







# “Media behavior of youth in the COVID-19 pandemic in Ukraine”

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# MEDIA BEHAVIOR OF YOUTH IN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN UKRAINE

## Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic and quarantine measures have transformed the media agenda. The aim of the study is to identify the behavioral characteristics of the youth news audience, which is formed in the context of COVID-19. To solve research tasks, from March 24 to April 5, 2020, an intelligence survey of young Ukrainians as news readers was conducted. 364 respondents aged from 18 to 29, living in different regions of Ukraine, answered the questions of the Google questionnaire. The results of the survey are qualitative in nature and highlight the trends that exist in the youth audience. According to the data, the topic of coronavirus has become a priority for 82% of respondents. Phobias of young respondents increased: more than 70% stated they were worried and afraid. The alarm response to the pandemic has prompted many media consumers (46%) to turn to more information sources than usual. On the other hand, some media consumers have reduced their contact with the media, which is a typical protective reaction. Uncertainty, suspicion, and anxiety shake the confidence of the youth audience in public institutions and the media. The study showed the emergence of new challenges for media companies. The media should anticipate the consequences of disseminating information, fake news, and adjust content strategies accordingly: compliance with journalistic standards, responsible dissemination of news, fact-checking.

## Keywords

media consumption, news content, audience interests, fake news, content strategies

## JEL Classification

I10, M39

## INTRODUCTION

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the media agenda has changed. Almost all reports relate to the subject of coronavirus and quarantine restrictions. Regardless of editorial policy, all media outlets are talking about the coronavirus. At the same time, readers' interest in the topic of coronavirus has formed, and information on the development of the COVID-19 pandemic has become a valuable asset for media consumers. In this situation, it is important for newsmakers to understand how the pandemic affects the audience, in particular, what is the media behavior of young people. After all, the issue of responsible dissemination of information, the need to form awareness of media consumers without causing panic in society became relevant in the crisis. The youth group has a lack of life experience and, as a result, insufficiently developed coping strategies. As an addition, incomplete maturation of the frontal lobes of the cerebral cortex affects the level of critical thinking and goal setting. That's why news flow might cause psycho traumas of youth people. However, it is unknown what the reaction of the youth audience to the current news flow really is, that needs to be investigated. COVID-19 is an important and topical event that transformed the media and affected the media behavior of youth in Ukraine. A study was conducted to find how the pandemic

has changed the media system and how it has affected young media consumers. The analysis focuses on Ukraine, where the media has been significantly affected by the pandemic, but similar studies have not yet been conducted, as in other countries.

## 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Life in the COVID-19 pandemic is characterized by great uncertainty both in the individual and in the society context. To describe this era in which humanity is entering, Bauman uses the metaphor of “liquid modernity” (Bauman, 2000). It is a transition from a complex structured world, which is burdened by a different network of social obligations and conditions to a flexible, fluid world. Some words, forms, institutions, including traditional media, are dying out. One of the main factors is the proximity to the sources of uncertainty, as well as the ability to escape. Such a transition, according to the author, led to changes in human life. This is especially evident during the pandemic. Zygmunt Bauman (Bauman, 2000), argues that any destruction, threats, and gaps between the physical world and the information world generate phobias in modern society.

The COVID-19 situation is of enormous importance to our planet nowadays, and it is a very relevant event for agenda-setting. Agenda-setting theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) describes how the mass media may regulate the important issues; the mass media can make an “agenda” by controlling news. The media try to influence viewers and establish a hierarchy of news distribution, which leads to the manipulation of information among the public. Young people are open to the perception of information from different media and, at the same time, they inevitably have to overcome this cognitive dissonance. Festinger (1957) hypothesizes that some people might be more accepting of dissonance than others (Festinger, 1957, p. 267). The theory of cognitive dissonance makes it possible to understand how media content affects the audience, what are the motives of viewers/listeners. Festinger draws attention to how the media influence public opinion and the perception of viewers/listeners. According to the author, a media message can sow doubts in the viewer’s mind about his position, make him think and weigh it again. Thus, a media message is more likely to be more effective

when it comes to content that people have not discussed and do not have a clear position on that content that the recipient already has a clear opinion about. The theory of cognitive dissonance explains a certain conflict between internalized attitudes and externally imposed ones, which leads to ignoring “unacceptable” sources of information and creating “additional” conditions for assistance (Festinger, 1957, p. 267).

The stress theory of Hans Selye (Selye, 1976) explains how a person perceives an unpleasant situation, which is especially important in times of crisis associated with the emergence of COVID-19: “It does not matter if the situation we are facing is pleasant or unpleasant. ... To destroy them means to extinguish a person’s life, to make him insensitive to external stimuli ... It is with her that we must fight, or rather, try to prevent the transition of stress into distress” (Selye, 1974).

A special place in the structure of media behavior is occupied by instinctive media behavior. Quite often, the representatives of the youth audience, as well as the audience in general, act in the media space under the influence of natural instincts. Zhilavskaya (2013) associates some actions with the deepest, most powerful regulators of behavior. “Feelings of self-preservation, the need for procreation, protection, food, housing and communication, instincts of dominance and gathering – all these basic needs and regulators of behavior are reflected in the media behavior of man” (Zhilavskaya, 2013, p. 76). As Zinchyna (2017) notes, “The decisive influence of the media on the youth consciousness allows us to nominate socialization in the modern information society as media socialization” (Zinchyna, 2017, p. 332).

