

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS OF UKRAINE ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE "DIIA" APP AS A COMPONENT OF G2C COMMUNICATION IN TIME OF WAR

СТРАТЕГІЧНІ КОМУНІКАЦІЇ УКРАЇНИ НА ПРИКЛАДІ ДОДАТКУ «ДІЯ» ЯК КОМПОНЕНТИ G2C КОМУНІКАЦІЇ ПІД ЧАС ВІЙНИ

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Abstract. *In times of war, effective communication between the government and the population becomes a vital component of maintaining social cohesion, disseminating information, and fostering a sense of unity. This article delves into the strategic communication efforts employed by Ukraine, focusing on the "Diia" app as an innovative tool facilitating communication between the government and its citizens during times of war. By examining the features, impact, and challenges of the "Diia" app, this study sheds light on the significance of leveraging technology to enhance government-citizen communication in times of crisis.*

Key words: *strategic communications, "Diia" app, international communications, G2C communication, war, conflict communication, technology, information dissemination, societal cohesion, crisis communication, digitalization, public engagement, communication strategies, state information policy.*

Анотація. *Під час війни ефективна комунікація між урядом і населенням стає життєво важливим компонентом підтримки соціальної згуртованості, поширення інформації та комунікації з урядом. У цій статті розглядаються стратегічні комунікаційні зусилля України, зосереджені на додатку "Дія" як інноваційному інструменті, що полегшує комунікацію між урядом і громадянами під час війни. Вивчаючи особливості, вплив та виклики додатку "Дія", це дослідження проливає світло на важливість використання технологій для покращення комунікації між урядом та громадянами в умовах війни.*

Ключові слова. *Стратегічні комунікації, додаток "Дія", міжнародні комунікації, G2C-комунікація, війна, кризова комунікація, технології, поширення інформації, діджиталізація, залучення громадськості, комунікаційні стратегії, державна інформаційна політика.*

Problem Statement. In the context of contemporary conflict scenarios, maintaining effective communication between governments and their populations becomes a critical challenge. Geopolitical tensions and military conflicts necessitate the swift and accurate dissemination of information, while countering disinformation and fostering a sense of unity among citizens. Traditional communication methods often fall short in meeting these demands. Thus, there is a

pressing need to explore innovative communication approaches that bridge the gap between governments and citizens during times of war. This article addresses the problem of enhancing communication strategies by investigating the role of the "Diia" app as a dynamic component of government-citizen communication in Ukraine, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of how technology can reshape information flow and societal resilience during war.

The purpose of research is to identify the strengths and weaknesses of Ukraine's digital transformation strategy and to study the effectiveness of the Diia app in the context of war.

Analysis of the latest publications. At the national level, the application of action has received a lot of attention from scholars, in particular, on individual services and their effectiveness. In particular, the works on e-governance by M. Mikhrovska, T. Biletska, and V. Borysenko were studied. However, from the point of view of strategic communications, there have been no studies of the application of Diia in terms of war. All researchers assess the process of digitalization in Ukraine as a positive phenomenon, although one that needs to be improved.

Presentation of the main research results.

Strategic communication is a purposeful and systematic approach to disseminating information with the intent of achieving specific goals. It encompasses the careful planning, crafting, and dissemination of messages through diverse channels to influence target audiences. In the digital era of constant crisis, understanding the intricacies of strategic communication is crucial for individuals, organizations, and governments alike.

According to James Farwell, strategic communication is a “tool that comprehensively employs images, words, and actions to influence target audiences’ perceptions, change their behavior, and accomplish national strategic interests” [Farwell, J. P. (2012)]. It can assist governments in addressing and responding to current and future security challenges, and it should be regarded as “critical to national development and strategy implementation”, states Paul Cornish [Cornish, P., French, J. L., & Yorke, C. (2011)]. Effective strategic communication, according to Lina Jing, can also help to “minimize threats to national security and aid in policy planning and execution” [Jing, L. and Jing, N. (2023)].

