as more credible than those originating in the former Soviet Union; those who could speak Hebrew unequivocally preferred watching the news in Hebrew, while those less advanced in Hebrew combined the television images with Russian radio broadcasts from REKA, the radio service of Israel Broadcasting Authority for immigrants and listeners abroad (2011: 90). This combination of locally-produced Russian audio and images hints at the potential utility of a future Russian-language domestic channel.

While little substantive research has been carried out specifically regarding Israel’s Russian-language TV channel, Remennick (2011: 112) claims it is a key provider of material for the reconciliation of Russian arrivals to Israeli society. Launched in 2002 as Israel Plus, the rebranded 9 Kanal primarily broadcasts in Russian (often with Hebrew subtitles) and

occasionally in Hebrew with Russian subtitles. As opposed to the Russia-focused recycled news featured in many of Israel's Russian-language press outlets, 9 Kanal portrays the life of the Israeli-Russian community and serves as a "cultural bridge to the mainstream society, politics and culture" (Remennick, 2011: 112). Later in this analysis I will assess, via primary research, the validity of these claims and attempt to compare the propensity of Russian-language news media in Estonia (e.g. PBK, *Delfi*) and Israel (e.g. 9 Kanal, *Vesti*) to act as such a "cultural bridge".

Looking briefly at Estonia and Israel's Russian-language media with Hallin and Mancini's dimensions in mind, we might compare the establishment of a government-funded Russian-language public service broadcaster in Estonia with the findings of Caspi, Adoni, Cohen and Elias, which affirm that the majority of Russian-language media in Israel are, by contrast, "fragile organisations subjected to manipulations by the establishment and economic entrepreneurs" (Caspi et al., 2002: 552). Despite both country's "laissez-faire" approach to media policy and their market-driven logic when speaking about the media in general, Estonia's recent establishment of a Russian-language public service broadcaster represents a major state intervention into the Russian-speaking market. In terms of journalistic professionalism, while Jufereva and Lauk have noted that Russian- and Estonian-language journalists in Estonia see their roles as complementary (2015: 61), Caspi et al. assert (2002: 552) that Russian-language journalists in Israel suffer "low professional status in the communication community" and lower levels of professionalism in general.

Chapter 3. Primary research

3.1 Quantitative analysis

In this section I undertake a two-fold quantitative analysis: using human-coding to complete a) a media survey across a two-week period in order to ascertain the “news agenda” (answering the question “What is the topic?”) and b) utilising search techniques to find specific articles relevant to the research question – here relating to the “homeland” (Russia) and to the host country (Estonia or Israel) – and tracking the tone of articles to discern whether the treatment of Russia and the host country is positive or negative.

3.1.1 News agenda

In this first section of quantitative analysis of news content, I have attempted to prepare a “snapshot” of news across major Russian-language media outlets in Estonia and Israel. The chosen outlets were selected primarily on the basis of viewing/readership rates and mentions of the outlets in prior secondary research, and on the basis of the news outlets noted by questionnaire respondents (which can be found later in this research). For practical reasons – e.g. difficulty in obtaining hard copies of newspapers – I have opted to survey newspapers that have a web version (which is almost all) and newscasts that are available online. While for the newspapers in question I have counted all news pieces uploaded on a given day in the study, for the TV news I have selected one primary daily news show to analyse.

The outlets included in the study are as follows (with number of “Likes” on Facebook added for reference, in the absence of absolute readership figures for all outlets):

Estonia

1. Perviy Baltiysky Kanal (news broadcast “Novosti Estonii”/Estonia News) (16k): Latvia-based TV station available in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. It primarily re-transmits content from Russian government-controlled TV channel Channel One, but also

2. includes a daily newscast produced locally in each country in the format of Channel One's principal news programme (Vremya).
3. *MK-Estonia (MKE)* (10k): Tallinn-based weekly newspaper owned by Latvian media company SIA "MK-Baltija", most readers consume online.
4. *Rus.Postimees* (17k): the Russian-language online version of Postimees, Estonia's oldest daily newspaper and with the largest circulation. The Russian-language portal covers Estonian and foreign news, receiving around 15,000 readers a day.
5. *rus.Delfi.ee* (13k): the Russian-language variant of the Estonian version of Delfi, a major internet news portal in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

Israel

1. 9 Kanal (also referred to as 9 Kanal) (news broadcast Den'. Itogi/Results of the day) (110k): TV channel primarily broadcasting in Russian (often with Hebrew subtitles), owned by Jewish Ukrainian-American businessman Alexander Levin and enjoying high viewing rates among Russian-speakers in Israel (67.5% of adult Russian-speaking expatriates watched in the first quarter of 2009 ("9 Kanal", 2016).
2. *Vesti* (89k): Internet version of Israel's most widely read Russian-language paper, based in Tel Aviv and owned by Yedioth Ahronoth Group, who run Israel's largest national daily.
3. *MIGNews* (43k): Online Russian-language newspaper owned by Ukrainian entrepreneur and politician Vadim Rabinovich, member of the Ukrainian parliament for the Eurosceptic, Russian-leaning "Opposition Platform — For Life" party
4. *Newsru.co.il* (15k): Israel-based version of Russian news site NEWSru, which is headquartered in Moscow but has a full editorial team in Tel Aviv. Owned by former Russian-Jewish media tycoon Vladimir Gusinsky, a known Kremlin critic who has engaged in legal battles against the Russian government.

Data was collected daily over a period of three weeks in September 2018. For the TV newscasts, I collected data from the daily evening news show, while for the online newspapers I logged on at 5pm each day to take stock of all news stories uploaded in the previous 24 hours. In order to ascertain the outlets' news agendas – i.e. the frequency with

which certain topics are covered in the news – I classified the news stories into a number of content categories: “Host country” (Estonia/Israel), “Home country” (Russia), “Community” (Russian-speaking community within the host country), “International”, “Relation” (between the host and home countries) and, for the Israeli sources, “Jewish” (relating to the Jewish community worldwide). The figures set out below were collected by noting the number of stories relating to each topic on a daily basis, calculating the total number of articles within each topic at the end of the three-week period, and then calculating what proportion of articles each topic represented across the entire period. Here I will simply report my findings, before completing an analysis incorporating all of my primary data in the latter part of this dissertation.

	% about host	% home	% community	% int	% relation	% Jewish
PBK	78%	0%	17.39%	0%	4.35%	
MK-Estonia	39.30%	32.31%	6.99%	18.34%	3.06%	
Postimees	38.85%	21.44%	13.38%	21.44%	4.88%	
Delfi	39.59%	22.11%	17.74%	15.94%	4.63%	
9 Kanal	37.45%	21.24%	7.34%	30.12%	1.93%	1.93%
Vesti	74.71%	3.83%	7.28%	9.20%	2.30%	2.68%
MIGNews	43.43%	19.28%	0.21%	32.42%	0.21%	4.45%
News ru	52.01%	14.05%	1.67%	28.93%	0.84%	2.51%

Figure 1. Proportion of coverage by topic across Russian-language news outlets in Estonia and Israel.

Turning first to Estonia’s Russian-language outlets, PBK’s *Novosti Estonii* represents a significant anomaly in terms of coverage of the host nation (Estonia). While the (online) press outlets demonstrated remarkably similar levels of coverage (ranging only from 38.85% to 39.59%), 78% of PBK’s *Novosti Estonii* covered exclusively Estonian stories. Similarly, PBK’s *Novosti Estonii* did not cover exclusively Russian news at all, whereas all other outlets offered coverage at a rate of between 21.44% and 32.31%. Across all outlets, a mean of 13.9% of stories related specifically to the Russian-speaking community of Estonia, with only one outlet (*MK-Estonia*) spending less than 13% of its coverage on this community. PBK’s *Novosti Estonii* offered no coverage of international affairs, while coverage in the

other outlets varied minimally (between 15.94% and 21.44%). All outlets provided a similar rate of coverage on relations between the host and home countries (Estonia and Russia, respectively).

Israel's Russian-language outlets varied significantly in their coverage of domestic Israeli news; while mean coverage stands at 51.9%, the proportion ranges from 37.45% on 9 Kanal to 74.71% in *Vesti*. *Vesti*, conversely, offered the lowest rate of coverage of Russian stories (just 3.83%), while all other outlets spent at least 14.05% of coverage on these stories. Although they offered vastly different coverage of domestic Israeli issues, 9 Kanal and *Vesti* granted similar coverage to the Russian-speaking community (7.34% and 7.28%, respectively), with *MIG News* and *News ru* providing far lower rates of coverage (0.21% and 1.67%, respectively). Unsurprisingly, given its high level of coverage of domestic Israeli affairs, *Vesti* provided the lowest level of coverage of international news (9.2%), while all other outlets spent between 28.93% and 32.42% of coverage on international affairs. Only a small proportion of news stories in all outlets centred on relations between Israel and Russia (between 0.21% 2.3%), with an only slightly larger proportion concentrating on the global Jewish community (between 1.93% and 2.68%).

While these findings will be placed in context and rationalised in later analysis, it is worth pausing briefly here to compare the data sets for Estonian and Israeli outlets. Firstly, Israel's Russian-language news outlets focused to a greater extent on news relating to the host country than their Estonian counterparts. While the proportion of news relating to the host country stands at just 48.94% vs 51.90%, respectively, this figure is skewed somewhat by the inclusion of PBK's *Novosti Estonii* in the calculation, due to the show's dedicated focus on events in Estonia. In the period surveyed, 78% of stories on PBK's *Novosti Estonii* related purely to Estonia, while a further 17.39% related to the Russian community within Estonia. As our results indicate, this high level of focus on the host country is not typical of Russian-language news outlets in Estonia in general. Were we to remove PBK from the analysis, the proportion of news stories relating to the host country in Estonian Russian-language outlets would stand at just 39.2%. A similar argument can be made in relation to the proportion of stories focused on the home country (Russia). Here Israeli outlets trail Estonian outlets even

with PBK included in the calculation: 18.97% of stories in Estonian outlets related to Russia, compared with 14.6% of stories in Israeli outlets. Should we exclude PBK, the percentage of Estonian stories relating to Russia rises to 25.3%. Relative to Estonian outlets (13.93%, or 18.6% excluding PBK), Israeli outlets had a considerably more international outlook, with 25.16% of news pieces being stories with no relation to Israel. In addition to higher levels of reporting on the home country itself, Estonian Russian-language media demonstrated far higher levels of reporting on the domestic Russian-speaking community (13.87%) compared with Israeli outlets (4.12%). Later in this analysis I will, by comparing this data set with consumer surveys, suggest possible explanations for this trend.

3.2 Tone of coverage of host country and homeland

In this second section of quantitative content analysis, I have utilised search techniques to select specific articles relevant to the research question – relating to the “homeland” (Russia) and to the host country (Estonia or Israel) – and tracking the tone of articles to discern whether the treatment of Russia and the host country is broadly positive or negative. While it is widely accepted that news outlets exhibit some level of political slant, it is challenging to rigorously quantify such a bias. In order to present the qualitative difference between the news outlets in a quantitative, comparable form, I have coded the different articles examined on a sliding scale of 1-5. An article’s average score was calculated by taking each individual sentence, along with the headline and any photographs/graphics, and ranking them according to a five-point scale, where 1 indicates that the article is very positive and 5 that it is very negative (see below). Each article received two sets of scores – one relating to its treatment of Russia and one relating to its treatment of Israel or Estonia – from which two mean “overall tone” averages were calculated for each article. From these mean scores, an overall average for each news outlet could be calculated.

Rating scale:

1 Very positive 2 Positive 3 Neutral 4 Negative 5 Very negative

Features of content that reflect positive/negative/neutral tone:

Positive tone: the home/host country (including but not limited to the government) is portrayed from a generally favourable point of view, supporters of the country would be pleased to read this article.

Negative tone: the home/host country (including but not limited to the government) is portrayed from a generally unfavourable perspective, supporters of the country would be angered or disappointed by the news article.

Neutral tone: either the news article does not appear to discuss the home/host country either positively or negatively, or it employs both positive and negative tones that balance each other out.

There is evidently a measure of subjectivity and opportunity for bias in this approach. While explicitly positive and negative terms are fairly easy to identify and code, coding for implicit terms to some extent necessitates founding judgments on a subjective system. The decision to engage in human coding, as opposed to computer coding using wordlist-based text-analysis programmes, was taken in order to avoid the analysis being reductive – avoiding focusing largely on frequency of terms, and particularly explicit terms – and to be able to take into account the context in which the article was produced. While an imperfect system, coding the articles myself allowed a deeper level of linguistic scrutiny that facilitated the inclusion of implicit meanings in the analysis, while allowing for the outlining of a quantitative difference between news outlets derived from qualitative data. Were I to conduct a similar analysis on a larger scale, I would seek to reduce subjective bias by enlisting a larger pool of human coders. As suggested by Pew Research, for optimum reliability and consistency all coders would go through extensive training, while intercoder tests would be carried out to ensure high rates of agreement among coders (“Human coding of news media”, 2015).

For this section of analysis I assembled the data in a uniform fashion from the same news outlets as the first section, with the exception of PBK. As the previous section shows, PBK’s *Novosti Estonii* largely covers purely Estonian topics and, as such, it would be difficult to

produce an accurate quantitative score for its tone regarding Russia and Estonia. Instead, I will offer qualitative notes on the newscast’s references to Russia and Estonia, and have calculated an average score using the aforementioned rating system for the principal newscast on ETV+, Estonia’s Russian-language public service broadcaster, as a point of comparison.

