

**DECONSTRUCTING THE FRAMES OF ARAB REFUGEES IN WESTERN MEDIA
DOCUMENTARIES CASA STUDY ON BBC NEWS AND BBC ARABIC**

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ABSTRACT: *This paper examines all documentaries shared and disparate narratives regarding Arab refugees migrating to the western countries. six major frames emerged from research analysis of the media coverage in documentaries: a humanizing frame, conflict frame, responsibility frame, Economic Consequences frame, security frame and, Suggested solutions frame. Also, researcher tend to analysis the documentaries through its semiotic visuals which differed in their Camera language, Color mode and Editing language. The research adopts framing and semiotic approaches in examining which frames were existent in western documentaries when framing of Arab refugees, among the various news frames, both channels compared the refugee situation in other countries, such as Germany, and Britain. The comparison always favored the latter. As per semiotics, BBC news tended to manipulate the truth of the lives of the refugees through posing their own agendas and perspectives in the production of their documentaries to come out looking more like a cinematic movie rather than a true reporting of real facts and stories. Whereas the BBC Arabic Documentaries tended to use more realistic and authentic treatment for their recordings coming out feeling like real events the viewers can relate to.*

KEYWORDS: Arab refugees- western documentaries – news framing – visual semiotic – BBC News- BBC Arabic

INTRODUCTION

The influx of refugees has taken a toll on the hosting countries. This is especially true regarding the fields of employment, education, health services, environment and security as well as the political and social atmosphere. This new reality has led to shedding a new light on an originally humanitarian issue, resulting in new social, political implications. It also has regional and global implications. Asylum seeking has become a contentious political topic, as seen in many an international, Arab and local media outlet, which do not present reliable and accurate information to their audience. In fact, misinformation and false narratives are rife, aggravating the issue. The best media representation of refugees is that of victims, depicting them in a more humanitarian light. On the other hand, the worst representation is that of invaders highlighting the threats accompanied with the sudden influx of refugees to the hosting communities. The media fails to address the myriads benefits these foreigners bring forth to the countries, such as the experiences of educated refugees, and diligent workers. As such, their positive contribution in their new communities is ignored.

An analysis of media reports about refugees would reveal the prevalence of “hate speech” directed against them. Politicians were able to use media as a tool to manipulate opinions of the public, transforming them from sympathizing with refugees to hating, and feeling threatened by their presence.

Statement of the Problem

The issue of refugees is one of the most complicated, pressing issues in the modern era. As a topic, it is one of the most tackled in the media lately, especially after the Arab Spring. The humanitarian aspect of the atrocious events related to conflicts and wars has always been the focus. Most refugees fleeing the struggle have found safe havens in local and global hosting communities. In 2015, the issue reached a tipping point with the increase of economic immigrants and refugees fleeing to the European Union mainly.

The problem of the research concerns the analysis of the messages conveyed in documentaries featuring Arab refugees, through studying the overt and subliminal messages conveyed by Western channels to their local and international audiences. The researcher selected BBC News and BBC Arabic, two of the most prestigious news European channels, to study the representation of Arab refugees in their documentary films. The study tackles films because they were judged to have a stronger effect on the audience than news, based on the former's use of filming techniques making the information they present more appealing.

Significance of the Study:

The issue of refuge is one of the most sensitive and important, yet widely ignored, issues in the western media. The majority of refugees has already suffered from oppression, discrimination and negligence in the Arab World. The media has been an active participant in their plight. It has largely failed to put their cause in the spotlight, or to promote the acceptance of the Other and raise awareness of their rights. It has also been directly or indirectly involved in incendiary discourse and attempts against them. In this light, the current study is significant with regards to the following points:

1. The current and important nature of the issue. Although a number of previous studies tackled the representation of refugees in western media, the current study is the first to address it in documentary films, especially those produced by BBC News and BBC Arabic.
2. The importance of identifying the subliminal messages conveyed covertly through the deliberate use of certain shots, filming angles and production.

Objectives of the Study:

1. Determining the most covered topics related to refugees, as well as their contexts.
2. Identifying voices addressing the issue of refugees, as well as determining the extent to which they assume primary roles in the coverage.
3. Determining the extent to which documentaries produced by BBC News and BBC Arabic have contributed to providing relevant information about refugees.
4. Identifying the difference, if found, between the representation of Arab refugees in documentaries produced by BBC News and BBC Arabic

METHODOLOGY

A. Method

This study was conducted using a quantitative content analysis method, by which a sample of documentary was collected and analyzed with the aim to determine how western documentary frame Arab Refugees in their coverage.

The textual and imagery content of documentaries was analyzed, in order to highlight how quotes and photos framed Arab refugees. The existence of quotes said by or about Arab refugees was questioned, and the inclusion of shots that feature Arab refugees were investigated in every documentary.

