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MODELING A MULTILEVEL COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGN IN DIGITAL BRANDING: THE CASE OF UKRAINE

The article examines the implementation of multilevel communication campaigns as active transmission hubs shaping a state's international image. It highlights the role of creative strategies and digital instruments—virality, storytelling, visual identity, gamification—in building a new paradigm of global audience engagement. Using Ukraine's case, it analyzes exposure to disinformation and reputational risks. Visualization relies on Nation Brands Index dynamics and content analysis. Through SWOT and PESTLE diagnostics, the authors assess the brand's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. A three-tier communication model is proposed: global influence, thematic depth, and localized interaction. The study emphasizes the need for adaptive content design and high-level coordination to ensure strategic consistency in a volatile digital landscape.
Keywords: *branding, digital branding, communication, information campaign, digitalization, model, factors, strategy, international relations, public administration.*
JEL classification*: F50, O33, D83, H83.*

МОДЕЛЮВАННЯ МУЛЬТИРІВНЕВОЇ КОМУНІКАЦІЙНОЇ КАМПАНІЇ ДЛЯ ЦИФРОВОГО БРЕНДИНГУ ДЕРЖАВИ: КЕЙС УКРАЇНИ

У статті розкрито механізми впровадження інформаційно-комунікаційних кампаній, які виконують функцію активного «трансмісійного ядра», їх роль у формуванні позитивного іміджу держав, використання креативних підходів і цифрових інструментів у залученні цільової аудиторії; здійснено аналіз ефективності застосування

провідних трендів, які вибудовують нову парадигму взаємодії держав з глобальною аудиторією, а саме, віральність, сторітелінгу, візуальної айдентики, геймифікацію, що свідчить про багатовекторність і креативність у реалізації державного брендингу в цифровому середовищі та нові правила глобальної комунікації; проведений аналіз та досвід країн засвідчує високу вразливість до інформаційних атак, дезінформації, що призводить до іміджевих ризиків, економічних і інвестиційних наслідків; для побудови візуалізації було використано динаміку позиції України в рейтингу Nation Brands Index, із застосуванням зворотньої шкали та контент-аналіз згадок про Україну. Авторами на основі проведеної інституційно-ресурсної діагностики за допомогою інструментів SWOT та PESTLE-аналізу сформульовано реалістичну картину можливостей бренду, їх сильні, слабкі сторони, можливості та виклики з урахуванням відповідних чинників:політичних, економічних, соціальних, технологічних, правових, екологічних. Запропонована триступенева авторська модель мультирівневої інформаціййо-комунікаційної стратегії України, яка складається з трьох стратегічних рівнів:глобального інформаційного впливу, тематичного поглиблення та локалізованої взаємодії; можливі фінансові витрати змодельованої кампанії. Як висновок, можна констатувати, що стратегічне управління цифровим брендом України потребує інституційної стабільності, гнучкого контентного дизайну, адаптивної взаємодії з глобальними платформами та високого рівня інформаційної координації. У подальших дослідженнях є доцільним зосередження уваги на розробці метрик ефективності цифрових стратегій публічної дипломатії в умовах швидкоплинного інформаційного середовища.

Ключові слова: *брендинг, цифровий брендинг, комунікація, інформаційна кампанія, цифрофізація, модель, чинники, стратегія, міжнародні відносини, державне управління.*

Problem Statement. The theoretical models summarized in the previous article have demonstrated that state branding in the digital age is not a static visual system, but rather a multi-component communication construct operating through interaction with content, platforms, and audience expectations. However, the actual perception of a brand is shaped not only by strategies and values codified in official documents, but primarily through their purposeful implementation in external communication. It is information and communication campaigns that serve as the key mechanism ensuring a state's presence in the global digital environment. These campaigns transmit core narratives, visual codes, and emotional signals capable of generating trust, identification, and engagement among international audiences.

Thus, the digital image of a state functions as a kind of calling card, instantly projected on a global scale. The concept of a digital brand encompasses not only official external communications but also the entire spectrum of visual, emotional, and semantic perceptions of a country within the information environment. In the age of social media, digital platforms, and algorithm-driven reputation systems, the formation of such a brand has become an integral part of state policy, civic engagement, and intercultural interaction. At the same time, a country's image is shaped not only by official narratives but also by a multitude of independent voices—from journalists and volunteers to influencers and digital diplomats.

Analysis of Recent Research and Publications. In the context of state branding, an information and communication campaign is understood by specialists and experts as a targeted system of communicative actions aimed at influencing the perception of a state by a specific audience through the dissemination of strategically prepared messages [1; 2; 3]. Such a campaign functions as a key tool of public diplomacy, enabling states to shape desired narratives, showcase cultural characteristics, and convey political or social messages in a way that is accessible and meaningful to the international community. In this regard, the campaign becomes an embodiment of soft power—the state's ability to exert influence not through coercion or economic pressure, but through the attractiveness of its ideas, lifestyle, values, and visual identity [4].

