

Олександра Балашевич
Єлизавета Бородько
Антон Курапов

КУЛЬТУРНІ ПЕРЕХРЕСТЯ. ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ ПРОДОВЖЕННЯ ВЗАЄМОДІЇ УКРАЇНЦІВ З РОСІЙСЬКОЮ КУЛЬТУРОЮ: ВІДКРИТІ ПИТАННЯ ТА АНАЛІЗ

Мета

Це дослідження мало на меті вивчити емоційні та тематичні реакції українців щодо продовження чи припинення взаємодії з російською культурою під час конфлікту, що триває. Завдання полягало у визначенні ключових емоцій і тем, що зумовлюють ці культурні взаємодії, а також у дослідженні ролі демографічних факторів, таких як вік і мова.

Методи

Дизайн перехресного кореляційного дослідження включав соціодемографічну анкету та опитування емоційної реакції учасників. Відкриті відповіді були проаналізовані за допомогою тематичної категоризації з використанням програми Chat GPT (v. 4o) і вручну перевірені авторами на доречність. Дані були розділені на дві підгрупи на основі статусу культурної взаємодії (продовження чи припинення взаємодії). Статистичний аналіз, включаючи описову статистику, тести хі-квадрат, ANOVA, проводився за допомогою R (версія 4.2.2).

Результати

Аналіз показав, що «Узагальнене негативне сприйняття» та «Роз'єднання та уникнення» були найбільш часто згадуваними темами серед тих, хто припинив взаємодію. Водночас «Емоційна реакція», «Невизначена неспецифічна відповідь» та «Захоплення і цікавість» були помітними серед тих, хто продовжував взаємодію. Емоційні реакції, які значною мірою асоціювалися із продовженням взаємодії, включали інтерес, ностальгію та естетичне сприйняття, тоді як відмова від взаємодії була пов'язана з такими емоціями, як зневага та презирство. Тест хі-квадрат не виявив значущого зв'язку між тематичними категоріями та демографічними змінними, такими як вік і мова.

Висновок

Емоційні реакції відіграють центральну роль у рішенні українців про припинення або продовження взаємодії з російською культурою під час конфлікту. Позитивні почуття, такі як ностальгія та цікавість, сприяють підтриманню взаємодії, оскільки багато хто відокремлює російську культуру від її політичного контексту. І навпаки, такі емоції, як презирство і зневага, призводять до припинення взаємодії, часто мотивовані бажанням уникнути асоціації з агресором і утвердити національну ідентичність. Перспектива майбутніх досліджень може полягати у вивченні того, як ці емоційні патерни змінюються з часом, особливо у молодих поколінь або у відповідь на зовнішні впливи, такі як ЗМІ чи політичні зміни.

Ключові слова: Емоційні реакції, культурне залучення, російська культура, тематичний аналіз, конфлікт, українська демографія, перехресне дослідження.

Oleksandra Balashevych
Yelyzaveta Borodko
Anton Kurapov

CULTURAL CROSSROADS. AN EXPLORATION INTO THE CONTINUED ENGAGEMENT OF UKRAINIANS WITH RUSSIAN CULTURE: OPEN QUESTIONS AND EMOTIONS ANALYSIS

Objective

This study aimed to examine the emotional and thematic responses of Ukrainians regarding their engagement or disengagement with Russian culture in the ongoing conflict. The objective was to identify the key emotions and themes driving these cultural interactions and to explore the role of demographic factors such as age and language.

Methods

A cross-sectional correlational study design involved a sociodemographic questionnaire and an emotional response survey among participants. Open responses were analyzed using thematic categorization facilitated by Chat GPT (v. 4o) and manually checked for appropriateness by the authors. The data were separated into subgroups based on cultural interaction status (engagement versus disengagement). Statistical analyses, including descriptive statistics, chi-square tests and ANOVA were conducted using R (Version 4.2.2).

Results

The analysis showed that “Generalized Negative Perception” and “Disconnection

and Avoidance” were the most frequently mentioned themes among those who disengaged. At the same time “Emotional Response”, “Unspecific or uncertain response” and “Curiosity and Interest” were prominent among those who continued engagement. Emotional responses significantly associated with engagement included interest, nostalgia and aesthetic appreciation while disengagement was linked to emotions such as disdain and contempt. Chi-square tests indicated no significant relationship between thematic categories and demographic variables like age and language.

Conclusion

Emotional responses are central to how Ukrainians engage or disengage with Russian culture during the conflict. Positive feelings like nostalgia and curiosity lead to continued interaction, as many separate Russian culture from its political context. In contrast, emotions such as disdain and contempt drive disengagement often motivated by a desire to reject associations with the aggressor and affirm national identity. Future research could explore how these emotional patterns shift over time particularly in younger generations or in response to external influences like media or political changes

Keywords: Emotional responses, cultural engagement, Russian culture, thematic analysis, conflict, Ukrainian demographics, cross-sectional study.

