A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SAUDI AND U.S. ONLINE NEWSPAPERS' FRAMING

OF SAUDI WOMEN'S ISSUES: CONTENT ANALYSIS OF NEWSPAPER

COVERAGE BEFORE AND AFTER SAUDI VISION 2030

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Previous research on framing has proved its strong effects on the social perception and political preferences of individuals. Therefore, the aim of this research is to explore how Saudi women's issues have been framed in a sample of United States and Saudi newspapers. Saudi Vision 2030 is the post-oil plan for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia that was announced on April 25, 2016. The sample of this thesis was 300 news stories from eight newspapers. The U.S. newspapers were the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and the *Los Angeles Times*. The Saudi newspapers were *Al Riyadh*, *Okaz*, *Al Jazirah*, and *Al Watan*. This thesis explores how these issues have been covered before and after Saudi Vision 2030 by answering five basic questions.

Quantitative and qualitative methods were used to analyze the news stories. For the quantitative analysis, five pre-defined generic frames from Semetko and Valkenburg were adopted: conflict frame, human interest frame, morality frame, economic consequences frame, and responsibility frame. An inductive approach to find the new frames was used for the qualitative analysis. Moreover, this thesis looked at how U.S. and Saudi newspapers have visually framed Saudi women through an analysis of the types of images used in the news stories related to Saudi women's issues. The main finding suggests that within the used frames in the newspapers, the U.S. newspapers focused more on the human-interest frame, while the Saudi newspapers mostly used the economic frame. Furthermore, the types of issues covered are discussed.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Media framing has played a vital role in the reporting of news and influenced the opinions of media consumers. The concept of framing refers to choosing and focusing on particular aspects of a news story more than others (Hoffner & Ye, 2009). When covering new stories, each newspaper frames them from its own culture and perspective (Chong & Druckman, 2007). Newspapers have the ability to influence people and change their attitudes towards certain issues through the use of certain frames. Moreover, they tend to focus on issues which occupy the public interest.

Social issues, specifically women's issues, have attracted a lot of attention from global and local media. Saudi women have a long history of being prohibited from practicing many basic human rights. Indeed, what has posed an obstacle for Saudi women is the conservative lifestyle in Saudi Arabia (Al-Nafjan, 2011; Tarabay, 2017). Saudi women have worked hard to gain several rights which have been practiced by their counterparts in different countries around the world for many years. In fact, many Saudi women have fled to and gained asylum from foreign countries on the pretexts of not being free to exercise their rights, such as driving and traveling without a male chaperone from within the family. However, Saudi Vision 2030- a government reform program- was established and brought many changes, several of which are related to the status of Saudi women. This vision was established by the king of Saudi Arabia in 2016. One of its goals is to support women and to extend to them their rights as citizens.

1.1     Statement of the Problem

Because the issues related to Saudi women have become well known locally and globally, it was crucial that it be examined in an analytical manner, especially after many

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changes have taken place. Several studies have found that Muslim and Arab women have been portrayed as victims who are in need of Western freedom (Luther, Lepre, & Clark, 2017, p.112; Aburwein, 2012). However, few studies have discussed how U.S. newspapers have framed Saudi women's issues in particular. Moreover, since there is strong demand for expansion of Saudi women's rights, women's rights are also under intense debate in the Saudi media (Al-Otaibi, 2018). Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that freedom of expression in the traditional media in Saudi Arabia is limited. The content that traditional media may publish is controlled by the government (Al-Saggaf, Himma, & Kharabsheh, 2008; Al-Saggaf, 2012; Al-Saggaf & Simmons, 2015). "Article 39 of the 1992 Basic Law, which covers mass media, does not guarantee freedom of the press, and the authorities are given broad powers to prevent any act that may lead to disunity or sedition" (Freedom house.org, 2015). When it comes to the framing done by Saudi newspapers, scholars have not paid much attention to the local coverage of Saudi women's issues. The reason behind that is Arab researchers have had more interest in Western newspapers' perspectives than in local ones. Saudi Arabia has been promoting the role of Saudi women, and news of Saudi women's issues has been increasing in both Eastern and Western newspapers.

1.2     Justification

This thesis is different from other studies which have discussed Arab and Muslim women's representations in foreign media (Steet, 2000; Shirazi, 2001; Mishra, 2007; Almahmoud, 2015; Bashatah, 2017). The current study contributes to an analytical comparison of U.S. and Saudi newspaper coverage of Saudi women's issues before and after the announcement of Saudi Vision 2030, which supports women's right. The study is important because the status of women in Saudi Arabia has evolved. Indeed, change is a part of human

nature. One crucial aspect that the change required by Saudi Vision 2030 aims for is the betterment of society. Also, the importance of this research lies in the discussion of current day Saudi women and their accomplishments through a valuable literature review.

1.3      Purpose and Approach

Overall, this research brings new insight because the analysis is focused on two essential ingredients. The first one is comparing Saudi and U.S. newspaper coverage of Saudi women, and the second one is studying whether there is a difference between media coverage before and after the improvement in the status of Saudi women.

Entman (1993) suggests that frames can influence how audiences understand and think about particular issues. Content analysis has been defined as "a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication," (Berelson, 1952, p. 18). Applying framing theory and the content analysis method was appropriate for tracing the framing of Saudi women's issues in eight newspapers. Four of them are Saudi newspapers, which are *Al Riyadh*, *Okaz*, *Al Jazirah*, and *Al Watan.* On the other hand, the other four are U.S. newspapers. These newspapers were the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Wall Street Journal*, and the *Los Angeles Times.*

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1     Brief Background about Saudi Arabia

In 1744, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab and Prince Muhammad bin Saud established

the first Saudi stats, as they participated in establishing a state based on a religious foundation

that follows the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet until it was dissolved in 1818 by the

Ottoman campaigns against the Arabian Peninsula. The second Saudi state began in 1824,

following a successful attempt by Prince Turki to establish a Saudi state, so Saudi Arabia entered

its second phase based on the pillars and components of the first state until some disputes led to

its end in 1891. Then, in 1932, Abdulaziz bin Saud re-established the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Today, Saudi Arabia contains 46 cities, including 20 major cities. Each region is divided into

several governorates (Mishal, 2020).

Social life in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia over the past years has been full of many

manifestations and phenomena stemming from its customs and traditions, which have evolved

over the years although some of them still remain, such as the *guardianship system*[1]. Saudi

Arabia was founded as an Islamic nation. It is the only religion in Saudi Arabia. Indeed, Saudi

Arabia is the only country in the world that applies the provisions of the Quran and *Sunnah*[2]

strictly (Wrampelmeier, 2001).

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the largest country in the Arabian Peninsula. It has

always been popular for its location in the middle of Asia and Africa. Also, the Kingdom has

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[1] Guardianship system is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as "the state or position of being responsible for somebody/something. To grant somebody guardianship of the children."

[2] Sunnah is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as the "traditional portion of Muslim law based on Muhammad's words or acts, accepted (together with the Koran) as authoritative by Muslims and followed particularly by Sunni Muslims."

been considered a rich country because of its oil. It is the second largest source of petroleum in the world. As the demand for oil rose, Saudi Arabia's economy grew. Therefore, this led to great attention from the Western media (Bowen, 2015, p. 144).

The Kingdom is witnessing tangible economic prosperity and progress in all areas of social and economic development, which has produced tangible improvement among all human development indicators, including the standard of living, health and education services, and environmental conditions, as well as the potential for comprehensive development (Saudi Vision, 2019).

Due to the above-mentioned factors, it is worth noting that Saudi Arabia has gained global attention on its internal issues, such as women's issues.

2.1.1   History of Saudi Newspapers

The emergence of media in Saudi Arabia started when the newspaper, *Um Al-Qura*, was established in 1924; it was the first official weekly newspaper to observe the country's decisions and report on them to the citizens. Then, historically, the Saudi press has gone through three developmental stages (Amer, 2014). They are individual journalism, stage of merging the newspapers, and development of press organizations.

In the individual journalism stage, the Saudi press published articles primarily serving the government's perspectives rather than other objective news, and at that time the newspaper, *Al-Bilad*, was established. During the next stage, different newspapers merged. This stage came as an attempt to reduce the number of newspapers that were present at that time. The last stage was the development of press organizations, which significantly changed the history of the Saudi press industry. During that movement, the Saudi press became organized by Saudi citizens who owned and operated the press institutions.

Freedom of the press has been debatable over the years. Hammond mentioned that Saudi Arabia had controlled the media since the occurrence of the Gulf crisis in order to protect itself from external threats (2007). Years later, Alloam reports that the Minister of Culture and Information, Al-Awwad, insists that Saudi Vision 2030 supports journalists by promoting their power to develop media work and improve Saudi Arabia's rating in terms of press freedom. However, some Saudi journalists still argue that among the pressing needs of the Saudi press, enjoying a higher ceiling of freedom than it currently has is one of most important (2018).

