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CINEMA AS THE BASIS FOR FORMING / CREATING MODERN NATIONAL IDENTITY

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Abstract

The purpose of the article is to analyse the role and place of cinema in the formation and strengthening of modern Ukrainian identity; to study the main trends observed in the development of contemporary Ukrainian cinema in the direction of state-building and geopolitical processes, in particular in the context of the war that Russia unleashed against Ukraine in 2022; to examine the shortcomings that negatively affect the quality and perception of Ukrainian cinema in Ukraine and the world. **Research methodology.** To achieve the set goals and solve the tasks, the researchers used such diverse approaches and methods as analysis (to study contemporary popular films) and synthesis (to identify trends in the development of Ukrainian cinema), historical method (to clarify the historical realities of Ukraine's development), literary analysis (to study literary sources that highlight identity in cinema). **Scientific novelty.** For the first time, contemporary Ukrainian cinema is analysed in terms of trends in the formation of national identity through feature films. The main components of Ukrainian national identity are identified: awareness of cultural heritage, understanding of one's role in the collective identity, and active consumption of cultural and information space, including cinema. The role and place of cinema in the formation and strengthening of modern Ukrainian identity are analysed. **Conclusions.** It is determined that the formation of Ukrainian national identity is conditioned by history, language, culture, religion, territory, traditions, politics and education. The article has analysed the Ukrainian cinema space and found that there is a tendency to rethink classical works and appeal to Ukrainian culture as a means of forming national identity, as well as to cover the topic of war and heroic events in the history of Ukraine, which contributes to the self-identification of Ukrainians as courageous fighters for freedom and independence. The study also has identified shortcomings, such as the use of "trouser culture", acting unprofessionalism

and instability of cinematic development, which negatively affect the quality and perception of Ukrainian cinema.

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Problem statement

The Russian-Ukrainian war, which has been ongoing since 2014, and the large-scale invasion of Russia into Ukraine in 2022, have created powerful conditions for Ukrainians to perceive themselves as a separate and unique nation. Understanding the foundations of the national idea and identifying oneself with them gives a person an understanding of their own role and place within the state, generally defined rules that society adheres to, etc., forms historical memory and transforms a group of people living in a certain territory into a nation. The formation of identity is always associated with the functioning of society as a whole, the development of the state, etc. The messages that form and affirm the national idea are disseminated through various communication channels, including cinema.

Modern Ukrainian identity is a phenomenon that is forming just now. This is because throughout long periods of history, the process of the birth of the Ukrainian people took place under the influence of the Russian Empire and other states that sought to make Ukrainians "Little Russians", just residents of certain territories, for which neighbouring states competed or fought. However, it cannot be said that our identity did not exist at all. Undoubtedly, it existed and helped Ukrainians to survive, assert themselves, give birth to outstanding personalities and create outstanding works in

the fields of science, culture, etc. Now, during the period of large-scale invasion into the territory of Ukraine, the identity crisis arises with a new force that causes the problem of our research.

Recent research and publications analysis

The research is based on the works of such scientists as E. Erikson (1968), who in his work "Identity: Youth and Crisis" presented the theory of identity. This research is fundamental for everyone who plans to study the issues of identity and self-identification.

In his article O. Dovhan (2004) "Specifics of a Personality Crisis in Adolescence" considered psychological aspects related to the identity crisis.

O. Kolisnyk (2017) in his monograph "On the problem of defining socio-cultural contexts of the concepts of 'identity' and 'self-identification'" explored various theories and approaches to these concepts, as well as their socio-cultural dimensions and impact on society. Analysing these aspects, the researcher considered how identity is formed in different socio-cultural environments and how it interacts with social norms and values. He also emphasized that there are specific cultural and social aspects that will be explored in this article.

The scientific work "Self-identity of the Personality as a General Psychological Problem" by L. Tyshchenko (2013) was about the issues of identity and self-identification.

In his work "National Traditions of State Formation in Ukrainian Historiography and Political Literature of the 19th– 20th Centuries: concepts, ideas, realities" P. Radko (1999) characterized the process of formation of the modern Ukrainian national idea, emphasizing that the thoughts of theorists of history and political science should consolidate Ukrainian society, contribute to the rethinking of the historical process and indicate a new external course for development and understanding of their own identity.

