FRAMING OF @YOURFAVORITEGUY'S TIKTOK VIDEOS ON THE PALESTINE GENOCIDE

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to examine and analyse the framing techniques employed by the TikTok influencer @YourFavoriteGuy in 100 videos related to Palestine. The objective is to understand how this influencer shapes and communicates narratives about the Palestinian cause. To achieve this, 100 videos were randomly selected from the influencer's TikTok page. The selection criteria focused on videos related to Palestine, posted between October 7th, 2021, and May 2024. The analysis applied the message frames adopted by Xiong et al. (2019). These frames categorize the content into five distinct themes: direct political content, call to action, reference to victims, mentioning the role of activists, and challenges or other artistic expressions. The study's findings reveal that the most prominent frame in the videos is direct political content, indicating a strong focus on political aspects of the Palestinian cause. Conversely, the least prominent frame is challenges and other artistic expressions, suggesting that these types of content are less frequently used by the influencer concerning the Palestinian narrative.

Keywords: TikTok, Palestine issue, online activism, thematic framing

INTRODUCTION

Over the past five decades, the Palestinian population has endured persistent oppression, marked by the displacement of countless individuals, the demolition of villages, and the transformation of Palestinian territories into what effectively resemble open-air prisons

(Tétrault-Farber, 2023). This prolonged and systematic oppression has not only exacerbated the suffering of Palestinians but has also restricted their freedom of movement, further highlighting the severity of their plight. In response to these ongoing challenges, social media influencers, mainly those active on platforms like TikTok, have emerged as agents in shaping public perception and raising awareness about the Palestinian issue. Moreover, generation Z has also been actively engaged in social justice movements, leveraging platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and others to express solidarity with Palestinian rights, especially in light of the heightened tensions and violence during the Gaza oppression in October 2023 (Buheji, 2024).

Additionally, these influencers have utilized their platforms to share personal insights, disseminate real-time updates, leverage their extensive reach and engagement, and mobilize support for those affected by the conflict (Abbas et al., 2022). Consequently, the influential role of social media influencers in advocating for Palestinian rights and mobilizing support for their cause has become increasingly apparent. Moreover, amidst the growing recognition of the power of social media influencers in shaping public discourse on socio-political issues, platforms like TikTok have emerged as potent tools for disseminating information and influencing public opinion (Darmantio & Delliana, 2020). Therefore, influencers such as @YourFavoriteGuy, with their substantial followings and considerable influence, hold significant sway over their audiences. Against the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian war, these influencers are critical in disseminating narratives and shaping public perceptions globally.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite the significant influence wielded by social media influencers, there is a shortage of research on how they frame messages concerning contentious issues involving Palestine. As Ziberi et al. (2024) mentioned, the emphasis on strategic communication during the Gaza humanitarian crisis highlights the crucial role of social media in conflict contexts, underscoring the need for research on how influencers frame messages about contentious issues like Palestine. Furthermore, Shestakov and Zaghouani (2024) highlight a critical gap in understanding the significant role of influencers during the Israeli-Palestinian crisis and their impact on shaping public opinion through their content. This gap in the literature presents a problem in understanding the mechanisms used by influencers in shaping public opinion on such platforms. Specifically, while @YourFavoriteGuy's TikTok videos on Palestine-related issues garner a broad audience, the framing techniques used in these videos remain largely

underexplored. Hence, a comprehensive examination of @YourFavoriteGuy's role as a social media influencer is essential to better understand how influencers shape public discourse on issues related to Palestine.

Research Objective

- To frame the messages in 100 videos related to Palestine Genocide on @YourFavoriteGuy's TikTok page.

Research Question

- What are the recurring message frames in 100 Palestine-related TikTok videos of the TikTok user @YourFavoriteGuy?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Netizen Journalism

Netizen journalism is a form of citizen journalism where individuals use online platforms to actively gather, report, analyse, and share news, promoting independent and democratic information dissemination while challenging traditional media structures (Darmanto & Delliana, 2020). This explains that netizen journalism encourages people to actively create and share news online, fostering independent and democratic information dissemination. As mentioned by Xiang (2019), netizen journalism transforms the traditional news landscape by empowering individuals to share diverse perspectives and stories, fostering inclusivity and democracy in media production while challenging conventional power structures. Moreover, netizen journalism transforms traditional media by enabling netizens to share overlooked stories, fostering a more accurate understanding of conflicts, and empowering a diverse collective to contribute to societal improvement (Miller et al., 2022). Therefore, netizen journalism revolutionizes traditional media by empowering individuals to share diverse, often overlooked stories, fostering inclusivity, democracy, and societal improvement.

