

The Image of Refugees and the Features of its Development in Lithuanian Online Newspapers

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Abstract. *The considerable number of refugees fleeing to Europe has an impact on countries' economic, political and social agenda, as well as the processes of society. The European refugee (migrant) crisis, which began in 2015, brought out not only different attitudes toward refugees among European Union politicians, but also revealed how diverse the coverage of national media may get on the refugee topic.*

Refugees flee to Europe from various countries and diverse cultural backgrounds. However, society lacks the knowledge about their religious beliefs, lifestyles and outlooks. Moreover, the media has the power to decide which events and individuals to portray, and in such a way constructs the audience's perception about the world they live in. Refugee-related messages in the media usually occur in a negative context: terrorist attacks, refugee deaths, criminal activity and protests. However, the media does not only construct, but also has the power to change prejudice toward refugees, ensuring that one of its aims is interaction between diverse social groups.

The author combines quantitative and qualitative research methods for media messages and analyzes dominant stereotypes about refugees in Lithuanian online media. The types of refugee-related publications are also examined. Three research periods were chosen: 1-31 July 2015, 1-30 November 2015 and 1-31 January 2016. The main goals are to theoretically discuss the media's role and peculiarities in shaping certain images which society maintains, as well as to define the stereotypes and their role in society.

Lithuanian online newspapers are commercial institutions, which – in order to compete in the market – strive to engage consumers. Delivering messages quickly and in large quantities often matters more than their content and the reliability of sources. This, in turn, leads to the information being distorted or superficial. Lithuanian newspapers construct a negative refugee image, where the most dominant images of refugees are as individuals who are uncontrollable, aggressive and prone to commit crime, being either gang members, terrorists or benefit recipients.

Keywords: *refugees, refugee crisis, stereotypes, newspapers, online media.*

Introduction

In the rapidly changing world, large refugee flows have an impact on countries' economies, political and social agendas and social processes. The European refugee (migrant¹) crisis that began in 2015 has exposed a number of problems: differences in the national legal systems within the community, an inconsistent stance on refugees, the fragility of a common position of the states.

According to Manuel Castells (2007), European integration and the formation of a European identity are a response to the process of globalization. The union of countries is designed to maintain influence in the political and economic arena, but also to create a generally accepted European identity (Castells 2007).

The image of a European being created can be depicted by the values declared by the European Union (EU). The EU Constitutional Treaty stresses that the following principles shall prevail in the society of member states: "pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality."² Considerable attention is also given to the topic of refugees, the Middle East and North Africa; in addition, numerous edu-

¹ In conducting the study, it was observed that the terms *migrant* and *refugee* are used interchangeably.

² The Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe: The Values of the Union (Europa.eu).

cational publications have been published, such as *The Good Practice Guides on Refugee Integration*³ – a methodology for teachers, students and other social groups to educate and cultivate tolerance for refugees.

The year 2015, when the number of refugees who overcame the Mediterranean Sea to reach Europe alone exceeded one million,⁴ is considered to be the beginning of the European refugee crisis; this crisis had hit “unexpectedly” and stirred up the heads of states and members of the public alike. Some countries – Hungary, for example – began to build border fences to protect themselves from refugees, while Germany and Sweden agreed to take in the majority of the refugees who came to Europe.

The portrayal of the refugee theme in national media also differs across countries. The broadcasters at Germany’s *Deutsche Welle* and the Sweden’s *Sveriges Television* caused a wave of outrage when they decided not to disclose the ethnic origin of alleged perpetrators, while Lithuanian news portals *Delfi.lt*, *15min.lt* and *Lrytas.lt* attributed the murder of a Lithuanian teenager in Sweden to a refugee, even though this information was only based on Facebook posts. Linking criminal offenses with refugee status incites social discord and creates a negative image of refugees. Refugees of very different nationalities, beliefs and religions come to Europe, but mass media usually presents generic information about them, which creates the image of a homogeneous and stereotyped social group and reinforces public prejudices. For example, there are dozens of different faiths and ethnic groups in Syria alone.⁵

Media4Change, an international movement which aims to promote responsible and ethical journalism, is drawing attention to the fact that in bringing the topic of refugees to light, European media has trampled

³ EUROPEAN COUNCIL ON REFUGEES. “Good Practice Guide on the Integration of Refugees in the European Union.” *World University Service*, 1999, p. 52.

⁴ THE UN REFUGEE AGENCY. *Migrants Emergency Response – Mediterranean* (Unhcr.org, 2016).

⁵ HOLLIDAY, Joseph. *The Struggle for Syria in 2011. Middle East Security Report 2* (Understandingwar.org, December 2011).

the fundamental principles of ethics and has contributed to the spread of hatred toward refugees.⁶ According to the authors, the media lacked a critical approach to the statements of politicians and other opinion leaders who were cited and helped spread a xenophobic message.

The portrayal of refugees in the media in the context of mostly negative events has significantly changed the attitude of Lithuanians towards them. A public opinion poll initiated by the Lithuanian Social Research Centre (LSRC) was carried out one week after the 2015 Paris attacks (November 19-29).⁷ Compared with surveys taken the previous year, the portion of the Lithuanian population that stated that their opinion of refugees had worsened increased noticeably, from 38 percent who felt this way a year ago to 72 percent. More than two thirds of the Lithuanian population felt that refugees could cause social unrest in Lithuania (82 percent) or increase the crime rate (86 percent); one in two people would not want to have a refugee as a neighbour (50 percent) or rent a place for one to live in (52 percent). Residents of Lithuania tend to think about potential threats to social safety rather than about the positive contribution that newly-settled people might make to the country's economy and culture.

Promoting communication between different social groups and increasing their awareness is one of the functions of the media, so it is important to investigate which refugee stereotypes prevail in Lithuanian online newspapers, as well as how they are created and which types of publications are predominant. This makes it possible to identify problems and draw conclusions, as well as to make suggestions and recommendations.

In 2015, the United Nations Refugee Agency, in conjunction with the Cardiff School of Journalism (United Kingdom), carried out an analysis of European media in five countries: Spain, Italy, Germany, the United Kingdom and Sweden. The goal was to examine how the media

⁶ MEDIA 4 CHANGE. *Unethical Reporting on Migrants and Refugees in Europe*, 2016.

⁷ LITHUANIAN SOCIAL RESEARCH CENTRE (LSRC). Institute for Ethnic Studies. 2015 public attitudes survey. [Interactive] 7 January 2016.

presents reports about refugees.⁸ According to the authors, the media not only contributed to the construction of the image of refugees, but also confused the notion of refugees with the notion of “irregular migrants,” thus creating a negative image of the refugees – they become associated with crime and terrorist attacks. By publishing numerous texts in which negative attitudes toward refugees are accentuated, they are intensifying public anxiety and hostility.

The authors note that the media has the power to construct a more positive image of refugees by providing more information about the motives of their trip and publishing stories about the lives of specific individuals. However, generic information prevails for shock value, and photographs are often published that portray boats full of refugees or even people who have drowned.

The topic of refugees became very pertinent to Lithuanians in 2015. According to the annual Google search engine report, which shows what information people searched the most for in different countries, the most popular searches in Lithuania ranked as follows:⁹

1. EuroBasket 2015;
2. Eurovision 2015;
3. Attacks in Paris;
4. Refugees;
5. The Syrian war.

The subjects of the study described in this article are the contents and type of online newspaper (Lrytas.lt, Delfi.lt, 15min.lt) publications about refugees. The objective of the study is to investigate what kind of image of refugees is being formed in Lithuanian online newspapers and how. Before discussing the results of the investigation, the hypothesis being proposed must be identified – it is likely that a more negative than

⁸ THE UN REFUGEE AGENCY; CARDIFF SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM. *Press Coverage of the Refugee and Migrant Crisis in the EU: A Content Analysis of Five European Countries*, December 2015.

⁹ “Google Revealed Unexpected Things About Lithuanians.” *DELFI.LT*, 1 January 2016.

positive image of refugees is predominant in Lithuanian online newspapers.

Scientific literature analysis and quantitative and qualitative content analysis was used in carrying out the scientific research. The aim was to define the traits and role of the media in forming certain images in society from a theoretical point of view, and to define the concept of stereotypes and their role in society. Another objective was to investigate what image of refugees prevails in Lithuanian online newspapers and what types of publications are predominant.