This issue is being developed in empirical studies. In particular, the Digital News Report 2019 (Reuters Institute) found that “young people were often frustrated by the negativity of the news agenda, about sensationalism...” (Reuters Institute, 2019, p. 58). It is also claimed that news

brands are less important, than social media for young people, where they spend their time constantly, “They use them for communication, for media, for games, for dating – and for news. Across all markets, the survey data reveal that the smartphone is the main device used for accessing news for the vast majority of under 35s (69%)” (Reuters Institute, 2019, pp. 55, 58). At the same time, according to the results of the survey, young respondents “expressed great interest in news formats that were more visual and easier to consume than the 800-word article. Some say that the lack of context or precondition was often also a problem...” (Reuters Institute, 2019, p. 58). In mid-March 2020, the Levada Center conducted a diary of information consumption among young Russians in large cities. The vast majority of young respondents receive news from the media, and the share of news from media accounts on social networks is not inferior to the consumption of media news on other sites. More than half of the respondents received news from acquaintances on social networks. The formation of the news order is dominated by media channels and on all research topics. At the same time, the share of personal contacts in social networks increases when the information affects the personal experience of respondents (for example, the introduction of distance work and learning) (Reuters Institute, 2019, p. 58).

Not following news making standards is a constant problem in the theory and practice of social communications. In particular, the intersections of journalism, ideology, and trust in them are considered in the work of Culver and Lee (2019) The Institute of Mass Media with the support of Internews Network focuses its research on the ethics of the media, that produce news content. 17 online media were monitored in January 2020. Ukrainian media Dzerkalo Tyzhnia (<https://dt.ua/>), Ukrainska Pravda (<https://www.pravda.com.ua/>), Ukrainskyi Tyzhden (<https://tyzhden.ua/>), and Ukrinform (<https://www.ukrinform.ua/>) consistently follow professional standards of journalism (Report on monitoring, 2020).

There are many articles studying the COVID-19 influence on media behavior of youth and their ability to detect fake news. The World Health Organization (WHO) uses the term infodem-

ics to define a situation of fear and insecurity in which the dissemination of false information has become widespread. An infodemic is an informational epidemic. The massive infodemic – “an over-abundance of information – some accurate and some not – that makes it hard for people to find trustworthy sources and reliable guidance when they need it” (Novel Coronavirus Situation Report – 13). An infodemic is “an overload of information, often false or unverified, about a problem, especially a major crisis. Quickly spreading in the news, online, and through social media, this information fuels fear and speculation, making the problem worse, not better” (What does an infodemic mean). Jacob L. Nelson and Harsh Taneja found, that social networking sites play a huge role in generating traffic for fake news (Nelson, Jacob L; Taneja, Harsh, 2018). The spread of fake news, part of which is on social networks, is dangerous because it affects health and can make the contagion worse and cause people to die (Pérez-Dasilva et al., 2020). COVID-19 has affected various social fields, including the media and journalism. Andreu Casero-Ripolles (2020) did research on the impact of COVID-19 on the media system and communicative consequences of news consumption during the outbreak. He writes about the role of legacy media, especially television, and the fact that citizens who usually remain far from the information have reconnected with the news (Casero-Ripollés, 2020). The results of the paper, in which the news on COVID-19 and 2019-nCoV in the Spanish media were analyzed, show “that digital media are the most used among other types to publish on the topic” (Lázaro-Rodríguez et al., 2020). Citizens are exposed to social media during a new coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in China. The prevalence of mental health problems is related to the influence of social media (Gao et al., 2020).

In this context, the media system is in the midst of a profound transformation process. For this reason, it is essential to study how news consumption patterns work and how young citizens obtain information. COVID-19 offers a unique opportunity to study these issues and their impact on the media system and media behavior. The study of the dynamics of information consumption by young people in Ukraine is extremely relevant.

## 2. AIMS

The purpose of the study is to find out the behavioral characteristics of the youth news audience formed in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The objectives of the study are:

- to explore how COVID-19 changes the activity of media consumers, information interests, priority sources, channels and formats of information, and
- to identify the consequences and effects of news consumption among young people during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 3. METHODS

To achieve these goals, a comparative analysis of data collected from young newsreaders in Ukraine was used. The theoretical basis of the research was accumulated at the stage of conceptualization. For this purpose, literature sources were analyzed and the basis for research of the theory and the concept was studied. Specifically, the dynamics of Internet users' queries was tracked using the Google Trends tool. The results of the research of the Reuters Institute, NGO "Institute of Mass Media" were also taken into account. The collected data were subject to comparison, synthesis and discourse analysis.

Google Trends data for the search term "coronavirus" for 90 days (from March 13 to March 23, 2020) shows a curve: the interest was growing rapidly, then there was a peak in the period from 15 to 21 March 2020, then the decline – less rapid, but not gentle. Interestingly, the peak for the query "COVID-19" falls on March 22-28: readers have understood the concept of COVID-19 a little later than the "coronavirus". These first observations motivate us to observe how the behavioral strategies and tactics of young people change during a pandemic and quarantine.

In addition, the Google Trends resource (<https://trends.google.com/trends/?geo=US>) tracks the dynamics of user queries for the search terms "coronavirus" and "COVID-19". To clarify and compare

the results and conclusions, the secondary data of research companies were analyzed: the Institute of Mass Media (Ukraine) (<https://imi.org.ua/en>), the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation (<https://dif.org.ua/en>), the Levada-Centre (Russia) (<https://www.levada.ru/en/>), the Reuters Institute (Great Britain) (<https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk>), and Wissenschaft im Dialog (Germany) (<https://www.wissenschaft-im-dialog.de/>).