Portrayal of Russia and Estonia in Estonian Russian-language news outlets (1 = positive 5 = negative)

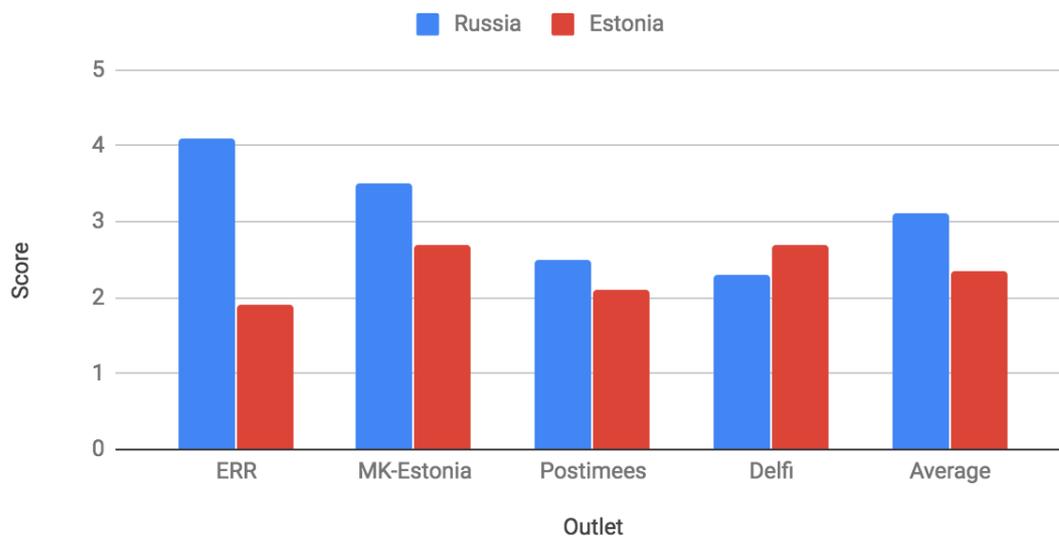


Figure 2. Tone of coverage of Russia in Estonian Russian-language news outlets.

Portrayal of Russia and Israel in Israeli Russian-language news outlets (1 = positive 5 = negative)

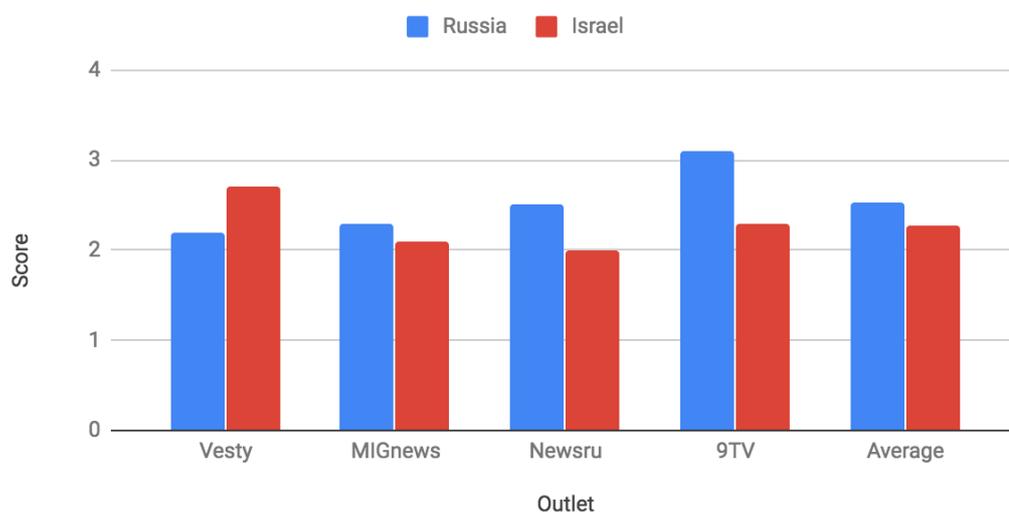


Figure 3. Tone of coverage of Russia in Israeli Russian-language news outlets.

Taking the results of all outlets together (see Figures 2 and 3), Israeli outlets offered a more even tone when reporting on Russia and Israel (averaging close to neutral overall scores of 2.525 and 2.275, respectively) compared to Estonia, where treatment of Russia earned a score of 3.1 against a score of just 2.35 for treatment of Estonia. However, ETV+ presents something of an anomaly; perhaps unsurprisingly, given its status as a public service broadcaster funded by the Estonian government, the channel's newscasts take a far more negative tone (with a score of 4.1, indicating a negative to very negative tone) when reporting on Russia than other Russian-language outlets in Estonia (*MK-Estonia*'s next highest score stood at just 3.5). Were we to remove ETV+ from the analysis, the average score for treatment of Russia would fall to 2.77 and the average score for treatment of Estonia would rise slightly to 2.5; even with the removal of ETV+, then, difference in tone between reporting on Estonia and Russia would remain significant, with a higher degree of variation than observed in Israel. In spite of the seeming uniformity implied by the Israeli outlets' scores, there was notable variation in their tone when reporting on Russia; coverage by *MIGnews*, *Vesti* and *Newsru* took on a fairly positive tone (with scores of 2.3 and 2.2 respectively), while coverage on 9 Kanal was fairly negative (with a score of 3.1).

In stark contrast to ETV+'s remarkably negative tone when reporting on Russia, PBK's *Novosti Estonii* – despite not covering issues directly related to Russia – provided an implicitly favourable outlook on Russia and the Soviet Union. For example, a lengthy piece on an event showcasing old military equipment to the general public was filled with positive references to the Red Army, while another story about Ukraine toughening its borders following the capture of two Ukrainian sailors by Russia, failed to mention the Russian aggression that is widely accepted to have sparked the Ukrainian government's response. In contrast, the newscast took on a subdued tone when talking about the slow growth of the Estonian economy, and offered more (possibly disproportionate) coverage on conservative groups and protest movements within Estonia than other outlets.

3.3 Close reading

I complement the analysis above with a qualitative close-reading, examining the framing of news stories and their use of language and images in relation to the homeland and host-country. Three events during 2018 generated plentiful coverage and valuable opportunities for such an examination: Putin's re-election in 2018 (covered in Russian-language media in both Israel and Estonia), Israel's victory in Eurovision, and the celebration of Estonia's 100th anniversary. Within this close-reading, I seek in particular to discern the employment (or lack thereof) of an in-group/out-group frame and positive or negative language in relation to the government of the host-country and homeland.

3.3.1 Putin's reelection as President of Russia, March 2018

Reporting on Putin's reelection by *Postimees* fell into a range of sections on the internet news portal: "Estonia", "Tallinn", "Abroad", and "Ida-Viru" (a region of Estonia with a majority of ethnic Russians, and the only region other than Tallinn to get its own section). As such, the reporting took on diverse angles. One article (E. Kulik, 2018), for example, focused on talking to voters in Tallinn about why they were planning to vote for Putin (in the "Tallinn" section), while another in the "Abroad" section simply stated the results of the election. A photo-led story from the Ida-Viru region (I. Smirnov, 2018) centred on pictures of Russians living in the region queueing to cast their votes, with another from the "Estonia" section focusing solely on a single resident of Pärnu and his criticism of Putin ("Житель Пярну.."),

2018). While language was by and large neutral across the articles – e.g. referring simply to “the President of the Russian Federation” as opposed to employing any kind of in/out frame such as “our” or “their” president, and the notable absence of superlative or triumphant language – coverage was overwhelmingly positive with regard to Putin and the election process itself. This positive coverage took on a number of forms, with some articles more clearly favourable than others; while an article titled “Why Putin? We just love him” (E. Kulik, 2018) interviewing voters in Tallinn, the vast majority of whom planned to vote for Putin and specifically against allegedly anti-Kremlin candidate Ksenia Sobchak, represented an obvious favourable presentation of Putin, the photo-led story focusing on voters queueing at the polling station conveyed a sense of commitment to the democratic process, and in this way lends legitimacy to the vote as a fair election. Even the article on the Pärnu resident and his anti-Putin views (“Житель Пярну..”, 2018), though seemingly critical of the Russian President, did not constitute forthright criticism; in a sea of positive articles, the ranting of one annoyed resident appears almost a mockery of his views.

Similarly, reporting in *Delfi* fell into both the “Estonia” and “Abroad” news categories. The position, however, appears rather more nuanced: sceptical yet hopeful. One article (“Опубликованы финальные результаты..”, 2018) lamented that those who proposed a liberal democratic agenda scored only 3.5% in total, referring to a report by the BBC Russian service, who spoke to voters with openly opposition viewpoints about how they are going to build their lives over the next six years and whether there is any place for liberal democracy in Russia. Later in the same article, however, two Russian academics were brought on for comment; Elena Lukyanova, a professor at the Moscow Higher School of Economics (HSE), stated that she “saw no reason for hellish despondency”, while Alexander Filippov, also of HSE, underlined the legitimacy of the election. In a similar vein, another article from *Delfi* (D. Kukushkin, 2018) featured a panel of experts who were generally negative about the result but appealed for engagement with Russians in Estonia: “[...] building a dialogue with them and considering their opinion is still necessary – and this is the responsibility of Estonian authorities to take into account”, wrote Dmitry Kukushkin, the chief editor. As in *Postimees*, the language employed in *Delfi* was generally neutral – conveying a certain distance from the events, as the domestic affairs of a foreign country, while nonetheless

highlighting the extent and legitimacy of Putin’s electoral success e.g. by rationalising the (relative) success of opponent Pavel Grudinin in the Far East of Russia: “the results of Grudinin in the Far East [...] are explained by the peculiarities of the region” (“Путин выиграл выборы...”, 2018).

PBK’s *Novosti Estonii* reported on the election as an event of great significance to both Russia and Estonia: “Many people believe the vote is important not just for Russia’s destiny but also Estonia, and the relations between our countries,” stated the voiceover in the election day newscast (First Baltic Channel, 2018a). A pre-election day special report (First Baltic Channel, 2018b) highlighted the number of Russian citizens in Estonia with the right to vote, and featured the Russian Ambassador speaking of the importance of this right – “Each voice is important to us” – in this way underlining both the significance and legitimacy of the election. The election day newscast (First Baltic Channel, 2018a) featured footage of voters arriving to cast their ballots at consulates in Estonia, along with a number of short interviews with voters. The overwhelming sentiment expressed by those interviewed was that of pride at coming to vote: “What a feeling of patriotism,” exclaimed one young woman. “Elections are a chance to express civic position [...] their position towards their historic and familial homeland is no different,” read the voiceover, at once setting Russians in Estonia apart as a distinct “out” group and legitimating their continued ties to Russia. No presidential candidates except Putin were mentioned in the election day or pre-election day broadcasts, in contrast to all other outlets surveyed.

Of all Estonian outlets surveyed, *MKE* came closest to a critical coverage of the Russian presidential election. In contrast to *Postimees* and *Delfi*, *MKE* placed the vast majority of articles in the “Abroad” or “Comment” sections of the news portal, conveying a more consistent sense of distance from the election. This effect was compounded by the outlet’s employment of neutral, non-sensational language and a reliance on statistics to tell the story (“Путин переизбран президентом с более 70%”, 2018). *MKE* was unique in the outlets surveyed in its presentation of possible risk to Putin’s hold on power; a notable pre-election piece (“ВЦИОМ: Рейтинг Путина снизился в крупных городах”, 2018) stated that his

popularity had fallen in the biggest Russian cities, momentarily hinting at danger for Putin: “Stable indicators remain only in cities with a population of 500,000 to 950,000 people.”

Coverage of the election in Israeli Russian-language outlets shared many traits with that of their Estonian counterparts; the election was generally reported as an event happening abroad – in no outlet was Putin referred to as “our” President, for instance – but coverage was nonetheless plentiful, and focused to a significant extent on Russians living in Israel (in this way diminishing a sense of distance from the event).

On the day of the election, 9 Kanal dedicated a large section of its evening news show (“Путин одержал победу”, 2018) to the election. In light of the results presented above, which suggest that 9 Kanal is generally neutral in its reporting on Russia, two surprising facets of this report are worth noting: a) the host’s sarcastic tone in his proclamation of Putin’s “very unexpected victory” and b) inviting a known Kremlin critic onto the show for comment. Former Israeli ambassador to Russia and Ukraine Zvi Magen has been particularly critical of Russia’s actions in Crimea, and believes the country to have broken international law; during his interview on the newscast, Magen stated that one of the main aims of the election was to create “an image of legitimacy”. Any critical reporting by 9 Kanal should not, however, be overstated; while hosts during a number of newscasts (“Выборы президента РФ”, 2018) jokingly commented on the inevitability of Putin’s victory (e.g. “We can guess who will win!”), there was no serious suggestion of vote rigging or other election abnormalities. Putin’s success was, indeed, backed up on 9 Kanal by frequent reference to polling results.

Vesti maintained a strong focus on Russians in Israel – not in terms of the implications of the result on this population, but rather in terms of their very presence in Israel and their participation in the democratic process. “Around 150,000 Russian citizens with the right to vote in the Russian Presidential elections live in Israel,” stated an article (“В России закончились выборы президента...”, 2018) published after polls closed in Russia. Most unusually for a story on the election, the main picture and headline were not of/about Putin, but his second-place rival, Pavel Grudinin: “In Russia the Presidential polls close: Grudinin

in second place”. While this focus on Grudin in was, perhaps, owing to his Jewish heritage, no explanation was offered in the article. Along with pictures of Grudin in, and later Putin, the story also featured photographs of noticeably diverse voters: old, young, religious and secular voters were captured participating in the democratic process. Earlier on the day of election, *Vesti* published a story (“В Израиле проходят выборы российского президента”, 2018) featuring short interviews with voters: “Russia is democratic” one confidently exclaimed.