Today, there are 15 daily newspapers in Saudi Arabia. These newspapers have been established based on the government's approval. Indeed, when some news organizations need to cover sensitive topics related to politics and conflicts, they depend on the Saudi Press Agency. The Saudi Press Agency was under government control until 2012, after which it has been supervised by the Saudi Ministry of Media (Saudi Press Agency, n.d.).

Nevertheless, it has been found by previous studies that when Saudi newspapers cover news related to Saudi Arabia, they predominantly use official sources. These sources include government reports and other official documents (Hashemi & Postel, 2017). Moreover, the Saudi government has banned political parties and opposition parties (Menoret, 2011).

2.1.2   Saudi Women

In 2020, statistics suggested that women in Saudi Arabia constitute statistically 49% of the population in Saudi Arabia ("The general authority for statistics issues," 2020). The situation of women in Saudi society is considered to be a part of woman's issues at every time and place according to the realities, historical, cultural, and social contexts. Saudi women, like women everywhere, are an active element in their society, contributing to the building and development of the country.

However, in this construction process, they remain governed by two pivotal factors: The first one is in reference to Saudi women, which is the Islamic Sharia that legalized women's rights, duties, and their position in human society. The second factor is that the Saudi woman's place in society is governed by customs which sometimes diverge from the essence of Sharia by indulging in strictness in practicing life in all its aspects.

Women in Saudi Arabia often wear the black *abaya*[3] in public life. Their types vary according to religious influences and social customs, as some cover their faces, while some are satisfied with the veil without a face covering. After the level of influence of the great awakening movement[4] decreased, abaya of various colors began to appear and some women have recently appeared out without the abaya, especially since it is not mandatory in the Saudi system, but only modest dress is required.

Regarding the issue of the emergence of women in the media, there are two aspects that we must distinguish and highlight. There are controls for the appearance of women in general, and stricter controls for the appearance of Saudi women in particular. Also, the idea of the occupation of certain positions by women was unwelcome in some quarters. Indeed, some families felt ashamed when their daughters worked in hospitals, and those who chose to pursue a career in nursing or journalism faced many criticisms because in these jobs, women have to deal with male colleagues.

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[3] Abaya is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as "full-length outer garment worn by some Muslim women."

[4] Awakening movement was one of the most powerful social and political movements in Saudi Arabia. Its origins date back to the 1950s and 1960s, when thousands of members of the Muslim Brotherhood fled violent repression across the region, especially Egypt and came to the conservative kingdom ("Saudi Arabia's Islamic Awakening," 2018)

2.2    The Media and Women's Issues

Although the public does not fully accept that media frames affect ideas, they still understand that the media are tools used to gain community interest in specific topics (Van Gorp, 2007). It follows that the media can be used to support or weaken women's issues. The contribution of women in the development of societies will be enhanced if they receive positive attention from media, and the contrary is also true. The reason is that the media has visible effects on influencing society.

The stereotypical images of women in the media reflect the role of women in society and define them based on those images. However, these stereotypes represent negative images that are reflected in the way women perceive themselves and the way others perceive them. Several media outlets, such as television and movies in most parts of the world, present an unbalanced picture of women's lives, hobbies, experiences, and diverse accomplishments in society (Mishal, 2020).

2.2.1    Saudi Newspaper Coverage of Saudi Women

Previous scholars found that the Arab media produced a more balanced and multi-faceted image of Saudi women than others. However, a study done in 2016 revealed that the coverage of Saudi newspapers was simple, and there was a clear absence of women's pages (Bashatah, 2017). In fact, statistics showed that a crucial part of the Arab media is still completely avoiding mentioning women (Al-Malki, Kaufer, Ishizaki, & Dreher, 2012). Saudi press coverage of women's activities is important because it has repercussions on the image of Saudi women in local newspapers and Western press. Clearly, Saudi press coverage influences the image of women in society in Saudi Arabia and also in other countries.

News about the first meeting of the Saudi women's council in the Al-Qassim region was

shared on Twitter, and the photo that was used in the news was only of men. Some people criticized this because there were no women in the picture (Al-Khader, 2017). The role of television at the end of the sixties and seventies was part of the memory of that particular Saudi generation. It was an important factor in changing people's social awareness. It promoted songs and series that were produced in other Arab countries which were more open to the emergence of women.

However, the Saudi press had a more restrictive view on the emergence of women in newspapers. Some Arab women appeared early on TV, specifically in children's programs. However, when it came to the local press, it was not possible for a Saudi woman to appear, even if the writer wanted to use her picture. The controls on the press were more severe because the conservative groups could reach the newspapers easily, unlike television which they didn't have access to because they believed that the presence of TV in their homes was forbidden and violated the religion of Islam. Therefore, they had no exposure to or knowledge of that world. In the late seventies, Saudi magazines began to put a few pictures of women announcing new products, such as washing machines and modern electrical appliances. They continued to go in the same direction until the mid-eighties, and slowly the number of images of women in media have increased (Al-Khader, 2017).

2.2.2    Foreign Newspaper Coverage of Arab-Muslim Women

Media rely on ideological dissemination to create representation because images and portrayals are ways in which representation describes the social world. People process the world through media images. Some of the past studies found that Arab women have been portrayed mostly negatively in Western media. (Steet, 2000; Shirazi, 2001; Mishra, 2007; Almahmoud, 2015; Bashatah, 2017). Aberwein (2002) points out that because Arab women have been

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stereotyped so frequently and for such a long time in the media, most people have little understanding about the status or daily lives of actual Arab women.

One example of the images of Muslim women that have been displayed in foreign media was a woman who is surrounded by a group of children, wrapped in black veil, showing only a narrow opening for the eyes. Aquil found that "What Muslim women wear on their faces and bodies has been the symbolic battleground for clashes and differences in culture between the West and the Muslim and Arab world" (2011, p. 21). Research has indicated that Western media tend to focus on the *hijab* of Saudi women, which has been described as a symbol of their oppression (Shirazi, 2001). Moreover, in Western movies, Saudi women have been portrayed as tools for men and their sexual satisfaction. They have been represented as strange, weak people who have no voice (Luther, Lepre, & Clark, 2017, p. 112).

Books and research studying the issue of Muslim women and the media have become increasingly prevalent (Shaheen, 2003; Muscati, 2002). Jack Shaheen (2003) studied the role of media in distorting the reputations of Muslims and Arabs. He analyzed 900 films and found that Muslims were rarely represented as ordinary people when it comes to social interactions (Shaheen, 2003). It was mentioned that in only 5% out of 900 movies were Arabs portrayed positively. Muscati analyzed Western media representations during the 1991 Gulf War. He studied media representations of Muslims and found that Muslims were the ones most likely to be misrepresented in the media (Muscati, 2002).

Therefore, it can be said that there is a strong need to produce more studies on Saudi women and Saudi media coverage and compare them with U.S. newspapers. It also can be noted that most Western studies have been done based on Arab or Muslim female identities not Saudi women in particular. Some researchers also have studied the images of Saudi women after

terrorist events, such as the incident of 9-11. Others were based on certain issues, such as driving and the veil. Indeed, Saudi Arabia has been criticized as the only country that prevented women from driving. These events might have led to more prevalent negative images of Saudi women.

2.2.3   Saudi Vision 2030

In late 2016, Saudi Vision 2030 was launched by the king of Saudi Arabia with a strategic plan for the coming fifteen years. The primary purpose behind Vision 2030 was to transform the Saudi economy from an oil-dependent one to a post-oil economy (Hvidt, 2018). The Kingdom's Vision 2030 is considered to be a road map for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It focuses on three main areas, which are: a vibrant society, a thriving economy, and an ambitious country. Several programs were discussed in the plan, among which was Saudi women's rights. It pointed out that Saudi women make up 50% of the workforce in society, and their participation is extremely important in forming a vibrant and prosperous economy. Also, Saudi Vision 2030 provides that Saudi's economy will give opportunities to all men and women, and young and old people to contribute to their best abilities (Al-Sagheer, 2017).

This radically new approach reflected in Vision 2030, and other parts of Saudi Vision, such as National Transformation Program for 2020 and the Financial Balance Program, recognizes that there is a need to encourage the full participation of Saudi women in the labor market, which will drive the cultural changes necessary to empower women to become more economically productive and more independent.

2.2.4   The Saudi Vision 2030 Approach

Vision 2030 indicates that Saudi women represent a great asset that unfortunately has not been sufficiently exploited. There is also a need to acknowledge the rights of women, the importance of lifting the current restrictions on their participation in the economy and lifting the

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ban on their driving. Finally, women should not need permission from a guardian to work or

travel (Al-Sagheer, 2017; "International expert: Saudi Vision 2030…," 2017; "Janadriyah:

Women's symposium, the kingdom's vision 2030…," 2018; "Saudi Vision," 2019).

