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REPUTATIONAL CAPITAL AS A FACTOR IN THE CAPITALIZATION OF INTANGIBLE ASSETS OF CRAFT ENTERPRISES: SOCIO-COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES AND DECOLONIAL DISCOURSE*

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Abstract. In the context of Russia's full-scale aggression against Ukraine and the ongoing decolonization of the national socio-cultural space, the study of intangible asset capitalization mechanisms through strategic communications has gained particular resonance. Investigating craft production as a representative of local identity and cognitive resistance is critical for understanding the contemporary model of Ukrainian economic resilience. *The subject of the study* is the socio-communicative technologies of intangible heritage capitalization and the formation of decolonial narratives within Ukraine's craft sector under martial law. *The aim of the research* is to analyze integrated communication strategies that ensure the conversion of cultural codes and historical memory into reputational and symbolic brand capital (based on the nationwide project "Craft Christmas" and the regional initiative "Craft Zaporizhzhia"). *The methodology* is based on a combination of systemic and decolonial approaches, the theory of identity claims, as well as elements of digital content discourse analysis and case studies. The analytics of the implemented cases indicate that decolonial communication creates a Unique Selling Proposition (USP), significantly increasing the product's added value through a "narrative of search" and the legitimation of local knowledge. The application of Google Ads and SE Ranking tools allowed for the verification of public demand for craft content, confirming a high correlation between strategic brand communications and increased digital audience engagement (specifically within the "Craft Christmas" project). It is proven that the transformation of social media from advertising platforms into socio-communicative institutions facilitates the formation of "digital clusters", where intangible assets (trust, solidarity) are converted into the financial stability of a region. The study of memorializing lost heritage (e.g., the Chateau Trubetskoi case) and social rehabilitation through fair activities demonstrates that craft serves as a tool for the "decolonization of the mind" and the restoration of community agency. The analysis of the "Craft Christmas" case identified a series of terminological definitions describing new socio-communicative phenomena in the Ukrainian business environment: "Craft Banking" – a strategic model of financial communication where a banking institution transforms from a technocratic service into an active mediator of cultural meanings, investing in "humanity" and unique customer experience; "Investment Authentication" – the process of verifying a local producer by large capital, granting the craft product the status of a national heritage and increasing its reputational value; "Digital Identity Incubation" – the use of large-scale media capacities (mobile apps, bank social networks) to bring local micro-brands out of "information shadow" into the broad public space.
Special significance in the context of the craft sector's survival is attributed to the strategy of collective agency. Our research confirms the hypothesis that in a Wartime Economy, the "solo survival" model is the least effective. It is critically important for craft producers to integrate into clusters, initiatives, and digital platforms. Joining

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communities provides several strategic advantages: distribution of communication costs, the "umbrella trust" effect, and narrative synergy. Thus, the transition from an individualistic model to network collaboration is not merely a business recommendation but a necessary condition for the decolonization of the Ukrainian market, where fragmented producers become a single powerful economic front. *Conclusions.* The research highlights the priority of the relational communication model (co-creation of meanings) over the transactional one; the effectiveness of cross-sectoral collaborations between large capital and micro-entrepreneurship as a Win-Win-Win model; and the necessity of forming a Ukrainian craft narrative as a component of national security and cognitive resistance that dismantles imperial stereotypes regarding the "peripherality" of local production.

Keywords: capitalization of intangible assets, decolonial discourse, craft production, strategic communications, social resilience, reputation capital, authenticity work, Ukrainian wartime economy, regional branding, cognitive security.

JEL Classification: H11, H76, J48

1. Introduction

In economics, reputation is not just a concept of "people think well of us", it is the difference between the market price of a company and the cost of its equipment or raw materials. Craft production without a legend is just a workshop. With a legend and decolonial optics it is an expensive brand. In the conditions of informational, territorial, and armed resistance to the occupying forces, decolonial communication creates a unique selling proposition (USP), which significantly increases the added value of the product. Craft brands that have built strong communities through socio-communication technologies demonstrate a higher level of survival: the community supports "their" manufacturer even in critical conditions, transforming social capital into financial stability.

In modern conditions, the capitalization of intangible assets directly depends on the quality of strategic communications. As noted by Perez-Cornejo and co-author (Pérez-Cornejo et al., 2019), high-quality reporting and transparency not only increase the visibility of socially responsible business actions, but also convert them into reputational capital through the trust mechanism. For craft enterprises whose activities are based on ethical production, such a communication strategy becomes a tool for overcoming information asymmetry and strengthening market positions. Studies of international practices confirm that all dimensions of corporate activity – social, environmental and economic – have a sustainable positive impact on the reputation of the company (Pérez-Cornejo et al., 2019).

In the context of decolonial discourse, this influence is amplified as craft enterprises become representatives of local knowledge and authenticity. However, successful capitalization of such assets requires a radical revision of traditional management approaches. As S.B. Banerjee argues (Banerjee, 2022), decolonizing management theory is a necessary condition for overcoming dominant Eurocentric paradigms that often marginalize local contexts. Introducing a decolonial perspective into communication policies allows craft brands to focus on reviving authentic narratives.