Certain campaigns position a country as an innovative leader with a rich cultural heritage and strong educational and scientific potential. They span dozens of sectors—including science, business, tourism, and culture—and operate in close coordination with diplomatic missions and global events, ranging from international exhibitions to major sports tournaments [3].

In South Korea, the «K-Culture Global Campaign» plays a strategic role in national branding by promoting the country's image through elements of contemporary pop culture—K-pop, cinema, television series, and gastronomy. With strong government support, cultural industries have become not only a source of revenue but also powerful conduits of the national image, portraying the state as youthful, creative, and open to the world [5; 6].

Some campaigns are built around the concept of closeness to nature, environmental sustainability, and emotional comfort. They employ soft visual palettes, natural landscapes, and concise messaging to create the image of the state as a «slow» space for restoration and humane interaction [1].

Despite the growing number of information and communication campaigns in the field of state branding, there is still a lack of a systematic understanding of their structure, functions and impact on the international image of states. The lack of a generalized typology of such campaigns complicates the analysis of their strategic purpose, thematic focus, implementation formats and effectiveness in the context of global competition for attention. As a result, campaigns are often viewed as disparate initiatives, rather than as integrated platforms for the symbolic self-presentation of the state on the emotional map of the world.

This necessitates an in-depth study of the mechanisms, tools and effects of such campaigns in the digital branding of the state, their role in shaping the international image, strengthening state subjectivity and developing an original model of a multi-level information and communication

strategy of Ukraine.

Research Aim. The object of this study is the mechanisms, tools, and effects of information and communication campaigns in the digital branding of the state, their role in shaping international image, enhancing state agency, and developing an original model of a multilevel information and communication strategy for Ukraine.

Presentation of the Main Research Findings. Within the structure of a state's digital branding, information and communication campaigns function as an active «transmission core»—translating strategic objectives into communicative actions that generate specific meanings, images, and associations in the public consciousness. Unlike traditional forms of communication, digital campaigns operate in real time and can rapidly adapt to foreign policy developments, crises, or shifts in the media environment. This makes them an exceptionally flexible tool for shaping and enhancing a state's international reputation.

According to the findings of a study conducted by the Centre for Strategic Communication at the European Parliament, it is digital campaigns that most often serve as the entry point for international audiences into a national brand. Through emotionally charged visual content, interactive formats, and personalized messages, states can effectively represent their core values and strengthen audience loyalty [7].

According to a 2022 OECD study, over 70% of the organization's member states—which include highly developed countries in Europe, Asia, the Americas, and Oceania—actively employ digital communication strategies to promote their image, particularly in tourism, cultural diplomacy, and international cooperation [8]. Data from the *Digital Diplomacy Review* (2023) indicate that more than 60% of states have official digital branding strategies, and expenditures on digital campaigns have increased by 35% compared to 2020 [9].

The growing popularity of digital campaigns is clearly illustrated by statistical data: between 2018 and 2023, the share of states employing digital formats in public diplomacy increased from 42% to over 75%, while total expenditures on digital branding doubled (according to *Digital Diplomacy Trends*, 2023) as it is visualized in Figures 1 and Figures 2.
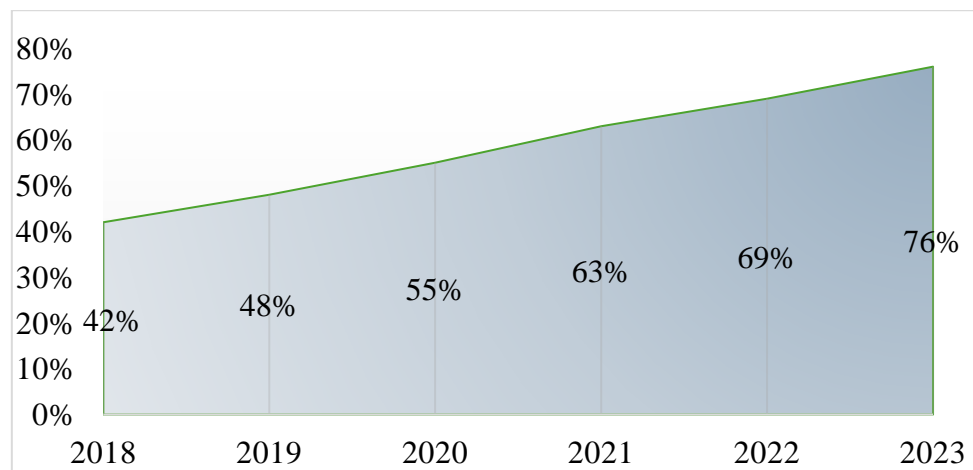