The Ministry of Labor is making strenuous efforts to support Saudi women in the

labor market and to increase their participation in appropriate and stable work environments.

This is based on empowering Saudi women in the labor market, and in line with the goals of

the National Transformation Program 2020 and the Kingdom's 2030 vision. One of the most

important projects launched by the Ministry of Labor in cooperation with the Human

Resources Fund, *Hadaf* is to empower Saudi women, increase their participation in the labor

market, and support their job stability, the following programs.

The *Qurra* program is a program to support child hospitality centers for women who

work.  It is provided by the Human Resources Development Fund *Hadaf* to enable women

who work to enter and continue in the labor market while reassuring their children by

registering them with a licensed children's hospitality service. Also, the human development

fund *Hadaf* contributes to cover part of the cost of the children's hospitality monthly

(Hisham, 2020).

The Access program is concerned with the transportation of women who work, and it

aims to enable work in the private sector by helping employees to overcome transportation

difficulties to and from the workplace in order to support job stability. The program works

with financial support from the human resources development fund and in cooperation with

vehicle orientation applications to provide high-quality transportation at a reasonable cost.

The program also covers all regions of Saudi Arabia, utilizing the licensed centers in each

region.

The initiative for the unified organization of the women's work environment is one of the most important initiatives and projects launched by the Ministry of Labor. It aims to create an attractive work environment for women to enhance their presence in various activities in the labor market and to facilitate private sector enterprises in attracting women and enabling them to work. The Ministry affirmed its objective through this organization to open several areas for women to work and at the same time offer an attractive and safe work environment (Hisham, 2020; "International women's day," 2020).

The Kingdom continues to strive in its unstoppable ambition within the Saudi Vision 2030 that aims to increase the percentage of participation in the labor market by Saudi women to 30% in addition to holding political positions. It also promoted women's active participation in the Shura Council and in the field of security. Also, women were allowed to nominate themselves for membership in the mayor's office (Al-Dakhil, 2019). Thus, we find that empowering Saudi women and supporting their abilities through training and providing opportunities make them full-fledged, effective partners in building the homeland and developing innovation.

The organization touched on several controlling measures for women's work, the most important of which are the employer's commitment to creating a suitable work environment for women, avoiding any work that would put pressure on women's freedom in a way that is not compatible with the work system, providing local regulations,  assuring non-discrimination in the wages of workers, and providing adequate security guards or an appropriate electronic security system for all facilities. The Ministry also prohibited the employment of women in occupations and industrial jobs that would expose them to risks to their safety and health.

Therefore, women in the Kingdom are coming in with a developmental and pivotal role

in Vision 2030 as it puts them at the forefront, emphasizing their full participation because they are an important component of a powerful society, and they have the potential for success (Al-Dawoud, 2019).

2.2.5    Developments in the Status of Saudi Women

Religious scholars objected to the participation of Saudi women in some activities for many years. This caused Saudi women to face economic marginalization (Al-Rasheed, 2013). As a result, women did not used to have the chance to become members of the Shura Council, for instance. The role of this council is to make recommendations concerning Saudi people and wait for their approval by the Council of Ministers headed by the king. It consists of 60 members, chosen by the king, who are chosen based on different attributes and abilities to contribute: scholars, business experts, and specialists. Then the rights of members, their duties, and all their affairs are determined by royal decree.

Saudi women were not allowed to drive, travel without a *mahram* (a man who is from her family, such as father, husband, or brother in the role of chaperone)*,* or get any official paperwork completed. Research has indicated that society, culture and religion were the reasons behind these obstacles (Miller-Rosser, Chapman, & Francis, 2006).

Lately, Saudi women have gained their rights to personal freedom and making their own choices in several matters. In 2012, Saudi Arabia opened the way for women to work in judicial facilities when the Ministry of Justice decided to grant legal licenses to women. Therefore, in 2018, the number of Saudi women lawyers has been increased as it reached 280. In 2019, the Ministry of Justice announced the opening of the door for employing Saudi women for the position of a notary public after it had opened the door for employment for them as legal advisors, researchers, and sharia lawmakers in the ministry for the first time.

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Saudi women also got their right to be Shura members ("Women enter the Saudi Shura Council," 2013), vote ("Saudi Arabia's women vote in election for first time," 2015), drive, travel without a chaperone (Fahim, 2019; Yeung & Alkhshali, 2019), and hold crucial leadership positions ("First Saudi woman appointed as assistant mayor," 2017; Al-Khalidi, 2018; "Taghreed Al-Haddab is director of policy," 2019).

When it comes to the appearance of Saudi women in Saudi traditional media, notable changes have happened. There has been an increase of the number of Saudi women reporters, journalists, and editors (Mellor, 2010). Also, coverage of issues and newspaper content have changed. In fact, Almistadi (2014) found that several crucial issues related to women have been covered in the top national Saudi newspapers, such as news about culture, labor, and justice.

Moreover, Saudi Arabia named a princess as ambassador to Washington (Hubbard, 2019). In October 2019, the Saudi Ministry of Defense announced the opening of applications for female military positions with many ranks in the ministry's branches from the Royal Saudi Land Forces, the Royal Saudi Air Force, the Saudi Royal Navy, the Saudi Royal Air Defense Forces, strategic missiles, and the medical services of the armed forces. The entry of Saudi women into these sectors is an historic event, as it is happening for the first time (Al-Ahdal, 2020; Al-Jabr, 2020).

The changes are happening fast, which led journalists to report on women's activities, such as driving around in the cities, exercising outside along the shores, and working as police officers and in the military, none of which used to be possible (Abdulaziz, 2019). These activities may seem mundane to the rest of the world, but in the past, it was strange for Saudi people to see women mixing with men in public places without wearing their hijab. On the other hand, recently, when it comes to wearing the veil, there are no longer strict restrictions. In an interview

with the *New York Times*, a tourist who recently visited Saudi Arabia said that she saw many

girls walking around town without a hijab in the three weeks that she was there, which was a

different sight to see. Also, women in Saudi Arabia are no longer banned from traveling without

having the permission of their guardians (Hubbard & Yee, 2019).

2.3     Framing Theory

2.3.1   The Concept of Framing Theory

Framing theory means that the news stories have been framed within a certain framework

through which the media outlet views the issues. This can be done by focusing on specific facts,

information, and opinions, and ignoring or minimizing other facts. In short, framing is the

placement of a story in a specific setting to give it a particular meaning. It is clear that framing is

one of the most useful theory when researcher seek to measure the inherent content of

information contained in news outlets stories.

News frames are defined as "conceptual tools which media and individuals rely on to

convey, interpret and evaluate information" ((Neuman, Just, & Crigler, 1992, p. 60). Baran and

Davis (2015) indicated that events are being framed based on the traditions and cultures of

newspapers (p. 326).  Goffman defined media frameworks as a specific construct of expectations

that the media use to make people more aware of social situations at some point. It is a

purposeful process by the communicator who reorganizes the message to affect the perceptions

of people and to hold their persuasive influences (1974).

There are also some comprehensive definitions of the framing theory. One of them was

stated by Gitlin (1980). He describes frames as persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation,

and presentation of, selection, emphasis, and exclusion by which symbol-handlers routinely

organize discourse. (p. 7). Overall, the concept of framing is related to the agenda-setting tradition. However, it focuses on the essence of the issues raised, not on a particular topic.

2.3.2   The Importance of Framing in the News

News frames are formed and embodied in specific tools, such as keywords, metaphors, concepts, symbols, and visual images. Emphasis is placed on these tools in the context of the narrative of a case or event through repetition of certain words and images. Repetition and strengthening the association of ideas with each other helps to establish a single interpretation of the issue or event. This interpretation is more comprehensive, clear, and more memorable to the public than other interpretations.

The importance of media framing lies in its ability to produce news stories, highlighting certain aspects of reality, and isolating others. It determines the extent to which individuals perceive and understand, assess and act towards a problem. The previous literature on framing has demonstrated its strong effects on social perception and political preferences of individuals (Entman, 1993; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). Therefore, choosing frameworks is especially important in diversifying perspectives.

Framing events and news in the media can systematically influence how recipients understand news related to these events. Entman believes that the impact of the media frameworks on messages is not only through the intentional formation of the framework, but also it is achieved by the intended omission, or the ignorance of the content producer (1993). The purpose of frame analysis is to ''isolate some of the basic frameworks of understanding available in our society for making sense out of events'' (Goffman, 1974, p. 10). Moreover, focusing the frame on highlighting certain information increases the possibility of the recipient perceiving it, realizing its meaning, and then processing and storing it in his memory.

