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Media Literacy in the Context of Russia's War

Umiejętność korzystania z mediów w kontekście wojny wywołanej przez Rosję

Abstract

The state is not able to control all the information flows and channels of obtaining information by ordinary citizens. This is especially felt in the conditions of war, as the enemy constantly changes the forms and methods of destructive influence, resorting to hybrid techniques. This is why media literacy needs to use new mechanisms for its improvement and dissemination. The ability to resist and oppose the information attacks of an enemy will depend on the consciousness and awareness of each individual and society as a whole. This article sheds light on this problem.

It is also indicated that disinformation campaigns are becoming more and more widespread and pose a serious threat to critical infrastructure and democratic processes in the state. It is important to understand these tactics and methods are used by actors to spread misinformation and false narratives to manipulate audiences. By recognizing these strategies, individuals, organizations, and governments can take steps to mitigate the impact of disinformation campaigns. This is

why increased public awareness can play a crucial role in combating misinformation and fostering a more informed and engaged society.

The study of media literacy as a form of countering the disinformation of the Russian Federation in the conditions of the Russian-Ukrainian war is especially important. The Russian Federation is waging a war against Ukraine on the basis of lies, provocations, and falsifications, and therefore informational aggression is perhaps the most important method of this war. The goal of Russia's large-scale information war against Ukraine is to restore its informational influence on the Ukrainian information space. It was for this purpose that the contained analysis of the state of media literacy in Ukraine in the conditions of the current full-scale war is carried out, strategies to overcome these negative trends are proposed, and Ukraine's current efforts to increase the level of media literacy of its population are characterized.

Key words: *information war, media literacy, disinformation, cyber attack, information aggression, the information space, information influence.*

Abstrakt

Państwo nie jest w stanie kontrolować wszystkich kanałów przepływu informacji. Dotyczy to zwłaszcza sytuacji, gdy w kraju toczy się wojna, a wróg wykorzystuje różne mechanizmy dezinformacyjne. Dlatego niezwykle ważne są rozsądne korzystanie z mediów oraz wiedza na temat metod rozprzestrzeniania dezinformacji. Odparcie ataków propagandowych zależy bowiem od świadomości poszczególnych obywateli oraz całego społeczeństwa.

W artykule podjęte zostały różne aspekty wojny informacyjnej. Autorki zauważają, że dezinformacja stała się istotnym narzędziem wykorzystywanym na szeroką skalę i coraz częściej stanowi poważne zagrożenie dla bezpieczeństwa oraz demokracji państwa. Wiedza na temat mechanizmów dezinformacyjnych pozwala skutecznie przeciwdziałać wojnie propagandowej. Dlatego też konieczne jest podnoszenie poziomu świadomości społecznej w tym zakresie, zwłaszcza w odniesieniu do działań dezinformacyjnych prowadzonych obecnie przez Federację Rosyjską. Pełnoskalowej inwazji na Ukrainę towarzyszy bowiem zakrojona na szeroką skalę równie brutalna wojna informacyjna, oparta na kłamstwach i prowokacjach. Jej celem jest przede wszystkim odzyskanie kontroli nad infosferą w Ukrainie.

Artykuł zawiera również analizę umiejętności korzystania z mediów przez społeczeństwo ukraińskie w warunkach pełnoskalowej wojny, a także omówienie działań służących zwalczaniu dezinformacji w Ukrainie.

Słowa kluczowe: *wojna informacyjna, umiejętność korzystania z mediów, dezinformacja, cyberatak, agresja informacyjna, przestrzeń informacyjna, wpływ informacyjny.*

Introduction

In the present context of the full-scale war in Ukraine, there is an urgent need for the information protection of Ukraine's citizens. This entails not only ensuring information and cybersecurity but also fostering media literacy, which involves the cultivating of resilience in the population against the influence of disinformation and fostering people's development of critical thinking skills. Consequently, this allows for the analysis and evaluation of information emanating from the information environment.

It is important to understand that the state is incapable of controlling all information flows and channels of information acquisition by average citizens, as Russia constantly alters its forms and methods of destructive influence, resorting to hybrid tactics. Therefore, media literacy necessitates the utilization of new mechanisms for its enhancement and dissemination. After all, resistance and counteraction to an enemy's information attacks depend on the awareness and knowledge of each individual and society as a whole. The Russian-Ukrainian war has demonstrated that media literacy should not merely be the subject of theoretical discussion and the concern of specialized experts but is also an essential national endeavor that should commence from preschool education.

