European Media’s Role in Nation Branding:
A Case Study of Swedish and British Coverage of Ukraine's 2016 and 2022 Eurovision Participation

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Abstract

This thesis examines the extent to which European journalistic coverage of the Eurovision Song Contest (ESC) supports the nation branding of individual countries, focusing on Ukraine's participation during 2016 and 2022. Through an analysis of 16 selected articles from British and Swedish media outlets, the study investigates how Swedish and British media outlets report on how Ukraine's portrayal in the ESC contributes to its nation branding efforts. Drawing upon theoretical frameworks of strategic narrative and nation branding, the research explores two main questions: To what extent does media coverage support Ukraine's nation branding in the ESC? And has there been any change in coverage since 2016?

Furthermore, the study reflects on why nation branding within the profession of journalism has become accepted and not questioned, examining the implications for the profession and its role in society. Through a qualitative narrative analysis based on the concept of framing, two distinct narratives were revealed: "Ukraine's Resistance Against Oppression and Invasion" and "Support and Solidarity from Europe." The findings demonstrate differences in reporting between Swedish and British media, with shifts in focus observed between 2022 and 2016. This study underscores the role of media in shaping perceptions and nation branding, offering insights into the dynamics of strategic narratives and media influence, and the evolving role of journalism in society.

Keywords: Eurovision Song Contest, framing, media representation, strategic narratives, nation branding, Ukraine, geopolitics.
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1. Introduction

The Eurovision Song Contest (ESC) stands as a beacon of cultural significance and unity in Europe since its inception in 1956. Originating as a means to foster post-World War II European cooperation\(^1\), the contest has evolved into a cultural, entertaining, and at times, “silly” event where countries compete for the title of the best song and performance.\(^2\) While some argue that both cultural and sporting events remain apolitical, others contend that the ESC, as well as events such as the FIFA World Cup, wield influence over the political landscape within and beyond Europe.\(^3\) Through its songs, performances, symbols, and artists’ backgrounds, the ESC possesses the power to shape political opinions and ignite debates.\(^4\)

This thesis delves into the multifaceted dynamics surrounding the ESC, exploring its role as a catalyst for cultural exchange, diplomatic messaging, and the construction of national identity. Through an analysis of media coverage and diplomatic discourse, this research seeks to unravel the intricate interplay between the ESC and journalism in a comparative perspective, shedding light on how media outlets from different countries frame and mediate the participation of their own and other nations in the contest. This will be examined through the lens of reporting on Ukraine’s ESC participation and success, providing insights into the broader implications of journalistic coverage in shaping perceptions and narratives surrounding the event.

Central to this exploration is an investigation into how journalistic coverage reports on the intersection of cultural, political, and social issues within the ESC framework. Through a qualitative analysis of media narratives, by using the nation branding theory as well as the strategic narrative theory, this research seeks to uncover the implications of journalistic coverage of the ESC and its broader socio-political significance. The theory of Strategic Narrative encompasses how political actors strategically craft and circulate narratives to influence perceptions and attain political objectives. Meanwhile, nation branding involves the global management of a country's image to portray it positively and shape perceptions of its

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values and identity. These concepts are pivotal in this study, which seeks to explore the intersection of European media coverage of the ESC with cultural diplomacy, political messaging, and nation branding endeavours. Through an analysis of strategic narratives and nation branding in media portrayals of the ESC, this study aims to explore the factors that influence media representations of nations and their cultural identities.

1.1. Purpose and Research Questions

The ESC transcends its role as a mere musical extravaganza; it serves as a prominent stage where participating nations not only showcase their cultural identities through music and performance but also leverage the platform to convey subtle or overt political messages. Through an analysis of European media coverage and diplomatic discourse, this study attempts to analyse the interplay between the ESC and journalism in a comparative perspective. The main aim is to examine the extent to which journalistic coverage of the ESC supports or counteracts the nation branding of individual countries, in this case, Ukraine’s participation in the ESC during 2016 and 2022. Ukraine has been chosen as an example in this study, based on its political position resulting from Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, as well as their invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Ukraine's political situation has resulted in their use of international arenas such as the ESC to highlight their values to the world. The rationale behind choosing Ukraine's involvement in the ESC during the years 2016 and 2022 for this investigation stems from the nation's remarkable achievements during those periods. Ukraine clinched victory in the ESC both in 2016 and 2022. Considering Ukraine's political landscape during this timeframe, as previously highlighted, these triumphs present a compelling avenue for deeper exploration within the context of this thesis. The above will be investigated through the following research questions:

- RQ1: To what extent does media coverage of the ESC to support Ukraine's nation branding efforts?
- RQ2: How has the media coverage of Ukraine's participation in the Eurovision Song Contest changed between 2016 and 2022?

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2. **Background**

Understanding Ukraine's dynamic journey within the Eurovision Song Contest is crucial for shedding light on the country's participation in this event. This chapter will explore various aspects of Ukraine's ESC history, including its historical evolution, competition format and rules, as well as the cultural and political significance of the ESC. Additionally, the chapter will examine the media landscape in Europe and Ukraine to provide context for the study of ESC coverage. It will also discuss Ukraine's selection process for the ESC and controversies that arose during the 2019 competition. Finally, the chapter will focus on Jamala's victory and the political discourse surrounding her song "1944" during the ESC 2016. Through an analysis of these different aspects, the chapter will provide insights into Ukraine's relationship with the ESC and its broader implications for cultural diplomacy and political discourse.

### 2.1 History and Evolution

The Eurovision Song Contest was established in 1956 by the European Broadcasting Union as a way to bring together European countries through music. Initially inspired by Italy's Sanremo Music Festival, the ESC aimed to foster unity and collaboration among post-war European nations. The first contest was held in Lugano, Switzerland, with seven participating countries. Over the decades, the ESC has grown significantly, now featuring over 40 participating countries from both Europe and beyond, including Australia.

The format and presentation of the ESC have evolved considerably. Early contests were simple, with a small audience and basic production. However, as technology and broadcasting techniques advanced, the ESC became a major television event known for its elaborate stage designs, impressive visual effects, and high production values. The contest has also embraced changes in music trends and societal norms, reflecting the diverse cultural landscape of Europe.

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10 Ibid.
2.2 Format and Rules
The ESC operates under a framework designed to uphold its non-political nature. All participating broadcasters, including the host broadcaster, are tasked with safeguarding the integrity of the ESC and preventing any politicization, instrumentalization, or actions that may bring the contest into disrepute. This commitment underscores the ESC’s dedication to remaining a platform for cultural exchange and artistic expression, free from political agendas or influences. In line with these principles, the ESC follows a structured format where each participating country contributes one original song, selected through national competitions or an internal processes. The contest consists of two semi-finals and a grand final, with the semi-finals determining the finalists, excluding certain pre-qualified countries.

During the competition, all songs are performed live, ensuring equal opportunity for each participant to showcase their talent. The performances are evaluated through a combined voting system, involving both national juries and public voting, with each contributing equally to the final score. This approach aims to maintain fairness and impartiality in the assessment process. Moreover, the voting mechanism operates on the basis of reciprocity, with countries awarding points to their top ten favorite songs, excluding their own. This system seeks to prevent biases and ensure an objective evaluation of the performances.

In essence, the ESC’s format and rules reflect its commitment to providing a platform for musical creativity and cultural diversity, while firmly rejecting any attempts to politicize or undermine the integrity of the contest. Through these measures, the ESC continues to foster a spirit of unity and celebration among nations, transcending political boundaries.

2.3 Cultural and Political Significance
The Eurovision Song Contest holds significant cultural and political importance in Europe. It serves as a platform for showcasing national identity and cultural heritage while promoting unity through diversity. Over the years, the ESC has also intersected with various socio-political
issues, reflecting broader European dynamics. For instance, in 1974, Portugal's entry became a symbol of the Carnation Revolution, signaling the end of dictatorship in the country. In 2004, Ukraine's victory with Ruslana's "Wild Dances" coincided with the Orange Revolution, a period of political upheaval. More recently, Conchita Wurst's win in 2014 with "Rise Like a Phoenix" was seen as a statement for LGBTQ+ rights.

The ESC often mirrors current political climates and serves as a stage for soft power. Countries use their entries to craft specific national images, aiming to influence perceptions both domestically and internationally. The contest’s inclusive nature also allows it to be a space for promoting social change and cultural dialogue.

2.4 Media Landscape in Europe and Ukraine
Understanding the media landscape in Europe and Ukraine is crucial for contextualizing the study of the journalistic coverage of the Eurovision Song Contest. European media is characterized by its diversity, with a mix of public service broadcasters, private media companies, and a wide array of digital platforms. Public service broadcasters, like the BBC in the UK and SVT in Sweden, play a significant role in covering events like the ESC, often emphasizing cultural and educational content. In contrast, private media outlets may focus more on entertainment value and sensational aspects. The European media landscape is also influenced by varying degrees of press freedom, journalistic standards, and regulatory environments across different countries.

Ukraine’s media landscape has undergone significant changes, particularly after gaining independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. The country has a mix of state-owned, private, and independent media outlets. The Ukrainian media environment has faced challenges, including issues of media ownership concentration, political influence, and conflicts impacting journalistic freedom. However, there has been a growing movement towards more independent

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and investigative journalism, especially in the wake of political events such as the Euromaidan protests and ongoing conflicts.23

By examining the media coverage of the ESC within this diverse landscape, the study can better understand how narratives are constructed and the role of media in shaping perceptions of national identity and cultural representation.

2.5 Ukraine’s Selection Process
The selection process to determine who will represent Ukraine in the Eurovision Song Contest is conducted through the national format known as “Vidbir.” The winner is determined by a combination of jury votes and national votes from the population, with each contributing 50% to the final result. Notably, the jury members themselves are chosen by the Ukrainian population. In 2024, the Ukrainian broadcaster nominated 9 individuals, from whom the population then voted for 3 persons who would serve on the jury.24 This process sets Vidbir apart from the selection methods of some other countries, which typically involve multiple semi-finals leading up to a final.25 Vidbir, in contrast to Sweden, for example, comprises a single selection event where the representative is chosen. Ukraine made its debut in the Eurovision Song Contest in 2003 and has since enjoyed notable success, consistently reaching the final every year except for 2019 in Tel Aviv.26 This exception was due to a disagreement between the Ukrainian public broadcasting company (UA:PBC) and the winner of that year's Vidbir competition, Maruv. The public broadcaster required the winner, to cancel all her performances in Russia in order to represent Ukraine in the Eurovision Song Contest in Tel Aviv.27 UA:PBC stated in a press release that as a representative of Ukraine in the international competition, the artist doesn't just showcase a good song; they also carry a significant cultural responsibility to act as a spokesperson for the entire Ukrainian society on the international stage.28 Maruv, however, declined to cancel her upcoming performances in Russia, which conflicted with the public broadcaster's stance on the responsibilities of representing the country.

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in the ESC. Consequently, they were unable to reach a resolution. Maruv herself asserted that she refused to sign the contract with UA:PBC because she did not want her participation in the competition to be politicized for Ukraine. This sentiment was clearly expressed in her statement:

"I am a musician, not a bat in the political arena." – Anna Korsun, Maruv.

UA:PBC, whose mission includes fostering unity within Ukraine, feared that Maruv's potential participation in the ESC could exacerbate political divisions among the Ukrainian population. Consequently, UA:PBC attempted to negotiate similar contractual terms with the second and third-place participants in Vidbir, leading to the absence of a Ukrainian representative in the 2019 ESC edition held in Tel Aviv.

