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POLITICIANS ON SOCIAL MEDIA: A COMPARISON ACROSS
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>INTRODUCTION</i>	4
<i>CHAPTER 1. REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN POLITICIANS IN SOCIAL MEDIA: A LITERATURE REVIEW</i>	6
1.1. Representation of Women Politicians in the Digital Space.....	6
1.2. Representation of Women Politicians in Social Media: Platform Specificities	9
1.3. Political Ideology and Communication Strategies in Social Media	14
Conclusions to Chapter 1	16
<i>CHAPTER 2. EMPIRICAL STUDY OF WOMEN POLITICIANS' COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN SOCIAL MEDIA</i>	18
2.1. Research Design	18
2.2. Data analysis and interpretation.....	25
Conclusions to Chapter 2	40
<i>CONCLUSION</i>	41
<i>REFERENCES</i>	43
<i>APPENDIX</i>	46

INTRODUCTION

Relevance of the Topic. In the contemporary information space, amid the flourishing era of digitalization, social networks play a pivotal role in shaping narratives for the general public and constructing societal discourse. They have become an integral part of political communication, enabling politicians to disseminate their messages without the mediation of traditional media. This is particularly relevant for women politicians, for whom traditional media often provides limited space or reproduces stereotypical images, focusing on their appearance, family status, or emotionality rather than professional qualities (Rubchak, 2009, 2011; Pavliuc, 2022). Furthermore, the use of social media allows female politicians to craft personalized brands, build communities of like-minded individuals, and mobilize voters through interactive engagement mechanisms such as live streams, polls, and direct communication with followers (Patterson et al., 2016).

However, despite these opportunities, social media also poses new challenges for women in politics, as they are more frequently subjected to digital attacks, hate speech, and discreditation campaigns, significantly complicating their activities (IFES Ukraine, 2019). Consequently, women politicians are compelled to develop unique communication strategies that balance professional representation, personal openness, and protection from online violence. Studying these strategies provides deeper insight into how women politicians adapt to the new conditions of the digital political environment and identifies the most effective communication tactics within the Ukrainian context.

Ukrainian women politicians actively utilize social media to promote their political agendas, respond to societal challenges, and combat discriminatory practices. Despite political parties' efforts to maintain gender balance in candidate lists, the distribution of women and men in the Verkhovna Rada remains uneven as of the last convocation. Although the proportion of women among

parliamentary deputies is nearly the highest in Ukraine's history, their representation in the highest echelons of power remains low.

Gender imbalances in politics impact not only decision-making structures but also the nature of political discourse, which in turn influences the communication methods of women politicians. Many studies on female political communication across different countries focus on how female politicians construct their public image through discursive strategies and how their rhetoric varies depending on political orientation (Winfrey & Schnoebelen, 2019, p. 110). In Ukraine, this aspect remains underexplored, necessitating a thorough analysis of the narratives employed by women politicians on social media. Particular attention should be paid to how representatives of different political movements adapt to new challenges, evolve their audience engagement strategies, and advance specific themes in public discourse.

The relevance of this work is driven by the lack of in-depth studies comparing discursive strategies of women politicians based on their political orientation. Most scholarly focus has centered on gender comparisons between men and women (Winfrey & Schnoebelen, 2019; Castanho Silva et al., 2025). Such an approach fails to reveal differences in rhetoric, communication style, and self-presentation among women aligned with liberal or conservative ideologies. In the Ukrainian context, this research question holds particular interest, as issues of gender representation are inextricably linked to Eurointegration processes and democratic transformations. Moreover, Ukraine's political landscape is marked by high polarization and complex democratization processes, which influence the communication strategies of women politicians.

Research Object: Political communication of Ukrainian women politicians on social media.

Research Subject: Communication strategies of women politicians on social media, depending on their political orientation and party affiliation.

Research Objective: To compare the communication strategies of women politicians on social media based on their political orientation and party affiliation.

Research Tasks:

1. Review studies on the representation of women in digital spaces, particularly on social media.
2. Analyze research on how the use of specific communication strategies on social media correlates with political ideology.
3. Conduct an empirical study comparing the communication strategies of Ukrainian women politicians on social media based on their political ideology.

CHAPTER 1. REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN POLITICIANS IN SOCIAL MEDIA: A LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. Representation of Women Politicians in the Digital Space

In the contemporary political environment, social media has become an important tool not only for communication but also for shaping the public image of female leaders. At the same time, the digital space reproduces and sometimes even exacerbates existing gender disparities in the representation of women politicians. An analysis of contemporary Ukrainian and international literature reveals systemic gender imbalances in political representation, which are actively reproduced in the digital environment. Based on studies that demonstrate both explicit and implicit biases towards women in leadership positions (Rudman & Kilianski, 2000; Elsesser & Lever, 2011), as well as the influence of gender stereotypes on electoral evaluations of candidates (Dolan, 2011; Huddy &

Terkildsen, 1993), it can be concluded that women in politics face perceptual barriers that lower the level of support regardless of their professional achievements, experience, or political competence. These biases are shaped by cultural notions of the «natural» roles of women and men in society, where leadership is traditionally associated with masculinity. Even when women exhibit qualities expected of political leaders — decisiveness, strategic thinking, confidence — these characteristics can be interpreted negatively precisely through the lens of gender bias.

According to Equal Future (2024), as of July 2024, the level of representation of women in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine stood at 21.2%, the highest figure in the country's history, but still among the lowest in European states. This political gender gap not only indicates limited access of women to decision-making centers but also reflects structural and symbolic barriers that maintain the status quo. One of the key factors in preserving this gap is the media — both traditional and digital — which play a central role in shaping public perceptions of what constitutes a «normal» politician. Stereotypical and sexist coverage of women politicians, including a focus on their appearance, marital status, or emotionality, distracts attention from their political agendas and professional achievements (IMI, 2022; OSCE, 2018).

Research conducted by the Institute of Mass Information (2022) shows that 5 out of 20 Ukrainian online media outlets contained sexist and discriminatory content. Furthermore, according to the European Parliament (2023), women politicians and female journalists face higher levels of online gender-based violence compared to their male colleagues. Such a media ecosystem reproduces a gender hierarchy in which the political subjectivity of women appears secondary and marginalized. At the same time, social networks create a paradoxical environment: on the one hand, they replicate and even reinforce stereotypes through algorithmic content-ranking systems; on the other hand, they provide tools for forming alternative perceptions of female leadership

and mobilizing support beyond the confines of traditional media (European Parliament, 2023). As Van Dijck (2013) emphasizes, the effect of social media on gender norms is ambivalent and depends on the specific platform and the users' level of digital literacy. Women politicians are forced to balance between the desire for authenticity and the need to meet societal expectations — often incompatible. For instance, excessive emotionality is perceived as weakness, while assertiveness is viewed as «unfeminine».

In a cross-national study of candidates for the European Parliament, Jungblut & Haim (2021) found that visual representations of women on official social media pages are significantly more likely to show them smiling, reflecting emotional gender stereotypes in visual political communication. Male politicians, by contrast, tend to display seriousness and competence, while women are compelled to construct a softer form of leadership in order not to violate gender expectations. The study by Anzia & Bernhard (2021) shows that gender stereotypes can both help and hinder female candidates depending on the type of office and context: women have an advantage in stereotypically «feminine» areas but face barriers in stereotypically «masculine» ones.