Figure 1. Share of States Using Digital Formats in Public Diplomacy (2018–2023)
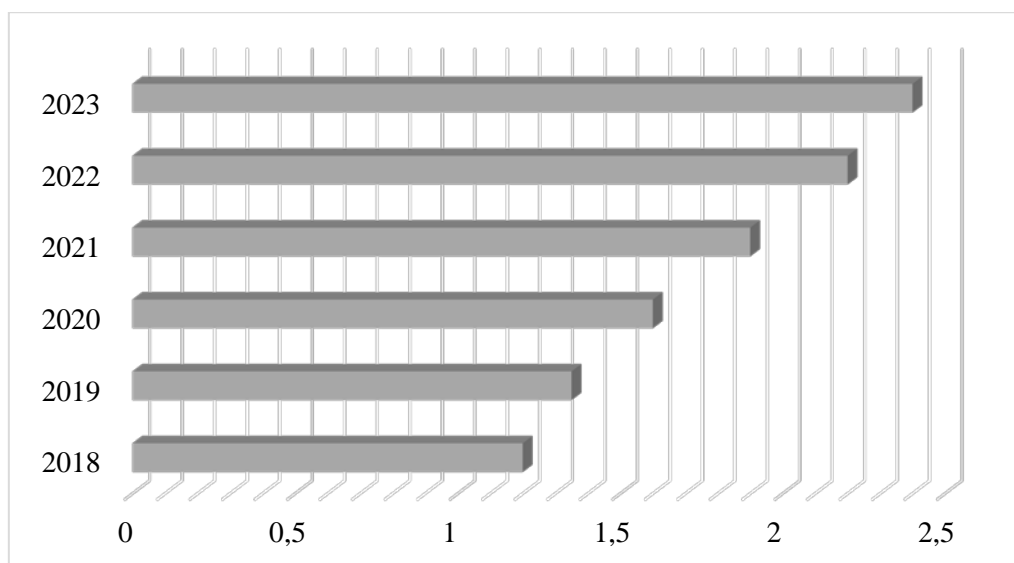*Source:* compiled by the authors based on: [8; 9]

Figure 2. Average Expenditures on Digital Branding Among OECD Member States (2018–2023)
Source: compiled by the authors based on [9]

This evolution is driven not only by technological advancement but also by a fundamental shift in audience communication behavior: over 85% of citizens under the age of 35 form their perceptions of other countries primarily through digital platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. As of 2023, more than 80% of video content in state campaigns is produced specifically for mobile viewing, with TikTok and Instagram Reels generating the highest reach [10].

Summarizing the analytical observations and statistical data, one can trace the transformation of digital campaigns from tools of reactive information dissemination to strategic media projects that set the tone for contemporary public diplomacy.

One of the leading trends in this context is virality—the capacity of content to spread rapidly in the digital environment through social algorithms and word-of-mouth mechanisms [9]. Viral campaigns achieve significantly greater reach than traditional ones, as users voluntarily share the content, generating a sense of engagement and trust. This dissemination is often driven by emotional resonance, unexpected creativity, or alignment with trending formats such as challenges, memes, or short-form videos.

The second trend is storytelling—the use of narratives that appeal to identity, history, values, or national achievements. Campaigns built on well-structured stories have a greater potential to establish long-term connections with audiences, as they enable individuals not only to receive information but also to emotionally experience their interaction with the state's brand [6; 3].

Visual communication, in turn, functions as a universal language. In the era of clip thinking, a concise visual image can convey an idea more quickly and effectively than text. For this reason, modern campaigns actively employ vibrant visual identity, infographics, animation, stylish videos, and AR/VR technologies that create an immersive experience within the cultural narrative [10].

Gamification is another promising approach in the implementation of digital campaigns. It involves the use of game mechanics—such as rewards, rankings, quests, and challenges—to enhance user engagement. Gamified elements contribute to brand building by turning interaction into an emotionally positive experience, fostering personal interest, and motivating users to return to the content. This is particularly important for younger audiences, who expect dynamic and interactive formats [1; 2].

Despite the potential of digital technologies to enhance international reputation, the associated risks remain systemic, multidimensional, and critically important for reputational stability. These risks encompass not only technical or content-related aspects but also the emotional and psychological dimensions of audience interaction, as well as the strategic consistency of state communication [11].

