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COMMUNICATION STRATEGY FOR SHAPING BAYRAKTAR TB2 AS A BRAND IN THE MEDIA SPACE

The article analyzes the communication strategy for building the Bayraktar TB2 brand as a process of transforming Turkish drones into a recognizable global brand and a symbol of Ukrainian resistance during the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation. The author notes that the success of the communication strategy ensured not only an increase in demand for Baykar products, but also strengthened Turkey's positive image in the world. It has been proven that Ukrainian official structures played a primary role in promoting the drones. Through agenda-setting, they made videos of Bayraktar TB2's combat successes the main news story, and officials' comments on these videos framed Turkish drones as the driving force behind the resistance in defending Ukraine. This triggered a chain reaction in the media, social networks, and the emergence of cultural content, which later transformed into large-scale crowdfunding, both in Ukraine and in other countries, in favor of Ukraine. As a result, the author concludes that the communication strategy for promoting Turkish drones was hybrid in nature, being neither completely planned nor spontaneous, and that several different actors participated in its development, from state institutions to civil society. Therefore, the brand's key message worked on two levels: symbolic (Bayraktar as the embodiment of Ukrainian resistance) and material (Bayraktar as affordable and effective military technology).

Keywords: media, communication strategy, brand, brand awareness, image, reputation, Bayraktar TB2, publicity, promotion, agenda-setting, social media, crowdfunding, philanthropy, public relations, public opinion, drone diplomacy.

Problem statement. It is quite obvious that any armed conflict affects the recognition of the combat arsenal used during it. In the 21st century, there are many channels for promoting weapons, which means that their role goes far beyond their functional purpose. For example, the Turkish Bayraktar TB2 (UAV) gained popularity not only because of its technical characteristics, but mainly thanks to a successfully developed communication strategy that transformed it from an engineering product into a symbol of Ukrainian resistance in Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, as well as increased its brand awareness. Under the simplified name “Bayraktar,” it is mentioned in Ukrainian songs (in particular, “Bayraktar” by Oleg Novosad and Taras Borovyk), and a Kyiv radio station named ‘Bayraktar’ with the slogan “Music of Ukrainian Victory” was named in its honor. Entire countries joined forces in crowdfunding to purchase it for the Ukrainian Armed Forces. Therefore, in this article, we analyze the communication strategy that popularized Bayraktar drones and transformed them from physical weapons into a brand—a symbol of

resistance for Ukraine and prestige for Turkey as a successful drone manufacturer.

The importance of communication strategy lies in the fact that, as a key mechanism of modern organizations, it involves a systematically planned set of actions and measures aimed at interacting with target groups to achieve the organization's strategic goals [6, p.28], which may include building a positive image, strengthening reputation, increasing recognition, communicating key messages, and promoting the values and vision of the organization or brand. The benefits of a successfully developed communication strategy are possible provided that its main components are correctly defined: a clearly defined goal of interaction, segmentation of target audiences, formulation of central messages, tone of communication, and selection of channels for their dissemination. This can be observed in the communication strategy of Bayraktar drones, which is unique in that it was not officially planned, as will be discussed in this study.

Analysis of recent studies and publications.

Currently, the topic of Turkish Bayraktar UAVs



is covered by a wide range of scientific research, including analysis of their role after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation in 2022. For the most part, they focus on drones as a military-political tool. However, there are also works in which Bayraktars are considered in the context of media coverage. For example, in his article “The Role of Media and Technology in Contemporary Warfare” [27], A. Velchev analyzes the influence of mass media and technology on the formation of public opinion in wars, naming Bayraktar TB2 among such key technologies. Turkish researcher İ.E. Erdinç examined the Bayraktar TB2 unmanned aerial vehicle as a case study in public diplomacy. Erdinç as a case of public diplomacy, conducting a content analysis of publications in the American media (*The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, *Forbes*, and *Foreign Affairs*) for the period from June 1, 2020, to July 1, 2021 [11, p. 26]. Other researchers, Abdad, M. Y. and Sugito Sugito, focused on the Bayraktar TB2 as an instrument of Turkey's international diplomacy, where the authors replace the usual concept of “drone diplomacy” with “defense diplomacy” [1]. From the perspective of national branding, Bayraktar Türkmen, A., and Guillet, C. highlighted this in their article “Hard power elements in nation branding: Bayraktar TB-2 example” (2023), based on interviews with Ukrainians, examining the influence of Bayraktar TB2 as “hard power” on the perception of the Turkish brand and proposing to add a “military” component as another dimension of nation branding [26]. However, the communication strategy for promoting Bayraktar TB2 drones in the media during the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation was not considered.