From March 24 to April 5, 2020, an anonymous intelligence survey "Young Ukrainians – news readers" was conducted. 364 respondents answered the questions of Google Forms. An interactive standardized online questionnaire was developed – a list of predefined questions and answer options. Respondents filled out the questionnaire from their own computers or mobile devices. This online survey analyzes the impact of COVID-19 on the media behavior of youth in Ukraine. It was conducted to people over 18 to 29, who lived in different regions of Ukraine. Most of the respondents study at universities and work in the intellectual field. The results of the survey are qualitative in nature and highlight the trends that exist in the youth audience.

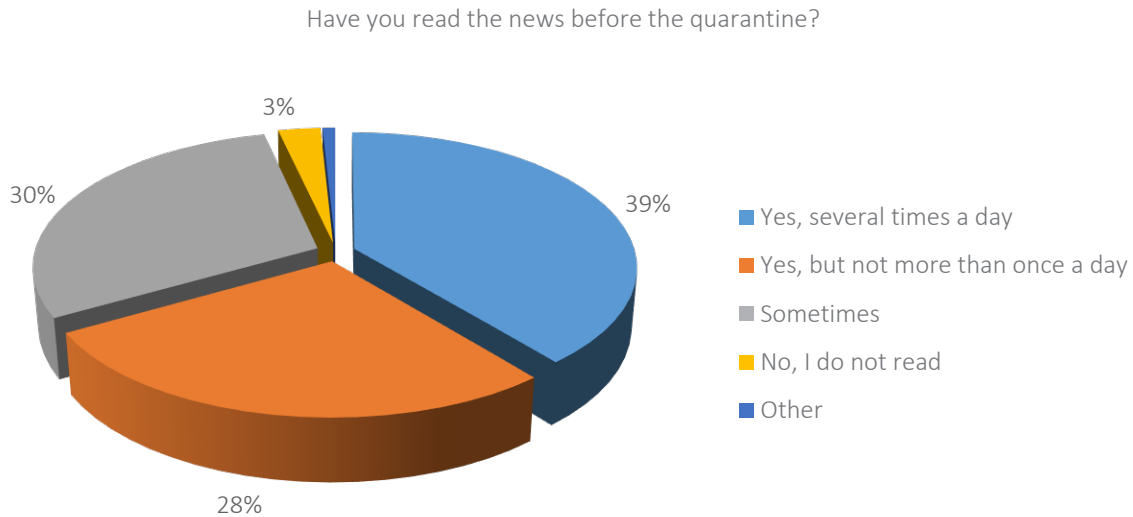
## 4. RESULTS

In general, even before the quarantine, young Ukrainians expressed a desire to be aware of various events of national and international scale. 95.8% of quarantine respondents followed the news with varying frequency, of which 39% read the news several times a day, 28% – no more than once a day, and 29% – sometimes.

After the start of the quarantine, the activity of readers has changed. On the one hand, the vast majority of respondents began to read the news more intensively. On the other hand, there were respondents who began to read the news less often amid the pandemic.

Respondents noted that they began to read more actively and intensively:

- among the respondents who have never read the news, 40% have started reading sometimes, 20% started reading once a day, and 10% – several times a day;



**Figure 1.** Interest of young Ukrainians in consuming news before COVID-19

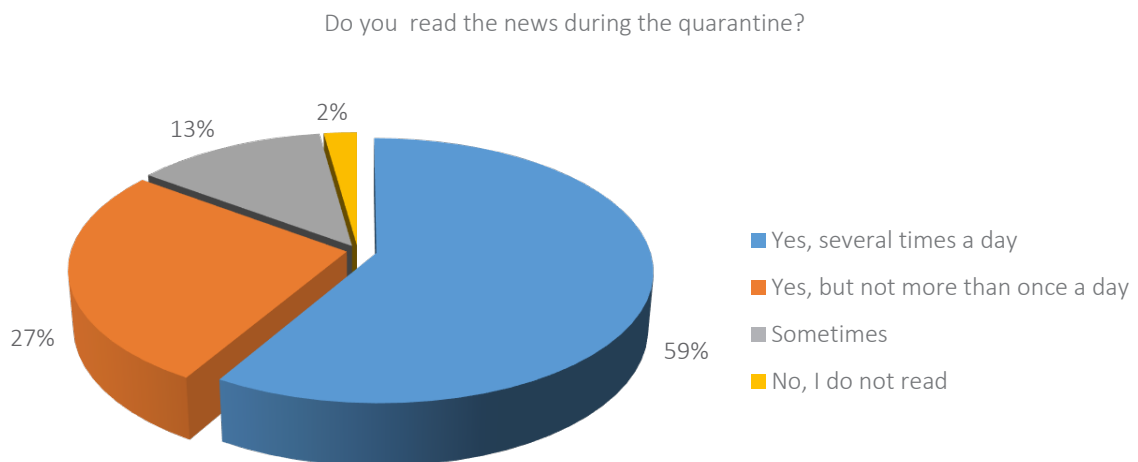
- among the respondents who read the news sometimes, 35% started reading once a day, and another 33% started reading several times a day;
- the number of respondents reading the news several times a day increased by almost 20% (from 39% to 58.5%).

that with the recession of the pandemic, they will again consume less news. The pandemic and its effects are the first global crisis that respondents aged 18-22 are experiencing at a conscious age. The news represents safety for them. In addition, the consumption of news in self-isolation is a connection with the outside world, an integrative process for them.