The aim of this article is to disclose the best global practices and individual state strategies for combating disinformation in the conditions of a state of war.

Methods and materials

To conduct a comprehensive study of the problem and its associated aspects, the following combination of general and specialized methods was used: conceptual and content analysis, the case study method, systemic and structural-functional analysis, SWOT analysis, the project method, and methods of mathematical statistics.

Disinformation is a pressing issue in the modern world, as the advancement of information technologies has significantly facilitated the spread of false or manipulative information like never before. This has serious consequences for public discourse, the political stability of states, and the personal well-being of citizens. In other words, disinformation is a common denominator of many problems that contemporary democratic societies face. In this context, it is important to develop a clear understanding of what disinformation is, how it operates, and how it can be countered.

Irene Khan, the Special Rapporteur of the United Nations (UN) on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, emphasized in her report dated August 12, 2022 that disinformation as a phenomenon has existed for over a millennium but only in the 21st century has it reached its peak of dissemination. (Khan, 2022) This line of reasoning is hard to disagree with, as disinformation has long been used to promote “favorable” narratives with the aim of exerting hybrid influences on individuals, societies, and states. The onset of a new era has changed the conditions for implementing the information policies of states, resulting in disinformation becoming not only a part of the present but also a serious threat.

There is significant interest in the concept of “disinformation” both in Ukraine and beyond, which stimulates scientific research in fields such as international relations, political science, information security, sociology, psychology, and others. Despite the fact that the issue of disinformation is studied by various scientific disciplines, there is currently no unified scientific approach to its definition.

Etymologically, the term “disinformation” derives from the French word *désinformation*, where the prefix *dés* indicates opposition or deprivation, and *information* refers to information. According to the definition provided by the Ukrainian Explanatory Dictionary (*Дезінформація...*), disinformation is false or unreliable information disseminated with the intent to deceive.

Let us consider some scientific approaches to defining this concept. In particular, the American writer, J. Martin, in his work “Disinformation: Propaganda Tool. Political Communication” (Martin, 1982), formulated a definition of disinformation as “a form of propaganda aimed at illegitimate action [...] through the use of false, incomplete facts, forged documents, and other methods”. (Martin, 1982) The Croatian scholars M. Tadjman and N. Mikelić, in their work “Information Science: Science of Information, Misinformation, and Disinformation” (Tadjman, Mikelić, 2003), defined disinformation as “misleading information disseminated with the purpose of causing harm to the person consuming it. The objective of disinformation is not to deceive, but to harm the target of influence”. (Tadjman, Mikelić, 2003)

The American philosopher J. Fetzer argues in his work “Disinformation: the use of false information. Mind and Machines” (Fetzer, 2004) that “disinformation is analogous to acts of falsehood, thus they can be compared to each other.” (Fetzer, 2004) In other words, disinformation is a false statement intended to deceive. Another American researcher, D. Fallis, formulates a definition of disinformation in his work “Conceptual Analysis of Disinformation” (Fallis, 2009) as “misleading information that is or at least is

intended to be misleading”. (Fallis, 2009) K. Wardle, an English researcher, provides a definition of disinformation in her work “Information Disorder: Fundamental Glossary” (Wardle, 2018) as false information intentionally created or disseminated to cause harm. (Wardle, 2018)

Among Ukrainian researchers, it is worth mentioning I. Polishchuk, who defines disinformation in his work “Political Media Technologies” (2014) as a method through which completely false information is presented in the media. (Поліщук, 2014) Furthermore, G. Pochepcov, in the publication “(Dis)information” (2019), formulates the term disinformation based on several significant factors: a high emotional level enabling influence on the masses, the promotion of fictional virtual objects through disinformation, and the difficulty of refuting disinformation due to the necessity of debunking non-existent fabricated objects. (Почепцов, 2019)

Ukrainian civil society organizations and educational platforms specializing in detecting and combating disinformation propose their own definitions of the concept. For instance, the Institute of Mass Information defines disinformation as the intentional dissemination of false information with the aim of manipulation and deception, leading to a lack of trust in any information source. (*Методологія моніторингу фейків...*) Another civil organization, “Detector Media”, defines disinformation as false or manipulative information that is always harmful and systematic. (*Дезінформація, пропаганда...*) This falls under the concept of conditional propaganda, which always carries a negative connotation.

