

# UA: UKRAINE ANALYTICA

Issue 4(10), 2017

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## Protracted Conflicts

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### Publisher:

Published by NGO "Promotion of Intercultural Cooperation" (Ukraine), Centre of International Studies (Ukraine), with the financial support of the Representation of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Ukraine, and the Black Sea Trust.

**UA: Ukraine Analytica** is the first Ukrainian analytical journal in English on International Relations, Politics and Economics. The journal is aimed for experts, diplomats, academics, students interested in the international relations and Ukraine in particular.

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ISSN 2518-7481

500 copies

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# THE POWER AND THE LIMITS OF COMMUNICATIONS: CASE OF REFORMS IN UKRAINE

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***A country's image is a strategic resource of the state, but even communication has its limits. The research analyses the elements and factors that influence the image of a country, including subjective, objective, temporary, and communicative components. Author states that the formation of Ukraine's international image should not occur partially, but should become a component of Ukraine's national policies, which would retain its development vector both on the domestic market and on the external one.***

## Elements of the State Image

Today, scientists argue that a country's image is a strategic resource of the state. Moreover, it should be noted that opinion exists that "...a targeted policy of forming an attractive image of the state contributes to the protection of its national interests, achievement of foreign policy goals and the creation of an atmosphere of support by the world community for its steps in the international arena".<sup>1</sup>

The relevance of the chosen study is due to the fact that Ukraine is now going through a political crisis and, therefore, has the image of a politically fragile state that is on the path to strengthening itself and is seeking membership in the European Union. This is what determines the need for justification of actions by the country's government. The goal is to form an attractive and positive political image of Ukraine.

The political image of a state "is a mental image of a certain country, formed in the minds of citizens and foreign audiences. It is formed in the process of communicative interaction of subjects of economic, social and political life both within and outside the country".<sup>2</sup> However, the modern image of Ukraine is perceived as a mental image of consciousness, namely as a reflection of Ukrainian realities. For example, the US media present Ukraine in the light of purposeful modelling of reflection of reality; through the prism of the media, a virtual image is shown, consisting of four leading components, which, in essence, form a four-level model of our country's image.

These components are:

1. Primary, pre-processed media materials, which are covered to minimize negative

<sup>1</sup> K. Vazhna, *Динаміка розвитку сучасного іміджу Україна на політичній арені сучасності (Dynamics of the Development of Ukraine's Modern Image on the Current Political Arena)*, "Image", No. 3, 2016, p. 48.

<sup>2</sup> V. Olshansky, *Образ і реальності: до аспекту аналізу іміджу країни (Image and Realities: To the Aspect of Analysis of the Country's Image)*, "Edges. Journalism", Ed. 15, 2013, p. 88.

information connotations and to enhance positive ones.

2. A model of primary materials prepared by media.
3. Negatively skewed reports, which are broadcast by the media.
4. The result of the work of the audience (that is, the coverage of its own impressions and competence) and the subject of perception, namely the opinion leader, who can independently construct in his or her mind an integral image of the state, based on already proposed models, which are imposed by the media, but take into consideration their own visions, views, and conclusions.

Media experts note that “the political image of the state, which is designed purposefully, has, as a matter of fact, two main addressees: the society inside the country and the world community”.<sup>3</sup> It is absolutely clear that each state requires a positive political image that will contribute to its socio-economic and political development and the expansion of relations with the outside world.

One of the main features of the image of Ukraine is functionality. But here it is worth noting that foreign media do not cover such a component as the internal filling of the state image. In our opinion, this is because it is not always advantageous to cover it in the light of the internal processes, as the Ukrainian media seek to strengthen and build solidarity within Ukrainian society, which contributes to overcoming the social and class conflict, especially when there is a war in our country. Furthermore, a positive image of a country strengthens its external functions and impacts. These include:

- the primary active integration into the global information and political community, taking into account a globalized world, and the askew of the state’s image on the world arena, through the prism of its negative connotation, can hypothetically lead to socio-economic cataclysms within the country;
- protection of the country from political and military external pressures (including Ukraine’s cybersecurity in general);
- the strengthening of support for Ukraine by the world community and EU countries;
- strong support of Ukrainian national business, with an infusion of foreign investment, which will strengthen the economic component of the state;
- development of tourism, which will contribute to a powerful influx of tourists and will be able to show the Ukrainian way of thinking and hospitality to the international community;
- protection of Ukrainians abroad.