According to the *EEAS* (2023) report, the most common types of threats in the field of digital branding include information attacks, fake content and disinformation, cyber intrusions or technological disruptions, as well as manipulations involving artificial traffic or bot activity (Figure 3).
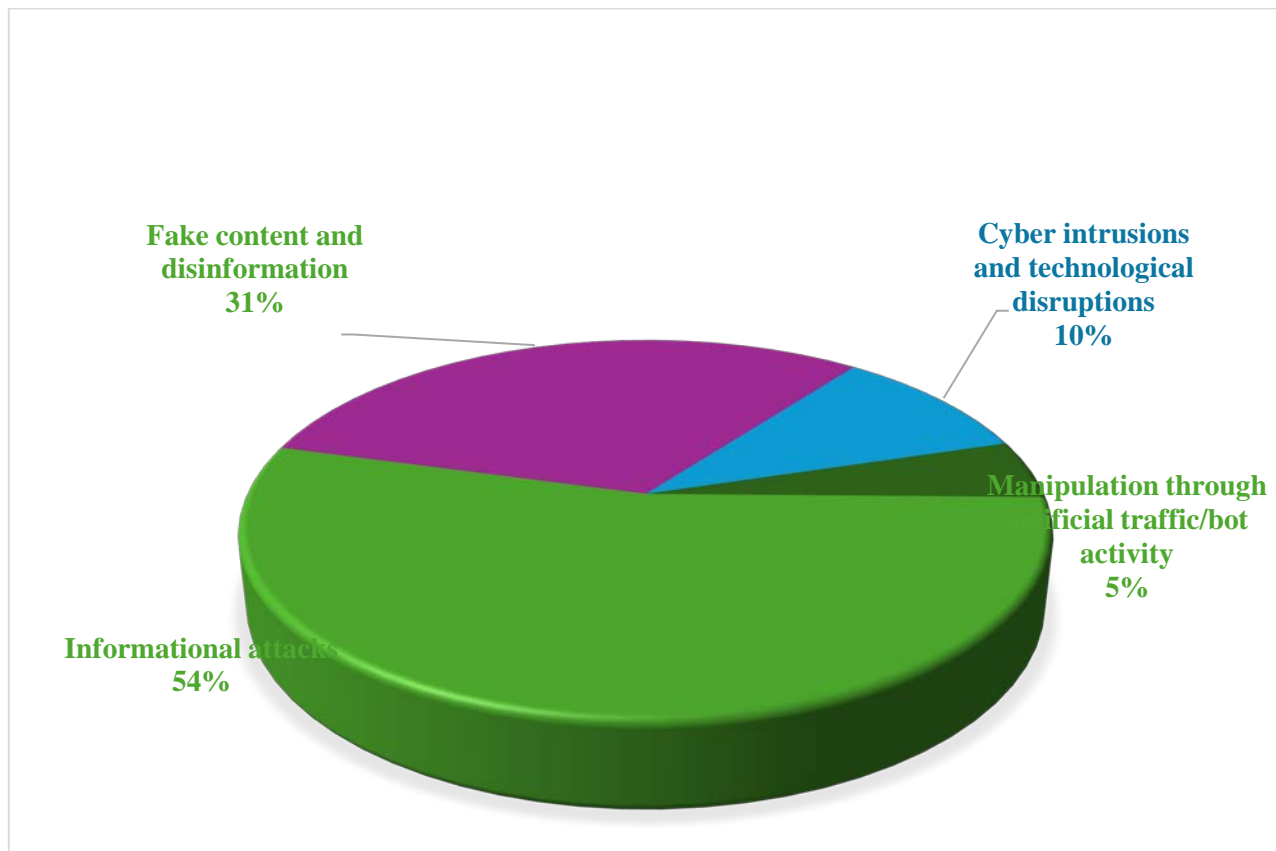

Figure 3. Distribution of Key Types of Threats in the Field of State Digital Branding
Source: compiled by the authors based on: [11]

The data illustrate key areas of informational vulnerability that must be taken into account when developing state digital communication strategies. Every day, over 60% of internet users worldwide seek information about other countries through social media. At the same time, 38% of them admit they are not always able to distinguish official information from unverified content. This significantly increases the susceptibility of digital narratives to disinformation, particularly during times of crisis [12].

In addition to reputational risks, shortcomings in digital branding campaigns can also lead to significant economic consequences. According to OECD analysts, countries that fail to communicate their image effectively or become targets of large-scale disinformation attacks lose up to 1.5% annually in potential revenues from tourism, international partnerships, or the export of creative industries [13].

For instance, the governments of the Baltic states have reported annual losses of €250–300 million due to the systematic spread of hostile narratives aimed at destabilizing the region's image in terms of security and investment attractiveness [14]. Similarly, Poland lost over USD 700 million in potential investments following the circulation of false information regarding the state of the rule of law and media freedom, which led to a decline in the country's rankings in several stability perception indices [15].

One of the key analytical tools for assessing Ukraine's digital brand is the study of the dynamics of its international reputation and media presence throughout the years of independence.