NEWSru addressed Russian-speaking readers in Israel as engaged parties in the election process. While there was no explicit designation of the readers as part of the wider community of Russians voting – there was no reference, for example, to “our” elections or president – the language used subtly indicated the presence of these Israel-based readers/voters within the “in” group of Russian voters. We might note, for example, simple reference to Putin (as opposed to specifying “Russian President Vladimir Putin”) and alluding to the “Far East” without any clarification that the area in question is a region of Russia (as opposed, for example, to referring to the Far East to mean parts of Asia) (“В России стартовали президентские выборы”, 2018). Despite this subtle casting of the readership as part of the voting “in” group, *NEWSru* also cast, however, its readers as a distinct population. Most notably, the news portal juxtaposed the results of the election with the very different results of a poll conducted by the site; while Putin won the election “as expected”, an earlier poll by website suggested that readers showed most support for Civic Initiative candidate Ksenia Sobchak (“Итоги выборов президента РФ в Израиле”, 2018). The fact that this result was published both prior to the election and after the election results suggests a concerted effort to set *NEWSru*’s readership apart from Russians in the main.

In contrast to all other Israeli outlets, *MIGnews* offered very little reporting on Russians voting within Israel. The election was, instead, reported in an extremely detached manner, as if an entirely foreign issue; we note for example, consistent reference to “Russians”, without any sense that a large part of the audience might form part of the population of “Russians” voting (“В России начались президентские выборы”, 2018). While *MIGnews* did not publish any outright condemnation of the election process, two particular stories were notable for their subtle reference to irregularities: 1. Just under two months prior to the election,

MIGnews reported that, according to Wikipedia, Putin had already won. The news site jokingly wrote, “May we remind you that just under two months remain until the election (“Википедия: Путин - победитель еще несостоявшихся выборов”, 2018). 2. The main photo on a story detailing the election process and candidates (“В России начались президентские выборы”, 2018) was of a peaceful protester holding a sign reading “I love Russia. I love honest elections.” In the analysis section I will discuss these findings in relation to the perhaps surprising fact that *MIGnews* is owned by pro-Russia Ukrainian politician Vadim Rabinovich.

3.3.2 *Estonia’s centenary, February 2018*

On 24 February 2018, Estonia celebrated the centenary of its independence, with celebratory events taking place through the year. In contrast to reporting by Estonia’s Russian-language outlets on the reelection of Putin, which varied in tone and framing but did not ask profound questions of the event, a number of the same outlets’ coverage of Estonia’s centenary problematised the anniversary and its significance for Russians in Estonia.

Two outlets – PBK’s *Novosti Estonii* and *Postimees* – opted for overwhelmingly positive coverage of the event. Most notably, reports by both outlets appeared to address viewers/readers as Estonians, rather than a distinct community of Russians within Estonia. For example, a PBK *Novosti Estonii* newscast dedicated a segment of its centenary coverage to Tallinn’s celebratory military parade (First Baltic Channel, 2018c). The report’s imagery focused on military equipment and personnel, together with waving Estonian and military flags; comments from military personnel and spectators were laudatory, with frequent references to “our country”. It was noticeable, however, that all those featured in this segment were speaking Estonian, which was then dubbed into Russian. This could be interpreted in one of two ways: 1. Russian-speakers were not involved in the festivities, suggesting a level of division or exclusion among Estonian- and Russian- speakers relating to the centenary. 2. Language is not important and the content of the report is still highly relevant to Russian-speakers, who form part of the “in” group celebrating the centenary, regardless of language. *Postimees* opted for an even more jubilant tone, wishing readers “Happy anniversary, Estonia!” (“Картина дня: Эстония празднует сотый день рождения”, 2018) and

consistently casting readers within a united Estonian audience: “On the 24th of February, our country turned 100”, “On the centenary of the Estonian Republic, all Estonian residents were presented with a gift by the skater Saskia Alusalu, who won fourth place in the mass start.” Notable also was the frequent use of imperatives (e.g. “Find out”, “See”), encouraging readers to engage more with the festivities.

Conversely, coverage by *MKE* and *Delfi* was rather more reflective, and – while not disparaging towards the celebration itself – complicated the notion of the centenary as an occasion for jubilation. In both outlets, part of this coverage took the form of “Opinion” pieces. In *MKE*, journalist Vyacheslav Ivanov (2018) took the opportunity to evaluate the importance of the centenary for the state’s “official mythology” and juxtaposed the 100 year celebration with the Estonian government’s seeming desire to erase the history of the Soviet period: “If we delete 50 years from our history, then why are we preparing to celebrate the centenary of the Republic of Estonia?” he asked, calling for a reassessment of the country’s Soviet history. While Ivanov asserted that he would not return to the USSR “for any price”, he nonetheless argued that “this is our story - what makes us what we are”. His consistent use of the first person plural (“we”, “our”) constructed an ambiguous in-group in relation to this history – is he addressing the Russian-speaking readership or Estonia as a whole, and is the “Soviet history” a veiled reference to the contemporary Russian community? Ivanov’s frequent reference to “Estonia” and never specifically to the Russian community suggests that he is speaking of Estonia in its entirety, but this remains nebulous nonetheless. *Delfi*, on the other hand, used the centenary celebration to publish an “Opinion” piece taking aim at Estonian nationalism more generally. The article, written by Nikolay Karayev, an ethnic Russian adviser to an Estonian MEP, problematised Estonian nationalism in light of the large number of Russians residing within the country’s borders (N. Karayev, 2018). The author, Nikolai Karaev, criticised key political actors for not using the anniversary as opportunity for reconciliation between the Estonian and Russian communities, while praising Russian community leaders in Estonia for being more conciliatory. In particular, Karaev condemned the Estonian Prime Minister’s centenary speech for its focus on nationalism and conservatism. Unlike in its *MKE* counterpart, here the use of the first personal plural (“we”,

“our”) was rather less ambiguous in addressing the Russian community in Estonia: “But on this side of the border is our homeland, too.”

3.3.3 *Israel’s Eurovision victory, May 2018*

On 12 May 2018, Israel’s Netta Barzilai won the Eurovision Song Contest in Lisbon, Portugal. The response from the Russian-language press to Israel’s victory was largely positive (to varying extents), but was overshadowed in some cases by Russia’s failure to qualify for the Eurovision Grand Final for the first time in the history of the competition.

The evening news on 9 Kanal the night following Eurovision dedicated its prime news segment to the story, with the triumphant headline reading “Next year in Jerusalem!” (“День. Итоги”, 2018). The host of the show opened the story with a proud exclamation of Israel’s success: “One more big victory for Israel – along with the opening of the US Embassy in Jerusalem, the victory of Neta Barzilai at Eurovision.” Information about the singer and contest was accompanied by pictures of crowds celebrating in Tel Aviv, with a heavy emphasis on those waving or wearing Israeli flags. While no Russian-speakers were interviewed among the crowds – instead, interviewees spoke in English or Hebrew, which was then dubbed into Russian – the Russian-speaking community was clearly cast as partaking of Israel’s victory as Barzilai’s compatriots: “This is the fourth time Israel has won the contest. We won in...,” the host explained, addressing a universal “we”. In a similar vein, *MIGnews* reported the victory as its top news story and took on a comparably laudatory tone (“Израильтянка покорила Евровидение-2018”, 2018). As well as casting the Russian-speaking readership as part of the wider Israeli population partaking of the victory, the reporting by *MIGnews* is remarkable for its frequent use of subjective adjectives – e.g. describing Barzilai as the “charming and spectacular Israeli singer” – and emphasis on the strength of her victory, detailing that Barzilai won “first place with an impressive margin, leaving no chance for her opponents to doubt”. In contrast, while *NEWSru* and *Vesti* both dedicated considerable space to reporting Eurovision, their focus was far less concentrated on Israel’s victory itself, and their tones far less laudatory. The news story published by *NEWSru* immediately following the end of the contest, for example, featured Barzilai in its headline but the contents of the article placed far greater emphasis on other aspects of Eurovision

(“Израильтянка Нета Барзилай одержала победу...”, 2018). Spending only a couple of lines on the fact of Israel’s victory and noting that “Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu” (note the detachment implied in this specification) congratulated Barzilai over social media, the bulk of the article concentrated on explaining other elements of the contest (e.g. the staging). The entire last section of the article detailed the positions of other countries of the former USSR – “Estonia took 8th place, Moldova 10th [...]” – but did not mention Russia’s failure to qualify. *Vesti*, on the other hand, titled an entire section of its post-contest report “Final without Russia”, which recounted both Russia’s failed journey to the Eurovision Grand Final in 2018, and the controversial banning of its representative at the 2017 contest in Kiev (“Нета сделала это”, 2018). Despite a seemingly neutral attitude towards Israel’s Eurovision win and close attention to the fate of Russia in the contest, the article nonetheless addressed its Russian-speaking readership as one fully ensconced in and part of Israeli society. We might note, for example, references to features specific to Israeli culture and society without clarification, such as Barzilai’s military service (which is compulsory for most citizens in Israel).

In the discussion section of this research I will attempt to bring together the findings of these close readings with the quantitative data I have collected, along with the information from secondary sources presented in the first part of this dissertation. For now I will note, however, that the media outlets examined here approached these newsworthy events – which were of high symbolic significance with regard to the position of the Russian-speaking community within Estonia and Israel – from diverse angles, framing the events in disparate ways and utilising both linguistic and visual tools to delineate the boundaries of the “in” group for whom the news story is most salient and to define the relation of the Russian-speaking community to the general population.

3.4 Consumer surveys

3.4.1 Overview of surveys

While invaluable for our understanding of the news content targeted at the Russian diaspora, the content analysis offered above does not in itself explore the potential link between news

content and identity formation. In order to address this deficiency, this section – via a consumer questionnaire – seeks to discover possible links between immigrants’ media preferences and identity construction and/or preservation.

In line with N. Elias’s approach to identity formation among immigrants (2011: 87-104), I undertake the next section of this research with the understanding that media consumption constitutes an “inseparable part of [immigrants’] adaptation strategy” and a “manifestation of the dynamic process of immigrants’ adjustment, simultaneously reflecting construction of a new identity while preserving the original identity”. With this in mind, I have sought to assess the participants’ (self-defined) Russian and Estonian or Israeli identity by assessing their preference for news media oriented towards current events in the host or home country. Here I examine the interaction between identity (Russian, Estonian and Israeli) and media usage, through identifying media preferences that strengthen affiliation with the former homeland versus those fostering the construction of new identities and bolstering the immigrants’ sense of belonging to the host society.

To these ends, I have conducted web-based audience surveys among the Russian-speaking populations of Estonia and Israel. Using a mixture of open and closed questions, these structured questionnaires aimed to provide information on the degree to which locally produced Russian-language media outlets are consumed by and important to Russian-speakers, along with data on audience motivations and intentions for consuming media and on personal identity. Using these results, I have attempted to ascertain the relationship (if any) between consumption of minority-language media and identity construction.

The questionnaire, made up of 11 questions, was sent to potential respondents via a number of Facebook pages and groups. These included “Русские в Израиле” (Russians in Israel) and “Русские и Прибалты” (Russian and Baltic), along with informational magazines centering on events happening locally in Israel or Estonia. While an imperfect strategy, I chose to find respondents via more “neutral” media sources rather than high-level news outlets, in order to avoid skewing the results.

I will firstly proceed to present the initial results of the surveys, and will later embark on a “deep dive” into the findings, comparing different variables in order to discern potential correlations.

3.4.2 Survey questions

The questionnaires, conducted in Russian, comprised 11 questions²:

1. What is your native language? Options (select one): Russian, Hebrew/Estonian, Other
2. What is your main source of news? Options (select one): Television, Radio, Internet, Print Media
3. In which language do you usually consume news media? Options (select multiple if desired): Russian, Hebrew/Estonian, Both languages, Other language
4. Do you usually read/watch/listen to Russian-language news sources from Russia or Estonia/Israel? Options (select multiple if desired): News sources from Israel/Estonia, News sources from Russia
5. When you read/watch/listen to news in Russian you want to find out information about.....? Options (select multiple if desired): Russia and the Russian-speaking world, the Russian-speaking community in Israel/Estonia, Israel/Estonia, the world
6. Why do you read/watch/listen to news sources in Russian? Options (select multiple if desired): To get information, To increase a sense of belonging to Israeli/Estonian society, To increase a sense of belonging to the Russian-speaking community in Israel/Estonia, To increase a sense of belonging to Russian society, To become a better “global citizen”, I don’t read/write/watch Russian-language news sources
7. Why do you read/watch/listen to news sources in Hebrew/Estonian? Options (select multiple if desired): To get information, To increase a sense of belonging to Israeli/Estonian society, To increase a sense of belonging to the Russian-speaking community in Israel/Estonia, To become a better “global citizen”, I don’t read/write/watch Hebrew/Estonian-language news sources
8. Write your preferred Russian-language news sources

² N.B. these questions are translated here from Russian into English, and differing options are offered for some questions to reflect the differences between the questionnaires given to respondents in Israel and Estonia. All respondents, in beginning the survey, self-identified as being Russian/of Russian heritage.

9. How many years have you lived in Israel/Estonia? Options (select one): 0-5 years, 6-10 years, 11-15 years, 16-25 years, 26-35 years, 36-45 years, 46+ years
10. Do you consider yourself more Russian or Israeli/Estonian? Options (select one): numbers from 1 to 10 where 1 is most Russian and 10 is most Israeli/Estonian
11. How old are you? Options (select one): Under 18, 19-30, 31-45, 46-60, 61+

3.4.3 Survey results

1. What is your native language?

98% of respondents in Israel stated that Russian was their mother tongue, with the remaining 2% reporting another language (other than Hebrew) to be their native language. 96% of respondents in Estonia stated that Russia was their mother tongue, with 2% claiming Hebrew as their native language and a further 2% reporting another language as their mother tongue. In this domain, therefore, respondents in Israel and Estonia reported similar characteristics.