The Media Shapes Images

Lithuanian media has a lot of influence on its contemporary audience. According to a survey conducted during 1st-10th of October 2015 by the public opinion and market research company Baltic Surveys on behalf of the ELTA news agency, 63 percent of the Lithuanian population over the age of 15 trust the Lithuanian media.¹⁰ It is an important source of information about the world around us and the events that take place. However, it is important to note that this communication and information medium constructs a distinctive world that does not always reflect reality.

John C. Merrill claims that mass media is often a tool for propaganda, and that bias exists in journalism. The latter is expressed in articles and reports in choosing which sources to cite, how to formulate questions, what to stress, and what to push to the background. These methods are used by journalists to distort the image, or even to suggest an opinion or attempt to persuade (Merrill 1965, p. 91).

One propaganda technique is using “one person as a typical representative.” The author presents the following scenario: “One person’s thoughts can be presented as a typical attitude. A university faculty member will be quoted in order to acquaint the public with the opinion

¹⁰ “Confidence in the Country’s Media Grew the Most This Month.” *VAKARŲ EKSPRESAS*, 19 November 2015.

of the entire faculty” (Dennis, Merrill 1997). In analyzing the image of refugees and the features of its creation in the media, it makes sense to use the theory of social constructivism, which attempts to highlight the impact of the media in the construction of social values.

According to Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, authors of *The Social Construction of Reality* (1991), reality is socially constructed. During primary and secondary socialization, the individual forms an image of social reality which is based on the values of a certain society or social context. During primary socialization (childhood), the individual becomes acquainted with the environment and learns to be a member of society.

This childhood world encourages the individual to believe not only in the significant people surrounding him or her, but also in the definitions of situations that they present. Only later does the individual learn to doubt. This reality is perceived as objective, natural and inevitable. It does not have room for other social worlds. “Primary socialisation ends when the concept of the generalised other (and everything related to it) takes hold in the consciousness of the individual” (Berger, Luckmann 1991). The author notes that socialization is never finite and often overlaps with its secondary stage.

During secondary socialization, the individual grasps the institutional context. The student looks at the teacher as an institutional officer (characterized by anonymity). Anonymity here means that one institutional officer can be replaced by another, so it will not make a significant difference to an individual’s socialization. And although the individual does not feel emotional attachment at this stage, he or she accepts the knowledge or information that is received. The person believes that the “reality” created by the institution is real and undisputed (Berger, Luckmann 1991). The media is one such institution.

Texts prepared by the media can be seen as either “open” or “closed.” Based on the thoughts of Umberto Eco (1979), the author considers “open” texts to be the ones in which attempts are not made to present the reader one specific meaning or interpretation. In “closed” texts,

however, attempts are made to present information in such a way as to avoid other interpretations. News reports are usually closed and characterized by a purified and informative ending (McQuail 2010).

An “open” depiction of a refugee in a published report promotes more varied attitudes, while a “closed” depiction reinforces the predominant universal attitude. In this respect, television news and press releases are characteristically “closed.” In preparing their texts, journalists can avoid such rigid structure and present “open” texts which would ensure diversity of opinion, promote discussion, develop critical thinking and facilitate the emergence of social communication (McQuail 2010).

Media representatives are bound with the environment by power relations – this has been observed by Denis McQuail and Sven Windahl (1993). An analysis of mass media management reveals that the latter is constantly forced to meet the various needs that arise from social institutions or the public. Sometimes those needs cardinally contradict one another, so the mass media outlets are forced to choose a maximally neutral position that would suit different sides. Consumers, competitors, investors, politicians and the like become external sources of power.

The dominance of cyberspace has given the conditions for one to receive the maximum amount of information in a very short time. By quoting a Norwegian anthropologist in his monograph *The New Censorship* (2011), Gintaras Aleknonis notes that our time provides an overabundance of information, and this excess has led to a loss of clarity in the information that is presented. The main effect of this problem is a multitude of unnecessary, trivial but attractively-presented information.

According to Robert W. McChesney (2004), socially sensitive topics that are relevant and important to the public are often covered in the media in a rather superficial manner, sometimes without even touching upon the main point. Internet expansion and global news services that work around the clock have created conditions for a constant hunger

for news. For news that are presented as fast as possible and from the most attractive angle as possible, this has a negative impact on the quality of the information.

The American Fox News Channel is given as an example. To save money, the company's executives paid more attention to pop culture and less to investigative journalism and reports – areas which generate less news over the same period of time. Some journalists lost their jobs, but the total number of published news did not decrease; on the contrary – it grew. This increased the likelihood that press releases and news agency texts will be minimally edited, and sometimes published word for word (McChesney, 2004).

Informative journalism and a deeper understanding of primary sources were offset by “soft news”¹¹ and less was invested into editorial content. Media corporation employees became less confident about their jobs and did not dedicate enough attention to development (Ibid.)

The scant number of copyright texts has an impact on the quality of information about refugees and the difficulties they face. The information provided is rarely based on a primary source, such as refugee stories or expert insights. The lack of a critical approach often promotes the formation of a negative image of refugees, and failure to provide expert insights creates one-way communication, where the attitude of the environment towards refugees prevails and diversity of opinion is not encouraged.

The concept of a refugee is clearly defined in Article 1A (2) of the 1951 Geneva Convention:

[A refugee is a person who] owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside

¹¹ *Soft news* denotes market-centered journalism where the line between information and entertainment is blurred. These are often attractive news pieces, based on human interest stories. (BROWN MILLS, Lisa. “Soft news.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*).

the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.¹²

The way the audience understands the content of the refugee image by receiving media reports is usually freely interpreted by the social environment.

In the social environment, the content of the image of refugees – like of other social groups – is constructed from various stereotypes. A stereotype is a simplified, schematic, emotionally-tinged image of an object that functions in the public consciousness (Dictionary of International Words, 2005). In other words, a characterization of people based on the group they belong to, irrespective of their individual traits or other differences.

In social terms, the originator of the concept of stereotyping is considered to be Walter Lippmann, who defined this concept in his book *Public Opinion* (1922). Stereotypes are certain simplified preconceptions which arise not from a person's own experience, but from an intermediate knowledge of the object: we are told about the world by others until we begin to learn about it ourselves by experience (Lipmann, 1922). From here it becomes clear that a person forms a stereotype about a social group not necessarily from a primary source, but also from an intermediate/secondary source, which is what the media also becomes. The latter shapes people's views on all issues that are beyond the boundaries of their own world or that of their family members.

In her research article, titled *Ethnic Intolerance in the Lithuanian Internet Media: Comments on the Internet*, Lina Auškalnienė underscores that online media, like traditional mass media, can spread, support and consolidate certain stereotypical views and attitudes in its reporting. The right given to the audience to use media to comment on events ensures feedback: the audience is affected by publications and vice versa (Auškalnienė 2006).

¹² CONVENTION RELATING TO THE STATUS OF REFUGEES: adopted 28 July 1951 (www.asylum-online.lt).

A stereotype is made up of two components: the cognitive component, which ensures the inclination of the subject to absorb the news published by mass media, and the instrumental component, which creates a context for evaluation of the information received and internal preparation of the subject for further action (Pruskus 2010).

When the instrumental component dominates, the individual only perceives and accepts what he or she wants to. It becomes difficult to tell lies from the truth, and existing beliefs become negative prejudice. “A categorical stereotype becomes an ‘image,’ and people become a depersonalised, manipulated, lonely crowd” (Ibid.).

In his book *Social Psychology* (2008), David G. Myers notes that people tend to define themselves socially and assign themselves to a specific group. This is how “in-groups” emerge, where people have a common sense of belonging and identity. Members of an in-group take on the pronoun “us.” Those who do not fall under the definition of “us” are ascribed to the “out-group” and considered clearly different. Belonging to an in-group strengthens the self-concept of “I.” A favourable assessment of one’s group reflects not only sympathy for the in-group, but also antipathy towards the out-group.

Good deeds done by an out-group are often rejected. They become “special cases” or a unique advantage, but failures are linked to general defects and qualities of character: “they didn’t succeed because they’re stupid,” or “they don’t have a job because they’re lazy.” Although stereotypes make people’s decisions biased, separate individuals are treated more favorably than the group to which they are assigned (Myers 2008, p. 394).

The media is an intermediary, and the image constructed may change during direct communication or in portraying specific individuals rather than the social groups to which they belong. In other words, a given person will treat a refugee named Mustafa more favorably than asylum seekers in general. The more personal information that is provided about a person, the more likely the person is to be treated favorably.

