PUBLIC DIPLOMACY OF UKRAINE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Abstract. This comprehensive article delves deeply into the intricate interplay between Ukraine's public diplomacy and the dynamic realm of social media, offering a nuanced exploration of the nation's strategic navigation within the digital sphere.

The primary focus is on crafting a compelling narrative that resonates globally, recognizing the pivotal role of social media platforms, particularly Twitter, in disseminating credible information, fostering a positive national image, and garnering international support. The critical role played by Twitter is highlighted, showcasing its significance in actively contributing to the creation of a positive national image. The challenges posed by the increased coverage and impact of Kremlin-backed accounts on social media, especially in the context of the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war were analyzed. The article underscores the complex landscape Ukraine faces in countering disinformation.

A notable aspect of Ukraine's proactive approach is outlined in the establishment of the UkraineNow brand in social media. This initiative serves as a strategic response to counter disinformation, presenting an opportunity to engage with and positively influence a global audience. Recognizing the dynamic nature of technological landscapes, the article emphasizes the imperative for a continuous adaptation of diplomatic strategies. It stresses the importance of diversifying communication channels as a means to mitigate potential vulnerabilities in the rapidly evolving digital space.
The article outlines Ukraine's targeted public diplomacy initiatives directed towards specific segments of the population. With a comprehensive analysis of the nation's endeavors to shape a positive and authentic narrative about Ukraine on social media, it underscores the complexity and dynamism of contemporary diplomatic efforts in the digital landscape.

**Keywords:** public diplomacy, social media, digital diplomacy, image formation, disinformation, communication channels, targeted initiatives.

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**ПУБЛІЧНА ДИПЛОМАТІЯ УКРАЇНИ У СОЦІАЛЬНИХ МЕРЕЖАХ**

**Анотація.** Ця всебічна стаття глибоко досліджує витончені взаємодії між громадською дипломатією України та динамічним світом соціальних мереж, пропонуючи нюансоване дослідження стратегічної навігації країни у цифровому просторі.

Основна увага приділяється створенню переконливого наративу, який резонує глобально, визнаючи важливу роль соціальних медіа, зокрема Twitter, у поширенні правдивої інформації, формуванні позитивного національного образу та залученні міжнародної підтримки. Відзначено критичну роль Twitter, де його значення виявляється в активному внеску у створення позитивного національного образу. Проаналізовано виклики, які створює збільшене висвітлення та вплив облікових записів, фінансованих Кремлем, в соціальних мережах, особливо в контексті російсько-української війни. У статті підкреслено складний ландшафт, з яким Україна стикається при протидії дезінформації.

Виділяється прозорий підхід України у створенні бренду UkraineNow в соціальних мережах. Ця ініціатива є стратегічною відповіддю на дезінформацію та надає можливість активного взаємодії із глобальною аудиторією. Враховуючи динаміку технологічних ландшафтів, стаття наголошує на необхідності постійної адаптації дипломатичних стратегій. Вона
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підкреслює важливість диверсифікації комунікаційних каналів як засобу зменшення можливих вразливостей у динамічному цифровому просторі.

У статті розглянуто цільові ініціативи громадської дипломатії України, спрямовані на конкретні сегменти населення. Вона пропонує всебічний аналіз зусиль країни у формуванні позитивного та автентичного наративу про Україну в соціальних мережах, висвітлюючи багатогранність дипломатичних зусиль в сучасному цифровому просторі.

Ключові слова: публічна дипломатія, соціальні мережі, цифрова дипломатія, формування образу, дезінформація, канали комунікації, цільові ініціативи.

Problem statement. In the context of the evolving digital landscape, the challenge of effectively shaping a country's image and narrative on social media platforms has become increasingly complex. This is particularly pertinent for nations like Ukraine, which are actively engaged in public diplomacy efforts to counter disinformation, promote a positive national image, and garner international support. Connection to Significant Scientific or Practical Tasks: The ability to navigate the dynamic environment of social media and counter disinformation while shaping a positive and authentic narrative about a country presents a significant scientific and practical task. It requires the development of innovative strategies, leveraging digital platforms, and engaging with diverse global audiences to effectively communicate a nation's message and influence perceptions in the international community. This task also involves addressing the potential vulnerabilities and complexities introduced by the ownership and control of social media platforms, as well as the need to target specific segments such as tourists, students, researchers, active youth, and businessmen and investors through tailored public diplomacy initiatives.

