

Learning the Palestinian Narrative: A Comparative Study of Documentary Films and Instagram Videos as Educommunicative Tools among Media Students

Aprendizaje de la narrativa palestina: estudio comparativo de documentales y vídeos de Instagram como herramientas de educomunicación entre los estudiantes de Comunicación

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Educommunication, Palestinian Narrative, Media Literacy, Digital Resistance, Generation Z

This study focuses on the comparative effectiveness of documentary films and Instagram videos as educommunicative tools for teaching the Palestinian narrative in the university setting. In a context marked by digital saturation and the hegemony of algorithms that act as “gatekeepers” of information, the study examines how different media logics shape knowledge acquisition, perceptions of credibility, and the historical memory of Generation Z. The research integrates educommunication, informal learning, and postcolonial theory to examine the transition from cinematic “archives of resistance” to the “floating digital homes” of social media, including the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Using a mixed-methods approach, a pedagogical intervention for media studies undergraduates is designed, structured into three phases: pre-viewing, comparative viewing, and post-viewing activities. To capture measurable quantitative and qualitative data, pre- and post-test instruments are designed, as well as focus groups, offering a replicable pedagogical model for using media as laboratories for social justice and political empowerment. The educational proposal’s approach allows for an in-depth analysis of the educommunicative potential of two contrasting formats: documentary films—which provide superior contextual depth and narrative coherence—and Instagram videos—which foster high emotional engagement and immediate accessibility, despite risking historical fragmentation. Ultimately, the study

underscores that developing critical media literacy is essential for students to identify algorithmic biases and protect narrative sovereignty against colonial erasure.

RESUMEN

Palabras clave:

Educomunicación, narrativa palestina, alfabetización mediática, resistencia digital, Generación Z

Este estudio pone el foco en la eficacia de documentales y vídeos de Instagram como herramientas educomunicativas para la enseñanza de la narrativa palestina en la universidad. En un contexto marcado por la saturación digital y la hegemonía de algoritmos que actúan como “guardianes” de la información, el estudio examina cómo las lógicas mediáticas configuran la adquisición de conocimientos, percepciones de credibilidad y memoria histórica de la Generación Z. La investigación integra educomunicación, aprendizaje informal y teoría postcolonial para examinar la transición de los "archivos de resistencia" cinematográficos hacia los "hogares digitales flotantes" de las redes sociales, incluyendo el impacto de la Inteligencia Artificial (IA). Bajo un enfoque metodológico mixto, se diseña una intervención pedagógica para estudiantes universitarios de Comunicación, estructurada en tres fases: pre-visionado, visionado comparativo y actividades de post-visionado. Para recopilar datos medibles tanto cuantitativos como cualitativos, se diseñan instrumentos de pre y post-test, así como grupos focales, ofreciendo un modelo pedagógico replicable para el uso de los medios como laboratorios de justicia social y empoderamiento político. El enfoque de la propuesta educativa permite un análisis profundo del potencial educomunicativo de dos formatos contrapuestos: el cine documental —que aporta mayor profundidad contextual y coherencia narrativa— y los videos de Instagram —que fomentan un alto compromiso emocional y accesibilidad inmediata, a pesar del riesgo de fragmentar el conocimiento histórico—. El estudio subraya que el desarrollo de una alfabetización mediática crítica es esencial para que los estudiantes identifiquen los sesgos algorítmicos y protejan la soberanía narrativa frente al borrado colonial.

Introduction

The Palestinian narrative has long been shaped and preserved through diverse forms of storytelling, ranging from oral histories to documentary cinema and, more recently, digital media platforms. Storytelling functions not only as cultural expression but also as a form of resistance, identity construction, and historical preservation in the absence of formal state archives. In the contemporary digital era, platforms such as Instagram have introduced new modes of narrative production characterized by immediacy, interactivity, and accessibility.

Despite the growing visibility of Palestinian narratives across both traditional and digital media platforms, the comparative effectiveness of these media forms in educating students about the Palestinian issue remains insufficiently examined in academic literature. Documentary films, by virtue of their structured production process, rigorous research foundations, and narrative coherence, have long been regarded as credible vehicles for historical education (Nichols, 2010). In contrast, Instagram videos are characterized by brevity, fragmentation, and algorithmic accessibility, qualities that afford wide reach but may compromise contextual depth and analytical rigor (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). While scholarship has explored the tension between long-form and short-form media in terms of narrative depth, audience engagement, and content dissemination (Boczkowski & Mitchelstein, 2013), the educational impact of these media forms on defined audience groups — particularly media students — remains largely undertheorized.