The Refugee Concept

In carrying out the study it was observed that refugees are often called “migrants, asylum seekers, irregular migrants, economic migrants, foreigners” or simply “incomers.” In texts, these terms are often used as synonyms, thus distorting reality and not accurately describing a person’s status. It is therefore important that these concepts be defined and explained in the present context.

Asylum seeker. A foreign national who has submitted an application for asylum is called an asylum seeker. This is a general term that describes a person whose application for a refugee status is still pending.¹³

Irregular migrant. This concept does not exist within the laws of the Republic of Lithuania. The concept is derived from the term *irregular migration*. In this case, an irregular migrant can be considered as a person who “does not hold the required legal status or travel documents to enter or remain in a country.”¹⁴ This is a broad concept: a person who came to the country with identification or travel documents that have expired can also be considered an irregular migrant.

Migrant. This term *migrant* describes a person who “makes a free decision to move to another region or country, often to better material or social conditions and improve prospects for themselves and their families.”¹⁵

Economic migrant. Often used interchangeably with the term *labor migrant*, which applies to people who move for the purposes of employment. However, this term “has a wider sense and can encompass migration for the purposes of improving quality of life in social and economic terms.”¹⁶

¹³ The Asylum Procedure in Detail. *Migration Department under the Ministry of Internal Affairs* (migracija.lt).

¹⁴ THE UN REFUGEES AGENCY. *Teacher’s Manual “Not Just Numbers” Educational Toolkit on Migration and Asylum in Europe*. Brussels, 2009, p. 9-10.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

The terms *incomer* and *foreigner* cannot be defined by any legal documents or laws. These terms do not convey the reasons for the person's migration and create an image of alienation and strangeness. Such an image promotes the division of society into "us" and "them," where "they" are intruders in someone else's space; it provides basis for the emergence of stereotypes and creates a negative image of refugees.

The *Al Jazeera* newspaper has decided not to use the term "migrant," explaining on its official website that this term "has evolved from its dictionary definition into a tool that dehumanises and distances, a blunt pejorative."¹⁷ *The Guardian* and *The Independent* followed this example.

In commenting on the use of terms in the media, Alexander Betts, director of the Refugee Studies Centre at Oxford University, noted that the term *migrant* should only be used in cases where the decision to migrate is taken freely by the individual concerned, and not because of any external factors. But in the refugee context, it is used to mean "not a refugee" and becomes harmful.¹⁸

Research Design

Publications were selected in two ways, depending on the type of archiving and distribution system used by a specific newspaper: by entering the word *pabêgêl** ("refugee*") in the internal archive or by using the hashtag *pabêgêliai* ("refugees"). The key units were distinguished in the texts of the publications, and it was calculated how often they were used. The content was classified according to pre-defined categories (Table No. 1). Words, groups thereof, or sentences which define refugees in the text and reveal their image were selected as the unit of analysis. Attention was also given to the discussion of the dominant types of publications. All this helps to fulfill the set goals and confirm or refute the hypothesis.

¹⁷ MALONE, Barry. "Why Al Jazeera Will Not Say Mediterranean 'Migrants'" (*Aljazeera.com*, 20 August 2015).

¹⁸ RUZ, Camila. "The Battle Over the Words Used to Describe Migrants" (*BBC.com*, 28 August 2015).

It is acknowledged that the coordination of news agency reports with journalist insights and other sources of information allows for a topic to be more objectively and accurately presented. In examining which publications on the refugee topic dominate in newspapers, they were counted and grouped according to predefined types.

1. News agency reports. All texts in which a news agency is noted as the only source. In some cases, the publication may specify more than one news agency. News agencies include media such as BNS, ELTA, Reuters, AFP, TASS, etc.;

2. Press releases. Releases distributed by various institutions, organizations and commercial companies, as well as material prepared by public relations specialists;

3. Copyright texts. Publication signed with a name and surname, as well as unsigned editorial articles when another source is not specified. In normal cases, texts for which the newspaper itself is given as the source are written by the editorial staff thereof;

4. Foreign copyright texts. Publications which an editorial staff has translated and published in a newspaper. This category refers to texts for which non-Lithuanian newspapers are given as the source. These texts are usually written by foreign journalists; they are more in-depth and supplemented with journalist insights. Common sources include TheGuardian.com, Dailymail.co.uk, Independent.co.uk, etc.;

5. Politician publications. Texts of specific politicians which are often written not only by the politicians themselves, but also by their assistants or PR professionals;

6. Other texts. Publications which do not meet the abovementioned criteria, e.g., texts prepared by online newspaper users, copyright texts written by experts from various organizations.

The amount of texts published on the refugee topic increased significantly in 2015. For example, Lrytas.lt alone published more than 1 200 publications from the 1st of June 2015 to the 1st of December 2015. It is difficult to analyze such a quantity of texts thoroughly, so it was decided to investigate specific, significant months that led to the interest in the refugee problem.

1-31 July 2015. This is a time when it became clear that European Union countries will have to divide among their populations the refugees who fled to the EU, and a specific number was given regarding how many refugees Lithuania will have to admit. This number was later adjusted;

1-30 November 2015. During this period, European leaders began to talk about the challenges imposed on the Schengen Area; the number of refugees exceeded one million; the French capital of Paris was shaken by terrorist attacks. Alongside the topic of refugees in the meeting agendas of European Union leaders, more attention began to be focused on national security issues;

1-31 January 2016. Global media was inundated with news about a wave of mass theft and violence during the celebrations of New Year's Eve in Germany. After these events, some EU leaders spoke out strongly against refugee quotas. In the same month, a teenager of Lithuanian descent was killed in Sweden, with the main suspect being a schoolmate of Syrian origin.

During the investigation period, 675 newspaper publications were selected: Delfi.lt – 162, Lrytas.lt – 310, 15min.lt – 203. If a publication did not include any descriptions, it was not assigned to any category. A single text can include several descriptions, in which case it is assigned to several categories. Stereotypes¹⁹ were classified as being positive, neutral or negative. Positive stereotypes are those which create a positive image of refugees, while negative ones are those which create a negative image. Neutral stereotypes do not significantly affect the overall image of the refugees. Negative stereotypes regarding refugees, which create a negative image, were predominant.

In order for an allocation of a publication to a specific category be simple and objective at the same time, the categories were selected before conducting the investigation. Some of the categories were selected based on *The Image of Refugees in National and Regional Press*, a study carried out by the Lithuanian Consumer Institute in 2009, as

¹⁹ The terms *category* and *stereotype* are used as synonyms.

Table No. 1. Category explanation and stereotype effects.

Category (stereotype)	Explanation	Category (stereotype) effect
Aggressive, prone to commit crime	Use violence, carry out criminal acts, harass people, pose a security threat.	Negative
Benefit recipients	Receive benefits, are allocated payments.	Negative
Potential workforce	Benefit the economy and the labor market, are qualified specialists.	Positive
War refugees	Fleeing their home country due to war/conflict.	Neutral
Likely to risk their lives	Come to Europe via the Mediterranean Sea, die trying to get to Europe, take risks.	Negative
Victims of violence/threat	Persecuted, subject to violence, under threat.	Negative
Christians	Profess Christianity.	Neutral
Muslims	Profess Islam, worship Allah.	Neutral
Economic migrants	Looking for a better life, fleeing poverty, come from countries that do not have conflicts.	Negative
Gang members/terrorists	Acting in an organized manner: bombers, attack organizers, Islamic State militants, jihadists.	Negative
Culturally alien	Different; do not heed to European values; diverse ways of life.	Negative
Irregular migrants	Cross borders illegally, not entitled to a refugee status, arrive without documents.	Negative
Unhappy with the situation	Complain, dislike the system in Europe and the conditions proposed. Protest, declare strikes.	Negative

Settling in ghettos	Live in communities, are not inclined to integrate into society.	Negative
Well-off	Have money, use smartphones/ laptops, have valuable items with them.	Positive
Destroying the system	Harm society, tourism, the economy. To blame for the introduction of border controls and limits on free movement in the Schengen Area.	Negative
Friendly	Inclined to interact, cheerful, come with a smile, not prone to conflicts.	Positive
Uncontrollable	Flock to Europe, do not obey the rules/control. Additional forces rallied because of them.	Negative
Disorderly, diseased	Tend to litter; are sick and spread disease. Chaotic and dirty.	Negative
Victims of discrimination	Oppressed, offended, subject to special criteria. Become the target of attacks.	Negative

well as a representative public opinion survey conducted by the same institute.²⁰ Some of the categories that were selected were eliminated over the course of the study upon observing that they are closely related or very rare. Only a few publications were included in the *Educated* category. On the other hand, refugee education was only associated with their ability to work, so it was decided to allocate these publications to the *Potential workforce* category.