Problem statement. The *purpose* of this scientific article is to analyze the communication strategy for promoting Bayraktar TB2 in the Ukrainian and international media space during the period from February 24, 2022, to February 24, 2023. The *objectives* of the article are to identify the main communication mechanisms that influenced the recognition of Bayraktar TB2 drones; to investigate the specifics of constructing the image of Turkish drones in media discourse; to determine the role of key actors in promoting drones.

Presentation of the main material. Although Ukraine currently uses drones from various manufacturers, including Ukrainian ones [31], it was the Bayraktar TB2 that made drones famous as an effective weapon at the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. and the resonance in social networks and Ukrainian media contributed

to the popularity of Turkish tactical drones in the world, increasing their sales.

There are currently 135,000 posts under the Bayraktar hashtag on Instagram (as of February 15, 2026). The official account of Bayraktar TV2 manufacturer Baykar Technology (@baykartech) with 498,000 followers has not gone unnoticed by subscribers. For comparison, the account of the American company General Atomics Aeronautical Systems (@generalatomics_asi), the manufacturer of the world's best military drones MQ-9 Reaper (according to the aviation news channel Aerotime [3]), has only 14,900 followers. This number demonstrates the popularity of Bayraktar drones.

The first reports on the effectiveness of Bayraktar TB2 in combat operations appeared thanks to official institutions and officials of Ukraine, who informed the public about the effectiveness of Turkish drones on social media through their official accounts. Even before Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022, when the first Bayraktar TB2 drone was delivered to Ukraine, the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense announced this on June 15, 2021, on its account on X (at that time Twitter): Defense of Ukraine: "Gaining altitude! Defense Minister Andriy Taran: the first Bayraktar TB2 strike drone system for the Navy has been delivered to Ukraine. We are conducting final acceptance tests of the system at its base"¹.

However, Bayraktar became particularly famous on social media among official structures at the beginning of the full-scale invasion. On the very first day, February 24, 2022, a video showing the destruction of Russian equipment using Bayraktar TB2 was posted on the Facebook page of the Ground Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. This information was immediately picked up by the Ukrainian media, in particular, the UNIAN news agency published the news under the headline «The Armed Forces of Ukraine destroyed Russian equipment with the help of Bayraktar (video)» [29].

A few days later, on February 27, 2022, the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine posted a video of Bayraktar's new victories on his official Facebook account with an emotional comment: «What Bayraktar is doing is life-giving! Chornobaivka village, Kherson region. Welcome to hell!» The video quickly gained millions of views (3.9 million views as of February 15, 2026)². On the same day (February 27, 2022), the Ukrainian Embassy in Turkey posted a video on its Twitter account showing Bayraktar TB2 blowing up a Russian artillery column,

¹ <https://x.com/DefenceU/status/1415585955432517632>

² <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=724421135390003>

accompanied by the words in Turkish: «Thank God for Bayraktar»³. Thus, combat videos distributed on social media and popularized by Ukrainian media have become a means of shaping the media image of Bayraktars as a symbol of resistance and even more – victory.

It is noteworthy that long before Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, during the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia, in which Turkey supported Azerbaijan by selling its drones, there was widespread coverage of successful strikes by Turkish drones against Russian-made armored vehicles and anti-aircraft systems. Canadian journalist E. Gosselin-Malo believes that “The country employed this mechanism as a strategy to promote its capabilities in the modern battlefield” [12]. According to the journalist, this increased the marketing value of the unmanned platform in sales to Ukraine and Poland. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that Ukrainian official structures adopted this practice of promoting weapons and simultaneously glorifying them in February 2022 from Turkey's experience.