Nevertheless, Moh Rifaldi Akbar (2023) states that netizen journalism carries risks of privacy violations, security threats, and misinformation due to varying digital literacy, while also exposing journalists to traceability and challenges in maintaining independent, critical reporting. In addition, Darmanto and Delliana (2020) contend that netizen journalism faces

dangers such as ethical issues, lack of formal training, and challenges in upholding journalistic values, while potentially impacting social, economic, political, and cultural aspects. On the other hand, Xiang (2019) recognizes the importance of netizen journalism in filling gaps left by traditional media outlets despite the risks associated with it. Similarly, argues that despite its challenges, netizen journalism significantly benefits society by fostering civic engagement and informed policymaking. All in all, netizen journalism stands as a potent instrument for fostering grassroots storytelling and facilitating community engagement. Its capacity to empower individuals to actively participate in news dissemination helps amplify voices that may otherwise go unheard.

The Framing of Palestine Genocide on Social Media

The Israeli-Palestinian war, spanning over 70 years, remains one of the most complex crises, with media coverage continually evolving. The role of mass media is immensely significant in global crises like the Israeli-Palestinian war, as it holds the power to shape public opinion (Klajnowska, 2022). From the 1960s to the 1980s, Western media dominance often led to bias toward one side (Abushbak, 2022). However, since 2006, the Israeli-Palestinian war has significantly shifted into the digital realm. Various events, such as Hezbollah's war with Israel in 2006, Operation Cast Lead in 2008-2009, the Israeli commando raid on the Turkish Marmara in 2010, and subsequent military operations in Gaza, alongside Palestinian protests and uprisings, have been extensively highlighted across social media platforms (Abushbak, 2022). Throughout these events, social media has wielded a considerable impact on the Palestine-Israel conflict, particularly during incidents like the attacks on Masjid Al-Aqsa and the Sheikh Jarrah event, with hashtags like #SaveSheikhJarrah and #SavePalestine flooding online platforms (Huda et al., 2022). The surge in social media usage has gradually enlightened users to the realities of the ongoing situation, highlighting the increasing importance of digital platforms in shaping public discourse and understanding of the complex Israeli-Palestinian war.

The Relationship between Netizen Journalism and Palestine Genocide

Klajnowska (2022) highlighted the diverse narratives surrounding the Israeli-Palestinian war, with legacy media and official government accounts often criticized for biases, while pro-Palestinian outlets and activist influencers play a significant role in shaping public opinion,