2. What is your main source of news?

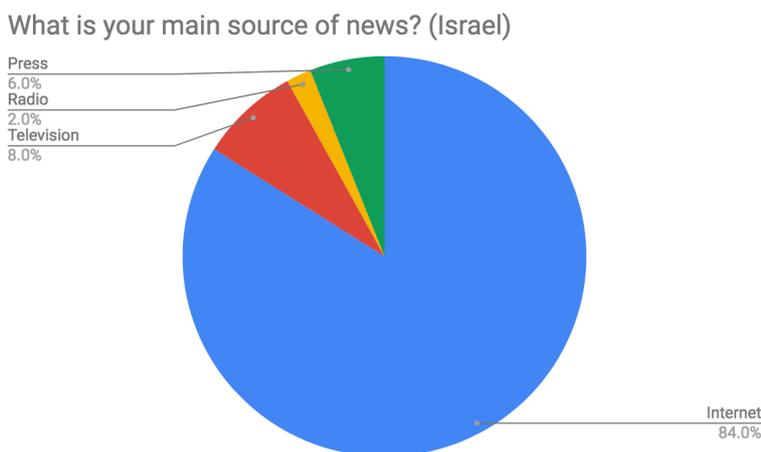


Figure 4. Main news sources among Russian-speakers in Israel

What is your main source of news? (Estonia)

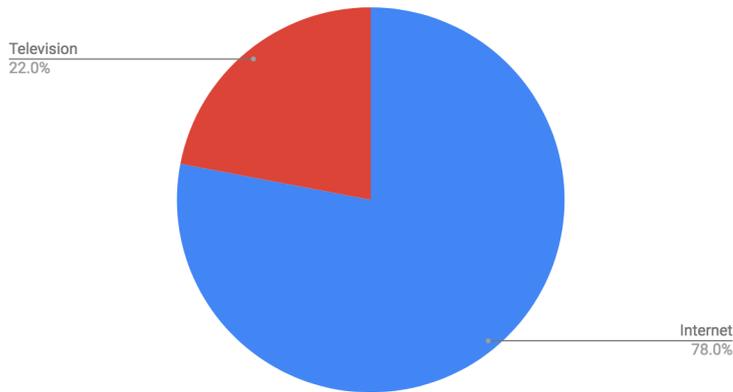


Figure 5. Main news sources among Russian-speakers in Estonia

Figures 4 and 5 demonstrate that in this aspect, too, respondents in Israel and Estonia demonstrated similarity, notably in their reliance on internet-based news sources. A far larger proportion of respondents in Estonia reported television to be their principal source of news (22%, compared to 8% in Israel), while the press and radio had a stronger showing among respondents in Israel.

3. In which language do you usually consume news media?

In which language(s) do you normally consume news? (Estonia)

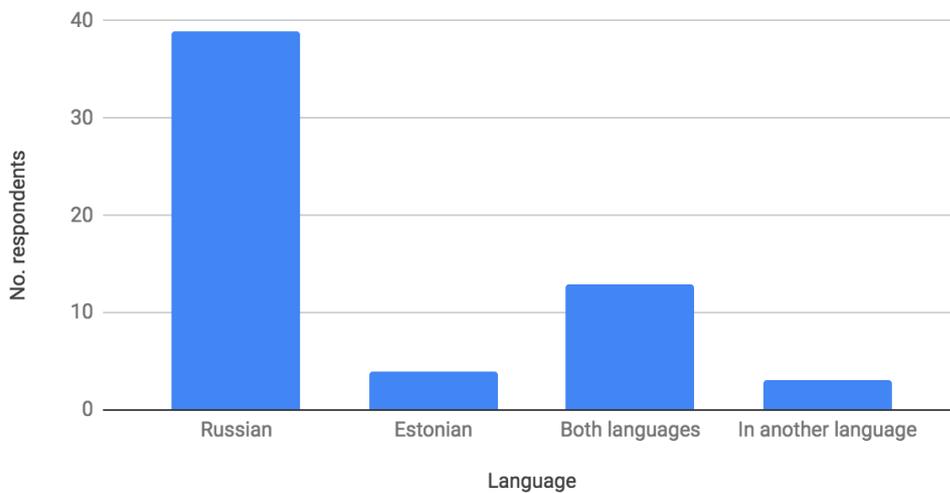


Figure 6. Language of news consumption among Russian-speakers in Estonia

In which language(s) do you normally consume news? (Israel)

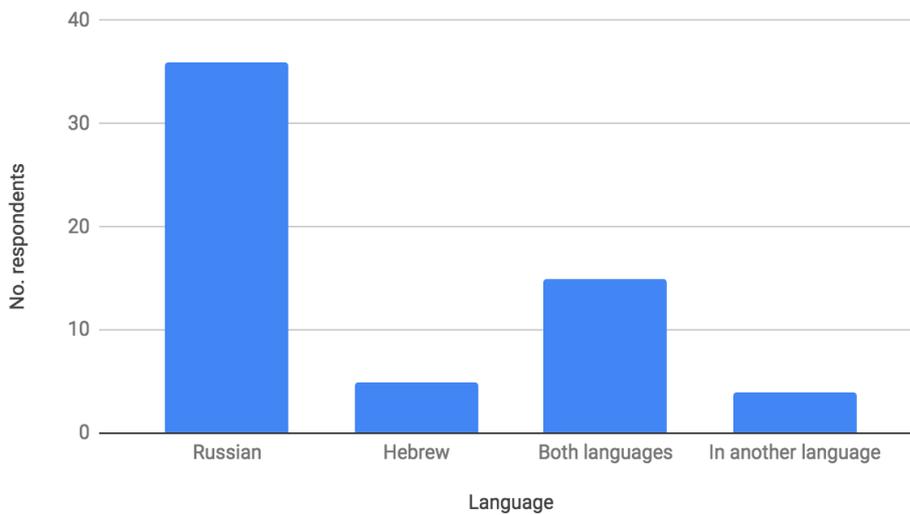


Figure 7. Language of news consumption among Russian-speakers in Israel

In terms of their language of choice for news consumption (see Figures 6 and 7), respondents in Israel and Estonia also demonstrated striking parity: between 35-40 (70-80%) consuming news only in Russian, between 2-3 (4-6%) consuming news only in the language of the host society, between 12-15 (24-30%) consuming news in both languages, and between 2-5 (4-10%) primarily consuming news in another language.

4. Do you usually read/watch/listen to Russian-language news sources from Russia or Estonia/Israel?

Do you usually consume Russian-language news sources from Israel or Russia?

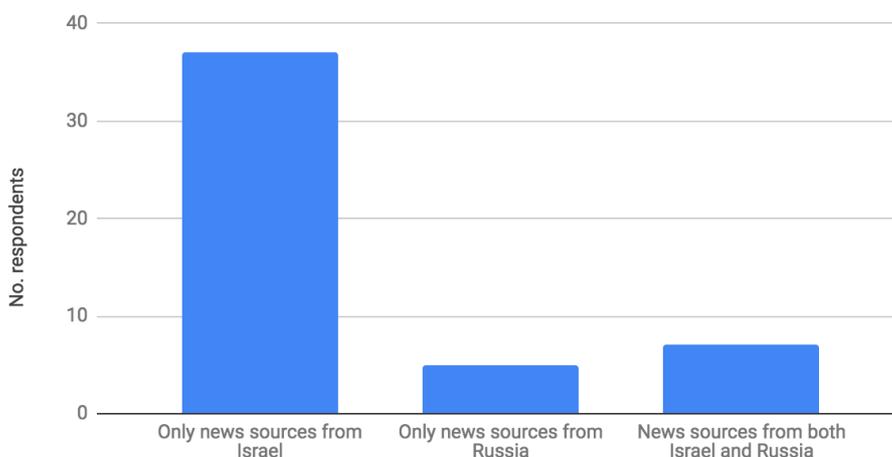


Figure 8. Provenance of Russian-language news sources consumed by Russian-speakers in Israel

Do you normally consume Russian-language news sources from Estonia or Russia?

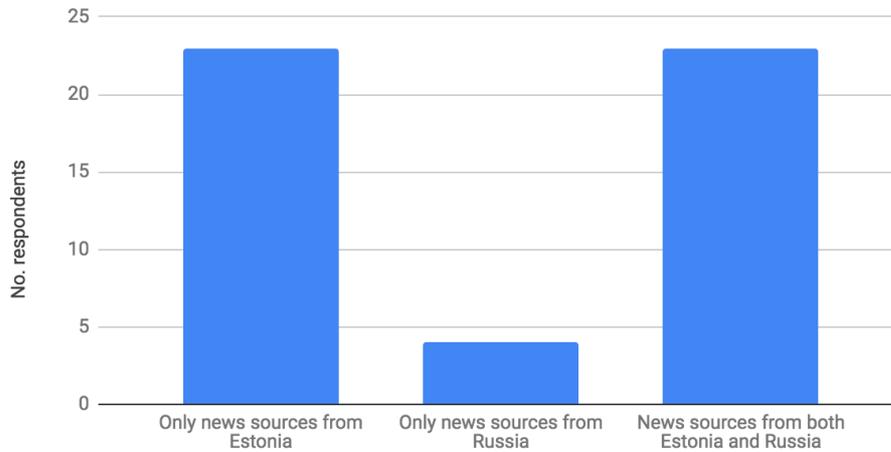


Figure 9. Provenance of Russian-language news sources consumed by Russian-speakers in Estonia

In contrast to the remarkable parity we have witnessed thus far – in terms of language of news consumption, preferred medium, native language – in Figures 8 and 9 we see a marked difference between respondents in Israel and Estonia. 37/50 (74%) respondents in Israel stated that they exclusively consumed Russian-language media originating in Israel, compared to only 23/50 (46%) in Estonia stating that they exclusively consumed Russian-language media originating in Estonia. This contrast suggests that targeted diaspora media is more popular among the Russian population in Israel than it is among the Russian population in Estonia. While a similarly low proportion of respondents in Israel and Estonia stated exclusive preference for news sources originating in Russia (10% and 8%, respectively), the surveyed populations returned significantly different results concerning splitting their consumption between news sources based in the home and host country: just 7/50 (14%) of respondents in Israel consume Russian-language news sources from both the home and host country (Russia and Israel), compared to 23/50 (46%) in Estonia.

The two big take-away points from this section of the questionnaire were as follows: targeted diaspora media is more popular among the Russian population in Israel than it is among the Russian population in Estonia, while news sources based in Russia are far more popular among the Russian population in Estonia than in Israel.

5. When you read/watch/listen to news in Russian, you want to find out information about.....?

Within this section – discerning the topics respondents sought to obtain news about when consuming Russian-language sources – there were two cases of similarity, and two of notable variation. While similar proportions of respondents in Israel and Estonia sought news about the host country and the world as a whole, there was greater disparity regarding news concerning the home country and the local Russian-speaking community. While 40% of respondents in Estonia stated a desire to obtain news concerning Russia and the Russian-speaking world, this proportion stood at just 18% among respondents in Israel. Similarly, whereas 54% of respondents in Estonia voiced a preference for news about the Russian-speaking community in Estonia, just 26% of respondents in Israel favoured news about the Russian-speaking community in Israel.

6. Why do you read/watch/listen to news sources in Russian?

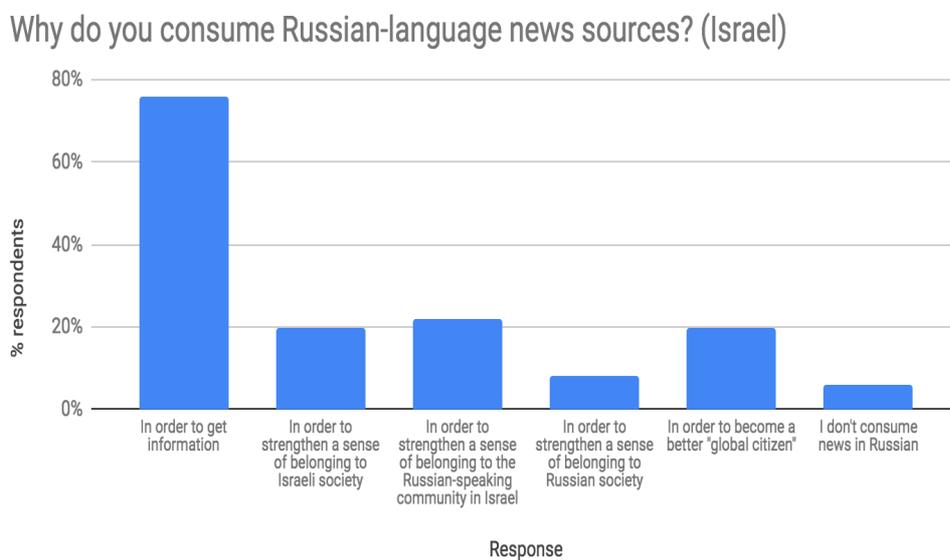


Figure 10. Reasons for consuming Russian-language news sources among Russian-speakers in Israel

Why do you consume Russian-language news sources? (Estonia)

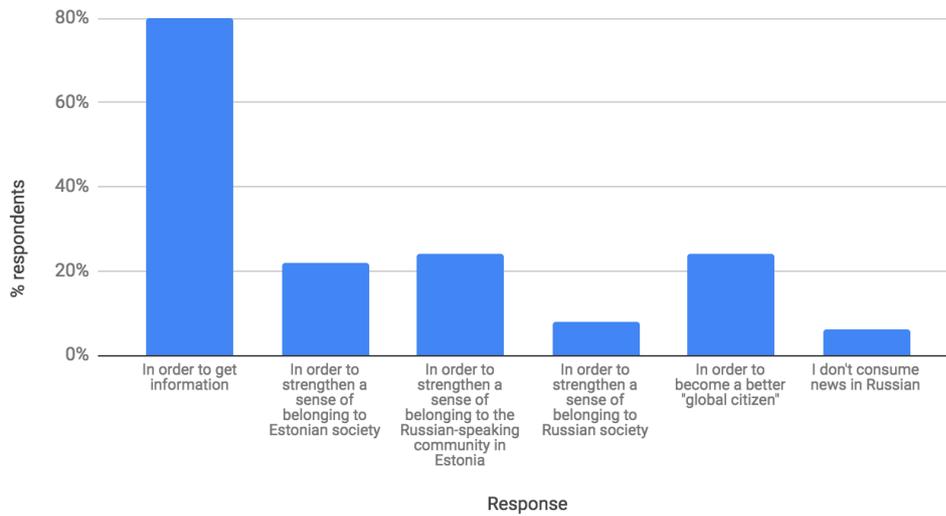


Figure 11. Reasons for consuming Russian-language news sources among Russian-speakers in Estonia

The results collected in this section were remarkably similar in both populations; this fact is somewhat surprising, given the variation recorded in section 5 regarding favoured news topics. While Figures 10 and 11 in both populations a strong desire for news regarding the host country was demonstrated, this does not, it appears, translate into reading news in order to feel more a part of the host society. Despite respondents in Estonia reporting a far greater interest in news about Russia (and the Russian-speaking world) and the Russian-speaking community in Estonia than their counterparts in Israel, both populations nonetheless demonstrated similarly low levels of desire to increase a sense of belonging to the Russian-speaking community in Estonia and Russian society.

