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Volume 65 (LXV) 2020  
DECEMBER  
2

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PUBLISHED ONLINE: 2020-12-30  
PUBLISHED PRINT: 2020-12-30  
ISSUE DOI:10.24193/subbeph.2020.2

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## HOW SOCIAL COMPARISON ON INSTAGRAM AFFECTS WELL-BEING. PERSPECTIVES FROM A STUDY CONDUCTED DURING THE LOCKDOWN

DELIA CRISTINA BALABAN<sup>1</sup>,  
DORIN FRANCISC SPOALLER<sup>2</sup>

**ABSTRACT.** During the Spring of 2020 amid the COVID-19 pandemic, several countries ordered lockdowns. The limitations of movement contributed to the rise of social media activity. The present research focused on how the active use of Instagram had an impact on well-being during the first lockdown in Romania. Aiming to explore how active Instagram use contributes to users' self-esteem, satisfaction with life, and loneliness during an unprecedented situation of a lockdown, we conducted an online survey in April 2020 on young adults (N=411) in Romania. Findings showed that actively using Instagram during the lockdown did not have a significant direct impact on self-esteem and satisfaction with life, but significantly decreased loneliness. Upward comparison of Instagram active users contributed to the increase in self-esteem but decreased the values of satisfaction with life and increased loneliness. The downward comparison had no significant impact on self-esteem, satisfaction with life, and loneliness.

**Keywords:** *social media, well-being, Instagram, social comparison, COVID-19 pandemic.*

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## Introduction

During the Spring of 2020 amid the COVID-19 pandemic, several countries faced an unprecedented health crisis that made governments order unprecedented measures to limit the spread of the disease. During the lockdown, the limitations of movement and social contacts in form of in-person meetings contributed to the rise of social media activity. Social media, in general, is used for social interaction, searching for new information, spending time, entertainment, relaxing, communicating, expressing opinions, distributing information, supervising and obtaining information about other users (Whiting & Williams, 2013), self-presentation and self-promotion, along with the desire to learn about other users of the platform (Alhabash & Ma, 2017).

The present research focused on how the active use of Instagram, the most popular social network site (SNS) for young people in Europe (Newberry, 2019). In terms of particular motivations to use Instagram, the need for entertainment, convenience, the medium appeal, passing of time, self-expression, self-documentation, social interaction, and information sharing were mentioned by an empirical study conducted among college students (Alhabash & Ma, 2017). In the situation of a lockdown, we might assume that some of the above-mentioned reasons to use Instagram became more relevant.

A study carried out during that period by IRES, called *Romania #StaysHome - Attitudes and behaviors of Romanians during the pandemic* (IRES, 2020) found out that the traditional media consumption such as TV used increased during the first COVID-19 related lockdown for 67% of respondents. Furthermore, 78% of those surveyed declared informing themselves about the pandemic from social media platforms and the Internet in general. These results underlined the role of social media during this time and therefore are an argument in favor of the decision to analyze how using the social media platform, in particular Instagram, the third most used social media platform in Romania and the most relevant platform for young adults (Zelist, 2020) influenced the well-being of young adults during the lockdown.

Previous literature on social media use and well-being took into consideration factors such as the type and intensity of use and consider the social comparison to be a distinguished element that has an impact on well-being variables. The present study aimed to contribute to the existing literature on social media and well-being not only by analyzing the particularities of Instagram use but conducting the study in an unprecedented situation, that of a lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **The context of the study**

The COVID-19 pandemic is a unique global situation in the last decades, which has imposed unprecedented measures in recent history. The medical scientific community, the governments of the states dealing with this health crisis, public policy specialists, even the World Health Organization had to adjust their recommendations and how they approached the fight against the spread of the virus, as knowledge on COVID-19 advanced.

In the context of a health crisis as complex and with such global implications, an ongoing crisis at the time of this work's conclusion, it is both relevant and difficult to map the timeline of the COVID-19 pandemic. The disinformation phenomenon adds new features to this endeavor.

According to official information from the Romanian Government, on February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2020, it is made public that Romania is facing the first case of infection with the new coronavirus (CMR, 2020). At the beginning of March, the number of infection cases is rising, thus banning flights from and to Italy, which becomes the epicenter of the epidemic in Europe and the first country after China to report a large number of cases. On March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020, the World Health Organization officially states that we are dealing with a pandemic of the new coronavirus. The health crisis gains momentum on a global scale.

The President of Romania declares a state of emergency in Romania on March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020. A series of measures by the Romanian state follow suit, meant to restrict the spread of the epidemic in our



country, and the term of *lockdown* is the one employed by the Romanian press to describe these measures to restrict freedom of movement. During March-May 2020, the maximum number of cases published daily in Romania is 525, in April, according to daily newsletters of the Ministry of Health (CMR, 2020). On May 15<sup>th</sup>, the state of emergency is concluded, followed by a state of alert. During the following months, in several countries from the European Union, measures are softening, which contributed to acceleration for the spread of the infection.

During the state of emergency, several military ordinances were issued, that constituted the legal framework meant to contribute to countering the spread of COVID-19. The measures imposed represented restricting the mobility of the population, who could not leave their homes except with a sworn statement to indicate a well-founded reason. Except for grocery stores and pharmacies, all other shops were closed. Teaching moved online on all levels.

The lockdown put in place on March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020 was extended on April 15<sup>th</sup>, thus Romania reached a state of the emergency period of two months, a lockdown. After two months of the emergency state, according to official data, in Romania, there were over one thousand deaths caused by the new coronavirus, and the total number of infection cases crossed 16,000.

## **Theoretical background**

Scholarship on the relationship between social media use and well-being was constantly developed over the last decade. The literature shifted from a generalized perspective that social media use will negatively impact well-being indicators to a much-differentiated view. However, when it comes to the nature of the effects that social media can have on users' well-being indicators mixed findings were reported. Studies that were previously conducted showed both positive (Niera & Barber, 2014) and negative effects (Kim & Lee, 2011;

Steinfeld et al., 2008). The increase of social media use was associated with a decrease in well-being and life satisfaction (Kross et al, 2013; Lin et al., 2016).

The majority of the research conducted on social media and well-being focused on Facebook (Feinstein et al., 2013; Kalpidou et al., 2011). Taken into consideration the multitude of motivations to use social media, scholars observed that different types of Facebook use can lead to different well-being outcomes (Cingel & Olsen, 2019). However, studies focusing on Instagram emerged (Ahadzede et.al., 2017; Kleemans et al., 2018). It is interesting to address the issue of social media use and well-being on several platforms taking into consideration the particularities of each virtual space. Instagram was from the beginning associated with visual communication (Van Dijck, 2013; Lee et al., 2015).

Thus, social media use can be defined not only in a quantitative manner but also in a qualitative one. In terms of behavior on social media, the literature distinguished between passive and active use. Previous literature underlined the positive role of active social media use on well-being indicators (Wang et al., 2017). Opposed to passive looking, self-disclosure in form of text or visual-based posts defines an active social media use that, according to previous literature, can have a positive impact on self-esteem (Cingel & Olsen, 2019). We assume that this type of effect will occur also during the situation of a lockdown and we posited:

**H1.** The increase in active Instagram use will directly increase a) self-esteem, and b) satisfaction with life.

**H2.** The increase in active Instagram use will reduce loneliness.

The social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) that underlined individuals' tendency to evaluate their abilities and opinions compared to those of others was often used as theoretical background when analyzing the relationship between social media use and well-being indicators. The popularity, sociability, and social capital of other users translated in the number of followers, reactions, and comments

provide the basis for social comparative functions of SNS (Chou & Edge, 2012; Vitak & Ellison, 2013). Previous research conducted on Facebook proved that social comparison plays a relevant role, by mediating the impact of social media use on self-esteem (Vogel et. al., 2014). Upward social comparison (with superior others) can inspire people to become similar to the people they admire, but it can also lead to poorer self-evaluation (Lockwood & Kunda, 1997). Downward comparison (with inferior others) can make people feel bad but can contribute to a better self-evaluation (Wills, 1981).

The type of social media use also plays a differentiating role in the effects on well-being (Cingel & Olsen, 2018). Therefore, the present study addressed the impact of active Instagram use on self-esteem, satisfaction with life, and loneliness and we hypothesized:

**H3.** Mediated by social upward comparison active Instagram use will increase a) self-esteem, b) satisfaction with life, and will decrease c) loneliness.

**H4.** Mediated by social downward comparison active Instagram use will decrease a) self-esteem, b) satisfaction with life, and will increase c) loneliness. Figure 1 depicted the conceptual model.

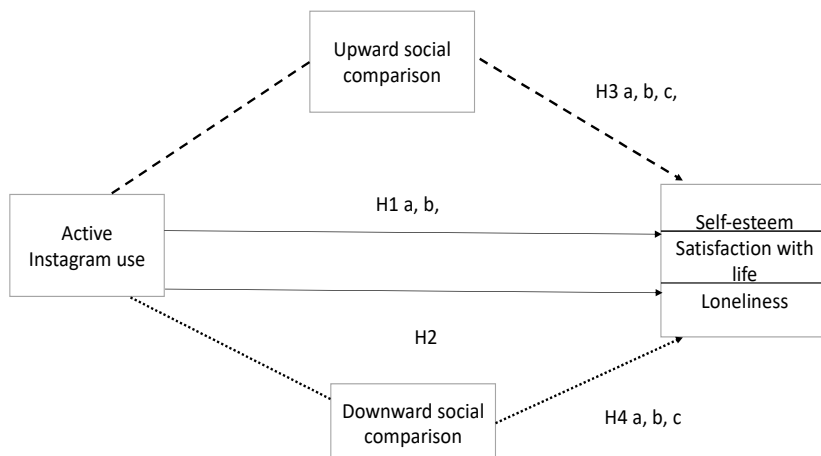


FIGURE 1. Conceptual model. Solid lines represent the tested direct paths.

Dashed lines represent the tested indirect effects of active Instagram use via upward social comparison on a) self-esteem, b) satisfaction with life, and c) loneliness. Dotted lines represent the tested indirect effects of active Instagram use via downward social comparison on a) self-esteem, b) satisfaction with life, and c) loneliness.

## Methods and measures

Aiming to explore how active Instagram use contributes to users' self-esteem, satisfaction with life, and loneliness during an unprecedented situation of a lockdown, we conducted an online survey in the second half of April 2020 in Romania. Participation was voluntary. The link related to the survey was disseminated via Facebook. The sample of the online survey consisted of  $N=411$  participants, young adults, age 18 to 30,  $M=22.06$ ,  $SD=4.89$ . 62.5% of the participants were women, 70.1% of them had a high school degree, 29.9% BA or MA degree, and 85.2% were living in the urban area.

In terms of Instagram use our respondents have  $Mdn= 443$  ( $M=588.2$ ,  $SD=682.73$ ) accounts that they follow and  $Mdn= 619$  ( $M=944.17$ ,  $SD=1526.53$ ) followers. Instagram stories are the most appealing feature of the social network platform. When active on Instagram several times a day (90.8%) they mainly use Instagram stories where 70.84% of the participants reported to have posted several times a day and 11.7% one a day. They react to Instagram stories once a day (24.1%), or several times a day (25.8%).

Posting on feed is something they do one a year (41.4%), one a week (22.6%), one a month (6.8%), or several times a day (3.9%). Commenting on others' posts was an activity that 30.9% of the participants perform once a week, 13.1% once a day, and 9.7% several times a day.

## Measures

### *Input variable*

Active Instagram use, was measured using seven statements (e.g., 'How often do you post on the Instagram feed?') on a 6-point Likert scale ranking 1= 'never or almost never' to 6='multiple times a day' ( $\alpha=.88$ ,  $M=4.32$ ,  $SD=.99$ ; adapted from Vogel et al., 2014).

### *Mediators*

The upward social comparison was measured using one statement ('When comparing yourself to others on Instagram, to what

extent do you focus on people that are better off than you?') on a 7-point Likert scale ranking 1= 'never' to 7='always' ( $M=3.16$ ,  $SD=1.72$ ; Vogel et al., 2014).

The downward social comparison was measured using one statement ('When comparing yourself to others on Instagram, to what extent do you focus on people that are worse off than you?') on a 7-point Likert scale ranking 1= 'never' to 7='always' ( $M=2.58$ ,  $SD=1.5$ ; Vogel et al., 2014).

### *Output variables*

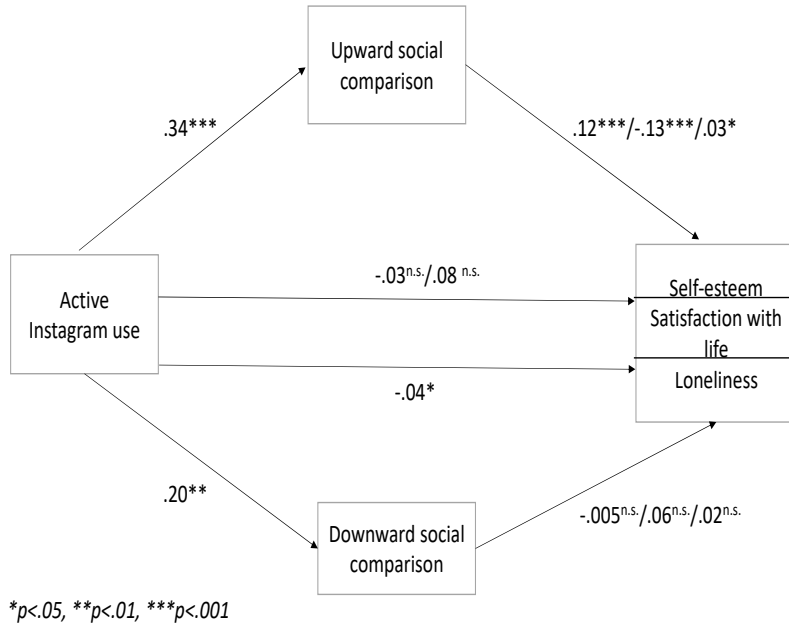
Self-esteem was measured using ten statements (e.g., 'On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.') on a 4-point Likert scale ranking 1= 'totally agree' to 6='totally disagree' ( $\alpha=.822$ ,  $M=1.96$ ,  $SD=1.89$ ; Rosenberg, 1965). Satisfaction with life was measured using five statements (e.g., 'From many perspectives of view my life is closed to my ideal.') on a 6-point Likert scale ranging 1= 'totally disagree' to 6='totally agree' ( $\alpha=.851$ ,  $M=4.13$ ,  $SD=.99$ ; Diener et al., 1965).

Loneliness was measured using twenty statements (e.g., 'How often do you feel part of a group of friends?') on a 4-point Likert scale ranking 1= 'never' to 5='always' ( $\alpha=.789$ ,  $M=2.05$ ,  $SD=.36$ ; Russell, 1996).

### **Findings**

To test the proposed hypothesis mediation analysis for each dependent variable was run using Model 4, PROCESS V3.4 in SPSS (Hayes, 2017) employing 5,000 bootstrap sample. Findings indicate that active Instagram use has no significant direct effect on self-esteem ( $b=-.02$ ,  $SE=.02$ , 95%  $BCBCI=[-.0732, .0183]$ ,  $p=.239$ ), nor on satisfaction with life ( $b=.08$ ,  $SE=.05$ , 95%  $BCBCI=[-.0158, .01783]$ ,  $p=.101$ ). Thus, H1a and H1b were not supported. However, in line with H2, active Instagram use has a significant negative direct effect on loneliness ( $b=-.04$ ,  $SE=.02$ , 95%  $BCBCI=[-.0784, -.0078]$ ,  $p=.017$ ).

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**Figure 2.** Direct effects

Active Instagram use has a significant positive indirect effect via upward comparison on self-esteem ( $b = .04$ ,  $BootSE = .0127$ , 95%  $BootBCBCI = [.0190, .0686]$ ), a significant negative indirect effect on satisfaction with life ( $b = -.04$ ,  $BootSE = .0212$ , 95%  $BootBCBCI = [-.0917, -.0095]$ ), and has a significant positive indirect effect on loneliness ( $b = .01$ ,  $BootSE = .01$ , 95%  $BootBCBCI = [.0005, .0246]$ ). Thus, H3a was supported, but H3b and H3c were not supported.

Active Instagram use has no significant indirect effect via downward comparison on self-esteem ( $b = -.001$ ,  $BootSE = .01$ , 95%  $BootBCBCI = [-.0115, .0094]$ ), on satisfaction with life ( $b = .012$ ,  $BootSE = .01$ , 95%  $BootBCBCI = [-.0082, .0395]$ ), and on loneliness ( $b = .003$ ,  $BootSE = .003$ , 95%  $BootBCBCI = [-.0031, .0117]$ ). Thus H4a, H4b, and H4c were not supported. Figure 2 indicates the direct effects and table 1 in the annex shows detailed results of hypothesis testing.

## **Discussion**

Actively using Instagram during the lockdown did not have a significant direct impact on self-esteem and satisfaction with life, but significantly decreased loneliness. Posting pictures and stories on Instagram made our respondents feel like a part of a community and thus made them feel less lonely. Similar to recent studies conducted on Facebook, an upward comparison of Instagram active users contributed to the increase in self-esteem (Cingel & Olsen, 2019).

Contrary to our expectations, upward social media comparison significantly decreased the values of satisfaction with life and increased loneliness. People who compared themselves with others that they consider to be superior have a lower level of satisfaction with life and feel lonely. The downward comparison had no significant impact on the well-being indicators that we measured, self-esteem, satisfaction with life, and loneliness.

## **Conclusions and implications, limits**

Our study contributed to a better understanding of the impact of active Instagram use on well-being in a special situation such as a pandemic related lockdown. We are aware of the sample limitations and future research may take into consideration additional aspects. The major limitation of our study consists of the use of a convenience sample having females over-represented. An experimental design would have explored in a better way the causality between Instagram uses and well-being indicators. We did not measure for example who are they living in the house during the lockdown, nor what is their economic situation to have a larger picture of other factors that might influence the well-being indicators besides the social comparison caused by Instagram use. As the COVID-19 pandemic was not yet over at the end of 2020, a longitudinal perspective on how Instagram use affected well-being indicators is to be considered.

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**Table 1.** Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis testing	Pathway	b(SE)	95% BCBCI
<b>Direct effects</b>			
<b>H1a</b>	Active Instagram use > Self-esteem	-.03(.02)	[-.0733, .0183]
<b>H1b</b>	Active Instagram use >	.08(.05)	[-.0158, .1783]
<b>H2</b>	Satisfaction with life	-.04(.02)*	[-.0784, -.0078]
	Active Instagram use > Loneliness	.34(.08)***	[.1711, .5011]
	Active Instagram use > upward social comparison	.20(.07)**	[.0569, .3470]
	Active Instagram use > downward social comparison		
	Upward social comparison > Self-esteem	.12(.02)***	[.0843, .1597]
	Upward social comparison > Satisfaction with life	-.13(.04)***	[-.2106, -.0511]
	Upward social comparison > Loneliness	.03(.01)*	[.0053, .0633]
	Downward social comparison > Self-esteem	-.005(.02)	[-.0471, .0386]
	Downward social comparison > Satisfaction with life	.06(.05)	[-.0275, .1539]
	Downward social comparison > Loneliness	.02(.02)	[-.0167, .0493]
<b>Indirect effects</b>			
<b>H3a</b>	Active Instagram Use > Upward social comparison > Self-esteem	.43(.01)	[.0190, .0686]
<b>H3b</b>	Active Instagram Use > Upward social comparison > Satisfaction with life	-.04(.02)	[-.0917, -.0095]
<b>H3c</b>	Active Instagram Use > Upward social comparison > Loneliness	.01(.01)	[.0005, .0246]
<b>H4a</b>	Active Instagram Use > Downward social comparison > Self-esteem	-.001(.01)	[-.015, .0094]

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Hypothesis testing	Pathway	b(SE)	95% BCBCI
<b>Direct effects</b>			
<b>H4b</b>	Active Instagram Use > Downward social comparison> Satisfaction with life	.01(.01)	[-.0082, .0395]
<b>H4c</b>	Active Instagram Use > Downward social comparison> Loneliness	.003(.003)	[-.0031, .0117]

**Note.** Unstandardized b coefficients (with boot SE between parentheses).

BCBCI=bias corrected 5,000 bootstrap confidence interval;

N=241. <sup>†††\*</sup> p < .05; <sup>\*\*</sup> p < .01; <sup>\*\*\*</sup> p < .001.



