



Brand Dynamics and Social Media Strategies During the Russia-Ukraine War: Insights from Poland

Magdalena Grzanka and Artur Strzelecki^(✉) 

University of Economics in Katowice, Katowice, Poland
artur.strzelecki@ue.katowice.pl

Abstract. This study investigates the significant shift in social media and brand management due to the outbreak of the war in Ukraine in 2022, focusing particularly on how companies' social media posts and strategies evolved in response to the conflict and its impact on user attitudes. The research explores the changing dynamics of social media engagement by companies and the public during the war, examining the role of social media in shaping public perceptions and responses to the conflict and the effect of companies' online activities on their relationships with users and consumers. Utilizing data from platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, the study also incorporates a survey conducted among the Polish community to evaluate consumer opinions about corporate actions on social media during the crisis. The findings reveal a paradigm shift in brand communication and management on social media, highlighting the expectation of users for companies to address social and political issues and the demand for brands to withdraw from the Russian market as a show of support for Ukraine. The study also explores into the practical implications of social media crisis management, underscoring the need for brands to monitor online platforms, respond promptly and transparently, offer solutions, and have a crisis management plan.

Keywords: Social media · Brand management · Ukraine War · Company engagement · User attitudes

1 Introduction

In recent years, social media has become an increasingly important platform for brands to reach and engage with their customers. With the proliferation of social media networks and the widespread use of mobile devices, consumers are now able to access and interact with brands in real time, anywhere, and anytime. This has led to a shift in the way that brands manage their online presence and reputation, as well as the way that they communicate and interact with their customers.

In 2022, the outbreak of the war in Ukraine caused a significant shift in social media and brand management. By the end of February 2022, companies abruptly altered the content they were posting on social media [29]. Companies that had not previously shared their social or political views on social media were required to take a side in the

conflict—either the side of Ukraine or the side of the Russian state—which initiated the war [42]. The lack of involvement of a brand in helping Ukraine was often criticized by social media users, who had previously been willing to buy products from the company. During the war in Ukraine, social media users worldwide identified with the people affected by the war in Ukraine and demanded that brands withdraw from the Russian market.

In times of war, an increasing number of social media users began to believe that companies should openly address social and political issues and share their own views on the actions of the Russian state. The start of the war in Ukraine forced many companies to change the way they conducted their social media activities [2]. The war conflict required companies to adopt a new strategy and change the way they communicated with social media users, where consumer views of a particular brand are most often expressed. Numerous companies have decided to limit their social media activity and relinquish their standard Internet activity. Many of them provided immediate help to Ukraine and expressed their support for the eastern community with posts published on their social media. Companies began to organize aid campaigns and money collections, which they had provided about on their social media. Those who had not previously published posts on social media were now forced to do so to express their support for Ukraine and to inform about the actions taken in this regard. The start of the war in Ukraine led to a change in the way brands communicated with their customers and the way they conducted their social media activities [50].

According to Wirtualnemedia.pl., in the first days of the war conflict in Ukraine, approximately 900,000 posts appeared on social media calling for help for the Eastern neighbors. The majority of these publications appeared on the social networking site Facebook (approximately 43%), and on Twitter (approximately 38%) [57]. With the start of the war, social media was dominated by posts related to help for Ukraine. After the Russian attack on Ukraine, a significant decrease in the number of ads published on Facebook was observed; on February 28, 2022, the number of ads on this social networking site decreased by 73% compared to the previous highest result in that month [56]. At the end of February 2022, ads on social media were mainly suspended, but posts that had been planned several months earlier and had to be published by brands on the internet could still be observed. These were posts from companies that had already been contracted in the past and had to be completed according to the company's regulations. These posts included the results of organized contests, planned events, or webinars [31]. There were also companies that completely suspended their social media business during the war crisis. These actions mainly resulted from the concern of brands about the reactions of consumers to the company's further actions on the internet during the war in Ukraine. Some companies remained active on their social media platforms but chose to disable comments in their posts. Such behavior did not win the sympathy of consumers. These actions were perceived by social media users as insincere, and silence was treated as an attempt to mask the brand's opinion on the war in Ukraine. The situation changed at the end of March 2022 when companies began to publish posts on social media again, but these changes were mainly related to the companies' involvement in activities supporting Ukraine. The war in Ukraine had a significant impact on the way brands communicated with their customers and changed their social media activities.