B. Research Questions:

1. What is the nationality of the refugees featured in the documentaries (Palestinian, Syrian, Iraqi...)?
2. In what light do the documentaries address the topic (positive –neutral—negative)?
3. How is the Arab refugee portrayed in the western media?
4. Who are the conflicting parties as depicted by the documentary films produced by BBC News and BBC Arabic?
5. What are the most utilized shots and angles in the documentaries under study? How are they significant?
6. What are the means of cutting and production used in the documentaries under study? How are they significant?
7. What is the significance of the color board used in the documentaries under study?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A. Framing

Framing has been defined by the scientific community as the strategy that media use in their habitual practice, to denote and give greater relevance to certain aspects of news events, while minimizing others. Entman defines framing as the "selection and emphasis of some aspects of a perceived reality" (Entman. 1993) The effects of framing represent a cross-disciplinary approach to research, originally rooted in different branches of human knowledge other than mass media studies, such as sociology and psychology

This study aims to examine which frames were existent in western documentaries when framing of Arab refugees, among the five news frames set by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000)—conflict, human interest, responsibility, and economic consequence.

B. Semiotics

As per visual framing, Messaris and Abraham indicate that the visual lends itself to the use of frames even more effectively than the text itself, due to its symbolic power. According to these authors, when there is a confrontation between the image and the word, the visual frames usually win. And this statement makes more sense when what is faced with the text is a photograph, since it, for its iconicity, almost always seems closer to the truth

According to Elena Palacios, of all studies based on framing, there is only 17% that analyse the visual component (E. Palacios. 2015)

Social Semiotics Theory in Visual Communication

Theo van Leeuwen's *Introducing Social Semiotics* (2005) is a significant introduction to the ways in which different aspects of modern society combine to create meaning. The semiotic resources surrounding man include obvious modes of communication such as language, gesture, images and music. van Leeuwen uses a wide variety of texts including photographs, advertisements, magazine pages and film stills to explain how meaning is created through complex semiotic interactions (van Leeuwen, T. 2005). Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) introduced the notion of "framing" in visual communication which refers to the "disconnection of the elements of a visual composition" when there are boundaries that separate different objects such as "frame-lines", pictorial framing devices – boundaries formed by the edge of a building, a tree, etc. – "white space between elements, discontinuities of color" (Kress, G. & van Leeuwen, T. 2006).

The present study seeks to prove that the social semiotic framework is able to provide a comprehensive account of the visual realization of metaphor and it also offers a cognitive explanation of how resources like camera positioning, color modes and visual composition acquire meanings (Feng & O'Halloran, 2013).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Refugee Crisis:

Although many studies indicate that social minorities like migrants are usually represented by the Western media in a negative and mostly prejudiced way, in the case of refugees, that representation seems to diverge. In this sense, Gregory P. Perreault and Newly Paul study the visual representation of Syrian refugees in particular, through the citizen journalism Facebook group: "Humans of New York". These authors, based on the analysis of 51 images, conclude that, in view of the supposed negative image of refugees offered by the media, in certain alternative pages such as "Humans of New York", which do not follow norms and routines traditional and dominant editorial lines, the Syrian refugee is mostly represented as a skilled subject, normalized and adapted to American society (G. Perreault and P. Newly. 2018)

The way Arab refugees were framed in the media in the countries to which they fled or the regions that could be affected by their influx was the main topic of a set of studies that are concerned with refugees from Arab countries that have witnessed political turmoil.

Documentary Films

The definition of a documentary film depends on its genre, mode, participants and the perspective of the filmmaker. A documentary is "a dramatized presentation of man's relation to his institutional life, 'film with a message,' as 'the communication, not of imagined things, but of real things only'" (Eitzen, 2010). The documentary films include four modes. The first one is the *participatory* mode, which embraces direct engagement between the filmmaker and the subject. The filmmaker becomes part of the documentary and the events being recorded (Nichols, 2001). The *poetic* mode deviates from the objective reality of a given situation or

people to percept at an inner truth that can only be understood by poetic manipulation. The *performative* mode allows the subjective reading of the audience. In the *expository* mode, “the Voice of God”, the narrator usually foregrounds verbal commentary and argumentative logic (Nichols, 2001).

Media Representations of Refugees

Historically, mainstream media have covered refugees in stereotypical ways, often portraying them as criminals and deviants who are different from the majority white population (Rettberg & Gajjala, 2016).

Gregory Perreault and Newly Paul 2019“ Narrative Framing of the Syrian Refugee Crisis in British Religious News” Four predominant narrative frames appear in the news stories on Syrian refugees. First, there was a humanizing frame that sought to rehabilitate the image of refugees in contrast to traditional media coverage. In other words, the coverage emphasized the human nature of the refugees by showing them in Western clothes and discussing near-universal concerns, such as family. This frame appeared seldomly in *bbc News* but was plentiful in *The Muslim News*. It did not appear at all in *Christian Today*. Second, there was a saviour frame in which the journalist served as the “hero” of the narrative and which placed refugees in the role of bystander or victim. Third, there was a dehumanizing frame that served to “other” refugees and instill fear of their camps. Finally, there was a redemption narrative frame underlying the news coverage of the refugees that focused on the injustice of treatment of refugees. This narrative even appeared in *Christian Today*, although the source of the injustice was often Islam, not the government (Gregory Perreault and Newly Paul 2019).