This gap acquires particular urgency when examined through the lens of Generation Z, a cohort born between 1997 and 2012 that has come of age in conditions of pervasive digital immersion (Seemiller & Grace, 2019). Unlike preceding generations, Gen Z learners demonstrate a pronounced preference for short-form visual content, exhibit platform-native information-seeking behaviors, and increasingly rely on social media as their primary source of news and current affairs (Pew Research Center, 2022). These characteristics are not merely behavioral but epistemic: the algorithmically curated environments in which Gen Z consumes information actively shape not only what this cohort learns but how it interprets, contextualizes, and retains knowledge (Selwyn, 2019). As Prensky (2001) observed in his conceptualization of digital natives, immersion in digital environments from birth produces qualitatively different cognitive and learning orientations (Bennett et al., 2008).

In addition, this research also interrogates the epistemic implications of integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) and algorithmic search engines into academic practices. Acting as “gatekeepers”, these tools reshape information through computational synthesis and opaque curation (Noble, 2018), inevitably modulating the framing of the Palestinian narrative. This study posits that such “information distillation” may result in a sanitized engagement with historical realities, potentially diminishing students' critical interpretive capacity. By examining the spectrum of AI usage — from fact-checking to holistic research — this inquiry seeks to delineate the nexus between algorithmic curation, pedagogical outcomes, and the sociopolitical interpretation of contested narratives.

Compounding this challenge is the limited scholarly attention devoted to the information-seeking practices of students engaging specifically with Palestinian history. It remains largely unknown whether such students rely predominantly on documentary films, social media content, academic publications, AI-powered search tools, or hybrid combinations thereof when constructing their historical understanding (Floridi et al.,

2018). This absence of empirical data is significant, as information-seeking behavior is not a neutral process but is shaped by platform logics, algorithmic gatekeeping, and the epistemic affordances of different media environments (Stanford History Education Group, 2016). Understanding these patterns is therefore essential not only for evaluating the pedagogical utility of different media forms but for developing media literacy frameworks capable of equipping students to critically navigate the increasingly complex information ecosystems (Hobbs & Friesem, 2025).

Based on these premises, this article is framed as a methodological proposal and pedagogical design. Following the Design-Based Research (DBR) (McKenney & Reeves, 2018), the primary contribution of this work lies in the construction of a replicable pedagogical intervention model. The current inquiry focuses on the conceptual architecture and the operationalization of media literacy tools tailored for the analysis of contested narratives. The study is particularly relevant for media educators at university and similar academic institutions, as well as for curriculum designers seeking to integrate media literacy into educational frameworks.

Theoretical Framework

Palestinian Narrative and Media Representation

The Palestinian narrative occupies a unique and contested space within global media discourse. Scholars have long argued that the representation of Palestinian history, identity, and resistance is not merely a journalistic or cultural concern but a deeply political one. Pappé (2024) contends that the telling — and silencing — of Palestinian stories constitutes a form of historical violence that operates alongside physical displacement.

The study of the Palestinian narrative is grounded in a multidisciplinary framework that integrates Historical Narrative Theory, where storytelling serves as an assertion of presence and political resistance against colonial erasure (Khalidi, 2016), and Media Theory (McLuhan, 1964; Manovich, 2001), which posits that the medium fundamentally shapes meaning. This perspective enables an analysis of how storytellers exercise agency through narrative coherence. The framework further incorporates Cultural Memory Theory (Assmann, 2011), viewing Palestinian memory as a public and performative act, and Postcolonial Theory (Said, 1978), which provides the foundation to critique Orientalist constructions. Complementing these, decolonial approaches emphasize centering indigenous voices against epistemic violence (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Within this context, Awad et al. (2025) demonstrate that oral histories maintain cohesion despite displacement, reinforcing identity across both cinematic and digital media.

Within this context, media representation is never neutral. Hall (1997) established that meaning is not inherent in images or texts but is constructed through cultural codes and power relations. Applied to the Palestinian context, this means that how the narrative is framed — whether through the lens of resistance, victimhood, or *sumud* (steadfastness) — fundamentally shapes the audience's understanding (Philo & Berry, 2011). The rise of digital platforms has not resolved this tension but has complicated it further, introducing new actors, new gatekeepers, and new possibilities for both narrative amplification and distortion (Loader & Mercea, 2011). This dynamic has been further sharpened in the post-October 2023 context, where Al Jazeera Centre for Studies (2025) documents how digital platforms became active battlegrounds for narrative control, with visual rhetoric deployed as a strategic weapon to shape international public opinion and contest Palestinian accounts of events.