Analyzing the profiles of consumers, a trend is established: the regularity of reading news has increased mostly by one step; those who did not read the news at all or read them sometimes, began to read no more than once a day; who read once a day, now check the news several times a day. It is likely

The survey also showed the opposite pattern: in a pandemic, some media consumers reduced the regularity of reading news:

- 11.2% of people who read the news several times a day started reading it only once a day;



**Figure 2.** Interest of young Ukrainians in news consumption during the COVID-19 pandemic



- 12.1% who read the news once a day started reading it sometimes; and
- 3.7% of respondents who read the news sometimes stopped reading it at all.

The move away from reading the news also took a step: those who read several times a day began to read once a day; those who read once a day began to read sometimes. Respondents who started consuming the news less often almost do not read news about coronavirus and health. Obviously, this is a certain protective reaction to the dominance of traumatic information coming from various sources. Therefore, after the situation stabilizes, these respondents can return to the usual rhythm of news content consumption.

According to the coexistence of these trends (ascending and descending dynamics of reader activity), in the sample, the total number of respondents who do not read the news at all has not changed (2.7% before quarantine and 2.2% during quarantine), and the number of those reading no more than once a day (before quarantine they were 27.7%, and during quarantine – 26.6%) also slightly decreased. It is important for the media that the share of news readers has increased more noticeably than the share of those who stopped reading.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Ukrainian youth became much less interested in certain topics, and more in some, on the contrary. So not only the media agenda has changed, but

also the range of readers' interests – it has significantly narrowed and focused.

Readers' interests have declined to the following news:

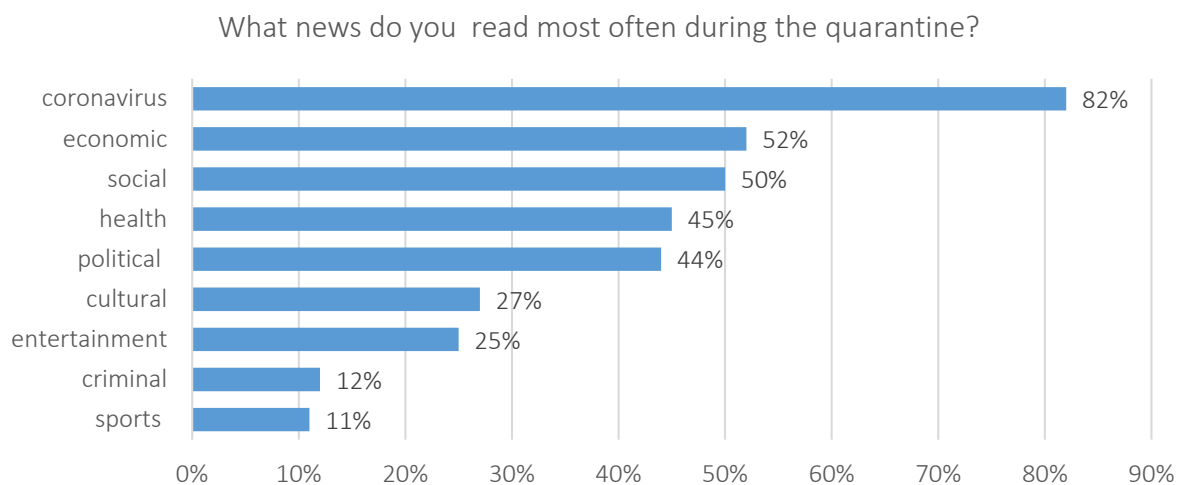
- entertainment – from 47.8% to 25.3%;
- cultural – from 45.1% to 26.9%;
- criminal – from 23.4% to 11.5%;
- sports – from 19.8% to 10.7%;
- political – from 55.8% to 44.2%; and
- social – from 53% to 49.7%.

The social news segment turned out to be even more stable: the readership decreased by only 3.3%.

With the outbreak of COVID-19, the situation changed: the coronavirus became the top topic in the media discourse. 81.9% of respondents read the news about it: this is how they feel “control” over the situation and “track” the spread of the virus. No other type of news, both before and during the pandemic, has such a high readability rate, indicating the unprecedented importance of survival information.

It is the instinct of media behavior that explains why, during the pandemic, readers' interest grew to the following topics:

- economy – from 23.7% to 52.2% (more than twice); and
- health – from 30.5% to 45.1% (this item was proposed in the questionnaire as a separate one).



**Figure 3.** Topics of news read by respondents during the COVID-19 pandemic

While in quarantine, 51.6% of respondents continue to receive news from their favorite source, 46.4% began to attract more sources of information. So, on the one hand, there is a high level of audience involvement, and, on the other hand – a slightly lower level of flexibility in selecting information sources, willingness to turn to new ones. This is natural. First, in quarantine, respondents are mostly at home, in an environment where they can read the news more often than usual, including several times a day. Secondly, the survey revealed a high level of distrust regarding the completeness of the broadcast information, suspicion and the assumption that the real situation is hidden from citizens. Accordingly, young people want to have more information, seek the truth, turning to various information sources. Their news sources include both international and national media brands, namely:

- tapes of news agencies UNIAN, Ukrinform;
- TV news releases, websites, social media pages of TV channels 1+1, 112, Ukraina, Hromadske, Channel 24, Suspilne.tv;
- websites, social media pages, much less often news releases of radio station as Hromadske Radio, Radio Svoboda;
- content of Internet projects as BBC Ukraine, Texty, Ukrainska Pravda, Deutsche Welle etc.;
- websites, social media pages, much less often news releases of radio stations Hromadske Radio and Radio Svoboda;
- content of Internet projects BBC Ukraine, Texty, Ukrainska Pravda, Deutsche Welle, etc.

It is noteworthy that none of the respondents mentioned the newspaper *Dzerkalo Tyzhnya* or the magazine *Ukrainskyi Tyzhden*, which belong to the quality press and have authority in society.

