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Актуальні питання масової комунікації – рецензоване фахове наукове видання Київського національного університету імені Тараса Шевченка. Журнал публікує оригінальні, закінчені роботи за результатами досліджень із масової комунікації, що відображають сучасні тенденції розвитку галузі в Україні та світі, закономірності, процеси, структури та форми масовокомунікаційних відносин. Пріоритет надається актуальним для української та світової аудиторії дослідженням масовокомунікаційних трендів у розвитку технологій, медіа, журналістики, видавничої справи, реклами, зв'язків з громадськістю, соціальної інформатики, документознавства, бібліотекознавства тощо.

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RESEARCH ARTICLES
ДОСЛІДНИЦЬКІ СТАТТІ

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The impact of electronic textbook applications on the structure of social communications in educational publishing

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Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Ukraine

The article aims to provide a theoretical understanding of the changes in the social communication environment of educational publishing resulting from the development of electronic applications for textbooks. The relevance of this study lies in the search for a concept of a high-quality cross-media textbook. The research **methodology** is based on a socio-communicative approach. The key features of the educational publishing domain have been identified, providing grounds for considering it a social communication institution. Based on Gerhard Maletzke's mass communication model, models of communication fields for printed and cross-media textbooks have been created. Using the method of comparing communication environments, the main differences in the communication activities of educational publishers are described. The position of cross-media textbooks in the communication field is described using data obtained during five years of work and research at an educational publishing house. As a **result**, it was determined how digital channels of information delivery affect the form and content of cross-media textbooks. The changes in communication interaction between the publishing object and the audience are outlined. The communicative purpose of a cross-media textbook is substantiated. The identified communication relations will help to form a system for assessing the quality of a printed textbook with an electronic application.

Keywords: social communication approach, Maletzke's mass communication model, cross-media textbook, textbook with electronic application, educational publishing, editorial and publishing workflow

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Вплив електронних додатків до підручників на структуру соціальних комунікацій у навчальному книговидаванні

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У статті викладено теоретичне осмислення змін у соціальнокомунікаційному середовищі навчального книговидавання, що викликані появою електронних додатків до підручників. Актуальність дослідження пов'язана з пошуком концепції якісного кросмедійного підручника. Методологія дослідження побудована із застосуванням соціальнокомунікаційного підходу. Визначено головні особливості сектору навчального книговидавання, що дають підстави вважати його соціальнокомунікаційним інститутом. На основі схеми масової комунікації Гергарда Малєцького створено моделі комунікаційних полів друкованого та кросмедійного підручників. За допомогою методу порівняння комунікаційних середовищ наведено основні відмінності в комунікаційній діяльності видавництва навчальних видань. Місце кросмедійного підручника в комунікаційному полі описано із залученням даних отриманих під час п'ятирічного досвіду роботи й наукової діяльності у видавництві навчальної літератури. У результаті визначено, як цифрові канали доставлення інформації впливають на форму та зміст кросмедійного підручника. Окреслено, як змінюється комунікаційна взаємодія між видавничим об'єктом та аудиторією. Обґрунтовано комунікаційне призначення кросмедійного підручника. Виявлені комунікаційні зв'язки допоможуть сформулювати систему оцінювання якості друкованого підручника з електронним додатком.

Ключові слова: соціальнокомунікаційний підхід, модель масової комунікації Гергарда Малєцького, кросмедійний підручник, підручник з електронним додатком, навчальне книговидавання, редакційно-видавничий процес

Education around the world is becoming digital. The learning process is shifting to electronic means of information delivery, thereby reshaping the representation of knowledge. Changes are affecting the form and content of publishing products, the channels used to distribute them, and the roles of the parties involved in the social and communication process.

Whereas the Internet previously played a primarily advertising and informational role in publishing communications, promoting the advantages of publishing products to representatives of educational institutions, it is now evolving into a comprehensive channel for the distribution of educational products. Digital textbooks, educational platforms, and electronic publications are sometimes circulated without the involvement of a traditional publisher.

The year 2025 marked the emergence of a new type of educational publishing product in Ukraine's school textbook production – a printed textbook combined with an electronic supplement. Drawing parallels with cross-media products in mass media which create connections between different platforms through hyperlinks and QR codes, the term "cross-media textbook" was proposed to refer to a paper textbook with an inseparable digital component (Herasymova & Zhenchenko, 2022).

A cross-media textbook represents a new product in the field of educational publishing, specifically in the area of social communication. Since "social communication is always a systemic phenomenon" (Rizun, 2022, p. 3), the emergence of a new product should lead to changes in the system of communication, including participants, organizational forms, customs, and the official legal framework. The change in what constitutes a textbook, along with the expanded

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understanding of its concept, and the approval of requirements for the electronic supplement to a textbook raise several questions: How should this type of publication be evaluated? What standards should editors in publishing houses follow to prepare it? What principles should guide a harmonious integration of the printed and electronic sections? How can teachers be taught to use the resources of a cross-media textbook effectively?

Without a socio-communicative context, attempts to answer these questions will lack the depth that communicative processes provide. To formulate practical recommendations for ensuring the quality of textbooks that include electronic applications, it is necessary to consider textbooks not as isolated artefacts, but as products of social communication activity involving various social actors – editors, authors, teachers, students, the state, software developers, and other stakeholders in the education sector.

The aim of this study is to provide a theoretical overview of the changes in the socio-communicative environment of the educational publishing sector resulting from the creation of interactive electronic applications for textbooks. The objectives of the study are: 1) to define a model of the communication field of a cross-media textbook, or a printed textbook with an electronic application; 2) to analyze a cross-media textbook as a product of social communication activity by answering the following questions:

A. How do the channels of information delivery influence the form and content of a cross-media textbook?

B. How does the interaction between the cross-media textbook and its recipient unfold during information delivery and processing?

C. What effect does the publisher seek to achieve on the audience when creating a cross-media textbook?

Completing these tasks will help determine the intended purpose of a cross-media textbook in the social communication environment, justify the requirements for the form and content of a textbook with an interactive electronic application, and clarify the nature of cross-media links in this type of publication.

Method

To clearly observe the transformations in the editorial and publishing process resulting from the transition to cross-media textbook production, a comparative method was employed. The study compared communication models for traditional and cross-media publishing products. For this purpose, Gerhard Maletzke's communication model (1963) was selected and adapted 1) to the publishing process, where the communication product is a monomedia paper textbook, and 2) to the process where the communication product is a paper textbook with an electronic supplement. A schematic representation of these processes and subjects of communication allowed for a comparison of the two models, illustrating the cross-media textbook as a product of social and communication activity within the editorial and publishing process.

The socio-communicative approach enables an analysis of the editorial and publishing activities of educational literature publishers "in the context of social interaction between social institutions, means and social roles" (Rizun, 2016, p. 289). To trace the communication links that influence the stages of the edit-publishing process and the communication product itself, the study attempts to prove that educational publishing can be regarded as a social communication institution. Data on the interaction between publishers and participants in the textbook production process, along with external influences, were gathered through an analysis of scientific sources and supported by the author's five years of experience working at the educational literature publishing house "Ukrainian Educational Publishing Center Orion".

Working at the publishing house provided insight into the internal processes of the organization and served as a source of empirical observations. Key informants included editors and managers, the majority of whom had prior experience at the state publishing house "Osvita". Given



that the publishing communities within the school education book sector are often resistant to field research, this “internal” perspective on publishing practices proves to be especially valuable for academic research. The author recognized the risk of seeing social reality solely through the lens of key informants. Therefore, a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods was employed to substantiate the conclusions and critically evaluate the collected data.

In this study, the socio-communicative approach and understanding of the socio-communicative environment draw upon the scientific works of Volodymyr Rizun (Rizun, 2017; Rizun, 2022). This approach was employed by Svitlana Fiialka to study educational literature (Fiialka, 2019), while Olga Trischuk (Trischuk, 2018) and Emilia Ogar (Ogar, 2016) utilized it to examine editorial and publishing processes within publishing houses.

Results and Discussion

Digitalization and global changes in education have highlighted the complexity of the textbook production system. In December 2015, a conference organized by the German Research Foundation (DFG) initiated an international dialogue on how the production of educational materials is evolving in the digital age (Sammler et al., 2016). The position paper, which reflects the results of the discussion, analyzes the production practices of creating educational media from the perspectives of four stakeholders: authors, the state and interest groups, political economy and business models, and changes in technology, particularly in the media sector. The authors' viewpoints, supported by scholarly sources, highlight the non-standard and unique complexity of the communication model involved in producing textbooks and educational content.

Researchers first examine the concept of a “broken market” (Sammler et al., 2016, p. 16). The argument is that the school textbook market has a flawed sales logic, where manufacturers and suppliers of publishing products do not have direct access to the end consumers – students and their parents. To reach these readers, publishers must convince teachers – another vital audience – of the quality of their products, so that they, as intermediaries, choose the right textbooks for their students. This structure of the communication process adds another mediator, another filter through which the communication product passes, layering the means of communication influence.

In addition, “the political governance of textbook production through formal approval procedures was repeatedly criticized by textbook publishers as hindering their ability to predict potential economic profitability, an aspect that could be dramatically improved by including state actors in planning processes from an early stage” (Sammler et al., 2016, p. 16). Similarly, in Ukraine, regulations governing the competitive selection of textbooks, requirements for the quality of educational materials, and rules for the preparation and selection of quality assessment experts affect not only publishers but other stakeholders too. To a certain extent, they shape the opinions of teachers, authors, and society at large.

The aforementioned German researchers also regard the role of the author of a textbook or other educational media as unconventional. “Textbooks give a voice not so much to their author(s) as to the owner of the intellectual property they contain; the textbook's discourse is spoken by an unknown entity, sometimes an institution, which is more-or-less authorized by society” (Sammler et al., 2016, p. 6).

John B. Thompson's theory of “publishing fields”, further developed by Marina Zhenchenko, allows us to view the educational book publishing sector not as a part of the publishing industry, but as a distinct field with its own agents of action and influence, specific interrelationships, and “a logic determined by established traditions and historically formed publishing practices, as well as the functional purpose of the products being created” (Zhenchenko, 2018). The researcher of transformations in the publishing industry notes that each field is undergoing its own, sometimes unique, transformations.



The field of educational publishing is notable for the high degree of institutionalization and technologization of its communication and production processes, as well as the leading role of publishing in the educational process. Jocelyn Hargrave, who holds a PhD in publishing with 25 years of experience in the educational publishing industry (including Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press, and Cengage Learning), presents several arguments in favor of viewing educational publishing as a distinct sphere within the publishing industry. If summarized, the researcher states that educational publishing operates through distinct value and supply chains. Publishers commission content in accordance with official curricula, adhering to strict editorial standards that prioritize both educational accuracy and market viability. Profitability relies on backlists and curriculum-driven new editions, while marketing is mediated through teachers and academics rather than directed at end-users (Hargrave, 2014, p. 36).

Educational book publishing and pedagogy are so intertwined that, in today's reality, most of the publishing team may consist of professionals with pedagogical background who have experience teaching in schools. Consequently, editors at educational publishing houses often assume the role of education experts, collaborating as co-authors on educational programs, textbooks, and workbooks. Notable examples include Iryna Krasutska, the editor-in-chief at the Ukrainian Educational Publishing Centre "Orion," who co-authored publications for primary schools in the Ukrainian language and reading course, and Olga Korshunova from the publishing house "Osvita," the author of educational programs, textbooks, and workbooks in computer science.

Educational publishing as a social communication institution

Examining the educational publishing sector from the perspective of a socio-communicative approach involves analyzing the activities of educational publishers "in the context of the production of this subject area by socio-communicative institutions and its functioning in society, its impact on society, and the study of society's response to the subject area" (Rizun, 2016, p. 289).

Educational publishing operates within the social institution of education. The publishing process, which specializes in the production of educational materials, fulfils a communicative function, organizing the public exchange of knowledge through its products. When viewed as a social and communicative institution, publishing consists of various entities (organizations, publishers, professional communities, the state, and users), means (media, technologies, and channels), and norms (laws, ethics, and standards), all working together to fulfill a socially significant function: convey meaning. Within this framework, educational publishing can be seen as a subsystem or subordinate institution.

Nevertheless, when comparing the regulatory framework and communication network system that support the sustainable organization of educational book publishing with other types of publishing activities, educational book publishing can be regarded as a separate socio-communicative institution. The system of social interaction in educational book publishing involves publishers, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, its administrative bodies (such as the Institute of Education Content Modernization, the Ukrainian Institute of Education Development), printing companies, educational institutions, and their representatives (teachers, methodologists, and directors), as well as end users (students and parents). Educational publishing is integrated into the educational system and is subordinate to the Ministry of Education and Science. It also has its own standardized genres developed within the Ukrainian education system. The social communication institution of educational publishing regulates communication in the field of education and science. Its network enables the creation of various types of educational publishing products. "This network is technological. Specific social institutions are responsible for its functioning. The purpose of social institutions is to provide people with certain information of social content, i.e., socially significant knowledge that can be used by people to satisfy their needs" (Rizun, 2011, p. 311).



Social communication within the education system takes place in several "technological systems of spiritual unity among people: the publishing network, the Internet, and the documentation system" (Rizun, 2022, p. 3). In other words, it is not only educational publishing that provides the entire communication process, even though it is the leading system for providing students and teachers with educational products. Instead, the documentation system plays an intermediary role, serving as a channel of communication between publishers and the Ministry of Education and Science, along with its various administrative bodies.

Communication models for creating printed and cross-media textbooks

In traditional textbook creation, the nature of connections between the participants in communication is unconventional (for example, communication and authority between the author and editor, students and teachers, and students and publishers) and is further complicated by the direct influence of various external actors within the system.

In cross-media textbook production, the usual communication process is augmented by electronic media, which includes stakeholders such as companies that create digital content, software developers, and copyright holders and its own patterns of communicative interaction. Consequently, the communication process for cross-media textbook production cannot be linear.

To ensure that important elements and communication links are not overlooked, the cross-media textbook creation framework was developed based on the traditional model used for paper textbook creation. In search for a foundational structure for the communication process, attention was drawn to Gerhard Maletzke's model from 1963. The choice of this model is justified by two key factors:

- the creation of a textbook is highly dependent on communicators who belong to different communication institutions and on their mutual perception;
- the media —as the intermediary, in this case, the publishing house—functions more as a "relay, and not as an autonomous communicator with own initiative and message" (Ioniță & PĂSTAE, 2017, p. 51).

Maletzke's model is based on Harold Lasswell's communication model from 1948, which consists of five elements: sender, message, medium, receiver, and effect. Maletzke excluded the effect element from his structure because "he believed this represents the fundamental issue in mass communication" (Ioniță & PĂSTAE, 2017, p. 49). Additionally, he applied the "cybernetic category of interdependence" to his model, which encompasses two principles: 1. Parameters control, correct and adjust each other; 2. The study of specific variables is relevant only if you consider the functioning of the entire system" (Ioniță & PĂSTAE, 2017, p. 49).

Unlike Lasswell, Maletzke refers to the sender as a communicator. His view of publishing as "a filter that can alter information to various degrees" seems methodologically significant for constructing a model of publishing communication (Ioniță & PĂSTAE, 2017, p. 50): the layout of a printed textbook (especially the adaptation of the author's material to a multimedia format) that complies with all regulatory and customary filters significantly reformats the author's original. According to Maletzke, "a communicator is that entity which generates the content and the form of the public message depending on social, cultural and psychological factors" (Ioniță & PĂSTAE, 2017, p. 50). At the same time, the intended form of the medium influences the content of the message. In textbook creation, the standards and criteria for expert evaluation of content, along with testing conclusions, often dictate the textbook's content. Conversely, the publisher influences the form, as clearly demonstrated in the creation of the concept of a cross-media textbook. Although the number of pages, format, paper, and printing options also impose restrictions on the author's ideas.

Roland Burkart adapted Maletsky's model for digital communication but did not include the Internet as a linear connection. In his model, the Internet functions as an intermediary that structures messages, influencing their form and content. Burkart's model assumes that "the digital



communication processes take place via a technological medium and the messages are not filtered by any agent" (Ioniță & PĂSTAE, 2017, p. 53). However, for textbooks – whether electronic or cross-media – and in the digital environment, there are numerous filters that shape the final product in various ways. The nature of the medium's control over interactive relationships remains unclear in this model, especially since digital communication allows participants to alter their roles.

The communication field model of a printed textbook

Based on Maletzke's model, a communication model of traditional textbook production was initially created, where the transmitter is a printed textbook (Figure 1). In this model, the structural elements of the communication process are the author, content, publisher, paper textbook, teacher, and children. The publisher does not perform the functions of a transmitter, as it does not interact directly with the audience; rather, it ensures the materialization and physical transmission of the message, i.e., it performs the infrastructural role of a participant. The textbook acts as a medium for the transmission of knowledge. The position of the transmitter emphasizes the independence of the textbook as a communication subject – it is not only a product but also a transmitter that operates independently from the user's viewpoint.

In the communication scheme we propose, unlike Maletzke's scheme, a filter for competitive textbook selection appears, which separates the transmitter from the end consumers. The filter in this scheme resembles a sieve wall, reflecting the competitive processes that impact the product from the author's initial concept through to the final stage of producing the original publishing layout. Competitive selection acts as a barrier, allowing only certain textbooks to reach the target audience.

Our diagram also has two audience groups: teachers and children. Children are excluded from direct communication channels, as all communication with the author regarding the educational product is conducted by the teacher. However, it is impossible to completely exclude students from the communication process, as all requirements for the textbook and its design must take into account the comprehension abilities of children at specific age levels. The communication diagram does not include parents at all, although it is generally accepted that they are responsible for the purchasing and, accordingly, the consumer capacity of children. However, in traditional textbook creation practices, the influence of parents is secondary and manifested through public opinion (Figure 1).

The communication field model of a cross-media textbook

The primary difference between the communicative field of a cross-media textbook and that of a printed textbook lies in the publisher's and the textbook's stronger position, as they engage in a wider range of communicative interactions and influence more factors. A communication product can be the result of the activities not only of the author and publisher, as in the traditional model, but also of a multimedia publishing partner, IT developers of state or commercial platforms, state platforms (e.g., the All-Ukrainian Online School), etc. However, despite the participation of all these actors in the textbook creation process, none possess the same level of influence as the publisher. Editors at the publishing house set the rules and requirements for the text, images, and multimedia design of the content (Figure 2).

In cross-media production, when developing an application as a supplement to a traditional textbook, the publisher can now communicate directly with teachers, children, and parents (all three elements of the audience are included in the scheme) without the author's mediation. Editors are increasingly involved in developing model curricula and coordinating groups of authors for further textbook creation. The publisher defines the concept of the textbook, including an electronic supplement, and provides teachers, students, and parents with instructions on how to work with the platform and its individual technological components. Editors moderate meetings between authors and teachers, talking about textbooks, manuals, and digital learning platforms. In addition to such direct communication with the audience, publishers incorporate electronic feedback forms

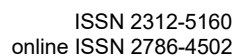
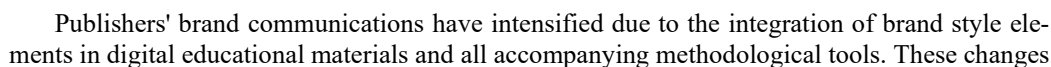


Figure 1
The communication field model of a printed textbook





in communicative activity empower publishers to communicate independently, regardless of the authority of the authors.

In addition, publishers exert more influence over authors due to their credibility. In the era of printed textbooks, authors might have chosen a publisher based on reputation, established connections, the atmosphere within the publishing team, and the author's fee. In cross-media production, however, these factors may be supplemented by the publisher's technological capacity to implement the author's idea and the publisher's significance as a stakeholder in the textbook creation process particularly concerning government agencies. After all, publishers have helped shape the requirements for electronic interactive applications and can advocate for their interests, influencing regulations during the implementation of electronic applications in public procurement.

The role of children in cross-media production is also growing. As children interact with interactive elements, their activities can be tracked and recorded. The ability to personalize learning paths according to specific student outcomes significantly enhances the child's engagement with the publisher. In addition, children's feedback can be directed to both the transmitter – the cross-media textbook – and the publisher. Therefore, publishers who have created technological platforms and websites for electronic applications must communicate directly with the end consumer regarding product quality.

We also included parents as a distinct element in the communication model for the production of a cross-media textbook. After all, some educational platforms provide for the creation of parent accounts, enabling parents to monitor their children's learning, pay for educational services, and communicate with teachers.

Changes in the social communication environment of the educational publishing sector

Different communication channels influence both the perception and structure of information. For example, if a printed book in the form of a codex is used as a channel for delivering information in a textbook, the structure will be clear, and the content will be linear. Such a channel does not promote communication between the student and the teacher to the same extent as multimedia materials. It is more oriented towards in-depth reading. The ability to convey information through a single object, which is a characteristic of the entire teaching and methodological complex, since didactic materials are selected for it — makes the product an authoritative source of knowledge.

Authors Anna-Lena Kemp and Åke Grönlund note that "not long ago, representations of a subject in textbooks were held as objective mirrors of reality, enclosed and explicated by scientists in print or other symbols" (Kempe & Grönlund, 2019, p. 2916). In other words, the knowledge in a textbook reflects the interpretations of its authors, making it resistant to transformation, and discouraging the construction of individual knowledge. The scholars further state: "By using endorsed artifacts like textbooks in schools, knowledge becomes standardized, and unified into a single voice, the recognized view of the subject matter" (Kempe & Grönlund, 2019, p. 2916).

With the wide variety of media formats available today, cross-media textbooks no longer impose a single authorial version of knowledge. Since in cross-media formats the content of electronic and print media is complementary and inseparable, the main challenge for publishers lies in how to connect the content of both media through factors such as layout, content, and compositional techniques. In a cross-media textbook, information is presented in a mosaic form, unless the printed material is designed to deliver theoretical content and the electronic format aims to reinforce it.

Different types of cross-media publications can be designed differently based on how the electronic content is organized. Their form depends significantly on the bandwidth of the software or device. Organizing additional material on a platform—such as a separate website or software application—requires the publisher to combine the design concepts of both the printed textbook and the electronic application. In addition to the design connection between these two components, all electronic applications hosted on the platform must be interlinked. Since the learning platform is



capable of creating a virtual environment separate from the physical classroom, the information delivery channel must provide functionality for a hypertextual non-linear structure. Users should be able to navigate through the content in any order using well-designed navigation elements.

The platform as a well-organized space with a specific purpose—distinct from a communication platform or online store, like those that house a variety of multimedia resources on a publisher's website, allows for the tracking of interactivity and user actions. The ability to communicate with users is a crucial consideration when developing a platform's structure. If the platform's functionality includes social interaction and personalized algorithms, its format and content must also align with these requirements.

Product and communication: interaction in the socio-communicative space of education

In the study of the phenomenon of collaborative digital textbooks in Sweden, researchers Kempe and Grönlund explain that new educational developments should be perceived not only as effective learning tools but also as "a complex socially evolved vehicle" (Kempe, & Grönlund, 2019, p. 2915). They emphasize that "every educational instrument is shaped by different historical notions of 'teaching', 'learning', and 'knowledge', as well as the 'activities' that are supposed to result in 'learning'" (Kempe & Grönlund, 2019, p. 2915). According to Squires and Price, a socio-constructivist perspective on knowledge facilitates the identification of fundamental learning questions that should be incorporated into software evaluation (Squires & Preece, 1999).

The printed textbook was intended to "transmit" knowledge which in the printed era was viewed as unanimous and canonical. The idea behind the publication was not to encourage teachers or students to construct their own knowledge based on the material provided. Instead, students were required to "memorize" the printed content and accurately reproduce generally accepted concepts of the world. As stated by Kempe and Grönlund (2019), "the teacher, on the other hand, has to perform the role of a gatekeeper in order to protect the norms conveyed in the textbooks and assess students' achievements according to these norms" (as cited in Fleck 1979; Banks 1993; Pingel 2010; Kress and Selander 2012; Selander 2016; Åberg and Åkerfeldt 2017).

Richard Mayer, the developer of the multimedia learning theory, adopts a constructivist view of learning, in which multimedia are not simply systems for delivering information, but rather "cognitive tools for constructing knowledge" (Mayer, 2020, p. 14). The researcher challenges the idea of learning as "knowledge transmission" by asserting that "students are not empty vessels" (Mayer, 2020, p. 16). Mayer's cognitive theory of multimedia learning suggests that information processing occurs through the active participation of the recipient. Consequently, the learner must select and organize material, build connections, organize information, and synthesize it with their prior knowledge.

Mayer describes multimedia learning as a meaning-making activity, where the learner attempts to construct their own understanding—individual knowledge—a personal representation of the information presented. The learner's responsibility is to create their own meaning while the teacher's role is to facilitate the process of meaning-making. Additionally, the multimedia format of knowledge presentation should "provide guidance for how to process the presented information" (Mayer, 2020, p. 17). The researcher explains such moderation by highlighting the main points, thought organization, and connecting new information with past experiences.

The introduction of electronic materials in the classroom, which are not presented in a linear, monolithic format, has transformed students' role from passive consumers of information to its producers. The digital tools that an electronic application can provide students with offer more opportunities for creativity and help them build their own understanding of accepted concepts or ideas. For example, modern programs enable students to create their own melodies, program algorithms, and model the environment; immersion techniques are particularly effective with electronic systems.



In Italy, students even participate in the creation of textbooks. "The aim is to engage students in a process of active construction of knowledge" (Anichini, Parigi & Chipa, 2017, p. 104). An article by Italian researchers states that "teachers who choose this kind of practice claim that auto-production supports and promotes teamwork, encourages discussion and planning, thus providing a dynamic environment for cognitive and social growth of students" (Anichini, Parigi & Chipa, 2017, p. 104).

