The Syrian Refugee Crisis: Media Coverage and Humanitarian Response

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The Crisis

An estimated 9 million refugees have fled Syria since the beginning of the civil war in 2011 (UNHCR)

Increasing influx in surrounding countries (Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Greece)

Impact European and other Western nations
General Research Question:
How does media coverage of the Syrian Refugee Crisis affect humanitarian response?
The Response

- Public response
- Policy response
- Humanitarian aid response
Previous Research

**Media Coverage**
- Influence on government action
- Catalyst for monetary giving
- Agenda Setting
- Framing

**Aid Response**
- Communication with aid organizations
- Tracking mechanisms

**Refugees**
- Access to information
- Timeliness of response
- Voice for the voiceless

**Dual Process Theory**
- Appealing to the emotional level
- Appealing to the rational level
Theory

Visual Elements

Anecdotal Focus

Active Social Media Presence

Dual Process-appeal to emotion

Wider Audience Reached

More Audience Response
Research Questions

What kind of media content generates the most audience response and interaction?

What kind of media content results in amplified news coverage?
Research Method and Design
Content Analysis

International News Organizations

Twitter Coverage of Crisis

Step 1
Compare the four one-week segments

Step 2
Determine the different indicators and categories

Step 3
Run tests to determine significance and correlation

Audience engagement
Brutal images of Syrian boy drowned off Turkey must be asen, activists say nyti.ms/1Ob07Ap

How big is the migrant crisis? nyti.ms/1Nkr59X

160,000
549,000
784,000

Refugees released in the proposal
Refugees and migrants
Refugees for reasons

196
107
196
107
196
107

Reply to @nytimes
Experimental Design

1. Partner with local refugee organization
2. Purchase ad on Facebook
3. Generate two ads using different media
4. Boost the ad to certain members of population
5. Evaluate number of click throughs on partner website
Refugees in Texas, October 2016- January 2017

Total reach: 5,342
Reactions: 14
Click throughs: 12
Ad #2

Total reach: 23,651
Reactions: 45
Click throughs: 17

I’m here. Will you help me?

world relief
Interviews

Interview 1: Past strategies of World Relief’s social media

Process: Gained access to social media accounts, linked ads to World Relief’s website

Interview 2: Follow up of success rate of ads, recommendations for future
Research Question 1: What type of media content generates audience response?

Research Question 2: What type of media content results in more news coverage?
Aid organizations and news outlets need to develop a closer relationship to create the most effective media strategies.