The war in Ukraine in 2022 had significant impacts on social media and brand management, as well as on how companies and users engaged with each other on social media platforms [46]. In this research, we explore how social media and brand management changed in response to the war, how companies' social media posts and strategies evolved during this time, and how users' attitudes toward these efforts were impacted. Additionally, we will examine the role that social media played in shaping public perceptions of and responses to the war and how companies' social media engagement during this time affected their relationships with users and consumers. The study relies on data from social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter [27].

This paper is organized as follows: after the introduction, there is a literature review which consists of the impact on the economy, financial markets, mental health, and social media. The next section describes the methods used in this study, followed by the results section. The results focus on brands' activities in social media and the study group from our survey. The discussion section highlights the outcomes of the study and emphasizes the practical contributions. The study concludes with the conclusion section.

2 Literature Review

Current studies on the Russia-Ukraine war focus on several major areas, such as its impact on the economy and finance. More detailed studies demonstrate changes in the behavior of individuals who are impacted by the war. Changes in social media usage have also been observed.

2.1 Impact on the Economy

Extensive research on the implications of the Russia-Ukraine War has revealed its profound impact on global economic sectors, especially sustainable development, food security, and financial markets. Recent works emphasize how the conflict has exacerbated poverty and hunger in Africa and the MENA region. They highlighted disruptions in global supply chains, inflation, and price hikes due to war and sanctions, hindering regions' progress toward achieving sustainable development goals [32]. These studies focus on regional vulnerability to food insecurity due to the dependence of these regions on food imports [1].

The economic costs of the Russia-Ukraine war are estimated at a 1% reduction in global GDP and significant contractions in the European, Russian, and Ukrainian economies. This creates challenges faced by policymakers in balancing growth and inflation [28]. Implications of the war for global food security have affected global food systems and supply chains, particularly impacting wheat and corn exports and thereby exacerbating food insecurity in regions reliant on imports from Ukraine and Russia [7].

The cascading failure model used to assess the impact of the war on global energy and cereal trade networks is highlighted [59]. There is evidence on how the war changed public support for clean energy policies. An increase in public support for clean energy policies has been revealed in European countries since the war, indicating a shift in perception toward energy independence and reduced reliance on fossil fuels [47]. The impacts on clean energy, conventional energy, and metal markets suggest a shift toward renewable

energy investments and varied effects on metal markets, underlining the geopolitical significance of Russia in these sectors [52].

Some studies advocate for a transformation in the global food system in response to war-induced disruptions. They propose measures such as shifting toward healthier diets, increasing legume production, and reducing food waste to address both immediate and long-term challenges in food security and sustainability [41]. The conflict is analyzed through resource dependency theory, highlighting strategic concerns over energy resources and markets as significant factors in the war's inception [22]. There are also notable shifting dynamics between oil and other financial assets during the war. Market behavior and risk management are changing during periods of geopolitical conflict [3].

2.2 Impact on the Finance Markets

The literature on the financial impacts of the Russia-Ukraine War provides comprehensive insights into global market reactions and the valuation of specific sectors. Some analyses employ data from thousands of firms worldwide, revealing that European firms and those with high trade dependence on Russia experienced lower returns, while industries such as oil, gas, and military saw higher returns [49]. Another study quantified the aggregate cost of the war on European firms using high-frequency stock data and structural models. It shows decreased corporate security prices, increased asset volatility, and heightened default risks, especially for firms with significant Russian economic ties [8].

