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Russian-Language Media in Israel: Characteristics, Consumption, and Impact

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Abstract

The article examines Israeli Russian-language media and the way it is perceived among repatriates from the former Soviet Union in Israel. The study addresses three central questions: to what extent these repatriates are familiar with Israeli Russian-language media outlets; what levels of trust and hostility they attribute to them; and where they position them on the political-ideological spectrum.

The article situates the discussion within a body of literature on right-wing media as ideological and alternative media, trust and hostility toward media outlets, media repertoires, ethnic media, and ideological ambiguity. The study is based on three consecutive surveys conducted among repatriates from the former Soviet Union, through which it examines patterns of familiarity and consumption, political-ideological perceptions, and levels of trust and hostility toward Israeli Russian-language media outlets.

Introduction

In recent decades, right-wing media has become increasingly important as a force shaping both the public agenda as well as collective identity, extending far beyond its role as a mere channel of information. This phenomenon is conceptualized as an ideological media system that distinguishes itself from mainstream media through its language and content, and functions as an active political actor offering an alternative interpretation of reality. Scholars emphasize that such media emerges from broader social contexts and fulfills

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a dual role: reinforcing existing perceptions while simultaneously mobilizing and shaping new identities (Benkler et al., 2018).

In the United States, networks such as Fox News have become a model of partisan media, generating narratives of "us" versus "them" (Jamieson & Cappella, 2008). Similarly, in several European countries, populist media outlets have strengthened the connection between right-wing parties and the public through consistent criticism of the establishment and immigration policies (Kramer, 2017; Nygaard, 2020). These comparisons demonstrate that right-wing media constitutes a significant component of the socio-political structure, influencing patterns of trust as well as citizens' sense of belonging or exclusion.

The Israeli case is not disconnected from these global developments, yet it manifests in a distinctive local context. The present study focuses on Israel's Russian-speaking community, which numbers more than one million people and represents a substantial demographic and political force. There exists a significant research gap regarding the media consumption patterns of this particular population, a gap that has become even more pronounced following the wave of immigration triggered by the Russia–Ukraine war that began in 2022. For these immigrants, Russian-language media serves as a vital mechanism of socialization, fulfilling a dual function: preserving their original identity and connection to their former homeland while simultaneously helping them navigate the challenges of integration into Israeli society.

The present study seeks to address three central research questions: To what extent are immigrants from the former Soviet Union familiar with Israeli Russian-language media outlets? What levels of trust and hostility do they express toward these outlets? And where do they position these media outlets on the political-ideological spectrum? Understanding the perceived ideological positioning of Russian-language media is essential for assessing the challenges faced by immigrants from the former Soviet Union and by Israeli society as a whole. This is particularly important in light of the growing influence of right-wing media, which draws inspiration from international trends but is shaped by local social divisions and cultural contexts.

Literature Review

Right-Wing Media as Ideological and Alternative Media

Contemporary research suggests that right-wing media operates simultaneously on two complementary dimensions: as ideological media that anchors and shapes political identity, and as alternative media that defines itself through criticism of, and opposition to, the mainstream. In both respects, it is not viewed as a neutral channel for transmitting information, but rather as a cultural-political agent actively involved in shaping the boundaries of the public sphere (Benkler et al., 2018).

On the ideological level, media functions as part of a broader structure of political meaning-making. As Hallin and Mancini (2004) demonstrate, media outlets do not merely reflect reality; they actively construct it through the selection, framing, and interpretation of issues. In this context, right-wing populist media contributes to the development of a distinct collective identity based on a narrative that portrays the mainstream as a detached and misleading elite, in contrast to "the people", whom alternative media claims to represent (Kramer, 2017). This narrative creates a sharp "us versus them" dichotomy, reinforcing political polarization and distrust in institutions (Nygaard, 2020).

This dynamic is also reflected in polarized structures of trust. Research conducted by the Pew Research Center points to profound ideological differences among American audiences regarding trust in the media. Conservative audiences tend to express low levels of trust in mainstream media and rely primarily on sources associated with their own political camp, whereas liberal audiences generally display higher levels of trust in news outlets and draw on a broader range of information sources (Pew Research Center, 2025). As a result, distinct "trust fields" emerge, in which credibility and legitimacy are evaluated according to group loyalty.

At the same time, right-wing media also functions as alternative media, defining itself through its opposition to the media establishment. It constitutes a hybrid space: on the one hand, it adopts professional journalistic practices, while on the other, it presents itself as an alternative voice to established elites

(Holt et al., 2019). Its alternative character is reflected not only in its content, but also in its underlying stance—the rejection of mainstream authority and the framing of the media as a site of political struggle.

Within this framework, exposure to alternative media has been linked to declining trust in mainstream news outlets and increasing trust in media perceived as "ours" (Andersen et al., 2023). This process contributes to the emergence of a parallel media system in which group identity determines the boundaries of knowledge and legitimacy. Simultaneously, alternative media fulfills important communal and organizational functions by enabling audiences to participate actively in content creation and dissemination and by facilitating political mobilization and the formation of networks of collective action (Atton, 2002; Downing, 2001; Kenix, 2011).

However, both the ideological as well as the alternative dimensions involve a structural paradox. Although right-wing media presents itself as an authentic, anti-establishment force operating outside the system, it functions within a competitive media market and depends on economic models based on advertising, subscriptions, or donations (Holt et al., 2019). Moreover, much of its activity takes place on commercial platforms such as Facebook and YouTube, which are governed by corporate logics of commercialization and surveillance (Fuchs, 2014). Consequently, a persistent tension emerges between ideological commitments and economic survival, whereby even substantive political content is transformed into a "product" designed to attract attention and user engagement.

In this sense, right-wing media combines identity production, opposition to institutional authority, and market-oriented practices. This combination enables it to establish itself simultaneously as a mobilizing community space and as a central media actor, while maintaining the image of an "outsider" challenging the existing order and reshaping the boundaries of political and public discourse.

Trust, Hostility, and Polarization in Media

The relationship between trust in and hostility toward media outlets is not a simple linear inverse; rather, it is best described as a strong negative correlation

between two distinct yet interconnected dimensions. Trust in media reflects a cognitive assessment of credibility, fairness, and professionalism, whereas hostility represents an emotional and identity-based response rooted in mechanisms of group affiliation and political polarization. This is a cyclical dynamic: hostility erodes trust, and the erosion of trust increases the tendency to perceive news coverage as hostile, reflecting a cumulative process of affective polarization and the delegitimization of mainstream media.

At the center of this mechanism is the hostile media effect, which posits that individuals with strong political commitments tend to perceive even balanced reporting as biased against their own group (Gunther & Schmitt, 2004; Vallone et al., 1985). In highly polarized media environments, such hostility constitutes an active emotional stance that encourages systematic avoidance of media outlets associated with the opposing political camp (Arceneaux et al., 2012). Moreover, such avoidance further reinforces hostility: limited exposure to opposing sources of information strengthens prejudices and entrenches negative perceptions (Peterson & Kagalwala, 2021).

This dichotomy draws clear identity boundaries. Trust delineates the internal boundaries of the political in-group and becomes part of the individual's political identity, while hostility defines the boundaries of the out-group. Accordingly, media outlets that individuals trust are perceived as belonging to their group, whereas others are viewed as foreign and even antagonistic. This process is reinforced by the formation of "echo chambers," or closed media ecosystems, in which audiences are exposed primarily to messages that reinforce their existing views and portray mainstream media as biased and misleading (Benkler et al., 2018; Jamieson & Cappella, 2008). As a result, distinct "trust fields" emerge, in which credibility is assessed according to a narrative's alignment with one's political camp rather than by professional standards.

Research also points to an asymmetry between political camps. In the United States, right-wing media has been found to have developed into a relatively "closed ecosystem," characterized by internal feedback loops that reinforce trust within the camp while fostering the persistent rejection of external sources (Benkler et al., 2018). Consequently, conservative audiences exhibit

consistent patterns of selective exposure to ideologically congruent sources and express particularly high levels of trust in media outlets associated with their political camp (Stroud, 2011), while mainstream media is frequently perceived as hostile.

These patterns are not unique to the American case. Findings from the Reuters Institute's *Digital News Report* reveal similar polarization in media trust across other national contexts, although its intensity varies according to the structure of each country's media system (Newman et al., 2021). In countries characterized by traditions of partisan journalism, trust tends to divide clearly along ideological lines, whereas countries with strong public-service media systems generally exhibit higher and more stable levels of trust and comparatively lower levels of polarization.

The implications of these dynamics extend beyond the media sphere. Selective exposure to partisan media reinforces existing attitudes, intensifies negative feelings toward political opponents, and reduces willingness to engage in political compromise (Levendusky, 2013; Stroud, 2011). Concurrently, the delegitimization of mainstream media often spreads to other institutions, including the judiciary, academia, and the scientific community (Hmielowski et al., 2013; Merkley, 2020), and is associated with a marked decline in trust in public institutions (Iyengar et al., 2019).

In this sense, trust in and hostility toward media operate together as a socio-political mechanism for drawing boundaries. They reinforce the collective identity of the in-group while simultaneously fostering suspicion toward external groups and institutions. The result is deep affective polarization, in which political identity is defined not only through identification with one's own camp but also through active rejection of the opposing camp (Iyengar et al., 2012). Consequently, the media becomes not merely a vehicle for information dissemination but a central arena for the construction of political and identity boundaries.

