The utopia of equality or covert dystopia?
A multimodal critical discourse analysis of the representation of Syrian and Ukrainian forcibly displaced individuals by the UNHCR on Instagram

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ABSTRACT

As Russia started the invasion of Ukraine and, consequently, the largest forced migration in Europe since the Second World War, anti-migration policies of neighbouring countries were set aside to welcome Ukrainian forcibly displaced people. However, the treatment of forcibly displaced individuals is inconsistent, as Syrians have faced racist and violent policies from European countries. Additionally, certain international news media and politicians justify such double standards under the narrative that forcibly displaced Ukrainians are Christian and Western neighbours. Such discursive practices operate at an individual and societal level, influencing our perception and communication of reality. Society's perception of forced migration can be partly influenced by the discourses of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as they are the top global organisation aiding forcibly displaced people, and sometimes, their representations of forcibly displaced people have been subject to criticism. However, social media also play crucial roles in influencing the discourses around those who suffer as the public resorts to these networks for news and information nowadays. Instagram, specifically, has grown in popularity among refugee organisations and the general public. Therefore, the representations shared on UNHCR's Instagram account can shape the public's perception of migration to varying degrees. The arbitrary narratives of news media and governments raise questions about whether there are also differences in the discursive strategies applied by the UNHCR to represent forcibly displaced Syrians and Ukrainians. As such, this study analysed how the UNHCR represents forcibly displaced Ukrainians and Syrians on Instagram. By applying Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis on UNHCR's Instagram posts of Syrian (N=45) and Ukrainian (N=45) forcibly displaced people, the representational strategies of UNHCR and their societal implications were analysed. MCDA allowed for a critical understanding of how words and images can contribute to the meaning-making of reality. More specifically, it illustrated how textual and visual representations on Instagram could be ingrained with societal biases and reinforce

asymmetric power relations. Overall, the results indicate that the UNHCR primarily represents Syrian and Ukrainian forcibly displaced people as victimised and voiceless masses in constant need of support to draw attention towards its brand and legitime its work. By doing so, the UNHCR emphasises a self-focused discourse typical of post-humanitarian appeals over the voices and agency of those who suffer. Notably, on some occasions, the UNHCR refers explicitly to Ukrainian forcibly displaced people as families or neighbours. By contrast, when representing forcibly displaced Syrians, the UNHCR sometimes described them as refugees or refugee families, which can have dehumanising effects. At the same time, the second most common approach involved representing forcibly displaced Syrians as empowered and talented individuals to prove the impact of donations in humanitarian causes. This way, the UNHCR applies a deliberate positivism strategy that reinforces global South and North power asymmetries. To a lesser extent, such a strategy has also been combined with post-humanitarian appeals. These results elucidate the significant marketisation of the humanitarian sector and the effects of the logic of social media on UNHCR's work.

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1. Introduction

One of the largest and quickest forced migrations that Europe has seen has been brought on by Russia's invasion of Ukraine (Semotiuk, 2022). Unprecedently, even countries with extreme anti-migration leaders, such as Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, promote adaptability and openness towards Ukrainian refugees (Angenendt et al., 2022; Global Detention Project, 2022). This turnabout may illustrate why the EU member countries have consented to bring the Temporary Protection Directive into effect, which has sat dormant since its passage in 2001 (Angenendt et al., 2022). This emergency plan prioritises prompt and efficient support rather than individually assessing each asylum plea (Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, 2022). Further, this plan includes not only providing access to safety but also to a variety of rights, like work permits, getting an education, and enjoying health care (Angenendt et al., 2022; Global Detention Project, 2022) and the chance to bring their pets (Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, 2022).

This approach contrasts sharply with the racist and violent policies applied towards forcibly displaced people from the Middle East, including Syrians (Brito, 2022; Egan, 2022; Global Detention Project, 2022). Furthermore, various international news media have bluntly justified these double standards under the narrative that Ukrainian refugees are different, as they are Christian and civilised (CBS News, 2022; Hannan, 2022; WION, 2022). Although this is not Europe's first time receiving immigrants, it has particular social significance since certain mainstream news media and politicians portray the suffering of Ukrainians as distinct and more humanised than migrants of colour (Ferrari, 2022; Jhon, 2022; Wamsley, 2022).

On this matter, refugee portrayals in news media (Chouliaraki & Zaborowski, 2017; Ferrari, 2022; Franquet Dos Santos Silva et al.,2018) and political discourses (Burroughs & O'Reilly, 2013; Goodman & Kirkwood, 2019; Mascareñas, 2023) have been extensively researched. However, international refugee organisations, such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), play essential roles in representing forcibly displaced people (Ongenaert et al., 2022) as they can, in direct or indirect ways, build public, media and political agendas and influence how people view forced migration (Ongenaert, 2019; Vestergaard, 2014). Thus, some studies have focused on the portrayal of refugees on various communication channels by advocacy organisations, such as reports (Veeramoothoo, 2022), photo archives (Johnson, 2011) and press releases (Ghachem, 2022; Ongenaert et al.,

2022).

Nonetheless, it is essential to address that developments in digital technology have significantly influenced the media and, consequently, the ways in which non-profits try to build the agendas of other actors. Tena and colleagues (2021) explained how digital information and communication technologies (ICT) are bringing about fundamental changes in social, labour and interpersonal relations, essentially in the way of informing and communicating, all instantaneously and simultaneously. These new ways seem to be an integrating process where people can be citizens of a global world without borders and, at the same time, preserve their local identity (Tena et al., 2021).

For refugee organisations, contemporary media technologies offer the resources to connect viewers with individuals who are struggling and, at the same time, challenge ingrained hierarchical structures in society in a manner that conventional technologies cannot (Scott, 2014). By offering the tools to include links, a variety of photographs and refugees' personal stories, the internet has the ability to deepen our knowledge and imagery of a region (Kennedy, 2009). Within this digital sphere, social media offers a platform to mobilise society (Carrasco-Polaino et al., 2018) and a fast spread of communication and dissemination of information, creating a shared understanding of a circumstance (Shirky, 2011). Furthermore, Kim (2022) highlighted how the involvement of NGOs in social media might empower advocacy groups by serving as the hubs of networks that link organisations, activists, and the general public. This theory is further strengthened by recent research (e.g., Barisione et al., 2019; Stier et al., 2018), which illustrates the advantage held by non-profits on social media, as these platforms allow them to stimulate popular opinion and focus public attention on particular causes. All in consideration, social media might be a potent instrument for more nuanced representations of individuals and for promoting social and political changes, especially when combined with the capacity for coordination and engagement of non-profits.

As such, non-profit organisations now utilise social media platforms (Jung & Valero, 2016; Maxwell & Carboni, 2016) to advocate, raise money, and bring attention to their cause (Jhoti, 2021). These platforms have simplified the dissemination of tactics for advocacy organisations (Kim, 2022) and constitute a new approach to enhancing bidirectional communication with geographically dispersed audiences (Campbell et al., 2014; Maxwell & Carboni, 2016; Waters et al., 2009). Importantly, social media platforms are experiencing an increased number of users, with individuals using them as a primary source for obtaining

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news and information (Sterret et al., 2019). As such, the public's perception of migration can be significantly influenced by the content refugee organisations share on their social media (Jhoti, 2021). Similarly, social media discourses may affect the coverage priorities of conventional media since traditional media often follows trends in social media (Yang & Saffer, 2018).

Within the plethora of social media channels available nowadays, Instagram has gained significant popularity for social justice discourse (Kim, 2022; Nguyen, 2020). This platform differs from the competition due to its rapid development and its significance to aesthetic photographs (Carrasco-Polaino et al., 2018). However, to my knowledge, the significance of visual imagery on social media, particularly Instagram, in representing forcibly displaced people by refugee organisations has received less scholarly attention. For this reason, I apply a Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) (Machin & Mayr, 2012) on UNHCR's Instagram posts of Syrian (N=45) and Ukrainian (N=45) forcibly displaced people between February 1st, 2022, and March 1st, 2023. By doing so, this study aims to answer the following research question: how does the UNHCR on Instagram represent Syrian and Ukrainian forcibly displaced individuals?

I opt to analyse the social media communication of UNHCR as it is the leading international refugee organisation devoted to resolving the issues of refugees (Clark-Kazak, 2009). For reasons of contextualisation, I will first focus on the societal background of refugee organisations. To theorise the key topic of this study, I will discuss the representational strategies of humanitarian communication and the challenges and opportunities of social media for refugee organisations.

2. Theoretical Framework

This chapter addresses the social context of refugee organisations, humanitarian organisations' communication strategies, and representations on digital platforms.
As such, several authors' theoretical perspectives have been adopted to support and strengthen the object of this study, which is to analyse representations on social media.

2.1. Societal Background

A holistic view of the societal environment is essential to comprehend the socio-political actions that influence the communication strategies of refugee organisations.

2.1.1. Challenging Socio-political Contexts

Individuals who have been forcibly displaced receive protection and aid on a global scale from international refugee organisations. This protection involves identifying refugees, standing up for their rights, offering fundamental aid like food, water, and sanitary facilities, ensuring that asylum procedures are accessible and looking for long-term resolutions, including the voluntary return, resettlement and local integration (UNHCR, 2010; UNHCR, n.d.-b). However, their work is complicated by a complex socio-political and economic context.

On the one hand, while providing protection and assistance to forcibly displaced individuals is primarily the duty of the states (Loescher, 2014), several countries have shown an increasing unwillingness to work in partnership with refugee organisations and even consolidated their asylum legislations and policies (Betts et al., 2012; Global Detention Project, 2022; Johnson, 2011). These actions make it increasingly challenging for refugee organisations, such as the UNHCR, to carry out their goals, as they rely heavily on charity from UN member states (Dijkzeul & Moke, 2005; Walker & Maxwell, 2009).

On the other hand, negative public opinion of people from the Global South who have been forcibly displaced further hinders refugee organisations in their operations. For instance, conservative and nationalist approaches to politics in Europe (BBC News, 2019) or the fact that some populist movements used horrific events in 2016, such as the terrorist attack in Belgium on March 22, the bombing in Turkey on March 13, or the assault on women in Germany on New Year's Eve, to link them to the humanitarian issues of 2015; and to, ultimately, undermine the European Union's authority and fuel public discontent with forced migration (Yang & Saffer, 2018). In addition, negative public perceptions are

frequently reinforced by news media depictions of forcibly displaced individuals (Chouliaraki, 2012a; Pupavac, 2008). Lastly, the COVID-19 pandemic, the worldwide recession and the climate crisis significantly challenge the organisation's activities (UNHCR, 2023a). However, despite these challenges, the UNHCR collaborates closely with government officials, NGOs, public and private sector actors, civil society organisations, and refugee communities to protect refugees and forcibly displaced people (UNHCR, n.d.-a)

Given the complicated environment in which they operate, refugee organisations must create successful strategic communication campaigns (Dijkzeul & Moke, 2005) to influence how society perceives displaced individuals (Chouliaraki, 2012a) and generate a broader impact on policies (Ongenaert, 2019). Such tactics assist organisations in promoting their narratives concerning problems, causes, and solutions (Entman, 1993), raising awareness, educating the public, and setting agendas (Ongenaert, 2019). In other words, public communication strategies aim to influence and inspire behavioural changes (Rice & Atkin, 2009). Nonetheless, criticisms towards humanitarian work (Madianou, 2019), the sheer number of NGOs competing for support from the public, contributions, and government funding places additional challenges on their capacity for self-promotion (Vestergaard, 2010). Therefore, let us now discuss how these challenges have influenced advocacy organisations' managerial practices and, as a result, their communication strategies.

2.1.2. The Adoption of a Humanitarian Branding Approach

As Yang and Saffer (2018) explained, the success of many refugee organisations depends on their capacity to raise funds, organise supporters from around the world to assist forcibly displaced people and build the agenda for the public about their causes. However, over the years, criticisms of humanitarianism have stressed its low levels of accountability towards people in need and of promoting the status quo's uneven power dynamics (Madianou, 2019a). Nevertheless, as the role of advocacy organisations continues to grow in addressing global challenges, there is an increasing expectation of heightened transparency and accountability towards contributors, taxpayers, and the affected individuals they serve (Martin & Brown, 2021). As such, in order to obtain and sustain support from a range of stakeholders, it is essential for organisations to promote their mission and achievements, as well as fulfil stakeholders' expectations (Vestergaard, 2010). Consequently, the non-profit industry has become more professional and commercial; specifically, the concept of

humanitarian branding has been introduced into the humanitarian sector (Vestergaard, 2008), as it enables organisations to communicate their values in more explicit ways and generate a new type of legitimacy (Vestergaard, 2010).