Instead, the most popular among respondents are news on social networks Telegram and Instagram, less often Facebook, YouTube. Most young people indicate only the names of social networks in their answers, and not specific pages and channels. Because users, firstly, do not pay attention to the

names of specific pages and channels, and secondly, do not consider it necessary to remember them, these details are clearly of secondary importance to them. Social networks are perceived more as a single communication space. In particular, 26% of respondents call Telegram their favorite source of news, and it is the most popular source of news for respondents.

In this survey, respondents said that they viewed news using the following devices:

- mobile phone – 95.6% (this device, which is always on hand, is the main provider of information);
- computer – 26.1%;
- TV – 20.6%;
- tablet – 3%;
- radio – 0.3%.

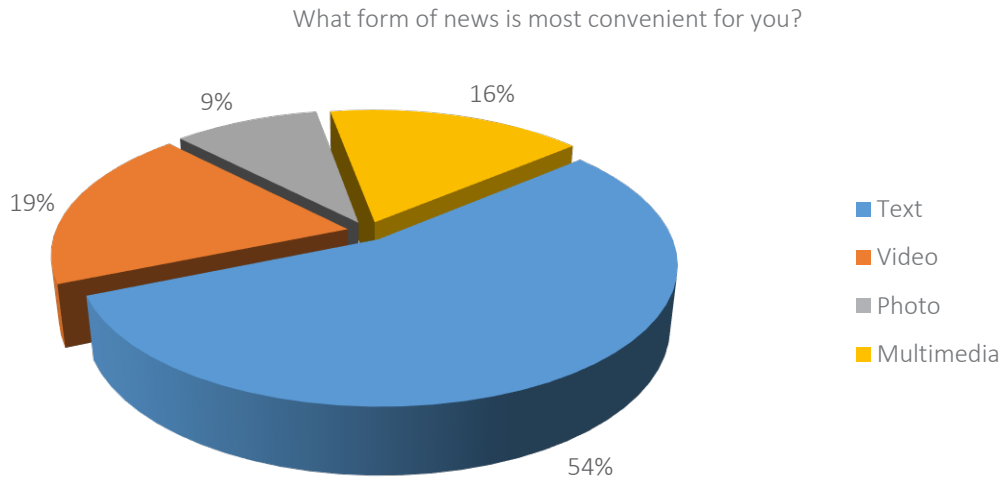
Young people are interested in fast news, instantly available on a mobile device, pre-aggregated, and recommended by someone. During the day, notifications of new messages come from information channels. Young people, being at home in quarantine, began to see them more often.

The survey also showed that a significant percentage of news delivery to young audiences is still maintained by television – 29.6% (assuming that the corresponding figure for older audiences will be even higher). At the same time, radio and audio news have no success with young Ukrainians.

An important aspect of the circulation of news information is the news format.

The question “*What form of news is most convenient for you?*” received the following answers: text – 53.8%, video – 18.7%, photo content – 9.3%, and audio – 0.8%. Almost 16% of respondents emphasized the optimality of multimedia news. Therefore, the results show that 53.8% of young news consumers preferred the classic text. And so answered respondents of both sexes (men slightly more often).





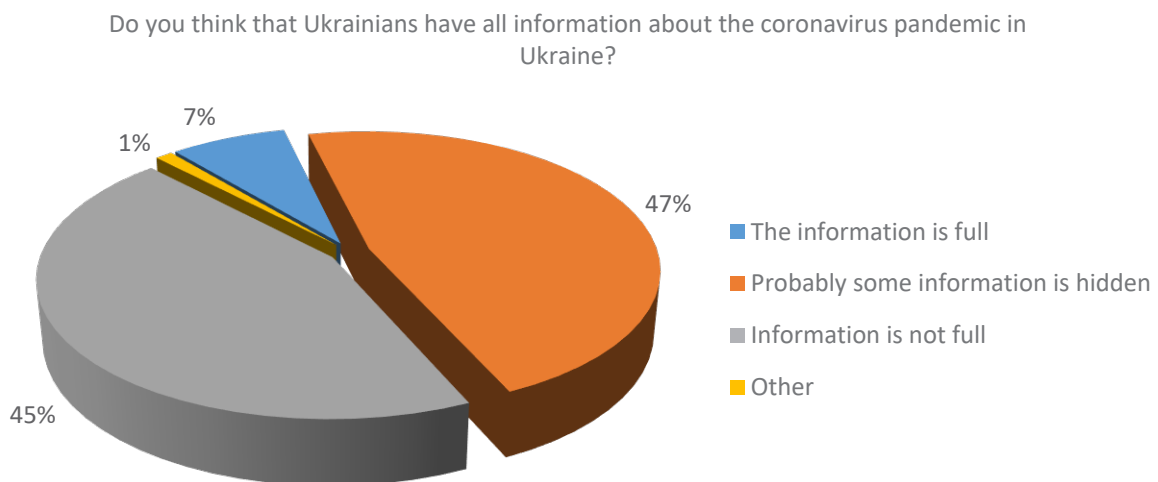
**Figure 4.** News formats that are most convenient for respondents

News (primarily hard) is mainly aimed at a rational result – the formation of awareness, social integration. The news text calls things by their names, records the statements of public figures, explains the context, the cause-and-effect relations. Respondents clearly articulate the requirements of the practical usefulness of information: “We need to tell the truth, with an emphasis on solutions, not problems”.

