

## Article

# How Deutsche Welle Shapes Knowledge and Behaviour of Syrian Diaspora

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**Abstract:** This study explores the impact of DW's news coverage on the perceptions, knowledge, and behavioural changes of the Syrian diaspora in Germany regarding the Syrian crisis. Grounded in the Uses and Gratifications theory, data were collected from 207 Syrian immigrants residing in Germany between September and November 2023 using a convenience sampling approach. The findings reveal that DW is perceived as a credible and objective news source that provides comprehensive and balanced coverage of the Syrian crisis. Exposure to DW's reporting significantly enhanced respondents' understanding of the crisis, enabling them to engage in informed discussions. DW's coverage motivated behavioural changes, encouraging participation in social media discussions and humanitarian initiatives. This study highlights the critical role of trusted international media in shaping diaspora communities' perceptions, knowledge, and actions during crises. These findings also highlight DW's influence as a key information source for the Syrian diaspora, fostering both awareness and proactive engagement with the ongoing crisis.

**Keywords:** Deutsche Welle (DW); the Syrian crisis; news consumption; behavioural change; diaspora



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## 1. Introduction

The 2011 Arab uprisings marked the onset of widespread social and political upheaval, with Syria experiencing one of the most devastating and prolonged conflicts (Balla, 2023; Kozman et al., 2021). The Syrian crisis, fuelled by years of civil war and human rights violations, has resulted in one of the largest displacement crises in recent history. Millions of Syrians flee conflict and persecution (Oliveira, 2023), with Europe facing both a moral imperative and a significant challenge in responding to the influx of refugees (Czymara & Klinger, 2022; Deutsche Welle, 2024). Among the host countries, Germany has emerged as a primary destination for Syrian immigrants, with over a million Syrian refugees (Deutsche Welle, 2024). Such movement requires the necessity of reliable access to information and news about the conflict and its surroundings (back home and in the hosting countries). For example, refugees face significant challenges related to bureaucracy, legal status, housing, etc., where mainstream media outlets (e.g., Deutsche Welle channel) can play, especially those offering content in Arabic, a vital role in informing refugees about their rights and the bureaucratic processes as well as shaping their understanding of the conflicts/and the hosting country's roles. For example, Blach-Ørsten et al. (2023) highlight how digital news media serve as a key tool for disseminating updates and fostering public

awareness. Accurate and timely reporting during crises is essential to reduce uncertainty and guide public response. Kalogiannidis et al. (2023) emphasise that the media's role goes beyond mere information dissemination; it actively influences public confidence and crisis management strategies. Similarly, Reilly and Atanasova (2016) note that both traditional and social media platforms have become indispensable during emergencies, offering real-time updates and strengthening community resilience. Thus, the role of international news media, particularly Deutsche Welle (hereafter DW), which provides news in Arabic, becomes critical in shaping the perceptions, knowledge, and behaviours of the Syrian diaspora communities by providing content that helps refugees navigate their new world and understand local cultural norms (Green et al., 2021).

Media consumption during crises is not merely a means of acquiring information (Bailey et al., 2007; Czymara & Klinger, 2022). It is a mechanism for coping with uncertainty and fostering a sense of connection to one's homeland. Diaspora communities often turn to trusted international news platforms to understand the multifaceted dimensions of conflicts (Georgiou, 2013; Karim & Al-Rawi, 2018; Miladi, 2006). However, because media coverage shapes how the public [immigrants] understand the crisis and its implications, the media works not only in conveying facts to the public but also in influencing the public's perceptions of the situation in the homeland. This is part of the framing that is used by most media outlets to frame and present news stories, where journalists selectively choose the topics to convey to their viewers and listeners (An & Gower, 2009; Elareshi et al., 2021). In doing so, consuming and framing a crisis directs viewers to the important details and often incorporates different aspects using such words and phrases, which affect viewers' perceptions and knowledge. However, K. Chen et al. (2023) confirm that viewers increasingly depend on news media to acquire information during war and crises.

Several studies have examined news consumption and the narratives of crises, highlighting the role of media outlets such as the BBC and CNN in covering international crises (Cooper et al., 2021; Riad et al., 2022; Thorbjørnsrud & Figenschou, 2022). However, to date, there is limited empirical research that investigates how the content produced by DW shapes the cognitive, emotional, and behavioural orientations of the Syrian diaspora in Germany. Our study addresses this gap by examining the interplay between DW's coverage and the perceptions, knowledge acquisition, and behavioural responses among Syrian immigrants (Al Husein & Wagner, 2023). Our main argument posits that DW, as a trusted and linguistically accessible media outlet, acts as both a source of transnational identity reinforcement and a catalyst for socio-political engagement.