Media Repertoires

The media repertoire approach provides a theoretical framework for understanding media consumption as a dynamic and integrated process

that takes place across multiple platforms simultaneously. According to this perspective, individuals combine different sources of information in order to satisfy a range of needs, including information seeking, entertainment, social belonging, and cultural identity (Hasebrink & Popp, 2006). The concept of a media repertoire refers to the relatively stable and personalized set of media outlets and platforms that individuals assemble for themselves, reflecting their habits, preferences, technological access, and the socio-cultural contexts in which they operate. Such repertoires are shaped by resource availability, accumulated experience, cultural and communal affiliations, and socio-demographic characteristics (Hasebrink, 2011; Hasebrink & Domeyer, 2012).

Immigrants tend to develop repertoires that combine ethnic media with media produced by the host society. On the one hand, they rely on information sources in their native language, which provide familiarity, cognitive comfort, and a connection to their cultural homeland. On the other hand, over time they gradually turn to additional information sources in the local language as part of broader processes of integration and cultural adaptation (Matsaganis et al., 2011).

Ideological Ambiguity in Ethnic Media

While the media repertoire approach explains patterns of media consumption from the audience's perspective, understanding the structure of the media field also requires examining how media outlets themselves adapt to these audiences. In this respect, ethnic media often adopts distinctive strategies of ideological ambiguity.

Research on ethnic media suggests that the avoidance of clear ideological positioning does not reflect a lack of political engagement; rather, it stems from structural, economic, and communal constraints. Studies indicate that ethnic media typically operates within relatively small, community-based markets while serving heterogeneous audiences. Consequently, it tends to prioritize informational and infrastructural functions, appeal to broad common denominators, and avoid content that could generate internal polarization or undermine economic sustainability (Riggins, 1992; Yu &

Ahadi, 2010). In this context, Ferrández Ferrer and Retis (2019) argue that growing dependence on private funding and commercial pressures fosters patterns of ideological restraint, including a preference for "soft" content, the avoidance of controversial issues, and even forms of self-censorship aimed at satisfying private sponsors and advertisers. Collectively, these dynamics produce a relatively restrained and ideologically ambiguous profile, enabling ethnic media to maintain legitimacy within the community while continuing to operate in media environments characterized by limited resources and considerable internal diversity.

This ambiguity is further reinforced by the internal heterogeneity that characterizes immigrant and minority communities. Such groups are often composed of subgroups that differ in their political backgrounds, socioeconomic status, and generational status within the migration experience, resulting in a wide range of worldviews within a single ethnic community. To avoid internal divisions that could weaken communal cohesion, ethnic media tends to avoid one-dimensional representations and strives to remain as broadly accessible as possible (Georgiou, 2006; Riggins, 1992). Nevertheless, ideological ambiguity should not be interpreted as the absence of political or values-based content. Research demonstrates that even media outlets that avoid explicit partisan signaling may still convey ideological tendencies through framing practices, source selection, and issue emphasis (Entman, 1993; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). By refraining from overt political branding, such media enables diverse audiences to consume its content without experiencing alienation or identification with a specific political camp.

More broadly, ideological ambiguity functions as an adaptive mechanism that allows ethnic media to serve as a unifying force. Shi (2009) demonstrated that economic constraints often lead ethnic media to avoid controversial topics and focus instead on "soft" content. This strategy helps establish ethnic media as an essential resource for navigating the host society while preserving collective identity (Matsaganis et al., 2011). Even when immigrant communities become more politically mature or when media outlets adopt agendas promoted by interested stakeholders, the ambiguous character of

ethnic media generally persists due to economic pragmatism and the need to appeal to the broadest possible segment of the community (Caspi et al., 2002).

The Uniqueness of the Israeli Case

The Israeli media system represents a unique and complex case that is difficult to classify within conventional typological frameworks used in comparative media research. According to Caspi and Limor (1999), even after decades of statehood, Israeli media does not fit neatly into a single model of political media. The above stems from the combination of a dominant security-based culture shaped by the ongoing Israeli–Palestinian conflict (Peri, 2012; Wolfsfeld, 1997), a small and concentrated media market, and intense political polarization reflected in deep social divisions. In addition, the historical legacy of direct political involvement in the media—when many outlets were formally affiliated with political parties—has left enduring ties between politics and journalism even after processes of commercialization transformed the media landscape (Caspi & Limor, 1999; Peri, 2004).

Over the past two decades, media polarization has accelerated, particularly through the strengthening of media outlets associated with the political right in opposition to others perceived as liberal or left-leaning (Weiss Yaniv & Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2016). This trend intensified during the years of right-wing governance under Benjamin Netanyahu, as he and many members of his governing coalition adopted strategies aimed at delegitimizing mainstream media (Mordechai & Barhum, 2026). The framing of the media as an adversarial political actor has eroded its traditional role as a mediating institution responsible for providing the public with reliable information. (Panievsky, 2022; Peri, 2004).

A prominent turning point was the establishment of the newspaper *Israel Hayom* in 2007. Distributed free of charge and backed by substantial private funding, the newspaper has been characterized in the scholarly literature as a "disruptive actor" that altered the economic and professional balance of power within the newspaper industry (Dahan & Bentman, 2017). This development coincided with the declining influence of critical news outlets such as *Haaretz*, the weakening of *Yedioth Ahronoth*'s position within the commercial media

market, and a broader process of declining confidence in mainstream media as a shared mediating institution. Together, these developments contributed to the emergence of a polarized media environment characterized by parallel "factual systems" and information consumption within ideological "echo chambers" (Benkler et al., 2018).

Polarization within the Israeli media field intensified further with the rise of Channel 14 (formerly Channel 20), which was established as a heritage channel in 2014 and later developed into a news channel with a pronounced right-wing political orientation. The channel plays an active role in challenging the legitimacy of state institutions and, unlike traditional journalism, promotes rhetoric that depicts the security establishment, judiciary, and the professional civil service as "enemies from within" acting against the will of the people (Egri, 2026). Government support and regulatory advantages have enabled the channel to replace fact-based deliberation with personal political loyalty. In this way, it has evolved from a media platform into a central mechanism within a broader project aimed at deconstructing the state and its liberal values (Navot & Goldshmidt, 2025).

Russian-Language Media in Israel

Within this polarized media environment, sectoral media systems have also emerged, shaping identity and political consciousness among specific social groups. One of the most prominent examples is Israeli Russian-language media. The large-scale immigration from the former Soviet Union beginning in 1989 created a demand for a dedicated media system, leading to the development of a distinct Russian-language media field. Consistent with the model proposed by Katz et al. (2011), this media is produced by and for the immigrant community and fulfills a dual function: preserving cultural identity and internal cohesion while simultaneously mediating between immigrants and the institutions of the host society.

As a result, a parallel media system emerged, serving not only as a source of information but also as a vehicle for the formation of a distinct collective consciousness. Consuming media in Russian enabled immigrants to follow

developments in Israeli society while preserving their language, cultural codes, and ties to the post-Soviet sphere (Elias & Caspi, 2011). Thus, it fostered the formation of a hybrid identity that combines ethnic belonging with partial integration into Israeli society.

Beyond its informational role, Russian-language media has also served as an arena for shaping group boundaries. Research indicates that it has frequently highlighted the distinctions between immigrants and the host society and, at times, criticized the treatment they received, thereby reinforcing internal cohesion and consolidating a distinct collective identity (Elias, 2011; Zilberg & Leshem, 1996). Nevertheless, its role is not one-dimensional. While fostering differentiation, it has also facilitated adaptation, provided accessible information, and supported gradual integration of immigrants into Israeli society (Caspi et al., 2002).

In the political sphere, Russian-language media has become a major strategic resource. It has provided a platform for political mobilization and mediation between political parties and immigrant voters, creating a symbiotic relationship between political actors and media outlets (Caspi et al., 2002). In doing so, it has transcended the category of "immigrant media", evolving into a media field with substantial influence on public discourse in Israel.

In the digital era, the role of Russian-language media has expanded even further. Online platforms have created a transnational space linking immigrants in Israel with post-Soviet communities around the world, enabling the preservation and expansion of social and cultural capital even after linguistic integration has taken place (Lissitsa & Chachashvili-Bolotin, 2014).

Taken together, these characteristics demonstrate that Russian-language media in Israel functions simultaneously both as a mechanism of integration as well as one of differentiation. It facilitates navigation within a new social environment while preserving identity boundaries and shaping a distinctive political consciousness. As such, it constitutes an important case study for

understanding how sectoral media systems develop within polarized and multi-layered media environments.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The study was designed to address the following questions: To what extent are immigrants from the former Soviet Union familiar with Israeli Russian-language media outlets? What levels of trust and hostility do they express toward these outlets? And where do they position them on the political-ideological spectrum? In doing so, the study seeks to provide a current and comprehensive picture of the complex relationship between Israel's large immigrant community from the former Soviet Union and its dedicated media sphere, thereby contributing to a better understanding of the dynamics and processes shaping interactions between former Soviet immigrants and Israeli media outlets.

Research Hypotheses

1. With the exception of a few isolated cases, Israeli Russian-language media outlets will not be perceived as having a distinct political-ideological orientation. Previous research on Russian-language media in Israel suggests that in a small ethno-linguistic media market, the desire to reach a broad audience encourages a service-oriented and integrative profile while discouraging clear partisan branding.