In the theoretical part, we defined that an image is constructed from stereotypes. The general image of stereotypes (categories) shall thus be regarded as the dominant image of refugees.

²⁰ LITHUANIAN CONSUMER INSTITUTE; LITHUANIAN JOURNALISTS' UNION. *The Image of Refugees in National and Regional Press*, 2009.

The Dominant Image of Refugees

Upon examining publications on the refugee theme and allocating them to a single category or more, it became evident which stereotypes dominate in each Lithuanian online newspaper. The dominance of some stereotypes in different newspapers coincides, while it does not for others (Figure No. 1).

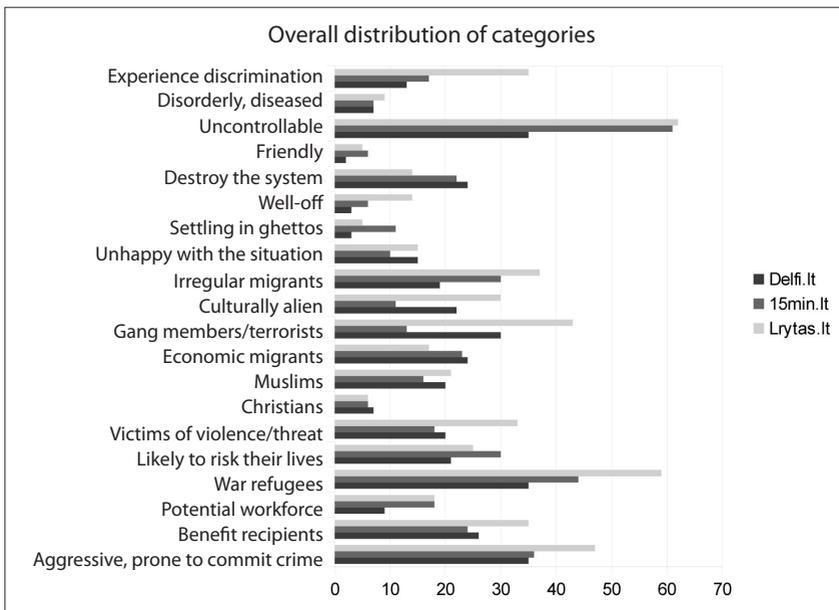


Figure No. 1. The overall distribution of categories from the newspaper publications analyzed.

By summing up the data of the three periods in the newspaper publications analyzed, it becomes evident that the dominant image is that refugees are aggressive, prone to commit crime, uncontrollable, are war refugees, gang members/terrorists, benefit recipients and irregular migrants. Texts were allocated to these categories as many as 671 times, which is 51.3 percent of the total numeric value.

Aggressive, prone to commit crime. In publishing information regarding the refugees, the linking of the refugee status with criminal actions is not avoided: “A Syrian refugee allowed his wife to be raped.”²¹ It is often claimed that refugees will “increase crime” or “pose a threat.” An inclination to commit criminal offenses is also ascribed to asylum seekers: “Finland is concerned about an increase in crime committed by asylum seekers.”²² “As alleged, three migrants brandishing a knife and spraying tear gas attacked a Lithuanian.”²³ Sometimes aggression is equated with terror attacks: “then those Muslim refugees began a large-scale terror attack on the German women – blonde, white women.”²⁴ In some cases, the text does not mention the specific number of refugees, and sometimes it becomes clear from the text that there was only one refugee, even though the headline forms a reference to the entire social group of refugees.

Uncontrollable. Publications often refer to “uncontrolled flows,” using phrases like “flocking in unstopably.” For example: “Refugees in Europe have already ‘made their mark.’ And more than once. Both on the borders of countries which have taken measures against the uncontrolled flows, and inside these or other countries.”²⁵ The need to erect fences is discussed: “[...] a fence, which will protect the country from

²¹ “Syrian Refugee Allowed His Wife to Be Raped As Payment for Transportation to Europe” (15min.lt, 6 January 2016). <http://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/pasaulis/sirijos-pabegelis-leido-prievartauti-savo-zmona-kaip-mokesti-uz-pervezima-i-europa-57-563919>

²² “Finland Concerned About Migrant Crime” (Lrytas.lt, 27 November 2015). <http://pasaulis.lrytas.lt/ivykiai/suomija-susirupinusi-del-migrantu-nusikalstamumo.htm>

²³ “Migrants at the Port of Calais Wounded and Robbed a Truck Driver from Lithuania” (15min.lt, 22 January 2016). <http://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/pasaulis/kaleuoste-migrantai-suzeide-ir-apvoge-vilkiko-vairuotoja-is-lietuvos-57-571081>

²⁴ “Thousands of Ultra-rights Protested in Germany against A. Merkel’s Migration Policy” (Delfi.lt, 12 January 2016). <http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/world/vokietijoje-tukstanciai-ultradesiniuju-protstavopries-a-merkel-migracijos-politika.d?id=70085770>

²⁵ GEDVILAS Vydas: “V. Gedvilas. Are Migrants ‘Holy’ Even When They Commit Crimes?” (Delfi.lt, 6 January 2016). <http://www.delfi.lt/news/ringas/politics/v-gedvilas-migrantai-sventi-net-tada-kai-daro-nusikalstimus.d?id=70035534>

the massive influx of migrants.”²⁶ To further underscore the uncontrollable refugee situation, they are compared to natural disasters: “Refugees are like a flood.”²⁷ The President of the Czech Republic, Miloš Zeman, is quoted as saying that there is no way to control the refugees: “the wave of refugees pouring into Europe is an organized invasion.”²⁸ This kind of position, delivered by an European leader, reinforces the impression among information recipients that there is no possibility of controlling refugees.

War refugees. These are publications where refugees are named as “war refugees, fleeing the war, fleeing a country ravaged by conflict.” Some publications detail the number of refugees coming from a specific country: “2 000 refugees of the Syrian Civil War.”²⁹ This category is important, as it “justifies” a refugee’s journey to Europe, which is a prerequisite for refugee status.

Gang members/terrorists. Politicians and journalists do not shy away from associating refugees with Islamic State fighters or calling them terrorists. One member of the Seimas (Lithuanian parliament) dubs refugees as terrorists with confidence: “Can we link the terror in Paris with refugees? And who will deny that we can’t?”³⁰ The danger of

²⁶ “The Hungarian Prime Minister Compares Irregular Migration With Terrorism” (Lrytas.lt, 25 July 2015). <http://pasaulis.lrytas.lt/ivykiai/vengrijos-premjeras-nelegalia-migracija-palygino-su-terorizmu.htm>

²⁷ “Czech Deputy Prime Minister: A. Merkel Does Not Want to Admit Her Mistake” (Delfi.lt, 14 January 2016). <http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/world/cekijos-vicepremjeras-a-merkel-nenori-pripazinti-savo-klaidos.d?id=70109130>

²⁸ “Czech President Miloš Zeman: It Is Impossible to Integrate Muslims in Europe” (15min.lt, 17 January 2016). <http://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/pasaulis/cekijos-prezidentas-milosas-zemas-musulmonu-neimanoma-integruoti-europoje-57-568749>

²⁹ “President: We Will Talk About How We Can Help Turkey” (Lrytas.lt, 29 November 2015). <http://lietuvsdiena.lrytas.lt/aktualijos/prezidente-kalbesime-kuo-galime-padeti-turkijai.htm>

³⁰ ZASČIURINSKAS, Mečislovas: “Praying for Paris, but Thinking About Lithuania” (15min.lt, 19 November 2015). <http://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/nuomones/mecislovas-zasciurinskas-pray-for-paris-bet-galvoju-apie-lietuva-18-543857>

terrorism is also associated with refugees in other texts: “At least two of the terrorists involved in the attacks were registered as refugees.”³¹ True, it later turned out that this information was erroneous, but the headline raises no doubts to the recipient – the links between refugees and terrorists are obvious. In some texts, the opinion of one official is presented as that of the entire EU: “The EU is alarmed: jihadists are traveling to Europe on migrant ships.”³² The aim is persuasion of information, creating the illusion that all representatives of the EU community see a threat of incoming jihadists. Such frequent association of refugees with terror acts had a significant impact on the public opinion that refugees will cause social unrest and carry out criminal acts. This is evident in the study conducted by LSRC,³³ described in the introduction of this paper.