This process is implemented through active "authenticity work". In particular, A. Koontz and N. G. Chapman (Koontz & Chapman, 2019) prove, that digital resources of craft producers (e.g., sections "About Us") serve as key platforms for legitimation of their identities through narratives of "search". For example, when a craft producer in Zaporizhzhia or Drohobych writes: "We are restoring an ancient Ukrainian recipe that was forgotten due to Soviet unification" – this is simultaneously: a Search Narrative ("we were looking for our roots"); legitimation ("we are genuine because we care for culture", "the right to recognition"); decolonization ("we are abandoning the imposed "Soviet" standard in favor of our own"). So, the website is a place where the brand tells the "legend" of its journey, so that the consumer wants to buy this product as a symbol of their identity. This allows brands to maintain opposition to the mass market, while remaining economically viable. Thus, social communication technologies become a tool for "decolonization of the mind" of both the producer and the consumer, which turns local agency into a powerful strategic factor of market capitalization and strengthens the internal resilience of the community.

2. Integrated Communications Strategy in the Process of Capitalizing of Intangible Heritage: Case Studies of the "Craft Christmas" Project

The transformation of the "Craft Christmas" project demonstrates the transition from a small-scale family tradition to a large-scale public communication strategy that performs the function of social consolidation, implementing the concept of "cultural branding", where a commercial brand becomes part of the national cultural landscape. The first stages of the project, implemented through craft fairs and festivals, witnessed the revitalization of public space as a platform for direct interaction between producers (craftsmen) and

consumers. This laid the foundation for the formation of social capital of the community, where support for culture is identified through the personalization of the creator and bearer of the tradition. The sponsored material from Kredobank on social media states: "Social and cultural initiatives have become the new norm of business communication. But do they really convert into customer trust? The consumer more often chooses not the product, but values. In the conditions of war, social and cultural initiatives have ceased to be an addition to marketing – they have become the main way of talking to the audience. "Craft Christmas" from Kredobank unites artisans, traditions and digital formats, turning finances into a tool for supporting culture and small businesses. The project has been in the process of development since 2023 and is repeated from year to year. This is no longer a campaign, but a tradition that forms an emotional connection, loyalty and trust in the brand" (AIN.UA, 2026).

"In Ukraine, the full-scale war has escalated issues of identity and responsibility – both personal and corporate…That is why large companies – from banks to corporations – are investing in cultural events, education and the development of local communities. This allows not only to do a good deed, but also to establish a long-term emotional connection with the brand" (Pavlenko, 2026).

Kredobank called the project philosophy as Craft Banking which means "treating clients and partners as unique stories and building trusting communication with attention to meaning and details. This is a multi-level platform that combines culture, craft, education and live interaction with the audience, where the bank, culture and small business interact" (AIN.UA, 2026). In fact, this concept in scientific discourse should be defined as a transition from a transactional model (bank as a service) to a relational model (bank as a partner in co-creation of meanings). This was confirmed by Andriy Melnyk, CMO of Kredobank: ""Craft Christmas" is not about format and not about creativity, it is about attentiveness to meanings, context and people (both masters of communities and clients). It is through craft in marketing that we create campaigns not for coverage and likes, but in order to build trust that works longer than any advertising" (AIN.UA, 2026).

The intellectual capitalization of the project was achieved due to multimedia support, in particular through a series of podcasts (in collaboration with the magazine "Local History" and Nadiyka Gerbish), where each year new stories of Christmas rituals, symbols, and regional differences are revealed to listeners. The involvement of opinion leaders and intellectuals (historian Ya. Hrytsak, musicians and public figures P. Gudimov, the ONUKA band) made it possible to verify the voice of tradition in a modern context, transforming ethnographic knowledge into relevant content that forms the reputational asset of partners (in particular, Kredobank), and to perform the function of an "intellectual verifier" that transforms marketing content into a scientific and educational asset.

Within the framework of the implementation of the project's cultural and educational initiatives, objects of applied art and ritual attributes are transformed into powerful communication mediators of national heritage. In particular, the case of the exhibition of Christmas stars in the Kyiv Art Gallery (supported by Kredobank) demonstrates the process of actualizing a traditional symbol as a recognizable visual marker. The evolution of this element from an authentic ritual attribute to an object of exhibition and stage space (nativity scenes, concerts) indicates the scaling of the decolonial discourse and its integration into a living socio-economic context. A perfect example of capitalization of intangible heritage is the cross-sectoral collaboration between the Grono brand and the Kurbasy ethno-group. Within the framework of this special project, there was a convergence of audio folklore (unique regional Christmas songs) and applied design (craft Christmas tree decorations). Such integration of ethno-music into a physical product not only expands the market niche of craft production, but also serves as a tool for actualizing the regional diversity of Ukraine, turning the cultural code into a significant brand asset. The evolution of symbolic capital gains a particular importance: from exhibition objects (a Christmas star in the Kyiv Art Gallery) and cross-industry collaborations (the Grono brand and the Kurbasy band) to instruments of social responsibility. This is an example of "multisensory capitalization", where the consumer buys not only a visual object (a toy), but also an audio code (a carol), which creates the effect of immersion in identity. The final stage of this strategy is the conversion of cultural loyalty into real assistance: from caring for vulnerable groups to raising funds for defense needs (a case of collecting 100,000 UAH for FPV drones in the Sense bookstore). This stage is critical because it closes the cycle of capitalization: symbolic capital (tradition) -> social capital (trust) -> real resource (security). Thus, "living tradition" in the context of craft production ceases to be just an object of consumption, but becomes a tool of economic resilience and social mobilization, where the human dimension and the ethic of care act as key verifiers of brand authenticity.