At the same time, those women who choose to strategically avoid feminine markers and appeal to a neutral or masculine image risk being criticized for «inauthenticity» or «excessive ambition», thus encountering the phenomenon of the double bind (McKay, 2020) — a situation where any choice leads to sanctions. This underscores the deeply androcentric nature of public discourse, where masculinity serves as the standard of political adequacy and femininity as a deviation from the norm. Such distortion is exacerbated in the context of national elections, where most citizens have limited information about candidates and tend to rely on superficial images disseminated by the media, necessitating a comprehensive approach — from media education to changes in editorial policy and the introduction of gender-sensitive communication standards in political campaigns. In the context of digitalization and the growing role of social media,

it is precisely in these channels that a significant part of the public image of women politicians is formed. Therefore, the analysis of the specifics of representing women in the digital space becomes critically important for understanding the mechanisms of reproduction or overcoming gender disparities in the political sphere.

1.2. Representation of Women Politicians in Social Media: Platform Specificities

Social media has become an integral part of contemporary political communication, transforming the way politicians engage with their constituents. For women politicians, these platforms are not only tools for disseminating political messages, but also arenas for shaping their public image. In this context, it is important to consider the specific characteristics of the social media platforms selected for this thesis, as each has its own features that influence modes of communication, strategies of self-presentation, and audience interaction.

Facebook and Instagram are two of the most popular social platforms, yet they differ significantly in ways that substantially affect how politicians — especially women — construct their communication strategies. Facebook is traditionally a more universal platform that allows politicians not only to publish materials but also to engage in discussions, organize interest-based groups, conduct surveys, and receive feedback from voters. This enables the development of more structured and politically detailed communication on matters such as policy, economics, and social reform. This thesis focuses on Facebook and Instagram, as they represent the highest levels of activity among women politicians in the Ukrainian segment of the digital space. Twitter, despite its significant role in international political communication, remains relatively unpopular among the general Ukrainian audience and is less frequently used by politicians as a primary channel of voter interaction.

Instagram, due to its emphasis on visual content and emotional connection, is increasingly becoming a key tool of political communication for women politicians. Unlike text-centered platforms, Instagram demands strategies that integrate aesthetics, personality, and political narrative, reflecting current trends in the visualisation of political discourse (Bast, 2021; Brands et al., 2021). This approach enables the construction of a multidimensional image of an «accessible leader», who simultaneously demonstrates competence and authenticity. The visual nature of Instagram fosters emotional mobilisation of the audience and creates additional opportunities for personalising the political brand of women in politics (Hassler et al., 2023). A strategy known as «privatization-personalization» allows the construction of a public image that balances professionalism with relatability (Sillén, 2023).

The visual nature of Instagram particularly facilitates emotional mobilisation among the audience of women politicians. A study by Brands et al. (2021) found that women politicians receive significantly more likes when they are personally visible in photos, compared to male politicians. An analysis of 762 posts by 40 politicians in the Netherlands and Germany showed that female politicians appeared in the majority of their posts (63.1%), most often smiling (66.9%), which reflects gender-specific strategies of visual self-representation. This approach enables women to construct a more approachable and emotionally engaging public persona that resonates with social media audiences. However, such visual personalisation also has a downside: a study by the Center for Countering Digital Hate (2024) found that one in every 25 comments under posts by women politicians on Instagram contained toxic content, and the platform failed to act on 93% of abuse reports. This creates a paradoxical situation in which Instagram offers powerful tools for visual self-presentation, while simultaneously exposing women to systemic online violence, which can deter political engagement and affect decisions regarding participation in elections.

The gender dimension of Instagram communication is further revealed through algorithmic bias and platform structure. Studies show that algorithms often discriminate against certain groups, with women being more likely to consider social context when evaluating the fairness of algorithmic decisions (Utz, 2024). Instagram systematically reproduces discriminatory practices toward marginalised groups through content moderation algorithms, forcing women politicians to balance audience expectations with their professional image.

International experiences demonstrate diverse strategies: in Indonesia during the 2024 pre-election campaign, political parties strategically used Instagram to shape public images through visual personalisation, prioritising individual appeal over party programs (Chotimah et al., 2024). A cross-continental study of women politicians revealed that right-wing representatives demonstrated a leadership style associated with hard skills (decisiveness, strategic thinking), whereas left-wing politicians focused on soft skills (empathy, collaboration), reflecting ideological differences in visual communication even in a global context (Berrocal Gonzalo et al., 2024). This differentiation underscores Instagram's role as a platform for constructing political identity and challenges the assumption of a uniform «female leadership style», demonstrating that the expectation of a single «women's style» is itself a product of gender stereotypes.

Facebook remains a platform for substantive political communication, allowing politicians to publish long-form posts, interact with audiences through comments, organize thematic groups, and conduct polls. This platform enables the creation of structured political discourse focused on complex issues such as economic reforms, social policy, and international relations. According to the WIP-Harvard-Facebook Study (2016), 94% of women parliamentarians who use social media in their political work use Facebook to communicate with voters, explain their positions, and mobilise support. Facebook serves as a platform through which women politicians can overcome traditional gender barriers via direct dialogue with citizens.

The study by Ov Cristian Norocel (2018) analyses the strategies of conservative women politicians in Hungary and Romania, who utilise Facebook for a dual communication strategy. On the one hand, they appeal to traditional gender roles through idealised images of motherhood and family values. On the other hand, they construct the image of a «strong woman» who succeeds in a «man's world» without support from feminist movements. For example, Hungarian politicians from FIDESZ and JOBBIK reject gender equality as a «Western import» but emphasise their own career achievements as a result of personal effort. A similar tactic is used by Romanian politician Monica Macovei (PMP), who promotes the image of a «self-sufficient woman» who does not require institutional support. Paradoxically, by rejecting feminism as an ideology, these women instrumentalise its language of rights and individual achievement to legitimise their political status.

Facebook also serves as an effective platform for emotionally mobilising political audiences. Empirical studies show that posts with clear emotional appeals — especially calls to pride, enthusiasm, or solidarity — significantly increase user engagement, garnering more likes, comments, and shares than neutral messages (Bil-Jaruzelska & Monzer, 2022). Content analysis during the Brexit referendum showed that emotionally charged posts had the highest levels of interaction. At the same time, negative tone also proves effective: in Central and Eastern Europe, dramatization of political events and the use of populist messages during election campaigns led to increased audience engagement (Bene, 2016). Thus, both positive and negative emotions in Facebook messages can be tools for mobilisation and enhancing users' political activity.

The Ukrainian context adds a unique dimension to political communication on Facebook. Research by Pavliuc (2022), presented at the APSA conference, found that during the 2022 war, women politicians increasingly used emotional appeals and themes of solidarity to mobilise international support.

Messages emphasizing defence and freedom demonstrated high levels of engagement due to their emotional resonance.

