

**THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN SHAPING THE DISCOURSE AROUND
REFUGEES IN AUSTRIA**

A content analysis of Austrian news outlets in 2015, 2019 and 2021

By

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I, the undersigned Dinudi Heva Davunda Gedara hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. To the best of my knowledge this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgement has been made. This thesis contains no material which has been accepted as part of the requirements of any other academic degree or non-degree program, in English or in any other language.

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ABSTRACT

In 2015 an unprecedented number of refugees were heading towards the EU; this mass influx of refugees was dubbed the ‘refugee crisis.’ Due to the immense numbers of people entering the EU daily, this crisis garnered national and international attention. Some media outlets welcomed the refugees and advocated for their rights, while others questioned their motives and stoked the fear of the unknown and the ‘other’. Using the research tool content analysis, this thesis explores whether certain types of newspapers, namely liberal and conservative quality papers, differ significantly from each other when reporting about refugee related topics. Additionally, this study investigates how the discourse around refugees has changed since the 2015 crisis, offering a temporal analysis. The thesis concludes that in general, the quality newspapers analysed did not differ significantly and with the passing of time, the issue of refugees became less and less salient. These findings imply that although the leaning of a news outlet is important, in quality newspapers it seems that newspapers tend to equally represent the positive and negative sides of the crisis. Additionally, with regards to the temporal factor, the results of the analysis demonstrate that the topic of refugees was regarded as less newsworthy over the years after the crisis.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EU- European Union

UNHCR - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

INTRODUCTION

The mass influx of refugees has been and continues to be a widely discussed topic throughout the EU. A highly debated issue in this regard is how the EU and its leaders failed to respond effectively to the flow of refugees in 2015. Not only with regards to the actual refugees and migrants arriving in the EU during 2015, but also the actions (or inactions) of different EU countries when addressing the root causes that led to the ‘crisis’ in the first place (Bauböck 2018, 147–48).

When talking about the failures of leaders during the peak of the refugee ‘crisis’ it is important to see why politicians were reluctant to help and developed hostile feelings towards refugees. A common argument is that the arrival of refugees had been highly politicised, so instead of arguing about the morality of letting people enter their countries, politicians’ arguments were based on their ideological beliefs. The politicisation of the refugee ‘crisis’ can be best seen in the way the media represents the issue. Most research regarding the refugee crisis, especially content analyses of media, focuses on the period of 2015-2016, which is considered the peak of the crisis. In contrast, this study offers not only an insight into how migration discourse differs between news outlets in a crisis such as in the years 2015-2016, but also offers a comparison between different points in time after the crisis, relating to migration and refugees. This study aims to show how the news coverage of the arrival of refugees to the EU has changed, by comparing how the coverage was during the crisis itself and after. The research questions to be answered are: How has the Austrian news coverage of the traditional left/right media evolved with regards to the flow of refugees the EU? And, how different is the news coverage of a liberal quality newspaper compared to a conservative quality newspaper in Austria?

In order to demonstrate how the coverage has changed, different points in time during 2015, 2019 and 2021 were chosen. In 2019, after the peak of the crisis, the focus of news outlets shifted from reporting about incoming asylum-seekers, to issues surrounding the ones already residing in the host country, such as crime and integration. More recently, the crisis at the Polish and Belarusian border in 2021, has also played a significant role in many policies and discourses around migration.

By conducting a content analysis of two Austrian quality newspapers, which are considered liberal and conservative outlets, this study adds to the research conducted by Berry et al. (2015), who argue that in general newspapers, regardless of their political slant, do not differ significantly in the way they report major events such as the 2015 refugee crisis. This study adds to these claims by showing that although news media may be situated at distinct parts of the political spectrum, if they are considered quality newspapers, more than likely they will cover the news the same way. With regards to the temporal differences within and between the news outlets being analysed, it seems that with the passing of time, the issue becomes less salient and newsworthy for the outlets. Additionally, for almost all years both outlets have a higher frequency of positive codes than negative, meaning the general tone with regards to refugees or asylum-seekers over the years stayed positive in both outlets.

The Chapter 1 of the study will present the current literature on refugees and media, and importantly will also discuss literature that has used content analysis, the research method used for this study, to explore how news outlets portray refugees. In the next chapter, the theory behind framing and agenda-setting will be discussed and why the media plays such a significant role in refugee discourse. After that the methodology and research design for this study will be discussed. Finally, the paper will demonstrate the results of the content analysis and discuss the findings.

CHAPTER 1

Literature Review

This chapter will analyse the existing literature on media and refugees. Firstly, the chapter will discuss the discourse around migration in Austria. Then, previous studies investigating the relationship between media and refugees will be explored.

1.1. Migration discourse in Austria

For Austria the 2015 refugee crisis was characterized by a lack of communication between the national government and the provinces, there was a tendency to point fingers between provinces and the central government to avoid taking responsibility (Rosenberger and Müller 2020). An example of this can be seen in the distribution of asylum seekers among the provinces. Although Austria introduced an agreement in 2004 between the nine provinces which included a quota system for the equal distribution of refugees across the country, the agreement did not contain any sanctions for provinces that did not fulfil their quota (Rosenberger and Müller 2020, 99). Due to this lack of sanctioning, Vienna was the only province in 2015 that fulfilled the quota (Rosenberger and Müller 2020, 99).

Additionally, in a multi-level governance system like in Austria, where there is a national government that is in charge of making policy decisions and local authorities who have to implement them, but at times also reinterpret the policies, there is bound to be conflict (Rosenberger and Müller 2020, 95). This is especially the case when the national government's priorities differ from those of local authorities, the latter most often prioritising the well-being of locals and social unity, while the former generally prioritises "control and sovereignty"

(Rosenberger and Müller 2020, 95). These types of tensions could be seen in 2015 when Austrian authorities were searching for additional facilities to accommodate all the new asylum seekers and were met with protests from locals. (Rosenberger and Müller 2020, 101). In response to these protests, the Austrian parliament passed a bill that allowed national authorities to build shelters without the approval of the municipality in question (Rosenberger and Müller 2020, 101).

Despite the fact that Austria was unprepared for such a high number of asylum seekers and the conflicts between the national government and municipalities, it is worth noting that especially at a local and civil society level people went beyond any policy requirements to assist and care for asylum-seekers (Rosenberger and Müller 2020). In September 2015, for instance, 350 mayors of the country assembled to discuss how they have been dealing with the high number of asylum seekers in their municipality and what they can do to increase cooperation between provinces to ensure smoother operations (Rosenberger and Müller 2020, 103). Additionally, civil society has also played an important role in the reception and integration of asylum-seekers, for instance by offering them German classes, which on a national level are only offered to recognised refugees (Rosenberger and Müller 2020, 104–5).

Since the change in government in 2017 (from centre-left to centre-right), however this welcoming attitude has shifted (Rosenberger and Müller 2020, 94). The new government has made changes to further centralise the power when it comes to the reception of asylum-seekers and their admission, while also planning to cut funding for integration programmes and suggesting asylum seekers should be housed in large camps, rather than smaller and private units (Rosenberger and Müller 2020, 105). The goal of these measures is to isolate asylum-seekers from the general public and send a tough signal to any potential refugees that Austria is not a welcoming country and to search for asylum elsewhere (Rosenberger and Müller 2020, 105).

1.2. Studies on the relationship between media and the portrayal of refugees

A number of studies have been made using the methodology of content analysis to analyse how refugees are portrayed in different media outlets, one of the biggest and most expansive ones being conducted by the Cardiff School of Journalism (commissioned by the UNHCR) (Berry, Garcia-Blanco, and Moore 2015). This study looked at the press coverage of the refugee crisis from the 1st of June 2014 to 1st of April 2015 in five European countries: the UK, Italy, Spain, Sweden and Germany (Berry, Garcia-Blanco, and Moore 2015, 5). The analysis showed that the five countries differed greatly in the themes they emphasised when publishing stories, for instance, humanitarian topics were more prevalent in the Italian press, presumably due to the high number of stories covering tragic boat accidents and drownings in the Mediterranean (Berry, Garcia-Blanco, and Moore 2015, 8). In contrast, British media seemed to put an emphasis on the threat posed by refugees, whether that is to the countries' culture or national security (Berry, Garcia-Blanco, and Moore 2015, 40). In general, the study came to the conclusion that the UK had the most negative press coverage during the 2015 refugee crisis, while Sweden had the most positive one (Berry, Garcia-Blanco, and Moore 2015, 1). What was noteworthy about this study was its sample size, which included three newspapers for each country (15 newspaper outlets in total) with different political slants on the political spectrum, meaning some variation of left or right-wing media (Berry, Garcia-Blanco, and Moore 2015, 24). Due to the considerable number of news outlets being analysed and their variety on the political spectrum, this offers an interesting comparison not only between the different countries, but also within a country itself. However, an important claim made by the study is that in most instances differences within a country were not as notable as between countries, in general, the study found that both quality and tabloid newspapers, whether left or right-wing, were mostly homogenous in the reporting of stories (Berry, Garcia-Blanco, and Moore 2015,

10). Since, this thesis will be conducting an analysis within one country, Austria, this claim can be tested for its accuracy.

