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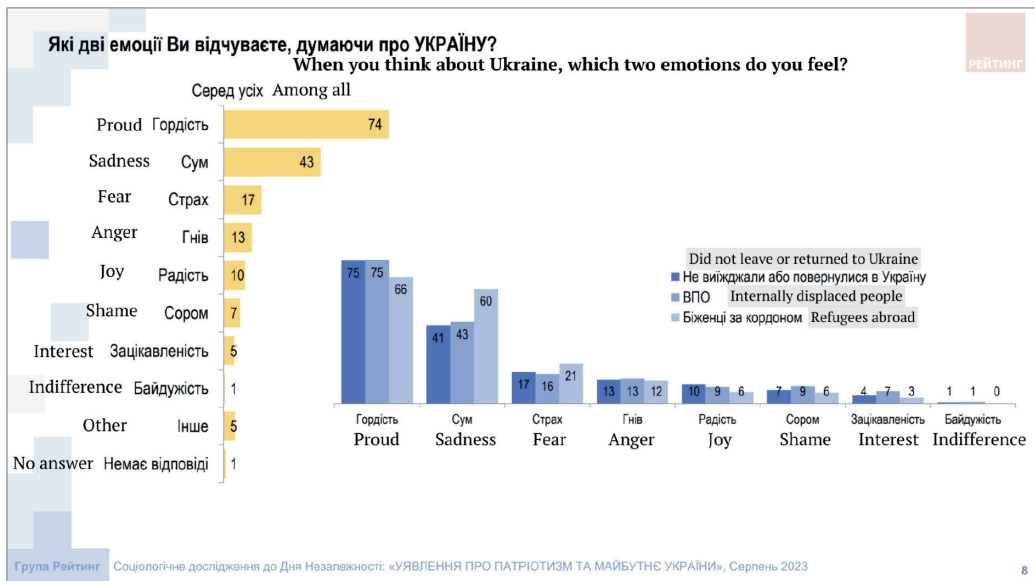
SPECIFICS OF CREATING MEDIA PROJECTS ON YOUTUBE IN UKRAINE: TRENDS IN DEMAND AND PRODUCTION

The full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation has become a driving force for change in every aspect of Ukrainian life. Having been at war for 10 years, of which the enemy has been using genocidal methods of warfare¹ for more than 3 years, the transformation of Ukrainian society, views, preferences and priorities is irreversible. In line with the challenges and social changes, the media space reflects the state of society, and media professionals engage in dialogue, cover and live through the events of the war. Moreover, the Ukrainian media landscape instantly went beyond the country's borders, as it disseminated information to the world.

In the process of creating a new media space, journalists, publishers, producers and other content makers can take a snapshot of Ukrainians' moods and preferences. General trends of natural Ukrainisation; the desire

¹ Understanding Russia's actions in Ukraine as the crime of genocide / Denys Azarov, Dmytro Koval, Gaiane Nuridzhanian, Volodymyr Venher // Journal of International Criminal Justice, Volume 21, Issue 2, May 2023, P. 233–264 URL: <https://doi.org/10.1093/jicj/mqad018>

to get rid of the Soviet legacy, which remains the Ukrainian-Russian common denominator, i.e. the processes of decommunisation and decolonisation; rejection of Russian-language content, which allows Ukrainian content makers to fill the information hunger and, as a result, stimulates the development of the media industry. Annual sociological surveys allow us to track the needs and moods of Ukrainians. For example, the study by the Rating Sociological Group «Perceptions of Patriotism and the Future of Ukraine»², conducted on 16-20 August 2023, touched upon the topic of emotional associations with Ukraine among the population. As of August last year, pride (74%) and sadness (43%) were the predominant emotions of Ukrainians, independently of age and gender (Fig. 1).



Source: research by the Sociological group «Rating»