In a different sector, the impact of the conflict on tourism stocks was analyzed using the event study method. A study revealed that the war's effect varied across firms, with American tourism firms experiencing positive returns on certain days, contrasting with Asian firms' mixed responses [35]. Similar work has explored the effects of conflicts on global currencies, observing significant regional variations. European currencies generally depreciated against the USD, while Pacific currencies appreciated [10]. Another study employs event study, cross-sectional, and network analyses to understand EU market reactions. It observes adverse impacts on stock market indices, influenced by geographic proximity and market efficiency, and highlights the interconnectedness between EU stock markets [25]. Finally, two additional studies extend the analysis to fintech, environmental, social and government, renewable energy indices, and commodities. El Khoury et al. [24] showed that these indices are net transmitters of connectedness in developed countries, while Izzeldin et al. [19] compared the impact of war on financial markets to that of other significant events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, revealing unique market dynamics in response to geopolitical crises.

2.3 Impact on Mental Health

The literature on the impact of the Russian-Ukrainian War on healthcare and mental health reveals profound challenges and coping strategies among affected populations. There are dire consequences for individuals with chronic diseases due to disrupted healthcare infrastructures in Ukraine, emphasizing the critical situation for those requiring regular treatments such as dialysis and the struggles of refugees in accessing necessary

medical care [37]. Similarly, another study demonstrated the efficacy of social media-based therapies such as drama, music, and art in reducing PTSD symptoms among evacuees, with drama therapy showing the most significant benefit, suggesting the potential of these digital interventions in managing mental health in crisis contexts [13]. Further research on the psycho-emotional impact of the war on university students and personnel in Ukraine reveals considerable mental health deterioration, such as depression, exhaustion, and increased substance use, with more severe effects on students than personnel and greater impacts on females [26]. Additional studies have shown high prevalence rates of mental health symptoms such as anxiety, depression, and insomnia among Ukrainians, highlighting the critical need for mental health support and effective coping strategies during such conflicts [58].

2.4 Impact on Social Media

In the literature on the impacts of social media and public opinion during the Russia-Ukraine conflict, several studies offer diverse insights. Research on the Ukrainian government's ban on Russian social media platforms such as VKontakte reveals a significant reduction in platform activity postban, regardless of users' political affiliations [14]. Similarly, the exploration of Twitter content related to the conflict indicates varied global opinions, with a notable emphasis on support for Ukraine. The study of "user-generated content" highlights the role of unverified accounts in propagating opinions, although verified accounts have greater impact on engagement [33]. Moreover, comparative analysis of Weibo and Twitter posts reveals distinct cultural and ideological influences on the portrayal of the conflict, emphasizing unified public sentiment favoring humanitarianism across platforms [51].

Furthering this exploration, a study distinguishes between human and bot account activities on Twitter, revealing significant differences in engagement and political stances. Their findings highlight the nuanced roles of bots in shaping online narratives during conflict [45]. Similarly, another study on pro-Russian propaganda on social media during the 2022 invasion of Ukraine underscores the critical role of bots in spreading propaganda, offering insights into modern information warfare tactics [12]. Complementing these perspectives, another study analyzes public sentiment toward economic sanctions using a vast array of Facebook posts. Their research reveals the complex interplay between public sentiment, government stances, and geopolitical positions, highlighting the fragmented nature of public opinion in international conflicts [34]. The conducted literature review reveals that there is a gap that this study aims to fill. The gap pertains to studying the change in brand management on social media during the conflict.

Based on the literature review, the following research questions are formulated:

1. How did social media and brand management change in response to the war in Ukraine in 2022?
2. How did companies' social media posts change during the war in Ukraine in 2022?
3. How did users' attitudes toward companies' social media engagement change during the war in Ukraine in 2022?

3 Method

For this study, we used a social media review and survey. In the social media review, we conducted an analysis of the actions taken by several different Polish companies following the occurrence of the War crisis. We primarily analyzed posts from the Twitter and Facebook accounts of well-known Polish companies. This was done using convenient sampling supported by news outlets. We described the actions taken by brands operating in Poland, such as Rossmann, ING, and InPost, as well as noting the absence of actions performed by Leroy Merlin. Survey research is a method of collecting information from a sample of individuals using structured questionnaires or interviews. To verify consumers' opinions about the actions taken by companies on social media during the war crisis in Ukraine, we decided to conduct a study among the Polish community [30]. This study took the form of a questionnaire survey in the Polish language and aimed to identify consumers' feelings and observations about daily brand image management compared to those experienced during the war crisis, which affected the Ukrainian community in 2022. The survey questionnaire was prepared using Google Forms software and was made available from March to April 2022. The survey was fully anonymous, and anyone interested could fill it out. To gather as many responses as possible, we made the questionnaire available on social media, especially on themed groups on the Facebook social networking site. The aim of the survey was to conduct a public opinion review on the perceptions of companies on social media and the activities of companies on social media during the war in Ukraine.

