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Volodymyr Zelensky – From Onscreen to Online
*A Content Analysis of Volodymyr Zelensky's Wartime Video
Communication*

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*Every new beginning comes from some other beginnings' end.
- Seneca the Younger*



Lisa Sjöberg
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Abstract

Volodymyr Zelensky - From Onscreen to Online

As of the current state, there is an ongoing war in Europe; something which has not been experienced in modern days. A crisis like this aids for political leaders who can communicate to their people, hence this thesis was sprung from an interest in investigating the unforeseen video communication that has surfaced with the Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky. The research delves into how the communication of his is strategically laid out in accordance with the social media era, and how it is appealing to the social media generation.

The method used was a qualitative content analysis, with additional quantitative strains in sample size. Our analysis illustrated frequent patterns of strategies used by Zelensky. Concludingly, there was a linkage between theoretical strategies used that work for persuasion and increased authenticity in appealing to the social media generation.

The phenomenon of a political leader communicating online in a current wartime context is terra-incognita. Hence this study has paved the way to further contextualise political communication in the sphere of social media.

Keywords: political communication, social media, digital natives, social media era, social media communication, vlogging, impression management, rhetorics, narratives

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1. Introduction

In the early morning of February the 24th this year, Russian soldiers crossed the borders of Ukraine and thus a dreaded Russian invasion became reality. Putin addressed in a televised speech that Donetsk and Luhansk were henceforth independent states, therefore initiating “a special military operation”, where he demanded that Ukraine's expansion along with NATO must be stopped (Utrikespolitiska Institutionen, 2022a).

Before 1991 Ukraine was a part of the Soviet Union, where history reveals a troubled relationship between the Ukrainians and the Russians. There was an absence of political reforms, severe corruption and a divided, disgruntled population (Utrikespolitiska Institutionen, 2022a). Since Russia annexed the Crimea Peninsula in 2014, there have been military tension between the nations, leading up to the full-fledged war of today (Utrikespolitiska Institutionen, 2022b; Globalis, 2022). For the time frame we have selected, i.e., 24th of February - 6th of April, there have been reports of 3 675 civilian casualties, a total of 4 335 320 refugees, mass destruction of Ukrainian cities and reports of Russian war crimes, due to evidence of tortured civilians and violated humanitarian corridors (UNHCR, 2022; Whiteaker, Mathieson, Faries, & Tribou, 2022). Despite sanctions and several rounds of peace discussions and possible agreements (Sveriges Television, 2022), none have been successful, since, at the time of producing this thesis, the war is still active.

In times of crisis, there is a need for a strong leader, someone who is a dealer of hope. The ideal leader has since the 1960's been described as someone who is perceived as honest and trustworthy (Garzia, 2011). Accordingly, the political leader in mid-crisis must be aware of the public sentiment, aligned with the environmental viewpoints, as well as possess empathetic qualities (Roberts, 2018; Roberts, 2019). However, due to digitalisation and the evolution of technology, political leadership has drastically changed, transferring into a new era of political communication (Enli, 2017). Social media has deeply affected several factors within politics, the structure of political campaigns, how voters participate and interact politically and foremost, how politicians communicate. Due to a personalisation of politics, the main focus has shifted from the political party to the person behind the politician. Today the political leader has been moved to the front stage, where the leader's personality and way of communication have a critical role in the people's perceptions and behaviours (Garzia, 2011).

Politicians' way of communicating and their use of rhetorics have always had implications for how voters build their perceptions and choose their political party. As Charteris-Black (2011, p.1) presents "The more democratic societies become, the greater the onus in leaders to convince their potential followers that they and their policies can be trusted". In order to be successful, it is crucial that politicians through their communication persuade their audience that they are trustworthy. As a consequence of political personalisation, voters are not only influenced by the communication they receive but also by what the politician's appearance represents. By consciously choosing how to present themselves, through clothes, physical attributes, and body language, amongst others, politicians can design their type of leadership (Charteris-Black, 2011).

In relation to the current war in Ukraine, the birth of not only a strong leader but also a different type of distinctive communicator has surfaced with the Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky. Ever since the invasion began, Zelensky has been reporting live from the war-torn Kyiv, uploading videos primarily on his own official Facebook page. We have seen leaders becoming infamous for using their social media as a tool for their political agendas before; Barack Obama's social media campaign became viral in 2008; both Hillary Clinton's and Donald Trump's campaigns were primarily conducted via social media channels in 2016, where a great part of the presidential election took place in a "Twitter war" (Enli, 2017; Wise, 2016). However, there is something different with Volodymyr Zelensky, evidently, his videos have affected an entire world. From thousands of civilians participating in demonstrations, several western countries are taking political actions of sending aid and placing sanctions, organisations are stopping all affiliation with Russia, all while Zelensky himself has become an online sensation, as he is repeatedly online labelled as a war hero, trending on TikTok and his portrait fronting the cover of TIME magazine (Chekmenev, 2022; Fidler, 2022; Press-Reynolds, 2022; Whiteaker et al., 2022). Indeed, the previous actor and comedian turned politician, seems to be changing the game of digital political communication - Volodymyr Zelensky has gone from onscreen to online.

1.1 Problematization and aim

As seen in the current situation in Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky is breaking new terrain. Never before has the western world faced a governing leader in the midst of a weaponized war, communicating primarily to the public through videos on social media.

The phenomenon of this thesis is the communication of a modern wartime leader through the perspective of the social media era. The specific case for analysis is the communication of the Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky, concretely by studying the published videos on his official Facebook page during the current conflict. The aim of this study is to bring knowledge to this new type of communication through multi-aspect content analysis. We want to examine in what ways Zelensky's communication is illustrating strategy as well as how that appeals to the social media generation.

1.2 Research Questions

The problematization and aim mentioned above have led to the following research questions, anchoring in how Volodymyr Zelensky's video communication is strategic:

- In what ways is Zelensky's communication particularly appealing to the social media generation?
- Which strategic patterns of impression management can be discerned in Zelensky's videos?

2.0 Contextual

Volodymyr Zelensky was born on the 25th of January in Kryvyi Rih. Zelensky has a history of acting, both in the school theatre, as an actor on the comedy show KVN, in feature films, and as co-founder and art director of Studio Kvartal 95 - one of Ukraine's most successful production companies (Ray, 2022). In 2014, during which Petro Poroshenko struggled with his presidency, corruption and revolts, Zelensky starred in the popular TV series *Servant of the People*. Where he played a role of a high school teacher finding himself becoming the president after delivering a speech on anti-corruption. Little did Zelensky know that his role would become reality. As Ukraine's economy was declining, so were Poroschenkos's votes and in 2019 Zelensky ran for president in an unorthodox way. He was running the world's "first entirely virtual presidential campaign" with no real-life campaigning, speeches, statements or press conferences. He instead published short videos and comedy sketches published on his social media (Ray, 2022; Savilov, 2019). Zelensky, with no party affiliation or clear advisors, was the least prepared candidate to lead such a shattered country, embossed by corruption, insecurities and on the verge of war (Savilov, 2019). Despite this, the populist, comedian and actor Zelensky won by 73% of the votes (Fisher, 2019).

3.0 Literature Review

This study takes a stance on the spectrum of political communication on a social media platform. The thesis is delving deeper into how the contemporary video communication of Volodymyr Zelensky appeals to the social media generation. Hence, it is of relevance to review what has been researched on topics regarding political communication on social media, as well as generational differences.

With the rise of social media, the landscape for communication has changed dramatically, not the least in the realm of political communication. Social media has given anyone the opportunity to voice their ideas and communicate freely. As claimed in previous research, presidents have historically communicated to the public through traditional mass media. However, contemporary communicative opportunities have changed with social media

(Christersson, Kreps & Kriner, 2021; Enli & Rosenberg, 2018; Wardynski, 2018). Cohen & Holbert (2018) further argue that mediated engagement is the core of today's political processes in terms of building relationships with the citizens, an idea echoing the ideas of Hoffman, Suphan & Mckel (2016), who claim that social media is the place where the contemporary political engagement derives from. The mediatization of political communication has simultaneously made the political arena itself bigger; the ratio in reaching an audience has grown significantly, which eventually increases the chance of political impact (Cohen & Holbert, 2018). It also includes the development of shaping opinion and sharing information (Hoffman et al., 2016), as well as increasing citizen support (McLaughlin & Macafee, 2019).

Previous research shows that there is a correlation between political communication on social media and increased personalisation of politicians amongst citizens. The possibilities for two-way communication, as well as real-time interaction, aid in communication that permeates personal aspects (Lee & Moon, 2021; McLaughlin & Macafee, 2019). Luebke & Engelman (2022) shed light on how citizens experience their politicians through social media. They argue that, with social media, politicians can self-focus to a larger extent than historically, ultimately leading to personalisation. Furthermore, personalisation links to authenticity as well as soft and human-like traits. Accordingly, when politicians become more human-like, McLaughlin & Macafee (2019) state that the audience in the matter, i.e., most often citizens, hence assume the politician's perspectives in a concept of identification. Evidently, there has been a shift in the political narrative online, where modern politicians are curving from being authoritarian to citizen level communicators. The nature of social media is enabling communication that appears private and revealing.

As mentioned above, authenticity is one aspect that is discussed. In regards to the topic, contemporary research states that authenticity is the level to which politicians consistently stay true to who they are, and social media platforms are critical in influencing perceived authenticity. Luebke & Engelman (2022) proves that as citizens, increased exposure to social media also increases the perception of politicians' authenticity positively. Enli & Rosenberg (2018) further conclude that populist politicians can build their credibility through social media, as the dimensions of having a populist standing point and using social media yet increase authenticity. Having a populist political approach implies being anti-elite. In short, that signifies that the

dimensions of a populist political standing point, as well as using social media as a communications forum, work as a two-way catalyst together in enhancing authenticity.

Having considered social media, privatisation and authenticity, it is also reasonable to discuss how they relate to the build-up of parasocial relationships between politicians and an audience. A parasocial relationship is when there is a perceived relationship between two parties. In relation to social media, that means that the audience of content creates a relationship with the communicator through the medium itself. The communication form of social media is directly directed towards the audience; the audience can take part in communication in the comfort of their home, through their own device, making the communication intimate. As a result, the audience experiences the communication as targeted towards them privately, as they are receiving the communication in a targeted manner. This type of communication can eventually build up parasocial relationships, where the audience ties a commitment to the communicator over time (Cohen & Holbert, 2018).

Social media platforms have become forums to cultivate political engagement. Citizens do not know their politicians privately, however, increased exposure to their politicians through social media consequently increases political commitment (Luebke & Engelmann, 2022). Cohen & Holbert (2018) further suggest that there might be a link between politicians who have had a career in entertainment succeeding in creating parasocial relationships with their audience easier than politicians who have not been exposed similarly in media prior to their political careers.

Another aspect of importance is how any generational differences play a part in the sphere of social media and political engagement. Enli & Rosenberg's (2018) study shows that there is segmentation in demographics which points to varied interest levels tied to social media and political engagement. In their study, they conclude that people of the older generation, i.e., 30 years and older, who typically do not consume social media similarly in comparison to the younger generation, do not appear to have the same level of trust towards their politicians, solely from social media. Whereas the younger generation, i.e., 30 years old and younger, who consume social media to a greater extent, are less sceptical towards social media. Additionally, the younger generation experience politicians as more authentic when they use social media.

Prensky (2012) brings upon the topic of generational differences in relation to technological development and coins a new definition of people that are born into the digital era: *digital natives*. The notion of digital natives illustrates how an entire generation, that has been

born into digitalisation, comprehends the complexity of technological products, similar to speaking in their mother tongue; digital products are hence a natural essence in their lives. The digital natives can be considered the social media generation (Prensky, 2012; Dingli & Seychell, 2015).

4.0 Theoretical Framework

This chapter will examine theories of relevance to our field of study. The theoretical framework will anchor our analysis process as our interpreted results will derive from the following theoretical subjects. Furthermore, the theoretical areas will build upon our methodology as they will work as dimensional outsets for the content analysis and further as parameters in the frequency sheet.

4.1 Managing Impressions

Impression management was founded and introduced by Erving Goffman in 1959 and it concerns managing others' perceptions in ways that are fulfilling to oneself. By consciously presenting oneself in certain ways, one can affect and influence the target audience's impression and their perception of you (Sun, Fang & Zhang, 2021). The evolution of social media does affect the ability to participate in creating one's self-presentation, making it easier to control (Rui & Stefanone, 2013).