It is important to highlight the role of positive content in political communication on social networks (particularly Facebook). Such messages emphasise positive emotions such as hope, optimism, compassion, satisfaction, admiration, interest, love, as well as achievements, promises of improvement, support, and approval of political actors or their initiatives. This type of content aims to evoke positive emotions, motivation to participate, mobilisation, and engagement in discussion or action. For instance, these could include posts telling success stories, demonstrating results of political work, thanking voters for their support, calling for unity, or emphasising shared values and goals. Positive content often employs language of support, inspiration, and belief in a better future, which helps build trust in a political actor or party and increases the emotional engagement of the audience. A positive strategy in political communication that includes emphasis on hope, achievements, and support (Gerbaudo et al., 2019) effectively motivates audiences to participate and strengthens trust in institutions. A study by Gerbaudo et al. (2019) on UK election campaigns confirms that positive messages help form a community around a political force, increasing the loyalty of supporters. Thus, Facebook serves as a platform for multidimensional discourse — from emotional mobilisation to rational political discussion.

Ukrainian women politicians actively use social networks, particularly Facebook, to highlight their professional achievements and promote gender equality. Moreover, women politicians often face online violence, forcing them to adapt their strategies to protect themselves from discreditation (IFES Ukraine, 2019). However, their participation in political discussions remains less visible compared to men, partly due to the influence of traditional gender roles (Zakharchenko et al., 2020).

In this context, it is especially important to consider how the communication strategies of women politicians vary depending on their political identity and ideological affiliation — a topic that will be analysed in the next chapter.

1.3. Political Ideology and Communication Strategies in Social Media

In the political sphere, image becomes one of the key tools for influencing public opinion, as it shapes how voters perceive politicians and their activities. Image formation is closely linked to party affiliation, as political parties provide ideological frameworks and value orientations within which candidates present themselves. Therefore, party affiliation is an important factor influencing the style of communication and self-presentation of politicians, especially on social media. The ideological orientations of parties determine not only political priorities but also how politicians portray themselves to the public, shaping respective interaction strategies. In this context, gender issues often become a tool for achieving political goals, which is particularly relevant in the context of globalization and European integration processes.

Contemporary research confirms that political ideology significantly affects the choice of communication strategies on social media, leading to the formation of different models of audience interaction. According to Engesser et al. (2017), populist and conservative forces actively use emotionally charged rhetoric that focuses on traditional values, family roles, and opposition between the «real people» and elites, effectively mobilizing supporters through ideologically aligned messages. In contrast, liberal parties, as noted by Norris (2001) and Dahlgren (2005), emphasize the expansion of civic participation, support for democratic institutions, rational discourse, and openness to diverse viewpoints, integrating contemporary social issues into their communication. Social media, as demonstrated by Bakshy et al. (2015), contribute to the creation of «echo chambers» — environments where users primarily interact with like-

minded individuals and consume content that reinforces their beliefs. This phenomenon, as Sunstein (2009) argues, intensifies ideological polarization and limits access to alternative views, which can further divide society. At the same time, algorithmic personalization enables political forces to more precisely segment audiences based on digital footprints, increasing the effectiveness of targeted communications (Matz et al., 2017).

International experience confirms that the communication strategies of women politicians on social media depend significantly on their ideological affiliation. In Spain, for instance, research by Cabezas (2022) shows that left-wing female candidates use feminist rhetoric much more actively, whereas the right-wing Vox party actively opposes «gender ideology». In the United States, Xi et al. (2020) found that conservatives more often display symbols of the status quo and social hierarchy in their publications, while liberals favor inclusive imagery symbolizing social change. This reflects a broader pattern: emotional appeals to traditional values are characteristic of right-wing forces, while left-wing actors tend to focus on rationalization, openness, and transformational narratives.

In Ukraine, the communication strategies of political parties — particularly among women representatives — are still under-researched. This issue is especially important given that different political currents in Ukraine address gender issues in various ways. Pro-European political forces such as Holos and European Solidarity systematically integrate gender equality into their communication and practice. According to an evaluation by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine in 2019, European Solidarity conducted a gender audit supported by the National Democratic Institute, while Servant of the People and Batkivshchyna also had codified principles of gender equality in their operations. This is especially evident within the Council of Europe’s «Promoting Gender Equality in Ukraine» (Pro-GE) project launched in 2024, which is aimed at integrating gender equality into political practice, supporting women leaders, and implementing gender-sensitive budgeting (Council of Europe, 2024).

Systematic research, including reports by the Institute of Mass Information, indicates a gradual increase in attention to female expertise in the media: in February 2021, the share of mentions of female experts in the political domain reached 26.1% (IMI, 2021).

Thus, literature analysis shows a correlation between the ideological orientations of parties and the communication style of their representatives. Gender issues are used as a tool of legitimation by liberal forces and as a marker of ideological opposition by conservative ones. Social media play a key role in implementing these strategies, allowing politicians to adapt their image to audience expectations.

Conclusions to Chapter 1

An analysis of scholarly literature and research studies indicates that social media play a key role in shaping the public image of women politicians, their adaptation to the new challenges of the digital environment, and the mobilization of electoral support. The representation of women in the digital space is largely determined by a combination of gender stereotypes, ideological orientation, and the operational characteristics of individual social media platforms.

Existing research confirms that women in politics often encounter perceptual barriers rooted in culturally entrenched notions of the “natural” social roles of men and women. On social media, these notions are perpetuated through emphasis on women’s appearance, marital status, or emotionality, which complicates their professional legitimacy. At the same time, women politicians actively employ self-presentation strategies aimed at overcoming such biases, including content personalization, emphasis on professional achievements, and demonstrations of competence.

Ideological orientation plays a critical role in shaping the style of political communication — from content themes to rhetorical strategies and platform

choice. Although the focus is on women politicians, the identified differences are observable across the broader political landscape, allowing them to be viewed as part of general trends in digital political communication. For instance, representatives of conservative political forces more frequently appeal to emotionally charged rhetoric centered on traditional values and family roles, whereas politicians from the liberal spectrum tend to use rational arguments and focus on themes of social inclusion and gender equality. These differences are reflected in content themes: liberal forces emphasize issues of modernization and human rights, while conservative ones focus on preserving cultural heritage and established social roles.

Specific attention is given to the communication characteristics of different platforms. Facebook enables the development of structured political discourse through textual posts, group discussions, and polls, whereas Instagram is oriented primarily toward visual representations and emotional engagement. Politicians extensively use Instagram for personalizing their image by sharing scenes from private life, domestic moments, or elements of intimacy, contributing to a multidimensional and “humanized” public image.

Theoretical generalizations reveal the paradoxical nature of social media as a space for political communication: on the one hand, they open new opportunities for self-expression, bypassing traditional media filters and establishing direct contact with voters; on the other hand, the algorithmic design of platforms often contributes to the reinforcement of gender biases by promoting content aligned with existing stereotypes. These generalizations provide a conceptual foundation for the subsequent empirical research focused on a comparative analysis of the communication strategies of women politicians representing different ideological orientations. This issue is particularly relevant in the Ukrainian context, where comprehensive studies combining gender issues, political ideology, and digital communication remain scarce.

CHAPTER 2. EMPIRICAL STUDY OF WOMEN POLITICIANS' COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN SOCIAL MEDIA

2.1. Research Design

The relevance of this study is driven by a growing interest in the political communication environment, particularly in the role of women in political processes. In the context of globalization and the expansion of democratic practices, there has been a significant increase in women's participation in politics, particularly in elected offices and governmental bodies at both local and global levels. However, despite positive shifts in social attitudes, there remain several challenges and barriers limiting the full integration of women into political practice, including stereotypes, gender discrimination, and insufficient support from political institutions. In this context, it is particularly important to explore how modern public relations tools, such as media and social networks, influence the formation of women politicians' public image — as this can both promote and hinder their political activity.

