

# Media discourse on receiving funds for financing of the elections'2019 in Ukraine<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

One of the most important indicators of democracy is electoral transparency, which is characterised by the legitimacy of campaign financing. Since Ukraine declares its desire to join the European Union, it should demonstrate the compliance with the values common to the EU, one of which is democracy. In 2019, Ukraine held «double» elections, around which, traditionally, a multi-vector discourse unfolded in the media space. One of the areas covered was the financing of election campaigns. The author applied one of the basic sociological methods of document analysis – content analysis of the discourse devoted to financing the 2019 presidential and parliamentary election campaigns in Ukraine. The results of the empirical study demonstrated that funding for these two campaigns was reported differently. Thus, in the coverage of the presidential campaign considerable attention was paid to the coverage of its various aspects. Moreover, the attention was paid to the type of voter bribery, known as direct. The parliamentary media campaign received less attention than the presidential campaign. The most frequent attention was paid to indirect voter bribery. The tone of the discourse was quite difficult to capture, however, if we evaluate the correlation between the negative and positive contexts of describing the financing of election campaigns, then, of course, the negative ones were much more prevalent.

**Keywords:** media discourse, election money, presidential and parliamentary elections in Ukraine, content analysis.

## Dyskurs medialny na temat uzyskania środków na finansowanie wyborów 2019 roku na Ukrainie

### Streszczenie

Jednym z najważniejszych wskaźników demokracji jest przejrzystość wyborów. To z kolei charakteryzuje zasadność finansowania kampanii wyborczych. Ponieważ Ukraina deklaruje chęć zjednoczenia z Unią Europejską, musi wykazać się przywiązaniem do wspólnych z UE wartości, z których

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<sup>1</sup> This research was supported by the V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) (<https://www.osce.org/uk/odihr/428918>).

jedną jest demokracja. W 2019 roku na Ukrainie odbyły się „podwójne” wybory, wokół których tradycyjnie w przestrzeni medialnej toczył się wielowektorowy dyskurs. Jednym z omawianych tematów było finansowanie kampanii wyborczych. W badaniach autorka zastosowała jedną z podstawowych socjologicznych metod analizy dokumentów – analizę treści dyskursu poświęconego finansowaniu kampanii wyborczych w trakcie wyborów prezydenckich i parlamentarnych na Ukrainie w 2019 roku. Wyniki badania empirycznego wykazały, że finansowanie tych dwóch kampanii było przedstawiane w mediach w różny sposób. W relacjach z kampanii prezydenckiej dużą uwagę poświęcono różnym jej aspektom. Ponadto dużą uwagę zwrócono na rodzaj przekupstwa wyborców zwany bezpośrednim. Parlamentarna kampania medialna cieszyła się znacznie mniejszym zainteresowaniem niż kampania prezydencka. Najczęściej zwracano uwagę na pośrednie przekupstwo wyborców. Ton dyskursu był dość trudny do uchwycenia, jednak jeśli ocenimy korelację między negatywnym i pozytywnym kontekstem opisu finansowania kampanii wyborczych, to oczywiście negatywne były zdecydowanie bardziej rozpowszechnione.

**Słowa kluczowe:** dyskurs medialny, pieniądze wyborcze, wybory prezydenckie i parlamentarne na Ukrainie, analiza treści.

It is difficult to overestimate or underestimate the influence of the media in contemporary world. The media world today is affecting almost every sphere of society. Ukrainian society has two major characteristics: it is politicised and prone to media influence. As early as 1990, Joseph Nye Jr proposed the notion of soft power, which was expanded through his subsequent work. His understanding of the use of soft power involves voluntary submission through conviction and propaganda using discourse (Nye Jr 2008). However, long before J. Nye Jr, M. Foucault conceptually combined the concept of power (as a form of force) with the notion of discourse. According to M. Foucault, power is the multiple ratio of force, when strategic settings are implemented through a variety of discourses (Foucault 1996: p. 203–204). The modern mass media are agents of soft power, according to Nye Jr, or agents of power over society through their discourse, according to Foucault. Researchers study the power of this influence, its features, specifics, and dynamics. They consider the reasons for reaching an audience with a particular type of media, the authority of channels, etc.

The topic of money circulating in Ukrainian politics, in particular during election campaigns, is present in the media discourse. It is indisputable that the discourse built by media channels on this topic constructs a certain image of the phenomenon among media consumers, who include a significant number of Ukrainians.

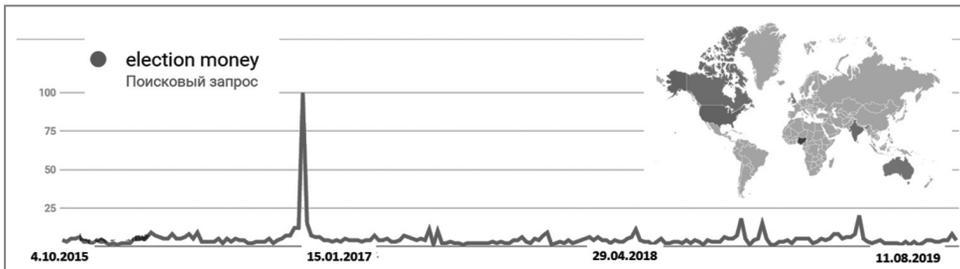
The research questions of this article are the following:

- What tone this discourse has, and what vectors (components) it offers to the Ukrainian public?
- Does the media represent the use of funds for politics as a way of coming up with toxic political projects (politicians) or as a way of solving the problems of Ukrainians?
- Is there a general imposition of negativity through the media on the use of money for politics, or justification of such involvement of finances and a number of other hypothetical assumptions?

All these questions will be revealed in the presented study.