Javier J. Amores and Carlos Arcila (2019) paper analyses the visual frames of refugees and migrants that predominate in the media agenda of the main Western European countries, The findings indicate that a typology of visual frames that represent the refugee and/or migrant as a victim, sufferer and in need, predominates in all media and countries. However, it has been found that the two frames of the most negative tendency, those that represent those subjects as a possible burden and/or threat to Western societies, surpass the other two frames in frequency (Javier J. Amores and Carlos Arcila 2019)

The unhcr (The UN Refugee Agency) reported that media coverage in the UK emphasized threat themes over humanitarian themes in coverage of refugees in 2014 and 2015 (Berry, Garcia-Blanco, & Moore, 2016).

much of the coverage of refugees has focused less on the refugees themselves and more on the politicians arguing about migration – in particular, media tend to emphasize anti-immigrant rhetoric by candidates (Nguyen, 2015) A report from the Ethical Journalism Network argued that media professionals in the UK tend to provide too little context for their coverage of refugees (Nguyen, 2015).

typical work routines of journalists largely privilege majority groups. Second, the national media tend to cater to the interests of their national audience. Finally, Western media tends to portray the interests of foreign policy and national elites in their coverage (Fürsich, 2010).

Such representations do not simply mirror culture but simultaneously “create reality and normalize a specific worldview” (Fürsich, 2010, p. 115).

Refugee groups are often portrayed in an “us versus them” frame that is largely “informed vis-a-vis the development of a mediated national identity”. And scholarship has argued that media creation of a national identity is at times dependent on the exclusion of minority groups (Fürsich, 2010). In the coverage of this phenomenon, many journalists use the term *migrant* – and hence stories using this term will be analyzed as well – but for the purposes of this analysis, the authors will refer to the group as *refugees*. In the midst of crisis situations like the Syrian migration, people rely on media for timely and comprehensive coverage of such issues (McCombs, 2004; Noll, 2003).

Another of the most recent visual analyses of the crisis of migrants and refugees in Europe and the Mediterranean is that developed by Zhang and Hellmueller. These authors study the dominant visual frames in the coverage of two of the main media in Europe: CNN International and Der Spiegel. The analysis focused on identifying differences in visual coverage between both media after September 2015, date of publication of the controversial photograph of the Syrian boy killed on Turkish beaches, an image that generated great indignation in international public opinion. The findings reveal treatment differences between both media, which denotes the variability of the visual frames according to the context. Zhang and Hellmueller resolve that, while CNN International tends to use more humanized visual frames of the refugee crisis after the international publication of the image of the Syrian child, showing closely the suffering of the migrants; Der Spiegel, however, tends to decrease the presence of refugees in its visual coverage while increasing the presence of law enforcement agents, conveying the perception of threat and the need for law and control (Xu Zhang and Lea Hellmueller 2017).

Traditionally, news media cover refugees using a limited number of frames. These are typically negative frames that emphasize the danger posed by refugees or, in some cases, positive frames that largely emphasize the plight of refugees (Fürsich, 2010).

The representations of immigrants in the media are largely negative. Van Dijk (2000) noted that in western media immigration was represented as a threat, and immigrants presented in passive roles, except when the agents of reprehensible acts (Van Dijk 2000). Similarly in the television coverage of the fall of the Berlin Wall, East German refugees were described as ‘floods’ and ‘invasions’ (McLaughlin, 1999).

One problem with studies of refugee-seeker identity is, however, that they usually analyze how others speak or write about refugees – these identities are rarely presented as refugees would construct them, or in their own voices (for some exceptions see Blommaert, 2001; Herlihy et al., 2002). This is partly a consequence of the fact that while refugees seekers are subjected to hostility, they rarely have the opportunity to assert their identity in public (Leudar and Nekvapil, 2000).

Study about “Hostility themes in media, community and refugee narratives” found that The views of local informants or the refugees seekers were not introduced in the media reports and so these two were not acknowledged by journalists as participants in the controversy. Yet the hostility themes were present in the narratives of both, which moreover, oriented towards the

media. All refugee seekers' narratives sought to establish an authentic personal identity, and the sequential structure 'hostility theme – defence' was implicit (hostility themes do not have to be explicitly voiced, they seem omnirelevant). refugee seeker strived to rule out the relevance of hostility themes to themselves. The problem is how to claim the status of a refugee without having the negative personal qualities attributed to oneself. The general solution was to construct an autobiography in which the life in the place of origin negated personal qualities and that place was an unliveable one. (Ivan Leudar, Jacque Linehay and Johanna Turne 2008)

Mass media could play a negative role in the process of dehumanization of refugees seekers. This was contended by Esses, Medianu, and Lawson (2013, p. 518) who analyzed the role media play in fostering dehumanization of immigrants and refugees among individuals who are in a state of threat and uncertainty (Esses, V. M., Medianu, S., & Lawson, A. S. 2013).

Inspired by the haunting image of the drowned child, Aylan Kurdi, who was a Syrian refugee escaping the civil war, visual representations of Syrian refugees in European newspapers were analyzed by van Schaik (2015). The analysis found an over-representation of children, and their photos were mostly used to attract attention to particular issues. Syrian refugees were often depicted in a large group, except if they were children, whilst their photos holding modern mobile phones seems to imply a meaning that they are not in need for an urgent help, or rather to mean that all people constitute one urban family (van Schaik, R. W. 2015).

In contrast to these negative and misrepresentative portrayals of Syrian refugees in social media, Salhab (2015, pp.1-2) compared some excerpts from both of the mainstream media and the social media coverage of the same issues in refugee crisis, recommending that social media is more capable of presenting truthful of the crisis. This is due to a set of factors that could represent the advantages of social media, such as its being independent and able to work for public interest, rather than being profit-oriented or owned by media tycoons (Salhab, J. 2015).