A month later, on March 29, 2022, Mikhail Podolyak, an adviser to the head of the Ukrainian president's office, posted a photo of himself with Haluk Bayraktar on Twitter with the caption: "Russian armored vehicles are burning flawlessly in our beautiful fields. And they will continue to burn. Because Bayraktars are perfect for any task – invisible, terrifying, destructive. I will always be grateful to the creator and father of this superweapon, @haluk, for ensuring our victory"⁴. The fact that an official of such high rank gave a positive assessment of Turkish drones on social media, associating them with victory, was the best publicity for Bayraktars.

The effect of the posts was amplified by the fact that they were accompanied by visual material – videos shot with drones, which gave impetus to the emergence of viral content (memes and videos demonstrating Bayraktar's accuracy, which were distributed on social networks by users and replicated by the media). Journalist Aaron Stein, studying the popularity of Bayraktar TB2 in the war in Ukraine, notes this effect in his article “The TB2: The value of a cheap and ‘good enough’ drone”: “The Turkish Bayraktar TB2 has emerged as one of the most well-known drones in the world, after videos from its sensors have been spliced and uploaded to a bevy of social media platforms” [24]. R. Leurs, author of the article “So wurde eine türkische Drohne zur Hoffnungsträgern im Ukraine-Kriege” (*How a Turkish*

drone became a beacon of hope in the Ukraine war), noting that “Bayraktar drones are likely to gain their true strategic significance primarily through social media – documented successes are designed to instill courage and boost public morale” [16].

Turkish military analyst A. Mevlutoglu, commenting to Coda Media, called this part of the Ukrainian military's PR campaign and noted that: "Footage showing destroyed equipment, particularly sophisticated equipment or slain enemy troops, multiplies the psychological effect. Even if not much equipment is destroyed, the dissemination of such imagery through social media creates a snowball effect, which is very useful for propaganda warfare" [17]. In turn, the March 1, 2022, issue of *Time* magazine, in an article titled “Ukraine's Secret Weapon Against Russia: Turkish drones,” referring to one of the viral videos on Twitter about the destruction of a Russian convoy by Bayraktars, notes: "Perhaps more significantly... the videos are also becoming an increasingly prominent part of Ukraine's information war – giving Russian invaders a reason to fear their enemy, and providing a vital boost for Ukrainian morale amid fears of a coming military onslaught" [21].

As already mentioned, Bayraktar's victories in the early days of the war inspired Taras Borovyk to write the song *Bayraktar* (released on March 1, 2022). Incidentally, the song *Bayraktar* has 2.9 million views on YouTube as of today (February 2026) and is also intended for a foreign target audience, with subtitles in English and other languages⁵. The lyrics have become the subject of interest among scholars⁶. The popularity of Bayraktars among the Ukrainian audience was also fueled by the victories of drones in the early days of the war. Joe Dyke of *Airwars*, an organization that tracks civilian casualties in armed conflicts, expressed surprise at the hype surrounding Turkish drones in a comment to *The Independent*: "I can't remember such fanfare around specific weaponry.... No one sang songs about the Predator or Reaper drones. It's a moment where everyone is talking about Bayraktar" [8].

Thus, the first reports on Bayraktar's effectiveness in combat, which came from official Ukrainian institutions and officials, launched the initial publicity for Turkish drones: Bayraktar entered the public sphere as a winning weapon, as the demonstration of combat videos and the admiration of Bayraktar's exploits by

³ <https://x.com/UKRinTR/status/1497857490976972804>

⁴ https://x.com/Podolyak_M/status/1508837875848200199

⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S3FGWPMj16M>.

⁶ Andrianova A. Not your ordinary drone: odes to the Bayraktar in the Russia-Ukraine war. *Popular Music*. 2023; 42 (4): 395-415. doi:10.1017/S0261143024000047

Ukrainian officials created the effect of proving the high effectiveness of the drones. This image then quickly spread both within the country and beyond through viral social media content and traditional media. However, publicity became the first key tool in a communication strategy that was subsequently used to develop other forms of promotion, from viral content on social media that constructed a narrative of victory, to setting the agenda in traditional media, the emergence of public crowdfunding initiatives, and public statements by Baykar.

