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Influence of political communication on the transformation of identity. Reflection in Ukrainian digital media discourse

Abstract: This article has been updated due to the new processes present in the Ukrainian digital media discourse. The texts that were published in the Ukrainian digital media from 2013–2015 actively covered the problem of the transformation in Ukrainian identity. The article aims to show the role of digital media in the transformation of the Ukrainian identity. To this end, an overview of modern interpretations in the media of Ukrainian identity is given; the catalyzing impact of digital media on the transformation of Ukrainian identity is shown; and it is demonstrated that the European integration dialogue within the Eastern Partnership is stimulating the transformation of Ukrainian identity (using texts from convergent media, such as the “Den” [Day] newspaper).

The theoretical basis of this article deals with the works of renowned scholars in the field of the impact of digital media on various social changes. This includes researchers such as Jim Hall on online journalism, Volodymyr Kulyk on the objectivity of digital media, Richard A. Lanham on the importance of the “electronic word” and Andrzej Mencwel on the tools of the multimedia communication revolution. Identity issues are raised in the article on the theoretical basis of Monserrat Guibernau, Yaroslav Hrytsak and Zenon E. Kohut.

The mobilizing impacts of digital media on society are reflected in the texts on the Ukrainian Euromaidan and Dignity Revolution period published in traditional media and distributed online. The authors of these digital media include historian, Timothy Snyder, writer, Oksana Zabuzhko, and online communications expert, Maksym Savanevsky.

The use of digital media in political communications has led to new demonstrations of Ukrainian identity and its adaptation to new political realities. Digital media were at the forefront of operational information about the events of the political life of the state. Political, social and state institutions have focused on communication with citizens over the Internet, including social media, blogs and columns in online media.

The high-quality digital media used in Ukraine have taken on an innovative position of pluralism, ultimately adapting to a European national identity, or at least cruising along a parallel trajectory with Europe. The European integration dialogue within the Eastern Partnership in the media has been stimulating the transformation of the Ukrainian identity.

Other new projects, which include publishing of books based on digital media texts, are also essential. The Ukrainian high-quality digital media, maintaining the traditions of free media, have reached a high level in analyzing the facts truthfully and adequately reflecting Ukraine’s political processes and its involvement in international events.

Key words: communication, identity, information, digital media

Introduction

The relevance of this article stems from the fact that it was the Ukrainian digital mediad iscourse which activated the transformation of the Ukrainian identity. The Ukrainian researcher Volodymyr Kulyk argues that “the Internet is now a major factor in maintaining Ukrainian identity outside of Ukraine” (Kulyk, 2011).

The aim of this study is to show the role of digital media concerning Ukrainian identity. The study hopes to provide solutions to the following research questions: (1) to give an overview of modern interpretations in the media of Ukrainian identity problems; (2) to show the catalyzing impact of digital media on the transformation of Ukrainian identity; and (3) to show that the European integration dialogue within the Eastern Partnership is stimulating the transformation of Ukrainian identity (using texts from convergent media such as the “Den” [Day] newspaper).

The research subject is texts taken from digital media, and also the texts of such convergent media as the “Den” newspaper, the “Ukrainskiy Tyzhden” [Ukrainian Week] magazine, and the “Ukrayinska Pravda” [Ukrainian Truth] online service. The “Ukrainskiy Tyzhden” is a high quality Ukrainian magazine, which specializes mostly in current affairs and opinion articles. “Ukrayinska Pravda” is one of the oldest Ukrainian online media, together with its column, “Istorychna Pravda” [Historical Truth]. The “Den” newspaper and its new convergent media platforms, i.e. website, presence in social media, screencasts of actual debates, book publishing and glossy publishing are also quite innovative. Its output includes blogs, posts on social media, columns in online periodicals on the events of the Ukrainian Euromaidan, the Dignity Revolution, the Russian invasion and Crimea annexation and Russian military aggression against Ukraine in the Donbas region. All of these express strong emotions using these new media. The authors of all these forms of digital media are journalists, and often participants in these momentous events. In articles, reports and comments, the authors position themselves as representatives and spokespeople of the Ukrainian nation.

A qualitative research methodology was chosen to study the topic of the article. The method of content analysis of the studied texts was applied. To answer the first question, the monitoring of the Ukrainian context of the transformation of national identity was made. This monitoring was based on the works of Oksana Zabuzhko, Yaroslav Hrytsak, Yevhen Holovakha and Iryna Bekeshkina, from a socio-cultural, communication and globalization processes background. The theoretical basis of Montserrat Guibernau’s work was used as an example of the constructivist approach to the issue of identity. Anthony D. Smith’s theoretical definition of the main features of identity was verified. To answer the second research question, a general academic method of the system analysis of digital and convergent media texts that catalyzed the transformation of the Ukrainian identity was used. To answer the third research question an interpretation of the “Den” newspaper texts concerning the transformation of Ukrainian identity against the background of the Eastern Partnership dialogue was conducted.

Literature Review

Questions of identity were brought forward in a new way in Ukrainian society as a result of the Dignity Revolution, and later through the annexation of Crimea and the Russian military aggression against Ukraine (in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine). These questions are raised in the article on the theoretical basis of Monserrat Guibernau, Yaroslav Hrytsak and Zenon E. Kohut.

The importance of this topic was closely considered in the theoretical works by Jim Hall on online journalism, by Richard A. Lanham on the importance of the “electronic word,” and by Andrzej Mencwel on the tools of the multimedia communication revolution.

The basic works that relate to a solution to the digital media challenge are the overviews by such Ukrainian and foreign academics as Richard A. Lanham *The Electronic Word: Democracy, Technology, and the Arts* (Lanham, 2005), Jim Hall *Online Journalism* (Hall, 2005), the anthology of studies by Polish academics *New media in modern society (Nowe media we współczesnym społeczeństwie)*, 2011), Valeriy Ivanov *The main theories of mass communication and journalism* (Ivanov, 2010) and Borys Potyatynyk *Online journalism: the boundaries of the profession* (Potyatynyk, 2010).

