

İSTANBUL BİLGİ UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAM

INFORMATION WARFARE: THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AS AN
INFLUENTIAL TOOL IN SHAPING THE PUBLIC OPINION DURING THE
SYRIAN REVOLUTION, YEAR 2019

Leen Hariri
117680011

Doç. Dr. Burak Özçetin

İSTANBUL
2020

Information Warfare: The Use of Social Media as an Influential Tool in Shaping the Public
Opinion During The Syrian Revolution, Year 2019

Bilgi Savaşı: Sosyal Medyanın Suriyeli Devrim Sirasında Kamuoyunun Şekillendirilmesinde
Etkili Bir Araç Olarak Kullanımı, 2019

Leen Hariri
117680011

Tez Danışmanı: Doç. Dr. Burak Özçetin

(Imza)..... İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi

Jüri Üyesi: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi. Esra Ercan Bilgiç.

(Imza)..... İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi

Jüri Üyesi: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi. Ayşegül Akaydın Aydın.

(Imza)..... İstanbul Aydın Üniversitesi

Tezin Onaylandığı Tarih: 12/06/2020

Toplan Sayfa Sayısı: 98

Anahtar Kelimeler (Türkçe)

- 1) Bilgi Savaşı
- 2) Suriye Devrimi
- 3) Çoklu ortam söylem çözümlemesi
- 4) YouTube
- 5) Anlatı Rekabeti

Anahtar Kelimeler (İngilizce)

- 1) Information Warfare
- 2) Syrian Revolution
- 3) Multimodal Discourse Analysis
- 4) YouTube
- 5) Narrative competition

FOREWORD

Despite the difficult times our world is currently facing, the uncertainty we are going through. It would not have been possible to write this master's thesis without the help and support of those closest to my heart, to only some of whom it is possible to give gratitude to here.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	ix
Özet	x
Introduction	1
Historical Context of the Syrian Revolution	3
Information Warfare	5
Chapter 1: Multimedia Discourse Analysis and its Applications.....,.....	10
1.1 Multimodal Discourse Analysis.....	10
1.2 Application of MDA Model.....	11
1.3 Application of the IW Life Cycle.....	18
Chapter 2: Analysis	20
2.1 Pre-Analysis	20
2.2 Analysis	24
2.2.1 Video 1: “2 WEEKS IN SYRIA (not what you'd expect!)”	
.....	25
2.2.2 Video 2: “ALEPPO, SYRIA What's It Like to Be a	
Tourist in ALEPPO in 2019?”	36
2.2.3 Video 3: “Getting into Syria as a Tourist”	59
2.2.4 Video 4: “Street Eating Challenge in Damascus - Syria	
2019 all for \$10”	67
2.3 Social Practice Explanation.....	79
Conclusion	83
References	87
Annex	93

ABSTRACT

While it is argued that the core goals of social media include enhancing connectedness and increasing the awareness of users towards various topics and affairs, these platforms can be described on the other hand as “a weapon of words that influences the hearts and minds of a target audience, and a weapon of mass destruction that can have effects on targets in the physical world” (Manduric, 2016, p. 262). It is argued that during the war taking place on ground in Syria, social media platforms presented a parallel battlefield that the fighting parties recognized its vitality in shaping the course of the events, and which the Syrian regime tried, through its different content strategies, to benefit from in order to shape the perception and opinion of the public audience.

This thesis aims to provide an understanding of the role of social media and information during the Syrian Revolution in shaping the public opinion discourse, during the year 2019. Through the framework of Information warfare, and by analyzing the multimedia content of influencing travelers/vloggers -who visited Syria during that period-, we try to understand what messages and discourses these influencers tried to present, and which tools and techniques they tried to use and develop.

The thesis argues that, despite the existence of considerable differences in terms of the tools and techniques used, the travel influencers delivered common ideas and messages that promoted the idea of a safe, historical, and touristic country that succeeded to overcome its long-lasting conflict, and which became ready to welcome the tourists coming from all over the world.

Keywords: Information Warfare, Syrian Revolution, Multimodal Discourse Analysis, Social Media, YouTube, Narrative competition.

ÖZET:

Bir yandan sosyal medyanın temel amaçlarından birisinin, bağlantılılığı kuvvetlendirme ve kullanıcılarda çeşitli konulara ve meselelere yönelik farkındalığı artırma olduğu iddia edilirken, diğer bir yandan bu platformlar, “hedef kitlenin kalplerini ve zihinlerini etkilemekte olan kelimelerden bir silah ve fiziki dünyada, hedefleri üzerinde etki edebilen bir kitle imha silahı” olarak da tarif edilebilmektedir (Manduric, 2016, p. 262). İddiaya göre, Suriye’deki iç savaş esnasında sosyal medya platformları, savaşan tarafların bu platformların olayların gidişatını şekillendirmedeki önemini kavradıkları ve Suriye rejiminin farklı içerik stratejileri vasıtasıyla kamuoyunu ve toplumdaki algıyı şekillendirmeye ve bundan yararlanmaya çalıştığı paralel bir savaş alanı olarak ortaya çıkmıştır.

Bu tez, 2019 yılı boyunca sosyal medyanın ve Suriye Devrimi esnasında yayılan bilgilerin kamuoyundaki söylemi şekillendirmedeki rolünü anlamayı amaçlıyor. Bilgi savaşı çerçevesinde, o dönem Suriye’yi ziyaret eden gezgin sosyal medya fenomenlerinin multimedya içeriklerini analiz ederek, bu fenomenlerin hangi mesajları ve söylemleri sunmaya ve hangi araçlar ve tekniklerle bunu kullanıp geliştirmeye çalıştıklarını anlamaya çalışacağız.

Bu tez, kullanılan araç ve tekniklerdeki kayda değer farklılıklara rağmen gezgin sosyal medya fenomenlerinin, ülkenin uzun süren çatışmaların üstesinden gelerek güvenilir, tarihi ve turistik bir yer haline geldiği ve dünyanın dört bir yanından turistleri ağırlamaya hazır olduğu fikrinin reklamını yaptıkları ortak fikirler ve mesajlar ilettiklerini savunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Bilgi Savaşı, Suriye Devrimi, Çoklu ortam söylem çözümlemesi, YouTube, Sosyal Medya, Anlatı Rekabeti

INTRODUCTION

This thesis tries to investigate the question of how the Syrian regime invested in the travel influencers to shape the general perception of the international audience regarding what is taking place in Syria. Through the framework of Information warfare, and by analyzing their multimedia content, the thesis tries to understand the techniques and tools used by these influencers, in order to deliver specific messages aiming to shape the international public opinion during the year 2019. The thesis argues that despite the existence of considerable differences in terms of the tools and techniques used, the travel influencers delivered common ideas and messages. By defending the idea of a safe, historical, and welcoming Syria, these influencers worked on promoting a new image of the country, being the one that succeeded to overcome a long-lasting conflict, and that is ready to welcome the tourists coming from all over the world.

Within the last two decades, Internet Technology has shown a rapid growth in order to meet the needs of information-age. With the rise of Web 2.0, the Internet granted its users the ability to create content instead of just merely consuming online content. This came to be known as 'social media' which refers to the websites and services whose content is mainly user-generated, such as blogs, microblogs and social network sites (Halpern & Gibbs, 2013, p. 1159). Social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn in addition to user-generated sites such as YouTube are the pieces that formulated this large ecosystem of connectedness.

According to Castells, communication is known as the process of delivering meaning by the negotiation and exchange of information (Castells, 2012, p. 6). Furthermore, the logic behind social media and communication platforms is based on the four elements of programmability, popularity, connectivity and datafication (Dijck & Poell, 2013, p. 5). In addition to the promise they have given their audience to be a more democratic space in comparison with mass media for all users to participate and generate content equally. Therefore, according to Catherine A.

Theohary, a Specialist in National Security Policy and Information Operations, social media is described as “a weapon of words that influences the hearts and minds of a target audience, and a weapon of mass destruction that can have effects on targets in the physical world” (Manduric, 2016, p. 262).

Given the huge use and spread of social media platforms, their core goals include enhancing connectedness and increasing the awareness of users towards various movements, including social or professional. Therefore, social media provided a medium for disagreement, and means by which like-minded people would organize and express their desire for change. Hence this led to the use of ICTs, Information Communication technology, to facilitate mass protest actions and was regarded as a ready-to-use tool for people to bring about social change, which therefore explains the concept of autonomous communication by Manuel Castells, which refers to the generating of a new public space in which both the digital space and the urban space are interconnected (Castells, 2012, p. 9).

Among the various regime changes in the first wave of the Arab Spring, including Tunisia and Egypt, social media platforms were the main instruments used to spark, mobilize and coordinate movements (Jost et al., 2018, p. 86). Therefore, the vast social media presence of the Syrian revolution is undeniable, with relevant Facebook pages garnering immense popularity throughout the revolution. In addition to the use of YouTube (which can be considered as the most explosive platform, for it shows the audience videos of what is happening rather than just narrating it to them using words (Church, 2010, p. 38)) to promote the cause and distribute videos documenting the protests. These tools and cell phones also aided in coordinating the protests. This use of social media was seen as a social information warfare, where political and social activists used the Internet and related technologies to further their objectives, hence providing an “immediacy of audience access”.

As mentioned by the former CIA director James Woolsey, social media plays an important role in active conflicts to receive national/international attention from a vast number of audiences, as it is the case with the U.S intelligence community which started to grasp the power of social media in organizing and linking movements across countries and around the world (Manduric, 2016, p. 263). Thus, according to Alberto Melucci, the generating of a social movement and the continuity of its process is known as mobilization. In addition, to ensure the continuity of this mobilization the construction of a collective identity is very significant, it's among the first tasks in a mobilization, identifying the enemy, the purpose and the objective of this movement (Gerbaudo, 2012, p. 41). Hence, the organizational structure of the Syrian Revolution is considered as a digital connective action network, for its more self-organized without a central lead and the usage of information technologies is quite crucial for its continuity (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012, p. 755).

Historical Context of the Syrian Revolution:

Almost 10 years ago, on March 15, 2011, Syrians marched the streets calling on Bashar Al-Assad, to stand down. In reaction to this, the Syrian regime reacted by using violence to limit and halter the demonstrations (Rodgers et Al., 2016, para. 3). By taking into consideration the history of the existing regime in Syria, which has been ruling the country for four decades now, this all started with previous president Hafez Al-Assad, seizing control of the Baathist Military Junta in 1970 (Laub, 2020, para. 3), by what was known as the 'Corrective Movement' and therefore ruling the people with an 'iron fist' (Shehabat, 2013, p. 1). Following the death of Hafez Al-Assad, his son Bashar Al-Assad succeeded him in 2000 pledging reforms.

The Assad family comes from the Alawite minority, a heterodox Shia sect, which is 15% of the population. The Assad family ruled all the various aspects of Syria's

political system, including the military, the economy and the media. For years, the Assad family has portrayed themselves to the Arab world as the ‘Arab resistance’ (Shehabat, 2013, p. 2).

Inspired by the regime changes that took place in Tunisia and Egypt, 13-year-old boys from Daraa, Southern Syria, sprayed the wall asking for regime change. This resulted in their capture and torture. Later, the death of 13-year old Hamza Al-Khatib, with the video of his clearly tortured body has been uploaded to YouTube hence resulting in an outrage locally and internationally (Shehabat, 2013, p. 2). Therefore, anti-regime protests spread from Daraa, to Damascus, Hama and Homs. The events escalated to violent bombing, defectors from Assad's regime to formulate the Free Syrian Army, to the use of chemical weapons and the displacement of more than half the population as refugees around the world (Laub, 2020, para. 5). The chaos and conflict continue till today, May 2020, with various parties taking part and various militia fighting among themselves within Syria (Stares & Vessey, 2018, p. 6).

Throughout the developments of the Syrian Revolution, all parties have used social media to express and create their perspective of the situation. The mobilization and organization of the revolution was facilitated through social media platforms. The main role of those platforms was as a communication tool and a catalyst for social and political change, through the use of images and videos of real-time events. According to Amr al-Azm, a Syrian archaeologist from Damascus and a professor of history and anthropology at Shawnee State University, in Ohio, he says that the regime's message is “totally and utterly triumphalist” (Deknatel, 2019, p. 12). The regime attempted to confer legitimacy by counter-using social media and new technologies to emphasize their narration of the situation and to manipulate public opinion and image.

While traveling to Syria is still highly unrecommended by most countries, it has been reported that organized tour groups and vloggers have been visiting the Old

City of Damascus, Aleppo, Homs, the Roman Palmyra and few others. Vloggers are defined according to the Cambridge dictionary as “a person who creates short videos, vlogs, recording their personal ideas, thoughts on a subject and shares them online”. The content that these vloggers are promoting is problematic, and the fact that they are visiting a country that is still in a state of conflict raised a lot of questions. In the past, governments have used tourism as a form of soft power and exert influence (Tse, 2013, p. 150). Hence, one would ask whether those parties organizing those trips are using it as a form of whitewashing -which could be defined as a refashioning of the past and the present, an operation in which the blood is hidden under a coat of white paint and the crimes of the dictatorship are spoken of in hushed tones, never openly or out loud- and marketing for the regime.

Information Warfare

Information Warfare (IW), as a term is considered fairly new, it was constructed and labeled by the United States Ministry of Defense in the 1990s (Van Niekerk et al., 2011, p. 1). Since then, it has been the focal interest of governments, security experts and intelligence agencies (Taddeo, 2012, p. 1). The usage of ICT's to support war existed in two different ways, first initially by facilitating weapons to be used in the battlefield to hit targets, such as drones, secondly collecting, processing and distributing information while forbidding the other party to do so (Taddeo, 2012, p. 1). Therefore, ICT's revolutionized military affairs by facilitating new tools. Making it the fifth pillar of war waging, in addition to land, sea, air and space (Taddeo, 2016, p. 2). Hence, Information warfare could be described as the use of internet technologies and its supporting systems to attack a country's infrastructure while in a traditional war (Crisley, 2001, p. 250).