## CRITICAL THINKING IN A WORLD OF FAKE NEWS. TEACHING THE PUBLIC TO MAKE GOOD CHOICES

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**ABSTRACT.** Fake news are a big concern for media, audiences and governments. Some journalists are engaged in finding fake news and disclose them. Fake news is also a concern to the researchers and journalism professors, but they should not focus only on the way fake news work, or how to teach future journalists about them, a big challenge would be to teach the audiences, the public to make the right choices and identify fake news. Tackling this problem of the popularization of science and teaching the public should actually be one of the key-concerns of the journalism professors today in Romania. It is the purpose of this paper to propose a list of criteria to identify fake news, by using critical thinking, a list that could be easily explained to people from the public, so they can make good choices. The core notion used hereby will be quality. A large discussion on quality in journalism raised at the end of the 1990s in Western Europe, not so in Romania. Therefore, it seems more than appropriate to start it now.

*Keywords:* fake news, media, critical thinking, education, public, criteria.

### 1. Relevance of the theme and novelty of the approach

Fake news is on the lips of journalists, scientists, politicians and members of the civil society. It is one of the key-concepts or key-concerns in communication studies today. Fake news is not a new

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phenomenon, but the level reached and the impact – both raised by the almost instantaneousness of news and the amounts of information today – make the difference in this phenomenon when comparing it to the past.

By fake news are meant quite different types of messages, from hoaxes to propaganda or what Hannah Arendt called “organized lying” (1971). These being said, the degree of potential danger and impact attached to different types of fake news is quite different. The two words have become more *en vogue* in the past three years, because the phenomenon has increased. Fake news is being used unflinchingly and powerful.

When it comes to mass media, critical thinking criteria have been used primarily in analyzing argumentative texts, editorials and commentaries. This is because critical thinking deals with argumentations. However, the largest part of journalistic articles is or should be the informative ones. Then the question comes up: How can critical thinking help in reading a non-argumentative, informative text? This is a new aspect in our approach. Informative texts contain facts, and for journalists who are producing quality content, facts are sacred.

The other new aspect is addressing the opportunity and the must of teaching the public in dealing with media content and fake news. It is aimed to help the reader/viewer/listener to ask himself questions on the reliability of the source of his information and to gain confidence in one source or another based on a critical thinking approach to that source and by critical reading the texts provided.

Journalists dealing with fake news and governments dealing with fake news are often discussed themes; the present paper points out the necessity to teach the regular individual from the public not to become or stay a victim of fake news.

Skepticism is important in staying critical, in asking questions, being vigilant, being pro-active, being a vigilant reader/viewer/listener and a vigilant citizen. On the same time, skepticism should not overwhelm the person and turn them into a person with a total lack of trust. Trustworthiness of media channels is a keyword when talking about fake news and there is a big need to build it (or rebuild it), gain

it (or regain it). Staying vigilant is different to feeling insecure. Insecurity and the mistrust are precisely the results of fake news. They are intended by those who spread fake news in an organized way, with a purpose. On the other hand, there is no recipe for a good, healthy dose of skepticism, it has to be found out by each individual.

## 2. Definitions

### 2.1. *What is fake news?*

There are several definitions of fake news. We will pick up the one given by professor Peter Gross in *Dialogues on Journalism and Media*: “Fake news has always been with us. That is the news that is misinforming, dis-informing or propaganda. Yes, this has increased because the media just about everywhere in the Western world has become increasing politicized. The media alone are not the culprits. There are significant segments of audiences that embrace this sort of fake news because it reinforces their beliefs. It is very dangerous to a democracy” (2017, 38)

#### 2.1.1 *Old and new*

Academics agree that fake news is not a new phenomenon, but in fact as old as human communication. What is new about fake news: the dimensions of the phenomenon in a world where people are offered information not only through mainstream (traditional media), but also through new media and so-called social media. New are according to the German journalist and co-author of *Fake News machen Geschichte: Gerüchte und Falschmeldungen im 20. und 21. Jahrhundert* Sven Felix Kellerhoff “simply the extent, the speed and also the resonance space that social media gives to such discussions. Something has changed qualitatively” (Cf. Ziehn 2017).

Nevertheless, analyzing older fake news is viewed as valuable, because they can give an insight on patterns. The two German journalists Lars-Broder Keil and Sven Felix Kellerhoff who have analyzed rumors, canards and fake news from the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century



in the above-mentioned book showed how many of the fake news they analyzed truly marked history, some of them even gave a fatal turn to history. It was the case with rumors in 1933 regarding an imminent coup d'état of the Reichswehr, the German army; these rumors helped Hitler come to power. Other fake news just shows how easy it is to spread disinformation because in a certain historical situation they seem conceivable.

“Canards and rumors taken seriously are a suitable instrument to analyze past reality. (...) To a historian a canard that was distributed publicly as a rumor and that becomes tangible because of its consequences is an evidence, a testimony that doesn't provide information about what a witness actually saw, but about what he considered to be natural or probable” (Apud Baetz 2017).

### 2.1.2. *Mostly negative outcome*

Fake news usually has a negative output; sometimes a catastrophic output, but Keil and Kellerhoff acknowledge that fake news doesn't necessarily have negative consequences: A case where fake news had a positive output was the joint statement of Chancellor Angela Merkel and the then Minister of Finance Peer Steinbrück regarding the guarantee of German savings at the beginning of the financial crisis. It was a general statement, but had the effect that the Germans did not clear their accounts, with a positive effect on the stability (Apud Baetz 2017).

We can add only that fake news is more aggressive and numerous in with what I called in my Master thesis “the crisis discourse” (1998), a discourse that appears before and during a crisis situation, war being the peak of a crisis situation known.

### 2.1.3. *How do fake news work?*

Kellerhoff underlines that “fake news has always to do with two phenomena: With real or perceived information deficit and with mistrust of the given information. Perceived information deficit is, of course, also related to the fact that, unfortunately, in the current situation, people who scream *Lügenpresse* cannot imagine anything

else but that the media would be lying and working on behalf of the government. This is of course absurd, but it is a consolidated false belief of the followers of this *Lügenpresse*-theory that we journalists get our instructions from the Federal Press Office. We are no longer believed that we gather information from our own best knowledge and conscience, process information and release it" (Cf. Ziehn, 2017).

As Kellerhoff further explains in the interview moderated by Sascha Ziehn, the current mistrust in journalists and traditional media is partly a consequence of the not quite proper way some colleagues dealt with the issue of the refugees back in 2015. As he states, over weeks there was a one-sided information. In this process, some people developed the impression of disinformation (2017).

Other specialists like the historian Habbo Knoch go even further and point out that the source of the fake news doesn't even claim that it can or will prove the news. Therefore we can say fake news has to do with the authoritarian character: "The strategy is to float an idea and not even claim that the sender can or will prove it. (...) Plausibility does not mean that we follow proof or rational arguments, but it means *I* incarnate the truth. *We*, the system, incarnate the truth" (Cf. Stänner, 2017).

#### *2.1.4. Different approaches in different countries*

Fake news is handled differently in different countries. This is mostly a result of historical events and of the democratic tradition (or its lack).

Reading the essay-book *China in Ten Words* by Yu Hua we find out that fake news seems to be usual and not surprising at all to the public there. The writer, who is not only a well-known novelist, but also as a contributing opinion writer for *The New York Times* covering Chinese society, culture and politics, shows how easily people oversee or even embrace fake news in his country where a totally invented story or interview seems to be common use in media. Fake news do not stir the spirits, they are seen no more than a "bamboozle" (2018, 269-273 pp.)

On the opposite side, in Europe, fake news is a concern to the EU and its member countries. In December 2017, the European Union was seeking for a solution to fight fake news and set up a High-Level-Group on Fake News and online disinformation, made up by 39 experts from the member countries, appointed by the Commission (European Commission, 2018).

France for example has gone further than other countries and wanted courts to ban fake news. In his new year's speech to journalists, President Emmanuel Macron said, "he would shortly present the new law in order to fight the spread of fake news, which he said threatened liberal democracies. New legislation for websites would include more transparency about sponsored content. Under the new law, websites would have to say who is financing them and the amount of money for sponsored content would be capped. For fake news published during election seasons, an emergency legal action could allow authorities to remove that content or even block the website, Macron said. 'If we want to protect liberal democracies, we must be strong and have clear rules,' he added" (Chrisafis, 2018).

Talks started before the law was discussed in Parliament, regarding the freedom of speech, but the intention was not to limit freedom of speech but to have fake news (here to be understood as propaganda and malicious false information with a destructive goal) banned and to protect democracy. (Schubert, 2018)

### **3. A Few Words on News Writing**

*Facts are sacred, comment is free!* This is the number one rule in Anglo-Saxon traditional journalism. It assures the public that professional media does not mix up facts and commentaries, that the public is always aware what type of text it has to deal with: news or comments. Journalists who honor their profession verify the facts and do not mix them up with comments.

Nothing has changed in this respect since London Times correspondent William Howard Russell intuitively wrote in 1854, when he dispatched his story from the Crimean War: "I shall proceed

to describe, to the best of my power, what occurred under my own eyes, and to state the facts which I have heard from men whose veracity is unimpeachable, reserving to myself the exercise of the right of private judgment in making public and in suppressing the details of what occurred on this memorable day" (1854).

He was aware of the necessity of building a trustworthy relationship with his readers back home, knowing only too well that till then the public was reached only by official news from the battlefield, news sent by the army. He was also aware of him being the first civilian (or one of the first), one of the first war correspondents to inform about an event of such a big importance.

On facts, Hannah Arendt said: "Facts need testimony to be remembered and trustworthy witnesses to be established in order to find a secure dwelling place in the domain of human affairs". The political theorist also shows what she calls "the fragility" of facts: "The deliberate falsehood deals with *contingent* facts, that is with matters which carry no inherent truth within themselves, no necessity to be as they are; factual truths are never compellingly true. The historian knows how vulnerable is the whole texture of facts in which we spend our daily lives; it is always in danger of being perforated by single lies or torn to shreds by the organized lying of groups, nations, or classes, or denied and distorted, often carefully covered up by reams of falsehoods or simply allowed to fall into oblivion". And she points out that "no factual statement can ever be beyond doubt—as secure and shielded against attack as, for instance, the statement that two and two make four" (1971). She shows the differences between rational truth, factual truth and opinions.

Journalists deal with factual truth and therefore they need to show testimonies, their own testimonies, other's testimonies, they need trustworthy, eligible sources and they need to double-check the information. On the other hand, they need to treat facts and opinions differently and also when they pass them on to the public they need to make sure the audience knows where the facts end and the opinions begin.

When it comes to writing news, there are a few very precise rules, recommended in journalism handbooks in the USA and across Europe: News has to answer to the five W-questions and the one H-question: Who? What? When? Where? Why? and How? There is also a generally accepted best formula to be used, when organizing the information and this is the inverted pyramid that provides the most important piece of information at the beginning and goes backwards to the least important one. It is mostly common to have the answers to What happens/happened? and Who acted/is involved? at the very beginning and then where and when things will happen/happened. These are the commonly accepted questions. There are voices from “anthro-journalism” calling to add one more question, in order to gain a holistic perspective. It could be the question “whence” as Susan L. Allen showed in an article published in *The Journalism Educator* (1987, 21). It is not a question in a regular handbook of journalism, but it is a question of interest when we are talking about analyzing news (fake news) by means of critical thinking.

“The lesson is that to understand the meaning of news, we must understand context; journalism emerges from and responds to cultural specificities”, as Elizabeth Bird puts it in the introduction to *The Anthropology of News and Journalism. Global Perspectives* (2009, 13).

News can *in extremis* also be written by a machine. This has been proved, by providing a software with the information to be used in the news and the formula of construction. But a machine wouldn’t “think” about the context.

#### **4. The Critical Approach**

René Descartes and the Cartesian view of asking yourself questions, of doubting were the inspiration source for this chapter. “The critical thinking method developed by Descartes was based on the principle of questioning, testing and questioning systematically”, as Aura Ana Vasile shows (2012, 72).

This is how Descartes himself describes his method: “[...] instead of the great many precepts whereof Logic is composed, I thought these four following would be sufficient for me, if I took but a firm and constant resolution not once to fail in the observation of them.

The first was, never to receive any thing for true, but what I evidently knew to be so; that’s to say, Carefully to avoid Precipitation and Prevention, and to admit nothing more into my judgment, but what should so clearly and distinctly present itself to my mind, that I could have no reason to doubt of it.

The second, to divide every One of these difficulties, which I was to examine into as many parcels as could be, and, as was requisite the better to resolve them.

The third, to lead my thoughts in order, beginning by the most simple objects, and the easiest to be known; to rise by little and little, as by steps, even to the knowledge of the most mixt; and even supposing an Order among those that naturally do not precede one the other.

And the last, to make everywhere such exact calculations, and such general reviews, that I might be confident to have omitted Nothing” (2008, originally printed in 1649, 12-13).

## 5. Being Critical about the News

The question this paper raises is whether critical thinking can be used not only in analyzing the argumentations in a text, but also the facts or the information presented as a fact.

This is how philosophy professor Gheorghe Clitan defines critical thinking: “[It] refers to a reasonable, reflective way of thinking, allowing one to determine what makes him believe or act” (2003, 68).

One of the abilities of critical thinking enumerated by Anne Thomson and cited by Gheorghe Clitan as abilities that can conduct to critical evaluation is “the effort to be as well informed as possible” (2003, p. 69). So not only can critical thinking evaluate the news, but by comparing the news and asking oneself questions about them the whole process grows the ability of the reader/viewer to keep informed and to exercise critical thinking. It is a two-way-process.

As Clitan points out, critical thinking is preceded by critical reading: "Critical reading [the news - we would add] understood as the activity to discover the information and ideas in a text precedes critical thinking meaning the evaluation activity of the information and ideas to decide what can be accepted and believed in the text" (2003, p. 71).

This is exactly what makes critical reading of the news so important: The public can evaluate the quality of the news and discover fake news. There is a much bigger need of media literacy today than ever before.

As we see it, there are several possible breaches in fake news and in badly handled news, badly constructed news:

**A.** at the level of the facts

Remember "facts are sacred" to journalists who respect their work. Factual information in the news is at least double-checked from two independent sources. It is equally important to the public to identify and discern between facts and arguments in the text. The questions are: Are the facts double-checked? Are the facts really facts or does the journalist try to present opinions as facts? What do I know about the sources of information the journalist used (his own presence at the place where the event takes place, a news agency, an unnamed source)? How often does he use unnamed sources?

The public must put the journalist under pressure by demanding good craftsmanship, good quality: double-checked information, named sources, absence of opinions in the news, sticking to the facts.

The public should learn to discover what the theorists in critical thinking like Tracy Bowell and Gary Kemp call "unsupported claims" (2005, 7). News should for the sake of complete and correct information contain only "supported claims".

**B.** at the level of the language used

The language of the news should be neutral and clear. The text should be clear of figures of speech and the vocabulary used should be rapidly understood and unambiguous.

**C.** at the level of construction

Is the most important element at the top of the news? If not, why? Doesn't the journalist know how to construct it or is he trying to focus the attention of his reader on something less important, is he trying to rewrite the story, to reconstruct it, emphasizing something that isn't so important and why.

**D.** at the level of context

Is the public well informed about the context in which an event has occurred or not.

Using critical thinking when reading/watching the news means in my view to have a set of questions formulated (looking at the Cartesian method) and to try to answer them.

Here are some questions, which in my opinion, a reader (viewer/listener) should ask himself/herself when trying to ask about the rightfulness, the correctness of the information in the news, a raster for anyone who wants to ask himself: Am I well informed? And also: Who (dis)informs me?

The "questionnaire" has as starting point the same 5W and one H-question a journalist has to answer to in order to have a complete piece of news and bearing in mind the different levels where a breach can appear in a piece of news transforming it into a fake news.

First and above all: Who (or what) is/are my source(s)? Followed by questions like: What do I know about the media channel? Who is the owner? Who pays for the advertising? Who is the source of power and the source of money? "Follow the money" is not just a rule in investigative journalism.

The next questions to be asked and answered to start with "What?": What type of media is it? When using a traditional media channel to get information, there is usually a long history behind it. What is its reputation? What does its history say about the media channel? What are its strengths? Where and when was it wrong and about what? And: How often was it mistaken in the past few years? What kind of mistakes have been made? How did the editorial staff react to them? How did they deal with the mistakes: Did they correct



them straightaway or not? What do other people say/write about it? What is your own experience with it?

Who signs the articles? News are often not signed, but often we find the initials of the reporter and being a member of the staff, we can find out the name. What type of articles does he usually write? Does he write only news or also commentaries? What is his point of view then, his position? Is he experienced/unexperienced? Is he a professional? What about his reputation? How often was he mistaken? What kind of mistakes did he do (content, context, lack of information, not answering to one or several questions etc.)? Did he/she correct them in any form?

Am I well enough informed about the sources the journalist used? Which are these sources? Is it a public person, a PR-officer, a news agency, a governmental institution, another media etc.? What do I know about the trustworthiness of this source? Does the journalist fully inform me about the sources used? Is there a statement included with quotation marks? Is there a name given of a person or an institution? Does he use other formulas to protect the source or why does he use formulas like “pe surse” (“using anonymous sources” – overused in Romanian media) or “from a highly positioned person who doesn’t want to be named”? How often are these formulas being used in the media he/she is watching/reading/listening to?

Does this particular piece of news appear in a similar form in other media (especially in competing media)? What is the common source of information? This might be a very difficult question to answer to. Governmental sources and sources from the civil society are very common ones to be used by journalists: How do I know if journalists have been critical when gathering it?

How is the news constructed? Does the public have the most important answers in the beginning or does the journalist point to another detail (and why: does he not know how to construct the news or does he do it on purpose)? Here a clue how anyone can find out the most important piece of information: Imagine you are Pheidippides, the legendary runner from Marathon, and have to deliver to the

Athenians the news of their victory. What words would you utter first, using your last energy? These words should be the lead of your piece of news.

The most important questions regard the content of the news. Ask again: Are the journalists well informed or were they misinformed? Or are they spreading fake news?

What kind of language has been used? Is it the simple, neutral, clear language that is necessary in the news? Or is the journalist or simply the news provider sloppy about language?

Fake news says that red is green and *vice versa* and often make it in a way that does not seem to be questionable. It seems probable. It seems likely. It seems a fact. But facts should be sacred. For the journalist it means to have checked the information from at least two independent sources. Has he done it? Does the reader trust him? Do I as a reader prefer to be informed a little bit later and receive better, more qualitative news, rather than receive them as quickly as possible, almost instantly, but not double-checked? Does the media channel/the journalist warn me it wasn't double checked yet, but I am informed timely, instantly, and become later the result of the double-checking and I can read it, however it would come out in the end? It is often the case with breaking news and developing stories where the media channel sometimes wants to be in time with the news but warns the public that it hasn't been double-checked yet (e.g. in the car accident of Princess Diana, TV channels grabbed the news in the morning, but underlined that they have no confirmation yet).