Introduction

For centuries, Russia has been trying to influence Ukrainian culture and its perception of it to gain political advantages (Baraban, 2024; Dreyer, 2020; Kuko, 2023). It managed to downplay Ukraine to the role of a “little brother”, the concept that imposes the idea of Ukraine’s inferiority and Russia’s greatness (Sudyn, 2023). After Ukraine became an independent state, the mentioned narrative started to weaken however did not stop to exist (Kiryukhin, 2017). When Russia invaded Donbass and annexed Crimea the separation of the cultures became more intense and escalated after the full-scale invasion in 2022 (Davlikanova et al., 2024; Kazanova, 2024; Lytvynenko, 2023; Olzacka, 2024). Nevertheless there are still Ukrainians who continue to interact with Russian culture (Kurapov et al., 2022; Kurapov et al., 2024; Ренчка, 2023; Surin, 2024). Culture indicates the strengthening of the nation’s identity and is an important part of external politics (Shkurko, 2023). As Olzacka (2024) explains, interaction with Russian culture is a threat to national security because it supports the narrative that Ukrainian and Russian people are one nation and that Russian culture is universal while Ukrainian culture is little. Russia intends to eliminate Ukrainian identity while this construct not only contributes to the feeling of belonging to a state but also unites people inside it. Moreover, consolidation, cohesion and national unity are the functions of national identity which is, as was mentioned above, strengthened by the state’s culture (Shkurko, 2023). Thus the problem of interacting with Russian culture during the Russian-Ukrainian war is emerging as one of the major questions for the internal affairs of Ukraine. Thus, based on the issues listed above, our study is aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. How can the generalized engagement/disengagement of Ukrainians with Russian culture be thematically categorized?
2. How and to what extent do spoken languages, age, and different emotional experiences define the engagement/disengagement with Russian culture?

Literature review

Cultural ties between Ukraine and Russia

It is important to outline the main historical events in the relationship between Ukraine and Russia to understand the current cultural situation among Ukrainians. The origins of both nations trace back to the medieval state of Kyivan Rus'. Over centuries, the regions experienced various conflicts and power struggles including the Mongol invasion and subsequent periods of Polish-Lithuanian and Russian control (Kuko, 2023). After the fall of Kyivan Rus', future Ukrainian territories came under the influence of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and later the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which exposed them to Western European cultural and political influences. In contrast, the northeastern principalities, including Moscow, developed under the Mongol-Tatar yoke and later formed the basis of the centralized Russian state (Kowalski, 2022). In the 18th century, Russia annexed large parts of Ukraine, integrating them into the Russian Empire. The Empire aimed to suppress Ukrainian culture and promote Russification (Kuko, 2023). Despite these measures, Ukrainian intellectuals and activists worked to preserve and promote Ukrainian culture.

The 19th century saw the rise of Ukrainophile movements, such as the Cyrillo-Methodian Society and the Hromady which aimed to protect folk traditions and the Ukrainian language (Hillis, 2012). During the beginning of the Soviet era, Ukrainians became targets once again particularly during the Holodomor (1932-1933), a man-made famine that killed millions of them (Dreyer, 2020). During Soviet times Russia formed the concept of "little brother". It refers to the notion that Russia views Ukraine as a junior partner or subordinate within a familial framework, the Ukrainian language as some sort of dialect of Russian, and Ukrainian culture as inferior to Russian (Baraban, 2024). The "little brother" concept has led to a post-colonial struggle within Ukraine to deconstruct Soviet-era myths and assert a distinct national history and identity (Sudyn, 2023). After the collapse of the USSR, Ukraine focused on building a national identity based on its cultural traditions while Russia emphasized strong state institutions and viewed Ukrainians and Russians as part of a single cultural community (Kiryukhin, 2017). Ukrainian cultural policy has evolved significantly in response to Russian aggression. Post-2014, Ukraine has implemented policies to dismantle Soviet-era cultural management and promote local cultural industries, fostering a distinct Ukrainian cultural identity and countering Russian influence (Olzacka, 2024). Therefore, it can be seen through the historical discourse that relationships between Russian and Ukrainian cultures always have been intricate.

Changes in cultural ties after the full-scale invasion

Russian full-scale invasion straightened the policy of separating Russian and Ukrainian cultures. Before the war, many Ukrainians had contacts with Russians, but post-invasion, these interactions have drastically reduced. Efforts to counter Russian

propaganda have been met with limited success, and the prospect of reconciliation is viewed pessimistically by most Ukrainians who see significant socio-political changes in Russia as a prerequisite for any future reconciliation (Davlikanova et al., 2024). Ukrainian cultural expressions, such as poetry and online content, have become tools of soft power promoting national solidarity and international support. Wartime poetry and channels have adapted to the realities of war, countering propaganda and popularizing Ukrainian heritage (Kazanova, 2024; Lytvynenko, 2023).

However, the ties between Ukrainian and Russian culture have not ceased to exist. Research shows that approximately one-third of the population continues to engage with Russian culture despite the invasion and its severe consequences (Kurapov et al., 2022). Another research has revealed major factors that predict termination or continuation of interaction with Russian culture (Kurapov et al., 2024). "Interaction with the Russian culture" includes watching videos and reading blogs by bloggers, reading classic literature, watching comedy and stand-up shows, interacting with folk art in any way, watching TV shows, series and films, reading modern literature, news and articles, interacting with science and pop-science, listening to the music of various genres, interacting with plays, visual art, video clips and games, out of which Ukrainians interact with blogs and music from Russia the most. The spoken language strongly influences the interaction, particularly, people who tend to speak Russian are more likely not to stop it. The political position of an artist matters too: people mostly cease interaction if an artist (author, blogger, etc.) supports war, and they continue it if an artist (author, blogger, etc.) disagrees with the actions of the current Russian government and doesn't support the invasion into Ukraine (Kurapov et al., 2024). The Ukrainian culture is in a continuous process of distancing itself from Russian culture, however, a significant proportion of Ukrainians still engage with Russian culture to varying extents.