For Richard A. Lanham it is important to analyze the “basic intellectual debate of our time” as “the revival of the old debate between the philosopher and the rhetorician.” In one of his essays, he demonstrates a variety of advantages of electronic text, and all the changes brought about by the electronic word in the world around us. His assertion that the interactive reader of the electronic word represents a critical reader and the borderline between the creator and the critic simply disappears (Lanham, 2005, p. 26) substantially reinforces another point, that the book-code (Richard A. Lanham’s expression), which had its special literary and cultural etiquette, is experiencing major changes in its electronic display. Similar changes also affect textbooks and teaching materials; learning through personalization, and textbooks for democratization will appear. Any kind of help to the reader, e.g. readable support, hypertext language comments and dynamically interactive bilingual texts will expand the opportunities of linguistic minorities in the world of literature. Electronic “textbooks” will democratize education in all the arts, just like the invention of printing increased the spread of Protestantism (Lanham, 2005, p. 31), Richard A. Lanham claims. His essay “Electronic Word: Literary Research and Digital Revolution” (Lanham, 2005, pp. 22–54) clearly shows a need to rethink literary studies, and think of them as something that can penetrate society through a literary rhetoric as the West always did, but with new technologies and through new administrative structures (Lanham, 2005, p. 52).

The general guideline on online journalism, according to its author, Jim Hall, is an attempt to “span the positions of extreme technological determinism, which underplays the cultural, ideological and economic context of the Internet, and the social constructivism, which insists that technology is no more than an effect of the tectonic forces which move and shape those contexts” (Hall, 2005, p. 9). Here the author is referring to the emergence of an unlimited number of information channels for the consumer, and the fact that the Internet has a significantly larger audience than earlier media and shows signs of a revisionism of traditional journalistic values, i.e. objectivity, responsibility, reliability and impartiality.

Noting the fact that “[t]he news media were the third global professional sector, after the military complex and higher education and research, to go online,” the author analyzes new practices and understandings of online journalism, the development of an information society, and the role of online journalists. The theoretical considerations of the author are based thoroughly on the clear facts of contemporary history on both sides of the ocean. Noting the interactivity and use of multimedia, as well as direct links to vari-

ous sources, he concludes that these Internet features “can promote a deep and irreversible change in ideas about news in general” (Hall, 2005, p. 55). Exploring such a change in ideas, he shows how individuals provide information about significant international events first-hand, using online Internet access.

His reference is characteristic of the role of information on new media during the war in Kosovo. In particular, Hall addresses a number of aspects of information warfare in the Balkans (Hall, 2005, p. 125), and observes the conduct of discussions in English (Hall, 2005, p. 127), i.e. their focus on distribution around the world. Of course, network information did not stop the bombing, but it became an additional source of propaganda-free publicity. Jim Hall’s study is by no means the only one to focus on the outcomes of the war in Kosovo, but his analysis draws attention to the devastating experience of war on people’s lives and the opportunity to vividly report the disaster. The Internet has truly become a means that finally de-mystifies the relations between war and information (Hall, 2005, p. 153). News about the hostilities in Kosovo was distributed quickly, and the governmental and international organizations concerned could not restrict it. Due to the network communications of the inhabitants of different countries, one of the fundamental strategies previously used to encourage nations to war, i.e. “demonisation of opposed populations and ethnic or religious groups” (Hall, 2005, p. 130) was successfully negated.

One can agree with Hall’s conclusion that the Internet has almost made it impossible to use certain manipulated informational strategies. Nowadays, incriminating materials are frequently placed on the Internet for manipulative purposes. Although Hall made a reservation with respect to hackers’ fraudulent activities, which is not the subject of his study, it cannot be avoided upon further development of these networks. The topic of censorship on the Internet focuses on examples of restrictions on the network used in China for various population groups, as well as placing controls over input data. However, the events of the 21st century indicate that democratic countries can censor justifying it with non-disclosure and safeguarding state secrets. It is still not possible to establish full legislative control over the Internet in any country. Another important issue explored by Hall is the preservation of privacy and copyright in online journalism, and ensuring individual rights for communication to all society.

The Polish researcher, Andrzej Mencwel, identifies three features of the Internet: hypertext, interactivity, and multimedia (Mencwel, 2012, p. 306). He recalls that hypertext is the invention of an academic, referring to Tim Berners-Lee, a CERN academic (Mencwel, 2012, pp. 308–309). The “Internet in its hypertext form is a medium of interaction” (Mencwel, 2012, p. 310). Considering the impact of technical innovations on interactivity, Andrzej Mencwel indicates that the “multifaceted, continuous dynamic – verbal, iconic and phonic at same time – is all about Internet interactivity. Each part of the Internet opens a series of decisions, and in this sense is an effective and, therefore, interactive act” (Mencwel, 2012, p. 311). Referring to the encyclopedic definition of multimedia, the researcher stops at the manifestations of the “public availability of the Internet (and its multimedia successor), and in this respect the differences are the same as the differences between the richest and the poorest of societies, i.e. almost incredible, but real” (Mencwel, 2012, p. 313). Having overcome geographical obstacles, the new media remain inaccessible for many poor societies. Their revolutionary changes are still dominated by evolutionary ones. The determination of the revolutionary changes brought by

the World Wide Web is also debated. In other words, not everything related to the new media is creation and creativity. Devastating effects accompanied by rapid implementation of innovative projects are possible. Nobody can obstruct an opponent from creating messages and content that can be false and destabilizing information. Examples can be seen in the narrative of info-war, trolling.

Andrzej Mencwel wrote about this in an extremely powerful way, appealing to the paradoxical nature of the world and the dual abilities of the tools of multimedia: “the tools of multimedia communication revolution carry the whole paradox of their dual capability, i.e. global solidarity in the service of values and the grand illusion of easy happiness. Basically, what they give us on a technical and global scale, they also take away from our personal and local areas. That is why it is so important to awaken one’s own creativity versus the game of tool, identity formation against playing of roles, creation of specific relations against the anonymous technology of globalization” (Mencwel, 2012, p. 341). It is not possible in this article to extend Andrzej Mencwel’s arguments in favor of the creation and formation of a personality in the real public contacts although such beliefs are supported. After all, this is correlated with an investigated topic, i.e. the dissemination of high-quality journalism on the Internet. It is difficult to outline the clear boundaries of online-journalism. Its positive features are multimedia, interactivity, hypertextuality and convergence. New media are criticized for factual, grammatical errors and for the use of secondary information, etc.