2.6 Jamala’s Victory and the “1944” Controversy: Ukraine’s Triumph and Political Discourse in the ESC 2016

Ukraine clinched victory in the Eurovision Song Contest 2016 with Jamala as the singer and her song "1944." The decision to include this song in the competition, and subsequently award it the top prize, sparked intense debate due to the Eurovision Song Contest’s principle of political neutrality for entries. The song addressed Stalin's deportation of Crimean Tatars from Crimea during World War II, a personal narrative drawn from Jamala's own family history.

In 1944, around 200,000 Crimean Tatars were forcibly deported from Crimea via train, enduring harsh conditions without access to necessities such as food and water. Survivors were resettled in labor camps spread across the Soviet Union, where they encountered additional hardships amidst an environment often patrolled by paramilitary forces, resulting in

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a tragic loss of life. Following this tumultuous period, the annexation of Crimea by Russia further compounded the displacement of the Tatars from their ancestral lands. In the aftermath of the war, the Tatars faced an uphill battle as they sought to reclaim their homeland and rebuild their lives. While Soviet authorities eventually permitted the return of the Crimean Tatars in 1980, the journey towards reintegration proved arduous, marked by bureaucratic hurdles such as the acquisition of Ukrainian citizenship, adding layers of complexity to their quest for restoration and belonging.

The Ukrainian government recognized this event as a genocide through a resolution in 2015, which was one of the reasons why the topic became relevant to contemporary society in 2016.

2.7 Ukraine's Historic Win at Eurovision 2022
Ukraine's participation and victory in the ESC 2022 was a historic triumph celebrated throughout the country. Following a performance with the song "Stefania" by Kalush Orchestra, Ukraine topped the scoreboard and secured victory in the competition. Their win marked not only a success for the country's musical talent but also an empowering symbol of unity and pride for the Ukrainian people, particularly considering the ongoing challenges with the Russo-Ukrainian War. Notably, Russia was not allowed to participate in the ESC 2022 due to its invasion of Ukraine earlier that year.

Ukraine's victory in the Eurovision Song Contest 2022 highlighted the country's cultural and musical diversity, exemplified by the Kalush Orchestra's fusion of traditional and contemporary music styles. Their performance provided an international audience with an insight into Ukraine's cultural heritage. This victory also underscored the role of music as a unifying element, illustrating the country's ability to maintain resilience and perseverance during challenging periods. Due to the ongoing war, Ukraine was unable to host ESC 2023. As a result, the United Kingdom, which had placed second in 2022, hosted the event on Ukraine's behalf.

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milestone celebrated not only within the country's borders but also hailed worldwide, and it will continue to endure as an important moment in Eurovision history.\textsuperscript{40}

3. Literature review

The research on the ESC as a platform for cultural diplomacy between Russia and Ukraine has revealed interesting patterns and strategies. Lea M Welslau and Torsten J Selck emphasize in their research article "Geopolitics in the ESC: Comparing Russia’s and Ukraine’s use of cultural diplomacy in the Eurovision Song Contest" the ESC's focus on culture but also point out its potential use for political purposes.\textsuperscript{41} The authors argue that Russia has a history of utilizing the ESC to promote an image of peace and innocence, while also conveying political messages implicitly.\textsuperscript{42} Additionally, they argue that Ukraine has emphasized showcasing its culture and history, interspersed with occasional political messaging, particularly in response to Russian aggression against the nation.\textsuperscript{43} This research suggests that there is an ongoing discourse regarding how the ESC is used as a political arena. Welslau and Selck shed light on the concept of nation branding and examine the participating countries' opportunities to promote their nation and its values through the ESC.\textsuperscript{44} What Selck and Welslau's study does not address, however, is how European media outlets report on this, making the research purpose of this study relevant. Thus, this research serves as an extension of Selck and Welslau's work.

John Street explores in his article "'Fight the Power': The Politics of Music and the Music of Politics" the interaction between popular music and politics. He argues that music can be more powerful than actual weapons due to its ability to directly engage with our emotions.\textsuperscript{45} The article delves into how political actors harness and manipulate popular music to advance their political agendas, shedding light on how the ESC can function as a tool for nation branding and geopolitical communication. Furthermore, it underscores the significance of integrating cultural policy into political processes, emphasizing music's pivotal role in shaping emotions, identity,

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid, p, 15.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid, p, 9.
and political engagement. Echoing Street's assertion about music's potent influence in politics, Ethan C. Busby, James N. Druckman, and Alexandria Fredenhall argue that seemingly inconsequential events also wield considerable influence in the political arena. Their study also underscores the need for further research on the phenomenon of "irrelevant events", strengthening the hypothesis that the ESC serves as a significant political actor. This supports the argument that additional investigation is warranted to explore how the reporting of the event, as well as its impact on nation branding, should be examined thoroughly.

Maria Kyriakidou, Michael Skey, Julie Uldam, and Patrick McCurdy, in their article "Media events and cosmopolitan fandom: ‘Playful nationalism’ in the Eurovision Song Contest," contribute to the discussion by exploring the ESC as a global media event. They argue that the ESC is experienced by its fans as a cosmopolitan space that is open and diverse, where national belonging is expressed in a playful manner tied to the overall visual aesthetics of the contest. Their empirical research, conducted during the 2014 Eurovision final in Copenhagen, highlights the dual nature of nationalism within the ESC—one that is playful and non-competitive among nations. This playful nationalism, according to Kyriakidou et al., is a fundamental part of the cosmopolitan space that the ESC creates, though it is bounded and limited in scope. This perspective adds a layer of understanding to how the ESC functions as a platform for both national expression and international engagement, highlighting the contest's role in fostering a cosmopolitan community among its audience.

They further explore the ESC's role in fostering a sense of European identity and cosmopolitanism. They argue that the ESC serves as a platform for engaging with cultural diversity and negotiating national identities within a broader European framework. The study employs a qualitative research approach, including participant observation and semi-structured interviews conducted during the ESC 2014 in Copenhagen. This research provides insights into how the ESC is experienced by its fans and participants, emphasizing its role in promoting a cosmopolitan outlook.

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50 Ibid, p. 4.
Cecilia Falek

Galina Miazhevich's research, titled "Paradoxes of New Media: Digital Discourses on Eurovision 2014, Media Flows and Post-Soviet Nation-Building," sheds light on the digital discourses surrounding the ESC 2014 and offers insight into how the media narratives transitioned from the central (Russian center) to the periphery (Belarus and Lithuania). Using Lotman’s model of intercultural dialogue, she shows how Conchita Wurst’s performance created various evolving digital discussion areas. Miazhevich discovered that while Russian-language media dominated in Belarus, Russian narratives didn't deeply influence due to Belarus's efforts to establish its own identity. In Lithuania, despite lower Russian media influence, narratives were similar to Russian discourse, possibly due to the need to monitor Russian narratives and shared homophobic attitudes. Her analysis indicates that new media allow cross-national communication but also uphold national boundaries due to language and nation-building efforts. Reactions to Conchita Wurst's victory revealed that homophobia encompasses more than anti-gay prejudice, including transgenderism and promiscuity. This challenges the assumption that new media inherently promote democracy, as both homophobic comments and calls for tolerance exist. Miazhevich's study highlights the core-periphery dilemma, where Russian discourse shifts through peripheral interactions, causing ambivalence and restructuring online. She emphasizes new media's limitations in mediating extreme notions like homophobia and suggests further research on how marginalized communities respond.

Her work enriches understanding of the ESC as a complex event with cultural and political implications, emphasizing the importance of considering power relations and cultural contexts when analyzing new media’s impact on societal attitudes and national identities.

3.1 Research gap

While existing research, particularly studies by Welslau and Selck, Street, Kyriakidou et al., and Miazhevich, have shed light on various aspects of the ESC, there remains an unexplored area concerning the role of European media in shaping perceptions of the event's cultural and political significance. Welslau and Selck focus on the ESC as a platform for cultural diplomacy between Russia and Ukraine, emphasizing the contest's potential for political messaging. Street explores the intersection of music and politics, highlighting the ESC's role in nation branding and geopolitical communication. Kyriakidou et al. examine the ESC as a global media event,

53 Ibid, p, 208.
54 Ibid, p, 214.
55 Ibid, p 203.
emphasizing its function in fostering cosmopolitanism and European identity. Additionally, Miazhevich's study on the digital discourses surrounding the ESC reveals the complex interplay of cultural, political, and social factors in shaping media narratives. However, these studies do not specifically focus on journalistic coverage or its implications for nation branding. Moreover, they do not explore how European media outlets report on the ESC and its implications for nation branding, particularly in the context of Ukraine's participation." While Kyriakidou et al. touch on the contest's role in promoting a cosmopolitan outlook, they do not specifically address the media's portrayal of national narratives during the ESC. Therefore, this research aims to address this gap by investigating the Swedish and British journalistic coverage of the ESC and its impact on nation branding, using Ukraine's participation as a case study. By analyzing media narratives surrounding the ESC, this study seeks to provide insights into how European media shape perceptions of cultural and political identities, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the contest's significance in contemporary European society.

4. Theoretical Framework

The following chapter provides an account of the selected theoretical frameworks: nation branding and strategic narrative. The aim is to further interpret and analyze the 16 chosen articles from British and Swedish media outlets in order to assess the extent to which these media have supported Ukraine's nation branding regarding their participation in the ESC during 2016 and 2022, and if there are any differences in reporting between the years. Furthermore, criticisms of both theories will be presented to demonstrate the study's transparency and to further argue why these theories are suitable for this study.

4.1 Nation Branding

In the context of this thesis, the nation branding theory serves as a critical lens through which it will be examined how Ukraine strategically manages and promotes its national image through its participation in the Eurovision Song Contest during 2016 and 2022. This theoretical framework enables an analysis of how Ukraine crafted and communicated its unique identity, cultural values, and historical narrative to a global audience during the Eurovision event.

Furthermore, the primary objective of this theoretical framework is to examine the ways in which British and Swedish journalistic coverage strategically bolstered the nation branding efforts of Ukraine's involvement in the ESC elucidating the specific mechanisms and narratives employed by media outlets to construct and disseminate a favorable image of Ukraine on the
international stage through their reporting. Building upon this, the aim of employing this theory is to facilitate a deeper understanding of how European journalistic coverage supported Ukraine's nation branding during its participation in the ESC through their reporting.

4.1.1 Definition of Nation branding

The theory of nation branding has been described by Keith Dinnie as a phenomenon that lacks a strong theoretical background in relation to its practical applications. By this, he means that the phenomenon of nation branding is relatively new and somewhat unexplored in theory. Göran Bohlin and Per Ståhlberg align with Dinnie and argue that this phenomenon first appeared at the end of the 20th century. However, in practice, it is a phenomenon that has been around for a long time, with the primary purpose of marketing a country as an attractive destination, both economically, politically, and culturally. Bohlin and Ståhlberg argue that the concept of nation branding is based on the concept of nation building. They refer to the 19th century and the Enlightenment era, when many states had their beginnings, and argue that cultural expressions, such as literature, art, and music, were crucial for successfully constructing countries with strong identities. These "cultural technologies" were then extensively used as tools to strengthen nations' identities internationally. In combination with the growing significance of the advertising industry during the 20th century, the phenomenon of "destination branding" developed. This meant that not only were products marketed on the global stage to compete with others, but also countries, cities, and regions.

Bohlin and Ståhlberg describe nation branding as a tool aimed at political consumption, shaped by a nation's cultural identity. They further argue that the concept of nation branding translates social solidarity into political action, with its foundation largely rooted in tradition and historical background, whether factual or fictional, being of lesser importance.