Information Warfare is a highly disruptive yet powerful weapon, unlike traditional warfare, IW is mainly bloodless, cost effective and is not military based (Taddeo, 2012, p. 10). The utilization of information warfare could be on three different

aspects including; physical, informational, and cognitive (Van Niekerk et al., 2011, p. 1407). Modern information warfare revolves around the concept that the battlefield is the people's mind, thus the more recent wars are psychologically dominant (Thornton, 2015, p. 43). Apart from the three different domains, IW consists of six functional pillars that are the main operational aspects of the IW model, (Van Niekerk & Maharaj, 2011, p. 1407), they are as follows:

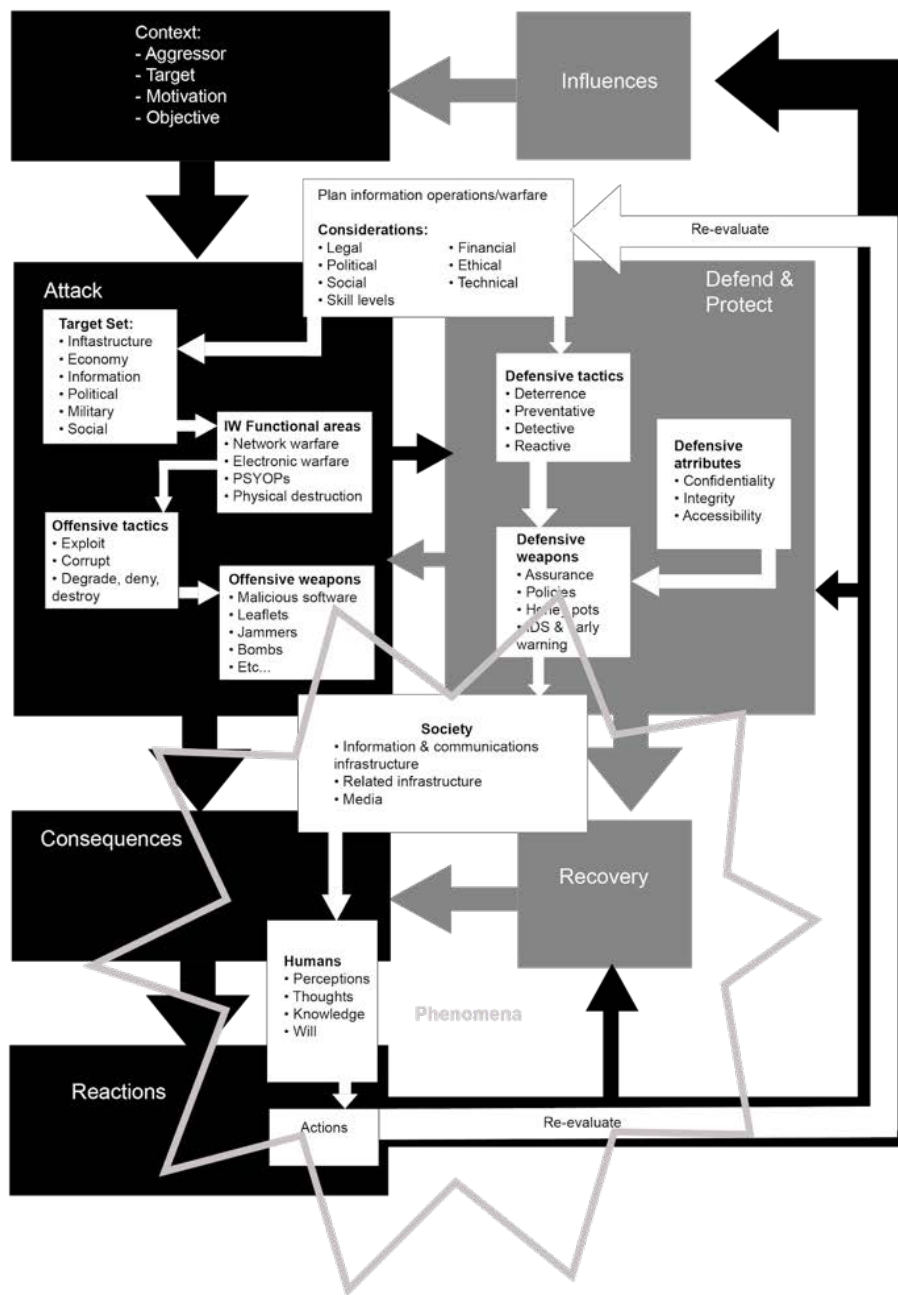
- Command and control warfare, the ability to protect and manage the forces while at the same time attacking the opponent's similar capabilities.
- Intelligence based warfare, collecting and processing intelligence and delivering to the users while at the same time preventing the opponent of such capabilities.
- Information infrastructure warfare is about protecting infrastructure while also attacking that of the opponent.
- Psychological operations, the action taken that affects the perception and determination of people to eventually alter their behaviors to a predetermined objective.
- Network warfare, merging various elements to create a cohesive combat force to maximize the fighting power.
- Electronic warfare, preserving the electro-magnetic spectrum while degrading the opponent's spectrum.

To attack information and support infrastructure, three strategies were developed, this includes, initially, denying, disrupting and degrading the access to information. Secondly, stealing, exploiting and intercepting information. Finally, corrupting the information by either destroying its content or manipulating it, to change the perception of the audience (Van Niekerk et al., 2011, p. 2).

In order to understand the events and implications resulting from Information Warfare, a life cycle model was designed. The information warfare life cycle model is a combination of message flow model adapted by the psychological operation pillar and by the framework of information security principles of the network

warfare pillar. The objective of such a combined model is to generate an adjustable model for various size incidents, including the majority of the functional pillars mentioned above (Van Niekerk & Maharaj, 2011, p. 1408).

The model consists of a dual interconnected layered cycle, the high-level consists of the main basic blocks, context, attack, defense, the consequences, reactions, recovery and influence on the context (Van Niekerk & Maharaj, 2011, p. 1408). While the second layer is the more detailed steps of the various blocks mentioned. The context mainly is about an aggressor initiating an attack, using certain tactics and tools to reach certain objectives. Thus, resulting in an effect on society in general, which later particularly effects individuals. The target initially attacked reacts to recover and re-evaluate the tacticts.



Source: Van Niekerk & Maharaj, 2011

Apart from the theoretical aspect of the information warfare, the IW life cycle model is ideal in order to analyze the audience impact and perception due to this specific incident, YouTube vloggers visiting Syria. Therefore, the use of ICTs as a tool of warfare has increased greatly and it is considered as a very powerful weapon.

Thus, the following thesis will take the theory of Information warfare to understand the role of social media multimedia content during the Syrian Revolution, and its role in shaping the international public opinion during the year 2019. By paying particular attention to the generated content on the YouTube platform, and following the multimodal discourse analysis method, the thesis tries to investigate how the Syrian Regime uses social media content to spread its official discourse. In Chapter 1, the history, usage and steps of the multimodal discourse analysis model is thoroughly explained, in addition to the application of the theory of information warfare lifecycle model on the Syrian Case. Following that, the thesis moves into adapting the multimodal discourse analysis while analyzing the video samples in Chapter 2 and presenting the common explanation to decode the common communication techniques resulting from the visual sample. Finally, the thesis concludes with the findings of this thesis, and presents how, despite the various different tools used by the travel vloggers in their YouTube videos, they had main discourses in common, which includes promoting the idea of a safe country that overcame the long-lasting conflict and that is ready to become a touristic location once again.

CHAPTER 1

MULTIMEDIA DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND ITS APPLICATIONS

1.1. Multimodal Discourse Analysis

Being an emerging space where new forms of social connections develop between humans, Social Media sought a development of cumulative communication acts and information technologies. In a tentative study to analyze the outcome of social media, the set of techniques used for making connections between texts and their meanings is initially known as Discourse Analysis (Gee & Handford, 2013, p. 1). Although language is considered an important element in Discourse Analysis, it is also essential to discuss other elements and resources to fully comprehend the meaning of visuals. Hence, the discourses which involve the study of language in combination with other resources, such as language, image, posture, and sound, is defined as Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) (O'Halloran, 2004, p. 1). The origin of this analysis is relatively recent, it's strongly associated with two main studies, initially 'Kress and Van Leeuwen's Reading Images' which mainly discusses the history and the meaning of various visual semiotic elements, while the second, 'O'Toole's The Language of Displayed Art' which revolves around the theoretical analysis of the interaction between such elements in a specific social context (Zhao & Djonov, 2014, p. 2).

Within this research, the history, usage and the steps of the multimodal discourse analysis model would be explained, later to be adapted while analyzing the video samples, for according to Gee & Handford (2013), videos are considered as a multimedia and multi-channel technology. The MDA model is fundamentally effective on the current topic of research, for it aids in investigating the level of both verbal and visual modes in their complex interaction. In addition to investigating typicality, the meaning, the feeling, the setting and the culture in relation to the attitude of production and interpretation of both verbal and visual modes.

A great deal of the work in multimodal discourse analysis emerged from the linguist Micheal Halliday's social semiotic approach to language, that considers language as a semiotic resource that people use to convey meaning and communication with one another. Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen and Michael O'Toole provided the initial foundation that the model was built upon in the 1990s, later Kress and van Leewuen explored images and visual design known as visual grammar (VG). By the mid 2000s, the multimodal research expanded greatly as linguists' interests in exploring the integration of language with other semiotic resources grew. Resulting in an acknowledgment that "communication inherently multimodal and that literacy is not confined to language" (O'Halloran, 2004, p. 5).

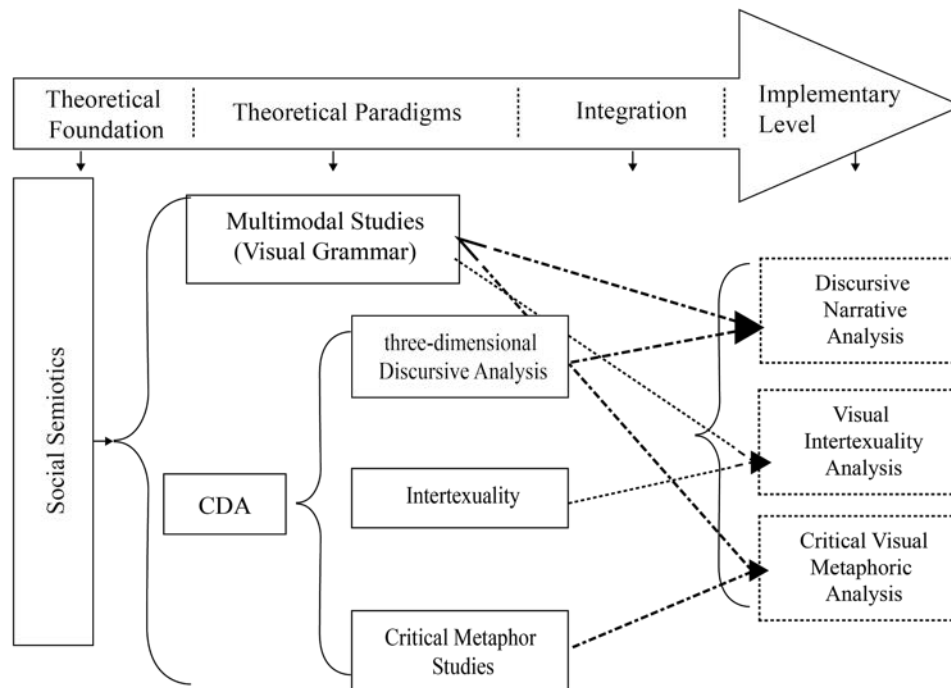
1.2. Application of MDA Model

The MDA model is not limited to print genres but also to film and video genres. It examines how texts are designed and how other semiotic tools such as color, frames, focus and element arrangement contribute to construction of meaning (Paltridge, 2012, p. 171). The resources which integrate to create a meaning are labeled as semiotic resources and sensory modalities. In definition, semiotic resources is the system of meanings that constitute the reality" of the culture", while sensory modalities, represents the sensation of a specific type of stimulus involving the five major senses (e.g. visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, gustatory, kinesthetic) (O'Halloran, 2004, p. 2). In addition, the relation of the semiotic resources is known as intersemiosis, this is considered as the focus of multimodal research. Hence, MDA is all about the design, production and distribution of resources in a social context.

To use and implement the multimodal discourse analysis model, a tri-module framework known as critical visual analysis was constructed based on social semiotics, visual grammar and some critical discourse analysis theories. This framework consists of 3 connected phases, the first one is social semiotics as the theoretical foundation, later the theoretical paradigm includes the critical discourse

analysis which leads to the implementation phase that consists of the critical visual analysis methodology which is the main framework for analyzing the content sample of this research (Wang, 2014, p. 267).

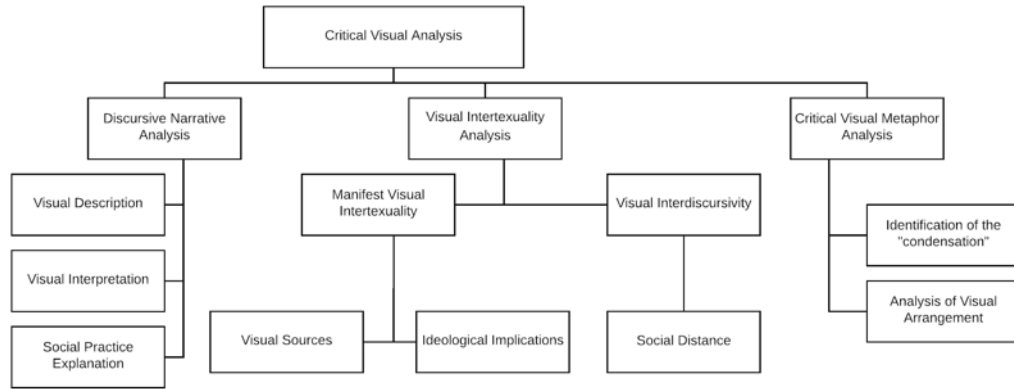
Figure 1.2.1 Theoretical Framework of Critical Visual Analysis



Source: Wang, 2014

The first step of analysis is to carefully identify the visuals presented by describing and analyzing the way people are presented in both language and images. Because interpretation of meanings is always crucial, there is always a sign being deployed within a field of interpretive arrangements that belong to some social order, complete with its culture, history, and politics. Hence, identifying whether they fall under narrative presentations which refers to people, place and things being represented in images and texts, or under visual intertextual type which is an interactive presentation that refers those who produce the images and texts and who interpret them (Ly & Jung, 2015, p. 51).

Figure 1.2.2 The Critical Visual Analysis Stage



Source: Wang, 2014

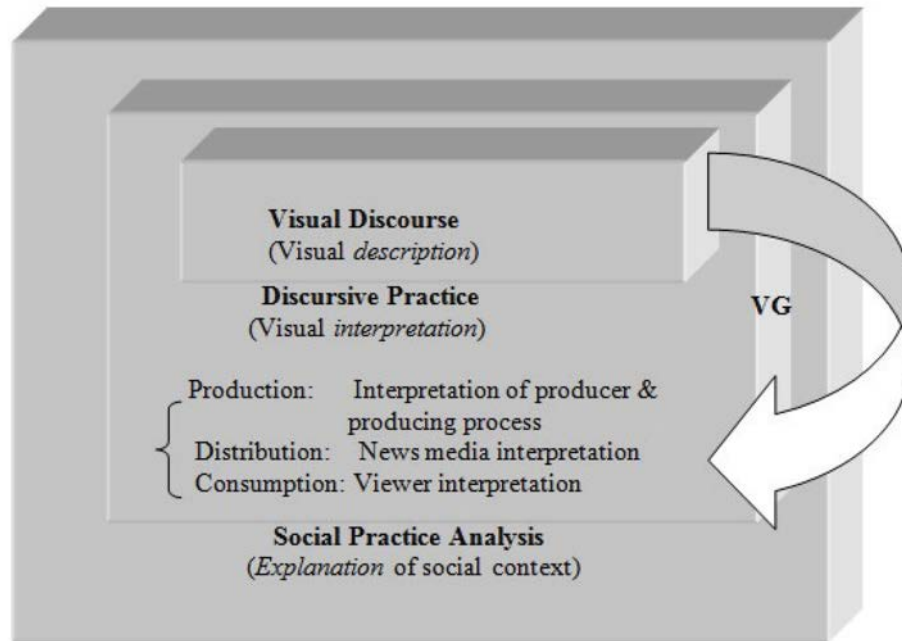
The second step is identifying the visual material into three categories:

- Discursive visual narrative, this mainly tackles the way in which visual images from news discourses are presented, as to state or narrate the (process) of an event (Ly & Jung, 2015, p. 52).
- Visual (-verbal) intertextuality, has two divisions:
 1. manifest intertextuality: refers to the source of the visual intertext, where the ideological implications could be identified
 2. visual interdiscursivity: refers to the social relationship with viewers and the visual impact of the mixed genres to the audience's familiarity.
- Visual Metaphor Analysis identifies the visual metaphor and mapping the source of an experience onto a target. It mainly indicates how a speaker associates a certain idea with an ambiguous concept

Finally, the displayed discursive narrative analysis is the most important stage of decoding ideologies within visual semiotics. The three-dimensional figure below was developed by Professor Norman Fairclough, a linguistic professor at Lancaster University, in his analysis of political discourse. The developed analysis was

adopted to deconstruct the ideology, power, and dominance in verbal texts (Wang, 2014, p. 265). Therefore, the following steps will be adapted to analyze the visual sample of this research.