It probably seems a utopia that a reader will go through all these questions. It takes time to find out the answers and the news reader today is more than ever a fast consumer, news is consumed "to go", not necessarily with time and patience as the time of reading cabinets has gone and so has the time when the newspaper was consumed during a large breakfast or the TV news with the whole family watching. But it makes sense to take your time to think about these questions at least when deciding to invest your trust into one media channel or another. When the reader/viewer/listener found "his" or "her" media

channels, he/she will see that the trust invested brings comfort. Journalists should learn about this trust, but the public should stay vigilant and let the journalists know about this too, since trustworthiness is not gained once and for all. Things can change: The channel once trusted could have been bought out and have another owner. This can have a good or bad impact on the content.

The reader/viewer/listener should also get information from various sources, from various media channels, should be ready to experiment and to experience. Should be open, but critical as well; vigilant, active, a good citizen. And also: Time is precious not only to journalists, but also to the public. It should not be wasted with channels, either traditional or new, if they have been repeatedly disappointing.

On the other hand: Using only the channels that are confirming once one viewpoint is not good either. They might be wrong, the reader (viewer/listener) might be wrong. It would be better to come out of the comfort zone and try something new: Try to understand a different viewpoint. This also makes a good citizen.

Media is the watchdog of democracy. "Media plays the role of the watch dog of democracy only as long as critical thinking is not avoided. Without critical thinking this role as an outpost held by the mass media in defending the values of democracy is inconceivable", as Aurelia Ana Vasile points out (2012, 74).

Further on: *An instructed public can be a watchdog of the media.* Cogito, ergo sum a good citizen. Cogito ergo sum well informed. Cogito ergo sum. "Just" this.

## 6. Media Quality

Quality was a concept *en vogue* in communication sciences during the 1990s. Looking at the evidence of the disturbances in communication today quality should raise interest again. Peter Gross argues: "It is always timely to talk about quality in journalism, no less than the need for a constant dialogue about democracy and liberal values" (2017, 27).

There are for sure aspects that can be reiterated, one does not have to reinvent the wheel. Other aspects would be new, because media has changed (since the growth of the internet), the information sources have changed (the alternatives offered by bloggers or vloggers) and the context is different (more and more aggressive fake news).

More than ever journalists have to defend their guild and their *métier*, adding quality to their work and defending it. This should also be pointed out: There is a demand – more than ever – for a responsible reader (viewer/listener) as a responsible citizen (the full sense is probably given by the word “*mündig*” used by the Enlightenment), one who knows what to ask for, what to demand from the journalists: good, reliable, quality content.

The tragedy of the situation is felt by many members of the journalists’ community and they tend to give up, to render in front of an alarming fake news wave and massive tabloidization. One example is picked up by Tobias Piller for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and presented in the article “Frauen und Alkohol’. Italien, Land des Postfaktischen”. After presenting examples of fake news in Italian media as well as opinions from analysts and journalists, the author turns to the “Ordine dei Giornalisti”, the Chamber of Journalists in Italy, which requests an exam so the journalist can become a member. This procedure should guarantee quality standards. The president of the “Ordine”, Enzo Jacopino, has given up his function being frustrated by the situation: “Efforts to return to the credibility of the profession have proved to be a major failure. I do not know where the unconditional respect for the truth and the dignity of the persons remained. Predominant are perverse and irresponsible games of militant opponents, sectarianism, superficiality, yelling and vulgarity” (2017).

It is not surprising that another Italian, no other than the famous Umberto Eco expressed bitterness and disillusion regarding communication today, while everybody awaited a positive outturn of the communication explosion. Regarding social media, he said after receiving the honorary degree in “Communication and Media Culture” in Turin: “Social media gives the right to speak to legions of idiots who once spoke only at the bar after a glass of wine, without

harming the community. Then they were immediately silenced, while now they have the same right to speak as a Nobel Prize winner. It's the invasion of idiots" (Apud Nicoletti, 2015).

In addition, "The TV had promoted the village idiot with respect to which the viewer felt superior. The Internet drama is that he promoted the village idiot to the bearer of truth" (*Ibidem*).

Instead, Eco invites newspapers "to filter information from the internet with a team of specialists, because nobody can understand today if a site is reliable or less" and "devote at least two pages to critical site analysis, just as teachers should teach kids to use sites to do the topics. Knowing how to copy is a virtue but we need to compare the information to understand if they are reliable or not" (*Ibidem*).

A different, happier case seems to be in France, as German journalist Jürg Altwegg found out by interviewing several French editors and journalists from daily newspapers. He cites Jérôme Fénoglio, the editorial director of *Le Monde* saying that: "We go to the schools to explain to young people how to check information for their truth" (2018). Fénoglio established a department dealing with 'fact-checking' and publishes new articles on this topic. *Le Monde* also operates the "Decodex", a search engine used for finding out about the quality of portals and their potential to lie: "'We have noticed the phenomenon Fake News long before the Brexit and the Trump election', says editor-in-chief Fénoglio" (Altwegg, 2018).

Regarding the measures proposed by Macron, a law supposed to be valid during election campaigns, having a seal of approval for information media during these periods, the German reporter observes: "Educational measures, media literacy is undoubtedly better than laws". In order to reach youngsters, 'Le Monde' is not active only on Twitter and Facebook, but also on Snapchat "'where it reaches 900,000 teenagers every day'", quoting Louis Dreyfus, the publisher of *Le Monde* (*Ibidem*).

It is a very good example of engaging in educating the public and raising a conscience generation, aware of both the qualities of media as well as possible traps. But not only journalists can get more involved in this process. Academics too can get more engaged in this process of educating the public media literacy. Or in the words of

Media professor Peter Gross: “Journalism schools should also take on the mantle of ‘public intellectuals’. That is, they must teach not only students but the whole (local, regional, national) community. They should militate for a democratic society with the appropriate values of professional journalism – accuracy, completeness of facts, context, credible sources, fair and balanced presentations and analysis, ethics, ethics, and again ethics; and help them identify media and journalists who can deliver this kind of journalism” (2017, 19).

## 7. Conclusions

More than ever media needs a powerful public, a public that can judge, make correct choices, a public that can talk, can analyze, and can demand quality. Only when the public is responsible and enlightened (what the Enlightenment called *mündig*: responsible, mature, can raise his voice), quality will return to media. This does not mean for journalists to stand back and wait for this moment, but rather to start teaching the public and giving evidence, showing proof that good, qualitative journalism is a need to a good working democratic society.

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# JOKER IN NEWS MEDIA DISCOURSE

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**ABSTRACT.** The entertainment media often delivers cultural symbols, which occasionally inform news media discourse. Such is the case of the “Joker” being used as a symbol of chaos. Since the character’s existence and popularity generated a pool of possibilities for political associations, the latest Joker film by director Todd Phillips, which premiered in 2019, caused controversy on many levels: “The real threat of Joker is hiding in plain sight” (The New York Times 2019); “Joker isn’t an ode to the far right – it’s a warning against austerity” (The Guardian 2019). The polemical aspect of the discourse prompted by this film is apparent in the frames used by the news media to cover Joker’s premiere. This paper aims to identify these news media frames, using an inductive clustering method, and further investigate them by exploring theories of social construction of reality, with a focus on psychoanalytic aspects of the hero/villain myth that informs these news frames.

*Keywords:* Media Frames, Myth, Constructivism, Joker.

## Introduction

*Joker* is an American film classified as a psychological thriller, which premiered on August 31<sup>st</sup> 2019 at the Venice Film Festival and in the United States on October 4<sup>th</sup> 2019. It was directed by Todd Phillips, written by the same person in collaboration with Scott Silver, and it stars actor Joaquin Phoenix as the main character, Arthur Fleck, in what seems to be an origin story for the Joker character. What inspired

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controversy around this film's release is its confusing political undertone, sometimes characterized as "far-right" leaning or "far-left". This is due to the story's hero, Joker, a mentally ill and abused individual who inspires a revolution against the wealthy of Gotham City.

Since the film caused such polarizing discourse, the purpose of this study was to determine the news media frames of its release, and shine a light on the narratives that inform these frames. The study explores hero/villain myth narratives in media discourse as archetypal perspectives that form intrinsic parts of framing devices. The research questions formulated in order to achieve this are:

**RQ1:** What are the media frames used in the news coverage of *Joker's* release in *The New York Times* and *The Guardian*?

**RQ2:** What are the differences in the coverage of *Joker's* release by the *The New York Times* and *The Guardian*?

**RQ3:** How do hero/villain myth narratives inform media frames, considering a psychoanalytic approach?

**RQ4:** Which are the main differences between the hero/villain frames constructed by *The New York Times* and *The Guardian*?

In order to answer the first two questions, the researcher used a media effects theoretical framework with the aid of a mixed methods research design and investigated two elite media outlets' articles related to this film: *The New York Times* and *The Guardian*. The selection criteria for these outlets are popularity and geographical importance, since they are both internationally renowned outlets, yet they are more relevant on different sides of the Atlantic Ocean: *The Guardian* is a UK-based European media outlet, while *The New York Times* is an American one. The purpose of this selection is to facilitate a comparative analysis.

In addressing the last two questions, the researcher followed Berger's direction on the myth model, considering his inventory of psychoanalytic approaches to myth and Jung's theory of archetypes, which, together with De Bruijn's study of hero/villain frames in political communication, serve as theoretical foundation for applying these categories to this study's frames. The results will be quantified and presented in charts.

## Literature Review

### I. *Framing: Media Frames*

Mass media effects is an evolving theory with a number of influential models that have gone through a series of paradigm shifts in the last century. Researchers note several stages of development of these models throughout history, „pivoting on alternative notions of significant versus minimal effects” (Neuman and Guggenheim 2011). The first stage is marked by *the magic bullet theory* or *the hypodermic effects theory* (1930s to 1950s), while the second stage can be seen as suggested by Scheufele (1999), a paradigm shift given by the return of significant effects theory in the 70s, following Joseph Klapper’s minimal effects theory in *The Effects of Mass Communication*. What is also notable in this period is the emergence of agenda-setting research through McCombs and Shaw’s study (1972). The third stage saw the development of concepts of framing and priming as media effects models (Goffman, 1974; Iyengar, Peters and Kinder, 1982; Entman, 1993). Scheufele (1999, p. 105) identified this as a fourth stage characterized by *social constructivism*, which brings us to present time.

Neuman and Guggenheim (2011) identify six media effects models, which emerge in their cumulative research that spans over fifty years. Their fifth cluster of models, *Interpretive Effects Models*, contains the Agenda-Setting, Priming and Framing theories, which are of interest to this study. They identify three key publications related to these theories, based on the number of times they have been cited within these 50 years: *Experimental Demonstrations of the “Not-So-*

*Minimal” Consequences of Television News Programs* (Iyengar, Peters and Kinder 1982), *The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media* (McCombs and Shaw 1972), and *Framing: Toward a clarification of a Fractured Paradigm* (Entman 1993).

This paper focuses on one of these media effects models, framing, ergo, the relevant literature also includes *Framing as a Theory of Media Effects* (Scheufele 1999) and *Framing: Media Frames* (D’Angelo 2017). Both Entman (1993) and Scheufele (1999) consider framing an

inconsistently defined concept, and suggest “research should address framing from a more metatheoretical perspective... within the realm of political communication, framing has to be defined and operationalized on the basis of social constructivism” (Scheufele 1999). Regardless of how it is used, the concept of framing refers to the elevation to salience of certain issues through particular ways of highlighting information about the subject item:

A media frame is a structure of meaning, a central idea, organizing principle, master narrative, macroattribute, or theme – that can be implicit, or latent, in a mediated text but nonetheless imparts a clear, selective meaning to the words and visuals a communicator uses to contextualize a topic. (D’Angelo 2017, 5)

According to Entman, frames *define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgements, and suggest remedies* (1993), however, “because salience is a product of the interaction of texts and receivers, the presence of frames in the text, as detected by researchers, does not guarantee their influence in audience thinking” (Entman, Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm 1993, 53). Thus, considering frames as “schemes for both presenting and comprehending news” (Scheufele 1999, 106), two concepts of framing can be identified: media frames and individual frames. Media frames are the essence of the issue that is being reported on; they are the way in which journalists present stories. Media frames have the potential to influence an audience’s set of opinions by stressing facts and values, making them more relevant. At the same time, media frames, as constructed by journalists, are filtered through the audience’s subjective interpretation, which can be informed by personal experience, value systems, beliefs, attitudes and biases, thus forming individual schemes for comprehending news media. Within media effects theory, these schemes are categorized as audience frames or individual frames, which are “mentally stored clusters of ideas that guide an individual’s” processing of information (Entman and Rojecki 1993, 52).

Scheufele also divides frames as dependent and independent variables, according to their use in research, and classifies frames using a four-cell typology, in an attempt to mark four different areas of research

with regards to frames: media frames as dependent or independent variables, and individual frames as dependent or independent variables. This research will first focus on an exploratory analysis of media frames as independent variables and will follow Scheufele's direction on relevant literature, namely Entman and Rojecki's 1993 study *Freezing Out the Public: Elite and Media Framing of the U.S. Anti-Nuclear Movement*. It singled out four types of frames: "a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described" (Entman and Rojecki 1993, 52).

Matthes and Kohring (2008) applied these frames in their study *The Content Analysis of Media Frames: Toward Improving Reliability and Validity* and determined a need for hierarchical cluster analysis in order to extract a single frame for every story. Thus, this study will look at media frames as independent variables and will follow the same research design as the one suggested by Matthes and Kohring.

## *II. Social constructivism. Myth narratives*

Entman's (1993) and Scheufele's (1999) theory of frames addresses "framing from a more metatheoretical perspective, [considering that] within the realm of political communication, framing has to be defined and operationalized on the basis of social constructivism" (Scheufele 1999). In *The Social Construction of Reality*, Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann posit that reality is socially constructed. They define reality "as a quality appertaining to phenomena that we recognize as being independent of our own volition" (Berger and Luckmann 1966).

In order to address the third research question, the relevant literature explores Arthur Asa Berger's text on *Media, Myth, and Society* (2013), which looks at how popular culture informs our sense of reality through its inevitable use of myth narratives.

According to Berger, "if you scratch deep enough beneath the 'surface' of many texts you can often find a myth—an example of intertextuality" (2013), which he concludes explains why some texts resonate with certain audience members. Myths are stories that serve to validate rites, customs, belief systems, while they also explain socio-

cultural and political situations, which is why all cultures have created them in order to explain their existence, origins and values. (McLuhan, 1959; Eliade, 1961; Barthes, 1972; Baudrillard, 1981; Berger 2013; Tsymbalenko 2017).

According to Mircea Eliade, myths are stories that describe primordial events through the lens of characters in the form of gods, heroes and villains (Eliade, 1961). This theory, together with Roland Barthes' *Mythologies* offer a comprehensive approach to myth, which precede and inform Berger's take on myth. Barthes states that "a myth is a system of communication [...], a message. This allows one to perceive that myth cannot possibly be an object, a concept, or an idea; it is a mode of signification, a form" (Barthes 1972, 107). In *Myth and Mass Media*, Marshal McLuhan stresses that even as we are not oblivious to mythical narratives in the news media, their capacity to subliminally impose are far too great not to consider:

They can be viewed at the same time as intelligible explanations of great tracts of time and of the experience of many processes, and they can be used as a means of perpetuating such bias and preference as they codify in their structure, [thus] mass media exerts a baneful influence on the human spirit (McLuhan 1959)

In *Myths in Media Communication* (2017), Tsymbalenko agrees and concludes that myths reflect content and structure-related alterations to modern media discourse. Considering the role that myths play in molding social life, Berger focuses on myths as the narratives that inform cultural, psychological and social aspects, as reflected in his myth model:

- *myth, defined as a sacred narrative that validates cultural beliefs and practices*
- *psychoanalytic reflections of the myth (when we can find them)*
- *historical manifestations of that myth (when we can find them)*
- *the myth in elite culture (operas, theatre, serious novels, etc.)*
- *the myth in mass-mediated or popular culture (songs, advertisements, TV shows)*
- *the myth in everyday life (when we can recognize it) (A. A. Berger 2013).*

### *III. Psychoanalysis, myth and media discourse*

In order to explore the psychological aspects of myth, Berger writes an inventory of psychoanalytic approaches to myth, which brings to surface Carl Jung's contributions to the study of myth. The author discusses Sigmund Freud's theory of the unconscious and Jung's take on the collective unconscious. He believed that Freud oversimplified his study of myths, while Jung offers a more comprehensive perspective on the study of myth forms, through archetypes.

The concept of archetype is partially rooted in Plato's *Ideas*, and even though it is impossible to define archetypes with complete accuracy due to their metaphysical nature, Jung attempts to develop an explanation for them by borrowing the terms „primordial image“ and „archaic image“ from Jakob Burckhardt. (Jacobi, 2018). These terms can be understood as motifs in stories, fairytales, fantasies, as Jung himself puts it:

The concept of the archetype is derived from the repeated observation that, for instance, the myths and fairy tales of world literature contain motifs that crop up everywhere. We meet [them] in the fantasies, dreams, deliria and delusions of individuals living today. These typical images and associations are what I call archetypal ideas (Storr, 1983)

Therefore, archetypes are psychological patterns that encompass human and animal behaviours within symbolic images. Some of the more common archetypal images and processes that can be found in myths, fantasies and games alike are: the father, the mother, the hero and the heroic quest, the evil monster, the descend into the abyss/hell/underworld, the animal companion, the sun cycle, birth, death.

Psychoanalysis uses Jung's collective unconscious manifestations such as archetypes, dreams and complexes through the process of cognitive transference, dream analysis and projection to explore trauma (Gross, 2001). This process of projection onto archetypal representations can describe how an individual has a positive or negative reaction



when met with certain media discourse, but also how the narratives at play might reinforce biases and perpetuate the internalization of certain belief systems.

One of Jung's most important archetypal representation is the hero, which generates myths of universal patterns (humble birth, superhuman strength, fast ascension to power, triumph in the face of evil and heroic sacrifice). When people are exposed to these stories of heroes' struggles, they unconsciously identify with them, which subliminally allows the ego to confront the darker aspects of the psyche.

This darkness is defined by Jung as a negative archetype, a villain to every hero, *the shadow*, which represents underdeveloped or repressed part of the subconscious. (Jung 1994). It often shows up as a threatening figure that when confronted, forces individuals to become aware of whatever it is that they might not accept about themselves and at times project unto others.

According to Hans De Bruijn, the author of *Hero or villain: framing in political communication*, frames often tap into social undercurrents, challenge or perpetuate core values and they contain a hero/villain aspect. This often leads audience towards subconsciously identifying with the frame, or strongly opposing it. The author explains the oversimplification of frames into hero/villain categories as relevant due to the emotional trigger factor that is attached to such frames. "As our emotions take over, we become increasingly susceptible to the kind of simple reasoning that underlies this frame. Emotions are thus the trigger of this frame – the spark that lights the fuse" (Bruijn 2017)

*Joker's* release caused so much controversy, that its emotionally triggering potential is reflected in news media discourse through its use of framing devices: "won't this movie cause dummies to think the Joker is good? To ask the question is to argue that nuance is dangerous" (The New York Times 2019); "Joker isn't an ode to the far right – it's a warning against austerity" (The Guardian 2019); "If that feels a little too dangerous right now, maybe it's a sign of how close to the edge we are" (The Guardian 2019). Consequently, this study will

analyze the resulting news articles frames and categorize them as pertaining to the hero/villain narrative, as informed by Jungian psychoanalysis.

## Methods

This study's sample consists of 28 articles extracted using an automated data collection tool, which allows for API interrogation, called Web Scraper Chrome Extension. It facilitated the obtaining of all Joker related news articles, 11 articles published by The Guardian and 17 articles published by The New York Times. The time frame was set between August 31<sup>st</sup> and October 31<sup>st</sup> of 2019, around the time of the film's international release. In terms of approach, this sample size is a convenience sample, as two elite media outlets were used as sources, an American one and a European one.