To construct the visualization, Ukraine's ranking dynamics in the Nation Brands Index (2008–2023) were used, applying a reversed scale on the graph to objectively illustrate the improvement of Ukraine's international image (Figure 4).
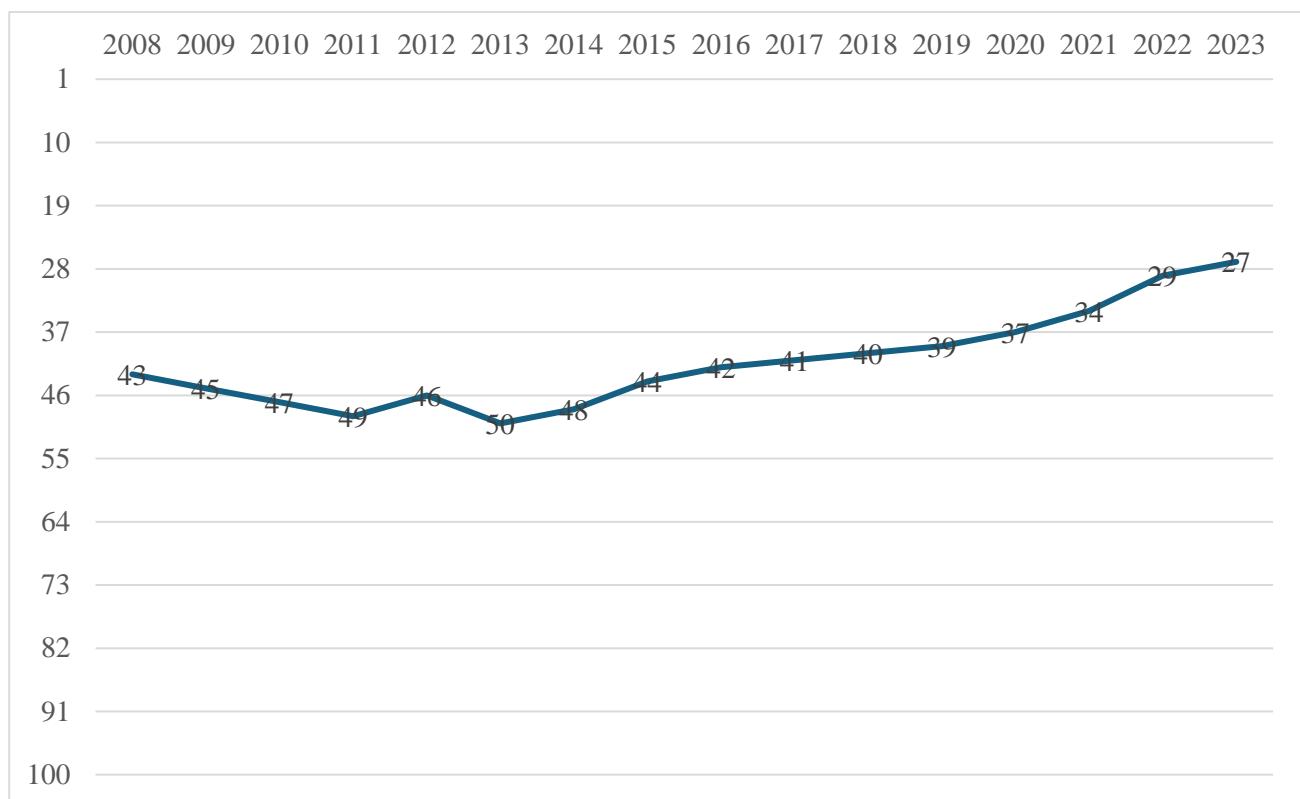

Figure 4. Dynamics of Ukraine's Position in the Global Nation Brands Index, 2008–2023
Source: compiled by the authors based on: [16]

According to statistical assessments, a key indicator of Ukraine's reputational dynamics is the content analysis of mentions in international media and social networks. As noted in the *Ukraine's Global Perception Report 2023*, prepared by the Brand Ukraine team with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, the number of publications about Ukraine in the global information space increased by more than 300% after 2022—reaching over 51 million mentions. Moreover, the share of positive and neutral content significantly exceeds that of negative coverage [17].

Based on the institutional and resource diagnostics conducted using SWOT and PESTLE analysis tools, along with profiling of key target audiences, it was possible to develop a realistic picture of the brand's potential, identify areas of reputational risk, and construct the architecture of targeted communication. The application of this tool enables the identification of key strengths, limitations, development prospects, and risks for Ukraine's systemic public communication in the international information space (Table 1).