Figure 1.2.3. A Model for Discursive Narrative Visual Analysis



Source: Wang, 2014

1- Visual description: It's used to conduct a linguistic explanation of the visuals. The process includes the following 3 categories (Wang, 2014, p. 270).

- Description of representational structure: which refers to narrative and conceptual function displayed in the image. Within this category, two processes take place. This includes an action process that illustrates an action on behalf of a participant towards a target while the reaction process illustrates taking an action, e.g. seeing.
- Description of interactive meaning refers to the interpersonal aspect of visual communication
- Description of the compositional system of the visual material: this discusses the way in which the image or frame is constructed, the manner in which the visual contents are organized.

2- Visual Interpretation: based on the visual description from the previous stage, this step focuses on analyzing the visuals in 3 modules which include the following:

- Production: Focuses on analyzing the producers and the production process, while in addition analyzing three other functions: action, reaction and speech, which are responsible for narrating the scenes in the visual material
- Distribution: Focuses on how the news media distribute ideologies in visual news and on how they prepare viewers to interpret those ideologies
- Consumption: Focuses on how viewers unconsciously interpret the ideology which is intentionally encoded in the visuals;

3- Social Practice Explanation: decoding the ideologies within the visual semiosis, is the critical visual analysis process.

Following the discursive analysis of the visual semiosis, arrangement of visual elements would be analyzed to reveal their visual effect on the ideology-encoding processes; and hence the deconstruction of the ideology. The main content can be used to communicate the types of identities and evaluate the participants actions. The research sample content would be evaluated based on the following main elements:

1. Verbs:

All of the different verbs of saying anything can be used to make certain participants appear more authoritative or subservient, legitimate or non-legitimate (Guo, 2014, p. 58). The kinds of verbs are as follows:

- Neutral structuring verbs: which introduce a verb without giving it any form of connotation (e.g. say, tell, ask).
- Meta Prepositional verbs: kind of verb that already introduced a certain interpretation of the speaker (e.g. ‘declare’, ‘urge’ and ‘grumble’ are assertive, directive and expressive accordingly)

- Metalinguistic verbs: are the kind of verbs that are already specified by the language used by a speaker (e.g. recounted is a verb or reporting on something that occurred)
- Descriptive verbs: verbs that categories the interaction of the speaker (e.g. ‘whisper’ and ‘laugh’ give connotations of the manner and attitude of the speaker to what has been said. Therefore, the audience is guided to how the verb has been said. This form of verbs represents attitude of a certain kind.
- Transcript verbs: the verbs in this category connote a development in a situation or express a quotation to another part of the discourse (e.g. repeat or pause).

2. Gaze:

Analyzing the gaze of a person is a crucial part of gestures, in which direction the person looks, at which angle etc. These gestures generally demand something from the viewer, demanding a certain connection between both parties.

For example: a woman looks directly at the screen at the audience. This gaze is a visual address, the viewer is acknowledged and initiates an imaginary relationship of presence. While on the other hand, when the woman doesn’t look directly at the audience, there is no demand, no response expected and no connection, these are called “offer” images (Ly & Jung, 2015, p. 51).

3. Social Distance:

This mainly discusses how the distance between the participant and the viewer could be interpreted. It’s suggested that the shorter the distance between the parties the higher the intimacy. The scale of intimacy between the participant and the viewer is divided into intimate, personal, impersonal, formal and strangers thus reflecting on the social distance. This is measured by the vision fields in the images. For example: when only the face is visible its intimate hence it is considered as an intimate distance, while in another image if the space from the head to the waist is visible, its personal relationship but a far personal distance (Ly & Jung, 2015, p. 52).

4. Poses:

Postures of the figures reflect a certain impression of themselves. It shows whether the individuals are approachable, independent or moody, in addition whether they interpret themselves as an individual or within a group. This element is crucial for it identifies the border values, ideas and identities of those figures.

5. Metaphors:

Another element to be analyzed are the metaphors, which are a matter of thought and it's mainly about depicting an idea or context onto another new target. New objects/ideas are conceptualized through comparing them with past experiences. Metaphors are classified into three categories: structural, orientational and ontological (Wang, 2014, p. 278). Structural conceptual metaphor are experiences conceptualized and reflected on a simple and specific experience (Ngoc Vu, 2015, p. 67). While orientational conceptual metaphor is based on the relation and interaction in the physical space like up-down or inside-out (Ngoc Vu, 2015, p. 68). Finally, ontological conceptual metaphors reflect abstract ideas into tangible or concrete objects (Ngoc Vu, 2015, p. 69). Therefore, metaphors have a separate analysis cycle that consists of three steps: metaphor identification, interpretation and explanation for they are a powerful tool of persuasion.

6. Visual elements arrangement:

Arrangement of visual elements has a huge effect on the viewers emotions along with the verbal texts hence possibly reaching high communicative influence. The arrangement of the elements whether linear, spatial or size arrangement in images is assumed to be an ideology encoded by the producer. For example, when a powerful object is placed on the left side in an image construction it is considered a given information. While when placing that same object on the right side in an image construction it states that this is new information (Wang, 2014, p. 280). Adapting the Gestalt theory of visual communication design, it provides a geometric and pattern recognition approach.

1.3 Application of the IW Life Cycle Model

Proceeding from the first days of the Syrian uprising, the Syrian regime captured, tortured and shared the video of the body of 13-year old Hamza Al-Khatib on YouTube thus resulting in a local and international outrage (Shehabat, 2013, p. 3). Hence resulting in the increased number of anti-regime protests, chaos and conflict across the country which still continues today, May 2020 (Stares & Vessey, 2018, p. 6). The following is an application of the IW life cycle model to the Syrian regime:

- Context:

Syrian Regime counter attacked the Syrian protests due to the threat they impose on the security and stability of the Syrian Government. Therefore, the actor is the Syrian Regime, the motivation and objective are to ensure local security and stability.

- Attack:

The Syrian Regime uses 4 different types of the functional pillars, this includes command and control warfare, information infrastructure by attacking the Syrian Opposition's locations to disconnect them from the world, psychological warfare was also employed through scaring the people still residing in Syria while also using some supporting news outlets to display an alternate reality of the brutal Syrian regime, finally information warfare, the utilization of vloggers to counter create another image and develop a new narrative of the situation in Syria.

- Defense and consequences:

The defense acts taken by the Syrian Opposition, was to make use of the Syrians abroad to report the truth from their families on the inside, in addition to expose those who whitewash for the Syrian Regime

- Reaction:

The impact resulted in a divided global public opinion, which hence resulted in some international pressure on Bashar Al-Assad.

- Influence of Context:

The struggle still continues, the Syrian Regime still benefits from the whitewashing of vloggers visiting Syria.

CHAPTER 2

ANALYSIS

2.1 Pre-Analysis

In this section, an analysis of the visual samples will be presented, those samples were created by the traveler/vloggers that have been to Syria and shared their videos between February 2019 - until March 21st, 2020 on YouTube. This section consists of 3 subsections. The reason for such division is there are certain steps to be taken to reach concrete results.

Total number of videos collected for the initial visual sample, population, is 31 videos, collected from 7 different vloggers (sources) with different backgrounds. The 7 vloggers that produced the initial visual sample are listed below with some biographical and professional information about them:

1. Drew Brinsky:

Drew Goldberg, otherwise known by his online alias, Drew Brinsky, is an American travel vlogger. Brinsky documents his travels on his YouTube channel and other social media accounts. He joined YouTube on July 26, 2012 and he currently has 1.47M subscribers. As of March 2020, he has visited 191 countries and plans to visit every country in the world by June 2020. His website: <https://drewbinsky.com>. He created 13 videos about his trip to Syria.

2. The Life of Jord - Jordan Simons:

Jordan Simons, a British professional photographer, filmmaker and vlogger. He describes that his mission is to show people how to travel the world. In 2014 he sold his possessions, quit his job and began to travel the world. He joined YouTube on July 26, 2012 and he currently has 1.47M subscribers. His website: <https://www.lifeofjord.com/home>. He created 6 videos about his trip to Syria.

3. Eva Zu Beck

Eva Zu Beck, a Polish travel show creator on YouTube, travel film creator and documentaries host. In her description about herself, she says, “I travel to places that most tourists don't! I love opening people's eyes to new experiences and places - and that's what this channel is all about.” She joined YouTube on February 24, 2013 and she currently has 477K subscribers. Her website is: <https://www.evazubeck.com/about-me>. She created 2 videos about her trip to Syria.

4. Qasim Al-Hattu - Ibn Hattuta:

Qasim Al-Hattu, a Jordanian originally Palestinian Traveler. He describes himself on YouTube, “We travel to restore the hope that we lost, the hope for man, after politics, governments and the media separated us, we travel to be closer to the people, closer to the truth, closer to happiness, closer to us. I am Qasim Al-Hattu, my pleasure is traveling and new experiences, leaving the comfort zone is my favorite hobby. Share my experiences and hobbies to travel together, I am living this period traveling around the world”. He joined YouTube on April 13, 2016 and he currently has 493K subscribers. The content he produces is generally in Arabic. He created 2 videos about his trip to Syria.

5. Stgtravels:

He is a German traveler, with no other description. He joined YouTube on October 22, 2015 and he currently has 23.1K subscribers. He created 4 videos about his trip to Syria.

6. Guslthego - Gustav Rosted:

He is a Danish traveler and joined YouTube on February 25, 2009 with 14.8K subscribers. His website: <https://guslthego.com/> He created 1 video about his trip to Syria.

7. Jacob Laukaitis:

He is from Lithuania and traveled over 65 countries in 5 years. He joined YouTube on February 6, 2015 with 476K subscribers. He created 2 videos about his trip to Syria.

The primary visual sample, population, consists of 31 videos from the 7 sources mentioned above. The duration of the videos collected range from about 3 to 30 minutes, a total of 273 minutes (about 5 hours). Thus, it is difficult to analyze all 31 videos thoroughly and few similarities were found in all 31. Therefore, it was crucial to choose a limited sample size to be analyzed based on the framework of the multimodal methodology described in the previous section. Hence following steps were adopted:

Figure 2.1.1



1. Collect Videos: Compile 31 videos from all the vloggers known as video population.
2. Organize Videos: Organize all the collected videos by vlogger name, video title, duration, release date, interaction rate (views, likes, dislikes, comments) and video description.
3. Label Video Topic: For each of the 31 videos, the main topic of which the video revolves around has been labelled. The topics include:
 - Food Tourism: These kinds of videos revolve around food, mainly tasting new dishes and knowing the food culture and witnessing preparations of some dishes of the country.
 - Marketing Normality: Spreading a general message that war is over, Syrians are eager to have people, that Syrians are great hosts etc.
 - Mobility Tips: since travelling to Syria is still difficult, those who manage to enter the country share their tips and procedures


of obtaining the visa, how to use money and what to be aware of when in Syria.

- Touristic Experience: Getting the full experience of the trip, which includes going to historical sites such as ‘Karak des Chevalier’, ‘Aleppo Citadel’, and ‘Umayyad Mosque’, in addition to trying local food, meeting with locals, and visiting locals’ sites.

4. Choose Sample: From each vlogger, choose a video with the highest views or the different video from the other vloggers. In order to ensure variety in sampling.

Based on the process above, a total of 4 videos were chosen as the visual sample to be analyzed later in this section. The initial information of the 4 videos are displayed in the table below.

Table 2.1.1

Name of Traveler/ Vlogger	Drew Brinsky	Eva Zu Beck	Stgtravels	Ibn Hattuta Travels
Title of Video	2 WEEKS IN SYRIA  (not what you'd expect!)	ALEPPO, SYRIA What's It Like to Be a Tourist in ALEPPO in 2019?	Getting into Syria as a Tourist	Street Eating Challenge - Damascus - Syria 2019 All for \$ 10
Video Duration	5:30	14:22	6:05	16:11
# of views	547,119 views	810,862 views	123,666 views	1,169,734 views
Date of release	November 19, 2019	September 14, 2019	June 17, 2019	March 6, 2019
Likes/Dislikes	27K / 862	29K / 1K	2.6K / 191	37K / 2.3K
Comment	4,382	5,313	673	5,842

s below video	comments	comments	Comments	Comments
Topic of video	Compilation of trip/ Marketing normality	Touristic Experience	Mobility Tips	Food Tourism

Each of the videos will be analyzed based on the discursive narrative methodology, which is one of the categories critical visual analysis in labeling the visual content. This methodology mainly tackles how visual images are presented to narrate the process of an event (Wang, 2014, p. 267). In parallel to the discursive narrative analysis, the video titles and the semiotic content would also be analyzed using discourse analysis.

2.2 Analysis

In this section, the 4 videos displayed above will be thoroughly analyzed. Following the discursive narrative analysis process:

A- Visual description: A linguistic explanation of the visuals. The process includes the following 3 categories (Wang, 2014, p. 269).

- Description of representational structure: which refers to narrative and conceptual function displayed in the image. Within this category, two processes take place. This includes an action process that illustrates an action on behalf of a participant towards a target while the reaction process illustrates taking an action, e.g. seeing.
- Description of interactive meaning refers to the interpersonal aspect of visual communication
- Description of the compositional system of the visual material: this discusses the way in which the image or frame is constructed, the manner in which the visual contents are organized.

B- Visual Interpretation: based on the visual description from the previous stage, this step focuses on analyzing the visuals in the following modules:

a. Production: Focuses on analyzing the producers and the production process, while in addition analyzing three other functions: action, reaction and speech, which are responsible for narrating the scenes in the visual material

b. Distribution: Focuses on how the news media distribute certain implicit discourses in visual news and on how they prepare viewers to interpret those discourses.

C- Social Practice Explanation: decoding the ideologies within the visual semiosis, is the critical visual analysis process.

2.2.1 Video 1: “2 WEEKS IN SYRIA ~~is~~(not what you'd expect!)” - Drew Brinsky¹

This first video is 5 minutes 30 seconds long, it's a compilation of Drew's experience in Syria, that he will later share in detail in 12 separate videos. The video is mainly a timeline of the 14 days he spent in the country. The title of the video formulates a general picture and logic of what the video could be about, the whole video is about the idea of formulating the audience's expectations yet showing otherwise.

A- Visual description of the video:

The video opens with the following image. The front-view image gives the viewer the sense that they are being addressed personally. This formulates a certain connection with the audience, that will allow the vlogger to build upon later. The background is unclear and vague, it can be interpreted as old and rusty. In addition, with using the following introductory sentence, it gives the audience the space to recall their own idea of what has happened in Syria.

¹ 2 WEEKS IN SYRIA (not what you'd expect!) video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zmK35KMPZhM>



Image 2.2.1.1 YouTube capture: 2 WEEKS IN SYRIA (not what you'd expect!)

Following that, showing an image of two children aged 3 behind bars along with their previously recalled interpretation of the situation in Syria. Additionally, the text used on this image emphasizes the urge for the user to have his/her own understanding of the situation.



Image 2.2.1.2 YouTube capture: 2 WEEKS IN SYRIA (not what you'd expect!)

Later, Drew, the vlogger, continues discussing how he thought he might not get the visa because he only heard of '3 Americans' getting in and how he had to pull "some strings" in order to get it.

The following image comes from a sequence of various welcomes from locals, all of which are a close shot of a person, while on the contrary the construction of this frame is different. At first glance, we see a tilted frame with two good looking, hospitable ladies, talking to the audience directly and welcoming them to Syria. But we notice the picture of the current Syrian President at the back of that frame.