### 2.3.3   Previous Studies and Framing

Framing theory has been applied by many researchers to various topics. Valkenburg and Semetko (2000) applied framing theory in studying the extent of European politics in the Dutch national news media. They analyzed more than 3,500 articles that were published in 1997 in three television programs and four newspapers. Their study examined how the news frame was used in the topics and each news outlet. They used five common news frames, which are conflict, economic consequences, namely attribution of responsibility, and morality. Also, they found that the conflict and responsibility frames were the frames most used in the news.

In terms of how women have been framed in general in the U.S. newspapers, Jia, Lansdall-Welfare, Sudhahar, Carter, and Cristianini (2016) investigated 2,353,652 news stories. They found that in both pictures and news texts, women were represented less than men. Moreover, women were represented in images more than text. In addition, some researchers used framing theory to study the media framing of particular women's issues. Cowart (2003) analyzed more than 90 news stories to study how media framed working women's images, especially voluntarily childless women, and he found that there was "negative framing of voluntarily childless women." (p. v).

In light of that, Carter, Steiner, and Allan (2019) found that news editors tend to represent women as silent fashion icons, victims, or celebrities. Using quantitative content analysis, De Bruin & Ross (2004) conducted in-depth interviews with 271 women journalists and found that women journalists are working framed by male socialization in the newsrooms, so they usually avoid writing about any differences based on gender. However, the framing of feminists in the news was studied by Lind and Salo, who analyzed around 35,000 hours of news. They concluded that feminists rarely appear, and their reputation is always demonized. The study has also shown

that feminists rarely appear.

Regarding how the media cover women's issues, Akmese and Deniz (2016) did a study "to find out how television news frames violence against women using representations and stereotypes." (p. 650). They analyzed more than 25 news stories, including ones on violence against women. Their main finding indicated that the news did not focus on the psychological and emotional effects of violence on women. Another study that focused on how news outlets have framed the issue of breast cancer found that "news magazines framed breast cancer from an economic angle, focusing on insurance and research funding" (Andsager & Powers, 1999, p. 1).

Other researchers have used visual framing and found that Muslim women were represented negatively (Dastgeer & Gade, 2016; Falah, 2005). Falah (2005) studied the visual representation of Muslim and Arab women in U.S. newspapers. He analyzed the headlines and photos published in news stories from 2001 to 2003, and his finding suggested that "women, in other words, are only technically and superficially present, and they serve primarily to reinforce preexisting understandings of Muslim societies as irrational, hostile, and antithetical to the liberal West" (p. 317). To compare the U.S. and Middle East newspapers (CNN and Al-Jazeera) coverages and framing of Muslim women's images, Dastgeer and Gade used visual framing. Their study suggested that Al-Jazeera portrayed women as involved in more important endeavors and as more active members of society than CNN did (2016).

In general, Arabs and Muslims have been misrepresented in the Western media, particularly after the September 11 tragedies. It was noticed that most studies of Arab and Muslims have been done after certain events such as September 11. This might lead to having negative images. With the development of the Arab, Muslim, and Saudi women's status, these images might be improved gradually.

To conclude, previous research has focused on the images and representations of Arab and Muslims women themselves. There is a notable lack of the study focused on Saudi women. Also, this research is not focusing on the representation of Saudi women in particular, but on how newspapers frames Saudi women's issues.

2.4     Research Questions

Based on what has been discussed, the present research seeks to answer the five following questions. Researchers suggested that "Research questions are part of the research framework; they are not frame in isolation" (Trede & Higgs, 2009, p. 14).

Frames in the news help readers and researchers to understand the way each newspaper covers the news stories, and whether it is using certain frame in all issues or using various frames considering the type of issues covered. The event may not have a major significance for the people unless the media put it in a specific framework (Entman, 1993).

> *RQ1: What frames have been used by U.S. newspapers in covering issues related to Saudi women before and after Saudi Vision 2030, and how have they been used?*

> *RQ2: What frames have been used by Saudi newspapers in covering issues related to Saudi women before and after Saudi Vision 2030, and how have they been used?*

It is also crucial to study each newspaper separately to understand its own perspective of Saudi women's issues. Critics have suggested that each news outlet's ideologies and cultures can guide their news framing decisions and lead to the use of various frames (Entman, 2010).

> *RQ3: Do the frames vary by each newspaper, and if so, in which way?*

The main goal of this thesis is to discover the major differences between the U.S. and Saudi coverage of issues related to Saudi women. This would be beneficial when identifying the local and global perspective.

> *RQ4: What are the differences between U.S. and Saudi newspapers' framing of Saudi women?*

Visual framing is another important aspect that needs to be taken into account when analyzing the news about Saudi women.  Indeed, studies have indicated that visual images are highly indicative of the frames being built and have become one of the best tools in analyzing frames (Coleman, 2010). Indeed, images are also a powerful tool when media want to attract the public's attention. The image has its importance and its impact on the press, and it also has a fundamental role in its industry.

*RQ5: How have the U.S and Saudi newspapers visually framed Saudi women?*

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1     Sample and Data Collection

In order to examine how Saudi and U.S newspapers have framed Saudi women's issues,

this thesis has used qualitative and quantitative content analysis. Content analysis is limited to

describing the content as what has been said or written without resorting to alteration of the exact

meanings (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000, p. 135).

To collect the data, eight newspapers were chosen. Four of them were U.S. newspapers.

The others were Saudi newspapers. The U.S. newspapers are the *Washington Post*, the *New York*

*Times*, and the *Wall Street Journal*. The Saudi newspapers are *Al Riyadh*, *Okaz*, *Al Jazirah*, and

*Al Watan.* These newspapers have been chosen with the intention of including various

geographical regions of the United States and because of their global notability. The *Washington*

*Post* and *New York Times* are two of the top ten largest daily newspapers by circulation ("Top 10

U.S. Daily Newspapers," 2019). The *Washington Post* encourages its readers to engage and

participate ("Top 15 U.S. Newspapers by Circulation," 2018). Likewise, *Aljazeera*, *Okaz*, and

*Alwatan* are the top three Saudi newspapers in terms of readership (Almistadi, 2014, p. 22). The

sample of this research was used to analyze how the news related to Saudi women's issues has

been covered and to compare U.S. and Saudi newspaper coverage before and after Saudi Vision

2030.

The time frame for this study was divided into two periods. The first is from 04/25/2014

to 04/25/2016. The second period is from 04/26/2016 to 06/26/2019. I chose this particular

timeframe because Saudi Vision 2030 was the beginning of radical changes in the status of Saudi

women. Indeed, according to many scholars, both current and historical political phenomena

have to be taken into account when analyzing the position of women in society over time (Van-Geel, 2012). Therefore, these samples aim to encompass these two periods.

To obtain the data, news stories were collected from U.S. newspapers using the advanced search box on each publication's website. For the Saudi newspapers' news stories, I used the Linkclump extension for collection of data. The news stories were chosen from the news section. Three hundred news stories in total were analyzed.

3.2     Coding Procedure

For this thesis, the number of newspapers to be analyzed was six.  However, during the data collection and analysis, it was difficult to find 300 news articles. Therefore, two additional newspapers were added to the sample, which were *Al Watan* and the *Los Angeles Times*.

To quantitatively analyze the content, the study implemented five pre-defined frames adapted from previous research (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). These frames are the conflict frame, the human-interest frame, the economic frame, the morality and religious frame, and the attribution of responsibility frame. The *conflict frame* emphasizes conflict between individuals, groups, or institutions as a means of capturing audience interest. The *human-interest frame* brings a human face or an emotional angle to the presentation of an event, issue, or problem. The *morality frame* interprets an issue from a moral (or often religious) perspective. The *economic consequences frame* reports an event, problem, or issue in terms of the consequences it will have economically on an individual, group, institution, region, or country. The *responsibility frame* presents an issue or problem in such a way as to attribute responsibility for its cause or solution to either the government, an individual, or a group.

Each frame has been assessed based on several questions that I asked with simple yes (1) or no (0) responses when analyzing the contents. The five pre-defined frames and their

operational measurements are indicated in (Table 3.1). Through the analysis, I noticed that some news stories may use more than one frame. Clearly one unit of analysis could fit under more than one frame. In this case, one frame was chosen as the dominant one. Stemler (2002) pointed out that when a media source chooses words that are predominantly used and repeated in a story, the effect is that media consumers feel this issue is of greatest concern.