Analysis of recent research and publications. Researchers Joseph S. Nye, Ilan Manor, Corneliu Bjola, Sabrina Sotiriou, Marcus Holmes, Nicholas J. Cull have made significant progress in digital diplomacy. The analysis of recent research and publications reveals a growing body of work focused on addressing the challenges and opportunities in shaping country's image on digital platforms. Numerous studies emphasize the significance of social media in public diplomacy and highlight the evolving strategies to navigate the dynamic digital landscape.

The research efforts by T. Krasnopolska, I. Myloserdna, M. Pavlyuh, S. Kushnei have contributed to initiating solutions for the identified problem of effectively managing Ukraine's narrative on social media. Several key findings from recent research and publications form the basis of digital diplomacy. There is a recognition of the transformative impact of social media on diplomatic communication, emphasizing its role in influencing global perceptions. Scholars have explored the
positive aspects of Ukraine's public diplomacy efforts, such as countering disinformation and promoting a positive national image.

The analysis also brings attention to the unresolved aspects within the overarching issue. For instance, despite the progress made, there are ongoing challenges related to the increased presence of disinformation and the influence of external actors, particularly in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. Addressing these persistent issues is crucial for a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of Ukraine's public diplomacy on social media.

The analysis underscores the dynamic nature of research and publications in the field of public diplomacy for Ukraine on social media. It recognizes the strides made in solving the identified problem while acknowledging the need for continued exploration and solutions to the remaining unresolved aspects within this complex and evolving landscape.

The purpose of the article. The purpose of the article is to provide a comprehensive analysis of Ukraine's public diplomacy efforts in the context of social media, with a specific focus on the challenges, opportunities, and strategies associated with shaping a positive national image and countering disinformation in the digital age. The article aims to analyze the transformative impact of social media on public diplomacy, emphasizing the critical role of platforms like Twitter in disseminating credible information, fostering a positive national image, and garnering international support. Additionally, the article seeks to highlight the targeted public diplomacy initiatives directed towards specific segments such as tourists, students, researchers, active youth, and businessmen and investors, elucidating the strategies employed to attract and engage these audiences. Overall, the article aims to provide valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities facing Ukraine in the digital age, offering a nuanced understanding of the nation's endeavors to navigate the dynamic world of social media and craft a compelling narrative that resonates globally.

Presentation main material. In the contemporary geopolitical landscape, the fusion of diplomacy with the expansive realm of social media has become not just a channel for communication but a dynamic platform for nations to actively shape perceptions, influence narratives, and engage with a global audience. This article embarks on a comprehensive examination of Ukraine's public diplomacy, dissecting the intricate strategies employed within the complex tapestry of social media. The multifaceted nature of this exploration necessitates a deep dive into the nuances of content creation, engagement tactics, and the overarching impact of Ukraine's digital footprint.

As we navigate this analysis, it is essential to recognize the profound shift in diplomatic paradigms brought about by the advent of social media platforms. Beyond the traditional confines of diplomatic channels, platforms like Facebook,
Twitter, Instagram, and others serve as dynamic arenas where nations not only disseminate information but actively participate in the construction of their global image. The geopolitical context of Ukraine, marked by ongoing challenges and a complex international landscape, adds layers of significance to this study. We will delve into the specific content strategies employed by Ukraine, ranging from official diplomatic communications to cultural showcases and public engagement initiatives. Each facet contributes to the intricate mosaic that is Ukraine's digital presence. Furthermore, this essay aims to go beyond a surface-level acknowledgment of Ukraine's social media engagement. It will meticulously scrutinize key performance indicators, exploring metrics such as audience engagement, reach, sentiment analysis, and the resonance of diplomatic messages. By dissecting these metrics, we seek to gauge the effectiveness of Ukraine's public diplomacy efforts in influencing global perceptions, fostering meaningful connections, and advancing its national interests on the international stage.