The online education studio EdEra, in collaboration with IREX, has developed a media literacy course where they define disinformation as one type of false information intentionally created to harm individuals, social groups, organizations, and countries. (Wardle, 2022) In a report on Russian disinformation and propaganda in 2022, compiled by the Lublin Triangle Group (a trilateral regional alliance between Lithuania, Poland, and Ukraine), disinformation is defined as a set of false or manipulative information with malicious intent and systematic execution. (*Resilience to disinformation...*)

Considering the diverse definitions of the term “disinformation” proposed by foreign and Ukrainian scholars and analysts, several characteristics of disinformation can be identified: the importance of information, the fallacious and deceptive nature of the concerned information, deliberately fabricated data, the purposeful dissemination of such data for manipulation, influence on public opinion, the causing of societal harm, the targeting of specific actors, and institutional origins.

Disinformation plays a significant role in Russia's pursuit of its goals in both the domestic and international spheres, serving as an effective tool to promote ideas that contradict democratic values and principles. For decades Russia has been spreading and still continues to disseminate disinformation messages and narratives, using them as a template while completely disregarding the truth. The aggressor country shapes an information environment aimed at supporting its political objectives.

According to analysts from the RAND Corporation, the modern Russian disinformation model is characterized by the following features:

- The presence of a large number of channels and message volumes.
- A shameless readiness to spread blatant lies.
- The speed, continuity, and repetition of dissemination.
- A lack of consistency in actions. (Paul, Matthews, 2016)

The hostile disinformation campaign carried out by Russia is based on the utilization of various methods, such as outright lies, distortion of facts, defamation, information diversions, provocations, distortion of historical events, and other such tactics. An important component of this campaign is its high resource capacity, as well as its wide network of information dissemination channels that allow propagandists to operate effectively in the information space. (Paul, Matthews, 2016) Moreover, Russian media outlets do not concern themselves with the veracity of information and do not invest time in fact-checking; they independently create the necessary “news” to achieve their objectives.

According to research conducted by the Global Engagement Center of the U.S. Department of State (GEC), contemporary Russian disinformation consists of numerous elements, with the main ones being presented in Table 1.

When investigating the characteristics of the Russian disinformation campaign at the current stage, it should be noted that Ukraine has been subjected to powerful disinformation operations and enduring psychological influence from the Kremlin for over 30 years. However, the highest level of dissemination of hostile disinformation and propaganda was observed following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

On the eve of the Russian invasion, on February 23, 2022, there was a widespread dissemination of disinformation messages aimed at demoralizing Ukrainians, worsening relations between Ukraine and its allies, and bolstering the Kremlin's position in public perception was detected. (Wahlstrom) These messages contained assertions that the military buildup prior to the invasion was for training purposes, focused on historical revisionism and the delegitimization of Ukraine as a sovereign state (statements cla-

iming that modern Ukraine was created by Bolshevik Russia), allegations of a neo-Nazi takeover of power in Ukraine, threats to the Russian population in Ukraine, and accusations of genocide perpetrated by the Ukrainian government in parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, which had been unlawfully controlled by Russia-supported separatists since 2014. (Cadier, 2022; Wahlstrom)

Table 1: The Elements of modern Russian disinformation (based on GEC research (Pillars of Russia’s Disinformation and Propaganda Ecosystem: GEC Special Report))

Official state communications	Statements from the Kremlin and its ministries, official announcements on social media, and statements or quotes from Russian officials.
Global state-sponsored media	Media outlets funded to target foreign audiences as well as domestic audiences, foreign media outlets funded by the Russian government, and international Russian socio-cultural institutions.
Cultivation of proxy sources	Pro-Russian internet resources with a global reach, local media outlets, and conscious or unwitting disseminators of Russian propaganda.
Social media	This weapon entails ongoing campaigns to undermine trust in governmental institutions and fuel protests or civil unrest.
Cyber disinformation	Unauthorized access to information in computer networks, website hijacking, counterfeit websites, and interference with the functioning of official sources or tools.

To achieve its objective of influencing target audiences, Russia has developed a potent propaganda apparatus through the dissemination of disinformation via:

- Media: print publications (Komsomolskaya Pravda, Arguments and Facts, Kommersant); television (Sputnik, Russia Today, Russia RTR/RTR Planeta, Russia 24); radio broadcasting (Russian Radio, Radio Russia, Mayak); news agencies (Rosbalt, RIA, TASS), and others.
- “Internet trolls and bots” (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Google, VKontakte, Odnoklassniki, etc.). It is worth noting that Facebook was blocked in Russia on March 4th due to accusations of censoring Russian state and pro-state media. Additionally, on March 14th, access to the social media platform Instagram was blocked throughout Russia.