Benefit recipients. It is accentuated in publications that considerable funds from the national budgets of countries will go to aiding refugees: “The funds allocated by the European Union for implementing the refugee admissions and resettlement process in Lithuania will definitely not suffice, so we will have to further contribute from our own budget.”³⁴ The impression is thus created that Lithuanian residents will suffer financially and the refugees will live off the taxpayers’ money. The publications mention the exact amount of money that will need to be allocated: “[...] this year, supporting one refugee will cost from 12 500

³¹ “At Least Two of the Terrorists Involved in the Attacks Were Registered as Refugees” (Lrytas.lt, 14 November 2015). <http://pasaulis.lrytas.lt/ivykiai/bent-du-atakosedalyvave-teroristai-registravosi-pabegeliais.htm>

³² “EU Alarmed: Jihadists Are Traveling to Europe on Migrant Ships” (Lrytas.lt, 8 July 2015). <http://pasaulis.lrytas.lt/konfliktai-ir-saugumas/es-sunerimusi-migrantu-laivuose-i-europa-keliauja-dzihadistai.htm>

³³ LITHUANIAN SOCIAL RESEARCH CENTRE (LSRC). Institute for Ethnic Studies. *2015 Public Attitudes Survey*. [Interactive] 7 January 2016.

³⁴ “Seimas Chair Accuses S. Skvernelis of Incompetence” (Delfi.lt, 22 July 2015). <http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/seimo-pirmininke-apkaltino-s-skverneli-nekompencija.d?id=68542434>

to 14 000 euros.”³⁵ In some cases, attempts are made to distribute the refugees: “[...] people seeking social benefits will come from Africa to Latvia.”³⁶ An impression is created that refugees from the Middle East will be economically beneficial, while those from Africa will be social benefit recipients.

Irregular migrants. This category is for publications which clearly stated that refugees “are irregular migrants” and “cross borders illegally,” or which assert that they “come from somewhere other than war zones.” They also talk about the need to “send irregular migrants home.” As an example, we may quote the words of Lithuanian Prime Minister Algirdas Butkevičius after his meeting with the head of the Hungarian government: “Irregular migration is a challenge that can only be resolved with the assistance of the international community”³⁷ – coming from such a senior official, these words have immense influence on the attitude the nation has towards refugees.

These analyzed stereotypes dominate in all of the newspapers that were examined and are therefore ascribed to the category of dominant stereotypes. Refugees are less often portrayed as being likely to risk their lives, victims of discrimination, economic migrants, destroying the system, or culturally alien. These stereotypes can be attributed to “frequent stereotypes” (Table No. 2).

³⁵ “Refugee-burdened Germans: You Called For Us to Help with Russia, But You Do Not Want to Help Us” (15min.lt, 22 July 2015). <http://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/pasaulis/pabegeliu-nastos-spaudziami-vokieciai-saukiates-pagalbos-del-rusijos-bet-mums-nenorite-padeti-57-517306>

³⁶ “Latvia Will Accept Refugees, But Not As Many as Lebanon, the United Kingdom and Germany” (15min.lt, 29 November 2015). <http://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/pasaulis/latvija-priims-pabegeliu-bet-ne-tiek-kiek-libanas-jungtine-karalyste-arvokietija-57-518755>

³⁷ “Algirdas Butkevičius Agreed With Viktor Orbán That Economic Migrants Will Have to Be Sent Home” (15min.lt, 24 November 2015). <http://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/lietuva/algirdas-butkevicius-su-viktoru-orbanu-sutare-kad-ekonominius-migrantus-reiks-siusti-namo-56-545909>

Table No. 2. The distribution of stereotypes according to frequency.

Stereotype categories		
Category	Total number	
Uncontrollable	158	DOMINANT
War refugees	128	
Aggressive, prone to commit crimes	118	
Gang members/terrorists	86	
Irregular migrants	86	
Benefit recipients	85	
Likely to risk their lives	76	FREQUENT
Victims of violence/threat	71	
Victims of discrimination	65	
Economic migrants	64	
Culturally alien	63	
Destroy the system	60	
Muslims	57	RARE
Potential workforce	45	
Unhappy with the situation	40	
Well-off	23	
Disorderly, diseased	23	
Christians	19	
Settling in ghettos	19	
Friendly	13	

Likely to risk their lives. The publications mentioned cases when refugees behave in a reckless, unsafe manner in an attempt to get to the European continent: “They try to reach Europe by sea, risking their lives.”³⁸ Statements like these are also used for people who have already

³⁸ “Mediterranean Crisis: The Highest Number of Refugees and Migrants Recorded” (Delfi.lt, 1 July 2015). <http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/world/vidurzemio-juros-regiono-krize-fiksuojaamas-didziausias-pabegeliu-ir-migrantu-skaicius.d?id=68386928>

reached Europe: “They are trying to cross the English Channel in any way possible,” emphasising that these kinds of attempts end in tragedy: “A migrant was killed on Tuesday in the Channel Tunnel, trying to get to Great Britain.”³⁹ There are plenty of short reports about the dangers in the Mediterranean Sea: “Smugglers are moving people even when the sea is unpredictable and is a major threat.”⁴⁰ Texts of this nature are often supported by statistical data on how many people have drowned in the past months. The inclination to put their lives at risk is created by describing other dangerous methods of travel. For example, when refugees were found in Bulgaria travelling in a refrigerated truck, it was reminded that a bit earlier, “71 migrants were found suffocated in a refrigeration vehicle designed to carry frozen food.”⁴¹

Victims of violence/threat. During this investigation, this category was seen as a negative. In the eyes of society, social groups that experience violence and are victims become weak and unable to defend themselves. This category is closely related to the category of those who experience discrimination. The fundamental difference is that discrimination is based on opinions and stereotypes. Violence and threat are a criminal offense that is defined by law.⁴² For example: “There were two shots fired at a refugee shelter in Western Germany. One of the residents suffered minor injuries.”⁴³ A specific action is identified, which is considered a criminal offense.

³⁹ “Migrant Killed in the Channel Tunnel Trying to Reach Great Britain” (15min.lt, 7 July 2015). <http://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/pasaulis/lamanso-tunelyje-zuvo-didziaja-britanija-megines-pasiecti-migrantas-57-514269>

⁴⁰ “The Path of Migrants in Winter: Shipped by Smugglers to Their Death” (Lrytas.lt, 5 January 2016). <http://pasaulis.lrytas.lt/rytai-vakarai/migrantu-kelias-ziema-kontrabandininkai-plukdo-i-mirti.htm>

⁴¹ “130 Migrants Found in a Refrigerated Truck in Bulgaria” (Lrytas.lt, 1 November 2015). <http://pasaulis.lrytas.lt/ivykiai/bulgarijoje-sunkvezimio-saldytuve-rasti-130-migrantu.htm>

⁴² Discrimination and Xenophobia. *A manual on Human Rights education for Young People* (COMPASS) http://www.eycb.coe.int/compass/en/chapter_5/5_4.html

⁴³ “Refugee Shelter in Germany Attacked” (Lrytas.lt, 4 January 2016). <http://pasaulis.lrytas.lt/ivykiai/vokietijoje-apsaudyta-pabegeliu-prieglauda.htm>

Victims of discrimination. The stereotype that refugees suffer from discrimination is a positive effect. The fact that online newspapers relatively frequently (65 publications) note that refugees are greeted with prejudices shows an understanding that a problem exists: refugees are disregarded unjustly due to the prevalent image. The next stage should be to deconstruct the negative image of refugees for which they are discriminated against.