Another content analysis study that included a big sample size was conducted by Chouliaraki and Zaborowski (2017), where the authors selected eight European countries for their analysis, five countries that were positioned near the route asylum-seekers frequently used to enter Central and Northern Europe and three countries that were considered popular destinations (Chouliaraki and Zaborowski 2017, 619). Unlike the Cardiff study which focused on a number of issues related to refugees (Berry, Garcia-Blanco, and Moore 2015, 273–75), this one focused on the voices of refugees, more specifically whether the news offers itself as a means for refugees to speak to the readers (Chouliaraki and Zaborowski 2017, 620). The foundation for this study is the belief that journalism is performative, in the sense that it allows readers to not only obtain some sort of information but builds a relationship between the reader and the refugee (Chouliaraki and Zaborowski 2017, 617–18). Additionally, the authors focused on three periods during the 2015 crisis for their analysis, the periods were chosen according to the events that took place before and after the mass influx of people to Europe (Chouliaraki and Zaborowski 2017, 635). The first period was the period of ‘Cautious Tolerance’ in July 2015, where the crisis had been going on for 3 months already and the media was reporting not only about the ongoing humanitarian crisis in the Mediterranean but also starting to mention violence committed by migrants (Chouliaraki, Georgiou, and Zaborowski 2017, 15). The second period was in September which was named ‘Ecstatic Humanitarianism’, during this time the photograph of the drowned three-year-old refugee boy, Alan Kurdi, captivated Europe (Chouliaraki, Georgiou, and Zaborowski 2017, 15). And finally the period of ‘Fear and Securitisation’ was in November after the terror attacks in Paris (Chouliaraki, Georgiou, and Zaborowski 2017, 15). The significance of this study is that it shows how newspapers choose whether the voices of refugees are present or not, how refugees are characterized and how the

difficulties refugees face are to be understood by the reader (Chouliaraki and Zaborowski 2017, 619). Another piece of research by Chouliaraki, Georgiou, and Zaborowski (2017) also made use of content analysis on the same eight countries, however, this paper had a broader focus: apart from the refugees' voices, it also considered temporal differences in the portrayal of refugees during the three abovementioned periods (Chouliaraki, Georgiou, and Zaborowski 2017, 14).

CHAPTER 2

Theoretical Framework

This chapter will discuss why it is important to analyse what topics the media is choosing to cover and explore how they frame these topics. Firstly, the two theories underlying this research, agenda-setting and framing theory, will be discussed. Secondly, it will be discussed how, or if at all the media influences politics and the policy process. This section of the study also shows why the agenda-setting theory is important for the policy process and the issue of refugees in media. Finally, the chapter will move on to highlight the role the media plays when it comes to framing refugees and how refugees tend to be portrayed by media.

2.1. Agenda-Setting Theory

The theory of agenda setting states that the media, by emphasising certain issues more than others can make the said issues more relevant in their readers' minds (Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007, 11; McCombs and Shaw 1972, 177). There are different ways the media can do that, for instance by placing a news story on the front page, which signals to audiences that this specific story is important (Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007, 11). In contrast, hiding a story in a small corner of a newspaper, indicates to the reader that this story is not a salient issue (Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007, 11). Another way media agenda-setting works is when an outlet decides to cover an issue more often than others (Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007, 11). Typically, the news media does not cover news stories for a prolonged time, at least not long enough to have a lasting effect on their readers mind. This phenomenon is also referred to as gatekeeping, which means that editors decide what is newsworthy and decide which stories to publish and how often (Communication Theory 2010). Thus, if a news story is deemed newsworthy enough to

be discussed for a prolonged period of time, it becomes more salient for the audience (Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007, 11). Additionally, making a topic more salient in their readers mind, can in turn influence the factors the public takes into consideration when judging political responses, this phenomenon is called Priming (Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007, 11). For this research, it can be studied which types of stories the two different news outlets deem newsworthy by judging the frequency of certain codes and thus exploring which stories the outlets want to make more salient in their readers' mind. Additionally, looking at the temporal aspect of this study, it can be explored how the relevance of topics surrounding refugees have changed over time.

2.2. Framing Theory

The theory behind framing assumes that news outlets can influence how a news story is perceived by the audience, by the way it frames a news story (Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007, 11). Essentially, framing is used to influence how the reader interprets the information provided to them (Arowolo 2017). At a macro-level, framing describes “modes of presentation that journalists and other communicators use to present information in a way that resonates with existing underlying schemas among their audience” (Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007, 12). However, this does not have to mean that journalists twist stories or mislead their readers, according to Arwolo (2017) framing can be used by news outlets to enhance their audience's view on an issue. This line of argument is based on the assumptions made by Goffman (1974) and others, who believe that individuals are unable to fully understand the world around them and applying frameworks helps them interpret the world better. At a micro level, framing helps people form opinions with the help of these frames (Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007, 12). For the purposes of this study, it can be analysed how the two different news outlets choose to frame matters around refugees, whether they use a positive or negative frame, and whether the leaning

of the outlet changes the frequency with which each frame occurs. Additionally, it can be analysed how the frequency of these frames change over time.

2.3. Why the media matters

In the past, the role of media in politics has only been researched in two areas: how the media influences citizens and public opinion and how media can be used as a tool by politicians for marketing, for example through election campaigns (Koch-Baumgarten and Voltmer 2010, 1–2). What has been less explored is whether and how media influences public policy. There seems to be little consensus in the literature when it comes to the role the media plays in public policy. On the one hand, there are those scholars who argue that the media plays a significant role in shaping the policy process and argue that policy-makers notice how and what the media covers and react to this coverage (Koch-Baumgarten and Voltmer 2010, 2). As agenda-setting and framing theory argues, the reason this may be the case is because the media could be seen as influencing public opinion and being a direct representation of public opinion, so by responding to an issue that has gained media attention, policy-makers could be responding to public opinion (Koch-Baumgarten and Voltmer 2010, 2; Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007; Arowolo 2017). Additionally, it has been observed that policy-makers also take into account the media's response to any announcement of new policies, and there is an incentive to represent a policy in a way that garners a more supportive coverage in the media (Koch-Baumgarten and Voltmer 2010, 2–3). On the other hand, there is academic research that rejects the claim that media influences policy and proposes that policy-makers do not respond to media coverage in a meaningful way (Koch-Baumgarten and Voltmer 2010, 2). The reason for this is that the media focuses on many different issues for a short period of time, and it is rarely the occasion that a story is sustained for a longer period of time to leave a mark in the audiences memory (Koch-Baumgarten and Voltmer 2010, 2). The policy process on the other hand occurs for a

long period of time and has many stages (Koch-Baumgarten and Voltmer 2010, 2). This line of argument is also supported by Yanovitzky (2002) who argues that studies that find a link between media and policy neglect this aspect of time and suggests research should separate the effects of media on a policymakers' attention to policy problems from the effects of media on their policy actions. In line with the agenda-setting theory, it may be the case that the media can bring attention to an issue and may even make the issue salient enough to initially force policymakers to develop some solutions or proposals for solutions, however once the media coverage decreases policymakers also shift their attention (Yanovitzky 2002). In short, both sides agree that the media can have an influence on public policy to some extent, however, where the contention lies is in the significance of its influence. While, one side claims the media has considerable influence, the other claims the influence is short-lived. The main point is that most news stories do not occupy the readers' and the news outlets' attention for an extended period of time to meaningfully affect the policy process. However, for an ongoing issue like the refugee crisis, this argument cannot be made, on the contrary, it could be argued that because of the large-scale effects of the crisis on many aspects of a host/transit country and due to the long time period during which refugees fled to Europe, the media can play a significant role in how citizens perceive the crisis and what political responses they expect.

2.4. Role of media in portraying Refugees

When it comes to the portrayal of refugees by the media, there are many ways the media can frame the situation. For instance, it has been noted that the media can play a big role in normalizing "moral panics" related to the refugee crisis, such as the association of refugees with terrorism (Matar 2017, 292). The way the media can do this is by echoing certain stereotypes or framing the incoming refugees as 'the other', who are different from 'us', by constructing differences between 'us' and 'them' on religious, racial or ethnic grounds (Matar 2017, 293).