Dinnie further argues that in order to understand the concept of nation branding, these terms need to be clearly defined, specifically the term "brand". The concept of "brand" can be defined from two aspects, according to Dinnie. On one hand, from a visual perspective, meaning how

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60 Ibid, p. 94.
a brand is represented visually, based on graphic elements. But on the other hand, the concept of brand can be defined based on softer values such as policies, identity, and culture. These two aspects generally differ from each other, but when discussing the phenomenon of nation branding, both are relevant. If only one of these definitions is considered, the ability to understand and consequently apply nation branding to nations and their reputations in a global context is lost.

Holt argues that branding, including nation branding, must operate in coexistence with the times we live in to be effective and successful. This perspective can also be linked to Bolin and Ståhberg's argument that cultural technologies are crucial for a country to strengthen and display its identity. Popular culture as well as societal trends influence brands in various ways, affecting both commercial brands and the brands of nations. Holt has theoretically developed this phenomenon into a process he calls "cultural branding".

Chernatony argues that the phenomenon of nation branding operates as an extension of the frameworks within branding. The branding frameworks are important, but for nations to be able to utilize them, they must be adjusted and adapted based on the stakeholders who have an interest in influencing the nation brand. This is to further empower the ability to influence as well as appeal to other significant stakeholders. Chernatony builds upon Dinnie's description of the concept of "brand" and argues that its meaning remains constant despite its application to nations. Furthermore, he suggests that the concept of branding also refers to the values that a nation advocates, with the purpose of subsequently influencing the population of the nation, who then further reinforce the nation's values. Through social and economic interactions, individuals become more aware of the nation's core values, which contributes to strengthening the brand and its image both domestically and internationally. This awareness of and understanding of the nation's values are important aspects of how the brand is sustained and reinforced over time. Chernatony further argues that important stakeholders for successfully

creating a sustainable nation brand include NGOs as well as media, government, advertising, and tourism.  

4.1.2 Nation Branding in the ESC

The theory and phenomenon of Nation branding have a very strong connection to the Eurovision Song Contest. The nation branding theory is being reflected in the ESC in various ways, from different perspectives. Dinnie also discusses the concept of Brand Ambassadors, which is described as an effective strategy for countries to further promote their nation through influential figures. Effective brand ambassadors are meticulously chosen based on their profession as well as their alignment with the country's values. Scotland, renowned for its golfing heritage, appointed the globally recognized golfer Colin Montgomerie as a brand ambassador. Through his participation in golf tournaments and media appearances both nationally and internationally, he could cast Scotland in a positive light politically and position it as a desirable tourist destination. According to Chernatony's perspective that social and economic interactions make a nation's individuals more aware of its fundamental values, the concept of brand ambassadors becomes important in nation branding. This is because this awareness contributes to strengthening the nation's brand and image both domestically and internationally. Furthermore, this awareness can also be seen as vital from the perspective that understanding and appreciating the nation's values are crucial for keeping the brand alive and reinforced over time.

With the above information in mind, it becomes evident that the ESC is a pertinent arena for nation branding, particularly concerning brand ambassadors. Furthermore, Bohlin and Ståhlberg describe how Estonia utilized the ESC to execute a nation branding campaign when the competition was hosted by Estonia in 2002. Estonia, which at that time was a relatively new sovereign state, having emerged from Soviet rule between 1940 and 1991, and previously being ruled by Denmark, Germany, and Sweden, saw an opportunity to bolster its own national identity following its victory in the ESC 2001. As a result, the Estonian government collaborated with the British PR agency Interbrand to develop a campaign aimed to:

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65 Ibid, p. 16.
67 Ibid, p. 16.
69 Ibid, p, 82-83.
During their hosting of the ESC, Estonia's strategy to enhance their global presence involved seamlessly integrating strong and positive narratives about Estonia and its history into the televised broadcast of the event. The primary focus of this campaign was on international investors and tourists. As a result, it was crucial to provide journalists covering the ESC in Tallinn with positive information about the country, recognizing their role in conveying Estonia's message to the world.\textsuperscript{71} As a result, a key aspect of the campaign involved providing virtually all incoming flights to Tallinn, as well as all hotels during this period, with newspapers filled with favourable facts and articles about Estonia's economy and historical background.\textsuperscript{72} The decision by the Estonian government, in collaboration with Interbrand, to incorporate newspapers containing both elements in their campaign can thus be seen as a strategic and effective approach. This tactic aimed to influence not only journalists but also international visitors who were specifically in attendance for the ESC event. Furthermore, to convey to ESC viewers worldwide that Estonia was a country with clear visions for the future, they also chose to utilize the slogan:

"Positively transforming"\textsuperscript{73}

The aim of this slogan was to convey to the international audience that despite past adversities, the country remained optimistic about the future. To further underscore this message, visual elements were incorporated alongside the slogan, depicting young men and women joyfully interacting with children while looking into the camera. Modern props and scenic nature images were also featured. However, conspicuously absent from this portrayal was their historical context. The older generation, who experienced life during the Soviet occupation, was entirely excluded. This omission can be interpreted as an attempt to overlook their history and emphasize their determination and ambition for the future. These instances align with Dinnie's perspective that the concept of "brand" encompasses two critical aspects, namely visual representation and values, both of which are essential in a successful nation branding campaign.\textsuperscript{74}

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid, p, 82.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid, p, 85–86.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid, p, 87.
The commentators from each participating country were given specific instructions regarding the information they might need for their commentary between each country's performances. These instructions included facts about Estonia and its national achievements, such as its notable internet usage among the population. However, none of the participating countries agreed to incorporate these facts about Estonia into their commentary between performances. This can be seen as an indication of a less successful approach.\textsuperscript{75}

### 4.1.3 Critique of the theory of nation branding

The criticism of nation branding theory is extensive and multifaceted. A central point of critique is that the concept oversimplifies and reduces complex national identities to marketing tools. O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy argue that the comparison of nations to brands is often overly generalized and does not consider the historical, cultural, and political nuances that shape national identities.\textsuperscript{76} Fan also points out the uncertain causality between strong national brands and the countries that create them, questioning the empirical basis of nation branding theory. Fan suggests that it is unclear whether strong national brands are the result of a country's success or if successful countries naturally develop strong national brands.\textsuperscript{77} This uncertainty casts doubt on the assumption that nation branding directly leads to improvements in a country's image and success. Additionally, Wang notes that while there are similarities between consumer branding and national image management, their practical manifestations differ significantly, further complicating the application of commercial branding methods to nations.\textsuperscript{78}

Despite the criticism of nation branding theory, it remains relevant to this study. By analyzing how Swedish and British media outlets support Ukraine's nation branding in their coverage of ESC 2016 and 2022, this study can demonstrate how media serve as a crucial channel for shaping and projecting Ukraine's international image. The ESC's large audience and cultural


significance make it a unique platform for nation branding, emphasizing the relevance of this theory for this research.

4.2 Strategic Narrative
The Strategic Narrative Theory is a conceptual framework within the field of international politics that emphasizes the importance of storytelling and narrative construction in shaping perceptions, beliefs, and behaviours of both domestic and international audiences. At its core, this theory posits that states, NGO's and other actors strategically craft and disseminate narratives to advance their interests, influence public opinion, and achieve their policy objectives.

In the context of analysing how European media outlets framed and mediated Ukraine's participation in the Eurovision Song Contest during 2016 and 2022, the strategic narrative theory provides a valuable lens through which to understand the dynamics at play. This theory emphasizes the strategic construction and dissemination of narratives by states and other actors to influence public opinion and achieve policy objectives.

Steven Livingston and Jack Nassetta argue that the theory of strategic narratives is an extension of the framing theory. The framing theory largely depends on how one interprets the narrative of an event and the impact this interpretation subsequently has on the event itself.79 Alister Misikimon, Laura Roselle, and Ben O’Loughlin argue that strategic narratives serve as a tool for political actors to shape the collective understanding of past, present, and future events in international politics. By constructing and disseminating these narratives, political actors aim to influence the behaviour and decisions of both domestic and international players. In essence, it highlights the role of storytelling in shaping perceptions and guiding actions within the realm of international relations.80

In the analysis of strategic narratives, Bolin and Ståhlberg have identified four fundamental components: the central characters and actors, the surrounding environment, the main conflict or action, and the proposed solution or outcome. This examination of strategic narratives is conducted at three main levels:

1. **International system narratives**: These narratives reveal the structure of the world, its key actors, and the mechanisms that govern it. An example is the narrative of the Cold War, which highlights global power tensions and dynamics.

2. **National narratives**: These narratives articulate a nation's history and identity, including its values and goals. For instance, the narrative of the USA as a peaceful nation portrays its self-image and aspirations.

3. **Issue-based narratives**: These narratives justify why a particular policy is important and beneficial, outlining strategies for its effective implementation. They provide guidance and motivation for action.

Through this analytical framework, they argue that we can explore and evaluate strategic narratives at various levels, from global power dynamics to national identities and specific political issues.\(^\text{81}\)

### 4.2.1 Strategic narrative, in relation to the ESC

The theory of strategic narrative, in the context of Ukrainian participation in the ESC during 2016 and 2022, refers to the deliberate construction and dissemination of narratives by political actors, such as the Ukrainian government or media outlets, to shape perceptions and influence behaviour both domestically and internationally. This may involve crafting narratives about Ukraine's cultural identity, political aspirations, or international standing, with the aim of portraying Ukraine in a favourable light or advancing specific policy objectives. The strategic narrative approach examines how these narratives are strategically deployed during the ESC to shape public opinion, influence the portrayal of Ukraine in media coverage, and potentially impact international relations. Furthermore, it analyzes how British and Swedish media incorporate these narratives into their journalism, offering insights into broader media dynamics and cross-national perspectives.

### 4.2.3 Critique of the theory of strategic narrative

While the theory of strategic narrative offers valuable insights into the shaping of collective perceptions over time, it is not without its limitations. Bolin and Ståhlberg criticize the theory for lacking a clear temporal framework, despite its capacity to influence a shared understanding.

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of past, present, and future events. This deficiency, they argue, risks obscuring the chronological order of events and actions, leading to a diminished comprehension of their interconnectedness over time. Furthermore, Bolin and Ståhlberg contend that this absence of temporal clarity may hinder the identification of causal relationships between events and contexts within strategic narratives, rendering relationships and connections more challenging to comprehend and articulate.

Following one notable drawback of the theory due to Bolin and Ståhlberg, is its tendency to oversimplify complex historical events and overlook the nuances of individual experiences. Additionally, the theory of strategic narrative emphasis on constructing a cohesive narrative may result in the exclusion of dissenting voices or alternative interpretations, potentially reinforcing dominant power structures. Moreover, the lack of a clear temporal framework raises questions about the theory's applicability to dynamic and rapidly evolving socio-political contexts. ⁸²

Despite these criticisms, strategic narrative theory remains a valuable tool for understanding how storytelling shapes societal understandings. However, its application necessitates careful consideration of its inherent biases and limitations.

4.3 Applying the theories to the analysis
The utilization of nation branding and strategic narrative theories in examining Swedish and British journalistic coverage of the ESC, specifically regarding Ukraine's involvement, provides valuable insights into the level of media endorsement for individual countries' nation branding endeavors. It unveils the intricate relationship between cultural promotion, political communication, and media portrayal in influencing global perceptions of nations. This analysis offers profound insights into the dynamics of international communication and the projection of soft power.

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5. Method and material

This section will outline how the selected method of narrative analysis, incorporating the concept of framing, will be utilized in this study to investigate how British and Swedish media supported Ukraine's nation branding in ESC during the years 2016 and 2022, in their reporting. The combination of narrative analysis and the framing concept will be discussed based on their characteristics and nature, as well as their application. Furthermore, a description of how the material has been selected will follow, aiming to make the study transparent and valid. To clearly demonstrate how the material will be interpreted based on the research questions, a code schema will also be provided.