However, the stereotype itself is more or less neutral and does not shade the image. It is written that refugees are discriminated against at various entertainment venues: “A nightclub in Germany threw refugees out of its premises several times and was accused of racism; refugees were not admitted in order to maintain a good atmosphere in the club.”⁴⁴ Discrimination can often be understood from information about hate crimes: “The young man was impelled to commit this crime by xenophobia.”⁴⁵

Economic migrants. The published texts often manipulate the terms *war refugees* and *economic migrants*. There are texts which state that “more and more economic migrants are reaching Europe.”⁴⁶ Mention is also made about the need to distinguish between “economic migrants” and “political refugees.”⁴⁷ The frequent mention of economic migrants in the context of refugees creates the impression that these are synonyms. The publications lack a clear separation and explanation of

⁴⁴ “Refugees Not Welcome at a German Club Due to Women’s Complaints” (Lrytas.lt, 13 November 2015). <http://pasaulis.lrytas.lt/rytai-vakarai/del-moteru-skunduvokietijos-klube-pabegeliai-nelaukiami.htm>

⁴⁵ “Asylum Seekers in Germany Increasingly Becoming the Target of neo-Nazi Hate” (15min.lt, 28 July 2015). <http://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/pasaulis/prieglobscio-vokietijoje-prasantys-zmones-vis-dazniau-tampa-neonaciu-neapykantostaikiniu-57-518177>

⁴⁶ “More and More People Coming to the EU Are Economic Migrants” (15min.lt, 27 January 2016). <http://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/pasaulis/vis-didesne-i-es-atvykstanciu-asmenu-dalis-ekonominiai-migrantai-57-573355>

⁴⁷ “Poland to Skip the EU Summit on Migrants Due to Internal Disagreements” (Delfi.lt, 11 November 2015). <http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/world/lenkija-del-vidausnesutarimu-praleis-es-vadovu-susitikima-migrantu-klausimu.d?id=69544586>

these concepts, and this misleads the information recipient. A stereotype is also created that refugees usually leave their country in search of better economic conditions.

Destroy the system. Various ways are presented regarding how refugees can harm Europe. It was noted in one publication that “migrants can change the gender balance.”⁴⁸ One of the most common cases is when refugees are accused of destroying the Schengen Area: “Schengen is very important, but it is in danger.”⁴⁹ The impression is strengthened by reminders that the Schengen Agreement is “Europe’s greatest achievement,” an “important principle” and so on. It is also accentuated that the large number of refugees is damaging the tourism sector in Southern European countries: “The refugees flocking to the islands are hurting the tourism business.”⁵⁰

Culturally alien. A conscious desire to stand out from the crowd or simply being different is considered a good quality in modern, cosmopolitan society. During this study, it was a negative category. This is due to words and their combinations which are used to describe the dissimilarity of refugees. In the texts that were analyzed, lifestyle differences were frequently emphasized: “They want to change or influence the Norwegian way of life and make claims.”⁵¹ Negative behavior that

⁴⁸ PUGAČIAUSKAS, Vykintas: “A Challenge for Europe – Migrants Can Change the Gender Balance” (Lrt.lt published by Delfi.lt, 17 January 2016). <http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/world/issukis-europai-migrantai-gali-pakeisti-lyciu-pusiausvyra.d?id=70134636>

⁴⁹ “German Federal Foreign Office: the Schengen zone Is in Danger” (15min.lt, 4 January 2016). <http://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/pasaulis/vokietijos-uzsienio-reikalu-ministerija-sengeno-zonai-iskilo-pavojus-57-562999>

⁵⁰ “Inhuman Conditions: Clogged Toilets, Dirty Mattresses, Mothers Don’t Even Have Any Milk Left For Their Babies” (Delfi.lt, 28 July 2015). <http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/world/nezmoniskos-salygos-uzsikimse-tualetai-purvini-ciuziniai-motinos-nebeturi-net-pieno-kudikiams.d?id=68559678>

⁵¹ “Expert: The Refugee Flow Raises the Question of What To Do to Avoid a Repeat of the Tragedy in Norway” (Lrt.lt published by Delfi.lt, 23 July 2015). <http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/ekspertas-pabegeliu-srautas-kelia-klausima-ka-daryti-kad-nepasikartotu-norvegijos-tragedija.d?id=68554098>

would seem usual only for refugees is also accented: “Last year, they threw the refugees out because they played with knives during class and smoked.”⁵²

The stereotype that prevails is that refugees live in an isolated world, are interested in other things, and live their lives differently: “Very often, immigrants don’t have any understanding about the order, traditions, law and cultural norms of the Western world,”⁵³ they “have completely different customs and beliefs,” and “would live their life according to their own rules.”⁵⁴ The aim is to demonstrate significant cultural differences: “They are faced with people who have a different conception of civilization, with an attitude in which human life is worth nothing.”⁵⁵

Refugees were three times more likely to be described as Muslims (57 publications): “In many refugee shelters, as far as I understand, it is Islamic Sharia law rather than Christian values that presides.”⁵⁶ Links with Christianity are rare: “Iraqi Christians who fled persecution of the Islamic State.”⁵⁷

⁵² PUKENĖ, Rūta: “Dad of the Teen killed in Sweden: They Are Trying to Silence Me” (Delfi.lt, 13 January 2016). <http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/svedijoje-nuzudyto-paauglio-tetis-mane-bando-uzciaupti.d?id=70104338>

⁵³ STATKUVIENĖ, Regina: “A Lithuanian’s Impressions from Brussels Refugee Centers: Lazy Youths, Ambitious Students and Imported Brides” (Delfi.lt, 19 November 2015). <http://www.delfi.lt/news/ringas/lit/lietuves-ispudziai-is-briuselio-pabegeliu-centru-tingus-jaunuoliai-ambicingi-studentai-ir-importuotos-nuotakos.d?id=69600072>

⁵⁴ “Slovak Prime Minister Calls EU Migration Policy a Ritual Suicide” (15min.lt, 26 January 2016). <http://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/pasaulis/slovakijos-premjerases-migracijos-politika-pavadino-ritualine-savizudybe-57-572749>

⁵⁵ JANČYS, Artūras: “Compassion For Refugees Can Turn Into a Shower of Bullets in Vilnius” (Lrytas.lt, 14 November 2015). <http://lietuvsodiena.lrytas.lt/aktualijos/atjauta-pabegeliams-gali-virsti-kulku-liutimi-vilniuje.htm>

⁵⁶ “Thousands of Ultra-rights Protested in Germany Against A. Merkel’s Migration Policy” (Delfi.lt, 14 January 2016). <http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/world/vokietijoje-tukstanciai-ultradesiniuju-protestavo-pries-a-merkel-migracijos-politika.d?id=70085770>

⁵⁷ “Lithuania to Admit 325 Refugees Over Two Years” (15min.lt, 20 July 2015). <http://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/lietuva/lietuva-per-dvejus-metus-priims-325-pabegelius-56-516887>

During the study, publications were assigned to the “potential work force” category 45 times: “[they who] possess job skills, [are] beneficial to the labor market.” For example, Ilma Skuodienė, head of the Foreigner Integration Program at Caritas of Vilnius Archdiocese, stated during an interview that Lithuanian employers are already taking an interest in refugees and have made specific job offers.⁵⁸

The stereotype of refugees who are unhappy with the situation was constructed by presenting a case when an Iraqi family that had come to Lithuania went to court, and with a text about a hunger strike initiated by refugees in the Czech Republic.⁵⁹ Texts were also published about the dissatisfaction with the accommodation conditions: “The refugees demanded that they be taken to a larger town,” and “they do not see a future in this country.”⁶⁰

During the study, publications on the topic of refugees were assigned to the “well-off” category 23 times. Such an unusual stereotype is often formed from people’s stories about refugees using expensive smartphones and other devices. Polish foreign minister Witold Waszczykowski was quoted in 15min.lt as saying that “they come to European coasts with smartphones in their hands and instead of food or water, they demand that their phone batteries be replaced.”⁶¹ The stereotype of refugees being well-off and big spenders is also enhanced by the impressions that Lithuanians have about refugees that are presented in

⁵⁸ VAINALAVIČIŪTĖ, Indrė: “Lithuanian Employers Already Interested in Refugees From Iraq” (Lrytas.lt, 21 July 2015). <http://lietuvosdiena.lrytas.lt/aktualijos/pabegeliais-is-irako-jau-domisi-lietuvos-darbdaviai.htm>

⁵⁹ “Iraqis Began a Hunger Strike at a Czech Migrant Detention Center” (Delfi.lt, 12 November 2015). <http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/world/cekijos-migrantu-sulaikymo-centre-irakieciai-pradejo-bado-streika.d?id=69559354>