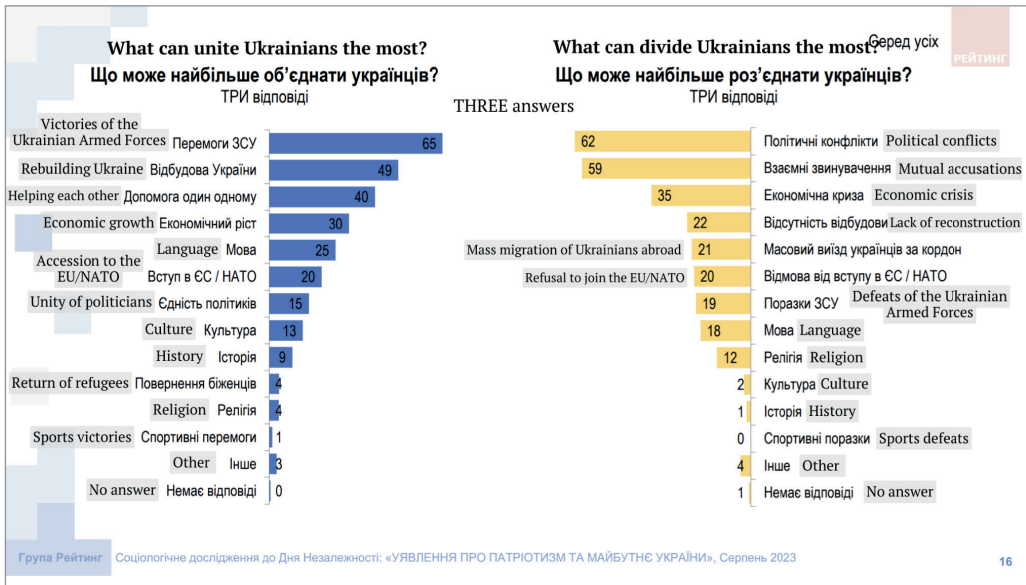
Fig. 1. What emotions did you experience thinking about Ukraine?

The second important topic that was highlighted in the study was the direction of the factors of population unification and separation (Fig.2). According to the respondents, the strongest unifying factors are: victories of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (65%); rebuilding Ukraine (49%); and helping each other (40%). In addition to the most popular, we suggest paying attention to the factors of language (25%), culture (13%), history (9%) and

² A sociological survey dedicated to the Independence Day. PERCEPTIONS OF PATRIOTISM AND THE FUTURE OF UKRAINE // Sociological group «Rating». 2023. URL: https://ratinggroup.ua/files/ratinggroup/reg_files/rating_independence_august_2023.pdf.

religion (4%) – these thematic areas require attention and development, as the strengthening of the nation is based on common socio-cultural denominators. These topics can become sources for new media projects that will meet the interests of the population and have a unifying function at the same time.

In addition, the factors of separation are a visualisation of the fears and pain of the population. Based on the indicators, the topics of «political conflicts» (62%), «mutual accusations» (59%), «economic crisis» (35%) are triggers that can be covered, elaborated, and initiated as an information campaign to reduce anxiety and fear. According to respondents, other socio-cultural triggers are: the emigration of Ukrainians (21%), language (18%), and religion (12%).