V. Potulnytskyi (2002) paid special attention to the study of the chronology of the historical development of the Ukrainian state that he wrote about in his work "Ukraine and World History: Historiosophy of World and Ukrainian History 17th–20th Centuries".

In his work "The Phenomenon of Ukrainian Culture: Source Base and Methodological Principles of its Study. History of Ukrainian Culture" T. Yaroshenko (2012) characterized the phenomenon of cultural uniqueness as a combination of images, symbols, and worldview. In his opinion, the ethno-psychological factor plays a key role in the identification of ethnonational and cultural paradigms of ethnic regions, as it depends on the characteristics and differences of each historical-cultural community, such as people, ethnos, and nation.

Z. Alforova (2020) in her article "New Ukrainian Cinema in the Context of Contemporary Audiovisual Art" emphasized that the formation of new Ukrainian cinema in its modern form was activated after the Revolution of Dignity. She called the objective factors the internal motivation of society to develop a new democratic vector, as well as actions aimed at destroying the ideals of the communist sys-

tem and efforts to define the peculiarities of the "Z" generation and other similar initiatives. Also, the scientist studies artistic transformations, and the development of audiovisual art, reinforced by the support of the state and its cultural and artistic policy, which contributes to the institution of national cinema, as well as the interpretation of symbols of the new era in the works of the young generation of artists, the internal motivation of society to move forward and develop, as well as actions aimed at destroying the ideals of the communist system and efforts to define the peculiarities of the "Z" generation and other similar initiatives. Please note that with the beginning of the full-scale war against Ukraine, the above symbol received a different context.

Scientists I. Havran and M. Botvyn (2020) in their article "Documentary Cinema in Contemporary Screen Discourse" emphasized that not only the role of artistic cinema is important, but also documentary cinema. They believe that domestic documentary cinema has undergone an evolution that has increased the significance and authority of the modern documentary genre.

Ukrainian art critics O. Bezruchko and V. Chaikovska (2020) studied a similar problem in the article "Features of the Implementation of the Director's Intent in Documentary Surveillance-film". Their article explores the current state and role of documentary cinema in visual culture and screen discourse.

Researchers O. Levchenko and O. Bilan (2023) in their article "TV Journalism under Martial Law" considered the impact of distorting facts on shaping public opinion, manipulating public opinion, and possible ways to improve the quality of information provision for citizens. After all, cinema can become a source of con-

veying the truth about events in Ukraine both for the Ukrainian people directly and for foreigners.

The purpose of the article. To study the indicated issues, it is necessary to analyze the role and place of cinema in the formation and strengthening of modern Ukrainian identity. Study the main trends observed in the development of modern Ukrainian cinema in the direction of state-building and geopolitical processes, especially in the conditions of the war that Russia unleashed against Ukraine in 2022. Investigate the shortcomings that negatively affect the quality and perception of Ukrainian film products in Ukraine and the world.

Main research material

The formation of national identity is a complex process that involves historical, cultural, social, and political factors. History has greatly influenced the development of human consciousness and identity. The Ukrainian language is a key element for preserving identity, and the struggle for its preservation and development plays an important role in shaping consciousness. Cultural aspects such as folklore, music, literature, and art also play a significant role in preserving identity. Religion, particularly Orthodoxy, influences the formation of national identity and promotes the affirmation of national values. Territorial issues are also important, as historical events determined the territories where Ukrainians lived, and this influenced their national identity. Traditions, customs, cultural features, and even culinary dishes play a role in forming national identity. Political events and transformations, including periods of rule by other states over Ukraine, contribute to strengthening national conscious-

ness through unification against external threats. Education, especially the study of Ukrainian history, also influences the formation of consciousness and identity of people.

All these factors interact with each other and influence the formation of Ukrainian national identity. It is important to note that ethnic self-awareness is dynamic and changes under the influence of various factors, including modern political, economic, and socio-cultural challenges.