SWOT Analysis of Ukraine's Brand in the Context of the Information and Communication Strategy

SWOT Analysis of Ukraine's Brand	
Strenghts:	Weaknesses:
• Stable growth of international support, including active media coverage, diplomatic initiatives, and participation in global forums • An established ecosystem of digital diplomacy, including the communication activities of the President's Office, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Digital Transformation, and "United24" • A distinctive national identity based on a heroic narrative of resistance, effectively translated into communication messages • A developed network of creative agencies, design studios, and independent media producing content aligned with international standards • Effective use of digital channels for emotional storytelling and crowdsourced information campaigns	• Reputational instability during peacetime, when the absence of acute events leads to decreased international media attention to Ukraine • Limited financial, human, and infrastructural resources, which hinder the consistency and quality of information campaigns • Insufficient coordination among state, civil society, and creative actors in the field of public diplomacy • Vulnerability to disinformation attacks, including difficulties in promptly countering fake news and manipulations • Partial fragmentation of the communication narrative, complicating the development of a coherent and long-term digital brand
Opportunities:	Threats:
• Building a long-term digital image through international partnerships creates new opportunities for promoting the Ukrainian narrative. Participation in joint communication initiatives with international organizations contributes to brand sustainability and strengthens digital diplomacy. • Development of multimedia storytelling, cultural branding, and creation of interactive content at the intersection of art, technology, and historical memory • Engaging the Ukrainian diaspora as brand ambassadors by creating targeted platforms for coordinated action, joint communication initiatives, and advocacy campaigns • Utilizing emerging digital technologies (AR/VR, generative content, big data) to develop innovative formats for presenting Ukraine • Active involvement of international cultural institutions in promoting the Ukrainian narrative	• Information aggression from the Russian Federation, including disinformation, attempts to delegitimize Ukrainian narratives, and the discrediting of state institutions • Competition with other global issues (economic crises, armed conflicts in other regions), which reduces the priority of the Ukrainian agenda in global media • Loss of international focus after the end of the active military phase, potentially leading to decreased attention, resources, and support • Emotional fatigue among audiences, particularly in cases of oversaturation with war-related news • Absence of a unified brand management center, creating a risk of message dilution and loss of strategic coherence

Source: compiled by the authors

In light of the identified internal resources and risks, it is strategically important to assess the impact of external factors on the development of Ukraine's brand. For this purpose, the PESTLE analysis tool proves useful, as it allows for a structured examination of the political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental parameters of the external environment that directly or indirectly affect the implementation of the state's information and communication policy (Figure 5).

Based on a synthesis of international experience, evaluations of previous Ukrainian cases, and the identification of structural factors in digital branding, an original model of a multilevel information and communication strategy for Ukraine is proposed. This model is grounded in the principles of open governance, digital trust, cultural agency, and technological leadership.

The goal of the campaign is to construct a systemic digital narrative of Ukraine as a state that simultaneously serves as a security shield, humanitarian contributor, creative driver, and innovative ecosystem. The proposed architecture consists of three strategic levels: global informational influence, thematic deepening, and localized interaction.

The first level of the communication campaign focuses on mobilizing the attention of the international community through emotionally charged short-form messages. This level is based on the principles of audience informational vulnerability in the context of rapid media consumption and the need for visually simple yet symbolically rich signals. The main objective of this level is to achieve a «barrier-free visibility» effect—ensuring Ukraine's presence in the user's information space regardless of geographical or cultural background. It is essential that the content at this level is not only technically polished but also creatively precise, evokes emotional empathy, fosters a sense of collective action, and highlights Ukraine's humanitarian agency on the global stage.
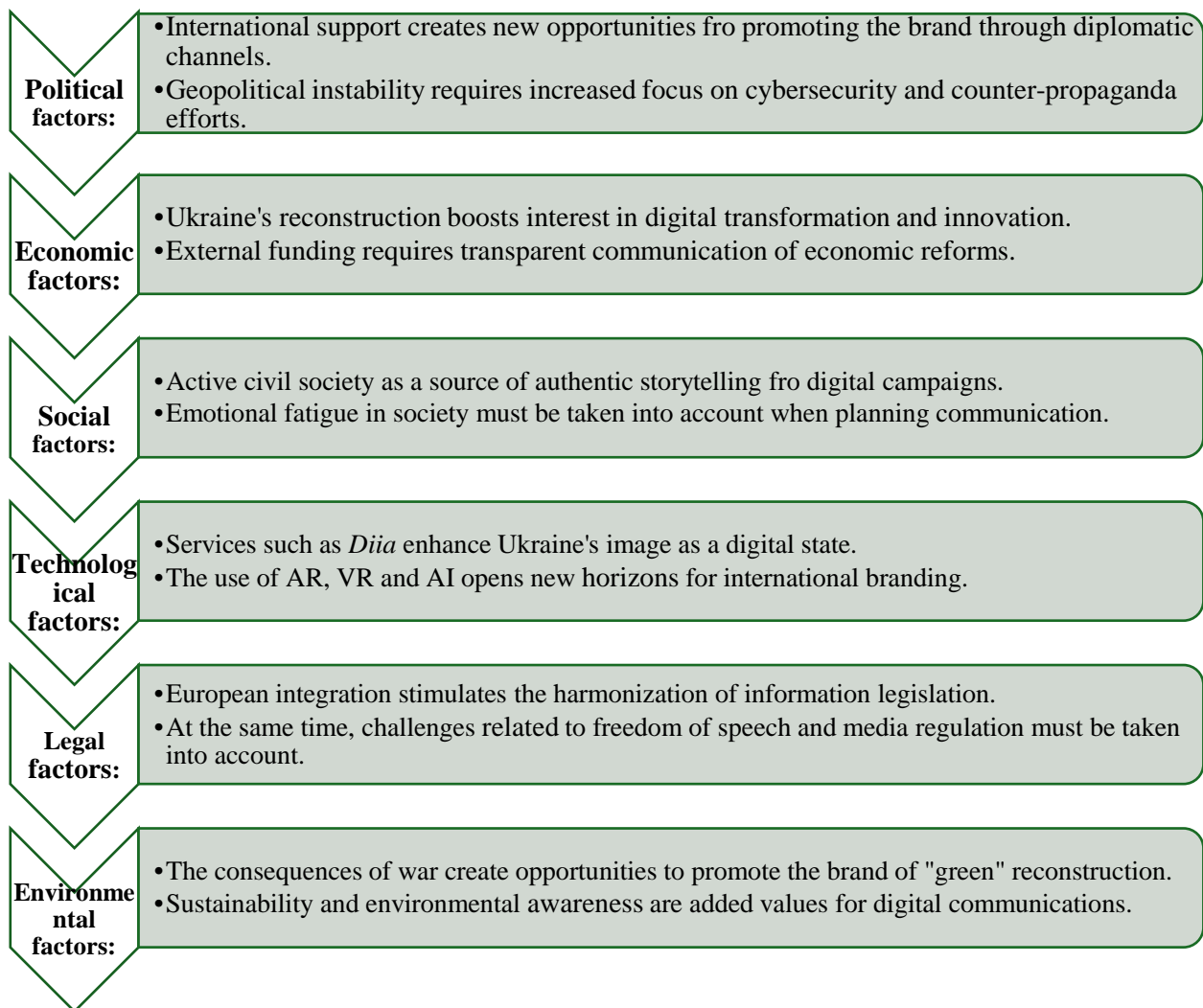
Political factors:
- International support creates new opportunities fro promoting the brand through diplomatic channels.
- Geopolitical instability requires increased focus on cybersecurity and counter-propaganda efforts.