⁶⁰ “Disappointed Refugees Afraid of Living Deep in the Forest” (15min.lt, 2 November 2015). <http://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/pasaulis/nusivyle-pabegeliai-bijogyventi-svedijos-misku-gludumoje-57-538181>

⁶¹ “Polish Foreign Minister Suggests Forming an Army of Refugees and Sending Them Back to Syria” (15min.lt, 17 November 2015). <http://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/pasaulis/lenkijos-uzsienio-reikalu-ministras-siulo-formuoti-pabegeliu-armija-irsusti-juos-atgal-i-sirija-57-542789>

the publications: “We couldn’t afford a cheap beer, while the refugees bought the most expensive Belgian beer, which costs almost 6 euros a can.”⁶²

Refugees are portrayed not only as “unbathed” and “sleeping in puddles,” but also as sick and even spreading various diseases, emphasizing a weak immune system: “They will be much less resistant to various viral and bacterial infections,” as well as unknown diseases: “It will be practically impossible to determine what they all have and vaccinate them.”⁶³

The most rarely occurring categories were a tendency to settle in ghettos: “Life in closed communities,” or “they have ghettos and separate areas,”⁶⁴ as well as friendliness: “They are educated, good-natured, warm people.”⁶⁵

Combining all of the numerical values of the categories, we see that negative stereotypes dominate (72 percent), neutral stereotypes make up about one-fifth (21 percent), and only six percent are positive stereotypes (Figure No. 2). A stereotype is a mark that gives the refugee concept a generalizing characteristic, which is transferred from the publications to the audience. In Lithuanian online newspapers, a negative character sketch is prevalent, so we can confirm the first hypothesis raised (a more negative than positive image of refugees is predominant in Lithuanian online newspapers).

⁶² GUDAVIČIŪTĖ, Dalia: “Refugees in Norway: Even Free Food Doesn’t Please Them” (Lrytas.lt, 23 November 2015). <http://pasaulis.lrytas.lt/europa/pabegeliai-norvegi-joje-jiems-neitinka-net-ir-maistas-uz-dyka.htm>

⁶³ “Infectious Disease Specialist: Refugees Are Coming, So Will Diseases” (Lrytas.lt, 2 November 2015). <http://sveikata.lrytas.lt/medicinos-zinios/infektologas-atvaziuoja-pabegeliai-atvaziuos-ir-ligos.htm>

⁶⁴ “The Pope Welcomes 5 000 Migrants in St. Peter’s Square” (Delfi.lt, 17 January 2016). <http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/world/popiezius-sv-petro-aiksteje-pasveikino-5-tukst-migrantu.d?id=70133722>

⁶⁵ ŽELNIENĖ, Liepa: “Iranian Taken in by Vilnius Believers: We Are Finally Sleeping Peacefully” (15min.lt, 8 July 2015). <http://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/lietuva/vilniaus-tikinciuju-priimta-irakiete-pagaliau-miegame-ramiai-56-514463>

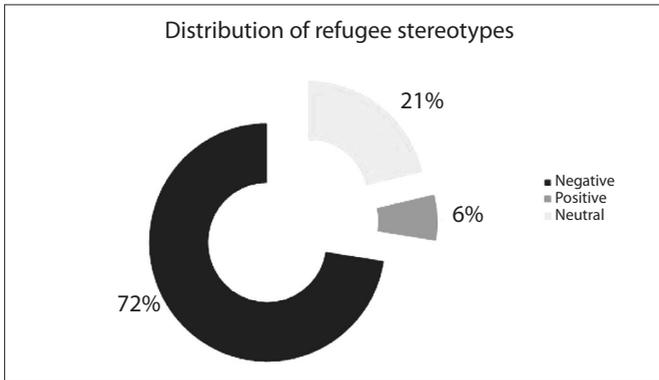


Figure No. 2. The distribution of stereotypes.

Types of Publications About Refugees

A qualitative study was conducted in order to investigate what types of publications are predominant in Lithuanian newspapers and what sources of information are used by the journalists who prepare and publish the texts (Figure No. 3).

Texts prepared by news agencies are predominant in the newspapers. This shows that the editors tend to trust texts prepared by news agencies as well as the information sources that they select. These texts are not edited – often only the title of the publication is changed. For example, BNS published a text, titled “Lithuanian President Says Not to Be Afraid of Refugees,”⁶⁶ and, on the same day, Delfi.lt published this text without any additions or revisions, only changing the title to “President: Refugees Can Be beneficial.”⁶⁷ Although the text remained unchanged, the title already presented another assessment – that refugees are beneficial. This illustrates that it is possible to “suggest” a direction to the reader on how to view the refugees without even creating content.

⁶⁶ “Lithuanian President Says Not to Be Afraid of Refugees” (Bns.lt, 23 July 2015). <http://www.bns.lt/topic/1912/news/48012494/>

⁶⁷ “President: Refugees Can Be Beneficial” (Delfi.lt, 23 July 2015). <http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/prezidente-pabegeliai-gali-buti-naudingi.d?id=68552278>

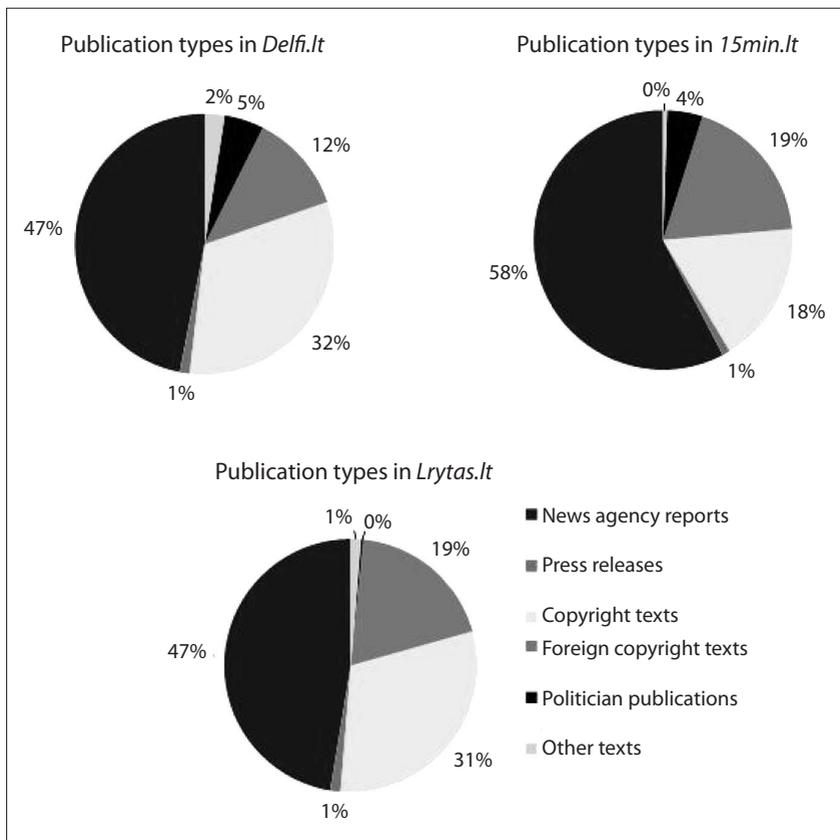


Figure No. 3. The predominant types of publications in the newspapers investigated.

Press releases represent a very small part (one percent) of the newspaper texts examined. This might be due to the “inflexible” and unattractive structure that journalists do not have time to edit.

However, a few press releases did make it into the newspapers. For example, the press release issued by the Swedish furniture group IKEA that the company will collect funds to support refugees. This

press release was published in 15min.lt⁶⁸ and Lrytas.lt.⁶⁹ Although the texts are identical, the newspapers specify their own editorial offices as the source of information. Another example is an article, published in Delfi.lt and titled “O. Koršunovas stages *Miranda* in Athens amidst demonstrations.”⁷⁰ Although the theatre director’s impressions of refugees in Greece are presented in the beginning of the text, the publications end with information on where and when viewers can see the play. The Delfi.lt editorial office is given as the text source, even though an identical text can be found on the theatre’s official website⁷¹ and on the Bernardinai.lt website.⁷² This demonstrates that interestingly prepared press releases can appear in newspapers among news regarding refugees.

Copyright texts are the second group of publications according with size. The relatively small number of copyright texts is due to the high expenditure of both time and money.

Foreign copyright texts make up less than one-fifth of newspaper content. The choice of which texts to translate is usually made by journalists in the foreign news departments, and this may lead to subjectivity.