However, it should be noted that at present, the problem (regarding the practical implementation) of modern media research is the coexistence of the internal and external image. “...The ideal option is the coexistence of both positive images when the social values of a particular country correspond to a system of world values such as ‘human freedom’, ‘world peace’, ‘freedom of speech and conscience’, ‘national sovereignty’”<sup>4</sup> This is the basis for the image of such powerful countries as the US and Germany.

<sup>3</sup> V. Romata, *Українська політична ситуація (Ukrainian Political Situation)*, “Edges. Journalism”, Ed. 15, 2013, p. 90.

<sup>4</sup> A. Starostina, *Маркетингові дослідження. Практичний аспект (Marketing Research. Practical Aspect)*, Williams: Kiev 1998, p. 166.

## Factors that Influence the Image

To analyse the Ukrainian situation, we should pay attention to the fact that contemporaries (political image-makers) have singled out a variety of components for the synthesis of the ideal coexistence of the external and internal images. These include subjective, objective, temporary, and communicative components, which we should study in more detail.

Subjective factors are represented in a formation of the image of the political leader of the state, or the political elite, which is perceived as an integral element of the first component in Ukraine, which produces the image of political institutions of power and political parties.

Objective factors are expressed in the formation of the image of the state's political regime, the image of democracy, or the presence of improvement in social and economic components.

Time factors are formed on cultural and historical facts or existing political events that contribute to the formation of political forecasts.


Communicative factors model the image from the standpoint of communication, that is, the influence of broadcast channels (media and communication media).

In such circumstances, the media, as researchers note, carry out two important and closely related functions in the political sphere: observe political life on behalf of society and ensure representation of the public sphere<sup>5</sup>. Here, attention is paid precisely to the design of the image as a

process, taking into account, first of all, the realities, while forming ideal models (images of friends or enemies). An example is the creation of e-government as a system of systematic interaction between government and society via the Internet.

However, image, as a communication product, is determined by its carrier and the image of the recipient. A favourable image of a state is related to the expectations of the citizens. "It is also conditioned by rational requirements, interests and sociocultural patterns, stereotypes of mass consciousness"<sup>6</sup>. A positive image of a state on the world arena arises when it is oriented towards the mentioned social groups and corresponds to their needs. Processes of a global nature in the sociocultural space within the state can, taking into account image-factors, be clearly traced both in the international and state space, which is political.

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## Evaluation of the State Image

"In world practice, the analysis of country brands and the creation of their ratings has become widespread since the middle of the early years of the 21st century, due to the following factors. First, the high development rates of the world economy at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century, led to an increase in demand for available investment resources

<sup>5</sup> P. van Ham, *The Rise of Brand State: The Postmodern Politics of Image and Reputation*, "Global Policy", [http://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/162/27557.html access: 14 October 2017]

<sup>6</sup> P. van Ham, *The Rise of Brand State: The Postmodern Politics of Image and Reputation*, "Global Policy", [http://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/162/27557.html access: 14 October 2017]

from dynamically growing countries”<sup>7</sup>. On the other hand, the political elite tries to influence the volume of investments aimed at developing trade between countries, and this dictates the conditions for maintaining the country’s image on the world stage. For example, the US boasts USD 1.4 billion, the United Kingdom – USD 1.2 billion, France – USD 3.1 billion<sup>8</sup>, Saudi Arabia – USD 6 billion<sup>9</sup>.

Here it should be noted that to study a country’s image, it is worth relying on projects on the country rating that have become increasingly popular in the world since 2005. For example, the Country Brand Index (CBI), the national brand index by Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index (NBI), or FutureBrand, which now operate in accordance with their own methods.

According to modern day experts (A. Starostina, G. Lychoy, V. Kravchenko, etc.), the strength of the country brand, according to the methodology of FutureBrand, is affected by the state of affairs in the following areas of the country’s socio-economic life: tourism, historical heritage and culture, business, the quality of life, values system. To assess the country brand, FutureBrand uses a three-level system based on a global quantitative study, expert interviews, and analysis of relevant statistical data.<sup>10</sup>

We suggest a detailed study of this method since we consider it valid for implementation with regard to the image of Ukraine. Specialists note that at the first stage all statistics and information of an

analytically factual nature in the media are collected and prepared. Researchers are interested in the country’s potential and the pace of introducing something new that will be of public importance. Analytics allows us to determine the dynamics of changes over a certain period and introduce something more powerful and more constructive to improve the image of Ukraine.