With the incorporation of commercial practices in humanitarianism, like branding, the division between the long-established responsibilities of private and public institutions has been clouded (Vestergaard, 2008). As such, recent times have shown an increasing participation of private - for-profit- companies in humanitarian and philanthropic endeavours (Burns, 2019; Madianou, 2019a). For instance, the UNHCR has developed partnerships with tech companies such as Microsoft, Mastercard (UNHCR, n.d.-c), Google, Facebook, Accenture and Amazon (Madianou, 2019b). These collaborations allow partners to expand their services and share knowledge and skills to implement innovative relief programs (Stoianova, 2013). Nowadays, tech enterprises play central roles in humanitarian activities (Henriksen & Richey, 2022; Madianou, 2019b). On the one hand, for humanitarian organisations, such as refugee organisations, digital innovation is seen as a way to provide metrics concerning the impact of their initiatives (Madianou et al., 2016), upgrade humanitarian assistance, refugee registry, the delivery of food provisions (Fast & Jacobsen, 2019) and ultimately, respond to the before mentioned criticisms for humanitarian efficiency and accountability (Madianou, 2019b).

On the other hand, two decades ago, Prahalad and Hammond (2002a) highlighted the profitable opportunities for businesses engaging in broad and unexplored markets that provide new consumers, cost-effective options and disruptive innovations. Indeed, for private enterprises, partnerships with the humanitarian sector offer remarkable branding opportunities and potential rewards, such as amplified visibility, data availability and prospects to test innovative technologies (Jacobsen, 2015). As such, it could be argued that philanthropy is used by companies as a way of advertising to enhance their brand (Burns, 2019; Prahalad & Hammond, 2002b) and fulfil their significant important corporate social responsibility role (Vestergaard, 2008).

In general, integrating humanitarian work with for-profit companies' interests and values indicates further commercialisation of humanitarianism (Madianou, 2019b), consequently strengthening old criticisms of humanitarian work. That is, by partaking in consumer culture, humanitarian organisations must place the consumer's interests, desires and values before their cause, which might, in turn, support existing values rather than promote social change (Vestergaard, 2008). For this reason, the branding of advocacy

organisations is sometimes considered a contradiction with the principles of charity, voluntarism, democracy, and grassroots activism in the first place (Vestergaard, 2008). At the same time, the marriage between for-profit companies and non-profit organisations poses a conspicuous contrast in interests since the former focuses on financial self-interest and the latter on altruism (Henriksen & Richey, 2022). However, the latter authors highlight that although capitalist tendencies have frequently infiltrated humanitarianism, the relationship between the two spheres has been increasingly apparent and openly embraced in recent years. Here, the reason for the enthusiasm of tech companies and humanitarian organisations' partnerships can be partly attributed to technology and data being perceived as neutral and innovative tools for solving complex humanitarian challenges (Fast & Jacobsen, 2019; Madianou, 2019b). However, with the technological hype, companies primarily focus on endorsing their newest innovation rather than thoughtfully analysing the complex root problems that drive humanitarian issues in the first place and for which tech interventions might not be appropriate (Madianou, 2019a). Furthermore, refugees are seen merely as valuable data producers and refugee campsites as innovation testing grounds (Madianou, 2019b) rather than individuals with unique experiences, necessities and privacy rights. The latter author explained how this phenomenon illustrates some of the characteristics of technocolonialism, whereby the possible dangers of experimentation are transferred to the most vulnerable sectors of the world. By doing so, these for-profit, non-profit partnerships assist in developing social structures that solidify colonial power relations (Madianou, 2019b) under the rationale that tech can bring innovative development solutions (Burns, 2019).

Moreover, similar partnerships have been observed between humanitarian organisations and famous philanthropic personalities. More specifically, celebrity humanitarianism has been promoted within advocacy organisations as it offers more chances to be noticed and develop brand awareness (Richey & Brockington, 2020). At the same time, famous humanitarians seem to overcome governmental issues concerning international donating through their activities, initiatives, and foundations (Mitchell, 2016). Worth noting, the participation of celebrities in humanitarianism is not a new practice, as Goodman and Barnes (2011, p. 82) highlighted the rise of "celebrity- consumption-compassion-complex ", in which famous people share their experiences and advice about development issues through social media. However, the critical distinction in the participation of famous people as ambassadors for humanitarian organisations is the brand factor, transcending simple

advocacy. In other words, with the implementation of commercial methods like branding, a uniform brand alliance arises between the UNHCR and the famous persona with significant advantages for both sides: while the famous character's reputation as a humanitarian is legitimised, the UNHCR brand increases its exposure (Chouliaraki, 2012b). However, albeit studies have shown a correlation between the communication of principles, positive brand image and the rise in contribution levels due to the branding of the non-profit sector (Huang & Ku, 2016; Michel & Rieunier, 2012; Paço et al., 2014), branding approaches are fundamentally based on consumerist values, which prioritise the tastes and interest of the consumer rather than the urgency of the humanitarian cause (Vestergaard, 2008).

Overall, the societal context of humanitarian organisations has led to the significant implementation of branding strategies. As a result, the types of representations in humanitarian communication have changed over the years, especially on digital platforms, as we will now discuss.

2.2. Strategies of Humanitarian Communication

Overviewing literature on humanitarian communication, various humanitarian representation strategies applied by humanitarian organisations, including refugee organisations, can be identified.

2.2.1. Shock Effect Appeals

First, a common representational strategy is referred to as shock effect appeals, which often rely on eliciting strong emotions such as pity and guilt in the audience (Cameron & Haanstra, 2008). To do so, humanitarian organisations play a significant focus on victims undergoing suffering (Chouliaraki, 2010). Here, Scott (2014) explained that if the public perceives such victims as individuals responsible for their own suffering or powerful enough to take action themselves and alleviate their misery, then this representational strategy might fail to generate profound emotions of pity and external donations. Therefore, in order to obtain the desired response from the public, victims should be perceived as innocent, powerless people deserving of compassion and help (Scott, 2014). Consequently, shock effect appeals often portray individuals as deserving of compassion and help, more concretely, infants and women (Scott, 2014). The deliberate portrayal of women and children in need of rescue can be related to the claim that they are seen as optimal victims (Höijer, 2004) to elicit the desired emotions in shock effect appeals and, ultimately, mobilise

support. However, Scott (2014) stressed the inherent problems of focusing primarily on ideal victims (Höijer, 2004). On the one hand, it can affect the public's engagement in relation to humanitarian causes, as a greater focus on particular individuals is being placed while disregarding the situations of others. On the other hand, it can lead to the general understanding that certain victims are more meritorious of audiences' pity and support.

Albeit this problematic, shock effect appeals can be the most powerful strategy in raising awareness and generating support, especially for immediate and time-sensitive humanitarian causes (Scott, 2014). As such, this representational strategy has been extensively employed by refugee organisations. They do so by depicting individuals from the global south who have been involuntarily displaced in negative ways as anonymous, defenceless and silent masses victims of trauma in need of protection (Bettini, 2013; Clark-Kazak, 2009; Johnson, 2011; Ongenaert et al., 2022; Ongenaert & Joye, 2019; Pupavac, 2008). This representation strategy can rapidly generate financial aid for pressing humanitarian causes in the short term. However, in the long term, the repeated use of shock effect appeals can make people desensitised to the images of suffering and less likely to take action (Moeller, 1999), also known as generating "compassion fatigue" in the audience (Chouliaraki, 2010, p.7).

Furthermore, the later author explained how this desensitisation to the suffering "Other" results in two practical risks. On the one hand, it can generate a feeling of impotence in the audience due to the plethora of negative images of the suffering "Other" displaced in the public sphere, ultimately leading to a lack of engagement. On the other hand, it can stimulate sentiments of frustration in the general public as shock effect appeals actively pursue to generate sentiments of guilt, consequently generating resistance towards the campaign itself. As such, rather than fostering social action toward humanitarian causes, these risks might rather undermine it (Chouliaraki, 2010).

In addition to the negative long-term consequences discussed above, the implementation of shock effect appeals raises critical ethical issues as well. For instance, humanitarian organisations might – inadvertently- reinforce conceptions of Northern superiority by promoting the idea that compassionate donors of the North are the central source to provide development solutions in the South (Cameron & Haanstra, 2008). These unequal power relations are sustained by the before mentioned victimised and powerless representations of forcibly displaced individuals from the global South (Scott, 2014). Moreover, shock effect appeals place a substantial focus on documenting the state of

suffering victims rather than providing explanations of the complex root causes of suffering (Scott, 2014). Overall, the latter author highlights that this type of representation has been criticised for oversimplifying complex situations, taking advantage of suffering individuals, denying them their dignity and underrepresenting them.

2.2.2. Deliberate Positivism

Second, in pursuing more representative and dignifying communication strategies, humanitarian organisations began to employ a deliberate positivism approach, rejecting victimisation imagery and favouring the agency and dignity of forcibly displaced individuals (Chouliaraki, 2010). Within this approach, Scott (2014) explained how forcibly displaced individuals are presented in more positive and personalised ways. To do so, humanitarian organisations highlight the voice and emotions of forcibly displaced individuals, include their names in their representations and often depict them in environments that contrast existing stereotypes of forcibly displaced people (Scott, 2014). For instance, refugee organisations often convey optimistic messages and images of people who have been forcibly displaced as entrepreneurs (Turner, 2020) or talented people (Crawley & Skleparis, 2017).

In contrast with the pursuit of eliciting strong emotions of pity and guilt in shock effect appeals, deliberate positivism intents to generate feelings of empathy and gratitude (Scott, 2014). Such emotions are achieved through images that subtly elucidate the sufferer's gratefulness towards those who aided in reducing their suffering (Chouliaraki, 2010), for instance, by portraying forcibly displaced individuals with a smile (Scott, 2014). Consequently, the benevolent person who has improved the sufferer's situation might empathise with the thankful sufferer (Chouliaraki, 2010). Such depictions serve two fundamental and interdependent goals of deliberate positivism. On the one hand, portraying individuals through a positive lens allows refugee organisations to prove the direct, favourable effects that donors' actions have had on recipients (Scott, 2014). On the other hand, such proof seeks to encourage audiences to participate in bringing positive change in the lives of forcibly displaced people (Chouliaraki, 2010).

Considering that this approach represents and promotes a long-term development philosophy, it is especially appealing to humanitarian organisations (Scott, 2014). As such, scholars have found that refugee organisations often portray forcibly displaced people in more positive, inclusive, humanised, and empowered ways (Dahin, 2022; Ongenaert et al.,

2022; Rodriguez, 2016). However, as previously seen with shock effect appeals, deliberate positivism has also been subject to critical scrutiny. For instance, Ongenaert and colleagues (2022) stressed that only forcibly displaced people considered skilled, appealing and affluent are the ones to whom refugee organisations grant a voice. At the same time, albeit the substantial focus on individual stories and emotional appeals by humanitarian organisations, Chouliaraki (2010) argues that deliberate positivism strategies fail to address broader systemic issues, resulting in a lack of meaningful change for affected populations.

Furthermore, deliberate positivism can – inadvertently- create a dependency on external aid and support (Chouliaraki, 2013) rather than promoting self-sufficiency and empowerment. Consequently, such dependency further strengthens existing North-South power relations as charitable donations from the North are seen as the only way to foster positive change in the South (Scott, 2014). Lastly, the repetitive deployment of images illustrating the positive progress in development can foster a public misunderstanding that active engagement is no longer needed (Chouliaraki, 2010). As such, similar to the effects of compassion fatigue in shock effect appeals, deliberate positivism has been criticised for fostering inaction (Scott, 2014).

2.2.3. Post-Humanitarian appeals

The third common approach, post-humanitarian communication, uses creative text and visual techniques, emphasising self-focused discourses rather than the pain of "the Other", who is frequently completely missing (Scott, 2014). Relying on celebrities' humanitarian work (Ongenaert et al., 2022) and demanding simple online actions to donate (Scott, 2014), this strategy can accomplish diverse goals like brand distinction, engaging niche customers, activism, or influencing global policies (Scott, 2014). As such, refugee organisations apply this approach by representing forcibly displaced people through creative, innovative and aesthetic ways, with the help of technology and celebrities' voices (Chouliaraki, 2012a). On this matter, famous people from the entertainment, arts, or media industries who use their notoriety for charitable causes are known for practising celebrity humanitarianism (Mitchell, 2016). For instance, celebrities like Bono or Oprah are as well-known for their philanthropic work as their professional accomplishments (Mitchell, 2016). Due to the visibility of celebrities, humanitarian organisations can draw attention to crucial global issues and provide solutions for different regions and populations (Jerslev, 2014).

Furthermore, some celebrities are so distinguished as charity campaigners that they

are asked to meet with state leaders to further their causes and counsel on international assistance and development matters (Mitchell, 2016). In this line, famous characters can become official ambassadors of humanitarian causes, such as Angelina Jolie for the UNHCR. Albeit she discontinued her role as ambassador (UNHCR, n.d.-d), this collaboration can be viewed as an asset for the UNHCR in the sense that it makes use of the significant symbolic value of, in this case, Angelina Jolie in order to use her celebrity status for the benefit of the UN (Chouliaraki, 2012b). Here, social media play a pivotal role (Bennett, 2012) since, regardless of the distance, the celebrity's social media status can foster emotions of closeness and connection between the audience and its famous persona (Mitchell, 2016). Nevertheless, the pursuit of effective and engaging communication for part of humanitarian organisations has been debated, further showing the intrinsic and multifaceted complexities within humanitarian work.