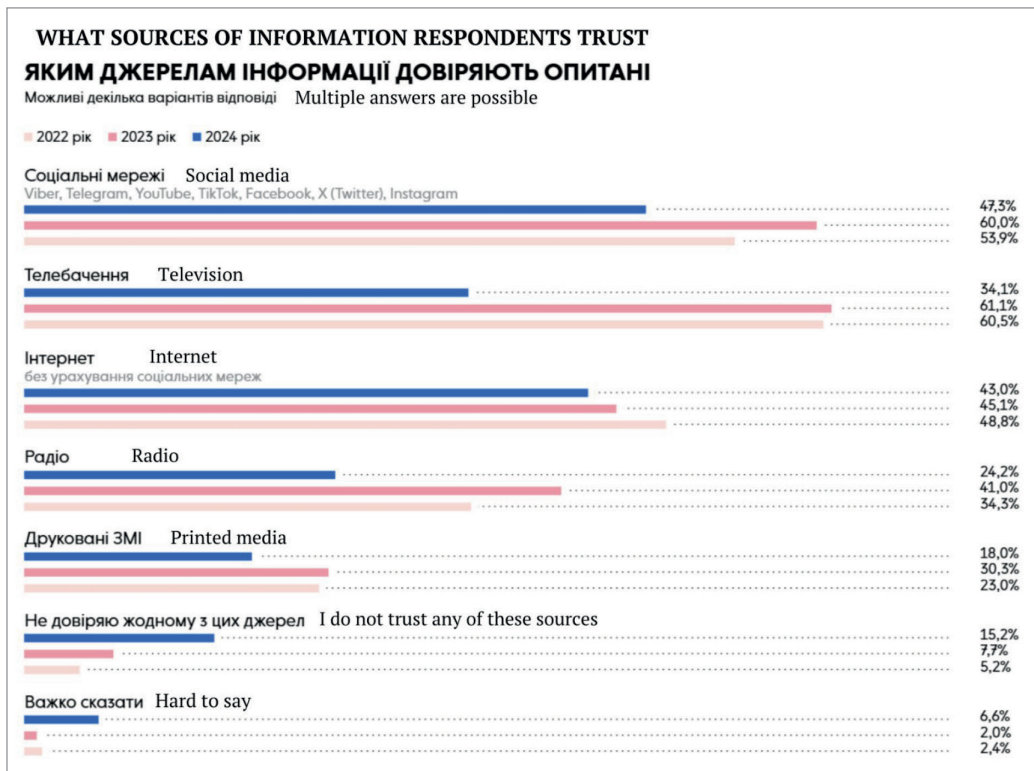


source: research by the Sociological group «Rating»

Fig. 2. What can unite or separate Ukrainians the most?

Sociological research is becoming an important source of topics for media projects, which are shaping the internal media landscape. The creation of an information strategy, justification of the project's goal, objectives, social value, and the main idea of the media product are an integral part of its creation, promotion, and distribution among the audience. In times of information warfare, the responsibility of content makers is growing, and their professionalism is becoming even more valuable.

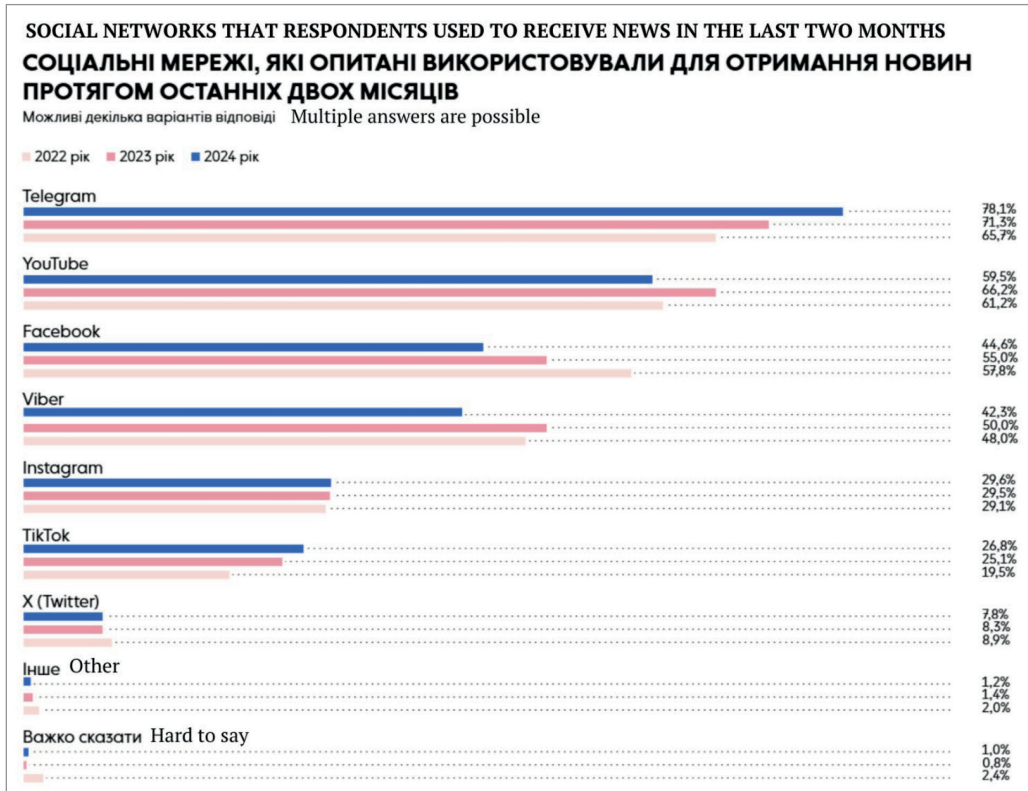
The next step in developing a media project should be to analyze the platforms for publishing and the trends in media consumption of the audience for which the content is created. According to the study «Media consumption of Ukrainians: the third year of full-scale war»³, the largest percentage of Ukrainians trust social media and online resources, namely 47.3% and 43.0% respectively (Fig.3). One third of respondents trust television as an information resource – 34.1%. The survey was conducted from 6 May to 4 June 2024 at the request of the Civil Network OPORA. Telegram messenger and YouTube video hosting were the most popular in the social media category – 78.1% and 59.5% of respondents respectively, as during April, May and June 2024, respondents received information and news primarily from these sources (Fig.4).