The search for a theoretical foundation for thinking about the Ukrainian new media led us to a collection of works of Polish academics who were able to consider a number of key aspects of the dependence between the phenomenon of the new media and society. Barbara Brodzińska-Mirowska, in her *Internet in Political Communication* article, writes about the arrival of the new media in politics and their impact on the “building of new political and communication strategies” (Brodzińska-Mirowska, 2011, p. 215). Using the examples from the political history of the United States and the European Parliament, the author writes about online inter-election political marketing. It shows the dialogue with voters and ability to discuss the most important social and political issues through the new media, i.e. chat rooms, blogs, forums, and e-surveys (Brodzińska-Mirowska, 2011, pp. 213–214). She also warns against the misuse of political advertising to the detriment of public dialogue and against the provocation of information chaos.

The Ukrainian researcher Larysa Masimova summarized the earlier theoretical conclusions of Borys Potiatynyk, Maryan Lozynskyy and Kateryna Serazhym regarding text pathogenicity in general, which applies to online media as well. A microbiological term is used to highlight the damaging effect of certain texts. According to Larysa Masimova, “[t]he basis of the pathogenic text is formed by a textual strategy wasting the real time of the reader. The formal feature of such a strategy is a violation of the space-time interaction (continuum) of the text, which results in deformation of the real image of the world” (Masimova, 2010, p. 152).

The creation and use of Ukrainian electronic books is considered in the studies by Vasyl Teremko. Describing the readers’ behavior in the environment of electronic books and the establishment of a new reading culture, he encourages publishers to take this phenomenon into account, since the “viewing (scanning) of screen texts” prevails in the reading practice of this generation of “so-called visuals.” In using the expressions “digi-

tal natives” and “digital immigrants” to define such readers, Vasyl Teremko believes that in searching for required information they “refer to Internet resources, largely and reasonably believing that it saves time, effort and money. This is a style of their cognitive behavior. The mercantile aspect (expectation to use the content for free) is characteristic of half of them” (Teremko, 2011, p. 13).

Ukrainian Identity and Political Communication: a New Comprehension in Communication

The topic of this article first requires we define Ukrainian identity, its origin, development and modern interpretation. It is necessary to examine each of these aspects. A new view of Ukrainian identity supported by Ukrainian and foreign academics, unbiased by Russian ideology and worship of Russian historiography is vital for Ukraine’s future.

As was rightly noted by the Ukrainian writer Oksana Zabuzhko, in 1989–1990 the identity of a considerable part of Ukrainian intellectuals experienced a change from the provincial to the European (Andrusyak, Zabuzhko, 2014, p. 96). Yet this change took place with the substantial presence of Soviet discourse in many regions. Another problem, which was also noted by Oksana Zabuzhko, was that “neither I nor my generation in Ukraine knew what the dialogue is and how to explain ‘yourself’ to another person, a different culture” (Andrusyak, Zabuzhko, 2014, p. 126). This lack of dialogue is still evident, after more than twenty four years of Ukraine’s independence. It slows down the acceleration of Ukrainian identity, generating a loss of faith on the part of Ukraine’s population, hampering the presentation and acknowledgement of everything Ukrainian to the world.

The events of 2013–2014 have forced a return to the deeper study of Ukrainian identity in its historical and political dimensions, as a discourse of the dynamics of the Ukrainian nation. Montserrat Guibernau stated that the defining criteria of identity is continuity in time and differentiation from the other (Guibernau, 2012, p. 19). It is crucial to see that early Ukrainian identity, its psychological and cultural outpourings were distinctive and authentic. The territory of Ukraine during the 16–18th centuries fell under the Commonwealth of Poland (*Rzeczpospolita Polska*), the Grand Duchy of Moscow (*Moscovia*) and the Ottoman Empire. The scholar of Ukrainian identity Zenon E. Kohut, in his book *Roots of Identity*, focused on the formation of Ukraine’s early nationhood in the form of the Cossack Hetmanate. He writes that the “Cossack State constantly had to balance between the conflicting interests of the great powers” (Kohut, 2004, p. 17).

Montserrat Guibernau’s theory defined national identity as “a collective sense, founded on a belief in belonging to a single nation and in a commonness of most attributes that make it different from other nations. National identity is a modern phenomenon that is fluid and dynamic.” It is impossible not to notice how digital media in political communications have accelerated the formation of the Ukrainian identity (Guibernau, 2012, p. 20).

The Ukrainian historian Yaroslav Hrytsak expressed a modern view on identity formation in his works: “The survey data suggests that, despite the obvious split in Ukrainian society, throughout Ukraine and in every region there is a growing segment of the population who voluntarily and willingly: (1) identify themselves with the country in

which they live; (2) consider themselves Ukrainian; (3) support the political independence of Ukraine, and (4) link their interests with its future [...] Respectively, the number of antagonists of each of these four options in the Ukrainian society makes a significant minority” (Hrytsak, 2011, p. 171). That is, the number of those who answered these questions negatively has significantly decreased.

An analytical view of the problem suggests that the referendum on the independence of Ukraine in 1991 was the beginning of a new perception of identity in Ukrainian historiography. The referendum received a more than ninety percent vote for Ukraine to separate from the USSR. Returning to that historical reality today, one must pay attention to certain numbers from the past. During Ukraine’s independence vote in 1991, the results were scattered regionally. In the Donetsk region, 83.9% of the population voted for independence. The Luhansk region was 83.8% in favor, Crimea 54.1% and in Sevastopol it was 57.0%. These figures show that tackling the nation’s identity crisis was not unified across the entire country. Public administration experts noted that there was little activity in state institutions in terms of promoting a Ukrainian identity and patriotism in these areas during the years of Ukraine’s independence. This identity crisis was made more apparent in the Donbas region and the Crimean peninsula during the Russian aggression and annexation. The Russian Federation, using military means on Ukrainian territory, continues to “restore the Empire, begun before the collapse of the USSR. This military nature shows that sovereign Russia is restoring its old ways. This is evident in separatist formations in quasi-Georgia, quasi-Moldova and quasi-Ukraine. The real states have imposed an unreal sovereignty with flawed international legal standing” (Shusharin, 2014).