Moreover, this topic aligns with broader European and international trends that address gender equality and issues related to self-representation and reputation-building of public figures. While there are studies comparing the communication strategies of male and female politicians, or strategies across political ideologies, the specific comparison of women politicians by political orientation remains underexplored — especially in the Ukrainian context. This research aims to fill that gap.

The central research question is as follows: What are the differences in communication strategies of Ukrainian women politicians representing parties with different ideological orientations (left-wing, right-wing, centrist, populist) on social media platforms (specifically Facebook and Instagram)?

Based on the research question, the following *hypotheses* have been formulated:

H1: Women politicians from populist parties are more likely to use individualized, privatized elements and visual self-representation (showing themselves in the frame) in their posts than those from other ideological camps; this applies to both Facebook and Instagram.

H2: Women politicians from centrist parties are more likely to post professionally oriented content and less personal content compared to representatives of other ideological directions; this is characteristic of Facebook, but not of Instagram.

H3: Women politicians from left-wing parties are more likely to address gender-related issues and use gendered language (feminitives) in their posts compared to politicians from other ideological camps; this is characteristic only of Facebook.

H4: Women politicians from left-wing and centrist parties use textual content more frequently than populist politicians, who tend to rely more on visual formats; this applies across both platforms.

H5: Differences in audience reach are explained not by the politicians' party affiliation but rather by their communication strategies.

Communication strategies refer to a deliberate system of decisions regarding the selection, structuring, and presentation of information to achieve specific communicative goals in interactions with a target audience. In the context of social media, they describe the ways of engaging with an audience through posts of different themes or formats (e.g., text-based or image-based). In this study, communication strategies were measured using the following criteria:

1. **Post type**, which reflects the thematic orientation of the post. Three main themes were identified: professional (related to the politician's professional activities), personal (related to her private life outside of work), and gender-related (entirely focused on gender issues).

2. **Reference to gender issues** (even indirectly) and the **use of gendered language (feminitives)**.

3. **Post format** (text-only post, post with photo, post with video, carousel post).

4. **Self-presentation strategies.**

Self-presentation strategies are ways of deliberately constructing and controlling a politician's public image through selective disclosure of personal information and management of visual presence in the media space. This is measured through three key variables: visual self-representation, individualization, and privatization.

Individualization is defined as content that highlights personal achievements, competencies, or characteristics of the politician as an individual, separate from her party or institutional affiliation. This includes posts about individual professional successes, personal stances on issues, or expert commentary.

Privatization covers content that reveals aspects of the politician's private life, including family relationships, leisure activities, domestic scenes, personal emotions, and experiences not directly related to political activity.

Visual self-representation is recorded when the politician is physically present in the image (photo or video), regardless of whether she is the central figure. This includes selfies, official photos, and event footage, but excludes images where the politician appears only as part of a large group without clear identification.

The operationalization of communication strategies in this study is designed to comprehensively capture the key aspects of digital political communication by women politicians. The selected variables cover both content and form of communication. These parameters allow for identifying behavioral patterns in politicians' social media use, comparing them across ideological groups and platforms, and offer convenient categorization criteria for large datasets. The sample was formed using the purposive sampling method, which is

a common strategy in research that seeks to ensure the representation of different groups — in this case, based on the ideological orientation of the parties to which the politicians belong.

According to a study by the ZMINA Human Rights Centre in 2019, during parliamentary elections, the share of women in party lists was as follows: Servant of the People – 32% (65 female candidates), European Solidarity – 28% (29 women), Holos – also 28% (49 women), and Batkivshchyna – nearly 30% (61 women). This dynamic reflects a growing awareness of gender balance in party list formation strategies. However, despite progress at the candidate list level, actual parliamentary representation of women remains relatively low in the European context: as of May 2025, there are 85 female Members of Parliament in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (9th convocation) out of a total of 401 deputies, which constitutes 21.2% of the parliament. While this is a record high for Ukraine, it still falls short of parity and average European standards.

The women politicians were grouped according to the ideological affiliation of their parties. Four ideological groups were defined:

- **Liberal pro-Western (center-left)** — represented by Holos party members Kira Rudyk, Inna Sovsun, and Lesia Vasylenko. These politicians embody a post-ideological liberalism with a focus on European integration, human rights, and reformist rhetoric.
- **Centrist ruling party** — represented by Servant of the People MPs Viktoriia Kinzburska, Halyna Yanchenko, and Olha Saladukha. These politicians reflect the dominant parliamentary force with a hybrid, predominantly centrist rhetoric and emphasis on state-building and modernization. The centrist group offers insight into the communication of politicians at the center of power with considerable influence on state policy.
- **Conservative-nationalist** — including representatives of European Solidarity and Svoboda: Sofiia Fedyna, Iryna Herashchenko, and Oksana

Savchuk. This group represents the national-conservative spectrum with a focus on patriotism and traditional values.

- **Populist and personalist projects** — including representatives from Batkivshchyna and independents: Larysa Bilozir, Aliona Shkrum, and Iryna Konstankevych. These politicians emphasize personal branding and emotionally charged rhetoric, providing insight into communication focused on emotional appeal and individuality.

For simplification, the liberal pro-Western (center-left) group will be referred to as the left, and the conservative-nationalist parties as the right.

Three representatives were included in each ideological category to maintain sample balance and allow for meaningful intergroup comparison based on party affiliation and public style. The limitation to three representatives per group was dictated by the need for in-depth manual content analysis of a substantial number of posts while maintaining analytical manageability.

Selection criteria for inclusion in the sample were as follows: politicians had to be members of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine during the past year, have official accounts on Facebook and Instagram, demonstrate active communication on at least one of these platforms, and regularly publish content during the study period.

The analysis covers the period from January 1 to April 30, 2025. This timeframe was selected for its adequate length to accumulate a substantial number of posts and alignment with the academic schedule for data collection and processing. The initial sample comprised 3,430 posts collected from the official accounts of 12 politicians. After data cleaning procedures, which included the removal of entries with missing values, the final dataset consisted of 3,150 posts. Thus, 280 posts (8.9%) were excluded due to incomplete or inaccurate data.

The study employed the method of formalized content analysis (quantitative content analysis), which allows for the quantification of qualitative characteristics of political discourse on social media. This method enables

statistical comparison of communication patterns across different ideological groups and platforms. The coding procedure was conducted manually during May 2025. Manual coding was chosen due to the necessity of accounting for contextual specificities of Ukrainian political discourse, the complexity of interpreting visual elements, and the need for detailed analysis of linguistic features — particularly the use of gendered language (feminitives).

Structure of the Codebook. The codebook contains 20 core variables organized into six thematic blocks that reflect key aspects of political communication by women politicians on social media (see Appendix 1).

1. *Identification variables:* capture key features of each post (ID, politician's name, ideological affiliation of the party, platform — Facebook/Instagram, publication date).

2. *Content typology:* classifies each post by its main category (personal, professional, gender-related, or other) and specifies its subtype (e.g., family-related, leisure, parliamentary, party-related, expert commentary, reactive, etc.).

3. *Gender-related themes and language practices:* record whether the post addresses gender issues and whether gendered language (feminitives) is used.

4. *Engagement metrics:* measure post popularity through the number of likes, comments, and shares.

