

Designing Local Visual Identity in Animation: The Jordanian Series "Ben and Essam" as an Example

fuad eyad fuad khasawneh , Visual Art Dept, School of Arts and Design, University of Jordan, Amman, Jordan

Received:
28/8/2023

Acceptance:
7/12/2023

Corresponding
Author:
fuadkhasawneh0@gmail.com

Cited by:
Jordan J. Arts, 17(2)
(2024) 259-272

Doi:
<https://doi.org/10.47196/17.2.2>

Abstract

In this study, the researcher aims to explore the design of Arab visual identity in animation. The research consists of a qualitative study and analysis of animations produced in Jordan. The objective of the study is to uncover the cultural implications of the visual identity depicted and disseminated in animations, as well as its impact on generations. The researcher discusses the concept of Arab and religious visual identity in animation. The qualitative method was employed in this study, with deliberate selection of research samples. The research sample was drawn from the series "Ben and Essam," which was produced in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The researcher analyzed several episodes of the series as the research sample. The study concluded several key findings, including the ability of the "Ben and Essam" series to highlight local (Arab, religious) visual identity and enhance Arab-Islamic local culture through the stories and topics covered in its episodes. The study found that the "Ben and Essam" series portrayed the bright side of Arab-Islamic civilization and culture, carrying local visual identity within its design and narratives. It conveyed values, knowledge, messages, and connotations that affirm the role of Arab-Islamic civilization in building society, nurturing youth, promoting tolerance, and accepting others.

Keywords: Visual identity, Animation, Character design, Ben and Essam.

تصميم الهوية البصرية المحلية في الرسوم المتحركة، مسلسل بن وعصام الأردني أنموذجاً

فؤاد اياد فؤاد خصاونة، قسم الفنون البصرية، كلية الفنون والتصميم، الجامعة الأردنية، الأردن

الملخص

عني الباحث في هذه الدراسة باكتشاف تصميم الهوية البصرية العربية في الرسوم المتحركة. وقد تالف البحث بدراسة بحثية وتحليل لرسوم متحركة تم إنتاجها في الأردن، وهدف الدراسة هو الكشف على الدلالات الثقافية للهوية البصرية التي تم تصميم الرسوم المتحركة لإبرازها ونشرها وأثر هذا الهوية في الأجيال. وتناول الباحث مفهوم الهوية البصرية العربية والدينية في الرسوم المتحركة. وقد استخدم الباحث في هذه الدراسة المنهج النوعي، وقدم تحليلاً لنماذج البحث المنتقاة قصدياً، وجاءت عينة البحث من مسلسل (بن وعصام) الذي تم إنتاجه في المملكة الأردنية الهاشمية، حيث قام الباحث بتحليل مجموعته من حلقات المسلسل عينة البحث. وقد خلصت الدراسة لمجموعته من النتائج أهمها: قدرة مسلسل بن وعصام على إبراز الهوية البصرية المحلية (العربية، والدينية) وتعزيز الثقافة المحلية العربية الإسلامية من خلال القصص والمواضيع التي تناولها في حلقاته. وجاءت خلاصة الدراسة أن مسلسل بن وعصام عكس الجانب المشرق من الحضارة والثقافة العربية الإسلامية وحمل الهوية البصرية المحلية بين ثنايا تصميمه وقصصه، فكان محملاً بقيم ومعارف ورسائل ودلالات تؤكد دور الحضارة العربية والإسلامية في بناء المجتمع وتهيئة النشء وتعزيز التسامح وقبول الآخر.

منذ الثمانينيات من القرن الماضي، استمرت الرسوم المتحركة العربية في أن تكون بمثابة محاولات فردية لعرض مواهب الرسامين والمبدعين العرب، ورغم أن الرسوم المتحركة لم تكن من أولويات المنتجين العرب في ذلك الوقت، نتيجة لاعتبارها ترفيهاً للأطفال وأيضاً بسبب قلة انتشار ثقافة التلفاز في العالم العربي، فإن الرسامين العرب كان لديهم مستوى عالٍ من الإبداع، خاصة في الدول الإفريقية مثل مصر وتونس. ومع ذلك، كانت جهودهم في صناعة الرسوم المتحركة محصورة في نطاق ضيق، نظراً لتحديات البحث عن مصادر الدخل اليومي، حيث كانت عملية الدبلجة تسيطر

© 2024 - جميع الحقوق محفوظة للمجلة الأردنية للفنون

على الرسوم المتحركة في العالم العربي، وكان المحتوى الذي يعرض على التلفزيون يعكس أساساً أفكاراً وقيماً وثقافات غربية، هذا الوضع أدى إلى تجميد الإبداع لفترة طويلة أمام المنتجين العرب، الذين قيدوا إنتاج الرسوم المتحركة العربية بحجة الرغبة في استهداف جمهور أوسع. ومن خلال عملية الدبلجة، جاء التأثير الثقافي وتعريب المحتوى، مثل تغيير الحوار وإعطاء الشخصيات أسماء عربية، كما حدث في تسمية الكابتن (تسوباسا) بالكابتن ماجد مثلاً. في المجمل، عني هذا البحث بدراسة الإنتاج العربي للرسوم المتحركة وتحقيق الهوية المحلية من خلال هذه الرسوم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الهوية البصرية، الرسوم المتحركة، تصميم الشخصيات، بن وعصام.

