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Semiotics of Nation Branding: Model of Ukraine's
Transmedia World 2018-2022
Master's Thesis

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I have written the Master's Thesis myself, independently. All of the other authors' texts, main viewpoints and all data from other resources have been referred to.

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Annotation

The thesis examines Ukraine's nation branding from 2018 to 2022 as a transmedia world, constructed and communicated by nation branding actors (stakeholders) that emerged in the context of the transition from a relatively peaceful context to a full-scale war. Particular attention is paid to the functions and interactions of government and non-government actors in the construction and circulation of motivated signs across multiple media. The researcher employs theoretical principles of transmedia and a multimodal approach to model Ukraine's national brand as an integrated system of action.

Keywords: nation branding, Ukraine, transmedia model, motivated sign, wartime.

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Acknowledging everyone who contributed to building the nation brand of Ukraine, especially during times of war: to everyone who reposted information about the war on social networks, even without believing it would make a difference; to those who donated to help Ukraine; to the military who physically defend the country; to civil society that took responsibility for the future; and to the authorities who recognized reality and stood shoulder to shoulder with the people. To everyone who became the voice of the nation.

The nation brand of Ukraine in times of war is forged at the cost of lives: the fallen Ghosts of Kyiv, millions of Russian mines hidden in the Ukrainian ground that Patron has not found – on which someone may someday suffer; all of this is part of our reality.

It is built for the sake of saving lives: children learning to walk again on prostheses; people helping to rebuild neighbors' homes destroyed in attacks; those providing hospitals with generators through funds raised in fundraising campaigns. War is always about death – Ukraine wants to speak about life.

This dedication is to the generation that will learn to survive from the very first day of their birth, and to those who have endured more than a decade of physical and moral invasion, yet remain immensely strong and determined to live.

12.01.2026 – day 1,419 of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, and day 4344 of the start of Russia's occupation of Crimea and Sevastopol.

Introduction

All information that an audience, both internal and external, can obtain about a country and its people falls within the scope of nation branding and its influence. A critical aspect of nation branding is the ability to spread identity and key signs through the discursive practices of different participants and generate feedback from target audiences. In the case of Ukraine, this role is especially relevant in responding to the challenges of information warfare and active influence both on national and global discourse. The principle *Nihil de nobis, sine nobis* – “Nothing about us without us” – captures the idea that a nation should actively shape the narrative about itself.

The transformation of the Ukrainian brand between 2018 and 2022 is a crucial aspect of this research, as the country transitioned from a period of peace to one of war. The years 2018-2021 correspond to the hybrid stage of the Russian war (2014-2021), when Russia conducted targeted military operations, but a full-scale war had not yet occurred. The official launch of Ukraine's nation brand in 2018 marks the logical starting point of the research period. The year 2022 marks the beginning of the full-scale war, while Omelchenko (2024) provides a comprehensive overview of the socio-political context and the evolution of Ukrainian strategic nation branding efforts from Ukraine's independence in 1991 to the first two years of the full-scale Russian-Ukrainian war in 2024. Prior to 2022, the official nation branding mostly focused on tourism, attracting investment, and expanding exports. After the outbreak of the war, its functions included forming international support, political coalitions, humanitarian and military aid, and countering Russian propaganda (UkraineNOW, Brave Ukraine, the activities of independent media, and fundraising campaigns).

The onset of full-scale war in 2022 prompts a new look at Ukrainian nation branding, emphasizing the importance of transmedia dynamics in this new context. By tracing the holistic nature of nation branding as a transmedia system, this study enhances the relevance of the research today and lays the foundation for practical applications. Consequently, it is insufficient to focus solely on individual campaigns; it is essential to consider who the leading actors are in this transmedia world and what objectives they pursue. In wartime, stakeholders' actions are guided by the goals of nation branding, which stem from the state's objectives of preserving sovereignty and countering propaganda (Omelchenko 2024; Vasist & Krishnan

2024). Every stakeholder, even the less visible ones, plays an active role and mobilizes in action.

The nature of nation branding in Ukraine is impulsive, partly situational, and, to a greater extent, a response to a pressing need that is currently burning, supported by great enthusiasm and an instant response from the creative industry to the government's request. For example, as mentioned in an interview in the documentary film "What kind of brand is Ukraine | Second series: State | THREE IN ONE: "President Zelensky addressed a creative agency with the premise "the world wants to help but does not know how, so we need an international platform through which to collect donations – the United24 website" (President of Ukraine et al. 2022; Serdiuk, M. and Hryhoryan et al. 2024). That is why so many stakeholders are involved as active figures during the war in the country (Kipnis et al. 2024; Kazymyr 2023) – this is the initiative of the people themselves, and not a well-thought-out strategy and systematic actions of the government several years in advance (although one can not underestimate the results of the national policy strategy developed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine and officially approved in 2021 (President of Ukraine 2021).

Understanding this period requires attention not only to campaigns themselves but also to the actors who drive them and their objectives. All participants in nation branding share a common goal, but they may have different visions and employ different methods to achieve it, and each stakeholder has a unique role. It is crucial to clearly identify the actors (stakeholders) involved in nation branding (Anholt 2006; Rojas-Méndez, Khoshnevis 2023), as well as the functions and goals they perform, whether voluntarily or officially.

The presence of numerous cases and vivid manifestations of support for the brand of Ukraine allows researchers to outline the transmediality (Scolari 2018; Tenderich 2014) and crossmediality of the semiotic space, or parts of the discourse. Even if it is impossible to study every instance of nation branding, the selection of cases enables analysis of the system as an integrated interaction of actors in an interconnected '**transmedia world**' (Klastrup & Tosca 2004).

Building on this context, a significant part of the research employs semiotics to analyze the visual style and narratives of nation brands or nation branding campaigns in various countries, including Ukraine. Nevertheless, in the studies of Ukraine's nation branding, researchers are limited to a few of the largest-scale campaigns, particularly those implemented since 2018 –

the nation brand “UkraineNOW” and the information campaign “Brave Ukraine” (Kazymyr 2023; Mazaraki et al. 2018; Omelchenko 2024).

Several scholars have addressed the wartime transformation of Ukraine’s national narrative. Kaneva (2022), in her essay “Brave Like Ukraine”: A critical discourse perspective on Ukraine’s wartime brand”, based on critical discourse theory, analyzes the “Brave Like Ukraine” campaign as part of the discourse of nation branding, and as an example of a radical change in the narrative of the national positioning strategy in the context of war. The researcher also poses open-ended questions about whether such an example of change serves as a signal “about the larger geopolitical and ideological context within which the Russia-Ukraine war is being fought” (Kaneva 2022: 232). This signals the need to move beyond isolated campaign analysis toward a systemic understanding of wartime nation branding.

In the research on transmedia storytelling and memetic warfare, Horbyk R. and Orlova D. also explore the strategic narrative “one of a brave, unified, and defiant nation, struggling against an evil empire” of Ukraine’s nation branding in the context of war as a case of compelling transmedia storytelling. They emphasize that the case of Ukraine’s storytelling approach in times of war suggests the need for further exploration of transmedia storytelling (Horbyk, Orlova 2022). The narrative arc of David versus Goliath, which is reflected in Ukraine’s strategic communications throughout the Russian Federation's military aggression, is another topic the writers focus on. However, what makes the study unique is its perspective on analysis – the manifestation of this archetype in memes as a storytelling element, known as memetic warfare, in the information war against Russian propaganda (Horbyk, Orlova 2022). While their research highlights the transmedia potential of narrative practices in Ukraine's nation branding, it remains focused on narrative forms rather than the structural organization of nation branding as a multi-actor system.

Finally, stakeholder- and practice-oriented research (Lemberg, Habtom 2025; Kipnis et al. 2024) introduces crucial insights into plurality, participation, and meaning-making beyond the state. Lemberg and Habtom (2025) conceptualize Ukraine’s nation branding as a polyphonic process, based on interviews with stakeholders from diverse sectors (academic community, business, civil society, cultural diplomacy, and communication specialists), interpreting Ukrainian national identity within the process of nation branding: “mix of voices reflects the complex and changing nature of national identity, while also raising questions of coherence

and credibility in the formation of Ukraine's nation brand" (Lemberg, Habtom 2025: 97). The study develops the concept of '**polyphony**' in nation branding, showing that different sectors and narratives can be a resource for the dissemination of nation branding if there are mechanisms for coordination without suppressing different positions. However, their model does not specify how such coordination works structurally or how meanings circulate between media and actor levels.

Kipnis, E., Bajde, D., and Todorova, G. (2024) investigate how war-related marketing activism contributes to societal resilience through meaning-making. Using a multimodal qualitative approach (photo elicitation and in-depth interviews), the authors explore how brands, organizations, and consumers create or interpret marketing actions related to the war, and how these actions contribute to community resilience through the trajectories of survival, creativity, growth, and recovery.

Omelchenko (2024), Lee (2022) and Cherep (2025) in their studies shift attention to government communication and digital platforms, adopting critical discourse and media-oriented approaches (Omelchenko 2024; Cherep 2025). Omelchenko (2024) applies Fairclough's critical discourse analysis to study a case of Ukrainian government communications from 2022 to 2024. She has investigated how the interaction between government and civil society, as well as the personal brand of leaders, influences the international discourse about Ukraine. The researcher also notes that technology and social media effectively disseminate information that can be quickly perceived and emotionally affect the audience (Omechenko 2024). Lee, Seow Ting (2022), using sentiment analysis, Leximancer concept mapping, and a logic model approach, built within the framework of the theory of change, analyzes how the country image of Ukraine has developed and transformed in the international media field and what semantic changes have occurred in the ways of its representation. Offering valuable diachronic insights from examining the country's image in international news discourse from independence in 1991 to the full-scale war of 2022, this approach does not capture actor-level dynamics and mechanisms of meaning circulation. Cherep (2025) examines the construction of nation branding through the government's use of social media for communications in crises (war) and identifies narratives, values, and symbolic representations appearing in Ukraine's official communication via United24 Media, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Ukraine.ua, and President Zelenskyy's Official Account Instagram accounts. However, this approach prioritizes narrative coherence over the

analysis of motivated visual signs, and views media platforms largely as isolated channels rather than as components of a transmedia system of nation branding.

Macro-level image studies examine the nation brand of Ukraine through the lens of major international nation branding indexes and rankings. While such studies are highly specialised and useful for assessing reputational performance at the level of aggregated indicators, they do not address communicative and semiotic processes. In particular, Rybka-Iwańska (2017) analyzes indicators and reputation data from international rankings up to 2018, which enabled the identification of recurring characteristics of Ukraine's nation brand, but during the pre-war period. As a result, this approach cannot be directly applied to the analysis of nation branding as a multimodal and transmedia process during war.

Based on the literature on nation branding of Ukraine, the following main research gaps can be identified: (1) existing studies focus on a limited number of nation branding campaigns and a short time period, mostly from 2018, which does not allow us to trace the transformation of this brand from the following time to the first years of the full-scale war, (2) there is a lack of a systematic, multi-actor approach to analyzing how state and non-government actors interact in the process of forming a nation brand, (3) researches primarily focus on narrative, audience, or reputation indicators, but do not explore motivated visual signs, multimodal processes, and transmedia circulation of meanings, (4) platforms and media are typically analyzed as isolated channels, without analyzing how they interact in the transmedia space. Finally, the relevance of researching the transmediality of the nation branding as part of the discourse, which is formed through the interaction of various actors (stakeholders) and circulates in the public space, remains underdeveloped.

The identified gaps open up the prospect of investigating a wide range of state and non-state campaigns and initiatives, tracing the transformation of Ukraine's nation brand from its official establishment to the first year of full-scale war, and analyzing the interaction of actors, transmedia processes, and motivated visual signs and multimodal forms, rather than just narratives or reputational indicators, to understand how meanings are formed, creating a unified nation ecosystem of nation brand.

Building on the research gaps in Ukrainian nation branding, the following overview examines how existing conceptual models of the structure of nation branding address different research gaps identified in Ukrainian nation branding studies.

The most frequently referenced conceptual models of nation branding demonstrate the formation of key elements of national identity, where the nation brand is understood as a derivative concept of **‘national identity’**. For instance, the most popular concept is **‘Competitive Identity’** (Anholt 2006). In the model, Anholt demonstrates the formation of key elements of national identity through key elements — sectors, which in turn are channels for the dissemination of identity. However, this approach can be less practical because different actors operate within the same sector. In addition, the model does not take into account the relationships between components, which limits its application. Dinnie’s model (2008) highlights the communication of national identity through cultural artifacts, brand ambassadors, diaspora, and marketing channels, yet focuses on channels rather than systemic interaction. Reputational capital is central to the Ukrainian nation branding model (Mazaraki et al. 2018). Also, the model is built on different blocks: goal-forming, functional, and executive, as well as competitive advantages in global markets (Mazaraki et al. 2018). The model is limited to large-scale, centralized campaigns and does not capture polyphonic participation of nation branding actors or multimodal meaning-making.

The model proposed by Zhou Yu (2019) complements these approaches by building the nation branding model on four dimensions: self-observed identity, self-perceived image, self-declared identity, and self-presented image. The first two focus on the internal perspective of the nation, how it understands itself, and what it aims to become, while the latter two address the nation’s communication with external audiences, reflecting what it claims and how it wants to be perceived (Zhou Yu 2019). This approach highlights the dynamic interaction between internal identity formation and external presentation. Nevertheless, it does not provide detailed mechanisms for multi-actor coordination or transmedia circulation, focusing primarily on identity-image dynamics. The integrated approach to nation branding proposed by Abdalmajid et al. (2023) illustrates using the example of Palestine, which is in a state of military conflict and undergoing state formation. The case study demonstrates the need to establish a sustainable nation brand in crisis and the cooperation of stakeholders for shaping the values and the primary message for nation branding. However, the model does not detail the stakeholder relationships at different levels and the mechanisms that ensure brand integrity.

Overall, the overview shows that strict and continuous management of all channels is the basis of most nation branding models. This is justified by ensuring the effectiveness of nation branding as a strategic management of the nation brand. However, this managerial rigidity

limits the strategy, where branding arises through decentralized, chaotic creation of initiatives that are not agreed upon in advance with the government or among all actors involved in nation branding. For example, when stakeholders (state bodies, public organizations, businesses, media, and diaspora, among others) act partially independently or in cooperation, they create their own forms of communication and brand remediation without a centralized nation branding strategy. Such models neither explain the relational structure among stakeholders nor account for mechanisms of discursive brand circulation under conditions of autonomous or cooperative actor participation.

Persistent gaps in nation branding research remain relevant, and existing models do not fully address them. There is a need for research that examines the interactions of multiple actors, multimodal practices, and transmedia dynamics. This perspective underlies the purpose and methodology of this study, which uses a mixed qualitative approach capable of capturing both internal and external dimensions of Ukrainian nation branding and their dissemination across different media and stakeholders.

Therefore, the study of Ukraine's nation branding transmedia world from 2018 to 2022 **aims** to conceptualize and analyse nation branding as a transmedia world, constructed and communicated by nation branding actors (stakeholders) in the context of shift from peace to wartime.

Research question:

How does the nation branding of Ukraine, created by multiple actors of nation brand, function as a transmedia world during wartime (2018-2022), when examined through multimodal analysis?

Research tasks:

- To collect data on nation branding cases of Ukraine for the period 2018-2022 (from the Ukraine's nation brand establishment to the end of the first year of the full-scale war) and to form a sample of research material to identify nation branding actors.
- To identify aspects of crossmedia strategies, common narrative, and visual representation in government-led nation branding campaigns.
- To analyze the activities of non-government nation branding agents and identify forms of nation branding transmediality.

- To model a coherent system, integrating the collected cases, incorporating all functioning actors, determining the structure and levels of the system, and representing them within the model with defined boundaries.

The thesis is structured to provide a coherent progression of the research, from describing the research object, methodology, and key concepts, to providing multimodal, crossmedia, and transmedia analysis, and ultimately creating a transmedia model.

Chapter 1 defines who a nation branding actor is, based on the collected cases, and prescribes the categories of actors that formed the basis for the development of the levels of Ukraine's nation branding transmedia model.

Chapter 2 provides the primary multimodal analysis (Subchapter 2.1) of a sample of government-led nation branding campaigns and initiatives in Ukraine (2018-2022), identifies the main modes, defines motivated signs in these modes of campaigns, and outlines the matrix of sign (Subchapter 2.2), and secondary multimodal analysis with a deeper description of the central motivated signs on examples from a secondary sample of cases where they are most clearly manifested, as well as show the change in motivated signs in the context of time before the full-scale war and during 2022. Subchapter 2.3 analyzes crossmedia use and audience reach in Ukraine's government-led nation branding campaigns (2018–2022), what type of media was most often used by the government in various campaigns, and highlights commonalities.

Chapter 3 provides the analysis of motivated signs of non-government-led nation branding initiatives, identifying if they coincide with those used officially by the government as nation branding.

Chapter 4 describes the logic of building a model of Ukraine's nation branding transmedia world, its structure, layers, and boundaries.

Research Object, Methodology, and Key Concepts

The research object is Ukraine's nation branding initiatives, from the establishment of the nation brand to the end of the first year of the full-scale Russia-Ukraine war. Those initiatives were developed by a variety of agents (nation brand stakeholders), including the government, in cooperation with creative agencies, state-owned companies, private companies, NGOs, and others.

When selecting material, it is necessary to consider that nation branding functions as a dual policy instrument; external and internal nation branding campaigns can differ significantly in their character and goals, as they target distinct audiences — namely, foreigners or domestic civilians — and thus operate within distinct symbolic and communicative contexts (Aronczyk 2008, 2010; Volčič and Andrejevic 2011; Kaneva 2011; Jansen 2008). Although this study focuses on the sample of material on external nation branding initiatives to a greater extent, those initiatives have received broad coverage in the national discourse and have the most significant influence and scale of distribution through media channels. This type of sample facilitates a comprehensive examination of the holistic nature of nation branding distribution; however, this research does not aim to examine the full impact of both types of campaigns — domestic and foreign — on the formation of a holistic nation brand.

To ensure the sample of campaigns is representative and understandable, 30 cases were selected for analysis, determined according to the principle of targeted selection, which involves including cases relevant to the study's goals and objectives, based on publicly available information on the Internet. Another principle is extensive media coverage and the presence of mentions in various media outlets, including online publications. So, the following were in the field of view:

- National campaigns have been created by the government since 2018, as this is the year the first official brand of Ukraine was established by the government.
- Campaigns that had or did not have cooperation with the government, created independently (public), but related to the branding of Ukraine or complementing the idea of the brand of Ukraine, as well as have received broad media coverage both nationally and internationally.

The further analysis is as follows. Firstly, official state campaigns were analyzed, then common motivational signs were identified. At the same time, the analysis does not aim to

examine all cases in detail, but rather to identify commonalities among them. Then, these common signs of nation branding were searched for in non-governmental campaigns in an Internet search, using the search words individually or in combination ‘ukraine’, ‘war’, ‘stand with ukraine’, ‘be brave’, or information was collected from the news over the years when it was covered in the media, especially in 2022 (for example, the cases Ghost of Kyiv, and Patron). The author's experience in the youth sector served as a valuable resource for finding examples of youth NGO activities related to nation branding.

The sample includes one case that represents projects created abroad by foreigners. Such projects are challenging to track and select relevant cases, given the global scale of the search and the limited coverage in the Ukrainian media field. It is worth noting that most of the projects in 2022 are fundraising in support of Ukraine.

The search also revealed numerous initiatives created by non-government organizations, such as viral videos, including a frontman of the BoomBox band, Andriy Khlyvniuk, singing “Oh, the red viburnum bent in the meadow” at Sophia Square in Kyiv while serving in the ranks of the terrorist defense. As a result, this evolved into even greater activity, including collaboration with Pink Floyd and the recording of the song “Hey Hey Rise Up” (Petridis 2022). The song and video garnered millions of views on social media and music platforms. There are also examples of international concerts of Ukrainian artists abroad to raise funds for the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

In 2022, internal national social projects were developed, such as the Air Alert application, which also communicated abroad as part of international presentations about the digitalization of Ukraine (Serdiuk, Hryhoryan et al. 2024).

Undoubtedly, these specific examples of initiatives are projects that form nation brand, and are taken into account in the analysis and transmedia nation branding model. But they were not included in the sample of 30 cases for analysis due to the repetition of already identified motivational signs in other campaigns, and the inclusion of other cases in the sample to represent public activism.

Since the study does not aim to determine the quantitative ratio of actors or identify who creates the most significant number of nation branding campaigns, the selected sample of cases is logical for achieving the research's goal.

The scope of initiatives varies in format and social spheres, often having a mixed nature, which means the campaign can be active in multiple spheres simultaneously, including social, fundraising, and political. 19 projects were implemented in the social sphere, 8 – political, 7 – military, 4 – economic, 2 – cultural, 2 – humanitarian, one each in tourism and education. Many initiatives are not only cross-sectoral but also mix different formats, simultaneously belonging to several categories, so the number of identified formats exceeds the number of cases. Thus, taking into account the mixed formats of initiatives, the sample includes 10 fundraising projects, 6 communication campaigns, 4 information web portals, 2 media, 2 humanitarian projects, as well as exhibition, coordination center, production and supply, digital archive, military recruiting campaign, social program, survey, merchandise shop, and outdoor public art installation.

The research also considers the geography of project implementation, enabling us to assess its scale and audience reach. In particular, the sample includes the most significant number of projects, with a mixed geography of reach, including both global and national – 14 cases. 8 projects were aimed exclusively at a foreign audience, while 4 had a national scale. 3 initiatives were implemented at the regional level in Ukraine, in particular, the Kyiv region and Ivano-Frankivsk, and 1 within the United States. It is worth considering that even initiatives implemented at the national or regional level have an international reach through the involvement of foreign businesses, coverage in international media, or visibility among international guests and politicians visiting Ukraine.