Source: research «Media consumption of Ukrainians: the third year of full-scale war»

Fig. 3. What sources of information do respondents trust?

3 Research «Media consumption of Ukrainians: the third year of full-scale war» // Civil Network OPORA. 2024. URL: <https://www.oporaua.org/viyna/doslidzhennya-mediaspozhyvannya-ukrayinciv-tretyi-rik-povnomashtabnoyi-viyni-25292>



Source: research «Media consumption of Ukrainians: the third year of full-scale war»

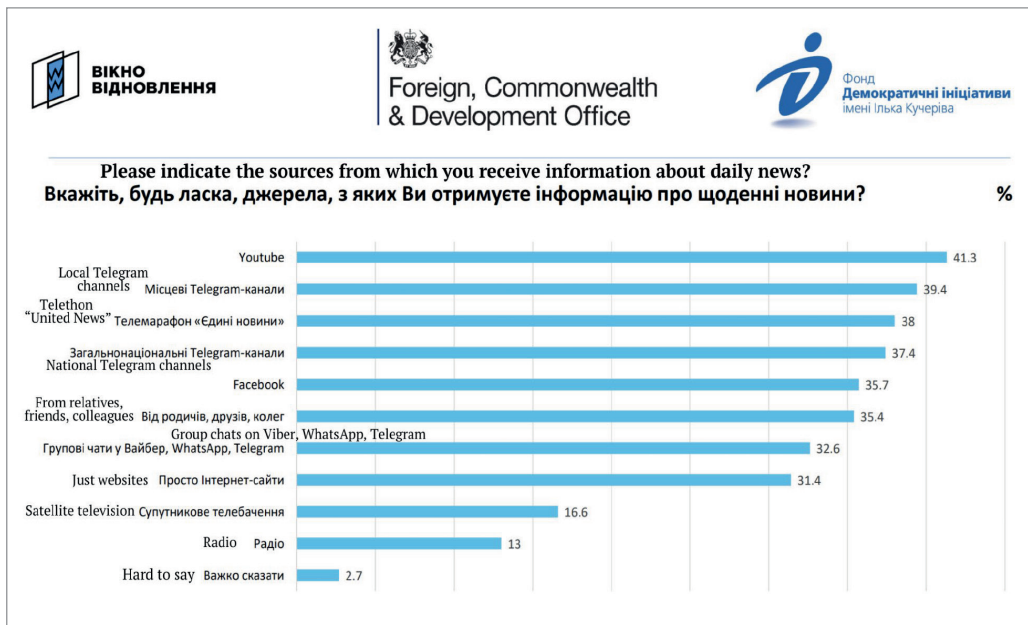
Fig. 4. What social networks are used to receive news

The present study is not the only one that confirms the trend of prioritizing online resources and social networks over traditional media such as television, radio or newspapers. This is confirmed by several other studies. For example, according to the results of the nationwide survey «Post-war recovery of Ukraine and media consumption»⁴, which was conducted from 3 to 12 March 2024, the most popular sources of daily news for Ukrainians are YouTube (41.3%); local Telegram channels, i.e. messenger (39.4%); the telethon «United News», otherwise national television (38%) (Fig. 5).

Representatives of the media community noticed the tendency of the Ukrainian audience to receive information through online resources and social networks during the crisis as early as 2014. The participants of the «New Media – New Opportunities 2014» conference attribute the significant increase in the

⁴ A nationwide survey on the problems of Ukraine's recovery and media consumption. SURVEY RESULTS // Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation. 2024. URL: https://dif.org.ua/files/Infographics_graphics/2024/Vikno%20Vidnovlennya/march_presentation.pdf.

number of visits to online resources to the revolutionary events and Russian armed aggression in eastern Ukraine. Maksym Savanevsky, founder of the «watcher.com.ua» portal, said: *«if in September 2013, 10-15% of the daily audience visited news sites, now it is 60% of the daily audience»*⁵. Since then, according to the USAID-Internews media consumption survey, the popularity of the Internet has been growing. According to a survey conducted in November 2021, 63% of respondents turned to social media for news during the month. One of the conclusions of the study: *«every year the number of Internet users who go online every day is growing – in 2021, 82% of them, and among young people aged 18-35, 97% use the Internet every day»*⁶.