The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki and approved by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee of the University of Economics in Katowice, Poland; Approval code: 135890, and date: April 3, 2022. Informed consent was obtained from each participant at the beginning of the survey. The statement was as follows: "By taking part in this study, you agree to allow us to collect data about managing brand image on social media during the war crisis in Ukraine. These data will help us better understand brand management during this crisis and will be kept strictly confidential. You may withdraw from the study at any time by contacting us."

In the survey, 150 respondents participated [15]. The questionnaire was completed by both women and men. The majority of the individuals surveyed were women (114 of whom were 76%). The questionnaire was published on social media platforms and influenced a large percentage of the respondents who were young—mostly school or university students. The number of respondents aged less than 18 years and older than 56 years was minimal. The largest number of people who participated in the survey were aged 18 to 26 years—85.3% of whom were 128 respondents. The next largest group of people participating in the survey were those aged 27–35 years (16 respondents). Three people were aged 36–55, two people were aged 18–1.3%, and one person was aged older than 56 years.

4 Results

4.1 Brands' Activities in Social Media During the Ukraine War Crisis

The onset of the war crisis in Ukraine changed the way brands were managed on social media. In the early days of the war, companies were constantly seeking new ways to build their brand image on social media. They tried to help their eastern neighbors and kept the public informed about it on social media. Companies chose different ways to support Ukraine. Brands supported refugees, organized financial and material collections, fought against disinformation, and used social media profiles as a place to publish reliable information from around the world. Some companies also decided to withdraw Russian products from their own range, suspend production, or ultimately cease operations in Russia [44]. As the war in Ukraine began, companies from various industries began to assist their eastern neighbors. Brands on social media platforms called for support for refugees and documented their efforts to help Ukraine. Similar strategies were adopted by well-known celebrities and influencers, who were often associated with a particular brand as a result of a campaign or promotion of goods. While helping their eastern neighbors, companies did not forget about maintaining the good reputation of their brand [48]. An important step during the war crisis in Ukraine was the fight against disinformation. Many companies decide to run a certain type of news service on their social media platforms [14]. This activity was intended to eliminate fake news and reduce panic among people [30]. A new service called VPolshchi.pl was created by Virtual Poland in response to the onset of the war crisis in Ukraine [55]. The VPolshchi.pl service was intended to correct false information. VPolshchi.pl features current information on the military actions being carried out in Ukraine and the most important news related to the ongoing war. The news in this service is conveyed in Ukrainian and is intended to be helpful to the Ukrainian community. This news focuses on delivering accurate information about the current situation in Ukraine and informing about organized aid efforts [48].

During the war in Ukraine, a significant number of refugees sought shelter in various countries, including Poland. Both individuals and businesses extended their support to these refugees through financial and material assistance. Companies organized campaigns to collect funds, food, clothing, medical supplies, hygiene products, and children's accessories for their eastern neighbors. Special hashtags and discount codes were created, where the use of such codes resulted in a specified amount of money being donated for the benefit of aiding Ukraine. These campaigns effectively encouraged consumers to participate in helping refugees. One notable example is Rossmann Pharmacy, which has actively supported its eastern neighbor since the war's onset. They organized an aid campaign by offering a special 40% coupon for selected products to those who wished to support Ukrainian refugees. The company emphasized that this campaign was not merely a promotion but also aimed to raise awareness among consumers. The discount was provided to individuals who would donate the purchased products to the refugees. This coupon was valid until March 8, 2022, and covered various hygiene products and children's accessories. The coupon was exclusively available to users of Rossmann's mobile application and could only be used once [20].

