

Media Use, Identity and Integration

Focus on Syrian Nationals in Oslo

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Name: Yam Bahadur Katuwal

Candidate No.: 51

Supervisor: Dr Carol Azungi Dralega

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NLA University College

Kristiansand, Norway

Abstract

This research assesses the pattern of media use of Syrian nationals in their daily lives and the issues of construction of their identity and integration through their media choices. The theoretical framework for the research is based on notions of cultural identity and diasporic communication. An in-depth semi-structured face-to-face interview model is used to explore the experiences of the informants of this research. The sample of the study is mainly the immigrants and refugees from Syria who migrated to Norway significantly after 2011. Snowball or chain-referral sampling method is used to access the informants. The fieldwork was conducted in Oslo between February and May 2019.

The research exhibits the on-going process of constructing identities of Syrian people in the multinational environment of Oslo. It explores their diasporic, hybrid and invisible identities caused by political, cultural and religious differences in the host society. The silence of media in acute need and the exaggeration of news contents in sensitive stories are frustrating to them. So they prefer social media like Facebook, YouTube, blogs, and WhatsApp as the significant sources of news and communications. They extensively use the internet and social media for self-expression and self-representation. Most of the informants have come to the point of negating the news hearing of Syria due to the repetition of similar kinds of stories and often fake accounts.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgement	vi
List of Acronyms	vii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Statement of Problem	2
1.2 Objective of the Study.....	2
1.3 Research Questions	2
1.4 Significance of the Study	3
1.5 Organization of the Study	3
CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY	4
2.1 Media in Norway.....	4
2.1.1 Broadcasting Media.....	4
2.1.2 Print Media	5
2.1.3 Online Media	6
2.2 Integration and its Dimensions.....	7
2.2.1 Social and Cultural Integration.....	8
2.2.2 Social Inclusion versus Exclusion	8
2.3 Immigration and Integration in Norway.....	9
CHAPTER 3: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	11
3.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	11
3.1.1 Identity and Identities	11
3.1.2 Diasporic Identity	12
3.1.3 Ethnic Identity and Discourse in Media	12
3.1.4 “Cultural Identity and Diaspora”	13
3.1.5 Media, Diaspora and Identity	14
3.2 LITERATURE REVIEW.....	15
3.2.1 Stereotypical Media Discourse.....	15
3.2.2 Ethnic Minority Representation.....	16
3.2.3 Migration and Syrian Diaspora.....	17

3.2.4 Cultural Integration: A European Crisis	18
3.2.5 Syrian Migrants: Threats to Europe (the European ‘Migrant Crisis’).....	19
3.2.6 Attitude towards Immigrants and Integration.....	20
3.2.7 Media and Integration.....	21
3.3 Gap in the Literature	21
3.4 Summary	22
CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY	24
4.1 Relevance of Qualitative In-depth Interviews.....	24
4.2 Sampling.....	25
4.3 Fieldwork and Data Collection	26
4.4 In-depth Face to Face Interviews	26
4.5 Analyzing Data.....	28
4.6 Limitation and Delimitation of the Study	28
4.7 Generalizability, Validity and Reliability	29
4.8 Ethical Considerations.....	30
4.9 Summary	30
CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS.....	31
5.1 MEDIA CHOICES OF SYRIAN NATIONALS IN OSLO	31
5.1.1 Downfall of Radio Use	31
5.1.2 Even Use of Television.....	32
5.1.3 Eclipse to the Use of Print Media.....	35
5.1.4 Wider Use of Internet and Online Media	36
5.1.5 Acute Use of Social Media.....	37
5.1.5.1 High Trust on Citizen Journalism	38
5.1.6 Summary.....	39
5.2 NEGOTIATING IDENTITIES	41
5.2.1 Cultural Identity: Process of Transformation	41
5.2.2 Budding Diasporic Identity	42
5.2.2.1 “Loss and Hope”	43
5.2.2.2 Sense of Belonging	44
5.2.2.3 Media: Source of Adaptive Strength in Diaspora.....	46
5.2.3 Ethnic Identity: We are Stereotyped.....	47

5.2.4 (Political) Identity: YOU ARE A REFUGEE!.....	49
5.2.5 Religious Identity: Islamophobia.....	49
5.2.6 Otherness	50
5.2.7 Summary.....	51
5.3 MEDIA USE AND THE INTEGRATION PROCESS	52
5.3.1 Transnational Media Choices	52
5.3.2 Streaming Norwegian Channels (Media) and their Roles	53
5.3.3 Negative Consequences	55
5.3.3.1 Escapist Attitude	56
5.3.4 Summary.....	56
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION.....	58
6.1 Kan Du Snakke Norsk? (Can You Speak Norwegian?).....	59
6.2 Recommendations	60
REFERENCES.....	61
Appendix 1: Interview Guide.....	68
Appendix 2: Profile of the Informants	71

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List of Acronyms

APA	American Psychological Association
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CNN	Cable News Network
DAB	Digital Audio Broadcasting
EU	European Union
FSA	Free Syrian Army
IMDI	The Directorate of Integration and Diversity
IPSOS	Institut de Publique Sondage d'Opinion Secteur (in French)
IS	Islamic State
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
LGBT	Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender
NAV	Norwegian Labour and Welfare Service
NORDICOM	Nordic Information Center for Communication and Media Research
NRK	Norsk Rikskringkasting (Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation)
NSD	Norwegian Centre for Research Data
PSB	Public Service Broadcasting
SIAN	Stopp Islamiseringen av Norge (in Norwegian)
SSB	Statistics Norway
UGC	User-generated content
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
VG	Verdens Gang (in Norwegian)
VYRE	Voices of Young Refugees in Europe

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Norway houses people from 221 countries and autonomous regions (Statistics Norway, 2017). Its population is very heterogeneous and complex. Norway has been planning and implementing different strategies to provide equal rights and opportunities among citizens and immigrants. “Employment, Childhood, education and language, Gender Equality and Participation” were remarked as the four pillars for successful inclusion by Hanseen, the minister of Labour and Social Inclusion (2007).

The government of Norway has launched several action plans and strategies to ensure a democratic society, “a society with room for everyone” (The Norwegian Ministry of Children and Equality, 2017a). The action plan to combat discrimination due to sexual orientation, *Revised strategy for combating work-related crime 2015*, strategy against hate speech for 2016–2020 are some of the notable attempts for integration (The Norwegian Ministry of Children and Equality, 2017b). The government has duly modernized media policy tools to promote media diversity, public debate, and democracy (The Norwegian Ministry of Children and Equality, 2017a). Broadcasting of *Migrapolis*, a programme about immigrant’s everyday lives in Norway through NRK from 1997 to 2016, was also a remarkable attempt to help immigrants integrate into society (NRK, 2001). Despite these, the issues of identity, minority, ethnicity, immigrants, refugees, representations, and their challenges of settlement and integration are still vulnerable in media and Norwegian society. Such issues became more sensible, particularly aftermath the crisis of the Arab Spring when the displaced people flew to Europe for shelter. Since the Syrian crisis became one of the worst humanitarian disasters, their settlement, management, and integration issues occupied a significant space in the aids and policies of Norway (Bolhuis & Wijk, 2018).

Syria first encountered the armed conflict in 2011 between the government led by President Bashar al-Assad and different opposing forces. The nationwide uprising turned into a civil war that killed thousands of people. From 2011 to March 2017, reportedly, 3,21,000 people were killed, and 1,45,000 went missing during the conflict (Bolhuis & Wijk, 2018). The conflict between pro- and anti-government forces took different facets with the issues of religion, ethnicity, and internationalization of the conflict. The rise of the radical jihadist group, Islamic State (IS), further complicated the situation. Since the conflict showed no signs of abating shortly, there was a constant increase in the number of Syrians fleeing their

homes (Sirkeci, Yazgan, & Utku, 2015). From 2011 to 2017, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has registered 2 million Syrian refugees in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon, while 3 million Syrian applicants were recorded by the Government of Turkey (Bolhuis & Wijk, 2018). And, from 2011 to 2017, 15,525 Syrian nationals have applied for asylum in Norway (Bolhuis & Wijk, 2018). Now, all the Syrian citizens are in the phase of the integration process in Norway. Here, the study focuses on investigating their pattern of media use, construction of their identity and their integration process in Norwegian society.

1.1 Statement of Problem

Norway has been ranked the first in Democracy Index in 2018 (The Economist Intelligence Unit Limited, 2018) but the intention of the government “to work for an open, peaceful and inclusive society” (The Norwegian Ministry of Children and Equality, 2017a) is still challenged by refugees, Syrian immigrants, and other migrants. Their representations in media, politics or any decision making roles are controversial these days. They are portrayed as invisible and cast as others. They are “spoken about” and spoken for rather than given a public voice of their own (Mainsah & Dralega, 2014, p. 5).

The study attempts to cover views of Syrian nationals (more recent arrivals) about their media habits in daily lives and their perceptions about the media of the host country for their integration. The study further attempts to find what media they use in their daily lives. Is it ethnic media in Norway or Scandinavia? Or do they use international media, transnational media, social media or Norwegian mainstream media? And why do they do so? By assessing the pattern of their media culture, the study tries to explore its relation with their construction of identities in a new society for integration.

1.2 Objective of the Study

To investigate the pattern of media use, identity construction and integration of Syrian nationals in Norwegian society

1.3 Research Questions

- I. What are the media choices (channels and habits) of Syrian nationals in Oslo?
- II. What identity discourses are articulated through these media choices?
- III. In what ways and to what extent do these media choices contribute to their integration within the Norwegian society?

1.4 Significance of the Study

No country is untouched from the tenets of social integration. Either it is a developing country or a developed one; it is deeply rooted in the consciousness of people. Ethnicities, minorities, indigenous groups, marginalities, refugees, immigrants, and their distinct identities are globally vulnerable issues today. So, a study of media use of Syrian nationals, their identity construction, and integration in the context of hybrid Norwegian society is very significant. This study is useful for researchers within media studies, migration studies, policy and those interested in integration issues, among others.

1.5 Organization of the Study

This research has three areas of concern. First, it brings into fore the media habits of Syrian nationals living in Oslo and then explores the issues of their identity construction and integration. The thesis shall have six major chapters. The first chapter is mainly an introduction about the research, research problem, objectives, research questions and significance of the study. The second chapter deals with the background of the study to show the trend of the development of media and media habits of people in Norway. It also exhibits the concept of migration and integration in Norway. The third chapter is of a conceptual framework to find out the relevant pieces of literature and theories applied for the research. It works as a guideline to analyze my findings. The fourth chapter comes with the discussions of methodologies used in the study for choosing out apt samples and data collection methods. The fifth chapter is all about findings and analyses of the media habits, identity construction and integration of Syrian nationals living in Oslo. The last section includes a conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

This chapter discusses the trend and status of media in Norway and the issues of immigration and integration in Norway. This chapter discusses Norwegian media basically to explore whether the informants are following the new trends taking place in media or their media habits are different from the general direction. And, the concepts, issues, and policies of immigration and integration are discussed to know how and to what extent the Syrian nationals are integrating into Norwegian society. It helps to ferret out whether the policies of Norway are welcoming to Syrian citizens to integrate into a new society or not, and how effective they are.

2.1 Media in Norway

The media system in Norway is mixed. It comprises of public service broadcasting company funded through license fees like NRK and several private commercial channels mainly financed by advertising. Today, newspapers, magazines, radio, television, film and the internet are parts of the Norwegian media system.

2.1.1 Broadcasting Media

Public service broadcasting (PSB) largely dominates broadcasting media in Norway. It officially established in 1933. NRK worked as the only broadcaster in the analogue terrestrial network until the development of private commercial channels from 1975 onwards, resulting in the introduction of cable TV in 1982, regional TV channels and satellite TV in 1986. To follow the modern digital trend the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation launched nrk.no in 1995. (Ottosen & Krumsvik, 2012) As of 2018, there were 31 nationwide radio channels with several regional and local radio channels in Norway (MEDIANORWAY, 2019). Norway also became the first country in the World to end nationwide FM radio and switch to Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB) in 2011 (NRK, 2018).

In the “golden age” of radio listening - the 1950s, before the introduction of television - Norwegians listened to the radio on average 2.5 hours per day. This was reduced by 0.5 hours when television was introduced in 1960 (Østbye, 2019). In 2018, 57% of the population listened to the radio on average in one day, down from 63% in 2017. On average, people listened 72 minutes on radio per day in 2018 (KANTAR, 2018). In the case of

television, Norwegians saw an average of 2 hours and 30 minutes on TV daily in 2017 (KANTAR, 2017).

In the context of Norway, local or private televisions have hardly overcome public service broadcasting media. Though the monopoly of NRK ended in 1982-83, it still got hold of the media market. The first real competition for the NRK came in 1992 when TV 2 was established by Schibsted and the Danish media conglomerate Egmont. Today, NRK1 is the channel with the highest market share, 32 per cent - the three NRK channels have a total share of 40 per cent. The market share of TV 2 channel is 18 per cent, and the total share of listening for all the channels operated by the TV 2 company is 27 per cent. TVNorge is the third largest TV channel (market share: 7 per cent). Modern Times Group's TV3 has a market share of 4 per cent. (Østbye, 2019). The NRK channels and TV 2 offer daily news programmes. The TV 2 system includes a 24/7 news channel. The audience can also subscribe to foreign news channels, like BBC World, CNN, Russia Today, Al Jazeera and Sky News. (Østbye, 2019). In this context, it is significant to find out the type of broadcasting media the Syrian people are following in Oslo. It will help to figure out whether they are following the dominant NRK or the other private channels of Norway or the international media, and the purpose behind it.

2.1.2 Print Media

Norway outlines itself on one of the top positions when it comes to the reading of the newspaper. High early literacy, active regions, high identification with local communities, etcetera are some of the reasons for the high readership of newspapers and magazines in Norway. (Østbye, 2019)

The first newspapers in Norway were established in the 1760s, mostly serving the administrative and economic elites. Since then, several local and regional newspapers were established along with the political movements. It was only in the 1950s the competition for market shares and ownerships got prioritized than the political content. Aftenposten, VG, Bergens Tidende, Stavanger Aftenblad, Fædrelandsvennen, Dagbladet, Dagens Næringslivn are some of the leading newspapers in Norway today.

The circulation of Norwegian newspapers remained high between 1990 and 2000s with 3.1 to 3.2 million copies but with the emergence of the internet and digital media there came a significant fall in the print industry (Østbye, 2019). In Norway, newspaper sales per capita have dropped around 40 per cent since 2003 (Ohlsson, 2015). The recent study of Knut-Arne Futsæter shows that the coverage of the traditional Norwegian media groups has

declined over the past ten years. This applies in particular to the reading of paper newspapers. In 2005, 85% read at least one paper daily, while in 2017/2018, the figure reduced to 42%. Of the 149 newspaper titles reported, only ten titles have received more readers, and 78 newspapers have received fewer. Overall, 54% read at least one newspaper via mobile or PC / Mac. (Futsæter, 2018) Dagbladet launched the first major online news operation in Norway on 10 March 1995 to compete in the media market. Simultaneously, VG published its online edition on 10 October of the same year (Ottosen & Krumsvik, 2012).

This shows that the majority (almost all) of the print media have introduced their online versions to target the maximum number of readers. Here, this study searches for the reach (choices) of Syrian nationals in the case of print media too. It attempts to find their preferences of print to online or vice versa.

2.1.3 Online Media

At least 96 per cent of the total population (age group 9-79 years) have access to the Internet in their homes, 75 per cent of people have tablets and 85 per cent own smartphones (Østbye, 2019). The whole media, including print, radio, and television, have adapted to this new trend and have services on the Internet. They have paid (paywall) and unpaid system for their consumers to access and download content. In 2013, one-fifth of the advertising revenues for newspapers came from digital editions, but only a few per cents of the revenues from sales to customers (Østbye, 2019).