Reasons why Ukrainians engage and disengage with Russian culture

Disengagement

Right now, Ukrainians are disengaging from Russian culture for several reasons. The full-scale invasion by Russia in 2022 has led to acts of cultural genocide including the destruction of Ukrainian cultural heritage and the imposition of Russian cultural norms in occupied territories (Bakalchuk, 2022). This has fueled a strong desire among Ukrainians to distance themselves from Russian culture and assert their own national identity (Botti, 2023). The war has accelerated the decolonization of Ukraine's socio-cultural space. Ukrainians are increasingly adopting Ukrainian and European symbols, language and cultural practices over Russian ones. This shift is seen as essential for strengthening national identity and resilience against Russian aggression (Marukhovska-Kartunova et al., 2024). Russian culture has been used as a tool of soft power to promote imperial myths and justify aggression. This has led to a reevaluation and rejection of Russian cultural outputs which are seen as threats to Ukrainian national security and identity (Gergało-Dąbek, 2022). Another reason for cutting the ties is collective responsibility. Understanding how many Ukrainians died because of the war, and the fact that listening or watching Russian artists may be monetized by them and fund the Russian government through taxes might bring a sense of discomfort or shame to

Ukrainians due to national solidarity and strengthened collective identity. Additionally, age might contribute to disengagement since younger generations of Ukrainians, who were born after the collapse of the USSR and in independent Ukraine, have fewer ties with Soviet narratives of a “little brother” (Kurapov et al., 2024). Ukrainians might disengage with Russian culture because they perceive it as a trauma-related stimulus. Research shows that Ukrainians, who stopped interacting with Russian culture, mostly feel anger, disgust, disrespect and contempt towards it (Kurapov et al., 2022). Therefore, Ukrainians choose to disengage with Russian culture because of national solidarity, a sense of personal responsibility and perceiving products of Russian culture as a trauma-related stimulus.

Engagement

Despite the full-scale invasion by Russia in 2022, some Ukrainians continue to engage with Russian culture. Many Ukrainians are bilingual and have grown up with Russian cultural products, making it difficult to completely disengage. The Russian language and culture have been deeply integrated into their daily lives, and this familiarity persists even amidst conflict (Kurapov et al., 2022; Renchka, 2023). Some Ukrainians engage with Russian culture, particularly anti-war literature and poetry, as a form of resistance and solidarity with Russian dissidents who oppose the war. This engagement helps to deconstruct Russian propaganda and offers a narrative of peace and reconciliation (Surin, 2024). Moreover, Ukrainians might use Russian products because of the lack of Ukrainian analogs. As an example, before the war Ukrainian psychologists would use Russian-language assessment instruments due to the absence of Ukrainian-language analogs (Kurapov et al., 2024). Overall, Ukrainians might be more engaged with Russian culture due to spoken language, prior integration into Russian culture, solidarity with Russian decedents, and lack of Ukrainian analogs.

Another important reason for Ukrainians to continue listening to Russian music, reading their literature, following their blogger, etc. is experiencing positive emotions. They are the main reason why people engage with culture at all (Hassanli et al., 2021; Hollebeek, 2018). Research showed that Ukrainians, who continued interacting with Russian culture mostly experienced interest, surprise, feelings of exalted and nostalgia (Kurapov, 2024). It can be concluded that the reason why they still feel those positive emotions while interacting with Russian culture unlike those Ukrainians who stopped the engagement is that they separate Russian aggressive government and Russian culture. For these people politics and arts and media are two separate independent entities (Kurapov et al., 2022). Therefore, Ukrainians who continue to engage with Russian culture, get positive emotions from these interactions due to isolating the aggressor’s actions from its culture.

Methods and Measures

This research was designed as a cross-sectional correlational study. We measured the socio-demographics and emotional responses of participants. The sociodemographic questionnaire included questions about gender (Male, Female, Other), age (coded into age groups: 18-20, 21-25, 26-35, 36-45, 46-60, 61+), and spoken language (Ukrainian, Russian, and Surzhyk, a mix of Russian and Ukrainian or Ukrainian dialect). Emotional

aspects were assessed by asking respondents to select the emotions they experienced while interacting (if they continued interaction) or the emotions they would experience if they were interacting (if they stopped interaction). The intensity of emotions was measured on a scale from 0 to 10. The emotions included (Izard, 1991): anger, contempt, disgust, fear, guilt, happiness (joy), interest, sadness, shame, and surprise. Context-relevant and more complex emotions expanded the list (Barrett, 1998): anxiety, calmness, despair, discomfort, disdain, embarrassment, inspiration, longing, nostalgia, pride. We also added aesthetic appreciation (the feeling of elevation and beauty) and aesthetic disgust (something perceived as ugly, distasteful or lacking in aesthetic value) (Hagman, 2002) to capture the aesthetic and emotional aspects of interacting with Russian culture. Additionally, participants were asked to report the extent of emotional excitement while interacting with Russian Culture, while the indicator of contact maintenance was measured through a subjective reporting item where participants indicated whether they had never interacted with any products or content of Russian culture (N = 35), stopped interacting after the beginning of the war (N = 630), or continued interaction (N = 305). Finally, participants were asked open question regarding reasons and emotions why they continue interaction or engagement with Russian Culture.