Such narratives can fuel criticism of government actions or promote social solidarity and mutual assistance, as Hawdon et al. (2012) indicate. Understanding how DW's presenting news stories regarding Syrian immigrants in Germany helps to understand more about the media's role in conflict and diaspora integration (Balla, 2023; el-Nawawy & Elmasry, 2024). To examine this, this study considers Syrian immigrants or diasporic audiences in the EU as an exogenous shock that can lead to news consumption (Van Aelst et al., 2021). To explore this, we conducted a quantitative survey of 207 Syrian immigrants residing in Germany. Three key questions guide our study: how does DW's news coverage of the Syrian crisis affect Syrian immigrants' perceptions of the conflict, their knowledge, and their behavioural responses regarding the crisis?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. News Media and Crisis Reporting

Crisis reporting serves as a vital source of information and news, particularly for communities affected directly or indirectly by conflict (Mushtaq et al., 2024; Perreault & Perreault, 2021). They also happen unexpectedly and disrupt normal routines in the

creation of news, fade norms, and affect policy formation. This requires balanced and ethical reporting practices that prioritise constructive engagement over sensationalism. In their study, [Czymara and Klingerer \(2022\)](#) also address audience behaviour in relation to news media by looking at how consumption patterns can differ between online and print media. They found that differences in media framing and content may lead to variations in audience perceptions and understanding.

For example, during the peak of Europe's 'Migration Crisis' in 2015, German media reported on key events such as large influxes of refugees and subsequent anti-immigrant sentiments. These narratives influenced the public's attitudes towards immigrants and refugees ([Czymara & Klingerer, 2022](#)). That said, this elevated need for information and news—often framed within the 'need for orientation' term—compels audiences to turn to trusted news sources that can provide immediate updates and expert opinions ([Van Aelst et al., 2021](#)). However, little scholarly attention has been paid to how DW's coverage is perceived by immigrants and refugees ([Karim & Al-Rawi, 2018](#)). We aim to fill this gap by hypothesising that (H1) DW's coverage of the Syrian crisis positively affected immigrants' perceptions.

## 2.2. Knowledge and News Media Exposure

The ability of news media to enhance public understanding of crises has been extensively studied. [Widyastuti \(2021\)](#) identifies media as a critical tool for disaster literacy, delivering educational content that promotes preparedness and informed responses. The relationship between knowledge and news exposure has been examined. Research has found that people who felt a higher concern about the impact of the crisis (e.g., COVID-19, conflict) and had a greater trust in news media exhibited increased news consumption ([Bailey et al., 2007](#); [Van Aelst et al., 2021](#)). [Hasibuan et al. \(2022\)](#) extend this argument, showing how targeted reporting can improve awareness of disaster risks and foster community empathy. Similarly, [Selvarajah and Fiorito \(2023\)](#) examine the relationship between international law and media framing during the Russia–Ukraine conflict, demonstrating how news coverage can elevate public awareness of humanitarian issues and legal accountability. This means that knowledge facilitation through trusted news sources is essential during a crisis. However, the effectiveness of media in promoting knowledge depends on trust and credibility ([A. Chen & Zhang, 2022](#); [Lindgren, 2013](#); [Reese, 2007](#)). In fact, [Czymara and Klingerer \(2022\)](#) emphasise the importance of understanding what information people are exposed to through different media outlets. For example, they note that the patterns of news coverage can significantly affect public discourse through diverse frames and narratives in the news and can enhance or limit the public's knowledge about complex issues. As [de Hoog and Verboon \(2020\)](#) argue, audiences are more likely to retain and apply information when it comes from reliable sources. This highlights the importance of media outlets such as DW, which are perceived as credible providers of in-depth, unbiased reporting. Thus, the relationship between knowledge and news exposure acquisition is critical in navigating complex situations, especially in times of uncertainty like the Syrian crisis. Therefore, we hypothesised that (H2) DW's coverage of the Syrian crisis positively affected immigrants' knowledge.

## 2.3. News Media and Audience Behaviour

Exposure to crisis coverage often leads to measurable changes in audience behaviour. Studies, e.g., [Eisele et al. \(2022\)](#) and [Mushtaq et al. \(2024\)](#) indicate how emotionally charged reporting can provoke social engagement such as sharing news on social media or participating in discussions. In the context of humanitarian crises, [Franks \(2013\)](#) illustrates how compelling visual narratives such as photojournalism have historically mobilised

public support and humanitarian aid. However, media-induced behavioural change is not always positive. [Abroms and Maibach \(2008\)](#) caution that sensationalised reporting can distort public perceptions and lead to misinformed actions. We, therefore, hypothesised that (H3) DW's coverage of the Syrian crisis positively affected immigrants' behaviours.

#### 2.4. Framing the Syrian Conflict in Global Media

The media coverage of the Syrian conflict has attracted considerable scholarly attention over the past decade ([Chib & Ang, 2023](#); [Green et al., 2021](#); [Karim & Al-Rawi, 2018](#); [Xu & Maitland, 2016](#)). For example, Western media, particularly CNN, the BBC, and The New York Times, have frequently been critiqued for oscillating between humanitarian empathy and security-based framing. They often privilege elite sources while marginalising Syrian voices (see, e.g., [Cooper et al., 2021](#); [el-Nawawy & Elmasry, 2024](#)). These representations have tended to construct refugees either as passive victims or as geopolitical burdens. In their study, [el-Nawawy and Elmasry \(2024\)](#) identified a consistent pattern in elite US newspapers of portraying Syrian refugees as 'less worthy' compared to Ukrainian refugees. This reflects orientations and racialised hierarchies of suffering.