Along with the digitalization in the media, social networking sites like Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, and YouTube are also increasingly becoming popular in Norway. Email, Messenger, Skype, Viber, WhatsApp, Snapchat, etcetera are being prominent sources of communication, slowly replacing the traditional means of communication like telephone. Internet users are actively playing the role of both the producers and the consumers of news and articles. According to an IPSOS survey from the 3rd quarter of 2016, 87 per cent of the population (18+) regard themselves as YouTube users, 82 per cent as Facebook users, 52 per cent as Snapchat users, 43 per cent as Instagram users, 28 per cent as Google+ users, 26 per cent as LinkedIn users, 25 per cent as Twitter users and 14 per cent as Pinterest users (Østbye, 2019).

In the case of research, these informative data are crucial to identify the ways the Syrian nationals are using the internet, the frequency and the purpose to evaluate their media habits and their identities articulated through these media choices.

2.2 Integration and its Dimensions

The word ‘integration’ came from the Latin word, ‘integer’ meaning whole (Maagero & Simonsen, 2008). When a society unifies as a whole with common aspirations and shared goals, then it can be regarded as an integrated society. Unity in diversity is a fundamental characteristic of integration. Integration encompasses different economic, social, cultural and political realities of society.

Integration is a sense of we-feeling. It is a sense of belonging and feeling respected, valued for who you are regardless the nationality. It is feeling a level of supportive energy and commitment from others (Miller & Katz, 2002). It is not a matter of acculturation and assimilation only but beyond those. When one is included in society, he or she needs to have all the rights as a citizen has within a national setup. Integration is not merely about access to the labour market and services, not just about having access to mainstream services or centring the marginal from outskirts, or about changing attitudes or civic engagement; it is a two-way process of adaption by migrant and host society (Spencer, 2000). When a person flees to a new society as an asylum seeker or migrates as an immigrant, a worker or a family immigrant, he or she cannot be integrated into the society solely by his or her deeds. The support of the host society has an equal role for successful integration. Thus, integration is an act of making equal participation of all the people living in a defined territory. It is about “participation in the community, like employees, students, volunteers, teachers, parents, residents – as active citizens” (Voices of Young Refugees in Europe (VYRE), 2012, p. 17).

Social integration is associated with social participation, social justice, equality of rights and liberty of people (Cohen & Syme, 1985). It also largely depends on the policies of the host nation. Integration policies are to promote social integration and inclusion, targeting specific groups of people that could be excluded from society (Blau, 1960). Ethnic minorities, indigenous groups, and diaspora groups are often in marginal lines of a nation.

Dominant culture and language of the host society are considered as major barriers in the process of social integration. The language of the host country as a barrier for jobs and social networks ultimately results as a barrier to integration (Blau, 1960). So, language acquisition and encouragement of cultural diversity are prominent factors to smooth integration (Lee, 2009). Language helps in building a mutual relationship with people, learn the culture and attitude of people, know about what is going on in the surroundings, consume and produce news, views, and experiences of people through media and so on. Similarly, encouraging cultural diversities promote respect to the distinct identities of heterogeneous cultures of people in a multi-cultural society.

2.2.1 Social and Cultural Integration

Angell (1968) defines social integration as fitting together of parts to constitute the whole society. 'Fitting together' suggests close ties among the members of society to form one unity of interest.

Integration in terms of economic aspect is based on equal access to the labour market. When ethnic minorities and immigrants get similar jobs like that of the dominant groups or the nationals as per their qualification, then they are economically integrated. This leads them to standard living, enjoying all forms of rights. Along with equal access in the economic arena, social, cultural and political aspects play a vital role in integration. Political integration refers to the fair treatment of all ethnic, immigrant and marginal groups as equal citizens from the policy level of the host nation. Everyone should have the same rights and freedom to exercise their duties and responsibilities.

Social or cultural integration is different from acculturation and assimilation. Acculturation is a process of adapting others' or the host nation's culture by the minority group to integrate them into the social system. It refers to as culture change that results from continuous first-hand contact between two distinct cultural groups (Berry, 1992). Here, the minority or non-dominant group slowly adopts the host culture accepting some changes to their own culture as a result of influence. They learn new cultures, traditions, beliefs, and values in the course of adjusting to the host society. And, assimilation is a state of acculturation where the group completely gets assimilated with the host or dominant group. It is a multidimensional process of boundary reduction that blurs or dissolves an ethnic distinction and the social and cultural differences and identities associated with it (Rumbaut, 2015). In this stage, they adjust in the host society and culture completely losing their original culture. So, assimilation is not a proper integration. Assimilation is coercive while integration is mutual. Integration respects diversity which assimilation discards.

2.2.2 Social Inclusion versus Exclusion

The notion of social inclusion can be traced back at least to the nineteenth-century sociologist Weber. It emerged in the field of sociology, together with the importance of social cohesion, meaning unity among the people of society (Gidley, Hampson, Wheeler, & Bereded-Samuel, 2010). It is "participating as a full member of society and the capacity to realize the conditions of social citizenship" (Sinclair, Bramley, Dobbie, & Gillespie, 2007, p. 7).

Social inclusion is a "process of improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of those disadvantaged based on their identity to take part in society" (The World Bank, 2018).

It's a way of bringing people from marginal to the mainstream. It encompasses diverse areas of economy, culture, language, religion, ethnicity, age, gender, region, health, and incarceration. It is an integration process among the speakers of different languages, residents of urban and suburban, 'have and have not', natives and immigrants, minorities and elites, people with disabilities and so on. The success of inclusion is understood not only by its coverage but the degree of inclusion too.

“The narrowest interpretation pertains to the neoliberal notion of *social inclusion as access*; a broader interpretation regards the social justice idea of *social inclusion as participation*; whilst the widest interpretation involves the human potential lens of *social inclusion as empowerment*” (Gidley et al., 2010).

The neoliberal notion of social inclusion is based on the ideology of developing national economic status fulfilling the gaps of the skilled workforce. Here, increasing social inclusion is regarded as investing in human capital to compete for the global market. While social justice ideology focuses on social inclusion based on equal participation of people regardless of their background of identities. It is based on people's rights and obligations, opportunities, and dignities. Here, people participate in developing a sustainable society. The lens of social inclusion as empowerment valorizes the dynamic potentialities of a human being. In this ideology, promoting social inclusion is expanding the possibilities of each human being in society. (Gidley et al., 2010)

Social inclusion is often associated with its counterpart, social exclusion, derived from French *les exclus* – those excluded from the social insurance system (Hayes, Gray, & Edwards, 2008). In the case of the UK, “women, racial minorities, the poor and the sick, those with disabilities, children and youth” (Labonte, 2004) are in the list of exclusion. However, in most of the countries, particularly in Europe, immigrants and refugees are regarded as the disadvantaged or socially excluded group. They do not fit in ‘solidaristic social networks’ of the given society (Paul, 2000). As a result, it creates a riot and disintegration in society.

2.3 Immigration and Integration in Norway

Many people have migrated to Norway as refugees, immigrants, students, and family reunion. As of January 1, 2019, there are 9,44,402 immigrants and Norwegian born to immigrant parents in Norway (Statistics Norway, 2019c). It means they constitute 17.7 per cent of the total population. In the case of Syrian nationals, they are relatively well dispersed throughout

Norway and are found in 399 of the country's 422 municipalities. The total population of Syrian immigrants and Norwegian-born to immigrant parents is 34,112 (0.64 per cent) out of which 20,010 are males, and 14,102 are females (Statistics Norway, 2019c). Free education, health insurance policy, a strong economy, and human rights are prime attractive factors to immigrate to Norway.

The Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDI) works actively for the integration of people, particularly refugees in Norway, in collaboration with the municipalities.

Introductory programme, language, and settlement are considered significant for “speedy, satisfactory and stable settlement of refugees” for integration (The Directorate of Integration and Diversity, 2018, p. 1). The introductory programme includes the teaching of Norwegian language and social studies for basic qualifications. It usually lasts for two years and is aimed at foreign nationals between 18 to 55 years of age. Refugees also receive economic support while participating in the introductory programme.

Norway is undergoing a welfare reform, reorganizing the social security offices and unemployment offices into a common organization, Norwegian Labour and Welfare Service (NAV)¹ (Lescher-Nuland, 2010) for the effective process of integration. With the support of NAV, the local authorities are providing services as per the needs and circumstances of their diverse users. The white paper *From reception centre to the labour market – an effective integration policy* (Meld. St. 30 (2015–2016)) is another crucial footstep to integrate the immigrants in the Norwegian labour market (The Norwegian Ministry of Children and Equality, 2017b). These policies and the act of welfare reform are very significant for the study to identify how far the integration has succeeded in the case of the Syrian nationals. The target group of IMDI is more relevant in the matter of age group where my sample's age lies between 20 to 43 years old.

1. ¹ NAV is a local government body in Norway to smooth job market and provide right services and benefit at the right time.

CHAPTER 3: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework for this research bases on Stuart Hall's notion of identity as multiple selves (1996), and Myria Gergiou and Roger Silverstones' diasporic communication and media use as the process and space for the construction of identity (2007). However, views of a few other theorists and researchers are also used as literature and guidelines to analyze the findings of the research.

3.1.1 Identity and Identities

Identity is an ongoing process of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. Identity as a 'production', is never complete. It is always in 'process', and always constituted within, not outside, representation (Hall, 1996, p. 222). So human beings have multiple selves or identities, and that identification is a constructed one (Hall, 1996). Who am I? Where am I from? What culture do I belong to? etcetera are the prime concerns of identity. People's consciousness, behaviour, deeds, and belongingness or their historicity determine ones' identity.

Constructing identity, in a way, is developing one's personality. It concerns how a human being experiences himself or herself and how he or she is experienced by others (Hagen, 2003). It is relational. It doesn't exist in isolation. So, a single identity itself refers to two different identities, personal and social.

A person's identity develops through interaction with his/her environment (Hagen, 2003). When "I" interacts with "you" and when "you" interacts with "I", a certain identity is created of both which are distinguished from each other. The interaction with the same person in different time frames and circumstances also affects the change in ones' identity. So, the etymological meaning of "identity" form Latin word "idem" meaning "the same" or "one and the same" (Hagen, 2003, p. 200) is very contradictory in today's context. The stability of "I" is challenged by the ideologies of postmodernist scholars who argue the multiplicity of truth and hence, the identity. For them, identity is a continuous process of construction, reconstruction and transformation. This multiplicity of identity is much more usual in media studies. It is very useful in identifying the identity of Syrian nationals in Oslo and the factors affecting the changes in their identities in different time frames.

3.1.2 Diasporic Identity

Diasporic identity is an identity of translation (Rushdie, 2012). He carries out this definition from the etymological meaning of 'translation' which refers to bearing across. Having been borne and identified across the world, he regards the diaspora as a translated identity. Since it is translated, the origin, the roots of the essence of culture and identity are lost in one way or the other. He claims diaspora is always haunted by imaginary homeland as they always suffer through homelessness and identity crisis.

Diasporas are transnational cultural communities. It is formed by a group of people or community living in a foreign land which shares the same cultural and historical background. Gabriel Sheffer provides a commonly accepted definition:

Modern diaspora communities are ethnic minority groups of migrant origins residing and acting in host countries but maintaining strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origin – their homelands. (Gabriel Sheffer, 1986; as cited in Kodmani, 2018, p. 4)

If the ties cease to exist, the diaspora would not be recognizable anywhere as no feature would distinguish it anymore from the rest of the society in which it lives (Kodmani, 2018). The essence of diaspora lies in the common goal of identifying themselves, their inner selves in the expatriate community. In a way, it is a negotiation of identity in transnational countries. Diaspora is as Edward Said (Said, 1978) once called imaginative geography and history of what is close to us and what is far behind. So, diasporic identity is "about the roots as much as it is about the routes of the diasporic journey" (Gergiou & Silverstone, 2007, p. 34). It is about their political, social and cultural formations in different periods (Hall, 1996).

The Syrian diaspora is characterized by heterogeneity in terms of religion, ethnicity and political aspirations. They reflect the rich diversity of the Syrian society (Ragab, Rahmeier, & Siegel, 2017). The study tries to explore the very notions of the diasporic identity of Syrian people living far away in Europe, Oslo.

3.1.3 Ethnic Identity and Discourse in Media

According to Gillespie (1995), the word 'ethnic' was originally used as an out-group term for "cultural strangers, "others" and "outsiders" to the dominant group. It means ethnic identity is an underdeveloped and marginal group of identity. In Said's word, they are the 'Orient' or 'Other' (Said, 1978, p. 10). They are always 'deferred' culturally and politically. Ethnic reality is "(re) produced, diffused, and disseminated by the dominant media discourses"

(Hussain, 2003, p. 115). So, their identity is determined not only by themselves but also by the ideologies of the dominant group and the discourse of media.

Ethnicity derives its meaning from its relationship to “culture, race, nation and recently also diaspora” (Hagen, 2003, p. 209). They have strong ties to their roots. They are constantly forced to work on their identity (Eide, 2003). They are in a constant struggle to come to the centre from the outer edge. Foucault says that power determines the discourse, so is the case with the ethnic identity and discourse. Their identity is positioned as the second sex (Beauvoir, Borde, & Malovany-Chevallier, 2010) in mainstream media. Since the Syrian community is also an ethnic community in Norway, their discourse is dominated mainly by the dominant discourse of Norwegian society and media. Based on the concept, the study explores the ways and to what extent the Norwegian mainstream media have produced the discourse of Syrian nationals and how the discourse contributes to their construction of identity and their integration phenomena in the Norwegian society.

3.1.4 “Cultural Identity and Diaspora”

Cultural identities are the points of identification made with the discourses of history and culture (Hall, 1996). Hall identifies cultural identity in two schools of thought. First, he finds cultural identity as a collective identity. This identity is developed through the sense of ‘oneness’ among the people with the same roots. It reflects “the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes” of the people (223). The truth of identity lies in the essence of culture. Since it is shared cultural values, Hall categorizes it as a stable and unchanging form of cultural identity. He stresses this particular identity is to be discovered, excavated, brought to light and expressed through cinematic representation by a ‘Caribbean or black diaspora’.

The second thought of cultural identity contrasts his first thought, referring to identity as a process of change and transformation, as a process of ‘being’ something from something. It is unstable with the instability of history and culture, as Foucault viewed, the change in history and knowledge with the change in power. It “belongs to the future as much as to the past” (Hall, 1996, p. 225). It cannot transcend place, time, history, and culture. So, “identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past” (225).

By positioning two different thoughts of cultural identity, Hall argues that the first essentialist definition of identity, “can and does inspire feminist, anti-colonial and anti-racist art and activism, but cannot help us comprehend the trauma of colonialism”(Hussey, 2014, p.

200). It is understood by the second definition, which emphasizes “the historical and social contingency of identity” (Hussey, 2014, p. 200).

Hall remarks cultural identity and diaspora appear simultaneously as political, scholarly and personal concerns. Diaspora identities are continually producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference. Cultural identity and the diaspora for Hall is like ‘textuality of history’ and ‘historicity of texts’ (Montrose, 1989, p. 20) for Louis Montrose for identification of meaning. It means history or identity is textual or narrative, which is governed by social, economic and political interests of the dominant groups. In the context of Syrians, their identities are their roots, histories, politics and socio-cultural values and norms. They belong to their memories of their country of origin and simultaneously the present scenarios in transnational countries. This ‘cultural identity and diaspora’ is one of the prominent parts of the research.