2. Older respondents and recent immigrants will exhibit relatively high levels of consumption of Russian-language media outlets due to linguistic dependence and the need to preserve cultural identity. The literature indicates that media consumption patterns vary according to age and duration of residence in Israel: whereas older immigrants and first-generation immigrants tend to rely on Russian-language media to maintain their language and cultural heritage, younger individuals and Israeli-born members of the community primarily consume Hebrew-language media (Elias & Lemish, 2008).

3. Levels of trust and hostility toward Russian-language media outlets

3.1 Trust in Russian-language media outlets is expected to be below the long-term average reported among the Jewish population (34%) (Hermann et al., 2025). This relatively low level of trust stems from a "culture of resistance" and an ingrained skepticism toward media institutions that developed under centralized political regimes in immigrants' countries of origin. Consequently, this audience tends not to perceive sectoral media as a unifying or independent actor; rather, it often adopts an "oppositional decoding" stance and suspects that media outlets serve those in positions of power (Bognar, 2018).

3.2 Levels of hostility toward Russian-language media outlets are expected to be moderate. Ethnic media primarily functions as a community-oriented service platform and therefore tends to avoid strong ideological signaling, reducing the likelihood of extreme hostility.

3.3 A negative correlation is expected between trust and hostility: as trust in a particular media outlet increases, hostility toward that outlet will decrease. Research on the hostile media effect demonstrates that trust and hostility constitute opposing poles. Trust delineates the boundaries of a reliable "us" group, whereas hostility marks the boundaries of an unreliable "them" (Arceneaux et al., 2012; Vallone et al., 1985). Selective media consumption patterns and individual media repertoires encourage exposure primarily to content that aligns with consumers' existing views, thereby reinforcing both trust in supportive sources and hostility toward opposing ones (Hasebrink & Popp, 2006; Stroud, 2011).

Research Design

Three consecutive surveys conducted among immigrants from the former Soviet Union examined the attitudes of Russian-speaking Israelis toward Israeli Russian-language media outlets. The study adopted a multidimensional approach across three principal dimensions:

1. A survey of media consumption patterns was conducted in April 2024 by the *Midgam* research institute among 493 respondents. Participants were recruited primarily through online panels, with targeted telephone sampling (approximately 10%–20%) employed to ensure the inclusion of populations with lower levels of digital access.
2. A survey examining perceptions of the political orientation of media outlets was conducted in March 2025 by the *Maagar Mochot* research institute among 601 respondents, using the same data collection methodology.
3. A survey examining trust and hostility toward media outlets was conducted in August 2025 among 610 Russian-speaking respondents, using an online panel (PanelView).

Respondent Recruitment and Sampling Methods

Respondents were recruited through several commercial online panels (PanelView, Panel4All, and iPanel). In addition, targeted telephone interviews were conducted by the survey institutes' call centers using random sampling procedures. The telephone component was intended to improve the inclusion of populations that are relatively difficult to reach through digital means, particularly older long-established immigrants and recent immigrants. Across all three surveys, the target population consisted of men and women aged 18 and older who had immigrated to Israel from countries of the former Soviet Union in 1989 or later.

Research Instruments and Questionnaire Content

This article analyzes media-related items selected from broader survey instruments that also included economic and political issues relevant to immigrants from the former Soviet Union. These items concern respondents' familiarity with Russian-language media outlets, their consumption of media content, perceptions of the outlets' political-ideological orientation, and levels of trust and hostility toward them. The full wording of the items, response scales, and a complete demographic profile of the respondents are provided in Appendix 2.

Demographic Breakdowns and Analyses

Demographic breakdowns (e.g., age, period of immigration, gender, and additional variables) were conducted for all relevant measures whenever subgroup sample sizes were sufficient to support valid statistical inferences. One notable exception was the measure of "perceived right-wing orientation of media outlets". Because the number of respondents who classified specific media outlets as "right-wing" was very small, no demographic breakdowns were performed for this variable in order to avoid drawing conclusions from extremely small subsamples. Relevant demographic analyses were conducted for all other measures.

Respondent Burden Considerations and Measurement Stability

Given the large number of niche Russian-language media outlets, and particularly because each outlet appeared twice in the trust and hostility matrices, concerns arose regarding respondent fatigue and potential break-off toward the end of the questionnaire. Accordingly, in the August 2025 survey, only media outlets known to have relatively high levels of familiarity among respondents were presented

Comparison Across the Three Samples

Although the use of three surveys conducted at different points in time presents certain challenges for comparison, it also makes it possible to assess the consistency of patterns across independent samples and over time. Future research would benefit from employing a single, comprehensive research instrument. Table 1 presents a demographic comparison of the three samples.

Table 1: Demographic Breakdown by Survey

Research Institute	PanelView	Maagar Mochot	Midgam
N	610	601	493
Data Collection Method	Online panel only	Online panel + telephone	Online panel + telephone (~10–20%)
Age Categories	6 (18–25 to 68+)	5 (18–30 to 65+)	7 (18–24 to 75+)
Gender (% female/male)	59/41	54/46	51/49
Immigration wave 1989–2000	71%	92%	90%
Recent immigrants (from 2022 and onward)	8%	1%	1%

It should be noted that the age categories are not identical across the surveys, and differences also exist in the gender distributions and the composition of immigration waves. For example, the proportion of recent immigrants in the most recent survey is eight times higher than in the first survey. These differences should be taken into account when interpreting the comparative findings (see Table A in Appendix 1). To assess the degree of comparability among the three samples, a comparison of their key demographic characteristics was conducted. Examination of these indicators points to a high degree of similarity between the groups:

1. Gender: The gender distribution is highly consistent across all samples, with very similar female-to-male ratios.

2. Age: Because the data was collected by different survey institutes, the age categories are not identical across the questionnaires. Nevertheless, the overall age composition is comparable, with the median age category in all samples centered approximately around ages 45–55.

3. Geography: All samples exhibit broad nationwide coverage, with substantial representation from central, southern, and northern Israel. The observed regional differences (Total Variation Distance < 0.15) do not suggest meaningful differences in the composition of the populations surveyed.

4. Political orientation: The study sample comprised 610 respondents, including right-wing (N = 317), centrist (N = 167), and left-wing (N = 70) participants.

Limitation of ideological measurement: It should be noted that the study examined only whether media outlets were perceived as right-wing. The questionnaire did not assess public perceptions of media outlets across the full ideological spectrum (right–left). Consequently, conclusions regarding ideological ambiguity should be drawn with caution, as the data does not indicate whether these outlets are perceived as left-wing.

Research Findings

Consumption patterns

The findings reveal a stable hierarchy in patterns of consumption of Russian-language media in Israel. Channel 9 leads by a substantial margin, with a consumption rate of 40.6% of respondents, followed by Radio KAN REKA, at 19.4%.

Besides the leading outlets, the data indicates clear market fragmentation: 15.7% and 14.3% of participants, respectively, reported using the Channel 9 website and the Vesty website of the Yedioth Ahronoth Group (which transitioned from print to digital format several years ago). These were followed by NEWSru (13.3%), RTVI** (12.4%), and IsraelInfo (11.3%). For

** RTVI (Russian Television International) is an international Russian-language television channel serving Russian-speaking diaspora communities worldwide. It broadcasts news, current affairs, and cultural content, while maintaining a local Israeli team that produces original material, including a dedicated Israeli affairs program.

the remaining Russian-language media outlets, consumption rates fell below 10%.***

The most widely recognized media outlets were Channel 9 (92.6%), Radio KAN REKA (79.3%), Vesty (74.3%), RTVI (72.8%), and NEWSru (70.3%). The least widely recognized outlets were Strana (40.0%), ISRAland (40.3%), Cursor (47.2%), MigNews (48.7%), and Arutz Sheva (53.6%).

Approximately one quarter of respondents (25.8%) selected "other Russian-language media outlets". This indicates that a significant portion of consumption occurs outside the list of brands included in the survey—likely including additional Russian-language websites examined in later surveys, as well as Telegram channels and various YouTube and other social media platforms. This pattern is consistent with the Long Tail model (Anderson, 2006), according to which a small number of dominant actors coexist with a large number of niche outlets that collectively account for a substantial share of the market. It also aligns with the literature on audience fragmentation and the growing role of digital platforms as alternative information sources (Webster & Ksiazek, 2012).

The most prominent finding in the study is a pronounced generational gap in the consumption of Russian-language media. The data indicates an almost linear gradient: the younger the age group, the lower the rates of consumption of Russian-language media (Table 2). Among respondents aged 25–34, only 46.3% report consuming Russian-language media, compared to 96.8% among those aged 75 and older. This trend indicates a process of media assimilation among younger generations of immigrants from the former Soviet Union, reflecting broader patterns of integration into Israeli society.

*** See Table B in Appendix 1 for a detailed breakdown.

Table 2. Consumption of Russian-language media by age

What is your age?							
	Total Sample	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65–74	75+
Consume information from Russian-language media	**71.60%**	46.30%	61.40%	66.30%	77.90%	92.30%	96.80%
Do not consume information from Russian-language media	**28.40%**	53.70%	38.60%	33.70%	22.10%	7.70%	3.20%

Accordingly, age emerges as the strongest predictor, with older respondents exhibiting higher levels of Russian-language media consumption than younger respondents. In addition, a statistically significant correlation was found between income level and four media outlets. No statistically significant correlations were found with regard to education level or period of immigration.