The continual struggle for national identity was made more obvious after the events of November 21 and December 11, 2013, on February 18 and 20, 2014 on Independence Square (Maidan Nezalezhnosti) in Kyiv. At that time, citizens protested against the decision to postpone the signing of the Ukraine-EU Association Agreement. According to Iryna Bekeshkina, sociologist and director of the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation, “around 60% of those who took part in the Maidan believe that they had won but not fully” (Semenchenko, 2014, p. 6). Based on the results of the nationwide poll conducted by the Sociology Institute of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (SINASU) in the summer of 2014, the level of cynicism and demoralization decreased compared to 2012. Yevhen Holovakha, a researcher from SINASU, believes that “the people felt a certain dignity, the rise of patriotic sentiment. The situation is extremely complicated, though, and the level of people’s anxiety is very high, even worse than in the 1990s. This is understandable, because there is a war” (Kryvtun, 2014). As is evident, the themes of the Maidan, Crimea and Donbas have positively affected Ukraine’s identity. This was done in various ways, thanks to digital and conventional high-quality media.

During the 21st century, questions appeared about the harmonization of Ukrainian national identity with European identity. This has since formed a pluralistic identity. Ukrainian academics are studying the problem of creating reachable goals and implementing measures under which Ukrainian citizens will identify themselves with the national state and with the supranational structure of the EU. In Ukrainian society there are still strong outpourings of a Soviet pseudo identity with nostalgia for the USSR. This, in turn, adheres to ideas of the so-called “Russian world.” In Ukraine there is no consistent

societal process of de-sovietization. This Soviet historical narrative adversely affects the formation of a national identity.

A large part of Ukrainian society, aspiring to be in some manner associated with the EU, is based on an understanding of European identity that complements the Ukrainian national identity through a qualitative impact. This is not about reformatting Ukrainian identity but about a consensual coexistence with the EU. Europe as a security force, as a single, unique economic space, offering a guarantee of human rights and democratic values, gives an example of how to build a Ukraine so that its citizens can feel both Ukrainian and European.

Through Anthony D. Smith's theory, one can see that digital media in political communications have intensified the political dimension of Ukrainian national identity. In particular, Anthony D. Smith has formulated the main features of national identity as: "the territorial boundedness of separate cultural populations in their own 'homelands'; the shared nature of myths of origin and historical memories of the community; the common bond of mass, standardized culture; a common territorial division of labour, with mobility for all members and ownership of resources by all members in the homeland; the possession by all members of a unified system of common legal rights and duties under common laws and institutions" (Smith, 1992, p. 60). These features remain relevant to the modern transformational development of the Ukrainian national identity.

Ukrainian Digital Media Discourse as a Factor Stimulating Ukrainian Identity

The dynamic development of communication through the Internet in Ukraine has been confirmed through statistics. "The share of regular Internet users who visited a resource at least once a month in the first quarter of 2014 compared to the same period of the last year increased to 53.4% of the population of Ukraine. This has been confirmed by the press service of the Internet Association of Ukraine (IAU), referring to the study conducted by InMind" (*The Number of Internet Users is Increased in Ukraine*, 2014).

The communicative function of the Internet in its narrative aspect, i.e. telling life stories, has allowed the tracking of Ukraine's most recent history. Volodymyr Kulyk has noted how quickly the Internet can transfer events to different parts of the world, bringing information consumers closer to these events. Internet users can choose texts freely, and the discussion of events and information on forums gives the impression of an "undistorted representation of the position of all interested individuals and groups" (Kulyk, 2010, p. 125).

While this article was being prepared it was reported that the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine and the President of Ukraine had joined the social media (UNIAN News Agency, 2014). The National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine even created its account on Twitter (https://twitter.com/rnbo_gov_ua). At the same time, the President of Ukraine created a Twitter account (<https://twitter.com/poroshenko>). However, subsequently, due to it being extremely busy, the President officially delegated the updating of his Twitter account to the press office.

These examples above show how relevant and important this topic has become in today's world. This is partly due to the way in which Internet development stimulates

the emergence and development of new media and their strengthening the influence of communication in Ukrainian society, formatting a Ukrainian identity. Looking at the example of the multimedia platform of the “Den” newspaper, we can see a gradual development of the periodical, catering to the requirements at the time. In terms of citizens’ reactions to important national events, these can be a spontaneous instant post on Facebook, or a tweet on Twitter, an exchange of ideas on the development of tactics and on further actions.

The beginning of the active changes in digital media was instigated by the Ukrainian consultant for Internet communication projects, Maksym Savanevsky through his blog on the “Ukrayinska Pravda” website. The changes were related to the strengthening of activity in political communications after November 21, 2013. On this day, at about 3 pm it became known that the Ukrainian government had decided to suspend negotiations with the EU on the signing of the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the European Union. This was reported over the next half hour by the top-end online media. And, as Maksym Savanevsky writes, “closer to 4 pm there was a giant leap in people accessing the news media. November 21 and November 22 experienced the highest activity on Ukrainian online media in the whole history of observations. For example, the number of people accessing the ‘Ukrayinska Pravda’ almost doubled (according to liveinternet)” (Savanevsky, 2013).

The growing importance of the digital media in political communications is evidenced by the fact that a short appeal by journalist Mustafa Nayyem on Facebook: “Let’s meet at 10.30 pm at the Independence Monument” was quickly spread. Other journalists, civil society activists and pro-Ukrainian Members of Parliament also urged those who disagreed with the suspension of negotiations with the EU to come to Independence Square, the central square in Kyiv. Maksym Savanevsky rightly observes that, on social media, people trusted the opinions of those who they considered an authority, and who they considered their relative or friend. “That’s why the role of social media in critical social situations is crucial. It is not the call of Klitschko/Yatsenyuk/Tiahnybok/Lutsenko¹ which determines whether a person will come to a protest, but whether their friends or people whom they trust are ready to do this. Internet users have a large audience of followers and are themselves followers, spreading the word. Therefore when Mustafa Nayyem, Roman Shrayk, Andriy Shevchenko, Lesya Orobets² and hundreds of other people wrote that they would go to Maidan, thousands then came, for they trusted them” (Savanevsky, 2013).

Facebook gave way to Twitter. The events of November 21 developed quickly and their display was supported by the ability to give brief, instant information on Twitter: “From November 21 to November 28 #euromaidan (#євромайдан) was the most popular hash-tag in Ukraine. The intensity of publications using it reached 1,500 to 3,000 messages per hour” (Savanevsky, 2013).