3.1.5 Media, Diaspora and Identity

“Questions of identity are central but intensely difficult to resolve both theoretically and in the experienced realities of everyday life” (Gergioui & Silverstone, 2007, p. 38). Since identity changes with time and position, it does not have a single fixed definition. Diaspora and hybridity, two key concepts in identity, are of central significance to the issue of contra-flows in the world today (Kavoori, 2007). Diaspora is:

the process which Appadurai calls ‘deterritorialization’, where not only money, commodities and persons unendingly chase each other around the world, but also group imaginations of the modern world find their fractured and fragmented counterpart. (Kavoori, 2007)

For Kavoori, the diaspora is an unsettled identity. A person always hangs in between the past and present, two cultures, two memories, hence, two identities. The identity is shattered and fragmented.

Diasporic media range from the exchange of letters, videos and mobile phones, texts, and images, to the printed press, domestic and satellite television, and the Internet (Gillespie, 1995). They are produced by the locals and could be limited to the locals only or be disseminated worldwide. Their communications, dialogues, expressions, and associations reflect their daily lives. They are the source to identify their proper identification and their roots.

Mediation and media cultures are not all about television and the Internet. Music, interpersonal communication, mobility in and out of communication spaces, such as Internet cafes, local libraries, community centres and clubs are

as much part of the diasporic media cultures as are the Internet and satellite television. (Gergiou & Silverstone, 2007, p. 39)

Modern media and technologies have allowed audiences and users to play with their identities. An American psychologist and social philosopher Sherry Turkle claims in her book *Life on the Screen. Identity in the Age of the Internet* that the internet may change our identities because we can more or less create or own identities in cyberspace (Turkle, 1995; as cited in Hagen, 2003). Similarly, Mainsah quotes Georgiou (2002) to claim that for immigrant populations, the internet and other new media technologies expand spaces for community communication and provide new opportunities for self-expression and self-representation (Mainsah, 2009).

Therefore, diasporas and their media have a pivotal role to play in the “development of contra-flows” and in the “diversification of mediascapes outside the (full) control of nation-states and corporate transnationalism” (Gergiou & Silverstone, 2007, p. 35). This view is remarkably relevant in studying the different media choices of Syrian nationals as the platform to share their worldviews, their purpose of the media choices (channels and habits) to form their identities and establish networks and grounds for integration in a new society.

3.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This section explores the relevant researches carried out in the issues of immigrants, their media representations, identities and their settlement in the host societies. After the review of the literature, it shows the gap in the research field and points towards the scope of this study.

3.2.1 Stereotypical Media Discourse

The issues of ethnicity, diaspora, identity, and fragmentation are significant concerns in media discourse these days. These are more common in European and American media.

Cultural stereotyping and discrimination of the ethnic minorities and notably that of Muslim immigrants, in the mass media, politics, academic and administrative discourse and practice is a common feature of advanced European societies. (Hussain, 2003, p. 116)

Muslims are often portrayed with stereotyped images of terror, arm and ammunitions, betrayal, mugger and even terrorists. European mainstream media have their prejudiced media discourse regarding immigrants, particularly Islam and its followers. They have created a kind of xenophobic attitudes among audiences with the repeated negative

representation of immigrants (Horsti, 2008). The Muhammed cartoon's controversy (when published in *Jyllands-Posten*, Denmark on 30 September 2005 and reprinted in Norwegian *Christian Weekly, Magazinet* on 10 January 2006) and the riot followed by is a vivid example of stereotypical images of immigrants' (Muslims') religion and values. Not only are the Muslims, media often found stereotyping the images of Africans too. Media have a "tendency to place all black people under the umbrella of a certain homogenous "Africanness" that ignored ethnic and national differences"(Mainsah, 2009, p. 87). It has affected so much that even the people from different countries of Africa have started identifying themselves from Africa instead of their particular countries. Media "contested the designation of all Africans as a single homogenous group", they (people from Cameroon) use "the same stereotypical designations when referring to themselves" (Mainsah, 2009, p. 87).

3.2.2 Ethnic Minority Representation

"The relationship between media uses and identity struggles in the lives of ethnic minority youth and diaspora" (Tuftte, 2003b, p.184). Tuftte explains it with the example of a riot in Nørrebro, Copenhagen in 1999. His study shows that the ethnic minorities are represented stereotypically in mainstream media, both national and transnational. Any kinds of bad news of ethnic minorities are spread faster in multinational media than the ordinary news. Tuftte (2003) argues the representation of ethnic minorities, particularly Non-Western, in the Danish media reinforces a discourse of ethnic minorities as 'other', contrasting them with the human and social values upon which Danish identity understands and qualifies itself, seen from the perspective of the 'ethnic majority Danes' (p. 182). He suggests identity suffers more with diasporic nature.

Ethnic minorities are always represented with constructed discourse or are underrepresented by the mainstream media. It is limited not only to news coverage of the group but in all sectors, television programmes, films, talk shows, fictions and non-fictions. Hollywood stills exclude women, ethnic minorities, LGBT and disabled people, both on-screen and behind the camera (Mumford, 2017). The study found that there was little to no meaningful change in the representation of diverse groups in popular movie content, with "white, straight, able-bodied men remaining the norm on screen in the film" (Mumford, 2017, p. 1).

3.2.3 Migration and Syrian Diaspora

Diaspora is one of the pulling factors of migration. Family, relatives, friends, sense of belonging, togetherness and cultural values are essential factors for migrants to travel in new destinations.

Even a small Syrian diaspora that lived in Europe before the current migration crisis most probably attracted more and more Syrians, thanks to strong familial ties and loyalty, even between collateral relatives with minor blood relations within a single clan. (Sasnal, 2015, p. 4)

Diaspora is acknowledged as “multi-layered, heterogeneous, and dynamic social formation, resulting from an active process of transnational mobilization, hence moving beyond essentialist conceptions of identity, culture and belonging” (F. Adamson, 2008; Baser & Swain, 2010; Sökefeld, 2006; as cited in Ragab et al., 2017, p. 7). It can range from associations and clubs based on ethnicity or religion, politics, locality or other civil society organizations (p. 8).

Diaspora has significant roles during and post-conflict reconstruction phase both in the country of origin and the host nation. Syrian diaspora has made significant oppositional political movements (Di Bartolomeo, Jaulin and Perrin 2012; as cited in Ragab et al., 2017). “Beyond political involvement, they also engaged in civil society groups, mainly humanitarian and human rights organizations, both in Europe and in the neighbouring countries” (Hallisso, 2014; Qayyum, 2011; Svoboda & Pantuliano, 2015; as cited in Ragab et al., 2017, p. 5). It was estimated that up to 2013, diaspora support accounted for close to 80% of the needs of forcibly displaced civilians (Kodmani, 2018). Around 600 to 700 local groups were formed to carry out the different humanitarian aids since the start of the conflict (Ragab et al., 2017, p. 5). A study of Ragab, Rahmeier and Siegel in Germany shows 33 per cent of Syrian diasporas engaged in the humanitarian sector in Syria and the neighbouring countries, 37 per cent promoted integration of Syrian refugees into the German society, 35 per cent of them perceived the need for more sustainable efforts by engaging in development activities “to alleviate peoples’ dependency in favour of a more self-determined life”, 17 per cent of the engagement aimed at promoting civil society development and 15 per cent were active in the cultural spheres to help “community building within the Syrian diaspora, by providing a space for the expression of identities and the cultivation of heritage, traditions, customs and culture of the origin country” (Ragab et al., 2017, pp. 30-31). Though the Syrian communities in the diaspora are endowed with skills, expertise and resources they still have several challenges to strengthen these in the host countries, particularly in Europe. The Islamophobia

and the domination of ISIS are the primary challenges for the Syrian diaspora in Europe (Troianovski & Walker, 2015).

This review of migration and diaspora of Syrian nationals is very significant in the study to know about their current diasporic situation and their identity in the host country. It also helps to analyze the actions carried out by the Syrian diaspora in Norway to mediate the conflict in Syria and facilitate the upliftment and integration of other Syrians in the host territory.

3.2.4 Cultural Integration: A European Crisis

Immigrants and the refugee crisis have become one of the burning issues in Europe today. Constant clashes among immigrants and the locals, their cultural differences, integration, separatist movements and representation process have always been the subject of interest in media, politics, government and the people of Europe. The debate on the perceived costs and benefits of ethnic and cultural diversity is already intense (Algan, Bisin, Manning, & Verdier, 2012, p.1). This is well illustrated in the case of banning the burqa² in France in 2010. It raised debates regarding national identity and security of the nation (Algan et al., 2012). The attack on November 13, 2015, in Paris, transformed this debate of European migration crisis into the discussion of national security and open border policy of the European Union. Since the Islamic State (IS) claimed the attack, Europe became more negative towards welcoming refugees from Middle East (Troianovski & Walker, 2015).

The government of Switzerland announced the banning of burqa and niqab³ punishable by a fine of up to £6500 for women as well as tourists in public places in Italian speaking region, Ticino (Iaccino, 2015). The law went into effect on 24 November after more than 50% of people in Ticino voted in favour of the ban in 2013 (Iaccino, 2015). Muslims and some human rights activists found this announcement as very offensive and a hindrance to integration policy of Switzerland. However, the Swiss government claimed the ban was for the security of the nation and its citizens. Now, Belgium and, to a lesser extent, Italy, Denmark and the Netherlands have also imposed a ban on the burqa and any other garments that cover the face of people (Iaccino, 2015). Similarly, “the vote in Switzerland against the construction of Muslim mosques clearly shows how heated, and emotional arguments on ethnic and religious identity have recently become” (Algan et al., 2012, p.1).

² Burqa: a loose enveloping garment that covers the face and body and is worn in public by certain Muslim women

³ Niqab: a type of cloth worn by some Muslim women that covers the head and chest, with the exception of the eyes.

3.2.5 Syrian Migrants: Threats to Europe (the European ‘Migrant Crisis’)

The fierce conflict in Syria (2011) produced a vast number of displaced people to Europe, the majority of them through unauthorized channels through Turkey and Greece Mediterranean Sea risking their lives. From 2011 to 2017, Belgium, Germany, Norway, the Netherlands and Sweden received 2,745,310 asylum-seeking applications solely from Syria, making an average of 27 per cent as a whole. Out of those 15,525 applications were filed in Norway with Syrian citizenship. (Bolhuis & Wijk, 2018) 2015 was the peak year in many countries, particularly in Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands, Norway and Belgium. “Europe must accept to live with sizeable Syrian immigrant communities from now on” (Sirkeci et al., 2015, p. 183). Since the influx was surprisingly high, the question of ‘who was coming in’ increasingly drew attention in the media and the political arena of Europe (Bolhuis & Wijk, 2018, p. 30). Media reports and policy papers also suggested some individuals being guilty of serious crimes and also suspected some links to terrorist organizations like the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). People assumed that ISIS “would make use of the migration flows to send operatives to Europe, with an eye of committing attacks in the future” (Bolhuis & Wijk, 2018, p. 30). The Norwegian criminal police reported in 2016 that it was investigating ten to twenty ‘war crimes cases’ of immigrants (Bolhuis & Wijk, 2018, p. 31).

Several challenges and threats came in Europe along with the immigrants. Bolhuis and Wijk summarize them in four main challenges:

- Infrastructural challenges and registration/identification capacity;
- Lack of available accommodation;
- Lack of (competent) staff to handle cases (registration/identification and/or examination/decision-making);
- The confluence of a high recognition rate and particular identity and security challenges. (Bolhuis & Wijk, 2018, pp. 34-35)

The inadequacy of infrastructures, online database information system, skilled officials and other technicalities made it very difficult to identify the genuine asylum seekers. Many of the asylum seekers could not be identified whether they were real Syrian or not, whether they belonged to the nationality of their travel documents or not. Paris attack in November 2015, Brussels bombing in March 2016, a suicide bombing in July 2016 in Germany, et cetera are some of the major instances of loopholes and crisis of such identification decisions. As a result, it became more and more difficult situation to Syrian nationals to integrate into society.

3.2.6 Attitude towards Immigrants and Integration

Sweden has housed more immigrants than any other Scandinavian countries, and Denmark has a more stringent policy in this area (Pettersen & Østby, 2013). Pettersen & Østby's comparative study between Norway, Denmark and Sweden identifies several similarities and differences in the behaviour and attitudes, labour market and education of immigrants. Sweden has the most liberal immigration and integration policy, and attitudes in Scandinavia (Pettersen & Østby, 2013). This has led many immigrants and refugees from all over the world; more from Asia, Africa and Latin America and recently from East Europe migrate to Sweden. So, "Sweden currently has about three times as many immigrants as Norway and Denmark (1.43 versus 0.55 and 0.44 million)" (Pettersen & Østby, 2013, p. 78). Similarly, "Denmark has the highest share of immigrants who are outside the labour force and education" (Pettersen & Østby, 2013, p. 82) because of its strict economic policies and requirements. Above all, Norway posits the top position in terms of living condition of immigrants based on their economy and education level (Pettersen & Østby, 2013).

The latest survey conducted in 2019 also shows that the trend of recent years' development continues, with increasingly immigrant-friendly attitudes. Fifty-six per cent think that the opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers to obtain a residence permit in Norway should remain the same as today (Statistics Norway, 2019a). The report suggests that the younger respondents that are studying in school/university colleges hold more positive attitudes toward immigrants than older respondents receiving welfare benefits or pensions (Statistics Norway, 2019b), and it is more common in Oslo and Akershus than in other parts of the country. Those who interact with immigrants in different arenas also have more positive attitudes than people who have no contact with immigrants. Many agree that immigrants are making a positive contribution both in the labour market and in cultural life. Still, fewer people (8 per cent strongly agree) believe that most immigrants are a source of insecurity in society or that they abuse social welfare schemes. (Statistics Norway, 2019a) This kind of negative attitude often leads to discrimination and extreme hatred towards immigrants. Breivik Massacre⁴ where 77 people were killed is a vivid example of extremism towards the immigrants, particularly Muslims. And more importantly, Breivik's boasting of massacre without any remorse shows his disgraceful attitude to the immigrants (BBC, 2011). Recently, burning of Koran by an anti-Islamist group, SIAN (Stopp Islamiseringen av Norge)

⁴ Breivik Massacre is a terrible day (22 July 2011) in Norwegian history when a Norwegian guy, Anders Behring Breivik, made a car bomb explosion in central Oslo killing eight people and open firing in Utøya island, summer youth camp of Workers' Youth League (AUF), killing 69 young people as movement against anti-Muslim. (BBC, 2016)

on November 19, 2019, in Kristiansand Norway is another picture of hatred to immigrants (Garza, 2019). The main reasons for such discrimination and hostilities are nationality, colour/race, religion and ethnicity (Algan et al., 2012).

3.2.7 Media and Integration

Society has been thoroughly mediatized. Every aspect of society from politics to civil society, economy to sustainability, individual to social relations, arts to literature, identity to culture is subject to media (Academy of Finland, 2018). Media bridges people and society, law and implication. Whether the media bear the role of social responsibility or follow the liberal model, media is indispensable. The role of media in the holistic development of an integrated society is undeniably significant. It is almost impossible for a government to run any action plans or strategies of integration without the support of media. Media helps to disseminate information correctly changing misconceptions and negative stereotypes of immigrants in the host country (Voices of Young Refugees in Europe (VYRE), 2012) for the successful participation of all the people living in the society.

In recent years, the digitization of the media industry has largely modified the communication networks, information systems and use of media. It has established new opportunities for consuming, sharing and creating media content through a growing number of devices and platforms – at any time and from any place (World Economic Forum, 2016). The horizon of media consumption and production has blurred. This ramifications of the new borderless media landscape have affected all aspects of society, from the activities of the individual media consumer to the fundamental principles of representative democracy (Ohlsson, 2015). Personal communication, dominated by mobile and telephones, now have been significantly replaced by the internet and social media. It has become possible to identify one as a global citizen or be recognized as a nationalist to the global world. So, the diasporic identity of loss and hope (Clifford, 1994) is narrowed with the use of media and media discourse. One can easily transcend the boundaries of identities, cultures and societies with a click in media. So, media use, identity and integration are complementary these days.