The sample of 30 cases in chronological order for analysis presented in *Table 1*.

The research material of nation branding cases includes media articles, websites, and the official reports related to these nation branding initiatives, a documentary film with representatives of creative industries and agencies who collaborated with the government to create national campaigns, “What kind of brand is Ukraine | Second series: State | THREE IN ONE” by KNIFE! Films and the online school for creative industries “Skvot” (July 2024), and the NATO *Review* interview “The Voices of a Nation: How Stories Have Shaped Ukraine’s Fight for Freedom” (February 2025), featuring Yaroslav Turbil, a representative of Ukraine’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs Communications team responsible for digital diplomacy.

Methodology

This research has a qualitative empirical character combining different research methods. To find an answer to the research question, it relies on a case study to deeply understand the process, explore real-life context and mechanisms behind a specific example of the nation brand of Ukraine, and applies the discourse analysis method to identify the nation branding actors of Ukraine in 2018-2022 (**Chapter 1**). Discourse analysis is broadly used in research studies that focus on nation brands (Kaneva 2011, 2014, 2022), as well as in combination with multimodal analysis (De Marco 2017; Fomenko 2023; Cheregi 2018; Kazymyr 2023).

In this research, a deeper analysis from the perspective of nation branding semiotics was conducted using multimodal analysis (Kress, Van Leeuwen 2006), which allowed to identify commonalities that shape nation branding.

According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), multimodal analysis is based on the concept of ‘**modality**’ (“expressing meanings of truth and falsehood, fact and fiction, certainty and doubt, credibility and unreliability”), which is implemented in modes through ‘**modality cues**’:

Modality markers have been established by the groups within which we interact as relatively reliable guides to the truth or factuality of messages, and they have developed out of the central values, beliefs, and social needs of that group. (Kress, Van Leeuwen 2006: 154)

In analysis, ‘**modes**’ are defined as:

A socially shaped and culturally given semiotic resource for making meaning. Image, writing, layout, music, gesture, speech, moving image, soundtrack and 3D objects are examples of modes used in representation and communication. (Kress 2009: 79)

In the context of nation branding, any campaign created by an individual nation branding actor can be viewed as a collection of different modes.

Within each mode, ‘**motivated signs**’ can be defined, “signs which have arisen out of the interest of social groups who interact within the structures of power that define social life” (Kress, Van Leeuwen 2006: 154). In other words, how a nation branding actor or sign-maker forms a specific meaning (motivated sign) about a nation brand through the use of a particular mode – this explains the choice in nation branding campaigns and initiatives of a specific color, slogan, background, photo, or video, etc., to embody social meanings, reflect context, and modality. It is precisely through this choice (color, slogan, background, photo, video, etc.) that the motivated sign manifests itself in communication and conveys social and cultural

meanings. In turn, the audience perceives the sign as plausible or implausible modal cues (Kress, Van Leeuwen 2006).

Since this choice is motivated and reflects specific interests, it reinforces the relevance of using discourse analysis and emphasizes the importance of outlining who these actors are. Multimodal analysis is presented in **Chapters 2 and 3**.

It is also taken into account that motivated signs of the nation brand are transmitted through different media channels. The combination of multimodal and transmedia analysis is classic for the methodology of analysis in the context of branding. For example, in the works of Aronczyk (2013), Kaneva (2011, 2014, 2022), Jansen (2008), Volčič and Andrejevic (2011), as well as in the studies of De Marco (2017), Cheregi (2018), Kazymyr (2023), and Fomenko (2023), a multimodal or transmedia approach is used.

If discursive analysis can identify the meanings and powers behind the formation of a nation brand, then how can we uncover the nature of the spread of nation branding?

This facilitated the crossmedia and transmedia analysis described in **Chapters 2 and 3**.

Since nation branding is strategic in nature, that is, a managed strategy for spreading a nation brand, which is defined by government policy at the national and international levels (Anholt 2006; Kaneva 2011; Li, Feng 2021; Hankinson 2004), the meanings to be transmitted or the motivated sign are not chosen randomly by each actor of nation branding (Kaneva 2011). The core of the brand has been passed on to civil society organizations, associations, youth NGOs, student unions, charitable foundations, private businesses, military units, as well as citizens, the diaspora, foreigners, bloggers, public figures, and independent media. This transition has occurred away from the Administration of the President, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, for example, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and other government organizations or companies. The brand's core or independent elements are repeatedly retransmitted through various media channels (Aronczyk 2008, 2010; Volčič and Andrejevic 2011) – a phenomenon that can be traced using transmedia analysis. Indeed, in this nature of dissemination, we can not speak of a one-hundred percent transfer of the entire government-formed brand by all authors of nation branding. However, society disseminates the main motivated signs as brand characteristics, which it defines as those that correspond to those valid in the cultural, historical, and social context (Kress, Van Leeuwen 2006).

Given the diverse range of actors and their motivations, it was appropriate to separate crossmedia and transmedia analysis. This approach is not popular in branding research, in particular, nation one. Traditionally, in the marketing approach to branding, the transmedia¹ analysis refers to the analysis of the conscious distribution of a campaign across different media, laid out as a pre-planned marketing strategy for the campaign's success and increased reach (Jenkins 2006; Kaneva 2011).

Transmedia analysis demonstrated how the same meaning, image, or narrative “lives” is modified and multiplied in different media, migrating between platforms (Jenkins 2006; Ojamaa 2015) used by different actors involved in nation branding.

Thus, to achieve the research aim, the crossmedia and transmedia approach is chosen as the main methodological framework, which defines the structure of the analytical model. At the same time, multimodal analysis is used as a supplementary method for an in-depth analysis of motivated signs that form the semiotic core of the national brand as a transmedia world.

Key Concepts

The literature on the nation brand and nation branding was reviewed. Scholars such as Dinnie, Hao, Kaneva, and Rojas-Méndez have studied the historiography of nation branding and attempted to explore how the concept of ‘**nation brand**’ and ‘**nation branding**’ have been interpreted in various fields of research, tracing their roots back to the early 2000s. The literature review of historiography of nation branding emphasizes a variety of fields such as marketing, political studies, in particular international relations, management, culture (in the context of nation brand as a part of national identity), in which various studies of nation branding have been conducted, and approaches applied, with technical-economic perspectives being predominant (Kaneva 2011).

¹ Having considered the following two examples, we can identify the difference between crossmedia and transmedia. For example, the government has launched a nation branding campaign targeting foreign investors, utilizing a website, social media, and posters to promote it. This is a deliberately formed marketing strategy with predictable results, and therefore has a crossmedia nature. Another example, six months after the launch of this state campaign, a public organization whose audience is citizens and youth in Ukraine creates its own separate project on culture, in which it decides to use an element of nation branding from the campaign that the government created, and to disseminate information about the project in an email newsletter and during an offline event. In this case, the state, as an actor of nation branding, has no relation to the campaign as an organizer, did not choose the distribution channels of this campaign, the audience, or create a distribution timeline.

In times of crisis, such as war, the nation brand ceases to be simply an image, economically or politically helpful in attracting investment, tourism, or resources (Dinnie 2008), (Anholt 2006). Thus, this research takes into account definitions that comprehensively consider nation branding and are not limited to a one-sided approach, such as a marketing, political, or cultural perspective.

Kaneva (2014) emphasizes the discursive nature of nation branding, shaped by many agents who create competing narratives and influence the formation of the nation brand:

Nation branding as a discourse – in the Foucauldian sense – delimits the boundaries of possible truth claims about national identity. It privileges a commercial logic, while concealing alternative possibilities for narrating the nation. (Kaneva 2014: 10)

This concept is further developed by Mazaraki et al. (2018) in a strategic and managerial context. They also emphasize nation branding as a form of discourse, but add the clarification that the result of nation branding should be the appropriate positioning of the country in the global economic system and a change in the perception or behavior of the nation in a positive direction:

In its turn, the essence of nation branding is considered as a form of nation discourse or branding, oriented on nation-state brand formation, meaningful components of which are authentic characteristics of the territory and nations self-perception, including provides for creation of a clear, simple, differentiated nation brand idea or strategy, understood by diverse audiences in different situations, strategic advancement and proper positioning of the country in the global economic system and, if necessary, changing nation behavior, attitude, identity or image in a positive manner. (Mazaraki et al. 2018: 100-101)

At the same time, one may disagree with Mazaraki et al.'s (2018) thesis that nation branding influences identity change, as the formation of a nation brand is a derivative process from the formation of a national identity (Anholt 2006; Dinnie 2008).

Emphasizing a managerial approach to nation branding, Rojas-Méndez and Khoshnevis (2023) focus on public-private sector collaboration in shaping nation brand strategy and communication:

Nation branding is a systematic process of involving public and private sectors to design a branding strategy for the nation, communicate the nation's core values and national identity, and apply branding tactics to promote a nation's image, improve the country's reputation among all different audiences, differentiate a nation from other nations and reach economic, social, political, business and international gains. (Rojas-Méndez, Khoshnevis 2023: 118)

Taking into account the described concepts, **'nation branding'** in this study is defined as a form of discourse (Mazaraki et al. 2018) and a strategic process (Rojas-Méndez, Khoshnevis 2023) of communicating and managing a **'nation brand'** as an image of a state and nation to external and internal audiences, subordinated to the interests of the state and shaped by multiple actors (Kaneva 2014) to enhance positive perceptions in the global economic, political and cultural context (Dinnie 2008; Anholt 2006), while also responding to hostile narratives, propaganda and established stereotypes in the global discourse (Omelchenko 2024; Vasist, Krishnan 2024).

When clarifying the difference between the concepts of **'crossmedia'** and **'transmedia'**, which form the basis for further analysis, it is essential to note that in communications and marketing practices, these terms are often not distinguished. As Giovagnoli argues:

“Today, in the entertainment, information and communication industries, both terms cross-media and transmedia — are used almost interchangeably, though with a certain preference for the second term” (Giovagnoli 2011:5).

In branding and narratology studies, however, Jenkins (2006) and Scolari (2018) note that transmedia manifests itself through the active involvement of the audience as co-creators, who further develop the main narrative and add their own new meanings.

In cultural semiotics, a related interpretation of transmediality focuses on the movement of specific motifs across time and cultural space (Saldre, Torop 2012; Ojamaa 2015). However, within this field, there is a clear distinction between the concepts of **'crossmediality'** and **'transmediality'**:

Crossmediality thus implies a target-oriented process whereby diverse media sources are collaboratively converged into a whole, and transmedia on the other hand implies a source-oriented process whereby a prototext is diverged into different individual metatexts in cultural space. Examples of crossmediality would include marketing one product through Internet, print media and TV or telling a coordinated story through comics, a movie, and a video game. Examples of transmediality would also include cinematic adaptations of a preexisting novel or the spontaneous ways certain motifs move from literature to music to painting etc. in culture over time. (Ojamaa 2015:9)

Building on these theoretical distinctions, the approach applied in this research distinguishes crossmedia and transmedia, taking into account the following criteria:

- Level of planning and strategic focus: intentionally centralized and strategically guided / decentralized, organic

- Degree of content replication and transformation: exact copying of motivated signs / transformation of motivated signs with the addition of new meanings when distributed to different media
- Control over the results of outreach: expected, predicted / organic, impossible to predict.

‘**Crossmedia**’ of nation branding campaigns is defined as a centrally planned, multiple media channel strategy for disseminating motivated signs within a single government-led nation branding campaign. Motivated signs in branding campaigns can communicate in various modes: logo, color, verbal/textual, moving image/video, static visual, audio/sound, tactile (material), spatial, thereby building visual identity, narratives, audiovisual images, and interactive or physical experiences.

Crossmedia content is centralized by strategy and replicated across different media platforms (Jenkins 2006; Giovagnoli 2011; Ojamaa, Torop 2015; Sutherland, Barker 2023; Kazymyr 2023; Cheregi 2018). Additionally, creators who intentionally employ a crossmedia approach can predict in advance the outcomes in campaign reach.

The Ukrainian government has developed several crossmedia initiatives for the period 2018-2022, which collectively demonstrate a high level of ‘**crossmediality**’ in the dissemination of motivated signs through various media channels, as analyzed in **Chapter 2.1**.

Otherwise, ‘**transmedia**’ in nation branding refers to the process by which motivated signs, meanings, and narratives are communicated by different actors and across multiple media outside of centralized control, resulting in their organic transformation and multiplication. Also, the outcomes in terms of audience reach and distribution of motivated signs can not be thoroughly planned or predicted in advance. In nation branding, this process involves the audience and various actors in creating motivated signs, allowing it to have a spontaneous and bottom-up nature of initiatives. Additionally, within transmedia, different degrees of **resemiotization** are possible, understood as “meaning making shifts from context to context, from practice to practice, or from one stage of a practice to the next” (Iedema 2003:41) that occur when signs move from one mode and media format to another. These shifts may range from a complete change of the sign to a partial change with the addition of new meanings.

The concept of ‘**transmedia world**’ defined by Klastrup and Tosca (2004) is used in the analysis:

Transmedial worlds are abstract content systems from which a repertoire of fictional stories and characters

can be actualized or derived across a variety of media forms. What characterizes a transmedial world is that audience and designers share a mental image of the “worldness” (a number of distinguishing features of its universe). The idea of a specific world’s worldness mostly originates from the first version of the world presented, but can be elaborated and changed over time. Quite often the world has a cult (fan) following across media as well. (Klastrup, Tosca 2004:409)

1. Actors in Nation Branding of Ukraine

In studies of nation branding by various researchers, one can find the concepts of stakeholders or actors involved in nation branding. Such a difference in concepts is due to the use of different research methodologies. For example, the concept of ‘**stakeholders**’ is used by Keith Dinnie (2008), Kotler and Gertner (2002), Helmi, Aitken and Campbell (2019), Li and Feng (2021), Abdalmajid et al. (2023), Hankinson (2004, 2007), Hao et al. (2021) and others, applying the stakeholder theory in nation branding (Dinnie 2008; Anholt 2000). In turn, the concept of ‘**actors in nation branding**’ is used in discourse analysis by Nadia Kaneva (2011; 2014; 2022), Melissa Aronczyk (2008; 2010), Volčič and Andrejevic (2011), Lee (2022), Lemberg and Habtom (2025), Omelchenko (2024), and others.

Thus, since this research uses a discursive approach, the concept of the ‘**nation branding actor**’ is used. It is defined as an entity (individual, group, or institution) that actively participates in the formation, management and/or communication nation branding for internal and external audiences through its activities and the shaping of discourse as a system of symbols and narratives (Kaneva 2011, 2014), and also has a systematic influence on the nation brand and the implementation of nation branding as a strategic process (Rojas-Méndez, Khoshnevis 2023).

To identify the actors of nation branding of Ukraine, a selected sample of 30 cases from the period 2018-2022 was analyzed, in particular through the coverage of information about their creators in the media sources: interviews, blogs, news articles, official media publications, websites of campaigns and initiatives, official reports, and a documentary film.

The analysis showed that 22 of 30 campaigns (approximately 73%) were created in cooperation between various actors, combining the President, government institutions, creative agencies, NGOs and association, private companies, media, armed forces (including military units and formations), charitable foundation, foreigners, public figures, Ukrainian diaspora and citizens, student unions, international program bodies, politicians, and social enterprises.

At the same time, it is worth noting that 14 of the selected 30 projects were initiated and officially implemented on behalf of the government in cooperation with other actors involved in nation branding, including VisitUkraine.Today, UkraineNOW — Ukraine.ua, Trade with

Ukraine — Diia.Business, Ukraine WOW, The International Defense Legions – Join the Brave, Close the sky over Ukraine!, Patron, UNITED24, Be Brave Like Ukraine, 5 grams of Perseverance, Zalizna Kramnytsya, #GrainFromUkraine, Carol for Charity, and #LightUpUkraine. Of these campaigns, only 4 were created purely by government structures, but with constant information support in the media and collaborations, such as Trade with Ukraine — Diia.Business, The International Defense Legions – Join the Brave, Close the sky over Ukraine!, and UNITED24.

In contrast, 2 campaigns were initiated by NGOs and associations in Ukraine on their own initiative, but in the final stages of implementation, they involved the government in cooperation: #ArmWomenNow, People's Bayraktar, and People's Satellite.

There are also 14 cases where the government had no involvement, and campaigns were created purely on the initiative of youth NGOs, student unions, private businesses, or other non-governmental actors in various collaborations.

Abroad, in 2022, representatives of the Ukrainian diaspora played an increasingly active role in forming and disseminating the nation brand. For instance, #standwithukraine was created by an association of Ukrainian and French citizens (a French NGO), Unite with Ukraine was created by the Ukrainian World Congress, which represents the Ukrainian diaspora worldwide, Adweek on Ukraine, Kyiv Independent, and Saint Javelin merchandise.

There is also a single campaign created by a single nation branding actor, for example, Spend With Ukraine.

A detailed analysis of the organizers and initiators of the projects enabled us to categorize different actors according to the functions they perform in the process of nation branding: official creator and manager of nation branding, conscious user/co-creator of nation branding, disseminator, and constant supporter of nation branding. At the same time, it is worth considering that types in different categories show differing levels of societal trust and perceived legitimacy.

The leading model of cooperation in nation branding involved collaboration between government structures and civil society representatives, comprising 11 cases. The rarest was tripartite collaboration, where the government, civil society representatives and independent media or individuals united at the stage of creating or already implementing an initiative – a national-international fundraising collection for the needs of the Armed Forces of Ukraine

(three Bayraktar TB-2 UAVs), which closed in 3 days for the amount of 600 million hryvnias (around 15 million usd) (Serhiy Prytula Foundation 2022).

The analysis also revealed who was involved and how often in nation branding projects (see *Table 2*).

The most significant number and frequency of engagements in nation branding initiatives for 2018-2022 are in NGOs, 10 engagements. In second place in terms of frequency are agencies, such as creatives and performers, that directly implement the campaign on someone else's order (in our sample, most often on behalf of the government), private businesses, and the President/Presidential Administration – 6. In third place are the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, independent media, and charitable foundations – 4. The Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, the Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine, and public figures, as well as other nation branding actors, took part in the initiatives individually.

Functional Categories of Nation Branding Actors

Creator and manager of nation branding — government: The Presidential Administration, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, for example, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, and other government institutions or organizations — possess the legal authority, have full power of governance and financial resources from the state budget.

Co-creator and conscious user of nation branding — civil society and non-governmental actors, politicians, the military: Civil society organizations, associations, youth NGOs, student unions, charitable foundations, private businesses perform an executive function in building and promoting the brand through fundraising, public projects, initiatives, and broader activities. Also active co-creators of nation branding are the armed forces (including military units and formations), as well as politicians who do not represent the official government position of Ukraine. Co-creators and conscious users possess resources to launch their own initiatives, often in cooperation with international donors, programs, and government institutions. This category may include both Ukrainian citizens and representatives of the diaspora or foreign actors; however, they operate in the capacity of official organizations or groups rather than as individual persons.

Disseminator and constant supporter of nation branding — independent media entity (media entity means “any person or entity that actively gathers information of potential interest to a segment of the public” (Law Insider 2025): This category encompasses individuals who act as representatives and operate independently of organizations or associations. Citizens, the diaspora, foreigners, bloggers, public figures, and independent media counter Russian propaganda by creating content that debunks myths, disseminating national news, and raising funds. This category also includes organizations, businesses that produce their own products with existing nation branding plots and emotional images: Ukrposhta issued stamps with “Russian warship... ALL!”, “Good evening, we are from Ukraine!”, “Ukrainian Dream (Mriya)” and “Patron Dog”.

The categories of actors described in this section are fundamental for determining the levels of Ukraine's Nation Branding Transmedia World model (2018-2022) based on the level of modality of the initiatives they create, as outlined in **Chapter 4**.

2. Government-led Nation Branding Initiatives in Ukraine (2018-2022)

This chapter presents a primary analysis (Chapter 2.1) of 14 multimodal cases created by the state during this period, which reflect the main practices of national branding, as well as a secondary analysis (Chapter 2.2) – a detailed multimodal work with a concentrated sample of signs and cases, which allows the more profound revelation of meanings, identification of transformations and value accretion in the national branding strategy.

Based on the theory of multimodality (Kress, Van Leeuwen 2006), the following categories of modes were identified during the analysis of cases created by the government:

Visual modes

- Logo

Includes wordmarks and graphic symbols in logos.

- Color

Includes color palettes used on websites, in graphic materials, reports, exhibition elements, and photos.

- Static visual

Photographs, posters, graphic objects, illustrations, infographics. The analysis takes into account their content, background, primary elements, emotional characteristics, and focus.

Verbal/textual mode

Titles, texts, slogans, descriptions, marketing, and information narratives, as well as video voiceover. The analysis covers lexical choices, accents, and rhetoric.

Moving image/video mode

Promotional videos, video content on websites. The analysis includes their rhythm, ways of representing events, and subjects.

Audio/sound mode

Music, sound effects, background noise, voice in video.

Spatial mode

Organization of exhibition space and public spaces. The analysis focuses on the interconnection of zones and the spatial formation of experience.

Tactile (material) mode

Physical objects, souvenir products (merch), and objects that involve touch. The experience of physical interaction is analyzed.

These modes are selected for further analysis and definition of motivated sign in the government-led nation branding campaigns and initiatives in Ukraine (2018-2022).

2.1 Motivated Signs in Government-led Nation Branding Campaigns and Initiatives in Ukraine (2018-2022)

The matrix of motivational features in government nation branding campaigns and initiatives in Ukraine (2018–2022) (*see Table 3*) presents the results of the primary analysis, offering an overview of the presence and distribution of motivational features in different cases. However, it does not provide an in-depth interpretive analysis of each case as a separate initiative; rather, it considers the cases as a collective data set in which the official nation branding strategy is conveyed through recurring motivational features, allowing for the identification of common features that constitute the main narrative. The matrix captures for each case the central motivated signs, secondary motivated signs that are present but not dominant, and motivated signs that are absent or minimally expressed, as well as the overall frequency of each signs across all cases.