In essence, this article is not merely an overview but a granular examination of Ukraine's digital diplomacy landscape. By peeling back the layers of content, engagement strategies, and performance metrics, we aim to unravel the intricate dance between Ukraine's public diplomacy and the dynamic world of social media, shedding light on how the nation strategically navigates the digital sphere to craft a compelling narrative that resonates globally.

Public diplomacy refers to the practices of various countries that are designed to establish communication bridges between them and target audiences. These governmental communication activities are aimed at audiences from other countries and cultures and seek to manage the international policy environment. For the sake of brevity, earlier practices of public diplomacy can be understood as governments trying to cultivate support for their foreign policy objectives among foreign publics. In this conceptualization, communication processes are controlled by governments. In general, practitioners of public diplomacy decide which audiences they want to target, what messages they want to broadcast, and what stories they want to tell about their country. The advent of social media challenged this hierarchy of communication, as it allowed for more open, direct, and equal interaction between foreign publics and countries. Audiences were able to share their reactions to the messages they received and even spread their own views of various countries. The study and the practice of public diplomacy have incorporated terms reflecting this change, including public diplomacy 2.0. This concept is understood as a government’s use of social media for public diplomacy purposes, increasing two-way communication forms such as dialogue and interaction—with the former referring to communication processes in which countries and audiences listen to each other, and the latter to processes in which actors react to the content created by others.
Three main characteristics differentiate the nature of communication in public diplomacy 2.0 from earlier public diplomacy practices. First, public diplomacy 2.0 has the technological capacity to facilitate the creation of relationships on social media (e.g., following on Twitter, likes on Facebook). Second, public diplomacy 2.0 relies heavily on user-generated content, such as feedback, comments, or videos. Third, the last distinct characteristic of public diplomacy 2.0 relates to the horizontally arranged exchange networks, as opposed to the vertical distribution of information in 1.0 practices. [7]

Ukraine is a fairly developed country in terms of public diplomacy on social media. The development of technologies has led to changes in many spheres of life, including politics, international relations, and the overall activities of a country. Just 20 years ago, creating a national image posed a real challenge for any state. The entire process involved colossal costs, time, workforce, and so on. With the popularization of social media, all of this became much simpler. The impact of social media on shaping a country's image is a widely researched topic in the modern digital world. The development of social media has allowed people to shape the image of their country through their online presence. In fact, the most crucial factor in shaping the image of an institution, including a country, is its presence in the information space. People are responsible for shaping the image of their country through their lifestyle and presence on social media. Having a website and pages on social media can help in creating a positive image of the country, and this has become an effective tool for governments in building national reputation. However, there are concerns about the homogenization of cultures and the erosion of ethnic identity due to the post-industrial development of the world. At the current stage of development, Ukraine is quite open to new trends in public diplomacy, image formation strategies, and more. The «Public Diplomacy Strategy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine 2021-2025» identifies digital diplomacy as one of the directions, defining it as a public diplomacy approach that involves the use of digital technologies and platforms, as well as interaction with them to protect the country's national interests. [1] Professional and systematic use of the opportunities provided by social media and digital platforms enables direct communication with citizens of foreign countries to shape a positive perception of Ukraine.