Therefore, the communicator's work with a cross-media textbook involves constructing their own knowledge based on the diversity of resources and activities offered by multimedia.

The desired effect of using the product

Among the numerous effects of multimedia materials—such as encouraging learning, enhancing responses, providing synchronous feedback, and allowing for personalization, their main function, in our opinion, is to assist the cognitive process. This approach to the goals of social communication activities in creating cross-media textbooks is learner-centered and focuses on the learner rather than on the technology used.

Mayer develops a learner-centered approach to creating new educational products based on the ideas of Norman and Landauer. Norman criticizes scientific and technological innovations that stem from a machine-centered approach to machine design, asserting that such a focus on technology does not support human cognitive processes; rather, it hinders and disrupts them. Landauer identified two phases of technology implementation: the first is automation, and the second is augmentation. At the augmentation stage multimedia learning technologies are developed as computer systems are intended to augment human abilities to learn new things (Mayer, 2020, pp. 13–14).

If the goal of creating a cross-media textbook is to assist students in the learning process, then, according to Mayer, research questions should focus on the relationship between design advantages or features and information processing. The most productive research question in this area would be: "How can we adapt multimedia to enhance human learning?" (Mayer, 2020, p. 13).

Another goal lies in the realm of communication. The hybrid format of the cross-media publishing project facilitates a smoother transition in the roles of teachers and students. While participants in the learning process continue to use the familiar artefact – the printed book – electronic content can gradually take on the role of immersing participants in more active communication interactions, thereby enhancing cognitive processes and aiding in the construction of individual knowledge.

The cross-media textbook presents knowledge in various multimedia formats. It is no longer just a presentation of information through the author's lens, but an opportunity to reconstruct an event, reproduce direct speech, and illustrate the actual course of a chemical or physical process. Such representations of facts encourage students to engage in more discussions with their peers, express their opinions, and stimulate their imagination. They aim to create favorable conditions for communication during lessons: "The learner is given a more active role in processing the content by making their own representations together with peers and not just remembering facts individually" (Kempe & Grönlund, 2019, as cited in Selander and Skjelbred, 2004; Selander and Kress, 2010; Ellis et al., 2011).

Conclusions

Changing the main product for the educational process affects the connections and roles of social actors within the social communication environment. With the advent of electronic applications as a mandatory component of printed textbooks, the approach to representing knowledge is changing, as are the roles of participants in the educational process and their activities concerning the new product and the anticipated effects of the socio-communicative product.

Studying the phenomenon of collaborative digital textbooks in Sweden, researchers noted that "transforming the traditional printed textbook into a collaborative digital textbook consequently



involves much more than a simple renaming of a signifier; it involves a reinterpretation of meaning, functions in school and the future but these questions are seldom addressed concerning cDTB in the literature that we found" (Kempe & Grönlund, 2019, as cited in Horsley and Martin, 2015; Rodríguez et al., 2015).

A comparison between two models of communication in textbooks – monomedia print and cross-media – highlights the increasing role of intermediaries in the transmission of information within cross-media production. A printed textbook with an electronic supplement also becomes communicatively tied to the end consumer, providing the publisher with additional tools to influence them. The emergence of a cross-media product generally makes the publisher visible in the market.

Digital products create technological incentives for the audience. By downloading an app that includes all the textbooks from a single publisher, consumers have more motivation to choose that provider. Digital communication erases time boundaries and weakens the barrier effect of channels, thereby shortening the distance between the publisher and children, parents, and teachers, making the relationship more synchronous. Even the ability to switch from the app's electronic content to the publisher's website with a single click increases the potential for building a stronger publisher brand and improving its positioning in the eyes of the audience.

The possibilities of digital formats and electronic channels of information delivery allow authors and publishers to present knowledge in textbooks in a mosaic-like manner, reducing the one-dimensionality of information interpretation. The digital environment serves as a powerful formative factor: an author's story can be transformed into video, audio, animations, a comic strip, or a game, thereby changing the author's communication message and intended media effects in accordance with the publisher's vision and the audience's needs.

However, with the diversity of media formats for presenting content, it is essential to apply a learner-centered approach and utilize them to maintain a beneficial cognitive load while minimizing unnecessary burden. The choice of a specific content format should be justified by the task the author sets in each block of information. Employees of publishing organizations, and editors in particular, can guide authors in choosing appropriate forms of knowledge representation in textbooks.

The technical characteristics of devices and the choice of technology for presenting information in electronic applications influence the form and content of a cross-media publication. Software requirements must align with the publication's desired communication objectives.

The concept of a cross-media educational product depends more on the requests and reactions of children, parents, and teachers than that of a traditional paper textbook. In the field of cross-media communication, the child's role as a recipient becomes more pronounced. Through electronic technologies, publishers can receive direct feedback from students and analyze their behavior patterns. At the same time, the development of requirements and methodologies for evaluating textbooks with electronic applications should take into account the concept of knowledge construction by students as embedded in multimedia technologies.

The changes outlined in the structure of social communications within educational publishing serve as a fundamental prerequisite for addressing practical questions related to the development of electronic applications for textbooks. To create a system for evaluating cross-media products and methodologies for training teachers and publishing editors, it is necessary to understand the object of social communication – its structure, functions, interrelationships, and impact on communication participants.

Declaration of generative artificial intelligence and technologies using artificial intelligence in the writing process. During the preparation of this article, the author used AI tools only as aids in preparing the manuscript, in particular for checking grammar and style — Grammarly, translating individual formulations into English — DeepL.



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DISCUSSIONS
ДИСКУСІЇ ТА ОБГОВОРЕННЯ

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Are investigative centres independent?

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Investigative journalism has brought both advantages and challenges for journalism in Malawi. As a developing country, Malawi has benefited immensely from this type of journalism. Research, however, has shown that centres for journalism have revealed that corruption exists within the media itself. The study has also demonstrated that the centres lack financial independence, although they maintain editorial independence. As a result, these centres can only carry out work that does not require significant funding. The study focused on two investigative journalism centres in Malawi: the Centre for Investigative Journalism and the Platform for Investigative Journalism. Purposive sampling was used to choose the respondent centres. The study used a qualitative approach that included semi-structured interviews. The study was guided by the research question: To what extent are investigative journalism centres independent? The findings revealed that journalists at these investigative centres applied Media Richness Theory and Framing Theory in their work. The study also found that some institutions receive support, while others do not hamper the process of investigative journalism. The study also revealed that governments and security agents have minimal influence over how information is gathered. It is hoped that this study will be used by media institutions around the world to develop their journalistic practices.

Keywords: investigative journalism, Malawi, Africa, Platform for Investigative Journalism, Centre for Investigative Journalism

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Чи є розслідувальні центри незалежними?

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Розслідувальна журналістика принесла журналістиці в Малаві як переваги, так і виклики. Як країна, що розвивається, Малаві отримала величезну користь від цього виду журналістики. Однак дослідження показали, що центри журналістики виявили наявність корупції в самих ЗМІ. Дослідження також продемонструвало, що центрам бракує фінансової незалежності, хоча вони зберігають редакційну незалежність. Як результат, ці центри можуть виконувати лише ту роботу, яка не потребує значного фінансування. Дослідження зосереджувалося на двох центрах розслідувальної журналістики в Малаві: Центрі розслідувальної журналістики та Платформі розслідувальної журналістики. Для вибору центрів-респондентів використовувалася цілеспрямована вибірка. У дослідженні використовувався якісний підхід, що включав напівструктуровані інтерв'ю. Дослідження керувалося дослідницьким питанням: якою мірою центри розслідувальної журналістики є незалежними? Результати показали, що журналісти цих розслідувальних центрів застосовували у своїй роботі Теорію медіа-багатства та Теорію фреймінгу. Дослідження також показало, що деякі установи отримують підтримку, тоді як інші не перешкоджають процесу розслідувальної журналістики. Дослідження також показало, що уряди та агенти безпеки мають мінімальний вплив на те, як збирається інформація. Сподіваємося, що це дослідження буде використано медіа-установами по всьому світу для розвитку своєї журналістської практики.

Ключові слова: журналістські розслідування, Малаві, Африка, Платформа журналістських розслідувань, Центр журналістських розслідувань

There are three metaphors that describe the media's role. The first metaphor is that of the mirror, where the community sees itself and corrects itself; second, of the watchdog, which starts to bark to make noise when leaders in power become corrupt, and the last one is of the marketplace of ideas, where even the oppressed and the less privileged get heard (Ziba:27; Craft and Davis, 2013). In this context, journalism is regarded as the fourth estate (Powe, 1992) because it serves as an institution that monitors governmental power (Alexander, 2015). This role is entrusted to the media by the people of a nation to ensure balances and checks on power. In that way, it introduces an accountability paradigm.

Democracy came to Malawi in 1994 with the establishment of multiparty democracy. Since then, the country has seen the birth of many radio stations and newspapers, although most of the newspapers have come and gone. While democracy was born in Malawi in 1994 and subsequently nurtured, the nation has had no centre for investigative journalism until the establishment of The Centre for Investigative Journalism of Malawi (CIJ) in 2013, aimed at encouraging ethical, impactful, and unique reporting (CIJM, 2018) and the Platform for Investigative Journalism in 2019 (PIJ, 2019) which has contributed immensely to exposing issues politicians had buried. Even in Southern Africa, the first centre that was dedicated to investigative journalism opened in South Africa in 2010, sixteen years after democracy was established there (Bizcommunity, 2010). This does not mean that there was no journalistic practice during this time, as some newspapers were indeed seeking out information, risking their lives.

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The author invites discussion of the topic and awaits comments from readers. Taking into account the comments, the author can prepare the manuscript of the article for review and publication as a scientific article.

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In a democratic setting where people are free from oppressive governance, policymakers are so relaxed that they steal from the public purse. It is at this juncture that investigative journalism can act as a credible and effective watchdog, thereby boosting the credibility of the press (Colonel, 2022). For this reason, the Malawian population has welcomed the establishment of these two media institutions.

This paper investigates the extent to which these investigative institutions are independent. It also explores the extent to which these institutions, known as investigative centres, have in fact been able to uncover corruption and contribute to saving money for development. These questions are crucial; if not answered, these institutions risk being perceived as "white elephants" within the field of journalism in Malawi today.

Furthermore, this paper aims to advance more literature on investigative journalism that can be used by scholars around the world to promote the growth of investigative practices and cultivate a culture of investigations among journalists.

Literature review

It has been reported that the Global Journalism Conference has 235 member organizations, and ten percent of those are in Sub-Saharan Africa. Among the 22, twelve are in Southern Africa, which is a significant development. However, it is important to note that not all these organizations serve the same functions. Some are geared toward training journalists, while a few do the donkey work of investigative journalism, leading to a decline in the number of foot soldiers in journalism. According to Majoni (2022:1), "a few of these member hubs in Southern Africa—four of them—are, strictly, not investigative centres because they do not in themselves produce content. Rather, they offer support efforts related to investigative journalism. This support includes the provision of small grants, training, and mentorship as well as research. Because of this, the distinction between purely investigative centres and support centres tends to be blurred, considering that the latter, in some cases, contribute directly and indirectly to the production of investigative news content through interventions like mentorship." This blurredness creates a gap on its own as the number of investigative reporters decreases when organizations focus only on training others. However, to overcome this drawback, journalists can collaborate online with other reporters to maintain information continuity. This can lead to the adoption of a global perspective, enriching local, regional, and national stories with information that could have been difficult to get due to a lack of investigative reporters (Berglez, 2013).

Investigative journalism has several dependent variables that must be explored. This study examines these independent variables to gain insight into the problems investigative journalism faces. The first variable is financial issues.

Financial issues

One of the drawbacks of investigative journalism is its high cost, although the future of journalism is largely dependent on it. This is corroborated by the saying of Njoki Chege, who coined the words that "Good journalism does not come cheap" (Kenya, 2022). The most powerful journalism breakthrough is always expensive. A good example is the story in the globe's Pulitzer winning investigation of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church in which there was a 40-year cover, published in January 2002. It took eight months of reporting and major litigation before a single word appeared in print... the overall cost of this effort was probably more than \$1 million in staff salaries and tens of thousands of dollars in legal costs (Houston, 2010:52). This point is further supported by Clement et al. (2018:4) and Ettema & Glaser (1998). Those who argue that investigative journalism is costly highlight that it requires more resources than daily journalism. This includes acquiring information, such as documents and databases; analyzing and verifying that information; and discussing findings before producing the initial draft. Often, legal examination and assistance are necessary.



It should also be noted that even in collaboration on investigations to reduce costs (Berglez, 2013), not all issues can be shared with other journalists due to classified information. Also, some journalists may pass information to people who are being investigated. This creates a gap in research.

Although journalism is expensive, it yields results that are beneficial to society, particularly in combating corruption. Hamilton (2016), as cited by Hume and Abbot (2017:4), concluded that for every dollar invested in an investigative story in the USA, society can reap over \$100 in benefits. This potential of investigative journalism has attracted attention from governments around the world. For instance, the United States Department Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor allocated between \$3 and \$5 million in 2016 to the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project and Transparency International for a three-year project aimed at advancing investigative anti-corruption journalism, which included training and support. Another example of increased US donor interest is USAID's recent five-year \$6 million media development project in Moldova, which had a major focus on investigative journalism and anti-corruption activities (Hume and Abbot, 2017:4).

However, one should say that if funds are mismanaged by journalists, it can lead to a lack of confidence, eroding donor trust in media institutions. Thus, in this context, the next vital variable is accountability.

Accountability

According to McQuail (2005: 207), "media accountability is a voluntary or involuntary process by which the media answers directly or indirectly to their society for the quality and/or consequences of publication". On the other hand, Claude-Jean Bertrand defines media accountability "as any non-State means of making media responsible towards the public" (2000: 108). Both definitions are relevant to this study.

There have been growing calls by media scholars to hold mass media accountable (Plaisance, 2000) due to the important role the media plays in the prevention of corruption. One of the significant concerns within investigative journalism is the lack of accountability. Because of the fundamental role of news media in a democratic society, it is of paramount importance for the media to maintain accountability at all times. In this spirit the 2021 Media and Democracy Monitor (MDM) was conducted. The results were alarming as very few media organisations demonstrated a comprehensive commitment to the fundamental ethical elements of accountability and transparency. Teams of researchers in 18 countries investigated the performance of leading news media regarding media accountability for the 2021 MDM project (Trappel & Tomaz, 2021b, 2021c). The overall picture left a lot to be desired (Barbara et al. 2022; 232). In this context, a report by Global Investigative Journalism Network Executive Director David E. Kaplan highlighted in his 2013 survey for the Center for International Media Assistance, "Global Investigative Journalism: Strategies for Support" (CIMA, 2013), concluded that only 2% of the nearly \$500 million spent annually on international media assistance went to investigative journalism. Kaplan expressed concern that donors might be more interested in exciting new digital and data tools, potentially failing to support systematic investigative reporting, which also requires a human element to uncover secrets using forensic techniques and provide meaning and context (Hume and Abbot, 2017:4).

This evidence underscores the need to implement accountability not only within organisations outside the media but also within the media itself, as it acts as a watchdog for society. As such, it acts as salt and light for the common person. Such gaps, therefore, need to be filled to ensure public trust.

Even so, there have been instances in the media where journalists have been harassed or intimidated by perpetrators who do not want journalists to write about them. The next variable, therefore, to discuss will be the harassment and intimidation of journalists.



Violence and intimidation of journalists

Organisations that monitor journalists, such as the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and Reporters Without Borders (RSF), have established that violence against practicing journalists has been on the rise and continues to escalate around the world. These institutions say journalists are being killed, while others are kidnapped, injured, or threatened for the investigative work they do, their investigations (Le Cam et al. 2021)

The United Nations states that every four days a journalist is killed in connection with their work. So far, in 2025, 72 media workers have died, following 125 journalists in 2024. The aim of this violence, according to Ferragamo (2025), is to stifle independent reporting.

Moreover, Amnesty International reports that in East and Southern Africa, governments are using national security laws that include counter-terrorism and cybersecurity legislation to undermine the right to freedom of expression, thereby punishing as well as suppressing media freedom. This context contributed to the arrest of Macmillan Mhone, who was charged with publishing news likely to cause fear and alarm (VOA, 2024). Additionally, Gregory Gondwe went into hiding following threats of arrest due to his coverage of corruption in the Malawi army (CPJ, 2024).

When politicians pursue the violence discourse against journalists by using anti-media rhetoric, the more likely it is to increase journalists' vulnerability to attacks and the more likely it is for non-state actors to attack journalists. The intimidation and violent discourse signal to both non-state and state actors that they can do anything to journalists without being arrested (Mazzaro, 2023)

Not surprisingly, a study by Dorff et al. (2023) found that as violence against journalists increases, the specificity of news stories decreases.

There is antagonism and a thin line between the violence perpetrated against journalists and the efforts to safeguard the freedom of the press.

A significant gap exists in trying to protect investigative journalists to do their jobs properly, and the violence from state and non-state actors. Filling this gap is essential to ensure that investigative journalism can thrive in a nation.

Theoretical Framework

The study uses two theories: Media Richness Theory and Framing Theory.

Media Richness Theory

Media Richness Theory (MRT) is a framework used to evaluate messages based on the way they are conveyed with richness through various channels, which include cues, facial expressions, body language, and vocal tone, among others.

The architects of this theory are Daft and Lengel (1986), who posited that ambiguous messages can be better explained through richer media. Authors benefit from fewer misrepresentations and a more comprehensive understanding of messages.

In the context of this study, investigative journalism adds colour to the language of journalism. Issues are better explained and articulated using investigative techniques. The actions of individuals, as well as deeds, are thoroughly investigated, and evidence is brought forward to clarify the meanings behind those actions. Investigative journalism loudly conveys to the public the meaning of accountability as well as freedom of speech and expression. For instance, investigative journalism can expose and explain how public money has been used, who used it, and in what manner. That way, it gives cues to whether money was appropriately utilized or misappropriated.



Framing Theory

Framing Theory examines how messages are presented, portrayed, or framed (Chong and Druckman, 2007). It aims to influence an individual's behavior, enticing them to take action. This is achieved by, among others, selecting and making prominent certain words or sentences while omitting others, driving people to an intended action. It should be noted that frames are used by journalists to emphasize specific aspects of a story, thus impacting the users of the message. They also do this by providing a specific context. For example, a story on community relations might focus on the duty of an individual rather than the community as a whole. In other contexts, Framing Theory may use slogans or jargon to send the message across.

Framing Theory is being employed in rhetorical political campaigns to sway public opinion in favor of particular parties. For behavioral change, campaigners choose certain language to their advantage by emphasizing it. It is also done by civil liberties organizations worldwide, even by major media organizations, such as the BBC, CNN, and Al Jazeera, who also emphasize some words, for example, "terrorism", "genocide", "harassment", and "intimidation" when reporting on journalists imprisoned by repressive governments around the world. They do this to send a strong message to such powerful nations as the USA, Great Britain, or France to take action. There is, in fact, a thin line between "journalism of attachment" and Framing Theory, where the former aligns with the community's interests, while the latter just frames a message for impact without any attachment. Nevertheless, both share the common goal of creating an impact for a specific purpose.

In the investigative context, the media use specific words to send a message across to citizens to take action if the media has exposed corruption. In terms of danger, the media use a certain frame to enrage citizens to demand governmental action. For instance, in Malawi, the media used words such as "rigging", "tribalism", and "theft" to incite public protest. It proved effective as people poured into the streets while others, unfortunately, burned government buildings and private property belonging to government officials.

Methodology

Research design

This is a qualitative study, as data were collected through interviews to understand informants' perspectives, unlike the quantitative research, whereby data are collected through statistics (Minichiello, 1990). Additionally, an interpretive study by interviewing individuals attempting to make sense of or interpret the phenomena related to investigative journalism centres was conducted (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, p. 2).

Methodological framework

This research adopts an interpretive approach, focusing on studying individuals' lived experiences and the meanings these individuals attach to such experiences. An interpretivist believes that "to understand this world of meaning, one must interpret, and the inquirer must elucidate and clarify how meanings are embodied" (Schwandt, 1994:118). Interpretivism, therefore, is suitable for this research as I interview the journalists of investigative centres to share their lived experiences and subsequently interpret the results.

Interpretivists study the meanings and motives behind people's actions and perceptions, such as behaviour and interactions with others in society, among others (Whitley, 1984). In this context, the investigative centres can be understood by studying their ideas, thinking, and the meanings that are important to them using thematic analysis (Boas, 1995). Thematic analysis is discussed later.

Interpretivism aligns well with the theoretical framework and the methodology of this study. Media Richness Theory and Framing Theory use interpretations to make decisions, and thematic analysis utilizes interpretations in the analysis process.



In addition to that, Lin (1998) explains that "interpretivist researchers do not only look for the presence or absence of a causal relationship but also the specific ways in which it is manifested and the context in which it occurs. Thus, these researchers can go beyond what has occurred to see how it has occurred" (Keliher, 2005; Lin, 1998). In this study, I propose to explore how investigative journalism is viewed by the public and understand the context of investigative journalism from the perspective of these centres.

Positivists, on the other hand, believe in knowledge gained through measurement (Antwi and Hamza, 2015). This study does not lend itself to empirical analysis based on mathematical methods (Abrutyn, 2023).

Constructivism posits that people construct their own understanding based on their experiences and prior knowledge (Western Governors University, 2020). Constructivists argue that concepts and hypotheses are human constructions rather than innate ideas or products of revelation, perception, or intuition. Since the study does not focus on human constructions but on examining and interpreting issues, constructivism is not applicable here (Collin, 2021)

Sampling

Data were collected from journalism centres and 20 journalists to gather their views regarding investigative centres. Purposive sampling was therefore employed to choose the investigative centres. For the journalists, a simple random sampling method was used to choose the respondents based on specific qualities that could help answer the research questions (Bernard, 2002).

Methodological tools

To obtain information on the lived experiences of respondents in their environments, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and in-depth interviews were utilized, as outlined in the methodological framework. In-depth interviews were used to research the topic and gather the required data.

Analysis

After data were collected from focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, a thematic analysis was conducted on their transcripts and recordings. Thematic analysis goes beyond merely counting phrases or words, as is the case with content analysis. This method of data analysis explores explicit and implicit meanings within the data and reveals codes and themes (Brauk and Clarke, 2006).

Presentation of Data and Their Analysis

This chapter presents results that were obtained from focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews, among other methods. It includes the questions that were posed and the responses the researcher received.

1. Please provide profiles of your organization (from the PIJ website).

Established in 2019, the Platform for Investigative Journalism (PIJ-Malawi) stands at the forefront of investigative journalism in Malawi. Born out of a need to bridge significant gaps in the investigative journalism genre within the local media landscape, PIJ-Malawi has quickly become a pivotal force in shaping transparent and accountable reporting.

As a registered non-governmental media Organisation under the Companies Act, PIJ-Malawi is more than just a media institution. It is a beacon of truth, consistently unearthing stories that demand attention and action. By holding power to account, PIJ-Malawi not only promotes the principles of investigative journalism but also plays a crucial role in lighting the path for democracy in Malawi.

2. To what extent does the investigative centre have both financial independence and editorial independence?



The twenty journalists interviewed agreed that editorial independence may sometimes rely on financial independence, as several investigative tasks cannot be performed without the organisation's financial muscle.

PIJ-Malawi acknowledges that gaining financial independence is a big challenge. However, it is achieved by financial injections from donors who value their work, as well as personal savings. Nonetheless, there is a need to make finances sustainable to ensure the longevity of investigative journalism.

3. How does financial independence affect editorial independence or vice versa?

All journalists agreed that financial independence stabilizes a media organisation, stating that a media outlet without finances cannot operate effectively. They noted that it is not surprising that many newspapers have closed due to a lack of finances.

Gregory Gondwe remarked that a financially stable organisation, one that does not rely on external funding, is more capable of publishing independently and maintaining ethical standards. He pointed out that financial influences can compromise editorial independence, particularly in cases like the journalists who received money from British businessman Zuneth Sattar to sway their editorial decisions.

4. To what extent has the media exposed corruption? Please provide examples.

Journalists said that all multi-party presidents have faced corruption allegations. The media exposed much corruption during the tenure of the first multi-party President, Bakili Muluzi. It is alleged that he embezzled money from Taiwan that was intended for development. The case was later withdrawn by the state during the MCP Government after languishing in the courts for over ten years. On the other hand, the United Democratic Front (UDF) responded to the anti-corruption efforts with an impeachment charge against Dr. Mutharika, accusing him of using US \$300,000 in public money for launching his Democratic Progressive Party, which alienated him from the UDF, the party that elevated him to the presidency. Joyce Banda was implicated in the *Cashgate scandal*, where many civil servants stole money using the Accountant General system. In case of Dr. Mutharika, many believe that individuals around him were responsible for significant thefts, while for Dr. Chakwera, it was again the associates who connived with Indian nationals to steal millions of dollars.

5. To what extent are some institutions helping in the fight against corruption?

Gregory Gondwe mentioned several organisations outside of Malawi that are forthcoming with information, particularly from the Western world, such as the United Kingdom. He noted that he was able to obtain information regarding allegations against prominent figures, including Dr. Chilima, the Vice President of Malawi, and Kapondamgaga, an aide to former President Dr. Lazarus Chakwera. They were both alleged to have accepted money in exchange for awarding government contracts. Dr. Chilima denied the charges, and the allegations against him were ultimately dropped. Similarly, the allegations against Kapondamgaga were also dismissed. Additionally, Gregory Gondwe highlighted a few organisations within Malawi that provide him with information confidentially. Other journalists mentioned private institutions owned by individuals who are willing to share information easily.