Image 2.2.1.3 YouTube capture: 2 WEEKS IN SYRIA (not what you'd expect!), (2019)

Drew continues on explaining his travel plans in Syria, and how he is adapting to Syrian Culture. Later he shows the audience a few images and insights of the cities he visited. He started off with Aleppo “a city that suffered a lot during the war”.



Image 2.2.1.4 YouTube capture: 2 WEEKS IN SYRIA (not what you'd expect!), (2019)

After, the audience sees a local person explaining how the areas around the citadel have been damaged, but Drew chooses to show the audience a Syrian flag, with what he mentioned to be “the world’s oldest citadel”, despite the fact that the frame does not show any visual of a citadel. The usage of the words “but is still highlighted” with the visual of the flag, which is known to be the official Syria’s flag.



Image 2.2.1.5 YouTube capture: 2 WEEKS IN SYRIA (not what you'd expect!), (2019)

Afterwards, he takes the audience to the coastal cities of Syria, Tartus and Latakia. In this part of the video, an aspect of stereotypes and presumptions becomes clear to the audience. He initially begins by saying in audio “something you wouldn't think of when you think about Syria”, but in the subtitles he personally transcribed it says otherwise “something you would think of when you think about Syria”. Assumable, this would be difficult to interpret as a mistake, for all his other 12 videos have no such spelling error.

Among the stereotypical reactions, was Drew’s surprise that Syria may actually have coastlines and people hangout there, he has a whole video entitled “SYRIA HAS BEACHES! (Hidden Gem of Mediterranean)”, without getting to the details of that video, the word composition and the usage of uppercase letters, reflects to

the audience the feeling of surprise and shock he had upon such discovery. In addition, he meets with a local fisherman, he asks if he knows English and is surprised that he does, the fisherman continues to make small talk and he is not interested.



Image 2.2.1.6 YouTube capture: 2 WEEKS IN SYRIA (not what you'd expect!), (2019)

The trip continued with Drew visiting Homs, a city known to be tremendously destroyed and affected by the conflict. In the frame below, the act of ‘seeing’ with such great concentration, along with the destroyed building in the background, for he calls it the “third’s biggest city”, while no features of a city are visible.



Image 2.2.1.7 YouTube capture: 2 WEEKS IN SYRIA (not what you'd expect!), (2019)

In addition, he mentions that 80% of Homs has been bombed, and carries to show the audience the act of feeling ‘sad’ to witness the reality, while walking through the destruction. Unlike previous stops in cities, he does not meet with locals or have some sort of interaction, but taking into consideration the situation in Homs, it could be presumed that it was difficult.



Image 2.2.1.8 YouTube capture: 2 WEEKS IN SYRIA (not what you'd expect!), (2019)

After, he continues to visit a “Christian” town called “Sadad”, and meets with the former mayor, who claims he defeated ISIS from controlling his town. He gives the location of this town, as at the start of the desert, while leaving out that it’s considered under the municipality of Homs, as he later does with few other locations. In addition, Drew claims to have learned quite a lot of information about the situation in Syria from the Mayor. Hence, referring to one of the detailed 12 videos Drew produced, there was a special video about his meeting with the Former Mayor, titled “HE SAVED 8,000 LIVES (Syrian War Hero)”. In that video, the mayor explains the location of his town, how they are Christian minority around other Muslim towns, how he thought the events that started in 2011, where a Shia/Sunni conflict and that they stood with the Syrian Army to defeat the terrorists and ISIS. The mayor goes on explaining how he trained the young men and how he took military aid from Russia, Iran and Hezbollah.

Finally, before reaching the end of his travel plan, Drew roughly mentions two other locations he had visited, to later reach the concluding scenes of this video. In the image displayed below, again in a front view, Drew is standing on what could be distinguished to be a minaret of a mosque. He informs the audience of his next steps, of showing them another side of Syria, one that he claims audiences haven't heard much about in the media.



Image 2.2.1.9 YouTube capture: 2 WEEKS IN SYRIA (not what you'd expect!), (2019)

In claiming to show the audience another side of Syria, using an image of food, may mislead the audience to believe that whatever content Drew would be producing would be food oriented, when in reality that's not the case.



Image 2.2.1.10 YouTube capture: 2 WEEKS IN SYRIA (not what you'd expect!), (2019)

Further, he informs the audience that the nation of Syria has suffered a lot while using the image of military men with rifles in what looks like a normal act of hanging out.

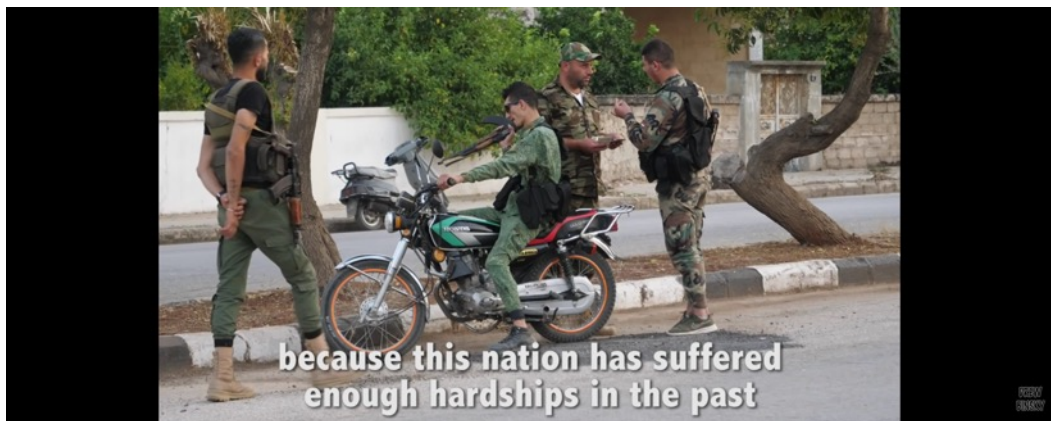


Image 2.2.1.11 YouTube capture: 2 WEEKS IN SYRIA (not what you'd expect!), (2019)

Repetitively, he again storms the audience with another group of stereotypical messages, assumptions and images of children.



Image 2.2.1.12 YouTube capture: 2 WEEKS IN SYRIA (not what you'd expect!), (2019)



Image 2.2.1.13 YouTube capture: 2 WEEKS IN SYRIA (not what you'd expect!), (2019)

Finally, Drew claims he will change the audience's preconceived thought of the Middle East, and he then counts a number of countries including Pakistan, Yemen, Afghanistan and Iran which he claims he did just so. In that frame, he again uses images of two children, one smaller than the other, while only showing the smaller one almost hiding behind the elder girl. Such construction has a greater meaning than being by chance.



Image 2.2.1.14 YouTube capture: 2 WEEKS IN SYRIA (not what you'd expect!), (2019)

B- Visual interpretation of the video:

This process consists of three phases; primarily in the production process, all the videos in this research are user generated content (UGC), which is considered content of images, videos or text that has been posted by users on any social media platform. The user generated content requires less production efforts, for it does not abide to any limitations and requirements from a channel or so, therefore it could be considered as spontaneous content.

Proceeding, the title of the video “2 WEEKS IN SYRIA 🇸🇾(not what you'd expect!)”, is an important piece of the analysis. Just by looking at the title of a video which is the first information that is delivered to the audience before the actual content of the video. In the context of this video, the audience can formulate their assumption of the content, which in this case could be leading the audience to an excited feeling about how he, Drew, would display the life from a country that has suffered huge instabilities since 2011. For the structure of the sentence reveals that he would alter the audience's perception. The usage of uppercase letters in the title, indicates that it is very important information, and may give the feeling of excitement, and the use of the flag as an icon, right after the name of the country is a form of emphasis. Moreover, the placement of words within brackets, makes it a secondary kind of information, but including an exclamation mark means it is important enough to be included in the title, and that it would deliver a certain message.

Next comes the distribution phase of the video, as opposed to the earlier days when people were forced to watch what the TV produced, today the audience can choose the content they find themselves interested in. Hence, for the sake of this research, the amount of likes and dislikes would be used as a scale of measurement. The video above has been watched more than half a million times (547,119 views), with 27.000 likes and 867 dislikes which has a ratio of (1:31), that is considered quite large. This large number of likes is an indication of the vast reach of the video and that there are people who were interested in the content of the video.

While in the consumption phase, such videos are used to shape the opinion of the ones watching the video, starting off with the dichotomy used of “not what you’d expect” but what you may really find. In the video above, the vlogger mentions how he has changed the perception of his audience of Pakistan, Yemen, Afghanistan and Iran. This is a clear statement of his goal. Though the labeling and categorization of those countries all together is unusual, for they are neither connected geographically nor culturally, instead they are were or still are areas of conflict, one could think his experience in visiting areas of conflict and working on reflecting another aspect of the situation, without mentioning the events taking place there is part of a bigger plan.

Within the video, various stereotypical messages and implications were displayed. This includes Drew's surprise at the fact that Syria has a beautiful coastline which he thought was very surprising he needed to make a special video about. In addition to questioning a local if he was able to speak English. Though one may argue that Drew’s question, is normal for any tourist to ask the locals, but in this situation it could be assumed that he is asking such frequent touristic questions, to eradicate the image of a chaotic Syria, considering that were this conversation took place is Latakia, which according to the BBC it is the “ancestral home” of the Assad's family and his minority Alawite sect, and is a political stronghold, hence the image of a normal state of life is clearly there.

Among other interesting analysis from the video, in the beginning of the video Drew uses the phrase “pulling some strings”, such a clear statement informs the audience that visiting Syria is possible yet difficult and reflects that visiting Syria and wandering around isn’t normal, and that some certain unclear procedure needs to be taken.

Drew uses images with vague sentences underneath to enhance the audience’s understanding, for example the sentence of “this nation has suffered enough hardship”, while using the image of military men with rifles, does not allow the

audience to make their own understanding of those hardships, he labels it with 'war'. This reflects a biased interpretation of events, while vloggers claim they are showing the situation of the people. In addition to such images, few visuals and acts were also used repetitively in the vlog, this includes children's images which could be used as a tool to touch on the soft spot of the audience, for everyone sympathizes with kids. In addition, his walking act and seeing the destruction in the city of Homs, could be just to make the audience feel sort of discomfort though he does not show further images from those destroyed towns. This could be interpreted as if Drew is trying to establish a close proximity with the audience.

2.2.2 Video 2: "ALEPPO, SYRIA | What's It Like to Be a Tourist in ALEPPO in 2019?" - Eva Zu Beck²

A- Visual description of the video:

This video is different in style and construction as compared to the previous one, it is 14 minutes and 22 seconds. Eva Zu Beck, in addition to be a traveler is also a filmmaker, therefore the video construction includes a coherent storyline and narration. The title of the video does not give quite a clear connotation of the content of the video, and the audience are unaware if Eva being a tourist in Aleppo will bring positive or negative images.

The video starts off with a high view camera angle, a bed from a hotel room in the background and Eva addressing the camera directly, introducing herself, and how she ended up visiting Syria.

² ALEPPO, SYRIA | What's It Like to Be a Tourist in ALEPPO in 2019?
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZTaoyJpr-YE>



Image 2.2.2.1 YouTube capture: ALEPPO, SYRIA | What's It Like to Be a Tourist in ALEPPO in 2019? (2019)

For a minute and half, in that same frame design, Eva explains various things. She explains the outline of her trip to Syria, where she has been and that the final destination of her trip is Aleppo describing it as the “once the great jewel in the crown of the Middle East” and the “longest histories of human inhabitation in the world”. Apart from describing it in those positive remarks, she also mentions that the same Aleppo has been “so devastated” by the recent conflicts in Syria.

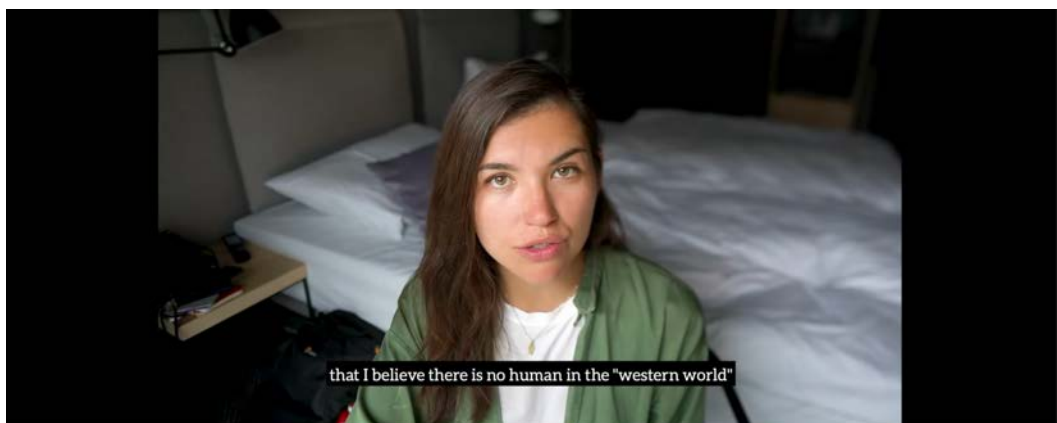


Image 2.2.2.2 YouTube capture: ALEPPO, SYRIA | What's It Like to Be a Tourist in ALEPPO in 2019? (2019)

Later, she addresses her audience, specifically the “western world” claiming they all should know about the tragedy that struck Aleppo. Proceeding, she informs the

audience that she did not know what to expect when visiting Aleppo, and that the situation she saw there devastated and crushed her while also surprisingly meaningful in various ways.

Following that, she talks to the audience directly and asks them to either commit to watching the vlog till the end or not at all, claiming the story has several turns and that she will show them her full experience there. While doing so, she ensures that the likelihood of whoever opened the video would watch it till the end as a sense of commitment and responsibility.

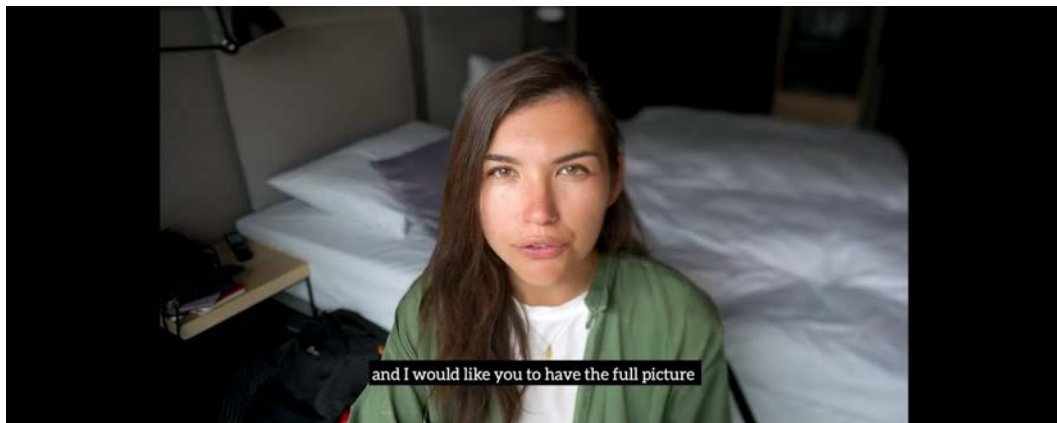


Image 2.2.2.3 YouTube capture: ALEPPO, SYRIA | What's It Like to Be a Tourist in ALEPPO in 2019? (2019)

For she is an experienced filmmaker, she is aware that disclaimers could be a form of defense if needed. She clearly states that her experience in Aleppo is a very specific one and the vlog is not a political commentary, or a reflection of what life is like for the people of Aleppo today.