The coffee roaster KawePale also joined the aid action for Ukraine. A post appeared on Instagram announcing the campaign organized by the brand. The company created a universal discount code for use in the company's online store [23]. The use of this discount code contributes 15% of the sales of the company's ordered coffees to the Polish Humanitarian Action. Polish humanitarian action supported both people in Ukraine during the ongoing war and refugees coming to Poland [40]. To help Ukraine, companies organized their own collections or transferred funds to the existing collections. Information about the ongoing campaigns was announced on the social media portals of companies and among employees of the network who had the opportunity to become involved in the assistance and show solidarity with Ukraine. These activities were undertaken by one of the Polish banks, ING Bank Śląski SA. On their Facebook profile, the bank posted information about a fundraising campaign for the Ukrainian community in connection with the ongoing war [16]. In addition, the bank declared that it would not only transfer the collected funds to help Ukraine but also double the amount collected.

InPost, one of the main logistics and transportation operators in Poland, also decided to help the Ukrainian community. The company decided to use its resources to help with the delivery of products collected as part of the aid campaigns organized throughout the country for Ukraine. The brand was informed about its decision on the Facebook social media platform [18]. The logistics operator InPost not only organized product deliveries to the eastern border but also participated in numerous charitable collections supporting refugees from Ukraine. The company entered into cooperation with the Polish Red Cross. InPost helped the PCK in the transportation of medical equipment, dressings, medicines, hygienic and medical supplies, and food products. Together with the Melissa brand, the company developed aid packages that were available for purchase through the InPost mobile application. Those willing to help the Ukrainian community purchased these packages, and the company delivered the goods to those in need in Ukraine. This transport was free of charge and was intended to support the Ukrainian community. In addition, to support refugees' lives outside their homeland, the InPost brand created a Ukrainian language version of the mobile application, InPost Mobile [17]. Communication service providers also supported people from Ukraine, initiating the creation of free starters for people from Ukraine. One of the mobile operators that supported Ukraine was the Plus Poland Company [48]. On Twitter, the company announced information about the organized action related to free starters for every person from Ukraine. This starter included a free package of 500 min and 10 GB for 30 days and required the person interested in showing their residence card or passport at the sales point [39].

During the Ukraine war crisis, a group of companies emerged that, after approximately two months of the war, still did not declare the withdrawal of their brand from the Russian market. This group included Leroy Merlin, Auchan, and Nestle. In April 2022, the opinions of internet users about these companies were critical. These brands were regularly boycotted on the internet, and previous customers of these businesses stopped purchasing products from their offerings [6]. The consequences of not leaving the Russian market, for example, affected the Leroy Merlin brand. Internet users were calling for a continuous boycott of this company on the internet, and social media users formulated a special hashtag, #boycottleroymerlin, calling for the cessation of using the services offered by this company. Newer graphics appearing on the internet showed

the disapproval of social media users. The Russian market was not abandoned by the Auchan hypermarket chain either. As a result of the companies' approach to the events taking place in Ukraine, a petition was issued by the National Boycott of Leroy Merlin, calling for the dismissal of the Polish management of the Leroy Merlin and Auchan chains [11]. Internet users described these companies as being cowardly and unworthy of imitation. Strikes were being organized under the stationary stores of the companies, calling for help for the Ukrainian community and the withdrawal of brands from the Russian market. Like with the company Leroy Merlin, the company Auchan tried to alleviate the tense situation it is facing. On March 11, 2022, the Polish branch of the company informed the social media site Facebook about the assistance organized for the Ukrainian community and declared that it has no influence on the decision of the parent company regarding the conduct of business in the Russian Federation [4]. In view of the expression of solidarity with Ukraine, the company hoped for a gradual easing of the consumer boycott. The effect of the message shared online was the opposite, and approximately twelve thousand negative reactions and comments directed at the Leroy Merlin Company were recorded under the published post [27].