Research Problem:

During recent years, the world has witnessed a tremendous and noticeable development in the animation industry, including tools and engines to build the design of the new idea in animation in general. This development was demonstrated by the emergence of a large group of animation makers, some countries adopted these makers and contributed with their financial and technical support. Animation makers showed in Jordan, for example, there was a new style stemming from the local visual identity, despite the limited nature of this production. These drawings were present in international forums in design and message, and their design was based on the local visual identity, trying to enter the discursive arena directed in order to influence the viewer locally and globally. Also, the characters were selected in animation has shaped the diversity and complexity of nationalities and trends, and here the idea of designing the local visual identity in animation has emerged as a concept in artistic production and the method of intentional selectivity in choosing the idea and symbols. The world has witnessed tremendous transformations at the level of animation design, which has become a basis for cultivating the transformation in the structure. Thought and its transformations are represented in the ability to influence the recipient and innovate ideas for a design that is compatible with the nature of intellectual transformations, ideologies, and acceptance of others by investing these fees in raising a conscious generation. The series “Ben and Essam” targeted children from different cultures to help them understand each other and emphasize that the difference in their cultures and ways of thinking does not mean disagreement between them.

We can define the research problem by asking the following question:

What are the connotations of local visual identity in the design of Arabic animation, the Ben and Essam series being an example during the last ten years, and what is the impact of these connotations on viewers in the world?

Research Importance:

The importance of the research is evident in studying the local visual identity in animation and its design methods in Arab animation, and the ability of animator makers to deal with this identity and its vocabulary in their design of animation and its characters according to visions that serve the purposes of the message of this cartoon, after studying a group of episodes of the Ben and Essam series. As a qualitative analytical study, note that this study will be one of the pioneering studies that will be used in the field of precise and general specialization for the title of Arab animation, as it will contribute to creating a new field of research in Arabic animation, its topics, and the role of animation in displaying the culture of Arab civilization in a different way in front of other cultures. This will enhance the upbringing of Western generations and fight the well-known stereotype. It will also contribute to encouraging Arab animation makers to choose local topics and will also contribute to encouraging official institutions to support these makers. On the one hand, this study will contribute to strengthening the capabilities of animation designers to Building Arab animated characters that reflect the Arab identity, keep pace with cultural developments, and show the state of contemporary times in the Arab world,

which will contribute to the emergence of a more modern design, reflecting the Arab and local cultural and artistic reality. The importance also comes from the fact that research in the field of Arab animation is limited, and those who follow the great developments it is going through. The animation industry in general and Arabic animation in particular.

1- Research Objective:

Revealing the mechanism of designing the local visual identity and its characters in the Arab animation industry through studying the animated series Ben and Essam.

2 Limits of the research:

It represents a collection of episodes of the Ben and Essam series from the first season in 2010, being the only season that has been produced so far.

3- Study Sample:

The Ben and Essam series was chosen as a model and sample for the study because it was produced in Jordan with official support and sponsorship (web 6, 2010) to reflect the civilized image of Arab culture and promote the approach of intercultural dialogue and common understanding between individuals and societies. The Ben and Essam series came with its first title in the English language and was launched at an official ceremony in the United States of America - New York. The production company contributed to distributing the series and publishing it in Western countries and across the world. Social media platforms, and the series was re-dubbed in Arabic and published on social media platforms later.

It was a set of four episodes of the animated series Ben and Essam: the first episode, the fourth episode, the sixth episode, and the ninth episode. These episodes were chosen because of the diversity of their historical, Arab, and cultural topics, which contribute to a more in-depth analysis of the research topic.

Presentation of Theoretical Literature:

Presentation: Arab Visual Identity in Animation

Since the 1930s, Arabic animation has shown a response to the influence of the prevailing style of Western animation. This response was limited to the idea first and the implementation mechanism second. At the same time, the limited Arab producers at that time tried to form a deviation in the visual identity of Arabic animation, despite the clear influence at times. And imitating Western cultures at other times.

At a time when Western animation producers developed, relying mainly on prevailing myths, stories, and surreal daily life (SURREALISM). For example, (Betty Boop and Felix the Cat), and (Bouldin, J. 2001) stated that the Arab animation industry was in the process of birth; it appeared in the beginning with an Arabic character such as (Mishmish Effendi), (Callus, P. 2018), which was the product of the cross-fertilization of Western and Eastern cultural traditions at the same time.

(Mishmish Effendi) has been, even for a short period, an Arab visual identity in animation since its birth in 1934 AD. (Mishmish Effendi) is, in fact, an Egyptian hero who expressed the Egyptian citizen, so he was inspired by the character of "Al-Masry Effendi" by the Egyptian-Armenian cartoonist (Saroukhan), which It was published in a newspaper called (Akhir Sa'a) at that time (web 1, 2014). Despite this, the visual identity of the character itself created widespread controversy, especially accusations that his character was inspired by the character (Mickey Mouse), which came from the dominance of Walt Disney. At that time in the American animation industry, the character of the Arab woman was also present in (Mishmeesh Effendi) and in (Baheya), which represented the Egyptian woman, in the manner of (Minnie Mouse), Mickey Mouse's famous lover."(Baheya) is the Egyptian character inspired by the character (Betty Boop), which was created by the American Max Fleischer (Pointer, R. (2017), and who appeared as a dancer in most of her episodes in American animation, and the name was given.

(Mishmish Effendi) because of a famous saying that Talaat Harb, the founder of Banque Misr and Studio Misr, said to the Frankel family when they asked him to finance the first Egyptian animated film, in the style of Disney. He replied to them: "There is no point," and when the question was repeated, he would tell them: "In apricots."

Meshmesh Effendi's films discussed Egyptian concerns, and she shouldered the responsibility of spreading awareness among Egyptians in a new, authentic Egyptian way. She discussed negatives that Egyptians have been known for since time immemorial, such as: the traffic crisis. Meshmesh Effendi also led a donation campaign for the national defense in 1938 AD. He participated in other films, such as: (Blessings and Healing, The Hot Plumbing, and Mishmish Effendi on Mars), and the Frankel family continued to believe in the character (Mishmeesh Effendi) until the situation began to deteriorate, so they were forced to immigrate to France and re-produce (Mishmesh Effendi), but in the French style under the name "Mimish", but he did not find popularity there until his star faded (web 1, 2014) and his character faded away. (Mishmeesh Effendi and Bahia) formed in the 1930s the beginnings of the formation of the Arab visual identity in animation, but they were greatly influenced by the prevailing culture of cartoons. Animated in the West, the characters appeared as identical copies with differences in details to reflect the Egyptian Arab identity at that time.