Figure 1 presents the collected data on motivational signs in government-led nation branding campaigns and initiatives in Ukraine, created between 2018 and 2021. To take into account the different weight of signs in each case in the context of an overall analysis of the national branding period, to each type of motivated sign was assigned a corresponding numerical value – central signs received 2 points, secondary (subordinate) signs 1 point, and absent signs 0 points – and the cumulative score of each sign across cases was used to calculate its overall weight. The wordcloud built on detailed data from *Table 3* on the frequency of use of specific motivated signs appearing across the analyzed cases, where each sign is counted only once per

campaign or initiative, regardless of the repetition in the case. This approach enabled us to identify dominant sign patterns and priorities in nation branding communication, while also determining which signs are the most popular among all nation brand projects created by the government by 2022.

The data showed that the most frequently used motivated signs in these years are **‘Ukraine’** and human-centered identity (**‘people’**), **‘innovation/development’**, which were found in 3 of the analyzed cases (UkraineNOW, Ukraine.ua, Ukraine WOW). Also noticeable is a high representation of national symbols, particularly the colors **‘yellow’** and **‘blue’**, the image of the national flag, and an emphasis on **‘joy, positivity’** (3), **‘beauty and travel’** (2), **‘responsibility, ecological consciousness’** (3), **‘industry / infrastructure’** (3) which were found in cases. Less central emphasis but still high performance was on **‘freedom’** (2), and **‘opportunities’** (3). These data confirm the nation brand’s orientation towards creating an attractive image of the country for tourism and attracting investment.



Figure 1. Motivated Signs in Government-led Nation Branding Campaigns and Initiatives in Ukraine (2018-2021).

During the whole period from 2018 to 2022 (see Figure 0), the most highlighted signs that remain at the core of nation branding are **‘Ukraine’** (16), **‘people’** (14), **‘blue’** (14), **‘yellow’** (13), and **‘flag’** (12).

In 2022, the emphasis on **‘opportunities, start, youth’** (6) and **‘beauty and travel’** (4) shifts and becomes less bright. The government focused on several key motivated signs, that includes highlighting the importance and place of Ukraine in **‘Europe / global context’** (14),

as well as the significance of ‘war’ (12), ‘security, rules, reliability’ (12), ‘cooperation, support’ (11), ‘bravery, courage, heroism’ (8). Additionally, a new term ‘steeliness’ (6) was introduced to mean ‘resilience’ of the Ukrainian people, and their ongoing fight for Ukraine’s victory.



Figure 2. Motivated Signs in Government-led Nation Branding Campaigns and Initiatives in Ukraine (2018-2022).

2.2 Multimodal Analysis

For the analytical section, a purposive sample of cases (Ukraine NOW – Ukraine.ua, Ukraine WOW, Patron, Be Brave Like Ukraine, 5 Grams of Perseverance, Zalizna Kramnytsya, and #GrainFromUkraine) was selected, representing the most incredible diversity of motivated signs. In addition, the analysis incorporates references to other campaigns where these signs are articulated, in order to contextualize their broader circulation within Ukraine’s nation branding ecosystem. The analysis does not include possible interpretations of the signs that have not been officially communicated by the creators of a certain case, or those that do not carry critically important changes and do not affect the overall result of the analysis.

The following criteria guided the selection for the secondary analysis.

The primary criterion was the degree to which a case most strongly articulates a specific motivated sign. Priority was given to cases in which concrete signs are expressed with the

highest semiotic intensity; if a sign is repeated in several cases, we choose the one where its semiotic intensity is highest.

Secondary criteria included temporal diversity within the 2018–2022 period, variation in formats, and representation of different thematic and institutional domains.

UkraineNOW-Ukraine.ua – ‘Ukraine’, ‘Blue’, ‘Yellow’, ‘People’, ‘Opportunities, Start’, ‘Industry/Infrastructure’, ‘Freedom’, ‘Joy, Positivity’

The “UkraineNOW” was created in 2018 as the official brand of Ukraine, and in 2021, it evolved into Ukraine.ua, a digital ecosystem that includes a website, YouTube channel, and social media pages. The essence of the brand is built on direct associations with the country, specifically combining the motivated signs ‘Ukraine’, ‘blue’, and ‘yellow’ with a human-centered identity (represented by ‘people’).

At the core of the campaign is the idea of showing modern Ukraine. Accordingly, the logo of the new official nation brand of Ukraine consists of two rectangular blocks with the words “Ukraine” – associated with the state, and “Now” – “an open, modern country where all the most interesting things are happening now” (*see Figure 3*) (Banda Agency 2018).

In addition, the primary colors of the branding, white, blue, yellow, and black, play a significant role. This choice clearly aligns with the idea of connecting the visual component of branding to national symbols, specifically the colors of the Ukrainian flag.



Figure 3. Official materials of the national branding campaign “UkraineNOW” (Banda Agency 2018).

In the video by the Kyivfornia agency, the foreground is occupied by youth (see Figure 4). We see students and young people of different genders and appearances, wearing youth clothing in various styles and colors. They are all physically active: some ride horses, boats, or climb TV towers, while others walk through museums, ride the subway, ride motorcycles, skate, play electric guitar, or play football. At the same time, the visual series is complemented by audio accompaniment, which names the characteristics of the youth of Ukraine: “beautiful, bold, courageous, rebellious and frivolous”, “knows the taste of victory”, has “positive and strong spirit”, and “opens the heart” (Kyivfornia 2018). At the same time, the fast rhythm of the audio emphasizes dynamism, as well as the speed of frame changes. The video features the soundtrack “Norman Here We Go” (2019) in the background, which has a contemporary pop sound, with lyrics that emphasize the idea of formation and the motif of moving forward. The repeated phrases “I will grow”, “Here we go”, “Like the world’s never known” (*ibid.*) emphasize not a constant descriptive characteristic of the youth and the country, but their process of formation and the present moment in action.

In turn, this gives a unique meaning to the understanding of the sign ‘Ukraine’ and its positioning in the global and national discourse – as a young, modern country that creates the future here and now.

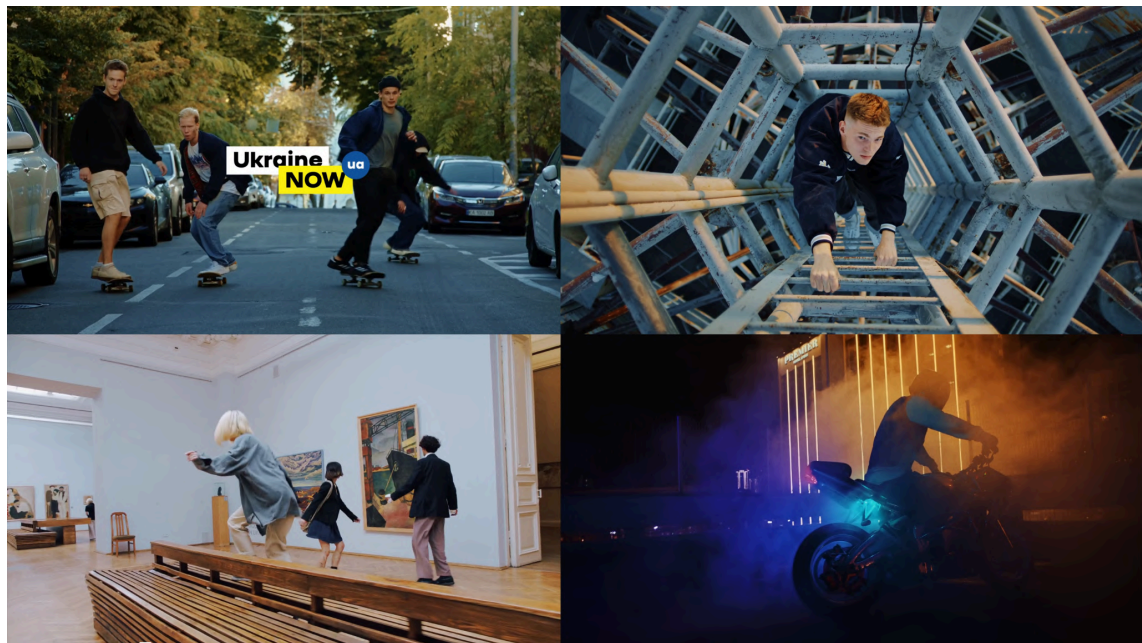


Figure 4. Footage from the promotional video of Ukraine (Kyivfornia 2018).

The aforementioned continuity from the past to the future is embodied by people (youth), and emphasized through the use of documentary footage of events from the country's history. These events are presented in brief, fragmentary moments – sometimes difficult to grasp in their content. Nevertheless, they are iconic for the nation and well-known on a European or world scale. In particular, video clips from the awarding of athletes at the Olympic Games, the joy of the national team's goal at the football championship, as well as archival footage from the 1990s, such as from the main square of Ukraine, Maidan Nezalezhnosti, are represented through images of young, smiling people. As a result, these fragments make it clear the context in which a new young generation grew up, which represents Ukraine now. In contrast, the negative national baggage of the past, associated with the Soviet regime, is presented through other visual markers, in particular, photos of the explosion at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant and the liquidators of the accident (Chernobyl disaster 1986).

Since these historical moments are presented by showing people in that context, rather than abstract events or symbols, this preserves the integrity of the campaign's main idea, which is to put people who represent the country at the center.

The use of frames of different people² in different historical periods forms a logic between the past, present, and future, allowing us to consider the development of Ukraine as a continuous process, which is further revealed in the “UkraineWOW” case.

On the Ukraine.ua website, the human-centered identity of Ukraine, alongside its characteristics as a country, is also communicated as “a place where hundreds of thousands of talented people live and work” (Ministry of Information Policy of Ukraine, Banda Agency 2018). Similar generalizations are used in the “Trade with Ukraine”³ communication, such as “well-educated and highly-skilled talents” and “over 42 million highly educated people living in it as of 2022⁴” (Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine, Entrepreneurship and Export Promotion Office 2021).

Since 2022, the content and emphasis in communications on Ukraine’s official channels have changed. Undoubtedly, the basis of branding, which was developed in 2018, remained, but it received a new perception in the context of a full-scale war; new interpretations were added, or existing meanings were selectively reinforced. For example, the same logo used in communication in 2022, but ‘Now’ has acquired an additional new meaning – Ukraine, not in the sense of ‘*new opportunities*’, but *rather ‘what is happening now’* in Ukraine.

If the sign ‘**people**’ was previously represented by energetic, positive, carefree youth full of possibilities, in contrast, since 2022, in the context of war, it has been resemiotized as youth who have become more mature, having quickly acquired uncharacteristic features for their age.

² The concept of ‘human-centered identity’ in national branding, as used from 2018 to 2021, is not limited to this case. Its logical continuation was the exhibition “Ukraine WOW” (2019-2020) in physical format, which will be described later in the analysis. There, Ukrainians themselves became not only part of the general theme of Ukraine as a country, but also co-creators of the exhibition due to high interactivity.

³ The “Trade with Ukraine” brand and campaign were developed as part of the “UkraineNOW” branding initiative in 2018 (Serdiuk, M. and Hryhoryan et al. 2024; Cherep 2025). As an export nation brand, its name is concise and straightforward, directly communicating its core proposition.

⁴ The specific population figure for 2022 is emphasized because, since the start of the full-scale war, there has been no verified data on the number of people living in Ukraine. This is due to human losses and cases of missing persons among military and civilian personnel, mass internal migrations, emigration of the population abroad due to military operations, as well as the impossibility of fully recording the population in the temporarily occupied territories.

In 2022, on the Instagram account, Ukraine.ua communicated personal stories of Ukrainian children and students from their everyday lives. The story of 9-year-old Askold from Kyiv exemplifies the extreme wartime experience of childhood, unseparated from ‘**resilience**’ and ‘**bravery**’ (see Figure 5). Askold’s comment on the destruction of a playground as a result of a Russian missile that “he has already seen much worse things... shelled houses...bullet holes” is central to understanding how youth, as the main representative sign of human-centered identity, has changed in the context of war (Ukraine.ua 2022a). He did not react to violence in the way a child of the same age would in a peaceful environment. In a news report used in a post, his calm tone and concise, clear descriptions suggested that war and terror have become familiar and are already part of his life experience. Moreover, through this experience, the child already made a balanced assessment of the consequences for himself, that a playground destroyed by a Russian missile hit is terrible, but a house shot through with artillery is more terrible. That is, the ‘**people**’ represented by children in nation branding communications are youth, who are aware of the consequences of cruelty in an adult manner, which reshapes the perception of danger.

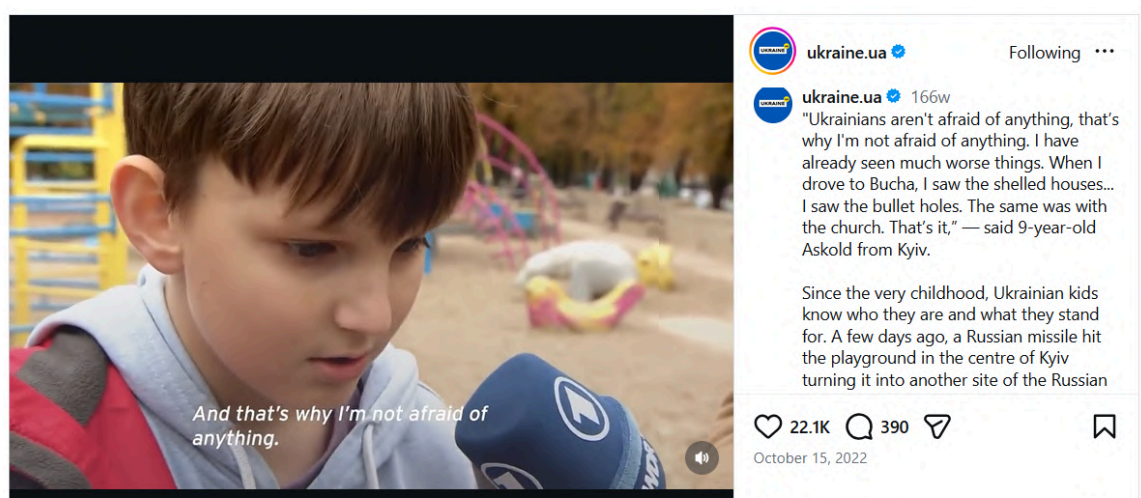


Figure 5. Instagram post by Ukraine.ua from October 15, 2022 (Ukraine.ua 2022a).

Another example is the story of 12-year-old Danyk from Chernihiv, which illustrates how a teenager assumed roles typically performed by adults (see Figure 6). As a result of Russia’s armed offensive on Chernihiv (February-April 2022), after losing his home and injuring his mother, Danyk became the only one in the family who could help his mother and grandmother, because the other men in the family were at the front, and he also volunteered for other similarly affected families:

“Before school reopens in September, Danyk tries to help other people as much as he can. Together with his grandmother, he has joined the volunteering initiative clearing the debris of buildings outside Chernihiv. All they were destroyed by Russian bombardment” (Ukraine.ua 2022b).

In this story, the focus is not on the teenager's suffering, but on his actions. He, as a representative of youth, is portrayed as a reliable and conscious person who took on huge responsibility despite the circumstances.

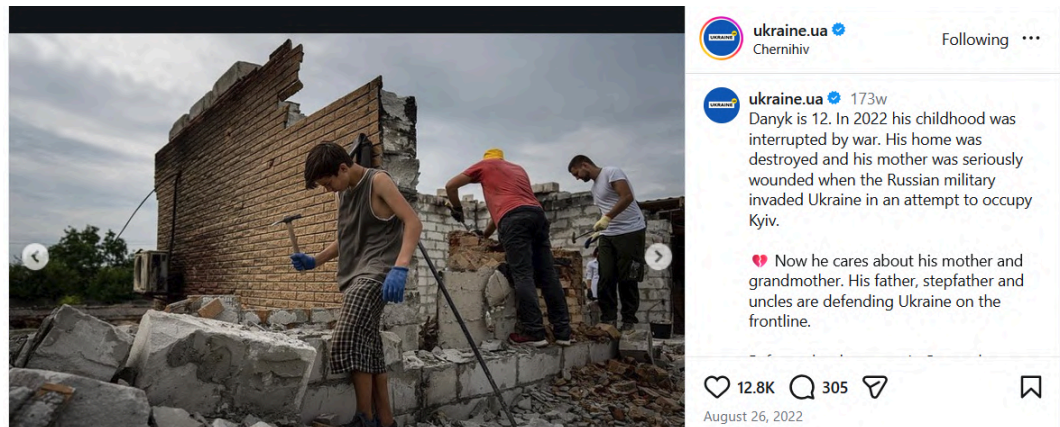


Figure 6. Instagram post by Ukraine.ua from August 26, 2022 (Ukraine.ua 2022b).

It is worth noting that the topic of the consequences of war on youth has been a recurring theme in official national communication since 2014, including nation branding media channels. However, since 2022, it has become more systematic, personalized, and mass in nature. It is from this moment that the stories of children and adolescents who grew up in conditions of war as a long-term factor appear, and over 8 years, they have formed an awareness of social need, their own responsibility for the future of the country, which later transformed into a real result and contribution to society. In this communication, youth is shown not only as a promise of the future, but as active forth in the present.

For example, as noted on Instagram Ukraine.ua, 17-year-old student Ihor Klymenko began working on the invention of a demining robot in 2014. The prototype was already developed by manufacturers in 2022 (see Figure 7) (Ukraine.ua 2022c). Volunteering and cooperation with institutions reinforce the idea that young people take high social responsibility, a trait commonly associated with adults.



Figure 7. Instagram post by Ukraine.ua from September 20, 2022 (Ukraine.ua 2022c).

Summarizing publications featuring youth in nation branding, the emphasis shifts from driven youth in a world of full opportunity in 2018 to forced adulthood in 2022, highlighting conscious social actors, regardless of age, who respond to the consequences of war as part of their everyday reality. In a similar manner to the coupling of **‘youth’** with the characteristic **‘responsible’**, the sign **‘war’** has become diffusive in all communication cases since 2022, shifting from a sporadic presence since 2014 to a constant narrative element. For example, in the Carol for Charity case, in the promotional video, the creators use footage of children who hear explosions and bombs every day, footage of them sleeping in bomb shelters and the subway (Saatchi & Saatchi Ukraine 2022).

At the same time, **‘people’**, redefined through a child who was forced to grow up early, serves as an entry point to broader resemiotization of this sign. In the context of the full-scale war, the sign **‘people’** extends beyond youth and becomes closely linked to the mining of *‘defenders’*, both in military uniform and those who wear civilian clothing. Images and videos depict civilians and defenders (military) in Ukraine in real-life and conditions – this is a reflection of real stories of finding strength.

On the Ukraine.ua website, in addition to the main messages of confrontation, fight against Russian aggression, the emphasis on people continues to be used in a more expanded, specific meaning, deepening the connection between values and devotion, sincerity, and love for the country that is their home: “Our resilience is rooted in the courage of our people, who defend

our home and our values with all their hearts” (Ministry of Information Policy of Ukraine, Banda Agency 2018).

This meaning of **‘people’** is also visually represented in the communication campaign “Be Brave Like Ukraine”. This campaign establishes a clear connection between the sign **‘people’** with **‘bravery’**, while the **‘bravery’** itself will be discussed in a separate case, “Patron”. Visually, the campaign features close-up portraits of people, with a strong emphasis on the eyes. Both military and civilian individuals are depicted in everyday environments – at home, on the streets, and against the backdrop of destroyed houses. The portrayed individuals were confident and often optimistic, visually reinforcing the message of resilience.

A similar human-centered approach, but with a distinct emphasis on the military, is evident in the recruiting campaign of the International Defense Legions of Ukraine⁵. It presents soldiers photographed in their positions with equipment, as well as defenders in military uniforms from different countries, gathered in military or combat positions. Here, **‘people’** is directly linked to collective responsibility at a global level that will also be described as central in the “#GrainFromUkraine” case study later. Finally, the platform UNITED24 expands human-centered identity through the representation of Ukrainian people, international ambassadors, and the image of the President of Ukraine, positioning **‘people’** as a unifying sign.

Alongside the core signs discussed above, the brand’s key message, “UkraineNOW,” positions Ukraine as a country of opportunities: “Now” is the best time to travel to, invest in, and move your own business to Ukraine” (Banda Agency 2018).

This message was built around the sign **‘opportunities, start’**, presenting Ukraine as an open, dynamic, and future-oriented country. In the campaign promotion video, the textual accents such as “place of strength”, “new opportunities now”, “worth to invest in”, “we are only getting started” characterized the country as a space for growth and development (*ibid.*).

⁵ The project, which was launched before the official launch of the “Be Brave Like Ukraine” campaign, initially had a format that included more individual appeals and official messages than a typical recruitment campaign. However, after a couple of months, it adopted the established branding and format of the international “Be Brave” campaign. This is an adapted version of Be Brave branding, with a call to Join the Brave.

The sign ‘**opportunities**’ has a broad meaning and is revealed in different dimensions, appearing both in the main nation brand and in subbrands, including the nation export brand, part of which is also present on the Ukraine.ua website.

For example, in UkraineNow, ‘**opportunities**’ are presented in a broad sense, indicating the possibilities of cooperation with Ukraine through investments, self-realization, and acquaintance with Ukraine in a tourist context. The brand’s messages of freedom, energy, openness, and potential support the unfolding of the ‘opportunities’ sign. Also, this sign is embedded in the idea of the logo, explained by the authors as follows, and can be interpreted as ‘*opening up new opportunities now*’:

The logo turned out exactly like this because we wanted to “underline” the main word of the message – NOW – with a yellow marker. The blue element resembles the notifications we see on social networks in shape. It is a symbol of something new, something that attracts attention. (Banda Agency 2018).