3.3 Gap in the Literature

The media use of immigrants, as media consumers or producers, and issues of identity construction are still less discovered research areas in the Nordic countries (Horsti, 2008). Most of the researches focused on the representation of minorities in power and politics, ethnic minority representation in media and their settlement issues. Even though the area is

being gradually examined these days, there is more to explore about particularities of immigrants and their worldviews (Horsti, 2008). In the case of Syria, there is a considerable lack in the literature on Syrian diaspora and forms of identities, particularly regarding the nature and dynamics of their engagement with Syria (Ragab et al., 2017). Studies that exist on Syrian diaspora before the conflict of 2011 dealt mainly with identity construction and forms of nationalism in North and Latin America in the pre-World War II era (Gualtieri, 2009; Schumann, 2004; as cited in Ragab et al., 2017), about the lives of workforce in Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon before the civil war in Syria and issues of brain drain in some European countries like France and Germany (Kodmani, 2018). The vicious conflict and the aftermath refugee crisis of Syrians have led to an increasing interest in studying the Syrian diaspora (Ragab et al., 2017).

The previous literature illustrates that most of the researches on immigrants are focused on the media representation of their identity, their rights and settlements in politics and mainstream media, attitudes of citizen on immigrants and their nationalism (Christiansen, 2003; Nikunen, 2007, Tufte, 2002; Alghasi, 2007; Mainsah, 2009; as cited in Mainsah & Dralega, 2014). This research explores the media choices of Syrian nationals, identity discourses articulated through those media choices and their contribution to the integration process in Norwegian society.

3.4 Summary

The study is primarily based on the notion of Hall's cultural identity and diaspora. As he states, identity is always reproducible and changeable. It switches time and again with the shifting of time, position and place of a person. It is cultural too. It is cultural in a sense, it is historical. This concept is borrowed in the research to find out the changing identities of Syrian nationals living in Oslo.

Similarly, diaspora, as another form of identity, has also been explored in the literature. It helps to know how the diasporic consciousness of Syrian nationals has given them a distinct identity in transnational geography. On this line, the study tries to probe the diasporic discourse of Syrian citizens represented by the dominant discourse of the host country.

Gergiou and Silverstones' ideas on the choice of media use as the process and space for the construction of identity and diasporic communication are brought to examine the media habits of Syrian people and the purpose behind it. The ideas also help to analyze the integration process of Syrian people articulated through such media choices.

Different literature regarding identity, ethnicity, diaspora, minority, media use, and representation is discussed in this chapter to analyze their findings and find a gap for carrying out this research.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

The study explores the media use of Syrian nationals, their construction of identity and integration process in the context of Norwegian society. Since the findings of the research base on the views of the Syrian people based in Oslo, the qualitative research method with in-depth interviews became a suitable approach to address the research questions. It allows the researcher to study the experiences of people profoundly and analyze data according to their responses and experiences (Creswell, 2014).

4.1 Relevance of Qualitative In-depth Interviews

“Qualitative research is a research strategy that usually emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data” (Bryman, 2012, p. 380). It is usually unstructured filled with open-ended questions, and findings are much more influenced by interpretivism. The approach is invariably unstructured to enhance the “possibility of getting at actors’ meanings and of concepts emerging out of data collection” (Bryman, 2012, p. 408). In qualitative research, the researcher himself is the main instrument of data collection. It is on the hands of the researcher on what to observe, what to focus on and what to write on (Bryman, 2012). However, the research should have meaningful coherence. It needs to address what it claims to address, use appropriate methods and link research questions, literature, findings and interpretations (Tracy, 2010; as cited in Bryman, 2012).

Quantitative researches are based on numbers with hard and reliable data which can be tested when desired while qualitative researches are based on words and micro study of participants’ viewpoints. Qualitative approaches are based on interviews and observations. Data are collected directly and indirectly with the help of participants. It can be done by direct methods like field visits, face to face interview and participant observation, and indirect methods like telephone interview, emails and chats. (Bryman, 2012)

Syrian people are the primary source of my data. My research is primarily based on the opinions of my informants. I wanted to have as in-depth ideas as I could get out of them. I wanted my informants to be more expressive and detailing (Bryman, 2012). I was also more prone to judging the informants’ face while collecting the data. I was eager to get rich answers from the informants about the stories of their migration, their identity, and their perceptions over the local media and the media perceptions about them. So, the direct method

of the in-depth interview became more reliable and convincing than the interviews done through telephone, WhatsApp, Viber and Skype (Bryman, 2012).

4.2 Sampling

The samples of the study are the immigrants and refugees from Syria who migrated to Norway significantly during the Syrian conflict that started in 2011. The sample is selected on the ground that they have a valid resident permit in Norway and have good communicative skills in English. I kept the English language as a requirement to conduct interviews smoothly as neither I could speak Norwegian fluently nor had any idea of their local languages. Syrians of 20-43 years age group are the sample of my study because I believe that the age group is active in migrating different places and using multimedia technologies. However, their profession, gender and status vary to a large extent to achieve diverse views and experiences.

In total, 11 people are interviewed for this study. Out of them, eight are males and three, females. They come from a different professional background. Two of them are hairdressers; two are students in Norway, one teacher, one researcher, one event and conference manager, one scenographer (production designer), one waiter and two chefs in restaurants. They are of different age groups varying from 20 to 43. Nine of them are refugees, one is an immigrant, and another one has recently obtained Norwegian nationality.

I have used a purposive sampling method, snowball or chain-referral sampling method to access my informants. I have two Syrian friends whom I work with. I interviewed them at first and moved on to other informants based on their suggestions. But, all their recommendations did not meet my need. Many of their friends were unable to communicate in English and had a similar background. So I interviewed some other Syrians by visiting their restaurants, hair salon and some with the help of my other colleagues.

During the process of conducting the interviews, my informants' consent remained significant to me. I tried to be quite close to them in a short period to make them more expressive. I convinced them the research is meant solely for my study purpose where their identities will not be disclosed. Following the ethical lines and considering the sensitivity of Syrian conflicts, their names are changed in the research.

4.3 Fieldwork and Data Collection

The secondary data of this paper come from already published work on issues related to media use, immigrants' identity and integration in Norwegian society. Also, online reports, public documents, journals and personal experiences of people remained an integral part of this study. However, primary data came from qualitative in-depth interviews with Syrians that were conducted in Oslo between February and May 2019.

I chose Oslo as the fieldwork of my study because the most significant number with an immigrant background from Syria lives in Oslo, with a total of 2600, constituting 0.4 per cent of the population of the capital city (Statistics Norway, 2018). Since I live in Oslo, it became more efficient for me to conduct fieldwork cost-effectively. I could search for possible informants visiting different places. Later, the proximity of my location also helped me to visit my informants time and again when needed. I took the beneficiary of this proximity by visiting Karam and Hassan (not real names) twice to extract more information from their experiences and thoughts.

In line with the main research questions, I developed an interview guide which contained around 50 questions. The first part of the questions focused on the media use patterns of the informants. For instance, (a) Which media do you have at your home? Radio/FM, Television? (b) Have you subscribed any newspapers/magazine at home or in the workplace? (c) Could you name some of your favourite television programmes? (d) Do you have the internet at home? (e) What kinds of contents do you look for at Norwegian media? and so on. These received objective sorts of answers. While, the second part focused more on the issues of identity and integration, which were the prominent research questions of the study. It contained questions about their identity, media role in the integration process, reports or news about their homeland and how the local Norwegian media present their grievances. They were questioned if Norwegian media provide equal representation to them as other communities living in Oslo. The questions about the treatment of the different communities towards them and their behaviour remained a significant part of the interview guide.

4.4 In-depth Face to Face Interviews

“Face-to-face interaction is the fullest condition of participating in the mind of another human being” (Lofl and Lofl 1995; as cited in Bryman, 2012, p. 399). The interview became very apt in understanding the links between the patterns of media use, identity and integration of Syrian nationals in Norwegian society. The first section of the interview focused on the

media use and consumption pattern of Syrian immigrants, and the latter part connotes the issues with identity and integration.

I followed an in-depth semi-structured interview model with people from different walks of life, age and sex. In-depth interviews allow considerable latitude for interviewees to express themselves freely (Bryman, 2012). Each interview lasted for around one hour. The interviews were recorded via mobile phone and I made some notes with the consent of my informants. Most of the questions were open-ended because an open-ended question provides more space to an informant to share his/her experiences openly. During the discussion, some cross-questions were also asked for clarity purpose and draw better results.

The direct interviews or the face to face interviews assist the qualitative interviewer in making an informed and reflective decision best for the project. The direct interviews are the primary and essential method being used for centuries to gather reliable data. In the indirect methods, there can arise some unknown problems while gathering data and writing something which may differ from the interviewed person's views. (Bryman, 2012) Therefore, the face to face interviews are performed to jot down the live and exact words of the interviewees to prevent any mishaps while writing them up.

Most of the in-depth interviews with the Syrian migrants were aimed at being semi-structured and more precise data was obtained from their expressional observations and responses. These interviews were intensive, and they intended to explore the views of the Syrian migrants living in Oslo about the treatment they receive in the host society and their media representation. These unstructured interviews involved only eleven people, but on an intensive basis, so their views become explicit for me to carry on with the research.

In in-depth interviews location of the interview also matters, and if the interview carries some highly classified or sensitive issues, the safety of the interviewee is the ethical responsibility of the researcher. Majority of the informants felt comfortable and secure in Norway; thus, security didn't remain a matter of concern for me and my informants. However, I avoided specific personal and controversial issues that could make the informant reactive in a manner not under ethical limitations (Oltmann, 2016). I ensured a high level of confidentiality for them so that they could open up with no fear. During the face to face interview, the non-verbal gestures and cues of my informants proved very much effective to build the findings of this research paper. The clearer the given components of the interviews are, the better the data narrative can be developed with a better analysis on it. I tried my best to make the informants comfortable by visiting and meeting them on several occasions. I conducted the interviews in a location of their choice.

4.5 Analyzing Data

The primary purpose of the research is to address the three research questions. After the successful collection of data through intensive interviews and literature, I have tried to address each research question separately. I have analyzed the data based on socio-political, historical, cultural background with the experiences shared by my informants and other references. “The analysis of the transcribed interviews is a continuation of the conversation that started in the interview situation, unfolding its horizon of possible meanings” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 193). It means that no interpretation and analysis is done in isolation. It should relate to its historicity. So, I correlated the research questions with background information of the study and the literature. Then I moved on to the findings and discussions of the research thematically in the light of theories of Halls’ identity and Gergiou and Silverstones’ diasporic communication and media use as discussed in Chapter 3. Kvale and Brinkmann refer to this type of analysis as to theoretical reading where “the readers reflect theoretically on specific themes of interest” (2009, p. 235). Findings that address the research questions successfully with relationship to theories can reach standards for valid research.

4.6 Limitation and Delimitation of the Study

This study explores the media choices and habits of Syrian people living in Oslo. It discusses their daily lives activities concerning the media use; either they are social, online, print or broadcast media. Because of lack of time, this study does not delve deep into the Syrian conflict. This study neither traces the history of Syrian media development nor analyzes the present state of Syrian media in Syria. It does not make any content analysis of the news of Syrian nationals published or broadcasted in Norwegian or international media unless the informants talk about those stories particularly. The recent political turmoil of Syrian falls behind the scope of the study. The research is mainly limited to the life stories of the Syrian people in Oslo and the data the researcher relies upon are live data which were gathered via face to face interviews. Reliance on any other data or news other than their live interviews might have helped draw better results.

One of the major limitations of this research was the language barrier. Many Syrian people who have migrated here after the Arab Spring have not mingled with the other communities or the local communities well, and they cannot speak English properly, nor could the researcher speak Arabic, neither their native language nor Norwegian. This language barrier created difficulties not only during interviews but also to access more informants. Out of eleven, three females were also interviewed to ensure diversity concerning

sex. My initial intention was to include at least five female participants but the females I encountered could not speak English as per the requirement of my sampling, and some of those who could speak English denied being interviewed by a stranger. The three females who participated in this study were convinced after a series of chats with their friends prior to the interview. However, recruitment gained momentum with the support of informants, friends and visits to restaurants. Valuable insights by diverse individuals and sexes surpassed the numerical limitation too. Along with these, many of them were not open to speaking to the media personnel or even academics. Asking them certain questions was an arduous job when they do not want to talk about specific issues.

4.7 Generalizability, Validity and Reliability

The scope of the findings of qualitative researches is often restricted due to its small size participants. Its reliability and validity are always within the questions of transparency, trustworthiness and objectivity. It is critiqued that the findings of qualitative researches cannot be generalized as in quantitative researches. But Bryman (2012) argues the qualitative research is conducted with a small number of individuals in certain organization or locality to find the insights of individual experiences, thoughts and feeling in detail. The people who are interviewed in qualitative research are not meant to be representative of a population. So, the findings of qualitative research are not based on statistical criteria, but the “quality of the theoretical inferences that are made out of qualitative data” (Bryman, 2012, p. 406). It is “the cogency of the theoretical reasoning” (J. C. Mitchell, 1983, p. 207; as cited in Bryman, 2012, p. 406).

Similarly, though my research has only eleven informants, it has not harmed the findings of the research. There is remarkable diversity in age, sex, profession and status of my informants. I have let their voices speak in the text to generate authentic meanings and unfold ways to multiple interpretations. I have not altered their gist of opinion while correcting their grammar in a few cases while writing. I have carefully discussed the findings of the research in the references of theories of Hall and Gergiou and Silverstones after undergoing the in-depth interviews and literature. My methodology has aptly led me to the discussions and findings of the research. I believe these informants have offered excellent insights that enrich the scholarship on media consumption and diasporic identity of Syrian nationals in Oslo. Besides, I have maintained objectivity and neutrality, passing no personal feelings and sympathies since I do not belong to the group. Detailed descriptions together with argumentation and impartial judgment of the findings have made my research

generalizable, valid and reliable (Ryan & Bernard, 2000). The findings can be generalizable culturally (not universally) since sampling does not include a diverse population of Norway but rather a small group of the Syrian community.

4.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues always remain central to social researches. I have ensured the ethical principles under the guidelines of the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD). I took the approval letter from NSD before I approached my possible informants. I have maintained transparency, accuracy, fairness, integrity and confidentiality throughout the research (Norwegian Centre for Research Data, 2020). I took consents of every individual whom I interviewed. All of them participated voluntarily. I did not exercise any coercive behaviour during interviews to get the desired information. They were free to share the information they wanted and had the right to withdraw their consent partially or completely from the interview process in case they felt so (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2007). I guaranteed the confidentiality of their identities under the guidelines of the General Data Protection Regulation, as mentioned by NSD. I have changed the names of the informants in research writing to ensure their privacy. Informants' identity should be protected by making them anonymous in the published reports (Payne & Payne, 2004).

4.9 Summary

This chapter discusses the research design and methods used for the research. It discusses the relevance of qualitative research approach and puts further the face to face in-depth interview as a suitable method to collect primary data. It explains how the data are collected through the semi-structured interviews, and they are analyzed from theoretical references of Hall's identity, and Gergiou and Silverstones' media as diasporic communication to come up with reliable findings. The preferences of fieldwork as Oslo and the way sampling is done are discussed adequately in the chapter. This section also briefly scrutinizes the issues of the limitation, generalizability and ethical consideration of the research.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter is divided into three parts to address the three research questions separately. The first part assesses the media use patterns of Syrian nationals living in Oslo. The second part evaluates the construction of identities articulated through those media choices. And, the third part relates their media habits and identity with integration in the host society.

5.1 MEDIA CHOICES OF SYRIAN NATIONALS IN OSLO

This part studies the patterns of media use of Syrian nationals living in Oslo. It answers what media they use in their daily lives. It thematically ferrets out whether they are inclined to their ethnic/home media, international media, transnational media, social media or Norwegian mainstream media.