Correspondingly, responses were analyzed separately: for those who continued, and for those who terminated the interaction. Overall, we have analyzed 935 open responses from the participants. To derive major thematic categories out of the open responses we have used ChatGPT (v. 4o). All the data was separated into two data frames by the “Interaction” variable (meaning that one subframe includes people, who keep interacting with Russian culture, and another one contains only responses of those, who have terminated the interaction). The questionnaire has a field for open answers where respondents were asked to explain the emotions they feel towards Russian culture. With the help of ChatGPT (v. 4o), we have executed and assigned categories to each open answer for further analysis. The data was also manually cleaned from inappropriate answers (e.g. controversial and non-correspondent answers) and checked for overall appropriateness by all authors. This was followed by conducting descriptive statistics, identifying significant data in cross-tabulation analysis (Categories x Age, Categories x Spoken Language) and analysis of variance, all performed in R 4.2.2 (R Development Core Team, 2014). All the results are described and visualized below in this article.

Data Collection and Participants

The data was collected in one phase. The collection process started on August 23, 2022 and lasted until September 21, 2022. This study used a snowball online questionnaire (using Google Forms). Participants were recruited among the students of the faculty of psychology at the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (students were also asked to share the questionnaire among their friends and relatives), through invitations to take part in the study in different Telegram channels, primarily through a news portal called “Hrunt-media” with 50,000+ subscribers. All questions were presented in the Ukrainian language. Informed consent was obtained from all participants. The inclusion criteria for the participants were: age 18–65 and being a citizen of Ukraine or living in Ukraine for at least 1 year before the beginning of the war. The study did not

presume any specific exclusion criteria. A total number of participants that fulfilled the criteria was 982, out of which 60.5% were female, 39.2% male, and 0.3% without gender specification. We also conducted a thorough evaluation of the responses to ensure their validity and consistency. Responses were excluded if they did not directly address the question, contained incomplete information (e.g., a dash or missing data), or demonstrated inconsistencies, incoherence, or irrelevance to the study's objectives. Additionally, responses that displayed clear biases, outliers, or duplicate entries were also excluded to maintain the integrity of the analysis. In total 206 participants have been excluded bringing the analyzable number of participants to N = 776.

Statistical Analysis

Statistical analysis was performed in R, version 4.2.2 (R Development Core Team, 2014) using packages ggplot2 (Gómez-Rubio, 2017), psych (Revelle, 2015), stringr (Wickham, 2010), tidyverse (Wickham et al., 2019), vcd (Meyer et al., 2024), and dplyr (Wickham et al., 2023).

In order to answer the research questions, we have applied a manual classification of respondents' answers to the open questions for the Research Question 1. We used ChatGPT (v. 4o) for initial classification, and then performed manual revision of each answer to confirm that each one fits the designated category. For data restructuring and visualization, the tidyverse and ggplot2 packages were used in the R statistical environment. Regarding the Research Question 2, we have employed ANOVA and Cross Tabulation with Symmetric Measures analysis (Phi and Cramer's V) using the vcd package.

Results

Exploring Factors Behind Ukrainians' Engagement and Disengagement with Russian Culture

Thematic categories were identified to explain the generalized disengagement of Ukrainians from Russian culture. The categories and their frequencies are visualized in Figure 1. They are listed in descending order of frequency, indicating how often each theme was mentioned in the responses. The categories suggested by ChatGPT are include Cultural Propaganda and Imperialism, Disconnection and Avoidance, Financial support and taxes, Generalized Negative Perception, Loss of Interest/Shift in Preferences and Rejection, Media Influence, Negative Associations, Reevaluation and Disillusionment, Unspecific or uncertain responses (see Table 1 and Figure 1).

Table 1
Frequencies of Thematic Categories Explaining Ukrainians' Disengagement from Russian Culture

<i>Category</i>	<i>N</i>
Cultural Propaganda and Imperialism	34
Disconnection and Avoidance	66
Financial support and taxes	7
Generalized Negative Perception	193

Loss of Interest/Shift in Preferences and Rejection	58
Media Influence	1
Negative Associations	26
Reevaluation and Disillusionment	58
Unspecific or uncertain responses	62
Total number	505

Note. The table presents the frequency (N) of thematic categories derived from responses explaining the disengagement of Ukrainians from Russian culture. The categories were identified based on qualitative analysis.

Generalized Negative Perception was the most frequently mentioned category, followed by Disconnection and Avoidance. Financial support and taxes with Media Influence were the least mentioned categories. This distribution highlights the prominent themes in the disengagement of Ukrainians with Russian culture.