6. To what extent are some institutions hampering the fight against corruption? Please give examples.

Most journalists mentioned a lack of information that might shed light on corruption. Three-quarters of the journalists interviewed said some government institutions are slow to provide information, while others said they were even threatened and told such information was classified under national security. This issue is particularly evident regarding expenses of the police and the military, where it is difficult to obtain such information. In other instances, red tape is prevalent, despite existing laws designed to facilitate journalists' access to information. Additionally, some institutions accept journalists' inquiries but fail to respond, even after multiple follow-ups, which



further hampers information collection. Some organisations have become no-go areas for journalists, viewing them as enemies of their institutions.

7. To what extent have you risked your life(ves) to obtain information for the nation and the world?

PIJ-Malawi has reported that its journalists have been arrested several times for publishing information deemed a threat to national security by the police. Continued publishing is enough evidence that journalists are willing to risk their lives. Out of twenty journalists, eight said they had been harassed and intimidated by the police at some point. Almost all journalists agreed that one cannot obtain information if they do not put their life at risk, as journalism is inherently a dangerous profession.

Ten journalists discussed political stories. During investigations, some alleged they were followed by young supporters of those parties, particularly the ruling party. They claimed that even the police did not protect them when they heard that the ruling party fanatics were harassing them. A revealing example was seen during the reign of DPP and MCP, where fanatics attacked demonstrators while the police looked on.

8. What is your advice for the investigative centres in Malawi? Please give reasons.

Fifteen journalists expressed the need for a single centre for investigations, arguing that the existing Centre for Investigative Journalism is basically used for training. In contrast, five journalists advocated for more investigative centres. Those fifteen said there was a need to help the centre have well-equipped, trained journalists who can work across the country or region. The five said that having more centres would enable the country to have more expertise, as diverse journalism centres might bring in better quality.

Some journalists suggested that PIJ-Malawi should enlist volunteers to assist in digging into stories, especially related to corruption. They also said international organisations should make a deliberate effort to establish funds to support investigations, as some stories require extensive investigation, especially stories that affect multiple countries. Additionally, journalists mentioned the depth of stories, saying some stories need a bigger depth for them to have a bigger impact.

9. How do you account for the funds?

Gregory Gondwe stated that the institution accounts for every penny received in funding. All expenditures are reported to donors, which ensures financial support as donors know that their money will be used responsibly. Even the private money, which constitutes a significant portion of the budget, is accounted for. Accountability is both our practice and tradition.

10. Is there other relevant information that needs to be mentioned?

Four journalists expressed the necessity for collaboration with other media outlets from other countries, especially regarding corruption that involves multiple nations. One journalist mentioned a syndicate involved in child trafficking and human trafficking operating between Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. One journalist said he saw how one bus company was colluding with border patrols across these countries. Such syndicates facilitate the entry of children, men, and women into South Africa with no passports. Another journalist mentioned multinational companies with branches in various countries, saying that when they are under investigation, it is essential for reporters from their respective countries to be involved. In that way, he said it would be cheaper to gather information than rely on journalists operating from a different country.

Discussion of the results

The results have shown that all journalists agree that investigative journalism has successfully exposed corruption in high places, including the media itself. Also, all agree that PIJ-Malawi has done significant work in investigating corruption. However, what many journalists do not agree on is how to address gaps within investigative centres.



One perspective suggests that PIJ-Malawi should employ trainee journalists to serve as a pipeline to the center, enabling a more thorough investigation of various cases, as it is the only relevant journalism centre in Malawi. However, others disagree, arguing even now the centre is struggling to operate effectively because of a lack of funding.

Another area worth discussing is the independence of the centres, particularly PIJ-Malawi, which is more proactive compared to CIJ, primarily focused on training. While it has been observed that these centres are professionally independent, their economic independence is a concern. PIJ-Malawi mostly relies on personal savings to fund its investigative stories. According to Gregory Gondwe, some organisations provide only intermittent funding, which hampers investigations.

These sentiments align with observations from the literature review, which indicates that investigative journalism is very expensive. While several media institutions can produce investigative stories, they are not sustainable because of a lack of funding.

PIJ-Malawi operates independently. It is not surprising that it investigates not only media professionals but also government agencies. Reporters from PIJ have faced harassment and intimidation. During the MCP Government era, PIJ uncovered instances of corruption involving certain editors who assured a corrupt individual that his stories would not be published by media outlets.

Another issue under discussion is the harassment of investigative journalists. The literature review revealed a worldwide crackdown on investigative journalists and investigative journalism, especially by powerful organisations and individuals. In Malawi, Gregory Gondwe and his colleague Golden Matonga have been repeatedly imprisoned. In some instances, they were harassed and intimidated by the police. After being arrested, they were transferred between different police stations, all to silence them. However, it is worth noting that each arrest ultimately led to further exposure of corruption. Exposing corrupt officials puts the lives of journalists at risk: corrupt officials who lost their jobs may want to retaliate by killing or poisoning journalists.

Another issue worth mentioning is the bribing of investigative journalists by conglomerate organisations, especially those that bribe senior government officials. Gregory Gondwe mentioned a bribery syndicate involving senior journalists at media outlets who, allegedly, received bribes from British businessman Zuneth Sattar. These journalists have not been held accountable and continue working in their media.

It should also be mentioned that journalism schools need to focus more on investigative journalism. A stronger focus could increase the number of investigative journalists in the country. Presently, very few media employ investigative journalists, partly because this subject is taught for one semester throughout the four-year journalism training programme.

It is important to acknowledge that investigative journalism is a highly risky field that demands both courage and a strong commitment to the profession, without which it is very difficult to uncover stories that are beneficial for both the country and the world. Just as soldiers who are ready to die for a country, those who want to venture into this area of journalism need to sacrifice a lot for the love of their country. Even full-time journalists, who were interviewed, have revealed that some journalists who excel in investigative journalism have put their lives at risk.

Additionally, the results of recent studies have illustrated concepts from Framing Theory and Media Richness Theory. The framing of stories shows that journalists want them to have an impact, particularly through the lens of the corruption paradigm. Evidence of corruption and the collusion involved in financial wrongdoings are all illustrations of the wealth of the powerful. This framing allows the audience to better follow and understand the unfolding events.



Lastly, the results have shown that PIJ-Malawi maintains editorial independence. However, it struggles with financial independence, relying on donor money and occasionally its own savings to fund investigations. Achieving financial independence is critical, as it is the only thriving investigative centre in Malawi.

Recommendations

I recommend that a fund be established for investigative journalism. This fund should be set up by international organisations that protect the journalism profession. That is the best way for investigative centres to be independent and sustainable. The loss of vibrant investigative centres would be a significant setback.

I also recommend that journalism programmes focus more on investigative journalism to train skilled reporters who can join investigative centres. At present, these programmes only include investigative journalism courses for one or two semesters out of eight throughout the entire college studies.

I recommend that there should be collaboration among journalists around the world. An investigative story that spans multiple countries or regions would be more feasible if institutions shared financial resources and coordinated the transfer of information.

I also recommend that watchdog organisations that protect journalists have regional or national offices, funded appropriately. In that way, investigative journalists can be better protected from state and non-state actors.

I recommend that the Media Council of Malawi implement punishments against those media that fail to adhere to professional ethics. Gregory Gondwe highlighted corruption in the media, which has not been thoroughly investigated. In contrast, the legal profession investigates allegations and punishes culprits. As the fourth pillar of democracy, which ensures accountability of the executive, the judiciary, and parliament, the media also needs to have systems of checks and balances in place. How can media be checking on others when they are doing the same?

Declaration of generative artificial intelligence and technologies using artificial intelligence in the writing process. The author confirms that no artificial intelligence tools were used to create, write, or edit the text during the preparation of this manuscript except for translation. All results are original and obtained without the help of AI.

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RESEARCH ARTICLES
ДОСЛІДНИЦЬКІ СТАТТІ

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**An assessment of development and non-development information
in selected nigerian newspapers**

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The study investigated the incidences of development information in two Nigerian national newspapers, namely, Guardian and Vanguard which were purposively selected to underscore their role in the development process in Nigeria. **The aim** was to determine the extent of the newspapers coverage of development Information, the thematic diversities of the development-oriented news, and the non-development items, and the differences between the development and non-development information. The Development Media Theory was employed as theoretical framework and the content analysis research **method** was adopted. **Results** indicated that the coverage of development items was low and there were variations in the number of development news for the three study periods. General development news accounted for the highest number of development information in the newspapers, while the papers presented more non-development than development-oriented information. The implications of the result is that readers are fed more with non-development information than development information. This portends a negative position as the impression is that the Government in Nigeria is not pursuing development efforts for the improved conditions of the citizens. Nigerian newspapers through the efforts of journalists and media houses should endeavour to cover and report development news in the communities to reflect news items in their publications from the rural areas.

Keywords: development communication, non-development information, Nigerian newspapers, quantitative content analysis, The Guardian, Vanguard

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Оцінка інформації про розвиток та нерозвиток у вибраних нігерійських газетах

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У дослідженні розглядалася поширеність інформації про розвиток у двох нігерійських національних газетах, а саме Guardian та Vanguard, які були навмисно відібрані, щоб підкреслити їхню роль у процесі розвитку Нігерії. **Метою** було визначити ступінь висвітлення газетами інформації про розвиток, тематичну різноманітність новин, орієнтованих на розвиток, та новин, не пов'язаних з розвитком, а також відмінності між інформацією, пов'язаною з розвитком, та інформацією, не пов'язаною з розвитком. Як теоретичну основу було використано теорію медіа про розвиток, а також було прийнято **метод** дослідження з контент-аналізом. **Результати** показали, що висвітлення новин про розвиток було низьким, а кількість новин про розвиток протягом трьох періодів дослідження коливалася. Загальні новини про розвиток становили найбільшу кількість інформації у газетах, тоді як газети представляли більше інформації, не пов'язаної з розвитком, ніж інформації, пов'язаної з розвитком. Наслідком цього результату є те, що читачі отримують більше інформації, не пов'язаної з розвитком, ніж інформації про розвиток. Це віщує негативну тенденцію, оскільки складається враження, що уряд Нігерії не докладає зусиль для покращення умов життя громадян. Нігерійські газети завдяки зусиллям журналістів та медіа-компаній повинні прагнути висвітлювати та повідомляти новини про розвиток у громадах, щоб відображати новини з сільською місцевості у своїх публікаціях.

Ключові слова: комунікація розвитку; інформація, не пов'язана з розвитком, нігерійські газети, кількісний контент-аналіз; The Guardian, Vanguard

A major thrust in any society is the quest for development in all ramifications of life. This quest is a phenomenon that is often accompanied by citizen's desire to see changes in different spheres of life, namely in the political, cultural, economic, religious, transformation, etc. The fact however remains that positive development does not happen or take place overnight as it is often a process accompanied by some enormous efforts that will likely require time and discipline. Literature is replete with multiple concepts of development as espoused by scholars (Rogers; Fair and Shah, cited in (Soola, 2003).

The old or dominant idea of development was the Western perspective of the 50s and 60s as a "development made simple" concept for the developing nations. The plan was to copy what the developed countries of the world did. Using the same model in the undeveloped world was characterised by great optimism, however, the results of the 70s showed that the outcome of the idea had fallen short of expectations, therefore, there was need for a new thinking of development.

The scholars in this new thinking of development were Everest Rogers and Wilbur Schramm. Rogers (1976) had rejected the top-down flow of the dominant paradigm, claiming that it had failed over time to bring development in the world thus, Rogers defined development as "a widely participatory process of social change... intended to foster both social and material advancement". Schramm also followed a similar line when he said in his book *Mass Media and national Development*: "The focus of the proposed strategy will be "the local area, local activity, local decision making, a two-way, horizontal, not one-way communication", (cited in Soola, 2003, p. 11).

It is instructive to assert that Latin America scholars and policy makers were some of the earliest to react to the approach of the dominant paradigm, criticising it for ignoring the regional complexities and the strong ties that development had with transnational corporate interest

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(Rodriguez and Murphy, 1997, p. 27). There were reported attempts to evolve an alternative paradigm of development based on the philosophies of Freire, Schumacher, Bordenave and Fuglessing, among other scholars (Lent, 1987, p. 27). Inayatullah's (1976, p. 10) definition was a more humanizing and contextualized one. In his words: "development is change towards patterns of society that allow better realisation of human values, that allow a society greater control over its environment and over its political destiny, and enables its individuals to gain increased control over themselves".

Dag Hammarskjöld in the early 60s, came up with the idea that development should be contextualized within the multiplicity and diversity of one world (Fair and Shah, cited in Soola, 2003). Hammarskjöld thinking was that societies can set their own normative standards and goals which do not need to conform with what obtains in the West. Therefore, development should be seen as quantitative and qualitative. Jayaweera (1987) has initiated the Gross National Product (GNP) versus the physical quality of life index (PQL) stressing that the quantitative and qualitative approach to development are interdependent and complementary. Therefore, development should be people-oriented, human capital-based, and should promote the well-being of the citizens.

Anaeto S., Anaeto M. and Tejumaiye J. (2009, p. 4) says the word development implies growth or advancement in the life of a person or society. Development is the total process of growth and improvement which involves growth in economic, social, political and cultural sector of a society. Recent definition of development can be Ojebode (2019, p.12) which he claims captives the totality of all in society.

These concerns of development have led scholars in the field of communication to come up with the idea of development communication which they have defined in a multiplicity of ways. The recourse to development communication in the communication field is a call to contribute to discourse on development in society. Ogan (1982) has described development communication as a process used only to serve the development goals of the government in power and also as a means to critical examination, evaluation and report of the relevance, enactment and impact of development programs". A more recent definition by Manyozo (2021) defines development communication as "the strategic use of communication processes and media to facilitate social development, particularly through participation, dialogue, and empowerment".

Also, Servoes (2020) views development communication as a dialogic process that bridges knowledge gaps and empowers communities. It is important to state also that development communication is the use of the media (radio, television, newspapers) or any of the communication outlets, in a given geographical entity in order to execute development.

Statement of the Problem

These ideas about development and development communication exist in the Nigerian landscape and this thrust of existence can be partly traced to the 1972 United Nations (UN) recommendation encouraging development communication for national development in countries. The United Nations recommendation was for comprehensive communication policies that are linked to the nation's overall social, cultural, political and economic development (MacBride et al., 1980). African countries have since embraced the idea of development communication through communication outlets, for instance, *the Ujama project* in Tanzania is a good example. In Nigeria, various governments have come up with similar ideas which have been communicated to the citizens through various outlets of media, for example, the Obasanjo government of 1977 came up with Operation Feed The Nation (OFN), while the Shagari government of 1979-1983 evolved the Green Revolution Program which was an attempt to place emphasis on agriculture.

Literature is replete with studies that have documented the use of media in development process in Nigeria. These are studies by (Okunna, 1992; Ifenkwe, 2009 and Umuerrri, 2022); while Okunna (1992) had carried out survey on sources of development information among rural women in Nigeria using a case study, Ifenkwe (2009) had carried out a case study on the assessment of



Newspaper Advocacy for rural development and environmental education in Nigeria using five (5) selected newspapers.

This study however investigated development information in national newspapers in Nigeria and analysed quantitatively the incidences of development and non-development information in the national newspapers. The study objectives were to determine:

- 1) the extent of Nigerian newspapers dissemination of development information to Nigerians;
- 2) the thematic diversifications of development information in the newspapers, and
- 3) the newspapers development-oriented and non-development information.

Newspaper studies have not focused on the development information contents of the selected newspapers for the given period of April - June, 2020 it is to this end that this study set out to investigate the development information contents of the Nigerian newspapers in its political, economic, community, General information and other significant dimensions of development This critical examination was guided by three formulated research questions as follows:

- (1) What is the extent of Nigerian newspaper coverage of development information?
- (2) How thematically diverse is the development content of Nigerian newspapers?
- (3) What is the extent of coverage between development-oriented and non-development-oriented information in the newspapers?

Operational Definition of Development information

These are stories that contribute to the development of the indigenes, their communities and citizens in Nigeria. These development stories are those on: General Development; health; politics; economy; and community.

The non-development information are: Crime/robbery etc.; crisis (political etc.); deaths/obituary; cult wars; and high cost of living. These were excluded as non-development information because they do not contribute to the positive development of the Nigerian society.

Theory

Much of the attention that have been given to development communication studies have been consistent over time Tomaselli (2025); Melkote & Steeves (2015); Milton and Mano (2025); Mmutle, Molale, Akinola & Selebi (2024). Development theory continues to evolve as both a theoretical and practical field that links media practices to social change and empowerment goals. Foundational work by Melkote and Steeves provides a framework for understanding communication as a tool for empowerment and social justice in development contexts (Melkote & Steeves, 2015). In the African context. Contemporary scholarship has sought to re-situate media theories and practices within local histories and epistemologies. For instance, Tomaselli's contributions to African media and communication highlight how indigenous perspectives cultural approaches, and post-colonial dynamics inform media scholarship on the continent (Tomaselli, 2025). Recent edited collections further demonstrate how strategic communication is leveraged in sub-saharan African to address governance development and social change challenges (Mnitle et al., 2024). Therefore, this study is guided by the Development Media theory which has postulations of development concerns as espoused by MCQuail (1987, p. 119). It is appropriate to the media situation of developing countries because of the great variety of economic and political conditions and the changing nature of situations. The main principles have been stated by (MCQuail 1987, p.121). One of such principles is that:

Media should accept and carry out positive development tasks in line with nationally established policy.

The development media theory is useful for a developing country such as Nigeria because it helps to explain concerns of development raised in this study. This theory focuses on the use of the media to highlight and overcome development concerns of poverty, health, transportation, agriculture etc. in the Nigerian geographical entity. The national newspapers used for this study



namely: *Guardian* and *Vanguard* are expected to report issues on General development news, health, economy, community news, politics etc. in the Nigerian society.

Theoretical Roots of the Research Questions

Research Question one: What is the extent of Nigerian newspapers coverage of development information.

It will be helpful to provide answer to a question that arises from the Development Media theory that this work will resolve. On the first principle of Development media theory by MCQuail (1987, p. 121) "Media should accept and carry out positive development tasks in live with nationally established policy," a question that this work sought to address is: what is the extent of Nigerian newspapers coverage of development information?

Research Question Two: How thematically diverse is the development content of Nigerian newspapers?

This research question emanated from principle two of the development Media theory which posits that: Freedom of the media should be open to restriction according to economic priorities and development needs of the society.

Topography of the Nigerian Mass Media

The organs of mass media have been in existence and in use in Nigeria before independence in 1960. In the context of usage the mass media before independence in Nigeria were used as tool for political emancipation and the evidence of this political context usage can be seen from the performance of the press at that time.

The Nigerian mass media can therefore be understood from the context of its history as tool for the emancipation of Nigerians from British government as they were vibrant in the struggle for the attainment of Independence. This fact of its contents was quite evident in the way the mass media carried on as confirmed by Olukotun (2018, p. 3) thus: "The media in Nigeria and much of Africa are best understood in the context of their pre-colonial origins in oral narratives and festivals as well as their colonial and post-colonial identities as enablers of authoritarian rule, at least until the democratic transitions of the 1990s".

This pre-colonial legacy bequeathed to the broadcasting sector took on a character that drew from the above in the sense that the Nigerian broadcast stations took on a character of authoritarian legacy in broadcasting whereby Nigerian journalists conduct interviews for politicians without interrogating or critically appraising what they have to say (Olukotun, 2018, p. 3).

In the years 1960 to 1966 when the nationalists were in power, the focus of the media was on sustaining democracy through the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation's (NBC'S) radio and the Nigerian Television Service (NTS), also owned by the federal government of Nigeria. The coming of the military in governance by 1966 witnessed an era when state owned radio and television stations were used by coup plotters to announce change of baton in government whenever there was a coup d'état as the coup plotters seized/or took over state owned radio and television stations from where they orchestrated the dawn of a new government. By the 70s, 80s and 90s this had become the trend, however, private broadcasting stations were granted license to operate in 1992 by the Babangida government, thus adding another dimension of broadcasting to the government-owned dominated broadcast stations that were in Nigeria. With the emergence of private broadcasting in Nigeria radio and television stations became lively and fertile ground for cross fertilisation of ideas within the geographical entity.

The idea to use newspapers as enlightenment publications was given birth to by Reverend Henry Townsend who established the first newspaper in Nigeria known as "*Iwe iroyin fun Awon Ara Egba ati Yoruba*" in 1859 in Abeokuta. Townsend's motive was among others, to excite intelligence of the people in his area of operation and to get them to read, thus, Reverend Townsend pioneered the development of newspaper in Nigeria Townsend used his newspaper several times



to proclaim the Egba point of view on political issues, first in the Yoruba version, and then in English version.

In addition, most of the other newspapers that were published before Independence were used in the propagation for Independence from the British. In the fore front of these struggles were nationalists who established leading newspapers in their attempt to have political control from the British and visible examples among others were: Nnamdi Azikiwe and Obafemi Awolowo. The former established a conglomerate of newspapers with the leading newspaper as *West African Pilot* on 22nd November in 1937, the aim was to propagate his political ideals and that of the citizens of Nigeria. Duyile (1987, p. 139) records that Azikiwe was a new hope in the new journalism practice that characterized the early 1940s as the publisher was a trained journalist. Up till the early 1950s, Dr. Azikiwe's newspaper ventures and his famous press inundated the Nigerian press with incisive stories. Azikiwe also established the *Nigerian Eastern Mail* which debuted before the *West African Pilot* and he was leader of the political party National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroun's (NCNC) from where he propagated his political ideals through his established newspapers to campaign for his election. Another nationalist, Obafemi Awolowo established the *Nigerian Tribune* in 1947 to vent his political ideals through his political party, the Action Group (AG)

In the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and 1990s Nigeria paraded a number of government owned newspapers not only at the Federal but also at the state levels. As attestation to government's involvement in the establishment of newspapers, it set up the *New Nigerian newspaper* and took over the *Daily Times* in the mid 1970s. These publications were used as mouthpieces of the Federal government for over three decades, beginning from the middle of the 1960s. It was also common place to find a number of state-owned newspapers which were established to ventilate the views of state governments and examples were the then Bendel State - government owned *Nigerian Observer* now owned by the Edo state government; *Tide*, Rivers state; *Chronicle*, Cross River state; *Sketch*, Oyo state, *Statesman*, Imo state; *Daily Star*, Anambra state; *Triumph*, Kano state; etc. These publications were used by different state governments to propagate the ideals of the different state governments, therefore the liveliness that were visible in these publications attracted a lot of developmental strides to the various state governments. However, a noticeable trend with the establishment of the plethora of private newspapers was that the relationship with government was at times adverse as a result of either the didactic messages published in these newspapers or as a result of misgivings and misunderstanding on the part of government. The following private Nigerian newspapers which dotted the landscape and are still in existence will suffice *Guardian*, *Punch*, *Tribune*, *Thisday*, *The Sun*, *Leadership*, *The Nation* etc. It was indeed common practice for government to shut down newspapers and magazines because of what it perceived as adverse reports by this section of the press. In 1984, two journalists, Nduka Irabor and Tunde Thompson of *Guardian newspapers* were jailed for one year each over the now infamous decree No. 4 promulgated by the Mohammadu Buhari military government of 1984.

The citizens in the landscape utilize numerous communication channels and the new electronic media for information dissemination and reception. However, the Nigerian press does not shy away from covering a number of issues that relate to the country especially in the area of development information.

Method

Content analysis was selected as the most appropriate research design as it has the most useful means of providing the best indication of the role of national newspapers in the reportage of development news. Content analysis is a method of studying and analysing communication contents in a systematic, objective and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables (Wimmer and Dominick, 2010, p. 125). This method allows for classification of analysis under objective criteria and render them susceptible to statistical description.



Therefore, content analysis is particularly amenable to such research problems as the one being dealt with here. Over the years many Nigerians have accused the media, particularly the print media of reporting stories that tend to be divisive and create tensions in the society. This position as it were, is not based on any empirical analysis of the contents of newspapers, therefore it is necessary to provide evidence that will invalidate this position.

For the sample, two national newspapers, *Guardian* and *Vanguard* were purposively selected for the study. In all, a total of 24 editions of the newspapers were used which covered the period of three months from April, May, June, 2020. To select the sampled days a composite week approach was adopted. Wimmer and Dominick (2010) explain that research has demonstrated that a composite week sampling technique is superior to both random sample and a consecutive day sample when dealing with newspaper content. The first Monday in April 2020, was selected, thereafter, Tuesday of the second week was chosen, Wednesday of the third and Thursday of the fourth week in April 2020. This process was used for the two selected newspapers and thus this gave us a total of 24 days and 24 editions as the selected newspapers analysed.

Table 1. Selected Days for April, May, June, 2020 in the newspapers

S/N	Days	April	May	June	Total
1	Monday	6	4	1	6
2	Tuesday	14	12	9	6
3	Wednesday	22	20	17	6
4.	Thursday	30	28	25	6
	Total No. of Newspaper	8	8	8	24

One copy of the two selected newspapers was used on each of these days. The sample size was considered adequate for answering questions because a small sample can produce more accurate results than one with a large sample. Therefore, by studying two Nigerian newspapers and sampling their editions and contents systematically, this study expected to produce acceptable reliable results.