In the export brand “Trade with Ukraine”, the concept of opportunities is translated into the economic and industrial domains, which will be described in more detail in the analysis of the sign ‘**industry/infrastructure**’.

In the visual communication of the export brand during the 2018-2021 period, ‘**opportunities**’ are expressed more vividly through the abstractness and creativity of the images (*see Figure 8*), possibly to emphasize the broad potential for cooperation, numerous business opportunities, and development. Analysis of the text revealed that the main accents were placed to emphasize the message that Ukrainian products are of high quality, are modern, competitive, technological, innovative, and creative.

Export Brand of Ukraine

The export brand of Ukraine has been created to ensure a better recognition of Ukrainian products worldwide. It is used to promote Ukrainian goods and services in the international market based on one visual concept.

The export brand is a part of the project «Consolidation of the Export Potential of Small and Medium-Sized Business and Simplified Access to International Markets» that was implemented by the Entrepreneurship and Export Promotion Office on behalf of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development as part of the EU4Business Programme.

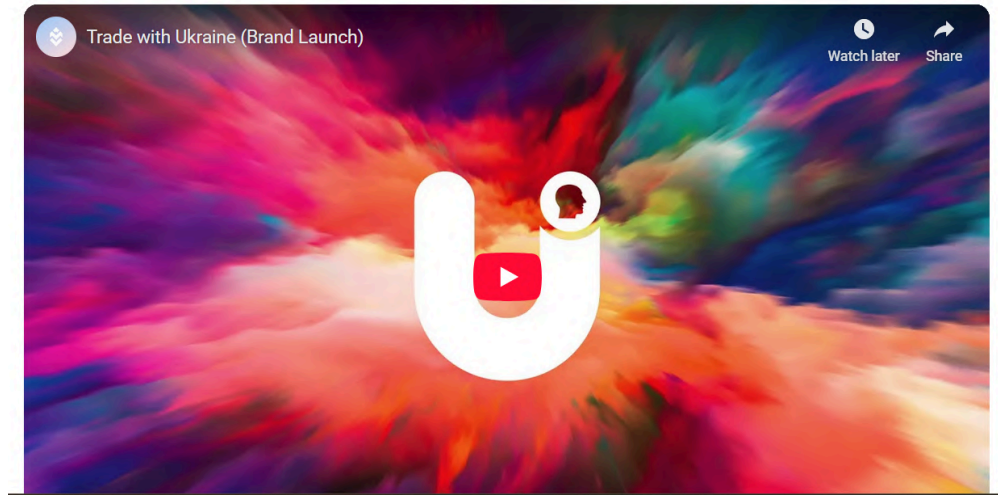


Figure 8. Preview of the “Trade with Ukraine” brand launch video (Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine, Entrepreneurship and Export Promotion Office 2021).

The sign ‘**industry/infrastructure**’ is conceptually close to ‘**opportunities**’, but it is realized differently across nation branding.

Within the export brand “Trade with Ukraine”, the sign ‘**industry**’ articulated through economic and production capacities: “metallurgy”, “chemicals”, “manufacturing”, “industrial base”, “long-standing traditions in the machinery” (Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine, Entrepreneurship and Export Promotion Office 2021). In parallel, Ukraine is positioned as a digitally progressive country, ranking among the “top 10 countries in conducting IT-friendly reforms” (*ibid.*).

Since 2021, Trade with Ukraine has become part of the “Diiia.Business” ecosystem (a digital government brand), as a result of which the digitalization process is not only communicated in texts, but is more deeply integrated into the positioning itself through the visual style of the site⁶.

⁶ The color palette has become more minimalist, with an emphasis on white, blue, and black rather than bright accents. The graphics have undergone a complete makeover, featuring a modern, flat design that is minimalist in style, with an emphasis on functionality, reminiscent of an app. Shapes have rounded corners, and minimalist icons replace images. The style of the texts shifts from one of creativity, bright appeal, and tourism to a more solid and concrete one.

When launching the official channels of Ukraine in 2021, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine mainly followed a strategy of “polished marketing campaigns and well-crafted promotional texts” (Turbil 2025). The texts and visual elements trace images and narratives that reflect the remarkable nature, culture, and innovations of Ukraine. Due to the dominance of negative associations, narratives and stereotypes about “corruption”, “revolution” and “military actions” in the discourse of the brand of Ukraine at that time (Serdiuk, M. and Hryhoryan et al. 2024), in official communication the goal was to counter-communicate, using expressions opposite in meaning: “Ukraine has incredibly high legal and technological standards for transparency and accountability”, “extensive anti-corruption and transparency reforms” (Ministry of Information Policy of Ukraine, Banda Agency 2018).

In this context, the launch of the digital government brand became part of the nation branding through which reform narratives were communicated through visible markers of transparency, reliability, and alignment with the EU standards.

Alongside digitalization, UkraineNow and the export brand of Ukraine strongly highlight that the country has “booming creative industries: design, audiovisual art, publishing and advertising, traditional crafts – all ready for cooperation with foreign partners” (Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine, Entrepreneurship and Export Promotion Office 2021).

Since 2018, as a part of nation branding, Ukraine has strategically used the country-of-origin effect (COO) (Anholt 2006), actively promoted through the “Made in Ukraine” label, reinforcing trust and credibility. In 2022, marketplaces with Ukrainian goods and manufacturers were launched, which can be purchased with delivery abroad (Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine 2022). In parallel, since 2022 onward, the industrial narrative increasingly incorporates the theme of the damage to Ukrainian industry due to the war, which has continued in the global discourse the theme of the loss of national production in the temporarily occupied Donetsk and Luhansk regions since 2015. For instance, “5 grams of Perseverance” is one of the largest government-led campaigns that appeals to the world to show the consequences of military actions on Ukrainian metallurgy, notably through the destruction of one of the largest and most critically important metallurgical plants – “Azovstal” of the Metinvest group.

Since 2022, the COO's marketing practice has been utilized in an initiative launched by Trade with Ukraine as a countercommunication campaign against the economies of hostile countries

– the “DO NOT sponsor murder” – aimed at boycotting Russian and Belarusian⁷ goods and companies abroad (*see Figure 9*). In this case, the barcode serves as a visual representation of the COO effect, becoming an ethical marker and a political stance for the consumer.

Accordingly, one can trace the transformation of the economic and industrial signs in the context of war. The barcode is associated with goods, the origin of the product, supply chains, and the economic responsibility of the consumer. In a peaceful context, it serves as a neutral marker of industry and global trade, while in a military context, it becomes a tool for exposing and identifying a country. The numerical codes 46 and 481 directly indicate the country of origin — ‘**industry**’ of the Russian Federation and Belarus, respectively. Clear communication, which corresponds to a country’s code, makes it impossible to ignore the political content. The semantic meaning of “murder” personalizes responsibility and position in war, which is also reinforced by the use of red text and splashes on the background. The stained, blood-marked white background operates as a visual allegory of economic and moral neutrality that can no longer be sustained in the context of war. As a result, this case semantically moves war from the geopolitical and military domain into the sphere of the daily life of the global consumer: “do not sponsor” equals “do not buy”, conveying the idea that *‘war is financed not in the abstract, but through everyday consumption, and the purchase of goods can be an economic resource for violence’* (Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine, Entrepreneurship and Export Promotion Office 2022).



⁷ “Belarus has also proven itself to be a “passive co-organizer” of the war against Ukraine, as Russian troops have regularly launched attacks on Ukraine from Belarusian territory since February 24, 2022” (Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine, Entrepreneurship and Export Promotion Office 2022).

Figure 9. One of the posters of the “DO NOT sponsor murder” communication campaign (Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine, Entrepreneurship and Export Promotion Office 2022).

Returning to the sign **‘infrastructure’**, in UkraineNow, it is primarily represented by transport accessibility, especially in the context of traveling across Ukraine. On Ukraine.ua **‘infrastructure’** is framed as “easy to travel across the country: 13 seaports, 16 river ports, 20 airports, 19,700 km of railways” (Ministry of Information Policy of Ukraine, Banda Agency 2018). This interpretation is further supported by the “Ukraine WOW” project, which explored the theme of revealing this sign through rail travel (as described in the “Ukraine WOW” case analysis).

In contrast, in Trade with Ukraine, **‘infrastructure’** is revealed through the theme of key infrastructure for business opportunities, logistics, and exports: “extensive infrastructure and valuable assets make our country an attractive trading partner” (Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine, Entrepreneurship and Export Promotion Office 2021).

Alongside the **‘opportunities’**, **‘freedom’** plays an important role in nation branding. Within the pre-full-scale-war communication, **‘freedom’** functioned primarily in the meanings of *‘openness’* and *‘creativity’*, articulated through expressions like “generation of freedom”, “territory of freedom”, and “unrestrained wind of freedom” (Ministry of Information Policy of Ukraine, Banda Agency 2018). Freedom is represented as a condition for innovation, self-expression, and growth.

Since 2022, the meaning of **‘freedom’** in official national communication has undergone a fundamental shift. The text blocks on the official website of Ukraine now focus on the struggle to defend the state. On the main page of the site, phrases such as “brave people”, “fighting for freedom in the heart of Europe”, and “standing firm against aggression” are brightly highlighted (*ibid.*).

This semantic transformation of this sign is further articulated in the interview *“The Voices of a Nation: How Stories Have Shaped Ukraine’s Fight for Freedom”*. Recounting the backstage of his work administering the digital ecosystem “Ukraine.ua” at that time, Yaroslav Turbil conveys the meanings that became paramount in communications and life: “resilience of Ukrainians enduring the war”, “the destruction of cities”, “country’s flag not just as a state symbol but as an emblem of freedom”, “showing the unvarnished, often unsightly truth of the war”, “true stories of real people, cities and villages”, “the reality of war in real time”, “shaping the world’s understanding of Ukraine’s struggle” (Turbil 2025).

The redefined meaning of **'freedom'** is taken even further in the communication of the International Defense Legions of Ukraine. Here, this sign is framed explicitly as a collective value and a cooperative defence of democracy and freedom: “defend the freedoms and the liberties”, “the shield standing in the way of the tyranny”, “avenge the harmed”, “fight for your values in our ranks” (President of Ukraine 2022).

Building on the “UkraineNOW” brand message described earlier, since 2018, the emphasis on investment and travel is reflected in the motivated sign **'beauty and travel'**. By that time, a website had been created to promote tourism in the digital space, VisitUkraine.Today⁸, it serves as a practical guide and information portal for the tourism industry. Later, the **'beauty and travel'** sign was more widely revealed in the branding of “UkraineNow”. Thus, in branding of “Ukraine.ua”, images and videos align with the national strategy of attracting investment and tourism. We see photos that represent *'beauty in everything'*: nature and cities in Ukraine, as well as agro-industry, airports, environmental technologies, startups, and IT, featuring various categories of ordinary, peaceful people – open and positive. Later, the concept of openness to everything beautiful was expressed in Ukraine WOW through a passion for travel as a means of discovering Ukraine’s beauty and diversity via railway journeys across the country.

'Joy and positivity' (energy) is consistently present in all selected cases analyzed for the period 2018-2021, and from 2022, it takes on a different manifestation. In the “UkraineNow” video, alongside images of energetic youth, the audio used as the background in the video was the track “Vsesvit” by ONUKA, as well as DakhaBrakha’s “Sho z-pod duba”. The music is in the style of ethno-chaos, which combines modern electronic elements and contains traditional folklore motifs. It is modern, positive, engaging, energetic, exciting, with a reasonably fast pace that creates a background and logically emphasizes the general idea of branding. In the ImageBank Ukraine on the “Ukraine.ua” website, in addition to nature and cities, there are photo sections featuring fashion, happiness, relaxation, fun, love, adrenaline. Furthermore, the sign **'joy and positivity'** transformed into admiration, understood as a possible manifestation of joy in the joint creation of the country by Ukrainians, and lies at the core of the “Ukraine WOW” concept by transforming ‘NOW’ into ‘WOW’.

⁸ The text on the site is more instructional in nature, and the developers also use informative videos accompanied by upbeat and calming music. The information guide provides practical tips for a safe journey when traveling to and from Ukraine. Text and video modes reflect the openness and sincerity of the country. During the war, the content is presented rather as help, without tension, prohibitions, or intimidation.

Since 2022, in the nation branding of Ukraine, another aspect worth considering is that, despite the presence of emotionally complex topics and serious messages in the discourse, there is a notable positivity in national communications, which serves as a means to convey the difficulty (Turbil 2025; Horbyk, Orlova 2022).

For instance, the Instagram post by Ukraine.ua on October 30, 2022, about Maryna, a 6-year-old child who suffered physical injuries to her leg as a result of the Russian attack on Kherson, and was learning to walk again (Ukraine.ua 2022d). There, the theme of victimhood is converted into a story about moral strength and cooperation as a manifestation of ‘**positivity**’, grounded in real experience rather than abstract optimism.

Although the context is overtly traumatic – a child injured in a Russian attack – the textual focus shifts to determination, care, and recovery. Phrases like “walks with determination” and “with the assistance of her favourite rehabilitation doctor, Nazar Borozniuk, who makes her laugh even as she completes difficult exercises” portray joy as the result of resilience, not as an emotional given (*see Figure 10*) (Ukraine.ua 2022d).



Figure 10. Instagram post by Ukraine.ua from October 30, 2022 (Ukraine.ua 2022d)

‘**Positivity**’ emerges through ‘**resilience**’ in the process of recovery after trauma, and the role of a child's positive mood: “She has been working closely with psychologists, physical therapists and teachers in Ohmadyt hospital @ohmatdyt after a Russian attack on her home. It’s her enduring positivity that has carried her and her family this far, said her mother, Nataliia” (Ukraine.ua 2022d).

An illustrative example of the sign of ‘**positivity**’ is the use of a meme alongside official communication regarding a political event – Ukraine signing the application for accelerated

accession to NATO. On the Ukraine.ua Instagram page, the same event was simultaneously communicated in the form of an official announcement and a Pokémon-inspired meme visual (see Figure 11) (Ukraine.ua 2022d). The meme is based on a scene from the animated series Pokémon, where the main character challenges a Pokémon to battle by saying the phrase “I choose you.” The visual adaptation relied on popular culture as an emotional bridge to engage with the audience and translate a geopolitical message into a familiar and accessible one, replacing the Pokémon figurine with the NATO emblem. Without denying the reality of war, it reduced possible emotional heaviness while preserving the seriousness of the message.



Figure 11. Instagram post by Ukraine.ua from September 30, 2022 (Ukraine.ua 2022e).

In the case of “Zalizna Kramnytsya”, despite the negative context of the war, the store focuses on positive messages, emphasizing family and friendship ties, as well as the memory of home in Ukraine. The creators use direct associations with “new adventures”, “fascinating landscapes, falling in love with unknown places of the country”, focusing on human connection, family (“meeting people on the platform, the connection with whom is as strong as a railway junction, reliably accompanying us throughout our lives”) and awakening the emotion of “joy” (Ukrainian Railways 2022).

Consultants of the shop, who are “sincere, open people who shine and absolutely honestly broadcast a good mood” in physical stores, become a symbol of trust and positivity (Vygovska 2023). They also shape the overall experience and impression of customers, making them an important part of the project’s branding.

Ukraine WOW – ‘Innovation, Development’, ‘Diversity’, ‘State Borders’

The analysis of this case is based on the material of the visit experience and the video tour published on YouTube (Ukraine WOW 2020). The authors created this exhibition following the launch of the official brand in 2018; the very idea of its branding is rooted in the style of the nation branding UkraineNOW, but with an expanded concept and format of interaction with the audience. As explained by Yaroslava Gres, one of the creators of the exhibition, Ukraine WOW is like “from our NOW you can go to WOW in one step, because each of us is wow, therefore the country is wow, because you ‘each of us’ made your efforts to this” (*ibid.*). Through the semantic expansion of the concept of national branding, the authors highlighted the exhibition’s mission of fostering social cohesion. The exhibition’s format enabled this to be realized in physical space. It was fitting that the exhibition was given a permanent location in Kyiv, the capital of the country and a symbol of national unity.

The exhibition was designed as a journey through Ukraine on a Ukrzaliznytsia train, where each location is interactive, allowing visitors to experience the content through sight, sound, and touch. The space was divided into 7 sectors that follow each other, as if the visitor was being taken through time and space. At the entrance, visitors collected a ticket and proceeded to a large compartment. Then, they discovered Ukraine as they passed through the various zones: “Departure”, “First acquaintance”, “Soulful conversation”, “Landscape outside the window”, “Dream”, “Stop”, and “Arrival” (Ukraine WOW 2020). Such an organization of space embodied the sign of a journey through Ukraine’s life, from history to modernity, from tradition to innovation.

The **‘industry and infrastructure’** sign, which has been the basis of nation branding since 2018, in addition to installations about minerals and various industries, was primarily revealed here through **‘innovation, development’**. The installation about the IT industry, as the sector that had the second-largest impact on Ukraine’s service exports to the global market in 2018, logically continued the conversation about Ukraine being a “digital country” with a “leading IT, startup ecosystem” (Ministry of Information Policy of Ukraine, Banda Agency 2018).

One of the most striking examples of innovation and modern technologies at the exhibition was the installation of a big beating “Heart of Ukraine” (*see Figure 12*), located at the end of the visitor’s journey. The installation integrated light and sound. For example, standing near the art object, the visitor not only saw the installation and the light illumination projected from it, but also felt the rhythm – the sound of the country’s heart and each of us. Moreover,

as visitors approach the installation, it begins to pulsate, responding to their presence and thereby symbolically representing the state that ‘feels’ everyone. It symbolized a sign of love, vitality, and social cohesion. In 2022, the motif of the heartbeat was used in Zalizna Kramnytsya in the postcard “The heart beats in the rhythm of the knock of wheels' knock,” which can be interpreted as a *‘living connection between people and the railway, the constancy of the rhythm of life’*.

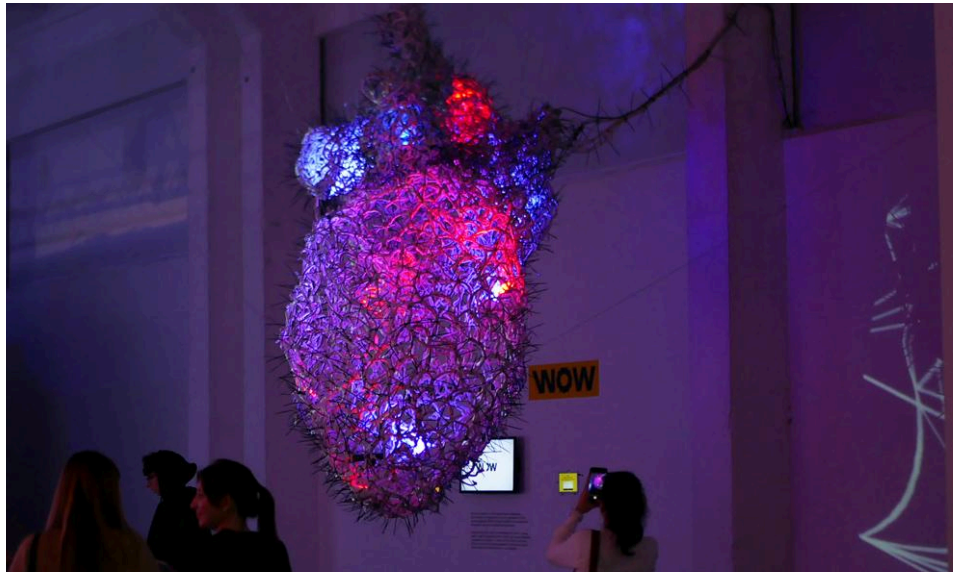


Figure 12. Installation of a big beating “Heart of Ukraine” at UkraineWOW (Mycaєca 2019).

In the exhibition, the motif of unity is conveyed through the display of **‘diversity’** in the modes used to convey information. The interactivity and content of the exhibition allowed visitors to gain an embodied experience through various sensory systems. Travel, life, diversity, and the richness of social life and culture were embodied in the sounds of the Ukrzaliznytsia train, stadiums, people, cities, and nature. The exhibition encompassed various historical periods, geographical regions, and fields of activity, including culture, science, technology, history, social themes, industrialization, and infrastructure. **‘Diversity’** is further reinforced through human-centered installations about prominent figures in science and the arts who contributed to national development.

‘Diversity’, **‘industry and infrastructure’** were framed within **‘state borders’**, highlighting how these signs operate within a country's territorial limits. For instance, Ukrainian Railways’ trains and tracks represent the national **‘industry and infrastructure’** itself, operating within the country's territory or crossing its borders on international routes.

The map of Ukraine, as an installation, represented the state borders of 1991 (including the temporarily occupied territories at that time and the annexed Crimea). Visitors marked with a sticker the region they came from, while the country's borders symbolically consolidated people.

A video that showed an improvised window of train No. 45/46 “Uzhhorod–Lysychansk”⁹ allowed one to “travel” across Ukraine from east to west in 10 minutes. The train route symbolized national unity, connecting the westernmost and easternmost¹⁰ geographical points of the territory of Ukraine, which was under the control of the Armed Forces of Ukraine until mid-2022 (Euronews 2022).

Since 2022, the ‘**state borders**’ sign has become one of the central ones in several national branding projects. The Ukrainian Railways’ merchandise shop project, “Zalizna Kramnytsya”, launched the sale of a sweatshirt featuring a train schedule to temporarily occupied cities. This initiative symbolized the unity of Ukraine, even despite the forced separation due to the war, the memory of one’s own inseparability. Be Brave Like Ukraine directly linked the sign with the sign ‘**Ukraine**’ and formed a stable collocation ‘**Ukrainian state borders**’, through emphasizing that “bravery has no limits but has borders” (Banda Agency 2022).