5.1 Method in relation to research questions, material and purpose

Since the research question focuses on examining the extent to which the journalistic coverage of the ESC supports Ukraine's nation branding in 2016 and 2022, it allows for interpretation of these media outlets' reporting. Since the purpose of this study is to investigate how British and Swedish media outlets have reported on Ukraine's participation in the ESC during the years of 2016 and 2022, the material will consist of 16 articles from newspapers from Sweden and the UK (8 from each country), covering Ukraine's involvement in ESC during the years 2016 and 2022. How these articles will be picked out will be presented in the following section.

To interpret the material based on the selected theories and effectively address the research question, a qualitative analysis will be employed in this study. A unique methodology, drawing from both narrative analysis and the concept of framing, has been developed for this purpose. Since the concept of framing often is used in content analysis, it is important to understand the importance of the hermeneutic circle. Therefore, a short report on how this has been used will follow further in this thesis.

This methodology aims to uphold transparency and objectivity in the study while showcasing the significance of material selection from a results-driven perspective. To analyze the material clearly and transparently, it underwent coding using a specific code scheme and was subsequently categorized into two themes. The purpose of this coding scheme was to identify the material's underlying frameworks, enabling the extraction of its narrative. Furthermore, the intention was to apply the chosen theoretical frameworks not only to the selected material but also to the identified frames and narratives, thus effectively addressing the research questions.
The advantage of using qualitative narrative analysis as a base, is that the method's transparency makes it a relatively objective approach. Due to this transparency, the material itself determines how comprehensive, detailed, and nuanced the results will be.\(^{83}\)

This study is designed according to the hermeneutic circle, which means that how a text is analysed and interpreted depends on prior knowledge, purpose, and the format of the material.\(^{84}\) Based on the selected articles' ability to address nation branding in Ukraine's participation in ESC 2016 and 2022, the results vary accordingly.\(^{85}\) Since this study exhibits content analytic characteristics, based on the concept of framing, it is crucial to understand the hermeneutic circle. This is because the interpretation of the material relies on the material itself and its inherent characteristics, the purpose of the analysis, and not least the previous knowledge of the interpreter analyzing the material.\(^{86}\)

### 5.2 Narrative framing

The method used in this study, referred to as "Narrative framing," is based on the idea of narrative analysis as well as the concept of framing. This method is self-composed to specifically work with the characteristics of this study. However, given the characteristics of the method, it was decided to incorporate certain aspects of the narrative analysis and combine them with the concept of framing. This was done to independently devise a suitable method for the purpose of the study. The following section provides an account of narrative analysis methodology and the concept of framing, along with an explanation of how and why these two have been merged into a unique method in this thesis.

#### 5.2.1 Narrative analysis

Marie Gillespie defines the concept of narrative as a phenomenon comprised of interconnected events that, depending on each other, generate a new event. Consequently, narrative hinges on

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the aspects of causality, time, and space. This is due to its inherent ability to possess a clear beginning and a clear end. Somers asserts that the concept of narrative serves as a framework for our actions. Furthermore, she suggests that the perceptions, interpretations, and expectations provided by narratives act as a guiding force in shaping our subsequent behavior within society. With this characteristic, narratives also can shape our perception of society. The one who tells or writes narratives thus holds the power to shape the recipient's view of the world.

The phenomenon of narrative can be visualized as a circle that begins at the top with one event and then links to another, which in turn connects to yet another event, and so forth. The size of the circle depends on the events that occur, and which additional events are linked together. However, all narratives share the commonality of having a beginning and an end, although the end is contingent on the events encountered along the way. Therefore, the end of the circle is never the same as the beginning. When the circle closes, a new narrative emerges, which in turn has the potential to lead to a different conclusion and so on. Gillespie argues that these characteristics are particularly significant in the discussion of narrative analysis due to the narrative's ability to shape the recipient's perception of the event. The narrative analysis seeks to explore the dynamic interplay between the storyteller and the receiver, recognizing the indispensable roles each plays in the construction and interpretation of a narrative.

Gillespie suggests that narrative analysis is particularly useful when attempting to understand how values and knowledge are portrayed and understood in our society. When it comes to media texts, she further believes that these ways of presenting their narratives help shape the recipient's way of understanding the world. Alexa Robertson agrees with Gillespie's argument and further suggests that it is through narratives that we construct or receive, shaping our perceptions and understanding of the society we live in. Because the storyteller behind the narrative holds the power to influence our perception of the world, it can be argued that the analysis of narratives is highly important. Furthermore, Robertson suggests that the analysis of narratives is crucial in understanding the power dynamics within a society and why they are as they are.
Chatman argues that narratives consist of both discourse and story. By this, he means that it's important to identify these different elements during narrative analysis. The discourse in a narrative represents how the story is conveyed, which is crucial when it comes to the storyteller's power to influence our reception of the narrative and thus the world.93

Based on the structure and characteristics of narrative analysis, it was determined that some of these features align well with the investigation in this study, while others are less suitable. Consequently, this methodology has been modified to accommodate the specific attributes of the research. This adjustment aims to ensure transparency, clarity, and reliability in the methodological approach.

5.2.2 Framing
As mentioned above, narratives serve as a framework for how we perceive the world we live in. In a broader sense, this implies that frameworks serve as a foundation for how narratives are constructed.94 Hence, in this study, it is of great importance to comprehend the concept of framing and its further significance concerning narratives. Coticchia and Catanzaro argue that narratives are built upon the understanding of frames.95 Furthermore, they refer to the understanding of one of the theoretical foundations of this study; strategic narratives, suggesting that the use of frames is not always employed for strategic purposes, whereas strategic narratives, by definition, are always intended to influence towards a certain direction.96

The concept of framing entails that media has the power to influence the recipient's understanding of the story based on how it is narrated and linked with other stories or events, as well as the broader context.97 This implies that media can influence audience choices, making the use of frames crucial for media outlets, particularly those focusing on politics. Moreover, frames can be seen as a means to highlight specific information while downplaying or omitting others, all aimed at influencing how audiences interpret the information.98 Entman identifies

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95 Ibid, p. 9.
96 Ibid, p. 10.
these frames into five categories, which he views as the primary approaches through which media outlets often structure their stories. These frames are as follows:

- Conflict
- Morality
- Human interest/Personalisation
- Consequence
- Responsibility

Frames alone do not inherently have the ability to influence a narrative in one direction or another solely by virtue of being a frame. The significance of a frame for a narrative depends on how the frame is integrated into the larger story. Furthermore, it is argued that frames are exemplified by the narrative. This means that frames exemplify the overarching ideas and perspectives that underlie a narrative. Frames and narratives serve different purposes; thus they have different effects on how we understand and perceive the society we live in. Frames organize and represent reality by providing a direction for our interpretation of various events, while narratives offer a deeper and more cohesive structure that connects different events, thereby giving them meaning in a larger context. Moreover, both frames and narratives influence our collective identity and how we relate to each other and the world. Therefore, both frames and narratives must be comprehensible in order to be effective in communicating and influencing others' perceptions. Without frames and their characteristics, there is no space for narratives.

The purpose of using the concept of framing in this study, based on the above explanation, is to direct the identification of frames towards Ukraine's collective national identity. However, it's worth noting that instead of using the aforementioned frames by Entman, I have developed my own narrative frames (building upon Entman's categories of frames), which are described in Table 1 (section 5.4). Consequently, I will be searching for frames in the articles that encapsulate how this identity is portrayed and emphasized, in order to then have the ability to discern the narrative within the articles.


100 F. Coticchia & A. Catanzaro, "The fog of words: Assessing the problematic relationship between strategic narratives, (master) frames and ideology," *Media, War & Conflict*, vol. 15, nr. 4, 2020, s. 10.

5.3 Selection of material
The material has been retrieved through the database, "Retriever Research (media archive)." The reason for selecting this particular database is its accessibility for students at Södertörn University, as well as its extensive content. Since this database contains such a large amount of material, it is crucial to know which search filters to activate. Further down, there will be an account of the search filters that have been activated, and why.

The material, consisting of news articles from both Swedish and British media outlets, has been carefully selected based on its ability to address the topic of the ESC and Ukraine. To clarify that the articles have not been chosen randomly, but have indeed been meticulously selected, specific search filters have been activated. The specific search terms for this study were "'Eurovision Song Contest' OR ESC AND Ukraine." In the search for articles from British media outlets, the word "Crimea" was included in the search criteria, as no results were found without it. Additionally, the search was limited to media types "print" and "web," thereby excluding "podcasts" and "TV & Radio." This was done to refine the searches, ensuring that only relevant sources were included.

The original plan was to select the first 4 articles, with at least 200 words that appeared in searches from Swedish media outlets in 2022 and 2016, as well as the first 4 from the British media outlets in the same years. This approach aimed to ensure transparency in the selection process, and to make sure that the material was long enough to be able to analyse the content of the article. Additionally, a "view" filter was applied to prioritize articles with the highest relevance in search results, thereby avoiding bias towards articles from June or May. However, due to the unavailability of many articles retrieved from Retriever, the intended selection method couldn't be followed. Consequently, the method was adjusted to choose the next available article in sequence if the original one was inaccessible. Therefore, the following articles were chosen for analysis:

Articles from British news outlets, 2016:

- BBC, "Eurovision Song Contest: Ukraine's Jamala wins competition,". Written May 15, 2016.\textsuperscript{102}

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- BBC, “Eurovision Song Contest: Ukraine and Russia stunned by Jamala win”. Written May 15, 2016.103
- BBC "Eurovision Song Contest: Mixed feelings over Ukraine’s triumph". Written May 15, 2016.105

Articles from Swedish news outlets, 2016:

- TTELA (Trollhättans Tidning, Elfsborgsläns Allehanda), “Kuhnke bjöd Ukraina till ESC-final” translated to "Kuhnke invited Ukraine to the final of the ESC”. Written May 14, 2016.106
- Dagens Nyheter, "Ukraina väljer laddat ESC bidrag”, translated to "Ukraine chooses charged ESC entry”. Written February 22, 2016.107
- Musikindustrin,” ESC världspolitiken klev in när Jamala vann” translated to "ESC World politics came into play when Jamala won”. Written May 16, 2016.108
- SVT, “Ukrainas politiska utspel I ESC” translated to “Ukraine's political action in the ESC,". Written May 12, 2016.109

Articles from British news outlets, 2022:


• Reuters, “Huge public support sweeps Ukraine’s Kalush Orchestra to Eurovision win”. Written May 15, 2022.110
• The Independent, “Russia can compete in Eurovision 2022 despite Ukraine invasion, organisers say”. Written February 24, 2022.111
• The Guardian, “Zelenskiy hails Ukraine’s Eurovision win and plans to ‘one day’ host final in Mariupol”. Written May 15, 2022.112

Articles from Swedish news outlets, 2022:

• TTELA (Trollhättans Tidning, Elfsborgsläns Allehanda), “Ukraine tar hem ny politisk ESC-vinst”, translated to "Ukraine secures another political ESC victory”. Written May 16, 2022.113
• Dagens Nyheter, "Ukraina vinner Eurovision Song Contest: ’Den här vinsten är så viktig’”, translated to "Ukraine wins the Eurovision Song Contest: ‘This victory is so important’”. Written May 15, 2022.115
• Aftonbladet, "Kalush Orchestra: ‘Alla typer av segrar är viktiga för Ukraina nu’”, translated to "Kalush Orchestra: All kinds of victories are important for Ukraine now”. Written May 14, 2022.116


113 TTELA, Johan Hammerby, “Ukraine secures another political ESC victory,” accessed April 29, 2024.

114 Gotlands Tidningar, Björn Berglund, "Eurovision på liv och död”, accessed April 30, 2024.


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It is crucial to note that the selected articles constitute only a sample and may not necessarily represent all media outlets' or countries' perspectives. These articles provide valuable insights into how certain media organizations in Sweden and the United Kingdom have reported on Ukraine's participation in the Eurovision Song Contest during the years 2016 and 2022, but they cannot be considered fully representative of all viewpoints and perspectives.