While Bayraktars were mentioned in some media outlets prior to 2022, they did not receive much attention. However, coverage of their active participation in the events of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine sparked particular interest in them. According to *Google Trends*, global searches for "Bayraktar" between January 2021 and January 2022 did not exceed 27 percent (October 17, 2021) out of 100. However, with the start of the full-scale invasion, the figure rose sharply to 100 percent on February 27, 2022, indicating a fourfold increase in user interest in this topic.

Turkish drones appeared in the Ukrainian media with some regularity, given that the first batch of Bayraktar TB2s arrived in Ukraine on March 20, 2019 [30]. In particular, in the Ukrainian news agency UNIAN, a year before the war (February 24, 2021-February 23, 2022), Bayraktar was mentioned 35 times in news headlines. However, between February 24, 2022, and February 24, 2023, there were 134 news items featuring the word "Bayraktar," indicating a significant increase in interest in drones on the part of Ukraine's largest news agency [33, p. 120]. According to R. Michaelson, author of the article "Turkey's drones had a bad reputation. The war in Ukraine has changed that" (2022), the inclusion of Bayraktar's victories in the public agenda allowed Ukraine "to display footage of the strikes to boost morale and galvanize international support for their fight" [17].

Active coverage in the Ukrainian media of the successes of Turkish drones on the battlefield from the first days of the full-scale invasion in 2022 was picked up and instantly spread in foreign media, contributing to awareness of the Bayraktar brand on the international arena. Leading publications such as *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *BBC News*, and many others emphasized the effectiveness of Turkish drones on the battlefield, consistently citing Ukrainian sources. This coverage became part of a communication strategy that contributed to the global recognition of the Bayraktar brand, promoting it among both civilian and military audiences.

Recognition was facilitated not only by frequent mentions in leading media outlets, but also by the appearance of the names "Bayraktar" and "Turkish drones" in news headlines, and most readers, according to a study by the American Press Institute, limit themselves to reading only the headlines [2].

Here are some of these publications over the past year: "Over Ukraine, Lumbering Turkish-Made Drones Are an Ominous Sign for Russia" (*The New York Times*, March 11, 2022), "Ukraine Says It Used Turkish-Made Drones to Hit Russian Targets" (*The Wall Street Journal*, February 27, 2022), "Turkish drones have become a symbol of the Ukrainian resistance" (*CNN*, April 11, 2022), "The Turkish Drone That Changed the Nature of Warfare" (*The New Yorker*, May 9, 2022), "Ukraine's Secret Weapon Against Russia: Turkish drones" (*Time*, March 1, 2022), "Turkey's Bayraktar TB2 drone: Why African states are buying them" (*BBC News*, August 25, 2022), "Ukraine army hails Turkish drones but Ankara plays down weapons sales" (*Financial Times*, March 11, 2022), Turkish drone success in Ukraine sets stage for Asia roadshow (*Financial Times*, March 16, 2022), After Ukraine, 'whole world' is a customer for Turkish drone, maker says (*Reuters*, May 30, 2022).

Forbes magazine had the highest number of annual publications mentioning Bayraktars and Turkish drones in its headlines: "Ukraine Receives Fresh Supplies Of Bayraktar Drones And Eye-Popping Numbers Of Anti-Tank Weapons (Updated Once More)" (March 3, 2022), "Russia Has Shot Down A Second TB-2. It's Too Little, Too Late To Stop Ukraine's Killer Drones" (March 31, 2022), "New Weapons From U.S. Could Rearm Ukraine's Bayraktar Drones" (April 6, 2022), "From Baykar to Kyiv: Turkey's 'No Strings Attached Drone Export Policy'" (April 13, 2022), "Ukraine's Bayraktar Drone Helped Sink Russian Flagship Moskva" (April 14, 2022), "The Russians Got Caught Faking a TB-2 Drone Shoot-Down" (April 28, 2022), "New Turkish Bayraktar Drones Still Seem To Be Reaching Ukraine" (May 10, 2022), "Will Turkey's Upcoming Bayraktar TB3 Naval Drone Also Become An Export Success?" (May 31, 2022), "The Ukrainian Military Is Changing Its Tactics With Bayraktar TB2 Drones" (June 23, 2022), "Greece Is Deploying Israeli Systems To Counter Turkish Drones" (July 3, 2022), "Arming Bayraktars With Air-To-Air Missiles Is Not A Solution To Defend Ukraine Against Russia's Iranian Drones" (October 31, 2022).