The media can also dictate how the crisis itself is presented, whether it is a humanitarian problem or an issue of national and cultural security (Matar 2017, 293). These types of negative framings of the crisis and the refugees themselves can in turn also impact the way the public views the issue (Matar 2017, 293–94).

CHAPTER 3

Research Design

In this chapter the methodological approach to this study will be discussed. First, the chapter will discuss the time periods and the two news outlets that will be analysed and the reasoning behind selecting them for this analysis. Next, there will be a brief overview of the research tool that will be used for this study, content analysis. This part of the chapter will also present the approach taken to code all the articles.

3.1. Background

This chapter will offer some background information for the time frames that will be used in the content analysis. The author chose two months in each year that represented a significant period with regard to refugees or asylum-seekers, either because of an event that took place leading up to this period or because of events that took place during these periods.

For the year 2015, the months July and September were chosen. Many noteworthy events took place in the year 2015. However, the focus of this thesis will be on the disastrous circumstances in the refugee camp in Traiskirchen, which made headlines in July. Due to the high numbers of asylum-seekers entering Austria at once, the refugee reception centre in Traiskirchen was overcrowded (Amnesty International 2016, 74–75). As a result of this, many asylum-seekers had to live in inadequate conditions and were lacking basic facilities (Amnesty International 2016, 74–75). Austria's failure to provide basic care for the asylum-seekers was met with harsh criticism from the public and the media. The second month chosen for the year 2015 is September. In the week before the beginning of September, the bodies of 71 refugees were found in a truck in Austria (Bienvenu and Santora 2015). Additionally, in the first week of the

month a photograph of the lifeless body of Alan Kurdi, a three-year-old refugee boy, was circulating throughout the world (Fantz and Shoichet 2015). These two tragedies redefined the way the media and the public saw the crisis, suddenly there was a surge of humanitarianism around Austria and people cared about refugees and their well-being.

Unlike 2015, the year 2019 did not have many noteworthy events regarding refugees. However, in Austria, in January the year started with a political discussion about the legality of deporting criminal refugees. The reason behind this sudden interest in deporting criminal refugees was the unfortunate statistics of five femicides in the first month of the year 2019 (Bonavida 2019). Additionally, in October 2019 the Turkish President decided to invade Syria (Lang 2019) and threatened the EU that if they continued criticising his decision to do so, he would open the Turkish borders for millions of refugees to enter the EU (Oliphant 2019). Finally, in 2021 the major event that was discussed throughout the year was the conflict at the Polish/Belarusian border. In this case the Belarusian President also decided to use refugees as political tools to stop EU sanctions, by opening the Belarusian border to Poland and thus enabling thousands of refugees to enter the EU through Poland (Hopkins 2021; Arraf and Peltier 2021).

3.2. Media outlets

As mentioned previously, this study will compare two Austrian media outlets that are daily newspapers and are situated on the political spectrum either as liberal media or conservative media. The following section will discuss why these two outlets were chosen for the analysis.

3.2.1. Der Standard

Der Standard is a self-proclaimed liberal daily newspaper that is independent of any political party or institution (Der Standard 2022). It is considered a quality newspaper, which means unlike tabloid newspapers, it does not rely on sensationalism and click-bait to grab a reader's

attention (Gossel 2017). According to their own website, they aim to offer thorough reporting and commentary based on facts (Der Standard 2022). Although this paper is not as widely circulated as rivalling tabloid papers, studying a paper that is supposedly objective and strives to offer factual coverage of events could be enlightening, because it encourages the reader to pay more attention to subtle details that may be indicative of biases or judgments. In addition to this the readership of this paper is highly educated and as academics it is important to question and study one's own environment, including where one gets their daily news.

3.2.2. Die Presse

Die Presse, also a daily newspaper, is owned by the Styria Media Haus Vienna GmbH (German Styria Medienhaus Wien GmbH) which is in turn owned to more than 90% by the Catholic Media Association Private Foundation (German Katholischer Medien Verein Privatstiftung) (Die Presse 2016). While there seems to be an obvious catholic/conservative connection in ownership, the news outlet's website labels itself as bourgeois-liberal (Die Presse 2016). Although, the outlet represents itself as bourgeois-liberal, numerous sources classify it as a conservative paper with an economically liberal tendency (Magin and Stark 2011, 98; Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung n.d.; Der Standard 2020). Similar to Der Standard this newspaper commits itself to reporting objectively on news stories and to offer a complete picture of any events taking place in the world (Die Presse 2016). The reasoning behind choosing this outlet for comparison is because it too has a highly educated readership, and emphasis factual coverage of news stories. This means that this paper also may seem to be neutral in the way it covers news events, however, a closer analysis may show that there are differences in how stories are covered by news outlets or in fact which stories are covered, compared to its liberal counterpart.

3.3. Content Analysis

For this research content analysis was chosen as a tool to explore how the reporting of news in relation to refugees has evolved since the start of the 2015 refugee crisis. The main objective of qualitative content analysis is to reduce qualitative materials, such as newspaper articles, texts or interview transcripts, into comprehensible and concise categories (Schreier 2014, 170). The way this is done is by creating a number of categories about which the researcher requires more information and then including sub-categories that offer more insight into what the material says about these categories (Schreier 2014, 174). For instance, one category that this study looks at is the crimes committed by refugees, and the subcategories ‘fraud’, ‘violent crimes’ and ‘terrorism’ explore the frequency of different types of crimes (see Appendix I for more detail). A key aspect of content analysis is that it allows for the conversion of qualitative materials into quantitative data, meaning the presentation of the findings for this analysis can be done in a quantitative manner, by presenting the frequency of codes for instance (Schreier 2014, 180).

3.4. Coding

Now the paper will discuss the approach that was taken to code the material for this study, as outlined in Figure 1 a combination of inductive and deductive coding was used (Hennink, Hutter, and Bailey 2020, 218–19). The way deductive coding works is when the researcher has pre-existing codes or categories, derived from previous research or existing theories and conducts the analysis based on these codes (Hennink, Hutter, and Bailey 2020, 219–20). In contrast, inductive coding is a freer form of coding, where the researcher reads the material and derives codes and categories from the data itself: the benefit of this type of coding is that it more accurately reflects the themes in the material itself and allows for a more unique analysis (Hennink, Hutter, and Bailey 2020, 220–21). As an initial starting point to this research, the UNHCR codebook was used as a guide and during the trial coding phase, where a random

selection of articles from the sample were coded, a number of additional categories and sub-categories were added (see Appendix). The author coded for general information, such as the terms used to refer to the foreign people entering the EU, to observe any general trends over the years that are being analysed. Additionally, some categories were more abstract, such as humanitarian elements or humanitarian main theme; these types of codes were used to show how the news outlet itself perceives the refugees and asylum-seekers, and whether this perception changed over time. The next section will discuss some of the categories that were used for the analysis in more detail (for the full list of categories see Appendix I).

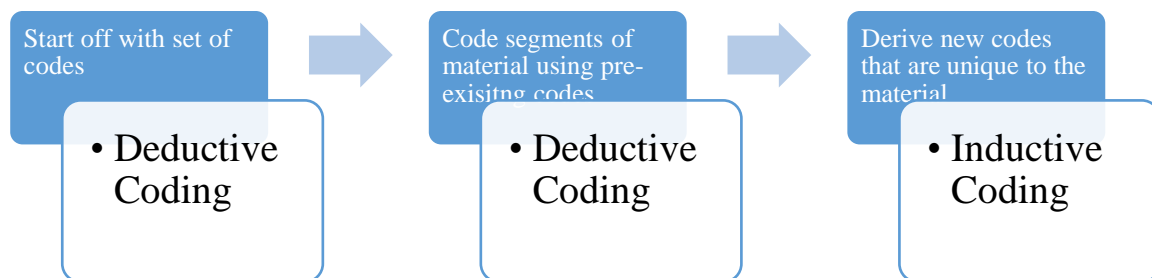


Figure 1: Coding Strategy

3.4.1. Refugee, asylum-seeker, migrant, immigrant

The UNHCR makes a clear distinction between migrants and refugees. According to the UNHCR refugees (German: Flüchtlinge) cannot rely on the protection of their State and are forced to leave their home country because they fear for their lives (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees n.d.). According to Article 1 of the 1951 Geneva Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, there are three vital elements that have to be taken into consideration when determining whether a person is a refugee: (1) the person must have a well-founded fear (2) of being persecuted (3) on the grounds of “race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion” (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 1951, 14). Additionally, there is also the term asylum-seeker (German: Asylwerber), which refers to foreign people who seek protection from persecution

and are unable to return to their home country, during the asylum process it will be established whether the person is in fact eligible to seek asylum in a country and thus is a refugee (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2018, 2). In short, the difference is in legal status, someone who seeks asylum (Asylwerber) is not yet considered a refugee (Flüchtling) until the above-mentioned elements of the Geneva Refugee Convention can be determined during the asylum process (Bundesministerium für Inneres 2022). Additionally, there is the possibility of subsidiary protection for third-country nationals, which is granted to persons who were not able to receive refugee status but have proven that should they be returned to their home country they would be at risk to face serious harm (Official Journal of the European Union 2011).