Image 2.2.2.4 YouTube capture: ALEPPO, SYRIA | What's It Like to Be a Tourist in ALEPPO in 2019? (2019)

As the final scene from the introduction of the video, Eva emphasizes that she is a travel vlogger and the experience she is going to share is a specific experience of a foreign tourist in Aleppo.



Image 2.2.2.5 YouTube capture: ALEPPO, SYRIA | What's It Like to Be a Tourist in ALEPPO in 2019? (2019)

Proceeding from the introduction, Eva starts narrating with the video of her actual visit to Aleppo. In the following frames, Eva uses the voice over technique that has been synchronized with the images, hence this is not a real time storyline. The audience starts off by seeing the entrance of the city, with the Syrian President Al Assad's picture on the street, from the back of a car with Eva explaining that in the

context of this vlog, for four long years during the Syria Conflict, Aleppo was the center of the battlefield. Labeling the key forces as the Syrian government and Syrian opposition. The construction of the frame makes it clear that this is the continuation of the car ride.



Image 2.2.2.6 YouTube capture: ALEPPO, SYRIA | What's It Like to Be a Tourist in ALEPPO in 2019? (2019)



Image 2.2.2.7 YouTube capture: ALEPPO, SYRIA | What's It Like to Be a Tourist in ALEPPO in 2019? (2019)

Eva continues narrating what she has read or seen on the news during those four years, the city being bombarded and under siege, people fleeing their homes to keep themselves and their families safe. The visuals associated with the narration do not

enhance a certain interpretation or understanding for they are still the car ride while travelling around the city.



Image 2.2.2.8 YouTube capture: ALEPPO, SYRIA | What's It Like to Be a Tourist in ALEPPO in 2019? (2019)

Eva explains that just two years after the end of the Battle of Aleppo³, she is surprised that she was able to visit Aleppo, but obviously with a guide. For a change, she divides the frame into two screens, in one the audience sees Eva looking out the window of the car that she has been narrating from the past couple of scenes. Showing the audience herself, may be to make sure they know that such footage is produced by her. In the other screen the audience still sees the city from the car.



³Timeline of the Battle of Aleppo www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-aleppo-timeline/timeline-the-battle-for-aleppo-idUSKBN1430PJ

Image 2.2.2.10 YouTube capture: ALEPPO, SYRIA | What's It Like to Be a Tourist in ALEPPO in 2019? (2019)

In the frame below Eva is concluding the car trip and introductory timeline of the situation in Aleppo and her personal insights. Reminding the audience that the trip to Aleppo is not as smooth and steady as one may think, she's using the metaphor of a "roller coaster" to explain her feeling and interpretation of the part of the trip to come.



Image 2.2.2.11 YouTube capture: ALEPPO, SYRIA | What's It Like to Be a Tourist in ALEPPO in 2019? (2019)

In the frame below, the audience sees a "I love Aleppo" sign which is only seen in touristic cities, along with the picture of Al Assad with the image of the Citadel of Aleppo. The text in that image is translated to "Aleppo is in my eyes" which means He, Al Assad, is or will take good care of Aleppo. Such a poster contradicts the timeline of events that Aleppo went through. She identifies that here the trip started off high, referring to the roller coaster metaphor. She proceeds to inform the audience that the scenes to come later are the "newer" parts of Aleppo, while showing a square which appears to be new because of the tall glass building on the side.



Image 2.2.2.12 YouTube capture: ALEPPO, SYRIA | What's It Like to Be a Tourist in ALEPPO in 2019? (2019)

The transition from the narration aspect of the video to the actual touristic experience was in a form of showing the audience some street food and sellers.



Image 2.2.2.13 YouTube capture: ALEPPO, SYRIA | What's It Like to Be a Tourist in ALEPPO in 2019? (2019)

Eva stops at one of those street food sellers to try out a local sweet, in that frame she communicates with the audience directly and explains what the food she is trying is made of and her own interpretation and interest in it. She then asks the seller to give her one so she could also try.

Furthermore, Eva informs the audience that her seller wants a selfie, and that they actually took on. Such a frame and information to the audience could be seen as a sign of interest from the locals and friendliness. She thanks him with the basic Arabic word of ‘Thank you’ and moves on to her next stop.



Image 2.2.2.15 YouTube capture: ALEPPO, SYRIA | What's It Like to Be a Tourist in ALEPPO in 2019? (2019)

The audience sees a couple of seconds of her walking down the street trying the sweet she just bought, in a very friendly and enthusiastic manner she informs the audience that trying this on the street was very overwhelming and not such a good idea. The visit continues to another special food place, she identifies it as one of Aleppo’s oldest traditional ice cream shops. Eva provides the audience with little information about this particular place, how the current owner inherited the job from his father, and how he prepares it right in front of his customers. In addition to the ice cream not resembling anything she had seen or tried before.



Image 2.2.2.16 YouTube capture: ALEPPO, SYRIA | What's It Like to Be a Tourist in ALEPPO in 2019? (2019)

In the next frame, Eva communicates directly with the audience, in a straight selfie angle, she informs the audience of the name of the sweet she is about to try, later continues to try the dish with the camera still capturing her face, the technique of trying the dish and her genuine reaction.



Image 2.2.2.17 YouTube capture: ALEPPO, SYRIA | What's It Like to Be a Tourist in ALEPPO in 2019? (2019)

Following that, Eva walks around that part of town, narrating what she sees around, making a few comments about various ironic images, such as the following.



Image 2.2.2.18 YouTube capture: ALEPPO, SYRIA | What's It Like to Be a Tourist in ALEPPO in 2019? (2019)

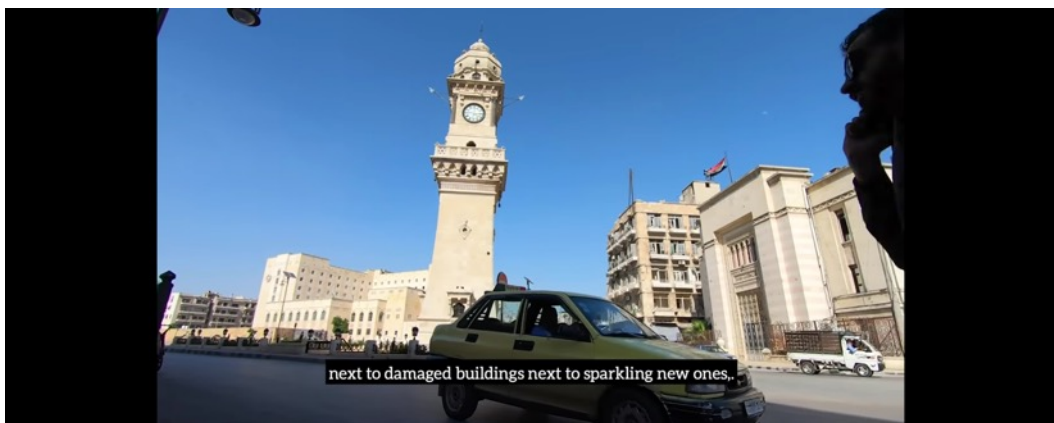


Image 2.2.2.19 YouTube capture: ALEPPO, SYRIA | What's It Like to Be a Tourist in ALEPPO in 2019? (2019)

Eva's local experience continues as she stops at a local soap seller, she introduces to the audience that this soap was something tourists used to buy in the past, it's made of olive oil and quite famous, she also gives tips on how to identify the level of its genuineness.



Image 2.2.2.20 YouTube capture: ALEPPO, SYRIA | What's It Like to Be a Tourist in ALEPPO in 2019? (2019)

In another transition from the food tourism aspect of this video, Eva shares her thoughts of the recent tourism state of the city. She is still walking around the downtown of Aleppo. She mentions how it is recently opening up, with an image of the embassy of Hungary, and how the tourism infrastructure is still mainly closed, such as the airline offices and the hotels because the airport is not yet operating.



Image 2.2.2.21 YouTube capture: ALEPPO, SYRIA | What's It Like to Be a Tourist in ALEPPO in 2019? (2019)

Eva's visit continues to pass by this famous hotel, she informs the audience about the history of this hotel and how this hotel hosted many famous figures along the years, including Agatha Christie. She mentioned the hotel no longer functions like it used to in the past due for the conflict leaving it in a terrible state.



Image 2.2.2.22 YouTube capture: ALEPPO, SYRIA | What's It Like to Be a Tourist in ALEPPO in 2019? (2019)

Eva continues to enter the old part of the city while addressing the audience directly in a close camera angle, she claims that those parts have been destroyed the most and those parts are the cultural and historical center for this entire region. Unlike the previous parts of the video, in the following parts of the vlog, the audience sees more of Eva within the frames and she interacts with her audience.



Image 2.2.2.23 YouTube capture: ALEPPO, SYRIA | What's It Like to Be a Tourist in ALEPPO in 2019? (2019)

Proceeding, in again a mid-camera shot with a front-view angle, Eva says that she has been told that part of the city has been damaged extensively but she doesn't know what to expect, hence she will inspect in the following scenes.



Image 2.2.2.24 YouTube capture: ALEPPO, SYRIA | What's It Like to Be a Tourist in ALEPPO in 2019? (2019)

Fast forwarding, to the actual sites, the audience see her walking over destruction with initially a tilt movement of the camera, from the ground with her footsteps and stones destroyed to a wide shot scene with an unknown location due to all the damage. She walks around the destroyed area in the frame below.



Image 2.2.2.25 YouTube capture: ALEPPO, SYRIA | What's It Like to Be a Tourist in ALEPPO in 2019? (2019)

From a bird-eye angle, the audience sees Eva's hand touching the rocks and stones in the destroyed area. Afterwards, the audience sees her again from a front view angle, her gaze indicates that the scope of the destruction is very large and vast.



Image 2.2.2.26 YouTube capture: ALEPPO, SYRIA | What's It Like to Be a Tourist in ALEPPO in 2019? (2019)



Image 2.2.2.27 YouTube capture: ALEPPO, SYRIA | What's It Like to Be a Tourist in ALEPPO in 2019? (2019)

Following that, she wandered around that same area, sensing some of what's left of that area. In the frame below, Eva shows the audience the bullet hole on what looks like to be a door or so. Assumable making sure to connect the destruction with the violence of war.



Image 2.2.2.28 YouTube capture: ALEPPO, SYRIA | What's It Like to Be a Tourist in ALEPPO in 2019? (2019)

After the few silent frames presented above, the audience sees Eva again in a front view camera angle, she talks to the audience directly about her feelings and her inability to express the extent of the damage. In that same frame structure, Eva tells her audience that she had never been to Aleppo before, and continues looking around with posture reflecting empathy and compassion.



Image 2.2.2.29 YouTube capture: ALEPPO, SYRIA | What's It Like to Be a Tourist in ALEPPO in 2019? (2019)

While walking around that area, in that same frame as above, Eva discusses her own opinion about reconstructing heritage and informs the audience how the people of Aleppo are reconstructing what's been damaged in a very quick way. Though, she says nothing could bring back the original structure and the original beauty of it.

Within her walk through that area, she again touches up some certain acts the people of the city did, she claims that house owners have collected stones and piled them up next to their destroyed house in order to rebuild them as it was in the past.



Image 2.2.2.30 YouTube capture: ALEPPO, SYRIA | What's It Like to Be a Tourist in ALEPPO in 2019? (2019)

In the next frame, the audience see a side view of Eva, with a voice over narration explaining how she ended up at the old bazaar that is “extensively destroyed”.



Image 2.2.2.31 YouTube capture: ALEPPO, SYRIA | What's It Like to Be a Tourist in ALEPPO in 2019? (2019)

The audience continues to see the inside of the souk, with Eva addressing them directly, she informs the audience that it could have been one of the oldest souks in

the world. Emphasizing in four different ways by directly looking at the camera that the souk is gone, each time her face reflects her emotion of sadness and surprise.



Image 2.2.2.32 YouTube capture: ALEPPO, SYRIA | What's It Like to Be a Tourist in ALEPPO in 2019? (2019)

Proceeding, the audience sees Eva but from a low camera angle, while she is moving around in a circular motion to show the extent of the destruction and share her reaction afterwards. In those few scenes, Eva shares her sad emotions and empathy with the audience.



Image 2.2.2.33 YouTube capture: ALEPPO, SYRIA | What's It Like to Be a Tourist in ALEPPO in 2019? (2019)

After witnessing some signs that workers are trying to rebuild the souk, Eva continues on with some motivational comments of what it means to be human,

getting oneself up even having lost everything, to rebuild and construct no matter what the damage. All such comments are constructed within a frame that fits with the sentences she has to say. Few of the scenes are as follows.



Image 2.2.2.34 YouTube capture: ALEPPO, SYRIA | What's It Like to Be a Tourist in ALEPPO in 2019? (2019)



Image 2.2.2.35 YouTube capture: ALEPPO, SYRIA | What's It Like to Be a Tourist in ALEPPO in 2019? (2019)

After coming out of the souk she stomps upon a local shop she says within the destroyed old city “you could find some nice souvenirs” referring to the man doing some copperware, she enters the shop buys a souvenir and she is glad he is still able to smile after all this destruction around him. Then carries on with the rest of her trip.



Image 2.2.2.36 YouTube capture: ALEPPO, SYRIA | What's It Like to Be a Tourist in ALEPPO in 2019? (2019)

As the video is closely coming to an end, Eva tries to conclude the storyline and share some remarks. She uses some comments with humanistic approach, in the frame below, in a wide shot she is walking in front of the citadel of Aleppo, to later discuss how it is hard for the people of Aleppo to have their homes shattered by forces “bigger” than them, with an image of an old street seller at a touristic location.

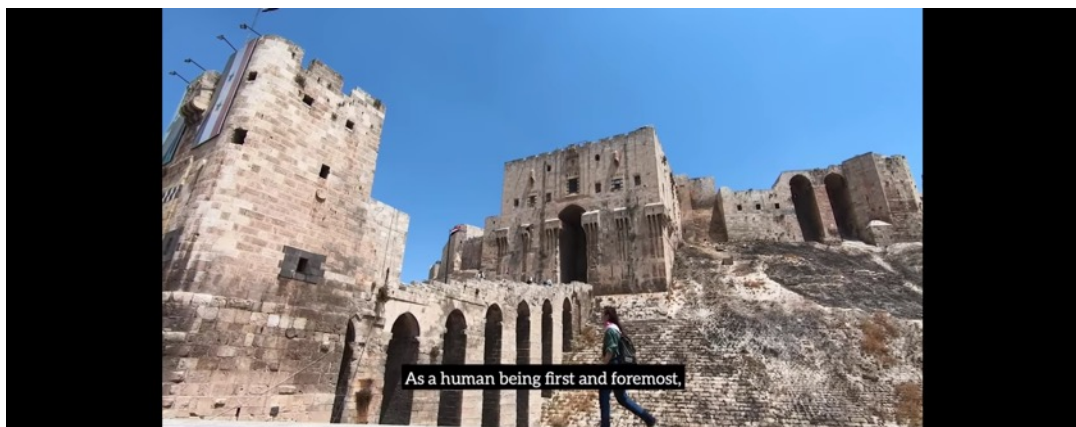


Image 2.2.2.37 YouTube capture: ALEPPO, SYRIA | What's It Like to Be a Tourist in ALEPPO in 2019? (2019)



Image 2.2.2.38 YouTube capture: ALEPPO, SYRIA | What's It Like to Be a Tourist in ALEPPO in 2019? (2019)

In her attempt to lift the mood of her audience before concluding the video, she says that the ultimate human power is “hope”, along with this sentence she connects it with an image of a child running up the stairs. The display of children in motion delivers the feeling of normality and continuity of the normal image of life.