In the second stage, there are various kinds of assessments of the attributes of Ukraine’s image on the world arena and brand strength indicators. In our case, we are talking about such aspects of coverage by foreign media as:

- a) awareness of the existence of Ukraine (significantly increased over the past 15 years);
- b) associations arising from mentioning the name of our state;
- c) the level of foreign support for our country;
- d) the desire to visit Ukraine;
- e) personal recommendation of foreign citizens to visit Ukraine.

To ensure the above tasks, the media conduct an international survey of foreign respondents. For example, the US edition of the Washington Post<sup>11</sup> notes that 3,800 respondents from 30 countries of the world participated in their internal survey

<sup>7</sup> A. Starostina, *Міжнародний імідж країни: практичні аспекти аналізу (Country’s International Image: Practical Aspects of Analysis)*, “Marketing in Ukraine”, No. 3, 2011, p. 52.

<sup>8</sup> The Marketing of Nations. *A Strategic Approach to Building National Wealth* by Philip Kotler, Somkid Jatusripitak and Suwit Maesincee, “The Free Press”, New York, 2017 [http://www.bizsum.com/articles/art\_themarketing-of-nations.php access: 14 October 2017]

<sup>9</sup> W. Olins, *Hull: Pioneering City, Case Study, 2016* [www.wolffolins.com/files/Hull\_0202New access: 16 October 2017].

<sup>10</sup> A. Starostina, *Міжнародний імідж країни: практичні аспекти аналізу (Country’s International Image: Practical Aspects of Analysis)*, “Marketing in Ukraine”, No. 3, 2011, p. 56.

<sup>11</sup> “Washington Post” [https://www.washingtonpost.com/ access: 16 October 2017].



of a statistical study on Ukraine (events in Ukraine) in 2016, and the survey was conducted online. They were people aged 20-60 who systematically travel and have an opportunity to visit Ukraine.

Here it should be noted that it is the results of quantitative sociological research – considering the opinions and impressions of the respondents – that are the basis for Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) calculations and that enabled the assessment of constituent components of attributes in CBI in 2017. According to CBI, analysis of the image of Ukraine was carried out according to the following mechanism: The rating scale ranged from 1 to 10 (where 1 is bad, and 10 is excellent). The first component was people; the second one was a product, namely tourist attractions of Ukraine, sports, trade, etc.; the third component was the state of media resources, including advertising communication; the fourth component analysed the environments, including events, conferences, and infrastructure.

In the third stage, the evaluations of the proposed specialists and experts, who systematically contribute to the development of the international image of countries around the world, are processed. In 2017, 62 experts were surveyed (in 2005, there were 35 of them). They are specialists in the field of tourism and officials. The results of this type of analytics are used to identify trends in the development of the image of the state in general.

The formation of Ukraine's international image should not occur partially, but should become a component of Ukraine's national policies, which would retain its development vector both on the domestic market and on the external one. Peter van Ham points out that "the main foreign policy department

of the state is the foreign affairs body, which plays a leading role in shaping the international image in many countries of the world. The importance of the factors of influence will differ significantly depending on the purpose of forming the image of the country".<sup>12</sup> Therefore, we should consider that previously the development of Ukraine's positive world image was dulled by the factor of corruption, entry barriers to the country's market, the investment climate, etc.



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To develop an attractive image, it is necessary to focus on improving the infrastructure of the state, preserving cultural and historical monuments, etc. Both the domestic and foreign policies of Ukraine will influence the stimulation of exports, which will develop the country's economy and will facilitate its entry into the EU.