⁶⁸ “Funds to Support Refugees Will Be Collected at IKEA Stores Around the World” (15min.lt, 24 November 2015). <http://www.15min.lt/verslas/naujiena/bendroves/viso-pasaulio-ikea-parduotuvese-bus-renkamos-lesos-pabegeliams-remti-663-545949>

⁶⁹ “IKEA to Collect Donations to Support Refugees” (Lrytas.lt, 24 November 2015). <http://verslas.lrytas.lt/rinkos-pulsas/ikea-rinks-aukas-pabegeliams-remti.htm>

⁷⁰ “O. Koršunovas Stages *Miranda* in Athens Amidst Demonstrations” (Delfi.lt, 16 November 2015). <http://www.delfi.lt/veidai/kultura/o-korsunovas-miranda-atenuose-stato-demonstraciju-apsuptyje.d?id=69585432>

⁷¹ “O. Koršunovas Stages *Miranda* in Athens Amidst Demonstrations” (okt.lt, 16 November 2015). <http://www.okt.lt/oskaras-korsunovas-miranda-atenuose-stato-demonstraciju-apsuptyje/>

⁷² “Oskaras Koršunovas Stages *Miranda* in Athens Amidst Demonstrations to Overthrow the Junta and the Refugee Crisis” (Bernardinai.lt, 16 November 2015). <http://www.bernardinai.lt/straipsnis/2015-11-16-oskaras-korsunovas-miranda-atenuose-stato-pabegeliu-krizes-bei-chuntos-nuvertimui-skirtu-demonstraciju-apsuptyje/137362>

One of the types of publications on the subject of refugees in newspapers are politician publications. The largest portion of all publications was found on Delfi.lt (5 percent) and Lrytas.lt (4 percent). The name of the specific politician as well as the name of the party to which he or she belongs were given. This allows the reader to understand that it is this specific politician's opinion that is being expressed. However, journalists and editors must ensure that an opinion be expressed fairly and ethically, without any conscious distortion of facts or data, but this is not always possible to ensure with politician publications. Take, for example, a text signed by Valentinas Mazuronis, chairman of the Labor Party: "On New Year's Eve, 'Arab-looking men' (police have confirmed that the majority of them had refugee documents) attacked, robbed and even raped women in the middle of the city."⁷³ This information was never confirmed by the police.

The last type of publications – "other texts" – denoted publications that were prepared by the representatives of public organizations, experts, or newspaper readers. Lrytas.lt published a text, titled "Does a Horrible Letter From a Doctor About Refugee Diseases Conceal Another Truth?"⁷⁴ Delfi.lt did not lag behind with an article "Joined the Side of the Refugees After the Paris Tragedy: This Is a Road to Nowhere."⁷⁵ Although editorial offices usually specify that they are not responsible for the content of such publications, the opinion that is expressed in them contributes to the creation of a stereotypical image of refugees. It also shows that the topic of refugees is relevant to the

⁷³ MAZURONIS, Valentinas: "V. Mazuronis. Refugees – a Trojan Horse in Europe" (Delfi.lt, 20 January 2016). <http://www.delfi.lt/es/alde/v-mazuronis-pabegeliai-troj-os-arklys-europoje.d?id=70166192>

⁷⁴ MARČIUS: 'Does a Horrible Letter From a Doctor About Refugee Diseases Conceal Another Truth?' (Lrytas.lt, 16 November 2015). <http://bendraukime.lrytas.lt/manrupi/baisus-gydytojos-laiskas-apie-pabegeliu-ligas-slepia-kita-tiesa.htm>

⁷⁵ NORBUTAS, Martynas: "Joined the Side of the Refugees After the Paris Tragedy: This Is a Road to Nowhere" (Delfi.lt, 15 November 2015). <http://www.delfi.lt/pilietis/voxpopuli/po-paryziaus-tragedijos-stojo-pabegeliu-pusen-tai-kelias-inekur.d?id=69575934>

readers, and that the opportunity for discussion presented by the newspapers is attractive.

The prevalence of news agency reports in the newspapers examined shows that the media trusts the texts that they put together: they are usually published without any content changes, additional comments or insights. This is due to lack of time, since newspapers publish hundreds of various texts every day, so there is a demand for publications that are already prepared and processed. This conclusion is reinforced by the small number of copyright texts which analyze the experiences of countries that admit refugees. Texts prepared by editorial staff usually just summarize information that is already known.

The desire to report news as quickly as possible does not only lead to a lack of diversity of opinion, but it also paves the way for a multitude of superficial or even inaccurate information, which forms the audience's perception of reality.

Conclusions

1. The reality that an individual perceives is constantly being formed by various social institutions, of which one is the media. The individual adopts this subjective reality of events and various social groups, and doubt and critical evaluation of the imposed reality is only possible if the publications presented include diverse opinions.
2. The Lithuanian newspapers that were examined are commercial entities which – in order to remain competitive – try to cajole consumers without necessarily providing quality information. The number of publications and the speed with which they are presented become more important than the content and the validity of the sources of information. Such a high density of publications lead to the information being distorted and presented superficially, and to the refugees being severely stigmatized.
3. The total number of publications in the newspapers analyzed had increased consistently and was the highest during the third investigation period, reflecting a growing interest of the audience in the

subject of refugees. The November Paris attacks, the January sexual assault scandal in Germany and the murder of a Lithuanian teen in Sweden all had a positive impact on the growth in the quantity of publications.

4. Lithuanian newspapers construct a negative refugee image. The predominant categories of negative stereotypes are of refugees who are perceived as uncontrollable, aggressive and prone to commit crime, and being parts of gangs, terrorist organizations or among benefit recipients. In this way, the image of an uncontrollable refugee, who is predisposed to crime and supported by the state, is thrust upon the audience.
5. In the newspapers that were analyzed, refugees are often described as “war refugees,” but the terms are often confused or distorted. The terms *migrants* (both economic and irregular), *incomers* and *foreigners* are used interchangeably and, combined, are used more often than the term *refugees*. Thus, an image of “non-war refugees” is formed in an effort to offer more scandalous content in publications. The audience of the publications is not introduced to the differences of these concepts.
6. The newspapers that were analyzed do not shy away from scandalous headlines that announce such phrases as “flocks of refugees” or “an onslaught of migrants” and so on. This is at odds with the provisions of the Code of Ethics in Providing Information to the Public of Lithuania. Such headlines create the impression that refugees are “flocking” to Lithuania, even though this is not true.
7. Mass media is forming the image of refugees in a chaotic manner, usually republishing texts prepared by news agencies and foreign newspapers without dedicating enough attention to evaluating the received information or ensuring diversity of opinion. This is partly due to a lack of time on the part of mass media employees.

Recommendations and Suggestions

1. It is recommended that media representatives, when preparing publications on the subject of refugees, more often make the texts personal, i.e., rather than presenting refugees as a single, homogenous group, that they draw attention to a particular person and the story of his or her life. This will encourage the knowledge of refugees in the society; it will destroy the myths that have been created and improve the refugee image, since people judge separate individuals more favorably than an entire group.
2. Reports about refugees should not be presented in an exclusively negative context. The criminal actions of a person should not be linked to refugee status – not all refugees are criminals, and not all offenders are refugees. It is recommended that information be supplemented with refugee success stories, information on the granting of refugee status and so on. The context of negative events can also be used to discuss the problem of refugees, the challenges that refugees face, and what are the systemic errors in countries that are integrating them.
3. The information that is received on refugees should be verified more carefully, and editors should not rush to publish information that is not officially confirmed or based on at least two sources. If in doubt, editors should seek the assistance of experts and/or non-governmental organizations.
4. It is recommended that diversity of opinion be promoted, as this is one of the responsibilities of the media. Sources of information should be carefully evaluated, and undue criticism should be avoided. If a specific person is being cited, bias of opinion, correspondence of the facts presented with reality, and the impact on the construction of the refugee image should be assessed.
5. News agency texts that are published should be critically evaluated and supplemented with a deeper analysis. By preparing more copyright publications, the mass media would provide more objective information and would gain a competitive advantage.

6. It would be worthwhile to investigate and reflect the experience, opinion and knowledge of the refugees themselves and their immediate environment. This would be a positive contribution to the dissemination of quality information. Their right to receive information would also be taken into account, and that would give cause for dialogue to emerge.

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