As explained by Chouliaraki (2012b), this communication strategy has the potential to generate public discussion regarding the celebrity rather than educating the public about systemic change. At the same time, Jerslev (2014) highlighted that celebrities could reach people who may not have been implicated in humanitarian issues, but only due to those individuals' affinity towards the famous personality. As such, fans might follow any movement the celebrity is involved in (Jerslev, 2014) rather than engage with humanitarian issues out of genuine concern for social change. This criticism is not to say that introducing celebrities in the humanitarian sector has exclusively adverse effects, as it does have the power to bring global injustices to the notice of the general public (Jerslev, 2014). However, while branding and celebrity humanitarianism can help in the visibility of social issues, it also creates a moral conflict by staging human misery in the field of entertainment and consumerism (Vestergaard, 2008). More generally, post-humanitarian appeals have been criticised for depriving forcibly displaced people of their voice, reproducing "Global North" and "Global South" power imbalances, failing to educate audiences (Scott, 2014) and relying primarily on one's judgment to engage with those who suffer (Chouliaraki, 2010).

2.3. Social Media Challenges and Opportunities for Refugee Organizations

2.3.1. Instagram Affordances in the Context of Activism

Regarding public communication, the rise of social media cannot be overlooked, as they have become crucial outlets for advocacy organisations, including refugee organisations (Kim, 2022). Social media networks provide a potent, affordable platform for showcasing an

organisation's efforts to a large audience (Carrasco-Polaino et al., 2018). As such, Kennedy (2009) explains that these technological advancements offer fresh ways to influence future events and take distant action. Furthermore, according to Scott (2014), by enabling two-way communication and immersion in virtual worlds, new media technologies, like social media, might help reduce the gap between viewers and individuals experiencing hardship. Specifically, for refugee organisations, social media platforms allow for more nuanced, varied, and comprehensive representations of the global South while providing simpler options for action, such as joining online petitions and exchanging information (Scott, 2014). As such, many NGOs utilise popular social networks like Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram (Carrasco-Polaino et al., 2018).

On this matter, Instagram has gained popularity as a venue for social justice communication, allowing organisations to communicate and educate the public primarily through text-based photographs (Nguyen, 2020). Here, a key advantage for refugee organisations is the ability of visuals to persuade; as compared to written material, images are more memorable, understandable, and attention-grabbing (Knobloch et al., 2003). In addition, images are also perceived as more trustworthy since they are seen by many as an accurate representation of reality (Carrasco-Polaino et al., 2018; Messaris & Abraham, 2001).

As a multifaceted platform including text and visual elements, Dumitrica and Hockin-Boyers (2022) explained that Instagram has facilitated the growth of slideshow activism. Concretely, activism that relies on a distinctive PowerPoint presentation in the form of a series of slides (images) with brief words and graphic components that focus on a particular subject or cause. These slideshows provide a new way of discussing and simplifying complicated political concerns into understandable and easily distributable visuals (Amit-Danhi, & Shifman, 2018). However, it is crucial to mention that stakeholder engagement on social media cannot be achieved by simply distributing information, as the social media logic has to be taken into account. For instance, Yang and Saffer (2018) outlined that advocacy organisations must craft their post in ways that mirror stakeholders' interests and principles. On Instagram, specifically, organisations should attractively design their postings since aesthetics hold significant importance for users of this network (Nguyen, 2020). These aesthetic posts can be achieved using Instagram's photographic editing tools, which allow users to make creative choices that improve the appeal and impact of pictures, such as framing and filter choices (Carrasco-Polaino et al., 2018). In this line, Instagram

usage by refugee organisations could be considered a new instrument for modern artivism, which Felshin (1995) defined as the fusion of art with social and political activity.

Nevertheless, while these technological advancements have enabled new ways to spread the humanitarian cause across longer distances, they do not come without criticism. On the one hand, Chouliaraki (2006) argues that we are so captivated by representations in images that now, instead of emphasising how things actually are, we focus more on the form rather than the content. In essence, there is an apprehension that aesthetic visual representations of humanitarian issues are more relevant than factual situations. In this line, Woods and Shee (2021) explained that editing images in ways that meet the audience's preferences and aesthetic ideals alters what we consider "real" portrayals in the framework of humanitarianism, in particular. On the other hand, (Rosa & Soto-Vásquez, 2022) elaborated that social media may raise participation rates not because individuals are more compelled to get involved but because these networks make participation simpler. Thus, the simplicity of participation might give the appearance of involvement, but actually, it fosters a short-term commitment to action, leading to superficial engagement with issues (Scott, 2014; White, 2010).

2.3.2. Instagram´s Use by Humanitarian Organizations

As we have discussed, different humanitarian strategies have been developed to communicate about the suffering "Other". However, they often obscure the diversity of experiences of forcibly displaced people and reinforce a one-dimensional understanding of the overall problem. As such, the concerns with respect to visual representations and social media attention (ibid.) become especially significant when considering how humanitarian organisations, including refugee organisations, utilise social media and particularly Instagram.

On this matter, deliberate positivism can be seen in Rodrigez's (2016) findings, with some asylum-specific NGOs using Facebook and Twitter to share the individualised experiences of forcibly displaced people to elicit compassion and sympathy. However, the author addressed that the asylum-specific NGOs primarily use social media to disseminate information about foreign countries and human rights policies, which could be seen as pursuing to educate audiences about systemic change. Moreover, Carrasco-Polaino and colleagues (2018) found two predominant communication strategies used by 20 international NGOs on Instagram. On the one hand, as evidence of social initiatives, some nonprofits used

an image of a possible aid beneficiary, typically a youngster or a woman, posing with a positive gesture or in an empowered way. This type of representation has similar characteristics to deliberate positivism. On the other hand, when the goal is to increase awareness of the need for assistance, NGOs try to create a negative emotion by depicting the potential recipients alone with a solemn or concerned expression (Carrasco-Polaino et al., 2018). Here, the NGOs seem to apply shock effect appeals to their communication. As such, although social media offers numerous opportunities to highlight development's complexities, the dominant and questioned, representational strategies also appear on social media.

   Overall, although valuable, these studies analyse NGOs' Facebook and Twitter communication from a public relations perspective or focus on the use of Instagram by NGOs in general. To my knowledge, the representational strategies of refugee organisations on social media, particularly on Instagram, have received less exploration by scholars. Since the public perceives refugee organisations as knowledgeable, their social media posts can significantly influence how people view migration (Jhoti, 2021). Hence, acknowledging these gaps, this study will investigate how the UNHCR represents forcibly displaced Ukrainian and Syrian people on their Instagram posts.

3. Methodology

3.1. Method

The constructivist representation theory perspective (Foucault, in Hall, 1997) highlights that discourse is the process by which knowledge and meaning are produced through language. Here, language refers to any signifying practice, such as words, images or abstract ideas (Hall, 1997). For Foucault, discourse operates as a regulatory mechanism in society, dictating the appropriate and comprehensible means of discussing a particular subject. Consequently, it also excludes and constraints alternative ways of thinking and talking about a topic. As such, Foucault views discourse as a system of social representations that actively shapes reality. These representations are neither impartial nor passive, as they are influenced by particular sociocultural contexts and employed to uphold relationships of dominance and subordination (Hall, 1997). Overall, Foucault's discourse perspective stresses the active role of representations in perpetuating power dynamics. In that regard, our understanding of forced displacement and the subjects who represent this topic can be partially produced and shaped by the discursive practices of nonprofit organisations, including refugee organisations (Hall, 1997; Johnson, 2011).

As such, this study approaches representation from a constructivist perspective. That is: things do not have meaning by themselves; instead, we create meaning through representational systems, such as ideas and signs (Hall, 1997). Specifically, discourse as a representation system is this study's focus. Discourse is a system that shapes our perception of the world and goes beyond language; it produces cultural representations and signifying practices that shape our beliefs, values, and identity (Fairclough, 2013). In this view, discourse operates at the individual and societal level, influencing how we perceive, understand, and communicate about reality. The discursive perspective recognises that information and significance are entrenched in certain social activities. Therefore, it is a historical and contextual approach (Clark-Kazak, 2009). At the same time, it gives us insights into how, by whom, and for what motives "the Other" is portrayed (Lamers, 2005, p. 44).

In this line, this paper will examine how UNHCR represents forcibly displaced Ukrainian and Syrian people on Instagram. A qualitative approach will be applied to answer the research question, as it assists in understanding the concepts, meanings, customs, and ideas of the subject being investigated (Brennen, 2017). Further, the impact of power relations and disparities in creating social injustices, particularly the discursive features of

power dynamics and inequalities, is one of Critical Discourse Analysis's (CDA) main areas of focus (Fairclough, 2013). In CDA, discourse has a crucial role within social systems (Fairclough, 2001); as such, by examining word and grammatical choices used to represent individuals (Machin & Mayr, 2012), CDA delves into the discursive construction and meaning-making of reality (Hansen & Machin, 2019).

Nevertheless, other semiotic mediums, such as images, can also express ideologies and power (Machin, 2013). In other words, images have the ability to give messages more legitimacy as they are frequently seen as an accurate picture of reality (Messaris & Abraham, 2001). How words and imagery communicate meaning is analysed by Multimodal Analysis (Machin & Mayr, 2012), and, in recent years, Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) has become a method for applying the Critical Discourse Analysis approach to non-textual forms (i.e., videos, images, or music) (Silveira, 2016). Like CDA, MCDA is committed to exposing underlying discourses and the ideologies they support (Bellander, 2021) and is suited for examining the discursive tactics of international refugee organisations (Ongenaert et al., 2022). Considering that the communicative medium this study will focus on is Instagram as its primary means of communication, along with texts, is through the use of images (Lee et al., 2015), the form of data analysis that will be applied for this research is MCDA, as it allows for close scrutiny of how visual and textual elements interact and contribute to the construction of meaning (Machin & Mayr, 2012).

3.2. Data Sampling and Collection

Since the research aims to examine how the UNHCR represents forcibly displaced Ukrainian and Syrian people on Instagram, only images featuring such demographic have been sampled. At the same time, only posts which clearly contextualise that the forcibly displaced person comes from Ukraine or Syria have been selected. As such, Instagram posts where the forcibly displaced person's origin is unknown or from another country have been excluded from this analysis. This specific inclusion-exclusion criterion is applied to compare each group's representations accurately. Thus, a non-probability, purposeful sampling technique has been used in this study. Purposive sampling is a nonrandom strategy where the researcher controls the selection of participants and chooses individuals based on their unique characteristics or relevance to the research question (Etikan et al., 2016). Within purposive sampling, homogeneous sampling has been employed. This sampling type concentrates on people with similar characteristics (Etikan et al., 2016), in this case, forcibly

displaced people originating specifically from Ukraine and Syria.

Further, a preliminary examination of UNHCR's Instagram posts has revealed a vast amount of data; as such, by analysing a larger portion of the annual timeframe, a feasible and sufficient volume of data to answer the research question can be reached. To ensure a uniform analysis of Syrian and Ukrainian's representations, an equal quantity of data has been collected for each demographic, resulting in a total of 90 samples. Therefore, the sample size encompasses material published online between February 1st, 2022, and March 1st, 2023, analysed and supported by Microsoft Office Software. Considering that the war in Ukraine started on February 24th 2022, the selected period allows for a comparison of Syrian and Ukrainian representations before and during the war. Specifically, to understand how the UNHCR represents forcibly displaced people from Syria and Ukraine, MCDA (Machin & Mayr, 2012) has been applied to UNHCR's Instagram posts of forcibly displaced Syrians (N=45) and Ukrainians (N=45), including the related captions.

Moreover, we focus on Instagram as we live in a visual society (Wright, 2002), where visual media has become the main semiotic channel for interpreting and comprehending the world (Woods & Shee, 2021). Thus, new technologies such as social media networks play crucial roles in influencing the discourses and stories around forcibly displaced people (Jhoti, 2021), and the representation of forcibly displaced people on Instagram particularly needs further investigation (Jhoti, 2021; Rosa & Soto-Vásquez, 2022). At the same time, this study will analyse the representational strategies applied by the UNHCR, as they are the top international organisation working with forcibly displaced people (Clark-Kazak, 2009) and, up to day, count with 1.9 million followers on Instagram (UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, n.d.). Therefore, the UNHCR can significantly shape public perceptions and representations of forcibly displaced Ukrainian and Syrian people and their experiences. The focus on Ukrainians is because their forced displacement is considered the most significant humanitarian movement to affect Europe since the Second World War (Matsuura, 2022). Whereas the focus on Syrians is due to the ongoing situation in Syria still impacting several lives, unpredictable security conditions persist in several parts of the nation, and the economic situation is worsening (UNHCR, 2023b). Overall, although both Syrians and Ukrainians require humanitarian assistance, the discoursive representations by some mainstream news media significantly favour Ukrainians (Chen, 2022; Hannan, 2022; WION, 2022), and different protection policies and hospitality measures can also be seen benefiting Ukrainians over Syrians across Europe (Angenendt et

al., 2022; Brito, 2022; Egan, L. 2022; Global Detention Project, 2022).