Economic factors:
- Ukraine's reconstruction boosts interest in digital transformation and innovation.
- External funding requires transparent communication of economic reforms.

Social factors:
- Active civil society as a source of authentic storytelling fro digital campaigns.
- Emotional fatigue in society must be taken into account when planning communication.

Technological factors:
- Services such as *Diia* enhance Ukraine's image as a digital state.
- The use of AR, VR and AI opens new horizons for international branding.

Legal factors:
- European integration stimulates the harmonization of information legislation.
- At the same time, challenges related to freedom of speech and media regulation must be taken into account.

Environmental factors:
- The consequences of war create opportunities to promote the brand of "green" reconstruction.
- Sustainability and environmental awareness are added values for digital communications.

Figure 5. PESTEL Analysis of Ukraine's Brand
Source: compiled by the authors

The second level is oriented toward in-depth intellectual engagement with the meanings and concepts that shape the state's brand in the eyes of audiences with high levels of analytical thinking and media literacy. At this level, the focus is not on the quantity of contacts but on the quality of communication. It is here that the perception of Ukraine as an institutionally mature, culturally profound, and technologically capable state is formed. This level is grounded in the principles of cultural representation, the objectification of meaning, and socio-symbolic interaction.

The third level of the communication strategy holds strategic importance for establishing long-term, resilient partnerships and ensuring Ukraine's institutional presence in the global intellectual, economic, and educational spheres.

Communication at this level is based on the principles of public diplomacy, interdisciplinary exchange, open science, and horizontal cooperation. It involves the development of long-term initiatives such as international conferences, public lectures, educational exchanges, research collaborations, and joint digital products—ranging from intellectual platforms to e-Government tools.

Summarizing the effects of the three strategic levels of the proposed digital communication campaign, it is important to emphasize their capacity to function as an integrated mechanism of public diplomacy in the digital age. Through a multilevel approach, the campaign simultaneously reaches diverse informational segments—ranging from immediate impact (global level), to in-depth analytical engagement (thematic level), and long-term partnership collaboration (localized level). This structure ensures not only informational outreach but also the development of deep symbolic capital, which contributes to Ukraine's sustained reputational presence on the global stage.

Given the proposed architecture of the campaign, it is appropriate to visualize its components in the form of a matrix illustrating the interconnections between communication levels, core objectives, target audiences, communication channels, and performance indicators. This structured presentation enables the formation of a comprehensive view of strategy implementation and facilitates subsequent monitoring of progress toward the expected outcomes (Table 2).