Source: national survey «Post-war recovery of Ukraine and media consumption»

Fig. 5. Daily news sources

Tatiana Yezhzhanskaya clearly described the advantage of the online space over traditional media: *«It is important for the media to be where their potential audience is. The advantages of media presence on social media are obvious: interaction with socially active readers enhances the reputation of the media,*

5 Dorosh M. How revolutionary events changed the audience of media sites // NGO «MEDIA DETECTOR». 2014. URL: <https://ms.detector.media/onlain-media/post/1290/2014-03-26-yak-revolutsiyni-podii-minyaly-audytoriyu-mediasaytiv/>

6 Attitudes of the population towards media and consumption of different types of media // Institute of Mass Information. 2021. URL: <https://imi.org.ua/upload/media/2021/11/17/61951144dc1fc-usaid-internews-media-report-2021-ukr.pdf>

increases its audience, allows it to listen to the wishes and advice of readers and make decisions on the further development of the publication»⁷.

While working on a project, producers and authors have to assess the sources of media consumption of the Ukrainian audience. A preliminary analysis allows us to identify the platforms where the project's target audience can potentially be found. Determining the platform for publication directly affects the product: the style of presentation, editing, use of graphic elements, musical accompaniment, and the prohibition or permission of sensitive content. In addition to audience preferences, the platform itself dictates its own rules in the form of copyright, user settings, censorship, and other technical and ideological considerations.

Given the popularity and accessibility of YouTube video hosting, we chose this platform to launch our own media project. It is worth highlighting that Ukrainian YouTube has been significantly transformed by the full-scale invasion. According to a study by «AIR»⁸, a strategic marketing agency, as of October 2022, Ukraine was the third largest country in Eastern Europe in terms of the number of content producers, with about 14,600 content makers. In March 2022, the number of views on videos about news, politics and educational content at least doubled compared to February (Fig. 6).

According to the results of the nationwide survey «Post-War Recovery of Ukraine and Media Consumption»⁹, in 2024, Ukrainians' interest in news and materials covering the war with Russia has not waned. 56.2% of respondents want to find information in the local media about the consequences of the war in their community, such as bomb shelters, mobilization processes, and commemorations of fallen soldiers.

The YouTube channels of military brigades of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, individual servicemen or groups, Ukrainian volunteers and activists are gaining rapid popularity, some of which are presented in Table 1 with data as of the end of October 2024. In addition to covering its activities, video hosting allows for paid subscriptions, which generates additional revenue from the audience. Exclusive videos, such as a report from the perspective of assault units in the

7 Yezhizhanska T. S. Mass media in social networks: trends, opportunities, prospects // Mass communication: history, present, prospects: a scientific and practical journal / edited by S. I. Kravchenko; compiled by M. A. Rozhylo. Lutsk: Lesya Ukrainka Eastern European National University, 2015. № 7 8 (6). C. 61–67. URL: <https://evnuir.vnu.edu.ua/bitstream/123456789/10264/1/Jezhizhanska.pdf>

8 The Impact of the War in Ukraine on the Creator Economy in the Eastern European Region and Beyond // AIR Media-Tech. 2022. URL: https://air.io/storage/Trends_report_2022.pdf.

9 A nationwide survey on the problems of Ukraine's recovery and media consumption. SURVEY RESULTS // Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation. 2024. URL: https://dif.org.ua/files/Infographics_graphics/2024/Vikno%20Vidnovlennya/march_presentation.pdf.

war zone, receive millions of views. Among the documentaries, interviews with the Ukrainian military, stories of Ukrainians released from Russian captivity and wounded soldiers receive millions of views.



Source: based on research by the strategic marketing agency «AIR»

Fig.6, Number of views on videos about news, politics and educational content

Table 1.