To roughly estimate the interest of the Ukrainian consumer towards information on the topic of election campaign financing, the simple tool can be used – *Google Trends* (<https://trends.google.com>). Unless additional search terms are added, such as “presidential elections”, “parliamentary elections” (in Ukrainian: „президентські вибори”, „парламентські вибори”), the tool will not reflect the interest in the topic of money and elections at all, indicating too little query. For comparison, the English-language search term “election money” has a constant low interest<sup>2</sup> (see *Figure 1*).

**Figure 1. Interest in the term “election money”**



Source: own elaboration based on *Google Trends*.

However, despite the lack of audience interest (checked by one way only), the topic is widely broadcasted through media channels. Automated sampling offers more than 5,000 messages containing the topic of money and elections.

One of the largest attempts of Ukrainian researchers to analyse the role of the media in the election campaign was the book *Denim Freedom* (ukr. «Джинсова» свобода) – the collection of papers dedicated to the 2006 parliamentary elections in Ukraine (Dovzhenko, Ligachova 2006). This book has a very professional and thorough analysis of trends, prevailed in the television space of the election period. The issues related to political advertising and manipulation have been addressed. Funding issues are considered only in terms of “power/ the political party – money – journalism”. It is about the willingness of journalists to act according to the principle of “money does not smell” and execute political orders, conceal and distort information, use manipulative technologies (Dovzhenko, Ligachova 2006: p.7). The issue of financing election campaigns and their coverage in the media is not addressed. This is understandable since the perspective of this study focused on the problems of journalism and political aspects.

Another study, which considered the issue of the voter bribery, was conducted by the Content Analysis Center during the period 14.01–28.02.2019 (*Pidkup vybortsiv 2019*). In the study, analysts worked with a sample of the TOP-60 Internet media, television, radio, press and Facebook (core audience), which made 1491 messages with 20.6 million audience contacts. This empirical study analysed the distribution of voter bribery in the

<sup>2</sup> The peak of interest was indicated on October 30, 2016, when former Director of the US Central Intelligence Agency John Brennan said that Russian interference in the 2016 US presidential election changed the opinion of voters.

media and Facebook, the dynamics of topic coverage, key messages and theses, distribution channels, and a list of key speakers broadcasting voter bribery. With regard to the outlined study, there are several issues that are worth noting. Firstly, despite the obtained quantitative and qualitative data and analysis conducted being sufficiently detailed, the study was based on a rather limited research period (lasting just over a month), whereas the election process in Ukraine was two-stage and lengthy. Secondly, the study solely used the concept of "bribery", whereas in the media space a much wider set of concepts related to financing within the electoral process is articulated.

The handbook *Funding of political parties and election campaigns* (Falguera et al. 2014) presents an explanation of the categories and subcategories used in my research toolkit. This handbook provides a global overview of the financing of political activity in theory and practice in terms of different parts of the world, states. It discusses the central issues in this area regarding the political situation and problems that are characteristic of Eastern Europe, which includes Ukraine. It is important to understand and describe in detail the types of financing of political parties and campaigns and their dependence on the level of democratisation of society. It is emphasised that the abuse of state resources is most characteristic of the countries of the former USSR and Africa (Falguera et al. 2014), which poses a reasonable threat to the formation of democracy.

Since empirical sociological research is always "mosaic", it demonstrates not only the subject of study, but also the methodology and method around which it is built. Nowadays, a significant number of publications are devoted to content-analytical research and various searches. This is directly correlated with the fact that the flow of information is constantly increasing in modern world. Its study is becoming a challenge for researchers. O. Ivanov and A. Zakharchenko are Ukrainian authors, who most actively work with theoretical and methodological aspects of the content-analytical research. They offer a number of policy studies based on the use of content analysis.

For example, the article *Elite's international communication studies with the use of content-analysis* presented methodological value, advantages and drawbacks of content analysis in the field of interstate political elite communication studies. The method was reviewed in historical perspective, and examples of modern content-analytical studies of international communication were described (Ivanov 2009: p. 49). The author also has a number of other works on the methodology of content-analytical research (Ivanov 2013, 2012, 2017), as well as content-analytical research in the field of political communication (Ivanov 2010, 2016).

Zakharchenko and his co-authors conducted a detailed analysis of the 2019 presidential election campaign (Zakharchenko et al. 2019). In their study, the authors used content analysis and discourse analysis to demonstrate how these methods can be used to study communication within political campaigns on a social network (in particular, Facebook). In another publication, Zakharchenko develops a comprehensive method for measuring the impact of relevant public information on the active part of society by observing the dynamics of the spread of this information on social networks (see: Zakharchenko 2016). The author demonstrates how the analysis of a significant number of posts on social networks can predict public sentiment.

## Research methodology

*The object* of empirical sociological research involves the means of financing presidential and parliamentary elections. *The subject* – media discourse on raising funds to finance the 2019 presidential and parliamentary elections in Ukraine. *The aim of the research* – to study the substantive components and tone of the media discourse on raising funds for the 2019 presidential and parliamentary elections in Ukraine.

*The basic hypothesis (1)*: the media discourse will often be dominated by all other funding options for voter bribery<sup>3</sup>.

*The consequence hypothesis (1.a)* information on direct bribery of voters will prevail, namely bribery through cash payments;

*The consequence hypothesis (1.b)* voter bribery information will be overwhelmingly negative.

### Sampling

Sampling in content analytics is often defined as "soft". Moreover, it is formed, based on the considerations of the researcher, quite "chaotically". However, nowadays, when automated computer tools are widespread, which allow to generate large arrays of text data, above-mentioned characteristic is not correct in many cases.

In total, 1580 media messages were received using the automated *Mediateka* tool (<http://mediateka.com.ua/>) using a search query:

(грн|гривен\*|долар\*|доллар\*|грош\*|денег|деньг\*|денеж\*|фінанс\*|финанс\*) NEAR/10(вибор\*|выбор\*|кандидат\*)NEAR/10(фонд\*|подкуп\*|підкуп\*)<sup>4</sup>.