3.3. Data Analysis, Reliability and Validity

As this research is applying a multimodal approach, on the one hand, to identify representational strategies in language, Van Leeuwen's (1996) categorisations for representing social actors will be followed. More concretely, I adopted discursive devices such as personalisation, impersonalization, collectivisation, specification, generalisation, nomination, functionalisation and pronouns. These discursive instruments helped to analyse how different social groups are represented in discourse and how this representation affects how these groups are perceived and constructed in society (Machin & Mayr, 2012). On the other hand, the latter authors explained that photographs could represent particular individuals in specific ways to suggest broader ideas, stereotypes, and abstract notions. As such, this research will follow the steps outlined by Machin and Mayr (2012) to identify representational strategies in visual communication. That is, analyse the distance, angle, individualisation, collectivisation, and generic or specific depictions of individuals. At the same time, the theoretical framework on humanitarian communication strategies developed by Scott (2014), including shock effect appeals, deliberate positivism, and post-humanitarian communication (supra), will also be considered when analysing the data.

Further, the distinction between quantitative and qualitative analysis is that the former is rule-based, whilst the latter is a creative process based on the conceptual abilities of the analyst (Patton, 1999). As such, reliability and validity concerns are addressed concerning the credibility of qualitative research (Silverman, 2011)

First, I focused on providing a thorough, transparent and clear overview of my research methodology and theoretical framework to increase the study's reliability (Silverman, 2011). In addition, the latter author suggests that researchers should make the concepts utilised to examine text and image explicit when assessing textual and visual data. For this reason, I introduced the discursive instruments and sensitising concepts that guided the MCDA, such as representing social actors, representational strategies in visual communication and different humanitarian communication strategies. Second, I have deployed various textual and visual discursive devices to increase validity and reliability. Third, in qualitative research, the researcher must consider their position in the research process, personal values, and how these elements may influence the study's findings, consciously or unconsciously (Silverman, 2011). Since narrativising social phenomena

demands the researcher have sufficient interpretation (Patton, 1999), my comprehension of the challenges of forced displacement may be influenced by my background, social position, and political and cultural outlook. Thus, while every researcher has certain personal biases that affect how they view humanitarian stories (Patton, 1999; Ongenaert, 2019), as a student, I have thought about various potential implications for the execution and results of this study.

On this matter, during my bachelor's in Argentina, I worked as a journalist for radio and television, providing me with a more critical perspective on media shaping and generating visibility around social, political, and ethical issues. Additionally, I volunteered at a feminist organisation, where I got a more extensive understanding of how biases are ingrained in government systems, policies, and practices. Worth noting, I worked as a project coordinator for a refugee organisation in Austria, where I regularly interacted with young refugee girls from Syria and Afghanistan. This job allowed me to experience first-hand how refugees face a higher risk of poverty, intersectional discrimination and under-representation in higher positions. As a result of my position, background and previous experiences, I am highly critical of discourses that homogenise, universalise, or even dehumanise forcibly displaced people - even while they may be well-intended. This also influenced my analysis, particularly my sensitivity to discursive strategies that can result in the implications mentioned above.

Overall, while these real-world experiences might help comprehend comparable situations (Berger, 2015), this study's main objective is to analyse the discursive practices employed by refugee organisations in representing forcibly displaced Syrians and Ukrainians. As a researcher, I recognise that I am an outsider to these humanitarian representational techniques and the potential impact of my biases. As such, I seek to minimise them by basing my analysis on various scholarly literature from different fields. By doing so, I aim to conduct methodologically sound, theoretically informed, and objectively minded research.

3.4. Case Study

In order to address the research topic, it is necessary to contextualise the events that caused both the Syrian War and Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

On the one hand, in their studies on the Syrian conflict, Cruz (2018) and Padinger (2022) explain that the Syrian civil war started in 2011 with the arrest and torture of young

people who demonstrated peacefully against President Bashar al-Assad, who had inherited power from his father, Hafez Al-Assad. At the same time, the Arab Spring occurred in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt; these events boosted the Syrian demonstrations against the decades-old autocratic regime. The authors further highlight that Syria was not only under an autocratic regime, but the population had deep grievances about corruption, lack of freedom, high unemployment and other shortcomings. Opponents of the government used this as a breeding ground for protest and self-defence; the president's response was swift and unleashed a civil war. Syria's international partners favouring President Al Assad were Russia and Iran. However, Russia's air support in 2015 for Syria to recover territory provoked the United States to declare war on Russia and Iran and send arms to the opponents of al-Assad regime. At this point, the two great powers were already immersed in a conflict that went from local to international, with Saudi Arabia, an ally of the United States and a rival of Iran, joining in (Cruz, 2018; Padinger, 2022). In the end, while the intervening powers put forward various arguments in the background in defence of their interests, without reaching any agreement, the Syrian population was left without rights and submerged in poverty and terror (Cruz, 2018).

On the other hand, the root causes of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine in 2022 go back a long way. In his television message of 21 February 2022, Vladimir Putin traces it back to the conflict in Crimea in 2014, when Crimea was annexed into Russian territory. In sum and building on Bussoletti's (2022) research, in his speech, Putin makes it clear that the Russian government does not recognise the Ukrainian state, alleges the presence of neo-Nazis against the Russian population, and positions his arguments in the history of the late Middle Ages, to extol Russian pride and reverse some of the deeds of the Soviet government under Lenin, who had recognised the Ukrainian state. Moreover, Bussoletti (2022) notes that after the collapse of the USSR, both Ukraine and some Eastern European countries were tasked with strengthening their identity by detaching themselves culturally and politically from Moscow and seeking the protection of the European Union. As in the Syrian conflict in 2015, countries are positioning themselves on one side in support of Ukraine, such as the United States and Europe, while others are positioning themselves in support of Russia. In other words, due to the countries' interests, a strong polarisation between the East and West emerged (Bussoletti, 2022).

The European Union has shown a different capacity to respond to these two major humanitarian conflicts (Jhon, 2022; Mascareñas, 2023). For instance, Bendixen, director of

Refugees Welcome Denmark, explained that the 2015 migration situation had shown a marked classification and distinction between migrants and refugees. The former, including Syrians, were subject to suspicion and not considered refugees, unlike individuals from Ukraine who were deemed refugees without suspicion (Jhon, 2022). In line with these statements and making a clear and stark distinction between refugees, Bulgarian Prime Minister Kiril Petkov declared that Ukrainian refugees are intelligent and educated people, drawing an obvious discriminatory line when referring to Syrian refugees, who are treated differently based on their origin and racial identity (Brito, 2022). In short, for the Prime Minister, Ukrainian refugees are European people, while Syrian refugees are prejudged as people of dubious identity and suspected of being potential terrorists (Brito, 2022).

In this context, Mascareñas (2023) provides interesting data that help to understand some arbitrary decisions regarding migration conflicts. During the Syrian war from 2014 to 2016, 1,260,920 asylum applications were registered; however, in 2015, Angela Merkel stated that Europe could no longer receive any more refugees. Consequently, a series of political decisions were made to reduce the entry of refugees. In 2019 asylum applications amounted to 744,810, and in the first half of 2022, they were 406,000. However, with the invasion of Ukraine, the European Union protected 4.2 million people. "These are numbers far above those of 2015 when Europe said enough is enough" (Mascareñas, 2023, p. 29).

According to migration expert Lamis Abdelaaty, there are differences in perception between refugees from Ukraine and Syrian refugees; the formers are white and Christian, i.e. there is more empathy because they share European identities and values, while with the latter, this is not the case (Jhon, 2022). Further, in Ferriri's (2022) opinion, the Syrian conflict in 2015 and the Ukrainian in 2022 resulted in a similar number of people being forced to move. However, they did not receive the same media treatment or political support. The Syrian conflict was regarded as a refugee "crisis", and thus, Europe considered other strategies, such as the hardening of the border by military means.

Overall, these subjective views consider a particular bias and arbitrariness according to country of origin, skin colour, and religious beliefs between some refugees and others, raising the question of whether there are differences in representation by UNHCR.

4. Results

The study's findings indicate that, when representing Syrian and Ukrainian forcibly displaced people, the UNHCR primarily seeks to evoke strong emotions of pity and guilt in the audience by representing helpless and anonymous women and children. The reason for the UNHCR to employ this particular approach can be related to the fact that, as Höijer (2004) explained, this demographic is often seen by the public as 'ideal victims' and deserving of compassion and help (Scott, 2014). As such, shock effect appeals can be influential in increasing donations and raising awareness (Scott, 2014). However, this communication strategy is mainly applied by the UNHCR in combination with post-humanitarian appeals in order to draw attention towards their brand and affiliated partners. At the same time, the analysis illustrated how certain affordances of Instagram facilitate the implementation of post-humanitarian appeals.

Moreover, the second most common approach identified involves the representation of forcibly displaced Syrians as empowered, talented, and humanised by the UNHCR. Such emphasis on the sufferer's agency and voice (Chouliaraki, 2010) is implemented in order to prove the impact of donations in humanitarian causes (Scott, 2014), confirming findings on deliberate positivism (Crawley & Skleparis, 2017; Dahin, 2022; Ongenaert et al., 2022; Rodriguez, 2016). To a lesser extent, this approach is also integrated within elements of post-humanitarian appeals.

As mentioned before, representations are neither impartial nor passive, as they are influenced by particular sociocultural contexts and employed to uphold relationships of dominance and subordination (Hall, 1997). In CDA, discourse has a crucial role within social systems (Fairclough, 2001); as such, this study has applied the categories for representing social actors outlined by Van Leeuwen (1996) in order to identify how grammatical choices are used to represent Sirian and Ukrainian forcibly displaced individuals on Instagram (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Let us now discuss the textual findings of Shock effect appeals in depth.

4.1. Shock effect appeals

4.1.1. Textual representations

Syrian and Ukrainians as nameless and defenceless masses in constant need of support.

The analysis revealed the impersonalisation category being applied extensively by the UNHCR. That is, removing personal information such as experiences, feelings or points

of view from forcibly displaced Syrian and Ukrainian individuals, which can dehumanise their representation (Van Leeuwen, 1996). Furthermore, to varying degrees, the genericisation category has also been implemented by the UNHCR to represent Syrian and Ukrainian forcibly displaced people on Instagram. More specifically, this categorisation is occasionally seen when referring to Syrian individuals (e.g. "a Syrian refugee", "Syrian girls") and more frequently when describing forcibly displaced Ukrainians (e.g. "People in need", Figure 1; "People fleeing."). By representing individuals in these broad terms, the UNHCR may risk constraining their identities solely to nationality or gender and oversimplifying the sociopolitical and economic reasons why forcibly displaced people are in need of aid in the first place. As such, this category is often criticised for homogenising the personal experiences and feelings of the represented social actors (Machin & Mayr, 2012; Ongenaert et al., 2022).
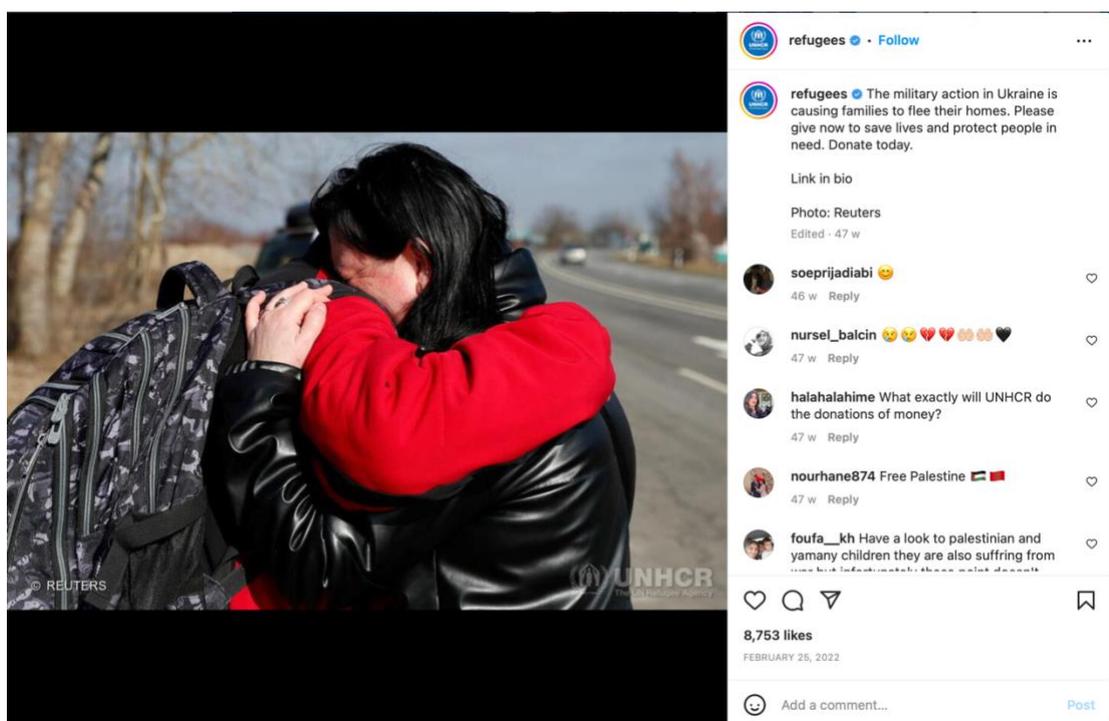
Figure 1. Screenshot of UNHCR's official Instagram account. February 25, 2022.