The second most popular news format among young people is video, and slightly more – among men (20.5%). This result is due to the popularity of YouTube video hosting and streaming news content among young people. According to the data, the still established commitment to traditional tel-

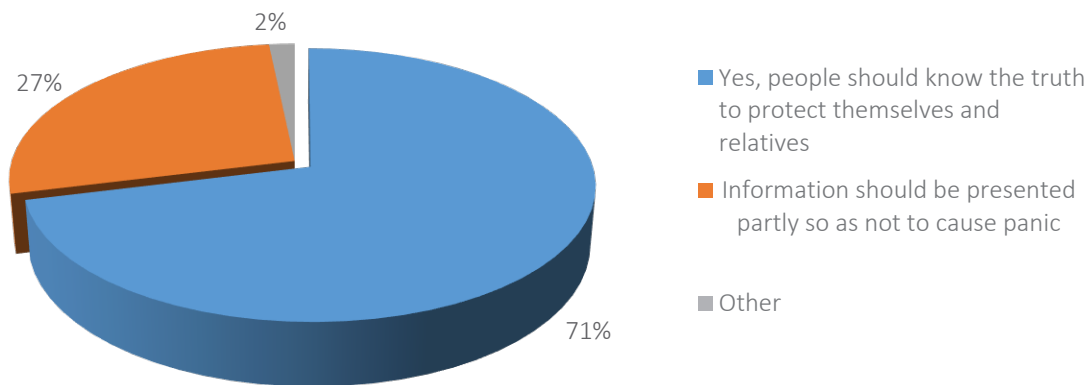
evision will be replaced by the habit of watching video content from a smartphone, so it is still advisable for TV people to develop video formats for young people on the Internet. In addition, 22% of women and 11% of men preferred the multimedia form of news, while 11% of men and 9% of women preferred photo content. In general, 44.8% of respondents mentioned some visual forms of information: video, photos, infographics, etc.

Respondents were asked whether Ukrainians have complete information about the course of the coronavirus pandemic in Ukraine? It turned out that only 7.4% of respondents believed that the information was complete. Instead, the vast majority argued the opposite in a more or less categorical form:



**Figure 5.** Respondents’ assessment of the completeness of information about the coronavirus in the media

Do you think the real scale and threats of the pandemic should be disclosed?



**Figure 6.** Respondents' assessment of the need to provide the media with complete information about the pandemic

- apparently, part of the information is hidden – 46.7%;
- information is incomplete – 44%.

Young people have a belief that they do not know the full picture of the situation – much of the information is deliberately withheld. It is the lack of information, not the fake news, that is the problem for the respondents. That's why they turn to more sources and watch the news more often than usual – they quench the information hunger. And until a person understands the topic, he has the illusion that he lacks information, because there was a lot of news about the coronavirus in the Ukrainian media – both about the situation in Ukraine and abroad. No less important are the results of the conviction of a large part of the youth audience that the concealment of socially important data is the norm, an appropriate tool for ensuring stability. As for the question, “Do you think it is worth disclosing the real scale and threats of the pandemic?” 26.9% of respondents chose the answer “Information should be provided in moderation so as not to cause panic”.

At the same time, 69.8% of respondents believe that people must know the truth to protect themselves and their families. Therefore, the majority of the youth audience is inclined to believe that society has the right to data, no matter what the crisis topic, and this is an optimistic result in terms of building democracy and civil society.

Almost 91% of respondents believe that the news does not reflect the full picture of reality, and almost 70% believe that people should know the truth. The following answers were received to the question “What information about the coronavirus do you trust the most?”:

- from the official authorities – 63.7%;
- from the media – 31.9%;
- from familiar physicians – 31.6%; and
- from people in their circle of communication – 9.9%.

Other options (from opposition politicians, foreign media, WHO etc.) had much less support.

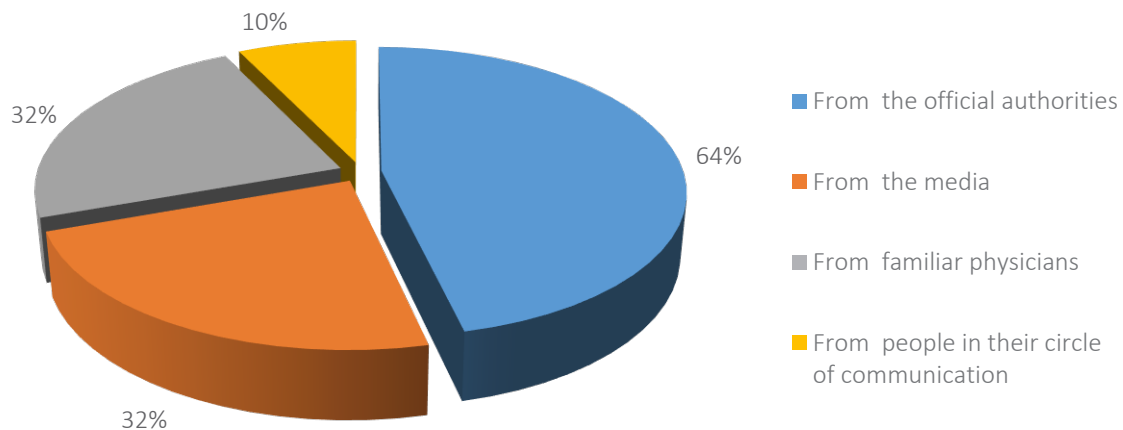
The study also showed that uncertainty, doubt, mistrust, misunderstanding and lack of information caused a high percentage of anxiety among young people. The respondents were asked “How does the news about the coronavirus pandemic affect you?”, and the following answers were received:

- I am worried – 67.6%;
- I am afraid – 3.6%; and
- I do not care – 15.9%.