Conversely, Arab media outlets such as Al Jazeera TV and Al Arabia TV have approached the conflict through varied lenses, as they are, of course, led by their state affiliations and sectarian politics. For example, [Karim and Al-Rawi \(2018\)](#) argue that Arab media diasporic audiences tend to select international media sources such as BBC Arabic, DW Arabic, or France 24 Arabic to navigate the polarised or propagandist nature of regional media. In this sense, DW occupies a unique yet underexplored position. Unlike CNN or Al Jazeera, DW is a Western media producing content in Arabic, explicitly tailored for Middle Eastern audiences. Existing studies have examined a similar topic. [Al Husein and Wagner \(2023\)](#) examined DW's coverage in the context of return migration discourses. [Oliveira \(2023\)](#) compared German media's coverage of the Syrian and Ukrainian wars, pointing to inconsistencies in tone and urgency. However, none of these studies offer a quantitative, audience-focused analysis of DW's Arabic-language content as perceived and internalised by Syrian diaspora populations in Germany.

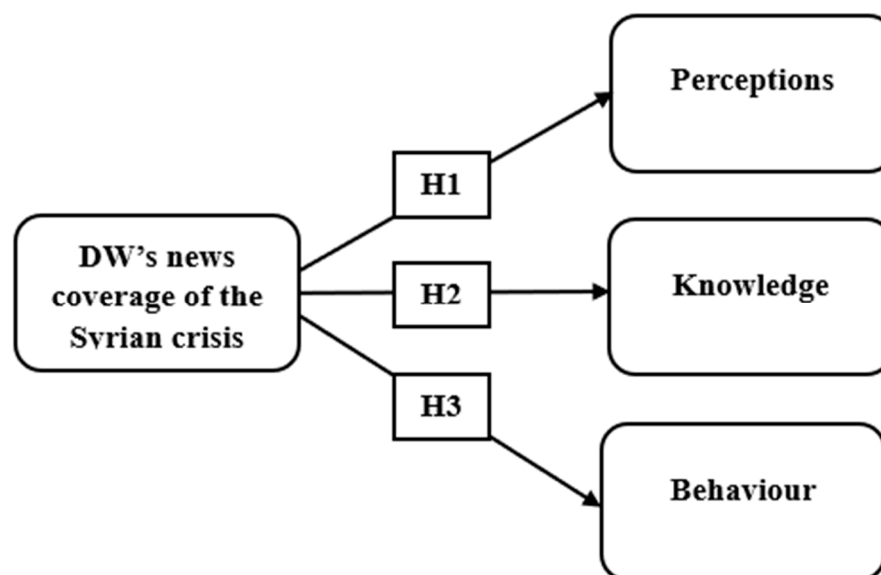
Our study, therefore, makes a distinctive contribution to understanding media production and media reception, focusing on how DW's framing of the Syrian conflict informs the perceptions, knowledge, and behavioural orientations of the diaspora.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

This study employs the Uses and Gratifications Theory (U&G) as its primary conceptual lens to analyse news consumption and how Syrian refugees in Germany interact with DW news content during the Syrian crisis ([Green et al., 2021](#)). Developed by [Katz et al. \(1973\)](#), the theory posits that individuals actively select media sources and messages, such as DW's news coverage, to fulfil specific psychological and social needs. These choices are influenced by personal interests, preferences, and the need for information during critical events ([Karim & Al-Rawi, 2018](#)). Our study examines how Syrian immigrants choose DW as a news source to satisfy their informational needs, whether for knowledge or habitual consumption. The theory also accounts for differences in media consumption behaviours, such as the preference for online vs. traditional media during crises. As [Apuke and Omar \(2020\)](#) [Choi \(2016\)](#) suggest, motivations for consuming news can vary widely depending on personal needs and the context of the crisis. This framework is particularly relevant for understanding how DW's representation of the Syrian crisis is constructed and received by the Syrian diaspora ([Georgiou, 2013](#); [Miladi, 2006](#)).