The choice of Christmas as the central symbol of the project is conceptual and strategic. "This holiday has been destroyed for decades by the Soviet authorities along with the customs and traditions inherent in Ukrainian Christmas. Ukraine has regained not only the authentic date, but also the values of Christmas: the family circle, home and traditions passed down from generation to generation. Supporting artisans is supporting people who preserve these meanings not in words, but in real things: ceramics, textiles, toys, decor, food. "Craft Christmas" has become a space where

banks, culture and small businesses interact on equal terms – and create a new model of communication in which finance becomes a tool of support" (Pavlenko, 2026).

A special place in the structure of the socio-communication strategy of the "Craft Christmas" project is taken by an interactive Advent calendar model, which adapts the European tradition of waiting for the holiday to the tasks of supporting national small businesses (Kredobank, Advent calendar, 2026). From the point of view of economic pragmatics, this format is cosidered as a tool for indirect investment in the real sector of the economy: a large banking platform (Kredobank) provides micro-enterprises with access to a significant audience, minimizing their marketing and promotion costs. Thus, the mechanisms of interaction between big capital and small business are being developed as a "Win-Win-Win" model (a winning for the bank, the manufacturer, and the client), which in the context of the Wartime Economy is strategically anti-crisis. The advent calendar format here acts not as entertainment, but as a "digital incubation" of small business, where the bank provides craftsmen with its media power as an intangible resource for survival.

The advent calendar mechanics, integrated into the bank's mobile application, implements the function of a digital showcase for craftsmen. Daily presentation of the brand (history of creation, positioning, values) allows converting emotional engagement of customers into real transactions (activation of payments with Mastercard cards). This transforms the social initiative from a short-term image campaign into a sustainable business model, where the banking institution focuses on human capital and shared values. An example of such integration is the straw constructor "Vytynanka" (workshop "SNIP" in collaboration with D. Alyoshka), which presents authentic craft in the format of a modern interactive object. Positioning products that have a deep value connotation – such as the silver pendant "Good" (the "Antidote" collection from the Katria jewelry workshop) or the gastronomic sets "4 Collections" (Honey History) – allows you to convert emotional customer engagement into real transactions.

The integration of the vytynanka into the bank branch is a "desacralization" of the official space, which is destroying the colonial stereotype of a "strict state institution" in favor of a people-centered hub (Figure 1).

According to the position of the institution's management (A. Melnyk), such support is critical in the conditions of martial law (energy crisis, logistical challenges), as it allows local producers to maintain product quality and ensure economic sustainability. The scaling of the project – from raffles among premium segments to attracting a wide range of customers – indicates the democratization of craft consumption.

Thus, the systematic nature of the project (since 2023) turns it into an institutional tradition that generates not only marketing indicators, but also reputational capital based on trust and systemic support of the national manufacturer. Communication support for the winners and strict adherence to banking secrecy during the implementation of the campaign reinforce the ethical component of the brand, making "Craft Christmas" an example of the transformation of corporate social responsibility into an effective mechanism for the economic resilience of territories.

An effective tool for visualizing decolonial discourse within the framework of the "Craft Christmas" project was the aestheticization of the public space of banking institutions through the integration of objects of modern applied art. The exhibition of large-format vytynankas by artist Daria Alyoshkina in Kredobank



Figure 1. Adaptation of the authentic art of vytynanki into the public business space as a tool for forming "soft power". Vytynanki by artist Daria Alyoshka decorated the Kredobank branch in Odesa

Source: (Kredobank, Exhibitions of Daria Alyoshkina's vytynankas, 2026)

branches (Kyiv, Lviv, Odesa, Kharkiv) demonstrates the emergence of artistic tradition beyond the gallery space into a utilitarian business environment (Kredobank, Exhibitions of Daria Alyoshkina's vytynankas, 2026). This implements the strategy of brand humanization, where the banking institution is transformed into a cultural hub that transmits national codes through modern art forms.

The use of archetypal images (didukh, angels, goat) combined with local urban landscapes allows the brand to establish a deep emotional connection with regional communities, particularly in frontline cities (Kharkiv), strengthening reputational capital through solidarity. The author's global recognition (exhibitions at the UN, collaborations with Cartier) verifies the high status of Ukrainian craft as a competitive premium product that meets global standards of high craftsmanship.

From the perspective of corporate social responsibility (CSR), such artistic interventions are an example of investing in "soft power". They not only reinterpret centuries-old heritage, but also create added value for the banking product through association with authenticity and high culture. Thus, the integration of D.Alyoshkina's works into the bank space is an example of strategic marketing of values, where the popularization of craftsmanship becomes part of a living cultural process aimed at preserving national identity in the face of global challenges.