Tedeschi (1981) states several reasons as to why one seeks to influence others' perceptions and presents the following: *a social role in symbolic interaction, avoiding blame and gaining credit, self-esteem maintenance, strategic self-presentations, power and social influence and connotative impressions.*

Symbolic interaction refers to the role one can play in interaction with others, which affects the construction of one's identity. By using self-presentation strategies one can either avoid blame through excuses and justifications or gain credit through entitling and enhancements. Strategic self-presentations can be used when one aims to gain power and influence the audience. Tedeschi's (1981) research states three ways this could be done, firstly by

enhancing oneself, secondly by providing positive feedback, based on our tendency to like people who elevate us. Lastly, self-presentation plays a role in one's possession of power and therefore social influence; this can be gained by communicating and presenting trustworthiness, expertise, authority and attractiveness. Creating a connotative impression is based on research that suggests that there are two dimensions in the perception of others, evaluation and potency. Tedeschi (1981) exemplifies a graph, on the vertical axis a good-bad scale, the other a strong-weak. By representing oneself in different positions on this graph, one can create, project and influence the audience's impression, the graph is shown in Appendix A.

Since we are analysing Zelenskys own communication, it is of importance to seek strategies for self-representation. Tedeschi (1981) presents different ways of tactical presentation: *verbal self-presentation*, which includes one's verbal communication, *expressive behaviour*, which includes facial expressions, gaze, eye contact and other actions, *artifactual displays* which is the use of one's appearance and it's cues i.e. clothing and physical presentation, *purposive behaviour*, behaviours that tactically is used can, for example, be gift-giving or signs of aggression. As crucial of a factor as communication is, so is nonverbal communication (Argyle, 1988). As a large part of our communication is nonverbal, it is fundamental, and its effects on our impressions are often more crucial than what we express verbally (Aliakbari & Abdollahi, 2013).

Choice of clothing is a powerful tool in impression management, as it is one of the most determinant parts of nonverbal communication. It has implications for several different perceptions, including credibility, dominance, likeability, moral character and many others. When effectively used, it can affect people's reactions and interpretations in the desired way, hence, can be used strategically (Aliakbari & Abdollahi, 2013). Common classification of clothing is if it is of formal or informal nature (Argyle, 1988). Formal clothing is often worn when one wants to stay within norms, and to gain respect, as it signalises professionalism while maintaining a social distance. On the contrary, less formal clothing can signal closeness and intimacy (Slepian, Ferber, Gold & Rutchick, 2015; Aliakbari & Abdollahi, 2013). Maran, Liegl, Moder, Kraus and Furtner (2021) conducted a study on how leaders are perceived based on their clothing attire. Their findings indicated that formal attire was favourable if one desired to be perceived as a prototypical leader and that it signalised less approachability. Additionally, leaders

who dressed less formal, and signalled friendliness and charisma, were more likely to be chosen as the preferred leader.

One of the most studied areas is the concept of power, where the perception of an individual's power is based on emotionality and rationality (Grecu & Chiriac, 2020). Political power is defined through an individual's power-related influence, both social influence and the ability to politically coerce (Grecu & Chiriac, 2020). There are several different aspects at play in the production of power, it can, for example, be, social, economical or symbolic aspects (Sannikov, 2020). Since we are studying physical attributes, we will focus on symbolic power. Power can be mediated through clothes, jewellery, appearance, offices and one's residence (Hedvall, 2012). The military uniform has had a long history and symbolism of power. Research shows it symbolises authority, reliability and social status (Clifford, 2001). Additionally, the military uniform plays a part in soldiers' self-perception of being and becoming a soldier (Ugolini, 2015). As Clifford (2001, p.369) states "A uniform distinguishes one group from the rest of society, and in that sense it is exclusive. But it also imposes a certain equality - uniformity and discipline - on those who wear it and thus functions to reduce social distinctions among them". The uniform itself differentiates soldiers from regular people, giving the soldiers a sense of equality and belonging amongst them.

4.2 Social Media Era Communication

4.2.1 Social Media Era

Social media is defined as the combination between technology, social interaction and user-generated content, used for purposes like social interaction, news reporting, marketing, and exchange of different cultures as well as entertainment (NE, n.d.). According to Fu & Cook (2021, p.1235), there has been a shift in power, stating "In this new media context, power has been transited from political institutions to cultural codes and is exercised through and within networks" confirming the effects of social media on the perspective of power. Castells (2000) argues that the society we live in is created from human interactions in a social structure. Digitalisation and its possibility to create networks have enabled a new type of social structure, which he defines as *the network society*, these different networks create new arenas for meaning-making.

4.2.2 Digital Natives and Communication

Relevant to our thesis are digital natives who, compared to earlier generations, are the first that have been born into an era prevalent in technology and grown in parallel with the evolution of social media, thereby being a social media generation (Prensky, 2012). Since the presence and daily use is natural, they are comfortable with technology and research shows a preference for social sites for communication, feedback and interaction (PrakashYadav & Rai, 2017). Having never experienced a world without the internet, their digital proficiency has led to new ways of communicating, primarily through social channels (Turner, 2015). Technology is enabling them to connect to the world at their fingertips (NE, n.d.). According to Statista (2020), 74% of digital natives use Facebook.

In regards to the global state of the past decades, digital natives have been formed by a time of war and global insecurities. Correspondingly, research shows that they value safety and security, community, inclusion and dialogue. With these values, digital natives use social media as an outlet to express their engagement in civic issues, as well as a tool for political participation (Cheng & Literat, 2022).

Enli & Rosenberg's (2018) research shows how authenticity and trust are achieved in our time of the social media era. Due to individualisation and digitalisation, there has been a declining trust toward media and political institutions, which affects how politicians are perceived. Their research confirms what has previously been stated, that younger generations preferred and trusted communication medium is social media. Therefore, they perceive politicians as more truthful and authentic via social media, on the grounds that they see social media as an opportunity for politicians to “present their honest version of the story in a seemingly unmediated and unfiltered way” which leads to increased trust (Enli & Rosenberg, 2018, p.4). Conclusively, younger generations were more likely to interpret politicians as honest when they used the same mediums as the individual themselves used (Enli & Rosenberg, 2018).

4.2.3 Vlog Communication

With social media moving from information-based to more interpersonal network-based a great part of our social lives is now existing on social media. Hence the art of video blogging, short *vlog* or *vlogging*, has become extremely popular (Wood, 2019). Statistics show there is a clear

desire for visual content, the most viewed content on Youtube was user-generated content, where vlogs were the most popular, rather than videos from traditional media (Cox, 2019; Werner, 2012). Vlogs are a spoken videoed communication genre with the characteristics of a diary since it has the form of a monologue with the recipients being imaginary. Vlogs often have a wide reach, due to their asynchronous element, where the viewer can watch and interact with the content anywhere, usually through comments and likes (Wood, 2019). Considering this, interactivity is often the main focus of vlogs, hence commonly used strategies include those of building a relationship between the creator and viewer (Frobenius, 2014). These include *encouraging engagement*, *use of formulaic expressions* and the *use of a conversational undertone* (Wood, 2019).

By encouraging engagement the creator can involve the viewers even though the communication is that of a monologue, i.e., using *engagement markers* (Wood, 2019). Engagement markers are the usage of pronouns, to personally address the audience, appealing to shared knowledge, the use of directives and including questions (Sahragard & Yazdanpanahi, 2017). Formulaic expressions are commonly used in vlogs, where the creator strategically uses a fixed expression repeatedly in all videos, in order to differentiate themselves from others. The expression, which often becomes a kind of trademark, is often said at the beginning as well as the end of the video (Riboni, 2017). Vloggers often use a conversational undertone, speaking to the audience casually, as if it was face to face communication (Wood, 2019).

A vlog is often recorded in the own home of the creator, being short, under 15 minutes and simply filmed. The frame is fixed where only the upper body is shown, while the creator looks straight into the camera, addressing the recipient directly i.e. *talking head*. The characteristics of the content are often addressed, personal and direct, while the body language mirrors it as well. Significant to the content is the creator's personality and mood when filmed (Wood, 2019).

So how come digital natives consume and appeal to this form of communication, unlike any other generation? Vlogging strategies resemble face to face communication, whilst occurring digitally, this conjoins with digital natives' comfortability and preference for social media (Wood, 2019). Having used the internet their whole lives, the video format is how digital natives prefer to gain knowledge and learn, while being able to interact with the creators, leading to a feeling of connection and community Cox (2019).

4.3 Narratives and Storytelling

Narratives and storytelling are crucial rhetorical tools. Narratives can be seen as spheres with stories at the core. They unnoticeably permeate our lives while simultaneously making our lives increasingly more comprehensive (Elleström, 2019). Narratives are stories that help us to understand and transport information into other meanings. Furthermore, narratives and storytelling are important aspects of political communication (Mayer, 2014). Narratives help breed democracy and social change (Nassim, 2018) as they provoke strong emotions and work persuasively. Moreover, narratives are meaningful instruments for political unity and the creation of collective action since narratives appeal to empathy (Mayer, 2014).

According to Nassim (2018) digital technologies, such as contemporary media channels, are useful for sharing narrative stories in comparison to other traditional mediums, due to the fact that modern media channels are good for rapid, widespread communication. Furthermore, Elleström (2019) describes how the narrative communicator becomes a part of the virtual sphere and media product through which he or she is communicating.

Mayer brings upon the concept of ‘moment of now’ which indicates the moment when the communication and narratives are told. Mayer (2014) indicates that narratives can foster collective force, which is a central pillar in politics. However, it is of importance that the narratives go in line with individuals feeling like they have their own rational choice.

4.3.1 Compelling Cooperation

The goal of political communication is to gain countenance. One core strategy is to use narratives that make societal cooperation desirable and hence compel unity. In order to achieve the feeling of belonging amongst the recipients, the communicator must create an idea of a collective, in which the recipients can feel identification. Communicating narratives of this sort often include stories filled with passion which stir emotions. They also contain ideas about the importance of the individual, i.e., the audience, and how the individual is a central puzzle piece, contributing to something bigger. The individual's existence lives in symbiosis with the collective where both parties need each other equally and interdependently. Realising this narrative can help engage recipients to act upon occurrences that not only affect themselves but also the collective in a solidary manner. The narrative clings to a socially constructed contract where the narrative points to how the collective shares the same story (Mayer, 2014).

4.3.2 Creation of a Crisis

In the narrative of creating a crisis, there is a severe “urgency of now”. In this narrative, the meaning of the moment is often seen as a dramatic turning point, upon which recipients should act immediately. The communicator generates a sense of a breakpoint, where the moment of now is decisively on either triumph or disaster. In this narrative, the recipients are encouraged to take a stand and become active actors in the question of matter. The crisis must also be resolved immediately (Mayer, 2014).

4.3.3 The Self-narrative

However a political leader aims to unite a collective for action, eventually he or she seeks to anchor their stories and define their own self-narratives. This means that the politician’s stories should align in his or her favour. This can be done by implicating the historical significance in the moment of the now, as well as pointing to the future. The communicator’s autobiography should align with the resolvement of the issue that is presented in the narrative. Hence, there is a sense of the communicator playing an important role in the moment of now but also in the future (Mayer, 2014).

Additionally, this narrative can create a sense of the communicator of being a commoner. Fitzgerald & Green (2017) build upon this narrative and suggest that recipients’ beliefs can be changed in accordance with the storyteller’s. In this narrative, there is a possibility for identification between the recipients and the communicator. The experienced bond can further influence the recipient's self-concepts in accordance with the communicator’s characteristics.

Concludingly, this narrative is anchoring the communicator as an important figure in the moment of now (Mayer, 2014).

4.3.4 The Underdog Narrative

The underdog effect is a common narrative often seen in political, sports, commercial, as well as popular cultural contexts. It is a powerful story that appeals to recipients in a way where they identify themselves with, and also sympathise with, the protagonist communicator, who stands in polarity to the antagonist (Mayer, 2014; O’Keeffe, 2019). The underdog is someone who is expected to lose and is at an immediate disadvantage to his or her opponent. However, the narrative of the underdog is popular due to its ability to facilitate inspiration; unfavourable odds

count for development which goes in line with the theory of desirable difficulties. Nowadays the underdog is also synonymous with being a hero (O’Keeffe, 2019).

Especially within the field of brand management, the storyline of underdog versus top dog has been thoroughly researched. However, the findings can be applied to other disciplines as well. For example, Park, Lee, Xiong, Septianto & Seo (2021) conclude that closeness to the communicator, i.e., achieved by the communicator being an underdog, prompts for the apprehension of authenticity. Eventually, the communicator is seemingly more persuasive in comparison to the top dog within the narrative. The underdog narrative can build a sense of oneness with the audience. This concept is something that Fitzgerald & Green (2017) also suggest is important as recipients can relate their experiences to those within the narrative. Thus, building a sense of connection through imagery.

4.4 Rhetorics

Rhetorics is the art of argumentation (Aristotle, 2020) which ideas come from ancient Greece. The concept derives from the technique of persuasive discourse undertaken by an orator for action (Martin, 2014). Rhetorics can hence be seen as a toolbox to use for improving speech and text for convincing purposes (Toye, 2013).