Table 3. Correlations between demographic variables and Russian-language media consumption

Variable	Media Outlet	χ^2	df	p
Age	Channel 9	106.86	6	<.001***
Age	Radio KAN REKA	115.68	6	<.001***
Age	Vesty website	32.86	6	<.001***
Age	Cursor website	28.46	6	<.001***
Age	Novosti Nedeli Newspaper	19.5	6	=.003**
Gender	Cursor website	8.41	1	=.004**
Income Level	Channel 9	38.59	5	<.001***
Income Level	Radio KAN REKA	31.34	5	<.001***
Income Level	Cursor website	20.96	5	<.001***
Income Level	Vesty website	12.65	5	=.027*

Concurrently, respondents reported consuming an average of approximately 2.2 Russian-language media sources, while among respondents aged 75 and older, the average rose markedly to approximately 4.2 sources. This pattern is consistent with media repertoire theory, which posits that individuals combine multiple information sources—including television, radio, the internet, and print media—to satisfy diverse informational needs (Hasebrink & Popp, 2006).

In addition, 39.4% consume Russian-language media less than once a week; 35.9% consume it daily; 13.8% consume it once to twice per week; and 10.9% consume it three to four times per week. A dichotomous distribution in consumption habits emerges: large groups reported either "daily" (35.9%) or "less than once a week" (39.4%), while medium-frequency users account for a smaller proportion (24.7%). This pattern reflects two distinct usage profiles: a core of regular, "heavy" consumers versus low-frequency consumption.

The data also reveals a negative correlation between income level and consumption of Russian-language media. Among respondents with below-average income, only 16.6% reported not consuming Russian-language media, compared with 35.7% among those with above-average income. This finding suggests that as economic integration increases, reliance on Russian-language media declines, while consumption of Hebrew-language media increases, often alongside improved Hebrew proficiency.

A moderate increase is also evident in the proportion of respondents who do not consume Russian-language media as education level rises: from 24.9% among respondents with up to secondary education to 29.2% among university graduates. In addition, men report higher levels of Russian-language media consumption than women (76.2% compared with 67.4%), a difference that may reflect variations in media preferences or distinct patterns of integration between the genders.

The analysis further shows that consumption rates among recent immigrants are substantially higher than among long-established immigrants (85.7% compared with 70.1%). This finding is consistent with studies demonstrating that reliance on ethnic media is particularly common during the early stages

of adaptation, when immigrants use such media for orientation, maintaining cultural identity, and sustaining a sense of belonging. Over time, reliance tends to decline as language proficiency improves and ties with the broader society deepen (Matsaganis et al., 2011).

Taken together, the findings support Hypothesis 2: consumption of Russian-language media is indeed more prevalent among older respondents and recent immigrants, as predicted based on the literature.

Perceptions of the Political Positioning of Russian-Language Media Outlets

The most striking and unexpected finding of the survey is that a large majority of respondents (69%) selected "don't know" when asked to identify which outlets on the list were considered right-wing. It is important to note that the question examined only right-wing affiliation and did not assess whether outlets were perceived as left-wing. Consequently, no conclusions can be drawn regarding their positioning along the broader right–left political spectrum.

Among all Russian-language media outlets, only Channel 9 stood out, with 20% of respondents identifying it as right-wing. It was followed by Radio KAN REKA, the Vesty website, and the Arutz Sheva website, each of which was identified as right-wing by approximately 6% of respondents. Approximately 4% identified RTVI as right-wing, while all other outlets were classified as right-wing by only 1–2% of respondents.

From a functional perspective, many Russian-language media outlets serve an ethnic-instrumental role: they provide access to information in Russian and help sustain community ties, rather than operating primarily as explicitly political brands. Consequently, their ideological signaling tends to remain weak and implicit. Moreover, respondents demonstrated a broader reluctance to assign political classifications. Even those familiar with particular outlets often refrained from categorizing them ideologically, whether due to perceptions of political neutrality or uncertainty about their positioning.

This tendency further contributes to the overall ambiguity surrounding these outlets (Matsaganis et al., 2011).

Consistent with this, editorial statements from various outlets indicate a professional norm of adherence to "objectivity," "neutrality," and a public image of political non-alignment. For example, according to Channel 9's editorial statement: "The editorial team operates out of commitment to the public interest and adheres to the principles of objectivity, transparency, and ethics, in accordance with the professional journalists' code [...] We are an independent media outlet and are not affiliated with any political party, public organization, or commercial entity" (Channel 9, n.d.; translation: mine, A.B.Y.).

In the Russian-language advertising market, which is limited to begin with since not all advertisers operate within it, any perceived political affiliation may further reduce the pool of advertisers. Consequently, editorial strategies of avoiding partisan signaling are maintained. This ambiguity reduces political differentiation and recognition but expands audience reach and minimizes the risk of segmentation in a small advertising market.

However, it should be noted that even outlets widely regarded as right-wing within the broader media landscape are seldom perceived in these terms by Russian-speaking audiences. For example, only 6% of respondents identified the Arutz Sheva website as right-wing. Yet a comparative analysis of the outlet's Hebrew- and Russian-language content revealed substantial differences: at least half of the articles published on the Hebrew site did not appear in the Russian version. In addition, visual markers of religious identity were far less prominent in the Russian edition; for example, images depicting men wearing kippot and women with head coverings were relatively rare. Similarly, the Russian version included articles featuring representatives of opposition parties that were absent from the Hebrew site at the time of analysis. Taken together, these findings suggest a strategy of moderating ideological signaling and a deliberate editorial effort to maintain as politically neutral a profile as possible. It is also possible that respondents, most of whom positioned themselves on the center-right or right of the political spectrum, did not perceive Arutz Sheva as being significantly more right-wing than themselves.

Table 4. Identification of Russian-language media outlets as right-wing*

Which Russian-language media outlets do you consider to be right-wing? (Multiple responses permitted)

	No	Yes
Channel 9 (TV channel/website)	80%	20%
RTVI channel	96%	4%
Radio KAN REKA	94%	6%
Radio Rishon	99%	1%
Radio Luchshee	99%	1%
Novosti Nedeli newspaper	98%	2%
Vesty website	94%	6%
NEWSru website	98%	2%
Detaly website	99%	1%
Arutz Sheva website	94%	6%
MigNews website	99%	1%
Strana website	99%	1%
ISRAland website	98%	2%
Cursor website	99%	1%
Other	97%	3%
Don't know	69%	

* Given the small cell sizes, these percentages should be interpreted with caution. Confidence intervals for these cells are presented in Table C in Appendix 1.

The empirical findings provide full support for Hypothesis 1: Russian-language media outlets exhibit high levels of ideological ambiguity and a lack of clear political identification, with one notable exception—Channel 9, which was identified as right-wing by 20% of respondents. Nevertheless, a measurement limitation should be acknowledged: because the question assessed identification with the right only, rather than ideological positioning along the full left–right spectrum, the findings do not permit conclusions regarding whether these outlets are perceived as left-wing. Future research that extends the measurement to the full left–right ideological axis may reveal additional patterns of political classification that were not captured in the present study.

Trust in Media Outlets

Table 5. Levels of Trust in Russian-Language Media Outlets

	Very high	Fairly high	Fairly low	Very low	No trust at all	Positive-Negative balance	Familiar but no opinion	Not familiar	Percentage with low or no hostility among those familiar with the outlet
RTVI channel	2.00%	6.70%	7.40%	12.80%	16.90%	**-28.40%**	27.10%	27.20%	55.80%
Radio Rishon	2.80%	5.60%	9.30%	9.30%	14.10%	**-24.30%**	22.30%	36.60%	63.10%
Radio KAN REKA	3.40%	9.70%	9.70%	8.40%	10.70%	**-15.70%**	31.00%	20.70%	63.30%
Radio Luchshee	3.10%	12.30%	9.50%	5.30%	9.20%	**-8.60%**	21.00%	39.70%	65.60%
Vesty website	2.30%	12.50%	11.50%	9.00%	12.30%	**-18.00%**	26.70%	25.70%	62.20%
Novosti Nedeli newspaper	1.60%	5.90%	8.80%	4.80%	9.80%	**-15.90%**	24.10%	44.90%	59.90%
Detaly website	2.50%	8.40%	10.20%	6.20%	10.20%	**-15.70%**	18.70%	43.90%	63%
NEWSru website	3.80%	13.80%	12.50%	6.40%	11.20%	**-12.50%**	22.80%	29.70%	64.20%

	Very high	Fairly high	Fairly low	Very low	No trust at all	Positive-Negative balance	Familiar but no opinion	Not familiar	Percentage with low or no hostility among those familiar with the outlet
MigNews website	1.30%	5.30%	7.20%	5.90%	9.00%	**-15.50%**	20.00%	51.30%	61.80%
Artuz Sheva website	1.10%	5.10%	9.20%	6.20%	10.00%	**-19.20%**	21.60%	46.40%	60.70%
Cursor website	1.80%	5.40%	5.90%	4.90%	9.20%	**-12.80%**	20.00%	52.80%	60.80%
Strana website	1.10%	3.80%	5.70%	4.40%	8.50%	**-13.70%**	16.40%	60.00%	65.10%
ISRAland website	1.50%	4.30%	5.90%	4.40%	9.20%	**-13.70%**	15.10%	59.70%	63.10%
Channel 9	5.50%	24.90%	16.80%	16.50%	12.40%	**-15.30%**	16.50%	7.40%	77.10%

The survey data indicates that levels of trust in Israeli Russian-language media outlets are relatively low. Even Channel 9, the leading outlet in terms

of consumption, is perceived as highly or very highly trusted by only 30.4% of respondents. It is followed by NEWSru (17.6%), with Radio Luchshee ranking third (15.4%).