Therefore, it is worth noting that the transmission of victorious narratives was aimed at two target groups: the domestic Ukrainian public (through

domestic media) and the international public (through the media of the respective country). Moreover, the international audience perceived this information as a call to action to purchase Turkish drones, as Bayraktars had proven themselves to be weapons with combat experience. As Sarah E. Krebs of Cornell University, a political scientist and former US Air Force veteran, said: “What armies want to do is use technology that's battle tested so they're not the ones trying to debug along the way” [17].

Therefore, media coverage drew the attention of an international audience to the Bayraktar brand, in which anyone wishing to help Ukraine could invest money, having been convinced of its effectiveness. This sparked a crowdfunding phenomenon for Bayraktar TB2 drones, with citizens of seven countries (Lithuania, Ukraine, Poland, Latvia, Norway, Spain, and Canada) organizing fundraising campaigns to purchase drones for the Ukrainian army.

The UNIAN news agency first reported on crowdfunding on May 27, 2022, informing about the collection of money in Lithuania for Bayraktars (“Ministers and students pitched in”: Lithuania is collecting money for Bayraktars for Ukraine” [32]). The next day, on May 28, a new report appeared about the fundraising initiative launched by a Lithuanian journalist (“Lithuanian journalist Andrius Tapinas is raising €5 million for Bayraktars for Ukraine”). On May 29, 2022, two news items about crowdfunding appeared at once (“Russians shelled Mykolaiv again, and a Lithuanian presenter raised money for Bayraktar – top news,” “Lithuanians raised €5 million for Bayraktar for Ukrainian soldiers in 3.5 days”), and on the 30th, one about the fact that “Russian propagandists have already ‘shot down’ Bayraktar, which has not even been purchased yet with the money raised in Lithuania.” Thus, for five days in a row, one of Ukraine's news agencies, UNIAN, intensified coverage of Lithuania's crowdfunding initiative.

However, Lithuania's crowdfunding initiative was joined by a philanthropic response from Baykar, which donated Bayraktar to Ukraine free of charge in less than a week, as announced on Twitter on June 2, 2022, by Lithuanian Minister of National Defense Arvydas Anušauskas: “It's incredible, but Turkey has just agreed to donate the Bayraktar that Lithuania was raising funds for. Free of charge. This is amazing. We will use the funds raised to purchase the necessary ammunition for the Bayraktar, and the rest of the funds will also go to support Ukraine. Thank you, Turkey!»⁷.

Subsequently, at the end of June 2022, Ukrainian TV presenter Serhiy Prytula organized the “People's Bayraktar” project to raise funds from Ukrainians for Bayraktars for the needs of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. However, Baykar refused to accept these funds, stating on its official Twitter page in three languages (Turkish, English, and Ukrainian) that “Business leaders and ordinary people alike contributed funds—small and large—to reach this milestone within a matter of a few days. Baykar will not accept payment for the TB2s, and will send 3 UAVs free of charge to the Ukrainian war front. We ask that raised funds be remitted instead to the struggling people of Ukraine. We are touched by their solidarity and resolve in the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges”⁸. In general, the manufacturer Baykar has repeatedly refused funds, directing them to humanitarian aid for Ukraine, as officially reported on its website under the subheading “Donation campaigns in seven countries” [10].

The company's gesture (free transfer of three Bayraktar TB2 UAVs to the Armed Forces of Ukraine) can thus be classified as corporate philanthropy, specifically in the form of an in-kind donation, which involves the provision of goods or services rather than monetary donations [7]. In general, philanthropy is increasingly used as a form of public relations or advertising, promoting a company's image or brand through cause-related marketing or other high-profile sponsorships [22, p.57]. However, given Baykar's experience in selling drones to various countries, we can say that its participation goes far beyond one-time charity, and its actions are part of the company's long-term business strategy, having the characteristics of so-called “strategic philanthropy,” which involves creating mutually beneficial opportunities for both those receiving assistance and the company providing it. According to K. Kubičková's definition of “strategic philanthropy,” “organizations today are attempting to move beyond enlightened self-interest by tying philanthropic activities into corporate strategy. This linking of philanthropy to strategic business outcomes must be designed to create a measurable benefit in an identifiable time period” [15, p.77].