Nevertheless, contrasting with these generalised terms, the analysis exposed that the UNHCR sometimes represents forcibly displaced Ukrainians specifically as "families" (Figure 1), which can create a more nuanced portrayal (Machin & Mayr, 2012). This specific terminology can serve to differentiate forcibly displaced Ukrainians from other affected populations. At the same time, it can be a practical approach to humanise their situation and mobilise support, as the term "family" may appeal to the reader's sense of compassion,

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making forcibly displaced Ukrainians' plight more relatable and real. Furthermore, by emphasising their familial aspect, the UNHCR may intend to establish a strong emotional bond with the audience, as the concept of a family could be associated with affection, warmth, or safety in particular cultures. Additionally, this representation can accentuate the victimhood and fragility of forcibly displaced Ukrainians, reinforcing their urgent need for support and security. However, using the word "families" to describe Ukrainians might reinforce the simplification of other forcibly displaced people's social units. In other words, forcibly displaced individuals can have diverse family structures and needs, and not all might be part of a family group. Therefore, highlighting the family component might lead to the perception that forcibly displaced Ukrainians are more entitled to assistance only due to their potentially relatable family status. In this line, as mentioned before, the UNHCR plays a pivotal role in representing forcibly displaced people (Ongenaert et al., 2022) and can influence public, media and political agendas (Ongenaert, 2019). Therefore, the use of such simplified yet specific - and potentially favourable- terminology to refer to Ukrainian forcibly displaced individuals might contribute to discriminatory distinctions among other individuals forced to leave their homes, as previously reported by Brito (2022) and Jhon (2022).

Moreover, the UNHCR substantially represented Syrian and Ukrainian females and children as part of a collective (e.g., "Syrian refugee children" (Figure 2), "3 million refugees have fled #Ukraine"), which can also have dehumanising effects (Machin & Mayr, 2012; Ongenaert et al., 2022). At the same time, by describing social actors as part of such a generic category (Van Leeuwen, 1996), the UNHCR portrays them as passive victims with no agency or individuality, confirming earlier criticisms of shock effect appeals underrepresenting and denying the dignity of forcibly displaced people (Scott, 2014).

Figure 2. Screenshot of UNHCR's official Instagram account. April 15, 2022.

Moreover, when analysing the ways in which concepts are expressed using a combination of verbal and visual representational systems is crucial to determine how the different functionalities of the two modes contribute to the construction of meaning (Machin & Mayr, 2012). In other words, examining the interplay between visual and textual representations to comprehend the potential underlying meanings for particular portrayals. In photographs, the distance and angles chosen to portray individuals connote varying relations between the individuals and the spectators (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006), affecting, in turn, engagement and relatedness outcomes (Hansen & Machin, 2019). As such, let us now discuss how the UNHRC further reinforces the textual shock effect appeals through visual depictions.

4.1.2. Visual Representations
Syrian and Ukrainian females and children as ideal victims.

The analysis exposed that forcibly displaced Syrian and Ukrainian individuals are often portrayed at the same height as the viewer, connoting that they are ordinary people (Machin & Mayr, 2012). However, the UNHCR occasionally positions the angle of the image at a higher level, directing the viewer's gaze downward, which can, in turn, connote

forcibly displaced Syrian and Ukrainians as vulnerable people (Machin & Mayr, 2012). By doing so, the refugee organisation might intend to evoke sentiments of pity in the audience with the portrayal of defenceless victims, confirming earlier findings of shock effect appeals (Bettini, 2013; Clark-Kazak, 2009; Johnson, 2011; Ongenaert et al., 2022; Ongenaert & Joye, 2019; Pupavac, 2008). Moreover, the UNHCR often portrays forcibly displaced Syrians and Ukrainians through medium shots (Figures 1 and 2), which allows the viewer to see what the represented social actors are doing (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Here, the UNHCR sometimes depicts Ukrainian families saying farewell. This portrayal can be seen as reinforcing the aforementioned textual specifications of Ukrainian forcibly displaced people as families and their genericised and collectivised representation as individuals fleeing war.

In general, through different image settings, the UNHCR specifically showcases Ukrainian women and children as ideal victims (Höijer, 2004) with melancholic gestures that might evoke sentiments of pity (Figure 1). Similarly, the refugee organisation mainly individualises Syrian forcibly displaced children (Figure 2), with their gaze almost always directly looking at the spectator (Figure 2), which can connote that they are actively engaging with the viewer (Machin & Mayr, 2012). On this matter, considering the prominent role of the UNHCR as the leading international organisation working with forcibly displaced people (Clark-Kazak, 2009) and its 1.9 million followers on Instagram (UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, n.d), the criticisms put forth by Scott (2014) regarding the portrayal of ideal victims are particularly relevant within this study's findings. By portraying ideal victims, the UNHCR might – inadvertently – shift its Instagram follower's attention solely towards specific individuals, such as women and children, while neglecting other forcibly displaced individuals' experiences and needs. At the same time, Scott (2014) explained that the prioritisation of ideal victims could foster a broader understanding in the general public that particular victims are more entitled to compassion and support. As such, it is paramount for the UNHCR to develop diverse, equitable and inclusive portrayals that acknowledge the needs and agency of all forcibly displaced people, regardless of whether they adhere to the ideal victim stereotype.

Overall, shock effect appeals can be considered powerful in raising awareness and donations (Scott, 2014), yet, as Moeller (1999) highlighted, the repeated use of such communication strategy can make people in the long term desensitised to the images of suffering (Moeller, 1999). As a result, the UNHCR might risk generating compassion fatigue (Chouliaraki, 2010) among its Instagram followers, which can ultimately diminish social

action (Chouliaraki, 2010; Moeller, 1999). At the same time, none of these Instagram posts addresses the underlying economic and political issues that initiated the conflict in Syria and Ukraine or how to implement systemic change. This way, the general public lacks a comprehensive understanding of these international conflicts, which might lead to a strained and superficial perception of the intricate experiences of forcibly displaced Syrians and Ukrainians. As such, these findings confirm earlier criticisms of shock effect appeals oversimplifying complex situations (Scott, 2014).

4.2. Shock effects in combination with post-humanitarian appeals

As mentioned before, the analysis revealed that the UNHCR primarily represents Ukrainian and Syrian forcibly displaced people through shock effect appeals in order to engage in post-humanitarian communication. Let us now delve into the categories by which this process unfolds.

4.2.1. Textual representations.
Syrian and Ukrainians as voiceless and agency-lacking masses for branding purposes.

When combining shock effect and post-humanitarianism appeals, the UNHCR substantially applies the before-mentioned textual impersonalisations, collectivisations and generacisations of Ukrainian and Syrian forcibly displaced people. Furthermore, similar to the occasional referral of Ukrainians as families in shock effect appeals, here the UNHCR also described them under the specific label of "neighbours". While this specification was infrequent in the analysis, it is noteworthy; as by highlighting a geographical distance, the UNHCR might inadvertently promote the notion of a hierarchy of worthiness and potentially reinforce adverse stereotypes about forcibly displaced individuals who do not apply to this proximity-based description, as previously reported by Jhon (2022), Ferrari (2022) and Wamsley (2022).

Moreover, contrasting with the absence of functionalisations observed in shock effect appeals, the UNHCR often employs this category when merging shock effects and post-humanitarian appeals. By doing so, the refugee organisation represents social actors based on what they do, which can confer legitimacy and authority (Machin & Mayr, 2012; Van Leeuwen, 1996). However, this category is only used to highlight UNHCR's agency and politicians' work in helping refugees (e.g. "We're working around the clock to help those in need ", "We are grateful of the Moldovan officials", Figure 3) rather than to represent

Ukrainian and Syrian forcibly displaced people. This approach can be related to the earlier discussed marketised societal background in which humanitarian organisations operate. That is, the UNHCR might attempt to respond to earlier criticisms of low levels of accountability and transparency within humanitarian work (Madianou, 2019a; Martin & Brown, 2021) by strategically promoting UNCHR's brand and highlighting governmental support on Instagram. However, through these means, the UNHCR prioritises a self-focused narrative rather than enhancing the voices and agency of the forcibly displaced Ukrainian and Syrian people portrayed in its Instagram post, aligning with typical post-humanitarian appeals (Scott, 2014).
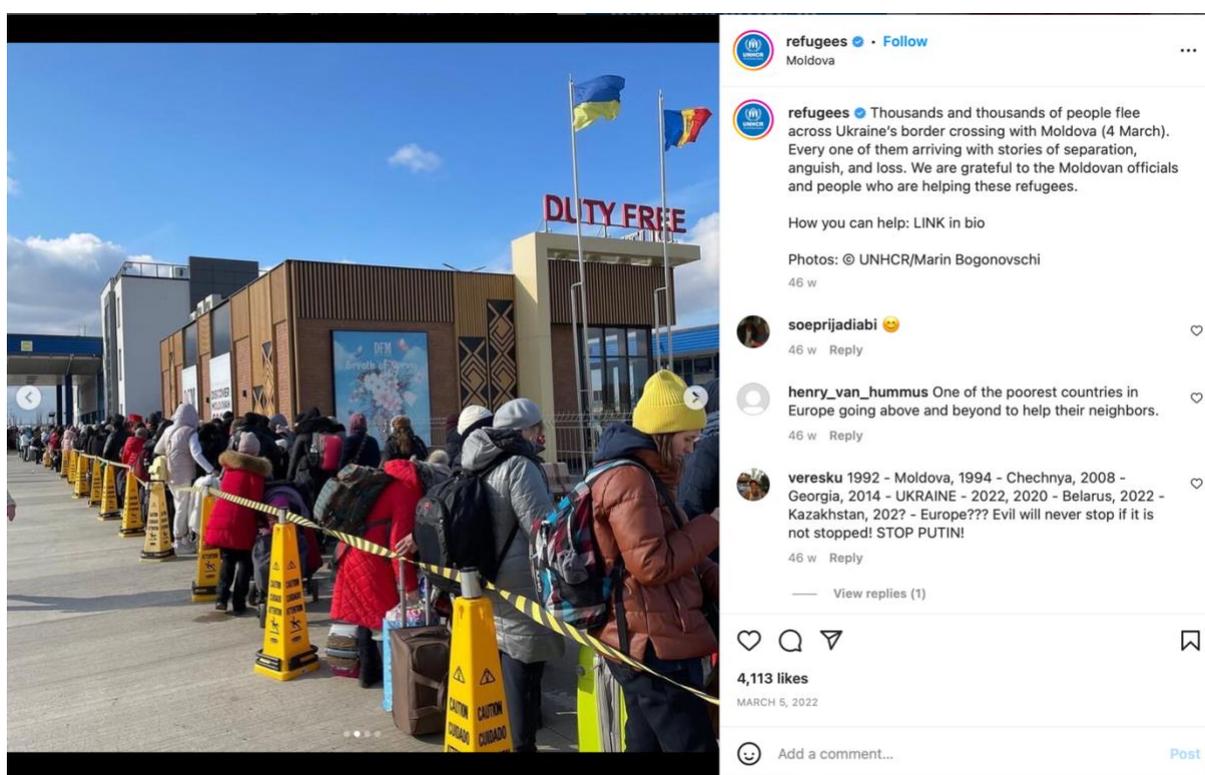
Figure 3. Ukraine. Screenshot of UNHCR's official Instagram account. March 5, 2022.

Furthermore, as explained by Vestergaard (2008), when participating in branding strategies, consumers' interests, values, and tastes are prioritised before the urgency of the humanitarian cause. In line with this, the analysis revealed the occasional use of pronouns by the UNHCR to directly target the emotions of its Instagram followers when representing Ukrainian forcibly displaced people (e.g. "What would you take if you had to flee war?", "You can help us help those who need urgent support."). On the one hand, by doing so, the refugee organisation might intend to foster audience engagement concerning the conflict in Ukraine. On the other hand, however, this emphasis by UNHCR to target the individual

emotions of its Instagram followers confirms the criticisms of post-humanitarian appeals relying on personal judgment to engage with, in this case, forcibly displaced Ukrainians (Chouliaraki, 2010). By doing so, the UNHCR might risk leading its audiences to believe that their involvement with humanitarian issues can be driven by their personal concerns and feelings (Vestergaard, 2008), fostering a limited and self-centred approach to engagement. Therefore, the UNHCR should promote a more altruistic engagement in its Instagram account based on every person's inherent worth to, ultimately, mobilise society to work towards ensuring that all individuals are granted the fundamental human rights they are entitled to.

