

## The Pandemic and Media Discourse: Linguistic Framing of Covid-19 in Egyptian Advertisements

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### Abstract

*Since the outbreak of Covid-19 in late 2019, media discourse worldwide has attempted to frame the pandemic as an invisible enemy everyone needs to fight. The total lockdown that took place due to the pandemic has also had an impact on media discourse in its different forms, such as television commercials. Business companies have tried to address the theme of the pandemic and the urgency to abide by the lockdown and social distancing in their advertisements produced during the period of 2019-2020. This paper aimed to examine selected Egyptian commercials, either on television or YouTube, to analyze how they tackled the pandemic. Eight Egyptian commercials were analyzed, focusing on how the pandemic was framed verbally and visually. Analysis was carried out on two levels. The first level was concerned with examining the ideas/themes that were promoted in the selected commercials that would shape how the audience would regard the pandemic. The second level investigated how these themes were represented verbally and visually by analyzing the linguistic as well as the visual layout used in the selected commercials. Significant results showed that the pandemic was linguistically framed in metaphors related to war, enemy, family, and Lockdown/Stay Home. These linguistic frames were also supported by the visual representation that highlighted the themes of social distancing and the lockdown.*

*Keywords: advertisements, coronavirus, covid-19, Egypt, linguistic framing, pandemic*

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## 1. Introduction

Since its outbreak in late 2019, the entire world started to take action to control the pandemic. The most prominent step taken was that of the lockdown and urging people to stay home and shift their lives to cyberspace. Official state, as well as independent institutions, have tried to address people within the new context of the lockdown, promoting the idea that staying home and maintaining social distancing are for everyone's safety to curb the spread of the virus. It was in this sense that the coronavirus has been framed in the metaphor of the "unseen" enemy that people should keep away from. In other words, there had been a nationwide consensus to encourage the lockdown as long as the virus is still spreading. Media discourse, in all forms, adopted this same message of including the theme of the lockdown in their media production, with no exception to business companies that tackled the theme of the coronavirus in their commercials both on YouTube and on television from different angles.

In March 2020, Egypt announced a partial lockdown nationwide. Educational institutions closed their doors on face-to-face classes and shifted to online classes. Public and private business reduced their contact hours in the office to abide by the dusk-to-dawn curfew declared by the Egyptian state. All cultural events, celebrations, and parties were suspended until further notice, while restaurants were not allowed to open their places as a dine-in. The first Ramadan during the pandemic was certainly different since people had to stay home during such a festive month that is usually an opportunity for family and friends' gatherings. Therefore, media discourse produced during 2020 was exceptional since people were largely depending on television and other media platforms (like *Netflix*, *Shahid*, and *Watch it*) as their means of entertainment. In addition, the media had to go through enormous efforts to propagate for the importance of maintaining social distance and abiding by the lockdown rules.

It thus becomes essential to explore how different media productions, including TV commercials, incorporated the pandemic in their discourse. Many studies, from different disciplines like sociology, psychology, and linguistics, have been interested in the semantic and metaphorical framing of illness in general. Literature related to this idea dates to the 1980s since the publication of Lakoff & Johnson's (2003) book *Metaphors we live by* (originally published in 1980) where they argued that metaphor is "pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action" (p. 4). Lakoff and Johnson (2003) explained that one's beliefs and concepts govern their perceptions as well as their "everyday realities". They argued that, in this sense, "the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor" (p. 4). It should be elaborated, at this point, that, with the context of the current study, the term *metaphor* would be used interchangeably with the word *framing* when discussing how the incident of the pandemic was tackled, whether linguistically or visually. In general, studies investigating linguistic framing focused on examining how certain key events have been described in different discourse types. Incidents investigated were mostly diseases like cancer and depression, or pandemics like SARS and the coronavirus. For example, Wallis and Nerlich (2005) examined how UK media framed the 2003 SARS by analyzing how the disease was tackled in five different national UK newspapers, while Gui (2020) analyzed how Covid-19 was framed in different Chinese social and cultural contexts. Similarly, Wicke and Bolognesi (2020) also analyzed how the coronavirus was framed in tweets written by non-experts on *Twitter*. Other studies on the linguistic framing of disease included Thomas et al.'s (2020) study which examined how Australian media placed responsibility for Covid-19, and Reali et al.'s (2016) paper on the linguistic framing of depression as an emotional disorder.