Patron, and Be Brave Like Ukraine – ‘Bravery, Courage, Heroism’

In the context of interpreting the sign of ‘**bravery, courage, heroism**’, the case of Patron is distinctive in that an animal figure is endowed with a complex moral character trait traditionally associated with humans.

Patron (Pes Patron) is a service dog, which in the first 2 months of the start of the full-scale war detected 90 explosive devices installed by Russian troops during the demining of the Chernihiv region (Ukrinform 2022). Although the dog became famous during the war, his

⁹The longest railway route within Ukraine, which was 1,653 km, operated until the Ukrainian Armed Forces withdrew from Lysychansk to save the lives of personnel on July 2, 2022 (Tyshchenko 2022; Hubareva 2021). As of the end of 2025, the city is still occupied by the Russian Federation.

¹⁰ Since 2015 and up to the mid of 2022, Lysychansk has been one of the easternmost large settlements in Ukraine controlled by the state, following the advance of Russian troops in the Luhansk region (Euronews 2022).

nickname Patron (from the Ukrainian *напорох* meaning ‘firearm’) does not carry a motivated sign of ‘war’. On the contrary, it is an image of opposition to the war, which encourages Ukrainians, and especially children. He also received the title of “Dog of Good Will” from the UNICEF organization (UNICEF 2022). This is clearly emphasized if one translates his nickname into English as ‘a special guardian, protector’.

The brightness of the representation of ‘**bravery, courage, heroism**’ in this case is enhanced by the contrast with the appearance (see Figure 13). His breed is a Jack Russell Terrier, a small, active, playful, and, to some extent, even cute dog. This is a fairly common breed in families, that is, he is close to everyone. Despite his small stature, he is capable of being a hero. His image carries the narrative that even animals can and do fight against invaders and defend Ukraine. In life, he wears a military uniform with chevrons featuring the flag of Ukraine and the emblem of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine; this is how he is typically depicted in most cases on murals or in graphics (State Emergency Service of Ukraine 2022).



Figure 13. Patron (UNICEF 2022).

A more explicit representation of ‘**bravery, courage, heroism**’ is articulated in the “Be Brave like Ukraine” campaign through human-related images and actions (see Figure 14).

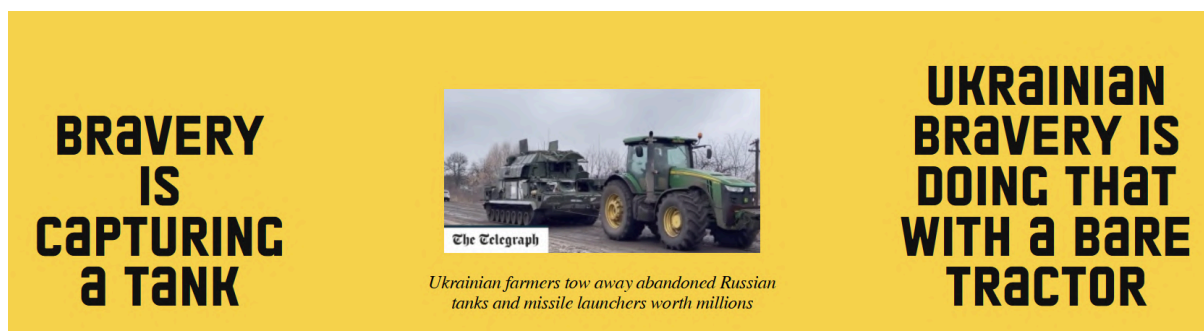


Figure 14. Official webpage of Be Brave Like Ukraine (Banda Agency 2022).

The phrase “Bravery is capturing a tank – Ukrainian bravery is doing that with a bare tractor” is interesting from the perspective of rethinking and localizing the general concept of courage (Banda Agency 2022). It is used to explain the national character, clarifying what exactly is meant by courage in Ukraine, and to make a direct comparison or juxtaposition of the general understanding (yours) and the national (ours), thereby nationalizing the general characteristic (Kaneva 2022). The reference to the tractor simultaneously introduces humor, which was mentioned earlier in the description of the Ukraine.ua case, namely, irony¹¹ (Kazymyr 2023).

In one of the campaign’s promotional videos, the phrase “Bravery has superhuman powers and a human heart” is used (Banda Agency 2022). From self-irony, this expression shifts the meaning beyond a purely human-centered understanding of bravery toward something superhuman, marked by the prefix “super”, which draws strength from the human heart (Lemberg and Habtom 2025; Kaneva 2022).

‘**Bravery**’ is further detached from a specific human figure and begins to function as an autonomous agent – it acquires attributes of a living being, capable of acting, as illustrated in: “Bravery can bite painfully if it has three teeth” (Banda Agency 2022). This metaphor emerges through the combination of the signs ‘**bravery**’ and ‘**trident**’.

To a certain extent, the sign ‘**heroism**’ is also articulated through використання humor in the form of sarcasm. This strategy is evident in phrases built on the opposition “we (Ukraine) – they (others in the world)”: “When the war started, the world gave us three days” (*ibid.*). This refers to the international discourse surrounding the failed blitzkrieg of Russian aggression and the onset of a full-scale war in Ukraine in 2022, which some world experts estimated

¹¹ The same theme of self-irony and positivity through indomitability is highlighted in the photo: portraits of people, military personnel, and civilians at home and on the street, against the backdrop of destroyed houses, yet smiling, positive, and strong (Lee 2022, Fomenko 2023). Also, the focus in the photo is clearly shifted to the eyes (Kazymyr 2023).

would last only three days, a prediction that did not materialize (Kazymyr 2023; Lee 2022; Kipnis et al. 2024). That is why such sarcastic jokes have now appeared in the Ukrainian discourse.

‘Bravery’ is also communicated through the Ukraine.ua channels and website. In a previously discussed example within the Ukraine.ua analysis, specifically Askold’s story, the child connected his personal experience with a collective identity when he said: “I am not afraid, because Ukrainians are not afraid of anything” (Ukraine.ua 2022a). In this articulation, **‘bravery’** was framed not as an exceptional personal trait, but as a shared national characteristic.

5 Grams of Perseverance and Zalizna Kramnytsya – ‘Steeliness, Resilience’ ‘Reliability’

5 grams of Perseverance is a special fundraising campaign that combines the history and present of Ukrainians. It was launched as a project by UNITED24 on October 6, 2022. The campaign has a multi-layered meaning, as it is built on the image of the military 12th Special Forces Brigade of the National Guard of Ukraine “Azov” formed since 2014, which was combined with the new context of 2022 — the battles for Mariupol on the territory of the Azovstal plant (“in 2022 the Azovstal plant of the Metinvest Group became the last defensive fortress of Mariupol” (UNITED24 2022; The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine 2022). The project’s photos and videos directly illustrate images of hot and hardened steel, soil, the bracelet-making process, factory machines, metal cutting, and sparks.

In this case, the campaign product, a bracelet (*see Figure 15*), took on the symbolic meaning of **‘steeliness, resilience’**. It is a materialized national memory of “Perseverance”, “a symbol of incredible courage that tells a story of might and fortitude” (UNITED24 2022). The material steel, through its physical properties, conveys the meaning of steeliness, that is, human resilience and endurance, which a person hardens in his character just like iron, therefore becoming unbreakable. In the national discourse, steel is “a universal expression that every Ukrainian understands without words” (UNITED24 2022), due to the historical context described above. The main color used in the campaign is black, which is also a part of the branding of the UNITED24 platform. In this case it takes on the meaning of memory and

mourning for the tortured, killed military and civilian Russian troops in Mariupol¹² (The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine 2022).

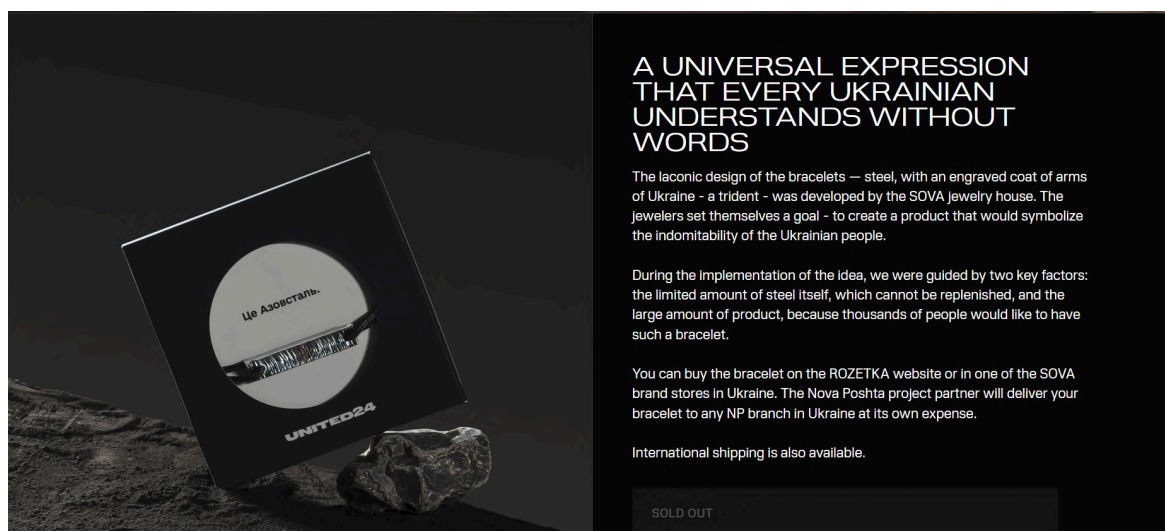


Figure 15. 5 grams of Perseverance (UNITED24 2022).

‘**Steeliness**’ extended beyond its literal connection to steel as a material and became directly embodied in a specific institution and actors. The bracelets materialize not only ‘**courage**’ and ‘**steeliness**’, but also the ‘**reliability**’ of the Ukrainian defenders, reflecting their ability to resist and fulfill their mission under extreme conditions. In this context, the Armed Forces of Ukraine have acquired an additional layer of meaning besides ‘**courage**’, namely ‘**steel resistance**’. As noted by campaign creators:

The last batch of bracelets is special. It was made of the steel letters “BELIEVE IN THE ARMED FORCES OF UKRAINE,” which were installed in the center of Kyiv. In this way, we're sharing our unquestionable faith in the Ukrainian Army, between thousands of people. And we will carry it all the way until victory” (UNITED24 2022).

The idea of making bracelets out of Azovstal steel can be interpreted as materializing ‘**steeliness**’ as resilience, defense, strength, and protection, functioning symbolically as an amulet that embodies both personal and collective perseverance.

¹² This campaign was preceded by military tragic events that were widely disseminated in national and global discourse. May 20, 2022, to preserve the lives of Ukrainian defenders, the cessation of fighting and their surrender to Russian captivity (*Le Monde* 2022). On July 29, 2022, the Russians killed Ukrainian prisoners of war in Olenivka (Zhukova, Horbatenko, and Standish 2023). On September 22, 2022, 108 Azov fighters were released as a part of a large-scale prisoner exchange between Ukraine and Russia (The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine 2022).

In another nation branding case, the Ukrainian Railways (Ukrzaliznytsia) merchandise shop project develops the theme of steeliness (*Zaliznist*), reframing it within the context of infrastructure and everyday resilience. Here, steeliness derives its meaning from the Ukrainian word “Залізниця” (translated into English as Railways). That is, *Zalizna Kramnytsya* can be interpreted as ‘*Railways shop*’ and ‘*steel shop*’ in the sense of ‘*resilient shop*’ rather than materiality alone.

In this context, the ‘**steeliness (*zaliznist*)**’ is further interpreted as ‘**reliability**’, reflecting the high social and industrial importance of the railway for Ukrainians. From the Ukrainian perspective, Ukrzaliznytsia has been associated not only with steel, but also with ‘**reliability**’ and ‘**stability**’ since the early stages of the war in 2015, a meaning that was actively communicated in 2022 (Ukrzaliznytsia 2023). When trains continue to operate under Russian missiles and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), and when damaged railroad cars and railway tracks are restored in a couple of hours, ‘**reliability**’ becomes a repeatedly enacted practice (*The Guardian* 2024). Through this repetition, ‘**reliability**’ transforms into everyday ‘**resilience**’ shared by millions of passengers.

In contrast, prior to 2022, in the nation branding, ‘**reliability**’ was mostly communicated through collocations such as “democratic and economic transformation”, “a stable and predictable developing market”, “set a range of ambitious reforms” (Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine, Entrepreneurship and Export Promotion Office 2021).

#GrainFromUkraine – ‘Europe / Global Context’, ‘Global Food Crisis / Food Security’, ‘Cooperation, Support’

In the nation branding of Ukraine, the motivation sign ‘**Europe/global context**’ is revealed through geopolitical logic, reflecting the country's strategic ties with Europe and other countries before and during war, its participation in international political, economic, and humanitarian processes, as well as its responsibility as a global actor.

In the “#GrainFromUkraine” campaign, this sign is articulated through Ukraine’s role in the global food production system and the organization of food exports to countries facing food shortages. In this sense, the campaign not only signals Ukraine’s national potential but also

positions it as a responsible player on the world stage in the political, economic, and security dimensions of its exports.

This articulation parallels the representation of **‘Europe/global context’** in other nation branding cases. For instance, Trade with Ukraine defines Ukraine as “the largest country located entirely within Europe”, highlighting its place in the global value chain and “free-trade agreements with 48 countries” (Export Promotion Office (Ministry of Economic Development and Trade of Ukraine), Banda Agency 2018). The International Defense Legions of Ukraine frames Ukraine’s defence as an international effort, a joint fight against tyranny and the invader at the global level. For example, defenders in military uniforms from different countries, gathered in military or combat positions, symbolize *‘unity in countering the violators of security, rights, and freedoms’* within the framework of not only the war in Ukraine, but also within the global context. Similarly, UNITED24 mobilizes global support by emphasizing “full-scale war in the heart of Europe” (President of Ukraine, Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, Ministry of Digital Transformation 2022).

The related sign **‘global food crisis/food security’** expands the image of Ukraine in the global context as a guarantor of food security. The collocation “Ukrainian grains” acquired recognizable global significance. Within the export nation brand “Trade with Ukraine” (2018), the thesis about Ukraine is clearly communicated: “Historically known as the «breadbasket» of Europe, Ukraine is set to become the «food basket» of the world”, highlighting Ukraine’s prominence as “the biggest organic food suppliers to Europe (#2 to the EU after China)” (Export Promotion Office 2018).

In summer 2022, Russian forces blocked Ukraine’s Black Sea ports¹³, which stopped grain exports from the country. This event was reflected in national branding and recontextualized the narrative of the role of Ukraine's grain in the global food system during the war: “By fighting and destroying traditional supply chains, Russians have taken at least 70 million people worldwide to the verge of starvation” (President of Ukraine 2022). In “#GrainFromUkraine”, the sign is reinforced through the framing of the humanitarian and economic consequences of the global food crisis: “Ukraine’s agricultural exports are vital for

¹³ The ports of Odesa, Pivdennyi, and Chornomorsk, from which exports were made, were blocked by Russia, preventing the exit of merchant ships, many of which carry Ukrainian grain, and thereby halting traditional seaborne exports of grain and other agricultural products (Martin 2022).

many countries in the African continent”, and “Ukraine remains committed to maintaining a crucial role as a food security guarantor” (President of Ukraine 2022).

Visual and textual elements complement the narrative about Ukraine as a breadbasket and the importance of ensuring the shipment of food from Ukraine to countries that need it in order to avoid a global crisis (Cherep 2025). The main document features a photo depicting grain, a flag, a trident, fields, granaries, combines, and ships in the Black Sea, which facilitate grain exports. As shown in *Figure 16*, a parallel is drawn between the world famine and the national tragedy of the Holodomor. It highlights Ukraine's historical experience with famine and its determination to prevent the repeated use of hunger as a weapon of war.

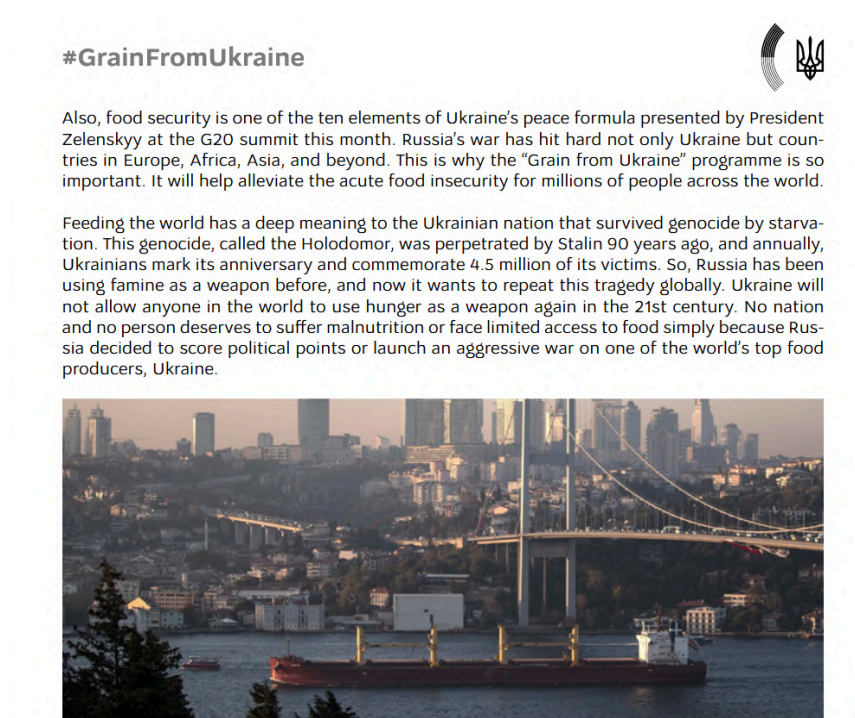


Figure 16. 5 grams of Perseverance (President of Ukraine 2022).

Through these representations, Ukraine’s national potential links to global responsibility. This demonstrates that its domestic production and exports are inextricably connected to international stability and prosperity.

The sign ‘**cooperation, support**’ reveals both in practical and strategic dimensions. The campaign emphasizes the need for international cooperation to overcome logistical challenges, as is reflected in the message “to consolidate efforts to form a global alliance and explore new opportunities to develop alternative logistics options for exporting agricultural products from Ukraine” (President of Ukraine 2022). Moreover, it is important that this

program is not limited to involving governments of other countries, but appeals to the contribution of a global audience: “Every country, NGO, or private company could join the “Grain from Ukraine” programme” (*ibid.*). Cooperation is seen here not only as a moral imperative but also as a practical mechanism that allows Ukraine to fulfill its role as a guarantor of global food security. This narrative is similar to that presented in other nation branding initiatives such as UNITED24. At UNITED24, this sign is expressed through calls for collective action: “protect Ukrainian seas and cities under fire”, “do to help Ukraine”, “we can, however, do it together”, “each contribution is important”, and “go from donor to a real frontline ally, helping shape the outcome of the war” (President of Ukraine, Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, Ministry of Digital Transformation 2022), and through the primary goal of the fundraising platform: “to unite the world around supporting Ukraine; to protect, save and rebuild” (*ibid.*).

To conclude the analysis of government-led nation branding cases, in the nation brand (2018), the combination of the central signs ‘Ukraine’ and ‘people’, along with the colors of the state flag, allowed Ukraine to establish a basis for branding that had all the makings of a national one. At the same time, this approach helped create a direct, stable association with Ukraine as a state, which is reinforced by national symbols (although the Trident in nation branding is not actively present until 2022) and images of people who directly represent Ukrainians as a relatively young and progressive nation in the world.

As we saw in further cases, this became a solid foundation for the brand, which was subsequently expanded and developed through the use of other motivating signs, as described in the analysis. Examples of government-led nation branding initiatives that have developed over time confirm the high adaptability of central signs, especially the human-centered identity, which is at the heart of the brand, and the ability to transform in different contexts, ensuring continuous communication of a single national brand from 2018 to 2022.

2.3 Crossmedia Strategies of Official Nation Branding

According to an analysis of crossmedia in government-led nation branding cases (2018-2022) (*see Figure 17*), the dominance of social media (13) as the primary communication channel

and the prominent role of user-generated content (8) among the most frequently used media formats are evident. These channels significantly shape the nature of the circulation of motivated signs in contemporary Ukrainian nation branding.

This configuration shifts nation branding from a predominantly institutional model of communication to a participatory and networked one. Through this strategy, meanings are co-produced, redistributed, and reinterpreted by the audience. As a result, motivated signs can spread rapidly across platforms, adapt to different contexts, and gain viral potential, thereby enhancing both visibility and emotional engagement.

At the same time, the high inclusion of offline formats in crossmedia strategies such as exhibitions and offline events (7), offline stores (2), merch (6), public installations (4), or embodied experiences re-establish nation branding narratives in a lived, material reality.

This combination of these formats reinforces trust, restores a sense of direct contact, and allows for an effective engagement that cannot be fully replicated in the digital environment alone.

The active trend of involving ambassadors and public figures (5) in nation branding contributes to the strengthening of the construction of a human-centered identity, as described in the cases earlier. This practice translates the nation brand from an abstract level (state, nation) to the level of a personalized representation, giving it a “human face” and avoiding impersonal political subjectivity. At the same time, the participation of public figures contributes to increasing the level of trust and reducing skepticism among the audience that may arise regarding the national brand or its initiatives. Indicative in this context is the case of “UNITED24”, as the manager notes in an interview for a film about the brand of Ukraine, where only after the successful involvement of the first international ambassadors did the number of international partnerships and, accordingly, the volume of donations through the platform increase significantly, which was not observed before their involvement (Serdiuk, Maksym 2024). Thus, ambassadors provide additional legitimacy to the nation brand without the need to attract additional resources from the government.