Rhetorics have five so-called *canons*. These are rules which rhetorics should follow. Initially, there is *invention*, which is the process of coming up with material and arguments, followed by the *arrangement* of the material which builds an outline of the presentation. Eventually, there is *style*, which is the choice of words and language. This step can be compared to choosing weaponry. Lastly comes *memory* and *delivery*. Memory is how well prepared the communicator is in regards to performing the speech. Delivery entails the output of the speech, that is the setting of the speech, accent, posture, tone of voice and how the message itself is carried out (Toye, 2013).

Aristotle (2020) pointed out that rhetoric is about accounting for the opportunities that lay in hand. An assumption that can link to politics. The fundamental core of politics is persuasion and formulating needs and solutions; politics hence implicates the knowledge of how to speak to the public (Martin, 2014). However, as rhetoric also can be tied to power execution, it is of extra

relevance to have an understanding of influence, especially when the political system is democratic. The connection is described by Martin (2014):

Instead of viewing democracy as a space from which emotions need to be evacuated, it may be better to think of it as an uneven network constantly (re)generated in and through affective strategies that assemble and reshape communicative practices by working on popular attentions and allegiances. Those strategies, as we have seen, are deployed ‘to direct and control the conduct of others’ by mobilizing metaphors and imagery, invoking memories and shaping perceptions or reactivating traumas and the promise of resolution (Martin, 2014, p.124).

4.4.1 Rhetorical Figures of Speech

Another important note is that language is a medium through which humans construct their realities. A rich understanding of language gives deeper knowledge and understanding of the perceived reality (Martin, 2014). There are different strains of rhetoric that can broaden the understanding of language, for instance, rhetorical figures of speech, which are instruments to make the argumentation appealing in various ways (Toye, 2013) The figures of speech used as codes are: *simile*, *antithesis*, *metaphor*, *repetition*, *meta-discourse*, *rhetorical questions*, *hyperbole* and *parallelism*. These will be further explained in Appendix B.

The greater knowledge of our language, and rhetorical figures of speech, the deeper and more nuanced notions one gets. Rhetorics, with the various figures of speech, is a way to point to familiarity between the communicator and his or her audience as they can meet in a space beyond the material (Toye, 2013).

4.4.2 Rhetorics, Media and Politics

Martin (2014) give important insights into how rhetoric, politics and media interplay in today’s digital society. As people are becoming more exposed to digital media, thereby social media, in various forms, it has become important for politicians to adapt accordingly.

Social media gives way to expressing social representation, which also goes in line with the notion of how rhetoric and democracy are linked. A free and democratic society has representable platforms. Through digital media, the possibility of multi expression is made easier, in contrast to traditional media. Considering politicians’ adapted media and rhetoric approach implies that digital media now is used for amplifying personalities and impressions.

Social media has changed the terms of political rhetoric as digital media minimise the experienced distance between the politicians and the public; it has also enabled the possibility of reaching out to greater audiences. The blurred lines between the formal and digital media political rhetoric have paved the way for a new type of political communication - rhetoric that is parable to show business (Martin, 2014). Politicians nowadays address their audiences through simplified messages, and in ways that appeal to the audience. As Toye (2013) explains, this is when the speaker takes a stand against what he or she assumes that the audience already knows. Another novelty in terms of online political rhetorics is the personalisation of politicians. Martin (2014) claims that the removal of barriers between politicians and their audiences, which is possible through social media, breeds a culture of celebrity politicians. This implies that politicians entail a vocabulary, and deliver their messages in a show business manner.

5.0 Methodology

The following chapter will describe our methodology and establish the working progress in researching our phenomenon.

We aim to unveil frequent patterns in the Ukrainian president Zelensky's published videos on his media era in an interpretive manner. Hence, in order to conduct this research, we have chosen the methodology of qualitative content analysis.

Qualitative content analysis is suitable for research that aims to systematically interpret the meaning of larger data. Accordingly, it is a powerful method to examine key aspects of datasets (Schreier, 2012; Berg & Lune, 2012). As described by Fors & Bäckström (2015) visual data is highly descriptive and can tell something about phenomena in who, what, when, where and how something is occurring. Our empirical data is of visual nature and is therefore rich in qualitative attributes. However, as we aim to gain a formal understanding of our phenomenon through a larger dataset, we will look at the frequential patterns in the empirical data with anchoring in contemporary topics. Moreover, the qualitative content analysis will help combine greater data with the ability to examine its totality. It is a method useful for working pragmatically and systematically (Schreier, 2015; Berg & Lune, 2012).

5.1 Sampling Process

Depending on the chosen method of sampling, one can reach different conclusions in research. However, for the validity of a sample, it needs to be representative of a bigger population (Boyle & Schmierbach, 2020). The most general way of obtaining samples in qualitative content analysis is by using non-probability sampling; this implies that the data is collected on non-random criteria to fit the research design and aspired results (Drisko & Maschi, 2015). In the qualitative content analysis, it is of importance to overview the complexity of the content. This means that the sample often is narrowed down according to criteria which lay the ground for the analysing process (Boyle & Schmierbach, 2020).

The empirical material of this thesis is videos published on Zelensky's official Facebook page (Zelensky, n.d.). In order to establish the sample of the empirical data, we work pragmatically while simultaneously ensuring that the data is saturated and representative. As Boyle & Schmierbach (2020) declare, this implies a sample with consistent characteristics. Our sample method is the model of purposive sampling for convenient and pragmatic reasons. This means that we will use systematic rules to determine the sample. In accordance, our sample frame is narrowed down to certain criteria as follows:

1. We have selected a time frame for which videos will be included in the sample. As the Facebook page of Volodymyr Zelensky is updated on a daily basis with approximately three videos per day, a time frame helps us reduce complexity. The time frame starts from the dawn of the invasion, i.e., the 24th of February, until the 6th of April.
2. We are only looking at videos where Volodymyr Zelensky is present.
3. We are only looking at the videos that have been published with English subtitles.

Within the timeframe criteria, there are 227 videos. In regards to the remaining three criteria, 80 videos meet the requirements. That is, we looked over the 227 videos and were left with a sample size of 80 videos. With the sample frame, we ensure that the videos are systematically listed which also certifies validity. Furthermore, the samples from within the sample frame are all of random nature and will be analysed individually in the same manner, meaning, we have no subjective selection of the videos but are analysing all of them. By analysing the 80 videos we

will have enough empirical evidence for conducting qualitative content analysis (Schreier, 2012). The sample size will ensure saturation and is likewise big enough to cover the aspects of our aim.

5.2 Analysis Method: Qualitative Content Analysis

A qualitative content analysis is a method used in social sciences, which enables researchers to dig into phenomena in a systematic way, while still having the opportunity to denote literal meanings (Schreier, 2012; Boyle & Schmierbach, 2020). This is done by organising empirical material into categories of codes, which simultaneously reduces the complexity of data. According to Schreier (2012) qualitative content analysis is specifically useful for rich data that require interpretation, thus making it a suitable method of choice for our study. However, the qualitative content analysis cannot perform any full meanings of analysis, and can only describe the material in accordance with what has been set out by the codes and categories. Schreier (2012) further explains that qualitative content analysis is systematic in the ways that all material is examined and categorised; the same working procedure applies to all videos. For this thesis, it means that we will look at our 80 videos, and analyse the full-length versions of them. Eventually, the same sequence of analysis steps is used throughout the process. The procedure of coding uncovers what the data is about as the codes work as instances of given concepts (Schreier, 2012).

In this research paper, we will work with the analysis from a dimensional outset derived from our theoretical framework. The dimensions will be our coding frame, hence they are the aspects that we wish to analyse our material through. Within the dimensions, we have several subcategories, all of which can be translated from the empirical material into statistical data. Moreover, all the codes are transcribed into a frequency sheet. This way of working ensures validity as anyone, with the instructions of coding, should be able to conduct this research. This way of working is an inductive and iterative process, where the coding works as a conceptualising tool (Schreier, 2012).

With the content analysis, we aim to gain results on a formal level, as the methodology cannot contribute with knowledge on a deeper level. However, we can provide overarching insights.

To guarantee methodological validity we are working with coding our material independently and parallel as researchers. Schreier (2012) points out the importance of coding and recoding the material, as well as testing the coding sheet, i.e., the frequency sheet before using the results. Thus, we are going to carry out separate analyses and compare our results to ensure the potency of our coding instructions, to eventually re-do our final coding together. However, in regards to the frame in which this study is conducted, deep delving re-coding processes, as well as consistency checks, are not possible.

The coding sheet with accompanied coding instructions can be seen in Appendix C.

5.3 Study Limitation

As mentioned above, different methodological options make for various results and different ways of conducting research lead to distinct research designs. This implies that research can fulfil different purposes, but also have diversity in flaws (Boyle & Schmierbach, 2020). In relation to this study, there are some limitations to have in consideration which will be brought up. Firstly, by looking at the methodology, and secondly by looking at the contextual aspects of our study.

The method of qualitative content analysis can only bring knowledge to formal levels (Schreier, 2012; Drisko & Maschi, 2015). It is likewise a context-dependent method where meaning is not always justified independently (Schreier, 2012). In regards to sampling, our data is limited in proportion to all of the data available for pragmatic reasons. However, this means that we can only draw conclusions on the basis of our material. The cut in empirical data is subjectively derived and can hence be argued for bias. Furthermore, since all videos are retrieved from Zelensky's own Facebook page, the videos are exclusively from his perspective, resulting in a one-sided version of the conflict.

Lastly, there might be language barriers and faults in subtitles where information, meanings and understandings evaporate; things which might be important to the greater understanding of Zelenskys videos. Communication which cannot be translated with subtitles, such as rhetorical strategies and figures of speech.

The contextual aspects of our study entail the retrieval of sources. Since the conflict between Ukraine and Russia is a current affair there can be limitations in the availability of

sources. For example, news information is not anchored in academia, there can be fake news circulating about this infected topic, and lastly, some insightful information comes from popular culture. In addition, we are only using information retrieved from a western context. The Russian perspective is neglected as there is little, to no, information available.

5.4 Reflexivity Statement

When writing academically it is of importance to acknowledge our standing points that we as researchers have on the studied topic as it might affect the outcome of the thesis (Probst, 2015). Schreier (2012) states that objectivity has a different meaning in social sciences compared to other disciplines, as the social sciences are researching humans in their contexts. Hence, reflexivity in social sciences research is crucial.

We have conducted inductive research with an objective standing point in observation; meaning we are analysing our empirical material from an outside perspective with rootedness in theory. However, we want to emphasise our personal viewpoints, our relation to the phenomenon as well as how we might be of any bias that could influence this paper.

We are two Swedish women that have grown up in a western and democratic society with liberal values. We have access to a variety of media channels alongside a variety of perspectives. Nonetheless, we are aware that we are also fed the western narrative regarding the conflict between Ukraine and Russia, in which Russia's perspective rarely is highlighted whilst Ukrainian stories are. This imbalanced storyline might have impinged us in the sense that we support Zelensky and the freedom of Ukraine while disregarding Russian interests.

Additionally, we belong to the generation of digital natives, meaning we have grown up in a digital environment and are hence familiar with the correlated communication, which also includes political communication online. As concluded by Enli & Rosenberg (2018) and Luebke & Engelmann (2022) there is a liaison between the media usage by politicians and trust in politicians. Our generation appreciates a shortened distance between ourselves and our political leaders, created by social media, as it eventually results in authenticity. This implies that we as researchers of the social media era find politicians trustworthy when they are using digital media. Consequently, we sympathise with Zelensky in his media usage. It is also another reason why we find this topic thrilling to further explore.