Table 3.1

*The Five Pre-Defined Frames*

| Frame | Question1 | Question2 | Question3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Conflict | Does the news story reflect disagreement between parties-individuals-groups-countries? | Does one party-individual-group-country reproach another? | Does the story refer to two sides or to more than two sides of the problem or issue? |
| Human interest | Does the news story provide a human example or "human face" on the issue? | Does the news story employ adjectives or personal vignettes that generate feelings of outrage, empathy-caring, sympathy, or compassion? | Does the news story go into the private or personal lives of the actors? |
| Morality | Does the news story contain any moral message? | Does the news story make reference to morality, God, and other religious tenets? | Does the news story offer specific social prescriptions about how to behave? |
| Economic | Is there a mention of financial losses or gains now or in the future? | Is there a mention of the costs/degree of expense involved? | Is there a reference to economic consequences of pursuing or not pursuing a course of action? |
| Responsibility | Does the news story suggest that some level of gov't has the ability to alleviate the problem? | Does the news story suggest that some level of the government is responsible for the issue/problem? | Does the news story suggest solution(s) to the problem/issue? |

In order to study how the newspapers have applied the frames and discern the types of issues that have been discussed, I applied an inductive approach because the inductive approach

is useful for discovering patterns among qualitative data during analysis (Thomas, 2003). It was used to examine whether there were new frames involved. The qualitative content analysis is considered "any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages" (Holsti, 1969, p. 14). Therefore, I set up new coding categories based on the qualitative reading. This coding contains the type of issues that have been covered by the U.S. and Saudi newspapers (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2

*The Types of Topics Covered*

| News article | News outlets | Hijab | Activists | Driving | Guardian-ship system | Employ-ment |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| e.g. "link of the article" | e.g. "*NYT*" | ✓ | | | | |
| e.g. "link of the article" | e.g. "*WSJ*" | | ✓ | | | |
| e.g. "link of the article" | e.g. "*Al jazirah*" | | | ✓ | | |
| e.g. "link of the article" | e.g. "*Al watan*" | | | | ✓ | |

When it comes to how U.S. and Saudi newspapers visually framed Saudi women's issues in the news stories, I used visual depiction coding categories, which have been borrowed from a previous study (Dastgeer & Gade, 2016). The visual depiction has three codings: active, passive, and unclear. The image was assigned as an active depiction when the woman in it is smiling, moving, or leading others. The image was coded as passive when the woman is motionless, or she is not looking at the camera (Dastgeer & Gade, 2016). The last coding, "unclear," was assigned to an image that I could not read as belonging to one of the two categories.

To visually analyze the images of Saudi women from a different perspective, this thesis also has adopted "hijab" categories (Dastgeer & Gade, 2016). The hijab category has been assigned according to four types: the covered face hijab, the uncovered face hijab, only the Abaya, and without hijab. The "covered face Hijab" has been assigned when the woman is covering her whole face. The "uncovered face hijab" has been assigned when a woman covers her hair but not her face. The "Abaya only" has been assigned to the image when a woman is wearing only the lower part of the hijab, which means she is not covering her face or her hair.

Finally, to statistically assess frames, descriptive statistics and several tests have been used. The analyses were conducted using *SPSS Version 26.*

3.3     Training for the Coding

It is crucial to confirm the reliability of the frames used. To check that, Weber (1990) has explained "to make valid inferences from the text, it is important that the classification procedure be reliable in the sense of being consistent: Different people should code the same text in the same way," (p. 12). Therefore, I asked another coder to analyze 10% of the total number to test reliability.

Prior to the training process, the charts of the five frames and the image coding categories with their definitions were sent to the coder, and he was given time to read and record any notes or questions. Then, the coder was trained for two days. For the first day, he was trained on how to analyze the news stories based on the five frames. Also, an instructional session was provided on how to code, step by step. For example, because some news stories were difficult to read or may go under more than one frame, I provided him guidelines on how to choose the most dominant frame.

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To facilitate the coding process, two Excel files were provided to the second coder. One for the U.S. newspapers, and the other one for the Saudi newspapers. For instance, for the news stories, the file contains five columns. They are as follow: story number, newspapers outlet, story link, story time, and frames. The newspaper outlets were assigned with numbers, as the *New York Times* was assigned as "1" and *Los Angeles Times* was assigned as "4". Also, the news story times were assigned by "0" and "1." "0" represents the news before Saudi Vision 2030, while "1" refers to the news after Saudi Vision 2030.  Also, the five frames were assigned 1 to 5.

To evaluate the inter-rater reliability, Cohen's kappa test was used. The level of agreement was .822, which is considered to be almost perfect agreement.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

I analyzed each news story as a unit of analysis, and a total of 300 news articles were
analyzed. For the U.S. newspapers, 37 news stories (24.37%) were from the *New York Times*, 48
news stories (32.0%) from the *Washington Post*, 42 news stories (28.0%) from the *Wall Street
Journal*, and 23 news stories (15.3%) from the *Los Angeles Times*. Among the Saudi
newspapers, 40 news stories (26.7%) were from *Al Riyadh*, 44 news stories (29.3%) from *Okaz*,
34 news stories (22.7%) from *Al Jazirah,* and 32 news stories (21.3%) from *Al Watan* (see Table
4.1).

Table 4.1

*Most Prominent Frames Employed in the U.S and Saudi Media*

| | Conflict | Human-Interest | Morality | Economic | Responsi-bility | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| U.S. Newspapers ($N = 150$) | | | | | | |
| *NYT* | 5 (16.7%) | 15 (28.3%) | 3 (33.3%) | 4 (40.0%) | 10 (20.8%) | 37 (24.7%) |
| *WPOST* | 11 (36.7%) | 19 (35.8%) | 2 (22.2%) | 1 (10.0%) | 15 (31.3%) | 48 (32.0%) |
| *WSJ* | 9 (30.0%) | 12 (22.6%) | 3 (33.3%) | 2 (20.0%) | 16 (33.3%) | 42 (28.0%) |
| *LA Times* | 5 (16.7%) | 7 (13.2%) | 1 (11.1%) | 3 (30.0%) | 7 (14.6%) | 23 (15.3%) |
| Total | 30 (100.0%) | 53 (100.0%) | 9 (100.0%) | 10 (100.0%) | 48 (100.0%) | 150 (100.0%) |
| Saudi Newspapers ($N = 150$) | | | | | | |
| *Al Riyadh* | 1 (14.3%) | 14 (26.9%) | 4 (57.1%) | 21 (28.4%) | 0 (0.0%) | 40 (26.7%) |
| *Okaz* | 0 (0.0%) | 17 (32.7%) | 3 (42.9%) | 21 (28.4%) | 3 (30.0%) | 44 (29.3%) |
| *Al Jazira* | 0 (0.0%) | 12 (23.1%) | 0 (0.0%) | 18 (24.3%) | 4 (40.0%) | 34 (22.7%) |

*(table continues)*

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|  | Conflict | Human-Interest | Morality | Economic | Responsi-bility | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Al Watan* | 6 (85.7%) | 9 (17.3%) | 0 (0.0%) | 14 (18.9%) | 3 (30.0%) | 32 (21.3%) |
| Total | 7 (100.0%) | 52 (100.0%) | 7 (100.0%) | 74 (100.0%) | 10 (100.0%) | 150 (100.0%) |

## 4.1 Research Question 1

*What frames have been used by U.S. newspapers in covering Saudi women issues before and after Saudi Vision 2030 and how?*

To answer this question, I set up coding that contains the story number, newspapers names, the time, and the frames used. To analyze the number of the frames, descriptive statistics were used. The descriptive statistics of the used frames shows that ($M = 2.95$, $SD = 1.586$). The frequency of results suggested that human-interest frame was the most prominent frame found in the analyzed news stories from the four U.S. online newspapers (i.e., the *New York Time*, the *Washington Post*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and the *Los Angeles Times*). It was used 53 times (35.3%). Responsibility frame (32.0%) was the second most evident used frame, followed by conflict frame (20.0%). However, the economic consequences and morality frames were the least used framework in the news articles about Saudi women's issues. The economic frame was used in 10 news stories (6.7%), while the morality frame was used in 9 news stories (6.0%).

Table 4.2

*Frames Used in U.S. Newspapers*

|  | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Conflict | 30 | 20.0 |
| Human interest | 53 | 35.3 |
| Morality | 9 | 6.0 |
| Economic | 10 | 6.7 |
| Responsibility | 48 | 32.0 |

Using chi-square test, $\chi^2$ (4, $N$ = 150) = 9.388, $p$ = .052, I was able to ascertain that there were no significant differences between the frames that were used before and after the implementation of Saudi Vision 2030. Moreover, the four U.S. newspapers used conflict, human interest, morality, economic, and responsibility frames before and after Saudi Vision 2030 as shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

*U.S. Newspapers' Use of Frames Before and After Saudi Vision 2030*

|  | Conflict | Human-Interest | Morality | Economic | Responsi-bility | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Before | 23.3% | 26% | 33.3% | 50.0% | 10.4% | 22% |
| After | 76.7% | 73% | 66.7% | 50.0% | 89.6% | 77.3% |
| Total | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |
| Chi-Square | Value | | df | | P value | |
|  | 9.338 | | 4 | | .052 | |

The second part of the question asked how the frames were used in the U.S. newspapers. The qualitative reading of the data showed that human-interest was used to dramatize the issue and emotionalize the event. Clearly, emotional language was frequently used. Words like *threat* were found to be dominant throughout the news stories. For instance, "A jailed Saudi activist was told she would be released if she denied being tortured, her family says. She refused," – *Washington Post*. (Parker, 2018).