These messages were collected during the period from 3.12.2018 to 31.07.2019, broadcasted by TOP-20 media in Ukraine. The general population did not include social media posts. The sample type is multistage. In the first step, 470 texts were read (coded) completely, with a parallel rejection of some of them. Only unique media texts were encoded. The following categories of media texts were "rejected":

- 1) copies of media messages broadcast through different channels;
- 2) duplicates (not substantially modified copies), including the ones in different languages;
- 3) texts relevant to the topic (for example, notification of the dependence of the next IMF tranche on the election situation);
- 4) a public announcement of the situation/event (e.g. budget adoption, reorganisation of subsidies, payment of pensions) and mention that this occurs during the election period;
- 5) content of candidates' election declarations;
- 6) review of the situation regarding the financing of the previous elections in Ukraine;

<sup>3</sup> This hypothesis is partly based on the results of the author's research on the impact of information support to the public through the press during the election period on overcoming the political barrier (content analysis of the printed press of the 2015 election period in different regions of Ukraine). Among the mentioned problems of the 2015 election process in the press of different cities (see: Yuzva 2016).

<sup>4</sup> (UAH|hryvnia|dollar|money|finance\*)NEAR/10(election|candidate\*)NEAR/10(fund|bribe|bribery\*) – in English. The request takes into account the linguistic situation of the domestic media space.

- 7) texts on elections and their financing in other countries;
- 8) messages that did not correspond to the topic (for example, election / competition in an artistic organisation for a monetary reward).

After reading 470 media messages, the survey tool was saturated<sup>5</sup>. Therefore, in the second step of sample construction, a simple random sample was calculated using the formula to justify the step:

$$n = \frac{t^2 \sigma^2 N}{N \Delta^2 + t^2 \sigma^2} = \frac{1,96^2 \times 0,5^2 \times 1580}{0,05^2 \times 1580 + 1,96^2 \times 0,5^2} = 309$$

As the study found that the array contains non-targeted articles, their percentage for the control group (470 texts coded) was calculated. In the coded control group, 123 unique texts were identified.

470 – 100%

123 – x

$$x = \frac{123 \times 100}{470} = 26\%$$

Therefore, this suggests that the share of non-targeted articles should not exceed 25%.

$$n_o = \frac{n_x \times 100}{re\%} = \frac{309 \times 100}{77} = 401$$

( $n_o$  – the actual sample size;  $n_x$  – minimum sample size;  $re\%$  – the proportion of media posts that will be retrieved).

Thus, the number of units of analysis should be 401.

As 123 media texts were encoded in the course of constructing the codifier (out of 470 / No. 75179105 (465)), the last step in the formation of the sample population was calculated by the step, from which the sources were selected:

401 – 123 = 278 (sample volume left to code)

$$\mathcal{K}_B = \frac{N}{n} = 4$$

( $N$  – volume of the general population;  $n$  – sample volume).

Provided that the source belonged to the category to be rejected, the following source was selected. Provided that, within step 4, all texts belonged to the rejection categories - they were not coded. Thus, the *actual sample population* was  $n = 123 + 254 = 377$  units of analysis.

<sup>5</sup> That is, a set of categories / sub-categories of analysis was formed, which was no longer supplemented. Of course, there were isolated exceptions. For example, when after the texts of the second round of the presidential election appeared, a subcategory of the debate funding and rental facilities for the Olympic Stadium was added.

### Research methods

Content analysis was the basic method of research (Krippendorff 2004; Bataeva 2018). The method of content analysis is considered as a method (or methodology) of obtaining reliable and valid conclusions from texts in the social context, utilising intersubjectively consistent rules of information systematisation (Ivanov 2013: p. 71). As Krippendorff notes, "content analysis is an empirically grounded method, exploratory in process, and predictive or inferential in intent" (Krippendorff 2004: p.1). It is worth noting that content analysis as a method is not only a set of general principles of comprehension of texts in terms of social theories, but also a set of procedures for processing these texts (Ivanov 2013: p. 70). A number of such procedures were implemented in this study. These include procedures such as codifier design, sampling, coding, and more. Taking into account that the content analysis is implemented in several stages, at the initial stage (theoretical and methodological) the main elements of the methodology of sociological research, such as the object and subject of research, were formulated and hypotheses were put forward (these elements are presented above). *The toolkit of the study* was an authoritative (Iuzva, author) codifier developed by the search engine (see *Table 1*). All the texts included in the sample were read, and in the process of their analytical reading significant markers were selected from them. The larger ones were singled out, and they became categories of research that filled narrower concepts (subcategories).

All in all, the study presents all possible categories and sub-categories of analysis contained in the media stream. The analysis categories for the parliamentary and presidential campaigns/ elections were not identical and reflected the specifics of the financing of these campaigns.

**Table 1. Codifier snippet (parliamentary election)**

Analysis Category	Subcategory	
Bribing a voter	direct bribery	money
		money for deputies' districts
	indirect bribery	products
		charity events
		gifts for children
		theater performances
	social assistance	repair entrances, roofs and basements

Source: own elaboration.