The dimensions of the work of public diplomacy entities in the field of digital diplomacy include:
- Interaction with international digital platforms to promote a positive image of Ukraine globally and ensure national security.
- Using digital tools to organize public diplomacy events and projects.
- Leveraging the potential of social media and engaging with online communities to shape a positive image of Ukraine and promote Ukrainian interests globally.[1]
The existence of an official strategy for social media management indicates that Ukraine recognizes the importance of managing information related to Ukraine. Public diplomacy is closely related to building the national brand of the country. It is primarily aimed at creating and projecting the identity and image of the country, with predominantly economic goals such as attracting investments and tourists, increasing exports and trade, attracting talents and labor, and enhancing cultural presence globally. Ukraine's sole national visual brand is UkraineNow, officially approved by the Government of Ukraine on May 10, 2018. It serves as a tool for public diplomacy to represent the country on the international stage. UkraineNow is a umbrella brand that can be developed and used for campaigns in various directions. The brand's philosophy is based on the word 'now,' which is currently the most important for Ukraine and modern Ukrainians. The brand is intended for use by both government institutions and local authorities, as well as businesses and individual citizens. Unified use of the brand will help shape a favorable image of Ukraine, its citizens, foreign and domestic policies, cultural values, and globally change perceptions of Ukraine and Ukrainians, presenting Ukraine as an open, modern country with European values.

The UkraineNow brand identity, outlined in the respective brand book, is recommended for use in all image events and campaigns of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), as well as being placed on accompanying content to contribute to the development of national brand identity and increased recognition of the national brand. The main narratives promoted within the UkraineNow project include[1]:

- A modern European country with a millennia-long history, culture, and arts.
- A brave and sincere country, a land of strong emotions, freedom, and dignity.
- A peacekeeper. Ukraine stands guard for the peace and tranquility of Europe.
- A country of positive discoveries, surpassing expectations in people, nature, and possibilities.
- Ukraine – the guarantor of global food security.

It is worth noting that the program was formulated before the full-scale invasion of Russia into Ukraine. After February 24, 2022, the main narrative shifted to «Ukraine – a defender of peace in the world». The next most popular idea propagated is «Ukraine – the guarantor of global food security». These statements were not chosen randomly; they are conditioned by the events occurring during the war. Considering resource limitations, the strategy of "niche" public diplomacy is optimal for Ukraine. This means that the advantage or niche that the country can occupy due to favorable geographical location, expertise in a specific field, or a unique product can be a useful and creative solution for the world. Ukraine's advantages in this regard include its agricultural potential, IT and creative potential, and experience in countering hybrid threats.
For an effective image policy, it is crucial to identify the target audience. Most public diplomacy initiatives, including those on social media, are directed towards the following segments:

**Tourists:**
*Goal:* Attracting foreign tourists to visit Ukraine, showcasing the richness of Ukrainian culture, history, and natural beauty.

**Students:**
*Goal:* Attracting foreign students to study at Ukrainian universities, fostering exchange of experience and culture.

**Researchers and Experts:**
*Goal:* Drawing the attention of international researchers and experts for collaboration and knowledge exchange.

**Active Youth:**
*Goal:* Involving youth in cultural and educational exchanges, supporting their ideas and initiatives.

**Businessmen and Investors:**
*Goal:* Attracting foreign investors and fostering international business partnerships.

**Representatives of Creative and Cultural Industries:**
*Goal:* Presenting Ukrainian art, culture, and creative solutions on the international stage.

**Journalists, Bloggers, and Opinion Leaders:**
*Goal:* Creating a positive image of Ukraine through media and influential individuals.

It is also important to consider the countries targeted by Ukraine's public diplomacy, taking into account cultural peculiarities, mentality, etc. For digital diplomacy, leading countries include the USA, Canada, Japan, the UK, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Belgium, Ireland, Switzerland, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark, Greece, Spain, Austria, the Czech Republic, Romania, Hungary, Turkey, Malaysia, Singapore, Qatar, UAE, Kuwait, Israel, Mexico, and Brazil. The success of Ukraine's international image for the global community can be determined by factors such as interest in the country, the desire to live there, and the social-psychological mood of the population [2]. The impact of the natural-resource potential, contributions of outstanding Ukrainians to global achievements, governance structure, cultural values, and the stability of the economy define Ukraine's image factors. Additionally, the official representatives of the political landscape who implement and execute reforms play a significant role. Improving the image can be achieved through symbols that identify a mental image of the country. Proposed symbols for Ukraine could include Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra, vyshyvanka (embroidered shirt), rushnyk (embroidered towel), a ship, borscht,
varenky (dumplings), and Lviv. After February 2022, more people became aware of Ukraine, and Ukrainian culture is now finding resonance in the hearts of both Ukrainians and citizens of other countries. Overall, it can be stated that at this stage, Ukraine has formed a relatively positive image in the eyes of the global community, but there are still some issues that need attention and improvement.