Since that time, until the nineties of the last century, animation remained individual attempts to show the potential of Arab animators and creative makers, and because animation was not one of the priorities of Arab producers at that time, due to the prevailing culture that it was cartoons directed to children and also due to the lack of widespread television culture in the Arab world, Although Arab animators enjoy a high level of creativity, especially African Arabs, such as in Egypt and Tunisia, their creative attempts at creating animation have been limited to a small scale, because the main concern is the search for economic resources for themselves and daily income, which they did not find in their cartoon industry. For a long period, the dubbing process dominated animation in the Arab world. The content shown mainly on television channels reflected Western ideas, values and cultures, the concept of which on television was limited to programs intended for children, which constituted a process of freezing and stagnation for a long period in front of Arab producers who restricted producing of Arabic animation under the pretext of the audience, which was limited to early stages of life (Khalil, J.F. 2023). The dubbing process was essentially controlled by the works of Arab producers. Here came the cultural appropriation and "Arabization" of the content, such as changing the dialogue and giving the characters Arabic names, such as: Renaming Captain Tsubasa to Captain Majid, for example.

The term cultural hybridity is the true measurement of the early stage in the creation of Arab visual identity in animation. This term, which was launched by (Silvio Weisbord and Sonia Galvin (Waisbord, S., & Jalfin, S. 2009), is the blending of global and local Arab cultural forms, and continuous borrowing. And the intertwining of styles and forms whose origins are located geographically in distant corners of the world. The process of building new forms of Arabic animation relied mainly at that time on mixing Arab and Western cultural elements at the same time.

As we entered the 1980s, and the frequency of television and satellite channels increased, Arabic animation began to take a turn with greater pace in construction, especially the urgent need to use it as a means to spread ideologies, and political and educational topics that can be used to build children's personalities and guide them, as Babel Company produced in Iraq. The animated film (The Princess and the River, 1982), (web 2,2023), whose elements were based on Iraqi Arab culture and whose events take place against the backdrop of the conflicting Sumerian kingdoms. Promoting such narratives through animated films contributed to the propaganda of former President

Saddam. Hussein during the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988). (Khalil, J. F. 2023).

Economic resources were the main obstacle in the animation industry at that time, which forced producers to turn to political issues and different ideologies to obtain the necessary funding for the Arab animation industry, and from here came the branches of the Arab animation industry and the creation of its visual identity, some of which dealt with and reflected national identity, Which mainly dealt with political issues using local environments and characters to a large extent on the visual level. The colloquial dialect is used with an emphasis on the specificity of countries and other Arab characters. The novels also use familiar stories based on collective memory that define national, regional, religious, and ethnic identities. Such as: folk tales, historical events, well-known stories from religious texts, etc. The main indicators of identity are buildings, cityscapes, internal and external locations, and landscapes, in addition to characters, including their features and clothing, and the primary sign of identity is language.

We began to see this in the productions of Dr. Mona Abu Al-Nasr in the character of the famous Egyptian series Bakkar (1998-2016) (web 3,2021), the Nubian character who reflected the unity of Egyptians. In each episode of the series, Bakkar embarks on a new adventure with his peers in his school, whether inside his village, or outside it, “Bakkar Abu is a delicate and small palm” that entered the homes and hearts of Egyptians, old and young, because of building his visual identity that represented the Egyptians and their culture. Bakkar dealt with many political topics. “Bakkar” was not the only work of Dr. Mona Abu. Al-Nasr, (Soliman, M. 2007) where she presented “Sinbad the Sailor” and the production company that bears her name produced the series “Super Henedy” in (2007), which is an Egyptian animated comedy series.

Just as the identity of animation carried the national identity, it also carried the Arab-Islamic identity in many of the topics that shaped the Arab animation industry, as the classical Arabic language is considered a vital factor in the production of social and political topics. The language has a symbolic value, expressing regional identities, so it targets animation that Classical Arabic is mainly used by audiences in the Arab world in general, along with Arabic narratives, characters, and architectural elements that create a sense of neutrality and cultural closeness. Classical Arabic is the language of the Qur’an and Islamic discourse, depending on a variety of factors that include the identity of the product and its goals, sponsorship, target audience, and distribution channels. And also political and economic considerations. Examples include: (Iftah Ya Simsim), which was produced by the Gulf Cooperation Council in 1979 (web 2,2023) and the series (Zaatour) (1995) written by Bazza Al-Batini, which revolves around a small donkey called Zaatour and his friends, accompanied by the woodcutter and his daughter Maryam, each episode discusses a general problem, as he appeared in an unspecified rural environment, and the physical appearance and clothing of the characters lack a specific Arab culture, as he came with a general Arab identity. (Khalil, J.F. 2023).

During the nineties of the last century and the beginning of the current century, many Arab production companies appeared that contributed to the production of animation with a national or Arab identity, using a combination of unified Arab culture and identity in its production, Like the Al-Najm Company for Artistic creation in Syria, whose goal was to depict the Levantine culture through animation, the Arab and national identities were regarded as a message in the creation process. The companies specialized in making Arab animation with an Arab-Islamic character were not overlooked, as Islam was presented as part of Arab culture, and elements of Islamic architecture were used such as: mosques, minarets, and fashion elements such as: the women’s hijab, and Islamic phrases were used in daily life without engaging in direct discourses about religion, and as a producer of animation of an Islamic nature, the distribution limits were greater than the borders of

the Arab region, where the Islamic world in general is. From it emerged the OK-TOONS Foundation, which came to express the specificities of Islamic identity, and produced a group of animated films with an Arab-Islamic cultural identity, the first of which was (Muhammad the Conqueror) in (1995 AD), and whose production was characterized by the exclusion of instrumental music and the inclusion of songs. (web 4,2022) Religious without instruments (chants).