Concerning images, the UNHCR further enhances its brand and partners through different visual settings while at the same time mainly portraying Ukrainian and Syrian women and children as ideal victims, as we will now discuss.

4.2.2. Visual representations.
Syrians and Ukrainians as ideal victims for branding purposes.

The predominant medium size and same-height angles used to represent both demographics in shock effect appeals (supra) are also found when combining them with post-humanitarianism appeals to represent Syrian forcibly displaced individuals. By contrast, the analysis exposed a different approach when portraying forcibly displaced Ukrainians. That is, the UNHCR substantially applies long shots to represent them (Figure 3), which can connote alienation and exclusion (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Here, the refugee organisation regularly portrays Ukrainians as vulnerable individuals by directing the viewer's gaze downwards (Figure 5). At the same time, Ukrainians are often portrayed from behind (Figure 5), which can be seen as a way to offer the audience their perspective on their current situation (Machin & Mayr, 2012). However, forcibly displaced Ukrainian's points of view are never expressed within these combinations of shock effects and post-humanitarian appeals, potentially undermining their voice and agency (Van Leeuwen, 1996).

In general, these long shots strategically showcase Ukrainian forcibly displaced people on the move or waiting in line at the border of neighbouring countries (Figures 3 and 5). It could be argued, therefore, that the UNHCR is reinforcing the aforementioned textual specifications of Ukrainian forcibly displaced individuals as neighbours and their collectivised and genericised representation as people escaping war. Importantly, these long shots sometimes include visual elements related to other countries and governments, such as

the Moldovan flag (Figure 3), the amenities the Polish government offered, or donations from neighbouring countries. By doing so, the UNHCR further enhances the textual functionalisations which highlight the involvement of states and authority officials in aiding forcibly displaced Ukrainians. Similarly, when portraying Syrian forcibly displaced individuals, the refugee organisation often includes UNHCR workers or clearly visualises the UNHCR's logo (Figure 4). Consequently, coupled with the before-identified textual functionalisations stressing the role of the UNHCR in assisting forcibly displaced Syrians, these portrayals strategically highlight the refugee organisation's brand.
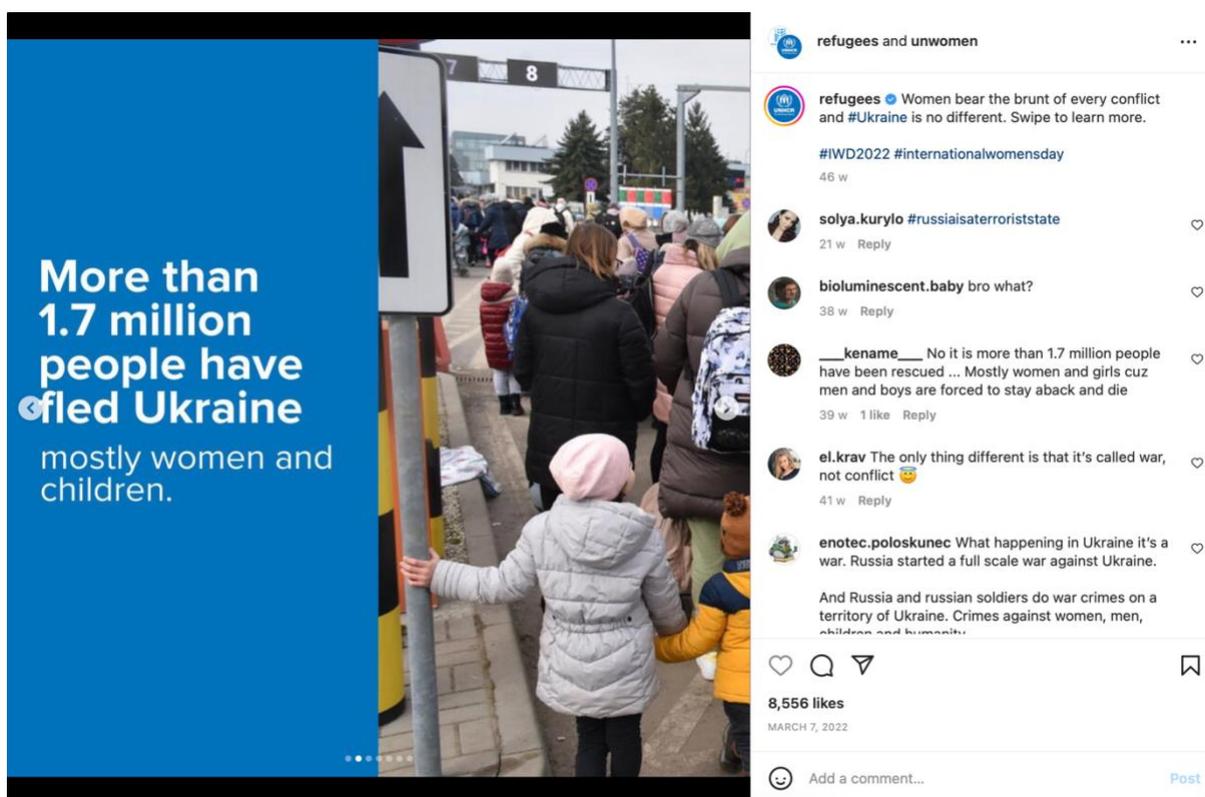

Figure 4. Syria. Screenshot of UNHCR's official Instagram account. March 16, 2022.

As mentioned before, in shock effect appeals, the analysis revealed the main individualisation of Syrian children by the UNHCR (Figure 2). However, when combining shock and post-humanitarianism appeals, the refugee organisation often implemented such individualisation to women as well (Figure 4). This way, the before mentioned strategic visual positioning of UNHCR's brand is often done through the portrayal of another demographic considered an ideal victim, aligning with the typical characteristic of shock effect appeals (Höijer, 2004; Scott, 2014). At the same time, these individualised Syrian women and children are represented through generic depictions (Figure 4). That is, the UNHCR extensively depicts them as typical Muslims with hijab, and as such, their

individuality can potentially fade under the aspects that categorise them (Machin & Mayr, 2012).

Moreover, in line with the discussed textual collectivisations found in shock effect appeals, when combined with post-humanitarian appeals, the UNHCR substantially portrays forcibly displaced Ukrainians as undistinguishable groups of people as well (Figure 5). However, among the collective, the refugee organisation almost always specifically foregrounds women and children (Figure 5), which might elicit sentiments of pity in the audience (Cameron & Haanstra, 2008) as they are often seen as ideal victims (Höijer, 2004).
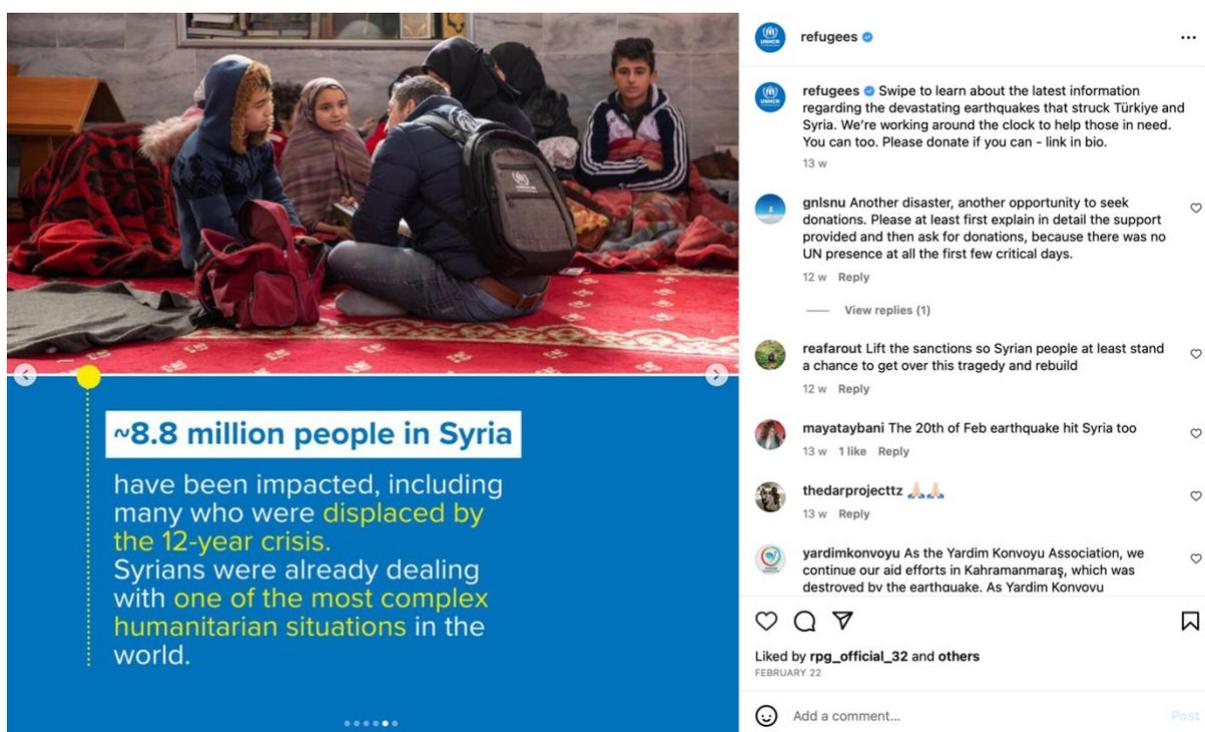

Figure 5. Screenshot of UNHCR's official Instagram account. March 07, 2022.

4.2.3. Instagram affordances facilitating post-humanitarianism appeals.

In addition to the previously discussed observations, the analysis revealed that such agency-lacking and vulnerable-looking representations of forcibly displaced Ukrainians and Syrian individuals are also portrayed through what Dumitrica and Hockin-Boyers (2022) explained as slideshow activism on Instagram. That is, the UNHCR often uses Instagram's affordances to communicate to its followers the current situation of Syrian forcibly displaced people. More specifically, this is achieved by the UNHCR through the application of brief texts and graphic features presented in a carousel format consisting of several slides. Likewise, albeit less frequently, such slideshow activism has been identified when

representing forcibly displaced Ukrainians (Figure 5). Furthermore, in line with Amit-Danhi and Shifman (2018), these slides summarise the main undergoing struggles of forcibly displaced Syrians and Ukrainians through easily readable and shareable slides (Figures 4, 5 and 6). By doing so, the UNHCR might simplify the explanation of the complex environment in which forcibly displaced individuals live to foster audience engagement. However, it is essential to acknowledge that non of these slideshow posts explain the existing and deeply rooted systems of oppression responsible for forced displacement, which perpetuate the adversities faced by forcibly displaced Ukrainians and Syrians. Therefore, UNHCR's use of Instagram features, such as slideshows, serves to reinforce earlier criticism regarding the drawbacks of post-humanitarianism appeals in adequately educating the public (Scott, 2014).

Figure 6. Screenshot of UNHCR's official Instagram account. February 22, 2023.

Notably, these brief texts and graphic visuals of UNHCR's slideshows are always aesthetically colour-coordinated and visually compelling (Figures 4, 5 and 6). This intentional design strategy could be related to the influence of the social media logic, whereby Instagram users place significant relevance on attractive posts (Nguyen, 2020). Consequently, the portrayal of Ukrainian and Syrian forcibly displaced people as voiceless and victimised individuals combined with the prioritisation of values and ideals of Instagram users further signals the commercialisation of the humanitarian sector. In other words, by

prioritising aesthetic components that appeal to its Instagram followers, the UNHCR participates in consumer culture practices (Vestergaard, 2008). As such, the refugee organisation might risk supporting existing values rather than promoting social change (Vestergaard, 2008), as they emphasise the design of visually captivating posts rather than creating more nuance, dignifying representations of forcibly displaced Ukrainian and Syrian individuals. In this line, Woods and Shee (2021) stressed that editing images in ways that meet the audience's preferences and aesthetic ideals ultimately alters what we consider "real" representations.

Importantly, UNHCR's use of Instagram's photographic editing tools enables the creation of such aesthetically pleasing posts (Carrasco-Polaino et al., 2018). This practice aligns with post-humanitarianism principles, which emphasise the use of attractive and innovative text and visual strategies (Chouliaraki, 2012a; Scott, 2014). As such, it could be argued that certain affordances of Instagram facilitate the implementation of post-humanitarianism appeals. On the matter of Instagram affordances, the analysis exposed the occasional implementation of easy options to donate (e.g. "link in bio" Figure 6), further fostering the application of post-humanitarian appeals (Scott, 2014). Although it might raise engagement rates (Rosa & Soto-Vásquez, 2022), such simplicity in enacting social change might promote a rather short-term involvement in audiences, ultimately leading to trivial engagement with humanitarian causes (Scott, 2014; White, 2010).