Image 2.2.2.39 YouTube capture: ALEPPO, SYRIA | What's It Like to Be a Tourist in ALEPPO in 2019? (2019)

A tilting motion from the ground to a high view of Aleppo along with the sun setting, delivers the feeling of a brighter tomorrow. Following that, she claims to have delivered the truth of the situation, that there is a lot of damage and wonders how the locals must have felt. With regards to all that, Eva goes on another emotional and motivational speech. How the rising from the ashes results in a new tomorrow, that is being built by the people of Aleppo.



Image 2.2.2.40 YouTube capture: ALEPPO, SYRIA | What's It Like to Be a Tourist in ALEPPO in 2019? (2019)

Finally, the trip is over, and the audience sees Eva in her hotel room, just like the introductory scenes of this vlog. She talks about her emotions, how it has been difficult being there and how editing the video brought tears to her eyes again. Hence, as a tourist it is this difficult what it could be like to call this home. With this part the camera shots keep on alternating between a very close shot at her face and between a normal shot. The close shots came with the words “remember”, “just one-time visitor”, “home”, “people of Aleppo”, “process incredibly difficult and complex”, these words with the close shot create more emphasis on them.

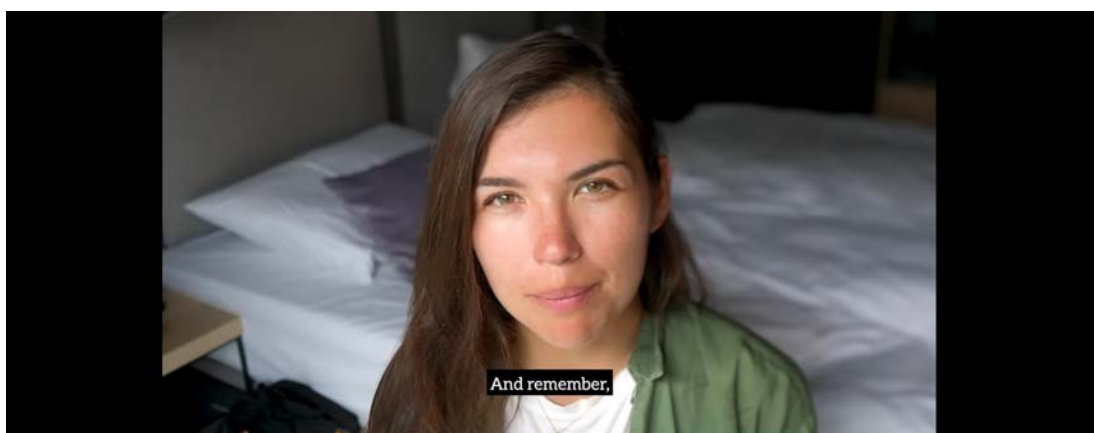


Image 2.2.2.41 YouTube capture: ALEPPO, SYRIA | What's It Like to Be a Tourist in ALEPPO in 2019? (2019)

Eva proceeds to tell her audience about a story of her friend, who is actually from Aleppo and his request to kiss the city for him. She mentioned that she is aware not being able to come back is not just him and his family, there are a lot of Syrians with similar situations. She concludes with her hopes that her friend could go back and kiss Aleppo himself and with wishes to see her audience in the next vlog.

B- Visual interpretation of the video:

After thoroughly describing the video above, various interpretations were derived from it. Initially, the title of the video, “ALEPPO, SYRIA | What's It Like to Be a Tourist in ALEPPO in 2019?”, is not clear of what the content would be about, would she visit the mainstream sites of the city, or reveal some unknown side of Aleppo. In addition, the emphasis on the date is quite questionable, what makes 2019 different from any other year? This video has been watched 810, 862 times with an impression level of 29K (thousand) likes and 1K (dislikes), which is considered a very large ratio 29:1.

Later, the video’s construction is clearly divided into phases and a storyline adapting the “roller-coaster” metaphor as the framework, along with a great dose of emotional speeches but nothing referring to concrete incidents. The video follows a narrative and emotional aspect to impact the humanism of her audience “western world”, thus resulting in the segregation of the audience, clearly making it visible to whom the video is made for. Furthermore, in the vlog, Eva was greatly aware of the word usage, not to offend anyone or reflect her personal understanding of the conflict in Syria trying to appear unbiased. In addition, since she is a filmmaker and documentary host, she adapts the techniques from such category in this vlog, hence creating a balance between the footage with voice over, the footage she appears in and addresses the audience directly, while also generating connection and proximity by touching few things here and there and allowing the audience to formulate their emotions of what they are seeing.

During the video, Eva comments on various things including, the conflict is still recent, the tourism infrastructure is closed and her friend from Aleppo back home sending his regards while recognizing that she is privileged to be able to visit the city while thousands of its residents are unable to come back such comments contradict her claim of this video not being a political commentary kind. She also states that she has read about the situation in Syria and what has and is going on there reflecting that she is part of the global audience, thus all of the previous comments in the video raise the question, why and how did she end up visiting Aleppo specifically and Syria generally particularly since nothing about the Syrian situation could be considered as non-political.

Finally, a few significant comments have been addressed on various occasions, Eva is emotionally affected by the destruction of heritage and very sad how the reconstructions will never bring back the old heritage yet failing to address the psychological and emotional reconstruction of the inhabitants of this city. Nevertheless, in different incidents, Eva displays few actions that the locals are doing, and interprets it as if life is going back to normal, unaware that working in your shop or reconstructing an old bazaar is a way for people to continue living in the bare minimum level.

2.2.3 Video 3: “Getting into Syria as a Tourist ” - stgtravels⁴

A- Visual description of the video:

In comparison to the videos discussed above, this video is different in terms of content and production. This video is the first video out four video series, with each tackling a different topic related with stgtravels’s visit to Syria. While the previous two videos had subtitles embedded in them, this video does not, the vlogger only uses his voice while narrating the vlog.

⁴ Getting into Syria as a Tourist: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aR-XHWxMW9c>

The vlog starts off with a time-lapse from the back of a car, in what could be Syria. The audience hears the vlogger, stgtravels, expressing his enthusiasm to show his audience his trip to Syria.



Image 2.2.3.1 YouTube capture: “Getting into Syria as a Tourist” (2019)

Following that, the audience sees a dark scene, which could be the city at night with the Arabic writing of the word “Syria”, in the background the audience hears the sound of Adhan, the call for prayer.



Image 2.2.3.2 YouTube capture: “Getting into Syria as a Tourist” (2019)

Proceeding from that, the vlogger carries to explain to his audience how flights to Syria are very “limited” and that international sanctions forbid travelling on Syrian Carrier. Hence, he used the common way taken by various tourists, flying to

Lebanon and then entering Syria by land. He proceeds to tell his audience how his personal trip started in Singapore and other irrelevant information to this video.

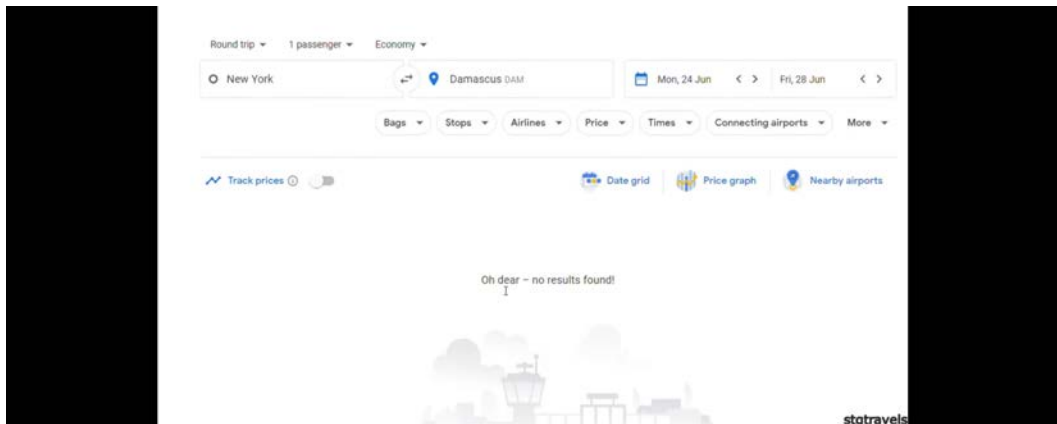


Image 2.2.3.3 YouTube capture: “Getting into Syria as a Tourist” (2019)

The vlogger, Stctravels explains the logistical aspects of his trip in detail. He mentioned after arriving at Beirut’s airport he took an Uber to the bus station where from there he gets on a shared taxi to Syria. While informing the audience of such logistics, he uses a google map recording to give the exact location along with a sliding camera movement of that bus station.

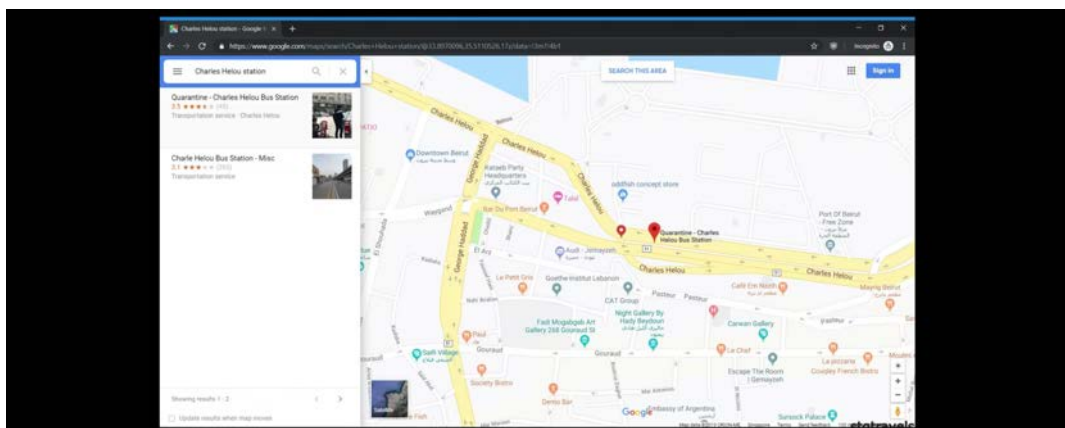


Image 2.2.3.4 YouTube capture: “Getting into Syria as a Tourist” (2019)

Apart from informing the audience about the mobility details, stctravels mentions some recommendations and tips for those who may want to do this visit. Among

that, asking the driver to write the cost of the ride to the border on a paper, which he says was 23 USD. In the frame below, the audience sees the vlogger for the first time since the beginning of the video, in a small frame inside the main frame just to mention how much he has paid and later continue with the footage from the car till he reaches the border. He then carries on informing the audience of his fears and surreal feeling of entering Syria although he claims he had done “extensive” research on the safety of travelling to Syria, which has suffered from civil war and terrorism.

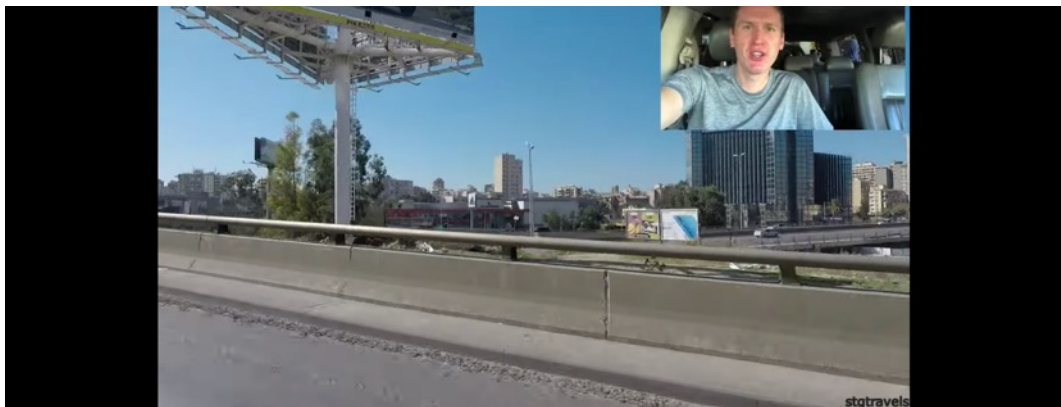


Image 2.2.3.5 YouTube capture: “Getting into Syria as a Tourist” (2019)

Prior to reaching the border, he informs his audience that the exchange rate of USD for Syrian Pounds is better than within Syria. The need for exchanging money is essential because Syria under sanctions cannot utilize ATMs and credit cards.

Afterwards, stgravels informs the audience about his experience at the Lebanese borders, how he got in the cue for foreigners and to his surprise the officer stamped his passport without questioning his reasons to visit Syria. Again, the vlogger uses some google maps imaging to identify the exact location of the Lebanese border. With the advice of the passengers in the car, stgravels does not take any videos or images between the Lebanese and Syrian border.

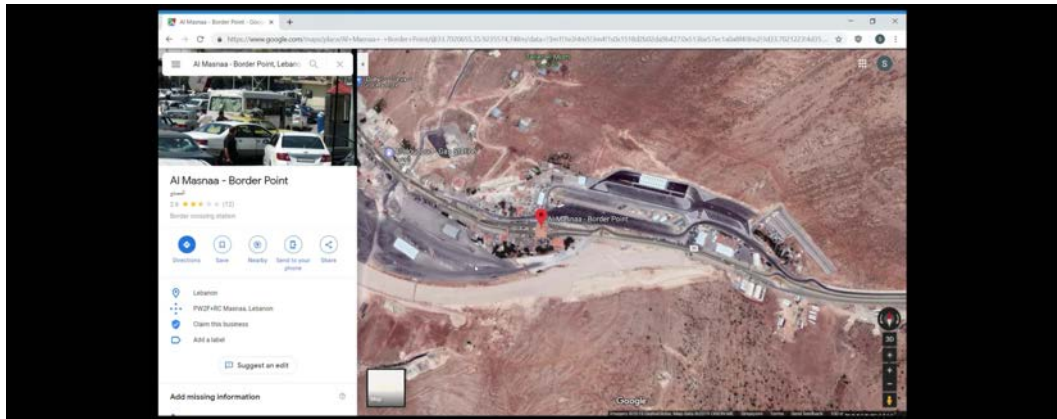


Image 2.2.3.6 YouTube capture: “Getting into Syria as a Tourist” (2019)

Following, stgtravels reaches the core of the video, the needed paperwork to enter Syria. He claims that visas for EU citizens could be obtained at the border upon arrival though a travel clearance document is needed from the Ministry of Interior in Syria, which is tricky, hence he has a friend who has obtained this for him. Although he had obtained all his needed documents the immigration officer was not able to find his clearance in the system. In the frame below, the audience could see the official document with the required information filled out including type of Visa, while in the background the URL of the website is called ‘cometosyria.com’



Image 2.2.3.7 YouTube capture: “Getting into Syria as a Tourist” (2019)

The vlogger carries to inform his audience about the situation in the waiting room, he sees a lot of Arabs and African people with UN Passports. He states that it was

clear a ‘Caucasian European’ was not common in that place. After an hour his clearance was found, and he carried on with his trip. While the narration above was taking place, the footage used were from the downtown of Damascus and a wide shot angle from a town called ‘Maaraba’, this town is under the Governorate of the countryside of Damascus and this governorate was a major conflict site during the Civil War.



Image 2.2.3.8 YouTube capture: “Getting into Syria as a Tourist” (2019)



Image 2.2.3.9 YouTube capture: “Getting into Syria as a Tourist” (2019)

Coming towards the end of the video, stgtravels expresses his excitement to have finally entered the “Syrian Arab Republic”, his voice tone is so eager with the footage showing the flag growing in size up until it reaches a full screen.