In general, the Arab cultural, national, and religious identity formed a compass for animation makers in the Arab world, which was reflected in their productions from its founding to the present day. The Arabic language formed the basic and constant element in Arab animation and the changes in cultural, environmental, and societal elements, political and religious topics, as well as in ideologies, to create a comprehensive Arab identity in animation. There is no doubt that the Arab Spring in the past twenty years greatly influenced the creation of the identity of Arab animation and its topics, which is what we see today through various social media platforms in terms of political and humorous cartoons, It is what the Arab world is going through right now—a popular revolt.

The Ben and Issam series came to represent a new case in designing the local Arab visual identity in animation, because of the intellectual contents it carries that contribute to raising a conscious Arab generation and disseminating Arab culture globally, accepting others, and preserving the cultural, social, and historical heritage. It carries important messages that help generations with these messages. It also contributes to preserving history.

Ben & Izzy Animated series:

It is a three-dimensional animation series, produced by the Jordanian Rubicon Company (the Jordanian Development and Training Company (Ben and Issam - Wikipedia (web 5,2023), in 2010. The launch ceremony of the animated series “Ben and Issam” was held in New York, which came with the aim of Helping children from different cultures understand each other and emphasizing that their different cultures and ways of thinking do not mean disagreement between them. (web 6,2010),

Rubicon International Company specializes in entertainment production. The group includes a team of hundreds of employees in four locations: the capital, Amman, in Jordan, the American city of Los Angeles, the city of Manila in the Philippines, and Dubai in the Emirates. This company designs, directs and produces content including: feature films, television, games, applications, web content, thematic entertainment design and development, intellectual property acquisition, licensing and merchandising. (web 8,2023), The story of the Ben and Issam series revolves around two eleven-year-old children, one of whom is a Jordanian Arab named Issam and the second is an American named Ben. Over time, the two children become friends despite their different cultures. This friendship resulted from work ties between grandfather.

The episodes of the series deal with a basic axis of science and scientists, both Arab and Western. Through thirteen episodes of this series, it was a portal into the depths of history and revealed Arab discoveries, inventions, and interesting and useful information in a manner dominated by the spirit of adventure and suspense. In its episodes, the series dealt with the topic of preserving the world’s historical heritage, where Wonders of the ancient world and protecting them from thieves and the antiquities trade.

In general, the Arab cultural, national, and religious identity formed a compass for animation makers in the Arab world, which was reflected in their productions from its founding to the present day. The Arabic language formed the basic and constant element in Arab animation and the changes in cultural, environmental, and societal elements, political and religious topics, and differences Ideologies in shaping the comprehensive Arab identity in animation. There is no doubt that the Arab Spring in the past twenty

years greatly influenced the creation of the identity of Arab animation and its topics, which is what we see today through various social media platforms in terms of political and humorous cartoons, which Represent the state of popular revolution that the Arab world is experiencing.

The Ben and Issam series came to represent a new case in designing the local Arab visual identity in animation, because of the intellectual contents it carries that contribute to raising a conscious Arab generation and disseminating Arab culture globally, accepting others, and preserving the cultural, social, and historical heritage. It carries important messages that help generations with these messages. It also contributes to preserving history.

Methodology:

The Ben and Issam series and the characters that appeared in it were chosen because they are the animation that most takes into account the characteristics of the personality structure and formation that is the subject of the study. As I mentioned previously in the research sample, the main goal of the series came to reflect the civilized image of Arab culture and promote the approach of intercultural dialogue and common understanding between individuals and societies, achievements and history. The Arab world and its influences on the world, and this was reflected in the characters and stories of the various scenes in its episodes, which strengthened it as a suitable model for research methodology.

The analysis focused on a set of main characteristics, each of which included a set of standards for content analysis. The researcher identified characteristics (characters, story, place, and time), and under each characteristic fell a set of standards that the researcher specified as follows: personality standards, such as face shape. And the story of the hair, eyes, and clothes. As for the story, time, and place, the main criteria were the architectural elements, personal clothing, monuments, the story and historical figures, and the significance and meanings of the content. The researcher used analysis methods to verify the designer's success in extending the Arabic visual identity to the series' vocabulary and In order to know the impact that could have on the viewer, content analysis was therefore used to determine the extent to which the Ben and Issam series was able to discover the Arab and local Jordanian identity.

In this research paper, the researcher followed the qualitative approach to discover the design characteristics of the Arabic visual identity in animation to reach the desired research results. The main determinant of the current study is the unit of analysis, which is the episodes of the series itself. The researcher identified the episodes Intentionally, these episodes were chosen because of their diversity Its historical, Arab and cultural topics contribute to a more in-depth analysis of the research topic.

The analysis tool used with this methodology will enable the researcher to examine the designer's ability to highlight the Arab visual identity, and then he will provide a critique of this analysis based on the Arab environment, socially and culturally, which will help the researcher reveal and highlight the characteristics of the Arab identity and the effects of the social environment in which he lives.