YouTube channels that are gaining popularity

Name of the channel	Creation date	The number of subscribers	The number of views
1	2	3	4
3-тя окрема штурмова бригада 3rd Separate Assault Brigade	July 7, 2022	1,3 million of subscribers	331 931 170 views

Continuation of table 1

1	2	3	4
A3OB Azov	August 5, 2014	507 thousand of subscribers	81 201 737 views
Армія TV – Військове телебачення України Army TV – Military TV of Ukraine	June 26, 2012	999 thousand of subscribers	588 650 913 views
Президентська бригада ім. Богдана Хмельницького Bohdan Khmelnytskyi Presidential Brigade	October 23, 2022	49,5 thousand of subscribers	10 202 374 views
ВІДДУШІВДУШУ FROM SOUL TO SOUL	November 12, 2017	290 thousand of subscribers	52 665 245 views
PRESSING	November 18, 2021	559 thousand of subscribers	99 133 076 views
STERNENKO	March 9, 2013	2 million of subscribers	990 241 293 views
Сергій Пригула Serhiy Prytula	March 12, 2020	652 thousand of subscribers	89 816 041 views

Additionally, socio-political issues, as well as war documentaries, are widely represented in the Ukrainian media. The military aggression of the Russian Federation has led to the emergence of countless topics, problems, human stories, and events that require immediate recording. Before developing and creating the author's project, we analyzed the topics and approaches to covering such topics as the experience of losing a loved one as a result of the war and the rehabilitation process of wounded soldiers. The main reference materials were the following works:

1. «НЕЗЛАМНІ»: Роман «Добряк» та Олександр «Терен» – фатальне влучання танку / життя після поранення
(*Unbroken: Roman Dobryak and Oleksandr Teren, a fatal tank shot / life after heavy wound*);
2. НЕСКОРЕНІ. ПОРАНЕНІ / ЯК СПІЛКУВАТИСЯ З ВЕТЕРАНАМИ / ЖИТТЯ ПІСЛЯ ПОРАНЕННЯ / ІСТОРІЇ ГЕРОЇВ
(*unconquered.injured / how to talk with veterans / life after heavy wound / stories of heroes*);
3. «Це все ще я» – військові, обличчя яких назавжди змінила війна
(*It's still me», soldiers whose faces were forever changed by the war*);

4. ОЛЕКСІЙ ЧУБАШЕВ. ІСТОРІЯ ГОЛОВНОГО РЕКРУТА КРАЇНИ.
In memoriam
(*Oleksiy Chubashev. The story of the main recruit in the country. In memoriam*);
5. Щоденник Монастирського. Документальний фільм-портрет українського міністра МВС
(*Diary of Monastyrsky. Documentary portrait of the Minister of Internal Affairs of Ukraine*).

As mentioned earlier, the choice of primary distribution platform directly impacts the media product; in our case, this platform is YouTube. Accordingly, our references are represented by media projects published there. In addition to the main references listed above, we analyzed other media projects with a focus on video filming and editing perspectives. While not all of these are our primary references, they provide valuable insights into the specifics of creating such content in Ukraine. The titles are listed below in both Ukrainian and English.

1. НЕСКОРЕНІ. ПОРАНЕНІ / ЯК СПІЛКУВАТИСЯ З ВЕТЕРАНАМИ / ЖИТТЯ ПІСЛЯ ПОРАНЕННЯ / ІСТОРІЇ ГЕРОЇВ
(*unconquered.injured / how to talk with veterans / life after heavy wound / stories of heroes*)
2. Дід Шинобі ЧАСТИНА 2 / підрив ЗАЕС / наслідки ПТСР / спілкування з вагнерами / корупція
(*Shinobi Oldman Part 2 / Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant explosion / PTSD consequences / communication with Wagner mercenaries / corruption*)
3. Щоденник Монастирського. Документальний фільм-портрет українського міністра МВС
(*Diary of Monastyrsky. Documentary portrait of the Minister of Internal Affairs of Ukraine*)
4. ОЛЕКСІЙ ЧУБАШЕВ. ІСТОРІЯ ГОЛОВНОГО РЕКРУТА КРАЇНИ.
In memoriam
(*Oleksiy Chubashev. The story of the main recruit in the country. In memoriam*)
5. «Це все ще я» – військові, обличчя яких назавжди змінила війна
(*«It's still me», soldiers whose faces were forever changed by the war*)
6. Вижив у полоні і розповів про побачене: що роблять із полоненими військові РФ | #ВУКРАЇНИ

(Survived captivity and told about what he saw: what Russian military do with captives | #INUKRAINE)

7. «НЕЗЛАМНИ»: Роман «Добряк» та Олександр «Терен» – фатальне влучання танку / життя після поранення
(Unbroken: Roman Dobryak and Oleksandr Teren, a fatal tank shot / life after heavy wound)
8. Підкорити гори на кріслі колісному – історія Івана Космини | Документальний фільм «Без перешкод».
(Conquering mountains in a wheelchair: the story of Ivan Kosmina | Documentary «No Barriers»)

We believe this selection is sufficient enough for studying Ukrainian production of such media projects. All projects were published during 2023–2024, therefore we can claim their experience is modern and relevant.