In the report "Strategic communications as a key factor in countering hybrid threats" issued at the request of the Panel for the Future of Science and Technology (STOA) for the European Parliament in 2021, the authors emphasize the significance of strategic communication in modern warfare. Report highlights that strategic communication is essential for governments to manage information flow, counter enemy narratives, and maintain domestic and international support for military endeavors [Quirós, C. T. (2021)].

The essential characteristics of strategic communications, according to the report, can be summarized as follows:

- they are executed according to a predefined and systematic plan;
- involve actions at strategic, operational and tactical levels;
- are developed in a competitive, and even conflictive, environment, where audiences are subject to a constant buzz that can hamper their goals being met;
- demand a high level of coordination and synchronization between stakeholders;
- require targeted audiences to be exactly defined;
- require selection of the most adequate communication channels;
- are aimed at informing, influencing or promoting behavioral changes in the target audiences;
- must be aligned with the overall goals of the promoter country or organization;
- must be focused on both the short and long term.

Considering the above-mentioned aspects, we can single out such components of strategic communication in wartime governance:

1. Coordinated messaging: Governments must ensure that messages broadcast across different platforms and channels present a unified narrative that corresponds to their strategies.
2. Differentiation of the target audience: It is crucial to identify and understand the different segments of the audience, including populations, international allies and adversaries. Tailoring messages so that they resonate with each group optimizes the effectiveness of communication efforts.

3. Crisis and risk communication: Governments must have robust crisis communication plans in place to deal with unforeseen events or emergencies. Fast, transparent and accurate communication during crises is essential to maintaining public trust.
4. Media Engagement and Management: Effective engagement with forms of media, including traditional, digital and social media, is essential. Governments must proactively manage media relations to ensure accurate reporting and counter misinformation.
5. Evaluation and adaptation: an ongoing evaluation of essential communication strategies. Governments must be prepared to adapt their messages and approaches based on feedback, changing circumstances and evolving objectives.

Achieving all the above-mentioned components for Ukraine in a time of war is impossible without the use of digital methods and necessary transformation. The digital transformation of society encompasses all types of communication between the state's actors - consumers (households), businesses, and the government.

In Ukraine, the Ministry of Digital Transformation ensures the formation and implementation of state policy: in the areas of digitalization, digital development, digital economy, digital innovations, e-government and e-democracy, development of the information society, informatization; in the area of digital skills development and digital rights of citizens; in the areas of open data, development of national electronic information resources and interoperability, development of broadband Internet access and telecommunications infrastructure, e-commerce and business; in the areas of public and administrative services; in the areas of electronic trust services and electronic identification; in the development of the IT industry [*Government of Ukraine... (2023)*].

The Diia portal, established in Ukraine in 2019, was initially designed to exercise the right of every citizen to access electronic services and information on administrative and other public services, to contact executive authorities, other state bodies, local governments, enterprises, institutions and organizations, to obtain information from national electronic information resources necessary for the provision of services, and to monitor and evaluate the quality of services.

The functioning of the state portal Diia is legally regulated by The Regulation approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine "Issues of the Unified State Web Portal of Electronic Services and the Unified State Portal of Administrative Services" No. 1137 of December 4, 2019 [*Resolution ... (2019)*]. Before the war, the portal already offered more than 70 public services online on the portal and 21 in the app, including the ability to become an entrepreneur, change the type of activity or terminate it, obtain a certificate of no criminal record, childbirth assistance, file a lawsuit, register a car or receive services related to driver's documents, apply for a number of licenses, permits or extracts from registers, and obtain COVID certificates.

During the war, access to public services for businesses and consumers in most regions of Ukraine was paralyzed. Thus, the Diia portal, along with a number of other online services, became the only way to maintain communication with the state. For security reasons, state registries were disabled to prevent data leakage. That's why some documents disappeared or were not pulled up. However, the Ministry of Digital Transformation continued to be active and promptly presented a number of relevant services, including:

- "Come Back Alive" Fund for the Army. The app makes it faster and more convenient to transfer funds to the army.