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The study conducted by the Skills Organization about the media coverage of refugee-related issues in 2019 revealed that such coverage, especially that of Syrian refugees, was influenced with two main factors, namely, the number of refugees and the proximity of the place of refuge. It garnered more interest in neighboring countries such as Lebanon and Jordan, whereas in

more distant countries such as Egypt and Morocco it was marginal. In those latter countries, as well as others in West and North Africa, other issues related to immigration, such as immigrants attempting to cross the Mediterranean, were covered as well.

A number of issues were reflected in the coverage of refugee-related issues. First, media coverage is closely connected to the official political stance/(s) in a given country. For example, whereas in Jordan the media was in tune with the governmental stance, it was a tool of political conflict in Lebanon, where issues such as the settlement of refugees and its demographic repercussions were debated fiercely amongst political figures. These statements were made rather implicitly. Moreover, media addressed refugees as one unit, portraying them in the light of one unified representation that was largely negative (Skills Organization 2019).

The study of Refugees in European Media Discourse tackled refugees fleeing from the war in Syria, Iraq and some African countries in light of news frames theory, which attempts to investigate constraints in media discourse and highlight the aim behind media coverage. It also uses compliance theory to identify the strategies of propaganda discourse and their ideological implications in especially right-wing media, as well as the role of the producer in determining the values of the adopted news approach in covering refugee-related issues. The theory also tackles the patterns and stereotypes defining the concepts of “us” versus “them”, and parameters and criteria controlling media discourse . The study revealed that there was indeed a difference between the coverage of refugee-related issues in the European media depending on each outlet’s objective. Left-wing media outlets, for instance, provided a more informative, psychological, and as such more balanced, representation of refugees, since these normally brand themselves as endorsers of the refugee cause (the French newspaper Liberation, for example). Right-wing media outlets, on the other hand, promoted a discourse fraught with hate and bigotry (the Hungarian periodical Magyar Herlab, for example) demonizing refugees and presenting them as *invaders, intruders, deviants, hypocrites, ignorant, chaotic, extremist, ignorant terrorists* or *ISIS members*. Some of them used fear-striking concepts, such as “Ebola” and “terrorist attack”, to label refugees (Hasnaa Huseein’s 2016)

another study aimed at identifying the role played by the media in providing information to Palestinian college youth about the refugee crisis. It mainly studied the effect of demographic factors defining research subjects on the extent to which they were able to acquire information about the issue from the media, as well as their exposure to different media and the influence this had on their information. This descriptive study adopted a survey approach, using investigative techniques as a tool of study. The research focused on Palestinian college students in Gaza. The results found The most important issue read about by the subjects was the history of displaced Palestinian cities and towns, followed by global demonstrations expressing solidarity. In fifth place came the refugee crisis negotiations. In the last place came issues relating to international conventions and resolutions (Abo-NeKeera 2008).

The study focused on investigating the rise of populists that was a direct result of the influx of thousands of refugees in the European Union, as well as determining the stance of the European Union towards solving the issue. It conducted interviews with refugees as well as with Human Rights Organizations. The researcher depended on the theory of the clash of civilizations to depict the interaction between Europe and its refugees. The following results were reached:

- The rise of populism has resulted in a weak response by the European Union towards

solving the refugee crises. It also slowed the process through which the Union provided humanitarian aid to refugees.

- The asylum system adopted by Europe is an unsuccessful one.
- The European Union is unable to deal with the mass migration of refugees, due mainly to the rise of populism and the policies that the Union adopts. These latter resulted in contentious relationships between member states, threatening the very existence of the Union.
- Some European Union countries, such as Germany, tried to be faithful to the humanitarian values of the Union, and tried to find solutions despite the prevalent populist tendencies in other countries.
- Refugees have huge economic future prospects and potential, despite the current view of them as a burden (Ali Alabassem 2015).

The study aimed at studying the refugee crisis and determining their numbers in the last years. In the year 2014, the numbers of refugees increased by 20 million. The study also aimed at identifying the means used by refugees and the destinations most popular amongst them. It sought to differentiate between refugees and immigrants according to international law, adopting a descriptive historical approach. The following results were reached:

- Europe has failed to meet basic requirements as mandated by the international law. Countries have closed the borders, ignored the plight of those who perish at sea, and detained immigrants to deter others from coming.
- Europe must coordinate a response to address the humanitarian crisis. It also needs to exert efforts to stop the bloodshed in countries ravaged by war to decrease the influx of refugees to its lands.
- The European response, both of the Union countries and organizations, to the crisis has failed to respect the legal rights of refugees (James and others 2015).

The study aimed at tracing the changes that occurred to immigration policies in countries of the European Union, especially in the last few years in which some countries suffered from economic recessions and lacked a welcoming atmosphere to receive refugees. The study also attempted to present its readers with an informative account of immigration and its policies. The research covered three countries; Greece, Spain and Italy. Using a descriptive approach, the following results were reached:

- Whether or not a country will receive refugees is determined by its policy.
- The increasing number of refugees after the Arab Spring has put to test the willingness and commitment of the European countries to shoulder their responsibility towards refugees. Some countries suggested to modify and amend the Schengen agreement (Tamara Jonic 2012).