According to different researchers, the Euromaidan and the Dignity Revolution events in 2013–2014 were covered online by TV and radio reporters who posted their screencasts on almost twenty different addresses. Besides watching the opposition “5th Channel” and “Channel 24,” one could watch what was unfolding also on YouTube,

¹ Ukrainian politicians.

² Ukrainian journalists and politicians.

“Hromadske TV,” “Espresso TV,” and other separate streamers that provided streaming broadcasts of the whole protest movement on Independence Square. According to the researcher Maksym Savanevsky, “the most impressive influence was made by a dangerous mix of the ‘Ukrayinska Pravda’ and ‘Radio Liberty’”. The first provided an extremely popular arena and the second performed direct video broadcasting from the sites of the most intense events.” The journalists of the new digital media and social media users had become the catalyst for manifestations of Ukrainian identity. The people felt the mobilizing factor of the media. Due to all this activity, the rally on November 24, 2013 in Kyiv attracted one hundred thousand protesters. The traditional media that supported the European aspirations of the Ukrainian people also played a positive role. However, many researchers believe that the new digital and social media played a far greater role.

In September 2014, during a Publishers’ Forum in Lviv, the Ukrainian writer Oksana Zabuzhko, together with drafters and publishers, presented the book “Witnesses’ Chronicle. Nine Months of Ukrainian Resistance.” This project arose as a result of revisiting the messages on online media. The text of the compiler says that the second Ukrainian Maidan began through social media. “It was Facebook which provided the freshest information and helped to gather people and eventually funds for victims of the Maidan and for the army reactivated by Ukrainians themselves” (Zabuzhko, Teren, 2014, p. 4). This book is a living picture of the national historical memory, the actual history of changes in the psychology of people during the peaceful protests and the national liberation war. More than one hundred authors whose works are placed in the book participated in and witnessed these tragic events of modern Ukrainian history. Their stories, poems, comments, and information present a mosaic portrait of Ukrainian identity. This identity went beyond the theoretical standards. This identity had been born through national unity and through the high dignity of these patriots. “A new national infrastructure is formed,” writes one of the authors of the Euromaidan events (Zabuzhko, Teren, 2014, p. 32). The importance of this book project is that it made it possible to read the thoughts and feelings of many ordinary witnesses of extraordinary events in modern Ukrainian history. People can read them despite the availability or unavailability of access to online media. The project is important, for it documented living history. This living history can be forgotten or lost, as the book compilers explain, because of the specific configurations of social media, and through the efforts of administrators from neighboring states, which are designed “to block, erase, and rewrite our living history” (Zabuzhko, Teren, 2014, p. 4).

The living history “was and is eradicated” from online media due to the continuation of the Soviet politics that falsified all things Ukrainian while it was a part of the USSR. This is the influence of stereotyping. The Soviet imperial myth pushed the impossibility of Ukraine’s existence outside of the Russian reality. This was also maintained and further reinforced by military aggression. The Ukrainian identity is being created in such circumstances of political communication. Online media are a good tool in this process.

The contemporary Ukrainian writer and philosopher, Ivan Dziuba, says that the European nations have gone through a strengthening of their identity during two centuries, and now they only have to adjust its development. By contrast, “Ukraine needs to create a new identity, though not from scratch, but in a much more complex environment, in terms of global integration, in an infinite space of global challenges and imperatives” (Dziuba, 2011, p. 34).

The Ukrainian “otherness” was described in the comments on social media by the authors of the “Witnesses’ Chronicles.” They wrote it as their own confession on the markers of Ukrainian identity: “Can you imagine that the Russians, every hour of an endless protest, would sing a unifying song as we sing our anthem? They just do not have such an ode. Their anthem is an instruction to whom and under what circumstances they should obey” (Zabuzhko, Teren, 2014, p. 128). The Russian propaganda pressure in Ukrainian territories generates the opposite effect, i.e. strengthening of the national unity in the face of various threats. Under these conditions, the civil society continues to develop and the political nation is cemented. According to the researcher at the Carnegie Moscow Center, Lilia Shevtsova, “the Kremlin’s policy ‘from enforcement to love’ facilitated the development of Ukrainian national identity and reinforced its aspiration for strengthening its sovereignty” (Shevtsova, 2013).

Continuing their studies of the qualitative transformations of Ukrainian society, the authors of blogs and posts on social media express concern about Ukraine’s future. Will Ukrainian society and its government avoid the mistakes that have previously hindered Ukraine becoming a truly independent sovereign state? Will this nation actually unite around its prescribed democratic values? The Euromaidan and the Dignity Revolution, as well as the anti-terrorist operation in Eastern Ukraine, demonstrated a Ukrainian patriotism, dignity, and the ability to defend the ideals of justice. However, thousands of lives were lost for this position. This was a high price to pay for the political challenge. The authors of the “Witnesses’ Chronicles” offer some persuasive words: “Ironically, it all started with our desire to be Europeans. Ironically, we were distinguished from Europeans (among other things) by such a non-European feature as forgetting. Failure to build a single line of historical memory, interruption and forgetting our experiences... Those who squander the chance to become Europeans have another chance from the history... This time the price of our ignorance was too high” (Zabuzhko, Teren, 2014, p. 133).

The objective of this study is to analyze digital media, showing their activity in political communications, stimulating the development of the Ukrainian identity to some extent. One of the oldest Ukrainian online media, “Ukrayinska Pravda,” began as an informative source. However, its topics eventually expanded, and now, this multidisciplinary resource is rich, in particular, in high-quality opinion journalism articles, and has such current columns as “Istorychna Pravda,” and “Yevropeyska Pravda” [European Truth].