5.1.1 Downfall of Radio Use

According to MediaNorway, radio listening has dropped sharply after the transition to Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB) in 2017. Among young adults, the average time spent on radio listening is halved over five years since 2014 (MEDIANORWAY, 2020). The report of about 57% of the population listening to the radio in one day in 2018 with 72 minutes per day (KANTAR, 2018) largely corresponds to the radio use of the informants. Out of 11 informants, only four of them owned radio and listened to it regularly. More than half of the informants denied acknowledging the importance of radio in this digital era. Farid and Hassan listen to the radio for music and sometimes for news in their work stations.

I usually turn the radio for my guests. They prefer to listen to music and news while having their haircut. And, when nobody is here, I play English and Arabic music through the internet. (Hassan, personal interview)

Fatima listens to Radio Norge sometimes to be updated with society. On the other hand, Karam is very positive about the significance of radio. He listens to it at least for an hour or half daily. He regards the radio as a very convenient means of news source which needs no proper attention like television or newspaper. “I listen to it while cooking, eating and even using the internet. I do not have its fixed time” says Karam (personal interview). He emphasizes:

As I am an active member of our society, people have approached me to be part of a radio programme which we are going to start in the coming year (2020) in the Arabic language. It will be related to the problems of refugee in

Norway, about their shelter, work, visa, study, and so on. We hope it helps them to integrate faster. (Karam, personal interview)

Other informants denied the use of radio as their source of information, education or entertainment. It is found they prefer apps like Spotify (Amira is crazy about it) or YouTube if they want to listen to music, and watch television or surf the internet for other purposes. “There is no point and no time to listen to the radio as I get everything that I want through the internet” says Yara (personal interview). While, Tahir has a different view: “Here in Norway, I have found many people tune radio only while travelling in a car.” He mocks “I have no car, so no radio.” He elaborates that he would listen to the radio if he had enough time for it or had no good alternative like in Syria, “I used to listen to the radio a lot in Syria as we had no good electricity and internet” (Tahir, personal interview). In this case, all the other informants too admitted that they used to listen to the radio in Syria as a primary source of information and music which has been reversed in Norway. The findings from this research confirm the decline in radio listenership, especially after the migration to DAB.

5.1.2 Even Use of Television

According to the report of Kantar, Norwegians saw an average of 2 hours and 30 minutes on TV daily in 2017, which is a decrease of 17 minutes from 2016. Most of the fall was among the younger target groups (KANTAR, 2017). Surprisingly, the use of the TV is higher in 2019 than before, on average, around three hours (Sandvik, 2020). In the case of informants, television has substantial space in their daily lives. All the informants watch television at one time or the other. “I watch TV at least for two to three hours daily after my work,” says Zahid (personal interview). “I watch NRK for news of Norway, *Skam* and often the comedy programme *Martin og Mikkelsen*. And, Netflix offers more than I expect.”

Interviewer: Do you also follow Syrian news or programmes on TV?

Zahid: TV is not for Syrian updates. The TV is mainly for Norwegian news and entertainment programmes, English series and films.

Interviewer: How do you get updates with Syrian news and programmes then?

Zahid: Through the internet. Norwegian and other TV channels are not good for covering the news of Syria. No details at all. But being honest, I have stopped following news updates of Syria through any source. Nothing new!

Interviewer: Don't you feel connected?

Zahid: I feel connected but cannot watch the bad news all the time. And, I know I can't run away from it because I am forced to see it as many of my friends share news and videos of Syria on their Facebook and Instagram.

Similarly, Tahir claims that nobody has ever covered the news of Syria fully. “I lived there and have seen all details, but no one can show such details even the local media in Syria”. He contends:

NRK is good in some case but not always. NRK made a video of the Free Syrian Army last time who were portrayed good, but all freedom fighter army is not good. NRK missed its dark sides. Recent news in NRK was about the death of 20 people in a fire. But the fact was ten were burnt to death in a fire which local media covered. I knew it from Facebook pages but not NRK since it may be busy with the documentaries of freedom fighter army guy. (Tahir, personal interview)

On the other hand, Iman states that he watches television every time whenever at home but not throughout the day. He often uses television as a computer screen and is fond of watching American, English and Turkish films, series, news and documentaries about Syria and other parts of the world. “However, my favourite programmes are British Got Talent, America Got Talent, The Daily Show, Game of Thrones, et cetera” (Iman, personal interview). Similar to Iman, Farid also gets updates with Norwegian news and watches favourite programmes like *Debatten* and *Side om Side* from NRK along with Hollywood movies, talk shows and sports. Media use of the young is diverse. American talk shows, series and films unite the young no matter which background they have (Tuftte, 2003b).

Fatima and Yara have quite similar thoughts about the use of television. They watch it for film, drama, music and sometimes news. “I like fictions, films and drama and programmes about the lifestyle of people” opines Fatima (personal interview). Unlike Fatima, Yara is very interested in news of social happenings too.

I sometimes find news of Syria in NRK and TV2 but do not follow them seriously. I switch to Facebook pages instead because I do not get connected. I feel they cannot cover the real happenings of Syria. It is meant for the Norwegian audience. It is not new to me. I already know it beforehand in depth through the internet. (Yara, personal interview)

Karam slightly differs from other preferring to watch more real programmes and documentaries from National Geography Channel and Animal Planet. “I don’t like fictions because they are only fictions,” says Karam (personal interview). News, documentaries of the animal kingdom, about the plight of people and their motivation stories, history channels etcetera grab his attention. For news, he follows different media like NRK, Al Jazeera Arabic, Al Jazeera English, CNN, BBC and a few others.

Depending on the language skills, it is not only the news from countries of origin that migrants tend to follow but also international media such as Al

Jazeera or BBC World are among the channels that are often watched. (Horsti, 2008, p. 287)

In contrast to all of them, Mahdi discards the use of television.

Actually, I do not like to watch TV or listen to the radio in general because they choose what they want to show, not what I want to know. So I go through the internet most of the times. Politicians use media. I do not trust media like Al Jazeera or BBC even. I watch the BBC to improve my English. (Mahdi, personal interview)

He asserts that his habit of watching television was different while in Syria. He used to watch television almost every time. “I used to like *Lost Village* programme broadcasted from Syrian TV but do not watch now” (Mahdi, personal interview).

Interviewer: When did you stop watching TV?

Mahdi: After two years of the Syrian conflict.

Interviewer: Why?

Mahdi: Got fed up with TV news and programmes. Monotonous with bombs, attacks and war.

Interviewer: What about Norwegian TV programmes then?

Mahdi: Not interested. You know the role of Norwegian media is not seen proper. Sometimes it looks the programme is aired from the perspectives of the Norwegian government, not us.

Here, Mahdi seems frustrated by flat presentations of television channels which are not depicting the actual sufferings of people. He feels disgusted with the television programmes targeted merely for entertainment. Similarly, Jamal, who works as a waiter in a restaurant and also a student of a university, poses no interest in Norwegian television channels and series. “I love to watch Arabic football and listen to my (Arabic) music” (Jamal, personal interview).

Interviewer: How do get updated with Norwegian society?

Jamal: I have subscribed VG online.

Interviewer: Have you ever found news of Syria published in VG or broadcasted on any Norwegian or foreign TV channels?

Jamal: Yes, often. More than 10 to 15 times. But the coverage is not complete. They present in their way what they like. I do not like to see something bad about my country in foreign media.

Many informants are found to be watching television programmes from different genres available in different corners of the world. In the case of Norway, they discussed those programmes that were aired either on NRK or TV2. It is because they had those local channels in free. Some of them have not subscribed other channels for being costly, and some felt less significance in the strong presence of the internet all the time. “I cannot pay both for

TV channels and the internet at the same time. I have to look after my family too” says Tahir (personal interview).

5.1.3 Eclipse to the Use of Print Media

Norway has always been having higher readership of newspapers and magazines in the Nordic region (Østbye, 2019). However, with the rise of digital platforms, the penetration of traditional news media is dropping, and the circulation of papers is in steep decline, especially for tabloids. In a study, Ohlsson (2015) asserts that less than half (about 42%) of Norway’s population read at least one paper daily. This eclipse came with the digitalization in the media market. Prints’ online versions and mushrooming online portals have reduced the importance and popularity of print media. In 2013, the Internet surpassed printed newspapers and became the largest advertising channel in Norway, and since then, the gap between online and print has only increased (MBL & Futsæter, 2018). This drop-off of print media has significantly affected the media use of the informants. Out of 11, only four of them go through the print media regularly, but not with the genuine purpose of reading quality journalism. “I go through *VG* sometimes when I do not have guests around,” says Farid (personal interview).

- Interviewer: Have you subscribed it?
Farid: Yes, for my guests.
Interviewer: Don’t you like to buy for yourself?
Farid: Not usually. I know the news beforehand through the internet.
Stale news comes in print.
Interviewer: What do you look for?
Farid: Happenings in Norway.
Interviewer: What about the foreign news?
Farid: I prefer the internet or TV.

Hassan, who is also a hairdresser, has a similar view to Farid, reading newspaper occasionally when he gets time in between the work. While Iman has a different perspective, he follows *VG* and *Dagbladet* to get the news in detail. He reads them at the office, either before the work or after “since it is free there” (Iman, personal interview). However, he confirms that he spends more time in online versions and follows Facebook pages for local news in Syria. Similarly, Karam goes through the newspapers and magazines available in the university library to improve his Norwegian language and be updated with news simultaneously. Yara, on the other hand, buys newspapers sometimes but cannot read strong Norwegian vocabulary and finds it expensive too.

Other informants sharply deny the use of newspapers and magazines anymore. “If you are to get everything on the internet, then why that newspaper?” replies Fatima (personal interview). “I read newspapers in Syria, but here I do not find its importance. Wherever I go, I have my internet with me” adds Jamal (personal interview). For him, the internet is cheaper and faster.

5.1.4 Wider Use of Internet and Online Media

Digitalization is one of the fastest-growing concepts in the world, and much faster in Nordic countries. It has changed the way of human communication and information system. Ottosen & Krumsvik view Norway as one of the most digitally mature markets in Europe. They claim that eighty per cent of the population over 12 years of age uses the Internet regularly (Ottosen & Krumsvik, 2012). With the growing use of the internet and digitalization in recent years, the use of traditional media is gradually falling apart.

“I am with the internet almost every hour. Even my work demands it” says Yara. She sometimes feels she cannot do anything without the internet.

As I work in theatre with lights and stage design, I take several supports from the internet. We always communicate through our app when we are preparing our part in different locations. (Yara, personal interview)

She further asserts that if she needs to go through news updates and other programmes, then online is the best medium. BBC and NRK are the sources of information she regularly relies on.

Interviewer: How do you get news about your home country?

Yara: I often follow *Al Jumhuriya* and *Alquds Alarabi*. They are handled by good people and not biased.

Interviewer: Do you mean other media are biased?

Yara: Yes, mainstream media are politically inclined and are biased.

Zahid, who is also a student of journalism, follows Al Jazeera, Al Arabia, BBC, Sky News sometimes online but not regularly. “Only BIG news attracts me” (Zahid, personal interview). While, Karam, researcher of Arabic linguistics, follows Arabic channels regularly. BBC Arabic, Al Jazeera and Al Arabia are the sites he often visits, including several online pages from Syria and Arabic news. “I am updated with every happening of my world” (Karam, personal interview). Many first-generation immigrants, and in particular exiled people, use the internet as a medium to follow news from their countries of origin or to keep in touch with friends and relatives within their diasporic network (Tufte, 2003b). Mahdi,

who denied the use of radio and television, keenly uses the internet. He uses the internet for five to six hours daily mostly for research, learning new things, Google, Facebook, YouTube and WhatsApp. He often follows *Ted Talks*. The best thing for him about the internet is that he “has a control on it” (Mahdi, personal interview). He uses it for news, entertainment, communicating with friends, post videos and photos and many others. Similar to Mahdi, Jamal also extensively uses the internet and online media for doing his homework, assignments and reading research papers.

Hassan, who has lived in Oslo for more than eight years, has himself noticed the shift of his preferences from print to the online version of the news.

In the initial years of my stay in Norway, I used to read newspapers and magazines when I was able to read them. I used to listen to the radio and watch Norwegian news and programmes. Now, I use online sites for news. It is fast and very easy to be updated just from a mobile. (Hassan, personal interview)

The digitalization has brought different media markets into one global industry. It has erased the terrestrial demarcation and ownership of media houses. The development has provided the modern citizen with a whole new pallet of global media content, with a richness and diversity unknown to previous generations of media consumers (Ohlsson, 2015). Tahir favours the use of online media due to its reach to all the news outlets all over the world. “I can read all the news of Syria online, which I could not do from newspapers here” (Tahir, personal interview).

5.1.5 Acute Use of Social Media

Researchers Bente Kalsnes and Tellef Solbakk Raabe point out areas that create alienation and democratic challenges with media development in Norway. According to them, the media economy is tight because social media is taking the advertising pie, and the growth in user payments seems to be levelling off. Fewer people read the news, and especially among the younger ones. Another factor is that confidence in the media is under pressure, and the use of alternative/partisan media is growing. (Kalsnes & Raabe, 2020, p. 1) The researchers are right if it is connected to the case of Syrian people too. All informants are active users of social media. They have used social media and the internet as space for news and communication (Ohlsson, 2015). Social media have become their platform to express their views, share stories and communicate with the diverse audience. Social networking sites and messaging applications like Facebook, Messenger, YouTube, WhatsApp, Telegram and

Instagram are popular among the informants. Facebook and YouTube have become important sources of news and information, particularly of Syria. “My Facebook profile is full of news pages, blogs and online sites,” says Karam (personal interview).

The informants are significantly using Messenger, WhatsApp and Telegram for communicating with family, relatives and friends in Syria and other countries. “My mother and I talk to my grandmother (who is in Syria) for hours through WhatsApp and Messenger” replies Jamal (personal interview).

Interviewer: What do you talk mostly about?

Jamal: About her health, about relatives, friends, situations in society, and so on.

Yara and Amira prefer Telegram to talk to parents and friends because WhatsApp often gets blocked in their region. Iman and Zahid are regular YouTube users. They watch different vlogs, funny videos of animals, talk shows, comedy shows, music and other entertainment programmes on YouTube. Fatima is interested in “following people and posting photos in Instagram” (Fatima, personal interview).

The analysis from Consumer & Media (F&M) and InterBuss show Facebook took the highest position in 2017 though in 2009 NRK1 was leading over it. YouTube, which was streamed just by 8 per cent in 2009, has jumped to 38 per cent in 2017. (Futsæter, 2018) The analysis coincides with the media choice of the informants. All of them agree to the point of using Facebook and YouTube more than any other forms of social media.

5.1.5.1 High Trust on Citizen Journalism

The 2011 aftermath events that took place in the Arab world like Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco, Libya, Syria and other Middle East countries brought ‘citizen journalism’⁵ to the forefront. Social media activists and citizen journalists pushed the public to lash out against their corrupt and repressive regimes through blogs, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and other forms of social media (Gire, 2016). During Syrian uprising citizen journalism (social media) became such a resourceful tool that forced the Syrian government to shut down the internet across the country (exact duration of shutting down the internet has not been mentioned) (Su, 2014). To further control the flow of information and widespread protests, the authoritarian government in Syria imprisoned bloggers and social media activists like Bassel Khartabil

⁵ Citizen Journalism is a kind of journalism based upon public citizens playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing, and disseminating news and information (Bowman and Willis, 2003; as cited in Wikipedia, 2020a). It is an alternative and activist form of news gathering and reporting that functions outside mainstream media institutions (Radsch, 2013).

with the accusation of participating in anti-government demonstrations and distributing valuable information online (Su, 2014). The government launched a crackdown on the internet that aimed to prevent Syrian from sending and disseminating information to the outside world. So, social media like Facebook, YouTube and blogs provided platforms where state-controlled media hardly discussed issues relating to public interests.