Designing animated characters in the Ben and Essam series:

Table (1): Essam's Character analyses

Ben and Essam series			
1	Essam's Character - an Arab boy of Jordanian nationality		
	Face shape	He has a semi-circular heart face, and wheat-coloured skin	
	Skin Tone		
	hair cut	Mass of hair combed to the side, and black hair	
	Eyes	Eyes of medium size, and hazel	
	Clothes	Shirt, traditional pants and shoes	

Table (2): Ben's Character analyses

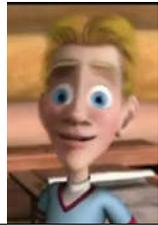
Ben and Essam series			
2	Ben's character - a Western boy - American nationality		
	Face shape	Oval face and white skin	
	Skin Tone		
	hair cut	A mass of hair combed from the middle. Hair color is golden	
	Eyes	The eyes are large, prominent, and the color of the eyes is blue	
	Clothes	Sportswear T-shirt and shorts	
Ben and Essam series			

Table (3): Omar Character analyses

3	Omar Aziz's Character - the grandfather - Arab-Jordanian nationality		
	Face shape	A semi-circular heart face with thick mustaches and eyebrows, and wheat-coloured skin	
	Skin Tone		
	hair cut	Traditional brown hair mass	
	Eyes	Medium-sized, hazel-colored eyes and a small pupils	
	Clothes	Shirt and pants clothing is common clothing in the Middle East	

Table (4): Jake' Character analyses

Ben and Essam series			
4	Jake's character - the grandfather - is a Western American nationality/archaeologist		
	Face shape	Almost oval, without mustaches and golden eyebrows, white skin	
	Skin Tone		
	hair cut	Bald with a golden side mass of hair	
	Eyes	Medium-sized eyes, blue color, and small pupils	
	Clothes	Clothes	

Table (5): Jasmine's Character analyses

5	Jasmine's character - the desert fairy		
	Face shape	White circular face	
	Skin Tone		
	hair cut	Tied hair and long hair braids	
	Eyes	Wide eyes	
	Clothes	Traditional Arabic dress and Arabic ornament	

Table (6): Clutch Character analyses

Ben and Essam series			
6	Clutch for Wheels' character - the antiquities thief		
	Face shape	White oval face	
	Skin Tone		
	hair cut	Black hair	
	Eyes	Medium-sized eyes with black pupils	
	Clothes	Formal suit and tie	

Table (7): Roxen's Character analyses

Ben and Essam series			
7	Roxen's character - helping the antiquities thief		
	Face shape	White oval face	
	Skin Tone		
	hair cut	Golden hair	
	Eyes	Medium-sized eyes with black pupils	
	Clothes	Women's formal suit	

From the above, we can distinguish between the physical characteristics of the main characters that appeared in the episodes of the Ben and Issam series, as the table shows the main criteria for each character, and from the analysis of the local characters that appeared, such as the character Issam and grandfather Omar Aziz, we notice the main characteristics that distinguish the Arab citizen in the Levant, where the dark skin and the mass of hair tend to be brown in colour, have a semi-circular face shape, medium-sized eyes and have a hazel colour, taking into account the style of clothing that is widespread as daily clothing nowadays, away from traditional Arab clothing, which appeared clearly within the episodes of the series, taking into account the content presented in each episode. Through observations, we see that all the Arab characters who It appeared not to be influenced in one way or another by the Western characters in terms of form and content, taking into account showing the difference between the Arab and Western characters, as we saw from the character of Ben and Michael, in which the recipient can differentiate between all the characters clearly and frankly. The characters in the series Ben and Issam were a reflection of the people who live in The Arab countries in general and Jordan in particular, which can clearly represent the visual identity of the Jordanian character through animation. Although there is a touch of other influences that were observed in the design of the secondary character, it is still the Arab identity that dominates the characters in the series, and the viewer can clearly distinguish the character's gender and culture.

Characteristics of the story, time and place in the design of the Ben and Essam series:

The episodes of the Ben and Issam series showed a large mixture of different times and places, through which the designer tried to achieve the desired goal of the content and successfully convey the ideas of the story. By analyzing a group of Ben and Issam episodes, which amounted to four different episodes (the first, fourth, sixth, and ninth), we see a mixture many temporal and spatial characteristics that revealed the Arab visual identity. Through an analysis of the episodes according to the criteria specified for that, the researcher reached a mixture of vocabulary that contributed to achieving the visual identity and imposing the dominance of the Arab Place on the viewer. The researcher identified a set of criteria to analyze this content, such as architectural elements, antiquities, Clothes, historical figures, and the desired story.

Table (8): First Episode analyses

Time and place/episode	First Episode
Episode source	https://stardiima.sbs/watch/episodes/%d9%85%d8%b3%d9%84%d8%b3%d9%84-ben-izzy-%d8%a8%d9%86-%d9%88%d8%b9%d8%b5%d8%a7%d9%85-%d9%85%d8%af%d8%a8%d9%84%d8%ac-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%ad%d9%84%d9%82%d8%a9-6/
Episode duration	22 min
Time	The story begins in the present time in Jordan, moving chronologically to the time of the Abbasid-Fatimid civilization in Egypt.
Content story	The events of the episode revolve around the attempt of one of the thieves of historical antiquities to attempt to steal the scepter of Ramesses II and offer it for sale via electronic Mazdat. At the same time, archaeologists Omar and Michael are excavating antiquities in the Jordanian desert to find a collection of coins dating back to ancient Arab times. The region represents a trade line. The Hashemites then decide to hand it over to the Amman Museum machine. At the same time, the fairy Yasmine, the friend of the boy Ben and Issam, informs them of the attempt to steal the scepter to help them travel through time and return to Egypt and visit Hassan Ibn al-Haytham to help them, through his inventions in the sciences of optics, in searching for the scepter in the antiquities of Pharaonic Egypt and finding it. Before the thief.
Architectural elements	The episode featured a group of architectural elements that represent Arab identity, such as the Arab tent and ancient Arab houses in Egypt, in addition to showing the Arab desert.
Archaeology	The episode featured the pyramids of Egypt and the Aswan Temple
Historical Characters	A group of historical Arab figures, Al-Hasan Ibn Al-Haytham Al-Basri, appeared in the episode, and a group of his inventions were discussed
Cloths	The episode featured a group of costumes that represent the current and historical eras, such as the turban, abaya, and historical Arab clothing.