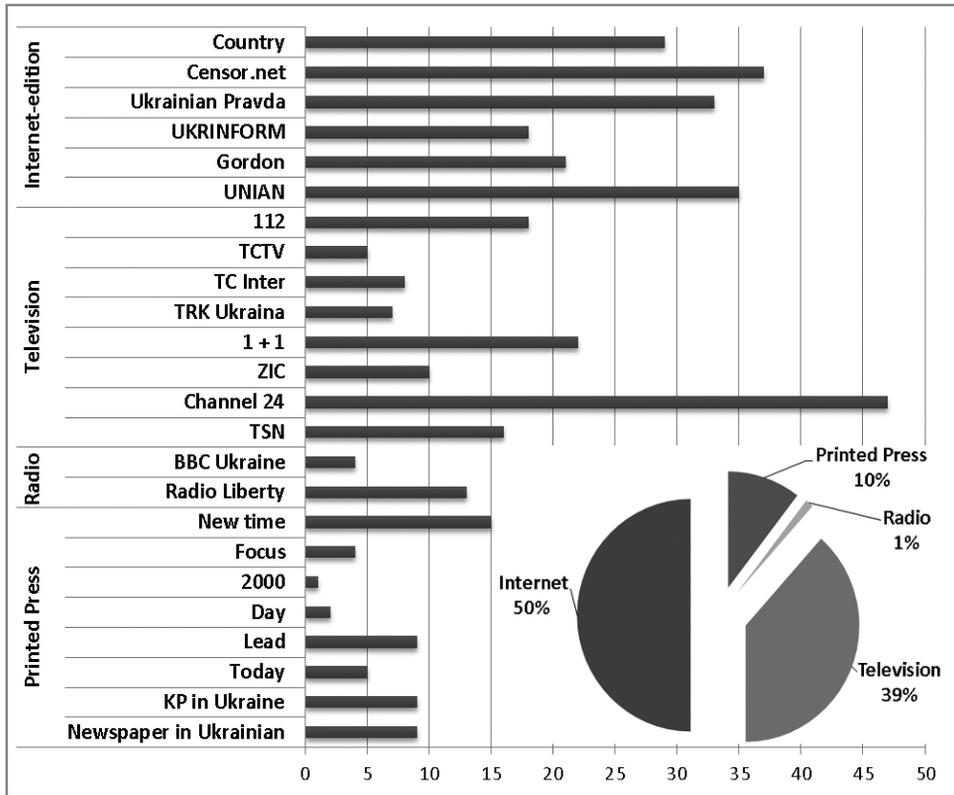
### Coding

The study used *latent coding*, i.e. all values and contexts of the categories of analysis were considered. The coding procedure took into account the frequency of occurrence of each unit of account. *The tone determination technique* was used to define the overall tone of the analysis category/subcategory in the message, rather than each individual unit of account.

## Research results

First of all, the distribution of the channels, from which the media messages were analysed, should be referred (see *Figure 2*).

**Figure 2. Channels and sources of sample filling**



Source: own elaboration based on media content analysis

Thus, the highest sample rate is attributed to media reports from online publications (50%). In their segment, most units of analysis are from Censor.Net and UNIAN. The second position is occupied by television, with the absolute leader in the sampling of texts – 24th channel. Since TSN is a component of the channel “1+1”, this channel is second only to this one.

It is advisable to submit substantive results separately to cover the financing of presidential and parliamentary election campaigns. This is justified by a number of methodological positions, which are presented below:

- 1) Uneven sampling; coverage of the financing of the presidential election campaign is represented in a much larger number of units of analysis (as in the array as

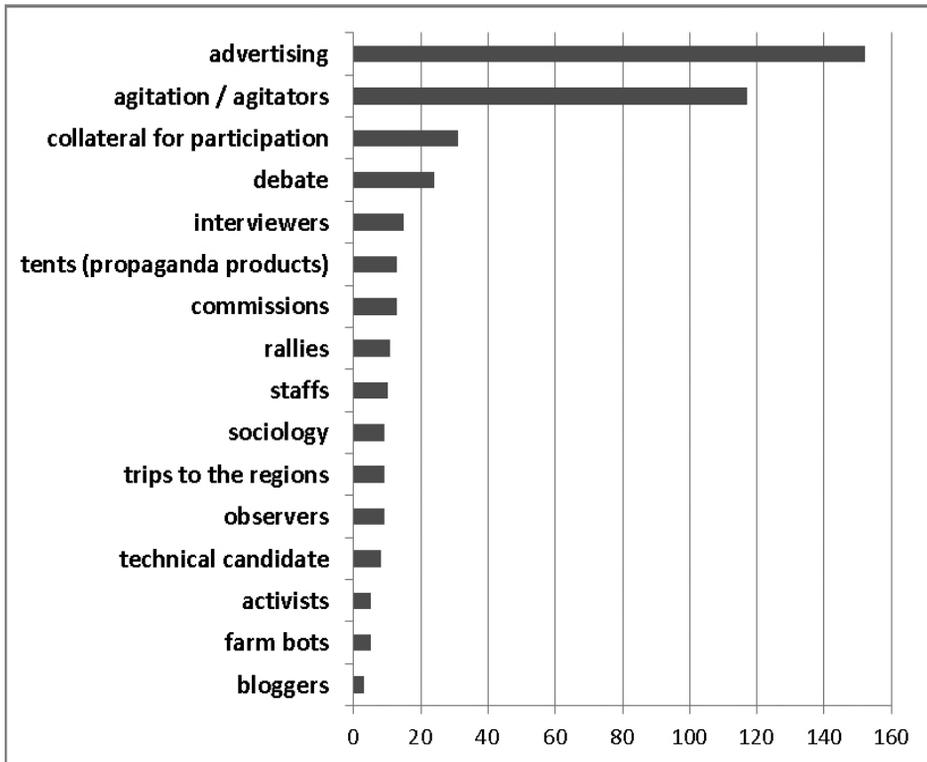
a whole). Only 78 media texts were devoted to the financing of the parliamentary election campaign (against 299 on the financing of the presidential one).

- 2) The unevenness of the sample, in particular, and the specificity of the journalistic coverage of the two campaigns led to a significantly different set of categories/sub-categories of analysis for the two campaigns.
- 3) As the sets of categories/sub-categories of analysis for the two campaigns were significantly different, it was, therefore, reflected in the frequency level. The frequencies in the coding form of the presidential campaign are much higher. The use of comparisons is thus not correct.