(How Russian propaganda. . .) However, this did not hinder the spread of Russian disinformation through these social networks by the use of virtual private networks (VPNs).

- Telegram channels (according to the Ukrainian publication “Detector Media”, the total number of Telegram channels disseminating Kremlin disinformation exceeds 300. (Кремлівська гідра...) Among the most popular are “Svit Sohodni” with “Yurii Podiaka”, Anatolii Sharii, Legitimnyi, Typovyi Donetsk, ZeRada, First News of War, Resydent, Plytkarka, Sposterihach, and others.
- Text (both in print and electronic formats); videos (the creation of propaganda videos often involves deepfake technology); audio (recordings of conversations, eavesdropping, song remixing, and presenting something old as new); and images and memes.
- Political and civic groups (“Russian World”, “Russian Community of Crimea”, “Russian Unity”, “Russian Blok”, “Slavic Party”, etc.), and even religious groups (the Russian Orthodox Church), which all have a significant influence on people’s consciousness. As of the beginning of 2023 there are still 8,505 Moscow Patriarchate churches in Ukraine. (*Ліше 63 церкви...*) Regarding political groups, their number in Ukraine was approximately 17 in 2022.

The aggressor’s use of these tools creates direct threats to Ukraine’s information security, which we categorize as external and internal.

Regarding external threats, we include the Russians’ utilization of special narratives and informational labels in an official context to undermine the legitimacy of the Ukrainian government, such as “Banderites”, “nationalists”, “neo-Nazis”, and so on. Additionally, the aggressor disseminates so-called “deepfakes” (the technology of replacing a person’s face in videos or photos), where President Volodymyr Zelensky is often the central figure. For example, in March 2022 a “deepfake” video featuring Zelensky surrendering to Russia was widely circulated. Furthermore, the aggressor spreads Russian “information agents” abroad to cast doubt on EU countries’ stance regarding the implementation of sanctions packages against the Kremlin. This involves the use of gas and nuclear blackmail, as well as the claimed presence of biological laboratories in Ukraine associated with the Pentagon. Lastly, there is a daily dissemination of disinformation regarding the situation on the battlefield, including allegations of capitulation by the Ukrainian Armed Forces, the relinquishment of positions, and the commission of crimes by Ukrainian soldiers in the deoccupied territories. It is worth noting that these accusations specifically target the separate Special Purpose Regiment “AZOV” of

the National Guard of Ukraine, which the Kremlin designates as a “terrorist organization”. The aggressor also conducts shelling of territories and civilian infrastructure objects, such as the railway station in Kramatorsk, the town of Vasilivka in the Zaporizhia region, the Kakhovka hydroelectric power station, the Zaporizhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP), and the detention center for Ukrainian soldiers in Olenivka, among others.

Turning to internal information threats, these encompass computer crimes and cyber terrorism, and the utilization of fraudulent schemes (both old and new) during the war to generate illicit profits. These schemes include organizing pseudo-evacuations, selling non-existent housing, and making fake payments to citizens. Another aspect of this is the brain drain of qualified workers abroad. Moreover, there is an active proliferation of collaboratorism, primarily on social media platforms such as Viber and Telegram, with the aim of manipulating the consciousness of Ukrainian citizens through the dissemination of disinformation and fake news.

The dissemination of disinformation together with Kremlin propaganda accompanies and sustains Russia’s military actions in Ukraine, including the attempted annexation of Crimea, Russia’s support for separatist movements in Eastern Ukraine, and the ongoing aggressive war. Russia constantly strives to delegitimize Ukraine as a state in the eyes of the Ukrainian and Russian public, as well as for the international community. However, the spread of disinformation to a wide audience is impossible without the involvement of certain “influential” individuals, including experts, actors, TV presenters, journalists, politicians, bloggers, war correspondents, athletes, scientists, church officials, and military personnel. The Ukrainian volunteer initiative for information hygiene, “Don’t Be a Vegetable”, has established a database consisting of over 2,000 individuals (*База російських пропагандистів*) who support the full-scale invasion of Ukraine and disseminate disinformation messages daily to their target audiences.