favourably shifting the narrative towards Palestinians. This underscores the growing influence of social media as a tool for capturing conflicts and garnering public attention, providing Palestinians with a platform to counter the marginalization of their perspective by the media. Despite facing Israeli restrictions and censorship, Palestinian activists have effectively utilized social media to engage people politically, leveraging hashtags like #SavePalestine and #SaveSheikhJarrah to amplify their voices and support resistance movements during the 2021 conflict (Abushbak, 2022). Moreover, Zahoor and Sadiq (2021) noted Palestinian leaders' enthusiasm for new media, as it reduces their dependence on traditional media, which can be easily manipulated. Furthermore, the success of social and political online movements is closely tied to content virality, with platforms like TikTok facilitating replication and widespread dissemination of content (Abbas et al., 2022). Through photos, videos, and first-hand reports from the scene, Palestinians can continuously update and share developments on the issue, reducing the audience's dependence on legacy media (Maharani, 2024). In brief, due to the emergence of netizen journalism, audiences are no longer compelled to rely exclusively on traditional media outlets for updates regarding Palestinian affairs. Instead, they have the option to seek information from trusted online activists.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative design to examine the significant frames utilized in @YourFavoriteGuy's TikTok videos on Palestine. Qualitative research is frequently used for content analysis because of its methodological approach that enables a thorough examination of complex phenomena (Vears & Gillam, 2022). In a similar study using a content analysis framework, Sotiraki (2023) aimed to analyse the Washington Post's TikTok videos regarding the Ukrainian War by utilizing framing theory concepts to uncover the framing methods and content features in the videos. Similarly, this research uses content analysis within the framing theory framework to emphasize the exploration of message frames in TikTok videos related to Palestine from October 7th, 2023, to May 2024.
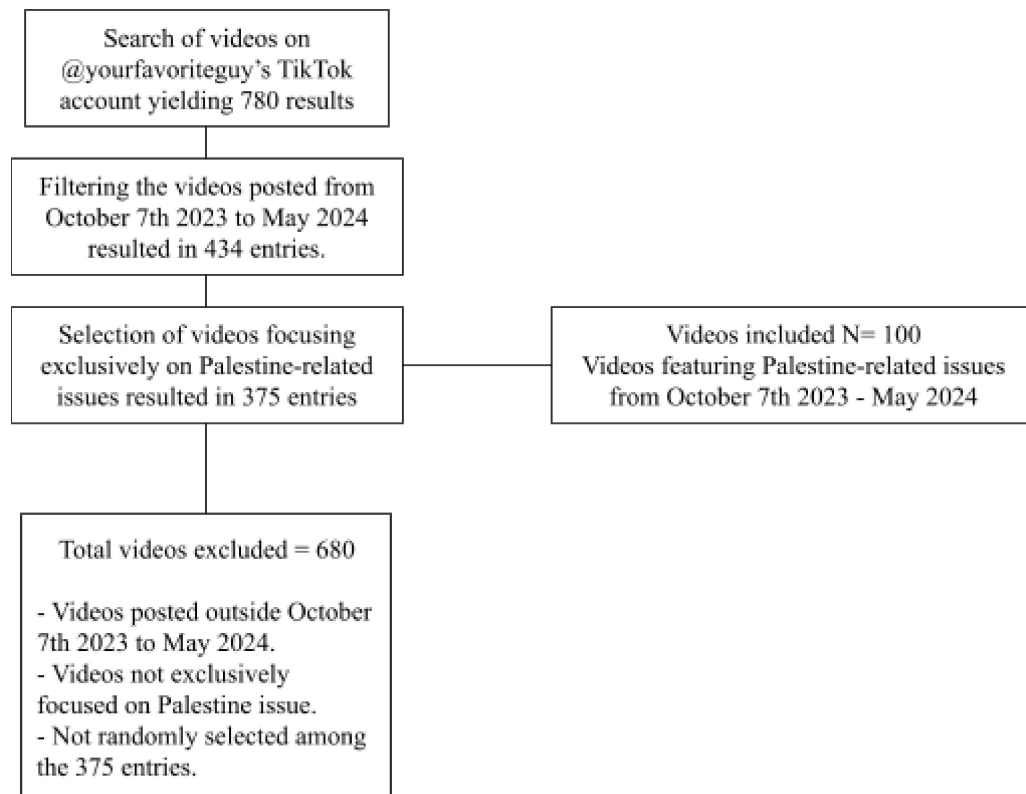
Table 1

Operational definitions of message frames.

Frames	Operational Definitions
Direct political content	Videos that contain demonstrations, rallies, live footage, Israeli strikes, war or conflict casualties, Palestinian activists' resistance, and accurate information about the conflict.
Call to action	Videos that feature a call to action in the form of written or spoken communication regarding boycotting businesses, blocking celebrities, or participating in demonstrations.
Reference to victims	Videos that show children, mothers, adolescents, and other Palestinians affected by the strife and warfare in Palestine.
Mentioning the role of activists	Videos that contain activists or influencers encouraging others to speak out, spreading awareness about the issue, or promoting a pro-Palestinian stance.
Challenges	Videos that feature content like dance challenges, lip-syncing songs, make-up, art drawings, or any form of cultural expression.

Note. Taken from Xiong et al. (2019).

DATA SELECTION PROCESS AND DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

This study applies a six-step framework for conducting thematic analysis on TikTok videos by @YourFavoriteGuy. According to Kiger and Varpio (2020), thematic analysis is employed in qualitative studies due to its accessibility, versatility, and ability to identify patterns and themes in data, providing a structured approach to analysis. Subsequently, employing this framework in this study helps facilitate a structured analysis of message frames within the videos, beginning with familiarizing with the data and progressing through stages of coding, theme identification, and theme refinement, ultimately culminating in a comprehensive report and findings.