Equally important are the roles of ambassadors in expanding the reach and strengthening the crossmedia circulation of motivated signs – and therefore increasing the chance of influencing the audience. Each ambassador is a famous person in their field (culture, science, sports, public sector, etc.) who has their own audience, which allows the nation brand to go beyond

the traditional political audience, adapt motivated signs to different social and cultural contexts, and also work more effectively in the global media space. Acting as active agents of crossmedia, ambassadors and public figures involved in nation branding ensure not only the distribution of motivated signs across various media channels, but also contribute to higher recognition and virality of these signs.

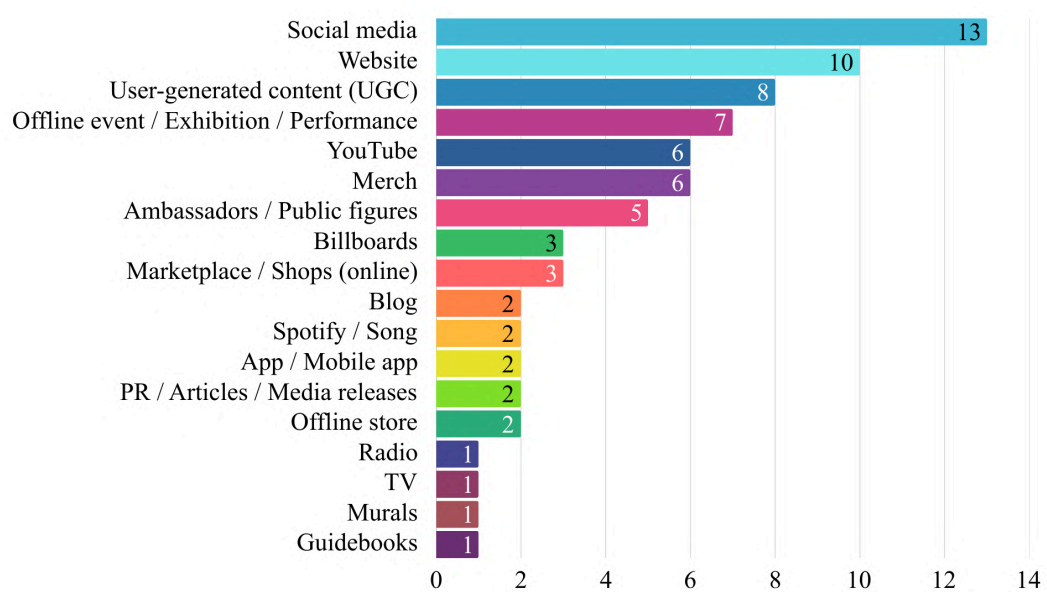


Figure 17. Crossmedia in Government-led Nation Branding Campaigns and Initiatives in Ukraine (2018-2022).

A comparative review of government-led nation branding campaigns between 2018 and 2022 (see Figure 18) demonstrates that initiatives that use a wider range of media channels – such as “5 Grams of Perseverance” (8 media), “Ukraine WOW” (7 media), “Be Brave Like Ukraine”, “Trade with Ukraine – Diia.Business” (6 media each) – tend to achieve broader audience reach. At the same time, the data suggests that the more diversified the crossmedia, the greater the potential for dissemination, as measured by the size of the audience reached. So, the correlation between the number of media used and the final reach is not strictly linear.

In addition to visibility indicators, the most tangible result of crossmedia impact can be observed in fundraising campaigns, where donations collected function as a concrete indicator of audience mobilization and real action and impact of nation brand. This observation is closely aligned with the broader logic of Ukrainian nation branding – the priority of mass interaction not as a final mission for the nation brand, but as a means of ensuring a quick, practical response to closing defined needs in the short term, while at the same time contributing to long-term reputational positioning.

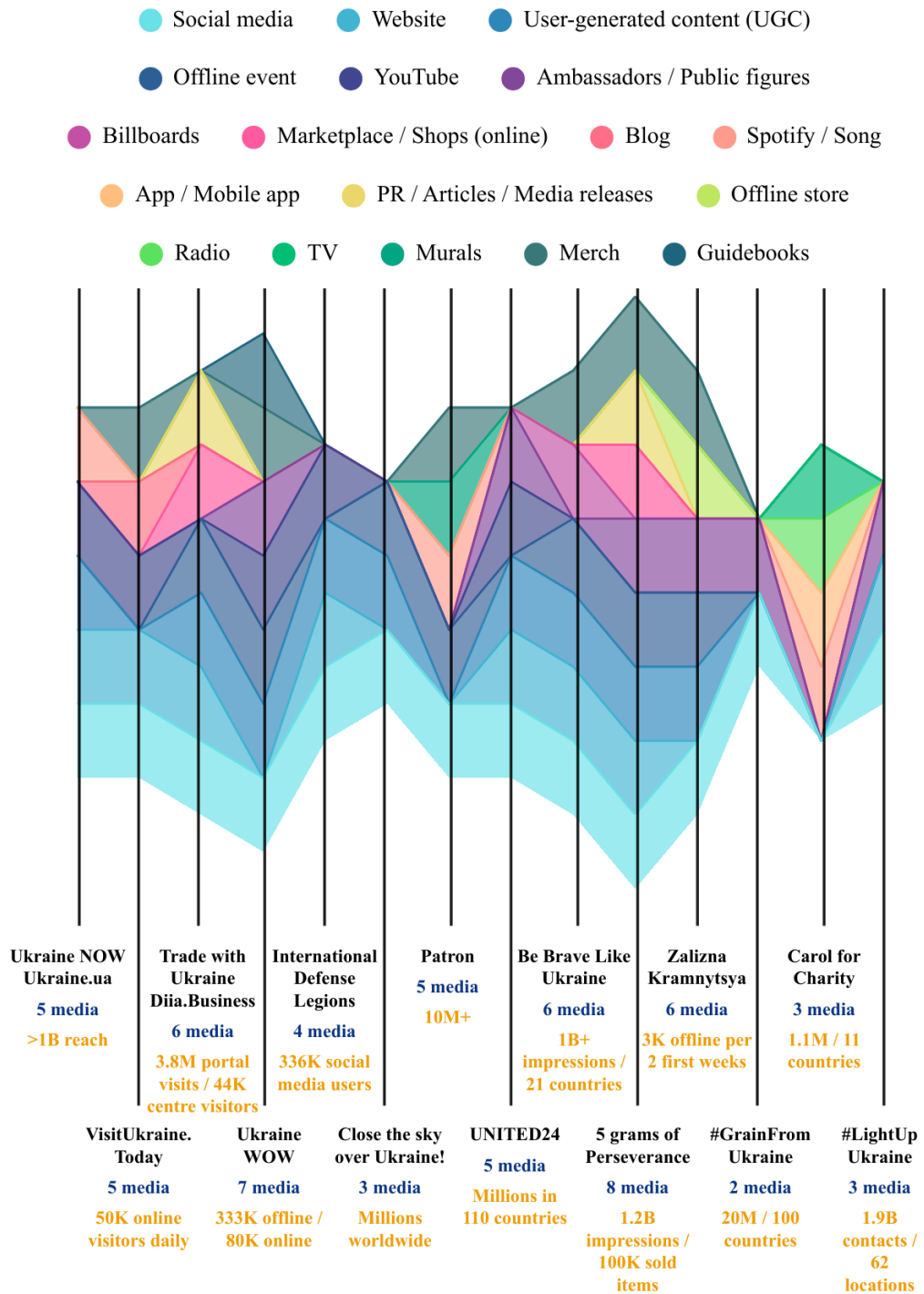


Figure 18. Crossmedia Use and Audience Reach in Ukraine's Government-Led Nation Branding Campaigns (2018–2022).

From an analytical perspective, crossmedia in Ukrainian nation branding functions not simply as a multiplication of channels, but rather as an effort to identify the most diverse and effective channels for audience interaction, thereby facilitating the systematic strategic dissemination of motivated signs. The analysis results show that key signs are not limited to

individual initiatives. They migrate between campaigns and recombine in various configurations, formats, contexts, and narrative combinations, allowing them to shift meaning. This sign's mobility, especially the central ones like **'Ukraine'** and **'people'**, enables the accumulation of meaning over time, maintains recognizability, and adapts to changing political, social, and communicative conditions (as previously outlined in the multimodal analysis).

3. Transmedia Nation Branding of Ukraine: Non-Government Campaigns and Initiatives (2022)

This chapter presents an analysis of 16 non-governmental projects that demonstrate a set of motivated signs used to contribute to the construction and dissemination of the nation brand of Ukraine in both global and national discourse.

With the beginning of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine in February 2022, the number of campaigns and initiatives aimed at covering military events, countering Russian propaganda and disinformation about the war, and mobilizing the diaspora and foreigners around the world to help Ukraine has sharply increased.

In parallel, in the period from February to April 2022, thanks to the involvement of the creative industries representatives on a volunteer basis, information campaigns were developed and launched to encourage residents of Russia and Belarus to speak out against military aggression:

In the early days, considerable creativity was generated to attract the attention of Russians and Belarusians, encouraging them to take to the streets and attend anti-war rallies, in an effort to change the situation within their own countries. But it did not work, then we already realized that it did not make sense (Serdiuk et al. 2024, 00:20:15)

Subsequently, all initiatives were supplemented by mass campaigns aimed at raising the necessary funds to purchase specific equipment for the Armed Forces of Ukraine (Serdiuk et al. 2024).

In 2022, non-governmental actors like civil society, politicians, and the military began to actively use messages like 'stand with Ukraine', 'unite with Ukraine'. This was reflected in various projects and identified the main motivated signs that could be primarily communicated by the government or, conversely, by non-governmental actors to move into official state communication.

Table 4 presents the distribution of motivated signs across non-governmental projects in 2022, with the greatest media coverage and demonstrated significant impact on Ukraine's nation branding.

According to the analysis, the most common sign in cases was **‘Ukraine’**, which indicates its centrality and importance for the creators of the initiatives. In 16 out of 16 cases, it is a component of the names of projects and their organizers, which performs a branding function, acts as a geographical indicator (names of Ukrainian cities), as also as in the content of the initiatives’ websites, where the name of the country is used as the main marker. It can be called the primary sign or symbol used by the nation in crisis.

The second most common sign was **‘people’** (14 cases). Its high frequency reflects the emphasis on people as carriers of values and meaning, contributing to the emotional engagement of the project audience and the formation of a people-oriented identity. At the same time, it indicates a personalized dimension of the nation brand, similar to approaches in government campaigns. Compared to government-led nation branding initiatives, the trend of expanding and concretizing the sign from 2022 continues, but different actors expand and better illustrate the diversity of social groups united under the single sign of **‘people’**.

It is represented in the expressions “Ukrainian people” (#standwithukraine), “all-Ukrainian youth movement” (Let’s Do It Ukraine SOS), “Ukrainians” (Ukraine war archive), “great people” (Spend With Ukraine), “Ukrainians working together from around the world” (Adweek on Ukraine), “Ukrainian students” (Ukrainian Students Abroad), “People’s Bayraktar”, “People’s Satellite” (People’s Bayraktar, People’s Satellite), “children” (Christmas not war), “Arm woman” (#ArmWomenNow), and “refugees” (Uniting for Ukraine (U4U)). The visual mode ‘people’ featured photos of Ukrainians, including both civilians and military personnel. A graphic representation of this motif was also found through the emphasis on the eyes used by Let’s Do It Ukraine SOS (see *Figure 18*).



Figure 18. Graphic element used by Let's Do It Ukraine SOS.

Another dimension of how this sign manifests itself is “Stories of success” (Ukrainer) and interviews with Ukrainians (Unite with Ukraine), i.e., living stories and personal narratives from representatives of the Ukrainian people. This enhances the humanization and legitimization of projects – people act as personified arguments for requests for help or support, rather than, for example, if only ‘Ukraine’ as a state was used in the campaigns.

A separate addition to all the meanings is the collective legendary image of military pilots (Ghost of Kyiv). This is the image of a hero and a professional defender, first of all, of collective resistance, which adds the characteristic of the sign ‘**people**’.

Accordingly, the meaning articulated through this sign ‘**people**’ produces the understanding that Ukrainians are represented as people, ordinary civilians and military people who live and create the history of the country right now:

Since the beginning of the full-scale war, Ukrainians have been creating millions of video and audio recordings of what is taking place in various regions of our country. Every shot, every voice message, every interview is part of a new history that we are creating together. (Ukraine war archive)

Separately, the projects emphasize the military, youth (students and children), and women as distinct categories of representatives of the people, detailing who exactly represents the people. Such a separation of categories is also a form of self-representation of the creators of these projects. An additional aspect related to refugees enhances the multidimensionality of the representation of the Ukrainian people in these cases. Refugees represent the people in a

state of forced mobility, a traumatic experience due to the presence of a constant external threat.

The third most commonly used sign was **'war'** (13 cases). The frequency of its use suggests that war serves as a key context and framework for projects related to Ukraine's nation branding, continuing the trend in government nation branding communication. This sign focuses and highlights the audience's attention on the crisis taking place in Ukraine. It also serves as a means of legitimizing public and international actions to support the country and its people.

In the cases, this sign is represented through textual expressions that directly name the word 'war' – “Russia's war against Ukraine” (Ukraine war archive), “conditions of war, wartime” (Ukrainian Students Abroad), “front line of Russia's war” (Kyiv Independent, Saint Javelin merch), or use an associative series of weapons such as “critical equipment to support Ukraine's defenders, including tactical medical supplies and equipment, armored vehicles, FPV drones, UAV complexes, and other essential systems” (Unite with Ukraine), and “enemy tanks and other military vehicles” (Christmas not war).

The text mode is supported by video and photo materials (*Figure 6*), used in cases to represent and illustrate the war and its consequences for the country. For example, videos and photos of combat missions (Ghost of Kyiv), camouflage military uniforms (#ArmWomenNow), military personnel (#SaveUkraineNow; Unite with Ukraine), photos of destroyed cities, and images of injured people (*see Figure 19*) (#standwithukraine). The use of photos and videos is not a method of intimidating or instilling fear in the audience, but rather a partial reflection of the reality in which millions of people in Ukraine find themselves, and an introduction to a request for support within this context. The use of videos and photos, rather than graphics, serves as documentary confirmation of this context.

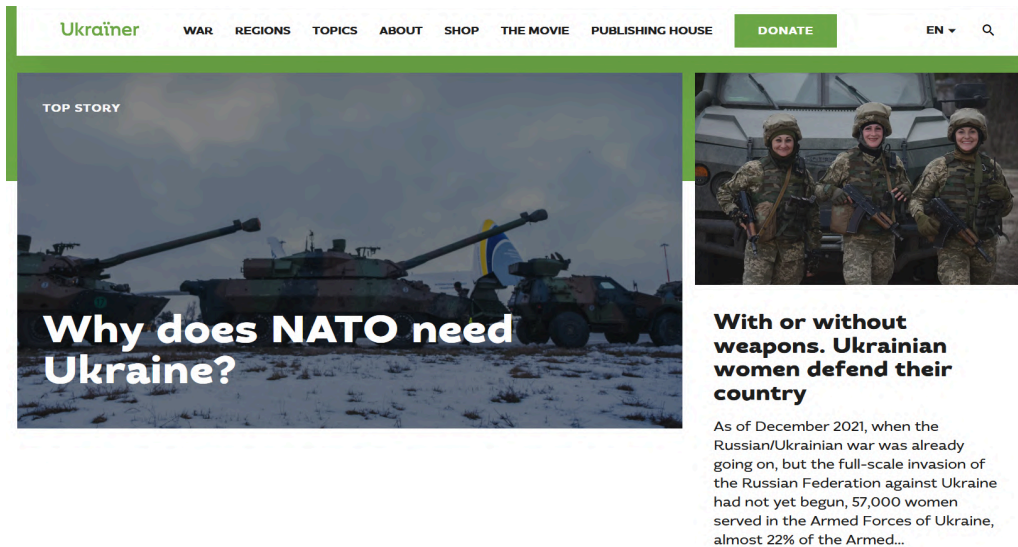


Figure 6. Photo on the Ukrainer website.

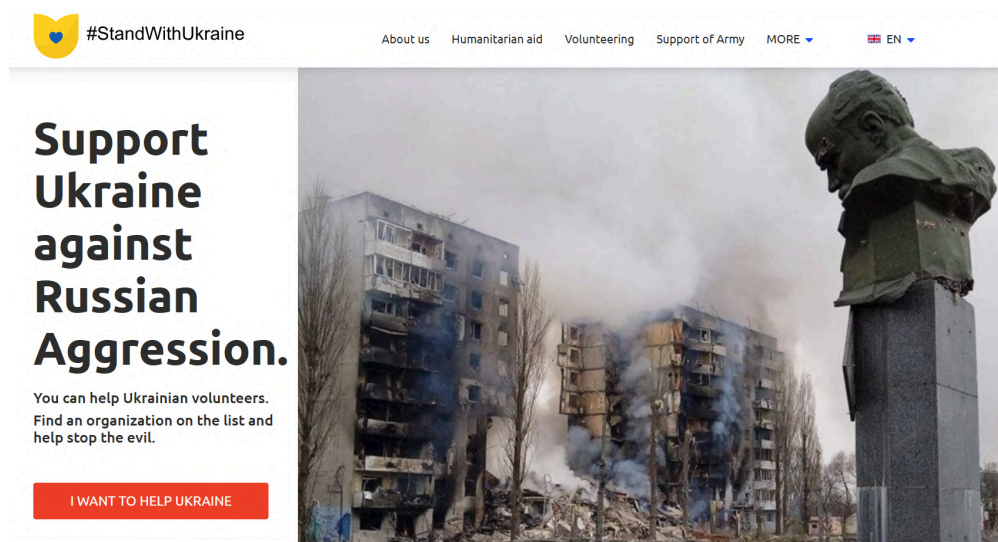


Figure 19. Photo on the #standwithukraine website.

In addition, the Ukraine War Archive project, whose function is directly related to the collection and storage of materials about the war, emphasizes its mission of documenting events. The materials are collected to provide evidence to counter disinformation about the events, for scientific research, and legal proof of the crimes of the Russian Federation against Ukraine (Ukraine war archive). Access to these materials is provided only upon prior request to the organizers.

The object for which donations were collected is also a direct representation of war. For example, People's Bayraktar, People's Satellite is a collection of weapons for the Armed Forces of Ukraine (People's Bayraktar, People's Satellite).

At the same time, the context of the war is conveyed through interviews with eyewitnesses to the war events (Ukraine War Archive) and stories of evacuees and activists (Ukrainer). For example, the articles “Listen to the voice of Mariupol” (Ukrainer), “A 5-Step Creative Curriculum for Post-War Ukraine”, “How I Live This War”, and “War-Life Balance: How the Lives of Ukrainian Creatives Have Been Reshaped by War” (Adweek on Ukraine).

If the sign ‘**war**’ is logically connected to Ukraine, reflecting semantic localization, the parallel use of the sign ‘**Europe/global**’ (11 cases) emphasizes the crisis scale, focusing attention not on locality, but on globality, on the importance for Europe and the world in general. War is defined as an event with consequences for international security, democratic values, and world stability. In contrast to government-led nation branding initiatives, non-governmental initiatives ‘**Europe/global**’ intensifies Ukraine’s local experiences to appeal to global solidarity and moral engagement.

Globalization is conveyed through the phrases “stories from Ukraine for the whole world”, “Global context of war” (Ukrainer), “consequences are felt not only in Ukraine but in the whole world” (#StandWithUkraine), “If we let Russia win, it won’t stop at Ukraine. It never has. But if we help Ukraine stand, we defend something bigger than any one country”, “This isn’t just Ukraine’s war” (Unite with Ukraine).

Through communication, Ukraine is positioned as a subject that speaks to the global community not only about compassion, but also appeals to contributions and actions. For example, “THE WORLD MUST KNOW THE HISTORY OF THIS WAR” (Ukraine war archive), “stories made a global impact” (Kyiv Independent, Saint Javelin merch), “Everyone in the world contributed what they could” (Christmas not war), “communication between European universities and Ukrainian students to open up more opportunities for them to continue their study in a safe place” (Ukrainian Students Abroad).

Another dimension of the manifestation of the sign involves cooperation with international and foreign entities. Organiser of Unite with Ukraine is the Ukrainian World Congress (Ukrainian World Congress 2022). An American media outlet released an issue about Ukraine (Adweek 2022). A Turkish company decided to give three Bayraktar TB-2 UAVs away for free, for which Ukrainians had collected money within the framework of the People’s Bayraktar initiative (Serhiy Prytula Foundation 2022).

In 11 cases, the branding and content of websites feature visuals with ‘**flag**’, ‘**blue**’, and ‘**yellow**’ signs. For example, a flag is featured on photos in the articles (Ukrainer; Adweek on Ukraine) and on the cover of the survey report “Ukrainian Students Abroad” (Figure 20). The identity of #SaveUkraineNow is based on the official nation branding, which features the colors yellow and blue. The graphic element of the logo contains colors of Ukraine's flag (#StandWithUkraine; #StandWithUkraine; Spend With Ukraine; Unite with Ukraine). The website graphic contains yellow, blue, and a flag (Let’s Do It Ukraine SOS; Uniting for Ukraine (U4U)).



Figure 20. The cover of the Survey “Ukrainian Students Abroad” (ESN Ukraine).

Merch design has become a medium through which these signs are also communicated. For example, in Kyiv Independent, Saint Javelin merchandise (Figure 21), yellow and blue have become not only the colors of the visual style but also a direct association with the flag of Ukraine.



Figure 21. The Kyiv Independent and Saint Javelin merch depicts Archangel Michael, the defender of Kyiv, in the colors of the Ukrainian flag.

Finally, the Ukrainian flag chevron is present on the military uniforms of the Ghost of Kyiv.