Despite the abundance of literature identified on the study of diseases in general and Covid-19, in particular, and how it is being addressed in different media discourse, a gap of research on this area is spotted in the Egyptian context. Thus, the aim of this paper aimed to address this gap by analyzing selected commercials aired on television and/or streamed on YouTube to examine how business companies have incorporated the theme of the pandemic while promoting their products. Examining Egyptian commercials, in fact, would give an insight on how business companies framed the coronavirus

in their commercials that were produced in 2020 promoting their products. The current study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. How did Egyptian business companies linguistically framed Covid-19 in the selected commercials?
2. How did Egyptian business companies visually framed Covid-19 in the selected commercials?

## 2. Literature Review

The idea of framing significant incidents and events has been the focus of many scholars in the fields of applied linguistics and media discourse. In their book *Metaphors we live by*, Lakoff and Johnson (2003) held that various events are framed in certain metaphors conceptually, and this is usually manifested in the language used in a specific discourse. They defined metaphor as “understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 5). In other words, a topic is framed when speakers/writers “select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (Entman, 1993, p. 53). Lakoff and Johnson (2003) further offered a practical example to elaborate on what they mean by metaphor. They explained how the word *argument* is held in the *war* metaphor in utterances like “*He attacked every weak point in my argument*,” “*[h]is criticisms were right on target*,” and “*I demolished his argument*” which all contain semantic elements related to *war* (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 4). Burgers et al. (2016) take Entman’s (1993) concept of framing a step further and explained that framing could be composed of two elements. These elements included the linguistic aspect, which Burgers et al. (2016) referred to as “figurative language types” including metaphors, and the second element is the conceptual – “reasoning” – device as reflected in “the frame’s conceptual content” and expressed literally without using figurative language (p. 411). In some creative media discourse like commercials, I believe, writers/speakers usually prefer framing topics implicitly through figurative language like metaphors leaving the conceptual idea for the viewer to decipher and understand.

As highlighted in the introduction above, a plethora of literature is found on the area of linguistic framing and the use of metaphors in media discourse, especially news reports, on certain diseases and epidemics (See Gui, 2021; Reali et al., 2016; Thomas et al., 2020; Wallis & Nerlich, 2005; Wicke & Bolognesi, 2020; Zhang & Gao, 2009). Findings of such literature mostly agreed that disease and pandemics are framed within the *war* metaphor with its semantic indicators of the disease expressed in words such as *enemy*, *fight*, *defeat*, and *threat*. For example, Wallis and Nerlich (2005) reported that the *war* metaphor, although not commonly found, was still used in Western media reporting on the SARS 2003 epidemic through images like “China on a ‘*war footing*’, ‘*plans to combat the threat*’, and ‘*Armies of disinfection squads*’” (p. 2633). Similarly, Gui’s (2020), and Wicke and Bolognesi’s (2020) examined the framing of Covid-19 on Twitter and in Chinese news reports respectively. The results of both studies were similar. Gui (2020) found that Chinese news reports have contributed to framing the pandemic as an enemy whose fighting is the responsibility of both the government and the Chinese people, while Wicke & Bolognesi (2020) reported that the *war* metaphor was also realized in the tweets examined along with other metaphors including that of *family*. In addition, in their multimodal analysis of Pakistani television commercials tackling the Coronavirus, Nasir & Mirza (2021) found that most of the analyzed commercials have framed the pandemic in the metaphor of the *enemy* their products would be capable of fighting.