RESULTS

Documentary description

Characteristics	Channel	
	BBC News	BBC Arabic
Number of documentaries	3	5
Production year	2016	2017
	2017	2017
	2015	2016
		2017
		2018
Duration	1:43	2:55

Table 1: Documentary sample description

The study focused on documentary films produced by the two channels between 2015 and 2019. The number of the documentaries produced by BBC News in this period was 3, with a duration of one hour and 43 minutes. The documentaries were aired in 2015, 2016 and 2017 respectively. Five films were produced by BBC Arabic in the same period, with a duration of two hours and 55 minutes. Three of these films were produced in 2017. It is worth noting that Arabic documentaries are relatively more than their English counterparts, revealing a difference of interest of both the local and international audiences of the BBC network.

Types of documentary frames

Frame type	channel	
	BBC News	BBC Arabic
Human interest	46%	11%
conflict	19%	9%
Economic Consequences	-	21%
security	15%	-
Suggested solutions	5%	%7
Comparison	15%	52%

Table 2: Types of documentary frames

Table (2) shows that human interest and conflict frames were the two most occurring frames in the BBC News, with percentages of 46% and 19 % respectively. On the other hand, comparison and economic consequences were the most employed by BBC Arabic, with the respective percentages of 52 % and 21%. The difference in frame use reveals a difference in the approach each channel adopts in addressing the issue depending on the audience, as is demonstrated later.

Refugees emotion in the documentary

channel	BBC News	BBC Arabic
Refugees emotions		
Positive	32%	22%
Negative	27%	64%
Neutral	41%	14%

Table 3: Refugees emotion in the documentary

The above-mentioned table shows that refugees emotions are largely negative with a percentage of 64% as depicted in BBC Arabic, and mostly neutral, 41%, as shown in the documentaries on BBC News. These films tackled the number of refugees arriving to Europe, how it has affected quality of life and posed a threat on resources and Europe's future, and the different perspectives regarding how to curb the influx of refugees. In BBC News the image was a more positive one in case of refugees in Britain, and negative elsewhere like Germany.

Refugees' identity in the documentary

channel	BBC News	BBC Arabic
refugees identity		
Syrian	100%	80%
Iraq	-	10%
Egyptian	-	10%

Table 4: Refugees identity in the documentary

Table (4) shows that Syrian Refugees were dominantly featured in the documentary films in both channels, coming in the first place. In very small percentages Iraqis and Egyptians came next. This is the result of the political atmosphere and the conflict in Syria, making its people the most likely to flee and seek asylum elsewhere. The percentages of Iraqis and Egyptians in BBC Arabic was very small. It was reported that they fled to seek better economic and living conditions.

Framing and semiotic analysis**BBC NEWS****1. Framing:**

The humanitarian frame was the most dominantly used in the film "The Syrian refugees rebuilding their lives in Britain", featuring a Syrian family that took refuge in Britain. It also features the life of a Syrian teenager who was accused of sexual assault of a girl in Britain and later acquitted, highlighting all the consequences that this had on him and his family. The topic was addressed from a single perspective, namely, that of the person and his family. The idea of a fair British justice system was also highlighted. The humanitarian frame was also

manifested in mentioning that most refugees did not willingly choose to immigrate and that this situation was imposed by war. In addition, they do not have any friends or a semblance of a social life in their new community. Another story that was told is that of the Syrian female refugee who has five children in Lebanon and had to turn to sex to provide for her family, including her parents who still live in Syria. The same frame was used in the documentary “Refugee Crisis: A Snapchat documentary” which portrayed the lives of families fleeing the conflict and terror in Syria, refugees separated from their loved ones, children, the old and sick being forced to march to safety. Among this tide of humanity, he also found economic migrants seeking a better life in northern Europe and he asked, with winter on the way, is the crisis about to claim even more lives?

The political conflict frame was also used through emphasizing the torture that Syrians were subjected to on the hands of the Syrian regime before fleeing their country. Those still living in Syria endure this torture and as such are forced into siding with one or another political party. Those Syrians who are taken care of by the British government are grateful to the country that hosts them. The comparison frame was used to compare between the more open relationships between young people in Britain and their more closed counterparts in Syria. This has made it more challenging for refugees to accept western lifestyle that is totally different than their traditions and religion. Hijab was highlighted in this regards.

In light of the solutions frame, it was mentioned that the British government has promised to settle 20 thousand refugees in Britain by 2020.

BBC News focused in its “The Syrian refugees turning to sex” documentary on young female Syrian refugees, who resorted to prostitution in Lebanon after they had fled the war in Syria. They were portrayed as downtrodden. Their faces, however, were obscured so that they do not face any trouble with the law. The question posed in this documentary is: Are these criminals or victims?

Concerning providing relevant and useful information, the refugees were the ones presenting their own cause, and were speaking for themselves about the suffering they endured in Syria and the better life they are leading in Britain, with no interference of other voices or opinions. The image portrayed in the films was that of people deserving and in need of the help and support that Britain is providing them with.