The purpose of being transparent and clear about the exact search filters used is to demonstrate the study's reliability. If this study were to be replicated by others, the same search filters would be used, resulting in the selection of the same articles.

As mentioned above, it was crucial to filter out articles that were not relevant from the search field. This was done initially by dividing the searches into periods. Since the international semi-finals and the final of the ESC take place in May each year, and the national qualifications usually occur shortly after the turn of the year, it was concluded that the relevant time period for articles written on the subject should govern the search time in the database. Therefore, the searches are primarily tailored to January 1st, 2016, to June 30th, 2016, and January 1st, 2022, to June 30th, 2022. Since the remaining time of the year is not associated with the ESC, there is also no point in including this time aspect in the search for materials.

It was also crucial to filter the searches based on the country of origin of the material and the language in which the material was written. The searches were filtered in Swedish and English based on my ability to understand the content of the material. In theory, it would have been possible to use sources written in other languages as well, as it is possible to translate the material smoothly. However, direct translation of text risks missing nuances and intentions that may be important for understanding the context and the meaning of the text. Since this study aims to understand how and if Swedish and British journalistic coverage of the ESC supports the nation branding of Ukraine due to its participation in 2016 and 2022, and whether there are differences between these years, it would be highly regrettable if the understanding of intentions and nuances of values as well as of the context were lacking.

As mentioned above, the ESC is a European music competition, primarily including European countries. However, since the competition is organized by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), which consists not only of European countries but also of countries that are not in Europe, countries included in the EBU but not belonging to Europe have the opportunity to
participate in the competition.\textsuperscript{117} This also implies that hypothetically, this study could incorporate material from more countries than just Sweden and the United Kingdom, even if the language filtering remains consistent. However, given that Ukraine is situated in Europe, there is merit in exclusively focusing on European sources. As the sources were filtered for Swedish and English content, there was a deliberate choice to solely utilize sources from Sweden and the United Kingdom. This decision was made not only to potentially streamline the number of sources and articles but also to enhance the study's validity and reliability. Therefore, a clear methodological account detailing how the material was selected contributes to the study's validity. This is crucial, as the study's replicability hinges on its ability to be conducted in precisely the same manner by others, resulting in similar outcomes.

5.4 Implementation of the method

As previously mentioned, this method is a fusion of a narrative analysis and the concept of framing. This combination arises from the unique attributes of these phenomena, which align well with this investigation. However, while narrative analysis possesses qualities that may not seamlessly integrate with this study, it has been adapted and subsequently implemented. The aim is to amalgamate narrative analysis and framing to pinpoint specific characteristics that align perfectly with this study, facilitating analysis of the material through the theoretical lenses of nation branding and strategic narrative.

The selected articles will be systematically analyzed based on the principles and characteristics of this method (Narrative framing). This means that each article will be examined through the lens of the theoretical frameworks. To achieve this, the content of the articles will be coded according to the coding scheme below. The code categories "Framing Techniques" and "Narrative" operate on different levels depending on their capacity to encapsulate the material. To clarify, the framing codes serve the purpose of collectively identifying the narrative. This implies that narratives can be identified across multiple articles, while it's probable to detect several distinct framing techniques within each article. Consequently, not every article will encapsulate a unique narrative. Instead, once the frames have been identified, it will become feasible to discern the narratives.

5.4.1. Code scheme

![Table showing code scheme]

These codes have been categorized into different color categories to be able to mark in the articles where these codes are identified. Since the category labels are not mutually exclusive, multiple codes can be identified in the same text. See an example of the coding below. As a result, the following narrative themes were identified through the coding process: Ukraine's Resistance Against Oppression and Invasion and Support and Solidarity from. These themes were then used to detect patterns within the material and correlate them with the theoretical frameworks. The aforementioned codes and themes were utilized to facilitate interpretation in line with the hermeneutic circle.\textsuperscript{118}

5.4.2. Example of coding

The following image illustrates an example where multiple codes could be identified within the same text. In this example, both code 1.5 and code 1.3 were identified. The text that is marked

in both blue and pink highlights how the material was handled with multiple codes simultaneously.

“We will do our best to one day host the participants and guests of Eurovision in Ukrainian Mariupol. Free, peaceful, rebuilt! I am sure our victorious chord in the battle with the enemy is not far off.”

Example 1 from Reuters, “Huge public support sweeps Ukraine's Kalush Orchestra to Eurovision win.”

5.5 Analysis model

As the theoretical frameworks are intended to be utilized as tools during the analysis of the material, it is crucial to understand both research questions and how the theories are intended to support the investigation. Below is an explanation of both research questions and how the theories will be applied.

The first research question: To what extent does media coverage of the ESC to support Ukraine's nation branding efforts? aims to examine how the European news coverage of the ESC contributes to shaping the image of Ukraine as a nation, particularly focusing on the years the country won the competition (2016 and 2022). To answer this question, the articles will be analyzed based on the theoretical frameworks of nation branding and strategic narrative to identify how they portray Ukraine and how this may affect the country's branding efforts.

The second research question: How has the media coverage of Ukraine's participation in the Eurovision Song Contest changed between 2016 and 2022? is aimed at comparing the European news coverage of the ESC between two different years (2016 and 2022). By analyzing the articles, it will be investigated whether there are any noticeable differences in how Ukraine and its participation in ESC are portrayed in the news reporting during these two specific years.

The theories will be applied by using them as analytical frameworks to understand and interpret the observed differences in news reporting between the two years. For example, theories of nation branding and strategic narrative can be utilized to identify how Ukraine is portrayed and which narratives are used to describe the country's participation in the ESC. By applying these theoretical concepts, the aim is to examine if there are any patterns or trends in how Ukraine is
depicted in news reporting during the two different years and how these potential differences may relate to nation branding and strategic narratives.

5.6 Limitations
Limitations for this study include the selection constraints arising from solely examining articles from European newspapers. This may lead to a bias in the results by excluding perspectives from non-European sources and limiting the diversity of opinions and interpretations. Additionally, the specified timeframe for the study (2016-2022) may restrict insights by not encompassing events before or after this period. Further limitations may arise due to potential linguistic and cultural differences in interpreting Ukraine's participation in the Eurovision Song Contest across different parts of Europe. It is crucial to be aware of these limitations to interpret the results accurately and understand the scope and applicability of the study.

5.7 Trustworthiness and ethical considerations
Since this study relies on published text materials rather than interview data, the ethical aspect is less crucial. This is because the materials have been reviewed and likely edited by the editorial teams of the news outlets, thereby diminishing personal factors such as credibility and ethical considerations. To ensure the study's trustworthiness, intra-coder tests were conducted. Intra-coder reliability was tested by coding the same material at different times to check for consistency. This ensured that the codes in the code scheme were applied reliably and uniformly. However, if this study were based on interviews, ethical considerations, along with adherence to GDPR regulations, would be central, as interviewees could risk exposure. The credibility of this study is addressed in the above section, which focuses on the selection of materials. It can be argued that the validity of this study depends on the transparency of the material selection process.

6. Result
In this section, the results of the investigation into how and to what extent British and Swedish media outlets have supported the nation branding of Ukraine, based on their participation in the Eurovision Song Contest in the years 2016 and 2022, will be presented. Furthermore, differences identified in the reporting between the years will be discussed. Additionally, the two identified narrative themes—Resistance Against Oppression and Invasion, and Support and Solidarity from Europe—derived from the interpretation of the material, will be elaborated on.
To ensure clarity and transparency, these results will be divided between the years 2016 and 2022.

6.1 Results of the articles from 2016
A noticeable pattern across all the selected articles from both the UK and Sweden in 2016 is the unified stance adopted by the media outlets analyzed in this study. By delving into Ukraine's historical dynamics with Russia, particularly highlighted in Jamala's song lyrics "1944" from 2016, distinct parallels emerge between Europe's sympathy towards Ukraine, evident in the reinforcement of its national identity, and the portrayal of Ukraine by media outlets.

This connection is notably illustrated in the BBC article titled "Eurovision Song Contest: Ukraine’s Jamala wins competition" written May 15, 2016. It highlights how former Soviet countries, previously prone to voting for the Russian entry, decisively switched their allegiance in 2016, supporting Ukraine amidst the conflict. According to the code scheme, this approach aligns with code 1.3 ("metaphors and symbols"), which identifies how this article aims to frame Ukraine as a country with a greater support from the rest of Europe, compared to Russia, by using the votes in ESC as a metaphor for Europe's support in the conflict between Ukraine and Russia.

Given the song's profound ties to the enduring political conflict between Ukraine and Russia, the political dimension is unmistakable in their coverage. The articles both from BBC, “Eurovision Song Contest: Ukraine’s Poroshenko hails win”, written May 15, 2016, and “Eurovision Song Contest: Ukraine’s Jamala wins competition”, written May 15, 2016, reference then-president Poroshenko, highlighting his pride in the entry's success. They depict Poroshenko as a resolute national figure, whose primary role is to safeguard the country from Russian aggression. This is exemplified in the following quote where he thanked Jamala on behalf of the whole Ukraine:

"An unbelievable performance!" President Petro Poroshenko.

In these two articles, it becomes evident, according to the used code scheme, that the journalists choose to link actions and actors (code 1.4). Specifically, they connect Jamala with the political situation between Ukraine and Russia, and associate Ukraine's president with the ESC. This is

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likely done to establish a framework where the president emerges as a populist figure emotionally connected to the populace due to his engagement in the ESC.

In SVT's article "Ukrainas politiska utspel i ESC," translated to "Ukraine's political action in the ESC," from May 2016, which includes an interview with the Ukrainian artist Jamala, the journalist, along with the artist, highlights the underlying purpose of the song, as well as its lyrics. The journalist poses questions to Jamala, providing her with the opportunity to delve deeply into the song's purpose and narrative. It emerges that the song is not solely about Stalin’s deportation of Crimean Tatars in 1944 but also aims to shed light on the situation in Crimea in 2016. This is evident in the following quotes (translated from Swedish to English by me):

"That people associate the song with this [the annexation of Crimea] is obvious to me and I want to show with this song that this is wrong, and I want this to never happen again” – Susana Jamaladinova, Jamala. 121

“There is a lot of sadness right now in Crimea and people are disappearing. Libraries and places where young Crimean Tatars could previously meet and exchange ideas are closed, banned and there is a sadness now in Crimea similar to the one in 1944”. – Susana Jamaladinova, Jamala.122

“It has been two years since the annexation of Crimea and this annexation has given us so much pain and evoked so much emotion in me, terrible memories have come back to me and my family.” – Susana Jamaladinova, Jamala.123

These quotes become particularly interesting considering this study's characteristics, given that Ukraine's entry is portrayed as peace-seeking and heavily influenced by Russia, ultimately representing Ukraine's desire to be part of Europe both geographically and sympathetically. This, in turn, embodies their nation branding. In this article, code 1.5 ("contextualization") can be identified through the article's ability to compare the events in Crimea in 1944 with those of 2016, thereby influencing the reader of the article, as well as the consumer of the song "1944," to interpret the situation as history repeating itself.