Similar to Gui’s (2020) study, Tahamtan et al. (2021), and Solvoll & Høiby (2023) also examined how the coronavirus was framed in different media discourses. Tahamtan et al. (2021) investigated how Covid-19 was framed in Twitter hashtags. A total of twenty-two Covid-19 related hashtags were thematically analyzed and researchers argued that the pandemic was contextualized in nine different frames on Twitter, including *quarantine life*, *public health guidelines*, *solidarity*, and *conflict*. In addition to their analysis of Twitter hashtags, Tahamtan et al. (2021) argued that framing a certain event would

affect public attention and reaction to it. They explained this by mentioning that “[f]raming or reframing an issue can shift how people understand the story, consequently changing how people respond to it” (p. 2). To measure public opinion or reaction to the proposed Covid-19 framing on Twitter, Tahamtan et al. (2021) analyzed tweet activity exemplified in retweeting frequency. On the other hand, Solvoll and Høiby (2023) found out that Norwegian public service broadcasting (i.e. news and debate programs) framed Covid-19 in five different metaphors. These included the pandemic being a *crisis*, socially, economically, and health-wise. The pandemic was also described as a risky event that requires governmental action as well as social behavior. Solvoll & Høiby’s (2023) paper thus frames Covid-19 as a threat that requires action on the governmental and individual levels for the country to face it.

To the researcher’s knowledge, the only study that examined the framing of Covid-19 in the Egyptian context is a thesis dissertation in the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at the American University in Cairo (AUC). In this study, Abdelgaber and El-Behary (2021) compared how the pandemic was framed in three different countries: Sweden, which adopted a herd immunity strategy in facing the virus, the UK, which adopted full lockdown, and Egypt, which applied partial lockdown (a curfew) in facing the pandemic in 2020. Frames of *morality*, *human interest*, and *fear* were the most commonly used frames in the three countries in the data examined in this thesis. The significance of the current study thus comes from the notion that commercials, as a channel of communication, have been utilized, I would argue, as an indirect means of raising public awareness as well as directing people’s attention to take the pandemic seriously. For this reason, it is vital to investigate how the selected commercials, especially those produced during the holy month of Ramadan being a festive season in Egypt, framed the pandemic and the lockdown to the Egyptian audience.

### 3. Research Methods

This is a qualitative study that analyzed a total of eight commercials of mobile networks, beverages, and disinfectants that were either aired on television or streamed on the official YouTube channels of their respective companies in Egypt (See Table 1). Three types of products were selected for this paper: (1) mobile networks as represented in commercials 1-4, (2) soft drinks (commercials 5 and 6), and (3) disinfectants in commercials 7 and 8.

**Table 1:** *List of selected commercials*

#	Company	Time (in seconds)	YouTube Link
Commercial 1	Vodafone Egypt	130	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WrnIhTsByPc">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WrnIhTsByPc</a>
Commercial 2	Orange Egypt	146	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&amp;v=9S478D3nInk">https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&amp;v=9S478D3nInk</a>
Commercial 3	Etisalat Masr	91	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&amp;v=5vzUJvPeq8w">https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&amp;v=5vzUJvPeq8w</a>
Commercial 4	Telecom Egypt	84	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PbAmsJ5Y3no">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PbAmsJ5Y3no</a>
Commercial 5	Coca-Cola Egypt	60	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&amp;v=8bKojZSvuMI">https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&amp;v=8bKojZSvuMI</a>
Commercial 6	Pepsi Masr	15	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u3v5PlfXAnE">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u3v5PlfXAnE</a>
Commercial 7	Dettol Egypt	35	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AwFcTB1nTzU">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AwFcTB1nTzU</a>
Commercial 8	Clorox Egypt	30	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4KS4ADyDDow">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4KS4ADyDDow</a>

Commercials for mobile networks were selected since they were of priority to people during the lockdown. Mobile networks in Egypt offered various and unique internet plans when work and study shifted to online mode in 2020. In addition, staying at home would mean more food and snack consumption. For this reason, two commercials of the two competing soft drink companies – Coca-Cola Egypt and Pepsi Egypt – were selected to see how such companies promoted their products during the lockdown. Lastly, disinfectants were of utmost importance since the beginning of the pandemic; thus,

commercials of both Dettol and Clorox were selected as samples of such products to analyze in this study. Another significant selection criterion that applied to all commercials in Table 1 (except for commercials 7 and 8) is that these commercials were specifically produced to be aired during the holy month of Ramadan, which is, under normal conditions, a festive month among Muslim communities that entails family and friends' gatherings. It was of interest to see how such commercials have included the pandemic, the lockdown, and stay-home calls during one of the most socially active months of the year in Egyptian society.