As of 2023, disinformation from Russia is being disseminated on an extremely large scale and transmitted through numerous channels, including social media, satellite television, and traditional radio and television channels. The Russian disinformation campaign is continuous and rapidly responds to events. Therefore, Russian propagandists show no inclination towards objective reality and do not wait for fact-checking as they simply disseminate interpretations of events that best suit their themes and objectives. Countermeasures against disinformation can be divided into three main groups: operational, organizational, and informational.

Operational measures include:

- Prohibiting the dissemination of Russian content in the Ukrainian media space and restricting access to Russian state media. In order to counter the use of the Russian language in the public sphere, a law came into effect on January 16, 2022 which requires all national print media to publish in Ukrainian, the official language of the country. (*Мовний закон України*) The law also stipulates that 90% of airtime of national television should be in Ukrainian and that local television channels are allowed to show no more than 20% of non-Ukrainian content.
- Prohibiting the activities of pro-Russian parties in Ukraine. According to Law No. 2243-IX, which came into effect on May 18, 2022, amendments were made to certain legislative acts of Ukraine regarding the prohibition (dissolution, forced liquidation) of political parties [26]. Currently, the activities of 15 pro-Russian parties in Ukraine are prohibited, including the “Worker’s Party of Ukraine”, “Happy Ukraine”, “the Communist Party of Ukraine”, “the Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine”, “OPZZH”, “Union of Left Forces”, “Party of Shariy”, “Left Opposition”, “the Socialist Party of Ukraine”, “Nashi”, “Block of Volodymyr Saldo”, “State”, “Socialists”, “Justice and Development”, and “Opposition Blok”.
- Combating collaborationism both on the Internet and beyond. According to Law No. 2108-IX, dated March 3, 2022, amendments were made to certain legislative acts to establish criminal liability for collaborationist activities. (*Про внесення змін...*) In 2022, Ukrainian law enforcement agencies opened over 2,600 criminal cases for cooperation with the Russian aggressors, with over 300 individuals being suspected, the majority of whom fled to Russia. (*До суду передано...*)
- Conducting counterintelligence, operational-searches, and procedural work aimed at documenting and disrupting the dissemination system of various calls for action, such as the illegal seizure of power, actions aimed at changing territorial integrity, and the promotion of interethnic hostility. In countering hostile propaganda systems, the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine (NSDC), the Prosecutor’s Office, the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU), the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), and fiscal authorities play a particularly important role.

Organizational measures include:

- Establishing centers within ministries (*Про створення Центру...*) whose activities include detecting and countering Russian disinformation, preventing the spread of false and misleading information by do-

mestic media, and cooperating with international centers in the fight against information threats.

- Government bodies creating and launching chatbots on the social networking platform Telegram, sometimes in cooperation with civil society (volunteer) organizations, to combat disinformation. One such example is “StopRussia | MRIYA”, launched by the Cyber Police of Ukraine in collaboration with volunteers and concerned citizens of the country for the processing and blocking of fake and pro-Russian resources.
- Promoting the image of Ukraine abroad, primarily through the activities of the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation, a state institution established in 2017.
- Continuous monitoring of Russia’s actions and its agents of influence in the West that aim to tarnish the history and statehood of Ukraine, as well as ensure effective governance and civil society engagement in the formation, implementation, and adjustment of state policies in the information sphere, among other objectives.

Informational measures include:

- Official responses (statements) from the President of Ukraine to address the spread of “fake news”, including “deep fakes” involving the President himself or concerning statements by the Russian authorities with the aim of destabilizing the situation in Ukraine (nuclear weapons, mobilization, territorial capture, etc.).
- The main forms of information dissemination to the population, including briefings, press conferences, and interviews with the President, Prime Minister, ministers, the leadership of the Presidential Office, the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine (MoD), the Main Intelligence Directorate of the MoD (GUR MoD), the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (General Staff), and others.
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) engaging in daily communication with foreign audiences, including the media, to explain the course of events in Ukraine, particularly those related to Russia’s armed aggression. In March 2022, the MFA launched an information platform for foreign audiences about the war in Ukraine called “War.Ukraine” (Козьменко, 2023), where official data and facts about the events taking place during the Russian-Ukrainian war are published.
- Ukrainian diplomatic missions to the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America, which have been and continue to be targets of Putin’s propaganda and information-psychological operations conducted by Russian intelligence services. There is also increased cooperation with Europe-

an analytical centers to counter Russian propaganda and its impact in Ukraine.

- Increasing the number of informational materials (print, audio, video) that depict real life in Russian regions, internal threats to Russian society, the anti-people activities of the Russian leadership, and other aspects, in order to counter Russia’s hostile influence and engage citizens who consider themselves “pro-Russian”.