The researcher used both qualitative and quantitative research methods in order to gather the data and analyze it. Following Matthes and Kohrig's (2008) research design, the first step in this analysis uses a qualitative approach that applies thematic coding to a categorical type of content analysis, which looks at discourse structures in the sampled articles. Thematic coding is a "categorization or observational extracts with reference to certain concepts, themes, heading [...] It is an attempt to identify, compare, contrast meaning elements, as they emerge from and recur in several different contexts." (Jensen 2002, 247) In order to apply thematic coding to the frame elements, the researcher used Entman's categories of framing elements, which were deductively coded using MaxQDA. These elements will be seen as variables, as follows:

If these elements are understood as variables, each of them can have several categories in a content analysis. A problem definition can consist of an issue and relevant actors that discuss the problem. A causal interpretation is an attribution of failure or success regarding a specific outcome. An evaluation can be positive, negative, or neutral and can refer to different objects. Finally, a treatment recommendation

can include a call for or against a certain action. (Matthes and Kohring 2008, 264) Once these variables were coded, the research employed a quantitative analysis tool, KH Coder, in order to determine a hierarchical cluster analysis of those elements, which revealed the main framing patterns. "That means when some elements group together systematically in a specific way, they form a pattern that can be identified across several texts in a sample. We call these patterns frames" (Matthes and Kohring 2008, 263).

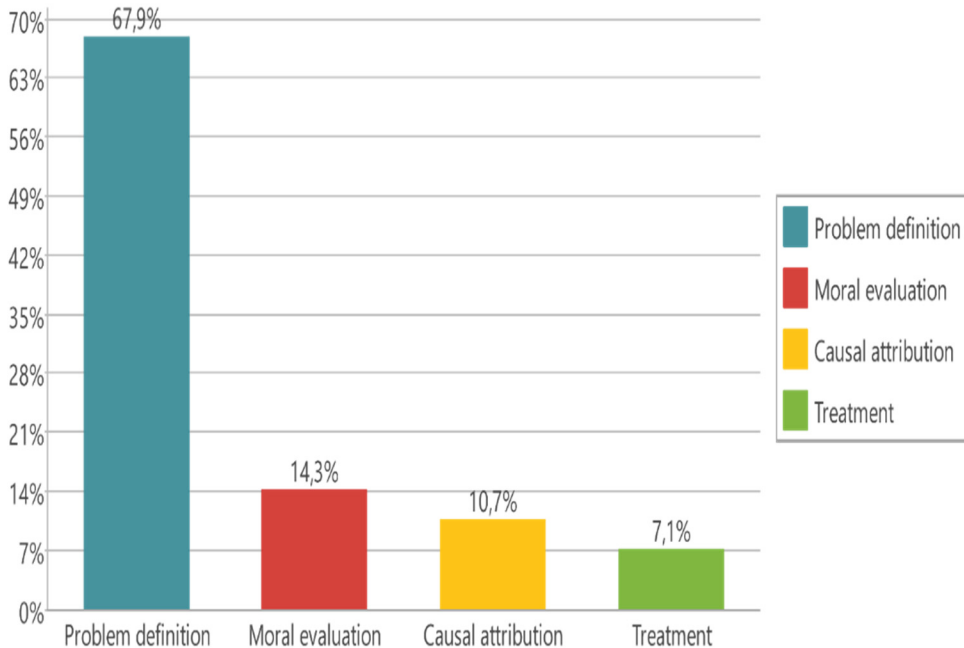
The hierarchical cluster analysis was set to use the Ward method, with the entire articles as the unit of analysis. The most noteworthy variables were identified within clusters with the highest means. Once the frames were identified, the researcher named them using inductive methods of coding, and quantified the resulting codes and data with the aid of MaxQDA, which is a software for qualitative and mixed methods research.

Once the frames are identified, the research employs qualitative methods in order to analyze the news articles" frames. This step in the analysis uses a qualitative synthesis approach that reviews and links relevant theory on media myths and the hero/villain archetypes, as presented in the literature review. Then it applies thematic coding to a categorical type of content analysis, which looks at discourse structures in the sampled articles. These previously identified frames will now be subcategorized using risk or benefit attributes, which serve to establish the frame elements as hero/villain. Once these variables are coded, they are named using inductive methods of coding. The resulting codes and data are then quantified to produce comparative results in the form of charts.

### **Analysis. Results**

Once the samples were gathered, the article texts were introduced as separate documents in MaxQDA, for thematic coding, according to Entman's four framing variables: problem definition, moral evaluation, causal attribution and treatment. The researcher

performed qualitative content analysis on every article and manually coded the variables, using the entire articles as single units of analysis. The results were quantified, in order to get an idea on which framing devices were most used, as can be seen in fig. 1:



**Fig. 1:** Framing Devices

The next step in the analysis was creating four separate projects in KHCoder, using the articles belonging to each framing device as a single project per category, in order to perform hierarchical cluster analysis and further identify frames. Data was manipulated in order to exclude prepositions and the media outlet's names from the analysis. The resulting charts can be observed next, in fig. 2.:

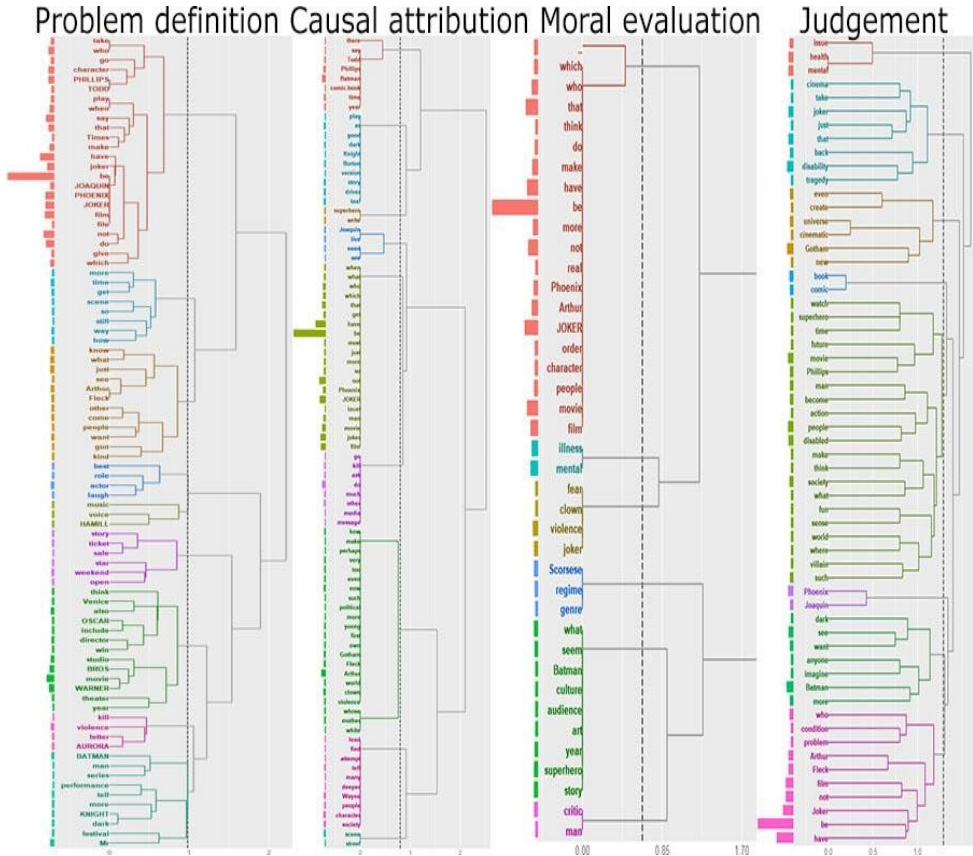


Fig 2: Hierarchical Cluster Analysis

The clusters with the highest means donned the most noteworthy variables, which were then coded in MaxQDA.

For the problem definition framing devices, seven noteworthy clusters were identified, based on the topics discussed. The researcher coded them in MaxQDA and determined the following variables: Box Office (word clusters include “sale”, “ticket”), Character Study, Character Scene, Character Comparison (word clusters for character related articles include “character”, “music”, “voice”, “laugh”, “best”), Public Concern (“gun”, “violence”, “people”, “kill”), Relevance Neutral and Relevance Negative (“play”, “joker”, “role”, “actor”, “scene”).

For the causal attribution framing device, two clusters were identified, as presented in fig. 3:

Risk Attribution (“illness”, “mental”, “portrayal”, “violence”, “fear”, “order”) and Benefit Attribution (“Scorsese”, “regime”, “Batman”).

For the moral evaluation category, two clusters were identified: Benefits: Call to action (“need”, “message”, “political”, “character”, “society”, “people”) and Risks: Moral (“story”, “superhero”, “incel”, “Taxi Driver”).

For the treatment category, another two clusters were identified: Judgement: Positive (“cinematic”, “superhero”, “society”, “future”) and Judgement: Negative (“issue”, “health”, “mental”, “disability”, “condition”).

In order to yield comparative results, the sample data was quantitatively divided according to the media outlet source, as seen in figure 1.3:

	New York Times	The Guardian
▼ Treatment		9,5%
Judgement: Positive		4,8%
Judgement: Negative		4,8%
▼ Moral evaluation		19,0%
Benefits: Call to action		9,5%
Risks: Moral		9,5%
▼ Causal attribution	8,8%	4,8%
Risk attribution	5,9%	4,8%
Benefit attribution	2,9%	
▼ Problem definition	41,2%	19,0%
Topic: Box Office	5,9%	
Topic: Character study	2,9%	
Topic: Character scene	5,9%	
Topic: Character comparison	5,9%	
Topic: Public concern	8,8%	4,8%
Topic: Relevance Neutral	5,9%	4,8%
Topic: Relevance Negative	5,9%	4,8%
Σ SUM	100,0%	100,0%
# N = Documents	17 (60,7%)	11 (39,3%)

Fig. 3: Comparative Coded Variables

What the data reveals in terms of comparing media outlets frames is that The New York Times' articles were majoritarian in their problem definition frames (41,2% of articles fit into this category), with no articles framed as treatment or moral evaluation, and 8.8% of articles belonging to the causal attribution category. The Guardian frames are evenly divided between problem definition and moral evaluation (19%), with smaller percentages of causal attribution frames (4.8%) and treatment (9.5%).

Once these framing patterns were identified, the researcher named them using inductive methods of coding, with the aid of the memo tool in MaxQDA, which was used during the qualitative content analysis in order to single out relevant article segments for the purpose of accurately naming frames, as follows:

### 1. *Problem definition frame element:*

1.1. Topic: Box Office was named an **Economic Prospect** frame, since it offers information about the film's earnings:

"Warner Bros. continued to rake in money with the grave supervillain story "Joker," which topped the domestic box office Friday through Sunday with an estimated \$55 million in ticket sales. The movie picked up an additional \$123.7 million overseas this weekend according to the studio, bringing its worldwide cumulative tally to about \$543.9 million after only its second weekend in theaters." (The New York Times, Cohn 2019)

1.2. Topic: Character study, Topic: Character scene and Topic: Character comparison are human interest frames that focus on the actor's performance from different angles, either as a character study of Joaquin Pheonix, "Phoenix said his criteria for choosing work are actually quite clear-cut. "I don't really care about genre or budget size, anything like that," he said." (The New York Times, Itzkoff 2019) or as performance comparison and ranking: "How does Joaquin Phoenix measure up to the actors who have played the Joker before?" (The New York Times, Bailey 2019) and thus, the resulting frame was named **Performance**.

1.3. Topic: Public concern brings forward issues of interest to the public: “Following concerns about the potential for violence, several chains will not allow face coverings or clothing that “would make other guests feel uncomfortable” (The Guardian, Pulver 2019). The frame was named **Public Concern**.

1.4. Topic: Relevance Neutral and Topic: Relevance Negative have been classified under the frame **Relevance**, regardless of the stated point of view being positive, neutral or negative. “To be worth arguing about, a movie must first of all be interesting [...] “Joker,” an empty, foggy exercise in second-hand style and second-rate philosophizing, has none of that.” (The New York Times, 2019)

2. *Causal attribution frame element:*

Risk attribution and Benefit attribution were both included in what was named a **Moral Consequences** frame, as the articles belonging to these categories refer to how the public perception of the movie constitutes either a moral risk factor or a benefit: “won’t this movie cause dummies to think the Joker is good? To ask the question is to argue that nuance is dangerous.” (The New York Times, Brooks 2019)

3. *Moral evaluation frame element:*

Benefits: call to action and Risks: moral attributes fit into an **Ideology** frame, as the author’s point of view is informed by their ideological stance: “Joker isn’t an ode to the far right – it’s a warning against austerity.” (The Guardian, Uetrict 2019)

“If that feels a little too dangerous right now, maybe it’s a sign of how close to the edge we are.” (The Guardian, Rose 2019)

4. *Treatment frame element:*

The two variables under this frame element, Judgement: Positive and Judgement: Negative focus on delivering solutions based on the film’s perceived message, whether positive or negative: “Maybe though, we’ve seen enough of disabled people depicted as pious martyrs, and it’s time the victims fought back. Not by shooting people, but with smart, anarchic direct action.” (The Guardian, Edgar 2019) This frame is thus named **Resolution**.



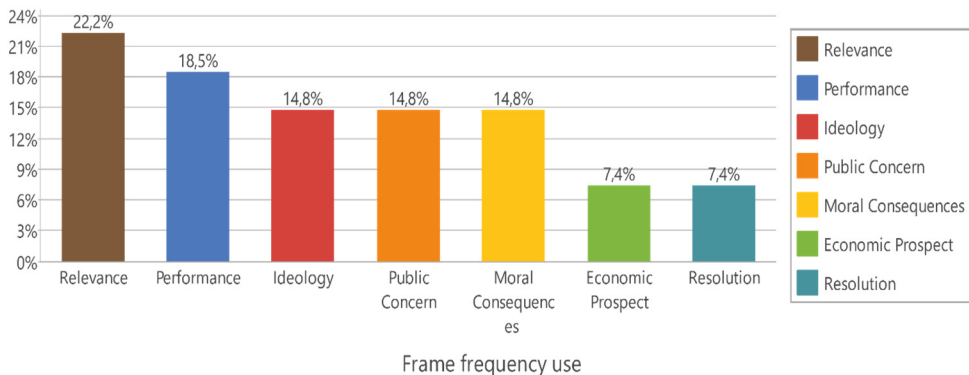
The frames were then coded into MaxQDA, in order to produce a comparative chart of frame use frequency with the sampled media outlets, as seen in fig. 4:

	New York Times	The Guardian
Resolution		20,0%
Ideology		40,0%
Moral Consequences	17,6%	10,0%
Economic Prospect	11,8%	
Performance	29,4%	
Public Concern	17,6%	10,0%
Relevance	23,5%	20,0%
# N = Documents	17 (60,7%)	11 (39,3%)

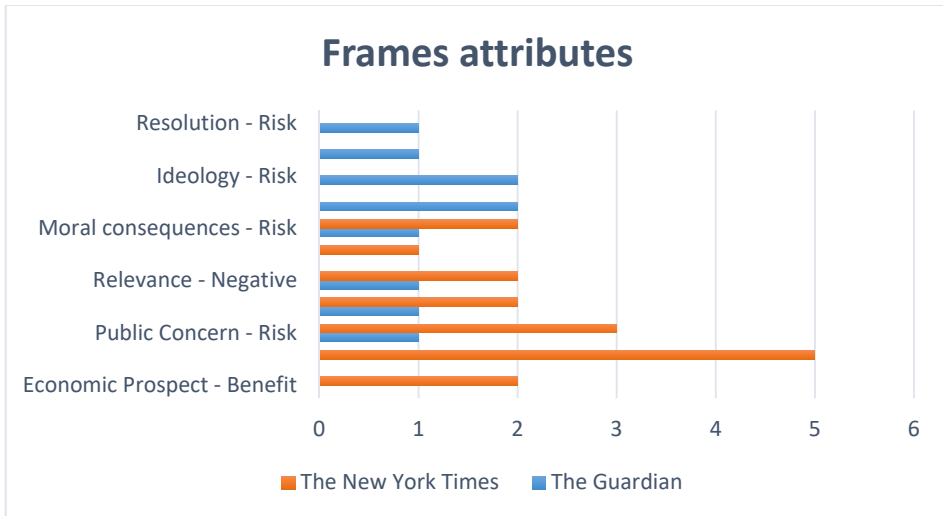
**Fig. 4:** Comparative Frame Use Frequency

As can be observed in fig. 4, The New York Times did not use a Resolution frame or an Ideology frame for the published articles on the film *Joker*, while The Guardian used the Resolution frame in a 20% proportion and the Ideology frame, 40%. New York Times’s most used frames are Performance (29.4 %) and Relevance (23.5%). While The Guardian did not use the Economic Prospect or the Performance frames at all, the Public Concern frame was also used in a 10% proportion and the Relevance frame, 20%.

Overall, the frames used the most were: Relevance (22.2%), Performance (18.5 %) and Ideology (14.8%), as can be observed in fig. 5:



**Fig. 5:** Frame frequency use



**Fig. 6:** Frames attributes

Considering Matthes and Kohring’s research design for determining news media frames (2008), all the identified frames can be divided into risk/benefit or positive/negative attributes, which is the next step in the analysis:

**1. Economic Prospect:**

The **Economic Prospect** frame focuses on the film’s earnings. There were no risk attributes identified for this category.

**2. Performance:**

This frame is a human interest frame that focuses on the actor’s performance from different angles. There were no risk or negative attributes identified for this category.

**3. Public concern:**

This frame only assumes a risk factor attribute: “Following concerns about the potential for violence, several chains will not allow face coverings or clothing that would make other guests feel uncomfortable” (Guardian 27.09) (Pulver 2019).

#### 4. Relevance:

This frame matches articles which display both negative and positive attributes: “To be worth arguing about, a movie must first of all be interesting [...] “Joker,” an empty, foggy exercise in second-hand style and second-rate philosophizing, has none of that.” (New York Times 03.10)

#### 5. Moral consequences:

The articles belonging to this category refer to how the public perception of the movie constitutes either a moral risk factor or a benefit.

#### 6. Ideology:

Since as the framing of articles belonging to this category is informed by different ideological discourse, this frame includes benefits and risks attributes.

#### 7. Resolution:

The two variables under this frame element, Benefit and Risk focus on delivering solutions based on the film’s perceived message, whether positive or negative.