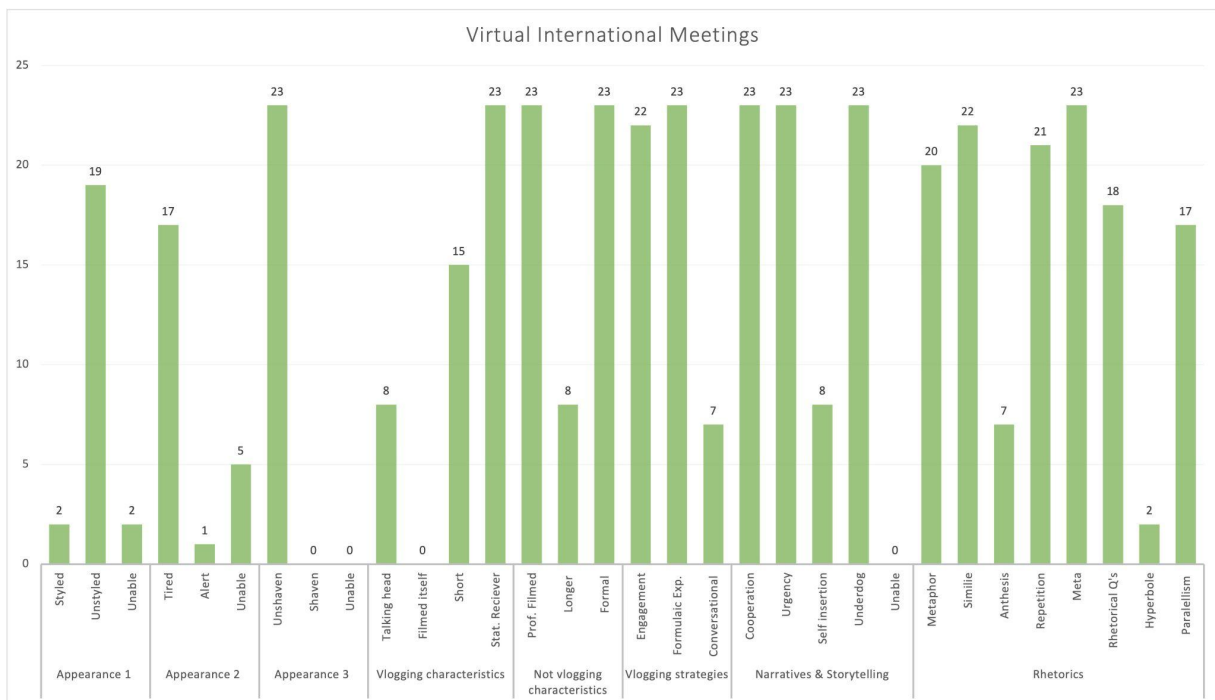
6.0 Results and Analysis

We have in our analysis found different themes of settings in Zelensky’s videos, all revealing identical patterns, hence the results will be presented and divided in relation to the themes, then further analysed in a synthesised manner. In addition to these, but separated from the codes, we noted the surroundings, the targeted receivers, as well as the colour of clothing Zelensky is wearing. These notions are of importance for the overriding understanding of the videos.

6.1 Results

The results are presented as measures in diagrams according to the coding results.

6.1.1 Virtual International Meetings

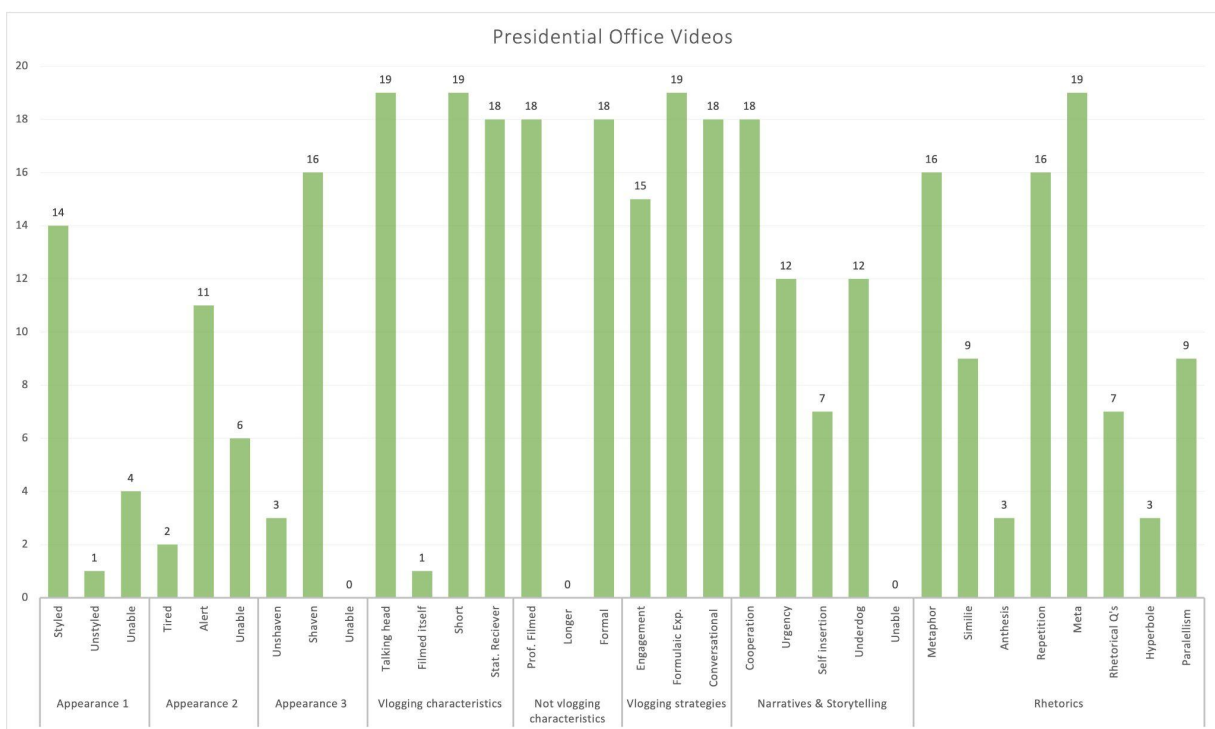


The first theme found is consistent with 23 unedited videos of Zelensky participating in virtual international meetings with either an institution, like the European Parliament or different countries' governments. As he is participating digitally, we see Zelensky sitting in an abstemious

room, the few things we identified in the frame were an office chair, a Ukrainian flag and Zelensky himself, as seen in Appendix D.

Zelensky’s clothing in these videos is of the informal kind, where he rotates between t-shirts, shirts, a thicker jacket and a fleece jacket. Each of the garments is khaki green, apart from one video where he is wearing a brown t-shirt. Zelensky clearly stated all of the receivers in the beginning, which is typical for vlogs.

6.1.2 Presidential Office

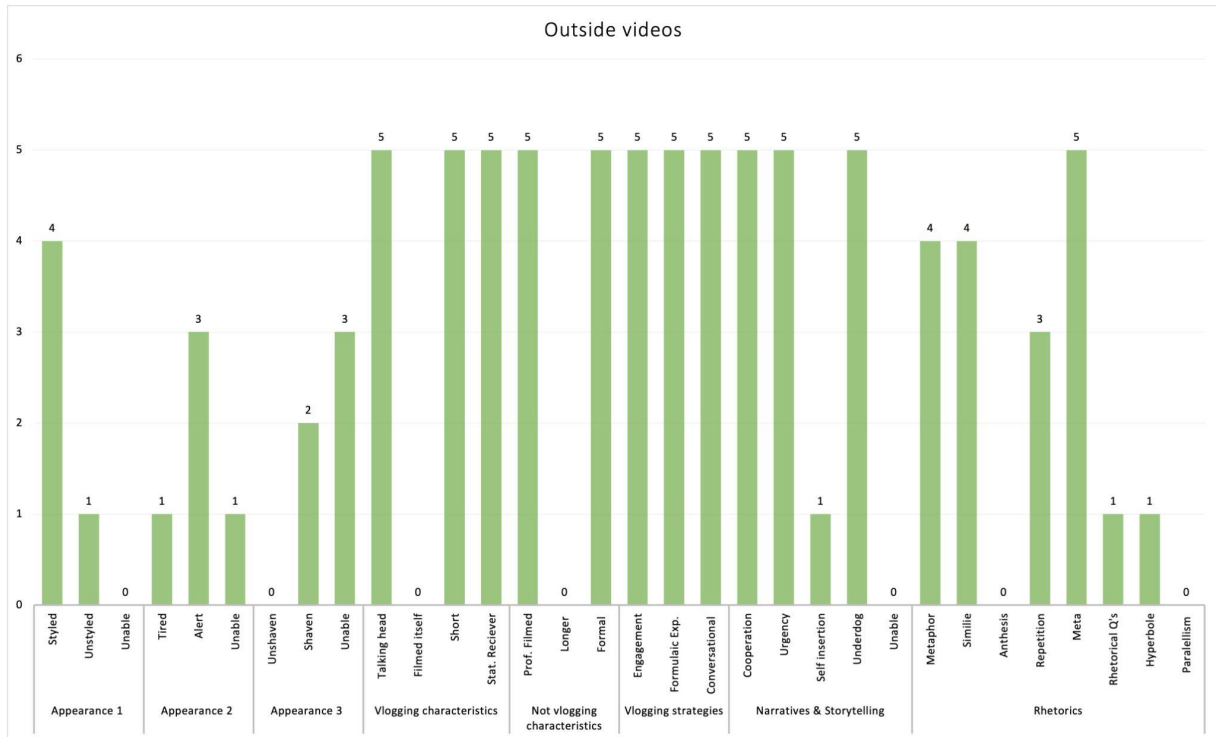


The second theme was 19 videos, 17 of which were filmed in the presidential office in Kyiv, with the scenery consistent with his office materia, this is shown in Appendix E. The remaining two are filmed in a different office setting, which location we were unable to identify, presented in Appendix F.

Zelensky is seen sitting and standing at his desk, from several different angles; several of these videos seem to be edited afterwards. In eleven of the videos, a majority, the Ukrainian population was the solely targeted receiver, whereas in five he spoke directly towards Russians, in two he addressed the whole world and in one singled out the Polish population.

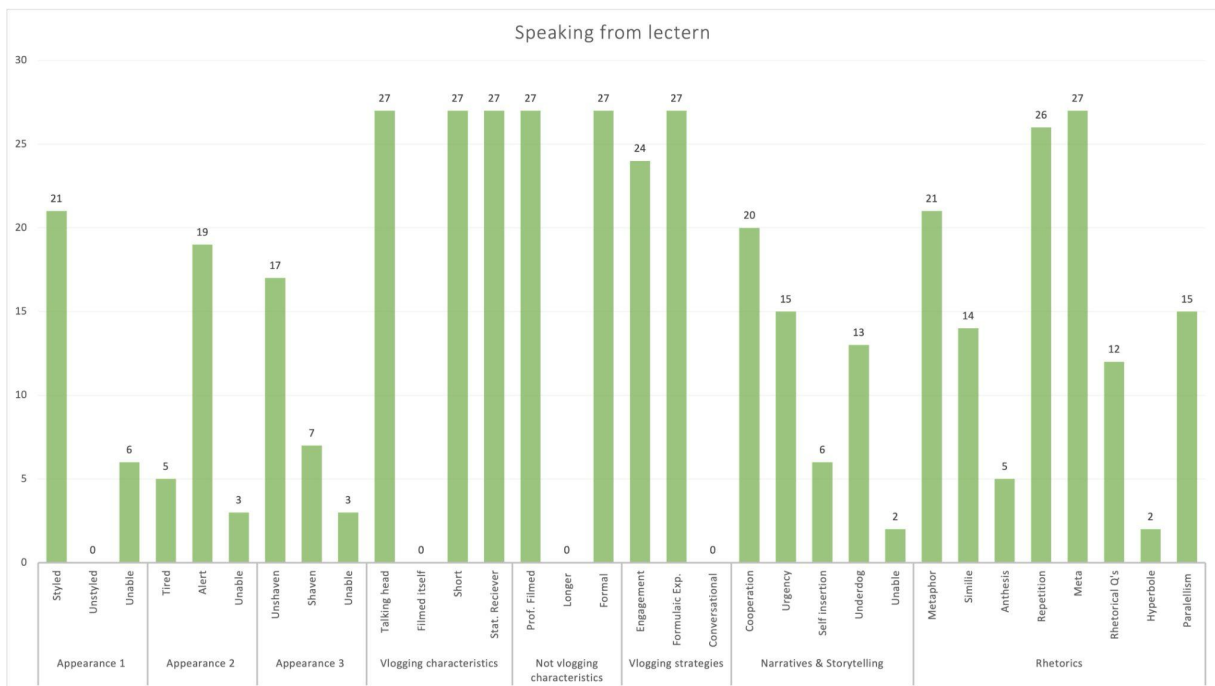
Zelensky wore different informal clothes, alternating between t-shirts, shirts, fleece jackets and one outside jacket, a majority in the colour of khaki green, except one brown shirt.

6.1.3 Outside videos



In the third theme, the five edited videos identified were filmed on the streets of what is presented as Kyiv. Four were filmed from different angles outside the Horodecki House, which is located across from the presidential residence, as seen in Appendix G and H. One seems to be filmed with a greenscreen but portrays the Horodecki House, as presented in Appendix I. In four of five videos, the targeted receiver is the Ukrainian population. What Zelensky is wearing is similar to the other themes, wearing a jacket in four and a shirt in one, all of them khaki green.