Limitations of the sample

The time frame of April, May and June 2020 was chosen for the study. From the presentation above, twenty-four editions of the two newspapers were sampled. A major limitation in this study is that the period under investigation was the Covid-19 era. This made it difficult for Nigerian newspapers to concentrate a great deal on positive development information on the thematic contents of the study.

Units of Analysis: The unit of analysis is the thing that is actually counted. It is the smallest elements of content analysis, but it is also one of the most important (Wimmer and Dominick, 2010). For this study, the units of analysis are news stories which are hard news items published in the newspapers and in the front, inside and back pages. A theme defined as a sentence or group of sentences expressing the same idea as unit of analysis was used.

Coding Categories: Coding was done and classified as comprising the following news with the thematic contents: 1. General development, 2. Health, 3. Politics, 4 Economy, 5.Community.



General development news themes cover national unity, national consciousness and positive information that will uplift the spirit of Nigerians, for example the provision of support or palliatives in difficult times. Health theme is on family planning and positive news on health. Politics is on positive news on the electoral process, party politics and political matters in government. Economy news focus on positive news on the economy, manufacturing sector, the stock market, commerce etc., while community news focus on development news in the rural areas of the country. The definition of these content categories was to ensure mutual exclusiveness. The non-development information are categorised in table 4.

Case selection and newspaper choice representativeness and editorial choice

These newspapers have fully established their presence on the internet, for instance, the newspapers have web portals which attracts readers and can be read in all parts of Nigeria. In addition, the newspapers are independent, present balanced reports of events and promote the best interest of Nigeria. Also, the **newspapers** have wide circulation and do not owe allegiance to any ethnic group, political party, community, religious or interest organisation.

Findings and Discussion

The dimensions of development information in two national Nigerian newspapers, namely: *Guardian* and *Vanguard* were investigated

Table 2. Distribution on Extent of Coverage by Newspapers

S/N	Periods of study	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Vanguard</i>	Total %
1.	First Period (April)	09	10	19 (33.3)
2.	Second Period (may)	08	07	15(26.3)
3.	Third Period (June)	13	10	23 (40.3)
	Total	30	27	57 (100%)

Hypotheses

The results of the analysis indicated that the total number of development information reported in the two newspapers for the period of April to June 2020 were 57 items. From this number the third period of June had the highest number of forty percent (n=23) in the two newspapers, while *Guardian* presented the highest number of fifty-two percent (30), *Vanguard* presented forty-seven percent (n=27) of development information. The indication from the result is that development information news in the publications were few, this is not surprising as the period was one of lockdown occasioned by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Table 3. Distribution of Thematic Statements by Development Orientation

S/N	Categories	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Vanguard</i>	Total %
1.	General Development	09	08	17 (29.8)



2.	Health	06	05	11 (19.2)
3.	Politics	07	05	12 (21.0)
4.	Economy	03	04	07 (12.2)
5.	Community	05	05	10 (17.5)
	Total	30	27	57 (100%)

A further enquiry was to provide answers to the thematic statements of development information in the national newspapers. Indication from the result is that general development news had the highest of twenty-nine percent (n=17) of development information than the other development information items. This preference for general development news was visible because government of Nigeria and other non-governmental organisations at that time were concerned about encouraging citizens to overcome the health challenge.

Table 4. Distribution on Non-development Information

S/N	Categories	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Vanguard</i>	Total %
1.	Crime/Robbery etc.	11	13	24 (23.3)
2.	Crisis (Political, etc.)	14	18	32 (31.0)
3.	Deaths/Obituary	09	11	20 (19.4)
4.	Cult Wars	06	04	10 (9.7)
5.	High Cost of Living	08	09	17 (16.5)
	Total	48	55	103 (100%)

On the reportage of development and non-development messages, the latter were sixty-four percent (n=103), while the former were thirty-five percent (n=57).

Table 5. Distribution of Development and Non-development Information

S/N	Items	Total %
1	Development Information	57 (35.7)



2	Non-Development information	103 (64.3)
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Thus, results from table 5 indicate that the newspapers presented more non-development than development information.

Result of hypothesis testing

The findings revealed that both newspapers published some amount of development-related content alongside non-development information. However, the analysis showed a noticeable variation in the proportion of development information and non-development information. Based on the results of the content analysis, the difference in coverage was found to be statistically significant.

Therefore the hypothesis is accepted indicating that a significant difference exists in the level of development and non-development information published during the study period.

From the results, it can be inferred that the Covid-19 pandemic during the period of study affected the newspapers reportage of development information news as the difference in the number of non-development and development information is significant as can be seen from table 5.

Conclusion

The role of newspapers in development process has not been in doubt, this is why communication scholars have advocated the use of Development Communication in the development process. The investigation of the newspapers reportage of development information in two of Nigeria’s national newspapers, namely, *Guardian* and *Vanguard* has revealed different results. First, the low reportage of development information in the newspapers is not surprising given the fact that the period under study witnessed a global health pandemic. Secondly, the general development news which was the leading thematic statement of the period can be ascribed to the fact that the elements of raising national consciousness and national unity were the prime motives of government and other citizens in the face of the health challenge which ravaged the world. It was therefore not surprising that both newspapers carried more of non-development than development information. This finding presents a true picture of the mood of the nation during the period of study as most of the information in the press at that time were on the adverse effects of Covid-19. Therefore, the following recommendations are made:

1. In a time of crises in the society journalists should endeavour to report positive news stories as a way of fulfilling the information and national integration function of the media.
2. More efforts should be devoted to coverage in the area of community news as the rural areas remain largely underreported by the press. There are a number of innovations and good things that are evolving from our rural areas, these should form sufficient and adequate grounds for investigation by journalists and for coverage in their presentation of daily diet of news.
3. Nigerian newspapers should endeavour to report more development-oriented, instead of non- development information as a way of contributing to the development process in Nigeria, therefore, journalists and media houses should make deliberate efforts to scout for such positive development information news.

Declaration of generative artificial intelligence and technologies using artificial intelligence in the writing process. The author confirms that no artificial intelligence tools were used to create, write, or edit the text during the preparation of this manuscript except for translation. All results are original and obtained without the help of AI.



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Framing Ukrainian Resistance: Identity, Democracy, and Civic Duty in Media Narratives of the Russo-Ukrainian War

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This study presents a corpus-based analysis of Ukrainian media discourse on Ukrainian resistance during the full-scale phase of the Russo-Ukrainian war, which began in February 2022. Using computational methods, it investigates the correlations between resistance-related lexemes and key semantic clusters. The study proposes two hypotheses: first, that representations of Ukrainian resistance are closely associated with the concepts of national identity, freedom, democratic values, and responsibility; and second, that the motivations for resistance may have evolved over the three years of the war. **Method.** A quantitative computer-assisted content analysis of lexical co-occurrences was conducted on long-form textual content from the English-language versions of two Ukrainian media outlets: The Kyiv Independent (specifically the “Human Stories” section) and Dzerkalo Tyzhnia (Mirror of the Week). Python libraries and modules were utilised for data processing. To extract content from the web archives of both media outlets, Python-based parsers were used to filter articles containing at least one predefined word from each of the following semantic clusters: “resistance” (6 words), “values” (5 words), “identity” (6 words), and “responsibility” (6 words). As a result, 8 separate datasets were formed. The total number of articles in the “Dzerkalo Tyzhnia” corpus is $n = 1614$, and in The Kyiv Independent – $n = 342$. Statistical correlations of co-occurrences were calculated between resistance-related lexemes in each corpus and three predefined semantic clusters: Identity, Values, and Responsibilities. A comparative longitudinal analysis was performed to examine changes in these associations from 2022 to 2025. **Results.** The results demonstrate strong (up to ~ 1.0) and statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) positive correlations between the lexical group related to resistance and the three semantic clusters across both media outlets. High correlations with emotive and symbolic terms such as “spirit” and “nation” indicate that they were prominently used to represent resistance in the first stage of the war. Many correlations remained moderate ($0.4\text{--}0.8$) yet statistically significant over time, suggesting relative stability in the association between resistance and these core themes. However, law-related associations (e.g., law, duty, and responsibility) strengthened or became more consistently present in 2024 and 2025. **Conclusions.** The findings support both hypotheses put forward in this study. Firstly, Ukrainian resistance in media discourse is consistently associated with the semantic clusters of national identity, freedom, democratic values, and justice, as shown by strong and statistically significant correlations across both corpora. Secondly, although certain shifts in the motivational framing of resistance can be observed over the three years, particularly the increasing prominence of duty- and responsibility-related associations in 2024 and 2025, the overall discursive construction of resistance remains stable. These results suggest that the core semantic foundations of Ukrainian resistance persist over time, despite evolving contextual emphases.

Keywords: media discourse, war narratives, Ukrainian resistance, computational text analysis, national identity, democratic values, Russo-Ukrainian war

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Фреймування українського опору: ідентичність, демократія та громадянський обов'язок у медійних наративах про російсько-українську війну

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У цьому дослідженні представлено корпусний аналіз дискурсу українських ЗМІ щодо українського опору під час етапу повномасштабної війни між Росією та Україною (з лютого 2022 року). За допомогою комп'ютеризований аналізу у ньому досліджуються статистичні взаємозв'язки між лексемами, пов'язаними з опором, та ключовими семантичними домедіями. У дослідженні висунуто дві гіпотези: по-перше, що репрезентації українського опору тісно пов'язані з поняттями національної ідентичності, свободи, демократичних цінностей, соціальної справедливості та відповідальності; по-друге, що мотивації опору могли еволюціонувати протягом трирічного періоду війни. **Метод.** Було проведено кількісний комп'ютерний контент-аналіз лексичних співживань на основі розгорнутого текстового контенту з англomовних версій двох українських ЗМІ: The Kyiv Independent (розділ «Human Stories») та «Дзеркало тижня» (Dzerkalo Tyzhnia). Для обробки даних використовувалися бібліотеки та модулі Python. Для видалення контенту з веб-архівів обох ЗМІ було використано парсери на основі Python для фільтрації статей, що містять принаймні одне попередньо визначене слово з кожного з наступних семантичних кластерів: «опір» (6 слів), «цінності» (5 слів), «ідентичність» (6 слів) та «відповідальність» (6 слів). В результаті було сформовано 8 окремих наборів даних. Загальна кількість статей у корпусі «Дзеркало тижня» становить $n = 1614$, а в The Kyiv Independent – $n = 342$. Було розраховано статистичні кореляції співживань між лексемами, пов'язаними з опором, у кожному корпусі та трьома заздалегідь визначеними семантичними кластерами: Ідентичність, Цінності та Відповідальність. Було проведено порівняльний лонгітюдний аналіз для вивчення змін у цих асоціаціях у період з 2022 по 2025. **Висновки.** Отримані результати підтверджують дві гіпотези, висунуті в цьому дослідженні. По-перше, український опір у дискурсі українських ЗМІ послідовно асоціюється із семантичними сферами національної ідентичності, свободи, демократичних цінностей та справедливості. Це підтверджується сильними та статистично значущими кореляціями в обох корпусах. По-друге, хоча протягом трирічного періоду можна спостерігати певні зміни в мотиваційному фреймінгу опору, зокрема зростання значущості асоціацій, пов'язаних із обов'язком та відповідальністю, у 2024-2025 роках, загальна дискурсивна конструкція опору залишається стабільною. Ці результати свідчать про те, що основні семантичні засади українського опору зберігаються з часом, незважаючи на зміну контекстуальних акцентів.

Ключові слова: медійний дискурс, воєнні наративи, український опір, комп'ютерний аналіз текстів, національна ідентичність, демократичні цінності, російсько-українська війна

The courage and everyday heroism demonstrated by Ukrainians since the outset of Russia's invasion in February 2022 have captured global attention, prompting media and analysts alike to seek symbols that embody Ukrainian resistance and resilience – most prominently, in President Volodymyr Zelensky (Onuch & Hale, 2022; Spector, 2022; Zachara-Szymańska, 2023). While Zelensky's leadership has become emblematic during the first critical period, he has also faced criticism for initially downplaying the threat of a full-scale invasion (Seitz, 2023).

Although considerable scholarly attention has been devoted to Zelensky's role in the conflict, this article shifts the focus to the motivations of ordinary Ukrainians who united to defend their right to live in a free and independent country.

The resistance of the Ukrainian people in the face of Russian military aggression that has come as a surprise to many Western observers (e.g. Benedetti, 2022), can be attributed to several factors, including a fight against Russia's long-standing hegemony, an unequivocal rejection of an autocratic style of governance, and a commitment to a democratic path of development that mirrors

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examples set by European countries (Kuzio, 2022). Despite the ongoing conflict, Ukrainians continue to embrace European ideals and view Europe as a “normative power” (Zarembo & Martin, 2024). Concurrently, an international “battle of narratives” is underway (Chaban & Zhabotynska, 2024), where Ukrainian self-narratives are frequently inadequately represented, and the realist perspectives on Russo-Ukrainian relations (Motyl, 2015) are still prioritised by some European and Western countries over the reasons for Ukrainian resistance against Russian military aggression.

The purpose of this study is to contribute to a better understanding of media narratives of Ukrainian resistance.

This article aims to examine how the discourse of Ukrainian resistance is constructed in Ukrainian media outlets and investigate the evolving associations between resistance-related lexemes and key democratic values, national identity, and collective responsibility during the Russo-Ukrainian war, with a time frame from February 24, 2022, to July 1, 2025.

The discussion outline of this article includes characteristics of the data, a theoretical framework for analysis, the findings, and a concluding discussion where these findings are compared diachronically and synchronically.

The material comprises articles from two Ukrainian English-language media outlets: *The Kyiv Independent*, the main English-language media outlet, and the English-language version of media outlet *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia* (*Mirror of the Week*).

The study focuses on the English-language discourse of these Ukrainian media outlets. This choice may limit the quantitative scope of the dataset, but it does not diminish the qualitative relevance of the analysis. English-language journalism serves as an important channel through which Ukrainians communicate narratives of the war and societal resistance to international audiences, allowing these perspectives to be articulated without mediation from foreign media institutions. To minimise potential bias related to editorial positioning or audience-oriented framing, the study analyses two independent Ukrainian media outlets known for their professional standards and editorial autonomy. Both outlets have established reputations for being independent and maintaining a commitment to critical reporting in Ukraine, even during periods of significant political pressure and wartime conditions.

Dzerkalo Tyzhnia is a Ukrainian analytical weekly newspaper founded in 1994 and is one of the most influential Ukrainian media outlets. Since 2019, it has stopped its print version and operates only as an online website in three languages (Ukrainian, Russian, and English). For our study, only the English-language version was analysed. Its English-language articles are accurate translations of the original Ukrainian articles, rather than being written separately for a foreign audience.

The Kyiv Independent is an exclusively English-language Ukrainian online newspaper founded in November 2021 by former staff members of *The Kyiv Post*, Ukraine’s first and most prominent English-language newspaper, established in 1995. Founded just three months before Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, *The Kyiv Independent* quickly gained international recognition for its coverage of the Russo-Ukrainian war conflict and has become one of the most frequently cited Ukrainian news outlets in international media.

The role of the media during the war is not limited to merely reflecting public discourse. We proceed from the position that, as members of Ukrainian society in a state of war, journalists from both media outlets are directly involved, and their professional work during the war is therefore an expression of their personal experiences of resistance against armed aggression. From this perspective, the study gains additional value for the deontology of journalism.



Theoretical framework

Russo-Ukrainian war as an identity conflict

The underlying causes of the war started by Russia in 2014 with the annexation of Crimea are subject to divergent interpretations, not only among the parties involved in the conflict but also by observers, journalists, politicians, and academics.

The conflict is termed an "identity conflict" if at least one of the sides denies the adversary's narrative regarding their national identity and their right to national sovereignty over the territory claimed by the two protagonists as their exclusive property (Auerbach, 2005). Each side feels that legitimate rights have been usurped by the other, which include claims for national self-expression and ultimately the establishment of a sovereign nation-state (Auerbach, 2005).

While the origins of Russian military aggression in denying Ukrainians their national identity and sovereignty are clear (Polishcuk, 2024; Schwirtz, 2022), only a few researchers have defined the Russo-Ukrainian war as an identity conflict thus far (Riccioli, 2024; Shekhovtsov, 2025).

Identity conflict, as opposed to a material conflict, "concerns existential issues for the rivaling parties, involves violence, extensively preoccupies members of the implicated societies and is perceived as a zero-sum nature and irreconcilable" (Bar-Tal & Bennik, 2004, as cited in Auerbach, 2005, p.43). While identity conflicts may also have a material dimension, the core issue in these conflicts is identity. This focus gives rise to and perpetuates a 'victim-victimiser' narrative.

The complete negation of the legitimacy of the other party as a national entity, and the subsequent active efforts to dismiss their demands, is perceived by the disadvantaged party as an injustice, leading to a sense of victimisation. Identity conflicts tend to be passionate and intense since "historic wounds are felt as assaults on the self-concept and therefore ultimate safety and security of the victim group" (Monville 2002, as cited in Auerbach, 2005, p.44).

Resistance to foreign intervention

In political science, resistance to foreign occupation is often understood as a manifestation of nationalism or hostility. However, this resistance is also driven by a multifaceted set of incentives, grievances, and the behaviour of occupying authorities, as some scholars argue (Collard-Wexler, 2003).

The discourse of civic resistance to occupation typically features narratives of heroism, victimhood, identity, and collective memory, aligning with findings in the literature on social movements and conflict analysis (Fairclough, 1995; Knox, 2015).

The media plays a crucial role in shaping these discourses, as it mediates ideological narratives that can either reproduce or resist dominant power relations (Fairclough, N., & Fairclough, I., 2015).

Studies on the resilience of Ukrainians in times of war have shown that freedom, traditions of grassroots self-organisation, and aspirations for joining the Euro-Atlantic community are the main sources (Kudlenko, 2023). A 2022 poll revealed that 71% of Ukrainians viewed freedom as more important than equality, while only 23% supported restricting certain rights and freedoms, such as freedom of speech, even in the context of foreign aggression (Rating Group, 2023).

Research on the concept of freedom for Ukrainians emphasises its practical significance. Here, the concept of freedom encompasses not only personal liberties but also responsibilities, defining individual and social agency, and having deep historical roots (Wynnyckyj, 2022).

Resilience is also associated with the desire for a good life and a better future, which, as most of the national polls show, is intrinsically linked to Euro-Atlantic integration. In the European family, Ukrainians prioritise shared values above everything else: democracy and human rights, for example, which they have always lacked in their union with Russia. From this point of view, NATO as a military alliance is appealing to Ukrainians primarily because it offers protection from aggression and the threat to their identity posed by the Russian Federation. The war has intensified



their aspirations: in January 2023, 92% of Ukrainians wanted membership in the EU by 2030, and 86% sought NATO membership (NDI, 2023).

Studies on civil resistance demonstrate that its effectiveness changes over the course of a prolonged war. While resistance by the civilian population is crucial in the early stages, it cannot be the sole factor. In the middle and later stages of a conflict, the willingness of civil society to fight is vital for maintaining military potential and societal functioning over the long term (Rakov & Fainberg, 2025).

In this study, we integrate the theory of discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak, 2008) with content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004) and employ a method of computer-assisted content analysis (Steblyna & Rodyhin, 2025). In Fairclough's framework, discourse practice conceptualisation as a mediating process between the text and socio-cultural practice helps to perceive the issue in a comprehensive manner and thus provides a useful analytical tool (Fairclough, 1995).

Method

Our study focused on two research questions:

RQ 1: How is the discourse of Ukrainian social and military resistance constructed within media narratives, and to what extent is it linked to core democratic values, national identity, and collective agency during the ongoing conflict?

RQ 2: How have the discursive patterns and associations of resistance-related keywords evolved over the three years of the Russo-Ukrainian war (2022–2025), reflecting changes in media framing and social attitudes?

These research questions address the key issue of understanding *what unites Ukrainian society in the face of aggression*. We focus on the role of freedom, dignity, justice, memory, and responsibility, specifically examining how resistance-related terms co-occur with these values in media texts. This research is rooted in a theoretical framework grounded in Critical Discourse Analysis, which links language usage with power, identity, and social agency during conflict.

The first research question explores the role of media discourse in shaping national resilience and collective identity in wartime, while being grounded in empirically observed correlations between resistance lexemes and fundamental societal values.

The second research question allows for an investigation of temporal dynamics, capturing shifts in resilience and identity discourse as the conflict unfolds. This approach aligns with recent research that analyses evolving media discourse over multiple years within a wartime context.

Methodological Approach

The research design consisted of three steps: (1) data mining, (2) linear correlation analysis, and (3) comparing correlation results from two media sources.

In the preliminary step, we identified groups of words for text analysis. We defined the cluster “Resistance”, which includes words such as “*resist*”, “*fight*”, “*struggle*”, “*defend*”, and “*resilience*” as basic.

For linear correlation analysis, it was necessary to collect two or more datasets for comparison. We identified three other clusters: the “Identity” cluster with words “*symbol*”, “*spirit*”, “*history*”, “*nation*”, “*identity*”, and “*memory*”, the “Values” cluster with words “*freedom*”, “*justice*”, “*right*”, “*dignity*”, and “*solidarity*” and the “Responsibilities” cluster consisting of words “*law*”, “*responsible*”, “*duty*”, “*responsibility*”, and “*punish*”.

In Step 1, we collected eight datasets (four from each media) of full-text articles using HTML-scraping and parsing in Python, covering the period from February 24, 2022, to July 1, 2025. Python programmes were coded by ChatGPT5o and were then used for data mining, utilising the Selenium module for scraping and BeautifulSoup for parsing. The dataset from the *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia* website comprised 445 full-text analytical articles in which at least one word from the “Resistance” cluster was used. Subsequently, we conducted a similar scraping for three semantic



clusters: 422 articles were found for the “identity” group, 372 for the “values” group, and 375 for the “responsibility” group. The total number of articles was 1614. Similar data collection procedures were applied to The Kyiv Independent, with the analysis limited to articles categorized by the tag “human history,” yielding 114 full-text articles for the “resistance” group, 112 for the “identity” group, 94 for the “values” group, and 67 for the “responsibility” group. The total number of articles was 387.

In Step 2, we conducted a linear correlation analysis of lexical co-occurrence in each dataset for each media source separately. The Python statistical modules (module pandas) were employed for this purpose.

In Step 3, we analysed the correlations and compared the results from the two media sources, using Python's modules seaborn and matplotlib for visualisation of heatmaps and plotting graphs. Additionally, ChatGPT was employed to interpret the results of the statistical correlation analyses, specifically for selecting significant correlations based on p-values.

Results and Discussion

I. Key Findings from *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*
1. Defence of Core Democratic Values as a Reason for Resistance

Table 1.
Correlations between “resistance” and “Values” cluster ($r \geq 0.3$), *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*

year	group1_word	group2_word	correlation	p_value
2022	resist	freedom	0.4220487722931861	0.0031274333298297
2022	fight	freedom	0.4315308092755756	0.0024572099177724
2022	struggle	freedom	0.316900744406735	0.0299810411105777
2023	defend	right	0.3436401719222325	0.0002219714399448
2023	resist	dignity	0.4187367387737467	4.791425411671998e-06
2023	struggle	dignity	0.3485272627211645	0.0001777944340966
2024	resilience	solidarity	0.478859390044693	1.3857896953582977e-07
2025	defend	justice	0.3561396415639528	0.0033365899226371
2025	fight	dignity	0.304907308596908	0.012798180791109

We found nine positive correlations between the word group “Resistance” and the “Values” cluster in the corpora of *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia* (Zn.ua/eng). The resistance-related words such as "resist", "fight", "struggle", "defend", and "resilience" consistently showed moderate positive correlations (ranging from ~0.3 to 0.48) with core democratic values, such as "freedom", "justice", "right", "dignity", and "solidarity" across all years studied. The most prominent correlations were



resist–freedom (2022: 0.42, $p \approx 0.003$), *resist–dignity* (2023: 0.41, $p \approx 0.0004$), *resilience–solidarity* (2024: 0.48, $p \approx 0.00001.4e-07$), and *defend–justice* (2025: 0.36, $p \approx 0.0033$).

This evidence suggests that democratic freedoms and values played an important part in mobilising the Ukrainian population to resist in 2022. During that year, Russian aggression was primarily perceived as a threat to freedom. In subsequent years, the increased emphasis on "fight" "dignity", and "solidarity" indicated a growing focus on social cohesion and consolidation of a value-based civic identity. This explains why resistance is perceived not only as territorial defence, but also as defence of a way of life.

2. Associations with National and Cultural Symbols

Table 2.
Correlations between “resistance” and “Identity” cluster ($r \geq 0.3$), *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*

year	group1_word	group2_word	correlation	p_value
2022	defend	symbol	0.407899673985384	0.0044265057090185
2022	defend	spirit	0.36460311485492	0.0117460106123629
2022	resist	symbol	0.6106101639049707	5.172493109457766e-06
2022	resist	history	0.3510989395861325	0.0155296389291726
2022	resist	spirit	0.6560810578179287	5.547083785048693e-07
2022	resist	nation	0.4837187866220054	0.0005719043196749
2022	fight	symbol	0.6249200015735648	2.6618282128812585e-06
2022	fight	history	0.4105712738614205	0.0041501235432051
2022	fight	spirit	0.6953377454400363	5.82806767959847e-08
2022	fight	nation	0.6357841154019979	1.5714362104806069e-06
2022	struggle	symbol	0.5007780282171276	0.0003370548306855
2022	struggle	spirit	0.4846496200145282	0.0005560320722052



2023	resist	identity	0.5106661197929403	1.862786210176891e-09
2023	resist	memory	0.3919184248902597	8.034900776450701e-06
2023	struggle	identity	0.3182856422678406	0.0003532280725768
2023	struggle	memory	0.3784909048260406	1.7190438630792823e-05
2024	defend	nation	0.371590438644831	1.344307994761135e-05
2025	defend	nation	0.3762243038059844	0.001328033291139
2025	struggle	memory	0.3453665882191218	0.0034093953049685

We also found 19 positive correlations between the word group “Resistance” and the “Identity” cluster in the corpora of *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, making this cluster the most representative among all clusters.