The collection of video clips of “Istorychna Pravda:” “The Orange Revolution: 20 Memorable Videos” has attracted attention for the large number of views. The collection editors wrote that in 2004, when the Orange Revolution was going on, when the people stood for fair elections in Kyiv at Independence Square, “there was no YouTube or similar services. One had to post a video on certain servers in a particular format (.wmv, .mp4 etc.), and then pass the link for viewers to download and watch. Therefore those videos did not go viral. The situation was changed by the ‘5 Kanal’ [5th Channel],³ which started posting the latest videos on its website. They were downloaded and discussed” (*The Orange Revolution: 20 remembered videos*, 2010). Many articles on the “Istorychna Pravda” column are consolidated by the idea of stories about the Ukrainian quality (nature), the fates of the prominent Ukrainians, and the Ukrainian identity. One

³ The Ukrainian TV Channel.

of the publications is the Inaugural Speech of the leading American historian, professor of Yale University, Timothy Snyder, on the occasion of the new academic year at the Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv: “The historian does not possess the truth, is not necessarily sure to find it, but is searching for it.” This is a vivid manifestation of the integrative humanitarian project. This Yale University professor, one of the most respected experts on Eastern Europe, put much effort into the study of Ukraine’s newest history. The international conference “Ukraine: Thinking Together” organized by Timothy Snyder in May 2014 was widely shown on digital media, on the website of the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, and the “Krytyka. The International Review of Books” [Critics] online magazine distributed it widely on Facebook. Timothy Snyder’s speech dealt with the Ukrainian nation as a European one, and therefore the Ukrainian future being a European future. “I talk about how the nature of the European challenge has changed and what, in my opinion, it is now,” Timothy Snyder said (Snyder, 2014, p. 39).

There is an important relationship between digital and paper media. In this case, it is in the form of a book. From December 2013 to August 2014, Timothy Snyder published several articles on Ukrainian events in the context of European history. His texts reached Ukrainian readers via different websites from European media. Now they, and the text of the lecture given at the International Conference have been compiled in the book “Ukrainian History, Russian Politics, European Future” (Snyder, 2014).

There is another aspect little explored by Ukrainian researchers and academics regarding the use of digital media in communications. The role of intellectual and pop culture leaders of the nation has also influenced Ukraine’s identity. For example, on August 24, 2014, on Ukraine’s Independence Day, a concert by one of the most popular Ukrainian rock bands Okean Elzy in Lviv, was broadcast live on “1+1” TV Channel.⁴ However, the audience compiled the playlist for this concert. On the eve of the concert the website of “1+1” TV Channel arranged for online voting. The Internet users chose 23 songs that “Ukraine heard on its birthday.” The bandleader, Svyatoslav Vakarchuk, spoke eloquently about the unity of the people and the faith of the future of the state between songs. Over 40,000 attendees of this concert sang Ukraine’s national anthem during the concert (*Okean Elzy. Concert in Lviv. Anthem of Ukraine*, 2014). Earlier, on December 14, 2013, Okean Elzy gave a free concert at Euromaidan (Independence Square) in Kyiv. On the eve of the concert, the frontman Svyatoslav Vakarchuk wrote on his Twitter account: “The important things unite people.” The videos and photos from the concert, where roughly 200,000 people (according to unofficial estimates) gathered in the central square of the capital of Ukraine and sang the national anthem together, were reposted on social media (*Anthem of Ukraine on Euromaidan*) (*Okean Elzy*, 2013).

Videos and photos from the different events can be seen in the area of digital media. The video by “Radio Liberty” journalist, Andriy Dubchak, “Rally in #Euromaidan,” became a finalist in the international competition The Lovie Awards. The mission of the Lovie Awards is “to recognize the unique and resonant nature of the European Internet community – from Europe’s top web and creative networks and content publishers, to cultural and political organizations and bedroom bloggers” (*The Lovie Awards*, 2014).

⁴ The Ukrainian TV Channel.

According to “Radio Liberty” and “Telekritika” [TVCritics] websites, this video was posted on Internet sites and broadcast by such world media as ABC News, CBN News, CNN, “The New York Times”, “The Washington Post”, etc. The video was shared on Facebook more than 10,000 times. On the “Radio Liberty” website, it was viewed over 100,000 times (*The video shot by Radio Liberty from the “Christmas tree” on the Maidan, has got into the final of the international competition*, 2014).

Research into media discourse discloses new approaches to analyzing the actual ideas that authors present in their works. Ewa M. Thompson, in her work “Imperial Knowledge: Russian Literature and Colonialism” rightly took note that “literature is a very important building block to express the national identity” (Thompson, 2006, p. 31). In other words, the opinion journalism in the high-quality Ukrainian media plays the same crucial role in digital media.

Convergent Media: Ukrainian-Polish Dialogue as a Part of Identity Formation

It is not possible to consider digital media separately from the phenomenon of online platforms of traditional paper periodicals. The example of high-quality Ukrainian symbiosis between traditional and new, the convergence of both media, is the “Den” newspaper. It features Ukrainian, Russian and English versions in paper and online media. The books published by it also consist of articles in Ukrainian, Russian, Polish and English. The newspaper website is maintained in three languages. The site has a news column, blogs, “Den-TV” posting live footage and studio conversations, photo reports, announcements of creative events of the “Den” newspaper, i.e. photo exhibitions, editor’s meetings with Ukrainian university students, presentations of books containing the journalistic articles of the newspaper, as well as reprints of works of the outstanding Ukrainian philosophers of the 19th and 20th centuries.

The topics of the “Den” newspaper website in some cases are wider than in the paper version. It focuses on humanitarian, international, historical, state, religious, economic and urban issues. The newspaper consistently highlights the various aspects of relations between Poland and Ukraine at different historical stages. Not claiming a consistent historical plan, the authors of journalistic studies create a mosaic picture of the events and facts which are the least studied by Ukrainian historians of the 20th century. A separate topic covers the journalistic articles by Oxana Pachlowska about whether the relations between Ukraine and Poland were within “new civilizational contexts” after the collapse of the communist regimes (Pachlowska, 2012, p. 524). Oxana Pachlowska sees the problems of a Ukrainian blurred with a “virtual” European integration state as follows: “If there is no European perspective in the cultural mentality of society and its elites, no convincing program of the European integration can appear at the subsequent institutional level” (Pachlowska, 2012, p. 527). This narrative, in fact, creates the topics of high-quality journalism articles, which are consistently and tirelessly defining the European perspective of society and presenting the Ukrainian identity as a process influenced by the Polish experience. Although such an axiological approach is taken by a small part of Ukrainian media, it is noticeable and significant from the point of view of communicative interaction between the author and the reader.