In relation to the responsibility frame, U.S. newspapers framed the issue by blaming the government for making restrictive regulations regarding the freedom of women and the guardianship system. For example, "How Saudi Arabia uses women's rights reforms against women's rights and reform," –*Washington Post*. (Allam, 2019). Another example is "Saudi women made history–but still have a long way to go." –*Wall Street Journal.* (Esfandiari, 2015).

The same frame also was used to praise the government for a change they had made or solving a specific issue, such as lifting the driving ban "Saudi Arabia adopts landmark changes for women, including an end to travel restrictions," –*Los Angeles Times*. (Bulos, 2019).

4.2     Research Question 2

*What frames have been used by Saudi newspapers in covering issues related to Saudi women before and after Saudi vision 2030, and how have they been used?*

The descriptive statistical test of the used frames shows that ($M = 3.18$, $SD = 1.125$). The frequency test suggested that economic consequences and human-interest frames were the most prominent frames in the analyzed news stories from the four Saudi online newspapers (i.e., *Al Riyadh*, *Okaz*, *Al Jazirah*, and *Al Watan*). The economic consequences frame was used 74 times (49.3%), followed by human interest, which was used 52 times (34.7%).

The responsibility, morality, and conflict frames were the least used frames in the news articles about Saudi women's issues. The responsibility frame was used in 10 news stories (6.7%), while the other two were used in only seven stories with the percentage of (4.7) each.

Table 4.4

*Frames Used in Saudi Newspapers*

|                | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------|-----------|------------|
| Conflict       | 7         | 4.7        |
| Human interest | 52        | 34.7       |
| Morality       | 7         | 4.7        |
| Economic       | 74        | 49.3       |
| Responsibility | 10        | 6.7        |

The subsequent results of the chi-square test showed that the differences between the frames that were used before and after Saudi Vision 2030 are not significant. When it comes to how the Saudi newspapers applied these frames, as the previous result shows, the economic

consequences frame was most used. The newspapers have used the frames in different ways. For instance, *Okaz* used it to discuss how allowing women into leadership positions has great economic effects. "Companies with more women in leadership positions outperform companies without women in senior positions by an average of 47%," – *Okaz*. (Al-Debis, 2018).

Table 4.5

*Saudi Newspapers' Use of Frames Before and After Saudi Vision 2030*

| | Conflict | Human-Interest | Morality | Economic | Responsi-bility | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Before | 100.0% | 50.0% | 85.7% | 51.4% | 50.0% | 22% |
| After | 0.0% | 50.0% | 14.3% | 48.6% | 50.0% | 77.3% |
| Total | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

| Chi-Square | Value | *df* | *P* value |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 9.401 | 4 | .052 |

However, the human-interest frame came as the second most used frame. Saudi news outlets have used it to emotionalize the issue by focusing on how the guardianship system suppresses the right of Saudi women. For instance, "And how can women who have raised the status of society and the nation through many qualitative achievements be treated as minors or incompetents?" – *Al Riyadh.* (Al-Abdeen, 2014). They explained how adult women are still in need of the care of a guardian. "they are denied many rights because of what the guardianship system imposes on them, regardless of their age, academic, cultural and social status," – *Al Riyadh*. (Al-Abdeen, 2014). *Okaz* used human interest in a different way; it discussed the role of Saudi women in a society holding onto ancient beliefs that men have about women with the quotation, "In our culture ... women cook and vacuum!!," – *Okaz* (Al-Naami, 2014).

4.3     Research Question 3

*Do the frames vary by each newspaper, and if so, in which way?*

For the U.S. newspapers, the result of chi-square test $\chi^2$ (12, $N = 150$) = 7.925, $p = .791$, suggested that there is no significant difference among the U.S. newspapers in employing frames. However, the *Washington Post* has mostly used the conflict frame at 11 instances (36.7%) among the frames. In contrast, the human interest was the most used frame by the *New York Times* with 19 instances (35.8%), and in the *Wall Street Journal* 12 (22.6%) (see Table 4.1).

Like the U.S. newspapers, the four Saudi newspapers used the economic frame. Nevertheless, the conflict frame was not used by *Okaz* and *Al Jazira*. It was most used by *Al Watan.* An example of how *Al Watan* applied the conflict frame is in a way that shows how a woman suffers from guardianship and how their lives are being controlled. Also, it was used in discussing women's and men's salaries in the private sectors. They wrote, "At the start of employment, wages are equal, but men get promotions faster than women who work in the same job and have the same qualification," – *Al Watan*. (Al-Shremi, 2017).

4.4     Research Question 4

*What are the differences between U.S. and Saudi newspapers' framing of Saudi women's issues?*

The results of Question 1 and Question 2 support that there are several differences between U.S. and Saudi newspapers in news framing when it comes to Saudi women's issues. U.S. newspapers focused mostly on the human-interest frame, in which they dramatized the issues and framed them from a purely human perspective. However, Saudi newspapers paid more attention to the economic aspect.

When analyzing the eight newspapers and obtaining 300 news articles, it was found that the types of issues covered were varied and have been discussed in various way, so to study the

differences deeply, I used the following types of topic coding categories.

The U.S. and Saudi newspapers covered the hijab, guardianship system, women's

driving, women's sport, leadership positions, guardian's system, and women empowerment.

Table 4.6

*Type of Topics Covered in Both U.S. and Saudi Newspapers*

| News outlets | Hijab | Activists | Driving ban | Guardian -ship system | Women empower -ment | Sports | Leader- ship positions | Vote |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| U.S. | 9 | 30 | 38 | 27 | 12 | 7 | 12 | 15 |
| Saudi | 2 | 0 | 10 | 7 | 37 | 2 | 49 | 43 |

4.5     Research Question 5

*How have the U.S. and Saudi newspapers visually framed Saudi women?*

4.5.1   U.S. Newspapers

The total of U.S. images that were analyzed was 154. First, I analyzed them based on

visual depiction categories. The result suggested that the images of Saudi women were mostly

active. In the four newspaper publications, the *New York Times,* the *Washington Post,* the *Wall*

*Street Journal*, and the *Los Angeles Times*, the descriptive statistic suggested that visual

depiction was active in 81 (52.6%) images out of 154 images. Here is an example of active

depiction taken from the *Los Angeles Times*: A woman leading another woman and teaching her

how to drive. Another example found in the *New York Times* is a young woman who is speaking

at a conference.

On the other hand, the total number of passive depictions found in the newspapers was 50

(32.5%). A passive example found in the *Wall Street Journal* was a group of women sitting

behind men while not facing or being focused on by the camera.

The chi-square test shows that the *New York Times* depicted Saudi women as active in 21 images (25.9%), while it depicted them as passive in nine images (18.0%). However, the *Wall Street Journal* showed women being active in 20 images (24.7%) and passive in the other 16 images (32.0%). The *Washington Post* used 23 active images (28.4%), while it used 17 passive images (34.0%). When it comes to the *Los Angeles Times*, the total of active images used was 17 to the percentage of 21.0%, and the total of the passive images was eight to the percentage of 16.0%. The unclear images in the newspapers were 23 images (14.9%) (Table 4.7).

Table 4.7

*U.S. Newspapers: Images Analyzed based on Visual Depiction Category*

|          | Active        | Passive       | Unclear       | Total         |
|----------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| *NYT*    | 21 (25.9%)    | 9 (18.0%)     | 7 (30.4%)     | 37 (24.0%)    |
| *WP*     | 23 (28.4%)    | 17 (34.0%)    | 8 (34.8%)     | 48 (31.2%)    |
| *WSJ*    | 20 (24.7%)    | 16 (32.0%)    | 6 (26.1%)     | 42 (27.3%)    |
| *LA Times* | 17 (21.0%)  | 8 (16.0%)     | 2 (8.7%)      | 27 (17.5%)    |
| Total    | 81 (100.0%)   | 50 (100.0%)   | 23 (100.0%)   | 154 (100.0%)  |

The second coding category measured in this study is the Hijab type. The result (Table 4.8) shows that a variety of hijabs were depicted in the found images. The four newspapers depicted all types of hijab worn in Saudi Arabia in their images. The frequency test shows that "covered face hijab" was found in 50 images (32.5%), while the "uncovered face hijab" was found in 79 images (51.3%). "Without hijab" has been indicated in 16 images (10.4%). The "only Abaya" was the least type used, which was nine (5.8%).