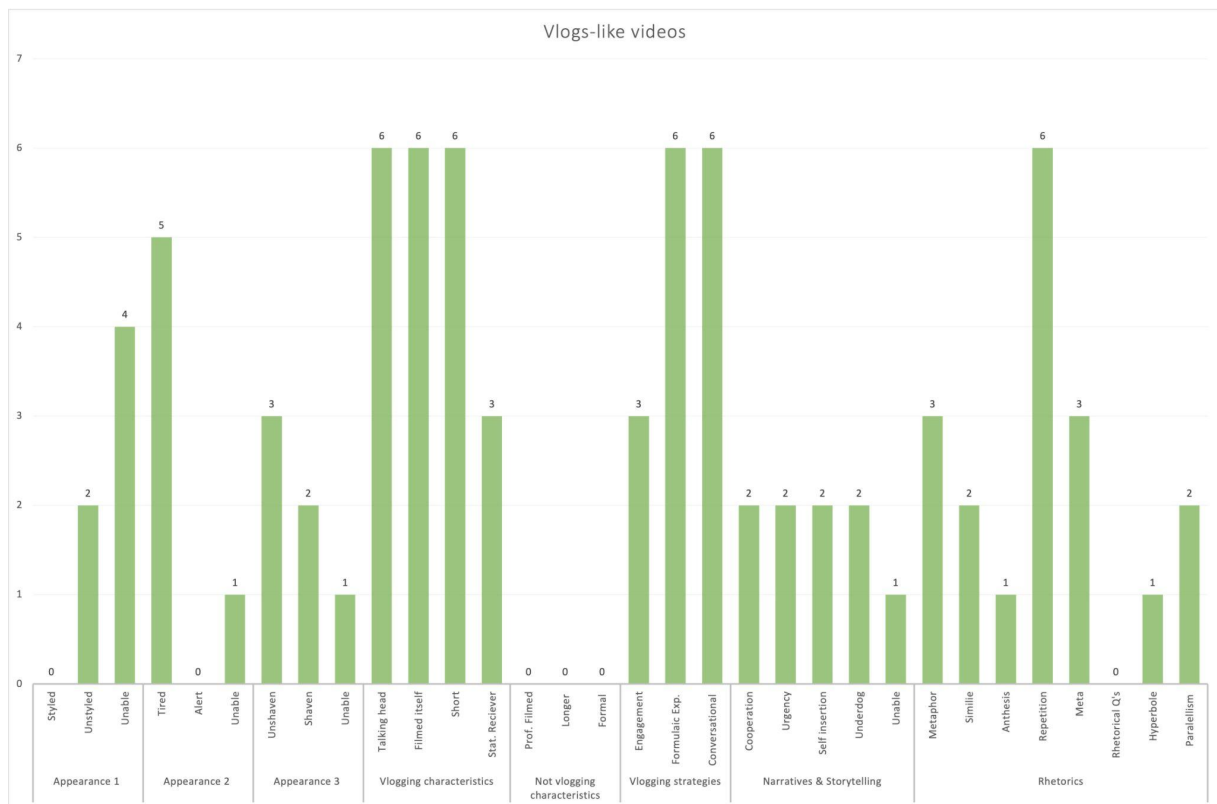
6.1.4 Speaking from lectern



The fourth theme is consistent with 27 edited videos that are categorised as speaking from a lectern, videos in which Zelensky is standing at a podium with a teal coloured backdrop. In all videos, except for the first two videos in the theme, there is also a Ukrainian flag next to the lectern (see Appendix J and K).

Out of the 27 videos, Zelensky is addressing Ukrainians as targeted receivers in 21 of them. Moreover, he is addressing Russians and Russian soldiers in five out of 27 videos. Zelensky is switching between a t-shirt, shirt, fleece jacket and a camouflage t-shirt; all of which are coded as informal clothing.

6.1.5 Vlog-like videos



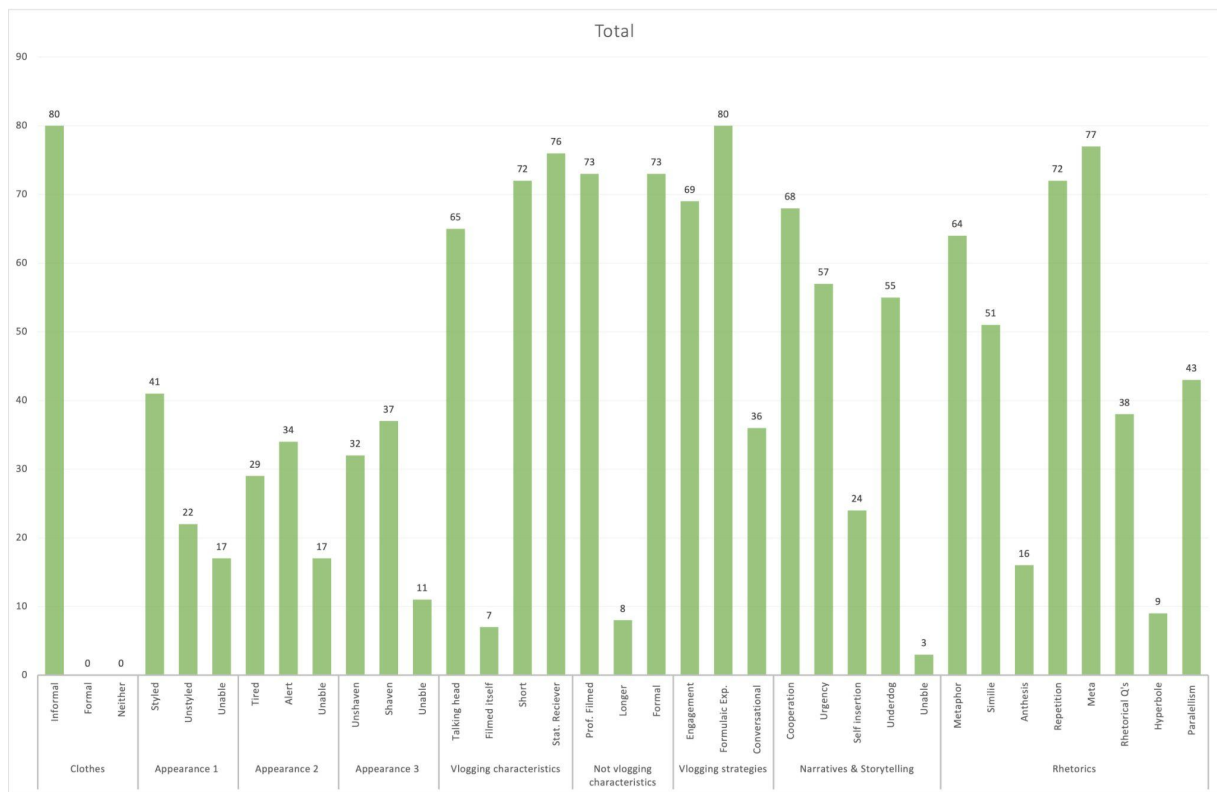
The unedited vlog-like videos are characterised by Zelensky filming the videos by himself in a vlogging style manner. That is, the videos fulfil the requirements of being categorised as ‘vlogs’ as described by (Wood, 2019). Out of the 80 videos, only six could be categorised into this theme, the complexion of the videos that belong to this theme can be seen in Appendix L.

The surroundings in these videos are discrete in the sense that the background and context cannot clearly be defined. However, the surroundings can only be described as abstemious, with Zelensky being in an indoor environment that is without any distinct details.

In his videos he is clearly speaking to the people of Ukraine in three out of six, hence half of the videos have targeted receivers. Furthermore, Zelensky is addressing the surrounding world in the remaining videos, however in implicit communication.

In the videos that belong to this theme, Zelensky is wearing informal clothing, all in khaki green colour. He switches between using a t-shirt, shirt and a fleece jacket.

6.1.6 Codes of Significance



The image above illustrates the results of the codes in all videos in total. When summarising our codes, we discovered several prominent results. For instance, taking vlog characteristics into account, there were 65 videos that were shorter than 15 minutes and 76 had a clearly targeted receiver. However, in contradiction to vlog strategies, 73 of the videos were both of a formal nature as well as professionally filmed. In the videos, Zelensky used vlog strategies to a great extent, where nearly half were presented in a conversational undertone, and 65 with a talking head. As many as 69 videos were engaging and finally, in all 80 of them, Zelensky used formulaic expressions.

Regarding narratives, Zelensky stated the urgency of the situation in 57 of them, whereas the essence of being the underdog was prominent in 55, and finally, he opted for cooperation in all 68 of the 80 videos, clearly showing Zelensky's substantial use of narratives.

Furthermore, a profusion of rhetorical strategies was used, in 51 videos he compared the situation in Ukraine to several others, such as ISIS and terrorism, along with both world wars and

anti-Semitism. Zelensky used metaphors in 64 videos, repetition in 72 and meta-communication was the main strategy used, found in a total of 77 of 80.

6.2 Analysis

It is evident that there is interconnectivity between results and theory, as will be discussed in the following segment. The analysis takes a stance on the aim of this thesis which is how the video communication of Volodymyr Zelensky is strategic, furthermore pointing to frequent patterns in the video material, and how these patterns relate to the social media era.

Greco & Chiriac (2020) state that political power is to achieve goals through influential and social relations. However, with digitalisation, social interactions and relations have moved into the sphere of online communication; so has even political communication (Christersson et al, 2021; Wardynski, 2018; Martin, 2014). Communication has transformed in relation to technological development, and this digital shift has changed it from being solely informative to becoming more network-based and personal (Wood, 2019). Social media has become a central pillar in the creation of engagement and building relationships between politicians and their audience (Cohen & Holbert, 2018).

The analysis is divided into sections based on the theoretical framework, due to the material being interdependent, it facilitates the material as tangible. The parts are sectioned in accordance with the structure of the theoretical chapter. Consequently, a segment of an overarching analysis will be presented at the end of this chapter.

6.2.1 Managing Impressions

A crucial part of our analysis is how Zelensky in his videos seems to be using his appearance, behaviour and expressions to manage impressions, either unintentionally or intentionally. How we perceive and interpret other individuals are based on both verbal and nonverbal communication and can be strategically used in order to shape perceptions in desired ways, i.e. impression management (Sun et al., 2021). Social media has affected how we can present ourselves, making it easier to participate in the construction of our identity (Rui & Stefanone, 2013).

It is essential for us to point out that what is interesting is that within each theme, we see a clear pattern in his appearance, physical attributes, and surroundings within each theme, however, these themes drastically differ from each other, apart from his clothes which stay congruent throughout. In the virtual international speeches, he seems to be unstyled, tired and unshaven in nearly all of them, in comparison to the videos from the presidential office, where he is alert, styled and shaven in most of them. This is despite the quality of the camera seeming to be the same and both being professionally filmed, however, there is a clear change of lighting. The drastic difference in his physical attributes between the themes is, according to us, inevitable, illustrated in Appendix M - Appendix R. Looking at the surroundings, the international speeches are very simplistic, only showing an office chair, desk, and the Ukrainian flag in the background. In contrast to the presidential office videos, where the surroundings are rather extensive; we see several different objects: a Ukrainian flag, piles of papers, notepads, stacks of books and office decorations both on the walls and on the desk; this as shown in Appendix M - Appendix R.

Tedeschi's (1981) presents reasons as to why one seeks to manage perception, as well as strategies for how it can be done. Firstly, he presents that individuals can through roles played when in interaction with others, build their own identity. We draw comparisons to how Zelensky is playing a role, which furthermore helps him to present himself, depending on the targeted receiver. In the international meetings he seems to be playing a role of a tired and unshaven leader, who is desperate for aid, while in the videos targeted mainly towards Ukrainians, he is mostly alert and shaven, playing a role of a strong and hopeful leader.

As a result of strategic self-presentation, one can gain power and thereby influence the audience by enhancing oneself, providing the audience with positive feedback and by communicating trustworthiness, expertise, authority and attractiveness (Tedeschi, 1981). We have identified several of these ways in Zelensky's communication. He mentions and inserts himself in 24 of the videos, and within all of the themes, we found evidence of him encouraging engagement and cheering both other countries and Ukrainians on. Tedeschi's (1981) research provides us with the strategy of creating connotative impressions, connecting oneself to connotations on a good-bad and strong-weak graph. We link Zelensky's appearance in the international videos as unstyled, tired and unshaven with being weak, in comparison to the presidential speeches where he is styled, alert, and shaven which links to the presentation of

being strong. It is evident that Zelensky presents himself differently, hence, we conclude that he presents himself on the good-weak axis when communicating in the international meetings and on the good-strong axis when communicating to the Ukrainians, in order to shape the receiver's impressions, this is illustrated in Appendix A.

Correspondingly, as Aliakbari & Abdollahi, (2013) argue, a large part of our communication is nonverbal, which lay a foundation for the interpretations we make of others, Choice of clothing plays an important role in how we perceive others, and can therefore be used strategically in desired ways. Research shows that formal clothing is often used when one wants to stay within norms and to gain respect. Signalling professionalism correlates to social distance. On the contrary, informal clothing can symbolise intimacy and correlates to closeness (Slepian et al., 2015; Aliakbari & Abdollahi, 2013). In nearly all of the videos, Zelensky is switching between four garments that seem to be the same, apart from four other shirts that are different. Which are different kinds of informal wear. Since he is exclusively wearing informal clothing, he might seek to symbolise friendliness and present his closeness to the audience. Maran, et al. (2021) study showed that leaders were perceived as more prototypical leaders when wearing formal attire, and informal attire signalled friendliness. We can conclude that Zelensky does not seek to present himself as an authoritarian stereotypical leader, but rather as a closer, more charismatic leader signalling friendliness. It does appear that the leader who wore informal attire was more likely to be the preferred choice of leader (Maran, et al. 2021) which we believe has a role in Zelensky's choice of clothing.