Figure 1

Data selection process.


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┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Search of videos on     │
│ @yourfavoriteguy's TikTok│
│ account yielding 780    │
│ results                 │
└─────────────────────────┘
           │
┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Filtering the videos    │
│ posted from October 7th │
│ 2023 to May 2024        │
│ resulted in 434 entries.│
└─────────────────────────┘
           │
┌─────────────────────────┐        ┌───────────────────────────────┐
│ Selection of videos     │        │ Videos included N= 100        │
│ focusing exclusively on │────────│ Videos featuring Palestine-   │
│ Palestine-related       │        │ related issues                │
│ issues resulted in 375  │        │ from October 7th 2023 - May   │
│ entries                 │        │ 2024                          │
└─────────────────────────┘        └───────────────────────────────┘
           │
┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Total videos excluded = │
│ 680                     │
│                         │
│ - Videos posted outside │
│ October 7th 2023 to May │
│ 2024.                   │
│ - Videos not exclusively│
│ focused on Palestine    │
│ issue.                  │
│ - Not randomly selected │
│ among the 375 entries.  │
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RESULTS

The content analysis of 100 Palestine-related TikTok videos from the user @YourFavoriteGuy from October 2023 to May 2024 reveals significant insights into the thematic narratives employed. This study has identified five primary frames: direct political content, role of activists, reference to victims, call to action, and challenges and artistic expressions. Given that each video may address multiple themes, this paper analyses the redundancy within each video. The following section explains the five frames, listed in descending order of prominence in Table 2.

Direct political content

The most prominent frame was "direct political content," which appears in 74 videos and accounts for 74% of the sample. This high frequency suggests that @YourFavoriteGuy predominantly uses his platform to address political issues directly. The content often includes discussions on policy decisions, political leaders, and the broader geopolitical context

Table 2

Thematic Frames present in @YourFavoriteGuy's TikTok Videos (n=100)

Frame	Frequency
Direct political content	74
Role of activists	39
Reference to victims	33
Call to action	27
Challenges & Artistic expressions	3

affecting Palestine. To further explain, this paper observed the consistency of @YourFavoriteGuy's video addressing the constant political issues between the United States Government and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). For instance, the United States Government defunded the UNSC because the UNSC condemned the US government for the event of The Massacre. Not only that, the videos further discuss political leaders, specifically Mike Gallager, alleging that he is influenced by the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) to support the ban of TikTok in the United States. This frame's dominance aligns with the broader trend of using social media platforms to educate and mobilize public opinion on political matters.

Role of activists

The theme of activist roles appears 39 times in the videos, underscoring the importance of organizational efforts in the Palestinian narrative. One prominent organization featured is Doctors Without Borders (DWB), an international NGO providing medical care in conflict zones. @YourFavoriteGuy frequently highlights the challenges faced by DWB, including attacks on their shelters by Israeli forces, resulting in deaths. This portrayal serves to humanize the conflict and highlight the humanitarian crisis. Other activists and organizations mentioned include The United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) and the roles of the University of Columbia's students who protested against the university's

invitation to Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers for presentation. These highlight the efforts of diverse activist groups in advocating for Palestinian rights and raising awareness of the conflict.

Reference to the victims

This frame is a theme that appears in 33 times in the videos, with a significant focus on the victims of the conflict including children, women, teenagers, and other Palestinians that are affected. One of the most frequently mentioned events is the "The Flour Massacre" which occurred in February 2024, where Israeli forces reportedly opened fire on aid trucks in Gaza City. Due to the event, at least 118 Palestinians died, with over 780 others injured. Additionally, he also mentioned the incident that occurred on Doctor Without Borders (BWD) front liners that were attacked while providing medical assistance in conflict zones. By highlighting such events, @YourFavoriteGuy draws attention to the brutal realities faced by victims, reinforcing the narrative of injustice and human rights violations.

Call to action

In 27% of the videos, @YourFavoriteGuy urges the viewers to take tangible steps in support of the Palestinian conflict. One of the calls is the wearing of *Keffiyeh*, a traditional Palestinian scarf, in most of his videos as a symbol of solidarity. In addition, he also encouraged his viewers to participate in the boycott movement, particularly against Starbucks. The effectiveness of this boycott movement is also highlighted through factual evidence, such as the caption "*the reported 10% reduction in the workforce of Starbucks in the Middle East due to the boycott*". This approach aims to indicate a proactive approach by encouraging viewers to be passive consumers of the content and active participants in the cause.