Next, each positive/negative or risk/benefit attribute is recoded as hero/villain, as can be observed in fig. 7, followed by a comparative chart of the two media outlets, as can be seen in fig. 8:

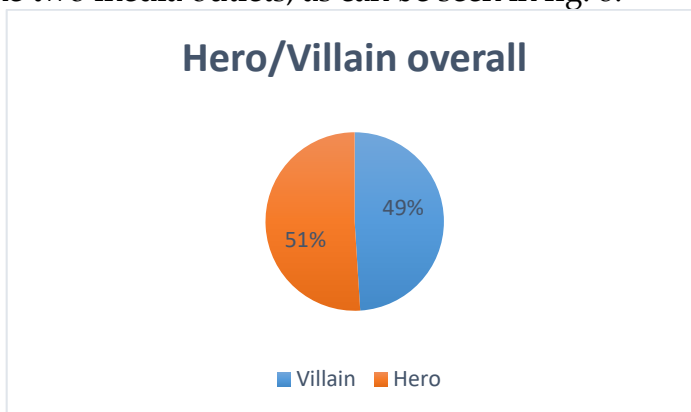
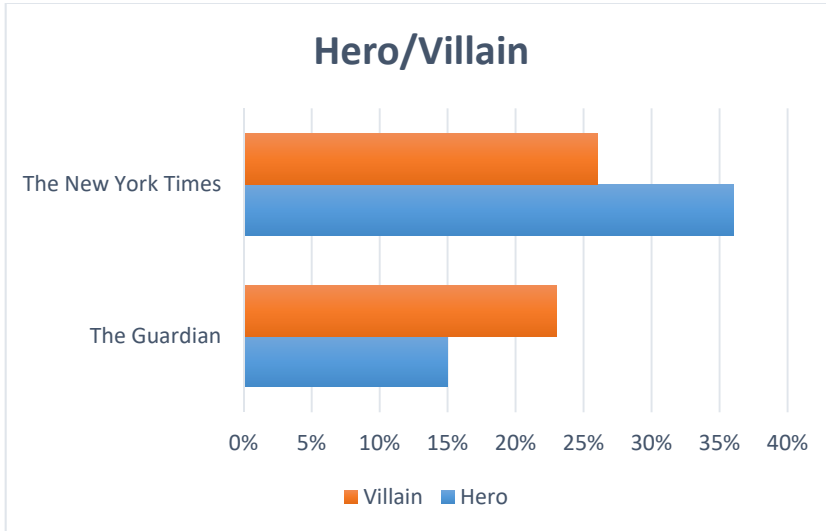


Fig. 7: Hero/villain overall



**Fig. 8:** Hero/Villain Comparative Chart

The quantification of data categories led to the following results:

Between the two media outlets, the hero/villain frames were used in almost the same proportion, with the hero frame being used 51% of the time, and the villain, 49%. However, The New York Times articles use a predominantly hero frame, while The Guardian donned more articles pertaining to the villain frame.

### **Discussion. Conclusion**

The unique patterns formed by frame elements or groups of frame elements, as defined by Entman (1993) can be interpreted as frames when using a research design that is meant to yield accurate results (Matthes and Kohring 2008). The methods used in this study combine manual coding and computerized analysis that resulted in determining these seven frames: Relevance, Performance, Ideology, Public Concern, Moral Consequences, Economic Prospect and Resolution. As suggested by Matthes and Kohring (2008, 275), “the crucial advantage [of these methods] is that frames are not subjectively determined but

empirically suggested by an inductive clustering method". The purpose of using this research design was the fact that it allows for observation of issues and frame changes throughout time, which would not be possible using a fully deductive method of analysis.

The resulting frames show the wide spectrum of approaches employed by journalists when covering a topic such as a popular culture film's release and its implications and effects. What the research revealed in terms of comparative analysis of identified frames is that, on one hand, The Guardian used a predominantly ideological and morally relevant angle. This indicates partisanship within this outlet's discourse. The importance of that is not to be ignored, since a political bias seems evident in the framing of the stories. The Joker as a symbol of chaos is being associated with "incels", Trump, Brexit, the act of protesting, the political left and the political right. The Resolution framing employed by The Guardian is applied to articles encouraging a "call to action" mindset.

On the other hand, The New York Times donned a less overall ideologically biased story framing, though it did partially focus on the moral implications of this film being seen and/or misunderstood, thus it focused on its relevancy. A notable difference in approach is the economical angle, as The New York Times brought attention to the business side of the movie industry, with a lot of talk of Box Office results, while The Guardian did not produce any economical related frames. This is justified by the former outlet's geographical location, within the same country that produced and released this film.

The frames identified in this study: Relevance, Performance, Ideology, Public Concern, Moral Consequences, Economic Prospect and Resolution served as this research's basic categories for further coding. The risk/benefit and positive/negative attributes, as applied to these categories, allowed for a link between the existent identified frames and the aforementioned study of the hero/villain myth in political communication.

As stated in literature review, the process of cognitive projection onto archetypal representations can describe how narratives at play might reinforce biases and perpetuate the internalization of certain

belief systems. In other words, we often suffer of confirmation bias, so we tend to believe that which matches our value systems, our needs or prejudices. This is often an unconscious choice, the purpose of which is avoiding the discomfort caused by experiencing cognitive dissonance. The root of those biases can be traced to what Jung calls the collective unconscious and our own personal unconscious, in the form of archetypes, which are inherited patterns of thinking or behaviour.

Considering archetypal representations permeate all aspects of culture, society and politics, it is perhaps noteworthy to consider how archetypes inform narratives such as myths and frames. This process of projection onto archetypal representations can describe how an individual has a positive or negative reaction when met with certain media discourse, but also how the news frames subconsciously reinforce biases and perpetuate systems of belief, beyond that which is easily noticeable.

Some of these archetypes, like the hero and the shadow (villain), play a crucial part in the natural development of self. When people are exposed to these stories of heroes' struggles, they unconsciously identify with them, which subliminally allows the ego to confront *the shadow*, which represents underdeveloped or repressed part of the subconscious. (Jung 1994). However, media discourse that is framed in terms of benefits/risks or hero/villain has the potential to polarize or confirm false beliefs. In other words, media constructs reality through framing devices. The hero/villain aspect of narratives can either challenge or perpetuate core values.

*Joker's* release caused tremendous controversy, and its emotionally triggering potential is reflected in news media discourse, as reflected in the finding that both hero and villain frames were used in equal proportion in the sampled articles. However, The New York Times donned a generally less politically biased account of the release of this film and the buzz around it, and used a predominantly positive - hero inclined frame to reporting, which can be justified by the outlet's strong ethical code and journalistic values. What the research revealed in terms of comparative analysis is that The Guardian used a predominantly ideological and morally relevant angle, and it tends to vilify the film.

The news media's polarized ways of approaching discourse that is related to an inevitably politically charged entertainment media product, *Joker*, is not only concerning, but also fascinating to observe and analyze. The different patterns of framing and construction of meaning revealed by this study can be applied when analyzing a wider set of data samples, which could also reveal more frames.

### **Limitations**

As stated in the methodology section, this research's sample characteristic is one of convenience, since only two media outlets were analyzed. The purpose of that was a focus on the research design rather than a thorough sampling. In order to determine a comprehensive account of all media frames that are relevant to this issue, at least six media outlets need to be analyzed. As a future completion of this project, an additional four outlets were selected based on location (European and American) and popularity: Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, BBC News and The Daily Telegraph.

Furthermore, this study raised additional questions related to the news media reporting of this film: how has *Joker* been used in the news media as a symbol of socio-political chaos throughout time? and how are the actors who played these characters being associated with *Joker* as a symbol of chaos?

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## NETTA BARZILAI AS AN ISRAELI SYMBOLIC GOODS

GALIA KATZ\*

**ABSTRACT.** This paper discusses Pierre Bourdieu's term symbolic goods (1930-2002) through an Israeli case study, Netta Barzilai. An Israeli performer and songwriter, winner of the Eurovision 2018 with the song "TOY" which became the anthem of the Me-Too movement. Netta as a symbolic good was packaged, marketed and distributed to the public, and the Netta phenomenon has spread throughout the world. Based on interviews with Netta, through listening to the songs and watching the clips that came after "TOY", "Bassa Sababa" (2019), "Nana Banana" (2019) and "Ricki Lake" (2020), I examine how and if Netta continues to maintain her status as a symbolic good, as an example and role model for many, and whether she continues to convey her message - self-love and self-acceptance - through shattering cultural and social stereotypes. It seems that Netta's next three songs introduced a powerful big size Netta but also a vengeful, vicious, narcissistic and lazy Netta. The fresh message she carried at the beginning was swallowed up in an ocean of shallow commercial images. A trend that led Netta's fans to lose interest and Netta to reinvent herself in her latest song, "Cuckoo" (2020). Through sincerity, directness and cleanliness of her message, Netta like a bird in a cage seeks to break free from the evil loop in which she was imprisoned and not only love herself but also love others and let others love her.

**Keywords:** symbolic goods; Netta Barzilai; Me-too movement; Pierre Bourdieu; Women empowerment

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## Literature Review

According to Bourdieu (Pierre Bourdieu, 1984) Symbolic goods are objects (concrete or abstract) with two aspects: economic and symbolic.<sup>1</sup> While in pre-modern societies these aspects are intertwined, with the development of modernity, capitalism and division of labor, these aspects of the symbolic goods tend to be cut off in the process that culminated in the creation of areas of relative autonomy (economics, arts, sciences, law, etc.), the same Bourdieu Calls Fields. Fields are areas of activity in which the legality governing the activity is not subject to the legality governing the activities of other areas.<sup>2</sup> Bourdieu defines cultural works (books, paintings, music, etc.) as a specific type of symbolic good.

If in the modern age, in reference to Bourdieu's publications in the visual culture containing the symbolic goods, the main concern of modernity was the need, the centrality and the universalization of vision and perception as a result of elites dictating taste and preference for everyone.<sup>3</sup> The boundary between high culture and low culture blurred as the cultural industries increased in size and importance,<sup>4</sup> as did the emergence of canons, traditions and the like within popular culture.<sup>5</sup> In the postmodern age the symbolic goods as part of the visual culture are all around us, building our reality.<sup>6</sup> In other words, any product presented in a more or less conventional space that is part of the visual culture of the environment can be conceptualized as a visual reflection of the intention to express something.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bourdieu, P. (1984). *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*. New York. Columbia University Press, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Bourdieu, P. (2005). On some of the field features. *Inside: Questions in Sociology*. Resling, Tel Aviv, pp. 113-117.

<sup>3</sup> Abrudan, E. (2012). Postmodern Visual Culture. In *Visual Culture*. Galaxia Gutenberg, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Crane, D. (1992). Chapter 3: Social Stratification and the Media: Audiences in Media-Saturated Societies. In *The Production of Culture: Media and the Urban Arts*. SAGE publication Ltd. California, pp. 33-34.

<sup>5</sup> Louw, P. E. (2001) Chapter 7: Circulating Meaning I: Making News. In *The Media and Cultural Production*. SAGE publication Ltd. London.

<sup>6</sup> Abrudan, E. (2012), p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Abrudan, E. (2012), p. 2.

## Netta Barzilai – An Israeli case study for symbolic goods

In the Israeli cultural context, it is impossible to ignore the woman and the phenomenon - Netta Barzilai and poetry winning the 2018 Eurovision Song Contest “TOY” as a prime example of a symbolic product in the postmodern era for women in Israeli society as an individual and in global society as a whole.

Netta Barzilai started out in the Israeli reality show, “The Next Star for the Eurovision Song Contest”, which is a reflexive community<sup>8</sup> within the Israeli art/music field in the postmodern era.

In the postmodern era, Elena Abrudan (2012) argues that delimited fields of social activity emerge in broader and more diverse contexts. The main features of these fields are: the existence of common meanings and practices, the practice of tools and products, the internal production of standards and objectives, the common implication and the mixing of production and consumption. Now it is not necessary to go to the museum to absorb the cultural value of the symbolic goods enough to open television, the Internet or any other form of media in order to experience symbolic goods.<sup>9</sup>

The Israeli reality show, “The Next Star for the Eurovision Song Contest” is a reality TV competition show featuring various performers competing for the coveted title of representing Israel at the Eurovision Song Contest in Europe each year. The reality show that started in 2013 featured high ratings and thus retained its status as a reflective community over the years till this day (currently the seventh season for Eurovision 2020 to be held in Amsterdam last year’s winner).

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<sup>8</sup> Writer’s note: A reflective community is expressed in several important aspects: First, its members are not born within the framework but choose to participate in it. Second, it can be spread more widely over space, and possibly over time. Third, it constantly poses itself to the question of its own creation, and reinvents itself far more frequently than a traditional community. Fourth, its “tools” and products tend to be not material but abstract and cultural. As a result, the same object, person or situation can designate different realities in different moments and contexts. Abrudan, E. (2012), pp. 9-10.

<sup>9</sup> Abrudan, E. (2012), p. 2.

In the “Next Star for Eurovision”, the results of the performers are judged by four judges who are considered reference of tastes in the Israeli music world as part of the sanctification and preservation field by Bourdieu. The sanctification and recognition institutions establish the legitimacy of certain conceptions of the field by symbolic violence (coercion of cultural arbitrariness), forming among their subordinates - habitus - an internalized generative scheme of practices, tendencies, value judgments, patterns of activity and taste - based on the cultural distinctions created. The power struggles in the field and reflect them.<sup>10</sup>

The audience is part of the same reflective community of the program and judges by voting on the performance of the performers, the voice of the audience also becomes tangled in judgment making up one percent per vote while the votes of the judges constitute 28% of the judging results per judge. As for them, who can vote using an app from their smart device.

The ultimate prize given to the winner in the competition for Orthodoxy (in Bourdieu’s terms, for those who have succeeded in turning their cultural preferences into legitimate capital in the field), is recognition from the sanctification and recognition institutions.<sup>11</sup> In the case of the “Next Star for Eurovision” program, it won first place in the decision of the Reflective Community: the judges who chair and the audience that influences the decision.

Netta, who participated in the “Next Star for Eurovision” show in season five of 2018, swept the judges and the audience thanks to her unique voice, her musical talent, and her originality in the use of the looper during her performances (no looper was used before Netta in this program and in general). In addition, her appearance, body structure, costumes, hairstyles and prominent makeup on her face

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<sup>10</sup> Bourdieu, P. (1984), pp. 25-27.

<sup>11</sup> Writer’s note: Bourdieu’s view sharply distinguishes between legitimate and illegitimate practices, based on the existence of conservation and recognition institutions. Power elites are born, mature and dead. When in power, they struggle to maintain their privilege positions, which include attempts to use the media for their own interests. Louw, P. E. (2001), p. 57; Crane, D. (1992), pp. 33-34.

made her part of the new and revised canon of female empowerment, defying the traditional canon of the Greek beauty ideal and a model for women and girls who did not meet the severe conditions of the traditional canon. After winning the competition, a poem written by Doron Medley and Stav Begger made her appearance on the Eurovision Song Contest. It should be noted that the words "TOY" performed by Netta in Eurovision were written in English to expand the cultural production field<sup>12</sup> for an unlimited production field<sup>13</sup> (in the distant past of the State of Israel, the performances have appeared in Hebrew-language songs, but in recent years there has been a trend towards the English language).

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<sup>12</sup> Writer's note: Bourdieu claims that in the last centuries, and especially since the 19th century, cultural activity has disengaged from its subordination to external contexts, such as religion and politics, and has created a relatively autonomous field of symbolic goods production and consumption, known as the cultural production field. Bourdieu links the establishment of this field with the development of capitalism: first, the emergence of a large and anonymous clientele allowed creators to disengage from their dependence on institutions (such as churches and states) and patrons with a claim for influence in the work, and secondly, the emergence of creators whose works are intended to meet market demands, Allowed the emergence of their value contrast in the form of a separate body of creators who explicitly opposes a commercial concept of art and claim for it a purely symbolic value that cannot be reduced to economic terms.

The claim to this symbolic value and its contradiction to economic value is most clearly expressed in the concept of the masterpiece as "priceless" and the appearance of the "genius" ideal, the creative artist who is also pushed to the work in contrast to his personal benefit and that the work is for him the foreseeable. Bourdieu, P. (1984), pp. 4-11.

<sup>13</sup> Writer's note: Manufacturers in the large-scale production field produce for the general public and their success is measured in sales volume. Manufacturers in the limited field produce for a limited audience of experts and their success is measured by the respect and esteem of peers who are competitors and clients at the same time some already appreciated. Bourdieu, P. (1984).





Netta Eurovision performance with the song “TOY”.<sup>14</sup>

The song “TOY”<sup>15</sup> became the soundtrack for the #MeToo’s campaign to denounce harassment and sexual violence against women. The message of the song in Netta’s performance has been able to move on and resonate around the world: You don’t have to be 90-60-90, You don’t have to be a pretty tall model to feel connected to a woman. You are a complete woman.... with confidence, who knows exactly what your qualities are, what you do and where you can go.<sup>16</sup> Netta represents a whole public of full women / girls who do not fit into the definition of the traditional canon of beauty ideal.

“I’m not a doll to play with me and I’m not your toy.... I’m not blinded by your money; your money doesn’t buy me.”

The song is a women’s empowerment song that expresses the voice of women in the MeToo era. Netta’s impressive appearance, her captivating personality, her smartness, wit and inner self managed to conquer Europe as a whole and she won the Eurovision and became a symbol to many. Netta as a symbolic good was packaged and marketed and distributed to the general public, girls and women

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<sup>14</sup> <https://youtu.be/84LBjXaeKk4>

<sup>15</sup> Song lyrics are attached as an appendix 1.

<sup>16</sup> Dor, V. (2018, May 14). Netta Barzilai’s Victory at the Eurovision Song Contest of the # MeToo Campaign. *Maariv*. Retrieved from <https://www.maariv.co.il/culture/music/Article-638072>.

began to imitate her in their hairstyles, clothing and makeup. In addition, the accessory that accompanied the path of Netta, the Chinese cat, which symbolizes luck in Chinese culture, has been replicated and distributed everywhere. The Netta phenomenon has spread throughout the world.

In an interview with the BBC, Netta linked the song "TOY" to the MeToo movement in which women make their voices heard, but claimed that "TOY" is an empowerment song for everyone, urging them to always be themselves. "When I sang in a wedding band", shares Netta, "brides would see my picture and I would hear the conversation with them on the phone: 'Don't you have another singer? Don't you have someone who looks better? 'I realized that I was very different, and being different, often, was not an acceptable thing. I was fat. I am fat". Netta goes on to say that they tried to change her but she was not happy and realized that in order to be happy she had to be herself. "This is what I am. People have a hard time getting it. I think I do a great service to a lot of people and that I and my team are breaking big stereotypes" she said.<sup>17</sup> The official clip that accompanies the song "TOY" reinforces the message of the female empowerment of the Me too movement, shows different types of femininity but always strong unapologetic femininity, Netta as a symbolic good uses her confident electrifying personality and asks the audience both female and male and those not defined to shatter traditions And ideals and embrace values like self-love and self-belief.

The clip is a celebration of colorful, clean, precise, sharp and serious aesthetics that is broken by humorous mimicry in Netta's face and the movements of her four dancers, despite the humor, the message and the appearance are strong and solid - always be true to who you are.

In the next chapter I will try to examine whether Netta through the songs after "TOY" continues to maintain her status as a symbolic good, as an example and role model for many, whether she continues to convey her message - self-love and self-acceptance - through shattering cultural and social stereotypes.

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<sup>17</sup> Gabay, N. (2018, March 3). Eurovision 2018: Toy - Toy by Netta Barzilai translating the words into Hebrew. *Hasafranim*. Retrieved from [https://blog.nli.org.il/netta\\_toy\\_hebrew/](https://blog.nli.org.il/netta_toy_hebrew/).

## Netta Barzilai - The day after

After her dazzling success with "TOY" Netta continued to break stereotypes in her next two songs. In February 2019, Netta launched her new song "Bassa Sababa"<sup>18</sup> along with an expensive video clip that is considered one of the most expensive videos ever produced in Israel. Barzilai sings in English as expected, she wrote and composed the single along with Avshalom Ariel and Stav Begar who also worked with her on "TOY".



Image 1<sup>19</sup>

The video clip shows Netta as a pink rhino with a pink horn (Image 1). At the center of the video clip, just before the wedding (Image 2), the groom runs off and a chase is starting. The clip predominant color is pink. Netta chose to identify with a pink rhino which symbolizes for her courage, strength, survival and family. In an article in the Israeli journal "Israel Today", Netta announces "I am excited to share with you Bassa - A festive and empowering anthem, about independence in all aspects, with lots of joy, lightness and color."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Song lyrics are attached as an appendix 1.