In the realm of cinema, documentary films have historically served as one of the most powerful vehicles for preserving and transmitting this narrative, particularly in the absence of formal state institutions capable of maintaining collective memory. Alawadhi (2013) views this medium as an “archive of resistance” that contests Zionist historiographies, while Pappé (2024) situates these works as a defense against archival erasure. Specific visual strategies are highlighted by Ginsberg (2016), who emphasizes temporal layering to represent trauma, and Rastegar (2024), who explores the visual economy of the Nakba to render visible the emotional dimensions of dispossession.

Furthermore, Abu-Remaileh (2008) illustrates how the cinema of Elia Suleiman utilizes irony and fragmentation to challenge dominant representations. In this regard, films such as *Divine Intervention* (Suleiman, 2002) have demonstrated how documentary and semi-documentary forms can function simultaneously as artistic expression, political testimony, and educational resource (Gertz & Khleifi, 2008).

Shifting to the digital ecosystem, platforms introduce algorithmic logics and ‘database narratives’ that restructure memory formation and user interaction (Nashif, 2024). Digital resistance emerges as a key pillar, involving the strategic use of these spaces to challenge dominant discourses and build transnational solidarities (Daniele & Kelsch, 2025; Gallant-Turner, 2026). Despite censorship, this resistance embodies a ‘radical imagination’ (Burris, 2019) within mediated environments.

In this sphere, Abu-Ayyash (2024) examines how digital platforms recontextualize symbols like the *keffiyeh*, while Nashif (2024) introduces the “digital floating homeland”, where virtual spaces provide sovereignty against geographic fragmentation. Similarly, El-Mansi (2024) analyzes platforms like the *PreOccupation Podcast*, which foster participatory memory and indigenous sovereignty (*Siyada Asliya Falastiniya*), and social media hashtags are shown to mobilize global action, transforming localized struggles into international movements (Daniele & Kelsch, 2025; Gallant-Turner, 2026).

At the level of student practice specifically, Abudheir et al. (2025) provide empirical evidence that Palestinian media students actively use social media to promote the Palestinian narrative to international audiences, though they face significant obstacles including content moderation policies, language barriers, and limited international networks.

Educommunication and Informal Learning

The concept of educommunication — the intersection of education and communication — provides a productive theoretical framework for this study. In this framework, media is not simply a tool for transmitting information but a pedagogical space in which learners engage critically with content, negotiate meaning, and develop their own interpretive frameworks (Aparici & Marín-Mateos, 2010).

This understanding has been extended in recent scholarship to incorporate the role of artificial intelligence and digital technologies in shaping educommunicative practices. Santos Albardía et al. (2025) argue that technology not only expands access to information but also carries the potential to motivate the development of critical thinking, provided it is embedded within an ethical and reflective pedagogical framework — a precondition that current AI-driven media environments do not always satisfy.

Informal learning theory, as developed by Livingstone (2002), complements this approach by recognizing that significant learning occurs outside formal educational institutions — in everyday encounters with media, culture, and community. For Palestinian students, informal learning through media consumption is particularly

significant given the limitations of formal curricula, which may not fully address the complexity of Palestinian history and identity (Pappé, 2024). Documentary films and social media content therefore function not merely as entertainment or information but as informal educational resources that shape historical consciousness (Erstad & Sefton-Green, 2013).

The urgency of this informal learning context has been recognized at the institutional level: a 2025 University of Rhode Island initiative, led by Hobbs and Friesem, engaged Palestinian educators and youth in a media literacy program explicitly designed for an AI-saturated information environment, acknowledging that young Palestinians face a particular vulnerability to misinformation and propaganda during periods of political instability (Hobbs & Friesem, 2025).

Documentary Film as an Educational Tool

Documentary films have a well-established history as an educational medium. From Grierson's (1933) early formulation of documentary as “the creative treatment of actuality” to contemporary participatory and reflexive modes of documentary practice, the form has consistently been used to educate audiences about social, political, and historical realities. Hobbs (2017) demonstrated that documentary films can be highly effective in promoting empathy, critical thinking, and historical understanding, particularly when viewed in structured educational settings.