The conflicting parties in the refugee crisis as presented by the films were not depicted as such by BBC News. Rather, the emphasis was on the problem itself and its possible solutions. Moreover, there was a complete lack of useful information on the crisis. The focus was more on the humanitarian aspect. As such, different opinions from both sides on the conflict were not voiced, and only the views of refugees were expressed. The same result was reached by Nguyen (2015) who found that media professionals in the UK tend to provide too little context for their coverage of refugees (Nguyen, 2015)

The most dominant words and phrases used to describe refugees were “fleeing the war”, “building a new life”, and “we are just statistics”. The last sentence was used more than once to describe how war victims in Syria are just a statistic, and collectively do not receive the same sympathy or response as the death of a single individual in Britain.

The language used in the narration was neutral to a large extent, with no instances of attack or condemnation directed at the refugees. In other instances, the language used conveyed a more sympathetic tone towards their plight. The tone used varies according to the context. For example, when reporting a tragedy, such as being accused of a crime that they did not commit, sympathy was naturally expressed.

Semeiotic

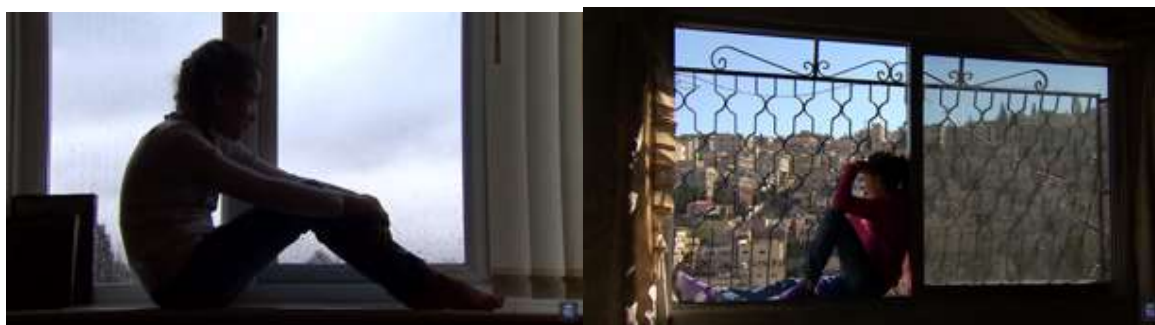
Screen duration

The story duration indicates the time that passes during the story, whereas the plot duration shows the actual amount that passes from the beginning of the narration to the end. Most of the documentaries screen durations range from 20 to 40 minutes. During this duration we manage to see a story of years of struggles. And towards the end of the screen duration we never feel that it is the end of the story.

Camera language

In the framing and composition of an image, the balance of visual weight is imperative to an environment's sense of stability or instability (Hurbis-Cherrier, 2012). Production designers have much to consider in the creation of an environmen

- **Individual representations**



The framing of individuals is very significant throughout the documentary { The Syrian refugees rebuilding their lives in Britain: Extended Film - BBC Newsnight }, subjects are often placed with a noticeable contrast between them and the outer environment and with a barrier between as significance that no matter the place they move to, it is never going to be home for them.

According to Kress & Van Leeuwen (2006), the interactive Meta Function of those two images portray the social distance factor through their medium shots. They emphasize the unclear future and the loss of their childhood. Also It arises the feeling that they are outcaste refugees (Kress & Leeuwen 2006). It is also noticeable that they are often the ones in the

shadows and never in the light. These feelings are also emphasized with the use medium shots, filling the frame with a figure and ground contrast.

- **Group representations**



The Family represents the state of all refugees. Using the extreme long shots when it comes to establishing the lives of these refugees as groups in the environment it distance the viewer from their facial expressions and true emotions towards these lives.

- **Situational representations**



On the contrary to the group representations. When presenting a situation with certain individuals involved we often see the use of the close-up and medium close-up angles that immerse the viewer into the situation and into the insights of this individual and their true emotions to their states.

Color mode



Color can be controlled by the time of the day and the color of the location or environment of the scene. You can clearly spot the dull, de-saturated color scheme of the BBC documentaries. Such use of colors, work for the examination of monotony to create lifeless images.

Montage/Editing language

Editing is a strong key to deliver the message as indented by the creators of the movie. As much as a documentary is often set to tell a truth and show it as it is, it still goes through a normal movie editing process maintaining the sequence of events as desired by the filmmaker, when to cut and what to omit.



A noticeable commentary is that the BBC news documentaries has went under a great deal of post production process and we can clearly see this through the coloring of the movies as well as the editing that gives the documentary a nature of a cinematic movie rather than a news channel documentary. In the Documentary “ The Syrian refugees turning to sex to survive” we can see the fast abstract cuts in the introductory scene with a background music. Creating what looks like an avant titre, then moving on to the introduction of main characters with a dolly in camera movement every time a character is introduced then their names appear on the screen as protagonists of our film. As much using such style could be aesthetically stronger but when it comes to a documentary the extent use of it can affect the reality of the truth they are documenting.

BBC Arabic

Framing:

The **comparison frame** was used to compare the real stance of the government and that of the German people with regards to refugees. This is reflected through the sentence “politicians

want to present themselves to the world as good people”, as well as a German citizen objecting to Germany welcoming 2 million refugees when Britain receives only 20 thousand. He also expressed his concern for German children due to, he says, the “violent nature” of refugee kids, and his frustration that their problems are ignored while refugee problems receive all the attention. Which contradict with Ali **Alabassem 2015** results that found that Germany, tried to be faithful to the humanitarian values of the Union, and tried to find solutions despite the prevalent populist tendencies in other countries. Comparison was also employed to compare Egypt’s and Libya’s political situation in the documentary “From Egypt to Europe: victims without a price”. Smugglers instructed refugees whose ship sank near Greece to falsely say that they were from Libya and not Egypt, since Greek authorities would most likely deport them back to the more stable Egypt. According to the commenter, whilst Libya is in complete chaos, Egypt is led by a strong man, Abdel Fattah El-Sisi.