The literature highlights the transformative potential of news media consumption in crisis contexts, from educating viewers to shaping their perceptions, knowledge, and

behaviours (Figure 1). However, the impact of media consumption varies across cultural and demographic groups, highlighting the need for context-sensitive analysis (Al-Jaber & Elareshi, 2014; Jie Chan et al., 2022). This study builds on these insights by investigating how DW's news coverage of the Syrian crisis influences the perceptions, knowledge, and behaviours of Syrian immigrants in Germany. For example, in informational gratification and knowledge acquisition, Syrian refugees engage with DW primarily to satisfy informational needs regarding the evolving crisis in their homeland. Accordingly, such media use is purposive and goal-directed—audiences turn to specific outlets as they perceive them as credible, relevant, and linguistically accessible (Choi, 2016; Green et al., 2021). For the cognitive and evaluative gratification through perception formation, beyond information-seeking, DW provides a cognitive lens through which audiences make evaluative judgements, which Katz et al. (1973, p. 513) called 'value reinforcement' and later Ruggiero (2007) called 'reality testing'. Regarding social gratification and behavioural activation, U&G also accounts for how media use fosters a sense of social belonging, especially in diasporic contexts where feelings of marginalisation are common. News consumption can catalyse real-world behaviour from online engagement to offline actions (Eisele et al., 2022; Miladi, 2006). In fact, the media acts as a bridge between personal emotions and collective action.



**Figure 1.** The research framework model.

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1. Study Design

This study employs a quantitative research design to collect and analyse data systematically. Quantitative approaches are well-suited for capturing generalisable insights and testing hypotheses about the relationship between media exposure and audience responses. This study focuses on Syrian immigrants residing in Germany who consume DW content about the Syrian crisis. A structured survey is used as the primary data collection tool, allowing for the standardisation of responses and ensuring participant reliability.

### 4.2. Data Collection

The questionnaire was developed based on validated scales from existing literature to measure the constructs of interest: perceptions of DW's coverage, the knowledge effect of exposure, and behavioural changes. The survey items were refined to align with the

study's objectives and translated into Arabic language to ensure clarity and accessibility for the target population.

#### 4.3. Sampling and Respondent Recruitment

This study employed a convenience sampling approach, targeting Syrian immigrants through community centres, social media groups, and cultural events during the period from September to November 2023. While this method may limit the generalisability of findings, it provides access to a specific and relevant population segment. The focus remained on selecting individuals who watch German television. A total of 207 respondents participated in the survey, reflecting diverse demographic characteristics such as age, gender, education level, and length of stay in Germany. Ethical approval for the study was obtained from Yarmouk University, Irbid, Jordan. Participants provided informed consent before completing the questionnaire and were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. The research adhered to ethical guidelines, respecting participants' autonomy and privacy.

The demographic profile of the respondents provides a comprehensive understanding of the study population (Table 1). Among the 207 respondents, 61% were male, and 39% were female. The age distribution revealed that 34.8% were between 21 and 30 years old, while 11.6% were between 41 and 50 years old. Educational attainment varied, with 34.9% holding a high school diploma, followed by those holding a college degree (33.4%) and a bachelor's degree (31.9%). The occupational distribution was equally varied, with 45.9% working as freelancers, 27.5% unemployed, 17.4% receiving national aid, and 9.2% being university students. The respondents' length of stay in Germany ranged from 40.1% residing for 4–6 years to 19.8% for a year or less and 18.4% for 7–9 years. Only 8.7% had lived in Germany for over a decade, highlighting the relatively recent nature of their migration and DW's potential as a critical resource for connecting them to their homeland. This diversity also reflects the heterogeneous socio-economic profiles of Syrian immigrants in Germany.

**Table 1.** The sample's demographic profile.

| Construct         | Item                      | N   | %     |
|-------------------|---------------------------|-----|-------|
| Gender            | Male                      | 127 | 61.4% |
|                   | Female                    | 80  | 38.6% |
| Age               | 18–20                     | 22  | 10.6% |
|                   | 21–30                     | 72  | 34.8% |
|                   | 31–40                     | 37  | 17.9% |
|                   | 41–50                     | 24  | 11.6% |
|                   | 51 or above               | 52  | 25.1% |
| Educational Level | High school               | 72  | 34.9% |
|                   | College                   | 69  | 33.4% |
|                   | Bachelor's degree or more | 66  | 31.9% |
| Occupation        | University student        | 19  | 9.2%  |
|                   | Unemployed                | 57  | 27.5% |
|                   | Freelance                 | 95  | 45.9% |
|                   | Receive national aid      | 36  | 17.4% |

**Table 1.** *Cont.*

| Construct           | Item              | N  | %     |
|---------------------|-------------------|----|-------|
| Residing in Germany | 1 year or less    | 41 | 19.8% |
|                     | 2–3 years         | 27 | 13.0% |
|                     | 4–6 years         | 83 | 40.1% |
|                     | 7–9 years         | 38 | 18.4% |
|                     | 10 years and more | 18 | 8.7%  |

#### 4.4. Data Analysis

This study uses Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) to examine the relationship between the independent variable (exposure to DW's coverage) and the dependent variables (perceptions, knowledge, and behavioural changes). SEM was chosen for its ability to handle complex relationships and provide insights into both direct and indirect effects (AlHamad, 2020; Leong et al., 2019). Preliminary analysis included descriptive statistics and normality testing to ensure data suitability for advanced statistical techniques. For the normality test, we employed both Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk tests (Table 2) (Tsagris & Pandis, 2021). The significance values related to each variable are insignificant, exceeding the standard  $p$ -value of 0.05, suggesting that the data were not normally distributed. Consequently, this study was validated using parametric tests for the analysis.