Several analytical articles in the “Den” newspaper were related to the activities of Symon Petliura and Józef Piłsudski. The Ukrainian academic arsenal contains rather a lot of works about these individuals, their contribution to the construction of their own independent states and the formation of nations. However, in their temporal and spatial perception, these historical figures appear ambiguous. For Poland and for Poles, Józef Piłsudski is a hero enjoying the appropriate respect in the society. In Ukraine, the issue of honoring Symon Petliura is still under discussion. These “differences” give food for thought to speculation and ambiguity in the emerging Ukrainian civil society. The authors of the “Den” newspaper try to find answers to the causes and consequences of the lost opportunities for Ukrainian state-building against the background of the development and progress of Poland.

The consideration of “understanding and reconciliation” problems in the “Den” newspaper contributed to the emergence of books on the subject, published and reprinted in Ukrainian and Polish. This rewarding experience found no great response from the Ukrainian media. As was noted by Andrzej Paczkowski, the academic discussions of Ukrainian and Polish historians have bigger audiences in Poland since they are broadcast on the main channels in Poland (Paczkowski, 2014, p. 151).

In Ukraine, where national identity is continuing to be formed, it is important that the convergent media, such as the “Den” newspaper, appeal to the topics of Ukrainian-Polish neighborhood, with a new reading of the historical memory of Ukrainians and Poles, and a pluralistic coordination of national identities within a European one.

The Ukrainian researchers presenting articles in the printed media, for example, explain the paradox of a Ukrainian understanding of the individual’s role in the development of the post-colonial and post-genocidal state of Ukrainian society through the lack of a sufficient number of members of the Ukrainian intellectual elite in public posts, the inertia of public organizations and right-wing political parties, geopolitical processes, a weakness of propaganda reasoning in the media, and a not fully formed identity, through linguistic, cultural and religious means.

These developments should not be rejected, but it is advisable to refer to the opinion of the Polish historian, Ewa Domanska: “The point is that, based on worldwide trends prevailing in contemporary humanities, and the use of selected theories as an interpretative framework, it enables a formulation of projects and initial research questions to seek the articulation of their own theoretical proposals which could enter the humanitarian and international circulation and contribute to building a diverse knowledge of the past and surrounding reality” (Domanska, 2012, p. 212).

The multidimensional interpretation of Ewa Domanska covers the general issues of contemporary humanities. The problems that we study represent a certain segment of the humanities. Therefore, it is right to consider the conclusion of this researcher and outline the search for new tools to address this issue. A useful tool that could measure up to these modern theoretical principles is the concept of the Europeanization of Ukrainian digital media as a strategy for high-quality media.

The concept of Europeanization finds a detailed examination in the paper by Rainer Eising, “Europeanization and Integration: EU Research Concepts” (Eising, 2007, pp. 255–274). It is difficult to agree with his conclusion that Europeanization “is not a fundamental innovative concept” (Eising, 2007, p. 272), since it is ill founded. Europeanization can only partly be seen as a consequence of European integration in relation to

legislative functions in a number of countries that joined the EU. The national development of the country is changing under the influence of the European integration process, and at some higher stage the signs of Europeanization appear. The European integration processes in the media, along with other aspects, form new communication features. The Europeanization motifs are qualitatively new topics in the development of the modern paradigm of the digital media.

Expanding the overall concept of Europeanization, one can state that Ukrainian authors' articles demonstrate innovations in overcoming the temporal gaps in the treatment of the state-society-man triad and the ability to go beyond the stereotypes of the past in terms of a Ukrainian identity. The same applies to the interpretation of the past and present of Ukraine and Poland in the publications of the high-quality Ukrainian media.

The "Ukrainskiy Tyzhden" magazine, in addition to a paper version, also has an Internet site which is quite popular among readers. The topics of the Ukrainian identity formation under the influence of the European and historical compatibility of national circumstances and European standards prevail. The authors of columns and articles under "The World" heading often include Polish academics, foreign journalists, and politicians. Based on the modern definition of publications as texts on "all topics," which "do not necessarily feature a political and ideological mode of formulation," it is possible to reach conclusions about the impact of the studied texts on the public consciousness and public opinion in general, and to improve media communications (according to Natalia Klushina) (Klushina, 2008, p. 6).

On the webpage of the "Ukrainskiy tyzhden" magazine and in its paper edition are Edward Lucas's columns. Well-grounded criticism of the crisis of European security and of the mistakes and weaknesses of the Western countries toward the Central and Eastern European countries can be found in his texts. Edward Lucas criticizes the indifference of Western politicians towards protecting the European values of Ukrainian people against the Russian military aggression that is being waged on the Eastern border of Ukraine.

It is viable then to state that the practical importance of topics raised by the "Den" newspaper is to study Ukrainian-Polish relations as an academic dialogue against the background of the reinforcement of Ukrainian identity in political communications using digital media tools and upgrading the traditional paper media. The Polish journalist and publisher, Adam Michnik, in the preface to the Polish language edition of the collection of articles of the "Den" newspaper *Wars and Peace. Ukrainians and Poles: Brothers/Enemies, Neighbors... (Wojny a pokoj. Ukraińcy i Polacy: bracia/wrogowie, sąsiedzi...)* said the following on the matter: "Ukraine and Poland are two large countries situated between Russia and Germany. Our relationship determines many things. A conversation about this history is difficult but necessary. The task is to direct our minds to the future, to realize how many shared values and interests we have, and how much we can achieve together" (Michnik, 2004, p. 3).

Conclusions

Digital media have led to new demonstrations of Ukrainian identity and its new formation with new political realities. Digital media were at the forefront of operational

information about the events of the political life of the state. Political, social and state institutions have focused on communication with citizens over the Internet, including social media, blogs and columns in online media. The creation of political change in the country could be seen live thanks to video streams in real time, such as those we saw during the Euromaidan and the Dignity Revolution in Kyiv. During the occupation of Crimea, amateur video reports regularly and promptly appeared on YouTube as a manifestation of citizen journalism, as well as professional journalistic video reports that covered the events in more detail. All this created a catalyzing effect on positive changes in the Ukrainian identity.

Since the beginning of the Russian invasion in the Donbas regions of Eastern Ukraine, there has been a grassroots volunteer movement to raise funds and resources to help the Ukrainian army, treat the wounded soldiers, support the families of fallen warriors and civilian casualties. Social media have intensified, especially through Facebook, aiding resettling refugees who have been affected by war, due to the Russian military aggression against Ukraine.