The comparison frame is evident in the documentary “Escaping Europe” where a comparison between living in Germany and Syria favoring the latter takes place. Despite the extremely appalling living conditions in Syria that forced the refugees to leave as described in the film, they were disappointed by the intolerance they faced in Germany, the language barrier, and people seeing them as terrorists.

The **economic consequences** frame was revealed mainly after differentiating between “real refugees” and “economic refugees”, the latter being accused of destroying the social security system, as well as making it more difficult for real refugees to find employment. A factory owner in Germany mentioned that he searched for Syrian workers, because they were, he says, the “engineers of the Middle East”. On the contrary, German citizens expressed their frustration with the situation, which worsened due to the heavy presence of refugees who open myriads of restaurants and steal work opportunities from the locals. The economic and the political frames were connected when questions were posed regarding who bears the financial burden of the refugees and the source of their money. Another frame, that of suggested results, appeared when it was suggested that they resettle back in their countries of origin.

The political conflict frame was employed in the documentary film “Welcome to Germany”, in which the protagonist gives an account of his detention, during which he was subjected to torture by the Syrian regime before he sought asylum, after he was accused of belonging to the rebels. The frame was also activated when it was mentioned that refugees are ignorant of their new societies, making them easy targets for extremist Right-wing parties which adopt a different stance than their extremist Left-wing counterparts regarding this issue. In addition to that, the frame was activated in scenes featuring demonstrators protesting the presence of refugees and carrying cards with the slogans “We don’t want refugee housing” on them. This is especially true with regards to Syrian refugees entering Germany illegally through Turkey and crossing the Mediterranean. One of the refugees described Turkey as a forest, which mirrors the British stance towards the country.

The security frame was used when a college professor teaching the influence of refugees on Germany said that there is a problem that results from bigotry and discrimination. The presence of refugees in the country, he says, would only aggravate the issue since German people would lose their land. It was also activated in the documentary “From Egypt to Europe: victims without a price” when the Egyptian police detained the BBC journalist for fear of the information he was gathering from smugglers and the victims’ families. No useful or relevant information was given about the refugees. Rather, the focus was on the suffering they endured till they reached their hosting countries. Their journey typically includes illegally crossing the Mediterranean from Turkey or Greece.

As for the language used to describe refugees, words and phrases such as displacement, destitution, hunger, no other place to go, no other choice, not ready to cope, terrorism, terrorist background, victims, illegal immigration and hopelessness were employed.

the portrayal of refuges and refugee-related topics and issues was generally negative, reflecting fears of the effect of their presence on the demographics of the population. There also has been violence directed against refugees on the hands of some Europeans fueled by security and religious concerns. This has resulted in demonstrations against the spread of Islamophobia. The same results were reached in the study conducted by Berry, Garcia-Blanco, & Moore, who reported that media coverage in the UK emphasized threat themes over humanitarian themes in coverage of refugees (Berry, Garcia-Blanco, & Moore, 2016)

Suggested solutions included refugees returning to their original countries. This solution comes as a result of a lack of vision via which the refugee influx can be addressed and solved. Another suggestion is to designate safe places in the hosting countries for refugees to settle, since to return them to their countries is to condemn them to death which goes against refugee laws.

Semeiotic

Screen duration

The story duration indicates the time that passes during the story, whereas the plot duration shows the actual amount that passes from the beginning of the narration to the end. Most of the documentaries screen durations range from 30 to 55 minutes. During this duration we manage to see a story of years of struggles. And towards the end of the screen duration we never feel that it is the end of the story. The refugees are still looking for a home and the story won’t end until they find one

Camera language

- **Individual representations**



The individualistic framing of the refugees are always set to reveal their true emotions towards the life they did not chose. Whenever a character is there solely in the frame the camera angle is always overlooking the character he faces his obstacles rather than facing the camera. It's always in a medium to a close up frame so viewers can feel they are a part of this perspective.

- **Group representations**



In contrast to the individualistic presentation, Group representation through the camera language tend to group families in the frame with a different warm and bright tones indicating the change of feeling between as opposed to his individual state to when he is with the family. Together through the frame they seem stronger and happier.

- **Situational representations**



In the documentary “ My story with Sfwan “ we see the reporter as a participatory subject in the film and as the refugee reports his story to her and accordingly she reports to us viewers.

The camera makes sure to capture her expressions to what the refugee sends to her of updates to his journey so these feelings could be translated to the viewer. She is the anchor in every situation.

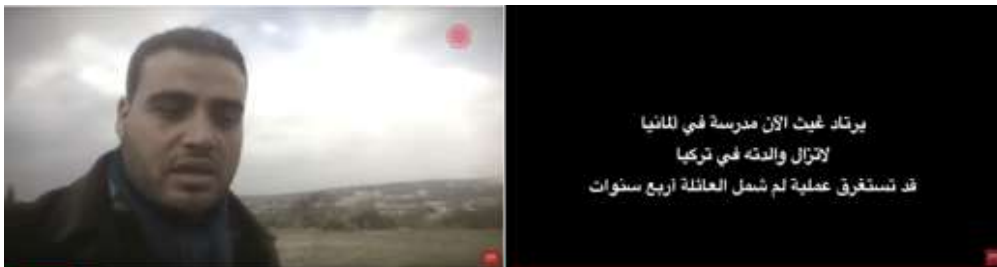
Color mode.