An important vector for strengthening the value component of the "Craft Christmas" project is strategic patronage in the field of cultural diplomacy and commemorative practices. The installation of the bronze mini-sculpture "Shchedryk" (the 47th within the "Search!" project) on the facade of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine with the support of Kredobank demonstrates the transition of corporate social responsibility (CSR) to the level of state branding (Kredobank, Kredobank became a patron, 2026) (Figure 2).

In a scientific context, this case illustrates the concept of "continuity of national identity": through the story of Mykola Leontovych's "Shchedryk" and Oleksandr Koshyts's "Kapela" (1919), a parallel is drawn between the struggle of the Ukrainian People's Republic and the modern resistance of Ukraine. For a financial institution investing in such symbols means the formation of symbolic capital which is based on historical legitimacy. As J. Karnovsky notes, financial stability and cultural subjectivity are considered complementary elements of national security.

From the point of view of communication technologies, the mini-sculpture "Shchedryk" is considered as a physical marker of "soft power" that integrates the craft tradition into the global context (the world-famous hit "Carol of the Bells"). This allows us to consider the "Craft Christmas" project not only as a local initiative, but as a part of a transnational cultural discourse, where Ukrainian heritage is positioned as a competitive intellectual product. Thus, the combination of financial capital with historical narratives creates a unique model of reputation management aimed at restoration and victory through the affirmation of identity. This case illustrates the concept of "commemorative marketing", where investing in historical symbols (the memory of the Ukrainian People's Republic and the O. Košyts Chapel) creates symbolic capital based on historical legitimacy. This allows us to consider the project as part of a transnational discourse, where Ukrainian heritage is positioned as a competitive intellectual product.

A separate vector of implementation of the "Craft Christmas" project is inter-museum and inter-sectoral interaction, which was most fully embodied in the exhibition project "Under the Christmas Star" (National Museum "Kyiv Art Gallery"). In scientific discourse, this case illustrates a model of integrated communications,



Figure 2. Memorialization of cultural diplomacy ("Shchedryk") as a means of capitalization of historical memory in modern brand management on the facade of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine

Source: (Kredobank, Kredobank became a patron, 2026)

where authentic museum collections (icons of the 17th–19th centuries, Kosiv ceramics), classical painting (I. Marchuk, T. Danylych) and products of modern craft workshops (Gunia Project, GORN Ceramics, Guculiya, etc.) are combined in a single exhibition space (Kredobank, The exhibition, 2026).

The use of such multimodal optics allows the brand (Kredobank) to act not just as a sponsor, but as an active subject of the cultural process, ensuring the continuity of tradition. As art historian O. Pidsukha notes, turning to ancient symbols in times of war trials is a search for landmarks of national existence (Kredobank, The exhibition, 2026). From the point of view of cultural economics, the involvement of well-known craft brands in the museum space verifies their status as objects of modern decorative art, which increases their market value and reputational capital.

The central installation "Christmas Star" by artist M. Alekseenko (Figure 3) acts as a semiotic hub that unites the different halls into a holistic concept of "victorious energy". In the context of corporate marketing (according to A. Melnyk), such activity is interpreted as a shared responsibility for heritage, where a financial institution invests in the rethinking of national codes.

"In this graphic, we combined ethnic motifs, Christmas aesthetics and images of artisans into a composition of a nativity star so that it was truly about a craft Christmas. We wanted this star to be traditional and recognizable, but also new at the same time", says the author of the work, artist Yaroslav Shkriblyak. Star is from the Proto-Slavic gvězda (Kredobank, The exhibition, 2026).

Thus, the exhibition "Under the Christmas Star" becomes an example of how the symbolic capital of tradition is converted into social cohesion and support for local creative industries, forming a sustainable ecosystem of interaction between business, the state, and artists.

A special manifestation of the pragmatism of socio-communication technologies within the framework of the "Craft Christmas" project is the mechanism of direct conversion of cultural content into material resources for the defense sector. The case of the charity concert "Kolyada" (Lviv, December 2025) illustrates the model of event marketing with a high level of social impact component (Kredobank, Rare carols, 2026). The performances of the ethno groups "Kurbasy" and "ShukaRyba" became not only an act of revitalization of authentic folklore, but also the basis for a fundraising platform. The effectiveness of this model is confirmed by the accumulation of 227,000 UAH (through ticket sales and auctions) directed to the "1991" fund for the purchase of electronic warfare (EW) equipment (Kredobank, Rare carols, 2026). In the context of Wartime Economy this example demonstrates the high liquidity of reputational capital: trust in the bank's brand and emotional involvement in a craft product are transformed into the technological resilience of the Defense Forces. The synergy between the tangible and intangible was embodied in the creation of a limited collection of Christmas tree decorations "Kolyada" (collaboration with the Grono brand and illustrator O. Lutsyshyn). Each product in the series is a multimodal object that combines visual storytelling (plots from Lviv, Kharkiv, Boykiv regions, etc.) with audio accompaniment (archival recordings of carols). This approach allows us to consider a craft product as a carrier of regional identity and a tool of solidarity,