Table (9): Episode Four - Imaginary Flying / Flying Imagination Character analyses

Time and place/episode	Episode Four - Imaginary Flying / Flying Imagination
Episode source	https://stardiima.sbs/watch/episodes/%d9%85%d8%b3%d9%84%d8%b3%d9%84-ben-izzy-%d8%a8%d9%86-%d9%88%d8%b9%d8%b5%d8%a7%d9%85-%d9%85%d8%af%d8%a8%d9%84%d8%ac-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%ad%d9%84%d9%82%d8%a9-6/
Episode duration	22 min
Time	The episode begins with contemporary times in Jordan and moves through time to Andalusia, where the Umayyad era is
Content story	The events of the episode revolve around the attempt of one of the thieves of historical antiquities to try to steal the first aviation model of Abbas Ibn Firmas, so that the boys return in time with the help of Yasmine to the countryside of Cordoba in the era of the Umayyads in Andalusia to preserve the model and prevent the thief from controlling it. They succeed in this and return to the Jordanian desert, where their grandparents are. By excavating antiquities and submitting the form to them The episode addressed the topic of the oldest cultural capitals, such as Baghdad and Cordoba, in addition to discussing the topic of Armenian Cowell, the first inventor of a flying suit.
Architectural elements	The episode featured a group of architectural elements that represent the Arab identity of the Umayyad civilization, including arches and ancient Arab buildings.
Archaeology	The episode featured a collection of Umayyad antiquities in Andalusia
Historical Characters	The episode featured a group of historical Arab figures, Abbas Ibn Firmas, and a group of his inventions in aviation, glass making, and astronomy.
Clothes	The episode featured a group of costumes that represent the current and historical era, such as the turban, abaya, and historical Arab clothing in Andalusia.

Table (10): Episode Six - Al-Jazari analyses

Time and place/episode	Episode Six - Al-Jazari
Episode source	https://stardiima.sbs/watch/episodes/%d9%85%d8%b3%d9%84%d8%b3%d9%84-ben-izzy-%d8%a8%d9%86-%d9%88%d8%b9%d8%b5%d8%a7%d9%85-%d9%85%d8%af%d8%a8%d9%84%d8%ac-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%ad%d9%84%d9%82%d8%a9-6/
Episode duration	21 min
Time	The episode begins in contemporary Jordan and moves through time to Iraq in the Abbasid era
Content story	The events of the episode revolve around a meeting across time between Issam and Ben, on the one hand, and the island scientist in the Tigris River region, and their talk about his inventions, the bird clock, and the rest of his inventions, such as the elephant clock, self-propelled machines, and hydraulic machines for drawing water. At the same time, the antiquities thief is a clutch for wheels, who kidnapped Jordanian archaeologists. Omar and the American Martin are trying to get the bird watch that the children have, which forces the children to return to Al-Jazari to help them with a motor invention through which they can free their grandparents.
Architectural elements	The episode featured a group of architectural elements that represent the Arab identity of the Abbasid civilization, mosques, domes, and ancient Arab markets on the Tigris River.
Archaeology	The episode featured a group of Abbasid mosques
Historical Characters	A group of historical Arab figures appeared in the episode: Abu Al-Izz bin Al-Razzaz Al-Jazari, inventor of the elephant clock and many hydraulic inventions.
Clothes	The episode featured a group of costumes that represent the current and historical era, such as the turban, abaya, and historical Arab clothing in the Abbasid civilization.

Table (11): Episode nine – Brioni analyses

Time and place/episode	Episode nine - Brioni
Episode source	https://stardiima.sbs/watch/episodes/%d9%85%d8%b3%d9%84%d8%b3%d9%84-ben-izzy-%d8%a8%d9%86-%d9%88%d8%b9%d8%b5%d8%a7%d9%85-%d9%85%d8%af%d8%a8%d9%84%d8%ac-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%ad%d9%84%d9%82%d8%a9-6/
Episode duration	21 min
Time	The episode begins with the current era in the State of Kuwait and moves through time to the Abbasid era
Content story	The events of the episode revolve around an invitation from the Department of Antiquities in the State of Kuwait to Jordanian archaeologists Omar and American Martin to help search for an archaeological chess board belonging to Abu Rayhan Al-Biryouni buried in Kuwait. During this, the boys Issam and Ben, with the help of Yasmine, travel through time and return to Kuwait a thousand years ago to meet Al-Bryuni and with his help. By protecting the chess board from theft by the antiquities thief, Clutch for Wheels, burying it in the Kuwaiti desert, and then re-exhuming it. During this, the events revolve around the most important discoveries and writings of Al-Biruni in astronomy, geography, geology, and mathematics, who is considered one of the most important Islamic minds.
Architectural elements	The episode featured a group of architectural elements that represent the Arab identity and civilization in Kuwait 1000 years ago, including traditional buildings, ports, and others.
Archaeology	-
Historical Characters	A group of historical Arab figures appeared in the episode, the most important of which is Abu Al-Rayhan Muhammad bin Ahmed Al-Biruni, an Iranian Muslim scholar from the Abbasid Caliphate.
Clothes	The episode featured a group of costumes that represent the current and historical era, such as the turban, abaya, and historical Arab clothing in the Abbasid civilization.

Results:

From the above, we find that the Arab animation industry, the subject of the study, was the result of social variables and different ideologies. Through what we discussed in the theoretical literature about the divisions of Arab visual identity in animation between patriotic nationalism and Arab religious and political, we find that the cartoon series Ben and Issam Al-Urduni had a group Of the intertwined identities between Arab and religious to show the desired purpose of the series.