**Table 2.** Data normality testing.

| Construct           | Kolmogorov–Smirnov Test |       | Shapiro–Wilk Test |       |
|---------------------|-------------------------|-------|-------------------|-------|
|                     | Statistic               | Sig.  | Statistic         | Sig.  |
| DW's news coverage  | 0.639                   | 0.143 | 0.388             | 0.301 |
| Perceptions         | 0.633                   | 0.124 | 0.112             | 0.108 |
| Knowledge           | 0.509                   | 0.491 | 0.353             | 0.637 |
| Behavioural changes | 0.635                   | 0.191 | 0.346             | 0.425 |

## 5. Results

### 5.1. Media Consumption Patterns

The analysis revealed that DW remains the most trusted and dominant news source of information among the Syrian diaspora in Germany, with respondents often citing it as their most trusted platform for updates on the Syrian crisis. A striking 97% indicated that they consumed news from DW via traditional television, followed by DW's YouTube (69%) and Facebook platform (31%). A few respondents (10%) mentioned 'others', including websites and news channels. This distribution reflects both the cross-platform reach of DW's content and the strong demand for Arabic-language media accessible across different digital environments. According to Ardèvol-Abreu (2015), news media play a crucial role in raising awareness, disseminating public information, and contributing to crisis resolution.

Importantly, platform preference showed statistically significant variation by age and education. Younger respondents (aged 18–30) expressed higher engagement with DW's digital platforms, especially YouTube and Facebook, while older participants (40+) predominantly relied on TV. Similarly, respondents with higher education were more likely to engage with DW's content across multiple platforms. This could be due to higher media literacy and broader digital access (Green et al., 2021; Karim & Al-Rawi, 2018).

### 5.2. Perceptions of DW's Coverage

This study reveals overwhelmingly positive perceptions of DW's objectivity and credibility (Elareshi et al., 2020; Ziani et al., 2017). Respondents praised the depth of DW's analysis of the Syrian crisis, rating it superior. The majority of respondents (80%) described DW as 'credible', 'objective', and 'comprehensive'. These perceptions of DW's coverage were found to influence respondents' news consumption habits. Existing literature suggests that people with higher trust in media are more likely to increase their news consumption during crises, as noted by Van Aelst et al. (2021). Trust in media sources often leads to greater reliance on them for accurate and reliable information. Czymara and Klingeren (2022) further explain how perceptions of news are shaped by the type of media consumed. This means that perceptions of news are not merely reflections of reality but are constructed, indicating that media framing choices significantly influence how audiences interpret reality.

Additionally, German broadcasting services, particularly TV channels, have shown considerable interest in covering the Syrian crisis. This interest stems from factors such as Europe's geographic proximity to the Middle East and the direct impact of the Syrian crisis on European countries, especially Germany (von Nordheim et al., 2019), due to the influx of refugees. DW's framing of the crisis was perceived as balanced, fostering nuanced discussions among the diasporas.

That said, further analysis revealed variation across gender and length of residence, with female respondents being slightly more critical of DW's portrayal of humanitarian issues, especially concerning women and children. This suggests that a gendered lens is used through which media credibility is assessed. Respondents who had lived in Germany for 6 years or more expressed greater trust in DW content than new arrivals. This could reflect a process of media internalisation over time, where long-term residents become more embedded in German media.

Interestingly, the perceived credibility of DW was further significantly correlated with the degree of behavioural engagement (see Section 5.4). This also suggests a reinforcing relationship between trust and behavioural engagement.

### 5.3. Knowledge Enhancement

The analysis indicates that exposure to DW coverage had a positive effect on enhancing immigrants' understanding of the Syrian crisis. For example, respondents (87%) agreed that watching DW's news coverage has increased their awareness of key issues (e.g., historical context, humanitarian, and geopolitical dynamics of the conflict) and led to obtaining a deeper understanding of their homeland crisis. However, this knowledge gain was not evenly distributed. For example, respondents with higher education reported greater learning from DW, especially in terms of legal processes (e.g., asylum rights and international diplomacy) and humanitarian frameworks, compared to those with lower education who reported a higher reliance on DW for practical, day-to-day knowledge.

This knowledge effect was particularly pronounced among those with higher educational backgrounds, suggesting the existing relationship between media literacy and the integration of complex narratives. In this context, Happer and Philo (2013) indicate that news media content creation is significantly affected by different powerful groups, including social and political institutions, lobbyists, and the PR industry.

Interestingly, younger respondents (aged 21–30) reported a higher rate of what could be termed 'interactive learning'—their DW consumption often led them to search for additional information online, indicating a more dialogic relationship with media.