Notably, none of the Russian-language media outlets exhibits a positive net trust score. The outlets with the most favorable trust balances are Radio Luchshee (-8.6%), NEWSru (-12.5%), and Cursor (-12.8%). The outlets with the most negative trust balances are RTVI (-28.4%) and Radio Rishon (-24.3%). Even Channel 9, the most prominent and widely recognized media outlet among Russian speakers, exhibits a negative trust balance (-15.3%). On the one hand, it enjoys the highest levels of trust among all the outlets examined; on the other, it is also the subject of considerable distrust. This pattern suggests that, despite its dominant position, it remains a contested media outlet.

The findings point to a critical and discerning audience characterized by complex patterns of media consumption. The fact that consumption persists despite relatively low levels of trust indicates that the role of media extends beyond the provision of reliable information to encompass social, cultural, and psychological functions. Moreover, the gap between high levels of familiarity and consistently negative trust balances suggests that media use is shaped not only by trust, but also by factors such as accessibility, language, and habitual consumption. Finally, the distribution of media use reflects a fragmented market structure, characterized by a small number of dominant brands alongside a “long tail” of niche outlets.

Hostility toward media outlets

The hostility data present a different picture. Only a small proportion of respondents reported high or very high levels of hostility, ranging from 4.6% toward Strana to 11.1% toward Channel 9. Although hostility tends to increase slightly as familiarity with a media outlet rises, the relationship is weak and does not reach statistical significance. Across all outlets, more than 55% of respondents familiar with them reported either low levels of hostility or no hostility at all.

Channel 9 stands out in this regard: approximately 77% of respondents reported either no hostility or only minimal hostility toward the channel. It is followed by Radio Luchshee (approximately 66%) and Strana (just over 65%). At the other end of the spectrum, RTVI records the lowest share of respondents reporting low or no hostility, at slightly below 56%.

Table 6. Hostility Levels Toward Russian-Language Media Outlets

	Very high	Fairly high	Fairly low	Very low	No hostility at all	High-Low balance	Familiar but no opinion	Not familiar
RTVI channel	5.60%	5.30%	8.50%	5.10%	30.00%	-32.70%	23.80%	21.80%
Radio Rishon	2.80%	3.60%	6.70%	5.60%	32.00%	-37.90%	19.50%	29.80%
Radio KAN REKA	1.80%	4.40%	6.90%	7.20%	37.50%	-45.40%	23.80%	18.40%
Radio Luchshee	2.60%	3.10%	6.60%	5.70%	32.80%	-39.40%	17.40%	31.80%
Vesty website	2.60%	4.90%	7.50%	5.60%	34.10%	-39.70%	21.10%	24.10%
Novosti Nedeli newspaper	2.30%	4.40%	5.90%	4.30%	36.60%	-40.10%	18.70%	27.90%
Detaly website	2.10%	4.60%	6.40%	4.60%	26.70%	-31.00%	15.40%	40.20%
NEWSru website	2.60%	4.40%	6.40%	6.20%	31.80%	-37.40%	17.70%	30.80%
MigNews website	2.10%	3.30%	7.40%	3.80%	23.60%	-29.40%	15.40%	44.60%
Artuz Sheva website	2.50%	4.30%	6.90%	4.40%	25.10%	-29.60%	16.60%	40.30%
Cursor website	2.30%	4.10%	5.30%	4.30%	23.80%	-27.00%	15.10%	45.30%
Strana website	1.60%	3.00%	6.20%	5.10%	22.00%	-28.70%	13.30%	48.90%
ISRAland website	2.30%	2.50%	6.60%	3.80%	21.30%	-26.90%	13.80%	49.80%
Channel 9	3.60%	7.50%	11.60%	9.80%	49.20%	-59.40%	12.10%	6.20%

Overall, hostility toward Russian-language media outlets is not particularly high. On average, approximately 30.5% of respondents report no hostility at all toward the outlets examined, while only about 2.6% report very high levels of hostility. These findings are consistent, among other things, with the literature on selective exposure and avoidance. According to cognitive dissonance theory, individuals tend to select content that aligns with their pre-existing attitudes and avoid dissonant content. Consequently, potential antagonists are less frequently exposed to media that contradicts their views, thereby reducing the contribution of hostile perceptions to the overall measure (Festinger, 1957; Garrett, 2009; Hart et al., 2009).

Spearman's and Kendall's rank correlation coefficients were used to examine the relationship between levels of hostility toward media outlets and levels of trust in them (see Table D in Appendix 1). The findings reveal considerable variation across media outlets. While statistically significant positive correlations were identified for some outlets (Spearman ≈ 0.06–0.30; Kendall ≈ 0.02–0.20), for others the relationship was weak or not statistically significant. Where such a relationship exists, it indicates that as the value of one variable increases, the other also tends to increase, albeit modestly. Weak negative Kendall correlations were observed for NEWSru and Channel 9; however, these were not statistically significant. Relatively strong correlation coefficients were found for Strana, ISRAland, MigNews, Cursor, Arutz Sheva, and Novosti Nedeli.

The presence of a positive correlation between trust and hostility is a relatively unusual finding in the literature, which typically reports a negative correlation between these measures. One possible interpretation is brand-level polarization: certain media outlets may elicit strong emotional responses characterized simultaneously by high trust and high hostility. Additional explanations include respondents' limited familiarity with some outlets, leading them to assign low scores on both measures, as well as a high proportion of "no opinion" responses, which may influence correlation patterns.

The outlets exhibiting the strongest correlations are Strana, which shows the highest positive correlation (0.30 based on Spearman's coefficient and 0.19 based on Kendall's coefficient); ISRAland, which also demonstrates a relatively high correlation (0.29 and 0.20, respectively); and Cursor, MigNews, Arutz Sheva, and the Novosti Nedeli newspaper, which show similar correlations (0.23–0.24 based on Spearman's coefficient). These findings indicate that, for these outlets, the inverse correlation between hostility and trust is strongest and most robust, even after applying a conservative statistical correction.

The weakest correlations were observed for NEWSru and Channel 9. Kendall's coefficient indicated a weak negative correlation (−0.04) in both cases, which did not reach statistical significance. Radio KAN REKA, Radio Rishon, and Vesty likewise exhibited only weak correlations. Although some of these relationships were significant in the initial analysis (Spearman ≈ 0.10–0.11), they did not remain significant after Bonferroni correction and should therefore be interpreted with caution.

Levels of hostility by political orientation

An analysis of average levels of hostility toward Russian-language media outlets by political orientation (see Table E in Appendix 1) revealed no pronounced differences across most groups. The hostility scale ranged from 0 (no hostility at all) to 4 (very high hostility), and mean scores were relatively low across most outlets, indicating generally moderate levels of hostility. A partial exception was observed for RTVI, Channel 9, and Cursor, which elicited somewhat higher levels of hostility among respondents identifying with the political left. However, even in these cases, the differences between groups remained modest.

The standard deviation of the political orientation variable (SD = 1.15) indicates a moderate degree of ideological dispersion within the sample. Table 7 presents Spearman correlation coefficients between ideological positioning and levels of hostility toward different media outlets. All coefficients are positive and range from 0.098 to 0.296, indicating weak to

moderately low positive correlations. Accordingly, the more ideologically defined respondents' political orientations are, the higher their levels of hostility toward media outlets tend to be.

An examination of the relationship between political orientation and hostility reveals clear patterns of polarization. While outlets such as Novosti Nedeli and RTVI exhibit relatively strong correlations (0.296 and 0.274, respectively), suggesting a substantial influence of political orientation on audience perceptions, the correlations for Channel 9 and Detaly are negligible (below 0.12). In other words, hostility toward Channel 9 and Detaly appears largely unrelated to respondents' political orientation. For most other outlets, the coefficients fall within the 0.15–0.26 range, reflecting a moderate correlation between political identity and hostility.

A further noteworthy finding concerns respondents who identified with the political center and those who responded "don't know." These groups sometimes exhibited the lowest levels of hostility, yet in other cases reported relatively high levels. For example, hostility toward Strana among these respondents reached 1.25, exceeding even the levels recorded among respondents at the ideological extremes. This pattern suggests greater variability and less consistent patterns of hostility among these groups.