Terms such as "symbol" (4 occurrences), "spirit" (4 occurrences), "nation" (4 occurrences), and "memory" (3 occurrences) were the most frequently used within this cluster. The semantic group showed stronger correlations (up to ~0.65) with resistance-related words during 2022, the first year of the full-scale invasion. For example, we observed the following correlations: *fight–spirit* (2022: 0.70, $p < 1e-07$), *resist–spirit* (2022: 0.66, $p < 1e-06$), *fight–nation* (2022: 0.64, $p < 2e-06$), *resist–identity* (2023: 0.51, $p < 2e-09$), *struggle–memory* (2023–2025: correlations around 0.34–0.38, $p < 0.01$). Of the total 19 correlations, 12 occurred in 2022; however, this number dropped dramatically to four correlations in 2023 and only 1 in 2024.

These findings point to a strong discursive framing of resistance as deeply connected with national identity and cultural heritage. The high correlations with “spirit” and “symbol” suggest a heavy use of emotive and symbolic language to represent the resistance in 2022.

The moderate correlations with "memory" (specifically *struggle–memory*) indicate continuity in framing resistance as a defence of national identity and historical remembrance.

3. Responsibility and Law-Related Concepts

Table 3.
Correlations between “resistance” and “Responsibility” cluster ($r \geq 0.3$), *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*

year	group1_word	group2_word	Correlation (r)	p_value
2023	struggle	responsibility	0.3544701292494781	9.462974891715174e-05



2024	defence	responsibility	0.3200911301055756	0.000615337050798
2025	defend	law	0.4361354682571301	0.0004951147051985

We also found a total of three weakly positive significant correlations in this group with no significant correlations in 2022. Notable correlations between resistance words and concepts such as "*responsibility*" and "*law*", appear as moderate only in the next years following the full-scale invasion: *struggle–responsibility* (2023: 0.35, $p < 0.0001$) and *defend–law* (2025: 0.44, $p < 0.0005$).

This could reflect an evolution of the resistance discourse towards frameworks of legal legitimacy and collective accountability.

4. Temporal Stability and Slight Intensification

Many of the correlations remained moderate but significant throughout the years, indicating relative stability in the way resistance is connected to these core themes.

In 2022, the “Identity” cluster was the strongest, with correlations between words like "*spirit*", "*symbol*", and "*nation*". However, this theme has shifted over time.

In contrast, some concepts from the “Responsibility” cluster, such as "*responsibility*" (in 2023 and 2024) and "*law*" (in 2025) have been emphasised more strongly in later years, suggesting evolving emphasis in the discourse as the conflict continued.

II. Key Findings from *The Kyiv Independent*

1. Strong Positive Correlation with Core Democratic Values

Table 4.

Correlation between “resistance” and “Values” cluster ($r \geq 0.3$), The Kyiv Independent

year	group1_word	group2_word	correlation	p_value
2022	defend	freedom	0.6098489002225858	0.015781139455897
2022	fight	freedom	0.5959857524147721	0.0190435230620774
2022	fight	justice	0.66485049629604	0.0068460532705771
2022	resilience	dignity	1.0	0.0
2023	resist	right	0.4364465677176944	0.0258053018431171
2023	struggle	freedom	0.5811819141838528	0.0018480265905011
2023	struggle	dignity	0.7126065256612822	4.416580243286231e-05
2023	struggle	democracy	0.3934389543046799	0.0467549180944833
2024	defend	justice	0.6803360514166091	0.0002540953480218



2024	resist	freedom	0.4190990671703343	0.0415005152300359
2024	resist	dignity	0.505076272276105	0.0118228835618537
2024	resist	democracy	0.7533708035008838	2.142800410297969e-05
2024	fight	justice	0.5796951885499027	0.0029884262680499

Across all years analysed, there was a consistently high and statistically significant correlation ($p < 0.05$, often much lower) between words associated with resistance and terms such as freedom, justice, dignity, democracy, and rights: *resilience-dignity* (2022: 1.0, $p = 0$), *struggle-dignity* (2023: 0.71, $p \approx 0.00004$). In total, there were 13 significant correlations in this cluster.

This suggests that in media texts, Ukrainian resistance is persistently framed as a struggle not just for physical survival or military objectives but as fundamentally aimed at preserving and re-
alising core values such as freedom, justice, and dignity. The high correlations with words like "democracy" and "identity" further indicate that national self-concept and democratic aspirations are central to resistance narratives.

2. Nationhood, History, and Memory as Pillars of Resistance

Table 5.
Correlation between “resistance” and “Identity” cluster ($r \geq 0.3$), The Kyiv Independent

year	group1_word	group2_word	correlation	p_value
2022	defend	spirit	0.6951736466013723	0.0013617697469441
2022	defend	nation	0.4896030957170718	0.0391763118863161
2022	resist	history	0.5621224578405455	0.0151797747323638
2022	fight	nation	0.6062663733402069	0.0076484492984059
2022	resilience	memory	0.6616591390145992	0.0027829482520487
2022	resilience	history	0.6645570174272215	0.0026251114720987
2022	resilience	spirit	0.8892972917998874	7.971395371971689e-07
2023	defend	history	0.3731184801732717	0.0422731997998317
2023	struggle	identity	0.50208969296966	0.0046959189850835
2023	struggle	symbol	0.4576043153224295	0.0110025241450916
2023	struggle	history	0.5408801531417586	0.0020279850130697



2024	defend	history	0.6822506801446152	1.2257120341988412e-05
2024	fight	history	0.6270536165075955	9.424271421990611e-05
2024	resilience	memory	0.3962766405926509	0.0224285380246865
2025	defend	memory	0.5330372837222158	0.0227397406521307
2025	defend	nation	0.5287334492157248	0.0240721877166235
2025	fight	nation	0.5604740427792777	0.0155461080271331

In our analysis, we found 17 significant correlations between resistance-related terms and the “Identity” cluster. Similar to *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, this cluster was the most representative among the other two groups. Terms such as "nation"(4 occurrences), "history" (6 occurrences) and "memory" (3 occurrences) were the most frequently used words with moderate to strong and highly significant correlations, e.g.: *resilience-history* (2022: 0.665, $p \approx 0.0026$), *defend-history* (2024: 0.682, $p \approx 0.00001$), *defend-memory* (2025: 0.533, $p \approx 0.023$).

This pattern points to the discursive construction of resistance as a continuation of historical struggles, serving to protect or create collective memory and national identity. The war is thus presented as embedded within historical trajectories and national mythmaking.

3. Responsibility, Duty, and Agency

Table 6.
Correlation between “resistance” and “Responsibility” cluster ($r \geq 0.3$), The Kyiv Independent

year	group1_word	group2_word	correlation	p_value
2022	defend	responsible	0.6499999999999998	0.0303859638438834
2023	fight	duty	0.4453889999158184	0.0430342676281817
2023	struggle	responsibility	0.535520365036663	0.0123533523935687
2025	defence	duty	0.7130240959073806	0.0310588499838167
2025	defend	responsible	0.8315841857951104	0.0054517932639068
2025	defend	duty	0.6799343576727904	0.0438944743697232
2025	fight	responsible	0.8621631183937565	0.0027901989220801



Within the “Responsibility” cluster, we identified 7 significant positive correlations. The moderate correlations between “resistance” and terms like “responsible”, “responsibility”, and “duty” have strengthened in recent years: *defend-responsible* (2025: 0.832, $p \approx 0.0055$), *fight-responsible* (2025: 0.862, $p \approx 0.0028$).

The increase in frequency and strength of these associations over time may reflect a shift in the narrative toward perceiving resistance as a collective and obligatory response.

III. Comparative Results of Media Outlets

In 2022, the strongest correlations were found within the “Identity” cluster (*Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*: *spirit-fight* 0.7, *fight-nation* 0.64, *fight-symbol* 0.62 — a total of 12 significant correlations within the cluster; *The Kyiv Independent*: *resilience-spirit* 0.89, *defend-spirit* 0.7 — a total of seven significant correlations within the “Identity” cluster) and the “Values” cluster (*Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*: two significant correlations with the word “freedom”; *The Kyiv Independent*: *resilience-dignity* 1.0 — a total of four significant correlations within the “Values” cluster). However, from 2023 to 2024, the correlations within the identified groups weakened (*Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, 2023: three correlations in each cluster; *The Kyiv Independent*, 2023: three correlations in each cluster; *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, 2024: one correlation in each cluster; in 2025, two correlations in the “Identity” cluster and none in the “Values” cluster; *The Kyiv Independent*: five correlations in the “Values” cluster and two in the “Identity” cluster with the word “memory”). By 2025, they had disappeared entirely: there were no correlations in the “Values” cluster in *The Kyiv Independent*, while three weak correlations remained in the “Identity” cluster.

The “Responsibility” cluster was manifested differently in both media outlets in 2022 and 2023: *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia* showed no correlations, whereas *The Kyiv Independent* had one correlation in 2022 and two in 2023, with no correlations in 2024.

However, in 2025, the “Responsibility” cluster, which was largely absent in 2023 and 2024, became a prominent theme for both outlets. *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia* had two significant weak correlations: *defend-law* (0.44) and *defend-justice* (0.36). *The Kyiv Independent* reported four strong correlations with the words “responsible” and “duty”: *fight-responsible* (0.86), *defend-responsible* (0.83), and *defence-duty* (0.71). It is important to note that the research period was limited to July 1, just three weeks before nationwide protests against the liquidation of the anti-corruption bodies, NABU and SAP, began in Ukrainian cities. Therefore, the resulting correlations are not related to this political event but instead illustrate the shift in public sentiment in early 2022.

The “Identity” cluster was the only cluster that demonstrated stable correlations with “resistance” across both media outlets over the 3.5 years of the war, with a sharp peak in 2022 and a gradual decline afterward.

The “Values” cluster exhibited consistent associations between 2022 and 2024, but these were missing in the first half of 2025. In contrast, the “Responsibility” cluster, which had been hardly present in the 2022–2024 period, unexpectedly gained prominence in both media outlets in 2025. This could be attributed to changes in public discourse related to the internal political landscape, the prolonged duration of the conflict, or external influences such as international debates about values and support.

Concluding discussion

This study examined how Ukrainian media construct narratives of social and military resistance during the full-scale phase of the Russo-Ukrainian war, from February 2022 to July 2025. Drawing on a Critical Discourse Analysis framework and applying statistical correlation analysis of lexical co-occurrence, the study analysed how resistance-related lexemes are connected with democratic values, national identity, and civic responsibility in media discourse. Furthermore, it explored how these associations evolved during the first three and a half years of the full-scale invasion.



Firstly, the analysis revealed that narratives of Ukrainian resistance in both media outlets are consistently structured around the semantic cluster of national identity. This cluster shows the most stable and frequent correlations with resistance-related lexemes throughout the entire period of analysis, particularly strong in 2022, linking resistance to concepts such as spirit, nation, and national symbols. This indicates that Ukrainian media outlets predominantly frame resistance as a form of collective expression of self-identity and a defence of national subjectivity.

Secondly, the study highlights a temporal transformation in the value-based framing of resistance. In the early phase of the full-scale invasion, resistance discourse was strongly associated with normative concepts such as freedom, dignity, and democracy. However, these associations gradually weakened between 2023 and 2025, suggesting a decline in the intensity of explicitly value-oriented narratives in media representations of resistance.

Lastly, the results indicate the emergence of civic responsibility as a new thematic dimension of resistance discourse. While the responsibility cluster was largely absent in the early stages of the war, it became increasingly prominent in 2025, linking resistance to ideas of duty, responsibility, law, and justice. This shift indicates a gradual reframing of resistance in media discourse, transitioning from primarily identity- and value-based narratives to a stronger emphasis on civic accountability and social responsibility.

Beyond contributing empirically, the study offers theoretical contributions within the field of media studies. Its findings indicate that media function as a key platform for the discursive construction of collective identity during wartime, shaping shared understandings of resistance and national belonging. The observed temporal shifts in the framing of resistance also demonstrate how media narratives adapt to the changing phases of prolonged conflict, moving from identity-based mobilisation toward discourses emphasising both institutional and civic responsibility. This transformation suggests that media narratives not only reflect but also contribute to the symbolic legitimisation of collective action and societal resistance during periods of existential crisis.

These findings also provide theoretical insights for research on resistance to foreign occupation. The results contribute to the literature on the motivations behind societal resistance by demonstrating that media narratives consistently frame resistance not only in strategic or material terms but also through symbolic and identity-based dimensions. This suggests that, within Ukrainian media discourse, the war is primarily perceived as a struggle for the preservation of national identity and political subjectivity, rather than merely a conflict driven by external actors or domestic political leadership. In this context, the study empirically supports theoretical distinctions made in conflict studies between identity-based conflicts and material conflicts.

However, the findings should be interpreted within the context of several limitations. First, the analysis is based on a limited dataset and does not account for audience reception, which restricts conclusions about how these narratives are interpreted by wider audiences. Second, the study focuses on correlations among three selected semantic clusters that represent important, but not exhaustive, dimensions of Ukrainian resistance. Further potential motivational factors, such as hostility towards the occupier or reactions to war crimes, were not included in this study and may constitute promising directions for future research.

Declaration of generative artificial intelligence and technologies using artificial intelligence in the writing process. The author declare the use of artificial intelligence tools in the preparation of this article: programs in Python were made with the help of ChatGPT5o, were then used as authors' software for data mining and linear correlation analyses; ChatGPT5o was used also for the interpretation of statistical correlation analyses. Information about this is included in the 'Method' section of the article.

The authors of the article bear full responsibility for the correct use and citation of sources.



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Artificial Intelligence in Media and Communication:
Analytical Perspectives on Digital Empowerment
and Algorithmic Domination

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The study aims to examine the dual dynamic of artificial intelligence (AI) in media and communication, exploring how AI simultaneously fosters digital empowerment—enhancing access to information, participation, and productivity—and facilitates algorithmic domination, where decision-making, social interactions, and economic opportunities are increasingly governed by opaque computational systems. **Research Method** The research employs a theoretical and analytical approach, situating AI within a framework that integrates concepts of filter bubbles, algorithmic governance, symbolic capital, and datafication. It synthesizes findings from empirical studies, policy reports, and critical scholarship to analyze AI’s effects on autonomy, inequality, and digital power distribution. **Results.** The analysis highlights mechanisms through which algorithms reinforce social and informational inequalities, limit user autonomy, and concentrate digital power among dominant actors in media and communication spaces. **Conclusion.** The study concludes by proposing strategies to mitigate algorithmic domination and enhance digital empowerment, emphasizing the importance of transparency, algorithmic literacy, ethical design, and participatory governance in digital media ecosystems. Besides, it underscores the need for empirical and interdisciplinary research to develop context-aware frameworks for understanding AI’s long-term impact on media.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, digital empowerment, algorithmic domination, filter bubble, algorithmic governance, symbolic capital, datafication, digital inequality

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Штучний інтелект у медіа та комунікації: аналітичні перспективи цифрового розширення прав і можливостей та алгоритмічного домінування

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Мета дослідження – вивчити подвійну динаміку штучного інтелекту (ШІ) у медіа та комунікаціях, досліджуючи, як ШІ одночасно сприяє цифровому розширенню можливостей – збільшуючи доступ до інформації, участі та продуктивності – і полегшує алгоритмічне домінування, де прийняття рішень, соціальна взаємодія та економічні можливості дедалі більше регулюються непрозорими обчислювальними системами. Метод дослідження. Дослідження використовує теоретичний та аналітичний підхід, розміщуючи ШІ в рамках, що інтегрує концепції фільтруючих бульбашок, алгоритмічного управління, символічного капіталу та обробки даних. Воно синтезує результати емпіричних досліджень, політичних звітів та критичних досліджень для аналізу впливу ШІ на автономію, нерівність та розподіл цифрової влади. Результати. Аналіз висвітлює механізми, за допомогою яких алгоритми посилюють соціальну та інформаційну нерівність, обмежують автономію користувачів та концентрують цифрову владу серед домінуючих акторів у медіа та комунікаційних просторах. Висновок. Дослідження завершується пропозицією стратегій для пом'якшення алгоритмічного домінування та посилення цифрового розширення можливостей, підкреслюючи важливість прозорості, алгоритмічної грамотності, етичного дизайну та партисипативного управління в екосистемах цифрових медіа. Крім того, воно підкреслює необхідність емпіричних та міждисциплінарних досліджень для розробки контекстно-залежних рамок для розуміння довгострокового впливу ШІ на медіа.

Ключові слова: штучний інтелект, цифрове розширення прав і можливостей, алгоритмічне домінування, бульбашка фільтрів, алгоритмічне управління, символічний капітал, датафікація, цифрова нерівність

The digital sphere has witnessed profound transformations driven by the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies into the architecture of media and communication platforms. AI has become a central tool in organizing information flows, personalizing content and steering interactions. It is often promoted as a means of empowering users by enabling efficient and rapid access to information and enhancing their capacity for interaction and participation. AI-driven systems now, structure the circulation of information, govern visibility, and mediate everyday communication practices across platforms. As scholars such as Gillespie (2014) and Boyd & Crawford (2012) argue, these systems not only filter and prioritize content but also participate in constructing the conditions under which knowledge is accessed and shared. When deployed responsibly, AI holds the potential to expand users' communicative agency—broadening access to information, facilitating participation in the public sphere, and enabling more inclusive forms of digital expression (Napoli, 2019).

These transformations raise epistemological and ethical concerns within the field of media and communication studies, particularly regarding the extent to which artificial intelligence contributes to achieving genuine digital empowerment, as opposed to the growing risks of what can be described as algorithmic domination exercised by major platforms through tracking, recommendation, and informational filtering technologies. In this context, it becomes necessary to distinguish these new dynamics from a critical perspective that links technology to power, and empowerment to control.

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Studies such as Noble (2018) examining algorithmic discrimination and Zuboff's (2019) analysis of surveillance capitalism reveal how opaque algorithmic processes can reinforce structural inequalities, shape public discourse, and centralize power within dominant technology corporations. These concerns parallel earlier debates on filter bubbles and echo chambers (Pariser, 2011), which foreground the ways in which algorithmic curation narrows the horizon of available information.

Anchored in theoretical frameworks including datafication, algorithmic governance, and platform capitalism, this paper examines the dual capacity of AI to either enhance communicative autonomy or intensify asymmetries within the digital ecosystem. Drawing on empirical studies and critical media scholarship, this study identifies the mechanisms through which AI technologies restructure user-platform relations and recast the dynamics of participation, visibility, and control.

Accordingly, this study poses the following research questions:

RQ1: To what extent does artificial intelligence contribute to empowering users in the digital sphere within media and communication contexts?

RQ2: What are the limits of this empowerment considering the increasing dominance of algorithms over the production and distribution of content?

Finally, the study proposes strategies to mitigate the risks of algorithmic domination in the media and communication sphere.

The paper is structured as follows. It first outlines the methodological approach adopted in conducting the theoretical and analytical review. It then presents a synthesis of key findings organized around two central dimensions: digital empowerment and algorithmic domination, supported by relevant theoretical frameworks. This is followed by a discussion of the paradoxical relationship between these two dynamics and its implications for media and communication. Finally, the paper proposes a set of mitigation strategies and concludes by highlighting key insights and directions for future research.

Method

This study adopts a **theoretical and analytical research design**, relying on a qualitative review of scholarly literature in media and communication studies, as well as interdisciplinary research on artificial intelligence, algorithmic governance, and digital society. The analysis is based on **conceptual synthesis**, which involves identifying, comparing, and integrating key theoretical frameworks – including digital empowerment, algorithmic domination, symbolic capital, datafication, and filter bubbles. Peer-reviewed journal articles, policy reports, and authoritative academic books were systematically examined to trace how AI transforms communicative practices and restructures power relations in the digital sphere. The study evaluates existing evidence and arguments to construct a comprehensive conceptual understanding of AI's dual role in the media and communication field. This method allows for the development of an integrated theoretical perspective and the formulation of analytical insights and recommendations.

Findings and Discussion

This section presents the main analytical outcomes of the study, organized around two interrelated dimensions: digital empowerment and algorithmic domination. It begins by examining how artificial intelligence contributes to enhancing communicative capacities at multiple levels, followed by an analysis of the risks associated with algorithmic control and power concentration. The section then explores the paradoxical relationship between these dynamics and discusses their broader implications for media and communication. This structure aims to provide a coherent analytical framework that connects the theoretical foundations of the study with its key insights



Digital Empowerment through Artificial Intelligence

Digital empowerment refers to the enhancement of individual and collective capacities through digital technologies, enabling access to information, tools, and resources that improve decision-making and agency (UNIDO, 2024). AI contributes to this process by automating routine tasks, supporting data-driven insights, and facilitating personalized learning and productivity enhancement.

The integration of artificial intelligence within media systems provides multiple levels of digital empowerment in the field of media and communication.

Access and Content Production Empowerment

AI-driven tools lower traditional barriers: they enable automated content creation, streamline editorial workflows, and support broader participation beyond established media institutions – potentially democratizing media production and expanding who can contribute to the public sphere. (Diakopoulos N. , 2019).

Personalization and Audience Engagement Empowerment

On the audience side, AI-based recommendation systems, sentiment analysis, and social media content analytics enable more tailored, relevant, and engaging media consumption experiences. These technologies help match content to user interests, optimize timing, and improve messaging effectiveness, transforming passive audiences into more active and informed participants (Baig, Altaf, & Azam, 2024).

Institutional and Structural Empowerment

AI supports institutional-level empowerment by providing media organizations with data-driven insights that can inform editorial strategies, content planning, and governance practices. Analytics of audience behavior, content performance, and platform dynamics allow institutions to adapt to changing consumption patterns and design more effective communication strategies (Thurman, 2014; Alem, Hasdiyanto, Irwanto, & Rido, 2024).

Empowerment via Governance, Ethics, and Reflexivity

A higher-order level of empowerment occurs when frameworks for governance, transparency, and ethical oversight accompany AI deployment. When media stakeholders adopt responsible design and participatory governance, AI not only amplifies voices but does so while preserving fairness, accountability, and inclusion, promoting a democratic and pluralistic media environment (Mathias-Felipe, Wang Ngai, & Tomás, 2024).

Overall, digital empowerment through AI in media and communication is layered from enabling content creation and access, through enhancing audience engagement, to restructuring institutional practices and embedding ethical governance. Recognizing these levels allows scholars and practitioners to understand both the potential benefits and the necessary conditions for AI to contribute meaningfully and equitably to media empowerment.

Algorithmic Domination: Risks and Theoretical Frameworks

Algorithmic domination refers to the **control and influence exerted by computational systems over human behavior, information access, and social interactions** (Ulises & Nick, 2019). Unlike traditional forms of control, which are visible and accountable, algorithmic domination operates largely through opaque systems where decisions are automated, continuous, and often unchallengeable. These systems can shape public opinion, influence economic opportunities, and reinforce social hierarchies by selectively promoting content, determining visibility, and personalizing experiences according to hidden metrics (Eubanks, 2018).

Global studies in media and communication demonstrate the pervasive reach of algorithmic power in shaping news dissemination, audience engagement, and content visibility. For example, platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter employ recommendation algorithms that



determine which news articles, videos, and social content are prioritized in users' feeds. These algorithms subtly influence audience attention, engagement patterns, and the spread of information without direct editorial intervention, raising concerns about bias, filter bubbles, and structural inequalities in information access (Bucher, 2018; Napoli, 2019). Consequently, the power of algorithms in media environments highlights the need for transparency, critical literacy, and governance mechanisms to ensure equitable and informed participation in the digital public sphere. Similarly, AI-based welfare management systems in the United States have been criticized for creating "digital poorhouses", where automated decision-making can disproportionately disadvantage vulnerable populations (Eubanks, 2018).

Theoretical Frameworks

Several conceptual frameworks help explain how algorithmic systems can produce domination while appearing neutral or beneficial.

Filter Bubble

The concept of **filter bubble** describes how personalized algorithms limit exposure to diverse perspectives, reinforcing existing beliefs and creating **information silos** (Eubanks, 2018; Fernando, Stephen, Michael, & Qian, 2023). Filter bubbles reduce cognitive autonomy by controlling what information users see, often amplifying social polarization and diminishing opportunities for critical engagement with alternative viewpoints. Recent studies in media and communication provide concrete evidence of this process. E.g., Benoit, Faridah, & Faiz (2025) demonstrate through agent-based modelling that algorithmic filtering on digital platforms systematically reduces informational diversity and leads to the formation of isolated information clusters. Similarly, Cerro (2024) shows that when social-media algorithms interact with homophilic network structures, they intensify political and ideological polarization by continuously reinforcing user-aligned content. A systematic review by Mohammad et al. (2023) further reveals that recommender systems across major platforms tend to amplify existing preferences, thereby limiting exposure to heterogeneous viewpoints and promoting personalized echo chambers. Complementing this empirical evidence, a recent analysis of Rodilosso (2024) argues that AI-driven curation on social media can undermine democratic deliberation by narrowing users' information horizons and prioritizing emotionally charged confirmatory content. Collectively, these findings illustrate how filter bubbles diminish cognitive autonomy, heighten polarization, and restrict opportunities for critical engagement in today's algorithmically mediated communication environment.