5. *Media characteristics:* identify the type of content format used (text, photo, video, carousel).

6. *Self-presentation strategies:* assess the presence of visual self-representation (politician shown in the frame), individualized content (personal achievements, unique positions), and privatized content (information about family, leisure, daily life).

Coding Procedure and Ensuring Reliability. Coding was conducted in chronological order of publication for each politician individually. To ensure internal consistency, 10% of randomly selected posts were recoded two weeks

after the completion of the primary coding phase. The level of agreement reached 94%. Special attention was paid to inter-categorical cases in which a post contained elements of multiple content types but needed to be assigned to a single category — in such instances, the principle of dominant characteristic was applied (the post was classified according to the content type it most closely aligned with).

The data were coded directly into an Excel spreadsheet and later imported into R, allowing for convenient data entry, real-time editing, and efficient preparation for statistical analysis. Each row in the spreadsheet corresponded to a single post, and each column represented a separate variable from the codebook.

Data Preparation and Analysis Process. The processing and analysis of the collected data were performed in R using the RStudio integrated development environment. This choice was motivated by R's powerful statistical analysis capabilities, broad range of specialized data processing packages, and support for full reproducibility of research results.

Data were imported from an Excel file using the `read_excel()` function from the `readxl` package. Variable names were standardized using the `clean_names()` function from the `janitor` package, which ensured uniform variable naming in line with R programming conventions (e.g., replacing spaces with underscores, converting to lowercase). A critical stage of data preparation involved eliminating records with missing values. Initial diagnostics of data completeness were performed using `colSums(is.na())`, which assessed the volume of missing data in each variable. Subsequently, the `na.omit()` function was used to remove all records with missing values in any variable. In most cases, missing data resulted from platform-specific limitations, such as hidden likes or comments due to evolving social media functionality. Although this step reduced the sample from 3,430 to 3,150 posts (a loss of 8.9%), it ensured data quality for further statistical analysis and minimized potential distortions in results.

Choice of Analytical Methods. Testing the first four hypotheses involved constructing percentage distributions and applying the Chi-square test

(`chisq.test()`). To test the fifth hypothesis, multiple linear regression analysis was used. The dependent variable was reach, a composite indicator constructed from three components: number of likes, number of comments, and number of shares. The independent variable was political affiliation, while control variables included features related to communication strategies. Additionally, the platform (Facebook/Instagram) on which the post was published was controlled for. Two regression models were built: a baseline model (without controls) and a full model (with controls), both using the `lm()` function.

2.2. Data analysis and interpretation

This section provides a detailed analysis and interpretation of the results obtained from testing the study's five hypotheses concerning the influence of party ideology on women politicians' communication strategies in social media.

The **first hypothesis** was based on the assumption that women politicians from populist parties are more likely to use individualized, privatized elements and visual self-representation (the politician appearing in the frame) in their posts compared to representatives of other ideological camps. This assumption draws on core characteristics of populist rhetoric, which traditionally emphasizes the personalization of political discourse, emotional engagement with the audience, and direct connection between the leader and the "people," bypassing institutional structures.

Visual self-representation (see Table 1) revealed platform-specific patterns. On Facebook, there were statistically significant differences between ideological groups ($\chi^2 = 109.65$, $df = 3$, $p < 0.001$), with populist women politicians showing the highest share of presence in the frame (59.4%). Instagram demonstrated a noticeably higher level of visual self-representation across all ideological groups (ranging from 77.2% to 86.0%) than Facebook. However, for Instagram, no statistically significant differences were found between political camps ($\chi^2 = 11.703$, $df = 3$, $p = 0.069$). This suggests that Instagram structurally

encourages visual self-representation regardless of ideology, thereby neutralizing ideological differences through the affordances of the platform itself.

Table 1. Visual self-representation (politician in the frame) by political ideology and platform

Platform	Party Ideology	Posts with Visual Self-Representation	Total Posts	Percentage (%)
Facebook (1)	Left (1)	63	143	44.1
	Centrist (2)	171	360	47.5
	Right (3)	376	1116	33.7
	Populist/ Personal Brands (4)	337	567	59.4
Instagram (2)	Left (1)	99	123	80.5
	Centrist (2)	117	136	86.0
	Right (3)	358	464	77.2
	Populist/ Personal Brands (4)	204	241	84.6

Privatized content (see Table 2) showed statistically significant differences between ideological groups for both Facebook ($\chi^2 = 13.636$, $df = 3$, $p = 0.003$) and Instagram ($\chi^2 = 9.036$, $df = 3$, $p = 0.029$). Populist politicians exhibited the highest percentage of privatized content on Instagram (11.2%), whereas on Facebook, left-wing politicians led with 11.9%. A potential explanation for this pattern may lie in the differing strategies used by each group: unlike populist women politicians, who leverage emotionally driven visual content and use Instagram more effectively to build a "relatable" persona through personal snapshots, left-wing politicians tend to use Facebook to share in-depth personal stories that underscore their social sensitivity and openness.

Table 2. Privatized content by political ideology and platform

Platform	Party Ideology	Posts with Privatized Content	Total Posts	Percentage (%)
Facebook (1)	Left (1)	17	143	11.9
	Centrist (2)	20	360	5.6
	Right (3)	52	1116	4.7
	Populist/ Personal Brands (4)	27	567	4.8
Instagram (2)	Left (1)	5	123	4.1
	Centrist (2)	13	136	9.6
	Right (3)	28	464	6.0
	Populist/ Personal Brands (4)	27	241	11.2

Individualized content (see Table 3) demonstrated statistically significant differences between ideological groups on both platforms ($\chi^2 = 31.338$, $df = 3$, $p < 0.001$ for Facebook; $\chi^2 = 95.911$, $df = 3$, $p < 0.001$ for Instagram). Populist women politicians were the leaders in the use of individualized content: 19.4% of their Facebook posts and 38.6% of their Instagram posts included personal achievements, individual positions, or highlighted personal competencies. This difference was especially pronounced on Instagram, where the proportion of individualized content among populists significantly exceeded that of left-wing, centrist, and right-wing politicians.

Table 3. Individualized content by political ideology and platform

Platform	Party Ideology	Posts with Individualized Content	Total Posts	Percentage (%)
Facebook (1)	Left (1)	22	143	15.4
	Centrist (2)	33	360	9.2
	Right (3)	119	1116	10.7
	Populist/ Personal Brands (4)	110	567	19.4
Instagram (2)	Left (1)	7	123	5.7
	Centrist (2)	17	136	12.5
	Right (3)	56	464	12.1
	Populist/ Personal Brands (4)	93	241	38.6

Thus, the hypothesis received full support only in terms of individualized content: populist women politicians were significantly more likely to use it on both Facebook and Instagram. Visual self-representation turned out to be a platform-specific phenomenon: significant ideological differences were observed only on Facebook, where populist politicians used it most frequently. Instagram neutralized the differences between political orientations due to its inherently visual nature. Regarding privatized content, we observed a mixed result across platforms: populists posted this content more often on Instagram, while left-wing politicians did so on Facebook.

The second hypothesis was based on the assumption that centrist women politicians are more likely to post professionally oriented content, particularly on Facebook but not on Instagram. This assumption is grounded in theoretical concepts that portray centrist parties as proponents of a technocratic approach to politics, emphasizing expertise, pragmatism, and institutional competence over emotional or personal narratives. Centrist forces traditionally position themselves

as rational alternatives to ideologically driven political parties, which would presumably be reflected in their communication strategies through a predominance of professional content.