Table 7. Correlations Between Trust in Media Outlets and Political Orientation

Media outlet	Spearman's Correlation: Between Trust and Hostility	Spearman's Correlation: Hostility and Political Orientation	Spearman's Correlation: Trust and Political Orientation
Channel 9	0.06	0.098	0.038
Radio KAN REKA	0.13	0.259	0.024
Radio Rishon	0.17	0.205	0.02
Radio Luchshee	0.21	0.256	-0.05
RTVI channel	0.14	0.274	-0.031
Vesty website	0.09	0.22	-0.045

Media outlet	Spearman's Correlation: Between Trust and Hostility	Spearman's Correlation: Hostility and Political Orientation	Spearman's Correlation: Trust and Political Orientation
NEWSru website	0.08	0.159	0.004
Detaly website	0.15	0.12	-0.091
Arutz Sheva website	0.22	0.214	0.075
MigNews website	0.28	0.159	-0.02
Strana website	0.39	0.158	-0.048
ISRAland website	0.32	0.175	-0.197
Cursor website	0.28	0.176	-0.143
Novosti Nedeli newspaper	0.32	0.296	-0.18

In examining the mean levels of trust in media outlets (see Table 8), it emerges that certain media outlets consistently receive relatively high levels of trust across the entire political spectrum. The most prominent among these are Radio KAN REKA and Radio Rishon, which are perceived as reliable sources of information regardless of political orientation. Channel 9 also enjoys relatively broad-based trust, although to a less pronounced extent.

However, some media outlets generate marked differences between political groups, with high levels of trust on one side of the political spectrum and low levels of trust on the other (see Table 8). Cursor provides the clearest example of this pattern, with a trust level of 2.43 among respondents identifying with the left, compared to 1.08 among those identifying with the right. A similar pattern is evident for ISRAland: 1.89 among left-wing respondents versus 0.91 among right-wing respondents. Strana shows a similar but more moderate trend: 0.95 among right-wing identifiers compared to 2.0 among those identifying with the center-left. In addition, Vesty enjoys relatively high trust among left-leaning respondents (2.29), while NEWSru receives high levels of trust among center-left respondents (2.64). Overall, both of these outlets receive higher trust ratings from the left side of the ideological spectrum (see Table 5).

It is noteworthy that among immigrants from the former Soviet Union who identify with the political right, Arutz Sheva does not receive high levels of trust (1.59 among center-right respondents and 1.43 among right-wing respondents). By contrast, two outlets that receive relatively high levels of trust among center-right respondents are Radio Luchshee (2.24) and NEWSru (2.05). Among centrist respondents, high levels of trust are observed toward both radio stations—Radio KAN REKA and Radio Rishon—each receiving an average score of 2.07.

Table 8. Trust Scores for Russian-Language Media Outlets by Political Orientation*

	Right	Center-right	Center	Center-left	Left	Don't know
Radio Rishon	1.61	2	2.07	1.57	1.9	1.92
Radio Luchshee	1.6	2.24	1.77	2.88	1.4	1.81
Novosti Nedeli newspaper	1.09	1.66	1.65	2.5	1.67	1.58
Vesty website	1.33	1.71	1.65	1.71	2.29	2.14
NEWSru website	1.53	2.05	1.77	2.64	1.91	2
Detaly website	1.23	1.7	1.85	2.27	2.2	1.58
Arutz Sheva website	1.43	1.59	1.41	1.75	1	1.18
MigNews website	1.13	1.64	1.57	1.6	1.43	1.35
Strana website	0.95	1.47	1.53	2	1.17	1.5
ISRAland website	0.91	1.56	1.61	2.67	1.89	1
Cursor website	1.08	1.69	1.59	2.6	2.43	1
RTVI channel	1.07	1.39	1.61	1.47	0.92	1.24
Radio KAN REKA	1.61	2	2.07	1.57	1.9	1.92
Channel 9	1.44	1.42	1.6	1.83	1.32	1.87

* The figures represent the mean trust scores for the media outlets on a scale ranging from 1 (no trust at all) to 5 (complete trust).

However, the analysis found no statistically significant correlation between the political positioning of immigrants from the former Soviet Union and their levels of trust in Russian-language media outlets. In terms of Spearman

correlations, this indicates that despite variation in political orientation, there is no consistent correlation between respondents' political positioning and their trust in specific media outlets. Most correlations are close to zero or very weak, ranging from −0.197 to +0.075. Accordingly, Hypothesis 3 is only partially confirmed:

Hypothesis 3.1 (Trust) The hypothesis is supported. The findings confirm that levels of trust in Russian-language media outlets are lower than the long-term average in the Jewish sector (34%). Indeed, even Channel 9, the leading and most widely known outlet among Russian speakers, received high or very high trust ratings from only 30.4% of respondents. Levels of trust in all other Russian-language media outlets are considerably lower. Moreover, none of the examined outlets demonstrates a positive net trust balance. In every case, without exception, the proportion of respondents expressing distrust exceeds the proportion expressing trust.

Hypothesis 3.2 (Hostility) The hypothesis is supported. High levels of hostility (fairly high and very high) were reported by only a small proportion of the total sample, ranging from 4.6% toward Strana to 11.1% toward Channel 9. On average, only 2.6% of respondents expressed very high hostility toward the media outlets examined. Across all outlets, more than 55% of respondents familiar with them reported low levels of hostility or no hostility at all. Channel 9 recorded the highest proportion in this regard, with approximately 77% of respondents reporting either no hostility or only low levels of hostility toward it.

Hypothesis 3.3 (Correlation) The hypothesis was not supported. It predicted a negative correlation between trust and hostility, whereby higher levels of trust in a media outlet would correspond to lower levels of hostility toward it. However, the findings reveal the opposite pattern: for most outlets, statistically significant positive correlations were found, indicating that trust and hostility tend to increase together rather than move in opposite directions. This anomalous finding is discussed in detail in the conclusion section.

Summary and Conclusions

The present study examined the Russian-language media field in Israel through three main dimensions: exposure and consumption, trust and hostility, and ideological positioning. It sought to determine whether Russian-language media in Israel functions primarily as ideologically right-wing media, reflecting patterns identified in the international literature (Benkler et al., 2018; Jamieson & Cappella, 2008), or rather as instrumental ethnic media focused on community service, language preservation, and cultural mediation (Matsaganis et al., 2011).

The findings suggest that the dominant model in this field is a hybrid ethnic-commercial model: a combination of community-based linguistic and identity needs alongside significant commercial constraints. Unlike mainstream Israeli media, where political identity may itself become a brand (e.g., Channel 14 or Haaretz), Russian-language media outlets are characterized by ideological fluidity and a functional orientation centered on survival and adaptation. Community-service goals, language accessibility, and market pressures all moderate political-ideological signaling and may even encourage the maintenance of deliberate ambiguity.

The findings reveal three central patterns. First, the dominance of Channel 9 (40.6% exposure) alongside a digital "long tail," with 25.8% of respondents reporting consumption of sources outside the list of established brands. According to the Long Tail model (Anderson, 2006), markets are structured around a small number of dominant players alongside a large number of niche outlets that collectively account for a substantial share of consumption. Second, a pronounced generational divide and clear processes of media assimilation: consumption of Russian-language media declines steadily among younger age groups (46.3% among those aged 25–34 compared with 96.8% among those aged 75+), suggesting that Russian-language media serves as a transitional mechanism for younger generations while remaining a stable information source for older immigrants and recent arrivals. Third, pronounced ideological ambiguity (69% selected "don't know" when asked to identify right-wing outlets, while only 20% identified Channel 9 as

right-wing), combined with a dual pattern of low trust (no outlet achieved a positive trust balance) and low hostility (an average of only 2.6% reported very high hostility). This pattern coexists with localized polarization (e.g., toward Cursor and ISRAland) alongside relatively broad-based trust in Radio KAN REKA and Radio Rishon.

Evaluation of Hypotheses

The research question was fully addressed in the dimension of exposure and consumption, and adequately addressed in the dimension of trust–hostility. In the ideological positioning dimension, the analysis was limited to identifying outlets as right-wing—a limitation that must be taken into account when interpreting the findings.

Hypothesis 1 (Ideological ambiguity): Fully supported

A large majority of respondents (69%) refrained from assigning Russian-language media outlets a right-wing political identity. Only Channel 9 was identified as right-wing by 20% of respondents. Even Arutz Sheva, widely perceived as right-wing in the broader Israeli media landscape, is rarely identified as such among Russian speakers (only 6%). It should be noted that only right-wing identification was measured; future research should expand this to the full ideological spectrum.

Hypothesis 2 (Differences by age and immigration tenure): Fully supported

A near-linear gradient by age was found: among respondents aged 25–34, only 46.3% consume Russian-language media, compared to 96.8% among those aged 75+, a gap of 50.5%. In addition, consumption among recent immigrants (2022–2024) is significantly higher than among long-established immigrants (85.7% vs. 70.1%).

Hypothesis 3 (Trust and hostility): Substantially Supported, but Only Partially Confirmed

3.1 (Trust): Fully supported—levels of trust in Russian-language media outlets are lower than the long-term average for the Jewish population (34%) across all outlets, without exception. Although Channel 9 leads in both consumption and familiarity, only 30.4% of respondents report high or very high levels of trust in the channel, and not a single Russian-language media outlet exhibits a positive trust balance.

3.2 (Hostility): Fully supported—levels of hostility are generally moderate and non-extreme.

3.3 (Correlation): Not supported—in contrast to the expected negative relationship between trust and hostility, weak to moderate positive correlations were found in most outlets.

The most anomalous finding is the positive correlation between trust and hostility across most media outlets, albeit weak to moderate. This contradicts theoretical expectations of a negative relationship, as derived from the Hostile Media Effect theory (Vallone et al., 1985) and Affective Polarization theories (Iyengar et al., 2012). In the literature, trust and hostility are typically conceptualized as opposing poles: trust defines the boundaries of the trusted in-group ("we"), whereas hostility marks the distrusted out-group ("they").