#### 5.4. Behavioural Impacts

Data indicate an overall positive effect of DW's coverage on respondents' behaviours. In fact, it inspired them to engage actively with crisis-related content and discussion. In doing so, respondents mentioned sharing DW's news stories on their social media sites. Furthermore, DW's portrayal of the crisis motivated humanitarian efforts, with respondents expressing a heightened inclination to support aid initiatives for Syria. Notably, respondents who perceived DW as highly credible demonstrated greater levels of behavioural engagement, supporting the framing theory's assertion that effective framing can influence actions. Literature review reveals that news framing is crucial in shaping audience emotions, attitudes, and cognitive responses (Elareshi et al., 2021; Patrick, 2024). News media can shape public opinion, especially during crises, to increase public awareness and understanding (An & Gower, 2009).

#### 5.5. SEM Analysis

##### Measurement Model Evaluation

As shown in Table 3, the measurement model was assessed for validity and reliability using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). For the internal consistency reliability, composite reliability (CR) values for all constructs ranged between 0.745 and 0.845, exceeding the threshold of 0.7. Cronbach's alpha (CA) values were similarly robust, ranging from 0.718 to 0.773, indicating strong internal consistency. Convergent validity was measured using average variance extracted (AVE) values for all constructs that exceeded the threshold of 0.5, confirming that the measured items adequately captured the intended constructs. Item loadings were significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) and ranged from moderate (e.g., DW2 = 0.432) to strong (e.g., DW3 = 0.983).

**Table 3.** Measurement model evaluation.

| Construct                                                     | Code | Item                                                                     | Source                              | Loadings |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------|
| DW's news coverage<br>AVE = 0.528<br>CA = 0.727<br>CR = 0.812 | DW1  | I seek news about the Syrian crisis through the DW channel               | (Bruine de Bruin et al., 2020)      | 0.610    |
|                                                               | DW2  | I follow news on the DW channel                                          |                                     | 0.432    |
|                                                               | DW3  | I perceive DW as my primary source                                       |                                     | 0.983    |
|                                                               | DW4  | I often watch news programmes to stay informed about global events       |                                     | 0.946    |
|                                                               | DW5  | DW provide more reliable information on the Syrian crisis                |                                     | 0.665    |
|                                                               | DW6  | I often turn to DW for comprehensive coverage of international conflicts |                                     | 0.875    |
|                                                               | DW7  | I trust DW to deliver accurate and objective news on the Syrian crisis   |                                     | 0.726    |
| Perceptions<br>AVE = 0.524<br>CA = 0.773<br>CR = 0.845        | PER1 | DW provides an in-depth analysis of the Syrian crisis                    | (Anbin, 2021; Knudsen et al., 2023) | 0.817    |
|                                                               | PER2 | DW provides objective coverage of the Syrian crisis                      |                                     | 0.738    |
|                                                               | PER3 | DW's coverage of the Syrian crisis is unbiased                           |                                     | 0.869    |
|                                                               | PER4 | DW provides credible coverage of the Syrian crisis                       |                                     | 0.660    |
|                                                               | PER5 | DW's coverage of the Syrian crisis is superior                           |                                     | 0.555    |

Table 3. Cont.

| Construct                                                      | Code | Item                                                                            | Source                                          | Loadings |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Knowledge<br>AVE = 0.538<br>CA = 0.718<br>CR = 0.745           | KNW1 | Watching DW increases my awareness of key events in the Syrian crisis           | (de Hoog & Verboon, 2020; Nanz & Matthes, 2020) | 0.875    |
|                                                                | KNW2 | DW's reporting gives me a deeper understanding of the Syrian crisis             |                                                 | 0.917    |
|                                                                | KNW3 | DW's coverage helps me understand the history of the Syrian crisis              |                                                 | 0.845    |
|                                                                | KNW4 | I feel more knowledgeable about the humanitarian aspects of the Syrian crisis   |                                                 | 0.864    |
|                                                                | KNW5 | DW improves my ability to discuss the Syrian crisis with others                 |                                                 | 0.845    |
| Behavioural changes<br>AVE = 0.581<br>CA = 0.742<br>CR = 0.814 | BHR1 | I often share DW's news coverage about the Syrian crisis on social media        | (Möller et al., 2020; Mutono & Dagada, 2016)    | 0.808    |
|                                                                | BHR2 | Watching DW leads me to participate in discussions about the Syrian crisis      |                                                 | 0.773    |
|                                                                | BHR3 | My opinions about the Syrian crisis have changed after watching DW              |                                                 | 0.670    |
|                                                                | BHR4 | Watching DW motivates me to support humanitarian efforts for Syria              |                                                 | 0.983    |
|                                                                | BHR5 | I prefer DW for news on other global issues because it covers the Syrian crisis |                                                 | 0.946    |

### 5.6. Structural Model Assessment

The goodness of fit was further tested to determine the suitability of the measurement model for the structural model assessment (Hair et al., 2019). The item with a lower loading value (e.g., DW2 = 0.432) was removed to determine the goodness of fit. Thus, the goodness of fit indices provide insight into the model's performance. The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) (0.0024) is well below the 0.08 threshold, suggesting an excellent fit. The Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI) is 0.954, close to 1, indicating a strong fit.  $\chi^2$  0.6556 reflects a good model fit when considered alongside other indices. Finally, the Norm Fit Index (NFI) is 0.836, slightly below 0.9, indicative of a reasonably good fit. Overall, the model exhibits a strong goodness of fit (Figure 2). These results supported our hypotheses and highlighted the role of DW in shaping the diaspora's media engagement.