Image 2.2.3.10 YouTube capture: “Getting into Syria as a Tourist” (2019)

He concludes with informing his audience that he spent four days in Syria and for them to watch his upcoming 3 videos of the trip, while in the frame the audience see a moving video of what looks like a wedding, the Ummayyad Mosque an important touristic site and another wide high angle of the city of ‘Maaraba’.



Image 2.2.3.11 YouTube capture: “Getting into Syria as a Tourist” (2019)

B- Visual interpretation of the video:

This video generally revolves around the mobility tips provided by the vlogger, unlike the two previously analyzed videos. This video compared to stgtravels’s other three videos has 123,666 views with 2.6K likes and 191 dislikes, which is considerably high despite that some information and details that are of no use in such video for example, informing the audience about his flight from Singapore to

Lebanon while stopping in Addis Ababa. In addition to the basic video production techniques he uses such as the constant use of google maps footage and that the audience do not actually see the vlogger, or any visual content of certain beauty. This raises the question, how is it possible for such video, that is not visually appealing to have such an amount of views. Another important note, vloggers when producing their own content make sure to make an appearance but, in his case, the audience sees the vlogger only once.

The video's introduction with the call of prayer is such a stereotypical image to use to represent Syria, though he could have used another alternative. The vlogger uses the word terrorism along with civil war to describe the situation in Syria, which is considerably unusual because this term has been used thoroughly by Bashar Al Assad's government when describing the opposition.

In the short video above, there are a few interesting points worth mentioning. The fact that foreigners need a travel clearance document issued from the Ministry of Interior confirms that the Syrian Government is fully aware of who enters the country and what they will be doing there. In addition, the ease in informing the audience that someone on his behalf obtained this document in such a situation, means some strings were pulled. In discussing the security aspect from the video, stgtravels mentions the need for writing the price of the ride from Beirut to Syria on a paper, probably to ensure he does not get ripped off, such a step confirms that he took some tips from those visitors before him. In addition, the scene from 'Maaraba' town and the shot in the final scene from the video, shows that the vlogger was able to travel around that town which is under the governorate of the countryside of Damascus which was or still is a conflict zone, thus showing to the audience that it is safe for tourists to go.

2.2.4 Video 4: “Street Eating Challenge in Damascus - Syria 2019| all for \$10”

(تحدي أكل الشوارع في دمشق - سوريا 2019 | كله ب ١٠ دولار) - **Ibn Hattuta travels**⁵

A- Visual description of the video:

This video compared to all the previous above is in Arabic language, hence the target audience is considered different. The video’s main topic is food, which is clear from the title. The challenge’s main concept is using 10 USD equivalent in the city he visits and see the amount of street food he could try.

Beginning with the first scene from the video, the vlogger, Qasem addresses his audience directly informing them he is in Damascus, Syria and about the crazy idea of the street food challenge. He then continues to show quick shots of all the food he is going to try throughout the video. Following that, he states that 10 USD is equal to 5000 Syrian pounds, and then carries on explaining how his food criteria is based on recommendations from a famous Facebook group for food eaters in Syria called “where did you have lunch? (؟وين تغديت)”. Finally, he states that he is eager to try the very delicious, cheap and traditional food of Syria. The frame construction is simple, in a public park at an eye-level camera angle and with direct communication he begins his video.



Image 2.2.4.1 YouTube capture: “Street Eating Challenge in Damascus - Syria 2019| all for \$10” (2019)

⁵ Getting into Syria as a Tourist: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hEbrGbQvmw8>



Image 2.2.4.2 YouTube capture: “Street Eating Challenge in Damascus - Syria 2019| all for \$10” (2019)

He introduces to his audience, his companion for the day, who he says had sent him a message on Instagram the day before and now she will accompany him on his food challenge.



Image 2.2.4.3 YouTube capture: “Street Eating Challenge in Damascus - Syria 2019| all for \$10” (2019)

On the first stop of this video, Qassim, tells his audience that the stop is not an actual street food, but it’s a traditional place where people come to have breakfast. He carries on explaining the components of the dish, its name and how it is made.

The frames of this stop vary from the entrance of the restaurant, to the actual food and the tasting experience of Qasim, they are as follows.



Image 2.2.4.4 YouTube capture: “Street Eating Challenge in Damascus - Syria 2019| all for \$10” (2019)



Image 2.2.4.5 YouTube capture: “Street Eating Challenge in Damascus - Syria 2019| all for \$10” (2019)

After leaving the first stop, while directly communicating with the audience he informs them of the prices of the food he just tried and what is left of the budget. He spent 1400 Syrian Pounds and has 3600 left.



Image 2.2.4.6 YouTube capture: “Street Eating Challenge in Damascus - Syria 2019| all for \$10” (2019)

In a break within the video, two girls on the street stop to say hi, they know him from the show “Sadeem⁶”, a competition for content creators that he was a part of.



Image 2.2.4.7 YouTube capture: “Street Eating Challenge in Damascus - Syria 2019| all for \$10” (2019)

The frame below is used as a transitional footage between the first stop and the one coming afterwards. It is a time-lapse video of the streets of Damascus without any clear identification of the surroundings.

⁶ <https://www.sadeem.com/ar>



Image 2.2.4.8 YouTube capture: “Street Eating Challenge in Damascus - Syria 2019| all for \$10” (2019)

Similar to the previous stop, the audience initially sees the shop’s front and knows about what it offers and that it is a 50-year-old shop that offers two types of meat sandwiches only.



Image 2.2.4.9 YouTube capture: “Street Eating Challenge in Damascus - Syria 2019| all for \$10” (2019)

Qasim goes on identifying the components of the sandwich, describes the taste, gives the sandwich a 7.5 out of 10 rating and informs the audience it cost him 400 Syrian Pounds, leaving him with 3200 left. Prior to addressing the audience, they see a time-lapse video of the eating process in that shop in a higher camera angle.



Image 2.2.4.10 YouTube capture: “Street Eating Challenge in Damascus - Syria 2019| all for \$10” (2019)

Similar to the transitional footage before, this time Qasem chose to show the audience the streets of the downtown of Damascus with him wandering those streets. This will lead to a shop downtown known for making famous croissants.



Image 2.2.4.11 YouTube capture: “Street Eating Challenge in Damascus - Syria 2019| all for \$10” (2019)

Repetitively, like previous stops the local food experience starts with Qasim showing the audience the look of this restaurant/shop. As he mentioned, he never thought that croissants would be a Syrian street food, but as in the previous tasting footage, he expresses his feelings about it and then informs the audience the cost of

one piece is 200 SYP, leaving him with 3000, and that it's a delicious, cheap traditional food.



Image 2.2.4.12 YouTube capture: “Street Eating Challenge in Damascus - Syria 2019| all for \$10” (2019)

Continuing to another stop, a ‘Belgian’ waffle shop. Again, the same sequence of events take place, with a similar frame to the above. He rates the waffles in comparison with the actual Belgian waffles he tried in Belgium.



Image 2.2.4.13 YouTube capture: “Street Eating Challenge in Damascus - Syria 2019| all for \$10” (2019)

For about 30 seconds of footage, the audience sees the new food stop, Shawarma (chicken sandwich); they see the preparation process in detail. Following that Qassim also explains the process and compares it to the Jordanian version of Shawarma, with providing the location of this shop and rating of the sandwich. He again mentions that it's cheap.



Image 2.2.4.14 YouTube capture: “Street Eating Challenge in Damascus - Syria 2019| all for \$10” (2019)

Qasim then carries on to what he describes as the actual definition of street, traditional food. The street seller informs him that in the past, it was used as a meal for breakfast because of all the sugar in it. The vendor emphasizes that you can never find it in a shop. It is always sold on carriages on the street.



Image 2.2.4.15 YouTube capture: “Street Eating Challenge in Damascus - Syria 2019| all for \$10” (2019)

Just like previous tasting experiences we witness Qassim spontaneously tasting the food and providing detailed comments on it. As a change, in this frame a side experience takes place, he meets with 3 young girls on the streets and asks them if they’ve ever tried this food, and then shares the experience of one of them as she tries it for the first time.



Image 2.2.4.16 YouTube capture: “Street Eating Challenge in Damascus - Syria 2019| all for \$10” (2019)

Qassim later accelerates the content of another food experience justifying that people in the Arab world already know it, hence no need to do all the show for them. Thus, making it clear that his audience are mainly Arabs.



Image 2.2.4.17 YouTube capture: “Street Eating Challenge in Damascus - Syria 2019| all for \$10” (2019)

Towards the end of the day, the audience sees Qassim in a car with a friend taking him to try another traditional food before dinner. This dish is made out of legumes, for a few seconds he comments on the name of the dish, tries it and informs the audience of the price and continues on to the last stop.



Image 2.2.4.18 YouTube capture: “Street Eating Challenge in Damascus - Syria 2019| all for \$10” (2019)

In the final minute of the video, the audience see Qassim sitting on the streets with the Syrian flag as a background. He is trying two different types of the same dish called “kibbeh” (bulgur outside with minced meat inside). He is impressed with

such a delicious dish, carries on explaining it to his audience and gives them a rating.



Image 2.2.4.19 YouTube capture: “Street Eating Challenge in Damascus - Syria 2019| all for \$10” (2019)

Finally, while he was rapping up the video, the electricity in the area he is in went out. Surprised by that, he continues to inform his audience that he has 300 Syrian Pounds left, after all that food trying today, concluding it was a cheap experience.



Image 2.2.4.20 YouTube capture: “Street Eating Challenge in Damascus - Syria 2019| all for \$10” (2019)

B- Visual interpretation of the video:

This video content is different from the previous videos, initially because it targets Arabic audiences, but it follows a consistent pattern of footage and production details. Though looking at the video at an artificial level, it appears as if it only revolves around food tasting and getting the most dishes from 10 USD but on the other hand, this could be interpreted as a tool of marketing for most people who have a soft spot for food especially one emphasized on being delicious, cheap and traditional. The use of these three words lifts the expectations of the audience at the beginning of the video. While on many aspects it's contradicted throughout the video. These contradictions are present in inspecting croissants and waffles as Syrian Traditional Food just because the Facebook group told him so, although it does not reflect the country's culture. When in reality the Syrian cuisine has a larger variety of traditional sweets that have an older history. Although one would expect that street food is generally cheap, the vlogger on several occasions is quite surprised, unsure what he would be expecting from a country who is suffering from an economic crisis and has gone through war for the past decade.

On several occasions in the video, the vlogger is addressed by either people on the street or on social media who happen to know him from several shows or his previous videos. This reflects the wide publicity he has and actually spending the day with someone from social media shows how realistic and humble he is, such acts actually ensures more publicity for him. This is reflected by the amount of views, 1,169,734 views, that is a very big number, in addition to a large number of interactions with 37K likes with 2.3K dislikes.

Finally, the vlogger reflects several scenes intended to show normality of life, this includes the three young girls suggesting that this country may actually be safe for them to walk around alone. In addition, the final scene with the electricity going off, in good situations no one would expect electricity to go off from a whole district, let alone a country in conflict. Furthermore, the main content of the video being food representation and tasting is a standard image of reflecting normal life

and things returning back to normal, suggesting that people could now enjoy street food again.

2.3 Social Practice Explanation: Decoding the Common Communication Techniques of the Analyzed Visuals

In this final aspect of the content analysis, the common similarities and differences of the videos discussed above in addition to the general sample, population, of 31 videos will be analyzed thoroughly. As mentioned before, all the content is ‘User Generated Content (UGC)’, it does not follow any bureaucratic, time or design limitations hence all the content producers have the freedom to produce content as they please in an appealing and intimate manner to their audience.

a) Glittering Generality:

While going through all 31 videos and in details the 4 videos above, it was noticed that the majority of the videos promote one or more similar messages. These messages include an emphasis on the generosity and hospitality of the Syrian people, all the vloggers in their videos have mentioned how some sellers have given them free gifts or have welcomed them warmly on various occasions, explaining to their audience how they think Syrian People are one of the most hospitable nations in the world. The use of such indefinite terms, generosity and hospitality, could be interpreted as if to sway public opinion and stimulate an emotion by connecting it with a virtue word, such technique is known as ‘Glittering Generality’ which is considered as communication technique (Abd Kadir et al., 2016, p. 2).

b) Plain Folks:

Following that, another common point in the vlogs is the promotion of tourism covered a huge aspect in most of the vlogs. The vloggers repetitively mention how Syria was a great tourism spot in the past and inform their audience how Syrians are eager to have tourists again. This method adopted by the vloggers can be considered as a technique of communication used to encourage the audience

towards an idea that he/she thinks reflects the perspective of a situation or person, which is known as ‘Plain Folks’ (Abd Kadir et al., 2016, p. 2).

Food tourism was exceedingly used by various vloggers in their videos. As mentioned above this could be a form of ‘Glittering Generality’, for it is mainly about connecting valued concepts for specific matters with various meanings for individuals. Hence, the idea of food tourism as a valued concept reflects upon the normality of life in Syria and informs the audience that reality marketed by the mainstream media is not fully true.

c) Stimulating Emotions:

Furthermore, several similar images were used excessively in the vlogs, children’s image is one example, almost all the videos display children age between 5-12 years. Depending on the context of the images, for example, kids walking alone on the street could be interpreted to reflect the stability of Syria and how the country is going back to normal. While in other examples, the image of kids could be used as an emotional context and proximity to connect with the audience. Such use of images could be identified as the technique of ‘Plain Folks’ mentioned earlier.

d) Homogenous Rhetoric:

Apart from the similar messages and images presented in the vlogs, few vloggers have used similar terms when discussing the situation in Syria. This mainly revolves around the term “Post-War”, which indicates that the conflict is over. However, according to the Preventive Priority Survey 2019⁷, the situation in Syria is a state of “continued violent reimposition of government control in Syria leading to further civilian casualties and heightened tensions among external parties to the conflict”, as explained by the report the impact which was labeled as moderate, refers to the measurement of the impact on the United States interests, while the likelihood refers to the likeness of the conflict to occur or continue in that year, this was marked high, hence indicating Syria is still an active conflict zone.

⁷ https://cdn.cfr.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/PreventivePrioritiesSurvey2019_Web.pdf

e) Labeling/Name Calling:

Moreover, among the similar terms was “ISIS”, the vloggers in a recurring manner have mentioned it as a significant factor in the conflict while disregarding the Syrian Government and Opposition as the other parties. For various reasons including security and public opinion, they have chosen the kind of facts to share because everyone agrees that ISIS is considered as a terrorist organization that committed shocking war crimes. The definition of such an act according to various communication techniques is known as ‘Name Calling’, which revolves around the audience rejecting an idea presented to them without looking for evidence, hence formulating an implication to describe the ‘enemy’ (Abd Kadir et al., 2016, p. 2).

f) Civilizational Memory:

Besides all the similarities mentioned above, a general overview was seen related to the travel route taken in Syria. Most travelers begin their trips in Damascus, visiting the Ummayyad Mosque, the old city, and the local bazaar while visiting the same ‘storyteller’ coffee shop and the same ice cream shop in the old city. The trip continues onwards to visit Aleppo, and the “the world’s oldest Citadel” as quoted by few travelers. Afterwards, the travelers visit the “Krak des Chevaliers”, the most preserved medieval castle. To finally end their trip back again in Damascus. In addition to travelling to similar places, few travelers have had similar comments on the places they had visited. Generally, all the travelers that have visited Aleppo have used an emotional connotation in explaining the situation, they have repetitively mentioned how it is very sad to see such an amount of destruction and how heartbreaking the situation is. According to Forbes magazine, the urge and curiosity of people to visit places that are associated with death and disaster is known as ‘Dark Tourism’ (Ledsom, n.d, para. 1), which could therefore explain the recent recurring visits of various travelers to Syria.

g) The Bandwagon:

Finally, based on the number of vloggers mentioned above that have been to Syria within one year, it could be assumed that they are the result of an appealing act to

encourage and convince the audience or other vloggers that Syria is a safe and welcoming country that has been victimized by the mainstream media that is still promoting war. Such technique of appealing to subjects and encouraging them to follow the crowd is known as ‘Bandwagon’, which is another communication technique (Abd Kadir et al., 2016, p. 2).