### **Funding for the presidential campaign**

The analysis of media reports demonstrated that the most frequent were the categories of analysis that concerned the financial costs of various components of the presidential campaign and mentioning of different types of voter bribery. Within the coverage of funding for various components of the presidential election campaign, the most frequent were: advertising costs, campaign costs (agitators) (see *Figure 3*).

**Figure 3. Components, on which money was spent during the presidential election campaign**



Source: own elaboration based on media content analysis.

Indeed, in media texts, a great attention is paid to the funds that Presidential candidates spend on various types of advertising. Most often, it is a reference to the large sums spent on television advertising. Less frequent are mentioning in the media of advertising on boards, Facebook, etc. Almost the same in frequency, there is a reference to the money spent on agitators. Agitators theme is widely publicised in the media. Information is broadcast on the so-called "nets", which are networks of agitators working to find people who are eventually recruited to vote for a particular candidate. Part of the same subcategory also includes interviewers, in whose texts there is a change of concepts. They write that agitators are asked to fill out a questionnaire, and in reality they simply use the concept of "interviewer". On the whole, the most frequent were the media reports on the payment of such agitators and "nets" by P. Poroshenko's team. The concept of agitators is covered in messages broadcast after the end of the presidential campaign, which referred to the amount of money spent by specific candidates for the campaign. Such media texts emphasised that the most expensive was, once more, the Poroshenko's campaign.

Another most frequent category of analysis is voter bribery, which was discussed above. Within it, different shares have different types of bribery, the most frequent of which is direct bribery (63%, i.e. the money received by voters); 27% – indirect, and 10% administrative bribery. More precisely, often it is about the «possible» amounts that voters can get. A small proportion of the texts contain information about the detention of campaigners who offered money for voting in elections.

The portion of the texts focuses on court cases between the candidates, in particular, Y. Tymoshenko vs. P. Poroshenko, which stated that one of the parties found facts of direct bribery of the other party. These messages, in addition to describing the court case as resonant and creating the "Peter Thousand" marker, partly contain striking illustrations, such as those featured in «Gordon»:

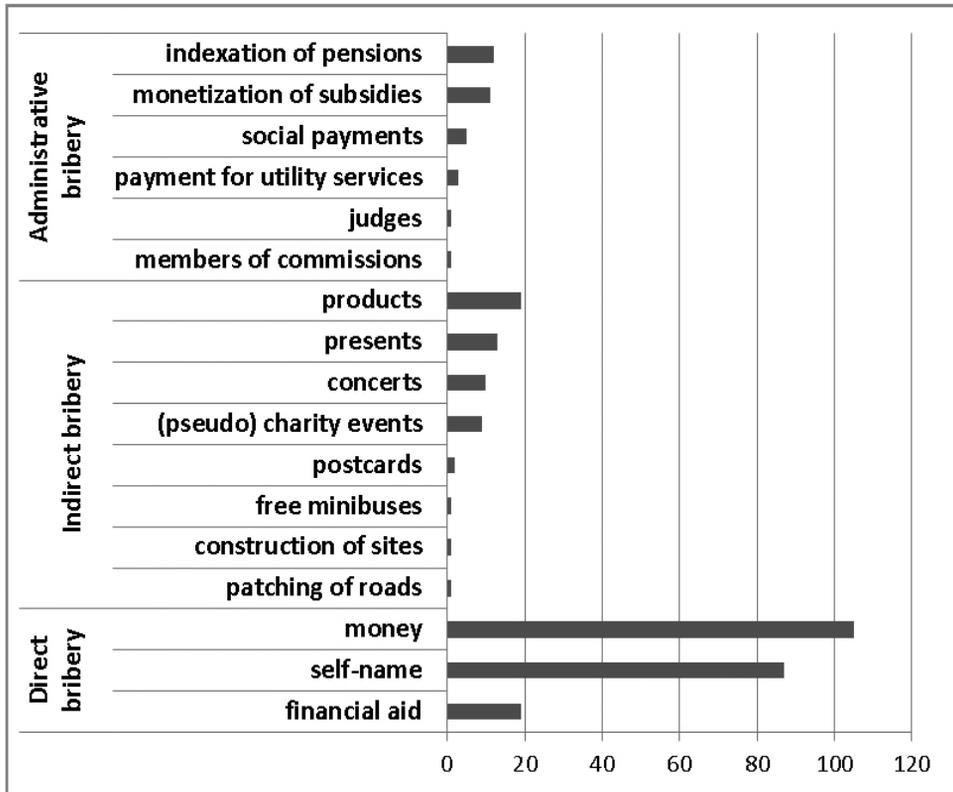
"I have travelled to many areas, I have seen these falsifications. I can give out one secret. There are tents in one region. I will not say in which specifically just in case somebody will decide to check me. I put on a cap, went into the tent of [former presidential candidate of Ukraine, Batkivshchyna leader Yulia] Tymoshenko, and in the tent [running for the second term of the incumbent President of Ukraine Petrol Poroshenko. In Poroshenko's tent, I was immediately offered to fill in a questionnaire. If I fill in, they said they would give me 1000 hryvnias," – said Leonid Kravchuk [the first President of Ukraine]<sup>6</sup> (Kravchuk 2019).

One of the peculiarities of filling the sub-category "Direct voter bribe" is that very often the text starts with statements that there is/ will be/ is possible voter bribery, and then it is specifically about bribery in the form of giving money. Such a component of the subcategory as "self-name" is frequent (see *Figure 4*).

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<sup>6</sup> Own translation from Ukrainian into English.