In addition, there were their own options such as “Normal, neutral”, “Calm”, etc.

According to the data, the largest cluster of respondents is “alarmed” (adjacent to them is a

What information about the coronavirus do you trust the most?



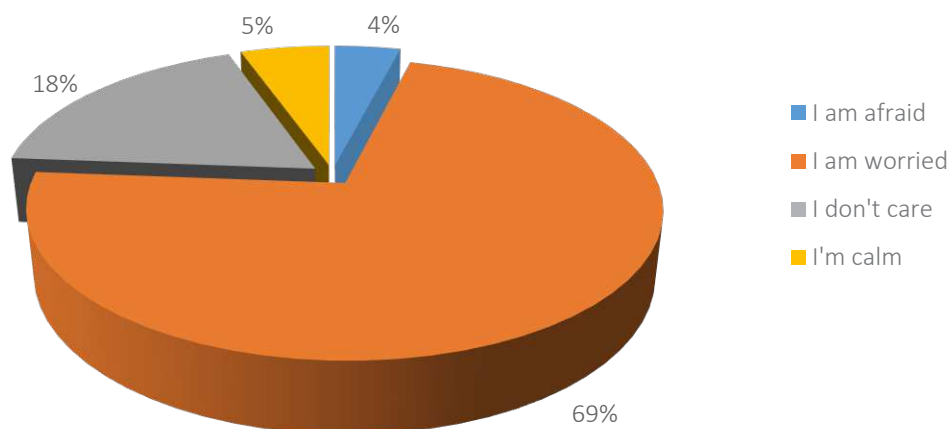
**Figure 7.** Sources of information that are most trusted by respondents

small cluster of “scared”). Among women, 74.7% chose the options “I’m worried” and “I’m afraid”, among men – 62.6%. The option “I don’t care” and the like was chosen by 25% of men and 11.6% of women. Thus, women reacted more sharply and emotionally to the situation.

In numerous sources, respondents intensively monitor the following topics: life and health of themselves and their relatives, as well as the economic situation, work, finances. These topics are triggers of anxious reactions; they determine the information interests of young people. But the increased anxiety caused by the impact of threatening information inevitably subsides as a result of habituation to the stimulus. Such “calm” respon-

dents claim: “At first it was anxious, then you get used to such news”, “At first I was worried, now almost not”. The level of anxiety is reduced: a person is not able to constantly be afraid of threats reported through the media if they are not realized in his immediate environment. It is assumed that the interest in news about the coronavirus will similarly decline. There are at least 16% of young people who do not take the pandemic situation seriously and, given age impulsiveness, can potentially try to violate quarantine measures. An excessive amount of information threatens protest reactions, such as: “Very angry news about the continuation of quarantine”, “I am against the panic unfolding in society. There are more threats from it than from COVID-19” (such respondents are called “aggressive”).

How is the news about the coronavirus pandemic affecting you?



**Figure 8.** Impact of coronavirus news on respondents

Interesting is the cluster of respondents (16%) (conditionally they can be called “indifferent”) who stated that they did not care about reports of coronavirus. It can be a certain social posture inherent in this age (mostly 18-22 years old) – an attempt to save face or the rejection of their own opinions, assessments, unwillingness to take action, to take some responsibility.

About 27% of respondents (conditionally they can be called “cautious”) believe that information about the pandemic should be provided in moderation so as not to cause panic. Most of the respondents show a typical protective reaction – they want to live in a “comfort zone”. 16% of respondents (conditionally they can be called “indifferent”) do not care about reports of coronavirus. So, news can be a trigger for phobias and anxiety.

## 5. DISCUSSION

In a crisis, the media not only continue to hold the attention of young people, but also successfully increase this audience. The dynamics of news consumption in a pandemic had two different trends – upward (stronger) and downward (weaker). Both the growing interest in the news and the respondents’ withdrawal from reading took place with approximately the same intensity.

It turned out that the range of informational interests of young people to quarantine was wide, it included both “hard” and “soft” news; the data obtained are fully consistent with the results of a study by the Russian company Levada-Centre (March 2020) (Potreblenie novostnoy informatsii – Consumption of news information).

The study found a clear pattern: almost halved interest in the so-called soft news. At the same time, it is characteristic that, despite the turbulent situation, young people, however, are interested in culture, entertainment, criminal, and sports news. And this despite the fact that almost nothing is happening in these areas – almost all measures have been canceled. Interest in political issues also declined. Before the pandemic, young audiences had to go through the crisis of 2014: The Revolution of Dignity, the shooting of the Maidan, the annexation of Crimea, the outbreak of war in

Donbas. In recent years, political topics dominated the Ukrainian media, kept society in suspense, intensified during the 2019 election campaign. In the difficult conditions of civil-society formation, the largest number of respondents (56%) showed interest in political news. During the pandemic, readers’ interest in political news declined, but not as much as in soft news.

During the pandemic, readers’ interests became more focused, focusing on three main topics: the coronavirus (health), the economic situation, and social issues. Gossip, the lives of stars (travel, intrigue), the achievements of others have receded into the background, and the survival of one’s own and loved ones came to the fore, as well as the need to know how the future, career, work will turn out. Hard news has become a priority for young readers.

Such a sharp “growth” of information interests testifies to the readiness of young respondents to mobilize quickly enough in a crisis. With the reduction of anxiety and the normalization of the situation in society, the spectrum of readers’ interests is likely to be largely restored, but the new media consumer experience will remain and affect the mentality and behavior of young respondents.