7. Why do you read/watch/listen to news sources in Hebrew/Estonian?

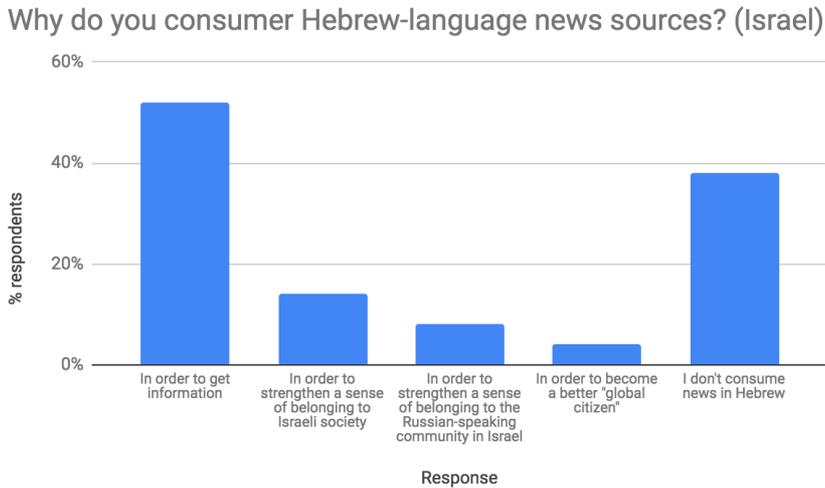


Figure 12. Reasons for consuming Hebrew-language news sources among Russian-speakers in Israel

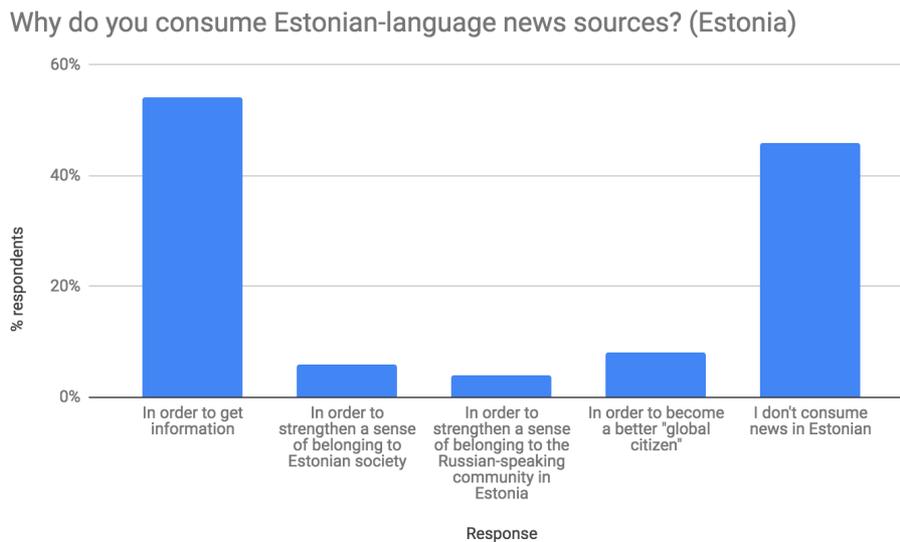


Figure 13. Reasons for consuming Estonian-language news sources among Russian-speakers in Estonia

As Figures 12 and 13 illustrate, the results collected in this section were remarkably similar in both populations. What is perhaps most surprising about these results is that a greater proportion of respondents stated that they consumed Russian-language media in order to strengthen a sense of belonging to the host society (20% of respondents in Israel, 22% in Estonia) than stated that they consumed news in the local language (Hebrew or Estonian) for the same reason (14% of respondents in Israel, 6% in Estonia).

8. Write your preferred Russian-language news sources

Among respondents in Israel, the most popular Russian-language news sources listed were: *Vesti*, 9 Kanal, *News.ru*, *Meduza* (Latvia-based news website), Radio Svoboda (Radio Free Europe), Israel Radio International (radio aimed at immigrants)

Among respondents in Estonia, the most popular Russian-language news sources listed were: PBK, *Postimees*, *Delfi*, *MKEstonia*, ETV+, BBC Russian, Perviy Kanal (most popular channel in Russia), RT (formerly Russia Today).

The vast majority of news sources noted are aimed at the diaspora audience and originate in the host country, rather than Russia, affirming the importance of diaspora media and the need for its study.

9. How many years have you lived in Israel/Estonia?

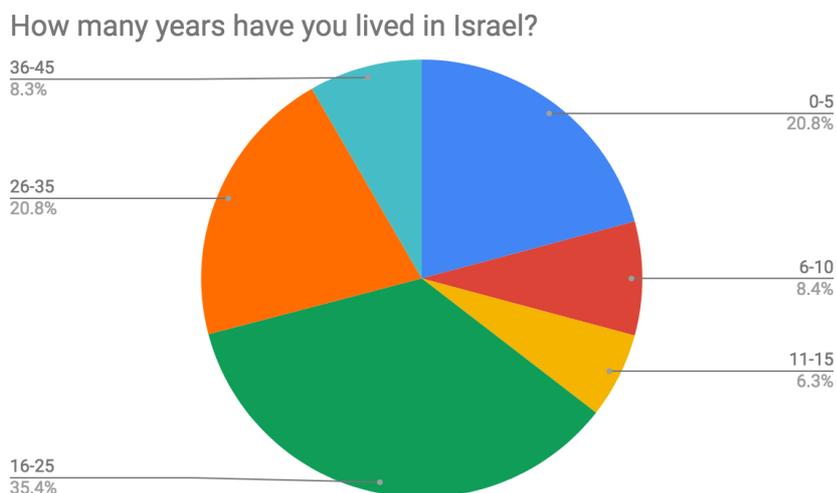


Figure 14. Length of time living in Israel among Russian-speakers in Israel

How many years have you lived in Estonia?

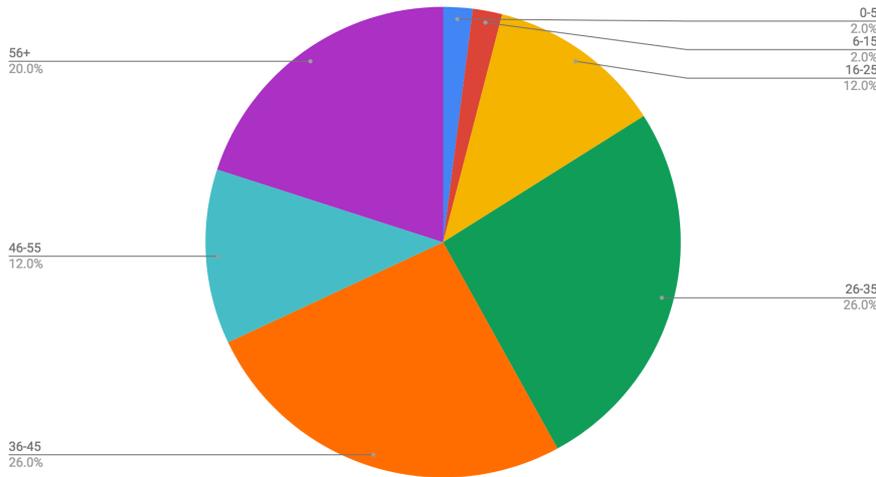


Figure 15. Length of time living in Estonia among Russian-speakers in Estonia

What is most salient about the data displayed in Figures 14 and 15 – which will be examined further in the deeper analysis below – and worth bearing in mind is that there were far fewer new arrivals in Estonia (only 2% arriving between 0-5 years ago and 4% between 0-15 years) than in Israel (20.8% arriving between 0-5 years ago and 35.5% between 0-15 years in Israel). Later I will collate the data gathered here to explore the potential link between time lived in a host society and the level of perceived integration/self-defined identity.

10. Do you consider yourself more Russian or Israeli/Estonian?

Do you consider yourself more Russian or Israeli? (1 = Russian, 10 = Israeli)

49 responses

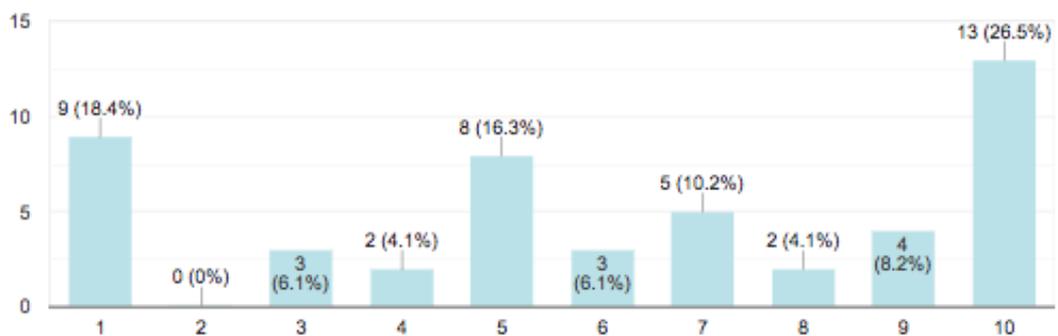


Figure 16. Sense of national identity among Russian-speakers in Israel

Do you consider yourself more Russian or Estonian? (1 = Russian, 10 = Estonian)

50 responses

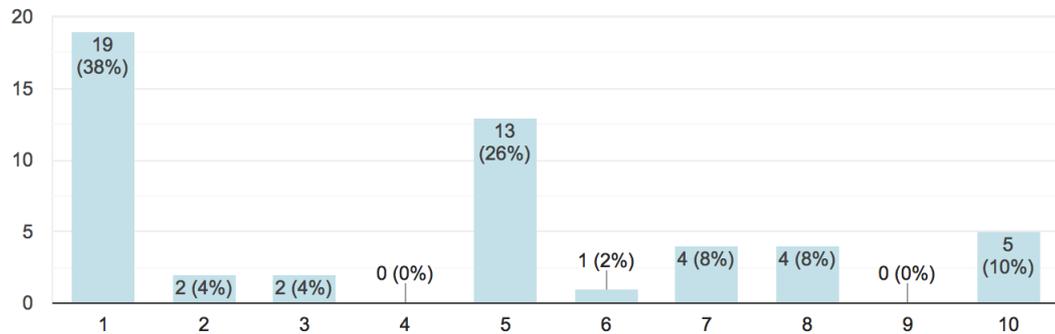


Figure 17. Sense of national identity among Russian-speakers in Estonia

Figures 16 and 17 show that the most obvious disparities between the two populations in the area of national identity are evidently a far more prevalent sense of “Russianness” among Russians in Estonia (38% chose a score of 1, compared with just 18.4% in Israel) and a higher rate of identification with the host country among respondents in Israel than those in Estonia (26.5% chose a score of 10 in Israel, compared with 10% in Estonia; furthermore, 54% of respondents in Israel chose a score of between 6-10, compared with just 28% in Estonia). Later in this analysis I will attempt to chart any potential links/correlations between this data on identity and media consumption.