Public diplomacy of Ukraine on social media at the present stage has encountered some problems. One of the main issues is the acquisition of the social network 'Twitter' (now «X») by Elon Musk. One of the directions of Ukraine's public diplomacy is its activity on the social media platform Twitter. Social media, blogs, and similar online platforms are utilized in digital diplomacy. Among them, Twitter stands out as a crucial channel for political communication. Journalist Yeva Garder considers Twitter to be the most important among all global social networks, as it shapes the «face» of the country's foreign policy. According to communication and journalism expert Philip Seib, the use of Twitter is a diplomatic tool that perfectly aligns with the expanding political rights and opportunities accompanying the social media boom. [6]

Twitter, created in 2006 by Jack Dorsey, rapidly gained popularity worldwide. The term «Twitter diplomacy» emerged around 2011, describing the use of Twitter by heads of state, leaders of international organizations, and diplomats to align positions on international issues. As of 2018, according to Twiplomacy [6], 98% of the 193 UN member states had an official presence on the platform. Only six countries – Laos, Mauritania, Nicaragua, North Korea, Eswatini, and Turkmenistan – did not have an official presence on Twitter. Research by BCW (Burson Cohn & Wolfe) in 2018 identified 951 Twitter accounts, including 372 personal and 579 institutional accounts of heads of state, governments, and foreign ministers from 187 countries. Foreign ministries continue to expand their digital diplomatic networks, encouraging missions and ambassadors worldwide to become active on social media.

While the Ukrainian segment of Twitter might have appeared overly meme-driven or prone to intense discussions on any topic, since February 2022, the intensity of these discussions increased. The platform also became instrumental in successfully fundraising and conveying the truth about the Russian-Ukrainian war. Twitter became a significant lever for Ukrainians to influence global politicians and a conscious Western audience, which closely follows the political situation and can create and disseminate important narratives in their countries. Unlike Ukraine, where political battles usually unfold on Facebook, the Western world prefers Twitter. This phenomenon is referred to as Twitter diplomacy. It is an online form of public communication through which politicians, public figures, and government agencies engage in political discourse by publishing tweets. Its main goal is to enhance the transparency of diplomatic activities and engage citizens in political
events through tweets from the country's leadership or public figures. This form of diplomacy gained significant popularity among politicians, especially in the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan, and other developed countries. One of the most notable practitioners of Twitter diplomacy was Donald Trump, who used his Twitter account to promote his ideas and communicate not only with voters but also with politicians from other countries, often putting them in awkward positions due to the ambiguity of his formulations. Regarding Ukrainian diplomacy on this platform, it should be noted that Ukrainian politicians significantly underestimate this platform. Research by CHESNO indicates that there are several Members of Parliament who successfully develop their Twitter presence and influence international media and their audience. The most effective users include Lesya Vasylenko, Kira Rudik, and Petro Poroshenko. However, there are those who have a large number of followers on Twitter but have long abandoned their accounts. For instance, former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko has over 200,000 followers, but she has not been active on Twitter since 2014. This is why she is not included in the ranking. The CHESNO movement identified 53 inactive accounts of deputies, which is almost half of the existing pages of parliamentarians. Only every fourth member of parliament actively maintains a Twitter account. Moreover, only seven of them have over 100,000 followers. Unfortunately, Ukrainian politicians often underestimate this social network. Interestingly, the effectiveness of the platform was recognized much faster by representatives of the opposition – "Holos" and the European Solidarity party. This is explained simply – the less access to traditional diplomatic tools, the greater the need to seek alternatives. Twitter provides the opportunity to convey necessary messages to a wide audience, including Western media and colleagues, requiring only one resource – knowledge of the English language.