BBC's article "Eurovision Song Contest: Mixed feelings over Ukraine’s triumph" from May 2016 refers to the chairman of the British Eurovision fan club OGAE UK, Alasdair Rendall,

122 Ibid.
123 Ibid.
who argues that the song "1944" by Jamala can primarily be interpreted as a political statement against Russia and the rest of the world, aiming to garner sympathy. He further suggests that it was this message that led the song to victory, rather than Jamala's musical talent. While analyzing this article, it became apparent that code 1.3 ("metaphors and symbols") was identifiable within its content. This was evident since the song's lyrics and significance were portrayed as a symbol of Ukraine's endeavor to secure political backing from the global community. Consequently, Ukraine was framed in this article as a nation whose primary objective in the ESC 2016 was to garner support from other European countries, rather than merely presenting a song appreciated solely for its musicality. This portrayal also suggests that the ESC in this context was depicted as a symbol of nation branding, as it offers countries a platform to express their political positions.

This is clearly demonstrated in the BBC article, "Eurovision Song Contest: Ukraine and Russia stunned by Jamala win", written May 15, 2016, where they highlight the significant disparities in the reporting of Ukraine's victory in 2016 between Russia and Ukraine. They depict the Ukrainian perspective on the victory as a major step forward for Crimean Tatar rights, while the Russian perception focuses on dissatisfaction with the outcome due to its perceived politicization. In the coding of this article, it became evident that code 1.1 ("emphasis") could be identified. This means that Ukraine's national identity is highlighted with the intention of influencing the reader to perceive that the Ukrainian population are standing up for their rights. Furthermore, the article describes the extent of happiness among Crimean Tatars in exile regarding the victory of this song in the ESC, and activist Lenur Islyamov is quoted as saying: "...first defeat for Putin, and a crushing one". - Lenus Islyamov.

Based on this quote, code 1.3 ("metaphors and symbols") could also be identified in this article. This is because the article clearly frames Ukraine's victory in the ESC 2016 as a symbol of the country's political strength in the conflict.

Dagens Nyheter’ article “Ukraina väljer laddat ESC bidrag”, translated to "Ukraine chooses charged ESC entry”, written February 22, 2016, describes the song based on its storyline and historical background. This article, written a few months before the ESC took place, was not

126 Ibid.
intended to comment on a potential win or loss. Instead, it discusses the meaning of the song from a historical perspective.\textsuperscript{127} The journalist explains the song lyrics as well as the events that occurred in 1944 when Stalin deported Tatars from the Crimean Peninsula, allowing me to identify code 1.1 ("emphasis") and code 1.3 ("metaphors and symbols") in the article. This is because the article clearly highlights Ukraine's historical identity by outlining the historical background and by portraying the song lyrics as a metaphor for how history has repeated itself.

TTELA’s article “Kuhnke bjöd Ukraina till ESC-final” translated to "Kuhnke invited Ukraine to the final of the ESC", written May 14, 2016, alludes to the fact that the Swedish Minister of Culture, Alice Bah Kuhnke, invited Ukraine's Minister of Culture, Jevhen Nysjtjuk, to the final of the ESC 2016. The article refers to the good cooperation between Sweden and Ukraine, and the journalist writes that alongside the Swedish contribution, Kuhnke supports the Ukrainian one based on the song's message. In this article, it is possible to clearly identify code 1.4 ("actions and actors") based on the aspect that through the Swedish Minister of Culture, Sweden demonstrates national support for Ukraine. This is evident in the following quote (translated from Swedish):

"Sweden has a very close cooperation with Ukraine, not least after Russia's illegal annexation. We have several cultural exchanges and have today agreed to strengthen them." – Alice Bah Kuhnke.\textsuperscript{128}

This article thus frames Ukraine's participation in the ESC 2016 as highly praised by Sweden, putting Ukraine on the map as a country with significant political support. Moreover, it underscores Sweden's stance as a nation firmly aligned with Ukraine, portraying a mutual stance against warfare.

Musikindustrin’s article “ESC Världspolitiken klev in när Jamala vann” translated to "ESC World politics came into play when Jamala won” written May 16, 2016, depicts the final as intensely gripping from a political standpoint. The journalist portrays Ukraine's victory as transcending mere success in a music competition, framing it as a significant event with broader implications. Through this lens, the article effectively conveys Ukraine's win as a symbol of global politics, fitting into the context of larger geopolitical tensions. Additionally, the journalist

\textsuperscript{128} TTELA, “Kuhnke bjöd Ukraina till ESC-final”, accessed April 25, 2024.
contrasts Russia and Ukraine, noting Russia's initial status as the favorite and the ultimate showdown between the Ukrainian and Russian entries. Thus, the coding of the material revealed the presence of code 1.4 ("actions and actors"). By employing this framework, the article positions the ESC as a platform for the geopolitical rivalry between the two nations, highlighting its role as a symbol of international politics. By employing this coding method, the framework in this article interpreted the ESC as serving as an arena for pitting the two countries against each other. In other words, this article framed the ESC’s capacity to be a symbol of international politics.

Through the coding scheme, several frameworks have been identified in the media outlets reporting on Ukraine's participation and victory in ESC 2016. These frameworks reflect Ukraine’s collective identity concerning Ukraine's history of being underestimated on the political scale, resulting in a cohesive narrative throughout these articles. Therefore, based on the material, one could argue that the narrative presented in the articles revolves around Ukraine's history as a victim of Russia and its political actions, but also emphasizes Ukraine's unified resistance against oppression.

Alternatively, it is suggested that Ukraine should be globally portrayed as a nation striving for peace and justice, despite the challenges it faces. This strategic approach may aim to present Russia in a negative light compared to the rest of the world. This creates a political narrative that can influence how other countries view the conflict and potentially lead to different nations' positions. That is, by highlighting Ukraine's pursuit of peace and justice, it may appear that Russia is acting against these values, which in turn can influence how other countries choose to act in the conflict.

Due to Ukraine's victory in the ESC 2016, most of the analyzed articles focused on this event, with fewer media outlets covering their participation before the win. Out of the eight analyzed articles from 2016, five were written the day after the final in the ESC. Thus, the majority of the reporting from 2016 examined in this study pertained to Ukraine's win in the competition. Naturally, this skewed the results of the frameworks and identified narratives due to the reactions that emerged after the victory, both from Ukraine, Russia, and the rest of the world. This was not due to the search terms used to filter the material from "Retriever Research (media archive)," but rather because the material that appeared in the search was filtered to display

based on relevance. The fact that Russia initially was seen as a favorite to win, laid the groundwork for strong reactions to Ukraine's victory, especially considering the theme of the winning song.

6.2 Results of the articles from 2022
The article from SkyNews "Ukraine War: Eurovision winner Jamala flees country while husband, family and friends hide in Kyiv bomb shelters," written March 3, 2022, discusses the 2016 Eurovision Song Contest winner and how she has had to leave the country following Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24/2-2022, while her family and friends are hiding in bomb shelters in Kyiv.

"I think we have to realise it's not war only against Ukrainian people, it is war against all European values, values that were built together after the second world war." – Susana Jamaladinova, Jamala. 

This quote was included in the article, where we can identify code 1.5 ("contextualization"), as the journalist frames the ongoing conflict not just as a war against the Ukrainian people but as a broader assault on European values. By contextualizing the conflict within the framework of European values established after World War II, the speaker emphasizes the significance and implications of the conflict beyond its immediate geographical and political boundaries. This framing serves to underscore the gravity of the situation and to rally support for Ukraine by appealing to shared European values and historical experiences. While this article is not primarily about Ukraine's entry in Eurovision 2022, it very clearly relates to the ESC by linking her 2016 entry, which focused on Stalin's deportation of Crimean Tatars, with Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. The article highlights Jamala's despair over history repeating itself and her clear willingness to help her country. This portrays Jamala as highly patriotic and virtuous, creating a clear contrast between Russia and Ukraine. This can be clearly seen in the following quote:

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"Anywhere my voice can be heard, anywhere my voice can help my country, I will do everything in my power to spread the word about Putin's bloody crime in Ukraine," – Susana Jamaladinova, Jamala.¹³¹

In the given quote, it's possible to identify code 1.4 ("actors and actions") as Jamala explicitly mentions Putin's actions as a "bloody crime in Ukraine," thereby linking specific actions (attributed to Putin) to shape certain perceptions of him.

In the Reuters article "Huge public support sweeps Ukraine’s Kalush Orchestra to Eurovision win," written May 15, 2022 (the day after their victory in the ESC), Ukraine's triumph in the ESC 2022 with Kalush Orchestra is elaborated. The song is described as a fusion of rap and traditional Ukrainian folk music, serving as a heartfelt homage to one of the band members' mothers. The piece also highlights the pride expressed by Ukraine's President Zelenskiy regarding this year's victory. In the following quote from him, the codes 1.1 ("emphasis") and code 1.4 ("actors and actions") were identified:

"Our courage impresses the world, our music conquers Europe! Next year Ukraine will host the Eurovision song contest... I thank the Kalush Orchestra for this victory and everyone who gave us your votes! I am sure that the sound of victory in the battle with the enemy is not far off," – President Volodmyr Zelenskiy.¹³²

By tying their Eurovision victory to the broader fight against the enemy, Kalush Orchestra is depicted as more than just winners of a song contest—they become participants in a significant struggle. This framing, connecting their triumph to a narrative of resistance against Russia, imbues their victory with deeper meaning. Furthermore, the narrative portrays Ukraine as a nation of immense courage, with its music resonating across Europe and making an impact in Europe. The emphasis on Ukraine's determination to host the ESC the following year serves to underscore the nation's pride and significance on the international stage.


The article "Russia can compete in Eurovision 2022 despite Ukraine invasion, organisers say" from The Independent, written February 24, 2022, discusses the competition considering Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The article highlights that the EBU, which organizes the ESC, does not intend to ban Russia's participation in the 2022 competition, emphasizing that the ESC is a non-political cultural event. Additionally, it describes how The Public Broadcasting Company of Ukraine has appealed to the EBU to exclude Russia from the competition, citing concerns that Russia may use ESC as a platform for spreading political propaganda, which contradicts EBU's values.

Based on the journalist's approach to Ukraine's plea to exclude Russia from the competition, it was possible to identify both code 1.2 ("exclusion") and code 1.4 ("actors and actions"). Code 1.2 became apparent in the claim that Russia is likely to use ESC as a tool for spreading political propaganda and disinformation, potentially weakening the portrayal of Ukraine's identity and national strength through this misinformation. Code 1.4 can be identified based on the aspect that the specific actors, the Russian media and government, and their actions include alleged political propaganda and disinformation against Ukraine.

The framing techniques of the above-mentioned article, were then linked to a narrative emphasizing that if Eurovision's values are not upheld, Ukraine may suffer negative consequences. This is evident when Ukraine calls for Russia to be excluded from the competition due to their alleged political behavior. By linking the actions of the Russian media to a narrative about Eurovision Song Contest's values and the protection of Ukraine, a negative perception of Russia and a more empathetic image of Ukraine is formed in the reader's mind.

The Guardian's article "Zelenskiy hails Ukraine’s Eurovision win and plans to ‘one day’ host final in Mariupol," written May 15, 2022, revolves around Ukraine's victory in the ESC 2022 in the context of the conflict with Russia. The article outlines President Zelenskiy's celebration of the victory and expresses his hope for the next year's ESC to take place in Mariupol, which at the time was one of the cities most affected by the Russian invasion in the country. Here, code 1.1 ("emphasis") can be identified, emphasizing the significance of the victory for the

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country. The journalist notes that this win has provided significant psychological support for
the country from the rest of Europe, strengthening the image of Ukraine as both a cultural and
political force to be reckoned with. Furthermore, the article places Ukraine's ESC victory in a
political and historical context, highlighting Ukraine's triumph despite Russia's invasion.
Zelenskiy is quoted:

“*We will do our best to one day host the participants and guests of Eurovision in Ukrainian
Mariupol. Free, peaceful, rebuilt! I am sure our victorious chord in the battle with the enemy
is not far off.*” – President Volodmyr Zelenskiy.¹³⁴

By including this quote in the article, where the president utilizes the ESC victory as a symbolic
metaphor for success in the struggle against Russia, and thereby reinforcing the narrative of
Ukraine's resistance and determination in the war, the codes 1.5 ("contextualization") and 1.3
("metaphors and symbols") can also be identified in the article. Furthermore, the article portrays
the band Kalush Orchestra and particularly the frontman Oleh Psiuk as central figures in the
narrative, who through their participation in the ESC and success in the competition symbolize
Ukraine's cultural strength and resilience. This is evident from the perspective that code 1.4
("actors and actions") can be identified. The article also includes Oleh Psiuk's call to the ESC
audience to help those still trapped in the war zone in Ukraine, further enhancing the image of
him and the group as committed and responsible citizens.