- EWarrrior is a convenient link to a bot for reporting the addresses of military equipment and occupation troops.

- Damaged property. The ability to report damage or destruction of real estate as a result of Russian military aggression.

- Action TV and Action Radio. The ability to connect to television and radio from any location, even from any location, even from a hiding place.

- E-Support. The ability to receive payments of funds to internally displaced persons and persons in the areas of active military operations [*Diia - State services online... (2023)*].

Due to war in Ukraine, digital transformation may have slowed down, but it is gaining momentum, albeit rather chaotically. It is absolutely clear that the future of economic development directly depends on the level of digitalization of the country, and a strategy is needed to realize its

full potential. The current strategy does not meet the current challenges of the war and needs to be adjusted in line with general changes.

Diia (short for Ukrainian "State and Me") is a mobile application, web portal and brand of the digital state in Ukraine, developed by the Ministry of Digital of Digital Transformation of Ukraine. Diia was first presented in 2019 and officially launched in 2020.

The application allows one to store your driver's license, internal and foreign passports and other documents in a smartphone, as well as transfer copies of them when receiving banking or postal services, checking into a hotel, and in other life situations. Diia (the app and/or portal) also allows users to access public services such as eBaby (a comprehensive service for the birth of a child), register a business and individual entrepreneur online, pay taxes and file declarations, sign any documents, change the place of registration, and more. By 2024, it was planned to transfer 100% of public services to Diia [*Who is implementing... (2023)*].

The development of the Diia application can be perceived as the existence of a certain system that exists in external circumstances. This system is open, because there is a constant exchange of resources with the environment. The main resource for the exchange is information, there are communication links with the environment and the exchange of services.

By origin, the system is an artificial mixed system - social and technological, because it combines technical devices with human groups. Actually, Diia is not just a program on a phone, it is human labor, thoughts, and ideas behind it. Together, technology and a strong team create an effective mechanism. The system is managed both internally (by the Ministry of Digital Transformation) and externally, as it must meet national requirements and is funded by numerous additional projects. The system is dynamic because the outputs of the system at a given time are influenced by the nature of the inputs in the past. That is, the system is influenced by decisions made in the past and the current threat environment.

The structure of the system is networked, i.e., there are both serial and parallel connections between subsystems both serial and parallel connections. In order for the system to work as a technical and social subsystems are combined.

The technical subsystems are:

1. The Diia application, which helps to build a connection with the environment (users).
2. An online platform with a wider range of services that highlights the main concept and provides links to other government projects. The social subsystem is a staff consisting of: State leadership Committee on Digital Transformation, Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine, Fedoriv Marketing Agency (Product strategy, brand strategy, visual identity, communication), Spilka design büro, EGAP programs (E-governance for government accountability and community participation, Swiss Confederation e-Governance for Government Accountability and Community Participation, Swiss Confederation (SDC)), EGOV4UKRAINE (EU, Sweden (SIDA), Estonia, Denmark, Poland), Office of Administrative Services Reform (EDGE, Canada), TAPAS Project (Transparency and Accountability in Public Administration and Transparency and Accountability in Public Administration and Services, USAID, UKAID), SACCI Project (Project Support to Anti-Corruption Champion Institutions in Ukraine, USAID), EU4PAR project (EU), BRDO (Better Regulation Delivery Office), EPAM. Privatbank, Monobank.

Based on the information about the Diia application as a system, we analyzed the strengths and weaknesses of the system and developed recommendations for its further development strategy under 3 possible scenarios in the context of war (survival, optimization, and development strategies):

Development	Optimization (based on strength)
1. Adopt the experience of countries with a high level of technological	