Aside from these two legal terms, in Austria there are other ways to refer to immigrants. For instance, there is the general term of “Migrant”, which refers to foreign persons who leave their home countries to improve their living conditions or due to family reasons (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2018, 2). For the most part migrants (German: Migranten) are able to return to their home countries, however at times they do rely on humanitarian aid to get by (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2018, 2). For the label migrant no legal status is tied to the word, and it is merely used colloquially to describe foreigners entering a country for various reasons, other than persecution in their home country (AG Integration 2015, 6–15). Although there is a legal difference between refugees and migrants, Austrian media tend to use all the above-mentioned terms interchangeably, referring to refugees and asylum-seekers from Syria or Afghanistan as “Migranten” (migrants).¹

¹Additionally, the terms Einwanderer and Zuwanderer, both translate to “immigrants” and are for the most part used interchangeably (AG Integration 2015, 6–15). Lastly, the term “Binnenvertriebene” refers to internally displaced persons.

It is clear that depending on the label that is being used the news outlet is sending a different message: if a person is referred to as a refugee or asylum-seeker there is a sense of empathy and legitimacy that comes with their arrival, while migrants can be more easily dismissed as being less worthy of help.

3.4.2. Positive/ Negative Themes

When presenting the results of the content analysis of the news outlets Der Standard and Die Presse, the findings will be divided into two themes: ‘Positive’ and ‘Negative representation of refugees’. It should be noted that in the majority of news articles the general tone of the article was neutral, most articles were just journalists presenting facts, or explaining the circumstances of certain events without giving any judgement or commentary. However, in line with the agenda-setting theory, it can be argued that even deciding what news to feature in the paper entails the judgement of the editor as to what is newsworthy, even if the articles themselves seems neutral. Thus, the findings of this paper will closely look at eight categories, four of which correspond to the positive representation of refugees and the other four the negative representation of refugees. By dividing the findings into these two simplified themes, it allows the author to make important links between the two news outlets and makes it easier to highlight any differences that may exist.

3.5. Sampling

This section of the chapter will briefly discuss the strategy used to obtain the sample of articles that were eventually used for the analysis (Figure 2). Firstly, the Nexis Uni database was used to retrieve all the articles for Der Standard and Die Presse for the periods of: July, September 2015; January, October 2019 and July, November 2021. Following the approach used by the UNHCR for their study of news outlets in Germany, this study also used the following

keywords and Boolean operators to search the database for relevant articles: “Migra! OR Immigra! OR Flücht! OR Einwander! OR Zuwander! OR Asyl! OR Illegal! AND Syrie! OR Irak! OR Iraqi! OR Palest! OR Afrika!” (Berry, Garcia-Blanco, and Moore 2015, 26). After that, the articles were filtered out manually in order to include only relevant articles to the sample. Examples of articles that were not included into the sample were those that only mentioned refugees in passing, for instance by merely stating that prior to an election the crisis and politicians’ response to it will play a crucial role. Additionally, since this study is focused on Europe and the EU, articles that only focused on refugee movements outside of the European territory were not included. Furthermore, articles that are about historic refugee movements, such as after World War II were not included. The focus of this paper is the 2015 refugee crisis and its aftereffects, including commentary about historic refugee movements would obscure the data and would not show an accurate picture of how the discourse around refugees has changed since the 2015 crisis. Finally, the sample does not contain all articles that discuss art in relation to refugees. This means that the sample does include articles discussing art made by or about refugees, often coded under ‘Refugee success stories’ or ‘Humanitarian elements,’ however it does not include articles where the main focus is on non-refugee artists, or where the majority of the article is focused on issues not related to this analysis.

In the end, as can be seen in Figure 2 Der Standard had a total of 195 articles and Die Presse 299. Figure 3 also shows how the number of articles differ through the time periods analysed.

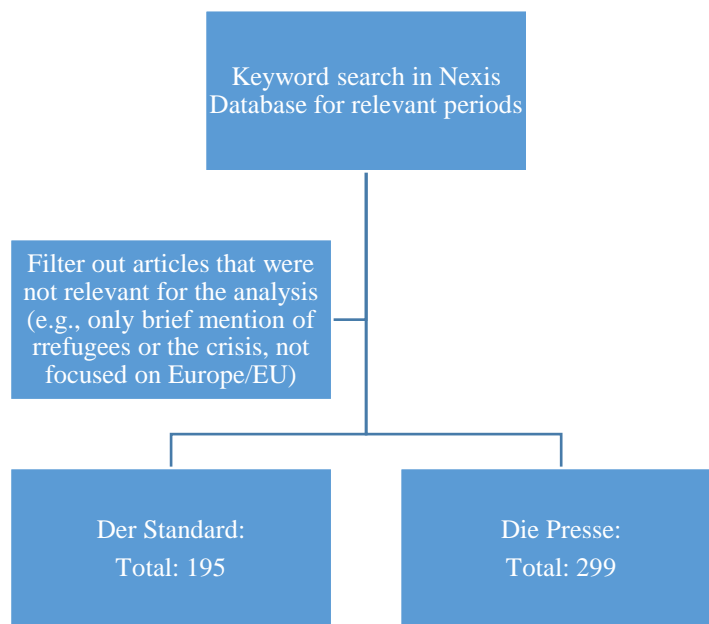


Figure 2: Sample selection

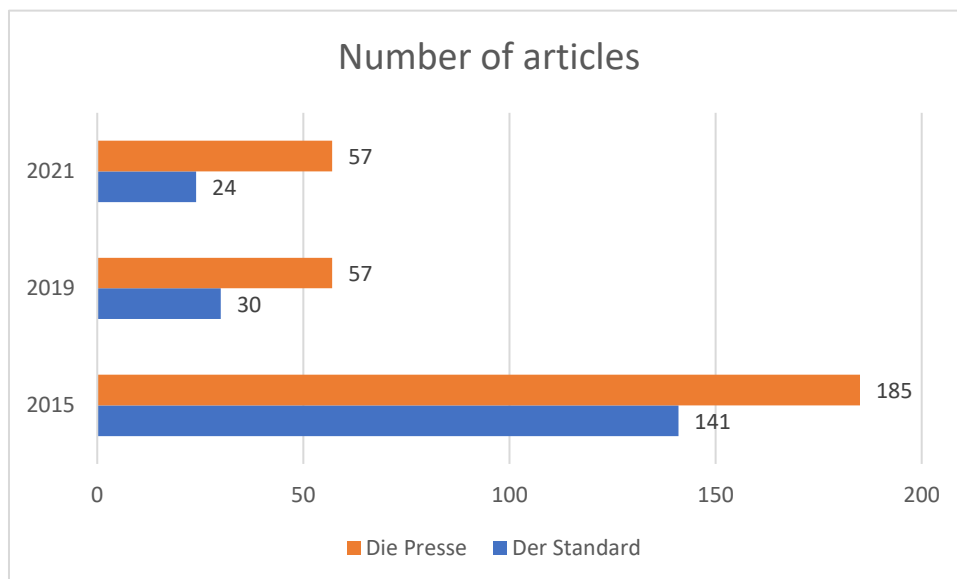


Figure 3: Number of Articles through the years

3.6. Research Question

The aim of this paper is to explore how the discourse around the mass exodus of asylum-seekers has evolved since the beginning of the 2015 refugees ‘crisis’, by looking at the liberal and

conservative media and its framing of refugees and asylum-seekers in the years after the crisis.

More specifically, the questions are:

RQ1: How has the Austrian news coverage of the traditional left/right media evolved with regards to the flow of refugees to Europe?

RQ2: How different is the news coverage of a left-wing quality newspaper compared to a conservative newspaper in Austria?

CHAPTER 4

Results

This chapter will present the key findings of the content analysis of the news outlets Der Standard and Die Presse during the aforementioned time periods in the years 2015, 2019 and 2021. This will be done by looking at various categories, that the author coded for and determining the frequency with which these categories appear in the samples for each news outlet. In order to have a better overview of the categories, they will be divided into two sections, the positive representation of refugees and the negative representation.