11. How old are you?

How old are you? (Israel)

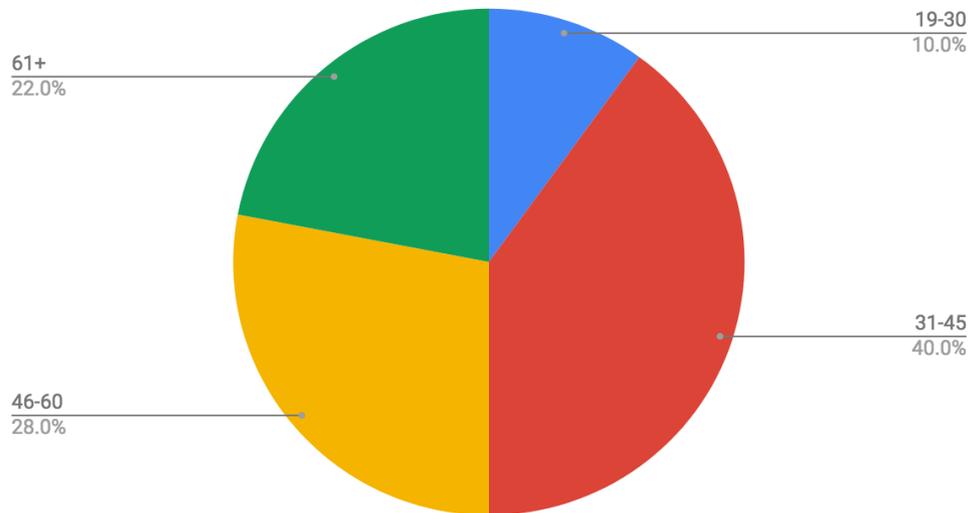


Figure 18. Age of respondents in Israel

How old are you? (Estonia)

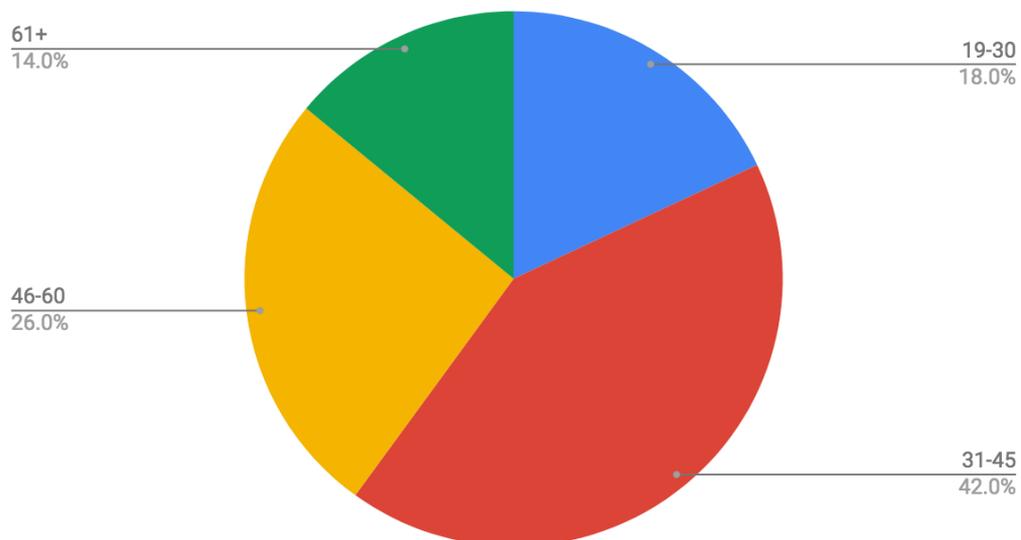


Figure 19. Age of respondents in Estonia

Other than a slightly larger proportion of respondents aged 61+ in Israel and aged 19-30 in Estonia, the populations surveyed do not demonstrate wildly different characteristics in terms of age makeup (see Figures 18 and 19). This data is, in itself, not particularly intriguing nor enlightening; it will, however, shed light on the preferences and identities of the respondents when collated with the other data sets.

3.4.4 Importance of diaspora media vs media from home country

¾ of respondents in Israel who said TV was their main source of news, and Russian their principal language of consumption, stated that they normally consume Israel-based news media – from this we can infer that they take in news from TV targeted at the Russian diaspora in Israel (9 Kanal).

In contrast, of those respondents in Estonia who said TV was their main source of news, and Russian their principal language of consumption, the vast majority consumed news media both from Estonia and from Russia i.e. a mixture of diaspora-targeted programming and programming aimed at the general Russian public.

From this data we can infer that diaspora media (or at least television targeted to the Russian diaspora) plays a larger role in media consumption among the surveyed Russian diaspora population in Israel than in Estonia.

3.4.5 Identification with host society: significance of media in the local language

Of those respondents in Israel who consume news media in Hebrew (whether exclusively in Hebrew or together with Russian or another language), 16/19 rated themselves 5 or higher on Question 10 (equally Russian and Israeli or more Israeli than Russian). However, among those who consume news media only in Russian (i.e. never in Hebrew) there is still an even spread in terms of self-defined identity across the spectrum; I had expected among this group far more respondents to have self-defined as more Russian than Israeli (choosing 1-4 on question 10), but this was not the case.

In contrast, 9/15 respondents in Estonia who consume news media in Estonian (whether exclusively in Estonian or together with Russian or another language) rated themselves 5 or higher on Question 10 (neutral or more Estonian than Russian). 23/35 of those respondents in Estonia who consume news media only in Russian rated themselves 5 or lower on Question 10 (neutral or more Russian than Estonian).

Among respondents in Israel, therefore, consuming news media in Hebrew appears to have little bearing on self-defined identification with either Israel or Russia. Among respondents in Estonia, however, it seems that consuming news media in Estonian has a stronger impact on self-identification with Estonian society.

3.4.6 Identification with host society: significance of length of time in the host society

In comparing data regarding the age of respondents, their length of time living in Israel/Estonia and their identification scores, we can attempt to discern the relationship between length of time in the host society and identification with that society. Comparing the age of correspondents with their time in the host society is useful in that it helps to indicate populations that have moved into the host society during their lifetime, and therefore explore the impact of intentional immigration vs. being part of an involuntary diaspora.

Those who had lived in Israel less than 10 years demonstrated a fairly even spread of sentiment regarding feeling more Russian or Israeli; however, 10/13 who had lived in Israel between 26-45 years rated themselves between 5 and 10 (i.e. reported that they considered themselves somewhere between equally Russian and Israeli and very Israeli). Time spent living in Israel does, therefore, appear to strengthen a sense of Israeli identity, but a short length of time living there does not preclude strong feelings of Israeli identity.

In contrast to the strengthened sense of Israeli identity among those who had resided in Israel a long time, 30/42 who had lived in Estonia over 26 years rated themselves between 1 and 5 (i.e. somewhere between very Russian and equally Russian and Estonian). An increased length of time living in the host society, therefore, appears to strengthen perceived integration

to a greater extent in Israel than Estonia. Were I to expand this research, I would seek to collect data from a larger population of new arrivals and longtime residents of Estonia, in order to discern whether there might in fact be a negative correlation between length of time living in Estonia and identification with Estonian society.

A comparison of the ages of respondents and their time living in Israel/Estonia offers insight into another characteristic of the populations surveyed: whether they moved to the host society during their lifetime (voluntary immigration) or were born into the diaspora.

The proportion of apparent voluntary immigration to Israel was (fairly unsurprisingly) higher in Israel than in Estonia. It is striking that only 5/50 respondents in Israel reported a duration of time living in Israel that corresponded with their age. 22% of respondents in Israel were age 66+ but nobody in Israel had lived there more than 45 years; while nobody under 18 was included in the Israel survey, between 35.5% and 70.9% have lived in Israel less than 18 years (a large margin, if I were to complete further research I would ask for more specific answers rather than wide time brackets). This data indicates that, with the possible exception of people who moved away from Israel and then returned, the vast majority of respondents in Israel were immigrants.

In contrast, there were far fewer new arrivals among respondents in Estonia; only 2% had been living in Estonia between 0-5 years and 4% between 0-15 years, compared to 20.8% between 0-5 years and 35.5% between 0-15 years in Israel. A much closer correspondence between the ages of respondents and their time living in Estonia indicated that a large proportion were born in Estonia, and found themselves a member of the Russian diaspora with the fall of the USSR (as opposed to intentionally moving to another state).

3.4.7 Linking preferences and practices to sense of national identity

a. Estonia

Of respondents who rated themselves 1-4 (more Russian than Estonian), 14/22 did not read news in Estonian. But, 20/22 read news from Estonia on a regular basis (we can assume in Russian, so media aimed at this specific population is important) and 10/22 only got news from Estonian sources. While 12/22 accessed news from Russia, only 2/22 exclusively consumed Russian news sources. When reading Russian-language sources, 17/22 wanted world news, 7/22 about Russia and the Russian-speaking world, 11/22 about the Russian community in Estonia, and 15/22 about Estonia.

Among those who rated themselves 5 or up (neutral or more Estonian, 28/50), 26/28 read news from Estonia (13/28 exclusively from Estonia), 2/28 only from Russia, while only 8/28 never read news in the Estonian language. Of those scoring themselves higher than 5, 19/28 read news in Estonian to get information, while only 2/28 seek out Estonian news specifically to feel more a part of Estonian society. When reading news in Russian, 7/28 seek to increase the feeling of being part of the Russian community in Estonia, 5/28 to strengthen belonging in Estonian society and only 1/28 to strengthen belonging to Russian society. When they read news in Russian, 22/28 want to get information about world news, 12/28 about Russia and the Russian-speaking world and 15/28 about the Russian community in Estonia, 16/28 about Estonia in general.

Perhaps unexpectedly, it appears that identification as more or less Russian or Estonian has little bearing on motivations for consuming either Russian-language or Estonian-language news sources; while it might be expected that those who identify as more Russian would seek more news about Russia and the Russian-speaking world and the Russian community in Estonia, the levels of engagement with this genre of news remains roughly comparable throughout the spectrum of national identity. Furthermore, among both those who rated themselves “1” (most Russian) and those who rated themselves “10” (most Estonian), the most popular news outlets were PBK, *Delfi* and *Ru.Postimees*. In a similar vein, among those who viewed themselves as Russian (1-3) or neutral to Estonian (5+) the consumption of Estonian public service channels remained around the same (15%).

b. Israel

One might expect that there would be a strong positive correlation between strength of Russian identity and consumption of Russia-based news sources. This does not, however, appear to be the case for respondents in Israel. Of respondents in Israel who rated themselves 1-4 (more Russian than Israeli), only 4/14 regularly consumed Russian-language news from Russia, and only 2/14 exclusively from Russia. We can compare these figures to the 12/14 who consumed Russian-language news from Israel, and the 10/14 who consume Russian-language news exclusively from Israel). When reading Russian-language sources, 6/14 do so just for informational purposes, 2/14 to strengthen a sense of belonging to the Russian community in Israel, with no respondents seeking to strengthen a sense of belonging to Israeli society or Russian society. When they read news in Russian, 7/14 want to get information about world news, 4/14 about Russia and the Russian-speaking world, 3/14 about the Russian community in Israel, and 9/14 about Israel in general. While 6/14 never read news in Hebrew, of the remaining 8 respondents, 6 consumed Hebrew-language news sources purely for informational purposes. Among this population, it seems, desire for news about the host or home society does not necessarily translate into a desire for greater belonging in these societies.

Among those who rated themselves 5 or up (neutral or more Israeli), 32/36 regularly consumed Russian-language news from Israel (27/36 exclusively from Israel!), while only 8/36 regularly consumed Russian-language news from Russia (just 3/36 exclusively from Russia). When they consume news in Russian, 28/36 wanted to get information about world news, 5/36 about Russia and the Russian-speaking world, 10/36 about the Russian community in Israel, and 19/36 about Israel in general. As might be expected, a far higher proportion of these respondents (compared to those who rated themselves 1-4) stated a desire to strengthen a sense of belonging in Israeli society as a motivation for consuming Russian-language news sources (10/36). Less expected, a higher proportion also cited a desire to strengthen belonging to the Russian community in Israel among their motivations (9/36), while a wish to strengthen belonging to Russian society was a lower priority (4/36).

What is most striking about these results is that there appears to be little link between consumption of Russia-based news sources and an increased sense of Russian identity; among both groups – those who self-define as more Russian than Israeli, and vice versa – there is a strong preference for Russian-language media based in Israel. Although those with a stronger sense of Israeli identity demonstrated a higher degree of motivation to feel a part of both Israeli society and the Russian community in Israel through consuming Israel-based sources, by and large both groups consumed news for informational purposes, without any (conscious) motivation to become closer to either the host or home society by way of this consumption. Far fewer respondents in Israel submitted their preferred media sources as part of the questionnaire (this was a non-mandatory write-in section) than in Estonia so I have not been able to draw links between identity with the host/home society and consumption of particular news sources.

Chapter 4. Discussion

4.1 Overview

This dissertation has aimed, firstly, to examine and analyse the nature and scope of the Russian-language news media that exist in Estonia and Israel. In particular, I have attempted here to look at media consumption as a significant social practice in which, as Christiansen (2004: 203) states, “a complex problem area such as multiculturalism and immigrants’ social integration appears in concrete form”. In this piece of research I have sought to explore the relationship between national identity patterns (Russian, Estonian, Israeli) and news media consumption, examining what news media consumption demonstrates about the relative isolation or integration of Russian-speakers in relation to the majority society in Estonia and Israel, what the similarities and differences are between these diaspora groups with regard to their news media consumption, and what this means in relation to identity – whether diaspora media facilitate segregation and affiliation with the former homeland, assimilation and fostering the construction of new identities, or something else entirely. Having examined data sets separately – secondary sources, content survey, tone assessment, close reading and consumer surveys – in the following section, I attempt to take these findings together and place them within their distinct cultural contexts.

4.2 Framing

According to Matt Evans (2011: 236-7), the media holds significant agenda-setting power in its ability to frame issues. Evans argues that the choice of which news topics or images to cover and emphasise make apparent a news outlet’s leaning or frame of reference, and often dictates whether the public perceives the information positively or negatively. Indeed, in highlighting certain issues and excluding others, news media (either intentionally or unintentionally) work to define which issues are of salience to their audience. Certain framing, Evans puts forward, can lead the news readership/viewership to feel a sense of “proximity” and identify with one side or group in a conflict, while a framing of “distance” can cause an audience to be “more detached and less empathetic”. In addition to shaping a

certain sentiment towards other groups, framing can foster a sense of connection among the receiving audience, and even cultural belonging.