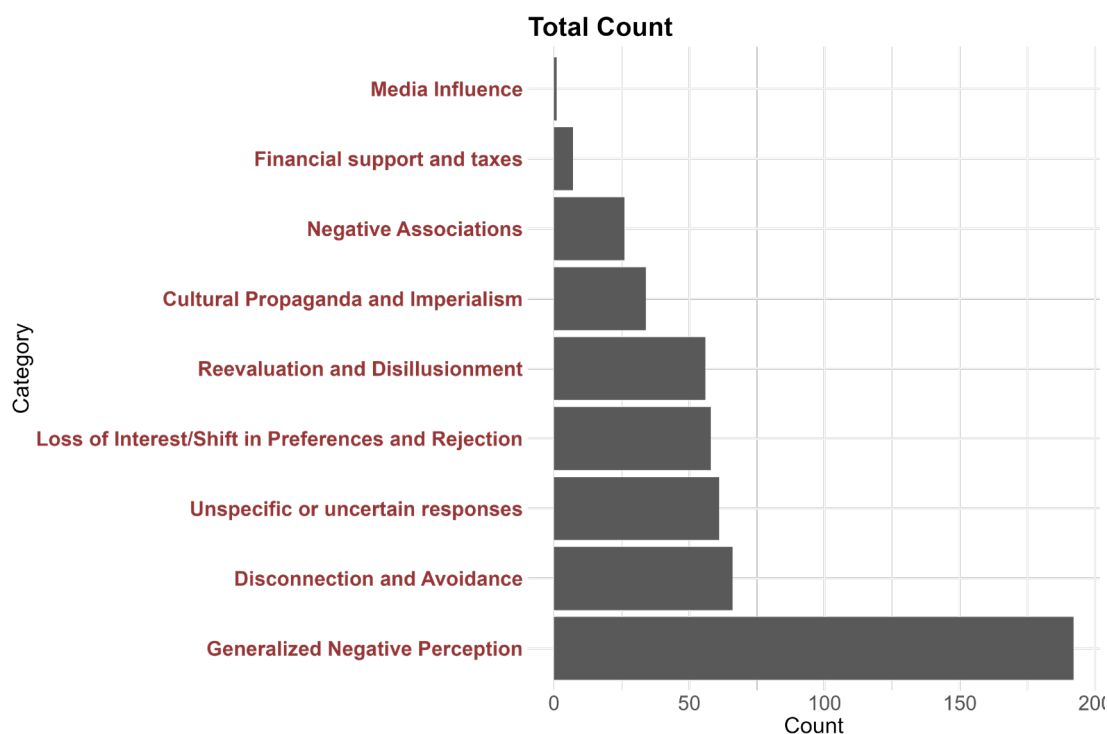


Figure 1. Distribution of Thematic Categories Explaining Ukrainians' Disengagement from Russian Culture

Thematic categories were also identified for the continued generalized *engagement* of Ukrainians with Russian culture. The categories and their frequencies are visualized in a Figure 2. In the bar chart, the categories are listed in descending order of frequency indicating how often each theme was mentioned in the responses. The categories include Academic or professional reasons, interaction based on relevance and work-related aspects, Aesthetic appreciation, Separation of art and politics, Concerns about the war, Curiosity and interest, Information and perspective, Critical analysis and

counterarguments, Emotional response, Familiarity and past connection, Influence and upbringing, Influence from Soviet times Language and learning limitations, Limited alternatives, limited availability of Ukrainian content, Personal preferences and selective consumption, Unspecific or uncertain responses (see Table 2 and Figure 2).

Table 2
Frequencies of Thematic Categories Explaining Ukrainians' Engagement from Russian Culture

<i>Category</i>	<i>N</i>
Academic or professional reasons. Interaction based on relevance and work-related aspects	16
Aesthetic appreciation. Separation of art and politics	12
Concerns about the war	12
Curiosity and interest. Information and perspective. Critical analysis and counterarguments	41
Emotional response	71
Familiarity and past connection	4
Influence and upbringing. Influence from Soviet times	8
Language and learning limitations	4
Limited alternatives. Limited availability of Ukrainian content	34
Personal preferences and selective consumption	6
Unspecific or uncertain responses	63
Total number	271

Note: The table presents the frequency (N) of thematic categories explaining the engagement of Ukrainians with Russian culture. Categories were identified through qualitative analysis of responses.

Emotional response was the most frequently mentioned category, followed by Unspecific or uncertain responses and Curiosity and interest, information and perspective, critical analysis and counterarguments. Familiarity and past connection and Language and learning limitations were the least mentioned categories. This distribution highlights the prominent themes in the engagement of Ukrainians with Russian culture.