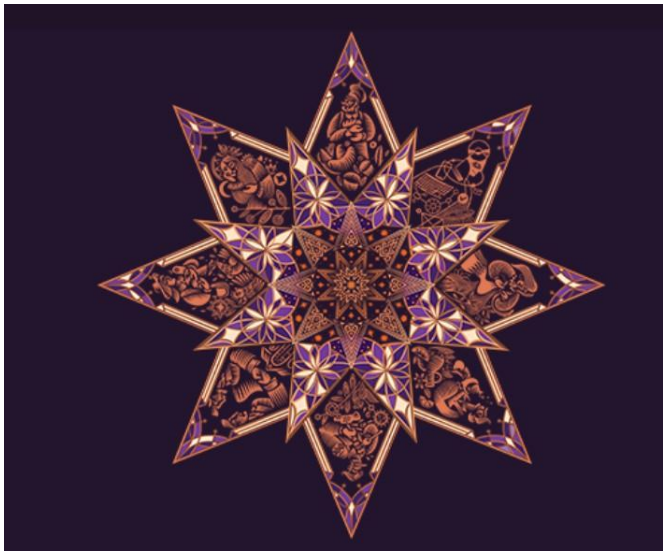


Figure 3. "Star" as a visual representation of decolonial discourse: a combination of ethnic motifs and images of artisans in the form of a Christmas Star as a symbol of cognitive resistance.

Source: (Kredobank, The exhibition, 2026)

where each transaction contributes to ensuring the cognitive and physical security of the state. Thus, the project proves that the integration of ethnomusicology, design and financial instruments creates a sustainable system of supporting the country, where tradition acquires applied defense significance.

The important thing in the framework of the conducted research is not only the analysis of the events held within the framework of the "Craft Christmas" initiative, but also the extent to which the population is aware and demonstrates the existing demand for this cultural series of events. The main service for tracking user activity on the Internet and identifying their interest in the analyzed issue was Google Ads (and its "Keyword planner" tool), which analyzes queries on the Internet based on certain metrics, and SE Ranking (and its "Keyword Research" tool), which is regarded as an SEO platform for analytics of web platform activities. Thus, the main metrics subject to analysis were "mention volumes" (namely, the frequency of mentions on the timeline) and "reach" (location of targeted queries) for keyword searches on certain sites. On Figure 4 there are the indicators which inform not only about the increase in requests for "Craft Christmas" during the winter holidays, but also about the devices from which information is searched. More than half of the requests are made from mobile devices, and the number of requests in December 2024 and 2025 significantly exceeds the number of other months.

The same data are confirmed on the SE Ranking platform, where the frequency of mentions of the key query "Craft Christmas" increases during the winter period (Figure 5).

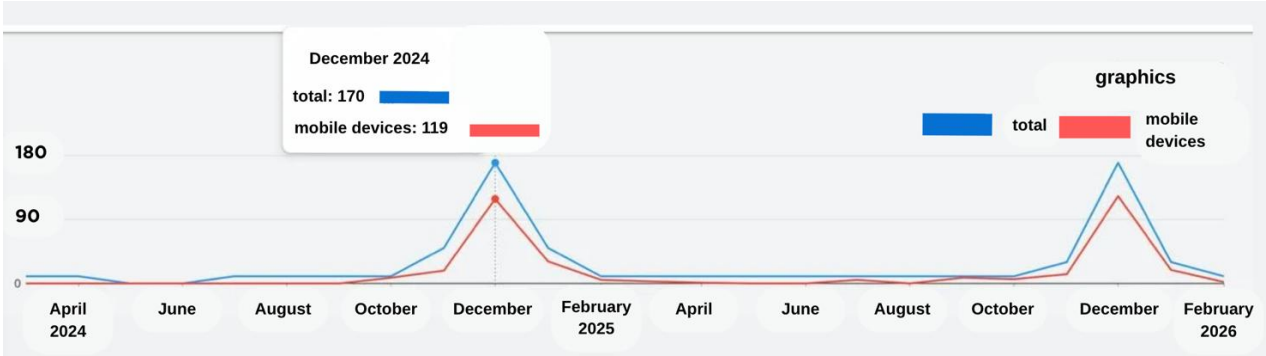


Figure 4. "Craft Christmas" information query metrics. Data from Google Ads



Figure 5. Indicators of information requests for "Craft Christmas". SE Ranking data

Therefore, the systematic activity of brands aimed at popularizing local producers and revitalizing national traditions is converted into sustainable public interest, which is confirmed by the positive dynamics of search queries and the growth of demand for information regarding the mentioned initiative.

The second important metric of the analysis was the "geographical reach" indicator, which allows us to verify the relevance of the implemented activities for different segments of Ukrainian society. Using the Keyword Research tool, the target audience profile was identified by territorial criteria. Figure 6 shows the results of localization of search queries, which indicate that the main centers of interest generation in the "Craft Christmas" initiative are the Kyiv and Lviv regions. The high concentration of queries in these locations (90% of the total volume) correlates with the high activity of specialized cultural venues and the media presence of key project stakeholders. The remaining regions of Ukraine, which together form 10% of queries, represent the potential for further scaling of the communication strategy and indicate the initial stage of diffusion of the craft narrative at the national level.