Moreover, the direct control of local media by an authoritarian regime and failure to cover Syrian conflicts in detail by international mainstream media had created a sense of disillusion among the informants towards media. At that time, they found citizen journalism and user-generated content (UGC)⁶ to be more reliable than traditional media because they believed those people (users) had lived the situation vividly.

Al Jazeera and Al Arabia are one-sided. I don't trust them. I don't trust Syrian media too. They are controlled by politicians and are biased. I trust people who post on Facebook pages. (Yara, personal interview)

Besides, in the research, it was observed that Karam's Facebook page is full of news pages, blogs and online sites. He is very influenced by the news, videos and opinions of citizen journalists. Yara follows *Al Jumhuriya* and *Alquds Alarabi* operated by the public (not mainstream media journalists). Iman watches different kinds of informative videos on YouTube regularly. Most of my informants use WhatsApp and Telegram more than telephone and other forms of communication for talking with family and friends and be updated about them and society. All of the informants' maximum use of social media as a prime source of news confirms their high trust in citizen journalism.

5.1.6 Summary

The daily coverage for radio and TV has sharply reduced in recent years with the emergence of Facebook, Apple, Amazon, Netflix and Google in the market (Futsæter, 2018). All of the informants' opinions about their use of media replicate this view of Futsæter. They are found more inclined to online media rather than print, television and radio. For many of them, print and radio, in particular, are undergoing the existential crisis.

NRK remains dominant among the informants for the news related to Norway. The primary reason for this is its content itself. They get what they want to know about Norway. Another reason could be that as most of the informants do not have a subscription to private channels; thus, they rely on the ones they get for free. Apart from that, it was observed that

⁶ User-generated content is any form of content, such as images, videos, text and audio, that have been posted by users on online platforms such as social media (Wikipedia, 2020b)

my informants take great interests in international channels that host talk shows, debates, comedy programmes, talent hunts, movies and series. BBC and CNN remain important sources of international news among most of the informants, while they watch Al Jazeera and Al Arabia for news related to Syria and the Arabic region. However, the majority of the informants showed distrust to the mainstream media when it comes to the coverage of Syrian conflict. They feel local media are biased while the international media do not talk of the Syrian conflict in detail. Out of 11, nine informants (except Amira and Zahid) have followed several news pages and online sites on Facebook to get news about Syria.

Their media habits show the increasing use of social media like Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp and Instagram. The primary purposes of using social media are getting connected to family, relatives and friends, and then be updated about the situations of their community. They have high trust in citizen journalism and user-generated content posted by their friends on Facebook, YouTube and Instagram. The high level of trust in user-generated content overcomes the other forms of media as sources of news.

The media use habit of the informants has significantly changed after coming to Norway. Media choices of informants vary from mainstream media of Norway to the broader contents of the international media. However, they use more international media than Norwegian media platforms. No one follows the mainstream Syrian press for allegedly being the mouthpiece of the government, but they get updates about the situations from their family, relatives, friends and social media. Amira is quite exceptional from the rest of the informants. She uses media mostly for music and communicating with families only.

5.2 NEGOTIATING IDENTITIES

The epicentre of the research lies in this section of the construction of identity and identities of Syrian nationals in the transnational society of Norway. It explicitly deals the forms of identities articulated through their media use in lines of the theoretical references.

5.2.1 Cultural Identity: Process of Transformation

As mentioned earlier, Hall (1996) identifies cultural identity in two forms: cultural identity as a collective identity and identity as a process of transformation. Collective identity is “one true self” (223) formed based on shared cultural values, common historical experiences, ancestry and a set of symbolic resources. The views of the informants challenge this essentialist view of identity being stable and unchanging (Hall, 1996). They find that their identity is in a continuous process of change. They accept that their ‘oneness’ of being Syrian and the truth of their identity lies in the essence of their culture, but it has changed with the change in the historicity of time, position and place. Their identities are undergoing constant transformation.

Interviewer: What kind of identity do you have in Norway?

Mahdi: If you mix two colours like red and green then you will get a new colour. I am that new colour.

Interviewer: Is that new colour dark or bright in Norway?

Mahdi: It is unique, of being both Syrian and Norwegian.

Cultural identity, in anti-essentialist point of view, is a matter of “becoming” as well as one of “being” (Hall, 1996, p. 225). It is historical, so unstable. Identity can also be different within the same timeframe with the difference in culture and society.

In general, people like us because we are hardworking, but some Norwegians are afraid of us because of our religion. They do not know our origin. We are from a different city, As-Suwayda, and our identity is different than the people of other societies within Syria. We are very open to any religions and not rigid at all. (Fatima, personal interview)

Here, Fatima claims that her identity should not be generalized as a rigid Muslim. Her traits, society, origin, culture and even the lifestyle are different than other Syrian people, and so is the case of her identity. Cultural identities are subject to the continuous play of history, culture and power (Hall, 1996).

Similarly, Karam replies “We are injured human. Our identity is injured. It is developing. We do not have one identity now” (personal interview). Here, Karam wants to mean that his identity in Syria was different. Now that has become a history. He has

possessed a new identity in a new society. The historicity of time and place determine his identity. So, his identity is developing, changing and is never stable. The study shows the informants tend to be more inclined with the second form of Hall's cultural identity, identity as a process of change and transformation.

5.2.2 Budding Diasporic Identity

Diaspora, as a social form, refers to the social relationships that are cemented by especial ties to both history and geography (Vertovec, 2000). Those who maintain these relationships and belong to such diasporas have spread over the globe, including to Scandinavia, through either forced or voluntary migration (Tuft, 2003b). Syria has a large diaspora in Turkey, Lebanon, the United States and some European countries like France, Germany, and Sweden. Big brain drain in France, "around 6,000 Syrian doctors in France only and more than 20,000 in the United States" (Kodmani, 2018, p. 4) has made strong diasporic identity there. In the context of Norway, Syrian diaspora is small, new and gradually growing. "We have more like Arabic diaspora than particularly single Syrian diaspora in Norway" asserts Karam (personal interview). He adds, "Though we have separate Syrian communities too, they are relatively small" (Karam, personal interview). They have small associations like *Syrian Society in Norway*, *Syrian Student Association* and *The Association of Syrian Kurds in Norway* but the latter is not active in recent years. "Though we are doing different activities under this umbrella (*Syrian Society in Norway*) we still do not know lots of Syrian people who are undergoing the problems of work, study and integration" (Karam, personal interview).

I know very few Syrians in Norway (many in Germany and Sweden). My brother, his friend and three others are close to me. All of us are very busy with works. We gather and share our happiness during festivals and sometimes casually. You know, Kurdish movies, music and dance are integral parts of our gathering and wedding ceremonies. We are Syrian Kurds, so we are different from many other Syrians in Oslo. I have heard that there is an association for us, but I do not know much about it. (Hassan, personal interview)

Hassan added that many Syrians fled from different regions for the security of lives. Their first and foremost purpose remained to set up their lives in the new world. So they (many of them) did not get sufficient time to engage in any community or association. They shared only the shattered feelings in common.

5.2.2.1 “Loss and Hope”

“Diaspora consciousness lives loss and hopes as a defining tension” (Clifford, 1994, p. 312).

People are haunted by the memories of the past and have an aspiration of a better future at the same time. “I want to be one of the best artists in the field of scenography,” says Yara (personal interview). They lament for the loss of their culture, family, friends, relatives, music, arts and social way of life.

I miss my early childhood in Syria. Sometimes it is monotonous to work as a waiter all the time. But now, I am enthusiastic about my new admission in a university. (Jamal, personal interview)

They are entangled in between two cultures, two societies and two identities.

I still feel I am a Syrian refugee belonging to my home country, and at the same time, I feel I am Norwegian since I live here and follow systems in Norway. I have two identities at the same time. I want to be a good example of a good refugee. I also feel sometimes we are in between two cultures and two religions. I don’t like nudity culture of Norway, and I also do not like some rigidity in the religion of Syria. We need to be open and enjoy freedom in Norway. (Iman, personal interview)

Here, Iman wants to point out his dual identity in Norway. He cannot forget the past neither can accept the present completely. He has got freedom in Norway, which he had been longing in his home country, but he is not happy with the culture of nudity that came along with freedom. He wants to settle his unsettled identity by being an example of good refugee, a good human being in Norway.

Diaspora, as a type of consciousness refers to a state of mind, a particular kind of awareness that is dual or paradoxical (Vertovec, 2000). Many informants are undergoing a conflicting state of mind. They are bewildered by new culture and lifestyle even after living a long time. Their past culture and religion thwart them to merge totally in a new culture.

First four-five years I had many Norwegian friends because I wanted them. But now I don’t have them since I found them very different. I just say “Hi/Hello” if I happen to meet them. I realized that I could not be like them. If you want to be close to them, then you should be like them. You need to go to a bar, drink and dance. I do not drink. Even I have a Norwegian citizenship now, but I am not a Norwegian. (Hassan, personal interview)

It shows that citizenship does not give identification to people in diaspora. It is the essence of their culture that forms their identity. It is the roots of people that determines their diasporic identity (Gergioui & Silverstone, 2007).

Karam expresses his feeling of loss and hope in the diaspora through his experiences of displacement in Norway as being injured human with injured identity. He feels he has lost his identity in Norway. He opines that he was a professor at a prestigious university in Syria, and everyone respected him. Now, though he has a similar position as a researcher in Norway his identity is generalized as Syrian refugee (though he is not in a refugee status). But he is hopeful that the negativity connected to refugee's identity will be changed one day with the change in the content of media and the concept of people.

Similarly, the media use of informants, their choice of movies and music, being updated about the news and stories of homeland and following Norwegian media to learn the culture and happenings simultaneously reflect their longing to home country and hope to integrate into Norwegian society for a better career. They are missing their homelands, language and culture but equally hopeful of building a new life here by learning a new language entirely and acculturating new culture and lifestyle. All of the informants have learnt the Norwegian language with a hope to integrate faster and build a prosperous future. "I am learning Norwegian and want to work as a translator again" opines Amira (personal interview). She wants to revive her position as a translator as she used to have in Syria, Arabic-English translator.

Hall (1996) states that diasporic identities re-create an endless desire to return to lost origins. Their history, culture, art, music, festivals, etcetera haunt the memoir of diaspora continuously and produce immense desire to return. In the study, all the informants asserted to go back to their home country once the conflict is settled. "Of course, I want to go back to my home. But not now. I need to build up myself first and go back when the conflict gets settled" states Yara (personal interview).

5.2.2.2 Sense of Belonging

Sense of belonging is another essential characteristic of diaspora. They maintain their collective identity by belonging to the shared history and shared communal ties (geography). Their duality of here and there, home and away from home echo their sense of belonging to dual identity. Hedetoft (2002) situates sense of belonging to four key parameters which in varying configurations are responsible for its relations to and importance for the identity politics of different groups. They are, in systematic order:

- i. sources of belonging: locality and an immediate familiarity
- ii. feelings of belonging: socio-psychological needs, identification with locality and memory

- iii. ascriptions and constructions of belonging: nationalism and racisms, new and old
- iv. fluidities of belonging: globality and the cosmopolitan dream (Hedetoft, 2002, p. 2)

In the study, informants show their sense of belongings in different levels in diasporic notion and their media choice. They are deeply rooted to their “place” of origin, “familiarity”, “sensual experience”, “human interaction” and “local knowledge” (Hedetoft, 2002, p. 2). They have their community in Norway to recognize their origins, like the *Syrian Society in Norway* and *The Association of Syrian Kurds in Norway*. “We have different places like a mosque in Oslo. We have Syrian community working for us and our country” says Iman (personal interview). They possess the feeling of belonging, homeness and identity producing processes. They participate in their community’s cultural and social activities and “share common horizon of ideas, knowledge, networks and topography” (Hedetoft, 2002, p. 3). “I have actively participated in different functions, meetings and programmes organized by our society”, expresses Karam (personal interview). They also have feelings of uprootedness, non-belonging and “identity alienation” in several cases when they feel isolated from family, relatives and friends, and when they are portrayed with negative connotations all the time in the host society and media. “We are humiliated with a tag of ISIS, and a refugee who is fed by NAV” (Iman, personal interview) reflect this vivid reality of non-belonging to the Norwegian society.

Hedetoft (2002) suggests ascriptions or constructions of belonging is related to nation-state dependent form of identity, which collapses individual, cultural and political interpretations of identity. Belonging is in the form of passport, citizenship, socialization agencies and official, ethnonational versions of historical memory (Hedetoft, 2002). Similarly, fluidities of belonging suggest the globalized nature of the identity of people. It points to multiple forms of identity and belonging, even borderless or virtual forms of (non-) belonging (Hedetoft, 2002). The study shows that Karam has Syrian citizenship and passport, Neshrad with Norwegian citizenship, and the rest of the informants with Syrian citizenship and Norwegian travel documents. Physically, the majority of them belong to Syrian societies who are willing to pursue their new identities in Norwegian society but psychologically they regard themselves belonging to their home country more and also the global community. Their media choices of watching Hollywood movies, English series, American talk shows, talent hunts, etcetera do suggest their cosmopolitan belonging.

5.2.2.3 Media: Source of Adaptive Strength in Diaspora

Media play significant roles in the lives of diaspora “as access points to symbolic worlds and actual direct contact with countries of origin” (Tufte, 2003a, p. 15). Media helps to connect people to their homeland and worldly affairs. All the informants in the study are well acquainted with the use of media and their significance in this technologically driven world. Media helped them to be connected to their family, relatives and friends in Syria and other Syrian diasporas worldwide. Whatsapp, Messenger, Telegram, phone and internet are important means of communication for them.

- Interviewer: How do you communicate with your family in Syria?
Yara: I use WhatsApp and Telegram to talk with my parents and relatives.
Interviewer: How often do you talk to them?
Yara: Almost every day and for hours. But sometimes, I call them on my phone because electricity is not good in Syria.
Interviewer: What do you talk about?
Yara: Anything and everything. I don't have subject matters. I ask about their daily activities, health, about relatives, situations in the community, and so on.
Interviewer: Do you have friends in other countries too. How do you contact them?
Yara: I have so many friends in Germany, Netherlands and France. We often chat on Messenger and sometimes do video call.

Similarly, Tahir also points out the maximum use of WhatsApp to communicate with his family. He says he uses Whatsapp because it cannot be tracked down by the government and sometimes Telegram when WhatsApp is blocked. He makes rare use of telephone calls, only in emergency cases when there is no electricity in Syria. “I am alone here, and I miss my family so much” (Tahir, personal interview).

All the informants are getting the updates of Syrian and international news and stories through the use of media, mainly social media. They have followed different online sites and news pages on their Facebook. Karam's Facebook profile is full of news pages. He is very active in surfing news from Al Jazeera, Al Arabia, BBC Arabic, BBC English, CNN, NRK, TV2 and many other small online portals almost every hour whenever he gets time. Hassan follows NRK and *Aftenposten* to be updated with Norwegian society because “it is very important to know what is happening in Norway when you are living here” (Hassan, personal interview). He follows BBC for international happenings and social media pages for Syrian updates. While, Jamal follows VG for Norwegian updates and more Arabic channels to watch Arabic football, movies and music, and YouTube for interesting videos and tutorials.

Diaspora identities are those who are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference (Hall, 1996). The media act as a catalyst to such change by providing new opportunities to people living in the diaspora “to maintain social and cultural networks across time and space” (Tufte, 2003a, p. 15). Fatima makes maximum use of Facebook and Instagram to share her views, feelings, photos and videos and gives feedback to others’ posts too. Mahdi, who is not so curious about television, is very keen on the use of the internet. He thinks he can use internet how he wants. He uses it for research, study, sports, videos on YouTube and also as a platform to share his ideas and research works.