Worth noting is that nearly all of his clothes are of the colour khaki green, which is the primary colour used in army clothing (Britannica, 2017) one can hence draw parallels between his choice of clothing to being in the military. However, Zelensky does not once wear an official military uniform, we wonder why. The military has long symbolised authority, reliability and social status. Studies show that the uniform signals a community of soldiers in between that distinguishes them from others (Clifford, 2001). Prior research in addition to our analysis, we present that Zelensky's absence of a military uniform evidently signals that he does not want to be perceived and connected to the stereotypical traits that the military uniform comes with, such as authority and power.

McLaughlin & Macafees (2019) research shows that politicians are shifting from traditional and authoritarian to more commoner and citizen level communicators. This is

evidently shown in Zelensky's appearance and communication style, he presents himself in informal clothing, in addition to his usage of a conversational undertone and vlog strategies, making him more of a citizen than an authoritarian.

Political power can be illustrated through the choice of clothing, jewellery, appearance, residence and office (Greco & Chirac, 2020; Hedvall, 2012). Focusing on the surroundings in the themes, as stated, it is clear that Zelensky presents himself in very different settings, depending on the receiver. Our analysis shows the setting of the international speeches as very abstemious, not revealing many cues of symbols of power, in contrast to the presidential speeches, where we see more cues that are correlated with power, i.e. the presidential residence, the desk, the gold details. In relation to power symbols, it can not be identified within the other themes since they do not reveal any evidence of this.

To conclude, it is evident to us that Zelensky does use several strategies for presenting his appearance, communication and surroundings that correlate to those of impression management, with the aim to steer and shape the audience's perceptions. As we have analysed 80 of his videos, we present a plausible idea of his usage of strategic impression management strategies.

6.2.2 Social Media Era Communication

It is important to note that Zelensky throughout his career primarily has been communicating through social media, even before the invasion, as his presidential campaign was completely virtual, conducted through his Instagram and Youtube (Savilov, 2019; Ray, 2022). Evidently, he sticks with the same strategy in this time of crisis, publishing all of his videos on Facebook, which corresponds with social media as the younger generations' preferred communication medium (Wood, 2019).

Due to the world situation digital natives have been born into, they have a first-hand insight into the global issues at the edge of their fingertips (Turner, 2015). Since the beginning of the invasion, Zelensky has invited the world to participate in the conflict, posting several videos a day to keep the world engaged and informed. Hence, we can conclude that the younger generations, and others who are interested, have first-hand insight, due to all material being accessible to anyone with an internet connection. Since Zelensky is publishing on interactive social mediums, people all over the world can engage with the content. According to us, he is

therefore enabling the societal structures of the new network society, while laying the foundation for parasocial relationships, either intentionally or unintentionally (Castells, 2000).

Being comfortable with the presence and daily use of social media as digital natives are, they show a preference for their social exchange and interaction as digital, consequently, vlogs and vlogging have grown popular (Wood, 2019). Additionally, often the most important aspect of vlogging is interactivity, therefore, it is therefore, crucial for the creator to aim to build a relationship with the viewers (Frobenius, 2014). As mentioned in our theoretical framework, there are several strategies for this. We have through our analysis found that Zelenskys's communication is categorically profused with these relationship-building strategies, not only in the videos that are filmed in a vlogging manner. The relationship-building strategies of vlogs are as mentioned: *encouraging engagement*, *use of formulaic expressions* and the *use of a conversational undertone* (Wood, 2019).

As stated in our results Zelensky used the strategy of encouraging engagement in a total of 69 out of 80 videos. As Wood (2019) argues, by creators' usage of engagement markers, they can involve the viewers even though vlogging communication is based upon monologue, which Zelensky does throughout nearly all of the videos, in several different ways. By expressing directives, he encouraged nearly all of his receivers to engage in different ways. Sahragard and Yazdanpanahi (2017) give us further examples of engagement markers, which are the use of pronouns, which Zelensky does in all of the videos, regardless of theme or receiver. Furthermore, one can address the audience personally, which we identified in all but six of the videos. Other engagement markers are including questions and appealing to shared knowledge. We identified in 38 videos that Zelensky several times asked questions, even though it was a monologue. Throughout the themes he repeatedly drew parallels and compared other incidents, situations and people, therefore also referring to shared knowledge. Considering 86% of Zelensky's videos are using one or more of these strategies, it is clearly encouraging.

Formulaic expressions, Riboni (2017) describes the use of expressions as a trademark or a kind of signature that the creator uses repeatedly in all videos, to differentiate them from other creators. In all of the 80, regardless of theme or receiver, Zelensky ends by saying "Slava Ukraini" which translates to "glory to Ukraine". As this is stated at the end of all videos, it becomes an expression that you connect to Zelensky, as well as a rhetorical repetition over time, identical to the vloggers Riboni (2017) studied.

Lastly, the usage of a conversational undertone is another relationship-building strategy vloggers use. As vlogs are the digital version of face to face communication, a casual tone of voice and choice of words are favourable. We found that in 36 videos he used this undertone, casually using linguistics of vlogging, using pronouns, speaking in terms of “us” and “them” expressing an undoubted communion. On the contrary, there are a majority of videos where he is not using a conversational undertone, where his tone of voice and choice of wording is more formal.

To conclude, through our analysis we found he used strategies for relationship building to a great extent and by using these strategies Zelensky enables interaction in addition to posting the content on an interactive social platform, encourages involvement and as a result, succeeds in building parasocial relationships through the videos.

Zelensky’s videos are also characterised by vlogging characteristics. We identified all but four videos as short, i.e., under 15 minutes, talking head in 65 and 76 had a stated receiver, however, there were only seven videos that Zelensky himself filmed, which is the typical characteristic of a vlog. The rest of the videos were professionally filmed and had more of a formal nature, which speaks against him primarily using vlogging characteristics. He does however use vlogging strategies even in themes that are not correspondent to being a vlog.

Cox (2019) argues that there is a clear wish for visual content on social media, research shows that this is how the younger generation gains knowledge. Due to its modular nature, the viewer can repeatedly watch over and over, which leads to a wide reach (Wood, 2019). It is evident that Zelensky primarily communicates via social media, hence, correlating to the social media era and how digital natives today communicate and interact.

Moving on, social media also works as a tool in the construction of one’s character, and digital natives use social media for both expressing opinions and showing engagement in societal issues (Turner, 2015). In a political context, this works both ways, individuals form their character, express opinions and participate politically through social media, whereas politicians can use social media to self-focus (Luebke & Engelman, 2022). Our analysis showed that in 24 of the videos Zelensky has used this strategy, where he focused the content on himself, which shows that he does not use this strategy to a great extent.

In addition to this, Enli and Rosenberg's (2018) research shows that digital natives perceive politicians as more authentic through social media, and prefer when politicians

communicate through the medium that they themselves use. This is due to them believing that this is an unaltered version, resulting in a greater amount of authenticity. As 74% of digital natives use Facebook (Statista, 2020) Zelensky reaches a wide audience, communicating through one of their chosen mediums, where they perceive politicians as more authentic and with characteristics of vlogging i.e. relationship building, we can draw the conclusion that Zelensky is perceived to be authentic, whilst building a parasocial relationship with the viewers. We find Zelensky's communication to be appealing to digital natives, due to his focus on dialogue and inclusion, by using engagement markers, as well as speaking with a conversational undertone, due to digital natives' value of dialogue (Cheng & Literat, 2022). One conclusion that can be drawn based on Enli and Rosenberg's (2018) research, is the theory that the higher the social media presence and communication of the politician, the higher the perceived trust and authenticity of the digital native will be. Another relevant factor we have observed in our analysis is that Enli and Rosenberg's (2018) research, showcases that populist politicians tend to be more authentic to traditional politicians according to younger generations. We believe this aspect has implications for our study, since Zelensky is a populist politician, having an untraditional path to the presidency, with his previous career in comedy and acting, primarily communicating through digital natives' chosen medium - results in Zelensky being perceived as more authentic than his traditional counterparts.

6.2.3 Narratives and Storytelling

As illustrated in the results, it is evident that Zelensky frequently is using narratives and storytelling in his communication. Out of the four different narrative codes, Zelensky is using opting for cooperation 68 times, creation of crisis 57 times, inserting himself 24 times and finally the underdog narrative 55 times out of the 80 videos. Linking the results to what has been stated by Nassim (2018), Zelensky is making use of social media as a platform while communicating in narratives, since social media platforms are suitable for sharing narratives. This is evident by the volume of narratives Zelensky is using. This also goes in line with what Mayer (2014) states, in terms of how narratives are good for politically creating collective force.

In the theme of international speeches, Zelensky is using the narratives of opting for cooperation, the creation of crisis, as well as the underdog narrative in all videos. In terms of being in the context of international meetings, and trying to gain countenance in the war from

other leaders in the world, it is strategic to use these narratives as they are crucial in political communication and the generation of unity (Mayer, 2014). In the themes of international speeches, Zelensky is using the narrative of opting for cooperation in the use of stories that evoke emotions. For example, Zelensky is drawing parallels between the situation in Ukraine and the second world war, as a way to point to the importance of cooperation. Zelensky is with the narrative of cooperation making the recipients, i.e., the world leaders, understand their position and the substantial benevolence they possess in the matter of the war. Zelensky is asking for support in a manner where the obligation to help is portrayed as something beneficial for the greater good of all participating in each meeting.

As mentioned, another prominent narrative used within the theme of international speeches is the underdog narrative. Zelensky is using the underdog narrative in a way where he positions himself in a disadvantaged state compared to Russia. As stated by both Mayer (2014) and O’Keeffe (2019) the underdog narrative is a powerful storyline as it helps to create bonds between the communicator and the recipients. Furthermore, the underdog can be considered a hero, because of the disadvantaged position in relation to the big antagonist, which facilitates sympathy and eventually identification from the recipient's side (O’Keeffe, 2019). The results support that Zelensky is portraying himself as an underdog, as he is in a substantial amount of videos expressing the unfavourable odds Ukraine has in comparison to Russia. In the context of speaking to other global leaders, being seen as an underdog not only increases sympathy but also strengthens the possibilities of cooperation as a two-way narrative rocket. However, it is seemingly interesting to compare the use of the underdog narrative in the international speeches, in contrast to the employment of the narrative within the other themes where Zelensky foremost is addressing Ukrainians. For example, within the theme of speaking from a lectern, Zelensky is using the underdog narrative in 13 out of 27 videos; in the presidential office videos it is used 12 out of 19 times; in the vlog videos it is used two out of six times and finally, in the outside videos it is used in all five videos. This points to Zelensky using the underdog narrative more frequently when in the context of communicating to the outer world, and less frequently when communicating primarily to Ukrainians.

There are other ways in which the narratives differ in terms of how they are used, and depending on the theme. As exemplified, the international speeches theme has the narratives of opting for cooperation, whereas Zelensky is referring to common grounds, such as the second

world war. However, the narrative of opting for cooperation is used differently in other themes. When addressing the people of Ukraine Zelenskys initiates his videos with statements such as “strong people of the best country in the world”. As Mayer (2014) argues, this is a way to create collective force and is hence a useful execution to foster domestic political engagement.

Having considered the frequent quantity of the narratives opting for cooperation, creation of crisis and the underdog, it is remarkable however looking at the contrast in the use of the insertion of self-narrative. Out of all 80 videos, the insertion of the self-narrative is only used 24 times. The self-narrative is according to Mayer (2014) a storyline where the communicator inserts him- or herself in line with the story in a favourable way, where the communicator plays a strategic role of relevance to both history, presence and future. The self-narrative puts the communicators in the limelight, as a significant figure in the moment of now. Despite this popular storyline amongst politicians (Mayer, 2014), it is not routinely applied by Zelensky.

There is a similarity between the underdog narrative and self-narrative in terms of identification. Mayer (2014) and Fitzgerald & Green (2017) point to how the two narratives have the same strains of identificational attributes. This could in theory mean that the two narratives are interconnected in how they could be used. However, Zelensky is not using the narratives in an interconnective way. Instead of imposing the importance of himself, and simultaneously playing the part of an underdog, Zelensky utilises the underdog narrative without inserting himself as a person of importance in the moment of now.

6.2.4 Rhetorics

There are various aspects to the broad topic of rhetoric that are relevant for this study, especially since rhetoric is closely tied to politics (Martin, 2014). The baseline purpose of rhetoric is to convince and persuade the audience by speech, thus it is considered the art of argumentation (Aristotele, 2020; Toye, 2013).