Analysis of professional content (see Table 4) did not reveal statistically significant differences between ideological groups on Facebook ($\chi^2 = 2.847$, $df = 3$, $p = 0.416$) or Instagram ($\chi^2 = 1.205$, $df = 3$, $p = 0.752$). All groups showed high and nearly identical rates of professional content publication (88–92%).

Table 4. Professional content by political ideology and platform

Platform	Party Ideology	Professional Posts	Total Posts	Percentage (%)
Facebook (1)	Left (1)	132	143	92.3
	Centrist (2)	319	360	88.6
	Right (3)	1016	1116	91.0
	Populist/ Personal Brands (4)	519	567	91.5
Instagram (2)	Left (1)	113	123	91.9
	Centrist (2)	121	136	89.0
	Right (3)	424	464	91.4
	Populist/ Personal Brands (4)	222	241	92.1

Personal content (see Table 5) revealed statistically significant differences on Facebook ($\chi^2 = 8.934$, $df = 3$, $p = 0.030$) but not on Instagram ($\chi^2 = 4.187$, $df = 3$, $p = 0.242$). Centrist politicians showed the highest share of personal content (albeit only slightly higher than other ideological groups) on both Facebook (11.4%) and Instagram (11%), contradicting the hypothesis of their technocratic orientation.

Table 5. Personal content by political ideology and platform

Platform	Party Ideology	Personal Posts	Total Posts	Percentage (%)
Facebook (1)	Left (1)	11	143	7.7
	Centrist (2)	41	360	11.4
	Right (3)	82	1116	7.3
	Populist/ Personal Brands (4)	37	567	6.5
Instagram (2)	Left (1)	10	123	8.1
	Centrist (2)	15	136	11
	Right (3)	34	464	7.3
	Populist/ Personal Brands (4)	15	241	6.2

Thus, hypothesis H2 was not supported. The analysis of content types showed that centrist women politicians led in the share of personal content on both Facebook and Instagram. No significant differences were found in the share of professional content across the ideological spectrum. This reveals a somewhat paradoxical nature of contemporary centrist communication in Ukraine. Instead of the expected technocratic approach, representatives of the ruling Servant of the People party were slightly more likely to share content unrelated to their political activity than other ideological groups. This may reflect a specific strategy of legitimacy-building through the construction of a “common person” image, which fundamentally distinguishes them from traditional political elites.

The **third hypothesis** assumed that women politicians from left-wing parties more frequently address gender issues and use feminine job titles (feminatives) in their posts compared to representatives of other ideological camps, specifically on Facebook. This assumption draws on the theoretical

foundations of left-wing political forces as advocates of progressive agendas historically supportive of emancipation, gender equality, and inclusive public communication.

Analysis of gender-themed content (see Table 6) revealed extremely low rates across all ideological groups. On Facebook, left-wing politicians mentioned gender issues in 3.5% of posts, but no statistically significant differences were found ($\chi^2 = 4.911$, $df = 3$, $p = 0.178$). On Instagram, this figure was even lower for left-wing politicians — 0.8% — and no significant differences were observed between political camps ($\chi^2 = 3.279$, $df = 3$, $p = 0.351$).

Table 6. Posts addressing gender topics ¹ by political ideology and platform

Platform	Party Ideology	Gender-Themed Posts	Total Posts	Percentage (%)
Facebook (1)	Left (1)	5	143	3.5
	Centrist (2)	9	360	2.5
	Right (3)	15	1116	1.3
	Populist/ Personal Brands (4)	13	567	2.3
Instagram (2)	Left (1)	1	123	0.8
	Centrist (2)	4	136	2.9
	Right (3)	13	464	2.8
	Populist/ Personal Brands (4)	3	241	1.2

Use of feminatives (see Table 7) showed statistically significant differences between ideological groups on Facebook ($\chi^2 = 21.831$, $df = 3$, $p <$

¹ We separately coded gender-themed posts by identifying those where the main topic was gender issues (i.e., posts entirely focused on gender), and those that mentioned gender topics in any way (i.e., the post could be categorized as professional but still contain a reference to gender-related matters). The latter variable is the one presented in Table 6. Mentions of gender topics in a post also include fully gender-themed posts. Given the overall low frequency of gender-related content in the dataset, it made methodological sense to use the broader variable to ensure sufficient cases for analysis.

0.001), while no such differences were found on Instagram ($\chi^2 = 4.394$, $df = 3$, $p = 0.222$). However, even on Facebook, left-wing politicians were not the leaders in this category. The highest proportion of feminative use was observed among populist/personal brand politicians (9.7%). Still, this percentage is not drastically higher compared to other political groups.

Table 7. Use of feminatives by political ideology and platform

Platform	Party Ideology	Posts with Feminatives	Total Posts	Percentage (%)
Facebook (1)	Left (1)	12	143	8.4
	Centrist (2)	17	360	4.7
	Right (3)	48	1116	4.3
	Populist/ Personal Brands (4)	55	567	9.7
Instagram (2)	Left (1)	8	123	6.5
	Centrist (2)	7	136	5.2
	Right (3)	17	464	3.7
	Populist/ Personal Brands (4)	17	241	7.1

Thus, hypothesis H3 was not confirmed. Left-wing women politicians were not the most active in addressing gender topics or using feminatives. Populist women politicians used feminatives slightly more often (only on Facebook). Overall, gender themes remain marginalized in the public discourse of women politicians regardless of their ideology or platform.

The fourth hypothesis was based on the assumption that women politicians from left-wing and centrist parties more frequently use textual content, while populist politicians rely more on visual formats (photos, videos, carousels),

regardless of the platform. This assumption relies on theoretical perspectives that describe liberal and centrist political forces as prioritizing rational argumentation and detailed policy explanations-formats typically requiring text — while populist movements emphasize emotional appeal and simplified visual messaging to maximize outreach.

As shown in Table 8, there were no statistically significant differences between ideological groups in the use of textual posts on Facebook ($\chi^2 = 7.677$, $df = 3$, $p = 0.053$), while for Instagram, the difference was significant ($\chi^2 = 45.195$, $df = 3$, $p < 0.001$). All ideological groups demonstrated extremely high levels of textual content use (ranging from 87.9% to 99.7%), indicating the universality of textual formats in the political communication of Ukrainian women politicians. Right-wing politicians posted textual content less frequently on Instagram, likely because they slightly more often broadcast live without accompanying captions.

Table 8. Use of textual content by political ideology and platform

Platform	Party Ideology	Textual Posts	Total Posts	Percentage (%)
Facebook (1)	Left (1)	142	143	99.3
	Centrist (2)	359	360	99.7
	Right (3)	1092	1116	97.8
	Populist/ Personal Brands (4)	560	567	98.8
Instagram (2)	Left (1)	122	123	99.2
	Centrist (2)	135	136	99.3
	Right (3)	408	464	87.9
	Populist/ Personal Brands (4)	236	241	97.9

For visual content on Facebook, statistically significant differences between ideological groups were found ($\chi^2 = 116.95$, $df = 3$, $p < 0.001$). As shown in Table 9, populist politicians lead in this regard: 98.1% of their posts included visual elements. Left-wing and right-wing politicians lag behind slightly (83.2% and 81.6%, respectively). On Instagram, however, there were no statistically significant differences ($\chi^2 = 3.243$, $df = 3$, $p = 0.356$) between ideological groups. Nearly all posts across all groups included visual elements (99–100%), suggesting that the platform’s inherently visual nature neutralizes ideological differences.