4.2 Survey Study Group

The respondents were asked about their attention given to businesses' online activity during the war crisis in Ukraine and its impact on brand posts on social media. The survey items are presented in Tables 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. Of the total number of respondents, 63 indicated paying attention to companies' posts during the war, with 36 showing significant interest. On the other hand, 31 respondents stated that they did not pay attention to these posts, and one person explicitly ignored business posts during the war. Additionally, 19 respondents were uncertain and chose the "Difficult to say" response (Table 1).

Table 1. Respondents' assessment of posts by brands on social media during the war in Ukraine

Statement	Answer				
	No	Rather not	Difficult to say	Rather yes	Yes
I pay attention to the actions taken by companies in social media during the war in Ukraine	0.6%	20.7%	12.7%	42%	24%
I notice a change in the posts published by brands on social networks as a result of the war in Ukraine	1.3%	18.7%	14%	40.6%	25.4%

The respondents observed both the actions taken by companies on social media during the war crisis in Ukraine and the changes in their posts. Of the respondents, 63

and 36 definitely noticed a difference in the behavior of brands on social media during the war. Only 32 respondents did not perceive any changes in the companies' social media posts following Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Additionally, 19 respondents found it challenging to provide a clear answer to this question (Table 1). Furthermore, the war in Ukraine led to the emergence of numerous negative consumer opinions about specific brands on the internet. Among the surveyed respondents, 104 individuals confirmed seeing criticism directed at companies on social media in relation to the ongoing war in Ukraine. Conversely, 46 respondents did not notice any negative opinions about companies on the internet concerning the war's impact on the Ukrainian community (Table 2).

Table 2. Opinions of users about companies on social media during the war crisis in Ukraine

Statement	Answer	Count
I notice negative opinions about companies appearing in social media during the time of war crisis in Ukraine	Yes	69.3%
	No	30.7%
I comment on content posted by companies' relationship on social media with the war in Ukraine	Yes	9.3%
	No	90.7%

During the war in Ukraine, respondents noticed negative comments about companies on social media, but they rarely shared their own opinions or comments about brand posts. Only 14 respondents confirmed commenting on content posted by companies on social media regarding the war in Ukraine. On the other hand, 136 respondents stated that they did not express their views on the internet about the actions of companies during the war crisis in Ukraine (Table 2). The respondents were also asked to provide their opinions on companies' social media activity during the war in Ukraine. A significant number of respondents (98) believed that brands should not engage in standard activity, 21 had different views, and 31 marked the response as "difficult to say" (Table 3).

The respondents unanimously agreed that businesses should deliver continuous updates on social media regarding their actions in response to the ongoing war in Ukraine, including providing material and financial aid to refugees. This view was shared by the majority, with 97 respondents expressing this opinion. Additionally, 108 respondents believed that businesses should support Ukraine on social media, while only 12 disagreed with this statement (Table 3). The surveyed individuals also believed that businesses should provide social media information about the withdrawal of Russian products from their own offerings—123 responses of this type were given. According to the respondents, it is important for companies to involve their brand's consumers in actively helping Ukraine and its refugees. Companies should also pay more attention to comments made about posts by brands on social media, especially during the ongoing crisis in Ukraine (111 responses). As claimed by the respondents, businesses should feel obligated to help the Ukrainian community and appeal for help among the followers gathered on social media networks (96 responses) (Table 4).

Table 3. Respondents' assessment of statements about companies on social media and the war in Ukraine

Statement	Answer				
	No	Rather not	Difficult to say	Rather yes	Yes
During the war in Ukraine, companies should not conduct standard activity in social media	34.7%	30.7%	20.6%	10%	4%
Companies should inform via social media about the current actions of the brand taken in the era of the war crisis	4.6%	12.7%	18%	40%	24.7%
Businesses should show support for Ukraine on social media	2.7%	5.3%	20%	37.3%	34.7%

Table 4. Respondents' assessment of the statements regarding the actions of brands during the war in Ukraine