Half of the listed media projects have an average duration of thirty minutes, three last fifty to sixty minutes, and one lasts twenty minutes. This implies that there is no fixed duration for such projects.

All of the mentioned projects have designed thumbnails, i.e. small preview pictures. These are usually photo collages of varying complexity, sometimes with clickbait titles that, in the authors' opinion, increase views.

The timestamps are a unique YouTube element, which breaks video into segments. Their correct utilizing provides easier navigation and helps viewers to perceive a story. However, not all authors use them, which we believe is a mistake if the video is longer than ten minutes.

Although all of the listed projects cover the same topic, they differ in genre. For example, «*Shinobi Oldman Part 2*» is a studio interview, «*It's still me*» is a report, and «*Diary of Monastyrsky*» is a portrait film that premiered in a cinema. This diversity indicates the topic complexity, as journalistic genres and even cinematic techniques are used to cover it.

The first minutes are crucial for videos published on YouTube. Depending on them, viewers decide whether to watch it or not. Therefore, the first minutes have to engage a viewer. This is a common practice in all of the mentioned media projects. Their authors use various techniques to reach a viewer. These may include a climax starting, video highlight compilation, interviewee's personal footage set to music, or simply introducing main characters. Emotional hooks, such as touching phrases, are also commonly used. After this introduction, a story is told in chronological order.

An important structural element of these projects are interludes that divide a video into sections. The interludes may be filled with location shots, scenes of characters' everyday lives, or previously mentioned interviewee's personal footage. They provide additional information and time to reconsider a story, prepare a viewer for the next section, or simply give an opportunity to take a break from an emotionally charged part.

All of the mentioned media projects use medium and close-up shots for interviews. This is an extremely effective technique that helps to conceal cutting and maintain the dynamic of a video sequence. Besides, the two-shot-technique makes it possible to capture both the interviewee's gestures and facial expressions.

The key feature of such projects is an active use of interviewee's personal footage, including both photos and videos. They provide better immersion, demonstrate the subject of interviewee's speech and reconstruct past events.

Both journalism and documentary filmmaking aim to capture reality as it is, which limits the use of graphics and effects. Typically, graphics are used for titling elements like lower thirds, captions, credits, title cards, or subtitles. Sometimes additional effects are applied to highlight an interviewee's personal footage.

One of the most common techniques for achieving seamless editing is the use of J- and L-cuts. This is a sound transition, where an interviewee's voice or any other sound are heard before or after they appear on screen. Visual transitions are less common; they are used for titling and sometimes for an interviewee's personal footage.

In contrast, music and sound are more frequently requested elements. Musical accompaniment helps to create a specific atmosphere and allows for the manipulation of the audience's emotional state. Sound effects (SFX) are often used to draw attention to the appearance of a new on-screen element, such as a lower third. In this context, we can mention «*Diary of Monastyrsky*» as an interesting sample, because its authors use SFX as an additional technique for the emotional influence on the viewer. This includes, but not limited to, children's laughter, explosions, and air raid alerts. This technique enhances the feeling of presence and engagement. Still, SFX is usually paired with a corresponding visual element.

The ideal location for an interview is often the interviewee's home, as shots taken there can provide additional insight into their personality and even generate new subtopics. This setting also supplies extra material for interludes.

However, there are cases where the location is dictated by the interview topic; for instance, interviews with wounded soldiers in a rehabilitation center are thematically determined. The least effective option is studio filming, where recreating the interviewees' everyday lives is almost impossible. This reduces the available narrative tools and may require more interviewees' personal footage to fill interludes.

Following this market research, we developed the concept for our project. We determined the genre, optimal duration, structure, and number of interviewees; selected the two-shot technique and captured interviewees' everyday lives; received personal footage from the interviewees; and chose interview locations based on thematic relevance.

A preliminary analysis of grant programs and competitions showed us that there is no significant support for media projects related to people's stories in the context of the Russo-Ukrainian War. Among foreign donors, we can highlight *the Institute for Human Sciences (IWM)* in Vienna, *the Europe-Ukraine Desk* at the non-profit organization «*Network for Border Crossing Journalism*» (*n-ost*) in Berlin, and the non-profit organization «*Do Not Look Away*» (*DNLA*) in London. This year, IWM and *n-ost* offered grant support of 5,000 euros, and DNLA offered 1,000 dollars to the winners of their competition. It should be noted that initiatives supporting Ukrainian films, such as *Generation Ukraine* or *ESFUF*, were not considered due to their focus on cinema projects.