In the Palestinian context specifically, documentary film has served a dual function: it preserves testimonies and historical records that might otherwise be lost, and it communicates these realities to both local and international audiences. Films such as *5 Broken Cameras* (Burnat & Davidi, 2011) and *The Wanted 18* (Budour & Masharawi, 2014) have reached global audiences and generated significant public awareness. For media students, engagement with such films offers not only historical knowledge but also insights into documentary craft, narrative construction, and the ethics of representation (Aufderheide, 2007).

However, documentary films also carry limitations as educational tools. Their length, production values, and distribution channels may restrict access, particularly for younger audiences accustomed to shorter and more immediately accessible content (Clinton et al., 2009). Furthermore, the authority that documentary films project may discourage critical engagement, positioning students as passive recipients of a constructed narrative rather than active interrogators of it (Nichols, 2010).

Social Media and Instagram as Sites of Learning

The emergence of social media platforms as primary information environments for young people has fundamentally altered the landscape of informal learning. Particularly, Instagram has become a significant site for the production and consumption of political and historical content. Its visual-first architecture, combined with features such as Stories, Reels, and hashtag aggregation, enables the rapid dissemination of content related to the Palestinian narrative to vast and diverse audiences (Highfield & Leaver, 2016).

Research on social media and learning suggests that platforms like Instagram can facilitate what Clinton et al. (2009) describe as “participatory culture” — environments in which users are not merely consumers but active contributors to the production and circulation of knowledge. In the Palestinian context, this has manifested in grassroots digital activism, citizen journalism, and the viral spread of eyewitness accounts that traditional media has often failed to adequately cover (Loader & Mercea, 2011). The

hashtag activism surrounding Palestinian causes has demonstrated the extraordinary reach of social media as a vehicle for narrative dissemination (Theocharis et al., 2015).

From a pedagogical and social perspective, Hamouda (2023) shows how digital storytelling aids identity formation and resilience, while Dajani and Meier (2022) highlight its potential to build transnational empathy. Gender also intersects with national identity in this educational and creative process, as Stern (2022) demonstrate how women filmmakers use domestic spheres as vital sites of resistance.

Nevertheless, social media learning is not without its significant limitations. The brevity of Instagram content — particularly Reels — necessarily constrains the depth of historical and contextual information that can be conveyed (Boczkowski & Mitchelstein, 2013). Algorithmic curation further complicates this picture, as content is surfaced not according to its educational value or historical accuracy but according to engagement metrics (Pariser, 2011). Wardle and Derakhshan (2017) offer a particularly relevant framework of information disorder — distinguishing between misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation — as social media environments are vulnerable to all three categories.

Generation Z, Digital Literacy, and Information Verification

Generation Z — broadly defined as those born between 1997 and 2012 — has grown up in an environment of information abundance, algorithmic curation, and platform-mediated social interaction (Seemiller & Grace, 2019). This cohort exhibits distinctive patterns of media consumption and information-seeking behavior that set it apart from previous generations. Recent data found that 51% of Gen Z now turn to social media as their first source of information, officially surpassing the traditional search engines (Sprout Social, 2026).

However, digital nativity does not automatically translate into digital literacy. The Stanford History Education Group (2016) demonstrated that Gen Z learners, despite their fluency in digital environments, often struggle to evaluate source credibility, distinguish between opinion and fact, and recognize algorithmically generated bias. This paradox — high digital fluency combined with limited critical evaluation skills — has significant implications for how this cohort engages with contested narratives such as the Palestinian one (Hobbs, 2017).

The growing integration of AI tools into student research practices adds a further layer of complexity. Floridi et al. (2018) argue that AI systems now function as epistemic intermediaries between users and information, synthesizing and presenting knowledge in ways that inevitably reflect the biases and limitations of their training data. For the Palestinian narrative specifically, this raises urgent questions about whose sources are privileged, whose voices are marginalized, and how the boundaries of legitimate knowledge are algorithmically drawn (Noble, 2018). This study therefore positions AI literacy and algorithmic awareness as essential dimensions of contemporary media education, particularly for a generation whose epistemic practices are increasingly shaped by computational systems they neither see nor fully understand (Selwyn, 2019).