Analysis of the selected commercials focused on (1) thematic analysis, (2) linguistic choices, and framing, in addition to (3) non-verbal elements and visual images used to enforce the target metaphorical representation of the pandemic in the commercials under study. Thematic analysis was concerned with the different topics each commercial covered, and how similar or different these themes/topics were. Analysis of linguistic choices and the visual images complement the first point of analysis since it targeted examining how the commercials' themes were realized both verbally and visually.

## 4. Results

In general, all selected commercials incorporated the theme of the pandemic and the idea of the lockdown or, rather, social distancing on different levels and realized these main themes differently on both the verbal and non-verbal levels. This section discusses the major findings of the analysis of the commercials.

The findings are divided into three parts. The first part presents findings of commercials 1-4 concerned with mobile networks, while the second part reports on major results of commercials 5 and 6 of Coca-cola and Pepsi, respectively. The last part of this section covers the results of analyzing commercials 7 and 8 of the disinfectants, Dettol and Clorox.

### 4.1 Commercials 1-4: Mobile Networks

All four advertisements of mobile networks examined here framed the pandemic in metaphors and visual images related to the frames of *stay home* and *social distance*. It could be argued that the four commercials did not adopt a threatening tone. On the contrary, they all tried to focus on various activities that could be done while staying safe at home. The ads highlighted these two major frames (*stay home* and *social distance*) through a number of common techniques, including showing people doing everyday chores online via video calls instead of meeting face-to-face, and showing gatherings of close family members; this mostly included the parents and their children only. Other techniques included adding the layout of live Facebook videos on the screen (figures 2 and 3 below) and an emphasizing voice-over message at the end of each of the four analyzed commercials that addressed the idea of being physically apart during the pandemic.

Commercials 1, 3, and 4 followed the same technique of depicting everyday activities being done online rather than face-to-face and followed the same shooting technique that highlights how the camera crew was working while maintaining social distance. For example, commercial 1 of Vodafone Egypt showed a number of celebrities doing their work online through video calls, some of them doing their everyday life tasks with their close family members (usually the parents and their children). Most of the shots were either taken indoors or outdoors in private gardens. The commercial shows a disclaimer on the bottom-right of the screen (where the arrow is in Figure 1 below) that reads, "This ad is shot while maintaining social distance in agreement with our initiative #stay\_home and general safety measures". This disclaimer is, in fact, one way how the company reinforced its awareness of the pandemic and the necessity of promoting the idea of social distancing. It should be mentioned that this is the only commercial in the selected data that added such a disclaimer. This could be attributed either to the idea that their commercial showed people in close physical contact with each other or to show their viewers that although this commercial has been produced during the time of the pandemic, the company was cautious, and its camera crew was keen to follow safety measures while working on the ad.



Figure 1: Commercial 1-Vodafone Egypt: Disclaimer

In addition, the commercial's jingle revolves around the idea of *"we are still together although we are currently physically apart"* and was supported by the visual images of celebrities like Mohammad Salah, the Egyptian footballer, playing with his daughter, attending online school events, and sharing online challenges on his social media accounts with his fans. Other visual images in this commercial included Cairokee and Sharmoofers<sup>1</sup> lead singers working together online, television presenter Esaad Younis shooting her talk show via video conferencing, and people having iftar together through online video conferences as well. At the end of the commercial, the viewer could listen to a voice-over reading, *"As long as we are there supporting each other, nothing can keep us apart,"* where the word *nothing* referred to the pandemic. In this way, Vodafone Egypt's commercial included the idea of the pandemic and the necessity of staying safe at home by reinforcing the notion of how people can still enjoy their lives while remaining safe and maintaining social distance to limit the spread of the pandemic.

