

On The Potential of Refugee-Focused Public Service Announcements to Increase Social Acceptance: A Pilot Study

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Abstract

Studies measuring attitudes between Turkish society and Syrian refugees in Turkey point to increasing social distance and negative attitudes between the two groups. For this reason, social cohesion activities organized by public institutions have recently targeted not only foreigners but also local people. This study explores the short films and public service announcements prepared by the Migration Management Presidency to increase Turkish people's awareness and social acceptance towards refugees. Using content analysis method, the study examines the information provided to the public about migration and refugees, explores the refugee profile (gender, age, occupation) presented in these films, and evaluates the findings in the light of the good examples shared by international institutions regarding how information activities should be conducted to support social cohesion and acceptance towards foreigners. Findings reveal that refugee representations in the short films consist of mixed groups of men and women, however the age group consists especially of children. Featuring children who are considered innocent compared to adults is an attempt to reduce the negative perception towards refugees and facilitate their social acceptance. In addition, many films feature the theme of living together and portray foreigners as people with professions and integrated to society. Although this is an example of good representation, the films nevertheless highlight host society's aid towards refugees rather than refugees' positive contributions to society. Such representations downplay the importance of refugee agency and consider social cohesion as limited to host society's efforts, thus their contribution to facilitate social acceptance will also remain limited.

Keywords: social cohesion, social inclusion, public spots, refugees, foreigners