Aims and Research Questions

This study is motivated by the following main research question: How do documentary films and Instagram videos differ in their effectiveness as educational tools

for teaching media students about the Palestinian issue? This main research question is broken down into the following specific sub-questions:

1. To what extent do documentary films contribute to students' understanding of Palestinian history and identity?
2. To what extent do Instagram reels contribute to students' understanding of the same topics?
3. Which medium do students perceive as more credible, engaging, and informative?
4. What sources do media students use when seeking information about specific events in Palestinian history?
5. How does media consumption influence students' knowledge and awareness of the Palestinian narrative?

With this in mind, the study has set the following objectives:

1. To design a pedagogical intervention that evaluates the comparative effectiveness of documentary films and Instagram videos in shaping media students' understanding of the Palestinian narrative.
2. To establish an educational framework for examining students' media preferences and information-seeking behaviors when researching historical events related to Palestinian resistance.
3. To investigate Generation Z's learning patterns and verification practices, specifically focusing on how they navigate between cinematic archives, social media content, and algorithmic tools to validate historical knowledge.
4. To assess the potential of media as an educommunicative resource in shaping knowledge, awareness, and critical understanding.

Methodology

Research Design

This study is grounded in the design of a pedagogical intervention (McKenney & Reeves, 2018) within the framework of educommunication. To achieve the proposed objectives, the research is structured into different complementary methodological phases that directly link the scientific literature review with the educational intervention designed. Adopting a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive analysis, the study includes the design of pre- and post-test instruments alongside focus group discussion guides to collect measurable and triable data.

In the first phase, a literature review was conducted, focusing on the representation of Palestinian identity within the complex documentary ecosystem of the digital age. This analysis allowed for the identification of similarities, distinctions, and complementarities between traditional media productions and the emerging dynamics of social media. In the second phase, the findings derived from the theoretical review served as an empirical basis for the design of a pedagogical intervention specifically aimed at media university students. This proposal is grounded in an educommunicative approach, designed to foster critical thinking and media literacy, and integrates active learning principles to place the student at the center of the process.

The pedagogical sequence was structured into three distinct stages: 1) a participatory pre-viewing dynamic, aimed at activating prior knowledge and contextualizing the Palestinian reality; 2) the group viewing of selected materials in the

classroom to promote a shared aesthetic and reflective experience; and 3) a post-viewing phase, consisting of a series of consecutive and interconnected activities oriented toward the promotion of critical thinking and the collective discussion of conclusions.

Methodological Protocol: Target Population, Media and Data collection methods

This pedagogical design is specifically tailored for media undergraduate students. This specific cohort is particularly relevant due to their academic background and engagement with media production and analysis. To ensure the methodological rigor of the prospective implementation, a series of preliminary inclusion and exclusion criteria have been established to define the target student profile.

The inclusion criteria defined for participation are: (1) being actively enrolled in media communication programs during the academic year of the intervention; (2) belonging to the Generation Z cohort (born between 1997 and 2012) to ensure consistency with the theoretical framework of digital natives; and (3) possessing fluent proficiency in social media usage, specifically Instagram. As exclusion criteria, students who do not complete all phases of the pedagogical sequence (pre-test, viewing, and post-test) or those who have prior professional ties to the analyzed audiovisual productions will be dismissed to avoid bias in perceptions of credibility and learning.

For the purposes of this study, three documentary films have been selected as primary texts, each representing a distinct mode of Palestinian documentary storytelling. The first, *Fertile Memory* (Khleifi, 1980), is a foundational work in Palestinian cinema that follows two Palestinian women — one under occupation in the West Bank and one displaced within Israel — weaving personal testimony and daily life into a pioneering document of Palestinian feminine experience and national identity. The second, *The Wanted 18* (Shomali & Cowan, 2014), combines animation, archival footage, and testimony to reconstruct a remarkable episode of First Intifada civil resistance, its blend of humor and political seriousness offering a productive formal counterpoint to conventional historical documentary. The third, *Fears, Tears and Dreams* (Masri, 2001), centers Palestinian voices and emotional testimonies around displacement and longing, adding an affective and interior dimension that complements the more overtly political registers of the other two films. Together, these three works constitute a deliberately varied documentary sample, spanning different historical periods, formal approaches, and thematic emphases.