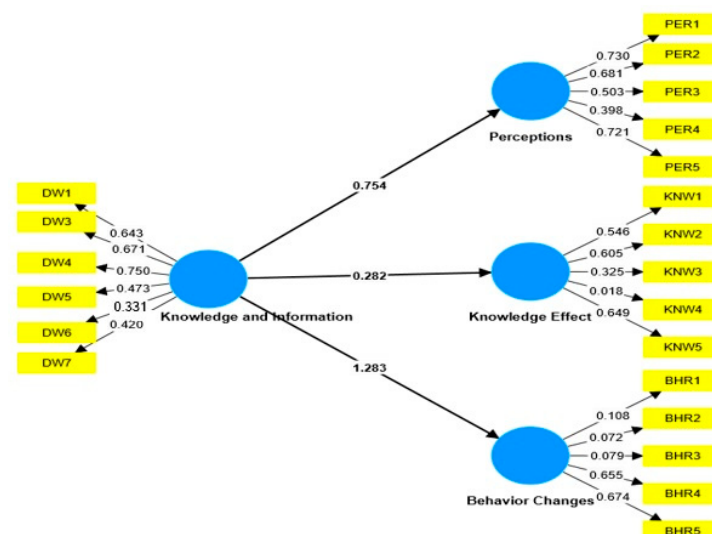


Figure 2. The measurement model.

Further, discriminant validity was tested using the Fornell–Larcker criterion and Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio scale (Table 4). The Fornell–Larcker criterion (in bold) showed that the square root of each construct’s AVE was greater than its correlations with other constructs, ensuring each construct measured a unique concept (Rönkkö & Cho, 2020). The Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio was below 0.85 for all construct pairs, further supporting discriminant validity.

**Table 4.** The discriminant validity test.

| Construct              | Fornell–Larcker Criterion |              |              |              | Hetreotrait–Monotrait Ratio Scale |       |       |   |
|------------------------|---------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|-------|-------|---|
|                        | 1                         | 2            | 3            | 4            | 1                                 | 2     | 3     | 4 |
| 1. DW’s news coverage  | <b>0.655</b>              |              |              |              |                                   |       |       |   |
| 2. Perceptions         | 0.581                     | <b>0.724</b> |              |              | 0.081                             |       |       |   |
| 3. Knowledge           | 0.198                     | 0.244        | <b>0.325</b> |              | 0.257                             | 0.26  |       |   |
| 4. Behavioural changes | 0.288                     | 0.189        | 0.383        | <b>0.546</b> | 0.205                             | 0.498 | 0.489 |   |

Table 5 outlines the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) values for the constructs within the SEM, alongside with effect size test ( $f^2$ ). These  $R^2$  values represent the proportion of variance in each dependent variable explained by the independent variable (e.g., exposure to DW’s coverage). Higher  $R^2$  values indicate that the model effectively accounts for variance in the dependent variables. For perceptions, the analysis indicates that DW’s coverage explained 33.8% of the variance in the respondents’ perceptions of the Syrian crisis ( $R^2 = 0.338$ ). This moderated effect highlights the DW’s significant role in shaping how Syrian immigrants perceive the crisis. The remaining variance may be attributed to factors such as personal experiences, exposure to other media sources, or cultural biases. Furthermore, the effect size ( $f^2$ ) was run and indicated perceptions and knowledge. The analysis indicates a moderate effect, while behavioural changes suggest a large effect.