4.1. Labelling

Firstly, as mentioned previously, the labels used to refer to refugees is significant not only because it would be incorrect to call a refugee a migrant for instance, but also because, as the framing theory states, the way news outlets characterize or label refugees, also influences the way their audience perceives them. As can be seen in Figure 5 and Figure 4 both news outlets predominately used the term refugee, especially during 2015, where the peak of the refugee crisis was. This trend continued in 2019, where again the label refugee was most often used in the articles. Interestingly, in 2021 both outlets increasingly used the term migrants more than the term refugee. This observation is particularly noteworthy, since during this period Europe faced a similar type of crisis at the Polish/Belarusian borders, and although reportedly the persons at the border were presumably still Syrians and Afghans who are persecuted, the news outlets used the label migrant in most of the articles (Hopkins 2021).

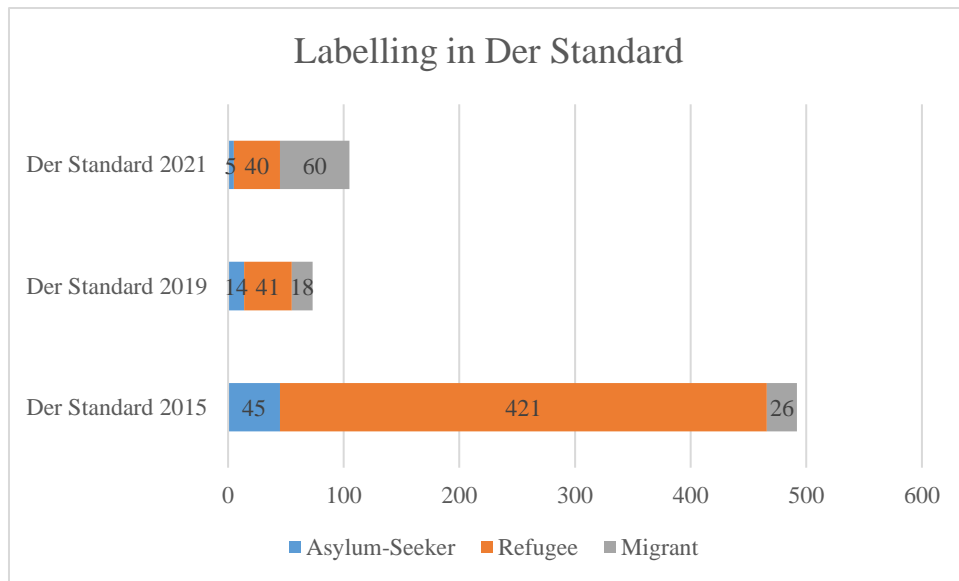


Figure 5: Labelling Der Standard

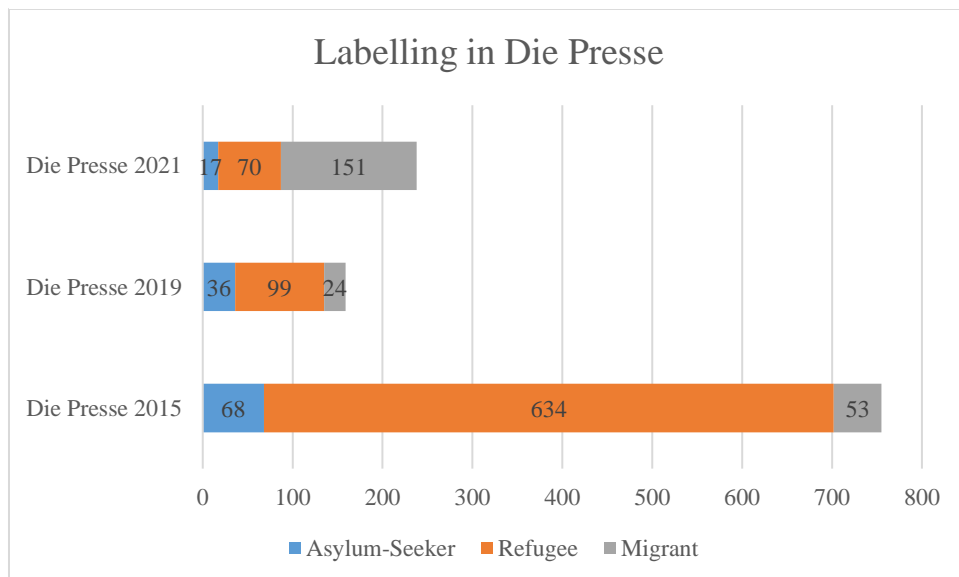


Figure 4: Labelling Die Presse

4.2. Die Presse

In this part of the chapter the results for the analysis for the news outlet Die Presse will be discussed. As mentioned previously, in order to have a better overview of the various categories and to offer an easier interpretation of the data, a number of categories were put together into themes, positive and negative.

offers an overview of all eight categories and their overall frequency in the newspaper Die Presse. As can be seen in Figure 6, the code with the highest frequency was ‘Humanitarian elements’, followed by ‘Crime and ‘Threat to communities/Cultural threat’.

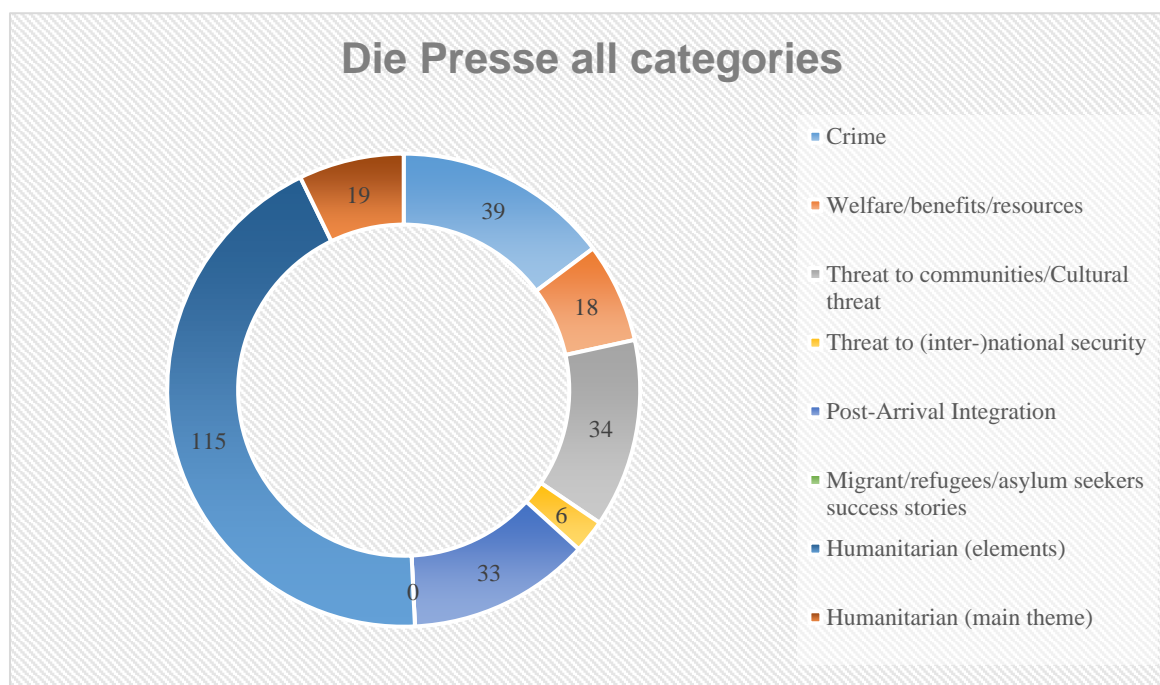


Figure 6: Die Presse all categories

4.2.1. Positive representation

The four categories that were chosen for the positive theme were: Post-Arrival Integration, Migrant Success stories and Humanitarian elements and Humanitarian main theme. These categories were coded whenever an article made any positive or sympathetic mention of refugees, whether that is their successful integration or mentioning how much refugees have suffered in their home country or during their journey to Europe/the EU. Figure 7 shows that there was an overwhelming amount of positive press coverage in 2015, in fact approximately 71% of the overall positive coverage was from 2015. Although, there is only a marginal difference, it can be seen that 2021 also has slightly more positive coverage, from approximately 11% of positive coverage being in 2019 and 18% being in 2021. This slight

increase in positive coverage could be explained due to the Polish/Belarusian crisis. For all three years the category ‘humanitarian elements’ was the one that was most frequently used.