Algorithmic Governance

Algorithmic governance refers to the use of AI and computational systems to manage, regulate, or guide organizational and user behavior in digital media environments, often without direct human intervention (Bucher, 2018). In the field of media and communication, it encompasses how platforms, news organizations, and content distributors implement algorithms to **organize content, prioritize information, and inform editorial strategies**. For example, YouTube employs recommendation algorithms that determine which videos are promoted or demoted, shaping content visibility and audience reach (Napoli, 2019). Similarly, Facebook and X use algorithmic moderation and ranking systems to manage news feeds, advertisements, and trending topics, effectively guiding user interactions and platform dynamics (Gillespie, 2018).

At the institutional level, algorithmic governance enables media organizations to analyze audience behavior, evaluate content performance, and make data-driven decisions regarding content planning, distribution strategies, and platform management (Adam, Jamie, & Hancock, 2014). Legal and regulatory frameworks play a crucial role in mediating the tension between digital empowerment and algorithmic domination in media. E.g., recent research on AI regulation in Ukraine and the EU demonstrates how sector-specific recommendations and legislative



measures can guide the responsible deployment of AI in media organizations, ensuring transparency, compliance with journalistic standards, and protection of audience rights. These frameworks provide a model for integrating ethical and accountable AI practices into media ecosystems, highlighting the importance of governance mechanisms that balance technological innovation with social responsibility (Приступенко & Євдокименко, 2025).

Policy initiatives such as the European Union's **Digital Services Act (DSA)** provide frameworks for transparency, accountability, and oversight of algorithmic processes, highlighting the need to regulate computational systems while acknowledging their influence on the production and circulation of information (Cooperation, 2024). Overall, algorithmic governance structures not only the operational logic of media platforms but also the strategic and ethical frameworks within which digital communication takes place.

Symbolic Capital in Digital Spaces

Building on Bourdieu's theory of symbolic capital, digital platforms distribute visibility, recognition, and influence in ways that reflect and reinforce existing social hierarchies (Ulises & Nick, 2019). Algorithmic mechanisms – such as recommendation systems, trending lists, and social scoring – determine who gains attention and whose contributions remain marginalized, thereby producing a digital form of social stratification. E.g., Annaki, Ouassou, & Igamane (2025) show that platforms assign digital actors differing levels of visibility and influence, creating a hierarchy in which certain users accumulate symbolic capital while others are largely invisible. Alessandro, Pujan, Mauro, Emiliano, & Gianluca (2024) provide empirical evidence that recommendation algorithms systematically amplify some content while suppressing others, independent of intrinsic quality, highlighting the structural impact of algorithmic design on digital recognition. Conceptually, Ragnedda (2018) frame this process as the production of “digital capital,” where social and symbolic resources are redistributed according to platform affordances and algorithmic governance.

Datafication

Datafication involves transforming human behavior into quantifiable data, which can be processed, analyzed, and monetized (Ulises & Nick, 2019; Eubanks, 2018). This transformation is not neutral: by converting everyday activities into data, platforms gain the capacity to predict behavior, segment audiences, and optimize content promotion strategies to benefit certain actors over others – effectively reinforcing structural power imbalances. Research on newsrooms demonstrates that datafication has reshaped journalistic practices such as editorial decisions, content visibility, and the perceived “success” of journalistic output increasingly depend on audience analytics and consumption metrics rather than purely editorial value (Kalender, 2024). From a critical-data perspective, data itself becomes a form of capital; platforms and media companies leverage it to control attention, influence, and cultural production (Bolin, 2022). Even scholarly research in communication employs datafied traces to produce knowledge, indicating how deeply datafication penetrates the epistemic foundations of media studies (Jeffrey & Yonaira, 2025).

In this light, datafication should be understood not merely as a technical or methodological shift, but as a structural transformation; a reconfiguration of the power to define visibility, legitimacy, and symbolic value in digital media environments.

The Paradox: Digital Empowerment vs. Algorithmic Domination

Artificial intelligence (AI) presents a paradoxical dynamic: it empowers users by enhancing access to knowledge, facilitating communication, and enabling efficient decision-making, yet it simultaneously enforces algorithmic control, subtly shaping behaviors, preferences, and social hierarchies (Ulises & Nick, 2019; Eubanks, 2018). This duality raises critical questions about the nature of autonomy, freedom, and agency in the digital era.



While AI tools promise to enhance individual and institutional capabilities, they often embed constraints through opaque algorithmic rules that challenge transparency and accountability. Research has shown that many decision-making systems function as “black boxes,” where the logic of decisions is hidden and unchallengeable (Md. Tanzib, et al., 2023). This opacity undermines users’ ability to understand, contest, or audit the outcomes – particularly when those systems influence media distribution, public communication, or institutional governance. Initiatives aimed at promoting algorithmic transparency suggest that without deliberate efforts, AI’s efficiency gains may come at the cost of democratic oversight and public legitimacy (Bell & Stoyanovich, 2024; Karl & Jenny, 2020). This tension illustrates that the benefits of AI (e.g., efficiency, predictive power) are often accompanied by structural constraints on visibility, accountability, and user autonomy.

The tension between empowerment and domination can be interpreted through non-domination theory, which emphasizes the absence of arbitrary interference as a condition for genuine freedom (Hoeksema, 2023). From this perspective, AI systems may superficially increase capabilities but fail to guarantee autonomy when opaque algorithms dictate choices or outcomes without meaningful oversight. Additionally, concepts of filter bubbles, symbolic capital, and datafication provide explanatory power for why empowerment and domination coexist; algorithms simultaneously expand access and concentrate power (Ulises & Nick, 2019).

- Awareness of AI’s dual role in media: Policymakers, media organizations, and civil society must recognize that AI-driven tools for content distribution, audience analytics, and recommendation systems are not inherently empowering; they can also reinforce biases, limit exposure to diverse perspectives, and consolidate editorial power.
- Digital literacy and algorithmic transparency in communication: Enhancing media literacy for both content creators and audiences, alongside promoting transparent algorithmic practices, is essential to ensure that AI serves as a genuine instrument for informed engagement rather than a covert mechanism of agenda setting or influence. (Diakopoulos, 2019; Napoli, 2019).
- Participatory governance and editorial oversight: The paradox of AI empowerment versus control highlights the importance of participatory design and governance in media platforms, allowing journalists, editors, and users to have input in how algorithmic decision-making shapes visibility, content prioritization, and news circulation (Gillespie, 2018).

The paradox of AI as both a tool of empowerment and domination necessitates proactive strategies to minimize risks and enhance the benefits of digital technologies. Based on theoretical frameworks and empirical studies, several mitigation approaches are proposed.

Transparency in AI refers to the openness of algorithmic processes, enabling users and regulators to understand how decisions are made. Transparent systems can reduce arbitrary interference, improve accountability, and build trust. E.g., disclosing how recommendation algorithms prioritize content or determine service eligibility can prevent opaque decision-making that disproportionately harms marginalized groups (Eubanks, 2018; Ulises & Nick, 2019).

Algorithmic literacy empowers users to critically engage with AI systems by understanding their functions, limitations, and potential biases (UNIDO, 2024). Educational programs and digital workshops can equip individuals and communities to navigate algorithmic systems effectively, enhancing autonomy and resilience against covert manipulation.

AI systems should be designed according to principles of justice, fairness, and non-discrimination (Barocas & Selbst, 2016; Joy & Timnit, 2018). Ethical design requires developers and institutions to:

- Avoid training models on biased datasets that reproduce structural inequalities.
- Implement clear accountability mechanisms for automated or algorithmically assisted decisions.



- Integrate human rights considerations and broader societal values into all stages of development, deployment, and evaluation.

Participatory Governance

Participatory governance requires involving multiple stakeholders – including audiences, content creators, civil society, and regulatory actors – in the design, deployment, and oversight of algorithmic systems that shape news distribution, content moderation, and media visibility. When stakeholders participate in defining content ranking rules, moderation policies, and transparency standards, this helps align platform algorithms with public interest values, social diversity, and democratic communication aims. Empirical and theoretical scholarship supports this approach: for example, the framework proposed by *We Build AI* shows that community-driven co-design of algorithmic policies can produce more legitimate, accountable, and context-sensitive governance arrangements for digital platforms (Lee, et al., 2019). Similarly, research on algorithmic governance indicates that participatory and audit-oriented regimes – including stakeholder involvement, transparent reporting, and institutional oversight – are necessary to counteract opacity, reduce bias, and preserve public accountability in media systems (Christian & Lena, 2019). This participatory turn enables media organizations and platforms to negotiate normative standards (such as fairness, equity, and representativeness) with those affected by algorithmic decisions – thus, mitigating the risk that algorithmic gatekeeping reproduces entrenched power imbalances and undermines pluralistic public discourse.

Data Sovereignty and Regulation

Ensuring data sovereignty allows individuals and communities to control how their personal data is collected, stored, and used (Ulises & Nick, 2019). Regulatory measures may include:

- Legal frameworks for ethical data use.
- Standards for cross-border data transfer and platform accountability.
- Institutional oversight of AI systems deployed in public services.

By asserting control over data, societies can reduce the risk of algorithmic domination and promote equitable access to digital benefits.

Integrated Approach

The most effective mitigation strategy combines technical, educational, ethical, and regulatory interventions. Only through a holistic approach—linking transparency, literacy, ethical design, participatory governance, and data sovereignty – can AI fulfill its promise as a tool for genuine digital empowerment while minimizing risks of domination (UNIDO, 2024; Ulises & Nick, 2019).

While these strategies provide a conceptual foundation for addressing the risks of algorithmic domination, their effectiveness depends on context-sensitive implementation and cross-sector collaboration. Future efforts should focus on operationalizing these principles through measurable indicators, institutional accountability mechanisms, and comparative policy frameworks across different media systems. In this regard, bridging the gap between theoretical recommendations and practical applications remains a critical challenge that requires sustained engagement between researchers, policymakers, and industry actors. It is important to consider how different stakeholders in the media and communication ecosystem can act upon these insights.

For journalists and media practitioners, the findings underscore the importance of engaging critically with AI tools used in content production, distribution, and audience analytics. This includes advocating for greater transparency in platform algorithms, adopting ethical guidelines in AI-assisted journalism, and maintaining editorial autonomy in increasingly data-driven environments.

For policymakers and regulatory bodies, the study points to the necessity of developing comprehensive governance frameworks that ensure accountability, fairness, and transparency in AI



deployment within media systems. This may involve implementing regulatory standards, supporting independent audits of algorithmic systems, and fostering collaborations between public institutions, academia, and technology companies.

For researchers, this work highlights the need to move toward more empirical and interdisciplinary investigations that examine the real-world implications of AI systems, particularly in diverse socio-cultural contexts. Researchers are also encouraged to develop methodological tools capable of critically analyzing algorithmic processes and their societal impact.

Conclusions

Artificial intelligence has profoundly reshaped the digital media landscape, creating new opportunities for audience engagement, content personalization, and participatory communication, while simultaneously introducing risks of algorithmic control and concentration of influence. AI tools can enhance the capacities of both media organizations and individual communicators by optimizing content distribution, analyzing audience behavior, and facilitating interaction across digital platforms. However, these same systems can reinforce structural inequalities in visibility and influence, prioritize certain voices over others, and embed opaque decision-making processes that limit transparency and accountability.

The tension between empowerment and domination in media contexts highlights the need for deliberate design, governance, and regulation of AI systems. Strategies such as algorithmic transparency, media literacy, ethical AI design, and participatory governance frameworks are essential to ensure that digital platforms foster informed engagement, equitable representation, and public trust.

Ultimately, the evolving media ecosystem requires continuous critical inquiry and scholarly attention. Researchers, journalists, policymakers, and technology developers must collaborate to harness AI's potential for enhancing communication, civic participation, and media pluralism, while mitigating risks associated with algorithmic gatekeeping and biased content amplification. Future research should examine empirical case studies of AI-driven media platforms, evaluate participatory governance approaches, and investigate innovative strategies for embedding ethical principles directly into content moderation, recommendation systems, and audience analytics.

This study identifies several directions, beyond its theoretical contribution, for future research. There is a need for more empirical and comparative studies that examine how AI-driven systems concretely shape media practices across different socio-cultural contexts, particularly in underrepresented regions. Additionally, future research could explore the long-term implications of algorithmic governance on journalistic autonomy, audience agency, and content diversity. Interdisciplinary approaches that integrate communication studies, data science, and critical algorithm studies may also provide deeper insights into the socio-technical dynamics of AI. Such efforts would contribute to moving beyond descriptive synthesis toward more actionable and context-aware frameworks for understanding and regulating AI in media environments.

Declaration of generative artificial intelligence and technologies using artificial intelligence in the writing process. The author confirms that no artificial intelligence tools were used to create, write, or edit the text during the preparation of this manuscript except for translation. All results are original and obtained without the help of AI.

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RESEARCH ARTICLES
ДОСЛІДНИЦЬКІ СТАТТІ

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The Image of People with Disabilities in the Ukrainian Online Media *Ukrainska Pravda*

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This study aims to identify trends in the coverage of people with disabilities in the online media outlet *Ukrainska Pravda* from 2015 to 2019 and investigate whether these trends changed in 2025.

Method. The following keywords were chosen for the study: disabled people, people with disabilities, individuals with limited abilities, individuals with special needs, persons with disabilities, and people with additional needs. **Results.** The analysis revealed that the number of materials published between 2015 and 2019 fluctuated, depending on social events. Coverage increased during the Paralympic Games, highlighting the victories of athletes with disabilities. However, during other periods, coverage was limited to isolated materials about these people. The findings demonstrate that social, legal, and sports aspects received the most attention, while medical and educational aspects were less frequently addressed. Political, scientific, and cultural aspects were largely absent from the information space. Among the main genres covering people with disabilities, notes and articles were the most common, followed by reports, author columns, and life stories. Content about people with disabilities draw attention when centered around achievements. In early 2015, the coverage mostly focused on the challenges faced by people with disabilities. In subsequent years, it shifted to their physical and moral accomplishments. There were also notable changes in how individuals with disabilities perceived themselves, with journalists aiming to reflect these positive developments to society, encouraging recognition of their equality and the creation of conditions for their comfortable living. The year 2018 saw the highest number of materials – 50. Compared to 2025, the trend changed, with the number of materials reaching 103. This increase is attributed to the full-scale war, which heightened this medium's focus on medical issues, as many people have been wounded and have become disabled. Conversely, sports coverage marked a decline. In 2025, materials about people with disabilities continued to appear in the same genres as those from 2015 to 2019, with the addition of interviews and surveys that journalists used to foster dialogue with society, particularly with people with disabilities.

Keywords: people with disabilities, media, social issues, inclusion, image, medical aspects, legal aspects, sports aspects, political aspects, social aspects

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Образ людей з інвалідністю в українському інтернет-виданні «Українська правда»

Ольга Полумисна

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У статті головною метою було з'ясувати тенденції щодо висвітлення на сторінках інтернет-видання «Українська правда» образу людей з інвалідністю з 2015 по 2019 рік, а також дослідити, чи змінилися ці тенденції у 2025 році. **Метод.** Промоніторено публікації українського інтернет-видання «Українська правда», для цього обрано ключові слова для аналізу: інваліди, люди з інвалідністю, люди з обмеженими можливостями, люди з обмеженими функціональними можливостями, люди з особливими потребами, особи з інвалідністю, неповносправні люди, люди з додатковими потребами. **Результати.** Установлено, що кількість публікацій, оприлюднених протягом 2015–2019 років, змінювалася залежно від тих подій, які відбувалися в суспільстві. Участь людей з інвалідністю в Паралімпіаді та здобуті ними перемоги активно висвітлювалися в даному медіа, натомість в інший період про цих людей трапляються поодинокі публікації. Доведено, що в соціальному, правовому, спортивному аспекті акцентовано найбільше, медичному та освітньому аспектах менше, майже відсутні в інформаційному просторі політичний, науковий та культурний аспекти. Із основних жанрів про людей з інвалідністю найбільше представлені замітка та стаття, меншою мірою – репортаж, авторська колонка та життєва історія. Установлено: історія людини з інвалідністю привертає до себе увагу в контексті певних здобутків. Якщо на початку 2015-го йдеться, хоч і побіжно, більше про проблеми таких осіб, то в наступні роки – про досягнення як у фізичному, так і моральному плані. Помітними є зміни й у свідомості самих людей з інвалідністю, відповідно журналісти намагаються ці позитивні зрушення спроектувати на суспільство, щоб те визнавало рівноправність людей з інвалідністю та створювало всі умови для їхнього комфортного життя. У 2018 році опубліковано найбільшу кількість матеріалів – 50. У порівнянні з 2025 роком тенденція змінилася. Повідомлень утричі більше – їх 103. У зв'язку з повномасштабною війною в даному медіа посилилася увага до медичної тематики, оскільки люди зазнають поранень та набувають інвалідності. Натомість спортивний аспект фактично не висвітлюється. Повідомлення про людей з інвалідністю у 2025 році представлені у таких жанрах, як і в 2015–2019 роках, додалися інтерв'ю та опитування, за допомогою яких журналісти налаштовують діалогічність із суспільством, зокрема з людьми, які мають інвалідність.

Ключові слова: люди з інвалідністю, медіа, соціальна проблематика, інклюзія, образ, медичний аспект, правовий аспект, спортивний аспект, політичний аспект, соціальний аспект

The Soviet era left us a legacy of a stereotypical attitude towards people with disabilities, making it crucial at the present stage to shape a more accurate image of these individuals. The media play a significant role in this process by influencing public opinion and decision-making. Media outlets facilitate image formation of specific groups of people, including politicians, individuals with disabilities, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and others. According to the Center for Content Analysis, some of the most influential Ukrainian media are *TSN*, *Obozrevatel*, *Korrespondent*, *Ukrainska Pravda*, and *Radio Svoboda*. For this study, we have chosen the online media outlet *Ukrainska Pravda*. Given that the formation of the image of a person with disabilities in media texts is complex, it is necessary to clarify the subject matter of stories that cover their lives, as well as the genres and the quantity of these materials, which highlights the relevance of our study.

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The author declares no conflict of interest.

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Ukrainska Pravda ranks among the top 50 most visited media websites in the Ukrainian internet segment. Prior statistics indicate that about 500,000 people visit the website every day. On January 24, 2014, *Ukrainska Pravda* saw a record number of users, reaching 1.6 million visitors, and from January 22 to 24, the total number of visits exceeded 15 million, demonstrating its prominence among Ukrainian online media (Dmytrenko, 2014). This status is further evidenced by an Internews-Ukraine study titled "Ukrainian Media: News Consumption and Trust in 2025". According to it, *Ukrainska Pravda* is among the top five nationwide media sources for news, and its Facebook page ranks among the top three (Oliynyk, 2025).

Musayeva (2020) notes that every morning, 300,000 readers engage with *Ukrainska Pravda*, with daily readership ranging from 1 to 1.5 million on weekdays. As an independent and self-sustaining media, it offers impartial and unbiased content. Its journalists primarily cover social issues, economics, politics, history, sports, and more. In 2025, *Ukrainska Pravda* was recognized as one of the top five most transparent and responsible media outlets for compliance with professional standards according to a monitoring report issued by the NGO "Institute of Mass Information".

Ukrainska Pravda devotes attention to people with disabilities, with most content featured in the section *Ukrainska Pravda – Life*. Given its wide audience, this media outlet influences public opinion about this community.

The purpose of the study is to identify trends in the coverage of the image of people with disabilities in *Ukrainian Pravda* from 2015 to 2019, as well as to examine potential changes in these trends in 2025. Additionally, we aim to assess the level of interest among journalists in covering this group of people.

Our hypothesis posits that there is a surge in narratives about people with disabilities during key events, such as the Paralympic Games, the adoption of legislative changes, observances for national and international days dedicated to people with disabilities, etc.

Theoretical Framework

The image of people with disabilities in the media is a topic of interest for both Ukrainian and international researchers. Scholars focus on the role of the media in shaping the image of people with disabilities, providing recommendations on the principles of covering social issues (Bondarenko, 2014; Butyrina, 2014; Mykhaylova, 2014; Svintsitska, 2015; Fudorova, 2012). Shenderovsky (2011) identifies the prerequisites that can contribute to the institutionalization of the media and the promotion of socially significant journalism. Fudorova (2012) insists that one of the most effective methods of combating the stigma of being "disabled" is showcasing the achievements of people with disabilities via mass media channels. Butyrina (2014) emphasizes the importance of genre representation of media content about people with disabilities, particularly through dialogic genres such as interviews, which will allow this group to voice issues that matter to them.

Stereotypes about people with disabilities and their presence in the media are investigated by international researchers (Brown, n.d.; Brevig, 2022; Cryer, 2021; Thompson, 2019).

Brevig (2022), in her article "The Case for Authentic Disability Representation in Media and Why Our Society Desperately Needs It" stresses that people with disabilities are extremely rarely represented in the media. The author draws on her personal experience with her brother, who has had a disability since childhood. As a result of a lack of information and predominantly stereotypical portrayals of people with disabilities in the media, her brother became socially isolated. Furthermore, the lack of accurate representation in the media reinforces societal ableism, where people without disabilities are given priority over persons with disabilities.



Method

According to the State Statistics Service, 2,703,000 persons in Ukraine live with one form of disability or another. This figure is constantly rising due to the ongoing military operations. However, there exists an imbalance in the coverage of information about people with disabilities; topics related to them often receive little attention, leaving society insufficiently informed about their lives.

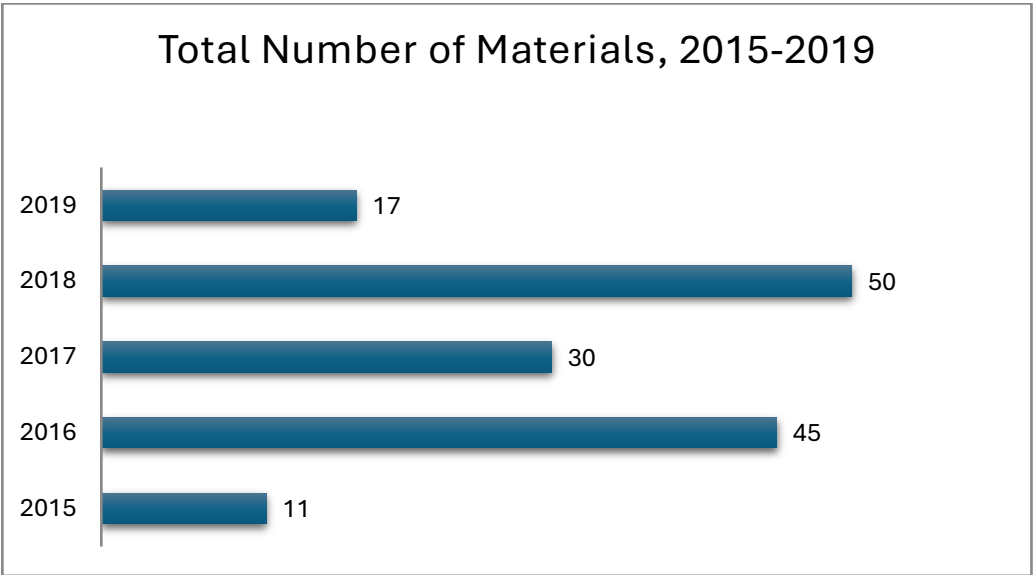
To investigate these issues, a content analysis was used. We monitored materials about people with disabilities on the website of *Ukrainska Pravda*, focusing on the category "health status, mental and physical abilities". We used a range of keywords, including "disabled people," "people with disabilities," "people with amputations," "people with limited abilities," "people with limited functional abilities," "people with special needs," "persons with disabilities," "disabled people," and "people with additional needs." Our analysis encompassed 153 pieces published between 2015 and 2019, along with an additional 103 materials published in 2025 to establish trends in the coverage of people with disabilities.

Through quantitative content analysis, numerical data on the frequency of dissemination of information related to people with disabilities were collected. Statistical analysis was employed to identify trends. Qualitative content analysis allowed us to analyze the data, in particular, the thematic and genre aspects of this content, which provided insights into media trends. The descriptive method allowed us to record and systematize the information.

Results and Discussion

The number of materials between 2015 and 2019, as shown in Figure 1, fluctuated in accordance with social events. Most content was published during the Paralympic Games, wherein people with disabilities demonstrated remarkable achievements. Additionally, extensive coverage occurred during the adoption of a law that prioritized the individual over the disability, officially approving the use of the term "person with disabilities" across all contexts.