It should be noted that M. Vehesha (2008, p.264) in his work "Political Science" highlights the basis of national identity in modern political science, the components of which are:

1. Affirmation in society, in political activity of orientations towards respect for the person as the highest value, increasing the effectiveness of institutions that ensure the realization of this value.
2. Orientation not only to the state but also to civil society, creating prerequisites for the supremacy of law and order.
3. Affirmation in political relations of tolerance, and political pluralism.

Before proceeding to the study of Ukrainian cinema, it is necessary to outline the concepts of identity, self-identity, and self-identification. In translation from English, the term identity means "identity", or "sameness". However, scientists give a broader definition of identity when it comes to human personality.

One of the leading scientists who studied the issues of identity and self-identification was E. Erikson. In his work "Identity: Youth and Crisis", he defines identity and self-identification as two related but not identical concepts: "Identity is a certain structure of the interrogative nature of an individual in space and time, and self-identification is a catalyst for human activity concerning significant external

factors in establishing relationships between 'self' and 'other'" (Erikson, 1968, p.145).

Researcher O. Kolisnyk, in his work "On the problem of defining socio-cultural contexts of the concepts of 'identity' and 'self-identification'", notes that the problem of identity and self-identity is of significant interest both for scientific thought and for practice in various fields of knowledge:

"The consideration of identity from the perspective of searching for <...> a balance of individual and social existence of a person in a post-industrial society filled with various risks, is widely represented in the interdisciplinary scientific space, however, this research topic continues to be significant, relevant and revealed from new perspectives of vision". (Kolisnyk, 2017, p.118)

It is worth agreeing with P. Hnatenko's (1999, p.4) idea that the process of self-identification and determination of self-identity is always based on social interaction: "It is in interaction that the individual clarifies their own identity, trying to meet the normative expectations of the partner. At the same time, they strive to express their uniqueness".

Self-identification is a rather complex process that involves several important components. In particular, the main parameters of identity structure are the target, content, and evaluative components. L. Tyshchenko (2013, p.303) in his work "Self-Identity of the Personality as a General Psychological Problem" deciphers these components and notes that "the separation of types of identity is carried out according to the parameters of the presence or absence of goals, experiencing crises, the ability to make decisions and choose alternatives". Therefore, iden-

tity and self-identification are actions, and processes that are impossible without the active participation of the individual.

When researching this issue, it is also necessary to pay attention to the concept of self-awareness, which forms the basis of this process. Self-awareness is a product of personality development, which reflects its real existence in approximate schemes and forms. Along with consciousness, it forms the basis of identity. O. Dovhan (2004, p.150) in her work "Specifics of Personality Crisis in Adolescence" notes that "the prerequisite for the development of personality, its exit from the age crisis, is the realization of its 'I', its social role, itself as a subject of cultured human activity".

So, identity is a complex fundamental process that arises in an individual and takes place through the prism of the social. We can conclude that Ukrainians are currently very actively experiencing the process of searching for their identity – that is, self-identification. The external factor was the start of a full-scale war with Russia, and the response to this – the internal activity of citizens, the search for their own identity, which resulted in the creation of appropriate content on social networks, as well as films with the appropriate theme.

Usually, the foundations of a person's national identity are laid in childhood and depend on upbringing and values. A person's values and upbringing are "optional" things, it is not something that is defined by laws and controlled by the state. Such traits are usually instilled by upbringing. Thus, a person's self-identification directly depends on the family and its views on life, as well as ingrained stereotypes, which are often passed down from generation to generation. There are many ste-

reotypes associated with Ukrainianism and the "being of our people", but many of these stereotypes are now successfully broken and replaced with other messages. In this context, as noted by O. Bezruchko, V. Cherkasov and T. Shiutiv (2023) in the article "Formation of Readiness for Creative Activity in the Field of Audiovisual Art and Production", changes are taking place in the training of screen arts specialists in higher educational institutions of Ukraine of the relevant profile.

In our research, we analysed cinema as one of the factors in forming national identity. Cinema is a part of the Ukrainian cultural industry, which also suffered as a result of the war. Because of this, in the "Plan for the Restoration of Ukraine" after the war, creative industries are dedicated to a separate chapter in the section "Culture and Information Policy". The state plans the following directions for the restoration of creative industries in the short and medium term:

Restoration and increase in funding for the Ukrainian Cultural Fund, promotion of cultural products for the promotion of Ukraine abroad (by the end of 2025).