The political and social changes and challenges of 2013 and 2014 united Ukrainian citizens for a common purpose. The idea of unity through national identity has fended off the enemy and aggressor from doing further damage to Ukraine's existence, thus allowing Ukraine's independence to further succeed. The Internet, new media, and social media have become the most expeditious and convenient means of communication, through the dissemination of ideas and information. They have become partially an accessorial means of unifying a nation and of a strengthening of the Ukrainian identity.

As the hybrid war continues on the battlefield and within the information space of Ukraine, the same channels of digital media will disseminate false, fake or provocative information in order to sow discord among those who are united, and discredit the main ideas of the struggle and of Ukrainian identity, effectively trying to disconnect Ukraine's national identity.

In conclusion, agreeing with the thesis of Montserrat Guibernau, Ukrainian identity at this stage features fluidity and dynamism. Based on the analysis of digital and convergent media, we can claim that there is currently no ground to speak about a crisis of Ukrainian identity. However, the information war led by Russia, aiming, among other things, at destroying Ukrainian national identity, has intensified in Russian political communication.

The high-quality digital media used in Ukraine have taken on an innovative position of pluralism, ultimately adapting to a European national identity, or at least cruising on a parallel trajectory with Europe. The European – Eastern Partnership dialogue in the media has stimulated a transformation of the Ukrainian identity. The issue of Ukraine's reality of Europeanization and integrating into European processes is key to digital media. They are developing new strategies for the successful reinforcement of a Ukrainian identity. The dynamic development of the digital media is also aimed at strengthening the Ukrainian national identity in political communications. This is demonstrated by the website named Euromaidan. Launched in 2014, it has been liked by over 300,000 Facebook users. On August 24, 2014, the first Ukrainian private TV Channel Ukraine Today, began broadcasting. It strives to report events in Ukraine in English only. The *Likbez. Istorychniy front* [*Likbez. Historical front*] website <http://likbez.org.ua/en/> has also been

created. It features Ukrainian historians debunking common Russian myths about Ukrainian history. In the spring of 2014, the Ukrainian journalistic community created a site <http://www.stopfake.org/> (in Russian and English), where it debunks false information spread by the Russian media about events in Ukraine. This information war is truly a hard-fought battlefield. Other new projects, which include publishing of books based on the digital media texts, are also essential. The Ukrainian high-quality digital media, maintaining the traditions of free media, have reached a high level in analyzing the facts truthfully and adequately reflecting Ukraine's political processes and its involvement in international events. With a wide array of topics mixed with a competitive and creative environment, Ukrainian digital media will ensure their popularity, as well as a rise in the number of their users.

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Wpływ komunikacji politycznej na transformację tożsamości: refleksja w ukraińskim dyskursie mediów cyfrowych

Streszczenie

Artykuł przedstawia nowe procesy obecne w ukraińskim dyskursie mediów cyfrowych. Teksty opublikowane w ukraińskich mediach cyfrowych w latach 2013–2015 aktywnie zajmowały się problemem transformacji ukraińskiej tożsamości, a celem artykułu jest ukazanie ich roli w tej transformacji. W tym celu przedstawiono przegląd współczesnych medialnych interpretacji ukraińskiej tożsamości, pokazano katalizujący wpływ mediów cyfrowych na jej transformację i pokazano, że dialog na temat integracji europejskiej w ramach Partnerstwa Wschodniego stymuluje transformację ukraińskiej tożsamości (z wykorzystaniem tekstów z mediów konwergentnych, takich jak gazeta „Den” [Dzień]).

Teoretyczne podstawy tego artykułu stanowią prace wybitnych uczonych w zakresie wpływu mediów cyfrowych na różne zmiany społeczne. Dotyczy to takich badaczy jak Jim Hall w dziedzinie dziennikarstwa internetowego, Wołodmyr Kulyk w dziedzinie obiektywizmu mediów cyfrowych, Richard A. Lanham zajmujący się tym jak ważne jest „słowo elektroniczne” i Andrzej Mencwel mówiący o narzędziach rewolucji komunikacji multimedialnej. Kwestie tożsamości zostały poruszone w artykule na podstawie teorii Monserrat Guibernau, Jarosława Hrytsaka i Zenona E. Kohuta.

Mobilizujący wpływ mediów cyfrowych na społeczeństwo znajduje odzwierciedlenie w tekstach ukazujących się w czasie trwania ukraińskiego Euromajdanu i „rewolucji godności” w mediach tradycyjnych i internetowych. Autorami tekstów publikowanych w mediach cyfrowych są historyk Timothy Snyder, pisarka Oksana Zabuzhko i ekspert w zakresie komunikacji internetowej, Maksym Savanevsky.

Wykorzystanie mediów cyfrowych w komunikacji politycznej wykształciło nowe przejawy tożsamości ukraińskiej i dostosowało ją do nowych realiów politycznych. Media cyfrowe znalazły się w czołówce mediów informujących o wydarzeniach z życia politycznego państwa. Instytucje polityczne, społeczne i państwowe koncentrują się na komunikacji z obywatelami za pośrednictwem Internetu, w tym mediów społecznościowych, blogów i kolumn w mediach internetowych.

Wysokiej jakości media cyfrowe wykorzystywane na Ukrainie zajęły innowacyjne stanowisko pluralistyczne, dostosowując się do europejskiej tożsamości narodowej lub przynajmniej idąc w tym samym co reszta Europy kierunku. Prowadzony w mediach dialog na temat integracji europejskiej w ramach Partnerstwa Wschodniego stymuluje transformację ukraińskiej tożsamości.

Istotne są również inne nowe projekty, w tym publikacja książek opartych na tekstach pochodzących z mediów cyfrowych. Ukraińskie media cyfrowe wysokiej jakości, podtrzymując tradycje wolnych mediów, osiągnęły wysoki poziom odpowiadającej prawdzie analizy faktów i adekwatnie odzwierciedlają procesy polityczne na Ukrainie i jej zaangażowanie w wydarzenia międzynarodowe.

Słowa kluczowe: komunikacja, tożsamość, informacja, media cyfrowe