In conclusion, the social practice analysis aspect covered four different common communication techniques of the videos. These are guidelines used to classify various similarities and comprehend the relationship between the elements in the videos and those techniques. The frequent repetition of those messages foregrounds the assumption that the regime is utilizing such individuals by counter-using social media platforms to emphasize their own narration of the current situation and hence gain some material to manipulate public opinion and image.


CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research was to examine the role that social media and travel vloggers played in shaping the general perception of the international audience regarding the events taking place in Syria during the year 2019. Since social media is considered as a medium of “immediate audience access” and democratic space for all users to generate content equally, therefore it facilitates the circulation of various videos outside the traditional platforms, and provides the space for vloggers to express and share their ideas and views with different perspectives.

Among the various social movements that took place around 2011, the Syrian people marched the streets on March 15, 2011 demanding Bashar Al-Assad to stand down. Despite the initial peaceful protests, the Syrian Regime reacted with violence, detaining and torturing the protestors. Among the iconic events that took place at the beginning of the Syrian Uprising, was the release of the tortured 13-year old boy Hamza Al-Khatib’s video that sparked a national and international outrage (Shehabat, 2013, p. 3) across Daraa, Damascus, Hama, Homs and Aleppo. Among others, the violent events included heavy bombing on various cities, use of chemical weapons on civilians and the displacement of more than half the population around the world as refugees (Laub, 2020, para. 5) thus resulting in an endless chaos and conflict lasting till today, May 2020 (Stares & Vessey, 2018, p. 6). As mentioned before, while various countries advise its citizens against traveling to Syria, an alternative discourse was presented by some organized tour groups and vloggers, who have been visiting the Old City of Damascus, Aleppo, Homs and few others in order to present another image of the situation taking place nowadays in Syria.

This research has used the information warfare life cycle model framework to analyze the impact and perception of the audience based on the multimedia content generated by the vloggers that have visited Syria in 2019. Information warfare is known as the use of internet technologies and the supporting systems to attack a

country's infrastructure in war (Crilley, 2001, p. 250). In addition, this research has explicated the key concepts of the discursive narrative analysis unit of the multimodal discourse analysis using the four videos from various international vloggers that have visited Syria in that time. It is assumed that multimodal discourse analysis is an efficient framework for it investigates both the complex interaction of the verbal and visual modes of the videos, which are considered as a multimedia and multi-channel technology (Gee & Handford, 2013, p. 7). In addition, the multimodal methodology tackles how visual images are constructed in terms of image, poster, sound and language in terms of narrating an event (Ly & Jung, 2015, p. 52). Furthermore, the model adapted is used to deconstruct ideology and power in verbal texts (Wang, 2014, p. 265). Therefore, three main steps were used to identify the visual sample of the research, and which includes a linguistic explanation of the visuals known as visual description, later an analysis of the production and distribution of the video based on the previous description which is the visual interpretation stage, and finally decoding the political and cultural ideas which represent the social practice explanation phase.

All the analyzed samples differed in content, concept and style. Primarily, the main concept of first video "2 WEEKS IN SYRIA (not what you'd expect!)" by Drew Brinsky, was to market normality across Syria for it was a general compilation of his whole trip that he later discusses in detail in various videos. The second video entitled "ALEPPO, SYRIA | What's It Like to Be a Tourist in ALEPPO in 2019?" by Eva Zu Beck, revolves around her touristic experience including food tasting, visiting the old bazaar and meeting locals in Aleppo, one of the heavily destroyed cities. "Getting into Syria as a Tourist " by stgravels was the third video analyzed, which was mainly about mobility tips of getting in and around Syria. Finally, "Street Eating Challenge in Damascus - Syria 2019| all for \$10" (أكل تحدي) (دولار ١٠ ب كله | 2019 سوريا - دمشق في الشوارع) by Ibn Hattuta travels, was an Arabic video that mainly revolved around a food challenge, how many different street food experiences would a 10 USD equivalency get the traveler. In each analyzed video the vlogger is not only communicating with the audience verbally but also through

other various elements Therefore, it appears from the results of this research that not only do the vloggers come from unsimilar backgrounds, but they also have delivered similar messages. All vloggers initially use YouTube as the medium of publishing their videos, through following a clear storyline and trying to use visuals reflecting the script they have written. Despite some logistical, style and content differences in the videos but the majority promote one or more similar messages. The similarities have been categorized into seven different communication techniques, glittering generality, plain folks, stimulating emotions, homogeneous rhetoric, name calling, civilizational memory and bandwagon.

Primarily, glittering generality reflects the indefinite terms the vloggers used such as emphasizing hospitality and generosity of the Syrian people in stimulating the opinion and emotions of the audience. Secondly, promoting general tourism, that Syria was a great tourism location and people are eager to have tourists again, and food tourism specifically, is a technique of plain folks which is mainly about encouraging the audience towards an idea that the vlogger thinks reflects the current situation. Thirdly, the repetitive use of similar images of children was used in order to stimulate emotions and develop proximity to connect with the audience. Fourthly, the homogeneous rhetoric reflects the repetition of the term ‘post-war’ indicating that the conflict is over while in reality it is still continuing (Stares & Vessey, 2018, p. 6). Fifthly, labeling the enemy and disregarding the other evidence, such as constantly mentioning ‘ISIS’ as a significant factor in the conflict without the other factors, is known as name calling communication technique. Sixthly, the vloggers all have followed a similar travel route around Syria and used similar connotations when describing the devastating situation of certain cities, implicating their urge to visit places that are associated with death and disaster which is labeled as ‘dark tourism’. Finally, the collective act of all the vloggers in encouraging their audience to visit Syria and promoting that it is a safe and welcoming country is known as bandwagon.

Apart from the benefit the Syrian regime gets from the messages the vloggers promote, the regime implicated four functional areas of the IW life cycle mode as a form of an attack to the context of events that took place as part of information warfare. The regime previously attacked the Syrian Opposition's location to disconnect them from the world as a form of information infrastructure warfare, and terrorize the Syrian people still residing in the country as an act of psychological warfare. Proceeding, the defense that was taken by the Syrian Opposition against such acts of attack, was to ensure that the international community knew the events taking place inside Syria, from the locals using their families abroad. Finally, this information warfare was the final phase of an open competition, which tried to convince the and cause a division in the international public opinion.

Overall, YouTube videos are considered as a powerful medium in affecting public opinion. On the other hand, tourism could be identified as a form of soft power used to exert influence (Tse, 2013, p. 150). Hence, throughout the Syrian Revolution, all parties have used social media platforms as a catalyst of political and social change to express and create their own perspective of the situation. Therefore, based on the results of this research it is concluded that those vloggers took part in an act of whitewashing on behalf of the regime, through promoting the idea of a safe, historical and welcoming Syria that have overcome a long-lasting conflict hence ready to welcome tourists from all over the world.

REFERENCES

- Abd Kadir, S., Mohd Lokman, A., & Tsuchiya, T. (2016). Emotion and Techniques of Propaganda in YouTube Videos. *Indian Journal of Science and Technology*, 9(S1). <https://doi.org/10.17485/ijst/2016/v9iS1/106841>
- Ballard, W. L. (1980). M. A. K. Halliday, Language as social semiotic: The social interpretation of language and meaning. London: Edward Arnold, 1978. Pp. 256. *Language in Society*, 9(1), 84–89. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S004740450000782X>
- Barber, Connie & Salam, A.. (2013). Critical discourse analysis: Toward theories in social media. 19th Americas Conference on Information Systems, AMCIS 2013 - Hyperconnected World: Anything, Anywhere, Anytime. 2. 926-933.
- Bennett, W. L., & Segerberg, A. (2012). THE LOGIC OF CONNECTIVE ACTION: Digital media and the personalization of contentious politics. *Information, Communication & Society*, 15(5), 739–768. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2012.670661>
- Bishop, M., & Goldman, E. (2003). The Strategy and Tactics of Information Warfare. *Contemporary Security Policy*, 24(1), 113–139. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260312331271839>
- Castells, M. (2012). *Networks of outrage and hope: Social movements in the Internet Age*. Polity Press.
- Church, S. H. (2010). YouTube Politics: YouChoose and Leadership Rhetoric During the 2008 Election. *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, 7(2–3), 124–142. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19331681003748933>

Crilley, K. (2001). Information warfare: new battle fields Terrorists, propaganda and the Internet. *Aslib Proceedings*, 53(7), 250–264.

<https://doi.org/10.1108/EUM0000000007059>

Deknatel, F. (2019). What Bashar Assad's victory looks like in Syria. *Business Insider*. Retrieved May 19, 2020, from <https://www.businessinsider.com/what-bashar-assads-victory-looks-like-in-ghouta-syria-2019-11>

Dijck, J. V., & Poell, T. (2013). *Understanding Social Media Logic* (No. 2–14; pp. 2–14). <https://doi.org/10.12924/mac2013.01010002>

Gee, J. P., & Handford, M. (2013). *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis*. Taylor and Francis.

<http://public.ebib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=957494>

Gerbaudo, P. (2012). *Tweets and the streets: Social media and contemporary activism*. Pluto Press.

Guo, S. (2014). Book review: David Machin and Andrea Mayr, *How to Do Critical Discourse Analysis: A Multimodal Introduction*. *Discourse Studies*, 16(1), 109–111. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445613510812a>

Halpern, D., & Gibbs, J. (2013). Social media as a catalyst for online deliberation? Exploring the affordances of Facebook and YouTube for political expression. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 29(3), 1159–1168.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2012.10.008>

Jost, J. T., Barberá, P., Bonneau, R., Langer, M., Metzger, M., Nagler, J., Sterling, J., & Tucker, J. A. (2018). How Social Media Facilitates Political Protest: Information, Motivation, and Social Networks: Social Media and Political Protest. *Political Psychology*, 39, 85–118. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12478>

Kress, G. R., & Leeuwen, T. van. (2010). *Reading images: The grammar of visual design* (2. ed., reprinted). Routledge.

Ly, Tan Hai, & Jung, Chae Kwan. (2015). Multimodal Discourse: A Visual Design Analysis of Two Advertising Images. *International Journal of Contents*, 11(2), 50–56. <https://doi.org/10.5392/IJOC.2015.11.2.050>

Ledsom, A. (n.d.). The Rise Of Dark Tourism In Europe. *Forbes*. Retrieved May 14, 2020, from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/alexledsom/2020/02/16/the-rise-of-dark-tourism-in-europe/>

Laub, Z. (2020). Syria's War and the Descent Into Horror. (n.d.). *Council on Foreign Relations*. Retrieved May 18, 2020, from <https://www.cfr.org/article/syrias-civil-war>

Manduric, A. (2016). Social Media as a Tool for Information Warfare. In N. Lee (Ed.), Google It (pp. 261–264). *Springer New York*. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4939-6415-4_10

Molander, R. C., Riddile, A. S., & Wilson, P. A. (1996). *Strategic information warfare: A new face of war*. RAND.

Ngoc Vu, N. (2015). Structural, Orientational, Ontological Conceptual Metaphors and Implications for Language Teaching. *Journal of Science Ho Chi Minh City Open University*, No. 3(15).

Niekerk, B., V., & Pillay, K. & Maharaj, M. (2011). Analysing the Role of ICTs in the Tunisian and Egyptian Unrest from an Information Warfare Perspective. *International Journal of Communication*. 5. 1406-1416.

- O'Halloran, K. L. (Ed.). (2004). Multimodal discourse analysis: Systemic-functional perspectives. *Continuum*.
- Prier, J. (2017). Commanding the Trend: Social Media as Information Warfare. *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, 11(4), 50-85. Retrieved March 5, 2020, from www.jstor.org/stable/26271634
- Paltridge, B. (2012). Discourse analysis: An introduction (2nd ed). *Continuum*.
- Rodgers, L., Gritter, D., Offer, J., & Asare, P., (2016). Syria: The story of the conflict. *BBC News*. Retrieved May 19, 2020 from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-26116868>
- Stares, P., & Vessey, J. (2018). Preventive Priority Survey 2019. *Council on Foreign Relations*. <https://www.cfr.org/report/preventive-priorities-survey-2019>
- Shehabat, A. (2013). The social media cyber-war: the unfolding events in the Syrian revolution 2011. *Global Media Journal*. 6.
- Tse, T. S. M. (2013). Chinese Outbound Tourism as a Form of Diplomacy. *Tourism Planning & Development*, 10(2), 149–158. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568316.2013.783738>
- Taddeo, M. (2012). Information Warfare: A Philosophical Perspective. *Philosophy & Technology*, 25(1), 105–120. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13347-011-0040-9>

Thornton, R. (2015). The Changing Nature of Modern Warfare: Responding to Russian Information Warfare. *The RUSI Journal*, 160(4), 40–48.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/03071847.2015.1079047>

Van Niekerk, B., & Maharaj, M. S. (2011). The Information Warfare Life Cycle Model. *SA Journal of Information Management*, 13(1).

<https://doi.org/10.4102/sajim.v13i1.476>

Wang, J. (2014). Criticising images: critical discourse analysis of visual semiosis in picture news. *Critical Arts*, 28(2), 264–286.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/02560046.2014.906344>

Zhao, S., & Djonov, E. (2014). From multimodal to critical multimodal studies through popular discourse.

Annexes:

2 WEEKS IN SYRIA 🇸🇾 (not what you'd expect!):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zmK35KMPZhM>

The World's OLDEST CITY (Damascus):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=clUne5DtBsA>

70 YEARS Making Mosaics (2 Syrian Brothers)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tUXdYSkHrhk>

What Can \$10 Get in SYRIA? (I GOT 10 THINGS!)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m6BoqJVxK_I

THE SWEETS OF SYRIA (best ice cream I've ever had)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z-gtR2q_pBM

Life in ALEPPO, SYRIA (post war reconstruction)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q6rdEjCTNnQ>

SYRIA IS MOVING ON... (Bright Future Ahead)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aw6GZ1Rr0PU>

SYRIA HAS BEACHES! (Hidden Gem of Mediterranean)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yfsqxz8ZuZ4>

HE SAVED 8,000 LIVES (Syrian War Hero)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mkya5zrc188>

THE BEST SYRIAN FOOD (Home Cooked Meal)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-6cb_fPJWd0

World's FRIENDLIEST Taxi Drivers?... (SYRIA)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SAvgcJE7Lvc>

INSANE CASTLE of SYRIA (Krak des Chevaliers)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ab4x_op5TP4

I GOT 16 GIFTS FOR FREE (in SYRIA)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eir_9LIFT1E

SYRIA After 4 Months... (would I go back?)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZprSpGgIt6c>


My Daily Life in SYRIA (Heart-Breaking Travel Experience)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OM9cxVKNqJ0>

11 Things NOT to do in SYRIA (Extreme Travel Syria)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y1RX6dWD0YA>

Is SYRIA Safe? (DENMARK GUY)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kPHr2tiY7DA>

How to travel to Syria?
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CtsfUIFVPN8>

What are weddings in Syria like? 
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cE_bVqv8V14

German Tourist in Damascus 2018 
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pwE-wc5CSdw>

Getting into Syria as a Tourist 
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aR-XHWxMW9c>

ALEPPO, SYRIA | What's It Like to Be a Tourist in ALEPPO in 2019?
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZTaoyJpr-YE>

SYRIA | What's It Like to be a Tourist in Damascus in 2019?
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_dR61b8U_Ac