Toye (2013) brings upon five canons that are rules from which rhetorics should follow. The canons of relevance that correspond to our results are the canons of arrangement, style and delivery. First, the arrangement, being the canon of coming up with an outline of the presentation, can be linked to how Zelensky’s rhetoric differs in the different themes. The arrangement used in the theme of international speeches is oftentimes rhetoric where Zelensky is finding common ground with the other countries. Zelensky is arranging his speech in regard to

the selected countries' history, making up for different arrangements in the different meetings. This stands in contrast to other themes, such as the themes where the receivers are Ukrainian, where the arrangements take standing points from domestic matters. Thus, the arrangements are how Volodymyr Zelensky is structuring his speeches (Toye, 2013).

Second, the style canon can be linked to the words and language that are used by Zelensky, which also can be described as the figures of speeches that Zelensky is using. As said by Toye (2013) the style canon can be compared to choosing weaponry, hence using figures of speech is a way of choosing the style of a speech; it decors the communication. However, the figures of speeches will be further discussed later in this chapter.

Last, the delivery canon encaptures the setting of the speech. That is how the message is carried out and in which context (Toye, 2013). In relation to the videos of Zelensky, he has various ways of delivery. As stated, there are five different settings in which his videos could be categorised, that we have chosen to call themes. Furthermore, the delivery canon entails the output of the speech, that is, Zelensky's tone of voice, posture and overall performance (Toye, 2013). Linking this last canon to our results, there is evidently connectivity between various of the analysis codes to the delivery. The code of talking headcounts up to 65 videos out of 80. Talking head, a video style where the focus is on the person filmed, with a fixed frame, can be translated into how the videos are being delivered (Wood, 2019). Furthermore, Zelensky is recording six videos himself, also making a specific form of delivery. These six videos are categorised in the theme of vlog-style videos. They are different in the delivery compared to the remaining 74 videos, which are all professionally filmed, i.e., giving a different form of delivery.

Even the appearance of Volodymyr Zelensky can be linked to the delivery canon, as it illustrates, and also generates something for the overall comprehension and output of the message. In a majority of the videos Zelensky's appearance is styled; all of which mainly belong to the theme in which he is addressing Ukrainians. The delivery in terms of his appearance differs from the other codes. In the theme of international speeches, Zelenky's appearance is mainly tired, i.e., in 17 out of 23 videos. However, compared to the videos where Zelensky is addressing Ukrainians Zelensky's appearance, i.e., the delivery, is in majority alert. Furthermore, the appearance of being groomed and hence the delivery as well differ, mainly between the international speeches videos and videos where Zelensky is addressing Ukrainians. In the first-mentioned theme, Zelensky is unshaven in all videos, whereas in the theme of speaking

from his presidential office, he is shaven in 16 out of 19 videos, and where he is speaking from a lectern Zelensky is shaven in 17 out of 27 videos. This evidently illustrates differences in the delivery of his speeches.

As mentioned above, one canon that encaptures the rhetorical figures of speeches is the canon of style. As pointed out by Martin (2014), figures of speech are a way to embellish messages in a way to make the language more comprehensive. It is also used as a persuasive instrument and creates a bond between the communicator and the audience.

Zelensky is using a variety of figures of speech in his videos. A remarkable figure of speech, which saturates 77 out of 80 videos is the *meta-discourse*. Zelensky is throughout the entire time span of his published videos talking in a meta-communicative manner, describing the war and happenings surrounding prior and post. As described by Toye (2013) and Martin (2014) the meta-discourse can help prepare an audience for what is to come, which in the case of a crisis, e.g., a war, can be of importance. Furthermore, Zelensky is using the figure of speech *repetition* in 72 out of 80 videos. Thereafter he uses *metaphors* 64 times and *similes* 51 times. The decorated language that Zelensky is using is pointing to a form of communication that helps build a relationship with the audience. Both with simplified messages, but also simultaneously with messages that create a greater understanding (Toye, 2013). Furthermore, this can be linked to what Martin (2014) describes in how rhetorics, politics and social media are interconnected. According to Martin (2014), social media has removed the barriers between politicians and their audience, making for communication that seems more personal. The language that Zelensky is using with figures of speech is thus laying the ground for communication that creates a linkage between himself and his audience. At the same time, the figures of speech, with their embellishment capabilities, can be seen as what Martin (2014) suggests as communication taking the form of show business manners. Martin (2014) declares that the removal of barriers between politicians and their audience counts for politicians transforming from authoritarians to celebrities. This takes a stance from both the communication itself, i.e., communication that is simplified and personal, and also the communications medium, i.e., the social media platform. Social media is enabling politicians to amplify their personalities and be open to informal communication.

6.2.5 Synthesised analysis

Our analysis above is divided according to the theoretical framework, however, since the results are interconnected, it is crucial to summarise and synthesise our findings, transcending the boundaries of theory. These factors we present are plausible conclusions that can be drawn from our theoretical framework, sampled material and analysis, it is however not possible for us to say if this is the reason why Zelensky has presented himself and his communication. Due to the fact that our sample is exclusively contained of his videos, it is not possible to state if this in fact is the case.

As presented above, our analysis shows significant results connected to impression management. It is evident that Zelensky communicates and presents himself differently depending on what theme it is, and therefore, which receiver is targeted. The videos within each theme show all clear patterns, while the themes are very different from each other. We present a plausible explanation for this, in line with Tedeschi's (1981) arguments, that one can play different roles in interaction with others to help manage impressions. We have identified two different roles in Zelensky's videos, in the virtual international meetings we perceive Zelensky's role as frail, whereas in the videos from his presidential office and speaking from a lectern, which is mostly targeted toward Ukrainians, we perceive his role as strong.

In the international meetings, we can through our codes identify Zelensky's appearance as mostly tired, unstyled and unshaven, in addition to these physical attributes, his surroundings and communication reinforce our conclusion. In this theme the narrative of being the underdog, as well as for opting for cooperation is seen in all 23 videos, clearly showing Zelensky's desperation. According to O'Keeffe (2019), presenting oneself as the underdog can be linked to being the hero, due to the disadvantage in relation to the antagonist's superior position, which can lead to sympathy. Together with the identified narratives within these themes, strategies of rhetorics play a part in Zelensky's presented self.

Toye (2013) presents rhetorical canons; Zelensky's arrangement canon is shaped after which country he is addressing, making it personal and closer, while the canon of delivery is as stated, in a frail state i.e. being tired, unstyled and unshaven. Zelensky addresses his audience directly while adjusting the message after whom he targets, drawing parallels to different situations, hypothetical situations and historical events. For instance, when speaking to Germany in an international speech he mentions the Berlin wall, to Israel he anchors the message on

Judaism and towards Italy, he emphasises their strong relationship during Covid-19. This reveals that through his communication, Zelensky is seeking to find common references and evoke emotions, strengthening the presentation of him as frail.

In contrast to this, in the presidential videos, we perceive Zelensky's presentation as the opposite, strong. His appearance is in several videos alert, styled and shaven. We see fewer narratives of being the underdog and opting for cooperation used, even if it does occur. In contrast to his communication presented in the segment above, here Zelensky does use the rhetorical arrangement canon of focusing his communication on domestic matters, rather than adapting after the targeted receiver. The delivery canon is based upon Zelensky being alert, styled and shaven for the most part. Clearly shows a difference from the self-presentation he opts for in speaking to international audiences. These findings suggest that Zelensky does present himself in different roles, having implications for how his impressions are formed.

Another important factor is social media and the perception of authenticity. Enli and Rosenberg's (2018) study show digital natives perceive populist politicians as more authentic and get the impression of trustworthiness when they are communicating via social media. It is therefore of importance to note that Zelensky both fits in the character as a populist politician, previously working as an actor and comedian, and has throughout his career used social media as his primary communication channel. The results show Zelensky's extensive usage of vlogging strategies, even those professionally filmed. In conclusion, it can therefore be interpreted that Zelensky does have an understanding of the social media era and how it has changed our communicative ways and altered his communication and self-presentation thereafter.

Martin's (2014) research shows the removal of barriers between politicians and their audience, due to digitalisation. Social media enables communicative ways that are more personal, closing the gap. The usage of figures of speech can result in familiarity between the sender and the receiver. Zelensky is using an extensive amount of figures of speech, which enables a connection between him and his audience, which can make for a closer relationship. The rhetorical strategies used, in addition to social media as a selected medium, Zelensky does encourage engagement and build relationships, which can lead to an increased level of authenticity. Here his choice of clothing plays a part, as previously stated, he does not present himself in any formal attire once and is solely wearing khaki green informal wear, which does however affiliate with the military, but not in the sense that it is perceived as a power symbol.

His clothing choices rather present him as a commoner, than an authoritarian. The factors of his appearance, social media communication and prior career results in Zelensky correspond to the qualifications that digital natives have in regard to increased authenticity.

An overview of the analysis reveals that through his communication, Zelensky lay the ground for parasocial relationships. The majority of Zelensky's communication contains vlogging strategies, which according to Wood (2019) are based upon strategies for relationship building, additionally, communicating via a medium made for interaction, enabling his audience to connect with him and the content. Furthermore, his rhetoric evidently shows him using engagement markers like pronouns such as "we" and "us". By doing this Zelensky states that there is already a relationship there. Consequently, according to Toye (2013), Zelensky's decorated language works as a tool for building relationships with his audience. Parasocial relationships correlate to the usage of social media, according to Cohen and Holbert (2018) who state that communication via social media is directly targeted toward people, which facilitates the process of bonding. Considering the above stated, in combination with his use of the narrative of opting for cooperation, lay a great foundation for Zelensky to create parasocial relationships with both his targeted receivers as well as any viewers of his videos.

In accordance with our findings, we have constructed a model, as seen in Appendix S, that illustrates the connectivity between the theories of narrative and rhetorics, how they are part of vlog communication, and how the two separate aspects generate persuasion and authenticity; all of which is appealing to the social media generation and creates relationships.

Finally, it should be noted that there are results that indicate elements which are not solely related to the social media generation. We have not disregarded the fact that Zelensky is still performing as a traditional president in terms of speaking in congress, from a lectern and in a formal manner to mention a few. However, it is the conveyance of the communication, that is being published on Facebook as videos, that makes his communication remarkable.

7.0 Discussion

As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, the world has never before seen a political leader in a western country, govern and communicate through social media while in the spitfire of a weaponized war. The Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky is, to say the least, cutting edge when it comes to liaising contemporary communication with strategic measures in the context of the conflict with Russia. Through his videos, Zelensky portrays the communication of a contemporary, hence also a new in the western context, wartime leader. He illustrates strategic communication in various ways. Firstly, he is strategic in his appeal to the digital natives with his videos being published via social media, as well as permeated by rhetorical and narrative aspects, which are also core tools used in political communication. Furthermore, these aspects are part of the vlog communication that is also seen in Zelensky's videos. Vlog communication involves a spectrum of characteristics and strategies. Finally, the rhetorical and narrative aspects that are baked into the realm of vlog communication, lead to relationship building and perceived authenticity. All of which are appealing to the social media era generation. This strategic interconnectivity is a three-stage aggregator, as seen in Appendix S.

Moreover, Zelensky is also strategically communicating with his self-presentation, through impression management. It is evident that Zelensky is communicating in various ways in relation to his targeted receivers, where both settings and looks are adjusted accordingly. By the same token, Zelensky being strategic with his output of appearance is also appealing to the digital natives. Being portrayed as a commoner is synonymous with authenticity. Hence the answers to our research questions can be seen as connected, when both culminate in the matter of authenticity, persuasion and enticing the social media generation.

The given interpretations that can be made from the data are that the published videos of Zelensky follow different themes of settings based on the targeted audiences. However, in all videos, Zelensky is seen wearing informal clothing. There are further differences between the themes where the communication is significant to that theme in terms of rhetorics and output appearance, i.e., how Zelensky looks, his surroundings and how he chooses to organise his speeches. Moreover, there are other interesting findings that also point to contrastivity beyond the differences between the themes. Zelensky is, as mentioned above, frequently portrayed as informal in his clothing. However he can be seen in prestigious spaces decorated with gold and

the Ukrainian flag; as if he is not a bureaucratic president, but solely a regular man who happened to end up in the presidential office. Furthermore, this presumption is reinforced by him using an everyday medium to communicate through, which, even though social media has been used by previous world leaders, has not been used in the context of war solely as a communications medium. Yet another example of contradistinction is his clothing being informal, but at the same time coloured in khaki green. The contrast of informality and the military token gives a rendition of a humble authoritarian. Despite the findings that point to Zelensky being a modern president in terms of appealing to the digital natives, he also communicates in a traditional presidential manner, which is not to be disregarded; he does possess traditional leadership communication characteristics as well, such as communicating formally as well as being persuasive, as any politician would strive to be. Because of the quantity, the research points out that there are strategies used in his communication, rather than Zelensky subconsciously having these traits in his communication.

