

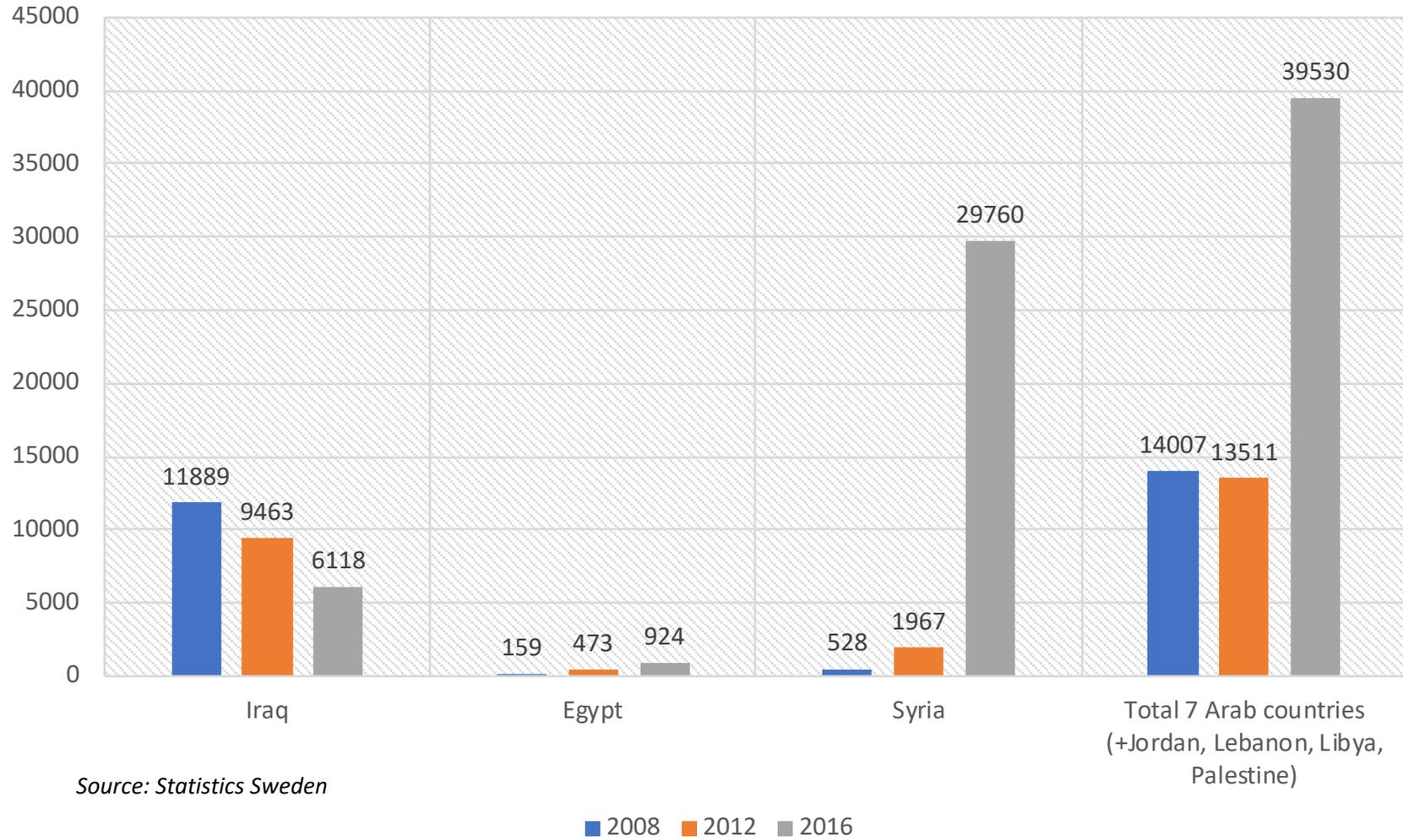
Collaborative integration through kids' media: the case of Arabic-speaking children

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Arab-born children aged 12 and under in Sweden, 2008-16



Asylum applications to selected European countries by top country of origin, 2015

Syria was the leading source country of asylum seekers in 13 out of 30 European countries (i.e. EU-28 + Norway and Switzerland).