This frame in particular from the movie "Welcome on Germany" tells a lot with the choice of the monochromatic color blue that washes over the scene. Our character is dressed in a similar color to the environment he is in. In this scene, our character finally finds a job in Germany after struggling for several years. He's finally in his element, which is clearly emphasized by the color palette of this scene.

Montage/Editing language

Throughout the BBC Arabic documentaries, we can notice that the movies did not go through a huge post-production treatment in order for the stories to seem more real and authentic.



We see in the documentary "My story with Safwan" the footage was presented as recorded by Safwan as he recorded his journey from Syria to Europe.

By the end of most of the BBC Arabic Documentary, we can see the written commentary appearing on the screen, giving the viewer more insights to what is happening in the lives of

these refugees after the movie's screen duration has come to an end. Posing the feeling that this documentary is more than just a movie this is a true life events.

Comparative documentary Framing of Arab refugees

Comparative framing analysis examines differences in news frames of the same issue from various cultural perspectives and ideologies (Dimitrova & Connolly-Ahern, 2007; Fahmy, 2010; Ravi, 2005).

Research on comparative framing analysis of Arab refugees documentaries has demonstrated distinct differences in the frames emphasized by English versus Arabic documentaries sources (Dimitrova & Connolly-Ahern, 2007; Fahmy, 2010). Rather than identifying different parties of the conflict, BBC News focused on the problem itself and its suggested solutions. It also did not provide an informative relevant account of the refugee crisis, but highlighted the human side of the issue. Different points of view of conflicting parties were not voiced. Only those of the refugees themselves were expressed. BBC Arabic, on the contrary, featured other parties, such as the Chief of European police.

BBC Arabic did not provide useful and relevant information about refugees, but rather portrayed the suffering they endured till they reached their destinations. Their journey typically involved crossing the Mediterranean illegally from Turkey or Greece to other European countries.

There were differences between the two channels with regards to frame use. BBC News mainly used the humanitarian frame followed by political conflict frame. As for BBC Arabic, comparison and economic consequences came in the first place. The difference in frame use is significant, since it reveals a difference in the coverage presented to the local and international audiences by the channels. To their English and European audience, the BBC presents an image of a society welcoming refugees in its midst, the many ways the country is trying to help them, and their dire living conditions elsewhere compared to Britain. For their Arabic-speaking audience, on the other hand, the BBC Arabic highlighted the pressure put on the countries' economic resources, and the concerns amongst the native residents from increasing Islamophobia and terrorism due to arrival of refugees

The results show that the documentaries on both channels emphasized the plight and suffering of refugees, using that as a basis to garner sympathy towards them. One of the strongly endorsed solutions presented is that they are deserving of aid and empathy in light of the dire conditions they lived in and the inhuman treatment they received in their countries.

BBC Arabic focused on the unwelcoming atmosphere refugees arrive to and their being forced into unethical work in countries such as Germany and Lebanon. The channel mainly suggested that they should return to their original countries as a solution to the crisis.

BBC Arabic depicted the journey of those refugees entering the countries illegally in two out of five films. Some of the featured refugees crossed through Egyptian beaches. The BBC Arabic journalist exhibited some antagonism against Egypt, especially when he mentioned that Egypt is more concerned with putting constraints on journalists' work than stopping smugglers.

He also said that Egypt is a country that hosts and attracts smugglers and that Europe will not be able to pressure smuggler-hosting countries like Egypt.

Most documentaries in both channels are produced using a performative documentary approach, which depends on the participation of the reporter in the film events. Generally speaking, both channels compared the refugee situation in other countries, such as Germany, and Britain. The comparison always favored the latter.

As per semiotics, if we compare the frame analysis between the BBC news documentaries and the BBC Arabic ones. We can resolve that the BBC news tended to manipulate the truth of the lives of the refugees through posing their own agendas and perspectives in the production of their documentaries to come out looking more like a cinematic movie rather than a true reporting of real facts and stories. Whereas the BBC Arabic Documentaries tended to use more realistic and authentic treatment for their recordings coming out feeling like real events the viewers can relate to.

Recommendations:

- Writing a media code of ethics with regards to the coverage of refugees and their rights
- Adopting a humanitarian perspective in the coverage of refugees and immigrants, addressing their issue in a more positive tone in an effort to promote kindness towards them, using a more supportive discourse of their rights, and highlighting discriminatory action against them.
- Attending and offering training addressing the coverage of refugees and the integration of human rights in general and refugee rights in particular in news reports and stories.
- Avoiding using hate speech, or any related labels and classifications.
- Paying more attention to more marginalized groups such as women, children, the elderly and people with special needs.
- In an effort to decrease fear from refugees, establishing a temporary residence system to deal with refugees with humanitarian needs, rather than grant them citizenship.
- Providing assistance and aid to the hosting countries, especially those suffering from different types of pressure and an increasing number of refugees.

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