Table 2

Implementation Matrix of Ukraine's Digital Information and Communication Campaign

Strategy level	Key objectives	Targeted audiences	Main channels	Instruments/formates	Anticipated KPI
Global (emotional)	Generating support, mobilizing attention	Youth, global online audience	TikTok, Instagram, Twitter/X	Videos, stories, flashmobs	Reach, engagement, sentiment
Thematic (analytical)	Deepening understanding, demonstrating expertise	Analysts, media, cultural community	YouTube, podcasts, interactive platforms	Longreads, video series, AR/VR	Trust index, media value, retention
Localized (partnership)	Building sustainable connections, intercultural diplomacy	Educational and business circles, diaspora	Educational platforms, Zoom, gov.ua	Webinars, conferences, case-studies	Partner engagement, visibility growth

Source: compiled by the authors

The success of a strategic narrative largely depends on the availability of an adequate budget that enables high-quality content development, promotion, analytical support, and technological maintenance. Taking into account international case studies (such as the information campaigns of the Baltic States, South Korea, and Poland), as well as successful Ukrainian initiatives like "Be Brave Like Ukraine," it is possible to outline an approximate financing model.

Accordingly, Table 3 presents an applied breakdown of the campaign budget, including specific figures, expenditure shares, and practical examples.

Table 3

Financial Expenditures of a Simulated Information and Communication Campaign for Ukraine

Expenditure Category	Share of total budget (%)	Estimated cost (USD)	Examples
Production and Creative	30%	$450,000	"Be Brave Like Ukraine" campaign — an international advertising campaign featuring billboards in Times Square and other cities around the world.
Paid Channels and Promotion	35%	$525,000	Advertising expenditures by local authorities in Ukraine: UAH 225 million in 2022 and UAH 362 million in 2024.
Influencer and Ambassador Engagement	15%	$225,000	#OwingToYou campaign featuring international influencers such as Frank Peter Wild and Irena Karpa.
Analytics, IT Solutions, and Support	10%	$150,000	Development of the Diia platform — over 130 government services available online.
Contingency and Local Initiatives	10%	$150,000	**Points of Invincibility**: more than 4,300 stations across Ukraine, with a minimum deployment cost of €17,000 per point

Source: compiled by the authors

The total budget of the campaign over a 12-month period is estimated at $1.5 million. To evaluate the cost-effectiveness of the digital communication campaign within the proposed strategy, basic economic and communication formulas are applied. With the specified budget and an average CPM (cost per 1,000 impressions) of $3, the campaign can generate approximately 500 million impressions. At the same time, an average CPE (cost per engagement) of $0.25 allows for more than 6 million interactions (likes, comments, shares). In terms of reputational impact, the campaign has the potential to enhance the state's international image—for instance, increasing its soft power score from 40 to 48 points represents a 20% growth. These calculations offer a clear understanding of the campaign's reach, depth of engagement, and level of strategic return.

The proposed digital information and communication strategy represents a contemporary model of state branding—one that integrates emotional appeal, intellectual depth, and institutional anchoring within the global communication environment. It is grounded in the principles of interdisciplinarity, adaptive flexibility, and multichannel outreach, enabling it to engage not only broad user audiences but also expert, cultural, and business communities. The visual-symbolic components of the campaign—its

name, color scheme, and graphic imagery—serve as a platform for further identification of Ukraine as a value-based actor in international dialogue. The multilevel logic of implementation allows for both expanded reach and the development of a coherent trajectory of meaningful interaction with the state in the digital sphere. Such a campaign constitutes a synthesis of reputation management, cultural diplomacy, and communication analytics—aligning with the demands of contemporary digital geopolitics.

Conclusions. This article has provided a systematic analysis of the current state of Ukraine's digital brand within the international information space, identified the key factors contributing to its formation, and proposed a structural model of strategic digital branding under conditions of external information aggression and global communication competition.

Ukraine's digital image has been examined as a tool of public diplomacy, reputational influence, and geopolitical agency. Based on SWOT and PESTLE analyses, the study has outlined internal resources and constraints, as well as external opportunities and threats that directly affect the

sustainable development of the state's digital identity. It has been established that the success of a digital brand depends on the presence of a coordination mechanism, a coherent narrative policy, cross-sectoral collaboration, and the institutionalization of reputation management at the state level.

The proposed three-tier model of a multilevel information and communication campaign—comprising global, analytical, and localized levels—meets contemporary requirements for targeted communication, multichannel outreach, and reputational resilience. Each level is defined according to audience focus, content format, digital platforms, and expected outcomes, ensuring internal coherence in the logic of informational influence.

In summary, strategic management of Ukraine's digital brand requires institutional stability, flexible content design, adaptive engagement with global platforms, and a high level of informational coordination. In the context of contemporary geopolitical turbulence, these factors are critical not only for ensuring informational visibility but also for maintaining Ukraine's long-term agency within the international symbolic order.

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