Training representatives of creative industries in the competencies of working in the international market (sales on international online marketplaces, using international payment systems, logistics between countries, protection of copyright rights, etc.).

Launching the National Office for the Development of Creative Industries as the main provider of state support for creative business and innovative development of creative industries (during 2023 – 2025).

Support for the implementation of projects in the field of culture and creative industries through the Ukrainian Cultural Fund (UCF) (in 2023 – 2025) on a grant

basis to support the restoration of the activities of economic entities in the field of culture and creative industries, supporting the restoration of the production of innovative cultural product, supporting individual artists, supporting international cooperation in the field of culture and creative industries (Plan for Restoration of Ukraine etc.) Therefore, the state directs efforts to develop creative industries, including cinema, realizing their role and place in the formation of the Ukrainian nation.

Analysing national cinema, it can be confidently said that our filmmakers are seeking their own identity precisely through the prism of wars, tragedies, and heroic pages of our history. Currently, most of the films released on screens are dedicated to the theme of war. However, even before the full-scale invasion, the film *Cherkasy* (2019) dir. T. Yashchenko, *Home* (2019) dir. N. Aliev, *Atlantis* (2019) dir. V. Vasyanovich, *Bad Roads* (2020) dir. N. Vorozhbit, *Guide* (2014) dir. O. Sanin, *Cyborgs* (2017) dir. A. Seitablaev, *Guard Outpost* (2017) dir. Yu. Kovalov, *Hellish Flag or Cossack Christmas* (2019) dir. M. Kostrov, *Kruty 1918* (2019) dir. O. Shaparev, *Black Raven* (2019) dir. T. Antipovich were among the films. All these films tell us about different historical periods but depict Ukrainians in the fight against enemies, as brave warriors, and resistant to external influences. Undoubtedly, such films influence the process of self-identification of Ukrainians.

In addition, reinterpretations of classic works are also popular. For example, the animated film *Mavka: The Forest Song* (2023) directed by O. Ruban and O. Malamuzh, based on Lesya Ukrainka's *The Forest Song*, recently came out in cinemas and became a leader at the box of-

fice. This indicates that Ukrainians are becoming self-aware as representatives of this nation, and this culture. Society is showing interest in its cultural heritage, and therefore the process of self-identification as representatives of the Ukrainian nation is taking place.

Such films help to realize oneself as the representatives of an ancient nation with a long history of struggle. Self-identification as a Ukrainian man or woman, who must fight for their freedom and independence, gaining it in the struggle, allows Ukrainians not to give up now, but to support the army and help win the war, achieving victory each on their front. Modern cinema of our state arouses considerable interest in the world, which also helps to form a certain image of a Ukrainian among the representatives of the world community.

Analysing the modern Ukrainian mass media space, in particular, cinema, the following components of Ukrainian national identity were singled out: self-identification of the Ukrainian people, which takes place both at the personal level and at the level of small and large groups. This is an active process, the catalyst of which are external factors, social realities, actions of other individuals, etc. It is impossible without two factors: active activity and the outside world; understanding of Ukrainian culture, its manifestations, identification of oneself with this culture; understanding oneself as part of collective consciousness and identity, expression of one's identity in the collective; involvement and active consumption of the product of the cultural and information space, including cinema.

In light of this, there is a desire to formulate Ukrainian national identity as involvement in a system of symbols, characteristics, and properties that define the

Ukrainian community. Analysing modern Ukrainian cinema, specific trends inherent in cinema as a whole have been identified that are involved in shaping modern Ukrainian identity. These include the visual richness of frames, forming high aesthetic-taste requirements in viewers through the presentation of a bright picture. Saturated colours, Ukrainian flavour, etc.; inclination to highlight and interpret historical events, presentation of historical moments in a fairly simple, understandable for a wide audience format; also, modern Ukrainian cinema often resorts to the adaptation of literary works, embodies in cinema Ukrainian fairy tales, legends and myths, including folk ones; demonstration of stable and formation of new material symbols: folk and historically conditioned clothing, jewellery, headgear, etc.; demonstration of intangible cultural heritage: music, culture, traditions, customs, rites, etc.