Whereas the themes presented in the series revolved around the struggle between good and evil and on the surface were nationalistic and religious themes that showed the Arab-Islamic civilization, fought the antiquities trade, and contributed to the acceptance of others, we find that the local identity was present in one form or another within connotations and meanings that show the wisdom and depth of Arab civilization, and because the differences that It appeared in the episodes of the series Ben and Issam, “The State of Singularity,” and contributed to forming a general perception of the local visual identity through the process of designing the different characters that appeared in the episodes on the one hand, and through the methods of presenting the story, place and time on the other hand. The aforementioned factors collectively enhanced the expression of the Arab-Islamic culture in the area. By using animation, we conclude the following pointds.

First, the characteristics of the design of the animated characters in the Ben and Issam series represented an important means of highlighting the local Arab and religious visual identity, whether through the main characters such as the character Issam, the scientist Omar Aziz, and the desert fairy Yasmina, whether by choosing their Arabic names or by selecting the face, skin color, and mass of hair and clothes. We find that. The character's designer intended to show traditional local Arab characters representing the Jordanian character in the present time. He showed a boy living in the present time in semi-modern clothes, wearing pants, a shirt, shoes, and underneath the shirt a T-shirt. The designer showed the boy in a modern image, far from the traditional stereotype, to show the Arab character, intending to highlight the state of development in which he lives. In the Arab world, the boy Issam also appeared with an Arab facial shape and features. We can see the wheat color and the heart-shaped face (semi-circular), in addition to the eyes of medium size and their hazel color. Regarding the of hair, the designer showed a mass of hair of a brown color tending to black, so we notice the designer’s intention. Showing the boy in the image of a traditional Arab boy in the Levant, with the wheat color, mass of hair, and medium-sized hazel eyes. As for Omar Aziz, the archaeologist, the designer deliberately

showed him in the image of a simple Jordanian citizen who lives at the present time, where clothes are considered daily clothes in Jordan. He appeared wearing pants and a traditional shirt. He showed facial features, wheat skin color, and large mustaches, while the eyes were medium in size and hazel in color. Grandfather Omar was an exact example of men in Jordan and their image at the present time, from the above and in comparison with the rest of the characters in the series, and the designer sought to show the difference between characters with an Arab visual identity and characters with Western visual identity: We find that Ben and his grandfather, Martin, appeared in Western clothes, with a flat face, an oval shape, golden hair, and wide eyes that tended to blue in an attempt to distinguish and differentiate between the Arab characters and the Western characters. As for the character of the thief Wells, he came with a camouflaged identity that mixed between the Arab and Western identity, so he came with Arab clothes and a Western appearance. The stereotypical thief in the Arab world, who has a large weight, a suit and tie, and a western sailor with a face and skin color, also helped in the personal theft operations by Roxen, who has a mixture of characteristics between Arabic and Western and the goal of disguising the identity of the thief. On the same level, the designer sought to show a group of historical figures in each episode, for example Every time period in Arab civilization, the characters appeared in their traditional clothes at that time, whether with a turban, abaya, or other items of traditional clothing, to highlight the state of change that appeared in the main and historical characters over time, and to also enhance the role of the characters in the time in which they lived, giving the recipient the ability to know their visual identity. Local through the animated characters that appeared in the series, and here we see that the designer succeeded in employing the local visual identity through Employing characters within the episodes of the Ben and Issam series makes the viewer able to distinguish between the historical and local character separately, enhancing the ability of animation to highlight the Arab and religious visual identity.

Second, the characteristics of the story, time and place represented an important means of highlighting the local visual identity, as each episode dealt with a new adventure to familiarize the viewer with one of the historical Arab or religious stories in the surroundings of the Arab world. We find a highlight of archaeological and religious places and Arab and Muslim personalities and scholars, as the designer succeeded in highlighting the visual identity through architectural elements. First, the designer showed a group of scenes of architecture, mosques, and traditional Arab or modern buildings, depending on the course of the story. We see dwellings in Cordoba during the Umayyad rule, mosques and dwellings in Kuwait and Iraq during the rule of the Abbasid state, and we also see ancient Arab dwellings in Egypt during the rule of the Pharaohs, trying to achieve the purpose of the story through Highlighting the architectural visual identity and also showing the local environment of desert, rivers and countryside to familiarize the viewer with the local identity in the Arab and Islamic world. Secondly, the designer strengthened the vocabulary of the visual identity by highlighting the Arab archaeological monuments in Egypt, for example, where the pyramids, Luxor Temple and other ancient monuments are to acquaint the viewer with the historical depth, and reflect The designer expressed this identity in the details of the buildings, where the arches, doors, and traditional dwellings are made of clay. We also see the domes of the mosques, their decorations, and other details that indicate our Arab and religious identity. The secondary characters that appeared in each episode came in proportion to the story, so the designer was able to highlight these characters in form and content, as he highlighted A group of historically Arab and Muslim scholars, such as Barzani, Ibn al-Haym, and others. The viewer was able to recognize Arab or Islamic characters with traditional features and clothing, each according to the time in which he lived, to interact with the events of the story and highlight the wisdom, admonition, and relief that these characters carried out.

The designer succeeded in highlighting Animation creates an Arab identity by highlighting the vocabulary of time and place and conveying the lesson of historical stories, so the viewer can read the local visual identity and recognize it through the previous characteristics, giving the local visual identity a space to highlight itself with ease, as the uniqueness of history and the depth of civilization contributed to the success of reversing the identity.