Figure 4. Components of different types of voter bribery



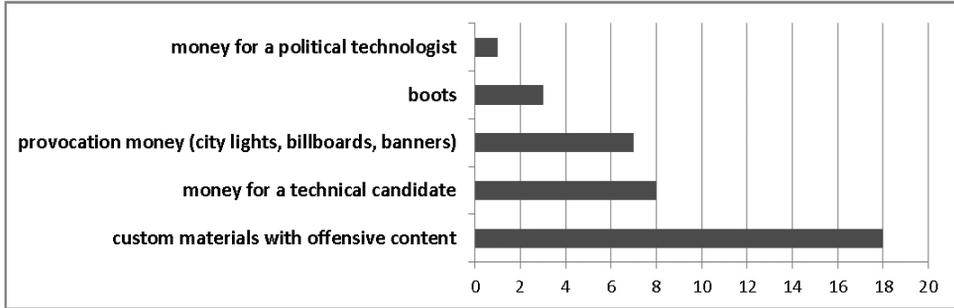
Source: own elaboration based on media content analysis.

In the media texts describing the financing of the presidential election campaign often appear arguments about the unpopularity of the so-called "buckwheat" in modern election campaigns in Ukraine. "Buckwheat" is also a marker created within the scope of electoral processes and mainly includes products but also other material rewards (except money). This discourse becomes the opposite in media reports about a parliamentary election campaign.

Other categories are much less frequent. The study presented the category "Financing Black PR" (see Figure 5).

Within this category, the most frequent was the broadcast of the custom materials with offensive content. The marker is used blurred, with no delineated volume. It reflects the specifics of presenting journalistic material through generalisation, the use of emotionally-colored terms to create an effect and to attract audience attention.

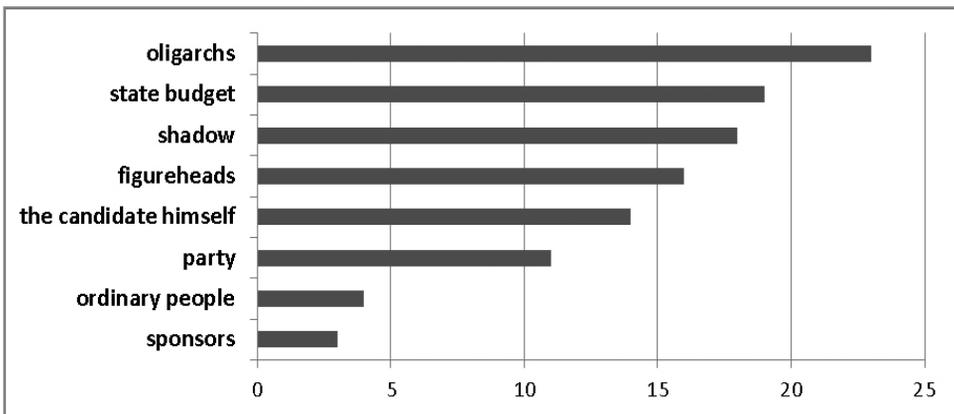
**Figure 5. Components of the category “Financing Black PR”**



Source: own elaboration based on media content analysis.

The category concerning the financial filling of the election budget contained eight subcategories, of which the most frequent was “oligarchs” (see *Figure 6*).

**Figure 6. Components of financial filling of candidates' election budgets**



Source: own elaboration based on media content analysis.

Among the mentioned oligarchs, the most frequently mentioned one was P.Poroshenko, and he was most often mentioned in the subcategory “candidate himself”, i.e. he emphasised that he had invested his own funds in his election campaign (formed his budget) (see *Figure 7*). It is possible to distinguish in the media texts frequency reports about financing of V. Zelensky by B. Kolomoysky.

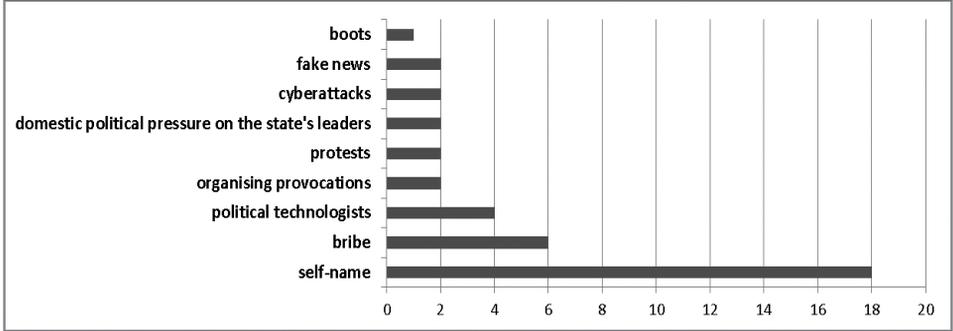
Figure 7. Oligarchs filling the election budgets of presidential candidates



Source: own elaboration based on media content analysis.

Frequent mention of oligarchs, like those who fund the election campaign, is a broadcast of the general oligarchy in Ukraine and its impact on key domains of the country. The next research category concerned the money Russia spent on its election campaign in Ukraine (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. Components of the financing of the election campaign by Russia



Source: own elaboration based on media content analysis.

In this category, once more, the most common is the blurred concept of "money from Russia" (self-title). Among the substantive sub-categories, money for bribery and money for political technology have a somewhat higher frequency. They remain without specifics in the text, as in the vast majority of texts, they are generalisations and assumptions.

### **Financing of the parliamentary campaign**

The toolkit for analysing media texts about the parliamentary election campaign contained only three analytical categories. Among them, the most frequent is the "Bribery of voters" – 46% (for comparison: "Parliamentary campaign" – 31%, "Election budget" – 23%). More attention is paid to the components of these categories, their meaningful content. The voter bribery category has only two subcategories (direct and indirect bribery), as opposed to three in the case of media texts about the presidential election campaign. In the texts about the parliamentary campaign the indirect bribery were mentioned much more often than direct. This is linked to the possibility of parties receiving so-called subsidies. These subventions lead to an incredible "palette" of variations in indirect voter bribery (see *Figure 9*).