‘Cooperation’ and **‘support’** are found in 9 cases. First of all, these signs are reflected in the names of some initiatives, such as #StandWithUkraine, #standwithukraine, #SaveUkraineNow, Unite with Ukraine, and Uniting for Ukraine. These signs are also communicated through the texts “demonstrate to foreigners the possible ways how they could help the Ukrainian army and the Ukrainian people” (#StandWithUkraine), “support of the UKRAINIAN PEOPLE and their right to exist as an INDEPENDENT NATION, threatened with erasure by the Russian regime” (#standwithukraine), “Kyiv Independent, Saint Javelin launch joint merch collection to help paramedics” (Kyiv Independent and Saint Javelin merch).

There are cases where **‘victory’** is communicated in texts, for example “Engaging the international community to support Ukraine is essential to victory” (#StandWithUkraine), “MAKE YOUR CONTRIBUTION TO VICTORY” (#SaveUkraineNow), “Over time, when the Kyiv region was liberated, concrete blocks were removed from the roads to the sidewalks. They will remain there until Ukraine wins” (Christmas not war).

There are also examples where victory is conveyed through images, such as the Ghost of Kyiv, which serves as a symbol of the country's victory, or the purpose of actions – donations to bring Ukraine's victory closer (People's Bayraktar, People's Satellite).

The victory became the topic and headline of the article "*How Ukraine's Creatives Are Helping Win the War and Keeping the World's Attention*" in a special issue of *Adweek on Ukraine*.

Along with victory, another motivational sign is used — '**resistance**' (present in 6 cases): "Ukrainians share the experience of courageous resistance and victories with the whole world" (Ukrainer). This motivated sign is articulated through a narrative that describes Ukraine as an active subject, which leads an organized and courageous struggle, rather than a passive victim of the aggressor: "From the very first minutes of the attack, the enemy faced powerful resistance the world had never seen" (Christmas not war). Resistance is framed as collective and exceptional, which counters the discourse of helplessness and vulnerability.

Also, '**fight**' (5 cases) and '**bravery, courage, heroism**' (5 cases) can be in the same line.

These signs emphasize not only the physical struggle against military aggression but also the defense of values and principles of universal importance.

For example, the statement "Ukraine is fighting not only for its borders. It is fighting for the idea that truth matters" (Unite with Ukraine) reinterprets a physical struggle for territory into a moral battle with ideological significance. Here, 'fight' includes the fight for democratic values and global ethical norms.

'**Bravery, courage, heroism**' combat to individual bravery portraying pilots who shoot down Russian drones, planes, and missiles in conditions of overwhelming enemy force. Combat pilots were awarded state awards for bravery and the title of Hero of Ukraine (Ghost of Kyiv). Additionally, visual mode conveys the '**steeliness**' of the Ghost of Kyiv through reference to an iron-fighter plane.

Similarly, "The Ukrainian capital has become a symbol of bravery, strength, and an unbreakable spirit for millions of people around the world" (Kyiv Independent and Saint Javelin merch) transfers courage from the individual level to the national level.

Figure 23. Model of Ukraine's Nation Branding Transmedia World.

The specified layers are based on the grouping of nation branding actors according to their functions: creation, management, co-creation, conscious use, dissemination, and support of nation branding.

The crossmedia layer is defined as the core of the nation branding transmedia world. Guiding by the principle of legal authority, the government is the main creator and manager of nation branding (Anholt 2006). That is, it is responsible for developing a national strategy for representing the state both domestically and internationally. Each campaign created by the government, according to the analysis, uses a crossmedia approach to disseminate information to the audience. Taken together, these campaigns form a crossmedia layer of nation branding practices, demonstrating the crossmediality of nation branding as a communication system embedded in a shared semiotic space. First of all, this is manifested in the centralized strategy of dissemination of motivated signs through various media channels in different campaigns.

The next level of the model is **transmedia**, divided into two sublayers. The division is due to the different types of actors operating at this level and their functions: co-creators and conscious users, as well as disseminators and supporters of nation branding. This level is characterized by an organic, decentralized, and chaotic spread of motivated signs, extending beyond the state strategy. It is impossible to determine in advance which signs will be communicated, to which audience, and what reach will be, even if this is a part of state policy and a strategy to involve different actors in spreading nation branding.

The transmedia layer offers a diverse range of voices, reflecting participatory meaning-making and affective involvement. Nevertheless, each analyzed case created by non-governmental actors has its own crossmedia strategy. This contributes to the transmedia expansion of nation branding, strengthening reach, and the formation of a unified nation brand.

The outer layer of the model is the functional (operational) space of nation branding – a space where branding is no longer built or managed by actors in this space, but nation branding still interacts through the target audience's experience and information that they have already received to form the nation brand in their perception.

The **boundaries** between the layers are dynamic, because motivated signs constantly circulate between them. This move ensures the coherency and long-term sustainability of nation

branding. The usual processes of communication, influence, and feedback accompany this constant movement. The government gives influence to other actors; in turn, the audience of nation branding as well as civil society, non-governmental actors, politicians, the military, and independent media entities, provides feedback. Feedback can be observed in the level of actors' involvement in the nation branding process and in the number of projects they create. It is also reflected in the degree of consonance between the motivated signs they choose to communicate the nation brand and those used by the government. In this way, the government can determine whether the strategy is effective and does not conflict with the other actors' perceptions of the country/nation image.

There are also vivid examples where the impetus is not provided by the government but by another actor, and the government, in turn, provides feedback, supports, and develops this initiative, i.e. makes it part of the official nation branding strategy. For example, Patron was, first and foremost, a symbol from a publication on the state service's Telegram channel about a demining dog that discovered a significant number of Russian explosive devices (State Emergency Service of Ukraine 2022). Later, he was awarded by the government and became the official national mascot, participating in international meetings with leaders of other countries, and working within the framework of the UNICEF program (Patil 2022).

Another example is the ArmWomenNow project, in which volunteers created a military uniform for women, which later became a state-level standard approved by the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine (NGO Brave Ukraine 2022). This specific volunteer initiative became a catalyst for the state policy of social inclusion, branding women defenders as part of the Ukrainian army (which also entered into international and national communication about equality, the role of women, and modernization).

The external space outside the model refers to the influence of external factors or opposition to nation branding (counter-influence), including hostile propaganda, media news, misinformation, and the use of oppositional motivational signs and branding from other countries.

Apart from everything, the analyzed cases of Ukraine's nation branding have characteristics of a **transmedia world**, featuring the foundational conflict (mithos), the spatiotemporal dimension (topos), and the moral code of behavior (etos) (Klastrup, Tosca 2004).

In the Ukrainian context, the established conflict is constantly communicated as Ukraine defending itself against Russia's aggression. The setting of the world is fixed within a clearly defined, specific historical period and detailed in the geography of Ukraine. The moral codex formulated through recurring motivated signs such as being brave, resilient, and supporting Ukraine.

The three-level structure of the model is empirically grounded in an analysis of Ukraine's nation branding cases from 2018 to 2022.

First, the three levels enable the separation of different logics of action that cannot be accurately described within a single layer. Nation branding simultaneously exists as: (1) an institutionally driven strategy; (2) a decentralized process of co-creation and dissemination of meanings; (3) a space of audience reception and experience.

Secondly, the central (crossmedia) level cannot be combined with the transmedia level, since it operates on the principles of planning, management, and responsibility, rather than spontaneity. This separation does not concern differences in multimodality, but differences in the organisation and circulation of multimodal articulations of motivated signs within the nation branding system.

Thirdly, the functional (operational) level is necessary to take the analysis beyond the production of content. This level captures the effect of the long-term action of motivated signs, allowing for the explanation of why, even in the absence of active communication, the brand continues to “work”.

Finally, the three levels allow us to analytically describe the movement of signs in space-time, not just their presence.

In this way, the three-level model allows nation branding to be examined as a coherent system – functioning transmedia world, rather than as a collection of isolated campaigns.

Conclusions

Throughout the entire period under study (2018–2022), the high multimodality of Ukraine's nation branding is observed, which is manifested in the combination of text, visual images, audio, video, and interactive elements within the campaigns, which ensures simultaneous emotional, cognitive, and practical engagement of the audience and their perception of motivated signs articulated through nation branding campaigns by both government and non-government actors.

In the period from the establishment of the official national brand until the start of the full-scale war, Ukraine's national branding was largely reactive: it responded to emerging needs, closing them after the problem had already manifested itself. For example, campaigns to combat corruption, attract investors, or promote tourism were formed as a response to external challenges and image threats. During this period, single, almost linear strategies controlled by the government were employed, which involved long-term preparation of campaigns and centralized communication of key motivated signs. At the same time, the first manifestations of transmedia were already visible when non-governmental actors were involved in distributing motivated signs. However, the scale and mass of such actions were limited. For example, in 2017, the Ukrainian Leadership Academy, together with Gres Todorchuk, created “Uncounted since 1932”, dedicated to the Holodomor, and in 2021, the multimedia exhibition “Chornobyl. Journey” and the “Marathon No One Wants to Run” project engaged a global audience in a discussion about cultural memory and the experience of war.

Since 2022, national branding has moved to an active and partly proactive model. New needs have begun to be addressed quickly, often before they are fully manifested, thanks to the involvement of a large number of different actors – government and non-government – in different spheres of life and locations. This approach allows not only a quick response to crises but also to shape public discourse, ensuring a tangible impact on the nation's life in wartime conditions. For example, the involvement of students abroad through a survey of their needs has contributed to strengthening cooperation with foreign educational institutions. Initiatives such as ArmWomenNow and Patron demonstrate how bottlenecks in the fields of social and military mobilization have been quickly and effectively integrated into the official branding strategy.

Thus, the transformation of Ukraine's nation branding 2018-2022 is a transition from linear, government-controlled communication to a system where the daily contribution of each participant functions as an element of the transmedia world, creating synergy between centralized strategy, public cooperation, flexible distribution of motivated signs, and the pace of brand adaptability to the needs and challenges facing the country. This emphasizes that national branding in Ukraine not only describes the country but also serves a strategic function, providing life support for the nation and the global community, influencing the behavior and decisions of the audience, and forming effective social mobilization and support.

These transformations not only reveal how Ukraine's nation branding operates as a transmedia system, but also provide actionable insights for further research or comparison with case studies of other countries, which can be further categorized as follows:

- The analysis confirmed a shift from government-led to citizen-driven initiatives, enabling bottom-up self-regulation.
- Shared motivated signs among all actors in 2022 were shaped by the external threat, uniting all actors around a common understanding of what was important for the defense of the country, beyond a shared sense of national identity. This confirms the approach “Do what every Ukrainian does”, employed in nation branding since 2022 (Turbil 2025).
- The use of diverse media channels in crossmedia and transmedia strategies ensures broad dissemination of the nation brand.
- With a diverse and engaged set of actors, total government control in nation branding is impossible; effective nation branding relies on synergy, communication, dialogue, and periodic governmental impulses, which enable the transmedia dissemination of the nation brand.
- Based on a systemic analysis of Ukraine's nation branding cases from 2018 to 2022, the government is responsible for developing and implementing the strategy and forming the motivated signs of the nation brand, particularly in official and diplomatic contexts, while society is responsible for their widespread adoption and impact in global discourse. The government can support non-governmental initiatives at specific stages (e.g., consultation or assistance), but it does not bear responsibility for the outcomes of these initiatives.
- Rather than operating as a tool of representational self-description, nation branding serves as a problem-oriented strategy through which the state articulates and addresses urgent national and global needs, including economic resilience, food security, and the

active confrontation of disinformation and propaganda in the context of information warfare.

- The three-level model is based on the cross- and transmedia nature of national branding and encompasses all possible actors that may be involved, whether consciously or unconsciously, by the government. It captures the processes of change and adaptability in nation branding as a long-term process, allowing to identify key motivated signs, their circulation, and interaction between actors, which is necessary for building an effective brand promotion strategy.

The results of the thesis demonstrate that intensive mobilization of nation branding actors and active transmedia circulation of meanings characterize wartime nation branding in Ukraine. The analysis of nation branding as a transmedia system increases the relevance of the research in the contemporary context. The results of the study provide a basis for further theoretical development and practical application in the study of national branding in Ukraine. Among the promising areas is the analysis of how processes of autocommunication and self-regulation operate within this system to sustain and transform the nation branding. It is also important to extend the research period for the Ukrainian nation branding from 2023 to identify new trends. Additionally, it is worth studying the impact of the brand's transmedia world on the audience over time and evaluating the results of its influence on socio-political decision-making in Ukraine and beyond. This may include, for example, influencing foreign volunteers, politicians, government officials, and the military, as well as society, to strengthen support for Ukraine. If the transmedia model is able to track the spread of motivated signs, then by considering the nation brand as a semiosphere, it is possible to analyze how signs are integrated into cultural and political narratives, assess their strengths and weaknesses, and predict which narratives should be strengthened for effective communication with different audiences.

The results of this case study can serve as a basis for a comparative analysis of nation branding of other countries, and the proposed model can be adapted to the context of any other country.

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Resüme

Magistritöö „Rahvusbrändingu semiootika: Ukraina transmeedialise maailma mudel 2018–2022“ uurib Ukraina rahvusbrändingu arengut kui transmeedialist maailma, mida konstrueerivad aktorid, kes tekkisid ülemineku kontekstis suhteliselt rahulikust olukorrast täiemahulise sõjani. Rahvusbrändingut mõistetakse strateegilise diskursiivse protsessina, mille kaudu võtmemärgid levivad erinevates meediumites ja reageerivad vaenulikele narratiividele, propagandale ja globaalsetele stereotüüpidele. Uurimus täidab varasema teadmislünga süsteemse, mitmeaktorilise ja multimodaalse lähenemisega, rõhutades vajadust analüüsida aktorite koostööd ja transmeedia dünaamikat.

Uuring põhineb kombineeritudkvalitatiivsel lähenemisel, peegeldades Ukraina brändingu sise- ja välismõõtmeid. Ristsmeedia ja transmeedia raamistik määrab analüüsi struktuuri, multimodaalne analüüs toetab motiveeritud märkide semiootilise tuuma uurimist.

Analüüs hõlmab esiteks 14 multimodaalset juhtumiuuringut riiklikest (2018–2022) rahvusbrändingu praktikatest. Need näitasid, kuidas ristsmeedia on võimalus leida mitmekesised ja tõhusad viisid publiku kaasamiseks. Võtmemärgid liiguvad kampaaniate vahel ja muutuvad eri formaatides, kontekstides ja narratiivides.

Teine peatükk hõlmab 30 kampaaniat, millest 22 (73%) loodi koostöös erinevate aktoritega. Kodanikud, diasporaa ja sõltumatu meedia tõrjuvad Vene propagandat, lükates ümber müüte ja levitades uudiseid. Need aktorid on fundamentaalsed Ukraina transmeedia rahvusbrändi mudeli jaoks (2018–2022).

Kesksete märkide „Ukraina“ ja „inimesed“ kombinatsioon lõi stabiilse, inimkeskse aluse, võimaldades järjepidevat kommunikatsiooni. Kolmekihiline mudel eristab tegevusloogikaid: (1) institutsionaalselt juhitud strateegia; (2) detsentraliseeritud kaasloomine; (3) publiku vastuvõtt.

Uuring näitab, et sõjaajal muutus rahvusbränding intensiivse huvirühmade mobiliseerimise ja transmeedia tähenduste leviku kaudu.

Appendices

Table 1. Timeline of Sample Nation Branding Cases of Ukraine (2018–2022)

Period of launch	Case	Description
2016-2022	Ukrainer	A media primarily focused on Ukrainian traditional culture and cultural and historical memory sites. Since February 2022, it has been reconstructed to cover the war and the disasters caused by the occupying forces, publishing stories about Ukrainians' perseverance in different languages on various platforms (Ukrainer 2016).
2018-2022	VisitUkraine.Today	An information portal for tourists traveling to Ukraine and Ukrainians planning a trip abroad (Visit Ukraine 2018).
2018-2022	UkraineNOW - Ukraine.ua	An official nation brand of Ukraine (Ministry of Information Policy of Ukraine, Banda Agency 2018), which since 2021 has turned into Ukraine.ua digital ecosystem of official communication channels of Ukraine managed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the NGO BRAND UKRAINE (BRAND UKRAINE 2022).
2018-2022	Trade with Ukraine	An export nation brand of Ukraine (Export Promotion Office, Ministry of Economic Development and Trade of Ukraine, Banda Agency 2018). Since 2021, a new sub-brand of the Diia ecosystem, the online portal Diia.Business has been created. The national project for the development of entrepreneurship and exports is implemented jointly by the Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine and the Entrepreneurship and Export Promotion Office, within the framework of the project, expositions are held at international exhibitions, national and international events, educational programs, and the DO NOT sponsor murder communication campaign to boycott Russian and Belarusian goods and companies abroad (Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine, Entrepreneurship and Export Promotion Office 2021).
2019-2020	Ukraine WOW	An interactive exhibition by Ukrzaliznytsia (Ukrainian Railways), NGO Ukraine WOW, and Gres Todorchuk Agency (Istomina, Toma 2019).
February	The Ghost of Kyiv	A collective legendary image of the pilots of the 40th

2022		Tactical Aviation Brigade, was created to raise the fighting spirit of Ukrainians (Ukrainian Air Force 2022).
February 22, 2022	#standwithukraine	A campaign using a hashtag created by an association of Ukrainian and French citizens attached to the defence of Ukraine, Europe, and our freedoms threatened by Russia (Association of Ukrainian and French Citizens 2022).
February 27, 2022	#StandWithUkraine	An information portal created by marketers and creatives from the Kyiv agencies WhoAreYou. Agency, TOP DOG, and Svitsoft to demonstrate to foreigners the possible ways they could help the Ukrainian army and the Ukrainian people (WhoAreYou Agency, TOP DOG, Svitsoft 2022).
February 2022	#SaveUkraineNow (SUN)	A coordination center created by public organizations and businesses, together with the military, to ensure comprehensive support of the defense forces from the Ivano-Frankivsk region on the front line (NGO SaveUkraineNow 2022).
February 2022	#ArmWomenNow	A social initiative and project about equality, dignity, and respect for women in the security and defence sector, as well as the right of women to choose who and where they want to be, was realized by the NGO “Brave Ukraine” (NGO Brave Ukraine 2022).
February 2022	Let’s Do It Ukraine SOS	A social project of the all-Ukrainian youth movement, supported by the “Let’s Do It World” organization, created to assist the civilian population, promote volunteerism, and address humanitarian and environmental crises (Let’s Do It Ukraine 2022).
March 2022	Unite with Ukraine	A global fundraising initiative of the Ukrainian World Congress, which procures and delivers critical equipment to support Ukraine’s defenders (Ukrainian World Congress 2022).
March 2022	Ukraine war archive	A unified database of video and audio materials about the war in Ukraine, founded by a joint team of NGO Docudays and Infoscope (Docudays, Infoscope 2022).
March 2022	The International Defense Legions of Ukraine, Join the Brave	An information campaign calling on foreign military personnel and those wishing to join the international battalion (President of Ukraine 2022).
March 16, 2022	Close the sky over Ukraine!	A video for international communication used by the President of Ukraine in his address to the US Congress (Office of the President of Ukraine 2022).

March 19, 2022	Patron	A detection dog, mascot for the State Emergency Service of Ukraine, and “Dog of Good Will” at the UNICEF organization (State Emergency Service of Ukraine 2022).
April 6, 2022	Spend With Ukraine	A web platform founded by Ukrainian NGO SWU, features over 200 Ukrainian companies and their products for purchase, thereby supporting Ukraine (SWU NGO, 2022).
April 24, 2022	Adweek on Ukraine, by Ukrainians	A special issue of American advertising trade media, created by 20 Ukrainian marketers and creatives about Ukraine, particularly covering their own stories highlighting Ukrainian creativity and resilience during the war (Adweek 2022).
April 25, 2022	Uniting for Ukraine (U4U)	A program of humanitarian protection launched by the Joe Biden administration for Ukrainian citizens to obtain asylum in the United States for a period of two years (The US Federal Government 2022).
May 1, 2022	Ukrainian Students Abroad	A worldwide survey to learn about the difficulties faced by Ukrainian students abroad, was launched by the NGO Erasmus Student Network Ukraine in cooperation with the NGO Ukrainian Students’ League, the NGO Ukrainian Association of Students, and the National Erasmus+ Office in Ukraine (Erasmus Student Network Ukraine 2022).
May 5, 2022	UNITED24	An official fundraising platform in Ukraine (President of Ukraine, Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, Ministry of Digital Transformation 2022).
May 8, 2022	Be Brave Like Ukraine	A communication campaign (Banda Agency, Office of the President of Ukraine, Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine 2022).
June-August 22, 2022	People’s Bayraktar, People’s Satellite	The Serhiy Prytula Foundation national fundraising for the needs of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (Serhiy Prytula Foundation 2022).
October 6, 2022	5 grams of Perseverance	A project on UNITED24 selling bracelets made from 5 grams of steel from the Azovstal plant (UNITED24 2022).
November 3, 2022	Zalizna Kramnytsya	The Ukrainian Railways (Ukrzaliznytsia) merchandise shop (Ukrainian Railways 2022).
November 26, 2022	#GrainFromUkraine	A specific humanitarian food program for sending grain from Ukraine to countries in need of food (President of Ukraine 2022; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine 2024).

November – December 2022	Carol for Charity	A Ukrainian charity project that transformed the world-famous Shchedryk into a platform for collecting donations for children affected by Russian aggression, using Shazam to call for donations (Saatchi & Saatchi Ukraine 2022).
December 2022	Christmas, not War	An art project that transformed concrete blocks in Kyiv into fairy-tale Christmas heroes, created by the Concrete by Kovalska company and the Children of Heroes Foundation (ANGRY agency, Concrete by Kovalska, Children of Heroes Foundation 2022).
December 13, 2022	The Kyiv Independent and Saint Javelin merch	A joint merchandise collection to support paramedics (The Kyiv Independent 2022).
December 21, 2022	#LightUpUkraine	A flash mob initiated by the President of Ukraine, Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, Mayor of London Sadiq Khan and the international parliamentary coalition United for Ukraine and realized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, the international parliamentary coalition United for Ukraine, and the UNITED24 team to raise international funds for generators for hospitals during the blackout in Ukraine, 120 locations around the world turned off their New Year's illuminations in support of Ukraine (UNITED24 2022).