Ukraine has been the target of a long-term disinformation campaign by Russia, characterized by a comprehensive and multifaceted approach using various media platforms including social networks, state-controlled media, and others. The main objective of this campaign, unchanged over the years, is to manipulate public opinion in Ukraine and undermine the legitimacy of the Ukrainian government. An analysis of Kremlin actions in the context of the full-scale war demonstrates that the main themes of pro-Russian narratives constantly change depending on developments on the battlefield. These narratives include claims that actions actually carried out by the aggressor country, Russia, were in fact perpetrated by Ukraine with the aim of concealing the true source of responsibility.

Ukraine’s experience in combating persistent Russian information attacks has significantly influenced its response under current circumstances. The country has responded to the threat of Russian disinformation by building on the progress made in strengthening its information and media environment since 2014, as well as by establishing mechanisms for direct response to information threats. Among these mechanisms, efforts to provide accurate information, ensure the functioning of media organizations, and the implementation of political measures to counter information threats can be highlighted.

Ukraine is actively developing media literacy among its population. Prior to the full-scale Russian invasion, the state focused on educational and enlightening activities related to media literacy. In the face of new geopolitical realities, media literacy has become a necessary condition for protecting citizens from information attacks and enemy propaganda, making it a central element and form of defense for the Ukrainian nation.

Currently, media literacy is a priority focus of the Ukrainian government’s activities. This is emphasized in the Strategy for Information Security of Ukraine, adopted on December 28, 2021, in which media literacy is identified as one of the key strategic objectives that must be achieved for effective resistance to the aggressor state in the information environment and for the protection of society from constantly emerging threats. (*Про рішення Ради...*)

To assess the level of media literacy among the population of Ukraine and determine its role in societal information defense, a SWOT analysis was conducted. This method allows for the identification of internal strengths and weaknesses of media literacy in Ukraine, as well as external opportunities and threats that this field may encounter in the future. This research method is necessary for developing the most effective strategy to overcome the critical state of the problem and identifying the factors that will contribute to the development of media literacy in Ukraine in the future. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: SWOT Analysis of Media Literacy in Ukraine during a Full-Scale War

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Segmentation of media literacy provisions in Ukraine based on target audiences. 2. Implementation of media literacy measures through the efforts of the government, civil society organizations, media outlets, and even individuals who have initiated their own blogs on social media. 3. Increasing awareness among the population regarding the influence of media on society and individuals. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Low level of media literacy among the population, particularly among vulnerable groups (residents of temporarily occupied territories, internally displaced persons, refugees, etc.), which reduces their ability to understand and analyze information received from the media. 2. Insufficient attention to media literacy in the national education system. 3. Lack of a regulatory framework for media literacy that would regulate the work of media outlets and their impact on society.
Opportunities	Threats
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Integration of media literacy into the education system of Ukraine. 2. Development and promotion of online courses for different population groups, as well as the creation of textbooks on media literacy. 3. Enhancement of the population's media literacy level through the implementation of information campaigns and the realization of social projects. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regular dissemination of Russian disinformation and propaganda. 2. Increase in the number of national information channels and sources, which may lead to information overload and a decrease in the quality of presented materials. 3. Insufficient funding for media literacy in the absence of economic stability in Ukraine and donor countries.

In conclusion, it can be argued that media literacy in Ukraine has significant potential for development. However, it is currently in a critical state due to existing weaknesses and threats. To overcome this situation, we propose to develop the following SWOT strategy, which takes into account internal and external factors influencing the development of media literacy, as well as its strengths and weaknesses. This requires significant effort and focus on developing and implementing a strategy that will increase the level of media literacy among the population and ensure its steady growth in the future.

Media literacy in Ukraine requires significant efforts to overcome its weaknesses and threats which contribute to the critical state of the researched object. These efforts include increasing the amount of media literacy materials, conducting daily activities to counter the spread of hostile disinformation and propaganda, securing additional financial resources for media literacy development, and developing educational programs and plans for media literacy in schools and higher educational institutions.