From my secondary reading and primary research (particularly the media content survey), it seems that there is a striking disparity between framing in Russian-language media outlets in Estonia and Israel. Russian-language news media in Israel appears to emphasise current events in Israel, with proportionally less coverage of Russian affairs or news relating to the Russian-speaking community in Israel. Their counterparts in Estonia – with the exception of PBK’s *Novosti Estonia*, to be discussed below – dedicate a far lower proportion of news coverage to domestic Estonian affairs, with this portion comparable to the share enjoyed by Russian news and news relating to the Russian-speaking community in Israel combined. Estonia’s Russian-language news outlets focused to a greater extent on news relating to the homeland (Russia) than their Israeli counterparts, and demonstrated far higher levels of reporting on the domestic Russian-speaking community compared with Israeli outlets. A significant anomaly, bucking this trend entirely, was PBK’s *Novosti Estonii* broadcast, which had higher levels of “host country” news coverage than any other news source (78%). Not only is this figure not indicative of Estonia’s Russian-language news sources more broadly, but it is also not representative of PBK’s own news coverage. Aside from the locally-produced news segment *Novosti Estonii*, PBK primarily re-transmits the Russian public television station Channel One, including its flagship news show *Vremya* – a move that has seen the channel condemned by critics of the Russian government, who fear that the channel could be used as a Kremlin mouthpiece to manipulate Estonia’s Russian-speaking population. If I were to conduct a more extensive piece of research, I would seek to bring in data from PBK’s multiple newscasts.

While I do not have the requisite data to state that there is a causal link between consuming host-focused news media and strengthened feelings of belonging to the host society, we can, however, suggest that there is a correlation. The self-defined identity scores collected as part of the consumer survey suggests that there was a far more prevalent sense of “Russianness” among Russians in Estonia (38% chose a score of 1, and only 28% a score of between 6-10), compared with the just 18.4% in Israel who chose a score of 1, and 54% who chose a score of

between 6-10. Russian speakers in Estonia, consuming news media relatively focused on the home country and local Russian-speaking community, therefore, were only just over half as likely to identify strongly with the host country as their Israeli counterparts, who consumed news media focused on the host country.

The same could not be said, however, for a link between a positive tone of coverage and strengthened feelings of belonging to the host society; when collating data from the “tone of coverage” survey and the self-defined identity scores, a positive correlation between consuming news media that frames the host country positively and strengthened feelings of belonging to the host society does not appear. While there was a higher rate of identification with the host country among respondents in Israel, where the outlets surveyed presented Israel in a slightly more positive light than Russia, in Estonia, where outlets by and large painted Estonia in a more positive light than Russia, there was a far more prevalent sense of “Russianness” among respondents.

In order to gauge framing at the level of language and story production, during the close-reading section of this research I sought to discern the employment (or lack thereof) of an in-group/out-group frame and positive or negative language in relation to the government of the host-country and homeland. Coverage of the election in Israeli Russian-language outlets shared many traits with that of their Estonian counterparts; the election was largely reported as an event happening abroad – in no outlet was Putin referred to as “our” President, for instance – but coverage was nonetheless plentiful, and focused to a significant extent on Russians living in Israel (in this way strengthening a sense of proximity to the event). The media outlets examined here approached the election – and the other newsworthy events examined – from diverse angles, framing the events in disparate ways and utilising both linguistic and visual tools to delineate the boundaries of the “in” group for whom the news story is most salient and to define the relation of the Russian-speaking community to the general population. Nonetheless, and in contrast to the results of the “tone of coverage” survey, coverage of the Russian presidential election in Estonian Russian-language media outlets cast Russia (and in particular, the Russian government) than their Israeli counterparts. This owed, for example, to having more neutral commentators on the event (e.g. *Delfi* chose

a professor at the Moscow Higher School of Economics, while Israel's 9 Kanal TV channel invited a known Kremlin critic for comment), and to placing more emphasis on the legitimacy of the election and the people taking part in it – there were far more frequent interviews with voters delightedly heading to the polls to vote for Putin in Estonian sources, for example. In their (mostly) stronger focus on local Russians who would be voting, the Estonia-based sources implicitly delineated the boundaries of the “in” group – Russian citizens with the right to vote, living in Estonia – in a stronger manner than Israel-based sources, defining these voters as a group distinct from the larger population. This was compounded by a focus on the importance of this group voting in the election, hammering home a sense that the Russian community of Estonia are valued Russian citizens and, in this way, creating a kind of emotional tie and sense of duty towards Russia. By comparison, the coverage in Israel – though focusing to some extent on the Russian community – lacked this emotional resonance. This kind of framing – which failed to be evidenced in the “tone of coverage” survey – may be a contributing factor to the more prevalent sense of “Russianness” among Russians in Estonia.

In addition, the positive framing of Russia and the Russian-speaking community evidenced in the close reading may be reflected in the relatively high desire of Russian-speakers in Estonia to consume news about the Russian-speaking world. While 40% of respondents in Estonia stated a desire to obtain news concerning Russia and the Russian-speaking world, this proportion stood at just 18% among respondents in Israel. Similarly, whereas over half (54%) of respondents in Estonia voiced a preference for news about the Russian-speaking community in Estonia, just 26% of respondents in Israel favoured news about the Russian-speaking community in Israel.

4.3 Israel and Estonia: different kinds of diaspora

Among other things, the results of the consumer surveys are indicative of the very different circumstances in which respondents have found themselves part of the Russian diaspora. As the survey results – with only 5/50 respondents in Israel reporting a duration of time living in Israel that corresponded with their age – have suggested, the vast majority of Russian diaspora members in Israel voluntarily migrated there, while members of the Russian

diaspora in Estonia are far more likely to have been born there. One community was gathered to a homeland, while the other became a minority with the creation of independent states following the fall of the USSR.

In an endeavour to develop a cross-cultural model for studying minorities, John Ogbu (1990: 141-68, cited in Caspi et al., 2002: 551) makes a distinction between voluntary and involuntary minorities. Voluntary minorities, he argues, arrive in the host society “of their own free will and with the expectation of improving their economic and/or political situation”, while involuntary minorities have often been “created by slavery, conquest or colonisation, and usually perceive the majority’s relation towards them as one of oppression and discrimination”. While Russians in Estonia did not become part of a minority by “slavery, conquest or colonisation”, they do represent, by and large, such an involuntary minority. By contrast, as Caspi et al. (2002: 552) affirm, Russians in Israel are not simply a voluntary minority but also a “returning Diaspora” in that the majority “share the dominant Jewish majority religion, cultural heritage and ethnic identity, and belong to the same national collective – the Jewish people”.

Furthermore, later research by Gibson and Ogbu (1991) indicates that the structural position of a minority within the larger society impacts both in-group solidarity and social/economic status of individual members in the host society. Caspi et al. (2002: 552) note that, in addition to the seeming advantage of being part of the majority national collective, the Russian minority in Israel was afforded special status as “the call for [...] Soviet Jews to be allowed to emigrate was a central pillar of Israeli ideology and foreign policy”. The vast majority of Russian speakers now resident in Israel arrived in the country under the Law of Return, which gives Jewish people the right to live in Israel (make “*aliyah*”) and, crucially, gain Israeli citizenship. Thus these arrivals were welcomed into Israeli society; indeed, an intensive immigrant absorption policy sought “to accelerate fusion of all immigrants into a national entity” (Caspi et al., 2002: 556). As opposed to a possible threat to this absorption, minority-language media formed part of its process as an interim solution to foster integration into Israeli society. While the data collected as part of this dissertation indicate that Russians in Israel largely reject Hebrew-language news media, preferring to consume news in Russian,

the high levels of coverage of Israeli issues in the Russian-language news (and relatively low levels of coverage regarding Russia and the Russian-speaking world) and the high levels of identification with the Israeli nationality among respondents suggest the possibility of minority groups being integrated to a considerable extent while retaining a high degree of cultural autonomy.

By contrast, Russians in Estonia represent another distinct kind of diaspora – what Rogers Brubaker (2000: 1) terms an “accidental diaspora”. Within the post-Soviet context he refers here to those huge populations who had moved within the Soviet Union without crossing state borders (internal migration e.g. from Moscow to Estonia) and then found themselves minorities in the new states formed with the fall of the USSR. Far removed from the high status of Russian arrivals in Israel, Russians in Estonia (and other post-Soviet states) with the dissolution of the Soviet Union “found themselves abruptly transformed [...] from privileged citizens of a great power into precariously situated minorities in precariously existing states” (2000: 3). As opposed to Israel’s Russian population, the vast majority of whom enjoy citizenship (and, indeed, emigrated largely because they were eligible for it), following the disintegration of the Soviet Union ethnic Russian residents of Estonia were not automatically granted citizenship but were offered a separate kind of passport for “non-citizen residents” (Jufereva and Lauk, 2015: 52) and the option to acquire citizenship via a challenging naturalisation process. As all former citizens of the Soviet Union were able, until the end of 2000, to apply for citizenship of Russia under the provisions of the law "On RSFSR Citizenship" – a far easier process – many ethnic Russians in Estonia opted to take up Russian citizenship instead of Estonian.

Unlike in Israel, where foreign-language media serving minorities was quickly accepted as at least an interim tool for integration, the Estonian government has only recently moved to increase integration via Russian-language media. The possibility of launching a Russian-language public service channel – criticised as an expensive and unnecessary endeavour – was only taken seriously following the controversy and riots in Estonia surrounding the 2007 relocation of the Bronze Soldier of Tallinn and the Ukraine crisis in 2013/14, in light of potential national security risks (K. Kallas, 2008: 45). Following audience research that

suggested the existence of two distinct information fields in Estonia (Saar Poll, 2004) – the Estonian-language information field promoting “European” values, and the Russian-language field promoting the actions and interests of the Russian government – only in November 2014 did the Estonian parliament approve funding for ETV+, a Russian-language TV channel as a subsidiary of the public broadcaster. The data collected as part of this dissertation indicate that Russians in Estonia in large part reject Estonian-language news media, preferring to consume news in Russian. Our findings that Russian-speaking residents of Estonia prefer to consume news from Estonia-based outlets, however, cast into question the common assertion that the distinct information fields inhabited by residents of Estonia are the “Estonian” and “Russian” fields, with the Russian-speaking population of Estonia exclusively following Russian media and therefore more integrated into the Russian information field than the Estonian one. Instead, the Russian-speaking population of Estonia appear to exist within their own informational sphere (influenced as it may be by Russian actors). Within this particular sphere – made up, until the recent arrival of ETV+, near exclusively of privately-run outlets – there are fairly high levels of coverage of Estonian affairs and, it seems, a mostly neutral and detached tone in this coverage of Estonia. Coverage of Russia does, however (as evidenced in the close reading earlier in this dissertation), seem to appeal to Russians living in Estonia both as a distinct community, and as part of the wider Russian population. In this way, Estonia-based Russian-language media outlets generate a feeling of connection among their receiving audience and delineate the boundaries of this in-group. Going forward, it will be fruitful to follow the progress of ETV+ in terms of viewing rates and general viewer engagement relative to other more established local Russian-language outlets; following a few more years of the TV channel’s development (assuming it will still be in existence) further research could attempt to track the impact (if any) of a Russian-language public service broadcaster on identity formation among the Russian population.

This is all to say that, despite surface-level similarities in terms of their origins and the characteristics of their local minority media spheres, the Russian diaspora in Israel and Estonia constitute very different minorities in relation to the host society at large; the structural position of these communities within the larger society shapes media production and consumption, which in turn impacts both in-group solidarity, integration and sense of

identity. The initial relationship to both the host society – voluntary immigrants with full citizenship in the case of Russians in Israel, and an “accidental minority” with fewer prospects of citizenship in the case of Russians in Estonia – along with the relationship with the (not so) distant homeland – a fairly far-off country that was willingly left in the case of Russians in Israel, and a country just over the border that was unwittingly left in the case of Russians in Estonia – shapes the course of the development of minority media. Russian-language media in Estonia, for example, has developed in close connection with Russian-language outlets both in Russia and the other Baltic States, therefore providing a Russian lens on news and a continued connection to the homeland; in Israel, by contrast, Russian-language media has developed fairly independently of Russian media and alongside a host of other minority-language media, born not of an aim to connect Russians with their distant homeland, but rather to bolster integration and cement the position of Russians as an active community within Israeli society.

4.4 Cultures of hybridity and new media

Bearing the particularities of the Russian communities in Estonia and Israel in mind, I would like to briefly explore the concept of hybridity set out by Stuart Hall (1993: 623). Hall argues that members of minorities in multicultural societies are born of “cultures of hybridity” and develop a dual identity due to the need “to inhabit at least two identities, to speak at least two cultural languages, to negotiate and ‘translate’ between them”. Contrary to the “melting pot” metaphor, so often set out as an ideal, in which different elements in a heterogeneous society “melt together” to make the society more homogeneous, in a “culture of hybridity” the erasure of cultural identity is not a necessary step on the path to integration. Instead, hybridity is a permanent yet flexible condition in which minority communities can become part of the dominant society while maintaining their own distinct cultural identity.