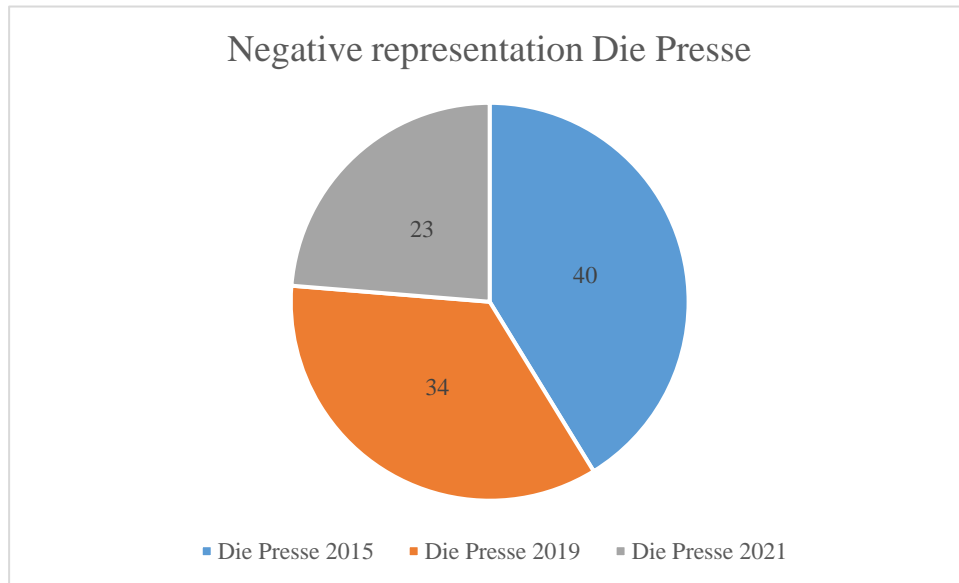


Figure 7: Positive representation Die Presse

4.2.2. Negative representation

When it comes to the negative coverage of refugees again four categories were chosen to demonstrate this theme: Welfare/benefits/resources, Crime, Threat to community and Threat to national security. These four categories were concerned with any negative news regarding refugees or asylum-seekers, whether that is crimes committed by refugees, them burdening the social system of the host country, or any mention of a threat to the security of the country or culture of the host community. Unlike the positive representation of refugees over the years, it is clear that the negative coverage is more diversly spread throughout the years (Figure 8). Once again, 2015 seems to be the period with the most negative coverage, with around 41% being negative. Notably, 35% of the negative coverage are from 2019, this may be due to the fact that during this time Die Presse extensively covered crimes, such as membership of a terroristic organisation or violent crimes committed by refugees. Finally, 24% of the negative representation of refugees took place during 2021. Out of the four categories the code that was

most frequently used in 2015 was ‘Threat to communities/culture’. During 2019 and 2021, the code with the highest frequency was ‘Crime’.

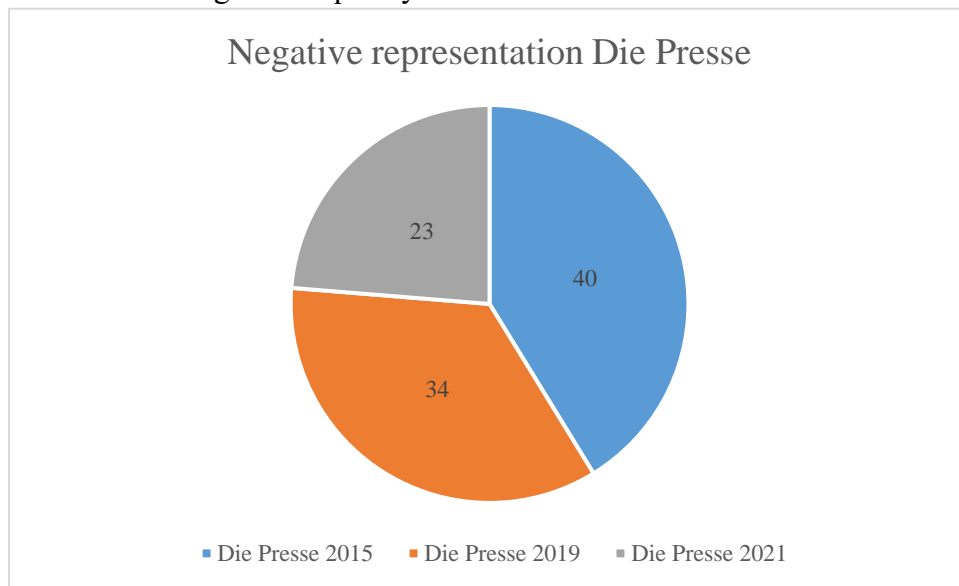


Figure 8: Negative representation Die Presse

4.3. Der Standard

In this section the paper will discuss how the news outlet Der Standard has evolved during the years 2015, 2019 and 2021. And just like the in the previous section, the same four categories were chosen for the positive representation and the negative representation of refugees. Figure 9 below shows that, similar to Die Presse ‘Humanitarian elements’ was the most frequently occurring code. However, unlike Die Presse, the second and third most frequent code was ‘Post-arrival integration’ ‘Humanitarian Main Theme’, which means this news outlets three most frequent categories were only positive.

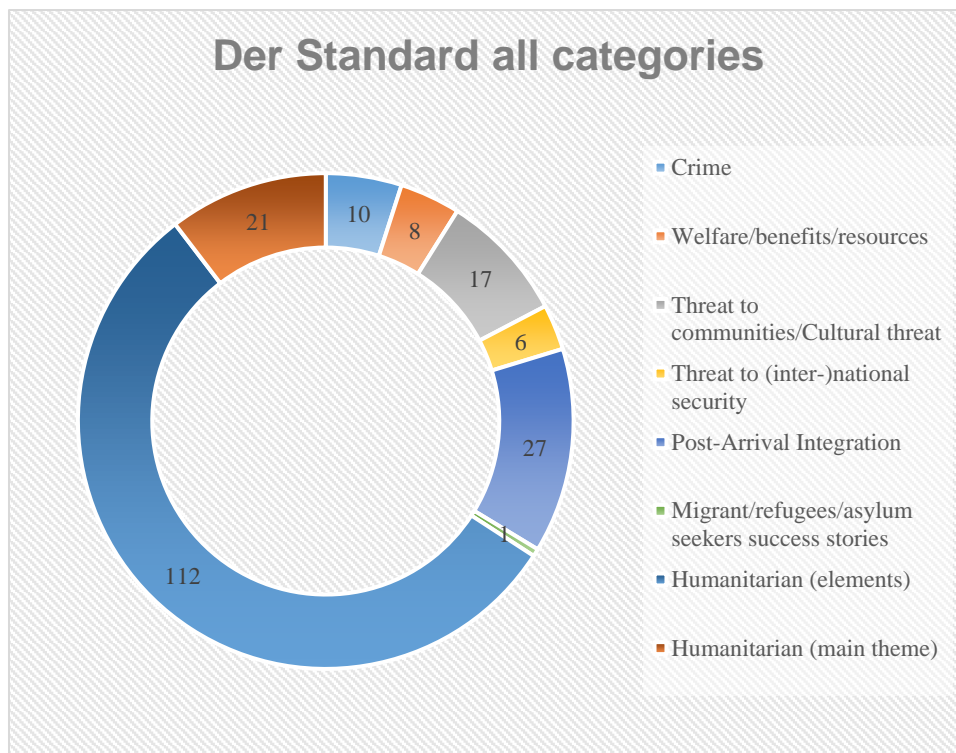


Figure 9: Der Standard all categories

4.3.1. Positive representation

When looking at how much the positive coverage of refugees and asylum-seekers has changed during the three years in question (Figure 10) similar to Die Presse, unsurprisingly 2015 during the peak of the crisis there was a lot more positive coverage (64%). Interestingly, presumably due to the conflict at the Polish/Belarusian border, with 19% the year 2021 had slightly more positive coverage of refugees than 2019 (17%).