**Figure 9. Options for indirect bribery during the parliamentary campaign**



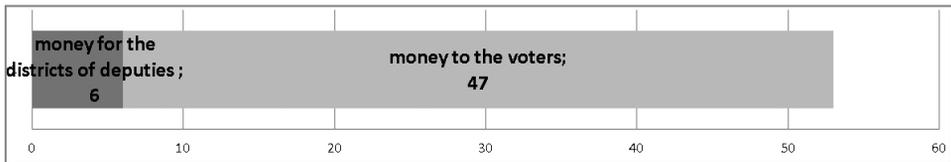
Source: own elaboration based on media content analysis.

The most frequent is the mention of products as a form of indirect bribery. But in fact, the discourse is much more interesting than the usual statement of the transfer of a product kit to a voter. Media texts broadcast a discussion of the change in the concept of "hrechkosiyannya"/ "buckwheat" (which is also frequent, as a marker, in this distribution and was used in most cases in situations of discussing the shortcomings of the majority system) and its change to "tsukorosiyannya"/sugar. The journalists broadcast information that the deputies took into account the seasonality of the elections and the peculiarities of Ukrainian practices (summer, conservation season) and distributed sugar. And furthermore, partly, the jars and lids to them. Second in frequency is the subcategory - concerts and shows. This is partly related to the election of the *Servant of the People's*

Party<sup>7</sup> and the frequent mentions of them giving free (or cheap) concerts in different cities. The concerts of others (for example, M. Poplavskyi, O. Vynnyk) and concerts of creative groups in settlements or suburbs of metropolitan areas are also mentioned.

In the context of direct bribery, information about voter money and the amount of money allocated to the entire voter district is broadcasted. It is actually the same subvention (see Figure 10).

**Figure 10. Components of direct bribery in a parliamentary campaign**

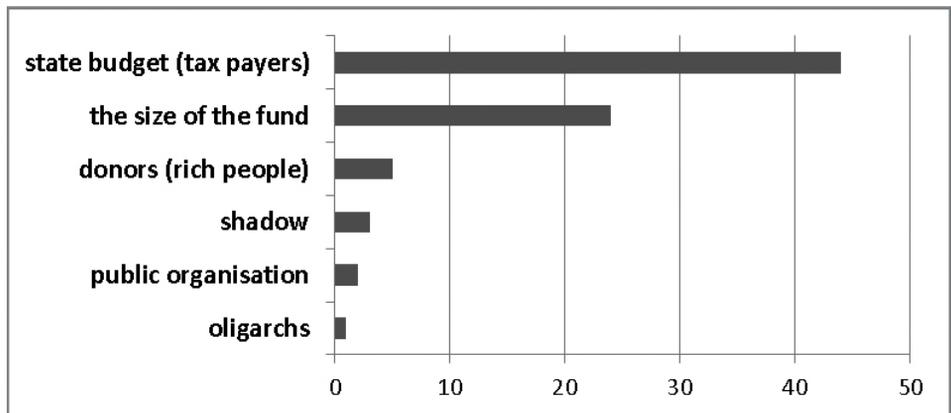


Source: own elaboration based on media content analysis.

Such “insignificant” use of direct bribery of voters by paying them cash is linked to the law of preventing electoral corruption, at which parties repay all the funds they invest in the election campaign. They can report the entire palette of indirect bribe and receive the money spent on it back. The direct bribery is not returned, moreover, it is unlawful act punishable by the state.

The category concerning the ways of filling the election budget contained six subcategories (see Figure 11).

**Figure 11. Constituent categories for filling of party funds**



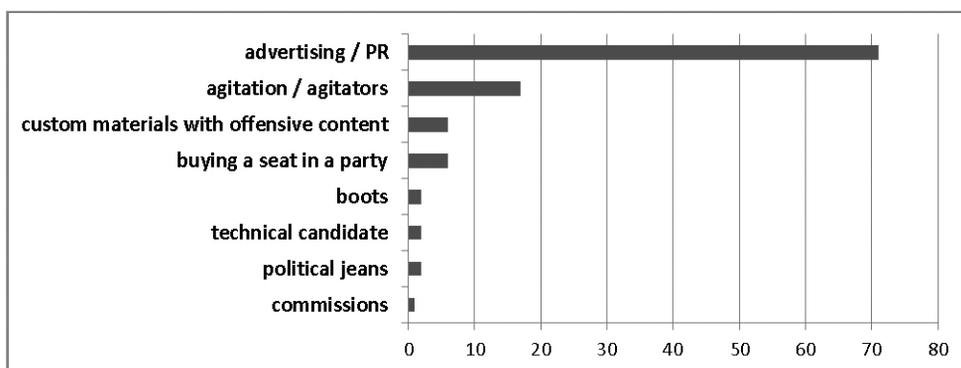
Source: own elaboration based on media content analysis.

<sup>7</sup> This means concerts show of «95 quarter».

The most frequent of them was the "State Budget". If in the situation with the media reports about the presidential election campaign, it was about filling the election funds from the state budget, and then the fact that due to the contributions of a large number of presidential candidates the state budget was replenished by their pledges. So, in the reports on the parliamentary election campaign was said almost all through that all this campaign was paid from the pockets of taxpayers, again, because the law on reimbursement to parties applies. Funds of different parties were separately discussed (frequency) with emphasis on who used too much and who - very little. The low proportion of mentions of oligarchs, again in the context of the law, which has been repeatedly mentioned, and its emphasis on making parties independent of the oligarchy is quite indicative.

The category related to election campaign costs includes the most frequent subcategory – advertising costs (see *Figure 12*).

**Figure 12. Constituent categories for election parliamentary campaign expenses**



Source: own elaboration based on media content analysis.