Overall, the comprehensive analysis of UNHCR's Instagram account exposed the extensive use of impersonalisations, collectivisations, generisations and specific portrayals of vulnerable-looking "ideal victims" (Höijer, 2004). Such categories to represent forcibly displaced Syrians and Ukrainians exemplify the use of shock effect appeals by the refugee organisation. Simultaneously, the analysis revealed the substantial implementation of funcionalisations strategically showcasing the role of the UNHCR and countries involved in aiding forcibly displaced Syrian and Ukrainian individuals. This inclusion of self-focus discourses aligns with another typical characteristic of post-humanitarian appeals (Scot, 2014). Additionally, the UNHCR sometimes prioritises its Instagram follower's emotions and values. However, it fails to educate them about the systemic issues that affect the represented forcibly displaced Ukrainian and Syrian individuals. These findings confirm post-humanitarian appeals' existing principles and criticisms (Chouliaraki, 2010; Vestergaard, 2008). Therefore, it could be argued that rather than rendering forcibly displaced people invisible, as seen in post-humanitarian appeals (Scott, 2014), the UNHCR

actively portrays them as voiceless agency-lacking individuals in constant need of support. This representation aims to generate strong emotions of pity and compassion in the audience while simultaneously highlighting the agency of the UNHCR itself and related supporters.

4.3. Deliberate Positivism

The second most common approach identified pursues to engage audiences by portraying Syrian forcibly displaced people as talented, empowered, dignified individuals with their own voice and agency, confirming earlier findings on deliberate positivism (Dahin, 2022; Ongenaert et al., 2022; Rodriguez, 2016) However, the systemic issues that drove Syrian individuals to be forcibly displaced in the first place are never addressed in the text. Thus, this approach lacks meaningful long-term change for affected populations (Chouliaraki, 2010). Furthermore, similar to the previously identified combination of shock and post-humanitarian appeals, the analysis exposed the combination of deliberate positivism with post-humanitarian appeals, albeit to a lesser extent. Let us now explain the findings of deliberate positivism first.

4.3.1. Textual Representations
Syrians as talented and unique individuals.

On this matter, based on Van Leeuwen's (1996) categorisations for representing social actors, this study found that the UNHCR substantially personalises and specifies Syrian forcibly displaced people by including in the captions of the Instagram post their names, particular stories, obstacles, and triumphs, which helps portray them as individuals with unique experiences and dreams. As such, their representations can be interpreted as more humanised and nuanced (Hansen & Machin, 2019), aligning with principles of deliberate positivism (Scott, 2014). Similarly, in order to highlight the unique identities (Van Leeuwen, 1996) of Syrian forcibly displaced people, the UNHCR sometimes applies the nomination category. That is, it referred to individuals through proper nouns or by name and surname. As such, the refugee organisation described social actors based on who they are (Machin & Mayr, 2012), and on Instagram, that is commonly seen in the form of a tag (e.g. "@GhazalMia", "@NujeenMustafa", "@YusraMardini", Figure 7).
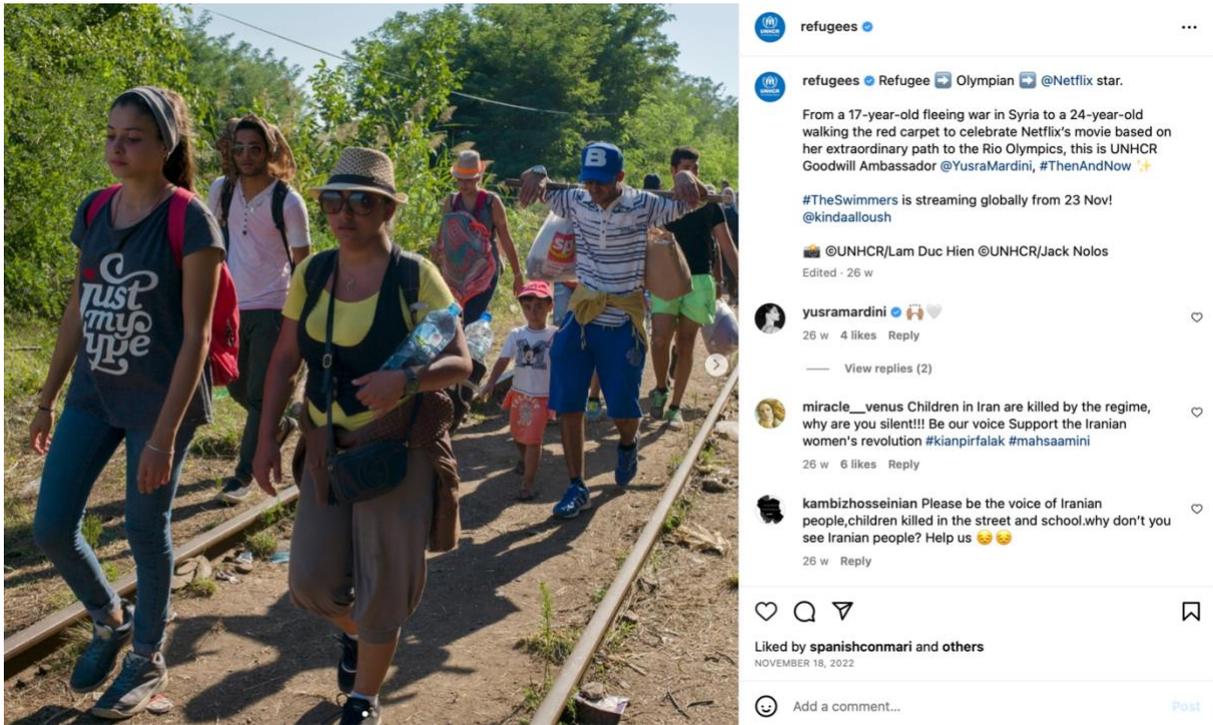
Figure 7. Screenshot of UNHCR's official Instagram account. November 18, 2022.

Figure 8. Screenshot of UNHCR's official Instagram account. November 18, 2022.

These nominations can ultimately sound more individualised (Machin & Mayr, 2012), especially on Instagram, where by clicking on the tag, followers can be redirected to the personal profile of the nominated social actor.

In this line, it could be argued that the affordances of Instagram offer opportunities for audiences to immerse themselves in the individual and self-constructed discourses displayed on Syrian forcibly displaced people's Instagram accounts. However, the criticisms made by Ongenaert and colleagues (2022) hold significant relevance in this context, as deliberate positivism approaches tend to highlight the narratives of proficient, enticing or prosperous forcibly displaced individuals. Confirming such criticisms, the before-identified nominations are exclusively applied by the UNHCR to individualise forcibly displaced Syrians who now work with Netflix (e.g. Figures 7 and 8), are engineers or published authors. As such, it raises concerns whether UNHCR's use of Instagram features facilitates followers' involvement primarily with forcibly displaced Syrians who possess particular desirable qualities.

Moreover, contrasting the previously identified funcionalisations for self-promotion practices in combinations of shock and post-humanitarianism appeals, the UNHCR consistently applied functionalisations to represent forcibly displaced Syrian individuals in the deliberate positivism approach. Notably, the earlier exposed generisations of Syrian forcibly displaced people in shock effect appeals have also been identified within deliberate positivism. As such, the UNHCR often referred to social actors in general terms (e.g. "refugee", Figures 7 and 8), which can have a homogenising effect concerning their situations (Van Leeuwen, 1996). However, these genericisations are sometimes used to subsequently functionalise Syrian forcibly displaced individuals based on their current role in society (e.g. "Olympian", Figures 7 and 8; "web developer") or upcoming function (e.g. "future doctor"), which helps establish individuals as respectable and 'good' members of society (Machin & Mayr, 2007).

Such transitions from homogenised social actors to talented active citizens illustrate the positive changes in forcibly displaced Syrian's lives. Therefore, these textual representations align with the aims of deliberate positivism of proving the favourable effects that the actions of donors have had on forcibly displaced individuals (Scott, 2014). Nevertheless, the way this terminology is applied may have implicitly negative associations toward those with refugee status, as it can connote that refugees are intrinsically undesirable until they transition to a different identity valued highly by certain societies. As such, it is essential for the UNHCR to find a balance in highlighting the development and accomplishments of Syrian refugees without undervaluing the significance and dignity of their prior refugee status.

4.3.2. Visual Representations

Syrians as joyful and empowered individuals.

Similar to the substantial visual individualisations of forcibly displaced Syrians as "ideal victims" in sock effects and in its combinations with post-humanitarian appeals, the UNHCR almost always individualised women and children within deliberate positivism. However, as the UNHCR textually personalised, specified, nominated and functionalised them (supra), such visual individualisation can be seen as portraying forcibly displaced Syrians as the sole agents of the stories and emotions expressed in the text (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Regarding distance, the UNHCR mainly depicts Syrian forcibly displaced people through medium shots, commonly used when it is important to showcase what the person is wearing and doing (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Such shots often showcase the social actors with cheerful faces (Figure 9), confirming earlier findings (Carrasco-Polaino et al., 2018). At the same time, the UNHCR sometimes combined different distance perspectives within the same post. For instance, the analysis revealed forcibly displaced Syrian individuals portrayed from long shots in rural areas (Figure 7) to medium shots in a professional environment (Figure 8). By doing so, the UNHCR visually showcases the favourable long-term changes in forcibly displaced Syrian's lives, further reinforcing what is expressed in the text (supra).

Figure 9. Screenshot of UNHCR's official Instagram account. December 6, 2022.

Moreover, concerning angles, the UNHCR, most of the time, portrayed Syrian forcibly displaced people confidently looking at the camera and at the same height as the viewer (Figures 8 and 9), which can be seen as a way to engage the audience in the person's story and to represent the Syrian forcibly displaced individual as an ordinary person (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Moreover, to a lesser extent, the UNHCR sometimes positions the angle from a higher perspective, and thus, the viewer "looks up" at the represented person. This angle, in turn, can portray social actors as empowered individuals (Machin & Mayr, 2012), confirming earlier findings on deliberate positivism by Rodriguez (2016) and Dahin (2022).

Overall, by depicting individuals with positive faces and constantly illustrating the favourable changes in forcibly displaced Syrian's life, the UNHCR might pursue to prove to its Instagram followers the impact that donations can have on those who suffer (Scott, 2014) and ultimately foment engagement in humanitarian change (Chouliaraki, 2010). However, by doing so, the UNHCR risks reinforcing a discourse in which forcibly displaced Syrians are seen as dependent on the charitable donations of benevolent donors (Chouliaraki, 2013) rather than promoting long-term self-sufficiency. At the same time, considering that Syria is located in the global South, such perceived dependency might reinforce existing North-South asymmetries, as charitable contributors from the North are often seen as the only way to enact social change in Southern countries (Scott, 2014). Therefore, the UNHCR should work to change this dependency narrative by, for instance, educating its Instagram followers on how to advocate for policy changes that address the root causes of displacement and enable meaningful long-term systemic change. Moreover, albeit deliberate positivism represents long-term development (Scott, 2015), the repetitive illustration of positive change has been criticised for promoting similar inaction outcomes as in shock effect appeals (Scott, 2014). In other words, deliberate positivism might convey to audiences that involvement with humanitarian issues is no longer necessary, as it portrays forcibly displaced individuals as if all their challenges have already been resolved (Chouliaraki, 2010).

4.4. Combinations of deliberate positivism and post-humanitarian appeals

As mentioned before, the analysis also revealed the occasional use of the optimistic, empowered and humanised stories and feelings of Syrian forcibly displaced people to draw attention to certain alliances or celebrities. Let us now discuss these findings in depth.

4.4.1. Textual Representations

Forcibly displaced Syrians as individuals with voice and agency for branding purposes.

This combination approach substantially applies the earlier-identified textual personalisations, specifications, nominations and functionalisations on deliberate positivism. As such, forcibly displaced Syrian individuals are represented in a more humanised, nuanced (Hansen & Machin, 2019) and individualised (Machin & Mayr, 2012) perspective than in shock effect appeals. However, these textual representations are often shared with nominated or functionalised celebrities or politicians (e.g., "@TomCruise", "@susie_wolff", Figure 10; "Chancellor Angela Merkel", Figures 11 and 12). As post-humanitarianism relies on celebrities' humanitarian work (Ongenaert et al., 2022), this approach might have been applied by the UNHCR in order to benefit from the celebrity's visibility from two perspectives. On the one hand, the UNHCR can use celebrities' exposure to bring attention to pressing humanitarian issues and solutions (Jerslev, 2014). However, this strategy might draw attention to the suffering "Other" only due to the relationship and emotions between the celebrity and the audience (Chouliaraki, 2012b), rather than deriving from genuine concern for the welfare of forcibly displaced Syrians. Arguably, such an approach might facilitate narcissistic and superficial engagement with humanitarian issues.