<sup>19</sup> [https://youtu.be/jV1sjm9Lz\\_Q](https://youtu.be/jV1sjm9Lz_Q)

<sup>20</sup> Swisa, E. (2019, February 1). Bassa sababa: Listen to the new Netta Barzilai's song. *Israel Hayom*. Retrieved from <https://www.israelhayom.co.il/article/629375>



**Image 2<sup>21</sup>**

“Calcalist” e-magazine wrote that “Bassa Sababa” is a reclamation anthem, a re-appropriation of the great female body that doesn’t apologize for it.<sup>22</sup> Barzilai goes with the rhino’s image to the end, as if to say “You call me fat? That’s exactly my strength, and you can’t take it away from me. “Watch out! My horn is bigger”, she defies in mocking the male culture of comparing sizes.<sup>23</sup>

Netta continues to maintain her status as a symbolic good through hints of the success she carries behind her, Netta’s car emanates from an underground parking lot in the shape of Netta’s head which is an exact replica of her appearance at a Eurovision show, with an emphasis on the unforgettable hairstyle (Image 3). 51 seconds into the song, this scene hints to the viewer at the delicacy of a pink rhinoceros, Netta is already embarking on a new path, but do not forget for a moment what she did on the world stage.

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<sup>21</sup> [https://youtu.be/jV1sjm9Lz\\_Q](https://youtu.be/jV1sjm9Lz_Q)

<sup>22</sup> Pinko, N. (2019, February 4). Nata Barzilai’s “Bassa sababa “ is much more than a light pop song. *Calcalist*. Retrieved from <https://www.calcalist.co.il/consumer/articles/0,7340,L-3755561,00.html>.

<sup>23</sup> Pinko, N. (2019, February 4). Nata Barzilai’s “Bassa sababa “ is much more than a light pop song. *Calcalist*. Retrieved from <https://www.calcalist.co.il/consumer/articles/0,7340,L-3755561,00.html>.



**Image 3<sup>24</sup>**

A critical feminist reading claims that in this clip Netta seems to be losing her status as a symbol of feminine power and full women, who do not let anyone treat them like a toy, the whole story is a mad revenge pursuit of a disappointed woman. Once the most sacred fantasy “the wedding” shatters to pieces, the bride, Netta, loses her mind and she loses it and behaves impulsively, vengefully and viciously, an ancient and dark stereotype against women.

The young girls who appear in the song are the ones who actually play the character of Netta in the computer game. Thus, again, through a seemingly simple image, Netta shows her admirers that they are the force that encourages her to continue to act and maintains her status as a symbolic good. On the other hand, it is impossible to ignore the happy look on the redheaded girl in the pink hoodie when the runaway groom is hurt (Image 4), it is not a message we are interested in conveying to our daughters. The girls who play and the flickering screen during the clip highlight the medium and remind the audience that he is actually an outside, and like the young girls, hides comfortably behind a screen and keyboard when he slanders or harms another.

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<sup>24</sup> [https://youtu.be/jV1sjm9Lz\\_Q](https://youtu.be/jV1sjm9Lz_Q)



Image 4<sup>25</sup>

The symbolic message of female empowerment and the re-appropriation of the great female body that does not apologize for it also goes on to the following song: “Nana Banana” by Barzilai, Stav Begar and Nathan Gosh<sup>26</sup>, which came out about a year after the Eurovision in May 2019. The interpretation of the phrase “Nana Banana” comes from the children’s language as a provocative phrase. This time Barzilai gave up a grandiose video clip and settled for a verbal video clip. The pink rhino and the pink bubblegum that accompanied in the previous song “Bassa Sababa” also appears here (Images 5 and 6), alongside the recognized hairstyle and makeup of Netta, and the Chinese cat from “TOY” (Images 7 and 8).

Netta sings about the right to determine and decide for herself, for her way, for the right to resign, not to participate in a race, to fortify herself in a bubble with ice cream and pajamas. But instead of free will, and defiance of the idea that others will set the path for it, Netta produces childish narcissism in the form of flat, one-dimensional pop.<sup>27</sup> It seems that the repetitive effect of symbols from

<sup>25</sup> [https://youtu.be/jV1sjm9Lz\\_Q](https://youtu.be/jV1sjm9Lz_Q)

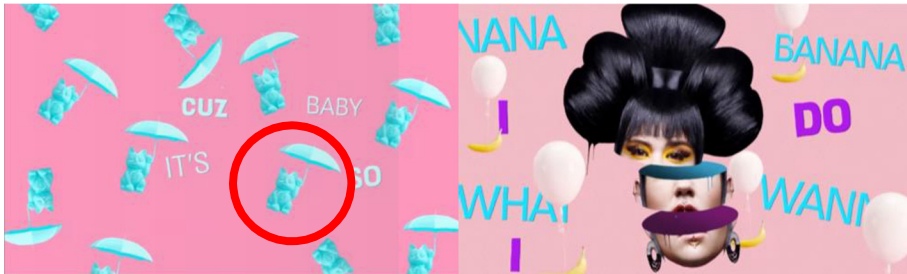
<sup>26</sup> Song lyrics are attached as an appendix 1.

<sup>27</sup> Vilnaya, O. (2019, May 12). Nana Banana: Netta Barzilai launched her new vocals back to Eurovision. *13news*. Retrieved from <https://13news.co.il/item/news/domestic/articles/netta-barzilai-242965>. Salev, B. (2019, May 19). Netta Barzilai’s new “Nana Banana” - routine pop and childish narcissism. *Haaretz Music review*. Retrieved from <https://www.haaretz.co.il/gallery/music/musicreview/.premium->

her previous songs in the current clip has a flawed taste, lacks freshness and innovation and does not serve the purpose of preserving Netta as a symbolic good.



Images 5 and 6<sup>28</sup>



Images 7 and 8<sup>29</sup>

Netta's next song "Ricky Lake" which was released in early 2020 bears the name of the host of the famous American entertainment TV show from the 90's - "Ricky Lake". The name of the song, as well as the colorful and bouncy clip, express a kind of Netta's love letter to American culture on the one hand and a sharp criticism of it on the other.

The clip begins with a gaze on an old TV projector that shows a hint of the United States flag with Netta's animated face in the center (Image 9), and continues with advertisements for American

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1.7218488

<sup>28</sup> Song lyrics are attached as an appendix 1.

<sup>29</sup> <https://youtu.be/kSLtroWy4O0>

symbolic goods bearing the name of the main character in the song - Ricky Lake (Image 10 and 11). Netta appears on the screen as a consumer product, once as the queen of Coca-Cola, once bathing in a donuts' bath and once being consumed by the viewing character in the form of medicines bearing her name (Image 12 and 13 and 14). The clip presents a colorful celebration of American affluent culture but there is an unpleasant feeling in the background that is confirmed with the appearance of the hormone syringe in the hands of an over-injected and made-up female character, and continues with Netta's terrifying dental treatment against mayonnaise jars in the supermarket (Image 15 and 16). Going forward there is a repetition of American symbolic goods: hamburgers, fries, pancakes and more. The whole clip seems to revolve around food, overeating, American symbolic goods and American stereotypes. According to Netta's critics in the clip "Ricky Lake", she mixes so many elements even more than she did before, in previous singles, confuses and exhausts the viewers and simply loses those who loved her in the song that brought Israel the Eurovision.<sup>30</sup>



Image 9<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Amano, S. (2020, Feb 9). Netta Barzilai - Ricky Lake. The Israeli Western Wall. Everything that is heard in the music. Retrieved from <https://www.amanokotel.com/post/%D7%A0%D7%98%D7%A2-%D7%91%D7%A8%D7%96%D7%99%D7%9C%D7%99-%D7%A8%D7%99%D7%A7%D7%99-%D7%9C%D7%99%D7%99%D7%A7>.

<sup>31</sup> <https://youtu.be/b66ZLhOhq0w>





Image 10 and 11<sup>32</sup>



Image 12, 13 and 14<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup> <https://youtu.be/b66ZLhOhq0w>

<sup>33</sup> <https://youtu.be/b66ZLhOhq0w>



**Image 15 and 16<sup>34</sup>**

In June 2020, Netta launched her latest song and music video: “Coco”. In contrast to her previous songs, “Coco” turns out to be a sensitive ballad in which the singer reveals her feelings and talks about heartbreak, alienation and inner journey. The center of the clip revolves around a cuckoo clock, the time passing versus the time it stops (Image 17).



**Image 17<sup>35</sup>**

In this song, Netta tries to regain her status as a symbolic good, clear her message of background noises and focus on a personal emotional exposure that is not without interests to raise her ratings.

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<sup>34</sup> <https://youtu.be/b66ZLhOhq0w>.

<sup>35</sup> <https://youtu.be/WfnRsamFUUA>.

“This song was written about the feeling of getting stuck in a loop, that you don’t know if you created the loop yourself or someone else put you in the loop,” she says in an interview about the song. “One of the images that scared me and stuck in my head for a long time was a ballerina stuck in a jewelry box, spinning forever in a loop (Image 18). ‘Coco’ is my confession, it reveals a vulnerable side of me that I have never let anyone see before”.



**Image 18**<sup>36</sup>

The song was produced by J.R. Rotem, whose resume includes collaborations with Rihanna, Beyonce, Nicki Minaj, Gwen Stephanie and Avril Levin.<sup>37</sup> Roi Raz directed in his rich and bizarre imagination situations of relationships of all kinds (Image 19) and the influence of time to illustrate an unchanging situation on the one hand, and on the other hand - what will happen if time stops.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> <https://youtu.be/WfnRsamFUUA>.

<sup>37</sup> Mako music system. (2020, May 17). Netta Barzilai – Cuckoo. Retrieved from <https://www.mako.co.il/music-news/local/Article-4fb19183c1c1271027.htm>.

<sup>38</sup> <https://youtu.be/b66ZLhOhq0w>



**Image 19**<sup>39</sup>

This song has created a new image for Netta, and presents viewers with a soft and exposed Netta, a Netta who no longer shoots pink gumballs, who no longer sends her murderous daughters, who no longer hides in a bubble or behind American brands. Netta, who is looking to break free from the loop she is in and love.

## Conclusions

Netta seems to have broken into the world consciousness with her first Eurovision song "TOY" (2018), tagged her with the Me-too movement, the LGBT community and the full women group, and gave her status as a symbolic good. Netta was packaged and marketed all over the world, her fans Imitate her with her luxurious hairstyles and excessive makeup and the sales of the Chinese cat that accompanied her from the beginning skyrocketed. Netta participated in various events (Image 20), was photographed in her unique costumes, hairstyles and makeup and starred on social and public networks as her message resonated

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<sup>39</sup> <https://youtu.be/WfnRsamFUUA>.

everywhere - self-love and self-acceptance accompanied by breaking stereotypes and ideals.



**Image 20**

This success resulted in more songs, Netta's next three songs, "Bassa Sababa" (2019), "Nana Banana" (2019), "Ricki Lake" (2020), introduced a powerful big size Netta but also a vengeful, vicious, narcissistic, lazy, gluttonous, and wan 'be Netta. The fresh message she carried on her wings in her first song "TOY" was swallowed up in an ocean of shallow commercial images. A trend that led Netta's fans to lose interest and Netta to reinvent herself. In the last poem "Cuckoo" (2020), Netta tries to break the fall and discovers the bare side of her heart, through sincerity, directness and cleanliness of her message, Netta like a bird in a cage seeks to break free from the evil loop in which she was imprisoned and not only love herself but also love others and let others love her.

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<https://youtu.be/b66ZLhOhq0w>

<https://youtu.be/WfnRsamFUUA>.

## Appendix 1: Songs lyrics

### TOY/NETTA

Doron Madali / Stav Beger

Look at me, I'm a beautiful creature  
I don't care about your "modern time preachers"  
Welcome boys, too much noise,  
I will teach ya  
(Pam pam pa hoo, turram pam pa hoo)

Hey, I think you forgot how to play  
My teddy bear's running away  
The Barbie got something to say, hey, hey, hey Hey!  
My "Simon says" leave me alone  
I'm taking my Pikachu home  
You're stupid just like your smartphone

Wonder Woman don't you ever forget  
You're divine and he's about to regret  
He's a bucka-mhm-buckbuckbuck-mhm boy  
Bucka-mhm-buckbuckbuck  
I'm not your bucka-mhm-buck-mhm-buck-mhm

I'm not your toy (Not your toy)  
You stupid boy (Stupid boy)  
I'll take you down now, make you watch  
We're dancing with my dolls on the motha-bucka beat  
Not your toy (Cululoo, cululoo)  
(Cululoo, cululoo)

A-a-a-Ani...  
Wonder Woman don't you ever forget  
You're divine and he's about to regret  
He's a bucka-mhm-buckbuckbuck-mhm boy  
Bucka-mhm-buckbuckbuck  
I'm not your bucka-mhm-buck-mhm-buck-mhm  
I'm not your toy (Not your toy)  
You stupid boy (Stupid boy)



GALIA KATZ

I'll take you down now, make you watch  
We're dancing with my dolls on the motha-bucka beat  
I'm not your toy (Not your toy)  
You stupid boy (Stupid boy)  
I'll t-t-t-take you now  
W-w-w-with me now, boy You stupid boy  
I'll take you down now, make you watch me  
Dancing with my dolls on the motha-bucka beat (I'm not your toy)  
Look at me, I'm a beautiful creature (You stupid boy)  
I don't care about your "modern time preacher" (I'm not your toy)  
Not your toy, not your toy, not your toy, toy  
I'm not your toy, not your toy, not your toy, toy

**BASSA SABABA / NETTA**

Stav Beger / Ariel Avshalom / Netta Barzilai

Bam bam ba-sabim  
Mesiba bassim  
Bis mi wasabi Bassa sababa  
Bam bam ba-sabim  
Mesiba bassim  
Bis mi wasabi

Stop, call your mama  
Run, tell her I'm a rhino  
My killer girls are coming  
If you won't hide your gun

I'm gonna eat you (I'm-I'm-I'm-I'm-I'm)  
Gonna beat you like a drum (I'm-I'm-I'm)  
Gonna chew you like some gum (I'm-I'm-I'm)  
Go and tell her who I am  
Baby, call your mom (Bam, bam, bam, ba, ba)

Bam bam ba-sabim  
Mesiba bassim  
Bis mi wasabi  
Bassa sababa  
Bam bam ba-sabim

Mesiba bassim  
Bis mi wasabi

Stop, hold the trigger  
World, my horn is bigger  
I win, I love my thicker figure  
I grew a thicker skin

I'm gonna eat you (I'm-I'm-I'm-I'm-I'm)  
Gonna beat you like a drum (I'm-I'm-I'm)  
Gonna chew you like some gum (I'm-I'm-I'm)  
Go and tell her who I am  
Baby, call your mom (Bam, bam, bam, ba, ba)

Bam bam ba-sabim Mesiba bassim  
Bis mi wasabi Bassa sababa  
Bam bam ba-sabim Mesiba bassim  
Bis mi wasabi (Bassa sababa)

### **NANA BANANA/NETTA**

Stav Beger/Natan Gosh/Netta Barzilai

I was sitting all day long in my pajama  
Eating peanut butter jelly with my mama  
Always fighting with myself just for the drama  
For the drama  
For the drama

I see pushi pushi people all around now  
But my belly belly's telling me to run now  
They keep asking me to shine just like the sun now  
Like the sun now  
But I don't wanna

Baby it's so comfortable  
In my bubble I stay  
Always running away

Cuz baby it's so comfortable  
They keep calling my name  
I'm not hearing nothing

NaNa BaNaNa I do what I wanna

I keep picturing myself as if I'm rising  
And I'm Fanta Fanta Fanta fantasizing  
Boy I take my time I'm not apologizing  
Clock goes ticki tack on my belly on my back

Baby it's so comfortable

In my bubble I stay  
Always running away  
Cuz baby it's so comfortable  
They keep calling my name  
I'm not hearing nothing  
Cuz baby its so comfortable

Baby it's so comfortable

Don't save me,  
If you see me sleeping don't wake me  
What you doing lately don't ask me  
I know you think I'm wasting my time

### **RICKI LAKE/NETTA**

I don't need ya high heels, bitch I'm higher  
Way up where they can't touch me  
See this face, no I don't look tired  
'Cause I don't forget to hydrate  
Who you think I was  
When it's all, right in front of ya  
Tell me what you want  
Guess what, I don't give a shit  
Baby, I dance to my own damn drum  
And if they don't then they dumb-dumb-dumb  
Ooh, she looking good

She so fire, who is that I see  
Moving all around in the mirror  
Oh my god, it's me  
Baby, I dance to my own damn drum  
And if they don't then they dumb-dumb-dumb  
I'm not gonna teach you how to bake a cake  
I don't need your problems, I'm not Ricki Lake  
Diamonds on my finger but my hair is fake Ah-ah-ah-ah-ah  
Dumb-d-dumb-dumb-dumb-d-d-dumb-dumb  
Dumb-d-dumb-dumb-dumb-dumb-dumb-dumb-dumb  
Dumb-d-dumb-dumb-dumb-d-d-dumb-dumb  
Dumb-d-dumb-dumb-dumb-dumb-dumb-dumb-dumb  
Never overthink  
Have a drink, baby loosen up  
I'ma level up, fill a cup  
Make you fall in love  
Baby, I dance to my own damn drum  
And if they don't then they dumb-dumb-dumb  
Baby, I dance to my own damn drum  
And if they don't then they dumb-dumb-dumb  
I'm not gonna teach you how to bake a cake  
I don't need your problems, I'm not Ricki Lake  
Diamonds on my finger but my hair is fake Ah-ah-ah-ah-ah  
I don't need ya high heels, bitch I'm higher  
Way up where they can't touch me  
See this face, no I don't look tired  
'Cause I don't forget to hydrate  
Dumb-d-dumb-dumb-dumb-d-d-dumb-dumb  
Dumb-d-dumb-dumb-dumb-dumb-dumb-dumb-dumb  
Dumb-d-dumb-dumb-dumb-d-d-dumb-dumb  
Dumb-d-dumb-dumb-dumb-dumb-dumb-dumb-dumb  
Dumb-d-dumb-dumb-dumb-d-d-dumb-dumb  
Dumb-d-dumb-dumb-dumb-dumb-dumb-dumb-dumb  
Dumb-d-dumb-dumb-dumb-d-d-dumb-dumb  
Dumb-d-dumb-dumb-dumb-dumb-dumb-dumb-dumb

**CUCKOO/NETTA**

I wanna change the channel  
But I keep losing my remote  
It's like my favorite show's on I can predict your every joke  
My friends think that I am lucky  
But I bet that you don't know  
That I don't really think so  
Chick flicks and breadsticks  
No, we don't have to say a thing  
I like when you're holding my hand  
But I don't feel nothing  
And do I really love you?  
I should really love you  
I'm like a bird in a cage  
And I'm going, "cuckoo, cuckoo"  
I know that I can escape  
But I don't wanna hurt you, hurt you  
Do I really love you? Do I really love you?  
I'm like a bird in a cage  
And I'm going, "cuckoo, cuckoo"  
I know that I could escape  
But I don't wanna hurt you, hurt you  
Do I really love you?  
Do I really love you?  
I think about the break up  
Sometimes I wanna pack my shit and...

# SYMBOLIC GOODS IN ISRAELI POSTERS

MICHAL PAL BRACHA<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT.** This article deals with symbolic goods in posters in Israel from the period before the establishment of the state to the present day. The poster and the symbolic goods that appear in it, serve as an agent of ideological companies. In this study, I will examine the nature of the relationship between the symbolic goods and the Zionist-Israeli ideology, by comparing the symbolic goods represented in them over time and space. The questions the research asks are: What are the contribution and importance of symbolic goods as an ideological tool in Israeli posters? Has the world of symbolic goods that served Zionist ideology origin or been borrowed from other ideologies? The methodology is Qualitative research by: study case, Visual - genealogical. The conclusions of the study indicate the importance of the symbolic goods in the foundation of the State of Israel by posters and other media. The symbolic goods that characterize the posters in Israel, consist in part of content related to Jewish tradition and religion (Bible stories and myths) and its other part is influenced by the symbolic goods appropriated from ideologies around the globe.