Statement	Answer				
	No	Rather not	Difficult to say	Rather yes	Yes
Companies should inform on social networks about the withdrawal of Russian products from its own offer	2.7%	4.7%	10.6%	34.7%	47.3%
Companies should pay attention to comments posted by followers on social networks during the war crisis in Ukraine	4%	6%	16%	35.3%	38.7%
Companies should involve followers in aid for Ukraine	5.3%	6.7%	24%	40.6%	23.4%

The survey respondents showed a keen interest in the support demonstrated by companies on social media for Ukraine. Of the respondents, 104 expressed concern and

engagement with this issue. The respondents were aligned in their demand for businesses to provide assistance to Ukraine, but not all respondents were discouraged from purchasing products from brands that did not take decisive action regarding the war in Ukraine. The responses were divided regarding the question of purchasing products from brands that lacked solidarity with Ukraine. Fifty-eight respondents indicated that they would still purchase products from such brands, while 51 respondents held the opposite opinion. However, the responses were almost evenly distributed regarding consumer reluctance to purchase products from companies that did not criticize Russia's aggression against Ukraine. For this question, 53 respondents answered affirmatively, while 72 respondents had a negative response. Furthermore, a decisive majority of the respondents expressed their intention to continue following the social media profiles of brands that do not show support for Ukraine, with 100 respondents confirming this. However, 28 respondents found it challenging to provide a definitive answer, and 22 respondents were prepared to stop following such businesses on social media (Table 5).

Table 5. Respondents' assessment of the statements about the war in Ukraine and the activities of brands online

Statement	Answer				
	No	Rather not	Difficult to say	Rather yes	Yes
I pay attention to the support shown in social media by companies for Ukraine	8,7%	11,3%	10,7%	40,6%	28,7%
No firm action by the company in the relationship with the conflict in Ukraine discourages the purchase of products of a given brand	20%	28%	16,7%	20%	15,3%
I will resign from following the profile of a company in social media that does not show support for Ukraine	35.4%	31.3%	16.7%	9.3%	5.3%
I will resign from buying products of a specific brand that is not in solidarity with Ukraine	16.7%	22%	27.3%	22%	12%

5 Discussion

The study addressed issues related to the change in brand image management due to the war crisis in Ukraine and the new reality that modern businesses had to find themselves in. The study of the activities of businesses and brand image management in social

media was based on a developed questionnaire survey that was made available on social media portals. One hundred fifty people participated in the study, expressing their own opinions on social media and their impact on brand image, even in the face of the war crisis in Ukraine. The analysis focused on the behavior and views of modern consumers in relation to the actions taken by companies on social media.

During the war crisis in Ukraine, businesses sought to provide assistance to their eastern neighbors and ensured support for refugees both materially and financially. The responses confirmed that consumers pay close attention to the activities of companies on social media, and these actions significantly impact the brand perception of customers. The surveyed individuals base their opinions on the products offered by brands and the reputation of the companies on the opinions of other users. In addition, due to Russia's aggression toward Ukraine, respondents experienced a significant change in the themes of posts published on social media and encountered more negative comments directed toward contemporary businesses. These negative comments are mainly directed toward companies that have not yet decided to withdraw their brand from the Russian market and have not withdrawn Russian products from their own offerings (as of the date of the survey). Respondents confirmed that, in their opinion, businesses should not conduct their usual activities on social media during the ongoing war crisis in Ukraine, and some of those surveyed replied that they would refrain from purchasing products from a company that is not supportive of Ukraine.

We have found the following answers to the research questions. The war in Ukraine in 2022 had a significant impact on social media and brand management, as companies were required to take a side in the conflict and express their views on social and political issues. This led to a change in the way that companies conducted their social media activities and communicated with their customers (Research question 1). During the war in Ukraine in 2022, companies' social media posts changed as they were required to take a side in the conflict and express their views on social and political issues. Many companies also limited their social media activity or changed the way they communicated with their customers to show their support for Ukraine (Research question 2). Users' attitudes toward companies' social media engagement changed during the war in Ukraine in 2022, as they began to expect companies to openly address social and political issues and share their views on the actions of the Russian state. Social media users also demanded that brands withdraw from the Russian market and show their support for Ukraine through their engagement with companies on social media (Research question 3).