Table 9. Use of visual content by political ideology and platform

Platform	Party Ideology	Visual Posts	Total Posts	Percentage (%)
Facebook (1)	Left (1)	119	143	83.2
	Centrist (2)	341	360	94.7
	Right (3)	911	1116	81.6
	Populist/ Personal Brands (4)	556	567	98.1
Instagram (2)	Left (1)	123	123	100.0
	Centrist (2)	136	136	100.0
	Right (3)	461	464	99.4
	Populist/ Personal Brands (4)	241	241	100.0

Thus, hypothesis H4 was not confirmed. Populist women politicians do indeed use visual formats more frequently, but the differences between political ideologies were statistically significant only on Facebook. The assumption that left-wing and centrist politicians would post more textual content was not confirmed due to the universally high use of text across all groups. Only right-wing politicians used text slightly less often on Instagram compared to others.

The **fifth hypothesis** was based on the assumption that the relationship between party affiliation and post reach is conditioned by women politicians' communication strategies. This hypothesis builds on the theoretical assumption that party ideology may serve as a proxy variable for other content-related characteristics, and that the true drivers of popularity are specific elements of communication strategies (e.g., content type, visual self-representation, media formats), rather than party affiliation per se. The logic of the hypothesis posits that when these elements are controlled for, the effect of party ideology should disappear, as party differences could be reduced to differences in communication approaches.

The dependent variable (overall reach, calculated as the sum of likes, shares, and comments per post) was log-transformed as $\log(\text{reach} + 1)$, due to the original distribution being heavily right-skewed.

Two regression models were estimated: a baseline model and a full model. The baseline model, which includes only party ideology as a predictor of the log-transformed reach (with centrists as the reference category), shows $R^2 = 0.408$, indicating that 40.8% of the variation in post popularity is explained. The full model includes all control variables (post type, gender-related content, feminine usage, self-presentation strategies, media format, and platform), yielding an adjusted $R^2 = 0.448$ — an increase of only 4.40 percentage points in explanatory power (see Table 11).

This modest increase suggests that party affiliation remains a strong predictor in itself and may not be reducible to the set of communication strategies included in the model. Alternatively, it may indicate that the link between party affiliation and post reach is driven by other unobserved variables not captured in this study.

Table 10. Baseline and Full Regression Models

Variable	Baseline Model	Full Model
Party Ideology (ref. = Centrist)		
Left vs Centrist	1.490*** (0.103)	1.650*** (0.101)
Right vs Centrist	2.847*** (0.070)	2.881*** (0.068)
Populist vs Centrist	0.924*** (0.077)	0.939*** (0.076)
Content Type (ref. = Personal)		
Professional vs Personal	-	-0.223** (0.100)
Gender/Other vs Personal	-	-0.598*** (0.194)
Gender-Related Content		
Gender Topic Mention (1 = yes)	-	-0.223 (0.190)
Feminatives Used (1 = yes)	-	0.134 (0.104)
Self-Presentation Strategies		
Individualization (1 = yes)	-	-0.046 (0.069)
Privatization (1 = yes)	-	0.200* (0.112)
Visual Self-Representation (1 = in frame)	-	0.251*** (0.054)
Media Format (ref. = Text)		
Visual vs Text	-	-0.240*** (0.091)
Platform (ref. = Facebook)		
Instagram vs Facebook	-	-0.775*** (0.055)
Constant	4.017*** (0.061)	4.508*** (0.140)

Notes:

- *Dependent variable: $\text{Log}(\text{Reach} + 1)$*
- *Standard errors in parentheses*
- *Significance levels: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$*
- *Dummy variables coded as 0 = no, 1 = yes*

Table 11. Model Fit Statistics

Metric	Baseline Model	Full Model
The number of observations	3,150	3,150
R ²	0.408	0.451
Adjusted R ²	0.408	0.448
Increase in adjusted R ²	-	0.040

In both models (baseline and full), affiliation with opposition groups (left-wing, right-wing, or populist) increases post reach compared to centrists (ruling party). This can be explained by the nature of opposition communication, which tends to include criticism of the current government, emotionally charged messages, and controversial statements that naturally stimulate user engagement through comments, discussions, and shares.

Interestingly, the use of visual content reduces reach compared to textual posts. The same applies to Instagram: posting on this platform decreases reach compared to Facebook. This may reflect limited opportunities for political debate in visual formats. Text-based posts offer more space for argumentation and extended discourse, while visual content is less suited for in-depth political exchange.

By contrast, the use of visual self-representation and privatization strategies increases reach. Also, professional or other content types reduce reach compared to personal posts. This may indicate an audience preference for a more "human" image of female politicians: users tend to react more to posts showing politicians in informal settings or with pets than to official political statements. This trend reflects the general personalization of politics in the digital era, where emotional connection with a politician often outweighs policy content. However, it may also suggest that women are still perceived as "caretakers," better suited

for tenderness than political activity — a notion that warrants further investigation.

Furthermore, a multicollinearity check for the full model revealed no problematic VIF values (all < 5), confirming no excessive overlap between predictors. The robustness of party ideology effects was also confirmed by analyses with robust standard errors accounting for potential heteroskedasticity. Even with more conservative error estimates, all party coefficients remain statistically significant: left ($t = 19.89$, $p < 0.001$), right ($t = 42.37$, $p < 0.001$), populist ($t = 12.50$, $p < 0.001$). These results underscore the robustness of party effects under stricter statistical conditions.

Thus, the fifth hypothesis is not confirmed. Party affiliation influences post popularity even when controlling for communication strategy variables. Several competing explanations can be proposed. First, this highlights the fundamental role of party branding and ideological associations in shaping audience perception, surpassing the influence of self-presentation or media strategy. Second, the lack of additional communication strategies in the model — such as opposition parties' critiques of the ruling party — may have limited explanatory scope. Third, it is possible that the audience of centrist women politicians is less active (perhaps due to reluctance to publicly defend ruling party actions in a sociopolitical context where criticism of authorities is normative). These explanations require further empirical investigation in future research.

Methodological Challenges and Limitations. The study of women politicians' communication strategies in social media was accompanied by a number of methodological challenges and limitations, which influence the interpretation of the results and the generalizability of conclusions.

First, the design does not allow for establishing causal relationships. Despite statistically significant regression coefficients, the study cannot definitively assert that specific communication strategies directly impact post popularity. Potential alternative explanations include self-selection effects (where

politicians with varying popularity levels may adopt different strategies); the presence of unobserved confounders affecting both content type and effectiveness; or reverse causality, in which prior success or failure influences subsequent strategic decisions.

Second, the study covers only a period under martial law (January–April 2025), creating a unique communication context that may differ significantly from regular democratic processes. Martial law shapes audience expectations toward official information, state-oriented rhetoric, and restraint in personalization. This limits the generalizability of results to other political contexts, as strategies effective in crisis may not be appropriate in stable conditions. The four-month period is also insufficient to identify long-term trends and may overlook seasonality or the evolution of strategies over time. The lack of a longitudinal perspective restricts the analysis of causal relationships and strategic dynamics.