**Keywords:** *Symbolic Goods, Posters, Marketing, Ideology, Zionist Movement, Israel.*

## 1. Introduction

In November 1947, the General Assembly of the United Nations discussed the report of the committee set up for Palestine-Israel and recommended the area between the Mediterranean until Jordan River to established two states - Jewish and Arab. Boundaries of division

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were determined mainly by demographic concentrations. The decision stipulated that the states would be Democracies and that they will not infringe on the civil and political rights of the other national group to remain in their territory. The partition decision was well-founded on the recognition of the rights of self-determination of the Arab-Palestinian collective and of The Jewish collective, as well as the fact that at the same time the two collectives could not live in peace and agree among themselves on essential matters such as immigration, security or foreign policy.

The division is meant to ensure that each of the collectives will have Control over immigration, settlement, security and public culture in the territory of his nation-state. At the same time, states were required to advance their right to definition National self in recognition of the individual and group rights. In November 30, 1947, immediately after the partition plan was adopted at the UN General Assembly, the Arabs of Israel launched attacks against the Jewish community in Israel to prevent its implementation. After a long war, On May 14, 1948, the establishment of a Jewish state in Israel was announced.<sup>2</sup>

At the establishment of the State of Israel, there were about 716,000 Jews in the Land of Israel. According to the Israeli Center for Statistics, there are 6,806,000 Jews living in Israel in 2020. About 45% of the world's Jews live in Israel. The question is- how in such a short time the State of Israel doubled 9.5 times the number of its Jewish inhabitants. Some will answer that this is a direct result of the horrors of World War II and the Holocaust. Some will say anti-Semitism in general, foreign fatigue and lack of belonging. But probably no one will say that Jews immigrated to Israel because of the swamps, poverty, wars, diseases, conflicts, different languages and unclear culture. USA that swept away hundreds of thousands of Jews was much more promising and attractive. Despite all the atrocities the Jewish people were experiencing, the Zionist movement realized that it had to market the Land of Israel.

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<sup>2</sup> Gabizon, R. (2007). *Things and fragments of things*. Editors: Ravitzky A. & Stern Y. The Israel Democracy Institute, Jerusalem Israel, p. 107.

In a time when there was no internet, cell phones and emails, Posters depicting virtual reality with nostalgic symbolic goods were distributed everywhere with the aim to "marketing" and "selling" Israel to the Jews in the Diaspora.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Art & Posters

One of the major visual ideology agencies in the world in the first half of the 20th century is posters. The symbolic goods in Posters is an agency for ideological companies, but still an artistic tool.<sup>3</sup> Symbolic goods are a rhetorical instrument and a tool of artistic expression mobilized. Even before the symbolic goods were mobilized for ideological purposes, art was mobilized. In her book "Art and Tyranny - Avant-Garde and Art Recruited in Totalitarian Regimes", Arieli-Horowitz (2008) deals with the subject of conscripted art. According to Arieli-Horowitz, the term "mobilized art" was not born in the dictatorships between the world wars, but existed even in the days of the political patrons of the art world. Arieli-Horowitz argues that the roles of art in totalitarian regimes were not defined by the artists themselves, but were dictated from above, according to the needs of the regime. It therefore suggests a distinction between the terms: "mobilized art" and "mobilizing art".<sup>4</sup> The first term describes art created under the coercion of the regime, i.e. "from above." The second term on the other hand describes art in which the artists themselves expressed commitment out of choice, "from below".

The visual style - according to Arieli-Horowitz, most identified with the art of mobilized art is 'Realism'. Returning to it characterizes crisis situations, which explains the blossoming of the style and its dominance in the politically and socially turbulent period between the

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<sup>3</sup> Donner (1998), p. 535.

<sup>4</sup> Arieli-Horowitz, D. (2008) *Art and Tyranny: Avant-Garde and Art Recruited in Totalitarian Regimes*. Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, Publishing, pp. 30-31.



world wars. Another means adopted by dictatorships alongside the realist style, is 'Monumentalism' as a tool to deepen their legitimacy and abolish the individual. The latter contains two means of communication: words and visual images, which are often used in a poster in combination.

A successful poster will catch the viewer's attention immediately, keeping the same attention until the message is received. The main purpose of the posters is to convey a message or promote a product or event.<sup>5</sup> A poster is, in essence, a printed sheet of paper hanging in a central location where it is exposed to a specific target audience as large as possible.<sup>6</sup> Later in my research, I would like to examine the role posters play in the world of new media, mainly because media digitalization and the rise of the internet society means a paradigm shift in the acquisition of media literacy.<sup>7</sup>

Posters produced in large numbers of copies were usually printed in standard formats, based on different sizes of paper. Independently produced posters are not necessarily based on the standard ones. In terms of materials, the poster itself adds a rhetorical device that engages in the narrowing of ideas and is used to spread them.<sup>8</sup> The way to build a poster is to create a visual dictionary that converts stereotypes or symbols, which we are used to recognizing in other contexts.<sup>9</sup>

The establishment of the art field during the establishment period and in the early years of the state, deals, among other things, with the issue of the national role of plastic art. A central claim made by nationalist thinkers is that the field of culture in general, and the field of plastic arts in particular, are key factors in the process of

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<sup>5</sup> De Jong, Cees W., Purvis, Alston W., LeCoultré, Martijn F. (2010). *The Posters: 1,000 Posters from Toulouse-Lautrec to Sagmeister*. New York, Harry N. Abrams, p. 11.

<sup>6</sup> Timmer, M. (1998). *The Power of the Poster*. London: V&A Publications, p. 7.

<sup>7</sup> P. Eric Louw (2001). "Sites for Making Meaning I: The Culture Industry," in *The Media and Cultural Production*. SAGE Publication Ltd. London.

<sup>8</sup> De Jung. & Purvis & Le Coultré (2010). *The Poster: 1,000 Posters from Toulouse-Lautrec to Sagmeister* by Purvis, Alston W., Le Coultré, Martijn F. New York: Abrams, p. 11.

<sup>9</sup> Tartakover, D. (2010). *Jean-David - multi-faceted*. Exhibition catalog, the Tefen and Omer Industrial Gardens and the Beit Reuven Museum, Tel Aviv, pp. 2-32.

redefining the uniqueness of the nation. This argument is also relevant to the field of 'Eretz Israel art'. Territory and social homogeneity are basic conditions for the existence of national art.<sup>10</sup>

Regarding Jewish-Zionist-Israeli art, according to Ofrat, the establishment of the latter has three stages: the revival of the new Jewish art, the recruitment of artists for the Zionist movement and the establishment of Bezalel.<sup>11</sup> Regarding the first stage, Ofrat, (2014) claims that in the middle of the 19th century, there was a revival in Jewish art in Europe, partly due to the "Enlightenment" movement and emancipation. According to him, Jewish painters and sculptors left the complexes of the closed Jewish culture and acquired artistic knowledge in academies, mostly in Central Europe.

Despite being "educated", artists such as Oppenheim, Maurice Gottlieb, and Isidore Kaufmann chose to give representation in their works to the religious Jewish life, in academic realistic language. As for the second stage, Ofrat argues that with the founding of the Zionist movement and the organization of the first Zionist congresses in the last decade of the 19th and early 20th centuries, the need arose for visual designs of various items, including certificates, postcards and posters. For this purpose, Jewish artists were recruited, some of them from the forefront of renewed Jewish art. The most notable example is Lilien, who is joined by names such as Ranzenhofer Hirszenberg Struck. These are members of a unique branch of form and content worthy of the name "Zionist art," Ofrat said. The third stage is, as mentioned, the

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<sup>10</sup> Trachtenberg, J. (2005). *Between nationalism and art. Establishment of the art field during the settlement period and in the early years of the state*. Jerusalem: YL Magnes Publishing House, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem. Eshkolot Library, Eshkol Institute, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, pp. 108-111.

<sup>11</sup>1906-Professor Schatz establishes the Bezalel School of Arts & Crafts in Jerusalem. The school's goals are "to train the people of Jerusalem in crafts, develop original Jewish art and support Jewish artists, develop visual expressions towards national and spiritual independence. Seeking to create a synthesis between European artistic traditions and Jewish design traditions of the East and West and to integrate these with the local cultures of the Land of Israel." Retrieved from <http://www.bezalel.ac.il/en/about/landmarks/>

establishment of Bezalel in Jerusalem, a school that, according to Ofrat, is the first artistic institution in the Land of Israel that is essentially Zionist, and the basis for the history of Israeli art. According to him, these three stages in the establishment of Jewish-Zionist-Israeli art "are responsible for the gradual development of images used by the Jewish artisans, those who designed archeological relics and memorabilia in Israel and Europe at that crucial time in the formation of the new national identity."<sup>12</sup>

## *2.2 Political poster*

The alternative semantic field poster serves as an interface between government and citizen and as an instrument designed from the outset to bring about a change of attitudes among the public, "assisted in converting it to a distinct and distinct platform for influencing consciousness and directing target audience behavior".<sup>13</sup>

Initial communication with the public met symbolic goods at every site and site. There was no need to read the fine print in the paper. She focused on the idea they were trying to express in illustration, photograph, in one word, or in several words.<sup>14</sup> Posters should be broad as possible, informative, recreative and convincing about any information or message. Since the space of the poster is limited, it must catch the viewer's attention as quickly as possible, it must be fluent and receptive. The shelf life of the poster is limited and its lifespan is short.<sup>15</sup> In this regard, Sheps adds that the natural display place of the poster is the street.

According to him, the distribution of the announcement is wide, but at the same time not for a long period. The message it conveys, he

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<sup>12</sup> Ofrat, G. (2014). Shao Ziona miracle and flag. In: Bahrozi Baruz, N. (Curator) Local Judaica. *Judaica Artifacts Created in Eretz Israel 1442-1964 Exhibition Catalog*, Tel Aviv: Eretz Israel Museum, Tel Aviv, p. 9.

<sup>13</sup> (Ibid, pp. 17).

<sup>14</sup> Kister, J. (2014), p. 16.

<sup>15</sup> Omar, M. (1999). Hebrew Graphics - Shamir Brothers Studio. *Exhibition Catalog*, Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv Museum of Art, p. 17.

emphasizes, will in most cases be limited, whether it is a particular product or a targeted event. Regarding the beginnings of the modern poster, Sheps argues that the latter began with the invention of lithography and the use of this technique to create posters by artists such as 'Daumie'.<sup>16</sup>

In his article "*Ideal Idea and Independence of Expression*", Danieli (1999) refers to the illustrated political poster. According to him, the role of the illustrated poster is to **market** a product that is essentially propaganda. It is designed to establish, with a minimum of means, ideological positions and to instruct maximum people how to relate to reality, who to choose and what to vote for. For this reason, poster illustrators, Danieli argues, used techniques known from the world of advertising and marketing: simple, pointed and direct messages that have elements of brainwashing.<sup>17</sup>

"Ideology" refers to control and power relations. "Ideologies are part of an attempt to legitimize a ruling group or social class. Governing power can make itself legitimate by encouraging the values and views that fit them, by presenting them as universal and natural values, so as to reflect them as necessary, by duplicating ideas, by eliminating and excusing his opponent's forms of thinking and blurring social reality according to his own needs."<sup>18</sup> Eagleton (2006) further argues that "ideology is the medium in which the social and political struggles exist at the level of meaning and representation."<sup>19</sup> Another theory supporting "imagined representation" is Anderson's theory articulated in *Imagined Communities*<sup>20</sup>: "Ideologies express

<sup>16</sup> Sheps, M. (1981). In: Tartakover, D. (curator). Franz Krauss: *Exhibition Catalog Posters*, Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv Museum of Art, p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> Danieli, J. (1999). The ideological identity and independence of expression. In: Shaltiel, S. (editor). *Art in the service of an idea - Hashomer Hatzair posters 1934-1964* Givat Haviva, Sde Boker: Yad Yaari and the Ben-Gurion Heritage Center, p. 38.

<sup>18</sup> Eagleton, T. (2006). *Ideology, Introduction*. In Hebrew translation by Oren Hamoked. Tel Aviv: Resling, p. 15.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Benedict Anderson (1999). *Imagined Communities: Thinking about National Origins and Its Expansion*, Tel Aviv, The Open University, Chapter 1, Introduction, pp. 38-31; Chapter 2, Cultural Roots, pp. 68-39.

desires, hopes, or nostalgia. They do not describe reality."<sup>21</sup> The reader derives textual meaning through an act of interpretation controlled by the way the image content is constructed. The context in which meaning is created and communicated through the media is also important.<sup>22</sup>

Using posters in the process of creating a new Israeli community served the ruling elites during the period in which the state was founded. The elites either "nationalized" the settler/colonial media or acquired the settler-owned media. These media, staffed by members of the new Western elite, were expected to implement self-censorship to assist the ruling elite in creating national unity and develop a national definition – i.e. state-licensed media.<sup>23</sup> In this theory, we can find a direct link to Foucault's supervisory mechanism.<sup>24</sup> The symbolic means culture will use to monitor and transmit its messages are packed with codes and symbols. These will ensure the regular presence of the dominant culture within the physical environment of the human beings who live the culture in all its facets.<sup>25</sup> In other words, what we call reality is solely based on the, which is the mass media dominated by capital and government interests.<sup>26</sup>

### *2.3 Visual images and symbols (symbolic goods of Zionism & Israel)*

What is an image? I will briefly define the concept with the help of Roland Barthes' article "The Rhetoric of the Image", in which the French semiotician examines the essence of the image and the meanings derived from it. In this article, in which Barth offers tools for

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<sup>21</sup> Eagleton (2006), p. 28.

<sup>22</sup> Abrudan (2012), p. 4.

<sup>23</sup> Louw (2001). *The Media and Cultural Production*, London, SAGE Publications Ltd, pp. 43-44.

<sup>24</sup> Foucault, Michel (1978). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. by Alan Sheridan. New York: Pantheon.

<sup>25</sup> Pierre Bourdieu (1986). "The Forms of Capital," in: John C. Richardson (ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, Greenwood Press, pp. 241-258.

<sup>26</sup> Abrudan (2012), p. 11.

analyzing advertisements aimed at conveying a clear message in a short period of time, Barth argues that an image is a presentation-re, which actually means resuscitation".<sup>27</sup> The use of visual images of Zionism is not limited to the field of graphic design. They can be found on other visual mediums, such as painting. They also appear in theater and cinema. Beyond that, Zionist images also exist in areas that are not visual at all, but textual. Among them are literature, poetry and singing.

The Zionist movement also made extensive use of symbols, similar to images. Members of the Zionist movement, and especially Herzl,<sup>28</sup> understood the importance of national symbols. From its earliest days, the movement has been able to adopt a set of national symbols. Next to the central national visual symbol - the flag, which I will expand on later, the main non-visual national symbol should be noted, which is the anthem. The very fact that the Zionist movement has had the anthem since its earliest days, the "hope" of 'Naftali Hertz Imber', teaches about the importance of symbols, visual and non-visual, among the members of this movement. The Star of David and the flag of the Zionist movement, is the most significant visual symbol of Zionism. According to Berkowski and Azariahu, "a flag is a media object made of a colored sheet of cloth adorned with graphic symbols, sometimes also. According to the two, the object of the same identification is used to convey messages, signal or identify."<sup>29</sup>

The symbolic goods can appear in various forms, whether in the colors of the flag, in its shape or in the goods of the symbols that appear on it. "Beyond its visual form, the meaning of the flag is a function of the socio-political use made of it and of the interpretations given to it in well-defined historical, cultural and ideological circumstances".<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Barthes, R. (2003), p. 259.

<sup>28</sup> Benjamin Zeev Herzl - State Contract.

<sup>29</sup> Berkowski, A. and Azariahu, M., (2014). Waving a flag! Hashomer Hatzair. *flags - first hundred years*. Givat Haviva: Yad Yaari Publishing Center, Hashomer Hatzair Documentation and Research Center, p. 12.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, Ibid.

As for the set of signs, two types of signs must be distinguished. Between: Icon and Symbol. "An icon is a sign in which a resemblance to a phenomenon it is supposed to represent, which in its form has a hint of the marked essence." An example of an icon is a clenched fist, which symbolizes rebellion, determination and power. A symbol, on the other hand, is "an arbitrary sign that is not iconic and therefore does not resemble the signified one."<sup>31</sup> For example, the Star of David - a geometric shape of a hexagonal star, which symbolizes the Jewish people. Regarding the flag of the Zionist movement, which will later be adopted by the State of Israel and serve as the official flag, it has been found that this flag has been used by the movement since the first Congress in Basel.<sup>32</sup> As for the inventor of the Zionist flag, the right to invent the Zionist Organization flag was granted, according to Zionist tradition, to David Wolfson, who saw before his eyes three details: the white field of the tallit, the stripes adorning it and the shape of the Star of David. Another speculation say that the origin of the Zionist flag is unknown, and that historians have not agreed on this issue. The Magen David has never been a unique symbol of Judaism alone. Magen David has appeared in different cultures and at different times. The common name for the geometric shape we call the Star of David is a six-pointed star. This is a very ancient symbol that has won many versions. Regarding the two azure stripes, Mishori claims that the origin of the azure stripes on the Zionist flag is in a tallit.<sup>33</sup> The national flag, alongside the military, embodies national pride, and both have been in this decade the two main national myths.

The seven-branched lamp, the temple lamp depicted in the Titus Gate relief in Rome, was a traditional Jewish symbol of the destruction and beginning of the Jewish exile. Over the generations,

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid, Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> The First World Zionist Congress is the first major convention of the Zionist movement's delegates and is the first of the World Zionist Congresses. The congress was held in the Swiss city of Basel from August 29 to 31, 1897. The initiator and leader of the congress was Benjamin Zeev Herzl.

<sup>33</sup> Mishori, A. (2000). *Sheshuro looked and saw - Zionist icons and symbols in Israeli culture*. Tel Aviv: Afakim Library, published by Am Oved, p. 166.

legends have been attached to the 'menorah'<sup>34</sup>, an example of which states that with the coming of the Messiah, the menorah will return to illuminate the temple he will build in Jerusalem. The recurring motif in all the legends indicates that the lamp that was exiled to Rome is actually a replica of the original lamp from the Temple and that the original lamp disappeared. The Zionist movement adopted the lamp as a symbol of national significance. Later, during the period of the Jewish Yishuv and in the years of the establishment of the state, the story of the menorah formed the basis of popular symbolism which "gave its rediscovery in the days of Messiah a secular aspect by stating that its return" home "symbolizes Zionist" return to Zion in modern times .

#### *2.4 Symbolic goods in various media and their distribution*

The Zionist movement recruited graphic artists, photographers, literary figures and filmmakers. All of these were invited to design, compile and produce the information materials produced by the Zionist image in a wide variety of media, from posters, through ads and brochures, to films and exhibitions. At the same time, Tartakover emphasizes, the posters in those years was a unique tool for disseminating ideological ideas.

The poster was born as an instrument for precisely this purpose, and while the other means of propaganda appealed to specific target audiences, the poster influenced a wide range of audiences. Posters of the Zionist movement were distributed in two ways. One is to display them in the public space on population pages and bulletin boards around the country, and the other is to display them in institutions such as schools, organizations, youth movement centers and public institutions. "There were announcements for an educational element that mobilizes the iconic memory in the process of imprinting ideology in consciousness".<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> 'Menorah'- The nickname of seven-branched lamp in Hebrew.

<sup>35</sup> Tartakover, D. (2010), pp. 15-17.



### 3. Methodology

The research method is based on case study research, Visual - genealogical, which uses a semiotic analysis tool. (Rose, 2012), (Barthes, 2004) and (Panofsky, 2009) I will present an analysis of eight posters, some designed for bodies and official institutions of the Zionist movement, and some designed for commercial bodies. Common to all the posters, they combine the ideological aspect with the commercial one through symbolic goods.