On the other hand, such visibility can enhance UNHCR's brand and engage niche customers (Scott, 2014). In this line, albeit Angela Merkel is not a celebrity, she is a renowned politician. Therefore, such nominations and functionalisation might serve to illustrate to audiences an alliance between the UNHCR and Germany, further legitimising UNHCR's brand, as previously seen in combinations of shock and post-humanitarianism appeals.

Figure 10. Screenshot of UNHCR's official Instagram account. July 9, 2022.

Moreover, the approach taken in deliberate positivism to showcase the positive changes in the lives of forcibly displaced Syrian individuals has also been identified in combination with post-humanitarian appeals. More specifically, the UNHCR often referred to the represented social actors in general terms (e.g. "refugee", Figures 11 and 12) to subsequently functionalise them based on their current role in society (e.g. "Student and German Citizen", Figure 11; "Bus driver", Figure 12).

Figure 11. Screenshot of UNHCR's official Instagram account. October 8, 2022.

In relation to images, the UNHCR further enhances its brand by including celebrities and renowned politicians in the depictions of empowered and dignified, forcibly displaced Syrians, as we will now discuss.

4.4.2. Visual representations
Syrians as empowered individuals for branding purposes.

Concerning angles, the UNHCR portrays forcibly displaced Syrians through the same image settings previously identified in deliberate positivism. As such, the represented social actors can be seen actively engaging with audiences and as empowered individuals (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Furthermore, contrasting with the substantial use of medium shots in deliberate positivism, the analysis exposed the main use of close-ups by the UNHCR when combining deliberate positivism and post-humanitarian appeals. Such distance encourages closeness and places the represented individuals in the role of the vehicle for the emotions expressed in the caption (Machin & Mayr, 2012). However, these visual settings are often shared with a celebrity or politician (e.g. Figure 11), further reinforcing the previously identified textual nominations and functionalisations highlighting the identity and agency of figures such as Angela Merkel or Tom Cruise. Consequently, the UNHCR might

risk generating conversations in the audience regarding the renowned person (Chouliaraki, 2012b) rather than the forcibly displaced Syrian individual. Therefore, it could be argued that the stories and feelings of the represented Syrian individuals are relegated to second place in regard to being the focus of attention.
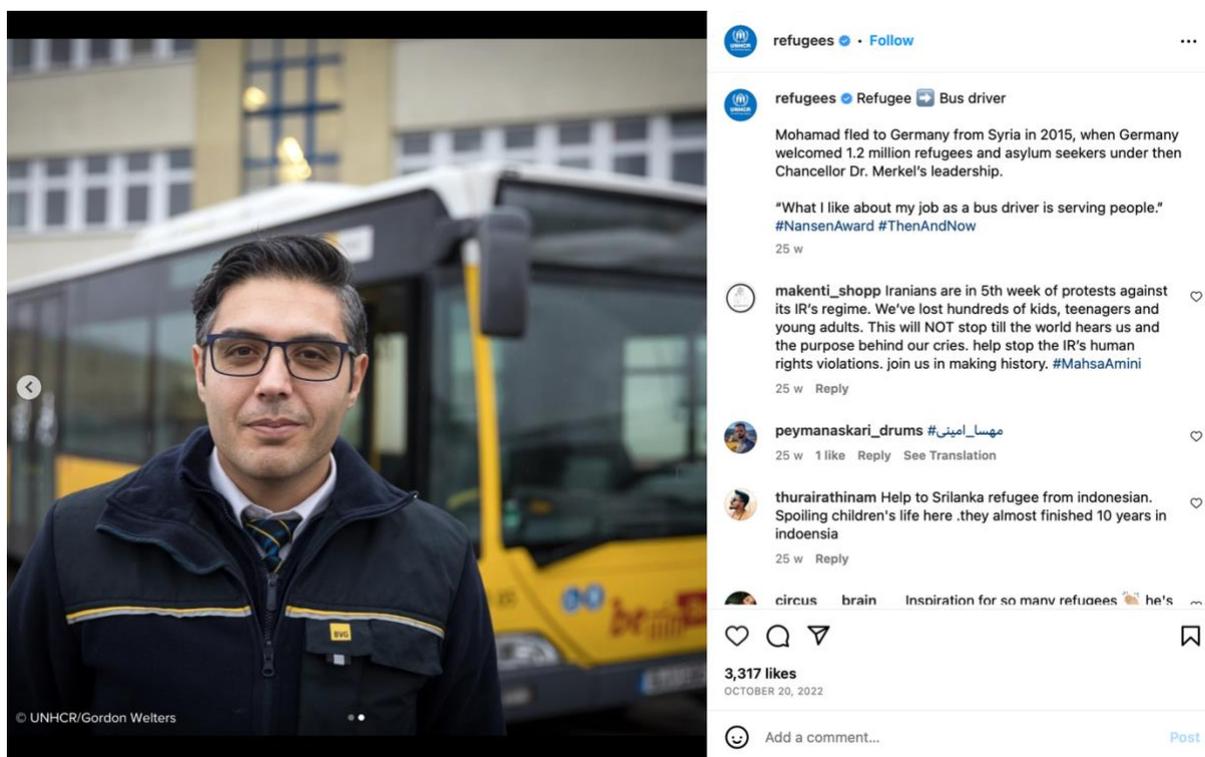
Figure 12. Screenshot of UNHCR's official Instagram account. October 8, 2022.

Overall, the analysis revealed the substantial implementation of personalisations, specifications, nominations and functionalisations to represent forcibly displaced Syrian individuals. As such, the UNHCR shited from the victimisation approach previously identified in shock effect appeals to recognising and enhancing the dignity and agency of forcibly displaced individuals, aligning with deliberate positivism (Chouliaraki, 2010).

At the same time, this study found the occasional inclusion of celebrities or renowned politicians in the empowered representations of forcibly displaced Syrians, signalling a combination of deliberate positivism and post-humanitarian appeals. It could be argued that, to varying degrees, the UNHCR uses the positive representations of forcibly displaced Syrians for branding and legitimacy purposes. Importantly, albeit this finding occurred less frequently than the combinations of sock effects and post-humanitarian appeals, it further highlights the marketised and complex environment in which humanitarian organisations navigate.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The present study investigated the communicational strategies applied by the UNHCR on Instagram to represent Syrian and Ukrainian forcibly displaced people. Therefore, Multimodal Critical Discourse analysis has been applied to social media, allowing in-depth examination of visual (images) and textual (captions) representations (Machin & Mayr, 2012; Silveira, 2016;). In general, the analysis exposed Syrian and Ukrainian forcibly displaced people represented mainly through combinations of shock effect and post-humanitarian appeals, expanding on earlier interpretations of humanitarian communication (Scott, 2014). By contrast, the second most prominent communication strategy identified was deliberate positivism to represent forcibly displaced Syrian individuals, confirming earlier findings (Rodriguez, 2016; Dahin, 2022; Ongenaert et al., 2022). To a lesser extent, this approach was also combined with post-humanitarian appeals by the UNHCR.

On the one hand, in concordance with previous findings of shock effect appeals (Bettini, 2013; Carrasco-Polaino et al., 2018; Clark-Kazak, 2009; Johnson, 2011; Ongenaert & Joye, 2019; Ongenaert et al., 2022; Pupavac, 2008), the analysis indicated the substantial use of this communicational strategy by the UNHCR to portray Syrian and Ukrainian forcibly displaced people. Concretely, the UNHCR largely represents the sampled population in their Instagram captions as voiceless and anonymised groups in constant need of support. To reinforce this approach further, the UNHCR specifically showcases women and children as ideal victims (Höijer, 2004) with anguish and solemn depictions to elicit strong emotions of pity in the audience. Importantly, shock effect appeals are primarily applied by the UNCHR to emphasise -visually or textually- its role and affiliated governments in aiding forcibly displaced Syrian and Ukrainian individuals.

By doing so, the refugee organisation prioritises its own visibility and legitimacy over the agency and voice of forcibly displaced Syrian and Ukrainians, confirming post-humanitarian appeals (Scott, 2014). Worth noting, the analysis revealed that, in some instances, the UNHCR refers explicitly to Ukrainian refugees as families or neighbours, which can sound more personal and might facilitate relatedness. In contrast, forcibly displaced Syrians are sometimes labelled more generally as refugee families or refugees, which can sound less humanised. In this way, the UNHCR might inadvertently perpetuate racial and geographical distinctions and privileges between Syrian and Ukrainian forcibly displaced people, which has been seen before in news media (CBS News, 2022, 11:22;

Hannan, 2022; WION, 2022) and government policies (Brito, 2022; Egan, 2022; Global Detention Project, 2022).

On the other hand, MCDA illustrated a contrasting change in discourse by the UNHCR when representing Syrian forcibly displaced people. Avoiding the previous vulnerable-looking and agency-lacking representations, the refugee organisation focused on more positive and humanised portrayals, as earlier findings of deliberate positivism strategies have shown (Dahin, 2022; Ongenaert et al., 2022; Rodriguez, 2016). Specifically, the UNHCR largely focuses on individual stories of forcibly displaced Syrians overcoming struggles and includes direct quotes from them in the Instagram captions, enhancing their agency and voice. Through the portrayal of empowered and talented forcibly displaced Syrians, the UNHCR pursues to demonstrate the positive changes in their lives due to the effects of charity, aligning with deliberate positivism (Scott, 2014). Within these positive representations of Syrian forcibly displaced people, the UNHCR occasionally included celebrities or renowned politicians involved in humanitarian development, aligning with post-humanitarian appeals (Mitchell, 2016). This way, the refugee organisation further increases its visibility. Nevertheless, it might relegate Syrian forcibly displaced people to a secondary position as the audiences' focus might shift to the renowned person (Chouliaraki, 2012b).

More generally, this study's findings illustrate how, albeit technological innovations such as social media are often seen as opportunities for more nuanced and comprehensive representations of the suffering "Other" (Scott, 2014), it substantially depends on how and in which context they are used. To varying degrees, the UNHCR continues to rely on the broadly criticised main humanitarian representation strategies, which hold negative implications for the represented forcibly displaced people. At the same time, due to the highly marketised environment in which refugee organisations operate, the UNHCR often participates in humanitarian branding strategies that focus on the promotion and legitimisation of its work, which presents a moral dilemma of displaying human suffering in the context of entertainment and consumerism (Vestergaard, 2008). Furthermore, the technology through which communication happens, Instagram, forces the UNHCR to shape its representations based on the social media logic, which prioritises the interest and values of Instagram users rather than those suffering. As such, the types of representations the Instagram followers might perceive are affected by consumerist values, and as discourse shapes reality (Foucault, in Hall, 1997), it can promote superficial and unfair representations

of the suffering "Other". These portrayals, in turn, might affect how the general public thinks and takes decisions about development, as the UNHCR can influence how people view forced migration (Ongenaert, 2019; Vestergaard, 2014).

Overall, this research provides valuable insights extending theoretical knowledge on the versatile application of post-humanitarianism on Instagram under a highly marketised humanitarian environment. Enabled by MCDA, the present study advanced the theoretical knowledge of how social systems and consumerist values can be reproduced through discursive practices. It illustrates the efficiency of MCDA in analysing textual and visual digital representations, and it encourages its implementation on social media platforms, specifically on those which offer more than one semiotic mode for representations.

This study hopes to shed light on how, inadvertently, power relations and social injustice can be further reinforced on Instagram due to the social system in which humanitarian organisations operate. Although societal change is slow progress, refugee organisations can work towards educating the public about the systemic, deeply rooted sociopolitical issues that foster inequalities and injustices. For instance, they could stimulate authenticity and transparency with their audiences by openly communicating the societal context that drives humanitarian organisations to participate in marketing practices. This way, they might foster open and real conversations with the public about the complexities of humanitarian work, possibly stimulating social understandings of how power structures operate and affect representations and policies.

Lastly, this study is not free of limitations. As the research involved an in-depth examination of visual and textual discursive practices and their interplay, the main focus was images and their accompanying text. Thus, future research could implement MCDA to analyse the representational strategies applied by refugee organisations through other semiotic modes, such as videos, which are highly predominant on Instagram. Furthermore, this research has focused on the communication strategies of UNHCR; however, more research is needed from the production perspective. As such, future research could perform depth interviews with social media officers of UNHCR to gain more insights into their underlying motivations, reasons and the broader context in which this communication is created. Lastly, it is acknowledged that while forcibly displaced people became the object of discourse, they were not involved in shaping such conversation. Therefore, from the production perspective, future studies should investigate how forcibly displaced people

perceive these communication strategies of the UNHCR and, in particular, its representations to know which emotions or values they interpret from such portrayals.

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