Challenges and artistic expressions

The least prominent theme in only 3% of the videos features @YourFavoriteGuy wearing the Keffiyeh and engaging TikTok trends such as lip sync to the trending music while incorporating educational captions about Palestine. Combining educational context via captions and lip-sync songs makes the information process engaging and accessible, fostering a greater understanding and empathy among viewers.

DISCUSSIONS

An initial objective of this paper was to identify the recurring message frames in 100-Palestine related by @YourFavoriteGuy TikTok users. Thus, this paper analysed five frames, with the top three being political content, the role of activists, and reference to the victims.

The most prominent frame of political content is justified due to the creator's American background, which grants his credibility to critique his country's policies and actions. It is believed that, as an American, he possesses a deeper understanding of the political discourse within the United States, allowing him to provide insightful commentary on the Palestine issue. Furthermore, politics, its nature, is an argumentative and complex topic that requires in-depth explanation and counterarguments to address the diverse opinions of his opinions. By creating multiple content videos focusing on politics, @YourFavoriteGuy aims to avoid misunderstanding and provide comprehensive information to his audience. Moreover, the emphasis on political content is crucial as it allows @YourFavoriteGuy to highlight the political dimensions of the conflict and the role of international power, particularly the United States, in shaping the region's politics. This focus on politics also enables him to engage with the American audience, encouraging them to think critically about their country's foreign policy and its impact on the Palestinian people. Due to that, this paper suggests that the abundance of political content in TikTok may have significant implications. For instance, Republican Senator Josh Hawley sent a letter to the Biden Administration in November calling for the ban of TikTok, citing his concerns over the platform's role in spreading anti-Israel content. The letter further emphasizes the potential national security risks and the need to protect American interests and allies, suggesting that the unchecked proliferation of such content on a widely used TikTok platform poses a significant threat that warrants regulatory intervention. These findings may be taken to indicate that disseminating information and criticism through social media can have far-reaching political consequences by influencing public opinion that may potentially prompt government action. The strategic use of political content by @YourFavoriteGuy not only for informing or engaging with the audience but also further supports the idea by Saaida (2023) that digital platforms have significant roles in shaping political discourse and policy responses.

Moving on, the role of activists is an essential frame in @YourFavoriteGuy's content as it humanizes the conflicts and highlights the personal sacrifices made by individuals against the Palestinian conflict. The current study found that this frame draws attention to the courageous efforts of activists who face immense risks, such as activists who have been

arrested, detained, or even killed while trying to provide aid and advocate for the rights of Palestinians. By highlighting the roles of activists, this frame serves as a powerful acknowledgment of efforts and may help to build the narrative of solidarity and support among the audience. This finding is consistent with that of Khamaisi (2020), who mentioned that the audience may have a more comprehensive understanding of the conflict by seeing it through the eyes of those involved. This finding is consistent with that of Selvanathan et al. (2022); seeing the dedication and bravery of the activists can motivate the audience to support the cause in various ways, whether through advocacy, donations, or spreading awareness. Thus, this paper believes that by recognizing and highlighting the role of activists, @YourFavoriteGuy content may urge the audience to stand with activists in their fight for justice and call for collective action and solidarity.

Next, @YourFavoriteGuy content prominently features the "Reference to victims" frame, utilizing images and illustrations of victims to evoke emotional responses and increase audience engagement. The current study aligns with Nussion (2019), who suggests that visual representations of suffering impact audience perceptions and increase engagement. Additionally, this framing highlights the immediate human cost and underscores the humanitarian crisis. Thus, he successfully bridges the gap between distant geopolitical events and individual experience, reinforcing the narrative of injustice and human violations. This dual effect fosters empathy for Palestine while condemning Israel's action. Ultimately, @YourFavoriteGuy's strategic use of victim graphics has proven to mobilize support towards Palestine discrimination while providing global awareness.