Zelensky is put in the limelight not only for being a leader in times of a crisis but also for his unorthodox career prior to being a president. Zelensky has a background in show business and was a Ukrainian celebrity. This would be something that could make him become distant from the people, however, it seems like it did the opposite: only favoured him. As pointed out by Cohen & Holbert (2018), his previous fame might have played in becoming acquainted with the people, as if they already know him from his glory days in television, adding to the creation of parasocial relationships. Furthermore, him being a celebrity might also play a part in his skillset of acting in front of the camera and in the arrangement of his speeches, as he evidently incorporates strategies naturally and thoroughly in his videos.

This research is of relevance as it builds upon previous research and connects theories in describing how, and what strategies are applied, specifically in the communication of Zelensky's videos. Furthermore, the research suggests that these strategies lay the ground for what conforms to the expectations of social media generation communication.

Since the distance between politicians and the people has been shortened due to social media communication, it presupposes that the political leadership has to evolve accordingly. As the communication of the social media era has changed political communication, the politicians must adapt thereafter. Not solely in their communication, but maybe also in who they are and how they present themselves.

8.0 Conclusion

This thesis has aimed to investigate the video communication of Volodymyr Zelensky, and in what ways it can be seen as strategic. The aim branched out into two research questions, first in regards to how the communication is strategic in terms of how it appeals to the social media generation, and second, how the communication is strategic in terms of how impression management can be distinguished. The findings of the research reveal that the communication of Zelensky follows theoretical strategies, and also points to how they can be seen as intertwined, resulting in his appeal to the social media generation.

Previous research suggests that social media has become a core pillar in the realm of political communication, however, it has not formerly been adopted as by Zelensky in the context of war, while solely publishing videos on Facebook. The knowledge gap hence concerns how the communication is strategic in various ways in order to both be persuasive and go in line with social media era communication. Furthermore, by doing this research, the realisation of connectivity between theories has surfaced. The results convey an overarching description of plausible linkages that may lay ground in the appellation to the social media generation.

The research has boiled down to illustrate that Zelensky as a president is communicating persuasively online, by tactically using different strategies. The research clearly displays how Zelensky is adapting the communication in accordance to his audience, making him become authentic. Volodymyr Zelensky appears as a commoner and has conformed to this character. As an authentic being online in appealing to the people, Zelensky is a contemporary president and has truly fulfilled in becoming a servant of the people.

8.1 Limitations and Proposition Statement

Because of the research design there could only be presented a plausible idea of understanding. The results are exclusively based on the video communication of Zelensky, hence there is a limitation in gaining a fully feathered comprehension of his totalitarian communication.

From our material, it is not to be said our results are solely the only explanations for the phenomenon, but that there could be other aspects of the theory to describe the context in a comprehensive way. As mentioned above, the theories that lay the ground for this research are all

intertwined, which indicates that the topic can be further explored. The methodological limitations can only give understanding on a formal level, however, the results point to frequency patterns that are of interest. Hence further research is needed to deepen the understanding of how strategies are built upon various theories, specifically in the realm of political social media communication.

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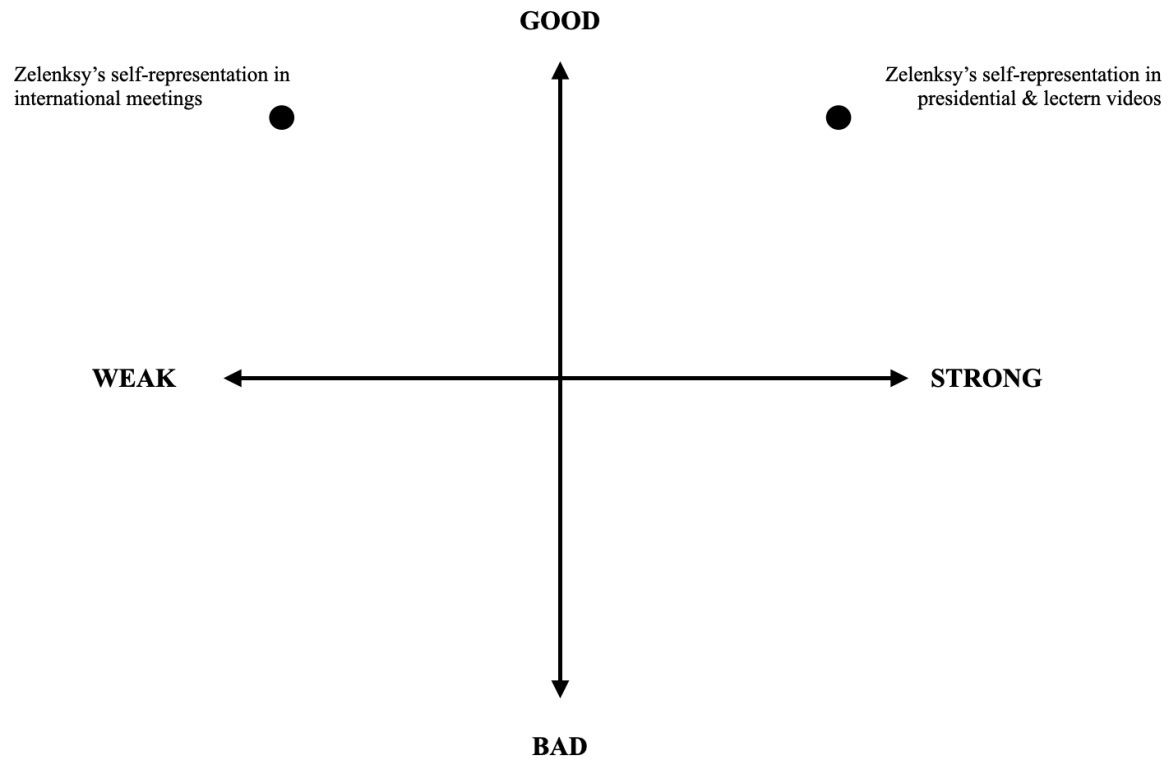
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Appendices

Appendix A. Connotative impressions (Tedeshi, 1981)



Appendix B. Rhetorical figures of speech

<i>Simile</i>	A comparison, where something is <i>like</i> something else.
<i>Antithesis</i>	When speaking in contrast.
<i>Metaphors</i>	Metaphors are one of the most prominent figures of speech. They say one thing which actually stands for something else. It paints a mental picture of what is happening.
<i>Repetitions</i>	When instances are repeated in various ways. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anaphora: Repetition of a word or a phrase at the start of paragraphs or sentences.• Epiphora: A repetition at the end of a paragraph or sentence.• Tricolon: Repetition of three things. Could be words and phrases.
<i>Meta-discourse</i>	Telling the audience about what is happening or going to happen, as a form of mental preparation.
<i>Rhetorical questions</i>	Questions that do not acquire any answer.
<i>Hyperbole</i>	Extreme exaggeration to a substantial extent.
<i>Parallelism</i>	The instances emphasise the same ideas, i.e., drawing parallels.

Appendix C. Coding sheet & instructions

The coding sheet is used with the following instructions. The codes can only be used one time per video.

DIMENSIONS	CODES	Descriptions
Surroundings	X	Describe the setting of the video
Targeted Reciever	X	Describe who Zelensky is addressing in the video
Managing Impressions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Clothes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Informal (Civilian clothes) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Military colours ○ Formal (i.e., Presidential attire/military uniform) ○ Unable to define ○ Clothing colour ● Appearance 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Styled ○ Unstyled ○ Unable to define ● Appearance 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tired ○ Alert ○ Unable to define ● Appearance 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Unshaven ○ Shaven ○ Unable to define 	<p>The informal clothes as clothes of 'everyday' characteristics. The informal clothes symbolise neutrality. The colour of the clothing is marked with the colour in the coding sheet.</p> <p>Appearance 1: With the code of styled/unstyled we see indicators such as looks of hair, makeup of face and the overall presentation of his appearance being 'prettyfied' or not.</p> <p>Appearance 2: Is based on Zelensky's general demeanour, facial expressions, body language and tone of voice.</p> <p>Appearance 3: As Zelensky is never fully shaven, we identified shaven as shorter groomed facial hair, while unshaven is outgrown and messy.</p>
Social Media Era Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Vlogging <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Talking head ○ Not professionally filmed ○ Short (under 15 min) ○ Direct & stated receiver ● Not considered a vlog <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Professionally filmed ○ Longer ○ Formal ● Vlogging-strategies used <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Encouraging engagement ○ Formulaic expressions ○ Conversational undertone 	<p>Not considered a vlog indicates videos that seem professionally made, i.e., filmed with professional camera, seems staged and are formal in their output (i.e., in comparison to vlogs, that are filmed by the communicator himself and with less professional equipment).</p> <p>Vlog strategies are based on the relationship building strategies mentioned in theory. Encouraging engagement is having a communication that ties to common ground and act engaging. Formulaic expressions are fixed expressions and conversational undertone indicates communication that is informal and conversational in terms of</p>

		word-use.
Narratives and Storytelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Opting for cooperation ● Stating the urgency of a crisis ● Insertion of self ● Underdog narrative ● Unable to define 	
Rhetorics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Figures of speech <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Metaphor ○ Simile ○ Anthesis ○ Repetitions ○ Meta-discourse ○ Rhetorical questions ○ Hyperbole ○ Parallelism 	

Appendix D. Surroundings in the Virtual international meetings



Appendix E. Surroundings in the presidential office videos



Appendix F. Surroundings in the presidential office videos



Appendix G. Surroundings outside videos - Horodecki House



Appendix H. Surroundings outside videos - Horodecki House



Appendix I. Surroundings outside videos - Horodecki House (greenscreen)



Appendix J. Surroundings speaking from lectern



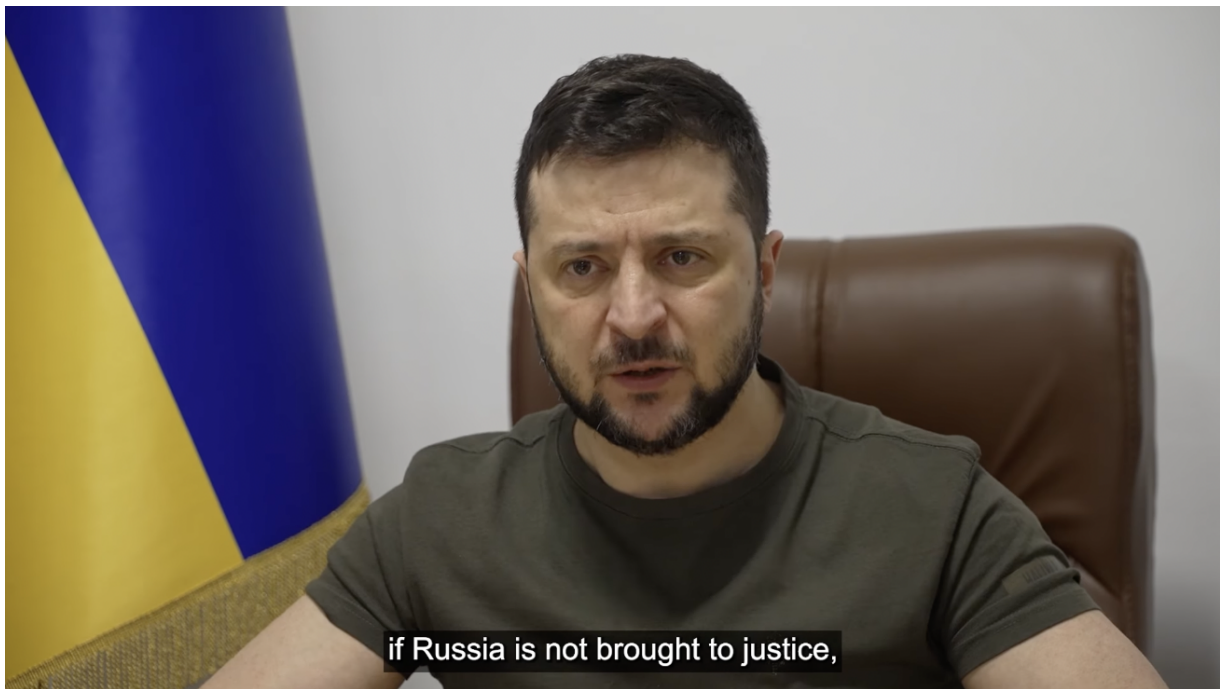
Appendix K. Surroundings speaking from lectern



Appendix L. Vlog-like videos



Appendix M. Appearance in virtual international meetings



Appendix N. Appearance in virtual international meetings



Appendix O. Appearance in virtual international meetings



Appendix P. Appearance in presidential office videos



Appendix Q. Appearance in presidential office videos



Appendix R. Appearance in presidential office videos



Appendix S. Model of Strategy Interconnectivity