On the other hand, Instagram content will be drawn from three selected accounts that represent distinct registers of Palestinian digital storytelling. The account @eye.on.palestine exemplifies the educational-archival mode, combining historical photography, infographics, and short video narratives to construct a coherent counter-memory of Palestinian experience. In contrast, @wizard_bisan — the account of trained Palestinian journalist and filmmaker Bisan Owda — represents the professional short-form journalistic mode, in which media literacy and platform fluency are deployed in service of documentary witnessing. Finally, @untoldpalestine embodies the historical-narrative mode, dedicated to surfacing lesser-known stories, testimonies, and archival material from Palestinian history that mainstream media has systematically overlooked.

To ensure a rigorous and multidimensional data collection process, the proposal adopts a mixed-methods design. This approach allows for the triangulation of information by combining quantitative and qualitative instruments, ensuring a holistic view of the intervention's impact.

On one hand, the quantitative dimension of this teaching proposal is articulated through a pre-test and post-test design, utilizing structured instruments specifically operationalized to measure three key variables:

1. Knowledge Acquisition: Measured through a thematic battery of several items covering history, culture, and socioeconomics. This variable is operationalized by calculating the normalized gain score (Hake's g) between the pre-test and post-test to determine the actual pedagogical impact of the intervention.
2. Perception of Media Credibility: Assessed using an adapted version of the Self-Reported Media Credibility Scale (Appelman & Sundar, 2016). Participants rate the “accuracy”, “trustworthiness”, and “bias” of documentary versus digital content on a 5-point Likert scale.
3. Algorithmic Literacy and Epistemic Trust: This variable is operationalized through a Likert scale regarding AI-mediated information. It measures the students' ability to detect omissions and their level of critical trust in AI-generated historical narratives.

On the other hand, the qualitative aspect is addressed through group reflection dynamics and focus groups, structured around the Critical Media Literacy (CML) Framework (Kellner & Share, 2019), focusing on dimensions of “Power and Ideology” and “Social Activism”. This mixed-methods approach ensures that the information distillation mentioned in the theoretical framework is empirically tracked through both statistical shifts and student discourse analysis.

Three ad hoc instruments have been designed for data collection: a pre-test questionnaire, a post-test, and a focus group discussion guide. To ensure ethical compliance, the pedagogical design incorporates informed consent, guaranteed anonymity, and data protection through alphanumeric coding. Participation is strictly voluntary, and students may withdraw at any stage without academic penalty. Furthermore, audiovisual materials are selected based on their educational relevance and thematic currency, ensuring the content remains timely and appropriate at the point of implementation. These instruments are presented in their pre-validation stage, accompanied by a formal expert judgment protocol—a mandatory step prior to their final implementation. Designed in alignment with the aforementioned theoretical frameworks, the preliminary versions of these tools are available at: <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.32435004>

Results: Design and Structure of the Educommunicative Intervention

Conceptual pillars for pedagogical implementation

The findings from the literature review identified a series of key conceptual pillars for pedagogical implementation. The deconstruction of the Orientalist gaze (Said, 1978) serves as the foundational pillar for Session 1, moving from theoretical critique to the practical mapping of digital images. Similarly, the concept of memory as a performative act (Khalidi, 2016; Assmann, 2011) justifies the comparative structure of Session 2, where students contrast the “stasis” of traditional archives with the “living” nature of digital platforms. Finally, the strategic focus on transnational solidarity and radical imagination (Daniele & Kelsch, 2025; Burriss, 2019) provides the methodological basis for Session 3, transforming students from passive consumers into active agents of narrative sovereignty. Session 3 also incorporates a module on Algorithmic Bias Literacy. This

activity requires students to perform a comparative analysis between AI-generated outputs and primary documentary sources.

By synthesizing these specific theoretical pillars into actionable learning phases, the study ensures that information distillation is critically addressed. These elements form the foundation of the educational intervention proposal, aimed at fostering students' critical analysis through the following points:

1. The Medium as the Message Shaper (Media Literacy): Understanding how narratives are transformed according to the platform and its technical logics (McLuhan/Manovich).
2. Dismantling Stereotypes (Critique of Orientalism): Identifying and challenging 'Orientalist' constructions that portray Palestinians as passive subjects (Said).
3. Digital Resistance and Virtual Sovereignty: Exploring the concept of the "digital floating homeland" (Nashif) and the assertion of indigenous sovereignty (El-Mansi).
4. Symbolism and Cultural Recontextualization: Analyzing the use of traditional symbols (*keffiyeh*, *thobe*) as tools of resistance within modern digital environments (Abu-Ayyash).
5. Memory as a Political and Public Act: Recognizing memory not merely as a recollection of the past, but as an active assertion of presence and belonging (Khalidi/Assmann).
6. Gender and Identity in Resistance: Highlighting the role of women and the domestic sphere as sites of political resistance (Stern).
7. Radical Imagination and Alternative Futures: Studying media as creative laboratories for envisioning a post-occupation future (Burris).
8. Transnational Solidarity and Global Action: Analyzing how local struggles are transformed into international movements through the strategic use of hashtags (Daniele & Kelsch/Gallant-Turner).