Contractual Comparison with Abbas et al. (2022) on Call to Action Frame

Lastly, this paper analyses the contractual comparison with Abbas et al. (2022) on call-to-action frames, as this study indicates that call-to-action is not among the top three most prominent frames. The Call to Action (CTA) frame in @YourFavoriteGuy's content compared to Abbas et al. (2022) reveals significant strategic differences in content priorities each content creator serves. Further elaboration is that @YourFavoriteGuy prioritizes content that builds a comprehensive understanding of politics and evokes emotional responses. This approach aims to foster a more deeply engaged and informed audience, which is believed to lead to sustained and meaningful activism. By focusing on politics and the emotional aspects of the Palestinian conflict, @YourFavoriteGuy seeks to create a solid foundation of knowledge and empathy

among viewers. This strategic choice is driven by the understanding that an informed, emotionally invested audience is more likely to participate in long-term activism and advocacy efforts.

This outcome contradicts Abbas et al. (2022), who emphasize using TikTok's features, such as hashtags, aim for immediate and creative calls to action. His approach leverages the viral nature of TikTok, encouraging users to participate in activism through easily shareable and replicable content. By focusing on hashtags, Abbas et al. (2022) aim to mobilize a broad audience quickly, encouraging people to take specific actions such as boycotting or attending protests. This method capitalizes on TikTok's ability to rapidly disseminate messages and engage a diverse user base in activism through creative expression.

The strategy differs between @YourFavoriteGuy and Abbas et al. (2022), highlighting different approaches to achieve social and political change through TikTok. @YourFavoriteGuy focuses on political education and emotional engagement and aims to build a strong foundation for sustained activism, while Abbas et al. (2022) leverage the platform's viral potential to drive immediate, collective actions. @YourFavoriteGuy's approach may result in a more informed and engaged audience capable of participation in long-term advocacy. Abbas et al.'s strategy effectively mobilizes users and generates immediate actions. Thus, this paper believes that both methods have their strengths and can complement each other in a broader strategy for social change.

Implication: Influencer Strategies on Shifting Public Opinion on Palestine

The strategic use of frames by @YourFavoriteGuy has significant implications in shifting public opinion on the Palestine conflict from being 'neutral' to actively supporting and advocating. This paper suggests that employing specific frames such as political content, the role of activists, and references to victims has effectively showcased the power of netizen journalism in driving social change. As a result, these frames undeniably have increased awareness and collective action globally, advocating for Palestinian rights. This can be seen by the increased participation in advocacy campaigns, donations to humanitarian organizations, and a broader public debate established narratives in social media about the conflict. Hence, it can be proven that the role of netizen journalists can be used to strengthen the voices of the marginalized and promote international solidarity for critical human rights issues.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research is limited to analyzing Palestine-related videos only on TikTok. This limitation restricts the scope of the findings to insights gained only from this platform, potentially overlooking broader perspectives or dynamics present on other social media platforms or offline contexts. Secondly, due to time limitations, this paper analysed only 100 videos of @YourFavoriteGuy related to the context of Palestine. As such, it may not encompass the full spectrum of content and trends posted by the TikTok user @YourFavoriteGuy. Thirdly, this research is limited to issues related to Palestine only. Future research should broaden the scope of analyzing other online activism on topics beyond Palestinian genocide on different social media to provide a more holistic understanding. Also, future research should expand the sample size of the video to cover a more in-depth analysis of the Palestine-related content posted by TikTok users.

CONCLUSION

The findings reveal that direct political content is the most prominent frame, highlighting the influencer's focus on addressing political issues and events related to Palestine. This suggests that @YourFavoriteGuy prioritizes conveying political messages and information to his audience, potentially aiming to inform, educate, or persuade viewers regarding the Palestinian cause. In contrast, challenges and other artistic expressions are the least utilized frames, indicating that creative or entertainment-based content is less common in the influencer's approach to discussing Palestine. These results underscore the influencer's role in shaping online discourse about Palestine through a predominantly political lens. This emphasis on political content might reflect the influencer's strategy to engage with their audience on severe political matters, using their platform to amplify specific narratives and calls to action. In conclusion, the study contributes to the broader understanding of how social media influencers can influence public perception and engagement with geopolitical issues. By focusing on thematic framing, this research highlights the significant role that influencers like @YourFavoriteGuy play in the digital advocacy landscape, particularly in raising awareness and shaping narratives around complex international issues such as the Palestinian cause.

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