The effectiveness of spreading the decolonial narrative and engaging the audience is directly determined by the authority of the communication platforms that act as relays of the initiative (Figure 7). Based on the analysis of the Domain Trust (DT) indicator, it was found that the key platforms for popularizing the "Craft Christmas" concept are the initiators' official web resources and social media integrated with them.

The high level of trust in the domains of these platforms indicates the established institutional reputation of stakeholders, which ensures content verification and minimizes information risks. This confirms the hypothesis that in conditions of martial law, the strategic communication of big capital (in particular, the banking sector) becomes a reliable channel for broadcasting national values, converting its own reputational capital into support for local producers.

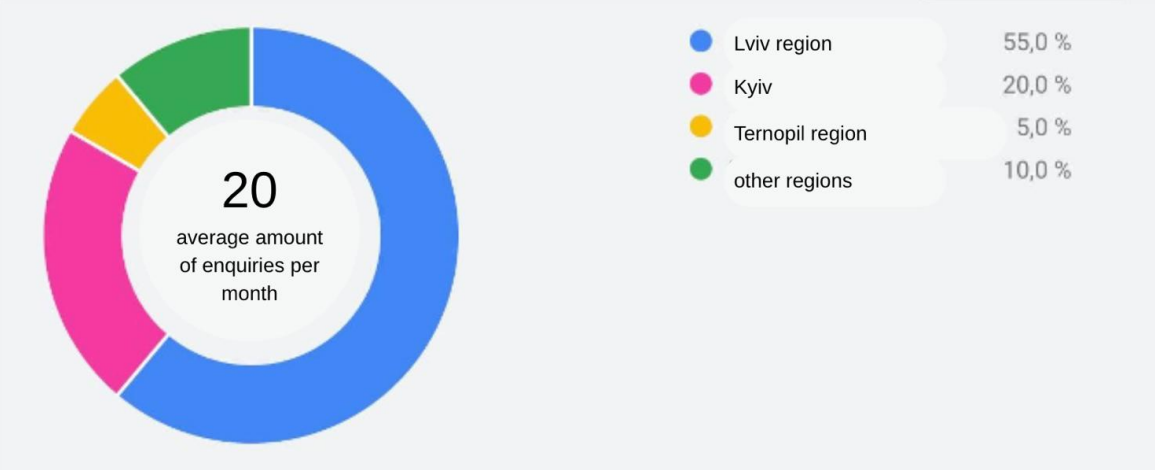


Figure 6. Localization results for search queries "Craft Christmas". SE Ranking data

POSITION	URL	TOTAL TRAFFIC	TOTAL TRAFFIC COST	KEYWORDS TOTAL	DT
1	Крафтове Різдво - Craft Banking від KredoBank - Кредобанк https://craft.kredobank.com.ua/rizdvo/	4	$0	9	68
2	Крафтове Різдво https://localhistory.org.ua/spetsproekty/kraftove-rizdvo/	2	$0	2	65
3	Крафтове Різдво повертається! А разом із ним ... https://www.instagram.com/p/DRuaClJghXE/	1	$0	2	100
4	Images				
	Крафтове Різдво https://localhistory.org.ua/spetsproekty/kraftove-rizdvo/				
	Крафтове Різдво - Craft Banking від KredoBank - Кредобанк https://craft.kredobank.com.ua/rizdvo/				
	як Крафтове Різдво будує зв'язок з аудиторією https://biz.nv.ua/ukr/markets/dopomoga-biznesu-2025-shcho-take-proyekt-kraftove-rizdvo-i-yak-kredobank-pidtrimuye-pidpriyemciv-50474946.html				

Figure 7. Domain Trust (DT) indicator

3. Formation of a Craft Cluster as a Socio-Communication Innovation: the Case of "Craft Zaporizhzhia"

If the project "Craft Christmas" (Kredobank) is an example of the macro level (big capital + national idea), then "Craft Zaporizhzhia" is a micro level (grassroots initiative + local resilience). The experience of the "Craft Zaporizhzhia" initiative allows us to analyze the mechanisms of forming **local identity as a form of cognitive resistance**. If nationwide projects focus on symbols, then local communities capitalize on territorial affiliation (place-based identity). The transition from a "home workshop" to a professional community (156 craftsmen) indicates the creation of a horizontal network that replaces the Soviet model of vertical management (Demianova, 2026).

The Craft Zaporizhzhia community acts as a **communication mediator**, helping small producers go through the process of legitimation (legal, psychological and marketing support). "A separate direction is the creation of content for project pages, advertising materials and support programs for new community members" (Demianova, 2026). This is the implementation of the strategy of **economic decolonization**, where the local producer ceases to be "artisanal" and becomes a market entity, and the direction is planned to be supported by the Zaporizhzhia Regional Military Administration. The organization of fairs in the format of "mini-stores" in large shopping and entertainment centres (CITY MALL, Amstor) is not just trade, but the appropriation (development) of space. In the conditions of war, when public space is constantly under threat, craft fairs serve as a **social stabilizer**. Direct producer-consumer contact creates an "economy of trust", which is much more sustainable than an anonymous mass market. It is worth mentioning that "before the full-scale war, the team also held large festivals with tastings, culinary shows, and raffles. This format is currently on pause" (Demianova, 2026).