All other subcategories differ significantly in their textual representation. The coverage of the presidential campaign, campaigners are discussed, but at the same time (since they are associated with direct money bribe that did not gain scope within the parliamentary campaign), the information is relatively incomplete. It is frequently the mention of detaining someone for bribery, and in this situation, the person who offered the money is called an agitator. Alternatively, there is the statement that if the agitators were involved in the parliamentary campaign, they were agitators from the previous presidential one. The subcategory "buying a seat in the party" is an infrequent but present one, as an indication in the texts on the preservation of the corruption component of the modern electoral process.

## Discussion and conclusions

First of all, it would be worth comparing the results of the study with other results obtained on this topic. It is extremely difficult to find sociological research and analysis on the issues of election campaign financing. It may seem that this situation is due to the "secondary" position of sociology in the study of such topics, which may be accompanied by the attribution of the topic to the field of political science, for example. The financing of political campaigns (parties, individuals, etc.) demonstrates the type of system in which the whole society lives, its civic positions, preferences and many other things that are the subject of study of social scientists. This topic clearly reveals aspects of democratisation of society etc.

Returning to research on this topic, it should be noted that most of it consists of analytical and journalistic posts (often in the media). The most relevant is the content-analytical study *Voter bribery* by the Center for Content Analysis (ukr. Підкуп виборців). In this report, based on the results of the empirical study (content analysis), all attention is focused on the study of the topic of bribery, which was broadcast on the media and social network Facebook (see: *Pidkup vybortsiv* 2019). If in my research voter bribery was only one of the categories of analysis, in this case it was the subject of study. It is possible to note certain intersections, similarity of results of researches. So, the analytical subcategories of my study include the key theses on voter bribery of presidential candidates presented in the report. The both studies present such forms of bribery as direct bribery (cash bribery) and administrative bribery (monetisation of subsidies, etc.). Analytics on bribery schemes and pyramids are also duplicated, focusing on two presidential candidates – Y. Tymoshenko and P. Poroshenko.

The classic way of thinking about research results is to confirm/refute the research hypotheses. Actually, the *basic hypothesis (1)* has been partially confirmed. Since it is fully confirmed regarding the media texts about the parliamentary election campaign and only partially – in the situation with the presidential one. This situation can be explained by the pattern of modern journalism, which often works in the style of "to impress". So, the "dry information" that such funds have been spent from such a fund is far inferior to "sensational" bribery in the context of corruption, as a mega-popular concept in domestic discourse. Frequently, the bribery of voters is also broadcast in order to demonstrate election violations. Ukraine has had a precedent for contesting election results, so in part, the frequency coverage of voter bribery looks like an "always on alert" position: if we contest the election results, it can be said that our publication has indicated a significant number of violations, including voter bribery. On the other hand, if we look for a positive vector of such attention to bribery of voters, then we can evaluate it as an attempt to build a civil conscious society, whose representatives are reminded of the wrongfulness of such activity, are explaining and educating. This context is indeed partly present in media messages.

*Consequence hypothesis (1.a)* – information on direct bribery will prevail, namely, bribery through cash payments can also be confirmed only partially. Since in reports

of a presidential campaign, this type of bribe really outweighs the direct one, that is, monetary. However, in the context of information about the parliamentary campaign the situation is the opposite.

*Consequence hypothesis (1.b)* – information on voter bribery will be marked with a negative tone in the vast majority of cases, which cannot be confirmed or refuted. Due to the expanded system of categories/subcategories, it was quite difficult to use the classical scale for determining the tonality of units of account (negative – neutral – positive). An attempt at its application has demonstrated that it is difficult to unambiguously assign subcategories to a particular pole, and as a result, most of them are forced to fall into a neutral position. In general, without frequency coding, we can say that negative contexts were not prevalent. Most messages were neutral. However, when evaluating the correlation between negative and positive contexts of the description of election campaign financing, the negative ones have prevailed.

Some discourses that are often presented in the results of empirical research also need some discussion. The frequency mentions of advertising costs within both campaigns are quite limited in content. For the most part, this is a simple invoice, a statement of considerable amounts of money. The media reports did not contain any logical links and analytical considerations/explanations to the audience as to why such “excessive” amounts are spent on television advertising. It is said that in Ukraine, among all types of media, television still has the largest audience and, at the same time, the highest trust. According to a survey conducted by NGO Media Detector, 74% of respondents receive information from Ukrainian television (*Information sources...* 2019).

There is no information in the media that politicians take into account the media dependence of the Ukrainian consumer and use this fact in the course of election campaigns by tying an advertising product.

The situation with the strong coverage of the financing of the presidential election campaign and the insignificant parliamentary election can be explained by several factors. Firstly, Ukraine, as well as the media environment, experienced two consecutive election campaigns, respectively. Mega-activity within the former and declining curiosity, and exhaustion during the latter, are understandable. Secondly, as the campaigns went one after the other, there was no significant time lag for the electorate to evaluate the President's activities, there were expectations and forecasts for a “typical” vote. Thus, the commitment of the electorate of one presidential candidate to the respective party (which he will support, be its chairman, etc.). The media could have reacted to this situation as a lack of additional coverage. Thirdly, what has already been mentioned is not enough time for coverage of the parliamentary election campaign.

With regard to the topic of financing, these factors have also been imposed on it. The funding of the presidential campaign was extremely cagey, while parliamentary campaign was narrowly presented. A promising way of exposing additional cognitive aspects of the topic might be the use of semantic analysis, which could illustrate the semantic cores of the main categories of analysis, and critical discourse analysis (Phillips, Jorgensen 2004), which would focus more on the specific discourses offered to the audience.

Finally, it seems apt to turn to the views of Y. Syrotiuk, who, in outlining the situation of contemporary Ukrainian journalism, refers to Nietzsche's statements in 1900: "God died, superman is left" and the French post-structuralists of the 1960s: "Man died – text left" (Syrotiuk 2019). Research into the realms of financing, its effects, both proven and latent, in particular, in the pre-election period in the domestic media space, may be the basis for the formation of a new statement: "The texts died. The election also died. Money left".

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