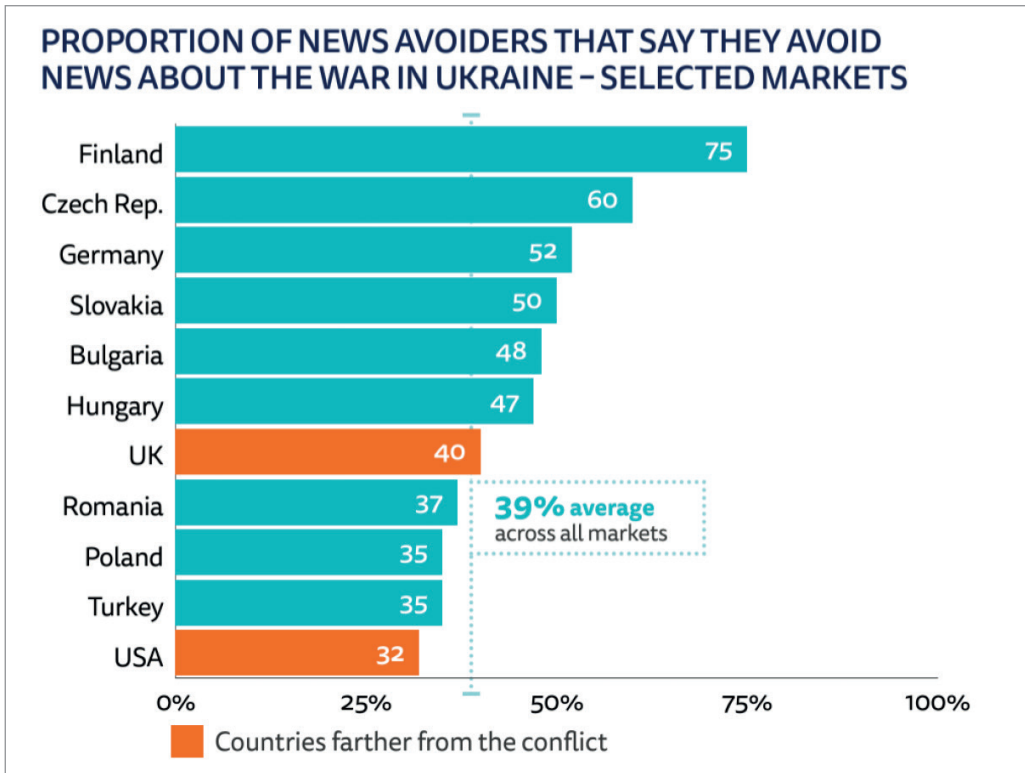
The lack of significant foreign support can be partially explained by the phenomenon known as compassion fatigue, where long-term consumption of tragic news decreases audience interest in such topics. Foreign media increasingly cover Ukrainian non-war themes, such as sports, culture, business, international trade, the lives of Ukrainians at home and abroad, nature, etc¹⁰. Fatigue from the Russo-Ukrainian War is also confirmed by the Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2023. It claims, that «*Amongst avoiders, almost four in ten (39%) said they had avoided news on the war in Ukraine.*»¹¹ (fig. 7).

Support for such projects in Ukraine is also minimal. The only institution capable of providing grant funding for their implementation is *the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation (UCF)*. However, this institution was not specifically established to cover the Russo-Ukrainian War; the focus on this topic is an

10 Brand Ukraine. (2023). *Ukraine's Global Perception Report*. URL: <https://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/24462279/ua-ukraines-global-perception-report-2023-web.pdf>

11 Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. (2023). *Digital News Report*. URL: https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2023-06/Digital_News_Report_2023.pdf

initiative of the contest participants. Ultimately, priority is given to cultural and inclusive projects.



Source: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, Digital News Report 2023

Fig.7 The Russo-Ukrainian War is the topic most often avoided by news consumers

Returning to our selection, of the eight projects, only one was created with the support of the UCF, focusing on the reintegration of wounded soldiers into civilian life. The other six were developed by the media on their own. Only one of these projects was commissioned by the media from a Ukrainian production company. Therefore, we can conclude that the creation of such projects is the initiative of the executors themselves.

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