The singling out craft food (cheeses, honey, sauces, drinks) into an independent format is an act of the so-called **"gastronomic decolonization"**. The rejection of unified "Soviet" or global brands in favor of the local tastes of the Zaporizhzhia region is a return to the **"taste of home"**. This is the capitalization of local knowledge, which S. Banerjee wrote about, where authenticity becomes the main competitive advantage.

Conducting educational hackathons and regular meetings (marketing, law, psychology) turns the NGO "Craft City" into an **educational hub**. This is an example of the intensification of socio-communication mechanisms, where knowledge is transferred through the **Peer-to-Peer model**. This strengthens the internal resilience of the community, turning the "hobby" into a strategic factor in the market capitalization of the region.

Their Instagram, as a tool for the visual narrative of local resilience, acts as a meaningful and thoughtful **"social archive of resilience"** (310 posts and 1102 readers as of March 16, 2026) (Craft Zaporizhzhia, 2026), because the profile clearly traces the transition from pure marketing to **military-civilian synthesis**. The visual content of the page implements the strategy of **"normalizing life"** in a frontline city. Photos of products (ceramics, textiles) against the backdrop of urban locations in Zaporizhzhia mark the space as "their own", controlled and alive.

This is an act of visual decolonization, where the Ukrainian city is represented through creation, not just destruction. Unlike the mass market, the Instagram of "Craft Zaporizhzhia" focuses on the **faces of craftsmen**. Each post is a case of **"individual agency"**: when the main attention span is not just on a product, but on the story of a person who continues to work under fire. In scientific discourse, this can be described as **"relational capital"**: the consumer does not buy a thing, but sympathizes the position of the craftsman. The page also is also used as a tool of **horizontal mobilization**, because Instagram is a platform for coordination of assistance to the Armed Forces of Ukraine and announcing "masters' meetings", which demonstrates the transformation of the social network from an advertising platform to a **socio-communication institution**. Thus, the project forms a "digital cluster" where intangible assets (trust, mutual assistance) are converted into the social sustainability of the region. An important stage in the institutionalization of this process is cooperation with grant platforms, in particular, the involvement of craftsmen in the "Permanent Competition of Creators" from the "This is Craft" fund (post from October 20, 2023). Such a mechanism for financing the development of prototypes of creative products on an irrevocable basis is a tool for investment authentication of local craft. This allows microentrepreneurs to overcome the barrier of transition from amateur hobby to professional production, while preserving copyright and subjectivity of the creator. In the context of decolonization, this demonstrates the transition from resource survival to the formation of intellectual property within the regional cluster. In general, posts often emphasize the authenticity of the ingredients (Zaporizhzhia honey, local herbs, clay), which within the decolonial process performs the function of **"geographic branding"**, legitimizing local resources as unique, nationally identifiable, which destroys the stereotype of the "peripherality" of regional products. A separate vector of socio-communication activity of the "Craft Zaporizhzhia" project is the **educational function of memorializing lost heritage**. An example of "digital commemoration" is the dissemination of the narrative about the Chateau named after Prince Trubetskoy (Kherson region) which is a unique object with a 126-year history and was completely plundered during

the Russian occupation (post from April 19, 2023). This case represents the collision of two **civilizational paradigms: creative (craft)**, based on generational inheritance and integration into the global context (recognition of vintage wines "Velvet of Ukraine", "Pearl of the Steppe" at the international level, supplies to the British royal court); **destructive (imperial)**, the goal of which is not only the physical destruction of assets (the blowing up of a warehouse in Gostomel with 40 thousand bottles), but also the annihilation of historical memory (the theft of a rare collection that has been kept since the 19th century). Highlighting such stories within the Zaporizhzhia craft community transforms the Instagram page from a trading platform into **a platform of solidarity and cognitive resistance**. Emphasizing that "the winery survived the First and Second World Wars" creates a historical perspective of invincibility. This forms the recipient's belief that the restoration of the winery is not just a business plan, but part of a **nationwide process of deoccupation and decolonization of the symbolic space of Ukraine**. Thus, craft production is marked not as private property, but as a national heritage for which the struggle continues. In addition, it is worth mentioning that Zaporizhzhia and Kherson are adjacent regions that are in a single modern military-historical context, and such a narrative demonstrates regional unity.

The particular importance belongs to the analysis of the motivational factors of craftsmen's participation in public events (fairs) in the first months of the full-scale invasion (post dated June 23, 2022). The theses put in the motivational post allow us to distinguish several levels of socio-communicative rehabilitation through craft:

Sensory and emotional authentication. The thesis that "goods want to be touched" in a scientific context means a return to a tactile, "living" reality that has been destroyed by the digital isolation of the epidemic period and the stress of war. It is a mechanism for restoring trust in the world around us through material objects.

Transformation from consumer to "accomplice". The offline meeting of the craftsman and the buyer at the fair is defined as a process of co-creation of demand. Unlike algorithmic online sales, a "live" dialogue arises here, where the awakening of curiosity about the local product becomes an act of solidarity.