Third, the sample is limited to 12 members of the Ukrainian Parliament and does not represent all women politicians in Ukraine. It excludes local government officials, regional actors, extra-parliamentary parties, or politicians without active social media presence. This selection bias is especially relevant given that MPs typically have more resources and professional support to manage social media compared to lower-level politicians.

Fourth, the analysis focused exclusively on two platforms (Facebook and Instagram), potentially failing to capture the full landscape of digital political communication. Although these are the most popular platforms in Ukraine, excluding others (Telegram, TikTok, YouTube, Twitter) limits a comprehensive understanding of media strategies and may overlook trends specific to those platforms.

Fifth, despite a 94% agreement level in the re-coding of 10% of the sample, coding remains inherently subjective. Particular challenges arose in classifying privatized content and distinguishing between professional and

personal posts, which can vary based on cultural context and coder background. Visual content also required subjective judgments about representation and symbolic interpretation. Contextual nuances — such as irony, sarcasm, cultural references, or meme content — may have been missed in formalized coding.

Sixth, the study did not account for external factors like political scandals, international events, or battlefield developments, which may have also influenced communication strategies.

To address these limitations, future research should expand the time frame to include both wartime and peacetime periods; increase the sample to include politicians at various levels of government; adopt alternative research designs (e.g., experimental or longitudinal) to establish causality and strategic evolution; and conduct cross-national comparisons to assess the universality of observed patterns.

Conclusions to Chapter 2

The empirical study confirmed that the ideological affiliation of women politicians significantly influences the characteristics of their communication strategies on social media, but this influence is selective and platform-specific. The findings demonstrate that there is no single "female style" of communication; instead, political identity shapes rhetoric, topics, and visual tactics. Particularly noteworthy is that Instagram acts as an environment where many ideological differences are blurred: regardless of political orientation, female politicians actively use visual elements and personalized imagery, which can be interpreted as adaptation to the platform's logic, emphasizing emotional engagement and aesthetic appeal. This highlights the structural influence of media algorithms on political behavior, which partially neutralizes ideological markers. In contrast, Facebook allows for greater ideologically driven differentiation. For example, populist politicians more frequently engage in individualization and visual self-

presentation, left-wing politicians exhibit higher levels of privatization, and centrists post slightly more personal content.

It is also important to emphasize that the lack of confirmation for some hypotheses does not reduce the value of the results. On the contrary, it reveals the complexity of actual political discourse and points to the need for further studies that consider not only ideology but also the personal characteristics of politicians, publication context, and evolving strategies over time. Methodologically, the study demonstrated the effectiveness of formalized content analysis in identifying patterns in digital communication. The results also underscore the importance of adapting communication strategies to the platform, making conscious choices between personalization and professionalization, and balancing emotional appeal with substantive content.

CONCLUSION

The theoretical analysis confirmed that social media are not only a means of disseminating political messages but also a space for constructing the public image of women politicians, who must navigate the balance between demonstrating professional competence, personal openness, and protection from gender bias and digital harassment. The characteristics of Facebook and Instagram determine the nature of communication: Facebook remains a text-centered platform for structured political discourse, while Instagram encourages visual personalization and emotional connection with the audience. Previous studies have shown that party ideology shapes communication style; however, these patterns have remained underexplored in the Ukrainian context, particularly in relation to female political representation.

The empirical part of this study revealed several fundamental patterns. First, content individualization — emphasizing personal achievements, expert opinions, and unique competencies — is most frequently used by populist politicians, aligning with theories of personalized political communication. At the

same time, privatization (sharing aspects of private life) showed platform-specific patterns: populists used it more often on Instagram, whereas left-wing politicians employed it more on Facebook. Second, gender-related themes were marginal: gender-focused posts comprised less than 4% of all content across ideological groups, and feminatives were used slightly more often by populist politicians, suggesting a potentially instrumental use of inclusive language to attract attention rather than a consistent ideological commitment to gender equality. Third, platform-specific communication strategies were empirically confirmed: Instagram structurally encourages visual self-presentation (80.5% of posts featuring the politician), while Facebook continues to support text-based political discourse. However, text-based formats and Facebook posts received greater reach, which contrasts with Western trends. Visual self-presentation, privatization strategies, and personal content attracted more engagement. This may indicate either a general trend toward personalization in politics and a desire to see politicians as "ordinary people," or it may reflect persistent gender stereotypes in Ukrainian society, where women are not yet fully perceived as serious professional politicians.

A particularly noteworthy result contradicts the hypothesis that communication strategies are the key determinant of post popularity: party affiliation retains its influence on reach even after controlling for other variables. Opposition politicians receive more reach than members of the ruling party. This can be explained by the nature of opposition communication, often characterized by criticism of the government, which boosts audience engagement. Alternatively, party branding and/or ideological alignment may attract specific audiences. These explanations warrant further investigation.

Methodological limitations of the study include the time frame (limited to the period of martial law), the sample (restricted to Ukrainian MPs), and the platforms (limited to Facebook and Instagram). Moreover, formalized content analysis cannot fully capture the emotional, ironic, or contextual meaning of posts

or the impact of external political events. Nonetheless, the findings hold both scientific and practical value: they offer deeper insights into the mechanisms of digital political communication by women politicians and outline strategies for building a personal brand. The results may serve as a basis for future research in political communication and inform practical recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of women politicians' communication strategies. To overcome methodological limitations, future studies should expand the time frame, include additional platforms, and employ alternative research designs (experimental or longitudinal).

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1. Codebook for Content Analysis

Variable	Description	Type	Categories / Codes
Post_ID	Post identifier	Text/Numeric	e.g., P001
Politician_Name	Name of the politician	Text	e.g., Ivanenko
Party_Ideology	Party ideological affiliation	Nominal	1 = left-wing, 2 = centrist, 3 = right-wing, 4 = populist
Platform	Social media platform	Nominal	1 = Facebook, 2 = Instagram
Date	Date of publication	Date	Format: dd.mm.yyyy
Post_Type_Main	Main content category	Nominal	1 = personal, 2 = professional, 3 = gender-related, 4 = other
Post_Type_Sub	Subcategory	Nominal	Personal: 1 = family, 2 = leisure, 3 = selfie, 4 = emotions, 5 = other Professional: 6 = parliament, 7 = party, 8 = expertise, 9 = reaction, 10 = other
Has_Gender_Topic	Is gender topic present	Binary	0 = no, 1 = yes
Uses_Feminitives	Use of feminized forms in text	Binary	0 = no, 1 = yes
Likes	Number of likes	Quantitative	e.g., 235
Comments	Number of comments	Quantitative	e.g., 12
Shares	Number of shares	Quantitative	e.g., 5
Media_Text	Is there text?	Binary	0 = no, 1 = yes
Media_Photo	Is there a photo?	Binary	0 = no, 1 = yes
Media_Video	Is there a video?	Binary	0 = no, 1 = yes

Media_Carousel	Is there a carousel post?	Binary	0 = no, 1 = yes
Media_Repost	Is it a repost?	Binary	0 = no, 1 = yes
Visual_Self_Portrayal	Woman present in the image (visual self-representation)	Binary	0 = no, 1 = yes
Individualised_Content	Is the content individualised (personal achievements, individual political stance)	Binary	0 = no, 1 = yes