### 4. Study case

#### 4.1 *Symbolic goods in the poster - romantic nostalgia*

Opinion is a combination of the cognitive mental logic, tradition, and belief system according to which a subject life and grows.<sup>36</sup> Based on this definition, it is understandable that spiritual products aimed at influencing opinions will depend on education, location, time, and the environment. Public opinion is built on the visual culture that surrounds it and dictates the agenda.<sup>37</sup> It is loaded with spiritual symbols aimed at commercial or spiritual gain. Symbolic goods have a dual reality as both merchandise and symbolic object.<sup>38</sup> Posters, as means of communication for distributing symbolic goods, often combine words and visual images. See Figure 1:

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<sup>36</sup> Dan Caspi (2001). Pictures in Public Opinion and Democracy, *Open University*, pp. 26-22.

<sup>37</sup> Elena Abrudan (2012). *Visual Culture*, Galaxia Gutenberg.

<sup>38</sup> P. Bourdieu (1984). *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, New York, p. 1.



**Figure 1:** "Land of Bounty," New York, 1937.

The visual image in Zionist movement posters was full of contrasts and contradictions: old versus new, east versus west, and abundance versus scarcity. This is the inheritance of the ancestors, whose descendants are meant to restore the homeland's early days, even though the land is also virgin territory that can be shaped and built in the spirit of a new era. It is an Eastern country, with an appealing exotic charm, but is also seen as part of the primitive East that Zionism is supposed to bring to the forefront of Western culture. There it is, presented as a land of milk and honey, which can guarantee the well-being of an oppressed people, but in other cases, it is a ravaged land whose desolation and ruins the people must overcome and rebuild.

Above all, the Land of Israel appears to be the absolute opposite of the Diaspora. Compared to the Diaspora, depicted in gloomy colors as a place of harsh devastation, the Land of Israel is the land of light and freedom. These images, whether created in the Diaspora or created in the Land of Israel, say more about the dreams and wishes of their creators than the land's objective reality. The Zionists who immigrated to Israel first described it through the visionary lens that brought them there. These images strengthened and nourished the

imagination of the Zionists in the Diaspora and were assimilated into the images created there. In the end, the Land of Israel, the heart of the Zionist cause, was an issue that needed to be marketed, acquire fans and believers, encourage immigrants, and open the hearts and wallets of donors. Propaganda posters and greeting cards were not intended to present a realistic picture reflecting the difficulties or complexity of life in Israel, but it seems that every Zionist immigrant who immigrated to Israel followed one image that found its way into his heart and became his private dream of this place.

Because posters are constructed of image and text, we must understand that visual images appearing in them are important means of communication that work to replicate reality, build private and collective memory, deepen fundamental assumptions and religious beliefs, formulate political ideologies, and so on. The images and symbols of Israeli posters were borrowed from contexts serving disparate ideologies. One prominent example is the image of the "new person," which exists as a visual image in many non-Zionist versions and is repeatedly used. An example of a propaganda poster of the new Jewish man is "A Pioneer Rolls Up His Sleeves," designed by Uta Velish for the JNF in New York in 1939.



**Figure 2**<sup>39</sup>: "A Pioneer Rolls Up His Sleeves," Uta Velish, 1939

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<sup>39</sup> Nahum Goldman (1996). *Blue and White in Color: Visual Images of Zionism, 1897-1949*, Tel Aviv: Diaspora Beit Hatfutsot Publishing House and Oved, p. 94.

One prominent visual feature is the use of a realistic figure. The pioneer's posture – his firm stance, the left hand rolling up the right sleeve while the right hand grips a hoe – indicates the pioneer's strength and resilience. The size of the figure on the poster and its central position in the composition indicate the importance of the pioneer and his centrality in Zionist movement imagery. The images and visuals incorporated into the design of posters were not unique to this medium. They can be found in other visual media such as plastic art, theater, cinema, literature, poetry, and song. The poster was just one of many agents "recruited" for the purpose of spreading Zionist ideology.<sup>40</sup>

After the establishment of the state, the posters in Israel focused on the elite's wish to preserve and shape the "new Israeli." In light of the many immigrant waves from around the world, there was a need to create a crucible to unite the multiple diasporic tribes. In practice, this meant re-education, and the brunt of that job fell to the nation's school system. Such a setup makes it possible not only to define the limited field of production as the arena of competition over the authority to grant cultural sanctification, but also to engage in the function of sanctification as a system specifically designed to do so.

This hierarchy expresses the structure of the objective relations of symbolic power among the makers of symbols produced for the public and are consequently sanctified by legitimate institutions and overall define legitimacy. After all, the state has the power to direct intellectual production through subsidies, commissions, promotions, positions of honor, and even decorations, all designed to speak or be silent, compromise or avoid.<sup>41</sup> An example of this can be seen in the mandatory "national corner" existing at the entrance to every Israeli school, classroom, and kindergarten, which consist of government posters that the Ministry of Education is obligated to post, just like the

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<sup>40</sup> Sabag, R.: Ben Baruch: B. Yaffe, N., and Vice, N. (eds.) (2010). *Art as a Visual Culture: The Middle School Curriculum*, Ministry of Education, Jerusalem, p. 4.

<sup>41</sup> Bourdieu (1984). *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*. New York, pp. 16-17.

mezuzah.<sup>42</sup> This institutionalized state cultural capital creates a record of cultural capacity that gives its possessor conventional, permanent, and legal value in relation to power. An example of this situation of cultural capital is formal education.<sup>43</sup>



**Figure 3<sup>44</sup>:** A national corner includes a map of Israel, the Declaration of Independence, a Star of David, the national anthem, photographs of the prime minister, president, and chief of staff, as well as Theodor Herzl (the visionary of the modern state of Israel), and Jewish / Israeli symbols.

While the “national corner” has existed since the establishment of the state, we are now sensitive to the postmodern phenomenon of pluralism and stratification in Israeli society. In an era of individualism and the ability to create entirely new identities, redefinition is needed. Thus, after the demise of the spiral of silence, which shut down discourse and secured hegemonic dominance, it was time for the postmodern era in which intentional interpretation of visual culture is more complex and leaves room for more truths. Visual culture has become part of

<sup>42</sup> Retrieved from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mezuzah>.

<sup>43</sup> Bourdieu (1986), pp. 241-258.

<sup>44</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.liatpeled.co.il/nation.html>.

everyday human production and develops by multiplying the forms in which it is expressed, thus increasing the impact it has on social interaction. It is found in the confluence of visual art and mass culture, being aware of the postmodern condition.<sup>45</sup>

#### *4.2 Postmodern Posters*

Some postmodern posters embrace the old symbolic goods and adapt them, in a layered and pluralistic way, to individualistic self-identifications in contemporary Israeli society. In doing so, they partner in producing and distributing symbolic goods. The poster of the Pride Parade (2019) took the motif of the new Israeli, the "beautiful pioneer" and recruited it for the publication of the parade.



**Figure 4:** A poster for the Pride Parade in Tel Aviv. 2019.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Abrudan (2012), pp. 5-6.

<sup>46</sup> From: Ephraim Arada Collection at the Museum of Eretz Israel, Tel Aviv (2019).

The poster decorated the streets of Tel Aviv and was sold to many tourists from all over the world who came to celebrate the Pride Parade in Tel Aviv. The public significance of a work must be defined by the author, originating from the recycling and consumption process that is governed by the objective relationship between the institutions and agents involved in the process.<sup>47</sup>

The social relations that produce this public significance are determined by the relative position that agents occupy in the structure of limited production. These relationships are revealed as a composition of the "publication" of the work. It has become a public object. In each of these relationships, each of these agents deals not only with his own image of other relationships in the relationship, which depends on his relative position in the field, but also with the image of his own other party image, that is, the social definition of his objective position in the field.<sup>48</sup>

Another example of a pluralistic social definition of who is an Israeli is designed as a huge poster in the heart of Tel Aviv of the Ethiopian community's demonstration. The Ethiopian community is affected by the visual definition of "the new Israeli" as a white man from Europe. It wants recognition and its own place in Israeli society as an equal. The poster wants to enter the Israeli cultural field using symbolic motifs to market its belonging. At the general social level, symbolic power operates within a defined field called culture. Cultural logic is an act of creating and granting legitimacy to perpetuate class structure, which is the existing system of inequality.<sup>49</sup>

The poster consists of symbolic goods, like the Star of David, the *talit katan* (a four-cornered undergarment worn by traditional Jews), Ethiopian embroidery, and a dark-skinned woman lifting her dress in the shape of the Israeli flag against a black background. The text contains a headline asking the public to support the Ethiopian

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<sup>47</sup> Barthes, R. and Foucault, M. (1967), *The Author's Death, What is the Author?* In *Dror Mishani. (2005) Tel Aviv: Resling Publishing.*

<sup>48</sup> Bourdieu (1986), pp. 241-258.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

protest. The body of the poster says “You are accused of having a ticking bomb in the womb.” Of the poster, its creator has said that “The establishment is concerned about separating and controlling. The establishment sees the black woman as a ticking black bomb...”<sup>50</sup>



**Figure 5:** Poster Design: Benjamin Samin. (2019).

The poster uses symbols of the existing culture to convey messages loaded with codes and symbols from the physical environment of the people who live the culture in all its various facets<sup>51</sup>

#### *4.3 Posters as Reflective of Regional Realities*

As a case study of symbolic goods in Israel, the poster cannot reflect the coherent situation in the country only according to the linear timeline of the period of the modern state's establishment with its attendant the romantic ideas or of the period of the post-modern

<sup>50</sup> <https://timeout.co.il>.

<sup>51</sup> Bourdieu, P. (1986).



search for identity. It is my contention that, in Israel, we must also examine the lateral axis of the dominant locations defining the posters parallel to their timeline. To do so, I will compare the Tel Aviv posters to the Jerusalem posters of the 2000s. The assumption is that the beginnings of introverted cultural capital are a long and complex process spanning the course of an entire life. The internalization of cultural values occurs mainly in childhood during the socialization process and only in such a way that these values become an integral part of the subjects and their environment.<sup>52</sup> External cultural capital has a number of features associated with cultural capital in its internalized state. Cultural capital is made external through material objects, such as books, paintings, posters, and more. Because it is material, it can be moved; in fact, it can be transferred as easily as economic capital. Therefore, cultural goods can be purchased, both in the material dimension (economic capital) and in the symbolic dimension (cultural capital).<sup>53</sup>

Thus, if there is a gap between the traditions of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, the capital product and cultural values may also differ between these two major cities.



**Figure 6:** Poster in the Mea She'arim neighborhood of Jerusalem, September 2014. (Photographer: Nati Shochat)<sup>54</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Rafi Man, (2017, June 1). *The Renaissance of the Haredi Digital*, The Haredi Media 2016 - Between Conservatism and Modernization <https://www.the7eye.org.il/250637>.

The poster's headline, in white on a red field, reads, "Daddy, I'm scared." The visual image is of an innocent-looking baby with body language that seems to convey fear. Alongside the image, text warns that smartphones and the internet are endangering the family. Below the text is a photograph of a rabbinic letter expressing the idea that electronic devices constitute something defiling. The technology and information revolution occurring in the ultra-Orthodox sector has led to a significant change in ultra-Orthodox society and its characteristics. Those who fear the continuation of this process explain the extent of the resistance of conservative elements to the new media's penetration into and power over the ultra-Orthodox world. Another example of posters in Jerusalem is taken from a large and very popular shopping mall where the second floor is a kind of biblical museum full of posters depicting biblical stories featuring both images and text.



**Figure 7:** Bible City at Cinema City Mall, Jerusalem (2019)  
(Photographer: David Ser).

As Abrudan (2012) wrote, we live in a world of visual culture. Its most important aspect is that we do not have to go to a museum to see art. Even as we enter the shopping mall, we experience forms of

visual culture. Art is displayed in industrial and commercial places. The action highlights the common goal of art, industry, and participant, together with business and industrial activities, for the improvement of quality of life.<sup>55</sup>

In terms of the demonstration of cultural capital and symbolic goods, we see that Jerusalem, too, has embraced the postmodern trend to take art out to the streets, such as shopping malls, street art, the workplace, and so on, i.e. places that are not the traditional gatekeepers of art, such as museums and galleries. On the other hand, the contents of the symbolic goods retain their modern condition and purpose of preserving the what exists, traditions, and beliefs. Most of the posters that appear in Tel Aviv are not welcome in Jerusalem and will not be shown there, and the posters that appear in Jerusalem will most often not be shown in Tel Aviv. It seems that, when it comes to the concept of the contents of the symbolic goods, the two cities differ. Although only 67 kilometers separate Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, the true distance between these two cities is not merely geographical.

#### *4.4 New Media (Post)ers*

Posters in the new media break boundaries and transcend dimensions of time and space, interactivity, networking, and frequent changes typical of today. The new media are aware of the power of symbolic goods and offer endless options for personalized poster editing. A new object is created in every copy of the object.<sup>56</sup> Thus, the author's intention loses its importance and is adapted to the needs of the symbolic goods replicator.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Elena, Abrudan (2012). *Visual Culture, Galaxia Gutenberg, Postmodern Visual Culture*, pp.1-2.

<sup>56</sup> Walter, Benjamin (1936). *Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*.

<sup>57</sup> Ronald Barthes (1968). "The Death of the Author".



**From:** Facebook profile, myself.

These selective patterns of symbolic goods and leisure activities suggest identification with symbolic meanings that define personal identity in new ways. According to Lace, Kline, & Jahli (1986), consumers choose products as a means of "communicating to others their relationships to complex sets of attributes and social values."<sup>58</sup> We live in a mostly symbolic visual medium, which makes it possible to understand the establishment of social reality in the picture, just as with linguistic terms. Identifying the strategies of viewers' interpretation in daily life allows us to understand the process of attaching significance and social meaning, at the same time.

In this case, the image is considered as a text and the audience is a community of visual significance. There is no reality that is "more real" than the one we perceive and interpret ourselves.<sup>59</sup> We become the creators of our reality and therefore we can also cancel the same reality with the click of a button. The liquidity of the virtual world is affected by the user's action. At the same time, the user is the witness of the message building and is an active participant.<sup>60</sup>

The process of exchange turns symbolic goods into signs of recognition and recognition of group membership. The process upholds and restores recognition and confirms its boundaries. Thus, bringing new members into the group poses questions about its identity, boundaries,

<sup>58</sup> D. Crane (1992). *Social Stratification and the Media: Audiences in Media-Saturated Societies*, SAGE Publication Ltd. California. p. 243.

<sup>59</sup> Abrudan, E. (2012). "Media audience as a community based of visual meanings," in *Visual Culture*. Galaxia Gutenberg, p. 16.

<sup>60</sup> Lev Manovich, Lev (2001). *The Language of New Media*, MIT Press, pp. 20-44.

etc. The restoration of social capital is possible through the constant flow of conversion and exchange in which recognition is confirmed and restored. Each group produces a mechanism through which it concentrates the social capital that underlies its existence to a single activist or a limited activist group that grants to activists the authority to act on its behalf.<sup>61</sup>

## 5. Conclusions

I found that the most common symbolic goods are: the new Jew/ pioneer, the conquest of the desert, settlement, the flora and fruit of the land, the seven species, the land of the Bible and the holy places, a map of Israel, portraits of great nations and Zionist figures, illegal immigration. Alongside them, the common symbols are: the Star of David and the flag of the Zionist movement, the seven-branched lamp, twelve symbols of the tribes of Israel.

In this article, two types of posters can be identified. One includes national posters, designed for public bodies and official institutions of the Zionist movement before the establishment of the state, and the other type includes commercial posters, designed for commercial bodies for the dissemination of political and commercial ideas in the Land of Israel after the establishment of the state. The ideological statement is visually expressed on the products of various symbolic goods produced by the Zionist movement, with the main visual medium for this purpose being the poster. The study shows that all streams of Zionism & Israeli poster used the same repository of images and symbols. There is no image or symbol that claimed ownership of a particular stream of symbolic goods.

One of the main tasks of the Zionist movement was to turn the Land of Israel from a desire, which exists as a historical memory, to a real homeland that exists as a territory of Hebrew settlement. Zionist activity also includes the cultural design of Israel as a homeland. The Zionist movement produced graphic publications of symbols and

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

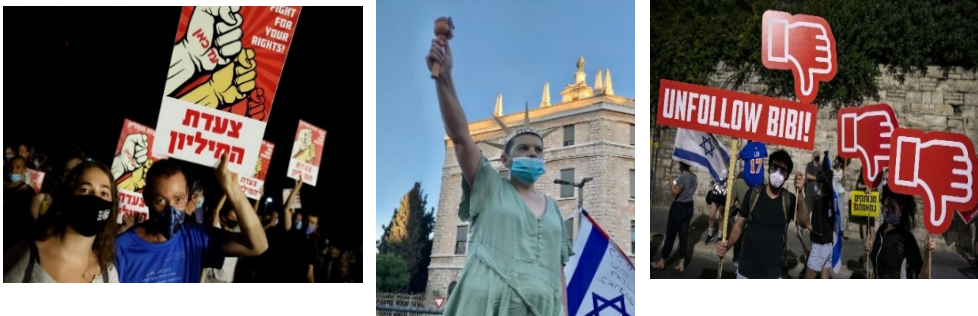
images from the process of nation building. The lives of those visual texts were sometimes very short, but their importance is in the symbols and images they created, which defined the national identity and the symbolic goods that represent it. The use of visual messages and their duplicate production in photography, painting and graphic design, as a tool for communication and ideal construction, has served the Zionist movement from its inception and serves the State of Israel to the present day. The same graphic materials colored the private space, and especially the public one, with visual messages that understood and strengthened Zionist consciousness, and encouraged activity and activity in the Land of Israel.

The relationship between a poster as a corporate agent and the Zionist ideology in all its forms, as expressed on national posters designed for public bodies and official institutions of the Zionist movement, compared to commercial ones designed for commercial bodies in Israel. Both kind of a posters with symbolic goods Made a major contribution to the dissemination of Zionist ideology in all its forms. It was a significant instrument for the visual narrowing of Zionist ideology. The ideological statement is visually expressed on various graphic products produced by the Zionist movement, when the main visual medium for this purpose was posters. At the same time, poster did not serve as the sole medium. Alongside it, various and varied graphic products were "recruited", from stamps, through "Happy New Year" cards to game boards. It seems that the members of the Zionist movement made use of almost every visual medium that existed in their time, within which they could spread the Zionist ideology. It can be stated that Zionist ideology was expressed less with the help of graphic languages, and more with the use of symbolic goods. After the establishment of the state, the posters received pluralistic symbolic goods as a central element that characterizes them.

The poster may have changed its form from a sheet of paper to a digital product, but its purpose remains the same, namely, to use symbolic goods to influence public opinion in marketing an idea, event, or product. It is clear to me that this is just the tip of the iceberg of options on poster research. Every poster contains sufficient research

opportunity for an entire thesis. The purpose of such a thesis would be to provide a broad overview of the development and status of posters in Israel in terms of both timeline and location. The study would address the close relationship between symbolic goods and posters in general and in Israel in particular. Repetition of symbolic goods in posters causes the symbolism to be echoed and preserved. The source of the symbolic goods that appear in posters in Israel, is borrowed both from the history of the Jewish people and the Bible and is owned by symbolic goods of different nations.

During the research, I discovered that the symbolic goods and their geographical place in posters in Israel matter. Also, in September 2020, posters are often used in posters in demonstrations against the government and the government in Israel. I would like to do further research on the subject of symbolic goods in posters at the Corona demonstrations in Israel. It is interesting to check to whom does the symbolic goods belong and whom does it serve in these demonstrations? The government or rather the people. Is it possible that the symbolic goods changed its role as an agent of the government to an agent of the people?



Demonstrators near the prime minister's residence.

Photo: Flash 90, 02/08/20

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