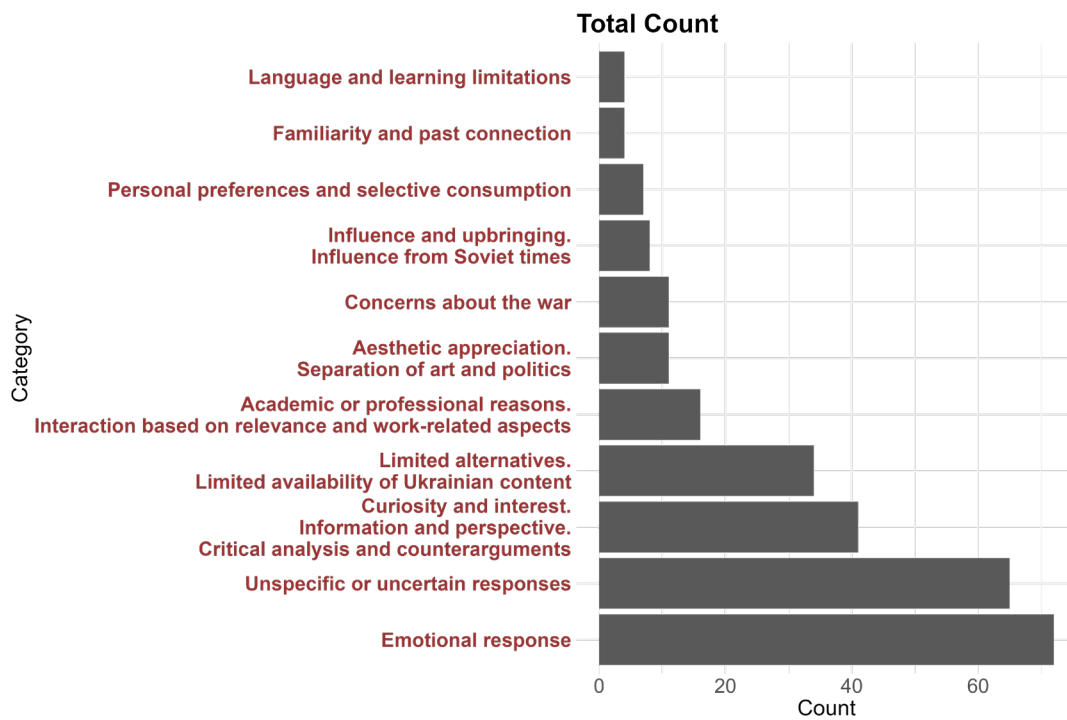


Figure 2. Distribution of Thematic Categories Explaining Ukrainians' Engagement from Russian Culture

To answer the question “How and to what extent do spoken language, age, and degree of emotional experience define the engagement/disengagement with Russian culture” a chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between thematic categories and language. The relation between these variables was not significant, $\chi^2(30, N = [271]) = 35.01, p=.242$. Additionally, the likelihood ratio was $\chi^2(30, N = [271]) = 37.77, p=.156$.

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between thematic categories and age. The relation between these variables was not significant, $\chi^2(50, N = [505]) = 58.6, p=.189$. Likelihood ratio was $\chi^2(50, N = [505]) = 59.27, p=.173$.

Thematic Categories versus Emotions

We have conducted one-way ANOVA to identify the most significant emotions common for people who continue engagement with Russian culture. The analysis revealed that several emotions were significantly associated with different thematic categories, including Interest, Surprise, Sadness, Anger ($F(10, 260) = 2.432, p = 0.009$), Disgust, Contempt, Disdain ($F(10, 260) = 1.943, p = 0.04$), Fear, Shame, Aesthetic appreciation, Aesthetic disgust, Discomfort ($F(10, 260) = 1.913, p = 0.044$), Nostalgia ($F(10, 260) = 4.931, p < 0.001$), Longing, Happiness, Calmness ($F(10, 260) = 2.166, p = 0.02$), Pride, Inspiration, Despair, Anxiety, Embarrassment (Figure 3), where only significant results were specified.

For the emotion of anger, ANOVA has shown that as the only category with a significant p-value was “Concerns about the war” ($M = 6.75, SD = 4.14$). For the emotion of disgust, ANOVA has shown four significant categories: “The influence and upbringing from Soviet times” ($M = 4.62, SD = 3.78$), “Language and learning limitations” ($M = 4.25, SD = 3.77$), “Limited alternatives and limited availability of

Ukrainian content” (M = 4.12, SD = 3.71), and “Unspecific or uncertain responses” (M = 3.78, SD = 3.72). For the emotion of aesthetic appreciation, ANOVA has shown significant interaction in two categories. “The influence and upbringing from Soviet times” elicited (M = 4.75, SD = 4.17), while “Aesthetic appreciation and the separation of art and politics” elicited (M = 3.75, SD = 3.49). For the emotion of discomfort, ANOVA has shown significant interaction in two categories. “Concerns about the war” elicited (M = 2.92, SD = 3.82), and “Aesthetic appreciation and the separation of art and politics” elicited (M = 0.67, SD = 2.31). For the emotion of aesthetic appreciation ANOVA has shown significant interaction in six categories, “Emotional response” resulted in (M = 3.28, SD = 3.47), “Familiarity and past connection” elicited (M = 3, SD = 2.58), “The influence and upbringing from Soviet times” elicited (M = 6.62, SD = 3.58), “Language and learning limitations” elicited (M = 5.5, SD = 4.2), “Personal preferences and selective consumption” elicited (M = 2.5, SD = 3.56), and “Unspecific or uncertain responses” elicited (M = 2.27, SD = 3). For the emotion of happiness, ANOVA has shown that only one category, “Curiosity and interest,” including subcomponents such as information and perspective, critical analysis, and counterarguments, elicited a significant interaction with (M = 0.32, SD = 1.01).