The following section presents three possible interpretations, examined in light of the available data.

Brand-level polarization: Media outlets that generate high levels of emotional engagement may elicit polarized responses among different audience segments—high trust among those who identify with them and high hostility among those who reject them. Aggregating the entire sample combines these two emotional responses, thereby producing a positive correlation. The observed data patterns support this interpretation. The media outlets that exhibit the strongest positive correlations between trust and hostility—Strana, ISRAland, and Cursor websites—are also the outlets for which the largest differences in levels of trust were found across political

groups. However, it is also possible that the correlation is partly driven by the structure of the data itself, and this should be acknowledged as a limitation of the study.

Methodological "no-opinion floor effect": Respondents unfamiliar with a media outlet may assign low scores for both trust and hostility. This creates a concentration of low trust and low hostility responses, which inflates the correlation coefficient and produces a technical positive correlation (see Table 6).

A supplementary analysis excluding respondents who selected "no opinion" or "not familiar" still produced positive correlations, many of which were even stronger. This weakens the methodological explanation and suggests that the positive correlation is not merely a derivative of variance compression; rather, it reflects a substantive pattern among engaged media consumers.

Ambivalence toward ethnic media: Unlike the broader media environment, in which media outlets are often clearly perceived as "ours" or "theirs," Russian-language ethnic media may evoke an ambivalent response among consumers. On the one hand, these outlets elicit trust rooted in linguistic accessibility, a sense of communal belonging, and reliance on them as sources of information in one's native language. On the other hand, they may also evoke hostility stemming from frustration with content quality, suspicions regarding vested interests or implicit political agendas, or the perception that an outlet does not adequately represent the needs of the community. Such patterns of ambivalence, characterized by simultaneous attachment to and criticism of community institutions ("love-hate relationship"), have been documented in the literature (Remennick, 2007). The finding that a majority of Russian speakers consume Russian-language media (71%), even when their trust in these outlets is limited, suggests that the role of these media extends beyond the provision of reliable information, and also encompasses needs related to language, belonging, and habit. This reality, in which consumers remain dependent on media outlets that simultaneously evoke trust and suspicion, creates fertile ground for ambivalence.

An additional and unexpected finding is that an exceptionally high proportion of respondents (69%) selected "don't know" when asked to identify which media outlets are considered right-wing. This finding may be understood as reflecting the interaction of two forces operating simultaneously. The first is strategic ambiguity on the part of media producers: in a limited ethno-linguistic market, economic considerations take precedence over ideological considerations, and explicit political branding may undermine the existing audience base rather than expand it. Accordingly, editors and channel owners may consciously adopt ambiguity as a strategy that enables them to appeal to the widest possible audience.

The second force is functional consumption: for many consumers, Russian-language media outlets do not serve as a political compass, but rather as a cultural and linguistic conduit. When the motivation for consumption is instrumental (language comprehension, information regarding rights, nostalgia), the question of a media outlet's political identity becomes irrelevant to the consumer.

From the perspective of political orientation, the data reveals an asymmetry between the two measures. Although no significant correlation was found between respondents' ideological positioning and their levels of trust in media outlets, consistent positive correlations were found in relation to hostility. In other words, the more strongly respondents position themselves ideologically, the higher their levels of hostility toward media outlets. This pattern is particularly evident in relation to the Novosti Nedeli newspaper and RTVI, whereas Channel 9 demonstrates the weakest correlation. At the same time, localized points of polarization were identified in relation to trust: the Cursor and ISRAland websites exhibit substantial differences in levels of trust across political groups, whereas Radio KAN REKA and Radio Rishon enjoy stable, broad-based trust across the political spectrum.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The discussion of the implications of ideological ambiguity in Israel's Russian-language media market is grounded in a unique empirical

configuration that combines structural concentration with the absence of clear political positioning. On the one hand, the market is characterized by a high degree of concentration, with a single dominant actor—Channel 9—whose exposure levels far exceed those of Radio KAN REKA, the second most widely consumed outlet. On the other hand, the remainder of the market is fragmented across a range of digital platforms, including Vesty, NEWSru, and RTVI. Despite the dominance of Channel 9, the system as a whole is characterized by ideological ambiguity, making it difficult to identify clear political orientations among the various outlets.

These findings suggest that ideological ambiguity should not be interpreted as an absence of influence. Rather, it appears to constitute a strategic mode of operation that enables media outlets to serve as a broad communal infrastructure within a small ethno-linguistic field. In this environment, commercial constraints encourage the avoidance of explicit partisan branding that could narrow the target audience, thereby leading the media to moderate political tensions rather than amplify them.

From the perspective of the public sphere, this means that consumers are exposed to the Israeli public agenda through a media system that is familiar to a very large proportion of immigrants from the former Soviet Union—particularly through Channel 9 and Radio KAN REKA—yet one that appears to refrain from offering a clear ideological compass. This ambiguity may help reduce intra-community polarization, but it may also contribute to a form of *discursive fragmentation*, in which assessments of credibility are based more on language and group affiliation than on an understanding of competing political interests.

In the context of integration processes, Russian-language media functions as a kind of "revolving door" that is essential for the absorption of successive waves of immigration. The findings indicate that media consumption among immigrants who arrived in Israel after 2000 stands at 85.7%, substantially higher than among immigrants who arrived between 1989 and 2000 (70.1%). In other words, these media outlets serve as a critical primary agent of socialization—an instrumental gateway into Israeli society. Despite the

pronounced generational divide in the consumption of Russian-language media, its relevance is renewed with each successive wave of immigration, as it provides newcomers with an anchor of information and a sense of belonging before they potentially transition to Hebrew-language media.

Patterns of trust and hostility within this market reflect a skeptical and decentralized form of media consumption. Although no media outlet achieved a positive net trust balance, levels of hostility are remarkably low, suggesting a functional mode of consumption largely devoid of deep ideological sentiment. This phenomenon may be explained in terms of *brand-level polarization*, whereby the relationship between trust and hostility is not necessarily negative, as certain media brands evoke strong emotional responses in opposite directions regardless of their position on the right–left spectrum. Finally, the "long tail" finding—according to which 25.8% of respondents consume media outlets not included among the major brands—highlights the shift toward alternative and niche channels, such as Telegram channels and media outlets operating through social media platforms.

In conclusion, Russian-language media in Israel constitutes a stabilizing social mechanism that mitigates intra-community tensions and polarization through the adoption of an ideological ambiguity strategy. This media sphere serves as a vital informational safety net, enabling recent immigrants to undergo a gradual process of adaptation to Israeli society, while for the older population it functions as a central anchor for preserving connection and a sense of belonging within the public sphere.

Research Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

Methodologically, the study is limited by its reliance on surveys conducted by different research institutes and the use of online panels, which may introduce sampling bias. In addition, the measurement is susceptible to self-reporting biases and to respondents' difficulties in defining their political orientation, as reflected in the high proportion of "don't know" responses. To deepen the findings, future qualitative research is recommended to examine the motivations underlying the selection of information sources and the complex

relationship between trust and hostility. In parallel, comparative content analysis could help determine whether political ambiguity is embedded in the media content itself, while the use of browsing data could validate actual patterns of media consumption. Finally, future studies should expand the measurement to a full bipolar political spectrum (right–left) in order to identify patterns that were not captured by the current measurement.

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Appendix 1

Table A: Demographic Breakdown

Variable	Category	Study 1	Study 2	Study 3
Gender	Men	46%	49%	46%
	Women	54%	51%	54%
Age	**Group 1**	18–30 (12%)	18–24 (4%)	18–25 (3%)
	Group 2	31–40 (27%)	25–34 (17%)	26–35 (14%)
	Group 3	41–50 (25%)	35–44 (22%)	36–45 (32%)
	Group 4	51–64 (22%)	45–54 (16%)	46–55 (21%)
	Group 5	65+ (14%)	55–64 (16%)	56–67 (11%)
	Group 6	–	65–74 (14%)	68+ (19%)
	Group 7	–	75+ (11%)	–
Area of Residence	North	13%	13%	18%
	Haifa	18%	20%	15%
	Central Israel	26%	25%	27%
	Tel Aviv	18%	18%	12%
	Jerusalem	5%	4%	6%
	South	19%	18%	19%
	Judea & Samaria	1%	3%	1%
	Shfela (Lowlands)	–	–	2%

Table B: Patterns of consumption of Russian-language media

Do you consume information from one or more of the following media outlets?	Channel 9	40.6%
	Radio KAN REKA	19.4%
	Channel 9 website	15.7%
	Vesty website	14.3%
	NEWSru website	13.3%
	RTVI channel	12.4%
	IsraelInfo website	11.3%
	Radio Rishon	8.2%
	Radio Luchshee	8.0%
	MigNews website	7.9%
	Zahav.ru website	7.8%
	Detaly website	5.8%
	Novosti Nedeli newspaper	4.1%
	Another Russian-language media outlet	25.8%
	Do not consume information from a Russian-language media outlet	28.4%
	Total	223%

Table C: Confidence Intervals for Small Cells

Media Outlet	n	%	Confidence Interval 95%
Radio Pervoe	39	7.80%	[5.8%, 10.5%]
Radio Luchshee	38	7.60%	[5.6%, 10.3%]
Detaly website	28	5.60%	[3.9%, 8.0%]
Arutz Sheva website	38	7.60%	[5.6%, 10.3%]
Strana website	37	7.40%	[5.4%, 10.0%]
ISRAland website	20	4.00%	[2.6%, 6.1%]