Hybridity is an inherently unstable condition, with no fixed start point or “goal” (e.g. total assimilation); furthermore, hybridity speaks to the internal diversity of minority communities themselves and the conflict that can arise from this diversity, both within the group and in relation to other groups. In the same way that minority (diaspora) groups are not homogenous communities, diasporic media cultures are equally not uniform “singular expressions of

community consensus” but rather “involve negotiations and conflicts within and outside the group” (M. Georgiou, 2003: 16). That is to say that, in researching the link between news media consumption and identity formation or, in the case of host society governments wanting to utilise the media as an integration tool, one must rid oneself of the illusion that integration is a linear process that must necessarily involve the erasure of cultural ties to the country of origin. In the same way, one must not begin to think of diaspora media as either entirely representative of the views of their audiences, or in binary terms as simply a tool belonging either to those who seek total assimilation or those who wish to foster greater segregation from the host society.

As Georgiou (2003) affirms, new communication technologies have had a profound impact on diasporic communities. Where previously immigrating to a new country would have meant a near-total severance of communication and connection with the country of origin, easier mobility and increased communication “allow the members of a group and of an imagined community to co-exist in virtual and real spaces”. This goes for communication between the home country and the diaspora, between the host society and the minority population, within the global diaspora, and within a particular minority community itself. According to Georgiou (2006: 22), electronic media and the internet bring together “various spaces of belonging”; members of the diaspora are able to exist (physically or imaginatively) in their country of origin, in their current locality or in a transnational space, making the sustaining of a hybrid identity far more tenable. This is to say, in part, that we should not expect to draw a clear, causal link between consuming, for example, news about the host country and a strong sense of identification with that country; we should expect, instead, that media consumption should reflect and feed into a complex, hybrid identity that is transnational and not necessarily exclusionary in nature. This is a reflection and caveat with which I wish to preface the tentative conclusions drawn from this piece of research.

Chapter 5. Conclusions

5.1 General conclusions

Expanding on the existing body of academic literature that finds media aimed at diaspora populations to be an integral part of identity preservation and construction, this dissertation has examined the possible links between news media consumption by members of the Russian diaspora and their sense of identity i.e. whether diaspora media facilitate segregation and affiliation with the former homeland, or assimilation and fostering the construction of new identities. Using the Russian diaspora in Estonia and Israel as case studies, I have focused particularly on news media aimed specifically at these diaspora populations, the role of this media in the process of identity construction, and the potential role of Russian-language media in advancing societal integration. The study was based on existing scholarship, quantitative and qualitative content analysis of media outlets, and web-based audience surveys.

At the risk of overgeneralisation, given the limits of my sample, both my secondary and primary research points towards a number of broad findings. Firstly, a high proportion of Russian-speakers in both Israel and Estonia consume Russian-language media originating in the host country (i.e. diaspora media, as opposed to media based in Russia). Secondly, Russian-speakers in Israel are more than twice as likely to report strong feelings of identification with their host country than their counterparts in Estonia. Thirdly, proportionally speaking, Russian-speakers in Israel consume less news about the Russian-speaking world than their counterparts in Estonia; Russian-language news media in Israel appears to emphasise current events in Israel, with proportionally less coverage of Russian affairs or news relating to the Russian-speaking community in Israel. Fourthly, extent and concentration of coverage appears to have a greater impact on identity formation than positive/negative tone of coverage, which did not return a positive or negative correlation. While there was a higher rate of identification with the host country among respondents in Israel, where the outlets surveyed presented Israel in a slightly more positive light than Russia, in Estonia, where outlets by and large painted Estonia in a more positive light than Russia, there was a far more prevalent sense of “Russianness” among respondents.

5.2 Hybrid identities and the factors that shape them

This study demonstrates that Russian-speakers in Israel and Estonia, firstly, delineate the boundaries of their cultural and ethnic community through consumption of news media content in Russian and, to a more limited extent in Israel than in Estonia, identified with Russian culture. Contrary to a prevalent assumption in both popular and academic discourse that minority-language news media bolster the boundaries of immigrant communities and strengthen solidarity with their distant homeland, the present study of Russian-speakers in Israel demonstrates that members of this community cross or move the boundaries as they form a new national and/or social identity, in part through the consumption of news media in Russian oriented towards current affairs, politics and culture of the host society. These immigrants develop a hybrid identity, which combines a strong identification with Israel and with the dominant “Jewish people” with a continuing connection with Russian language and culture. As opposed to strengthening segregation or a sense of solidarity with Russia, the formation of a collective identity of Russian-speakers in Israel via locally produced Russian-language news media contributes to the community’s integration into the Israeli public sphere.

In the absence of sufficient evidence to demonstrate a causation between consumption of diaspora/minority-language media and a strong sense of identification with the host or home country, diaspora media consumption is rather one facet of a complex identity; consumption is both symptomatic of and feeds into this multifaceted identity. While it may not be possible to draw a causal link between consumption of diaspora media and identity construction, this research has shed light on the conditions that shape both the context in which diaspora media operates and, in turn, the form and content of the diaspora media outlets. This parallel investigation of the Russian-speaking communities in Estonia and Israel has proven to be especially fruitful in this regard given the considerable similarities and differences between these two groups.

5.2.2 *Origins*

We might term the first condition the “point of departure”, or origins of the community in its current physical and cultural context. This is radically different for the Russian-speaking populations of Estonia and Israel; while Russians in Estonia are an “accidental diaspora”, their counterparts in Israel are a voluntary diaspora. The very different circumstances in which these groups have found themselves in a minority in a host society will, inevitably, play into their attitude towards the host and home countries and, in turn, into their sense of national identity. When we consider these dissimilar “points of departure”, upon which everything in the subsequent minority experience is built, it is perhaps unsurprising that Russians living in Estonia would feel considerably more Russian than their counterparts in Israel, and would consume relatively more news media regarding the Russian-speaking world.

5.2.3 *Relation to the host society*

The “point of departure” shapes the second condition, namely the relation to the dominant host society. Russian-speakers in Israel, called to make *aliyah*, in large part are Jewish and therefore share the dominant majority religion and ethnic identity; moreover, most Russians have Israeli citizenship. By contrast, Russians in Estonia are generally of a Slavic heritage, with ethnic Estonians being instead a Finnic people; Russians in Estonia have historically had to go through a challenging citizenship process, with the result that a large proportion of Estonia’s Russian community either remain stateless or took up Russian citizenship rather than Estonian. Differing relations with the dominant host society at the level of citizenship and heritage go some way to explaining lower levels of political integration among Russians in Estonia – a factor that is certainly shaped by and feeds into news media consumption.

5.2.4 *Media landscape*

Thirdly, the media landscape is of key significance. The brief examination of Estonia and Israel’s media systems towards the beginning of this dissertation demonstrated that these systems possess attributes characteristic of Hallin and Mancini’s Liberal and Polarised

Pluralist models (2004). On one hand, in their “laissez-faire” approach to media policy, their market-driven logic and high levels of newspaper circulation, these media systems most resemble the Liberal model. On the other, weak journalistic professionalism in both countries is most reminiscent of the Polarised Pluralist model. Despite these similarities, the Estonian and Israeli media spheres have very different internal dynamics. In stark contrast to Estonia, where Estonian- and Russian-language media are the only major players in the media market, Israel’s media landscape reflects the population’s diversity in language and religious or ethnic identity. Along with media in the country’s predominant language, Hebrew, there are media outlets operating in a number of other languages, including Arabic, Russian, English, French, Polish, Yiddish, Amharic and Farsi. As such, while the Israeli media landscape may be to some extent linguistically fragmented, its multifaceted nature forestalls the kind of polarisation perceived on the Estonian media landscape.

5.2.5 Size of minority population

Fourthly, and in addition to the diversity of the media landscape more broadly, the size of the minority population has a direct bearing on the size and nature of the minority media market. With a population of Russian-speakers three times higher than Estonia, Israel offers a more viable Russian-language market that is of greater interest to commercial media outlets. By contrast, Estonia’s small Russian-speaking community does not represent a large enough market to spur the creation of locally-based Russian-language media outlets, leading the Russian-speaking community to turn to Russia-based or regional outlets. The role of government in the media landscape and, specifically, the government’s attitude towards minority media, bears particular importance where there is no viable commercial media market. The intervention of government to ensure the integration of the Russian-speaking population into the national information sphere would seem, therefore, more necessary in Estonia. Hallin and Mancini (2004: 41) assert that the “most important form of state intervention is surely public broadcasting”; unlike in Israel, where foreign-language media to serve minorities was accepted as at least an interim tool for integration (although, it must be noted, the Russian-language TV channel 9 Kanal is not a public service broadcaster), the Estonian government has only recently taken stock of its necessary role in increasing integration via Russian-language media, with the Estonian parliament approving funding for

a Russian-language TV channel (ETV+) in November 2014. While this research demonstrates that private media is unable to fully serve the needs of Russian-speaking residents of Estonia, the arrival of a Russian-language public service broadcaster onto the media landscape affords a note of optimism with regard to the potential role of Russian-language media in the creation of a common information sphere.

5.2.6 Access to homeland media

Lastly, it is essential to consider the accessibility of media originating in the homeland. The role of government in Estonia's Russian-language media landscape is arguably more salient than governmental intervention in Israel due to the wealth of Russian-language TV channels available via terrestrial and cable networks (more easily available in Estonia than in Israel), making the likelihood of Estonia's Russian community becoming integrated into the Russian information sphere far higher. In light of the Russian state's policy of "protecting Russian minorities abroad" (M. Boulegue, 2017: 337), and the role of news media in propagating this policy, the role of Estonian-produced Russian-language media in supporting integration and social cohesion takes on new importance.

5.2.7 The role of news media in integration

In his survey of the decline of social capital in the United States, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, R. Putnam (2000) sets out a fundamental distinction between two types of social capital: "bonding" capital and "bridging" capital. According to Putnam (2000: 22), examples of bonding capital is inward-looking, building connections within a fairly homogeneous group, while bridging capital is outward looking, forming connections *between* dissimilar social groups. While much academic discourse has focused on the propensity of diaspora media to strengthen bonding capital, this piece of research suggests its capacity to provide bridging capital between diaspora communities and the dominant host society. Furthermore, the hybrid identities inhabited by diaspora communities (combining strong identification with the host society and high levels of Russian-language media consumption) – here best exemplified by the Russian-speaking community in Israel – highlight the role of diaspora media in the deconstruction of the notion

of a singular stable, geographical homeland. Belonging is de-centred, away from a single physical location and instead inscribed in moments of transnational communication. It is my hope that, in addition to facilitating a fuller understanding of the Russian diaspora, this project sheds light on the notion of transnational identity more generally and the possibility (and, indeed, inevitability in an era of globalisation) of alternative media models, beyond spatial and national boundaries. While this dissertation has not dealt extensively with integration in its various dimensions, it may serve as a point of departure and reflection for further research into the role of news media in the integration of diasporic populations.

5.3 Evaluation

The methodology employed here cannot provide an objective and exhaustive analysis of the relationship between diaspora media and identity. Instead, it has offered a map of the key dynamics of mediation as it relates to processes of identity formation and inclusion/isolation among the Russian diaspora in Estonia and Israel. While not comprehensive, the descriptive data gathered here provides a point of departure and reflection for the further study of transnational media and identity.

A significant limitation of this study has been the use of the nation as an interpretative framework of analysis. As Georgiou (2012: 366) affirms, such a cross-national comparative study arguably reproduces what Ulrich Beck (2006: 286-290) has termed “methodological nationalism”. The use of the nation as a frame for measurements is also arguably incompatible with the transnational realities of diaspora populations; moreover, the growth of satellite and digital media renders the need for new methodologies “across cultural, political, and social spaces” (Georgiou, 2012: 366) even more urgent.

If I were to redo or expand this piece of research, I would make a number of changes. Firstly, in order to avoid mischaracterising the experiences of diasporic groups as more homogeneous than is true in reality, I would seek to provide a more multilayered analysis. This analysis could, for example, examine such factors as sex, education level, social class and citizenship. The incorporation of intersectionality into the research would acknowledge the intragroup differences that likely exist within a group that shares a level of common identity, and would

seek to answer questions such as “Is the diasporic experience and national identity of Russians in Israel different among men and women?”.

Secondly, I would further explore the impact of the unique capacities of “new” media. The nebulous concept of “new” media is taken here to refer, as Eugenia Siapera sets out (2012: 1-6), to media that are digital and have online connectivity as a key component, while also denoting dynamism, constant evolution and elements of interactivity. In the Web 2.0 era, some media — e.g. open-source software and social media such as Facebook and Twitter — facilitate the creation of user-led content, blurring the distinction between consumers and creators and giving rise to what Axel Bruns (2008: 2) has termed “produsage”. Many of the news outlets studied here either feature comments sections on their own websites or post stories on social media pages; here the audience can not only respond to the story, but also engage in discussions amongst themselves. While the anonymity of the commenters is problematic in that it obscures the comment’s provenance (e.g. was it written by a Russian-speaker in Israel or elsewhere), taking these comments into account would offer insight into the community’s response to news stories, as opposed to assuming that viewers/readers must necessarily share the perspective of the news media that they consume.

Thirdly, a missing piece of this research “puzzle” has undoubtedly been the role of journalists. In order to understand how journalists perceive their role in terms of providing information to diaspora communities, facilitating intragroup ties or integration within the host society, I would take inspiration from Jufereva and Lauk’s study of Russian-speaking Estonian journalists (2015: 63). Their research finds that these journalists take seriously their role in the creation of a common information sphere between the Russian- and Estonian-speaking communities and in the mediation between these communities, but doubt their ability to promote the interests of the Russian minority. If time and resources afforded it, I would seek to gain access to Russian-speaking journalists in Estonia and Israel in order to compare and contrast their self perceived roles, along with any obstacles they perceive themselves to face.

Lastly, in order to draw more concrete links between news media consumption and sense of national identity, it would be necessary to conduct this research on a larger scale than was possible here with the available resources.

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