Table 4.8 also shows that the "uncovered face hijab" type was the most common type of

hijab in all four publications, with 79 images out of 154 images. The covered face type of hijab was the second most commonly depicted type in all four newspapers. In fact, there were only 50 images of women wearing a covered-face hijab out of the 154 images.

Table 4.8

*U.S. Newspapers: Images Analyzed based on Hijab Type Category*

|  | Covered Face | Uncovered face | Only Abaya | Without Hijab | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *NYT* | 11 (22.0%) | 23 (29.1%) | 1 (11.1%) | 2 (12.5%) | 37 (24.0%) |
| *WP* | 18 (36.0%) | 23 (29.1%) | 3 (33.3%) | 4 (25.0%) | 48 (31.2%) |
| *WSJ* | 15 (30.0%) | 22 (27.8%) | 3 (33.3%) | 2 (12.5%) | 42 (27.3%) |
| *LA Times* | 6 (12.0%) | 11 (13.9%) | 2 (22.2%) | 8 (50.0%) | 27 (17.5%) |
| Total | 50 (100.0%) | 79 (100.0%) | 9 (100.0%) | 16 (100.0%) | 154 (100.0%) |

The *New York Times* used the covered-face hijab and the uncovered-face hijab types more than the "only abaya" and "without hijab" types. It used the covered face hijab in 11 images (22.0%) and the uncovered face hijab in 23 images (29.1%). However, "without hijab" type was found in only two images (12.5%), and the "only abaya" in only five images (11.1%). By contrast, the *Washington Post*'s images included covered faces in 18 images (36.0%). Like the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* used the hijab in 23 images (29.1%). However, "without Hijab" was found in four images (25.0%). The *Los Angeles Times* was the newspaper that published the most pictures of Saudi women without hijab at eight (50.0%).

4.5.2   Saudi Newspapers

Seventy-six images were analyzed from the Saudi papers. Based on the visual depiction

categories, the result suggested that the four newspaper outlets, *Al Riyadh, Okaz, Al Jazira*, and *Al Watan*, used the visual depiction of women as both active and passive frequently. More specifically, descriptive statistics indicated that visual depiction was active in 36 (47.4%) images, while it was passive in 34 (44.7%) out of 76 images. An example of an active depiction taken from the *Al Riyadh:* A woman, who is proud of herself because she won in an equestrian race. In the picture, she is waving her hand and holding the winning medal (Figure 4.1). Another active image found in the *Al Jazira* is of a military woman who is saluting her commander. On the other hand, a passive example found in the *Al Riyadh* was of a group of women who are sitting with men, and the men are leading the discussion.



*Figure 4.1*. Active depiction image from *Al Riyadh*.

Chi-square results indicated that *Al Riyadh* newspaper depicted Saudi women as active in 16 images with a percentage of (44.4%) within visual depiction, while it depicted them more often as passive. The number of the passive images was 19 (55.9%). In contrast, *Okaz* represented women as active in 6 images (16.7%) and passive in seven images (20.6%). *Al*

*Jazira* used five active images, while it used four passive images. Also, the total images in *Al Watan* newspaper was 14 images. Nine of them were active with the percentage of (25.0%); four of them were passive, while the last one was unclear (Table 4.9).

Table 4.9

*Saudi Newspapers: Images Analyzed based on Visual Depiction Category*

|  | Active | Passive | Unclear | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Al Riyadh* | 16 (44.4%) | 19 (55.9%) | 2 (33.3%) | 37 (48.7%) |
| *Okaz* | 6 (16.7%) | 7 (20.6%) | 2 (33.3%) | 15 (19.7%) |
| *Al Jazira* | 5 (13.9%) | 4 (11.8%) | 1 (16.7%) | 10 (13.2%) |
| *Al Watan* | 9 (25.0%) | 4 (11.8%) | 1 (16.7%) | 14 (18.4%) |
| Total | 36 (100.0%) | 34 (100.0%) | 6 (100.0%) | 76 (100.0%) |

The Hijab type result (Table 4.10) shows that four categories of the hijab types were depicted in the analyzed pictures. The four newspapers depicted all types of hijab worn in Saudi Arabia in their images. The statistical finding shows that "covered face hijab" was found in 24 images (31.6%), while the "uncovered face hijab" was found in 43 images (56.6%). "Without hijab" and the "only Abaya" were the least used categories. The news outlets used "without hijab" in six images (7.9%). Similar to the U.S. newspapers, the "only Abaya" was the least type used, as it was used in only three instances (3.9%).

Table 4.10 indicates that the "uncovered face hijab" type was the most used type in all Saudi newspapers' analyzed images, with 43 images out of 76 images. On the other hand, the "covered face" type of hijab was the second depicted type. Indeed, there are 24 images of women who are wearing a covered-face hijab out of the 76 images. The covered-face hijab and the

uncovered-face hijab were used in *Al Riyadh* more than the "only abaya" and "without hijab" types. It used the "covered face hijab" in 12 images (50.0%) and the uncovered face hijab in 19 images with a percentage of (44.2%) within the hijab type. However, "only abaya" hijab type was found in only two images. By contrast, *Okaz and Al Jazira* didn't use the "only abaya" hijab in any image. Also, similar to *Al Jazira*, *Okaz* used "without abaya" hijab type in only one image with a percentage of (16.7%) within the hijab type. *Al Watan* newspaper used the "uncovered face" hijab type more than any type.

Table 4.10

*Saudi Newspapers: Images Analyzed based on Hijab Type Category*

|  | Covered Face | Uncovered Face | Only Abaya | Without Hijab | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Al Riyadh* | 12 (50.0%) | 19 (44.2%) | 2 (66.7%) | 4 (66.7%) | 37 (48.7%) |
| *Okaz* | 6 (25.0%) | 8 (18.6%) | 0 (0.0%) | 1 (16.7%) | 15 (19.7%) |
| *Al Jazira* | 2 (8.3%) | 7 (16.3%) | 0 (0.0%) | 1 (16.7%) | 10 (13.2%) |
| *Al Watan* | 4 (16.7%) | 9 (20.9%) | 1 (33.3%) | 0 (0.0%) | 14 (18.4%) |
| Total | 24 (100.0%) | 43 (100.0%) | 3 (100.0%) | 6 (100.0%) | 76 (100.0%) |

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This research is designed to study how political and social changes, Saudi Vision 2030 in particular, has played roles in the media's coverages about Saudi women's issues. In fact, media coverage and framing can be affected by changes that have been occurred in societies. Saudi Vision 2030 contains great efforts to empower women to be advanced in all fields and to activate their role in societies, believing that women are an essential partner in achieving the goals of development and renaissance.

On the basis of the used frames in the U.S. newspapers, human-interest was the most commonly trending frame, as the U.S. newspapers focused on the language that dramatized Saudi women's issues. Previous researchers found that using emotional frames had a big impact on how the audience perceived the newspapers and their stories (Kim & Cameron, 2011), which indicates that the human-interest frame certainly caused readers to feel the emotional impact of the stories and perceive the situation and circumstances negatively.

Even though there was no difference in the frames employed by the U.S. newspapers before and after the Saudi Vision 2030, which comes as a result of having a certain culture to follow in framing certain news, it was noticed through analysis that U.S. newspapers have linked some changes to some previous conflict issues. These perspectives reflect the nature of U.S. newspapers, which have communicated a static image of Muslim and Saudi society. Gitlin (1980) believes that journalists may select some frames more than others due to common journalistic routines.

Also, the developments in the status of Saudi women may have led to the change in the way certain frames were employed, as it was noticed that the use of the responsibility frame

differs in its meaning. Also, using the economic frame after the implementation of Saudi Vision 2030 was to show the advantages of the Saudi women's empowerments on the development of the economy. In fact, in recent years, Saudi women have actively contributed to economic and national development. The last five years have brought Saudi women a number of improvements in their work, such as the abolition of needing a legal agent, which made them a partner in national development.

On the other hand, the result of the second question indicates that Saudi media covered Saudi women's issues focusing on the economic consequences more than any frames. One reason behind that is that women's support is closely related to economic development (Duflo, 2012; Hill, 2010; Kabeer, 2012). The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is on the threshold of an economic transformation that will unlock the full potential of its competitive advantages, which leads the media to focusing on the economic impact more than other frames or factors.

However, although the public does not fully accept that media frames affect ideas, they still understand that media are tools used to gain community interest in specific topics (Van Gorp, 2005). This shows that media can be used to support or weaken women's issues. The contribution of women in the development of the economy will be enhanced if they invoke their right to positive coverage from the media (Al-Juaid, 2019). The reason for that is the media has a visible influence on changing social life.