Baykar's strategic philanthropy, which aims to strengthen its reputation, audience loyalty, and expand its sales markets, is directly linked to the important concept of “drone diplomacy,” which describes the trend of using drones as a means of influencing international politics, as well as a weapon that has changed the nature of warfare. Drone diplomacy owes its emergence to the Turkish Bayraktar TB2 drones.

⁷ https://x.com/a_anusauskas/status/1532314210872459264?s=20&t=jYY3aHiKCC4MfncWx87tPw

⁸ https://twitter.com/BaykarTech/status/1541478839662043136?t=FOsIX7zp15QLbi_b8Q2D3g&s=19

One of the first publications on drone diplomacy appeared before Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in an article entitled "Turkey's modern way of doing foreign policy: drone diplomacy" (3 Nov 2021) by Canadian reporter E. Gosselin-Malo, who explains it as "an integration of foreign and drone policy... allowing it to cement deeper diplomatic relations" [12]. In a later article, "Turkey's drone diplomacy: Lessons for Europe" (Jan. 31, 2022), European Council on Foreign Relations analyst F. Borsari describes Turkish drones as a powerful foreign policy asset: "Geopolitically, Turkey has demonstrated how drones can be a powerful foreign policy asset. This technology has helped the country to coerce its geopolitical rivals and conduct military operations where it once may have been too costly and dangerous to do so" [5].

Thus, it is reasonable to argue that drone diplomacy and the victorious narratives of Bayraktar TB2 in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict have influenced the formation and nation branding of Turkey, as through the sale of drones, Baykar has promoted both the quality of the Turkish defense industry and its positioning as a fighter for justice. This was facilitated by the clear position of the management, which announced that it would not sell weapons to Russia. In particular, in an interview with *CNN* on July 18, 2022, when asked by host Julia Chatterley, "Would you supply Russia?" Haluk Bayraktar, CEO of Turkey's Baykar, replied: "We have not delivered or supplied them with anything, [and] we will never do such a thing because we support Ukraine, support its sovereignty, its resistance for its independence" [25]. In addition, he stated that he is proud that the Bayraktar TB2 has become a symbol of Ukrainian resistance against Russia.

It is noteworthy that Selçuk Bayraktar, in his interview with *CNN* on April 11, 2022, three months before Haluk Bayraktar, already called the Bayraktar TB2 drone a symbol of Ukrainian resistance ("I think it is one of the symbols of resistance" [14]), which may indicate a controlled narrative on the part of the Bayraktar brothers.

In general, the interview given by the Bayraktar brothers, Selçuk and Haluk Bayraktar, to *CNN* in the first year of the 2022 war, commenting on the role of Bayraktar TB2 drones in the Ukrainian conflict, can also be seen as a key earned media tool within media relations that contributed to the popularization of Bayraktar TB2. Moreover, this PR was reinforced by the fact that Haluk Bayraktar specifically shared this material on owned media, including LinkedIn and X, with the post: "Interviewed by *CNN* today

regarding the Bayraktar TB2 and its operations in Ukraine and elsewhere. Thank you for hosting me @jchatterleyCNN" (July 18, 2022)⁹ ¹⁰. Thus, he applied the effect of earned media amplification [9].

Given the above, it is appropriate to say that the promotion of Bayraktar TV2 in the media space, not being the result of an officially planned communication strategy, was formed in the period 2022-2023 as a sequence of several modes, taking into account the typology of Henry Mintzberg and James A. Waters: *umbrella strategy*, *consensus*, and *deliberate* [18, p.270].