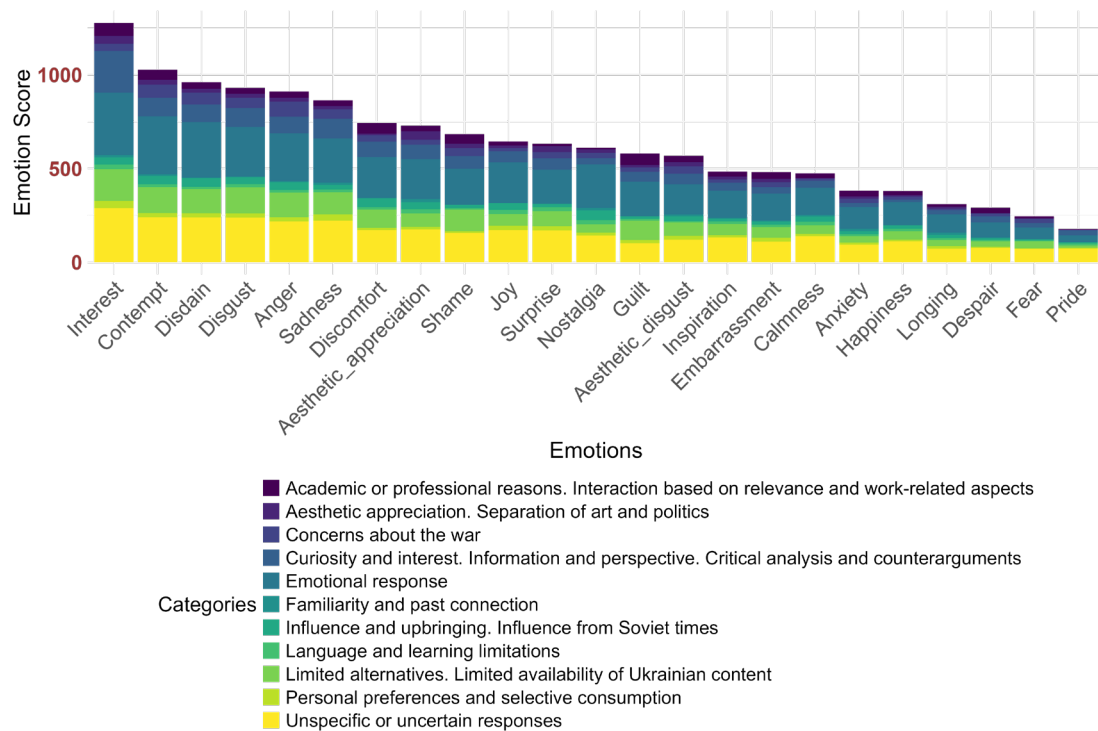


Figure 3. Emotional Responses Associated with Thematic Categories of Engagement with Russian Culture

We have conducted another one-way ANOVA to identify the most significant emotions common for people who stopped engaging with Russian culture. The analysis revealed that several emotions were significantly associated with different thematic categories, including: Interest ($F(8, 496) = 5.52, p > .001$), Surprise, Sadness, Anger ($F(8, 496) = 4.935, p > .001$), Disgust ($F(8, 496) = 4.466, p > .001$), Contempt ($F(8, 496) = 3.228, p = .001$), Disdain ($F(8, 496) = 3.248, p = .001$), Fear, Shame ($F(8, 496) = 2.455, p$

=.01), Guilt, Aesthetic appreciation ($F(8, 496) = 5.736, p > .001$), Aesthetic disgust ($F(8, 496) = 4.258, p > .001$), Discomfort ($F(8, 496) = 6.147, p > .001$), Nostalgia ($F(8, 496) = 3.072, p = .002$), Longing, Happiness ($F(8, 496) = 2.748, p = .005$), Calmness, Pride, Inspiration ($F(8, 496) = 5.174, p > .001$), Despair, Anxiety, Embarrassment (Figure 4), where only significant results were specified.

For the emotion of disdain, ANOVA has shown significant interaction between the emotion and categories in three cases. “Disconnection and Avoidance” elicited ($M = 7.42, SD = 3.46$), “Reevaluation and Disillusionment” elicited ($M = 7.88, SD = 3.35$), and “Unspecific or uncertain response” elicited ($M = 6.55, SD = 4.05$). For the emotion of contempt, ANOVA has shown significant interaction between the emotion and categories in three cases. “Loss of Interest/Shift in Preferences and Rejection” elicited ($M = 6.66, SD = 3.86$), “Reevaluation and Disillusionment” elicited ($M = 7.91, SD = 3.38$), and “Unspecific or uncertain response” elicited ($M = 6.55, SD = 4.11$). For the emotion of discomfort, ANOVA has shown that “Unspecific or uncertain response,” as the only category with a significant p-value, elicited ($M = 4.05, SD = 3.78$). For the emotion of shame, ANOVA has shown significant results in two categories. “Disconnection and Avoidance” elicited ($M = 4.91, SD = 3.73$), and “Reevaluation and Disillusionment” elicited ($M = 4.93, SD = 3.98$).