The results from the survey confirm the actions observed in the social media review. When a company decided to leave the Russian market, it was generally viewed positively. Respondents mostly commended such decisions. However, on the other hand, if a company chose not to leave the Russian market, it faced negative feedback from social media users. This observation was also supported by the data from the study.

Brand management during a war crisis is strongly related to management on social media during a crisis [5]. Social media crisis management involves taking steps to mitigate the negative impact of a crisis on companies' reputation and relationships with stakeholders and has the following managerial implications [21]. First, brand management during a crisis involves monitoring social media platforms. Keeping an eye on

social media platforms is crucial for identifying and responding to potential crisis situations [9]. Social media monitoring tools can be used to track mentions of a brand and alert individuals to any negative or potentially crisis-causing content. This allows the brand to assess the situation and take appropriate action quickly.

Second, the response needs to be made quickly. When a crisis arises, it is important to respond quickly to mitigate any negative impact on the brand's reputation. This helps to demonstrate that the brand is at the top of the situation and is taking it seriously. A timely response also allows us to provide information and address any concerns that stakeholders may have [53]. Third, communication needs to be transparent. In a crisis situation, it is important to be open and transparent in brand communication. This helps to build trust with stakeholders and shows that brand is taking responsibility for the situation. A brand would like to avoid trying to hide or downplay the issue, as this can often do more harm than good [36].

Fourth, if appropriate, it can be helpful to offer solutions or take steps to resolve the crisis. This finding shows that a brand is actively working to address an issue and helps to demonstrate its commitment to solving problems. It may also help to reassure stakeholders that the brand is taking the situation seriously and is working to fix it [54]. The fifth way is to use social media to improve brands' advantages. Social media can be a powerful tool for crisis management, as it allows brands to quickly and easily communicate with a large audience. Brands could use these tools to share updates and information about the crisis as well as to provide support to stakeholders. A brand can also use social media to address any concerns or questions that stakeholders may have [43]. Sixth, it is important to have a crisis management plan in place before a crisis occurs. This approach will help brands respond more effectively and efficiently when a crisis does arise. A crisis management plan should outline the steps that a brand will take to identify and respond to a crisis, as well as the resources and personnel brand needed to manage the situation effectively [38].

6 Conclusions

This research has shown that the start of the war in Ukraine in 2022 significantly impacted the way that brands managed their social media presence and interacted with their customers. Companies that had previously not shared their social or political views on social media were required to take a side in the conflict and faced criticism from consumers if they did not support Ukraine. Consumers began to expect brands to openly address social and political issues and demanded that companies show support for Ukraine or withdraw from the Russian market. This led to a decrease in advertising on social media, as well as a suspension of business by some companies. However, there were also companies that remained active on social media and sought to address the war crisis through actions such as aid campaigns and money collections. The war in Ukraine ultimately changed the way that brands communicated with their customers and conducted their social media activities.

There are several limitations to consider. The first is the time period. The study focuses on events that occurred in 2022, which may not be representative of the current state of social media and brand management. The second is geographical scope. The

study focuses on the impact of the war in Ukraine on social media and brand management, which may not be applicable to other countries or regions. The third is the causal relationship. The study suggested that the start of the war in Ukraine caused changes in the way brands managed their social media presence, but it is not clear if this was the only factor that contributed to these changes. Other factors, such as changes in consumer behavior or the adoption of new social media platforms, may also have played a role. The fourth group includes data sources. The study relies on data from social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, which may not be representative of the entire population or all social media activity. The fifth factor is the sample size. The study does not specify the sample size of the companies analyzed, so it is not clear how representative the findings are of all companies that were active on social media during the war in Ukraine. Finally, the study is focused on the specific context of the war in Ukraine, so it is not clear how applicable the findings are to other situations or contexts.

Future research could explore the long-term effects of the war in Ukraine on brand management on social media. It would also be interesting to compare the responses of different types of companies to the war conflict and how their social media strategies were impacted. Additionally, further research could examine the impact of other significant global events on the way that brands use social media to communicate with their customers.

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