All the informants make use of media to exchange happiness and sorrows in one way or the other. They communicate with family, friends, relatives all over the world or surf on the internet for their favourite programmes to come out of isolation, depression and trauma. Thirty-seven years old, single, Amira uses internet mostly to talk to family and for music. “My family’s safety and music motivate my life here” (Amira, personal interview).

The views of informants demonstrate how diasporic identifications and connections are strengthened by modern communication technologies. Their views manifest media as a source of adaptive strength in the diaspora.

5.2.3 Ethnic Identity: We are Stereotyped

The Fadime case in Sweden in early 2002, where a young woman of Kurdish origin was murdered, her father and brother being the prime suspects. The motive allegedly being that she, by pursuing her relationship with a Swedish boy, of ‘old Swedish origin’, was violating the honour of her family. The murder, and the media attention it drew, articulated a huge public debate in Sweden, but also in neighbouring countries, about the conditions some second-generation immigrants, especially young girls, live under, caught between different value systems, gender roles and traditions. (Tufte, 2003a, p. 10)

This reference of Sweden is brought in the middle of the discussion to show how the research of Tufte on media representation of ethnic identity carried out back in 2003 is still relevant in the context of Norway today. Since one of the critical fields of this research was also to explore how the Syrians are portrayed and identified in Norwegian mainstream media, the issues of ethnic identity and media discourse stuck in the centre of discussion. In Norway today, the immigrant youths do not have a self-evident location in the public spheres as mass media and politics, “where dominant discourse about their situation is constructed and

articulated” (Mainsah & Dralega, 2014, p. 5). As mentioned earlier, they are “spoken about” and spoken for rather than given a public voice of their own (Mainsah & Dralega, 2014, p. 5). This statement is clarified with the shreds of evidence of informants who (the majority of them) opined that the media portrayal was stereotyped, negative and always connected to crime and conflict.

- Interviewer: How often do Norwegian media cover the news of Syria?
Iman: Very less coverage. I find news of Syria only when big things happen, something like a terror incident claimed by ISIS or any other group.
Interviewer: How are they (Syrians) portrayed?
Iman: We are always portrayed with a criminal background. Media do not cover news of Syrian revolution separating with the news of ISIS. Media should talk about our problem, the problem of Syria. Our revolution is different, and the case of ISIS is a different one. Even I never accept to have ISIS in my country.

Hussain (2003) argues that the stronger an ideology of nationalism in the politics of identity, the harsher and exclusionary discourse is expected in the national media’s representation of the ethnic minorities. People from ethnic minority groups are portrayed exclusively as threats or as problems to society (Eide, 2003). This view can be detected in the opinion of Iman who regards media in generalizing Syrian refugees with crime and trying to create Islamophobia associating their religion. The sentiment is echoed by Karam too who says media representation of them isn’t always positive, “Media often show bad sides of refugee more than good sides. I request to show at least both sides” (Personal interview). He adds, “they should at least present the reality as it is without any biases or political inclination” (personal interview). Hussain calls this kind of practice as the discursive construction of ‘difference’ (Hussain, 2003, p. 116) which means mass media do not merely reflect the ethnic reality that is constructed in the practices of the dominant societal institutions, they also recreate and reshape it through signifying practices and representations.

“Nationalistic and cosmopolitan ideologies are in constant tension in the diaspora” (ethnic people) and the content of media (Gergiou & Silverstone, 2007, p. 35). “Diasporas appear, or more often do not appear, in mainstream media; and when they do appear it is often through stereotypical and alienating images” (Gergiou & Silverstone, 2007, p. 35). Zahid has found the various news coverage of Syria in Norwegian media. But whenever he sees the news, it is all about the civil war of Syria and the international politics of Russia, Turkey, US, Israel and others in Syria. “No stories beyond that” (Zahid, personal interview). This kind of discourse has created hatred towards news media, not only of Norway but all,

including Syria (Zahid, personal interview). Horsti claims young people are very much aware of the ethnic conflicts that receive intense media attention and articulate the constructed discourse of “us” and “them” (Horsti, 2008, p.287). Therefore, the media representation of ethnicity is, in fact, the societal image of “the heathen, the outsider, the savage, the out-cast, the diaspora, the stranger, the vagabond”, or “in a state of cultural schizophrenia” (Schierup, 1994; as cited in Hussain, 2003, p. 120).

5.2.4 (Political) Identity: YOU ARE A REFUGEE!

Political identity is often based on nationality, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, language, culture, expression of an individual’s belief system and social affiliations (Ramon, 2020). However, the research finds out the identity of Syrian nationals has been politicized. Their cultural and religious diversities have been homogenized. They have only one identity in Norway, the identity of a refugee.

YOU ARE A REFUGEE, not a normal man. You are less than others. This kind of name follows you until you die. It is a big humiliation. You do not have an identity. Though I am a researcher here and not a refugee, people think I am only a refugee just because I come from Syria. (Karam, personal interview)

Karam conceives that his political identity is demolished and bracketed. Like Karam, Iman emphasizes, “I am a human at first then a refugee. My mistake should be counted as a human mistake, not a refugee mistake” (Iman, personal interview).

No one can escape politics because our life is connected to politics, whether we want it or not (Yara, personal interview). Our identity is also connected to the politics of our country. “Now I am a refugee,” says Yara (personal interview). Similarly, Tahir perceives the notion of his political identity being determined by his religion (Islam) in Norway. The views of the informants indicated that their political identity has been constructed and reconstructed in a foreign land and media.

5.2.5 Religious Identity: Islamophobia

The 11 September 2001 and the subsequent ‘war against terrorism’, launched by the former US President George W. Bush have impacted tremendously on the representations and perceptions of Muslims in the Western world (Tuftte, 2003a, p. 10). The concept of Islamophobia is vivid in Europe. The literature (as mentioned in chapter three) on Mohammad cartoon, banning of burqa in France, Switzerland, Belgium, Italy, Denmark and

the Netherlands, and the vote in Switzerland against the construction of Muslim mosques attribute adverse position of Islam in Europe.

“We have to stop Islamophobia at first” (Iman, personal interview), reflects the religious identity of Syrian immigrants in Norway. He infers since Syria is often portrayed as a hub of ISIS and other terror groups, its religion (Islam) is also misrepresented with a crime.

Interviewer: Do you find yourself integrated into Norwegian society?
Tahir: I can never be fully integrated in Norway even in ten years because of my religion.

This concluding response of Tahir during his interview suggests the first barrier of his integration in Norway is his religion, his religious identity. He finds himself a misfit in a dominantly Christian society. Similarly, Karam, who calls himself an atheist but respects all religions, expresses his sorrow of being tagged as Muslim with negative connotations.

5.2.6 Otherness

The world is made up of two unequal halves, Orient (Non-West) and Occident (West), and their relationship is a “relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony” (Said, 1978, p. 13). He writes that the structure of Orientalism is nothing more than a fabric of lies, myths and others. Years passed, but the essence is still the same. This opinion of Said is very congruous today in the case of immigrants, particularly non-Western, and more importantly, with a Muslim background. They are cast as other and homogenized with derogatory identification. As said by Iman (personal interview), they (Syrian) are generalized as impotent refugees (who are fed by NAV) with a criminal background. Similarly, Karam adds that all the Syrians in Norway are generalized “merely as refugees, less than others” (Karam, personal interview).

Mainsah and Dralega’s research on *Ethnic Minority Youth Participation in the Production and Consumption of Social Media in Norway* finds young immigrants with a constructed discourse of “Other” that is excluded from “Us” that designates a Norwegian national identity (Mainsah & Dralega, 2014, p. 3). Like other youth, they are often excluded from mainstream media and culture.

I was a civil engineer assistant in Syria, but here I am a barber since I began working. I don’t know when I would restart my professional career as an engineer. I know it takes a lot of time, and I am tired of the lengthy system in Norway. (Farid, personal interview)

All of the informants' views (except Karam and Fatima who have the similar profession in the academic sector in Norway) are identical to Farid. They say that their jobs in Syria were different than they are having in Norway. They dream of getting it back or achieving even higher in the near future. "I had never worked in a hotel in Syria. I was an editor and research assistant at a university. I like my academic field" asserts Iman (personal interview). This sort of a discourse of otherness raises a fundamental question, "How long must a person live in Norway for them to be, to feel or to be seen by others as nothing else but "Norwegian"?" (Mainsah & Dralega, 2014, p. 8). This is very evident in the lives of immigrants. Hassan, who has lived in Norway for years and bears its citizenship, still says, "I am not a Norwegian. I am a Syrian Kurd" (Hassan, personal interview).

5.2.7 Summary

The prime purpose of this section is to construe the different forms of identities of Syrian nationals articulated through their media choices in Norway. It explicitly deals their changing identities that have transformed in different course of time, place, history and geography. It tends to clarify how the cultural identity, as referred by Hall, gets changed with the play of history, culture and power.

This chapter also evokes the diasporic identity of the Syrian people. It unfolds the characteristics of diaspora like the feeling of home and away from home, loss and hope, sense of belonging, and use of media as their adaptive strategy in a foreign territory. It explores how the media preferences of Syrian diaspora ranging from Arabic music and movies to global contents connect them to their homeland and transnational world.

It equally presents the ethnic, political and religious identities of informants and the media discourse towards them. It portrays how the ethnic identities of Syrian nationals are stereotyped and misrepresented in mainstream media of Norway. It unfolds the homogenizing nature of media about their political and religious identities connoting them to Islamophobia. It signifies how the Syrians are lessened to refugees and refugees to criminals.

Finally, the chapter concludes with the depiction of the attitude of media and host society of excluding the informants (immigrants in general) and their constructed discourse of Orientalism. It examines the frustration among the informants brought by the otherness.

5.3 MEDIA USE AND THE INTEGRATION PROCESS

“Media provide frameworks for inclusion, and by the same token, frameworks for exclusion. Those frameworks are at once transnational, national, ethnically specific, regional and local” (Gergiou & Silverstone, 2007, p. 35). This section analyzes whether the media use patterns of Syrian people have helped them to integrate into Norwegian society or not. It elucidates the role of (Norwegian) mainstream media in the process of integration and the negative consequences of misrepresentation and constructed identity in/by media.

5.3.1 Transnational Media Choices

With the advent of modern science and technologies, migrants are gathering information and entertainment through more multiple channels, ethnic, national, international, multinational and transnational media platforms, than are the native-born. So, “they live in a much more transnational space” (Horsti, 2008, p. 287). But, it is critiqued that the very media habit of being more transnational and inclined to home media than the host country’s media have complicated the process of integration to some extent (Mainsah, 2009).

The study shows that the informants have diverse media choices. They follow local Norwegian news, dramas, movies, humour to Arabic music and football to international talk shows, talent hunts, comedies, histories, series and musical channels. It is found that the informants have increasing use of Norwegian media and transnational media in comparison to their home media. Though the informants are updated with happenings of their country, they have distrust to their home media. They have generated negative feelings to the contents of news and programmes of their home country’s media (except their love for Arabic music). This transnational media choice has helped them to connect their diaspora worldwide. With the use social media like Facebook, Messenger, WhatsApp, YouTube, Telegram and Instagram they express their views, opinions, happiness, sorrows, and communicate with the people living in Norway, Syria and other parts of the world. Besides communications, the internet has helped them in getting news and worldviews from across the globe, gaining different ideas about researches and has become a prominent source of knowledge. For instances, Jamal, Mahdi and Zahid use the internet for completing their assignments of the university, Karam and Fatima used for reading more research work mainly related to Arabic language and linguistics, and Yara for learning techniques to enhance scenography.

The media habits of the informants suggest the internet as one of the prime sources of their adaptation in the diaspora, both as media consumers and media producers. Internet, to

some extent, has helped them to adapt socially and culturally in vibrant Oslo among Norwegian and international communities.

5.3.2 Streaming Norwegian Channels (Media) and their Roles

“If you live in Norway you need to watch Norwegian news and channels. “It helps to acquaint us with Norwegian people and their culture” (Karam, personal interview). Though these words are of Karam, the gist of all of the informants’ views on the purpose of streaming of Norwegian channels is the same. In general, they found two positive sides of watching Norwegian channels in their daily lives, first, to get information about Norwegian happenings, and second, to strengthen their Norwegian language as most of them were newcomers. The primary sources of their Norwegian news and programmes were NRK and TV2. They reported that they used television more than radio, and when it comes to the use of the internet, they hardly surfed for Norwegian sites except few online versions of prints like *Aftenposten*, *VG* and *Dagbladet* (the details of this finding have been discussed earlier in the first part of chapter five). All of the respondents agreed on one point that media mirror the society and can play a vital role in integration but posited contrasting views on the actual performance of media in their parts.

Norwegian media are not helping that much. The programmes are designed to know more about them not about us. Media need to show good things about us so that they can trust us. Religion is not my problem because I don’t follow any religion. Media normally show the bad side of refugee more than the good side. I request to show at least both sides. Media should be cautious about making the news of vulnerable communities. Media are silent for something and sometimes very talkative about silly things. Media must take care of the sufferings of people. Media know the things but do not talk about the tortures of those poor people. We should not forget media; media should not forget the sufferings of people. (Karam, personal interview)

Karam views that media have a high potentiality to integrate them into Norwegian society. Media need to introduce Syrian people without tagging crime in their religion and portray balanced and unbiased news. Similar to Karam, Mahdi claims that the role of Norwegian media is not seen proper, “sometimes it looks the programme is aired from the perspectives of the government, not us because media are controlled by politics of that nation” (Mahdi, personal interview). Like both of them, Iman argues that Islamophobia should be eliminated from media at first. Then, the positive sides of refugees or immigrants should be brought by the media to establish a kind of trust in society. He adds:

Norwegian media themselves seem following other media showing some specific things forgetting main and real issues of Syria. And sometimes they sound like fake news since the news does not become so relevant to the scenario of Syria. They also present news from Norwegian perspectives and their priority lists, not by Syrian needs. They are busy in focusing news of rights of gay, lesbians and other trivial issues which are not so important for our community. It does not mean I disrespect gays or lesbians, but I mean the media need to cover the main problem of Syria, crisis. If the crisis is solved, all of the other problems get solved gradually. (Iman, personal interview)

Unlike three of them, Yara has a quite different perspective, “Media has not helped for integration because it was hard to understand Norwegian in the beginning” (personal interview). She points out that majority of Norwegian mainstream media air programmes in Norwegian. It was difficult for her to understand the Norwegian language in the initial months and even it took her a couple of years to understand Norwegian media contents completely. “When I needed integration in the beginning, no media stood up” (Yara, personal interview).

Zahid has noticed some media outlets like TV2 having programmes on integration or issues related to immigrants, but he feels they are not sufficient for his community members in the integration process. He argues:

Integration is vast. Integration cannot be defined in one way. Media solely are never able to integrate people completely. Integration is in the hand of people themselves. Be open, learn Norwegian and work somewhere. These will help you to integrate. I accept all cultures. When in Rome, do as Romans do. (Zahid, personal interview)

Jamal shares similar views to that of Zahid. He thinks Norwegian media and people do nothing about integration. They have everything they want. If you want to integrate then you have to do it yourself. You have to mix up with them, talk to them and make friends. If you cannot integrate, then it’s your problem. (Jamal, personal interview)

Amira sharply contrasts to all of them. She strongly rebukes the use of (news) media in the process of integration. Due to the frustration caused by “chaotic” Syrian news media, she feels she has no influence of any media for her integration. She even does not want to discuss more the actual roles of media since “they never carry out” (Amira, personal interview). She concludes, “I am done with the news and newspapers now. Please ask me about music instead” (Amira, personal interview).