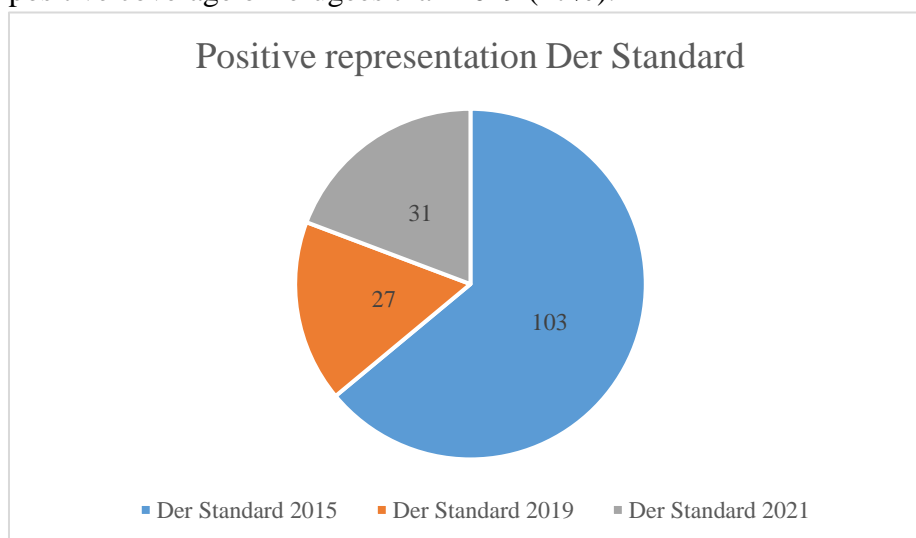


Figure 10: Positive representation Der Standard

4.3.2. Negative representation

Finally, as can be seen in Figure 11 again 2015 had the most negative representation of refugees (51%), while 2019 (27%) had slightly more negative coverage than 2021 (22%). When looking at the data, the reason for this high number is due to the higher frequency of the crime code, but also the mention of a threat to the host community or culture. Similar to Die Presse, for year 2015 the code that was most frequently used out of the four categories was ‘Threat to communities/culture’.

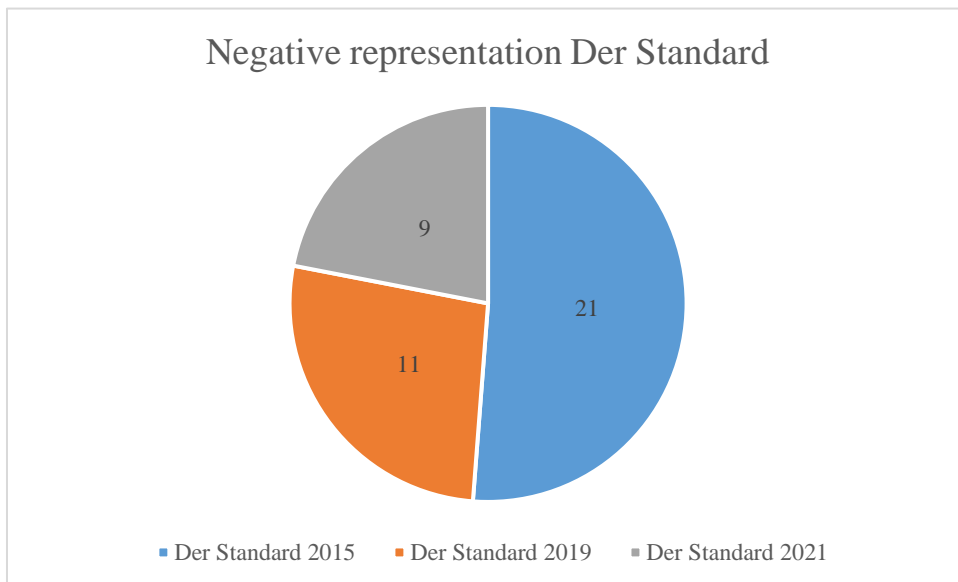


Figure 11: Negative representation Der Standard

4.4. Comparing the two news outlets

Now that the temporal differences within each news outlet have been explored, this section will compare the two outlets with each other. Firstly, the paper will investigate how the negative and positive representation of refugees differs between both outlets. Then the paper will compare temporal trends between Der Standard and Die Presse.

4.4.1. Negative and Positive representation

Figure 12 shows a graph comparing the number of times a positive or negative code was found in both Die Presse and Der Standard for all three years in question. As can be seen both outlets have a similarly high number of positive news coverage with regards to refugees, although Die Presse seems to have a slightly higher number. When looking at the negative representation however there seems to be a significant disparity between the two outlets. As can be seen in Figure 12 Die Presse has more than double the amount of negative coverage of refugees compared to Der Standard.

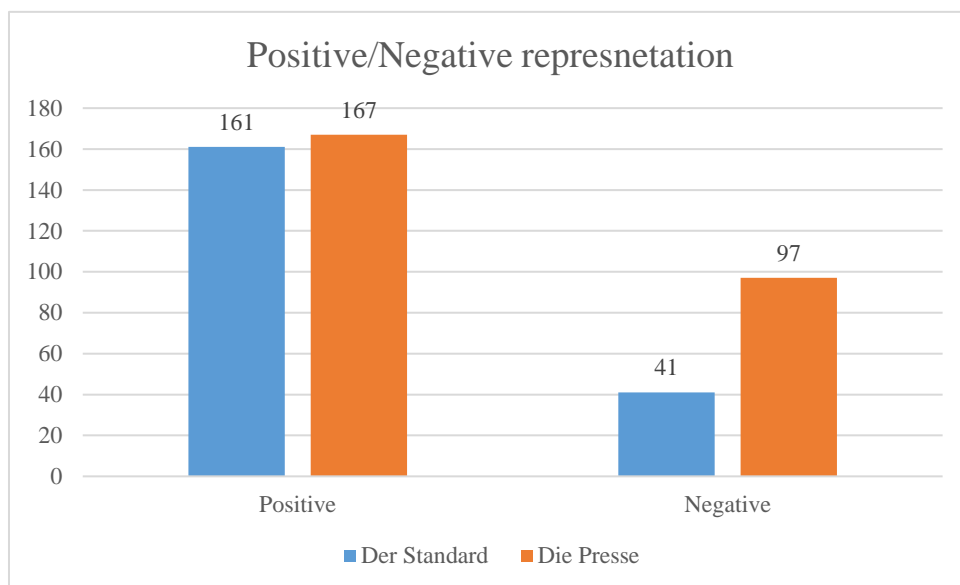


Figure 12: Positive/Negative representation

As mentioned previously, both news outlets frequently mention crimes committed by refugees, however as seen in Figure 13 when comparing the mention of crime in each news outlet, over the three periods, it is clear that Die Presse has a significantly higher number when it comes to the frequency at which crime was mentioned, especially during 2019, presumably due to the increased femicides and terrorism related court hearings that took place in Vienna during the time periods analysed.

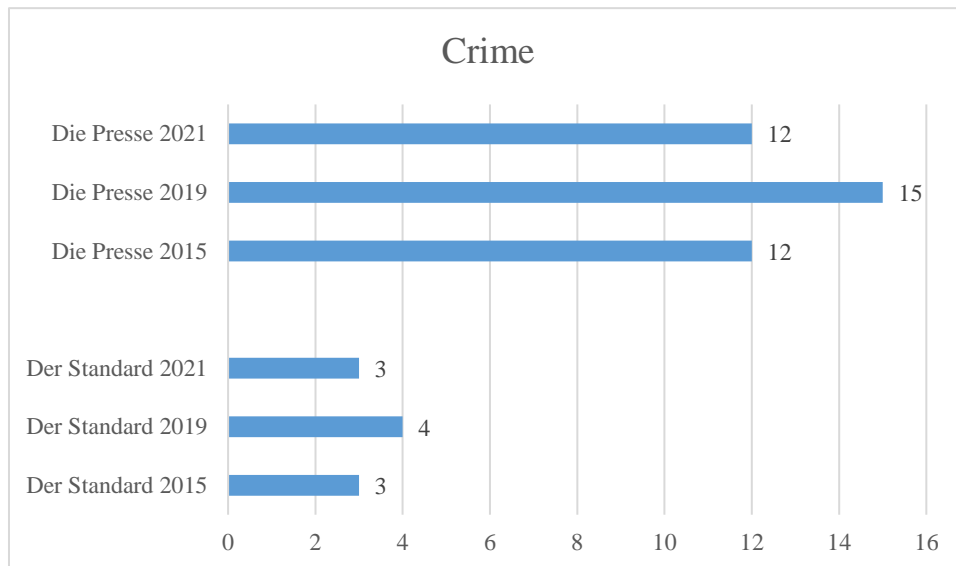


Figure 13: Mention of crime comparison

4.4.2. Temporal Trends

As mentioned previously, in both news outlets the frequency of the four positive categories is very high in 2015. When comparing each year of each news outlet with one another it can be noted, that both news outlets follow approximately the same trend when it comes to positive coverage, in 2015 there is a lot of positive coverage, then this number decreases significantly in 2019 and rises again in 2021, again presumably due to the Polish/Belarusian border conflict (Figure 14). When looking at the negative coverage, the two outlets also follow the same trend, where the coverage of negative categories declines. However, when looking at the negative representation in relation to the positive one, the two news outlets do not seem to follow the

same trends. Unlike, Der Standard, where the positive coverage always outweighs the negative, Die Presse seems to have more negative coverage of refugees than positive, during 2019.