However, as a result of Analysing the films, we noticed certain shortcomings in Ukrainian cinema that affect the process of forming a national identity. Among these shortcomings are:

- The use of "sharovar culture" samples: this is the culture that was imposed on Ukrainians by the Russian Empire, and later by the Soviet Union. "Sharovar culture" significantly simplified and primitivized Ukrainian national culture: clothing, music and songs, traditions and rites. Unfortunately, many compatriots are convinced that "sharovar culture" is traditionally Ukrainian, so they resort to using its samples.

- Ukrainian cinema actors often demonstrate unprofessional play, because, for a long time in our country, there was no powerful acting school, instead, theatre actors often play in cinema, which affects the quality of the game.

– National cinema has not been developing for a long time, so there are quite a few outstanding directors and screenwriters in Ukraine, which also affects the quality of the cinematographic product, etc.

Conclusions

Therefore, we conclude that the process of creating national identity is extremely complex and long-lasting. The formation of our people continues to this day, especially the feeling of this process has intensified with the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war as it is just now a new system of values is being built, historical memory and justice are being formed, the process of understanding the rights and obligations of citizens before

the state, and the state before citizens is taking place.

Ukrainian cinema actively uses symbols and cultural heritage: clothing, jewellery, music, traditions, myths, and legends to form national identity. In recent years, more and more films on historical topics have appeared, their important feature is the story of historical events through the stories of individual people.

Undoubtedly, there are certain shortcomings in modern Ukrainian cinema, which are caused by a long period of colonial rule by Russia and the imposition of a primitive and weak identity on Ukrainians. However, it can be argued that Ukrainian cinema is steadily developing and plays a significant role in the formation of national identity.

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**КІНО ЯК ОСНОВА ФОРМУВАННЯ /
ТВОРЕННЯ МОДЕРНОЇ НАЦІОНАЛЬНОЇ ІДЕНТИЧНОСТІ****Олександр Безручко^{1а}, Назар Степаненко^{2б}**¹ доктор мистецтвознавства, професор;

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Мета дослідження – проаналізувати роль та місце кінематографа у формуванні та зміцненні модерної української ідентичності. Вивчити основні тенденції, що спостерігаються у розвитку сучасного українського кіно в напрямі державотворчих і геополітичних процесів, зокрема в умовах війни, що її Росія розв'язала проти України у 2022 році. Дослідити недоліки, що негативно впливають на якість і сприйняття українського кінопродукту в Україні та світі. **Методологія дослідження.** Для досягнення визначених цілей і розв'язання завдань використано такі різноманітні підходи та методи, як аналіз (для дослідження сучасних популярних кінострічок) та синтез (для виявлення тенденцій розвитку українського кінематографа); історичний метод (для з'ясування історичних реалій розвитку України); літературний аналіз (для дослідження літературних джерел, які висвітлюють ідентичність у кіно). **Наукова новизна.** Вперше проаналізовано сучасний український кінематограф з огляду на тенденції становлення національної ідентичності через художні фільми. Встановлено основні компоненти української національної ідентичності: усвідомлення культурного спадку, розуміння своєї ролі в колективній ідентичності та активне споживання культурно-інформаційного простору, включаючи кіно. Проаналізовано роль та місце кінематографа у формуванні та зміцненні модерної української ідентичності. **Висновки.** Визначено, що формування української національної ідентичності обумовлене історією, мовою, культурою, релігією, територією, традиціями, політикою та освітою. Проаналізовано український кінопростір та з'ясовано, що спостерігається тенденція до переосмислення класичних творів і звернення до української культури як засобу формування національної ідентичності, а також висвітлення теми війни та героїчних подій в історії України, що сприяє самоідентифікації українців як мужніх борців за свободу та незалежність. Також виявлено недоліки, такі як: використання «шароварної культури», акторська непрофесійність і нестабільність кінематографічного розвитку, що негативно впливають на якість та сприйняття українського кінопродукту.

Ключові слова: національна ідентичність; самоідентифікація; культурологія; війна; кінематограф; актор; режисер; театр; нація