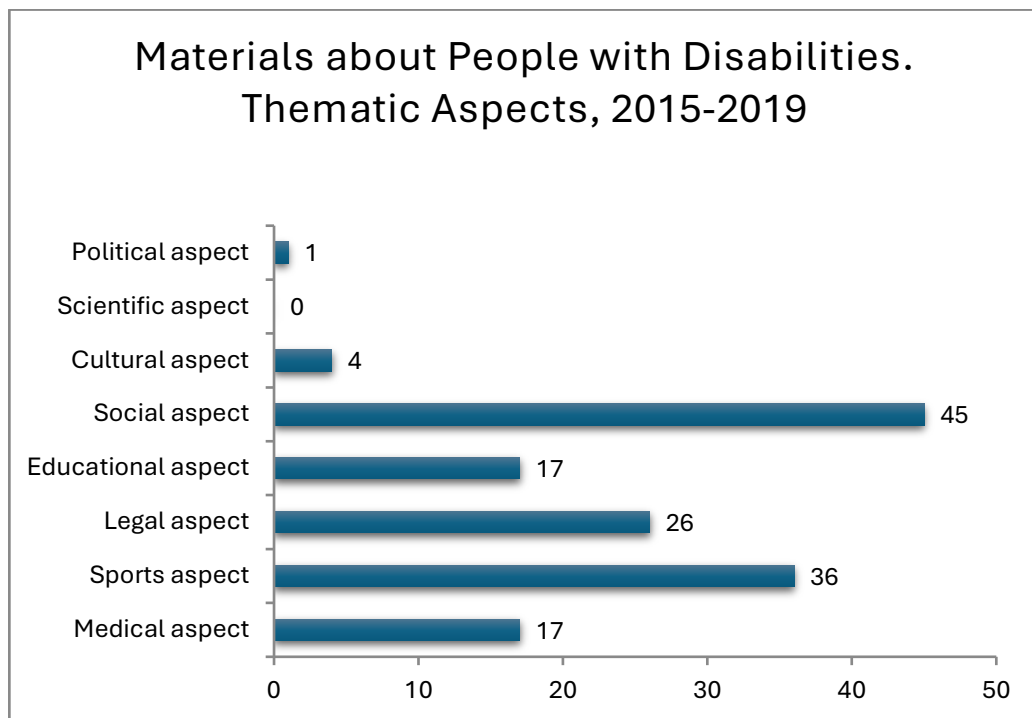
Figure 1. Total Number of Materials in *Ukrainska Pravda*, 2015-2019





We selected several thematic aspects (see Figure 2) that relate to people with disabilities to understand which topic is most relevantly covered by journalists of *Ukrainska Pravda*.

Figure 2. Materials of *Ukrainska Pravda* about People with Disabilities. Thematic Aspects, 2015-2019



The medical aspect includes content related to the health of people with disabilities. We observe a trend that the number of materials on this topic has increased since 2018. The positive developments are due to a growing societal interest in the health of people with disabilities, as parents have become more open about their children's illness—topics that were previously considered taboo. This openness has contributed to the fact that parents of children with disabilities began to form support communities and jointly seek solutions to common problems. The opening of the "Early Intervention Institute", which provides high-quality assistance to both children and their parents, has played a major role in this process.

The sports aspect encompasses content about the achievements of people with disabilities in sports. A surge in such materials coincided with the Paralympic Games. For example, in 2016, when the Paralympic Games were held in Rio de Janeiro, *Ukrainska Pravda* published between 10 and 12 pieces within two to three months. This was an important moment for advocating the visibility of people with disabilities, prompting Ukrainian society to recognize them as equal citizens. Consequently, the media started to cover their stories more prominently.

The educational aspect is represented in materials about children with disabilities, particularly those with special educational needs. In 2017, amendments were made to the Law of Ukraine "On Education" to ensure equal access to education. According to this law, the state is required to ensure the identification and removal of barriers that hinder the realization of the rights and the fulfilment of the educational needs of these individuals. During 2017, the highest number of



materials about inclusive education appeared, with pieces such as "Ukraine Has Signed a 5-million Contract with China for the Development of Inclusive Education," "Everyone Has a Place Here. How Special Children Get Along in Schools," "Osnova" is Friendship. 10-year Experience of a School Without Restrictions," The Council Adopted a Law on the Education of Children with Special Needs," "Must Have" Article of the New Law "On Education," among others. In the following years, information about educational needs for children with disabilities has declined. This trend indicates that while legislative progress stimulates the media coverage of certain topics, discussions about challenges in inclusive education tend to fade over time, even though issues persist. Occasionally, we read about these problems through social networks, but they are not always featured in the media.

The political aspect is illustrated in one material about G. Kernes, a politician, the mayor of Kharkiv, who became disabled following an assassination on April 28, 2014. This context arose when G. Kernes did not appear in court regarding a case involving kidnapping, torture, and threats to kill. Politicians A. Gerashchenko and A. Avakov believed that G. Kernes was using his disability as a shield. In contrast, G. Kernes stated that he had not registered his disability and wished to attend city council sessions. By underscoring this point, the authorities reinforced the stereotype that a politician with a disability is unable to reach their workplace and, therefore, is unfit to lead a large city.

The scientific aspect is absent from any content, which makes it impossible for readers to form an image of a scientist with a disability. One piece does mention Stephen Hawking as a writer of books for children, which he co-authored with his daughter, and includes an excerpt from one of those books.

The legal aspect is covered by materials that have appeared regularly in the media over the past five years. These articles mainly report on changes to legislative norms regarding people with disabilities and the violations of the rights of this group of people. Examples include: "Parents of Children with Special Needs Will Have Additional Leave," "Poroshenko Established a Department of the Commissioner for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Presidential Administration," "How to Provide Appropriate Social Services for Persons with Disabilities", "Parents of Special Children Asked Lyashko not to Use the Word 'Down'", "The Smell of Mattiola, or How I Registered My Mother for Disability". Other topics address employment rights for individuals with disabilities, such as "After the Uproar on Social Networks, Ukrzaliznytsia Reinstated a Man Who Became Disabled in the ATO," and "The National Police Employ Veterans and Disabled Members of the ATO", among others.

The social aspect is represented in 45 materials, which is the highest on this topic. In 2015, 2016, and 2017, such materials were scarce, with only 18 being published during those years. However, the number began to actively increase in 2018, with 18 pieces in that single year. Most of these materials focus on inclusion. This surge can also be attributed to changes in legislation, increased attention to persons with disabilities from various public organizations, monitoring city for accessibility, inclusion, and, in general, the attitude of the public towards people with disabilities, as well as their inclusion in public life. A series titled "Convenient City," created in collaboration with people with disabilities, Ulyana and Vitaly Pcholkin, deserves special attention. They are public activists who advocate for inclusiveness of cities and institutions. Key publications in this series include "A Convenient City: Accessible Room – How Hotel Rooms for People with Disabilities in Kyiv Are Equipped," "A Convenient City: What Accessible Fashion and Art Should Look Like," "A Convenient City: What It Is – Accessible Football at the NSC 'Olimpiysky'," "People with Disabilities Dance Twerk," "Stairs Are Not a Sentence, But an Obstacle. How Dmytro Shchebetnyuk Destroys Curbs in People's Heads," "Without Taboo, or How Persons with Disabilities Fight for the Right to Be Parents," "Buy a Sling and Grow Zen: 9 Secrets from a Blind Mom." Starting in 2019, the number of such materials decreased from 18 to 7, which indicates a decline in journalists' interest in topics related to people with disabilities.

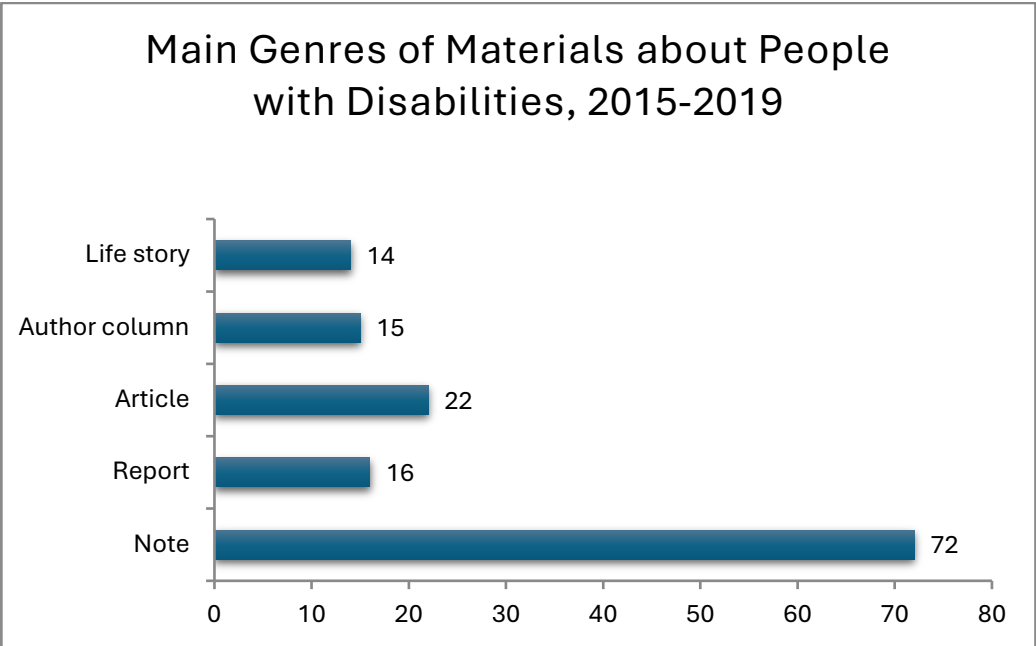


Coverage of the cultural aspect includes only four materials published over five years. Journalists began to write about people with disabilities, namely, artists, actors, and dancers, including stories such as "I Do Not Want to Be Loved for My Disability": How an Artist with Atrophy Sold 1,000 Works," "Recognize Us': How Art Destroys Stereotypes About Persons with Disabilities," "Hear the Voice of the Body: How British Theater Teaches Ukrainians About Intimacy Through Dance," and "18 Photos That Prove Persons with Disabilities Can Create Art."

Additionally, there were materials reprinted from foreign media, such as *The Guardian*, which featured "Lego Has a Figure of a Person in a Wheelchair for the First Time" and *The Independent*, with "Argentinean with Down Syndrome Becomes Kindergarten Teacher for the First Time." There were also stories highlighting the experiences of people with disabilities in various countries, such as "Teddy Dog from Northern Ireland Saved a Boy with Down Syndrome," "Girl with a Prosthesis Traveled All Over Europe and Made an Entertaining Project Out of It," and "Teacher of a Class for Children with Down Syndrome Invited Students to Her Wedding." This is a positive trend, as it allows readers to have information about people with disabilities from around the world, emphasizing the equality of people with special needs and their active integration into society, with a reflection on the Ukrainian context.

After conducting research, we found that the materials published by *Ukrainska Pravda* relating to people with disabilities fall into both informational and analytical, as well as literary-journalistic genres. Figure 3 presents the main genres of content about people with disabilities found in *Ukrainska Pravda*.

Figure 3. Main Genres of Materials about People with Disabilities, 2015-2019



Among the genres, the most common format in *Ukrainian Pravda* is a note, followed to a lesser extent by reports and photo reports. Notes tend to increase during periods of significant changes impacting the lives of people with disabilities. They are characterized by their brevity and dryness of presentation. In 2018 and 2019, reports and photo reports began to appear, indicating a shift in the approach to covering information about people with disabilities. The author's emotions

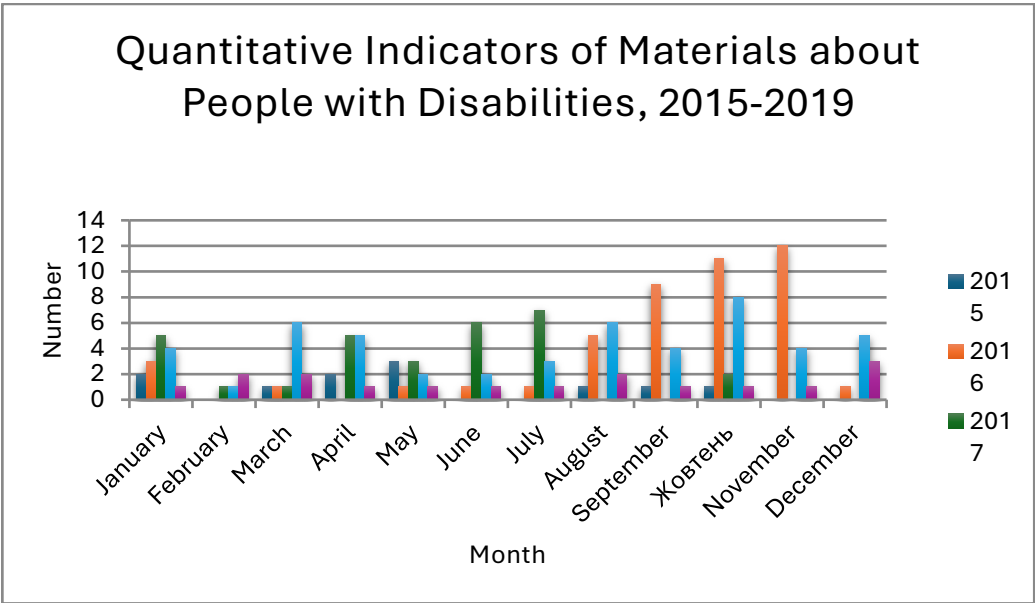


and personal attitudes towards these people became more apparent. Notably, the photo reports of the "Convenient City" series show every movement of persons with disabilities and the degree to which urban environments are adapting to their needs.

Within analytical genres, articles are the most prevalent. In the analytical materials of *Ukrainian Pravda*, journalists provide readers with insights into the lives of people with disabilities, the challenges they face, and the diverse perspectives of experts on various situations. Examples of these articles include "Inclusion Does Not Concern You? Why This Isn't So," "When the Child Comes First: Explaining the Reform of Boarding Schools in Ukraine," and "Dictionary of an Educated Ukrainian: How to Speak Appropriately About People."

Across the literary-journalistic texts about persons with disabilities, the genre of life story is presented in the series "The Price of a Medal: Stories of Paralympic Champions in Rio". In addition, a popular author column, where contributors such as politicians, educators, human rights advocates, and parents of children with disabilities express reflections on related issues, for example, pieces by O. Tkachenko, "Deputies Can Save My Child Now," R. Hreba, "How to Simplify Life for Parents and Teachers of Inclusive School Students," Yu. Sachuk, "The Struggle Continues: What the UN Finally Heard About the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Ukraine," and I. Vyrtyosa, "Leaders, or How girls with disabilities change themselves and the community." Between 2015 and 2019, the quantitative indicators of materials about people with disabilities changed (see Figure 4). Stories about people with disabilities attracted attention only in the context of their achievements, particularly in sports, highlighting their talent and uniqueness. If at the beginning of 2015, the focus was placed on the challenges faced by these people, then in the following years, it shifted to their achievements in both physical and moral aspects. This change is also reflected in how people with disabilities perceive themselves. As a result, journalists are striving to convey these positive developments to society, encouraging recognition of the equality of people with disabilities and advocating for the creation of an environment that supports their comfortable living.

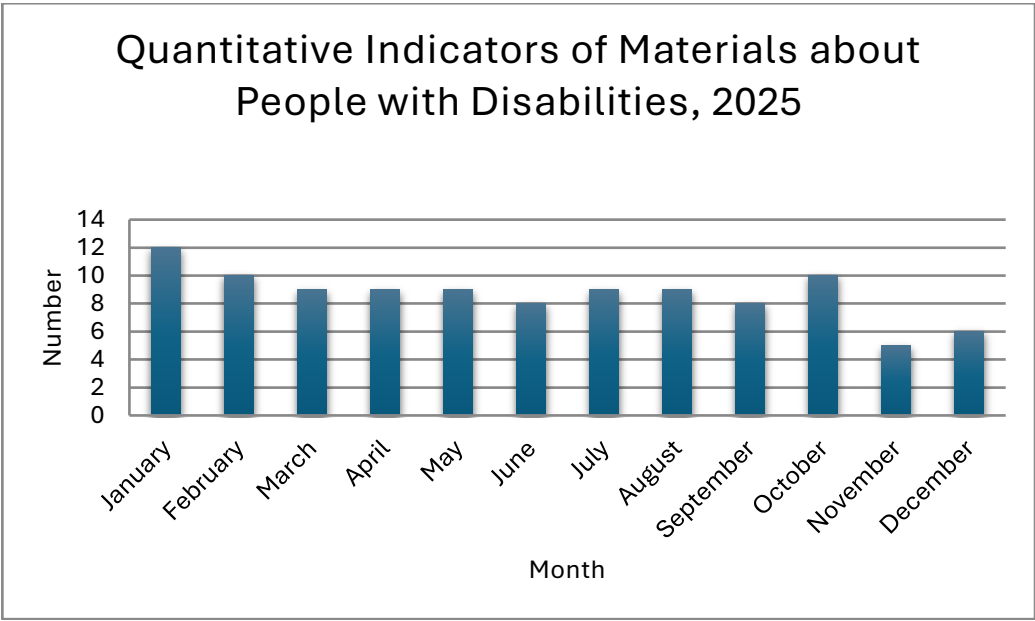
Figure 4. *Quantitative Indicators of Materials about People with Disabilities, 2015-2019*





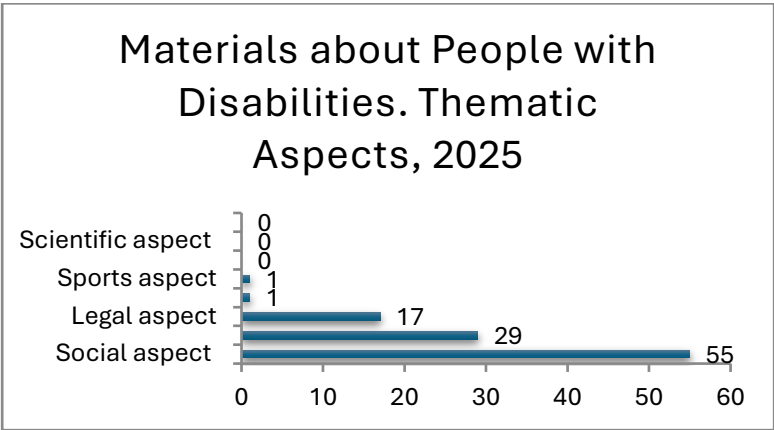
An analysis of content during 2025 shows positive trends: if the highest number of materials in 2018 was 50, then in 2025 it is 103. Accordingly, the number has demonstrated monthly growth from between two and three to between 8 and 10 pieces. This signals that people with disabilities are becoming more visible.

Figure 5. Quantitative Indicators of Materials about People with Disabilities, 2025



The thematic focus of content has shifted from sports to medical issues, given the fact that during the full-scale Russian-Ukrainian war, the number of people with disabilities has significantly increased. Social, medical, legal, and rehabilitation-related topics have come to the fore, while sports and education for people with disabilities lack coverage. People with disabilities from political, scientific, and cultural domains remain absent in the information space.

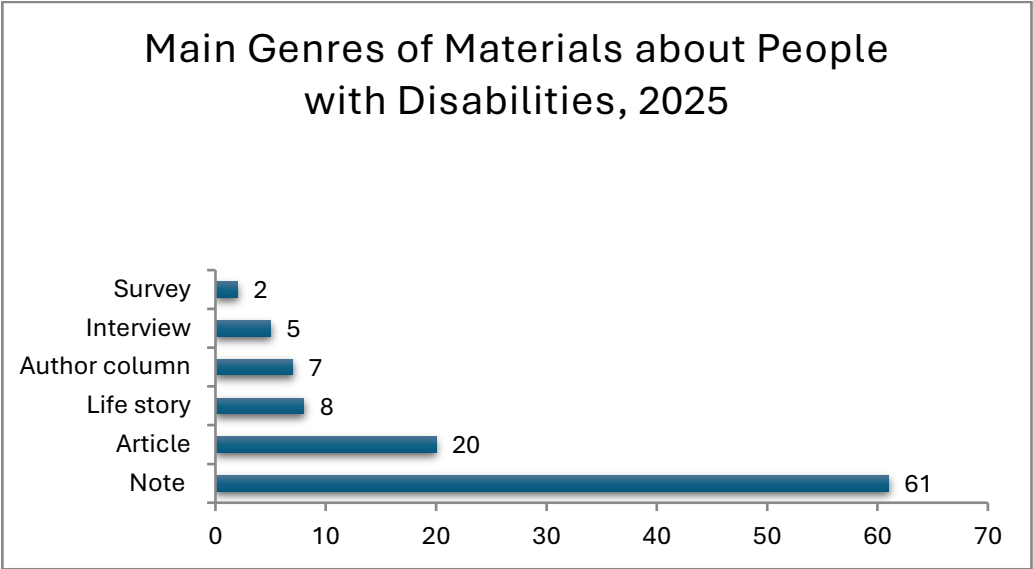
Figure 6. Materials about People with Disabilities. Thematic Aspects, 2025





As demonstrated in Figure 7, among the main genres represented in *Ukrainska Pravda* are a note, an article, a life story, an author column, along with interviews and surveys, which indicates an intensification of dialogue, allowing for the exchange of opinions between people with disabilities and those who want to deepen their knowledge about this community.

Figure 7. Main Genres of Materials about People with Disabilities, 2025



Conclusions

Based on the analysis of the content of online media *Ukrainska Pravda*, we can conclude that the limited number of materials over the past five years reflects a lack of interest among journalists in issues related to people with disabilities. This may indicate a certain level of intolerance and, at times, indifference from the media toward this group of people. While specific events can spur an increase in content volume, this rise does not become consistent, highlighting a lack of systematic and regular coverage. The topics addressed in *Ukrainska Pravda* predominantly focus on the social aspects of the lives of people with disabilities. Over the last two years, noticeable progress has been made in the coverage of inclusivity and the integration of people with disabilities into social life. Public activists with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities significantly contribute to this evolution. The sports-related topics rank second, often highlighting the achievements of athletes with disabilities, which positively influences their public perception. However, athletes with disabilities often feel that, despite occasional spikes in media interest, public attention quickly fades, and many are not even recognized for their accomplishments. Legal topics primarily relate to the protection and advocacy for the rights of people with disabilities, though sometimes the portrayal leans toward a victim narrative, wherein people are depicted merely as tools for achieving broader objectives. Coverage of medical and educational topics has demonstrated improvement, particularly after the adoption of the law on inclusive education in 2017 and 2018. Such coverage sometimes features teachers with disabilities. Unfortunately, politicians with disabilities lack representation as well as scientists with disabilities, whose representation is absent altogether, which results in a significant information gap regarding their activities in these domains. A positive shift is the transition from informational to analytical genres, suggesting a deeper engagement in



discussing the lives of people with disabilities and enhancing public understanding of their experiences. In literary-journalistic materials, there has been a tendency to write about reflections of authors on topics related to people with disabilities. By 2025, we anticipate a shift, as the increasing number of materials and a change in thematic focus—from sports to medical, social, and legal topics—indicate a growing interest in improving dialogue around the lives of people with disabilities. Nevertheless, we still register fluctuations in publishing frequency during significant events related to people with disabilities.

Declaration of generative artificial intelligence and technologies using artificial intelligence in the writing process. The author confirms that no artificial intelligence tools were used to create, write, or edit the text during the preparation of this manuscript except for translation. All results are original and obtained without the help of AI.

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RESEARCH ARTICLES
ДОСЛІДНИЦЬКІ СТАТТІ

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**Ivy Ledbetter Lee and the Soviet Case:
Implications for Public Relations Principles and Ethics**

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The study examines the historical case of cooperation between one of the founders of PR theory and practice, American Ivy Ledbetter Lee, and the Soviet government in the 1920s. The main focus is on reconstructing the motives and circumstances of this event, as well as the political, media, and scientific discourse surrounding it. **The purpose of the study:** to clarify the influence of Ivy Lee's "Soviet case" on the formation of his professional views, as well as on the principles and the moral-ethical dimension of the theory and practice of public relations, and against this background to identify historical parallels with modern public communication, propaganda, and reputation management. To achieve this goal, the case study method was used, which concentrates on examining the historical essence of a unique event within a broader process. The study examined more than 50 major English-language sources. Using the comparative-historical method, the realities of the PR industry's formation and transformation, against the background of Ivy Lee's personal and professional development, were analyzed, and external factors that influenced this process were identified. **Conclusions.** Ivy Lee's visit to the USSR, which culminated in his cooperation with the Soviet government in the 1920s, is an important and revealing historical case at the intersection of professional PR practice and international politics. It focused attention on the possibilities of communication technologies to shape global public opinion and, at the same time, raised a number of questions regarding ethics and reputational risks that should be taken into account in modern public relations theory and practice.

Keywords: Ivy Ledbetter Lee, "Declaration of Principles", ethics, public relations, history, PR, propaganda, public diplomacy, reputation management, USSR

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«Радянський кейс» Айві Ледбеттера Лі: вплив на принципи та етику паблік рилейшнз

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У статті розглядається історичний кейс співпраці одного з основоположників теорії та практики піар, американця Айві Ледбеттера Лі з радянським урядом у 1920-ті роки. Основну увагу сфокусовано на реконструюванні мотивів та обставин цієї події, а також на політичному, медійному та науковому дискурсі довкола нього. **Мета дослідження:** з'ясувати вплив «радянського кейсу» Айві Лі на становлення його професійних поглядів, а також на принципи й морально-етичний вимір теорії та практики паблік рилейшнз, і на тлі цього виявити історичні паралелі із сучасною публічною комунікацією, пропагандою та управлінням репутацією. Для досягнення цієї цілі було використано метод кейс-стаді, який зосереджується на розгляді історичної сутності унікальної події в рамках ширшого процесу. У межах дослідження опрацьовано понад 50 основних англомовних джерел. За допомогою порівняльно-історичного методу проаналізовано реалії, пов'язані з формуванням і трансформацією піар-галузі на тлі особистісного та професійного становлення Айві Лі, а також з'ясовано зовнішні чинники, які вплинули на цей процес. **Висновки.** Візит Айві Лі до СРСР як апогей його співпраці з радянським урядом у 1920-ті роки є важливим і показовим історичним кейсом на перетині професійної практики піар і міжнародної політики. Він загострив увагу на можливостях технологій глобального впливу на громадську думку і водночас поставив низку питань щодо етики та репутаційних ризиків, які мають бути враховані в сучасній теорії та практиці паблік рилейшнз.