The popularity of news consumption through social networks is quite understandable. It is a part of their way of life, their format: from a mobile phone, they realize all their needs in social networks: study, work, acquaintances, relationships, entertainment, etc. The transition of life to quarantine online was stress-free for the youth audience.

Social networking algorithms relieve the need to search for information on their own, and young people consume the recommended content. Accordingly, media journalists today need to be active in social networks, have a content strategy for each of them, based on analytics to fine-tune the content – to adapt to the information interests of communities. In addition, you need to have a high-quality mobile version.

The young audience is still watching television. Obviously, traditional media consumption models are quite stable, associated with family habits. This conclusion can be compared with the find-

ings of Wagner and Hochreiter, who found that 84% of German youth were willing to watch TV; especially for boys, watching TV was a typical leisure practice (Wagner & Hochreiter, 2016). At the same time, radio and audio news have no success with young Ukrainians. They often listen to music, headphones have become an integral part of their style, but they do not consume news information through this channel. The reason is the slow formation of this segment of the Ukrainian market, the anemia of marketing activities, which should form the audience of radio news.

It has already been said above that young people often read the news on the social network Telegram, where much of the content is text. This is mostly short news with references to other materials (videos, news on the site etc.). The rapid appearance of publications provokes the viewing of new content, with additional facts, comments, and quotes. The media should focus on the following: news messages should be short and clear in the first place so that the user can quickly assess, continue reading the news, or he has already learned enough for himself. And this should be subordinated to the titles, which should look like micro-stories. These studies confirm the conclusion about the relevance of data visualization, for example, in Klemm and Staples (2018), Meier (2014), and Drozdova (2018). In particular, Drozdova rightly states: "The visual message... is characterized by cost-effectiveness, instant clarity, which ensures the speed of communication processes" (Drozdova, 2018, p. 97).

In the understanding of the youth audience, modern news is a quality text plus a visual (entertainment) component. Young people are interested in infotainment – news that not only informs, but also emotionally touches and entertains. Media journalists should be prepared for the fact that public discourses will be increasingly smoothed and mixed in the future.

Trust is a factor of communication. It is noteworthy that in Germany, against the background of the spread of coronavirus infection, confidence in science, medical research, expert opinion of doctors has increased sharply, and the level of trust correlates with the level of education of citizens (Hütten, 2020). This study was also interested in who young news readers trust in a crisis and

whether they trust at all. It has proceeded from the fact that trust arises from the belief that everything is going in the right direction and that the person owns the situation.

Paradoxically, suspecting the state the concealment of information, young people at the same time have the strongest trust in the current government. It will be recalled that in the 2019 elections, the current government had 80% support for young voters (taking into account age – up to 30 years, and incompleteness or lack of higher education of a certain part of respondents) (Who are those voters). Young respondents largely perceive the current government as liberal and "their own", so they are inevitably forced to overcome this cognitive dissonance and combine mutually exclusive attitudes. In addition, young respondents trust people from their own environment and the media. In the conditions of the crisis, the trust of young respondents is concentrated within the triangle "official power – acquaintances – media". This "trust triangle" reveals the basic model of media behavior. Young people are aborigines of the digital world and social Internet networks. They inevitably trust this environment – him and his regular heroes: politicians, experts, and journalists who appear on the air. Media journalists, responding to readers' expectations, should provide prompt, complete, reliable, and practically useful information, referring to official sources, to involve in the speech of those on whom the state of affairs in society depends, recognized experts.

Viewing news about the coronavirus provokes different reactions from respondents. Depending on the characteristics of the response, the respondents are divided into several clusters: "anxious", "scared", "calm", "aggressive", "cautious", and "indifferent". Most of them are the first. The diversity of respondents' reactions is due to their many personal characteristics, in particular, how they overcome situations of challenge and uncertainty.

The adaptability and stress reactions of young people to information about the pandemic are diverse, from growing anxiety to habituation and aggression. This encourages media outlets to adhere to journalistic standards and responsible dissemination of news.

## CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic has become a stressful situation for the majority of the population: the threat to health at the personal level and in the immediate environment, the presence of difficulties with work, barriers to communication and mobility, the transformation of universal life patterns. In such conditions, the media behavior of young people changes, which is reflected in the frequent viewing of news, information requests, and selecting sources of information.

Given the results obtained, news media, anticipating the possible consequences and effects of dissemination of information, must transform their content strategies. First of all, it is about providing quality and useful content that will not inspire panic. To do this, it is necessary to strengthen the explanatory component in the materials, that is to actively involve reputable experts (well-known virologists, government officials in the field of health, etc.). News should be a priori objective, but not depressing, which is achieved through priming techniques and layout. Messages about individual and collective responsibility for life and health that emerge in a pandemic will be important.

The news stream should include materials on the real epidemic situation, changes in quarantine measures approved at the legislative level, which are being introduced in Ukraine and the world, as well as in the regions of the country. The audience should be able to monitor the situation, compare data, draw conclusions about possible mobility, case planning, and so on. Static and dynamic infographics, diagrams, etc. are convenient forms for presenting such information.

In the news, it is necessary to thematize new practices of work organization, education, rational leisure – in general, a way of life in quarantine conditions, and talk about the corresponding progressive experience. News should promptly provide the audience with ideas for promising quarantine and post-quarantine greeting practices.

Journalists are offered recommendations on changing content strategies: to provide quality and useful content that will not inspire panic, strengthen the explanatory component in the materials, that is actively involve reputable experts; news should be objective, but not depressing, which is achieved through priming techniques and layout; ideas about promising vital practices in quarantine and post-quarantine periods, etc. should be promptly provided to the audience.

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