* Six media outlets were identified as small cells (n<30 or %<10%)

Table D: Correlations Between Hostility Toward Media Outlets and Trust in Them

Rank	Media Outlet	Spearman	Kendall	Spearman p-value	Kendall p-value	Bonferroni Correction Status
1	Strana website	0.3	0.19	p<0.001***	p<0.001***	both
2	ISRAland website	0.29	0.2	p<0.001***	p<0.001***	both
3	MigNews website	0.24	0.13	p<0.001***	p<0.001***	both
4	Cursor website	0.24	0.14	p<0.001***	p<0.001***	both
5	Arutz Sheva website	0.23	0.14	p<0.001***	p<0.001***	both
6	Novosti Nedeli	0.23	0.12	p<0.001***	p<0.001***	both
7	Radio Luchshee	0.19	0.06	p<0.001***	p=0.031*	Spearman only
8	Detaly website	0.18	0.06	p<0.001***	p=0.031*	Spearman only
9	RTVI channel	0.14	0.04	p<0.001***	p=0.150 (n.s.)	Spearman only
10	Radio Rishon	0.11	0.03	p=0.007**	p=0.283 (n.s.)	Not robust
11	Radio KAN REKA	0.11	0.02	p=0.007**	p=0.473 (n.s.)	Not robust
12	Vesty website	0.1	0.02	p=0.013*	p=0.473 (n.s.)	Not robust
13	NEWSru website	0.06	-0.04	p=0.138 (n.s.)	p=0.150 (n.s.)	Not significant
14	Channel 9	0.06	-0.04	p=0.138 (n.s.)	p=0.150 (n.s.)	Not significant

*** p < .05 = significant before correction; ** p < .01 = highly significant before correction; *** p < .001 = very highly significant before correction; n.s. = not statistically significant.**

Correction robustness key:

Bonferroni (both) = remains significant after Bonferroni correction in both measures (strong and robust relationship);
Spearman only = remains significant after correction only for Spearman's coefficient (partially robust relationship);
Not robust = does not remain significant after the conservative correction (although significant in the uncorrected test);
Not significant = not statistically significant even in the uncorrected test ($p > .05$).

Significance note: With $N = 610$, Spearman correlation coefficients of approximately **$\rho \geq .11$** are significant at the **$p < .01$** level, while coefficients of approximately **$\rho \geq .08$** are significant at the **$p < .05$** level. The weak negative correlations (**$\rho \approx -.04$**) are not statistically significant according to either measure. A total of 28 correlation tests were conducted (14 media outlets × 2 coefficients), increasing the risk of Type I errors. A conservative Bonferroni correction (**adjusted $\alpha = .05/28 \approx .0018$**) was therefore applied as an especially stringent safeguard. Despite this stringent correction, the six media outlets exhibiting the strongest correlations (**$\rho \geq .23$**) remained significant according to both coefficients, indicating the robustness of the findings.

Table E. Mean Levels of Hostility Toward Russian-Language Media Outlets by Political Orientation

	Right	Center-right	Center	Center-left	Left	Don't know
Radio Rishon	0.79	0.63	1.05	0.36	0.64	0.85
Vesty website	0.97	0.6	0.95	0.82	1.08	0.65
NEWSru website	0.94	0.72	0.83	0.55	1.08	0.96
Radio KAN REKA	0.68	0.52	0.86	0.62	0.82	1
RTVI channel	0.92	0.9	1.39	1.14	1.62	1.16
Radio Luchshee	0.66	0.54	1.02	0.33	1	1.21
Novosti Nedeli newspaper	0.75	0.58	1.14	0.67	1.18	1.08
Detaly website	1.09	0.72	0.9	0.47	1.13	1
Arutz Sheva website	0.72	0.89	1.26	0.79	0.91	1
MigNews website	0.96	0.77	1.11	0.4	0.8	1.12
Strana website	0.87	0.74	0.96	0.36	1	1.25
ISRAland website	0.93	0.7	1.07	0.67	0.89	1.12
Cursor website	0.9	0.72	1.07	0.22	1.5	1.18
Channel 9	1.16	1.13	1.08	0.92	1.76	1.73

Appendix 2

Midgam Survey

1. How frequently do you consume information from Russian-language media outlets?

1. Every day
2. Three to four times a week
3. Once or twice a week
4. Less than once a week

2. Do you consume information from one or more of the following media outlets? (More than one answer may be selected)

1. Channel 9
2. RTVI channel
3. Radio KAN REKA
4. Radio Pervoe
5. Radio Luchshee
6. Vesty website
7. Channel 9 website
8. NEWSru website
9. Detaly website
10. MigNews website
11. IsraelInfo website
12. Zahav.ru website
13. Novosti Nedeli newspaper
14. Another Russian-language media outlet

15. I do not consume information from Russian-language media outlets

Gender

Responses	Total sample
Men	**49%**
Women	**51%**

Age

Responses	Total sample
18–24	4%
25–34	17%
35–44	22%
45–54	16%
55–64	16%
65–74	14%
75+	11%

Level of Education

Responses	Total sample
Elementary/partial secondary education	1%
Secondary education	11%
Post-secondary education	24%
Academic education	64%

Income Level

Responses	Total sample
Well below average	18%
Slightly below average	14%
Average	21%
Slightly above average	29%
Well above average	14%
Refuses to answer	4%

Period of Immigration

Responses	Total sample
1989–2000	90%
2001–2013	8%
2014–2018	1%
2022–2024	1%

Area of Residence

Responses	Total sample
Jerusalem	4%
North	13%
Haifa	19%
Central Israel	25%
Tel Aviv	18%
South	18%
Judea & Samaria	3%

Political Orientation

Responses	Total sample
Far Right	8%
Right	32%
Center-Right	24%
Center	23%
Center-Left	5%
Left	3%
Far Left	1%
Refused to answer	4%

Maagar Mochot Survey

Which Russian-language media outlets, in your opinion, are right-wing? (Response options were presented in random order; multiple responses were permitted.)

1. Channel 9 (TV channel/website)
2. RTVI channel
3. Radio KAN REKA
4. Radio Pervoe
5. Radio Luchshee
6. Novosti Nedeli newspaper
7. Vesty website
8. NEWSru website
9. Detaly website
10. Arutz Sheva website
11. MigNews website
12. Strana website
13. ISRAland website
14. Cursor website
15. Other
16. Don’t know

Gender

Responses	Total sample
Men	**46%**
Women	**54%**

Age

Responses	Total sample
18–24	12%
25–34	27%
35–44	25%
45–54	22%
55–64	14%
65–74	12%
75+	27%

Area of Residence

Responses	Total sample
North	13%
Haifa	18%
Central Israel	26%
Tel Aviv	18%
Jerusalem	5%
Judea & Samaria	1%
South	19%

Political Orientation

Responses	Total sample	Combined Percentages
Left	2%	8%
Center-Left	6%	
Center	29%	29%
Center-Right	23%	61%
Right	38%	
Undecided	2%	2%

PanelView Survey

To what extent do you trust each of the following media outlets?

Media Outlet	Very high	Fairly high	Fairly low	Very low	No trust at all	Familiar with the outlet, but no opinion (because I do not consume it)	Familiar with the outlet, but no opinion (although I consume it)	I am not familiar with this media outlet
Channel 9 (TV channel/ website)								
RTVI channel								
Radio KAN REKA								
Radio Pervoe								
Radio Luchshee								
Novosti Nedeli newspaper								
Vesty website								
NEWSru website								
Detaly website								
Detaly website								
Arutz Sheva website								
MigNews website								
Strana website								
Cursor website								

To what extent do you feel hostility toward each of the following media outlets?

Media Outlet	Very high	Fairly high	Fairly low	Very low	No trust at all	Familiar with the outlet, but no opinion (because I do not consume it)	Familiar with the outlet, but no opinion (although I consume it)	I am not familiar with this media outlet
Channel 9 (TV channel/ website)								
RTVI channel								
Radio KAN REKA								
Radio Pervoe								
Radio Luchshee								
Novosti Nedeli newspaper								
Vesty website								
NEWSru website								
Detaly website								
Detaly website								
Arutz Sheva website								
MigNews website								
Strana website								
Cursor website								

Gender

Responses	Total sample
Men	**41%**
Women	**59%**

Age

Responses	Total sample
18–25	1%
26–35	14%
36–45	44%
46–55	25%
56–67	11
68+	5%

Area of Residence

Responses	Total sample
North	18%
Haifa	15%
Central Israel	33%
Tel Aviv	8%
Jerusalem	6%
Judea & Samaria	1%
South	19%

Political Orientation

Responses	Total sample
Left	5%
Center-Left	6%
Center	27%
Center-Right	24%
Right	29%
Undecided	9%

Period of Immigration

Responses	Total sample
2000-1989	%71
2013-2001	%13
2018-2014	%8
2024-2022	%8

Level of Education

Responses	Total sample
Completed only a few years of schooling/Did not attend school	1%
Elementary/partial secondary education	2%
Secondary education	8%
Post-secondary education	20%
Bachelor's Degree	34%
Master's Degree	31%
Doctoral Degree	4%