Ключові слова: Айві Ледбеттер Лі, «Декларація принципів, етика, зв'язки з громадськістю, історія, піар, пропаганда, публічна дипломатія, репутаційний менеджмент, СРСР

In the 21st century, amid the escalation of hybrid conflicts and the full-scale russian-Ukrainian war, communications aimed at shaping global public opinion and building international relations are gaining exceptional importance. Alongside diplomats and politicians, public figures, journalists, and influencers often participate, becoming active not only in public diplomacy and state representation but also, at times, in justifying authoritarian regimes. Against this backdrop, the issue of ethics in professional public relations becomes particularly relevant. To deepen our understanding, it is helpful to turn to historical experience; in particular, the so-called Soviet Case of Ivy Ledbetter Lee – often called the “father of modern public relations” – is illustrative as he was one of the first to formulate and institutionalize the profession’s ethical principles, building on the paradigm of reputation management, transparency, and social responsibility.

According to Myers (2021, p. 7), “Lee’s contributions to the public relations field were significant because he established the first ethical guide to public relations practice with his 1905 Declaration of Principles, which sought legitimacy for the profession.” At the same time, Russell & Bishop (2009, p. 93) believe that “previous scholarship on Ivy Lee identifies the “declaration” as a seminal moment in public relations history, while also suggesting that Lee’s legacy is mixed.”

Lee’s career spanned more than 30 years, during which he consistently emphasized the need for openness and honesty in public relations. Still, Hainsworth (1987, p. 35) says, “overcoming misconceptions about Lee’s own career has proved difficult.” One of the most controversial cases

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is Lee's work with the Soviet government under Joseph Stalin, which continues to spark debate among experts over its impact on PR ethics and morals.

To illustrate, in May 1927, at the invitation of the Soviet government, Ivy Lee traveled to the USSR for a 10-day trip. His goal was to get to know the life of the newly born communist state with his own eyes, to talk to representatives of the authorities, journalists, and ordinary people, using the method of participant observation, which he often used in various research projects. Upon returning home, Ivy Lee put his impressions of his visit on paper. In July 1927, he published the book "USSR (Union of Socialist Soviet Republics): A World Enigma" in London (Lee, 1927), and a year later, its expanded edition under the title "Present-Day Russia" was published in the United States by Macmillan Publishing House in New York (Lee, 1928a).

Despite the significant body of research devoted to the figure of Ivy Ledbetter Lee and his role in the formation of public relations, the Soviet Case in his professional activity remains insufficiently understood in the scientific literature. The available works mainly record the very fact of Ivy Lee's trip to the USSR and the publication of the book "Present-Day Russia," but do not pay due attention to this episode in the context of the evolution of professional principles and moral and ethical foundations of the industry, as well as their connection with modern examples of communication practices.

Based on this, the *goal* of this historical investigation is to clarify the influence of Ivy Lee's Soviet Case on the formation of his professional views, as well as on the principles and moral and ethical dimension of the theory and practice of public relations, and against this background to identify historical parallels with modern public communication, propaganda, and reputation management, which involves finding answers to the following research questions:

RQ1. How did Ivy Ledbetter Lee's collaboration with the Soviet government in the 1920s influence the formation of his professional views on the principles of openness, honesty, and social responsibility in public relations?

RQ2. How was Ivy Lee's Soviet Case evaluated by the Western academic and media community, and how did this influence the perception of his professional and moral and ethical legacy?

RQ3. What historical parallels can be traced between the practices of public communication and legitimization of political regimes with Ivy Lee's participation in the 1920s and modern models of propaganda, international relations, and public diplomacy of authoritarian states?

Literature review

The sources analyzed fall into three groups. The first consists of scientific works focused on Ivy Lee and his background, offering context for the case. Notably, Hiebert's classic biography (1966a) provides a detailed chronology of Lee's career and early PR. Watson (2017) regards it as the first historical public relations study in the United States. This group also includes Grunig & Hunt (1984), who establish Lee's work as the historical basis for the "public information" model, as well as monographs and encyclopedias (Cutlip, 1994; Ewen, 1996; Gunning, 2018; Parry, 2022; Wilcox & Cameron, 2021), which consolidate and deepen Lee's legacy in the academic literature.

The second group includes research articles that detail specific aspects of Ivy Lee's work. Among a number of key works, Hallahan (2002) is worth noting, who described Lee's work as a consultant in 1914 and as an employee of the Rockefeller company in 1915, and identified his role in crisis communications during the Colorado coal strike. Harrison & Moloney (2004) made an important comparison of the careers of the American Ivy Lee and the British John Elliott, who laid the foundations of the public relations profession worldwide. Russell & Bishop (2009) examined the early activities of the "father of PR" in 1865–1904 through the prism of the "Declaration of Principles" he developed.

The third group of sources consists of works that, from different angles, directly highlight the case under study. First of all, these are Lee's own works (1927; 1928a), in which he discusses his



visit to the USSR and his attitude toward what he saw. Also included in this group are reviews of the book “Present-Day Russia” (e.g., Borders, 1928; Schuman, 1929), as well as press articles that shed light on this event (e.g., Ivy Lee Moved to Aid the Soviet, 1926; Ivy Lee dies at 57 of brain ailment, 1934).

Method

The methodological basis of this research is the case study method, which examines the historical essence of a unique event within a broader process. Through the analysis of documents and texts, more than 50 primary and secondary English-language sources representing the case itself and the political, media, and scientific discourse surrounding it were processed. The historical-genetic method was used to reconstruct the motives and circumstances of Ivy Lee’s visit to the USSR and cooperation with the Soviet government. The comparative-historical method was used to understand the realities of the PR industry’s formation and transformation against the background of Ivy Lee’s personal and professional development, as well as to clarify the external factors that influenced this process. Systematization and generalization were used to examine the relationships and interdependencies among various factors within the conceptual and chronological architecture of the study. The method of scientific interpretation contributed to the crystallization of conclusions within the historical and contemporary field of development of public relations theory and practice.

Results and discussion

Ivy Lee’s personal beliefs and values are key to understanding his professional outlook and behavior, which influenced the overall development of PR theory and practice. His father, a Methodist minister whose sermons were “about thrift, love, diligence, and moral duties,” had a significant influence on Lee’s inner world (Hiebert, 1966a, p. 18). In addition, his father was a good communicator and a good networker. Apparently, Ivy Lee also inherited these important skills for PR professionals from him.

Relying on his own morals and worldview, Ivy Lee was convinced that he would never be in a situation where he would be forced to lie to the public, and thus became “the first person to put respect for the public on the agenda” (Gunning, 2018, p. 2). In his work “Publicity: Some of the things it is and is not,” Lee used a compelling comparison: “To utter a lie to the public is just as futile and will come back to plague you just as quickly as it will to utter a false check”. “If you utter a false statement to the public, it will be pointed out very quickly because there are a million eyes that are just looking for every false statement that comes along. If a person utters an untruth to the public that person is going to stand well in the public eye for only a very short time.” (Lee, 1925, p. 23).

In 1898, Ivy Lee graduated from Princeton University’s Department of Economics (Parry, 2022). He then worked as a journalist, writing for American newspapers and magazines on business, finance, and industry. His education and journalistic background gave him a strong grasp of economic principles, leading him to see capitalism as a model for industrial growth and recovery. However, as the “father of PR,” he also saw key flaws in capitalism – namely, unchecked corporate power undermining democracy and social trust. Ivy Lee explained this gap by the fact that “capitalism had advanced faster than the of the human intelligence to cope with it. Restrictions must be placed on the use of capital so as to obtain, at the same time, the utmost good for the community as a whole” (Olasky, 1985, p. 9). That is why Ivy Lee recognized the strategic role of public relations in harmonizing companies’ business interests with society’s expectations and eliminating moral and ethical contradictions between them. In addition, he considered public relations “the art of relating one’s ideas and purposes to the public, or the activity of explaining one group within society to another” (Hiebert, 1966b, p. 113). Ivy Lee “understood the power of words in swaying opinion and believed in the use of all available media” (Hainsworth, 1987, p. 36). “Ivy Lee’s basic



philosophy was that an individual's, a company's, or a country's reputation must rest on its actions. Words alone cannot bring about acceptance. Good public relations, Lee believed, is a reflection of the policies adopted and implemented by a company" (Primer, 1992, p. 322).

Ivy Lee's socially oriented worldview had much in common with Andrew Carnegie, "the controversial steel magnate and progressive-era captain of industry" (Lamme, 2015, p. 62). Like Carnegie, Lee adhered to the principles of Social Darwinism – the fittest should be able to profit over others, but they owe it to those below them to provide a ladder of opportunity that aspirants could climb, rung by rung. These principles, therefore, not only reinforced belief in public opinion but also later served as the basis for the theory of corporate social responsibility (CSR).

Having founded one of the world's first public relations agencies, drawing on his own insights and practical experience, in 1906, Ivy Lee published a "Declaration of Principles" that he pledged to guide his agency, which included non-secrecy, accuracy, and truthfulness – all concepts that public relations professionals and scholars are familiar with today (Zoch et al., 2014).

Lee is largely credited with influencing the development of the profession by setting the ethical standards and philosophical underpinnings of how practitioners ought to work (Parry, 2022, p. 922). He communicated his perspectives to the professional community through public speeches, professional publications, and books, articulating his views on various aspects of public relations. Seitel (2017, p. 61) observed that Lee "disdained the press agents of the time, who used any influence or trick to get a story on their clients printed, regardless of the truth or merits. By contrast, Lee firmly believed that the only way business could answer its critics convincingly was to present its side honestly, accurately, and forcefully." In a democratic society, Lee reasoned, "nothing could succeed without public approval. If one's policies were not acceptable to the public, he must change them" (Hiebert, 1966b, p. 114). Furthermore, to earn a voice in society, a company must secure the public's trust and goodwill. Lee contended that the PR professional's responsibilities are twofold: "to relate his group to others through effective channels of communication, and to adjust those relationships by advising different plans of action when misunderstanding or conflict arose" (Hiebert, 1966b, p. 114).

However, working as a PR consultant for the Rockefeller companies, Ivy Lee not only had the opportunity to observe the other side of the morality of capitalist relations but also found himself in difficult reputational circumstances. In April 1914, an accidental shot during a miners' strike in Colorado (USA) led to a shootout in which three miners and bystanders, including two women and 11 children, died, trying to escape the fight by hiding in a pit under a tent, which then caught fire (Hallahan, 2002). This incident triggered a series of repressions and clashes, which led to even more deaths in what journalists called the "Ludlow Massacre," directly linking the tragedy to the Rockefeller company "Colorado Fuel & Iron." The billionaire family commissioned Ivy Lee to conduct an educational campaign and defuse the situation. As contemporaries acknowledged, Lee did in fact falsify the facts during the strike in Colorado and tried to show industrial magnates in a favorable light (Oltarzhevskiy & Zagorulko, 2025, p. 12). In general, for his attempts to justify the not always noble business practices of the Rockefeller family, for whom Lee worked as a PR consultant, he was called "a hired slanderer, a paid liar, and even a poisoner of public opinion" (Ewen, 1996, p. 83).

On the one hand, the tragedy in Ludlow gave impetus to the development of crisis communications as an independent field within the public relations system, and on the other hand, it exposed an important moral and ethical dilemma. On one side of the scale were the interests of business, which ensured material development and social progress; on the other – the reputation of the company, its owners, and the PR professionals themselves, who were called upon to balance them. Another important conclusion from this lesson is that PR cannot be a tool for protecting a business that ignores its own social consequences and the public's interests. Communication alone cannot save a company from liability for management miscalculations. Instead, to maintain social legitimacy and trust, businesses must choose a moral position in society, manage reputational capital



strategically, and use professional public communications grounded in the principles of transparency and stakeholder cooperation.

Meanwhile, across the ocean, a different socio-economic reality was rapidly developing. In 1917, the Bolsheviks came to power in Russia. Using bayonets and propaganda posters, they brought new values to humanity that contrasted with the principles of the capitalist system. The greatest paradox is that, despite poverty and repression by the authorities, the Soviet masses were sincerely inspired by the illusory ideas of socialism. For their sake, they were ready to put up with endless “temporary difficulties” and supported the tough decisions of the communist party and government. Of course, the key role in this was played by massive Bolshevik propaganda, which distracted citizens from the root causes and skillfully shifted logical and semantic accents, providing the authorities with total control over public consciousness.

Of course, the effectiveness of Soviet propaganda and the ideology behind it could not fail to interest Ivy Lee. He wrote:

I had heard that the Russian Government, the Communist Party, and the Communist International are all combined in a conspiracy against mankind, particularly capitalist mankind. I was anxious to find out, by first-hand examination, just what is the nature of that conspiracy and how it is functioning (Lee, 1928a, p. vii).

Such a position only confirms the professional curiosity of Ivy Lee, who was “an incessant collector of information and built his own background files or ‘morgue,’ a habit learned from his father who was always in search of sermon material” (Cutlip, 1994, p. 39).

At the same time, Lee maintained until the end of his life that “his interest in Communist Russia was personal and not a professional engagement” (Ivy Lee dies at 57 of brain ailment, 1934). Moreover, he perceived it as a kind of hobby: “Some people collect first editions, some people collect postage stamps, I collect information about Russia... My chief interest in it as a citizen is to see to it, as far as any influence I may have is concerned, that the problem is faced realistically, that we find out what the facts are...” (Lee, 1928b, p. 93). Cutlip (1994, p. 141) cites one of Lee’s colleagues as saying that he had been fascinated by Russia since his time in London in 1910–1912, long before the Bolshevik Revolution. After that event, he became seriously interested and concerned about the Soviet government’s news policy and its efforts to close all channels of communication with the outside world (Hiebert, 1966b, p. 118). Lee believed that only a free flow of information and communication between East and West could promote peaceful understanding between the two polar camps, and for this reason, in the 1920s, he began calling for dialogue and diplomatic recognition of the Soviet Union, even as the US government strongly opposed it.

In 1926, Ivy Lee sent letters to members of the United States Chamber of Commerce calling for the restoration of relations between the United States and the USSR and even proposing the opening of a Chamber of Commerce advisory office in Moscow to exchange trade information. He also addressed this issue to US President Calvin Coolidge, the Secretary of State, and the Department of State, arguing the need to establish relations with the USSR on the grounds that it was impossible to ignore the presence of such a large country on the political map of the world and that contacts with it were inevitable. *The New York Times* of March 28, 1926 quoted Ivy Lee as saying:

Some day Russia has got to come back into the family of nations and we ought to try to help her to get back rather than to force a great nation like Russia to come back on her knees and in sackcloth and ashes (Ivy Lee Moved to Aid the Soviet, 1926).

Lee also believed that the USSR could be a promising partner for American business, especially in the energy and industrial sectors, and called for helping the Soviet Union establish



relations with Western corporations. At the same time, he categorically denied that he “sympathized in any way with Communism or with the attitude of the Russian Government toward private property” (Ivy Lee Moved to Aid the Soviet, 1926).

The “Soviet phase” of Lee’s work was received in the West with great ambivalence, provoking simultaneous interest, criticism, and controversy. According to Olasky (1985, p. 5), even Lee’s supporters were surprised that a “defender of capitalism” wrote a book filled with sympathy for Stalin. Moreover, despite his pioneering role, he was accused of dishonesty and criticized for his collaboration with the American-Russian Chamber of Commerce, which sought to legitimize economic relations with the USSR and help the Bolsheviks establish cooperation with the civilized world (Wilcox & Cameron, 2021). Ivy Lee was publicly criticized for his public sympathy for a country ruled by a dictatorship and systematically violating human rights. In addition to criticism of his political affiliation, in early 1929, he and two senators were accused of receiving improper financial compensation from the Russian government (Cutlip, 1994, p. 143). However, an independent investigation did not confirm this fact, so all charges were dropped.

From today’s perspective, it is difficult to assess whether Ivy Lee’s cooperation with the Bolsheviks was a fully conscious choice. Perhaps he was influenced by his own ideological errors. It is possible that he himself became a victim of Soviet propaganda, which, using his professional interests, was able to charm him with the idea of communism – a fantastic world where, unlike capitalism, everyone lives happily and justice and equality reign for all. It is also likely that Ivy Lee’s certain disappointment in the values of capitalism, accumulated while consulting American corporations, was added to this.

Cooperation with the Soviet government cannot be seen as a clear betrayal of Ivy Lee’s professional and ethical principles of honesty, accuracy, and truthfulness. Likewise, his book “Present-Day Russia” should not be considered a manual dictated by Kremlin propagandists. On the contrary, it presents many ideas at odds with communist ideology. In fact, the book was not published in Russian until 2018 and is still little known in the post-Soviet territories. Ivy Lee admired the scale of Soviet industrialization but was also wary of totalitarianism and censorship. Among his strongest criticisms was his view that the Soviet Government “can never enjoy the complete respect of enlightened civilization until within its own borders it does these things: First: Establishes real freedom of thought, action, and belief; Second: Establishes a system of justice based upon such fundamental principles as the Magna Charta and the Bill of Rights, principles which are inherent in the very nature of liberty itself” (Lee, 1928a, p. 200).

Another uncompromising position of Ivy Lee was that he considered the “enemy of humanity” not the Russians as a people (with whom, in his opinion, everything was fine) but the Communist International.

The supreme problem is how to drive a wedge between the Communist International and the Russian people so that the people themselves will come to feel that they want none of the International or its works. How would human nature react if the Russian people, instead of having to live on starvation wages, were able to earn enough to amass a little property? Would they want to hold on to that property or would they want to give it up? (Lee, 1928a, pp. 200-201).

Lee’s critics also shared these views. Thus, Borders (1928, p. 677) emphasized that

... private property is the basis of all sound economics. Anything else is contrary to human nature and cannot permanently survive. Bolshevism is a disease that flourishes on poverty and discontent. The cure lies in the opportunity to “taste the joys of high wages, comfortable incomes, and the possibilities of owning property.” But Russian youth is being trained in the art of revolution and the hatred of capitalism. This training turned to the use of the hungry hordes of Asia might start a conflagration that would set the world on fire. Thus, Bolshevism remains the chief enemy of mankind. The question is how to smite it.



In general, the Soviet Case should be seen as just one episode in Ivy Lee's multifaceted professional activity as a private consultant at the intersection of public relations, lobbying, international relations, and public diplomacy. Taking on large-scale global projects, he regularly traveled abroad, participated in the formation of American foreign policy, supported international organizations through the Association of Non-Party Organizations of the League of Nations and the World Court Committee, and participated in the Council on Foreign Relations and the Institute of Pacific Affairs (Primer, 1992, p. 323). Lee consulted the governments of Poland, Romania, Hungary, France, and other countries on reputational issues and external communications. In the 1920s, he was the first PR consultant to realize the importance of trust in national currencies (Hiebert, 1966a, p. 266). This highlights the fact that in the first decades of the twentieth century with Ivy Lee's involvement in public relations, a new direction, "state PR," emerged, which became a strategic part of the support for the internal and external image of the authorities of various countries, including the USSR. This experience became the basis for the information policy of the then Soviet government, and was later inherited by the ideologists of the Russian Federation.

Was it useful for Soviet propagandists to have contact with one of the world's first reputation management experts, who had significant practical experience in resolving crises? Absolutely. Relying on the technologies of bleaching a tarnished image, which Ivy Lee knew, they sought to change the opinion of the general public in the West about the USSR in order to return it the opportunities for economic cooperation (and this is the first parallel to the relevant foreign policy goals of modern Russia). But this required not only Lee's professional know-how, but also his authority in the professional world.

At that time, the use of foreign public figures as advocates of Soviet policy was a common practice among Kremlin propagandists. David-Fox (2011) cites as an example the "Soviet visits" in the 1930s of artists, intellectuals, and opinion leaders such as George Bernard Shaw, Henri Barbusse, and Romain Rolland, who consciously or unconsciously participated in the creation of new myths about the Soviet Union, acting in the status of its "Western friends."

A case study described by Gamache (2014) and associated with the names of two famous journalists of the time deserves separate consideration in this context. One of them is the Welsh reporter Gareth Jones, who first opened the world's eyes to the Holodomor in Ukraine. The second is Walter Duranty, an Anglo-American journalist, correspondent for *The New York Times* in Moscow, who denied the genocide of the Ukrainian people organized by the Soviet authorities, and in 1929 took an exclusive interview with Joseph Stalin, in which the dictator appeared as a wise leader of a powerful country. Thus, propagandists used Walter Duranty to confirm and promote the messages they needed – a well-known manipulative technique called "borrowed authority."

To draw parallels with the present day, in February 2024, American TV host Tucker Carlson interviewed Vladimir Putin for the first time among foreign journalists since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine (Carlson, 2024). The Kremlin explained its choice by saying that Carlson's approach "differed from the one-sided coverage" in Western media. In reality, the interview was used as a propaganda tool to promote Russian narratives and whitewash the image of the aggressor country and its leader.

Another aspect of the manipulative legitimization of the authoritarian regime was the formation of a picture of its "international recognition" through the documentation of events. Just as almost a hundred years ago, Ivy Lee sought to present an impartial assessment of the situation in the Soviet Union in his books and letters, today Kremlin propagandists present their narratives on behalf of Western experts and celebrities, whom the public mistakenly perceives as expressing the views of the majority. An example of this is the documentaries about Ukraine, which were shot by Hollywood film director Oliver Stone and which Russian channels periodically rebroadcast as "evidence-based," justifying the Kremlin's aggression in every possible way.

Thus, the history of almost a century ago demonstrates that, even at an early stage of the professionalization of public relations, the tools of public opinion management could be integrated



into the propaganda strategies of authoritarian governments, relying not only on communication technologies but also on symbolic Western expert authority. This, of course, echoes the modern methods that Putin's Russia uses in its hybrid aggression against Ukraine, in which propaganda, disinformation, manipulation, and other means of communication are used together with military weapons. In this sense, Ivy Lee's legacy appears not only as the basis for the instrumental support of the profession but also for the moral side of public relations, where the line between informing, persuading, legitimizing, and propaganda can blur, consciously or unconsciously.

Conclusions

Ivy Lee's visit to the USSR in the 1920s, at the apogee of his cooperation with the Soviet government, can be considered a historical case at the intersection of PR practice and international politics. The results indicate early forms of using public figures as tools to influence transnational public opinion, which correlate with modern practices of strategic communication and international image-building, and also highlight ethical and reputational risks that remain relevant in the context of modern global crises.

RQ1. As this study shows, Ivy Lee's professional principles are based on his personal values and beliefs, shaped by parental upbringing, economic education, and journalistic experience. Based on them, Lee laid down and consistently defended the ideas of truthfulness, openness, public accountability, and faith in the power of public opinion, considering public relations a tool for harmonizing interests with society. His "Declaration of Principles" was an attempt to generalize and canonize these beliefs as ethical standards for the profession, which contributed to the development of modern reputation management approaches and the concept of CSR. In the modern context, this can be compared with institutionalized professional standards, which also uphold principles of transparency and responsibility, but face limitations in the practice of international communication. In general, the analyzed case contributes to expanding scientific understanding of the PR industry's development and complements the picture of Ivy Lee's perception, who is traditionally considered an authority in PR.

RQ2. Ivy Lee's Soviet Case became one of the most controversial episodes of his career, sparking discussions about professional ethics in public relations. Despite the declared commitment to the principles of truthfulness and accuracy, the activities of the "father of PR" at the intersection of lobbying, international communications, and public diplomacy have always been in the realm of personal reputational risk, given the position and behavior of customers. This partly explains the similarity of the cases of consulting the Rockefellers and the USSR government. At the same time, the study's results show that the Soviet Case cannot be unambiguously interpreted as Lee's departure from his own principles, but rather as a manifestation of a complex moral dilemma between faith in the power of truth and communication and pragmatic geopolitical considerations. In the context of its influence on the development of PR theory and practice, this once again emphasizes the importance of the personality of the industry leader and his personal beliefs, which lie within the realm of professional morality. The analyzed case also reveals the problem of personal risk for PR professionals who, while working to improve their clients' reputational perception, jeopardize their own reputations and expose themselves to public criticism. Similar risks are observed in modern practice, particularly in cases of cooperation between communicators and state or quasi-state structures, where the line between informing, lobbying, and propaganda remains blurred.

RQ3. The study revealed historical continuity in the use of technologies to manipulate public opinion, which may be associated with subsequent changes in society's perception of the PR industry. Among them, one can mention the methods of "borrowed authority" and documenting events as tools for legitimizing the authoritarian policies of the USSR and modern Russia, which involved Western journalists, intellectuals, and public figures. Just as in the 1920s and 1930s, the Soviet government used mechanisms to form a positive image of the USSR, the current Russian



Federation replicates these practices, involving foreign media actors to promote its own narratives. Thus, the Soviet Case of Ivy Lee appears not only as a historical precedent but also as an analytical framework for studying modern strategies of propaganda, reputation whitewashing, and manipulative public diplomacy. This study also outlines the path to understanding the expanded role of PR professionals, in which the possibilities of managing public opinion go beyond the boundaries of individual companies or industries and can be scaled in the political environment at the global level, influencing international communication processes. Thanks to such historical precedents, PR began to be perceived as a global discipline capable of influencing the life and fate of global society.

And the general conclusion from the analyzed material is that, depending on the strategic goals, public relations methods can serve as a tool for encouraging openness and harmonization of relations in global society, as well as a propaganda tool for authoritarian regimes to legitimize wars and repressions. This actualizes the role and ethical boundaries of the profession: should PR be a neutral practice of decision-making or an effective actor in shaping the agenda of modern society, with all the responsibilities that rest on PR professionals? Such a paradigm can serve as a basis for further research into historical and contemporary cases of professional ethics and approaches to regulating PR activities in light of public morality.

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