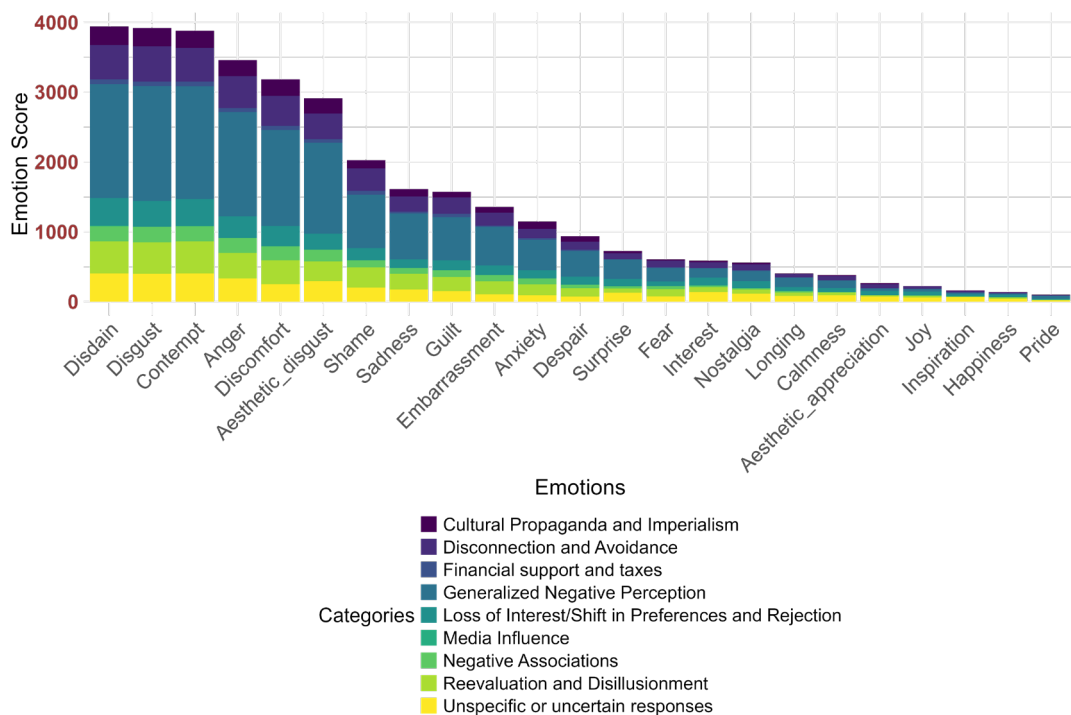


Figure 4. Emotional Responses Associated with Thematic Categories of Disengagement with Russian Culture

Discussion

This study explored the emotional and thematic responses of Ukrainians regarding their engagement or disengagement with Russian culture following the onset of the war. The most frequently mentioned theme among those who disengaged from Russian culture was “Generalized Negative Perception” followed by “Disconnection

and Avoidance.” Less common categories included “Financial Support and Taxes” and “Media Influence”. For those who continued engagement, “Emotional Response” was the most frequently mentioned category followed by “Unspecific or Uncertain Responses” and “Curiosity and Interest”. Categories like “Familiarity and Past Connection” and “Language and Learning Limitations” were less commonly mentioned. The chi-square tests indicated no significant relationships between thematic categories and language or age, suggesting that disengagement and engagement themes were consistent across different demographic groups. Significant emotions associated with continued engagement included interest, nostalgia and happiness while other notable emotions like anger, disgust and aesthetic appreciation were identified as well. For those who disengaged significant emotions included disdain, contempt and discomfort. Disconnection and Avoidance and Reevaluation and Disillusionment were common themes associated with these emotions.

According to our results, emotions play an important role in decision-making, at least while choosing which content to consume. Numerous studies supported this idea (Lottridge et al., 2011; Luo & Yu, 2015; Schachter, 1964). Fresh studies also describe that emotions and decision-making seem to have something in common with the same brain region – the orbitofrontal cortex (Rolls, 2023) and the possible relation between emotional intelligence and decision-making (Joshi & Brahmi, 2023).

While the study anticipated distinct emotional and thematic patterns based on demographic variables such as age and language, the results did not support these hypotheses. The lack of significant relationships between thematic categories and demographic factors suggests that the decision to engage or disengage with Russian culture is influenced by a broader set of emotional and contextual factors rather than specific demographic traits. Some articles describe social factors in consuming content online (Kaghazgaran et al., 2020), in particular engagement-based social factors. Worth mentioning that the research situation didn’t seem to include any war-related problems. Another study showed that consumers’ demographic factors, lifestyle and personality features predict their content consumption (Palumba, 2021).

This study builds on prior research that explores the complex emotional responses toward cultural interactions in conflict settings. It aligns with earlier findings (Kitayama et al., 2006; Boiger et al., 2012) that emotions play a crucial role in shaping cultural engagement and disengagement. Moreover, it adds to the understanding of aesthetic responses (Yang et al., 2019) by examining how aesthetic appreciation and disgust manifest in a politically charged cultural context.

Future research could explore the longitudinal changes in emotional and thematic responses over time. Additionally, investigating the role of specific media and information sources in shaping these responses could provide more granular insights. Expanding the study to include a broader set of demographic and psychographic variables might also reveal more nuanced patterns of cultural engagement and disengagement.

Conclusion

This study explored the emotional and thematic responses of Ukrainians towards engaging or disengaging with Russian culture in the ongoing conflict. Understanding these responses is crucial as they reflect broader cultural and political sentiments that influence social dynamics during times of conflict. Our findings reveal that emotional responses such as generalized negative perceptions, curiosity, aesthetic appreciation, and emotional response significantly shape these interactions, regardless of demographic factors like age or language.

While some may argue that cultural engagement is purely personal or unaffected by broader sociopolitical factors, our research highlights that these decisions are deeply intertwined with emotional and contextual influences driven by the conflict. Recognizing the importance of these emotional factors can lead to better support for individuals navigating cultural choices in turbulent times.

Future research should further investigate how these emotional and thematic responses evolve and explore additional factors that influence cultural engagement. By continuing to study these dynamics, we can better understand the complex interplay between culture, emotion, and conflict, ultimately guiding more empathetic and informed approaches to cultural interactions in divided societies.

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Відомості про авторів

Олександра БАЛАШЕВИЧ, студентка КНУ імені Тараса Шевченка
Oleksandra Balashevych, Student, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv
ORCID: 0000-0002-4865-3487
E-mail: alexbalashevych@ukr.net

Єлизавета БОРОДЬКО, студентка КНУ імені Тараса Шевченка
Yelyzaveta Borodko, Student, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv,
corresponding author
ORCID: 0009-0005-8293-1187
E-mail: yelyzavetaborodko@knu.ua

Антон КУРАПОВ, канд. психол. наук, асист., КНУ імені Тараса Шевченка
Anton Kurapov, PhD (Psychology), Assist. Prof., Taras Shevchenko National University
of Kyiv
ORCID: 0000-0002-1286-9788
E-mail: ankurapov@knu.ua