Most Ukrainian officials and deputies write about Russian war crimes and call on international partners to provide financial and military assistance to Ukraine. However, there is another important aspect: the presence of Ukrainian politicians on Twitter is crucial due to the platform's features.[5]

After Elon Musk's purchase of the company, restrictions were lifted from Russian government accounts that had been imposed after February 24 of the previous year. However, it was recently revealed that English-language posts related to the Russian-Ukrainian war are flagged as misinformation by algorithms. This significantly reduces the reach of these tweets and complicates the information confrontation with Russian aggression. Twitter relaxed restrictions on the accounts of Russian and Chinese state media, such as RT.com and Global Times, introduced in 2020. Analysis of Twitter's source code showed that its algorithm reduces the reach of publications related to the crisis in Ukraine.

In April of 2022, a few weeks after Russian troops entered Ukraine, Twitter announced that it would «not amplify or recommend state-affiliated media accounts
of states that restrict access to free information and are engaged in armed interstate conflict», stating that this policy immediately applied to Russian government accounts. It is noted that this means that these accounts will not be recommended for search, home timelines, and other parts of the service. However, tests conducted by The Telegraph showed that Russian government accounts are displayed at the top of some search results and appear in suggestions for other accounts. Tweets from the Russian government appeared in the algorithmically curated «For You» feed for a newly created account, even if it did not subscribe to them. [8]

Increasing the presence of Ukrainian government representatives on Twitter – both majority and opposition parties – is another tool to combat these changes. It is simple mathematics: if the Western audience is interested in the Russian-Ukrainian war, they will read tweets from either Russian politicians (both unblocked pro-government pages and the mythical «opposition») or Ukrainian ones. And for us, it is crucial that they read about Ukraine. For instance, the page of Russian «opposition figure» Alexei Navalny has over two million followers. The largest account among MPs belongs to Petro Poroshenko, who has almost one and a half million followers. This figure is explained by the fact that he was the president, and the peak development of his account coincided with the beginning of the war in 2014. [7]

The European Union has also not remained indifferent to the changes introduced by Elon Musk. The European Commission published a study showing that Elon Musk's X platform (formerly Twitter) contributed to the spread of Russian propaganda about Russia's war against Ukraine. According to the year-long study, despite voluntary commitments to take action against Russian propaganda from major social networks, including Meta, Russian disinformation against Ukraine thrived.

Summing up all the above, it becomes clear that Ukraine and the world are facing a significant problem, as disinformation continues to thrive on Elon Musk's social media platform. Additionally, Elon Musk continues to promote negative narratives about Ukraine to his multi-million audience. All of this affects the perception of our country in the global community and can have a negative impact on Ukraine's overall image.

Conclusions. The analysis of Ukraine's public diplomacy in social media, particularly the examination of its image formation in platforms such as Twitter, provides valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities facing the nation in the digital age. The establishment of the UkraineNow brand in social media signifies a proactive approach to shaping a positive and authentic narrative about Ukraine, engaging with a global audience, and countering disinformation. However, the recent acquisition of Twitter by Elon Musk introduces new complexities and potential threats to Ukraine's public diplomacy efforts. The influence of Musk, as the owner of the platform, over algorithms and content restrictions poses risks to the
dissemination of information related to the Russian-Ukrainian war. This underscores the need for continuous adaptation of diplomatic strategies to evolving technological landscapes and the importance of diversifying communication channels to mitigate potential vulnerabilities.

As Ukraine strives to navigate the dynamic environment of social media, it is imperative to address the underestimation of the platform's significance by some Ukrainian politicians. The inactive or outdated accounts of influential figures represent missed opportunities for leveraging Twitter as a tool for international influence and effective communication. In the face of active disinformation campaigns and the pivotal role of social media in shaping public opinion, the development of public diplomacy in these digital spaces remains a critical task. Emphasizing the utilization of platforms like Twitter for the dissemination of credible information, fostering a positive national image, and garnering international support should be at the forefront of Ukraine's diplomatic efforts in the evolving landscape of social media.

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