American newspapers portrayed the decision on Saudi women driving as one of their rights, and that they finally became free, while Saudi newspapers portrayed it as an economic development and as uplifting the kingdom's economy because women were using foreign drivers to a large extent but will not need them after this decision. In fact, even though newspapers have different cultures, it is likely that each newspaper constructs issues in way that correspond to its

ideological and cultural attitudes even though they have used some of the same frames (Van Gorp, 2007).

After analyzing the types of topics covered, it was found that U.S. and Saudi newspapers focused on certain topics before and after Saudi Vision. For example, the focus of the U.S. newspapers before Saudi Vision was mostly on discussing the driving ban for Saudi women. However, after the ban was lifted, the focus turned to the guardianship system.

The case is different with the Saudi newspapers. Before Saudi Vision, they focused on women's votes and women's role in the Shura Council, while after Saudi Vision, the focus has become the Saudi women's empowerment and leadership positions, explaining how women have strongly become a part of the development of the new Saudi Arabia.

The images that have been found in the U.S. newspapers were mostly active. However, the presence of 50 passive depictions in the four U.S. newspapers shows that the passive image of Saudi women was fairly common despite the predominance of active images. (Luther, Lepre, & Clark, 2017, p. 112). When it comes to types of hijab used, there was diversity in the wearing of the veil, which supports that the wearing of the veil has become a personal choice, and Saudi women are no longer forced to wear it.

In addition, it is worth mentioning that in the Saudi news outlets, the total of images that were found was 102, but I only analyzed 76 images. Indeed, the other images were of men even though the news stories were about women. One of the news stories was about Women's International Day, and the image was of the person who organized that event, for instance (see Figure 5.1). Coleman (2010) suggested that any time a particular photo is chosen for a story, framing is taking place through the image itself. As was mentioned previously in the literature, the appearance of Saudi women in the media is still a work in progress.

*Figure 5.1*. Women's International Day organizers.

The result supported that the least discussed topic or issue in the U.S. and Saudi newspapers was Saudi women's sports. In fact, Saudi women did not achieve their rights in sports until 2018 ("Allow women to enter sports stadiums," 2017). There were many objections to Saudi women entering and participating on the sporting field from conservatives, as some have considered it as a trivial topic to be discussed. Eventually, the Saudi government decided to encourage girls practicing and participating in sports at schools ("Saudi Arabia allows girls to play sports in government schools,"2017). This decision came to support Saudi women as was mentioned in Saudi Vision 2030. Saudi women students also were not allowed to practice sports at school. ("Saudi Arabia allows girls to play sports in government schools," 2017).

Moreover, Saudi newspapers have not delved into discussing the guardianship issue as much as the U.S. newspapers did. Issues like hijab and guardianship were sensitive topics to be discussed, particularly in a society with limited freedom of expression. As mentioned previously in the literature review, freedom of expression in Saudi traditional media was limited because the

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Saudi government controls media content (Al-Saggaf, 2012; Al-Saggaf, Himma, & Kharabsheh, 2008; Al-Saggaf & Simmons, 2015). Also, because Saudi Arabia applies the provisions of Sharia law, one of the beliefs is that a woman should have a guardian.

It is possible to find both similarities and differences between Saudi and U.S. coverage of issues related to Saudi women both before and after Saudi Vision 2030, but the biggest differences still lie between the portrayal of issues related to Saudi women in Western and Saudi news sources rather than time differences. It takes time to see changes reflected in mindsets and culture, and both culture and mindsets of news organizations affect the frames used by the media.

5.1     Limitations

This research has relied on specific frameworks, so using new frames may have yielded new and valuable results. Also, this study focused on the news published immediately after Saudi Vision 2030, which caused an inability to find crucial differences between the coverage before and after Saudi Vision's implementation. The newspapers may need time to adapt the new character and changes of Saudi society. Therefore, studying the coverage after 2020 may contribute to new discoveries. Media regulation also may have resulted in obtaining limited result.

5.2     Recommendation for Future Studies

There is a notable lack of academic research addressing Saudi people's attitudes toward national and local media framing.  Therefore, this study can be a useful start to studying the impact of U.S. and Saudi media coverage of Saudi women on Saudis themselves.  From a practical perspective, future studies can provide a better understanding in which way the frames used in newspaper outlets can be an effective feature in shaping public opinion.

5.3    Conclusion

This study is important because comparing national and local news outlets is beneficial. Recently, societies learn and build beliefs about each other through the media. The local and global media have become a fundamental role in raising the public's interest in the issues and problems at hand, as the media is a main source that the public resort to in obtaining information on all political, cultural and social issues because of its social effectiveness, its wide spread, and its ability to reach and address the greater part of societal formation.

It also helps researchers in determining whether framing differs or not and in which ways. By analyzing the news stories quantitatively and qualitatively, I gained valuable data. The study has focused on the tones of language used and provided clear examples to explain how these certain frames have been used in these newspapers. Understanding the use of frames in the media can help the public minimize the impact of the use of frames and can increase critical thinking as news consumers on the part of the public.

APPENDIX A
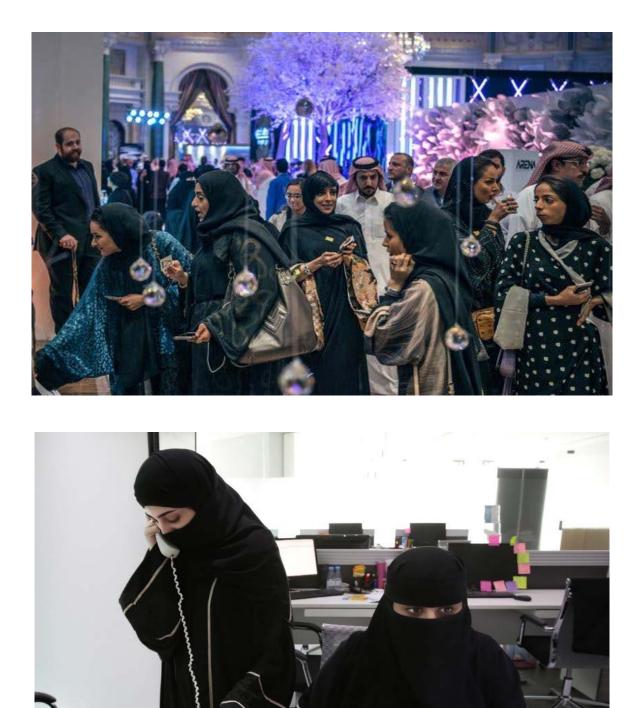
EXAMPLES OF ANALYZED NEWS STORIES

| U.S. News Stories |
|---|
| 1. Saudi Arabia Moves to Curb Its Feared Religious Police |
| 2. Women in Saudi Arabia vote for the first time |
| 3. Saudi Arabia Releases Two Women Drivers from Jail |
| 4. Saudi women find ways into the workplace |
| 5. Saudi Women to Vote and Run for First Time in Nationwide Municipal Election |
| 6. Saudi Women Free After 73 Days in Jail for Driving |
| 7. A Saudi Morals Enforcer Called for a More Liberal Islam. Then the Death Threats Began |
| 8. As Prince Accelerates Changes for Women, Saudis Adapt at Varied Pace |
| 9. An all-female crew lands a plane in Saudi Arabia. But they can't drive from the airport |
| 10. A billionaire Saudi prince says it's 'high time' for Saudi women to start driving |
| 11. Saudi Arabia finally let women drive. Don't mistake it for democratic reform |
| 12. Once women take the wheel, Saudi Arabia will never be the same |
| 13. Saudi Women Ask King to Bring an End to Male Guardianship |
| 14. Car Makers Woo Millions of Saudi Women as Driving Ban Ends |

| Saudi News Stories |
|---|
| 1. "Saudi women behind the wheel" |
| 2. Saudi women on International Women's Day |
| 3. The variation in the number of female workers in Saudi factories |
| 4. The right of women to hold ministerial positions |
| 5. Saudi women workers ... and abuse |
| 6. A pioneering march for women in the era of King Abdullah |
| 7. Saudi women run women's stores today |
| 8. 1470 Saudi women obtained their licenses from Jordan ... and scholarship students say: We drive comfortably |
| 9. For the first time in the «Health» .. a woman was appointed as the director of the maternity hospital in Dammam |
| 10. First Saudi woman appointed as General Manager of "Rezidor" hotels |
| 11. Saudi women share responsibility and decision-making with men |
| 12. Leadership positions should not be withheld from qualified women because they are female |
| 13. The feminization of 13,000 shops in the Kingdom and the employment of 65,000 Saudi women |
| 14. Saudi women knocked on global doors during the era of King Abdullah |

APPENDIX B

EXAMPLES OF IMAGES PUBLISHED IN NEWSPAPERS

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