The formation of a "professional caste" as a tool for survival. Post emphasizes the emergence of a "sense of caste" and horizontal connections between craftsmen (information sharing, joint trade). Within the framework of a decolonial approach, this can be interpreted as the creation of "local networks of resilience" that replace the destroyed global logistical and corporate chains.

Collective visual representation. The involvement of professional photographers into creating content at the fair ("someone is photographing you with love") demonstrates a collective effort to create a positive image of the frontline city. This turns the fair into a media event that broadcasts a signal to the world about the subjectivity and indomitability of the local community.

Thus, the fair in June 2022 at the CITY MALL Zaporizhzhia shopping mall became not only a trading platform, but a form of social therapy and institutional self-affirmation of the city's craft community. In fact, the theory of A. Koontz and N. G. Chapman (Koontz & Chapman, 2019), mentioned above, highlights in this case the ideas of "Authenticating Identity Claims": the craftsman at the fair "authenticates" himself to the buyer, and the buyer accepts his belonging to the community through a purchase.

A comparative analysis of the dynamics of queries for the marker "Craft Zaporizhzhia" revealed significant differences in the perception of the local initiative compared to nationwide projects. In contrast to the stable interest in the concept of "Craft Christmas", the local case currently does not demonstrate a formed target query. The results of the Keyword Research tool (Figure 8) recorded the presence of semantic asymmetry: the associative range of users is limited to narrow-profile categories of goods (for example, "craft beer", "barrel of Zaporizhzhia"), which does not correspond to the socio-cultural content of the initiative itself.

This situation indicates a lack of institutional communication at the local level and the need to develop a "consumer education" strategy. The lack of a direct correlation between the name of the initiative and search intent highlights the problem of brand-category blurring. This highlights the need to intensify media presence and use additional storytelling tools to separate the cultural craft product from the mass consumption segment.

4. Conclusions

Empirical research using SEO metrics has revealed an uneven formation of the craft narrative: while national initiatives demonstrate sustainable reputational capitalization, local projects (the "Craft Zaporizhzhia" case) face **semantic asymmetry** and a **deficit in categorical identification**. This underscores the necessity of transitioning from individual advertising strategies to the formation of **network clusters**, which provide "umbrella trust" and the collective promotion of authentic meanings.

The analysis of socio-communicative technologies for the capitalization of craft production within the context of wartime and decolonial discourse allows for the formulation of the following key theses:

1. **Transformation of the Communication Paradigm.** In conditions of crisis and war, the reputational capital of craft brands is based not on transactional benefits but on a **relational model** – the co-creation of meanings and identity. Decolonial optics

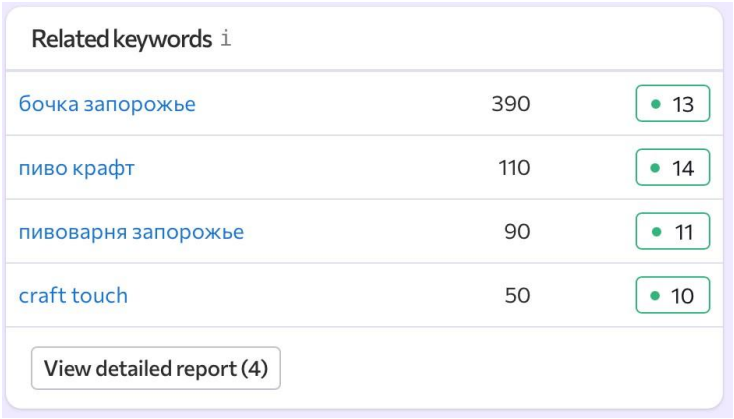


Figure 8. Keyword Research tool results

in communications transform a local product into a symbol of resistance, creating high added value and ensuring community loyalty by converting social solidarity into financial resilience.

2. **Effectiveness of Cross-Sectoral Collaborations.** The case study of the "Craft Christmas" project demonstrates the viability of the **Win-Win-Win model**, where large capital (Kredobank) functions as a mediator and **investment verifier** for micro-entrepreneurship. The use of "digital incubation" tools (advent calendars, podcasts, artistic interventions) enables the capitalization of intangible heritage, transforming it into a contemporary market asset.

3. **Clustering as a Survival Tool**. The experience of the "Craft Zaporizhzhia" initiative confirms that the network integration of local producers is an effective innovation that replaces outdated vertical management models. The formation of craft clusters ensures an **"umbrella trust effect"** and the distribution of communication costs, which is critical for preserving the **economic agency** of territories in frontline zones.

4. **Cognitive and Memorial Functions of Craft**. Contemporary Ukrainian craft serves as a **"social archive of resilience"**. Narratives of lost heritage (the Chateau Trubetskoi case) and the return to offline interaction through fairs (the CITY MALL case) mark local spaces as "ours", controlled, and vibrant. This implements a strategy of visual and gastronomic decolonization, dismantling the imperial myth of the "peripherality" of Ukrainian culture and economy.

5. **Development Prospects**. The capitalization of intangible assets through craft requires the further implementation of systemic approaches to **investment authentication**. Creating platforms that combine grant support for prototypes (the "Tse Kraft" case) with professional SMM support is a strategic task for strengthening national security and integrating Ukraine into the global market as a subject of unique intellectual and cultural products.

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