The journalist Johan Hammerby reflects in his article TTELA,” Ukraina tar hem ny politisk
ESC-vinst” translated to "Ukraine secures another political ESC victory", written May 16,
2022, on Ukraine's triumph in ESC 2022 and its political implications. He argues that the reason
for the song's victory was not solely its musical excellence but rather the sympathy it garnered
from the rest of Europe. By contextualizing and comparing the 2022 victory with Ukraine's
previous win in 2016 with the song "1944," which also had political undertones related to the
Crimea crisis, the article emphasizes how ESC is not only a music competition but also an arena
for political symbolism and messages.¹³⁵ Thus, code 1.5 ("contextualization") can be identified.
The article also questions Eurovision's political nature by discussing the connection between

¹³⁴ The Guardian, “Zelenskiy hails Ukraine’s Eurovision win and plans to ‘one day’ host final in Mariupol,”
accessed April 29, 2024, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/15/zelenskiy-hails-ukraines-eurovision-
win-and-plans-to-one-day-host-final-in-mariupol.
the competition results and political events and geopolitical tensions. Code 1.4 ("actors and actions") is clearly identifiable based on the article's ability to discuss the various actors (and their actions) that have shaped the events surrounding the competition and its results. Ukraine is portrayed as a central actor through its choice of entry and its political and cultural overtones related to the conflict with Russia. This political dimension is reinforced by other countries showing sympathy and solidarity by voting for Ukraine. On the other hand, Russia's past aggressions and its role in the conflict are mentioned, contributing to a polarized and politically charged atmosphere surrounding the event. By highlighting these specific actors and their actions, the article provides a deeper insight into how the political dynamics have influenced the outcome and perception of Ukraine's entry in ESC, as well as of Ukraine as a country.

The article "Eurovision på liv och död" published in Gotlands Tidningar (Gotland’s Newspapers) translated to "Eurovision: Life and death", written May 15, 2022, discusses the political context of the ESC in 2022 where Ukraine was the favorite and Russia was excluded due to their invasion of Ukraine. In the article, code 1.3 ("metaphors and symbols") can be identified based on the aspect that the winning song "Stefania" is described in the article as a tribute to one of the band members' mothers, but after Russia's invasion of the country, the song has gained greater significance and is now described as a symbol of national unity and pride. By associating the song with the country of Ukraine as their mother, its importance as a source of comfort and identity for the Ukrainian people during this turbulent time is emphasized. Furthermore, code 1.3 ("exclusion") can be identified as the article describes the fact that the song is supposed to have elements of traditional Ukrainian folk music, which has created additional political tension. This is based on Russian President Putin's expression that Ukrainian culture does not exist.136 Furthermore, this article outlines Ukraine's as well as Russia's historical participation in the ESC, where there has consistently been a clear rivalry between the countries, based on historical, political, and cultural factors, with territorial disputes playing a central role. Code 1.4 ("actors and actions") can be identified in the article, where it is stated that the artist Ruslana Lyzhychko, who represented Ukraine and won the ESC in 2004, has retired from her artist career and instead become a soldier to participate in the fight against the Russian invasion. By focusing on Ruslana's individual action of defending her country, the image of a strong bond between the individual and Ukraine's national defense is reinforced. In this article, a clear narrative can be identified that underscores Ukraine's pride, resilience, and

the seriousness of the situation the country is facing, while also highlighting the political context that affects the competition.

Aftonbladet’s article ”Kalusch Orchestra: ”Alla typer av segrar är viktiga för Ukraina nu” translated to ”Kalush Orchestra: All kinds of victories are important for Ukraine now”, was written May 14, 2022, the same day as the final would take place in Turin, discusses how a potential victory in the ESC 2022 would affect Ukraine as a country. For the band Kalush Orchestra, the competition was more than just a chance to win; it was an opportunity to boost Ukraine's self-esteem and represent their country in a time of war.137

Code 1.1 (“emphasis”) as well as Code 1.3 ("metaphors and symbols") are illustrated in the article by its ability to emphasize Kalush Orchestra's participation in Eurovision as a platform for national empowerment and identity formation, highlighting how the band is seen as a symbol of national pride amid the ongoing conflict. By emphasizing the significance of a potential victory for Ukraine, the article frames the country's participation as a meaningful nationalist act. Furthermore, Code 1.4 ("actors and actions") can be identified in the article. This is evident in the inclusion of the band's personal connections to the war. This provides the reader with a clearer and deeper understanding of the political as well as cultural consequences of their presence in the competition, particularly the consequences that the country's inhabitants endure as a result of Russia's invasion.

In the article ”Ukraina vinner Eurovision Song Contest: ’Den här vinsten är så viktig’”, translated to ”Ukraine wins the Eurovision Song Contest: ’This victory is so important’”, in Dagens Nyheter written May 15, 2022, the international support shown for Ukraine during the ESC is described. The article refers to the band Kalush Orchestra's appeal to the audience to help Ukraine and specifically the city of Mariupol on stage, and also quotes the representatives of Iceland in the competition where they exclaimed after their performance in the final:

”Peace for Ukraine!” - Systur.138

The journalist's portrayal of the Icelandic group Systur and their call to the European audience for assistance to Ukraine, illustrates the application of code 1.4 ("actors and actions") in the

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article. Including these statements in the article frames the band's political message on stage, which in turn affects the interpretation of Ukraine's situation. Their appeal anchors their presence in the competition in the ongoing geopolitical climate and reinforces their image as ambassadors for Ukraine. The action also highlights the band's commitment to their homeland and creates a connection between their musical performance and the ongoing conflict. Similarly, Ukraine's nation branding is strengthened by the representatives of Iceland's exclamation; this demonstrates clearly that there are other countries standing behind Ukraine in this conflict. By including their action in the article, Ukraine is framed as a country with clear support from other nations, and that they are not alone in defending themselves with soft power. By integrating political messages and actions into the article, the media outlet contributes to shaping a narrative about the importance of solidarity and support for Ukraine.

Furthermore, code 1.1 ("emphasis") can be identified in the article, where Ukraine's win in ESC 2022 is clearly emphasized as particularly important as they have the opportunity to showcase and represent Ukrainian culture. By placing emphasis on this, the journalist creates a frame where Ukraine appears as a culturally rich nation with a strong presence and significance in European culture. The band emerges as ambassadors for Ukrainian cultural heritage. This emphasis has the power to influence the recipient's perception of Ukraine and its cultural contributions, thereby strengthening the nation's image and position in the international community, especially in relation to the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

In summary, the analysis indicates that the media supports Ukraine's nation branding by employing various framing techniques to create narratives around their participation in the ESC. In 2016, Ukraine's participation was portrayed as a symbolic struggle against historical and contemporary oppression, particularly from Russia following the annexation of Crimea in 2014. That year, Ukraine's role as a nation standing up against aggression and oppression was emphasized, reinforced by their victory in the ESC. By framing Ukraine's participation as a powerful act of resistance against Russia's aggression, the examined media outlets created a narrative that strengthened the nation's self-image as a fighter for freedom and independence.

In 2022, the focus shifted to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and its impact on the ESC and the nation as a whole. Articles during this year also emphasized the broad European support for Ukraine during the competition, especially after their victory. The framing techniques in 2022 contributed to creating a narrative where Ukraine appeared as a nation with significant soft power, where winning the ESC strengthened their national pride and resistance against Russia's
aggression, as well as the opportunity to host ESC 2023. A significant difference between 2016 and 2022 was how media outlets more explicitly showed their support for Ukraine in 2022 through their framing of Ukraine's participation in the ESC, contributing to shaping the narrative of Ukraine as a strong nation internationally. This is possible to argue based on the increased frequency of identified frames during the coding of the material from 2022 compared to 2016.

In the analysis of the selected material, two clear themes emerged in how Ukraine was portrayed in the Swedish and British reporting on the country's participation in the ESC during 2016 and 2022. These narrative themes are:

Resistance Against Oppression and Invasion:

Through the analysis of articles from both 2016 and 2022, it is evident that Ukraine's participation in the Eurovision Song Contest is used to mark resistance against historical and ongoing oppression against minorities. In 2016, Ukraine's participation is portrayed as a symbol of resistance against the oppression they previously faced from Stalin and the Soviet Union, while the focus in 2022 shifts towards marking resistance against Russia's invasion of the country that same year. This theme demonstrates how Ukraine's participation in the ESC is used to reinforce their national identity and pride and to express their determination to resist external threats and aggression.

Support and Solidarity from Europe:

Another prominent theme is the immense support Ukraine receives from the rest of Europe, especially during ESC 2022 when they won the competition. This solidarity and support from Europe reinforce the image of Ukraine as part of the European community and demonstrate international support for the country's sovereignty and self-determination. This theme highlights how Ukraine's participation in the ESC is not just a cultural event but also a political and symbolic act used to strengthen the country's position and image internationally.

As mentioned earlier, it is important to emphasize that the results presented here are based on a selection of articles and cannot be generalized to all media or to the countries of Sweden and the United Kingdom as a whole. While these articles offer an interesting insight into media coverage of Ukraine's nation branding in relation to the Eurovision Song Contest, their limitations and the selective sampling of media should be considered when interpreting the results.
7. Analysis and Discussion

This section contains an overview of the analysis conducted on the 16 selected articles from British and Swedish media outlets spanning the years 2016 and 2022. The analysis focuses on how these articles contribute to Ukraine's nation branding through its participation in the Eurovision Song Contest during those years. The analysis is guided by the two chosen theoretical frameworks: strategic narrative and nation branding, and the findings are organized based on thematic analysis, identifying two distinct narratives within the material.

7.1 Ukraine's Resistance Against Oppression and Invasion

The identification of this narrative in the analyzed articles from 2016 and 2022 was made possible through modifications to the coding scheme, which was tailored to interpret the material in line with the research questions. Understanding Ukraine's historical oppression by the Soviet Union was pivotal in interpreting the material, particularly given the contextualization of the articles from 2016 regarding these events. According to the results of this study, it can be argued that the Swedish and British media outlets examined, clearly intended to present Ukraine in their reporting on its participation in ESC 2016 and 2022 as a strong nation that does not tolerate historical or contemporary oppression. These media outlets have thus highlighted the narrative conveyed by Ukraine through its performances and song choices in ESC and reinforced it in their own media to influence their readers and viewers. This has resulted in readers and viewers getting the desired image of the country. This has strengthened Ukraine's identity as a nation according to the strategy that the country has sought to communicate.

The media's reinforcement of the narrative about Ukraine as a nation resisting oppression and invasion by describing the plot of the song "1944" can be linked to John Street's article "'Fight the Power': The Politics of Music and the Music of Politics". Street's research explores the relationship between popular music and politics and emphasizes music's ability to directly engage our emotions. This can be related to the findings of this study.139 The Swedish and British media outlets examined in this study have deliberately reinforced Ukraine's narrative in their coverage of its participation in the ESC in both 2016 and 2022. By emphasizing Ukraine's portrayal of itself in the ESC, the media have manipulated and bolstered the narrative presented

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by Ukraine, which in turn has influenced audiences and contributed to the nation branding that Ukraine has sought to achieve.