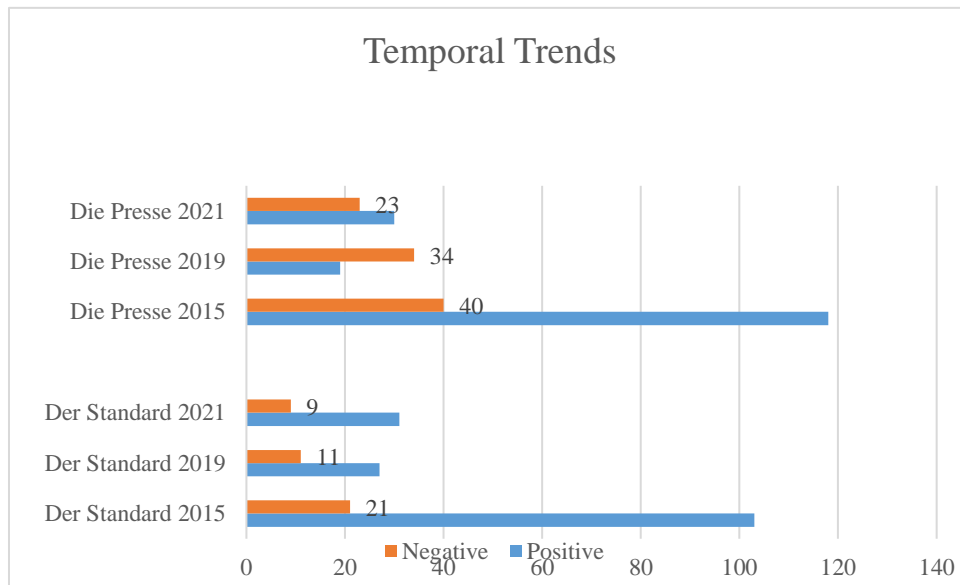


Figure 14: Temporal Trends

Discussion

Now that the results of the analysis have been examined, the study will answer the research questions of this study and discuss their significance. Firstly, with regards to the first research question, and in line with the argument put forth by Berry et al (2015), it seems at a macro-level there is no notable difference between the two news outlets, as both predominately have a positive representation in comparison to the negative theme. However, at a micro-level, also taking into account the differences between the years, there seem to be some notable differences. For instance, that although Die Presse and Der Standard have equal frequencies for the positive theme, Die Presse also has a significantly higher frequency for the negative theme. This means that Die Presse frames refugees negatively more often than der Standard. Additionally, when looking at certain codes, such as Crime, and taking into account the differences in the time periods, it is clear that at a micro-level there are noteworthy differences between the two outlets. In general, to answer the second research question, it can be observed that the number of articles has decreased, signalling less salience to the reader, and within and

between the news outlets it seems that the coverage was persistently positive, apart from the year 2019, where Die Presse had a higher frequency of negative representation. Featuring negative frames such as crimes committed by refugees or threats to culture, at such a high frequency increases the relevance of such negative news in the readers mind and can influence the importance they place on such factors when forming their own opinions. Furthermore, when looking at the number of articles alone, the sample size of Die Presse is significantly bigger than that of Der Standard. Going back to the agenda-setting theory, this demonstrates that Die Presse not only deems stories regarding refugees or asylum-seekers more newsworthy, but it could also be argued that featuring that many articles about refugees makes the issue more salient for the audience and also increases the likelihood that the media influences what their readers think is important with regards to the topic of refugees. When looking at the temporal differences, it is clear that both outlets significantly decreased the number of articles surrounding the topic of refugees, making it a less salient issue for their readers. Finally, when it comes to the labelling of refugees, both news outlets seem to follow similar trends, of decreasingly labelling foreign people entering the EU as refugees and increasing the use of the label migrant.

CONCLUSION

The mass influx of refugees from Syria, Afghanistan and many African countries changed the dynamics within the EU and between its member states forever. During the peak of the crisis in 2015, the media was dominated by the topic, mostly following one of two trends, either reporting through a sympathetic lens about the hardships refugees have to face and how to help them or fuelling anti-immigrant/refugee sentiment by excessively reporting about crimes committed by refugees, or the threat they pose to the host country's culture. This thesis used the research tool of content analysis to analyse numerous articles from two Austrian quality newspapers, one considered liberal while the other is considered conservative, in order to explore how the discourse around refugees has changed over time. Additionally, this study also determined whether the two newspapers in question differentiated in the way they reported and framed issues surrounding refugees, due to their leanings. With regards to the question how the reporting of the refugee crisis changed after 2015 the study showed that in the years after the peak of the crisis, the number of articles written in relation to refugees decreased significantly. What this indicates is that since the number of refugees entering the country has decreased and the crisis is not at its peak anymore, the stories regarding refugees were deemed not newsworthy anymore. This study has also shown that although news outlets may be situated at distinct parts of the political spectrum if they are considered quality newspapers, more than likely they will be similar when it comes to what they report and how they report it. This observation confirms the arguments put forward by Berry et al. (2015), which say that in general news outlets tend to be fairly similar in the way they report the news.

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APPENDICES

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| Codebook |
| Negative Frames |
| 1 Threat to (inter-)national security |
| Mention/discussion of any threats to national security (understood as the security of the state, not the safety of individuals). Includes any mention of terrorist threats/attacks |
| 2 Welfare/benefits/resources |
| Any mention/discussion of the benefits/welfare system. Includes mentions of the impact migrants have on welfare, benefit abuse, job market and the pressure over social/health services. It also includes mentions to the ‘call effect’/‘pull factor’ the benefits system may have upon potential migrants |
| 3 Threat to communities/Cultural threat |
| Mention/discussion of any threats to the cultural identity or cultural homogeneity of a country or area. Includes religious and linguistic diversity. |
| 3.1 Threat to communities/Cultural threat >> Religion |
| Mention of religion |
| 3.2 Threat to communities/Cultural threat >> Antisemitism |
| Mention of Antisemitism |

| |
|--|
| 4 Crime |
| This theme refers to crimes committed by migrants in the countries of destination. It includes mentions/discussion of crime levels in countries of destination. For stories to be coded under this theme, an explicit mention of migrants as criminals must be made. |
| 4.1 Crime >> Fraud |
| Fraudulent activities conducted by refugees. |
| 4.2 Crime >> Violence |
| Violent crimes committed by refugees. |
| 4.3 Crime >> Terrorism related crimes |
| Crimes that are related to terrorism, such as planning or executing an attack but also being a member of a terrorist organisation. |
| Positive Frames |
| 5 Post-arrival integration |
| This theme refers to the integration of migrants in the communities of the country of destination. It may have cultural, civic, political, linguistic, and job-market aspects. It also includes any discussion of the benefits (civic/economic/cultural) migration brings to communities in the countries of destination. This theme presents migrants under a positive light. |
| 6 Positive/Accepting/Sympathetic response to refugees |

This includes the portrayal of refugees as trustworthy, include any empathetic feelings towards refugees, or the willingness to help. Unlike both categories 'humanitarian', this category does not necessarily portray refugees as victims, rather the focus is on how the outside responds to refugees and whether there are positive or sympathetic emotions when discussing the arrival of refugees. Also includes giving refugees a voice.

7 Migrant/refugees/asylum seekers success stories

Mention / discussion of stories which focus on achievements of migrants (studying an academic degree, succeeding as a professional, obtaining a prize...). Presents individual migrants under a positive light. The integration of migrants in the society of destination is not considered to be an achievement in itself. Obtaining a residence permit, or a judicial/administrative victory over the country of destination should not be considered an achievement either.

8 Humanitarian (elements)

This theme focuses on the suffering of migrants, and presents them under a sympathetic/empathetic light, and/or presenting migrants as victims. This theme is applicable when there is a small number of brief mentions of migrants as victims or suffering

9 Humanitarian (main theme)

This is similar to 'Humanitarian (elements)' but develops the theme extensively. This could involve, for instance, an extended discussion of the suffering of migrants/refugees (as opposed to brief mentions). Alternatively, it could involve extended discussion of the conditions/situation that they are fleeing from

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| Labels |
| 10 Asylwerber |
| Mentions the label Asylwerber. |
| 11 Einwanderer |
| Mentions the label Einwanderer. |
| 12 Flüchtling |
| Mentions the label Flüchtling or Flüchtlinge. |
| 13 Migrant |
| Mentions the label Migrant or Migranten. |
| 14 Zuwanderer |
| Mentions the label Zuwanderer. |