Similarly, commercials 3 and 4 of Etisalat Egypt and Telecom Egypt, respectively, employed the same techniques highlighted above as used in commercial 1. The two ads depicted scenes of people carrying on their everyday activities online. In addition, both commercials have also added the layout of live social media videos to their screens (figures 2 and 3) with comments and hashtags appearing on the ad.



Figure 2: Etisalat Egypt commercial: Live video layout

Although both commercials endorsed the theme of the pandemic, commercial 3 stands out in the tone maintained throughout. In addition to the linguistic frame of *stay home* that is maintained in all four commercials of mobile networks, Etisalat Masr advertisement (commercial 3) adopted a tone of

<sup>1</sup> Cairokee and Sharmoofers are two Egyptian musical bands.

boredom and anger. The protagonist of the advertisement - Ahmed Helmy, an Egyptian actor - appeared to be indifferent to time and to the fact that people were celebrating Ramadan while maintaining the tone *"I'm ok, nothing is wrong!"* at the same time where all the visual images show him doing various tasks alone, like cooking and burning food, playing backgammon with his reflection in the mirror, and trying different snapchat filters. These visual images changed when Helmy tried to go out after iftar where the viewer could see Helmy's picture with the filter of a policeman and a slogan on the screen saying, *"Don't go out!"* to emphasize the *stay home* frame in a different threatening tone especially that, in the ad, Helmy immediately got back indoors and did not go out. In addition, the voice-over at the end of the Etisalat Masr, commercial 3, read,

*Because this Ramadan is not like any other one, Etisalat will make you closer to your beloved ones through a plan like no other one. A 6-in-1 plan: regular, you, internet, friends, share, charity - in cooperation with the Egyptian Cure Bank and Egyptian Food Bank. Call 011# and recharge your account with the most powerful plan, the 6-in-1 plan. Etisalat...the most powerful network in Egypt.*

In fact, this pervious voice-over shed light on the uniqueness of the time of Ramadan 2020 being a time where people had to stay home and abide by the state lockdown regulations while sustaining a positive attitude. Commercial 3 succeeded in depicting possible feelings of boredom and annoyance people might have felt during the lockdown and lists its company's promotion at the end of the commercial in an attempt to tell their viewers that the company felt for them and that it aimed to make its customers feel together while physically apart. In this sense, Etisalat Egypt adopted the *stay home* metaphor while depicting fun activities that could be done at home despite possible feelings of annoyance and, at the same time, promoting their exceptional internet plans that would appeal to its customers during the lockdown period.



Figure 3: Telecom Egypt Commercial: Snapchat live video layout

Although commercial 4 resorted to the same language and themes used in commercial 3 above, the Telecom Egypt commercial adopted a more joyful tone where it showed members of a family, composed of parents, their children, and grandchildren, having fun at home and online as shown in figure 3 above. This commercial also showed family members cooking and doing online challenges together as well as studying and attending business meetings online. Unlike commercial 3, the voice-over in commercial 4 focused mainly on the company's special internet plans for this Ramadan without further highlighting the idea of people not being able to meet face-to-face. On the contrary, the focus in this voice-over was rather on the super-fast internet offered by Telecom Egypt's network being made more affordable to its customers with almost no direct mention of the pandemic throughout the commercial. The ad only focused on how people could have fun with their family without having to go out.

Although commercial 2 - of Orange Egypt - maintained the same theme of people being apart, its visual images were not related to the pandemic or any activity done during the lockdown except for the voice-over at the end of the advertisement. The commercial was composed of different visual images of people communicating with their loved ones over the phone or through video conferencing. It started with a video call between a mother and her son, who was surprising her of coming back home. Unlike commercials 1, 3 and 4, the jingle is one that revolved around the idea that people might get apart for many reasons - other than the pandemic. The rest of the commercial displayed different scenes of families and friends separated because of staying in different countries and ended with all these families and friends reunited by the traveling member getting back home. Unlike the previously discussed commercials, this one, of Orange, showed people hugging rather than maintaining social distance. However, as mentioned earlier, the voice-over at the end of the ad read:

*We miss this moment (of people reuniting and hugging), the gatherings. We miss those days. Until these days are back, we'll make you close to them. No matter how faraway you are, Orange makes you closer*

Thus, in commercial 2, the *social distance* frame was enhanced, not through the visual images nor the jingle, but only through the voice-over at the end. Overall, this commercial looked calmer with a nostalgic tone rather than the angry tone of commercial 3 or the festive one adopted in commercial 4.