5.3.3 Negative Consequences

The ethnic minorities, and particularly those of non-European origin, after decades of sojourn in Nordic countries still face discrimination in housing, employment, legislative measures and during encounters with the authorities and institutions, e.g. police, schools and hospitals, and in everyday life in the public sphere. (Hussain, 2003, pp. 116-117)

The opinions of informants reveal the relevance of this study. Their views suggest the traditional role of media as the voice of voiceless in Western society doesn't exist longer. The media are not representing the actual scenario of ethnic minorities and immigrants, particularly refugees. They claim that they are misrepresented and underrepresented with a constructed discourse of crime and criminality.

Norwegian media rarely cover the news of Syria. If any big thing happens then, they include the story. The big thing for the media is ISIS. It is not the case of Norwegian media only but all mainstream media worldwide including Al Jazeera and Al Arabia. People know of Syria because of terrorism. (Iman, personal interview)

Media have always represented us with the identity of refugees, homeless people and people with criminal instinct. News of accidents, murder or any crime spreads faster in Europe if they are carried out by immigrants, especially refugees. (Karam, personal interview)

“Culture in the modern society is to a very large extent stored, reproduced, modified, mediated and distributed by the mass media” (Hussain, 2003, p. 116). So, these kinds of negative representations of Syrian nationals have largely affected the understanding of one another's culture and the process of their integration in Norwegian society. These have divided their identity as us versus them, occidental versus oriental, majority versus minority, centre versus marginal and have othered them from the mainstream social lives and cultures. As a result, the distance between the informants and Norwegians are stretching farther.

This research finds the negative consequences brought by Syrian media too. Informants are fed up with their one-sided presentation favouring the government amid the protests.

I followed before, but now I blocked all the pages of Syrian news sites because they are annoying, lying and chaotic. I don't trust any (news) channels. I just care whether my parents are safe or not. I get news from my friends if I need, but actually, I do not need news of anything except my family's health and life. (Amira, personal interview)

Zahid sounds equally frustrated and tries to escape the “news world” though he knows that “he can’t run away completely since his friends share the happenings of Syria in one way or the other” (Zahid, personal interview).

In Syria, I was a student of journalism and a journalist. I covered so much news about the conflict all the time that I got fed up with the news. I was a victim myself and found foolish in the running for the news of conflict. Now the whole world is burning, and I don’t care. (Zahid, personal interview)

All of the informants confirm their distrust to the local and mainstream media operated in Syria for what they described as “being the puppets of tyrants”. So, the primary sources of news for them are their family, relatives, friends and social media sites, mostly Facebook. They trust people (not media) because they have lived the situation.

5.3.3.1 Escapist Attitude

Escapist attitude is one of the significant outcomes of negative consequences. In the course of interviews, some of the informants showed their escapist attitude. They expressed their thoughts to run away from the ground reality of Syria. The prime reason for developing the mindset is never-ending conflicts in Syria. They repeatedly said that they were fed up with the same news of the bombing, murder, terror, attacks, and so on. They are also fed up with the one-sided news reporting (favouring the government) of Syrian mainstream media and dominating diplomatic eyes of foreign media and politics. For instance, Zahid, who was a student of journalism in Syria (now also in Norway) does not like to follow news and even programmes from Syria as far as he can. He is in such an extreme frustration that if the whole world gets burnt, he doesn’t care. He instead prefers watching funny videos of cats on YouTube, scams and comedy program like *Martin og Mikkelsen*. Similarly, Amira blocked all the pages of Syrian news sites and did not want to hear any news of Syria except her family’s safety. Currently, she is fond of music only.

5.3.4 Summary

This section has explored the relationship between media use and the process of integration. It shows how the transnational use of media and media technologies have helped Syrian people to connect them to their home country, host country and other diasporas in other countries. It shows diverse uses of the internet and social media to communicate around the world and also strengthen them academically.

Besides the use of the internet and global media, the study depicts the importance of host country's media for integration. In the study, the informants agree that the media help people learn a new language, culture and societal aspects. They did learn about carefree Norwegian lifestyle, people's habits, behaviour and attitude towards migrants and ethnic minorities which helped them to integrate in one way or the other. However, the informants critiqued when they were to analyze the roles of Norwegian media for integration. They reviewed how minorities are portrayed in the media in ethnocentric and nationalistic terms where "us-them" categories are used (Eide, 2003) and how minority identities are "both stereotyped and misleading" in media discourse (Tuftte, 2003b). Finally, it shows the negative consequences of contested identities of people articulated through media discourse.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Identity and identities of ethnicity, minority, urban, subaltern, diaspora, etcetera are critical contemporary discourses in the field of media texts. This study explores the media use of Syrian people and their identities articulated through media use and media discourse. It examines the connection of media use and their integration process in Norwegian society, Oslo.

The study grounds on the theories of Hall's notion of cultural identity and Gergiou and Silverstone's diasporic communication and media use. It is carried out through a qualitative research approach with semi-structured interviews. The primary data for the study are face to face in-depth interviews with Syrian people and literature as secondary sources.

In assessing the media choices of Syrian people, the research finds that the Syrians are more habituated with television and internet than radio and prints. All the informants are found watching Norwegian programmes in considerable amount through NRK and TV2. They watched Norwegian news and programmes primarily for two reasons, to be updated about what is going on in Norway and to strengthen their language ability. They equally followed international channels and programmes like talent hunts, Hollywood movies, series and musical shows. The prime source for international media was the use of the internet.

One of the common assumptions people make of ethnic and diasporic people is their love for home media and the local programmes. With contrast, the study shows the informants' intense hatred and distrust to both mainstream and local media of their home country due to the direct control of the government. Many of the informants opined that they stopped watching the Syrian television channels immediately after fleeing the country. They follow online portals and Facebook pages for updates of their society if they need.

The diverse media choices (channels and habits) of the informants suggest their multiple identity discourses. The research analyzes how the Syrian people are undergoing identities transformation from one society and form to others. It accredits the Halls' anti-essentialist notion of changing cultural identity with the change of time, geography and history by depicting their changing identities: cultural, ethnic, diasporic, political and religious identities. It presents how mainstream media underrepresent the ethnic minorities and how they are separated from an "imaginary 'us' (white, ethnic Norwegian)" (Mainsah & Dralega, 2014, p. 11).

This research probes into the budding diaspora of the Syrian community in Oslo. It explores how the diaspora has used media to adapt to the host society and have maintained their communication process. It delineates how their communication is flowing in diasporic space, a transnational space, “in all different directions through all forms of communication, such as telephone, travel, interpersonal encounters, radio, television or the Internet” (Gergiou & Silverstone, 2007). It finds the extensive use of the internet by the informants, almost every hour, for study, work, research, entertainment programmes, information, news and communication all over the world. It also finds social media like Facebook is very popular for getting reliable news of Syria, and WhatsApp for communicating with their family, relatives and friends in Syria and other parts of the world. With the popularity of the internet, the informants have easy access to the news and stories happening around the world, which was not the case in Syria.

The research accords the diverse media use of informants is very significant in the process of integration. Their choice of global media content and the (maximum) use of the internet have helped them to enrich their horizon of knowledge of different culture, behaviour, lifestyle and attitudes of people to adapt in a new territory. However, the use of Norwegian media did not work so well for integration as the media discourse excluded them from the mainstream group. The discourse misrepresented them by generalizing their identities as ethnic minority refugees, Muslims and criminals. So, they are facing trifold marginalization with several other challenges for proper identifications and integration into Norwegian society.

6.1 Kan Du Snakke Norsk? (Can You Speak Norwegian?)

All of the informants concurred in a statement that language of the host country precedes media and all other elements in the integration process. They admitted that language helps in building a mutual relationship and social network with people (Blau, 1960). It eases them to work in a multicultural environment. It is the source of their expression of likes, dislikes and opinions. Zahid boasted his achievement as a research assistant in a university because of his proficiency over the Norwegian language. Yara acknowledged her good position in theatre due to the proper communication (including theatrical terminologies) and Iman claimed his rapid promotion in work due to the command over language and staffing.

6.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings and analysis of the study, I would like to recommend some practices that the media could follow. Though the suggestions are not to be considered as the exhaustive solution, yet can be remarked as valuable ideas for the successful integration of Syrian people into the Norwegian community.

Mainstream media need to stop misrepresenting and underrepresenting the immigrants and ethnic minorities with reconstructed identities. They need to give equal coverage to immigrants and make them visible in the mainstream with proper identifications without any biases. The media can create a shared space or platform where the immigrants could express their opinion and generate creative thoughts.

It would be a remarkable step if the media could publish special issues (supplements) or broadcast programmes about the challenges immigrants face in Norway and the ways to alleviate them. They can telecast special episodes during the festivals or special events of immigrants, like on the occasion of Eid and the national day. These sorts of activities strengthen their ties of togetherness with the host society.

(Norwegian) media need to create more employment opportunities with a diverse background of people. They should value the recruitment process in all significant positions, in pre-production, production and post-production phases, on merit basis respecting the heterogeneous identities of immigrants. This equal participation provides them with opportunities to explore and express their amusing untold stories.

Othering with the differentiation of “us” and “them” needs to be demolished by promoting the concept of a multicultural society where everyone enjoys their rights and culture together.

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Appendix 1: Interview Guide

I. Background Information

- What is your name?
- How old are you?
- Where do you live?
- Are you married?
- Where is your spouse from? (country of origin)
- How many children do you have?
- Do you all live together? (If not, are you planning to bring your family here?)
- How long have you been in Norway?
- Do you speak Norwegian and English well?
- Have you got Norwegian citizenship?
- What is your current educational status?
- Where did you get your education?
- Where do you work? (nature of the job)

II. Media Habits

- Which media do you have at your home? Radio/FM, Television, Newspaper/Magazine or Online/Internet?
- How often do you use them (or the particular media you follow)? (In your house and workplace)
- Which ones do you like and follow the most? Why?

- In the case of Newspaper/Magazines:

- Do you read newspaper/magazines? (How often?)
- Have you subscribed any newspaper or magazine at home or workplace? (Which)
- What sorts of news or articles do you read the most? Why?
- Do you read newspaper and magazines mostly in print form or through the internet?
- Are these papers from your home country or Norway or other countries? Which do you like most? Why?

- **In the case of Radio/FM and Television:**

- Do you have a radio/FM or television at home?
- How often do you listen/watch them?
- Which do you like most? Why?
- What sorts of programmes do you like the most? News, movies, non-fiction, music, drama, reality shows, talk shows or any other? Why?
- Could you name some of your favourite programmes? (from Radio/FM or TV)
- Are these programmes from your home country, host country or transnational ones?

- **In the case of the Internet:**

- Do you have the internet at home?
- How often do you use it?
- What sort of contents or sites do you look for on the internet?
- Can you name a few sites that you visit frequently or regularly?

- Have you found any significant changes in your media habits after coming to Norway? What sorts of?

III. Media Use, Identities and Integration

- Do you follow media from your home country?
- Do you have easy access to your home country's media? Through what means? (Newspaper prints, TV channels, FM or Internet?)
- Which and how often do you follow your home country's media?
- What kind of contents do you usually look for in your home country's media?
- Do you use Norwegian media?
- How often do you watch Norwegian media?
- Which do you follow the most? Paper? Radio/FM? Television? Or online? Why?
- What sort of contents do you look for in Norwegian media?
- Which/whose issues do you want to see more in Norwegian media? Local issues of the host society, contemporary global issues or your home country's news?
- Do you regularly follow Syrian news covered in Norwegian media?
- Do you feel connected to home when you read/listen/watch Syrian news abroad?
- How are Syrians portrayed? Are you happy with it?

- What sorts of coverage do you want to see in Norwegian media about your home country?
- Have you also noticed the issues of identity and integration addressed by Norwegian media?
- Could you name a particular programme(s), news or article(s) that you like the most about these issues?
- Are they sufficient? If not, then how can they be addressed properly?
- Do you think that media need to have a separate agenda featuring special programmes and themes to promote individual identity and integration in society?
- Do you think that people can learn about the culture and society of another country through the means of media?
- How far have you felt so in your case? Which media is better for you?
- Have your media habits supported you to integrate into the host society?
- Are you integrated in Norwegian society? Have you got any Norwegian friends?
- How do you find yourself in a Norwegian society now?
- Do you want to share anything further about this topic which we have missed in the discussion?

Appendix 2: Profile of the Informants

1. Amira

Sex: Female

Age: 37

Marital status: Unmarried

Religion: Muslim

Current Occupation: Chef

Previous Occupation: Translator of Arabic to English and vice-versa

Level of Education: Bachelor in English from Damascus University

Length of stay in Norway: 3 years

Citizenship: Syria with travel document of Norway

Status: Refugee

2. Fatima

Sex: Female

Age: 27

Marital status: Married

Children: 0

Religion: Muslim

Current Occupation: Primary Teacher

Previous Occupation: Teacher

Level of Education: Bachelor in Arabic Literature from Damascus University

Length of stay in Norway: 3 years

Citizenship: Syria with travel document of Norway

Status: Refugee

3. Farid

Sex: Male

Age: 31

Marital status: Unmarried

Religion: Muslim

Current Occupation: Hairdresser

Previous Occupation: Assistant Civil Engineer
Level of Education: University education in Engineering in Syria
Length of stay in Norway: 4.5 years
Citizenship: Syria with travel document of Norway
Status: Refugee

4. Hassan

Sex: Male
Age: 34
Marital status: Unmarried
Religion: Muslim
Current Occupation: Hairdresser
Previous Occupation: Business
Level of Education: University education in Syria
Length of stay in Norway: 8 years
Citizenship: Norway

5. Iman

Sex: Male
Age: 27
Marital status: Unmarried
Religion: Muslim
Current Occupation: Event and Conference Manager, Head Waiter
Previous Occupation: Editor and worked as an assistant in university in Syria for Persian and Arabic languages and literature
Level of Education: University education in Syria
Length of stay in Norway: 4 years
Citizenship: Syria with travel document of Norway
Status: Refugee

6. Jamal

Sex: Male
Age: 20
Marital status: Unmarried

Religion: Muslim

Current Occupation: Student, Waiter

Previous Occupation: Student

Level of Education: High school education in Syria

Length of stay in Norway: 5 years

Citizenship: Syria with travel document of Norway

Status: Refugee

7. Karam

Sex: Male

Age: 43

Marital status: Married

Children: 0

Religion: Atheist

Current Occupation: Researcher in Norway

Previous Occupation: Researcher in a university in Syria

Level of Education: Ph. D.

Length of stay in Norway: 1.5 years

Citizenship: Syria

Status: Immigrant

8. Mahdi

Sex: Male

Age: 28

Marital status: Unmarried

Religion: Muslim

Current Occupation: Master student in a university in Norway

Previous Occupation: Student

Previous Level of Education: Student of English literature at a university in Syria

Length of stay in Norway: 4 years

Citizenship: Syria with travel document of Norway

Status: Refugee

9. Tahir

Sex: Male

Age: 23

Marital status: Unmarried

Religion: Muslim

Current Occupation: Chef

Previous Occupation: Student

Level of Education: One year of university education in Engineering in Syria (Incomplete)

Length of stay in Norway: 3 years

Citizenship: Syria with travel document of Norway

Status: Refugee

10. Yara

Sex: Female

Age: 31

Marital status: Living together

Religion: Muslim

Current Occupation: Scenographer (production designer)

Previous Occupation: Student

Level of Education: Student in film school for bachelor studies

Length of stay in Norway: 4 years

Citizenship: Syria with travel document of Norway

Status: Refugee

11. Zahid

Sex: Male

Age: 27

Marital status: Single

Religion: Muslim

Current Occupation: Master student in a university in Norway

Previous Occupation: Journalist in Syria, Research Assistant in university in Norway

Level of Education: Master (Ongoing)

Length of stay in Norway: 3 years

Citizenship: Syria with travel document of Norway

Status: Refugee