In our opinion, at the beginning of the full-scale invasion, the dissemination of information about Bayraktar drones was carried out under the so-called *umbrella* strategy, which "represents a certain vision emanating from the central leadership. But here those who have the vision do not control its realization; instead they must convince others to pursue it" [18, p.263]. Henry Mintzberg and James A. Waters even emphasize that the umbrella "requires a light touch" [18, p.264], rather than complete control, responding "partly emergent and deliberately emergent" [18, p.270]. This was evident in the fact that government officials, posting videos of Turkish drones' exploits on social media and often accompanying them with their own evaluative comments, thus set the general informational tone, i.e., the narrative vector, which allowed for different interpretations. It is quite likely that such rhetoric demonstrating effectiveness was chosen to create evidence, domestic and international support, and the morale of Ukrainians.

If, from the outset, Bayraktar's communication strategy was implemented as an umbrella strategy, then the subsequent concentration of public attention on Turkish drones was reinforced by another strategy – the "consensus strategy" – "rather emergent" [18, p.270], which consists of the following: "Here many different actors naturally converge on the same theme, or pattern,... without the need for any central direction or control [18, p.267]. This is evident in the fact that the theme of victorious Turkish drones, outlined by official institutions, was taken up by various actors in the public sphere, who themselves agreed that Bayraktar was a symbol of resistance. In particular, the strategy was implemented through diplomatic accounts and accounts of government institutions, through the agenda-setting tool of the Ukrainian media and later the world media, through memes, songs, and crowdfunding initiatives.

⁹ <https://x.com/haluk/status/1549046522779779073>

¹⁰ https://www.linkedin.com/posts/halukbayraktar_interviewed-by-cnn-today-regarding-the-bayraktar-activity-6954818284764418048-o2Lm/

Such public resonance around Turkish drones prompted Bayraktar to shift its communication strategy to a deliberate strategy, as drone manufacturer Baykar picked up on the image of its drones as weapons of victory that had been formed in the public sphere and actively embraced it, acting as a philanthropist, namely: refusing to accept payment as part of crowdfunding campaigns, making public statements of solidarity, issuing press releases, giving interviews on leading channels, launching charitable initiatives, etc. Henry Mintzberg and James A. Waters describe this as follows: “If the strategy should prove successful, it can always be accepted and broadened-internalized in the system as a (henceforth) deliberate strategy” [18, p.266].

Therefore, it is evident that Bayraktar's communication strategy at the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 is hybrid in nature: initially formed as an umbrella, it is then modified into a consensus in the public sphere, after which it takes shape as a more deliberate line of communication. Although not controlled, the communication strategy of Bayraktar TB2 drones was not entirely spontaneous. This hybrid nature is probably the key to the company's success, since, as the authors of *Principles of Strategic Communication* note, “communication strategy works best when you employ multiple channels, strategies, and tactics together to support each other” [13, p.194].

Depending on the audience, the communication strategy had the following goals and objectives: building brand awareness; strengthening Turkey's image as a technology leader; generating demand for Baykar products; gaining international support; and strengthening patriotic spirit.

The result of this communication strategy was that, just one year after the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the Turkish company Baykar Technologies and its leaders began to appear in global rankings in which they had not previously been included. Baykar Technologies ranked 49th on the list of the world's 50 largest aerospace companies in 2023 [4], which it entered for the first time. The ranking is compiled by the analytical company Counterpoint Market Intelligence based on sales data and other indicators. The list is led by giants such as Boeing (1st place) and Airbus (2nd place). The company's revenue amounted to \$1.8 billion thanks to the successful export of drones such as Bayraktar TB2 and AKINCI. More than 90% of the company's revenue comes from exports, and its products are supplied to 35 countries around the world.

An interesting fact is that the Bayraktar brothers entered Forbes' list of the world's richest people in

2024, more precisely on April 2, 2024 [20] (Forbes World's Billionaires List. The Richest in 2024). Selçuk Bayraktar, chairman of Baykar, who owns a controlling stake of 52.5%, ranked 2410th, while Haluk Bayraktar, CEO of Baykar, with 47.5% of the company's shares, ranked 2545th [28]. The growth in profits of the Turkish company Baykar, the manufacturer of Bayraktar TB2, is evidenced, in particular, by the report of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) dated December 4, 2023, according to which the Middle East saw the highest percentage growth in arms sales revenue among all regions in 2022. As an example, Dr. Diego Lopez da Silva, a senior researcher at SIPRI, cites Baykar: “Baykar entered the top 100 for the first time after its arms sales revenue grew by 94 percent, the fastest growth rate among all companies in the ranking” [23]. According to Statista, Bayraktar TB2 drones are among the military equipment transferred to Ukraine by international partners as of January 2024. The list also includes various aircraft and unmanned systems from different donor countries [19].