Third, the Ben and Essam series came to achieve a set of educational and societal connotations and meanings through implicit messages carried by its various episodes. The first connotation and meanings were under the protection of antiquities from thieves, antiquities smugglers and auction dealers, and to educate future generations about the importance of cultural heritage and protecting it from thieves and tamperers in the Arab world. Its importance is the historical and moral value of the Arab-Islamic civilization.

The second significance and meaning that the series carried was the fulfillment of one of the provisions of the Amman Message of Love and Tolerance, which calls for accepting the other despite differences in race, religion, and language, and working with him to preserve the homelands. The series showed the state of convergence of ideas between Arabs and the West, young and old, and working and coming together on the same goal and purpose of protecting the cultural heritage fighting the corrupt, in addition to the idea of cooperation and meeting in the same circumstances and respecting different civilizations and cultures. The third educational meaning came with a set of messages and wisdom that were highlighted through the historical figures who were present in the various episodes of the series and who each time came to carry a message and educational meanings that help define The world with the wisdom and depth of culture, Arab civilization, and introducing the extent of Arab and Islamic inventions and innovations throughout the ages, and emphasizing the cultivation of the idea of not tampering with history and falsifying facts by showing the true owner of the invention, and also introducing the greatest centers of culture throughout history, for example Baghdad and Cordoba, in addition to repeatedly mentioning Arab rule. For example, what Al-Jazari said, "Wisdom can open a thousand locks," and Al-Biruni, "Searching with wisdom will provide a thousand solutions," and other sayings and messages that call for immortalizing scholars and reminding them of them, even with a simple thing like a postage stamp or a statue, in addition to emphasizing in the series' educational messages that the place Antiques and antiquities are museums, and places for books and science are libraries. We see the repetition of the names of museums, such as the Amman Museum and the Library of Alexandria.

The Ben and Issam series reflected the bright side of Arab-Islamic civilization and culture and carried the local visual identity within the folds of its design and stories. It was loaded with values, knowledge, messages and connotations that affirm the role of Arab and Islamic civilization in building society, preparing young people, and promoting tolerance and acceptance of others. The designer succeeded in reflecting the local Arab and religious visual identity through different episodes, we see a Jordanian animated series that carries a local identity and contributes to promoting Arab values and civilization and disseminating them in various countries of the world. Through the previous results, it can be an introduction to important research in the field of the local visual identity of Arab animation.

Final conclusion

The Ben and Issam series reflected the bright side of Arab-Islamic civilization and culture and carried the local visual identity within the folds of its design and stories. It was loaded with values, knowledge, messages, and connotations that affirm the role of Arab and Islamic civilization in building society, preparing young people, and promoting

tolerance and acceptance of others. The designer succeeded in discovering and reflecting the local Arab and religious visual identity from During the various episodes, we are presented with a Jordanian animated series that carries a local identity and contributes to promoting Arab values and civilization and disseminating them in various countries of the world. Through the previous results, the research can be an introduction to important research in the field of the local visual identity of Arab animation.

Sources & References

قائمة المصادر والمراجع:

1. Khalil, J. F., Khiabany, G., Guaaybess, T., & Yesil, B. (Eds.). (2023). *The Handbook of Media and Culture in the Middle East*. John Wiley & Sons.
 2. Bouldin, J. (2001). *The body, animation and the real: Race, reality and the rotoscope in Betty Boop. Proceedings of affective encounters: rethinking embodiment in feminist media studies*, 48-54.
 3. Callus, P. (2018). *Animating African History: Digital and Visual Trends. Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*.
 4. Pointer, R. (2017). *The Art and Inventions of Max Fleischer: American Animation Pioneer*. Mcfarland
 5. Waisbord, S., & Jalfin, S. (2009). *Imagining the national: Gatekeepers and the adaptation of global franchises in Argentina*. TV formats worldwide. Localizing global programs, 55-74
 6. Suleiman, M. (2007). The Arab Child Between East and West: A Reading of Al Shamshun, 'Alam Simsim, and Bakkar. *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, 105 -122
 7. Sayfo, O. (2021). *Arab animation: Images of identity*. Edinburgh University Press.
 8. Suleiman, Y. (2019). *Arabic language and national identity: A study in ideology*. Edinburgh University Press
 9. Kraidy, M. M. (2016). *The naked blogger of Cairo*. Harvard University Press
 9. Kraidy, M. (2006). *Hybridity, or the cultural logic of globalization*. Temple University Press.
- Electronic References:
10. Web 1: "Apricot Effendi" ... the first cartoon in the world to compete with Walt Disney. He was Egyptian, but "it is of no use". He is now 75 years old. and he led the donation campaigns for the National Defense. Tahiya Karioka chose him and Sabah was a hero - Youm7 (youm7.com)
 11. Web 2: The Princess and the River - Wikipedia (wikipedia.org)
 12. Web 3: "Mona Abu Al-Nasr" was defeated by cancer, and "Bakkar" immortalized her in the hearts of viewers - Kalmetna platform (kelmetna.org)
 13. Web 4: League of Levant Writers - Professor Osama Khalifa in an exciting dialogue about his experience in producing cartoon films (archive.org)
 14. Web 5: Ben and Issam - Wikipedia (wikipedia.org)
 15. Web 6: Queen Rania participates in the launch of the animation program "Ben and Essam" and stresses the importance of helping children see common humanity in its rich cultural diversity | Queen Rania (queenrania.jo),
 16. Web 7: <https://stardiima.sbs/watch/episodes/%d9%85%d8%b3%d9%84%d8%b3%d9%84-ben-izzy-%d8%a8%d9%86-%d9%88 %d8%b9%d8%b5%d8%a7%d9%85-% d9 %85%d8%af%d8%a8%d9%84%d8%ac-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%ad d9%84%d9%82%d8 %a9-6/>
 17. Web 8: Rubicon Holdings - Wikipedia (wikipedia.org)