Table 1.

Theoretical frameworks and their application in the pedagogical design

Phase / Session	Theoretical Pillar	Media / Tools	Key Activity	Learning Outcome
Session 1: Pre-viewing	Orientalism (Said) & Media Logic (McLuhan/Manovich)	Digital Images & Search Engines	Diagnostic Pre-test & Image Traceability Mapping	Deconstruction of stereotypes and "otherness".
Session 2: Viewing	Memory & Identity (Khalidi/Assmann)	Documentary Film vs. Instagram Reels/Videos	Comparative viewing & thematic block analysis	Differentiation between "Auteur" and "Ephemeral" narratives.
Session 3: Post-viewing	Radical Imagination (Burris) & <i>Siyada Asliya</i>	AI Models (Audit) & Social Media Campaign	Algorithmic Bias Audit & Creative Workshop	Development of digital agency and narrative sovereignty.

Note. Own elaboration based on the proposed research framework.

Design of the Intervention: Sessions and Pedagogical Actions

Session 1: Pre-viewing – Deconstructing the Gaze

Focus: Orientalism and Media Literacy.

- Diagnostic Pre-test: An initial questionnaire is administered to assess students' prior knowledge regarding the Palestinian reality. The survey is structured into

key thematic blocks: history and politics, essential services (education and healthcare), socio-economic structure, culture and religion, as well as gender, diversity, and information-seeking habits.

- Theoretical Introduction: A brief lecture on Edward Said's Orientalism and McLuhan's "the medium is the message". We critically discuss how Western media has historically portrayed Palestinians as passive subjects or through a lens of "otherness".
- Active Dynamic: Students conduct a directed online search for images related to Palestine. Once they identify images representing diverse perspectives, they must perform a traceability exercise: investigating the original source, the dissemination platform, and the geographic location of origin.
- Discussion and Initial Reflection: A collective analysis on how framing changes based on the image source. Is the Palestinian subject perceived as an active or passive agent? This debate serves as a foundation for introducing the concept of dismantling stereotypes.

Session 2: Viewing – The Cinematic vs. The Digital

Focus: Similarities and divergences in the representation of Palestinian identity.

- Part A: The Documentary (Auteur Narrative): Screening of a selected Palestinian documentary.
 - Observation Goal: Identification and description of the representation of Palestine according to the same analytical blocks as the initial questionnaire: history, politics, essential services, economy, culture, religion, gender, and diversity.
- Part B: The Digital Feed (Ephemeral Narrative): Exploration of a curated set of Instagram Reels and videos.
 - Observation Goal: Analysis of the use of identity symbols (such as the *keffiyeh* and *thobe*) and how platforms construct a "digital floating homeland" (Nashif) for the diaspora. As in Part A, students will record the representation of Palestine based on the initial thematic blocks.
- Part C: Comparative Analysis: A guided debate on the narrative convergences and divergences between documentary cinema and digital content. Reflection will focus on how these audiovisual formats shape identity, culture, and memory, functioning as tools for resistance and as means of constructing sovereignty (*homeland*) for the Palestinian people.

Session 3: Post-viewing – Algorithmic Auditing and Narrative Sovereignty

Focus: Digital Resistance and Information Seeking.

Building on the reflections from previous sessions, this final phase consists of a sequence of linked activities designed for active learning and deep understanding.

- Information-Seeking Task: Students must research a specific event (e.g., the Sheikh Jarrah protests) and track its transition from a local hashtag to a global movement (Daniele & Kelsch/Gallant-Turner). They must verify source credibility and identify elements of *Siyada Asliya* (indigenous sovereignty) within the narrative.
- AI and Disinformation (Algorithmic Bias): Students must enter exactly the same thematic categories (history, gender, economics...) into an LLM (ChatGPT, Claude, etc.). They must compare the AI's response with the information from the documentary/Instagram content and note which facts are omitted or downplayed by the algorithm. They are encouraged to use neutral prompts to accurately assess

these biases. Furthermore, students must cross-reference AI-generated information to detect inaccuracies and overlooked perspectives.