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of Eurostat data, accessed June 22, 2016

Country of application	Top country of citizenship	% of all applications
Cyprus	Syria	43
Denmark	Syria	41
Finland	Iraq	63
Germany	Syria	36
Greece	Syria	29
Hungary	Syria	37
Latvia	Iraq	26
Luxembourg	Syria	27
Malta	Libya	53
Netherlands	Syria	43
Norway	Syria	35
Romania	Syria	45
Slovakia	Iraq	63
Spain	Syria	39
Sweden	Syria	33



Arab approaches to screen media for children

Perspectives on childhood



Protect from 'harm'

- Moral message
- Save from 'deviance'



Education prioritized

- Heavy didacticism
- Entertainment often seen as separate



Focus on Arab-Islamic heritage

- [Objectives of Mansour](#)
- Regional emphasis

Filling the schedules



Dubbed imports

- MBC3
- Jeem TV



Co-production

- BeJunior with Studio 100
- Driver Dan, Sesame St etc



'Local' production

- [Hamdoon](#)
- Non-Arab input

Implications of our findings

- Protection does not include protection from graphic images of violence
- Children's TV in the Arab world has come to mean predominantly animation
- Arab children are unused to seeing themselves or their everyday situations on screen; adult programming (Turkish series; Latin American telenovelas) also has impact and is watched with families.
- Various forms of 'othering' (gender, ethnicity, language, etc.) feature in much children's programming produced in the region.
- Significant potential for European creativity – already co-opted by Arab channel owners

What Arab parents want

- Importance of religious continuity
 - UK parents concerned about their children growing up in the UK.
- Importance of family and family values.
 - Parents in UK, *Simpsons* "full of improper stuff"
 - Morocco distaste for entertainment with "impolite kind of dancing"
 - Values include deference to age and seniority
- Importance of Arabic language – literary version.
 - UK parents keen on Baraem because of its emphasis on classical Arabic;
 - But older children in the UK didn't watch programming in Arabic

What we learned from child respondents

- Differential impact of educational systems affects aspirations (Cf London, Casablanca and Beirut)
- Differential impact of socio-economic positioning
- Big variation in overt references to religion
- Interviews/Observations showed children to be highly resourceful in terms of devices and social media
- Screen media language was less of an issue for them than for their parents – they learn new languages quickly – They watched shows in Standard Arabic
- Scheduling exercise in all three countries shows children preferred a varied range of genres (news, drama, factual, comedy, Kids X Factor, weather) and programme forms (animation, live action) – **A Public Service Sensibility – Animation made up only a minority of programming chosen by children themselves.**

Children's comments - in the diaspora

- Children were engaged with multicultural popular culture (*Justin Bieber, Spiderman, Demi Lovato, Rihanna, Chelsea, Match of the Day, Minecraft*), but wary of unsuitable material “it’s full of kissing and stuff” (*The Simpsons, American Dad, South Park*); Miley Cyrus “she’s disgusting”
- Favourite shows: *Tracey Beaker, Wolfblood* (both CBBC); also *Ben Ten, Gumball*. No religious content.
- Favourite channels: CBBC, Cartoon Network, Disney
- Didn't watch much content in Arabic: . “I couldn't really understand it, because it's in Arabic. It's the alphabet and numbers, because I want to get familiar with Arabic so I watch it”



Children's comments – in Arab contexts

- Favourite children's channels MBC3 (SpongeBob); Tuyur al Jannah, Cartoon Network (*Tom & Jerry, Ben Ten*)
- They enjoyed the children's songs of Tuyur al-Jannah (Birds of Paradise), a channel which promotes Islamic values in a form of colloquial Arabic that children can understand, not standard/classic Arabic. "because they are in Arabic and I understand them".
- Radio – important source of news, information.



Children's comments - in Arab contexts

- Children selected more religious content in the scheduling exercise, but also a diverse range of health, news, comedy, cartoons.
 - I choose to do a programme for children and name it *Alam Atfal* (Children's World). In this programme I will do a show where children go through the world and discover a lot of things. I also need to organize a competition for children from which they will learn and get knowledge; the team that will answer the most questions is the one that will win.
- They were alert to inequalities in education (private/public), corruption and injustice (e.g. harsh treatment at school) in contrast to TV shows:
 - "Célestine (on 2M) always gives advice to his human friends, such as how to respect nature and how to treat others"; *Ernest et Célestine*
 - "I watched *Sally* ([clip](#)) on Spacetoon. It is an orphan girl work in a house cooking and doing housework. She is kind, innocent and caring. She has long hair. "



Takeaways

- Children appreciate variety in content - animation, comedy, news, health
- They are alert to inequalities in their real lives.
- They appreciate stories that depict fairness and kindness.