Table 2. Frequency of Involvement of Nation Branding Actors in the Case Sample.

Type of Nation Branding Actor	Number of Engagements in 30 Cases
NGO	10
Agency	6
Private business	6
President / Presidential Administration	6
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine	4
Independent media	4
Charitable foundation	4
Ministry of Defense of Ukraine	3
Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine	3
Public figure	3
Youth NGO / student union	2
Citizens of Ukraine	2
Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine	2
State company	2
Intergovernmental / international program body	2
Ministry of Health of Ukraine	1
Ministry of Infrastructure of Ukraine	1
State Border Guard Service of Ukraine	1
State Tourism Development Agency (STDA)	1
Ministry of Economy of Ukraine	1
Armed forces	1
Ukrainian diaspora	1
State Emergency Service of Ukraine	1
Foreigners	1
Blogger	1
Association	1
Social enterprise	1
Intergovernmental parliamentary coalition	1

Table 3. Matrix of Motivated Signs in Government-led Nation Branding Campaigns and Initiatives in Ukraine (2018-2022).

C	Central motivated sign
S	Motivated sign, secondarily present but not dominant
-	Absent motivated sign or not significantly expressed
()	Total amount of cases
	Selected cases for secondary analysis
C	Unique or predominant central motivated sign within cases

Project Format	Sphere	Case	Timeline	Motivated signs																												
				Ukraine	Human-centered identity (People)	Blue	Yellow	Flag	Industry / Infrastructure	War	Security, rules, reliability	Europe / global context	Cooperation, support	Bravery, courage, heroism	Trident	Innovation, development	Joy, positivity	Democracy	Opportunities, start, youth	Ukraine's victory	Freedom	Beauty and travel	Steeliness, resilience	Responsibility, ecological consciousness	State borders	Global food crisis / food security	Diversity					
Comm campaign / brand	Political	Ukraine NOW	2018-2021	C	C	C	C	S	C	-	-	S	-	S	-	C	C	-	C	-	C	C	-	S	-	C	C	-	S	-	-	S
Comm campaign / brand	Political, Economic	Trade with Ukraine	2018-2021	C	S	C	C	S	C	-	S	C	S	-	-	C	S	S	S	-	-	-	-	S	-	C	S	-	C	-	-	
Interactive exhibition	Cultural, Educational, Social	Ukraine WOW	2019-2020	C	C	S	S	-	C	-	-	-	-	-	-	C	C	S	S	-	-	C	-	C	C	-	C	-	C	-	C	
Information web portal	Tourism, Economic, Political	VisitUkraine.Today	2018-2022	C	C	C	C	C	C	S	C	C	S	-	S	-	S	-	-	-	S	C	-	-	S	C	-	-	S	-	-	
Digital ecosystem	Political	Ukraine.ua	2021-2022	C	C	C	C	C	S	C	S	S	-	C	-	C	S	S	S	-	C	S	S	-	C	S	S	-	-	-	-	
Comm campaign / brand	Political, Economic	Trade with Ukraine - Diia	2021-2022	C	C	C	S	S	C	-	S	S	S	-	C	C	-	S	C	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Military recruiting campaign	Military, Political	The International Defense Legions of Ukraine	March 2022-2022	C	C	C	C	C	-	C	C	C	S	C	-	-	-	C	-	S	C	-	S	-	S	-	S	-	S	-	S	
Video	Military, Political	Close the sky over Ukraine!	March 16, 2022-2022	C	C	S	S	C	-	C	C	-	C	S	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Comm campaign, mascot	Military, Social	Patron	March 19, 2022-2022	S	-	S	S	C	-	S	C	S	-	C	C	-	S	-	-	S	-	-	S	-	-	-	S	S	-	-	-	
Fundraising web portal	Social, Political, Fundraising	UNITED24	May 5, 2022-2022	C	C	C	C	C	-	C	C	C	C	S	C	-	-	C	-	C	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Comm campaign	Social, Political, Fundraising	Be Brave Like Ukraine	May 8, 2022-2022	C	C	C	C	C	-	C	-	C	C	C	C	-	S	-	-	C	-	-	S	-	C	-	-	S	-	C	-	S
Fundraising campaign	Fundraising, Social, Political	5 grams of Perseverance	October 6, 2022-2022	C	C	-	-	-	C	C	C	S	C	C	-	-	-	-	-	-	C	-	-	C	-	-	C	-	-	-	-	
Merchandise shop	Social, Political	Zalizna Kravnytsya	November 3, 2022-2022	C	C	C	-	-	C	S	C	S	-	-	-	-	-	-	C	-	-	-	-	-	C	-	S	-	-	-	-	
Humanitarian program	Humanitarian, Political, Economic	#GrainFromUkraine	November 26, 2022-2022	C	-	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	-	C	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	C	-	C	-	-	
Fundraising campaign	Fundraising, Social, Political	Carol for Charity	November – December 2022	C	C	C	C	C	-	C	-	S	C	-	-	-	-	C	-	C	-	-	-	-	-	-	S	-	-	-	-	
Fundraising campaign	Fundraising, Social, Political	#LightUpUkraine	December 21, 2022	C	C	-	-	-	C	C	-	C	C	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	S	-	-	-	-	-	-	S
Frequency in Cases	2018-2022		C (16)	15	13	11	9	9	9	9	8	7	7	5	5	5	4	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	1		
	2018-2022		S (16)	1	1	3	4	3	1	3	3	7	4	3	1	0	5	4	3	2	1	1	4	4	4	4	4	0	4			
	2018-2021		C (3)	3	3	2	2	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	2	0	1	0	1	0	1	2	0	1	1	1	1			
	2018-2021		S (3)	0	0	1	1	2	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	2	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1		

Table 4. Frequency of Motivated Signs from Government-led Ukraine's Nation Branding Projects in Non-Government-led Nation Branding Initiatives (2022).

Motivated Sign	Representations of Signs	Number of Cases
Ukraine	Names of projects and their organizers, names of Ukrainian cities: Ukraïner, Ghost of Kyiv, #StandWithUkraine, #standwithukraine, #SaveUkraineNow (SUN), NGO “Brave Ukraine”, Let’s Do It Ukraine SOS, Unite with Ukraine, Ukraine war archive, Spend With Ukraine, Adweek on Ukraine, Uniting for Ukraine (U4U), Ukrainian Students Abroad, the Armed Forces of Ukraine, Kyiv region, Kyiv Independent and Saint Javelin merch.	16

<p>People</p>	<p>“Stories of success” (Ukraïner);</p> <p>military pilots (Ghost of Kyiv);</p> <p>“Ukrainian people” (#standwithukraine);</p> <p>Arm woman (#ArmWomenNow);</p> <p>all-Ukrainian youth movement, website graphic emphasis on the eyes (Let’s Do It Ukraine SOS);</p> <p>interviews with Ukrainians (Unite with Ukraine);</p> <p>“Since the beginning of the full-scale war, Ukrainians have been creating millions of video and audio recordings of what is taking place in various regions of our country. Every shot, every voice message, every interview is part of a new history that we are creating together” (Ukraine war archive);</p> <p>“Ukraine is a home to many great products. But also great people” (Spend With Ukraine);</p> <p>“The issue was staffed by more than 20 Ukrainians working together from around the world” (Adweek on Ukraine);</p> <p>connect sponsors with refugees or get help applying to become a sponsor under the U4U program (Uniting for Ukraine (U4U));</p> <p>“needs of Ukrainian students who are already studying or want to continue their education abroad, photos of rallies in support of Ukraine” (Ukrainian Students Abroad);</p> <p>“People's Bayraktar”, “People's Satellite”, “It is our best national investment!”, “nationwide flash mob” (People's Bayraktar, People's Satellite);</p> <p>“Since the beginning of the full-scale war, the children are permanently stressed and frightened. The war is having a devastating impact on the mental health and well-being of children” (Christmas not war).</p>	<p>14</p>
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<p>War</p>	<p>“stories of evacuees, documents humanitarian and military support initiatives, records interviews with activists, and exposes Russian propaganda”, “Listen to the voice of Mariupol” (Ukrainer);</p> <p>Videos and photos of combat missions, camouflage military uniform (Ghost of Kyiv);</p> <p>“Today it is clear that this is a war for the world's future, and it is about what the model of the world will be like after its completion”. Photos of destroyed cities, Bucha (#StandWithUkraine);</p> <p>Photos of destroyed cities, injured people, military (#standwithukraine);</p> <p>Photos of military personnel (#SaveUkraineNow (SUN));</p> <p>“This is a project about equality, dignity and respect for women in the security and defence sector, as well as the right of women to choose who and where they want to be”, photos of military uniforms (#ArmWomenNow);</p> <p>Photos and videos of military personnel, “military fundraising meetings, procures and delivers critical equipment to support Ukraine’s defenders, including tactical medical supplies and equipment, armored vehicles, FPV drones, UAV complexes, and other essential systems” (Unite with Ukraine);</p> <p>Videos, audio, photos, interviews with eye-witnesses to the events of war, “Russia’s war against Ukraine is now the most well-documented act of military aggression in history” (Ukraine war archive);</p> <p>Articles “A 5-Step Creative Curriculum for Post-War Ukraine”, “How I Live This War”, “War-Life Balance: How the Lives of Ukrainian Creatives Have Been Reshaped by War” (Adweek on Ukraine);</p> <p>“We understand that in the conditions of war society faces a large number of challenges, but we consider it extremely important not to lose sight of the problem of students”, “the needs of Ukrainian students in wartime” (Ukrainian Students</p>	<p>13</p>
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	<p>Abroad);</p> <p>The object for which donations were collected – weapons for the Armed Forces of Ukraine (People's Bayraktar, People's Satellite);</p> <p>“Concrete by Kovalska provided 11,000 concrete blocks to protect our cities from enemy tanks and other military vehicles” (Christmas not war);</p> <p>“profits from the sales will be donated to Hospitallers, a Ukrainian volunteer organization of paramedics who save lives on the front line of Russia’s war” (Kyiv Independent, Saint Javelin merch).</p>	
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Europe/Global	<p>“Ukraïner, as before, remains a platform for stories from Ukraine for the whole world, "Global context of war” (Ukraïner);</p> <p>“The criminal and military aggression of the Russian Federation demonstrated that Ukraine has the support of the whole world. In the first few days of the project's existence, we saw that 5190 people had already transferred money to various organizations using this resource. Thus, foreign citizens seek to financially help Ukraine, the Ukrainian army, civilians, hospitals, refugees...”, “Help stop this right now because the consequences are felt not only in Ukraine but in the whole world” (#StandWithUkraine);</p> <p>“a social project of the All-Ukrainian youth movement “Let’s Do It Ukraine”, supported by Let’s Do It World” (Let’s Do It Ukraine SOS);</p> <p>Organiser is global fundraising initiative of the Ukrainian World Congress, “If we let Russia win, it won’t stop at Ukraine. It never has. But if we help Ukraine stand, we defend something bigger than any one country”, “This Fight Belongs to All of Us”, “This isn’t just Ukraine’s war. It’s an attack on truth, on freedom, on the right of a nation to exist” (Unite with Ukraine);</p> <p>"THE WORLD MUST KNOW THE HISTORY OF THIS WAR, SO WE RECORD IT" (Ukraine war archive);</p> <p>“Our mission is to support the Ukrainian economy by promoting world-class Ukrainian products and services worldwide and helping them find customers” (Spend With Ukraine);</p> <p>An american media, article "Ukraine: The World’s Film Set" (Adweek on Ukraine);</p> <p>“communication between European universities and Ukrainian students to open up more opportunities for them to continue their study in a safe place” (Ukrainian Students Abroad);</p> <p>Turkish company “The Baykar company decided to give three Bayraktar TB-2 UAVs for free. This allowed us to use the saved 600 million UAH (roughly 15 million USD) to purchase the</p>	11
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	<p>satellite” (People's Bayraktar, People's Satellite);</p> <p>Involvement of foreigners and diaspora abroad: "Everyone in the world contributed what they could" (Christmas not war);</p> <p>“Many of the journalists at KI have been reporting on Ukraine for years, and this year, their stories made a global impact” (Kyiv Independent, Saint Javelin merch).</p>	
<p>Flag, Blue, Yellow</p>	<p>There is a flag on photos in the articles (Ukrainer; Adweek on Ukraine);</p> <p>Flag chevron on military uniform (Ghost of Kyiv);</p> <p>Graphic element of logo contains colors of Ukraine's flag (#StandWithUkraine; #standwithukraine; Spend With Ukraine);</p> <p>The identity is taken from the official national branding (#SaveUkraineNow (SUN));</p> <p>Website graphic contains yellow, blue, and flag (Let’s Do It Ukraine SOS; Uniting for Ukraine (U4U));</p> <p>Photos, logo (Unite with Ukraine);</p> <p>Photos, graphics (Ukrainian Students Abroad);</p> <p>Merch design (Kyiv Independent, Saint Javelin merch)</p>	<p>11</p>

<p>Cooperation, Support</p>	<p>“demonstrate to foreigners the possible ways how they could help the Ukrainian army and the Ukrainian people”, #StandWithUkraine, “Support Ukraine against Russian Aggression”, “Help stop this right now because the consequences are felt not only in Ukraine” (#StandWithUkraine);</p> <p>“STAND WITH UKRAINE was born from the will of European citizens to gather in support of the UKRAINIAN PEOPLE and their right to exist as an INDEPENDENT NATION, threatened with erasure by the Russian regime”, photos of rallies in support of Ukraine (#standwithukraine);</p> <p>The logo is Save Ukraine Now (#SaveUkraineNow (SUN));</p> <p>“Its mission is to assist civilians, support volunteering, and address humanitarian and environmental crises” (Let’s Do It Ukraine SOS);</p> <p>“Unite with Ukraine” (Unite with Ukraine);</p> <p>“problems of Ukrainian students in Europe, such as the lack of access to information about available programmes, financial support, housing and language support” (Ukrainian Students Abroad);</p> <p>Uniting for Ukraine (U4U);</p> <p>“The Baykar company decided to give three Bayraktar TB-2 UAVs for free” (People's Bayraktar, People's Satellite);</p> <p>“Kyiv Independent, Saint Javelin launch joint merch collection to help paramedics” (Kyiv Independent and Saint Javelin merch).</p>	<p>9</p>
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Victory	<p>“Ukrainians share the experience of courageous resistance and victories with the whole world” (Ukrainer);</p> <p>Serves for the country victory (Ghost of Kyiv);</p> <p>“Engaging the international community to support Ukraine is essential to victory” (#StandWithUkraine);</p> <p>“MAKE YOUR CONTRIBUTION TO VICTORY” (#SaveUkraineNow (SUN));</p> <p>The article “How Ukraine’s Creatives Are Helping Win the War and Keeping the World’s Attention” (Adweek on Ukraine);</p> <p>Donations to bring Ukraine's victory closer (People's Bayraktar, People's Satellite);</p> <p>“Over time, when the Kyiv region was liberated, concrete blocks were removed from the roads to the sidewalks. They will remain there until Ukraine wins” (Christmas not war).</p>	7
Resistance	<p>“Today, Ukrainians share the experience of courageous resistance and victories with the whole world” (Ukrainer);</p> <p>“Russia’s war against Ukraine is now the most well-documented act of military aggression in history” (Ukraine war archive);</p> <p>“During the war teams behind these companies support the resistance” (Spend With Ukraine);</p> <p>Article “From the Editor: Ukraine’s Creative Resistance” (Adweek on Ukraine);</p> <p>“From the very first minutes of the attack, the enemy faced powerful resistance the world had never seen” (Christmas not war).</p> <p>“Saint Javelin, the team behind the iconic symbol of Ukraine’s resistance and a social enterprise”, “The central symbol of the collection is Archangel Michael, the protector and one of the main symbols of Kyiv” (Kyiv Independent and Saint Javelin merch).</p>	6

<p>Fight</p>	<p>“Today, Ukrainians share the experience of courageous resistance and victories with the whole world and explain why the world should also fight for democratic values on the side of Ukraine” (Ukrainian);</p> <p>“We decided to use all our experience in marketing and join the fight for this support on the information front” (#StandWithUkraine);</p> <p>“Ukraine isn’t just fighting for its borders. It’s fighting for the idea that truth matters” (Unite with Ukraine);</p> <p>“Help us fight the darkness, spend with Ukraine to stand with Ukrainians” (Spend With Ukraine);</p> <p>Article “Flight, Freeze, Fight: How Ukraine’s Design Studios Are Enduring and Adapting” (Adweek on Ukraine).</p>	<p>5</p>
<p>Bravery, Courage, Heroism</p>	<p>“Today, Ukrainians share the experience of courageous resistance” (Ukrainian);</p> <p>“Courage Looks Like This” – interview section (Unite with Ukraine);</p> <p>Shoots down Russian drones, planes and missiles in conditions of overwhelming enemy force, combat pilots awarded state awards for bravery and the title of Hero of Ukraine (Ghost of Kyiv);</p> <p>NGO “Brave Ukraine” (#ArmWomenNow);</p> <p>“The Ukrainian capital has become a symbol of bravery, strength, and an unbreakable spirit for millions of people around the world” (Kyiv Independent and Saint Javelin merch).</p>	<p>5</p>

Freedom	<p>“But if earlier these stories were about a peaceful country changing and reforming, today it is a country fighting for its freedom” (Ukrainian);</p> <p>“Every day today, Ukrainians are dying for such familiar and seemingly understandable things that the aggressor country wants to destroy – a free civil society, political democracy, human dignity, freedom of speech, and, finally, just the right to be Ukrainian” (#StandWithUkraine);</p> <p>“Ukraine — This Is Where Freedom Makes Its Stand. In Ukraine, the future of freedom, dignity, and human rights is being decided — for all of us” (Unite with Ukraine);</p> <p>“Since that time, it has been doing everything possible to take away freedom and joy from Ukrainian adults and children” (Christmas not war).</p>	4
Democracy	<p>“But despite the fact that Ukraine defended its democracy in two revolutions, resists Russian occupation, and continues its development even during wartime, the disparaging and diminishing rhetoric towards Ukraine still can be found in international media” (Ukrainian);</p> <p>“Every day today, Ukrainians are dying for such familiar and seemingly understandable things that the aggressor country wants to destroy - a free civil society, political democracy, human dignity, freedom of speech, and, finally, just the right to be Ukrainian” (#StandWithUkraine);</p> <p>“In Ukraine, the future of freedom, dignity, and human rights is being decided — for all of us” (Unite with Ukraine).</p>	3
Responsibility	<p>“This resource accumulates and publishes only information and accounts confirmed by official sources. We guarantee everyone reading this now that all data on the portal is verified and regularly checked and updated” (#StandWithUkraine);</p> <p>“Its mission is to assist civilians, support volunteering, and address humanitarian and environmental crises” (Let’s Do It Ukraine SOS)</p> <p>“To help protect the public from misinformation and combat Russian propaganda. To facilitate justice for the people of Ukraine. To preserve the history of the Ukrainian people’s</p>	3

	resistance for the future and to defend against the potential manipulation of facts” (Ukraine war archive).	
Ukraine's_ borders	Graphics, photos, videos (map of Ukraine, photos of regions) and content dedicated to all regions of Ukraine, including temporarily occupied and annexed Crimea (Ukrainian); “At dawn on February 24, russia attacked Ukraine along the entire length of the common border, from Luhansk to Chernihiv, as well as from Belarus and the occupied Crimea” (#StandWithUkraine); Map of Ukraine with borders in 1991 (Uniting for Ukraine (U4U)).	3
Defence	Article “With or without weapons. Ukrainian women defend their country” (Ukrainian); Protects the sky over Ukrainian cities (Ghost of Kyiv); “equality, dignity and respect for women in the security and defence sector” (#ArmWomenNow).	3
Opportunities	“The world is going to see and experience a very different Ukraine it might've used to while looking at us through the incredible, beautiful, ingenious, fresh, and exciting new products they wish they had learned about earlier” (Spend With Ukraine); “communication between European universities and Ukrainian students to open up more opportunities for them to continue their study in a safe place” (Ukrainian Students Abroad).	2
Diversity	The diversity of culture, nationalities, traditions and history of different regions of Ukraine (Ukrainian); “The world is going to see and experience a very different Ukraine it might've used to while looking at us through the incredible, beautiful, ingenious, fresh, and exciting new products they wish they had learned about earlier” (Spend With Ukraine);	2
Resilience	“We want to tell the world about these unbreakable women, about their resilience, professionalism and selfless work for the benefit of their country” (#ArmWomenNow).	1
Beauty and	Photo, video, textual content about Ukrainian historical regions	1

Travel	(Ukrainian).	
Steeliness	Aircraft as a reference to steeliness (Ghost of Kyiv);	1
Independence	“in support of the UKRAINIAN PEOPLE and their right to exist as an INDEPENDENT NATION” (#standwithukraine).	1
Equality	“This is a project about equality, dignity and respect for women in the security and defence sector” (#ArmWomenNow).	1
Ecology	“address humanitarian and environmental crises” (Let’s Do It Ukraine SOS).	1
Trident	part of logo (Unite with Ukraine)	1
Justice	“establishing a foundation for truth and justice” (Ukraine war archive).	1
Innovation	“exciting new products they wish they had learned about earlier” (Spend With Ukraine).	1
Unity	“working together from around the world” (Adweek on Ukraine).	1
Joy	“We turned gray concrete blocks from former road barriers into ten colorful holiday characters to bring the Christmas mood back to our children”. “Despite the stress because of the war, the feedback was 100% positive” (Christmas not war).	1

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