- **Radical Imagination Workshop:** Based on Burris (2019), students will work in groups to design a brief social media campaign for a “post-occupation future”. This task moves beyond documenting trauma toward articulating aspirational visions of justice.
- **Final Reflection and Creative Output:** To contextualize the project within Media Studies, students will present their conclusions in their preferred format: a short video essay, a podcast pilot, or a reflective digital thread. These will be showcased to the class as the culmination of the proposal.
- **Post-test:** After the dynamics, a final questionnaire will be administered to determine if the pedagogical proposal enabled a deeper understanding of the social and cultural complexity of the Palestinian people. The post-test also measures changes in students’ critical perception of AI as an epistemic intermediary.
- **Focus Group:** To collect in-depth qualitative data, the class will participate in focus groups to develop broader and more nuanced responses regarding their learning process.

Upon completion, all quantitative and qualitative data will be analyzed and cross-referenced through methodological triangulation to measure the impact of the educational intervention.

Discussion and Conclusions

This article presents a methodological proposal and a pedagogical framework designed for undergraduate media students. The educational design addresses a question at the intersection of media education, digital culture, and political memory: how do different media forms shape what young people know and feel about the Palestinian narrative? By comparing documentary films and Instagram videos as educommunicative tools, the research moves beyond questions of representation to focus on the learner — their reception, interpretation, and information-seeking behavior in a digitally saturated environment.

The significance of this inquiry extends beyond the Palestinian context. At a moment when short-form digital content increasingly competes with — and often displaces — long-form structured media (Sprout Social, 2026), understanding the pedagogical implications of this shift is essential for media educators globally. However, the Palestinian narrative carries particular weight in this regard, as it is a story simultaneously contested, fragmented, and actively suppressed across many information ecosystems, including algorithmically curated ones. Studying how media students in Palestine themselves engage with this narrative through different platforms offers a uniquely grounded and authentic perspective.

The educational proposal developed in this research, including the data collection and evaluation tools, serves as a critical bridge between theoretical decolonial frameworks and the practical training of future media professionals. By proposing a three-stage pedagogical sequence — pre-viewing, viewing, and post-viewing — the intervention design moves beyond passive content consumption to foster a radical imagination (Burris, 2019). The inclusion of activities such as identifying algorithmic bias

in AI and tracking the evolution of hashtags and trends (Daniele & Kelsch, 2025) allows students to navigate the complexities of the digital era.

By integrating documentary films as “archive of resistance” (Alawadhi, 2013) as well as digital platforms into the university curriculum, this pedagogical design reaffirms the importance of centering indigenous voices and protecting narrative sovereignty and offers a replicable methodological framework for using media as a laboratory of political affirmation and social justice.

The proposal’s strength lies in developing three core competencies: first, a technical and theoretical grasp of media logic (Manovich, 2001) and its role in shaping collective memory; second, a heightened historical awareness that views memory as a “public and performative act” (Assmann, 2011) rather than a static record; and finally, the cultivation of digital agency (Gallant-Turner, 2026), enabling students to understand and participate in the construction of transnational solidarity through strategic digital resistance. Ultimately, this approach is based on media literacy not merely as a technical skill, but as a vital tool for dismantling Orientalist stereotypes and recognizing the “digital floating homeland” (Nashif, 2024) as a legitimate space of sovereignty and resistance.

The mixed-methods design proposed here is well-suited to capturing both quantifiable learning outcomes and the interpretive experiences of the participants. The design of the pre- and post-tests, as well as the focus group guide, draws not only on the theory of edumunication but also on practical debates regarding curriculum design, media literacy pedagogy, and the role of digital platforms in fostering historical awareness among Generation Z.

However, this study acknowledges certain limitations that delineate its scope. Firstly, the study addresses the design of an educational proposal, as well as various assessment tools, but without actual implementation. Furthermore, the proposed program is focused on university media students, a choice that prioritizes depth over broad representation. The audiovisual content is also restricted to a specific selection of case studies, comprising documentary films and a curated set of Instagram content, which may not capture the full diversity of Palestinian media production. Consequently, the findings may not be strictly generalizable to all academic or cultural settings, although these observations serve as a critical foundation for future comparative research and offer a replicable model for studying media literacy and narrative resistance in other contested or subaltern contexts.

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