It should be noted that Ukraine is actively developing media literacy among its population in the conditions of a state of war. During the period from 2022 to the beginning of 2023, the government has taken a significant step in increasing the level of media literacy among the Ukrainian population. It has initiated educational campaigns on media literacy, provided materials and resources to target audiences, and established cooperation with civil society organizations and others. (Дуцик, Орлова, 2022) Despite the measures taken in this field, there are numerous threats that pose obstacles to the development of media literacy in Ukraine, including the lack of coordination among key actors in the context of the full-scale war, the inability to fully reach target audiences, particularly vulnerable population groups, and a shortage of experts engaged in media literacy issues, as stated in the Strategy of Information Security of Ukraine. (*Про рішення Ради...*)

Taking into account the current challenges and threats associated with the disinformation campaign of the Russian Federation, key recommendations have been developed for increasing the level of media literacy among the Ukrainian population in the conditions of a state of war. In particular, the following measures are recommended:

- Develop and implement a national program to enhance media literacy among the population. The program should include training in the fundamentals of media literacy, understanding information aggression, developing critical thinking and information analysis skills, and in utilizing social media and internet resources.

- Thoroughly study the target audiences of Ukraine, including psycho-analytical research, particularly concerning vulnerable population groups, and develop media literacy projects taking these characteristics into account.
- Integrate media literacy into the educational process. Media literacy is an important component of education in times of war. Currently, it is not a mandatory component of the basic educational curriculum of Ukraine, which hinders the acquisition of necessary skills in educational institutions. The systematic integration of media literacy into the educational process requires an interdisciplinary approach and the development of an appropriate methodology at the national level. (Tudjman, Mikelic, 2003)
- Expand the market of quality media outlets in Ukraine, which will contribute to an increased availability of objective and reliable information for the population, as well as raise the level of professional ethics and journalistic quality. Establish mechanisms for quality control of information published in the media and on the Internet. This pertains not only to commercial media groups owned by influential individuals (such as “1+1 media”, Starlight Media, Inter Media Group, and others), but also to public broadcasters (“UA:Pershyi”, “Suspilne Novyny”, “Suspilna Kultura”, regional branches, and others) and independent media outlets (“Ukrayinska Pravda”, “Hromadske Radio”, “The Kyiv Independent”, “Ukrainian”, and others) that currently provide broad access to various official sources of information, including alternative views and opinions, allowing citizens to form an informed stance on current events in the country.
- Facilitate the development of media literacy among military personnel, including through the implementation of systematic training and seminars on media literacy at different stages of military training, and through providing access to specialized literature and video materials that address important issues of media literacy and information security, among other initiatives.
- Establish media literacy centers in various regions of the country that will provide the population with the opportunity to receive consultations on media literacy, particularly in the identification and counteraction of disinformation.
- Conduct weekly educational activities among the population, especially at the local level, involving experts and professionals in the field of media literacy and information security. Ensure the access of residents

to media resources that promote the development of media literacy, such as printed and online guides, lectures, presentations, interactive courses, and other resources.

- Provide financial support to media literacy projects. Funding for such projects should come from the state budget through grants, crowdfunding, and corporate financing. (Tudjman, Mikelic, 2003) In times of war and an unstable economic situation, the state should create incentives and conditions to engage businesses in this process. Additionally, it is necessary to ensure the efficient allocation of financial resources among different projects, taking into account their target audiences, and to conduct systematic monitoring and control of the use of allocated funds to achieve the maximum efficiency and effectiveness of the implemented measures.

In the conditions of the full-scale war, the issue of ensuring media literacy in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine (TOT) becomes particularly acute. In occupying Ukrainian cities and towns, the aggressors create an information blockade which deepens the physical captivity of local residents (currently, such territories include the populated areas of Donetsk, Luhansk, part of Kherson, and the Zaporizhia regions, as well as the territory of the Crimean Peninsula). As a result of this, Russian authorities make an effort to push the inhabitants of these territories into the so-called “information vacuum”, including through the distribution of printed publications and brochures, outdoor advertising, the blocking Ukrainian television and promotion of Russian channels, the disabling of Ukrainian mobile communication and distribution of Russian SIM cards, restricting internet access to only Russian networks, maintaining a network of Telegram channels and communities on the Russian social network “VKontakte”, and other similar endeavours. (Дуцик, Орлова, 2022)

Understanding the complexity of this issue, we propose to adopt a comprehensive approach to promoting media literacy in the temporarily occupied territories, particularly through initiatives that can overcome the hostile information blockade. The following measures are highlighted:

- Ensure access to reliable sources of information by providing residents in the temporarily occupied territories with secure channels to official Ukrainian media. Such channels may include VPN services, virtual private networks that safeguard a user’s internet connection and preserve their anonymity, as well as alternative browsers (e.g., substitutes for Google Chrome, Opera, Safari) that conceal the user’s geolocation, this ensuring privacy online.