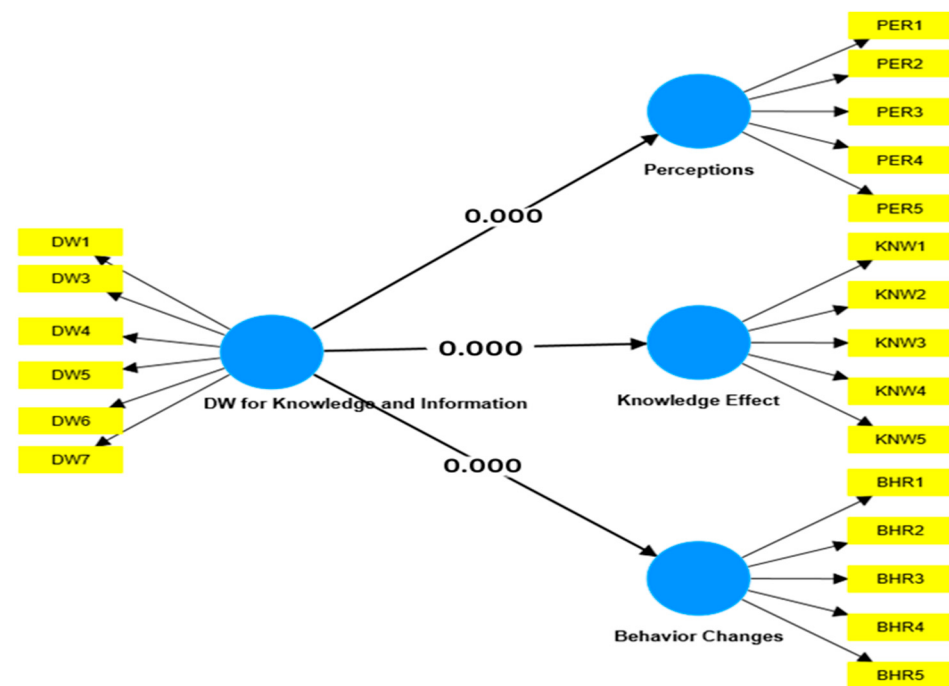
**Table 5.** Coefficient of determination  $R^2$  and effect size  $f^2$ .

| Construct           | $R^2$ | $F^2$ |
|---------------------|-------|-------|
| Perceptions         | 0.338 | 0.510 |
| Knowledge           | 0.437 | 0.241 |
| Behavioural changes | 0.774 | 3.421 |

Finally, path analysis was conducted to test the proposed effects of DW’s coverage on the perceptions of the Syrian crisis, knowledge, and behavioural changes using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) (Table 6 and Figure 3). The results indicated a significant positive effect of DW’s coverage of perceptions ( $\beta = 0.754$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), knowledge ( $\beta = 0.282$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), and behavioural changes ( $\beta = 1.283$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). These results suggest that all hypotheses are accepted, confirming significant effects.

**Table 6.** Hypothesis testing (path assessment).

| Hypotheses                           | $\beta$ | t-Value | p-Value | Decision |
|--------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|----------|
| DW’s coverage => Perceptions         | 0.754   | 10.999  | 0.000   | Accept   |
| DW’s coverage => Knowledge           | 0.282   | 7.420   | 0.000   | Accept   |
| DW’s coverage => Behavioural changes | 1.283   | 15.206  | 0.000   | Accept   |



**Figure 3.** Final model indicating path analysis results.

## 6. Conclusions

This study highlights the crucial role of news media in increasing public awareness and understanding of the crisis. Although news media framing different social and political conflicts has received much criticism, the role of the media in public awareness cannot be denied. These news media platforms are crucial for sharing information, shaping perceptions, and promoting communities, particularly during conflict and uncertainty. Our study found that DW's news coverage of the Syrian crisis has a substantial positive influence on the perceptions, knowledge, and behavioural changes of Syrian immigrants in Germany. For example, the findings indicate that exposure to DW's content not only enhances understanding of the crisis but also motivates respondents to engage in humanitarian efforts and discuss crisis-related topics actively. Trust in DW as a credible source was particularly associated with higher levels of engagement.

It is worth saying that the findings regarding audience perceptions of DW reveal a complex and layered engagement with international media. While the dominant view was highly favourable—DW was widely trusted and appreciated for its depth—there existed a healthy degree of critical reflection among respondents. Overall, the study highlights the critical role of media consumption in shaping public response during crises and indicates DW's significance as a trusted information source for the Syrian diaspora (Karim & Al-Rawi, 2018).

### 6.1. Implications

The implications of this study are multifaceted: first, the findings highlight the crucial role of international news media and their media responsibility in shaping the understanding of crisis among diaspora communities. This responsibility includes providing balanced and accurate reporting that can positively influence perceptions and knowledge. Second, for organisations involved in crisis management and humanitarian aid, this study suggests that effective communication strategies need to be developed that resonate with the diaspora, utilising trusted media platforms to disseminate important information and foster engagement. Finally, the positive impact of DW's coverage on knowledge and behavioural

changes indicates potential strategies for NGOs and community organisations to leverage trusted media sources in mobilising support and encouraging informed discussions with diaspora communities. This shows that effective framing can encourage proactive audience behaviours, contributing to broader social engagement. News media professionals should recognise their potential to drive social impact through thoughtful and responsible framing, especially in contexts of geopolitical crises and humanitarian issues.

## 6.2. Limitations and Future Research

This study has some primary limitations that future investigations can address. First, this study was only conducted in the context of Syrian refugees in Germany. While this is important, the results cannot be generalised to other immigrants in different countries. Future studies can replicate this research design and acquire insights from other regions. Second, selecting DW as the only media outlet has its limits. Future studies can examine the same phenomenon related to different news media organisations in Germany. Finally, this study uses a single, quantitative design. Future studies can involve more methodologies, e.g., mixed methods (media practitioners, journalists, and editors), to obtain more in-depth insights.

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