### **The Image of Ukraine in Foreign Media**

Therefore, it is worth noting that, while examining the specifics of the implementation of methods for assessing the international image of Ukraine in foreign media, one should adhere to several dominant factors. The first one is the widespread use of systematic analysis and research of Ukraine's ratings. This will help to increase the level of competition in our market, support the

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<sup>12</sup> P. van Ham, *The Rise of Brand State: The Postmodern Politics of Image and Reputation* [<http://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/162/27557.html> access: 14 October 2017]

economy and investment resources in the international market. Secondly, it is necessary to analyse and develop the country's tourism industry, which will contribute to positive feedback on the Internet from foreigners who have already visited us and gave us good endorsements. Thirdly, the analysed results of the international study of the image of countries and the pilot online survey of respondents from different countries confirmed the hypothesis presented by us. Fourth, foreign policy factors are now the leading factors in shaping Ukraine's international image. "The long-term ignoring of the Ukrainian factor by Western media was replaced by a concentrated observation of this fragment of the post-Soviet space, where a political crisis unfolded, which took the form of a power collision between alternative visions of the present and the future".<sup>13</sup>

It is worthwhile focusing attention during the research on which specific media outlets (from the countries surveyed by us) pay attention to coverage of the image of Ukraine and in what way. It should be noted that on the pages of foreign websites we find certain elements of contradictions in the coverage of the fight for a positive image of Ukraine. Many reports are aimed at covering the military conflict. "The conflict between a desired and real models of Ukraine's external perception reflects a deep distance between the competing types of public self-esteem in Ukraine that are characteristic of certain groups of political and intellectual elites".<sup>14</sup>

The coverage of information about Ukraine in foreign media outlets in recent years can be divided into the following topics:

- the Ukrainian political crisis and its consequences;

- Ukraine and spheres of influence on it, namely of Russia and the United States;
- Russia and Ukraine—zones of alienation and rapprochement;
- the Ukrainian government and its work;
- Myths vs. Facts: Ukrainian corruption;
- reforms in Ukraine and the path for joining the EU;
- criminal Ukraine;
- military Ukraine.

The traditional image of Ukraine, which now dominates in the North American online media (Globe and Mail, Washington Post, Bloomberg) is that of a tired state and people who, since the time of the Revolution of Dignity, are fighting for their freedom: "Instead of being proud and independent, we rather see Ukraine in the image of a tired miner, who slowly, but confidently is moving out of the darkness and into the light, forward to the next happiness," notes the Globe and Mail (2015). The traditional topic for the US media about the content of Ukrainian media is also highlighted by the state of press freedom, the Ukrainian media aspect in general.

When analysing German media (for example, *Suddeutsche Zeitung*), we see a tendency of support and a positive attitude towards the possible entry of Ukraine into the EU and, therefore, the formation of a positive image of our state.

Polish media cover the media industry in Ukraine from the standpoint of distancing itself from existing and accepted standards

<sup>13</sup> O. Butyrsky, *Україна у дзеркалі західних ЗМІ (Ukraine in the Mirror of Western Media)*, "Scientific Notes of the Institute of Journalism", No. 17, 2016, p. 77.

<sup>14</sup> O. Butyrsky, *Україна у дзеркалі західних ЗМІ (Ukraine in the Mirror of Western Media)*, "Scientific Notes of the Institute of Journalism", No. 17, 2016, p. 78.

and moving in the European direction, changing and becoming more democratic. For example, the Polish edition of *Rzeczpospolita* highlights Ukraine's attitude not only towards economic but also social and political problems. In the European Union section, attention is often focused on the reforms in Ukraine and the terms that we comply or fail to comply with (21 articles in total). In most cases, the coverage of the problems of European integration of Ukraine covers 23% of the total number of articles of both a positive and negative nature. The Political Struggle category (where we analysed 18 articles) tells us about the problems of the Ukrainian judicial system, reforms. Attention is paid to the current medical reform. This section contains both positive and negative feedback about us, which statistically came to 13% positive, 5% negative. The Political Activities section has counted 16 articles that described modern Ukrainian rallies and meetings, focusing on the fact that we still have a calm environment and people continue to fight for freedom (it was about rallies on Independence Square and about new tent camps). Here are 12 articles, five of which are strongly negative, and seven are positive.

## Conclusions

It is worth noting that during the study we came to the conclusion that the primary source of changes in opinions regarding Ukraine is the existence of the profound reforms currently taking place in our country. This leads to economic, cultural, and other aspects of the country's activities, which is reflected in the media. Experts are now predicting that this will have a positive discourse in foreign media and, consequently, will result in the country's positive image. Ukraine finds itself at a new stage in the formation of its image, which brings with it radical changes but still has a number of contradictions in the various information fields of countries. PR actions alone are not enough to improve the situation in Ukraine. The country needs to restructure the system itself, and not just the information field.

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