Conclusions. A product becomes a brand when it acquires clear associations that are personally linked only to it, thereby distinguishing it from all other products in its line. Thanks to Baykar's flagship product, the Bayraktar TB2, and its successful, albeit not centrally planned, communication strategy, Bayraktars became a recognizable brand during the year of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, acquired connotations as a symbol of the Ukrainian people's resistance, enhanced Turkey's positive image, and, quite logically, increased demand for their purchase.

From the analyzed material, it is evident that by using videos of Bayraktar's combat successes as a news hook, official structures made them important by bringing this news to the agenda-setting. Moreover, by adding their own evaluative comments to the video, Ukrainian officials framed the Turkish drones as the driving force behind Ukrainian resistance by heroizing them. This message helped to activate both the Ukrainian and international audiences, being reproduced in the agenda-setting of leading media outlets, in the creation of cultural content, enabling crowdfunding, and shaping favorable public opinion through various communication channels. This chain reaction of media presence ensured the promotion of Bayraktar TB2 drones and their manufacturer, Baykar.

The global recognition of the Baykar brand and its enduring association with the symbol of resistance since the start of the full-scale invasion, as well as

the steadfast position of Baykar's leaders in upholding their statements of support for Ukraine's sovereignty and their promise never to sell their products to Russia, have had a positive impact on the formation of Baykar's reputation in the world.

Thus, the communication strategy was shaped by several actors at different stages: official institutions and officials of Ukraine, civil society, traditional

media and social networks, and finally Baykar itself. Accordingly, each actor had its own sphere of influence on public opinion, whose audience was concentrated around the domestic and foreign public. The key message was conveyed on two levels: Bayraktar as a symbol of resistance for the Ukrainian people on a symbolic level, and on a material level: Bayraktar as effective and inexpensive military technology.

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Циховська Е. Д. КОМУНІКАЦІЙНА СТРАТЕГІЯ ФОРМУВАННЯ БАУРАКТАР ТВ2 ЯК БРЕНДУ В МЕДІАПРОСТОРИ

У статті аналізується комунікаційна стратегія формування бренду Bayraktar TB2 як процесу перетворення турецьких безпілотників на впізнаваний світовий бренд та символ українського спротиву під час повномасштабного вторгнення РФ в Україну. Автор зазначає, що успіх комунікаційної стратегії забезпечив не лише зростання попиту на продукцію компанії Baykar, а й зміцнення позитивного іміджу Туреччини у світі. Доведено, що першорядну роль у просуванні дронів відіграли українські офіційні структури, які через механізм agenda-setting зробили відео бойових успіхів Bayraktar TB2 головним інформаційним приводом, а коментарі посадовців до цих відео фреймували турецькі безпілотники як рушійну силу спротиву у захисті України. Це запустило ланцюгову реакцію в медіа, соцмережах та появі культурного контенту, що згодом трансформувалося у масштабний краудфандинг, як в Україні, так і в інших країнах на користь України. У результаті автор доходить висновку, що комунікаційна стратегія з популяризації турецьких дронів мала гібридний характер, не будучи повністю ані спланованою, ані стихійною, а в її побудові брали участь кілька різних акторів – від державних інституцій до громадського суспільства. Тому ключове повідомлення бренду спрацювало на двох рівнях: символічному (Bayraktar як уособлення спротиву українців) та матеріальному (Bayraktar як доступна та ефективна військова технологія).

Ключові слова: медіа, комунікаційна стратегія, бренд, brand awareness, імідж, репутація, Bayraktar TB2, publicity, популяризація, agenda-setting, соціальні мережі, краудфандинг, philanthropy, piar, громадська думка, drone diplomacy.

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