#### 4.2 Commercials 5 and 6: Soft drinks

The pandemic theme was evident in both commercials 5 and 6 of soft drinks. Coca-Cola Egypt and Pepsi Egypt did not depend on actors/models to shoot their commercials. The hero of their commercials was the cola bottle across different times in commercial 5 and the two-liter bottle in the later. Pepsi's commercial (6) was of only 15 seconds, had a brief message that synchronized with the overall atmosphere of the pandemic. The advertisement showed the two-liter bottle - personified - in the living room watching television and saying

*It seems we'll stay home for a longer period this Ramadan, so, Pepsi produced larger sizes. For a limited time, buy the 2-liter bottle, and you'll find it 2 liters and a half. More time means more Pepsi. Let's postpone our gatherings."*

The voiceover above also framed the pandemic in the *stay home* metaphor but in a very short, to the point, message and depending on a hashtag *#يلا\_ناجل\_لمنته* (*let's postpone our gatherings*) which is used as the Pepsi campaign slogan in Ramadan 2020. Although there was no mention of the Coronavirus, Pepsi Egypt's commercial asserted the importance of staying at home and avoiding gatherings. One explanation for this could be that promoting for a beverage like soft drinks required maintaining a cosy, friendly atmosphere due to being a product associated with spending good time and having fun. It could be argued that Pepsi Egypt did not want to ruin the festive nature of Ramadan by mentioning the pandemic explicitly in their commercial. Instead, the company just used the hashtag at the end urging the people stay home safe.

Coca-Cola Egypt - commercial 5 - entirely depended on the idea of having a voice-over with different images of the Coca-Cola bottles, cans, boxes with their different shapes across time. The voice-over started with the sentence, "*Thanks for the heroes of this time*". After which, the speaker started listing various categories of people spending their time during the pandemic. For example, he read, "*those who are alone, and those staying together, our friends who we miss*" and added, "*those who cough at distance, and those who keep distance, those who don't kiss, and those who wear masks*" in a direct indication of the *stay home* and *social distance* metaphors associated with the pandemic. In addition, the commercial also expressed gratitude to people in the medical sector, describing them as "*the white army*", thus adding another common metaphor to the pandemic, that of the *war*; a metaphor that is used in commercials 7 and 8 as highlighted in the section below.



### 4.3 Commercials 7 and 8: Disinfectants

The products promoted in these two commercials were strongly related to Covid-19 since one of the major tips for people worldwide has been to clean their hands and the different surfaces they touch on a regular basis. Both Dettol and Clorox produced two special commercials for the coronavirus addressing their customers that their products were capable of defeating the virus. Because commercials 7 and 8 were those of disinfectants, the coronavirus was linguistically framed as a *danger* and an *enemy* which the advertised products could *destroy* or *kill*.

Commercial 7 - of Dettol - featured Dr. Mohammad Rifaat, a pediatric, talking about how Dettol has been proven effective in destroying different viruses like influenza, SARS, and MERS due to its active ingredient that could destroy the outer surface of the virus. Dettol advertisement had a disclaimer at the end that the product was safe to be used on all surfaces and with all age groups, specifically kids. At the end of the ad, a badge appeared on the screen saying that “Dettol kills Covid-19” (figure 4 below).



Figure 4: Commercial 7-Dettol: Able to kill COVID

Dr. Rifaat ended the commercial by addressing women, “*Trust Dettol. It is scientifically proven that Dettol destroys the new Coronavirus.*” Before moving to the next commercial, two points need to be mentioned about the Dettol commercial. First, choosing a pediatric added to the credibility of the information mentioned in the commercial as well as to the seriousness of “fighting” the virus. The second point is that the badge that appeared on the screen at the end enforces the *enemy* metaphor used to refer to the virus and Dettol’s ability to defeat it.