- Expand the coverage of Ukrainian radio signals by constructing new broadcasting towers. Ukrainian radio, for instance, served as the sole source of objective information in the occupied city of Iziium where the Russians attempted to impose a complete information blockade. Unfortunately, over the course of a year of full-scale warfare, the occupiers destroyed or seized more than 10 radio and television facilities across Ukraine, thereby complicating their subsequent reconstruction and the construction of new ones. (*Чотири місяці війни...*) Addressing this issue requires intricate engineering work and financial support from Ukraine's partner countries.
- Generate media content targeting various age groups among the residents of the temporarily occupied territories. This content should include debunking myths and false information to elevate the level of critical thinking among the target audience.
- Develop specialized online courses on media literacy for residents on the front-line and in the occupied areas, particularly through closed information channels within virtual private networks (VPNs). These courses should focus on information security for individuals living under occupation and the development of psychological resilience in aggressive information environments.
- Implement a program to support local media outlets and broadcasters in front-line cities, considering that some populated areas in the Kharkiv, Chernihiv, and Sumy regions lack digital broadcasting coverage, thereby depriving citizens of the ability to access programs from Ukrainian television channels.

Thoroughly studying and implementing the recommendations provided above is an essential prerequisite for enhancing the level of media literacy in Ukraine, particularly in the temporarily occupied territories. It is important to note that media literacy plays a vital role in national information security as it enables individuals to comprehend and analyze information from various sources, including those containing propaganda or disinformation. The improvement of media literacy is a continuous process that requires adaptation to new technologies and societal conditions.

Overall, the creation of media educational content in the context of war represents a significant practical approach to ensuring media literacy in Ukraine. Developing such content contributes to the promotion of media literacy among the population, fosters responsible media consumption, and cultivates a critical analysis of received information, among other benefits.

Conclusion

Ukraine is achieving significant success in the fight against disinformation, despite its enemy's actions, who is conducting an aggressive information campaign and constantly adapting new tools and technologies for subversive activities. Government authorities are implementing corresponding resistance measures which we categorize as operational, informational, and organizational. However, it is essential not to stop here as the achieved positive transformations cannot guarantee a reliable protection of Ukraine's national interests against future manifestations of Russian information aggression.

When considering media literacy as a form of countering Russian disinformation in the context of the current war, it should be noted that it plays a crucial role in the information defense of the state. Through the conducted SWOT analysis, we have identified the strengths of media literacy in Ukraine, including a developed media infrastructure, the presence of quality media products, and the high population activity of social networks. However, there are also weaknesses present, expressed through the absence of effective mechanisms for filtering received information, the low levels of media literacy among citizens, especially vulnerable population groups (internally displaced persons, refugees, residents of temporarily occupied territories), and the insufficient funding of the media sphere in Ukraine, directly associated with the economic instability of the country caused by the conditions of war.

Media literacy in Ukraine is systematically provided to target audiences to counter the enemy's channels through their continuous saturation with Ukrainian content. Efforts to enhance media literacy can be grouped into levels such as state, societal, and personal, forming an integrated system. This has ensured an adequate level of media literacy, the mitigation of disinformation and enemy propaganda, and a unity between society and authorities in countering Russian aggression.

In the conditions of a state of war, special attention should be focused on raising the level of media education and media literacy among various target population groups, especially the youth – particularly students who are already working on projects for Ukraine's reconstruction. The government should implement a national program to enhance media literacy among the population. The program should include training in the fundamentals of media literacy, understanding information aggression, developing critical thinking and information analysis skills, and the use of social media and Internet resources. Furthermore, the state should work on ensuring media li-

teracy in the temporarily occupied territories, particularly through measures capable of overcoming the enemy's information blockade, including the construction of television towers, providing access for residents of the temporarily occupied territories to official Ukrainian media through secure channels, implementing support programs for local media outlets (broadcasters) in frontline cities, and other such initiatives.

Therefore, successfully combatting the information threats associated with the spread of disinformation in the context of a full-scale war is extremely important to ensuring Ukraine's information security. To achieve this goal, a comprehensive approach to implementing media literacy in Ukraine is necessary, which includes developing strategies to combat propaganda and disinformation, monitoring and analyzing the media space, ensuring accessibility and a diversity of information sources, a proper level of cyber defense for the country, raising media literacy among the population, and fostering cooperation between the government, civil society organizations, media outlets, and the academic community.

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