<p>development, develop an effective development plan</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Continue to fight bureaucracy at different levels with the help of new electronic tools 3. Make the process of professional development transparent, advertise forums and accelerators 4. Expand the new project with internships aimed at young people 5. Advertise the application in social networks of different age groups 6. Improve the website, make it more attractive to investors 7. Add new features for refugees abroad (for example, digital diplomas) 8. Join the HealthyMe registry 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create a group to help older people understand how to manage the application 2. Provide jobs for people who have worked in the bureaucratic system 3. Train these people in mobility from experienced e-system employees 4. Involve Mykhailo Fedorov in creating advertising that will attract investors to optimize infrastructure 5. To interest the population through transparent and open projects 6. Increase the staff with IT specialists who can counteract cyberattacks 7. Develop an even more complex identification process to prevent identity theft
<p>Optimization (based on weaknesses)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase funding through foundations and partnership programs 2. Increase the number of professional staff working with technology 3. Introduce internships for students, which will be funded by partners 4. Disseminate information on e-literacy training among young people 5. Improve the work of registers, deeper coding of information 6. Add lawyers to technical support to help with legal issues. 	<p>Survival</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explain to the population how digital transformation will affect economic development 2. Correct errors in the application to gain the trust of a skeptical population 3. Adjust the concept and work plan until 2024, paying attention to the challenges faced during the war 4. Coordinate the work with the city authorities at the legal level (what will happen if the government changes, under what conditions, etc.

The Diia app also became a method of communication between Ukrainian citizens and the governments of other countries to which Ukrainians were forced to flee the war. "Diia has been recognized by 58 civilized countries, whose government agencies will be able to use electronic documents in the application. The Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine adopted the relevant decision by Resolution No. 910 of August 16, 2022 on "Some issues of transferring personal data outside Ukraine through the Unified State Web Portal of Electronic Services" [*Resolution ... (2022)*].

At the same time, the resolution states that "personal data may not be transferred to foreign entities registered in a state recognized by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine as an aggressor or occupying state, or to states that are members of customs and military alliances with such states." This suggests that the government is trying to make it impossible for the enemy to steal personal data.

Despite the imperfections of the system, its effectiveness in the context of war has been impressive for other countries. The experience of using Diia has been adopted by other countries, including Estonia, one of the leaders in digital development. On January 18, 2023, it became known that the United States intends to replicate the success of the Ukrainian e-government program Diia in other interested countries. This was announced by USAID Administrator Samantha Power at the World Economic Forum in Davos.

"USAID has provided funding to the Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine to help develop Diia and improve its cybersecurity, and has allocated another \$8.5 million to help expand the

program's services during the war," Power said. She noted that Ukraine is ready to share its approach and technology with other countries, so USAID plans to start discussions with interested countries about potentially using Diia as a template for their own similar programs.

And in February 2023, the Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine announced that it was communicating about the implementation of the Ukrainian Diia app in more than five countries. These include several European countries, Asia, and Africa. The list of countries was not disclosed in detail.

According to the head of the department, Mykhailo Fedorov, such agreements could potentially bring "a lot of money" to the budget. «We are talking about billions of hryvnias for the implementation of Diia in a short period of time. Not only a technological product is sold, but also expertise and consulting» [Fedorov... (2023)].

Conclusions.

The introduction of e-governance ensures openness and transparency of public authorities, access to public information through modern information technologies, improvement of the quality of administrative services, saving time and material resources of both service applicants and officials, and the possibility of receiving administrative services around the clock, which contributes to the democratization of society and overcoming corruption in the public administration system of Ukraine. However, in the context of Russia's military aggression, the process of digital transformation of the state has proven to be effective, and the Ministry of Digital Transformation faces even more challenges.

The analysis examined the work of the portal and the Diia application as a system and identified new priorities and ways of development. These include strengthening the monitoring of the system to prevent data leakage of Ukrainian citizens to Russian databases. Young people should be the driving force behind the development of the app and the portal, so it is very important to encourage them to take an interest in digital projects now, even in such difficult conditions. It is also necessary to help older people get used to using the app. To do this, it needs to be made even more simple and convenient.

It's important since Diia brings Ukraine to the arena as a strong player in the field of e-governance and digitalization and serves as a bridge for communication not only between Ukrainian citizens and the government, but also between Ukraine as a state and other actor in international relations.

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