Although the theme of the pandemic is depicted, Commercial 8 of Clorox did this on a lighter note by focusing more on the visual images. The ad started with a teacher wearing a mask cleaning class desks and welcoming students, all with masks on as well, to class. The rest of the advertisement featured people cleaning different places with Clorox products, accompanied by a voice-over thanking everyone who encouraged others and made things easier for people.



Figure 5: Commercial 8-Clorox: Kills Covid-19 badge

Like commercial 7, the Clorox voice-over also addressed women and ended by reading, “*Thank you for trusting that Clorox, in every single moment of your life, protects you from viruses and germs*”. The commercial only referred to the theme of *protection* from viruses with no reference to the pandemic; viewers could only see people wearing masks and others cleaning different surfaces along with the voice-over. The coronavirus was only explicitly mentioned at the end of the commercial through the final red badge (figure 5) that appeared on the screen reading “*kills COVID-19 virus*,” which, again, framed the virus in the *enemy* metaphor.

## 5. Discussion

Analysis of selected commercials showed that, like previous literature on the subject matter (Gui, 2021; Nasir & Mirza, 2021; Thomas et al., 2020; Wicke & Bolognesi, 2020; Zhang & Gao, 2009), Covid-19 is framed in the *war* and *enemy* metaphors, especially in the commercials of disinfectants. This, in fact, is well placed since the main purpose of the products promoted in such advertisements is to *destroy* the virus and ensure its customers an environment free of infection. The *enemy* metaphor is also spotted in commercial 5 of Coca-Cola through the analogy held between the medical sector being compared to an *army fighting* the virus. However, the most prominent frames identified in the analyzed commercials were those of *stay home, and family*. *Stay home*, and the idea of the lockdown was referred to in almost all of the selected commercials. In commercials 1-6, staying home was the main theme/frame tackled, highlighted with possible activities that could be done either with close family members or remotely through different online platforms and applications. In this way, these ads tackled the coronavirus either implicitly, as in commercial 2 of Orange Egypt and commercial 4 of Telecom Egypt, for example, or explicitly – as shown in commercials 1 and 3 of Vodafone Egypt and Etisalat Masr respectively, and commercials 5 and 6 of Coca-Cola Egypt and Pepsi Egypt – by merging metaphors related to the two frames: *stay home* and *family*.

The *war* frame not being pervasive in the analyzed data – appeared mainly in the ads of disinfectants – could be attributed to a number of reasons. The first reason is the small sample size of this study, while the second, and more significant reason, that should be considered is the time where these commercials were produced and aired on television. These commercials were produced during the peak time of the pandemic, where people worldwide were urged to stay in their homes. One possible explanation for avoiding the *war* metaphor is that business companies have been trying to lighten the atmosphere, so, instead of adopting *war* and *threat*-related vocabulary and visual images, they might have preferred to adopt a positive perspective by focusing on what fun, family-gathering activities could be done while abiding by the lockdown regulations. Further research would, in fact, help in asserting – or denying – such interpretation.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper aimed to investigate how Egyptian commercials, produced during the festive month of Ramadan 2020, metaphorically framed the coronavirus pandemic during the lockdown period. In general, the *war*, *family*, and *stay home* frames were the most used in the eight selected commercials. These three frames were represented both verbally, through commercials’ jingles and voice-overs, and non-verbally, through the commercials’ layout as discussed above. It should be mentioned, though, that the current study has its limitations. Other frames depicted in the selected data include framing the pandemic as a *threat* that required maintaining *social distance*, and an *enemy* that required all members of the society to fight. It is important to stress the idea that the results of this paper should not be generalized due to the limited data analyzed; eight commercials might not yield generalizable results. It is recommended that future research would further explore this topic by analyzing a larger number of commercials for different products. This could also be carried out by building a corpus of the selected ads which would result in quantitative analysis of the frequency of frames used in the data. Another element to be considered in future research is to carry out a comparative study either through exploring

the theme of the coronavirus in commercials in different countries or through comparing commercials of the same products across time.

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