The examined media outlets have reinforced the narrative of Ukraine as a country resisting oppression and invasion, particularly by referring to the song "1944" and its themes. In doing so, the media have actively used music and the ESC as tools for nation branding and geopolitical communication, which on a deeper level reflects Street's argument about the role of music in shaping emotions, identity, and political engagement.

This can be strongly linked to the theory of strategic narrative, given that the media have succeeded in constructing a narrative of Ukraine as a nation based on their national ability to create certain perceptions and beliefs among the international audience. Drawing from Misikimon, Roselle, and O’Loughlin’s argument that the strategic narrative theory has the potential to serve as a tool for political actors to shape a shared understanding of past, present, and future events in international politics, clear patterns can be seen in the reporting on Ukraine's contributions to the ESC in both 2016 and 2022. Thus, the deliberate media reporting in 2016, aimed at creating a specific image of Ukraine as a nation resisting oppression and defending minorities, succeeded in shaping a European understanding of the past, present, and future events in international politics. This can be observed partly through the clear narrative created in the media about Stalin's deportation of Crimean Tatars in 1944, where the narrative has a singular antagonist, which was the Soviet Union. Based on the analyzed articles from 2016, it can also be argued that the narrative of the past persisted in the narrative of the present. This is exemplified in SVT's article "Ukrainas politiska utspel i ESC" (Ukraine's political action in the ESC), where Jamala herself described the dire situation for the Crimean Tatars on the Crimean Peninsula in 2016 following the Russian invasion in 2014, and compared this to the situation in 1944. The narrative of the future becomes evident when analyzing how the selected media outlets reported on Ukraine and its contribution to ESC 2022, based on the aspect that the reporting that took place in 2016 created a narrative for Ukraine in the future. And that narrative laid the foundation for the narrative created during the reporting in 2022. If the media outlets had taken a different angle in their reporting on Ukraine and ESC during 2016, they would not have had the same starting point in 2022, which would likely have resulted in a

different narrative being created in their reporting. This would have further had the power to shape the audience's perceptions.

From the above stated, it can be argued that the construction of nation branding is constantly built upon the narratives created about factors such as the country's political stance. If these narratives are strategic, they also have the power to influence the collective understanding of the past, present, and future, which consequently affects how a country's identity is perceived both domestically and internationally. Therefore, it can be said that strategic narratives are crucial for the development of a country's nation branding. This is based on the idea that the collective perception of the country (both nationally and internationally) influences how the country chooses to brand itself as a nation, which aligns with Dinne's view that the concept of brand can be identified through politics, identity, and culture. This can be linked to Welslau and Selck’s research article "Geopolitics in the ESC: Comparing Russia’s and Ukraine’s use of cultural diplomacy in the Eurovision Song Contest", where they argue that Ukraine and Russia have a history of using ESC as a platform to express their political messages. Specifically, they claim that Ukraine has shown a pattern of wanting to convey its history and culture through the ESC. However, this study serves as an extension of Welslau and Selck’s work, as their study focuses solely on arguing that ESC is used as a platform for countries to express themselves politically and thereby engage in nation branding within that context. This thesis has used Selck and Welslau's findings as a foundation, and then focused on how well Swedish and British media have supported the nation branding of Ukraine in ESC during 2016 and 2022.

7.2 Ukraine’s Support and Solidarity from Europe

As mentioned in section 5.2.2 Framing, Entman argues that there are five categories of frames that are often used by media outlets to structure their stories. Based on these categories, it can be observed in this study that all of them have been utilized in the analyzed articles. Therefore, an explanation follows on how these categories have been significant in the analyzed articles.

The "conflict" category aims to present conflicts between parties, engaging the reader of the article. It can be argued that this category, in this study, has been used as a kind of umbrella frame in the articles from both 2016 and 2022. This is because the articles collectively shaped a narrative of Ukraine as an oppressed country, both historically and in the present. Furthermore, it can also be noted that this frame has served as a kind of foundation for the following frames.

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to build upon. This is because it allows the other frames to exist, based on the context of the articles. This can be explained by the fact that this frame has made it possible for the article to subsequently include moral aspects of the conflict. The “morality” category can be identified in several of the articles, for example, when the journalist for The Guardian's article "Zelenskiy hails Ukraine’s Eurovision win and plans to ‘one day’ host final in Mariupol," describes Ukraine's victory as a moral triumph for the country in its struggle against Russia. By emphasizing Ukraine's victory as an expression of the country's moral strength and resistance to Russian aggression, the article can reinforce the reader's perception of Ukraine as a nation fighting for moral values and justice. This can generate increased sympathy and solidarity from the reader towards Ukraine and its people. At the same time, the article, by using moral reasoning and emphases, can evoke feelings of moral indignation in the reader towards Russia's actions in the conflict with Ukraine.

The "human interest/personalization" category can be clearly identified in SVTS's article "Ukrainas politiska utspel i ESC" (Ukraine's political action in the ESC), based on how Jamala as an artist is portrayed as a representative of the oppression suffered by Crimean Tatars during the Soviet deportation in 1944, but also for the oppression that has occurred after the Russian annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014. By highlighting Jamala's personal experiences and linking them to larger historical events, the article engages readers on an emotional level and creates a deeper understanding of the political and cultural context surrounding her participation in ESC. This category can also be identified in the article "Eurovision på liv och död" (Eurovision: Life and death) from Gotlands Tidningar (Gotland's Newspapers), where the journalist includes the story of the former artist Ruslana's transformation into a soldier to fight for her country. By focusing on Ruslana's personal journey and commitment to her homeland, the article evokes readers' compassion and sympathy.

The framing category "consequence" became evident in the article "Russia can compete in Eurovision 2022 despite Ukraine invasion, organisers say" in The Independent, where it was stated that Ukraine expressed its wish to the EBU for Russia to be excluded from ESC, claiming that there was a significant risk that Russia would use their participation to spread political

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Which contradicts EBU’s values. Writing an article aimed in that direction framed Russia as a controversial actor in the competition, whose presence could lead to political manipulation and questioning of the competition's principles. This framed Russia as a potentially destabilizing force in the competition and could influence readers' perceptions of the country's participation in ESC. Thus, Russia was portrayed as an actor whose presence in the competition had consequences for the integrity and message of the competition.

Similar to the fundamental framing category "conflict" in this analysis, it can also be argued that the category "responsibility" looms over all articles. Based on how the conflict is framed, it can also be argued that there is an antagonist responsible for the conflict. This is portrayed by describing the conflict as a Russian invasion of Ukraine, which suggests that it is not a mutual conflict. But primarily, Russia's responsibility is framed by portraying Ukraine as an innocent nation that solely wants peace between the countries. The clearest example can be found in SkyNews' article "Ukraine War: Eurovision winner Jamala flees country while husband, family and friends hide in Kyiv bomb shelters," which vividly depicts the suffering endured by Ukraine's population as a result of the Russian invasion. By connecting Jamala's escape from the country and her family's hiding in bomb shelters, a clear picture of the responsibility that Russia bears for the situation is drawn.

The above narrative can be directly linked to Bohlin and Ståhlberg’s argument regarding nation branding as a tool targeting political consumption, which is shaped by a country's cultural identity. According to their perspective, nation branding is a process where social solidarity translates into political actions. By emphasizing the broad European support for Ukraine before and during their participation in ESC 2022, both Swedish and British media reinforce the image of Ukraine as part of the European community and as a nation that values its sovereignty and self-determination. Hence, this support and solidarity from Europe can be viewed as part of Ukraine's nation branding strategy, where the country utilizes ESC as a political and symbolic gesture to strengthen its position and image internationally. Furthermore, the findings of this study emphasize how this support and positive attention from Europe


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Contribute to shaping a narrative where Ukraine appears as a nation with significant soft power and national pride, thereby reinforcing its resistance against Russia's aggression.

Dinnie's discussion on brand ambassadors can be further connected to the results identified in this study. This is based on the perspective that the Kalush Orchestra, as depicted in the articles from 2022, is portrayed as folkloric, partly due to their desire to represent Ukraine's traditional folk music, and because they clearly argue that their song "Stefania," which won ESC 2022, represented Ukraine as a national mother for all its inhabitants. According to Dinnie's argument that a country's brand ambassadors should align with the country's values, the Kalush Orchestra can be seen as a form of brand ambassadors for Ukraine, as their performance and message in ESC 2022 clearly convey the country's cultural heritage and values. This connection to Dinnie's discussion about brand ambassadors underscores the importance of consistency and credibility in the representation of a country's identity and values, both nationally and internationally.¹⁴⁸ By identifying the Kalush Orchestra as potential brand ambassadors for Ukraine during ESC 2022, we can see how their performance contributed to reinforcing Ukraine's image and positioning on the international stage, in line with the nation branding strategy the country aimed to convey. Therefore, it can be argued that the use of brand ambassadors falls within the framework of strategic narrative, which in this context has influenced Ukraine's nation branding. This can be linked to Welslau and Selck's argument that Ukraine tends to use ESC both as a platform to showcase its culture and history and to express itself politically regarding the Russian invasion of the country.

Based on Bohlin and Ståhlberg's four fundamental components of strategic narrative, it is possible to identify which of these components are most clearly linked to this study and the analyzed articles. Since all articles have addressed the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, it can be argued that the component "the central characters and actors" is addressed in the articles. Furthermore, the component "the surrounding environment" in this context is the Eurovision Song Contest, as Ukraine has used its participation in ESC to brand their nation.

The two narrative themes identified in this study (Resistance Against Oppression and Invasion and Support and Solidarity from Europe) can be linked to Bohlin and Ståhlberg’s explanation of the three levels at which strategic narratives can be exercised. Based on the articles' ability to very clearly emphasize Ukraine's identity and history, it can be argued that these media

outlets have used strategic narratives at level two: "National narratives". Furthermore, this narrative has portrayed Ukraine as a country that stands up for itself and has significant support within Europe, which also reinforces the narrative of Ukraine's identity. Ultimately, the study of strategic narratives in this analysis offers valuable insights into the dynamics of power, identity, and persuasion in contemporary media discourse, where Ukraine and the ESC, in particular, have been important political actors.

In 2016, distinct differences emerged in how public service outlets like the BBC and SVT compared to commercial media reported on Ukraine's participation in the ESC. This contrast was evident, with commercial media emphasizing dramatic elements, exemplified by The Guardian's focus on Zelenskiy's reaction to Ukraine's ESC victory. Conversely, public service outlets such as the BBC delivered more balanced and in-depth coverage, demonstrated by their analysis of Ukraine's and Russia's responses to Jamala's win. These differences can be attributed, in part, to the divergent objectives and mandates of commercial and public service media. Commercial outlets often prioritize generating interest and maximizing clicks, while public service media strive to offer objective and comprehensive news coverage.

Due to the absence of any public service media outlets among the selected articles from 2022, this conclusion cannot be applied to the reporting in 2022. It's crucial to acknowledge this, as it has had a significant impact on the results of this study.

From the analysed articles, one can identify clear differences in how Swedish and British media reported on Ukraine's victory in the ESC in both 2022 and 2016. Swedish media, such as SVT and Dagens Nyheter, chose to focus on Ukraine's political actions in the competition and the personal stories behind the artists' performances. Their reporting also emphasized the significance of Ukraine's victory for the country's identity and political standing. For instance, SVT's article "Ukrainas politiska utspel i ESC" from 2016 includes an interview with the Ukrainian artist Jamala, highlighting the political message of her song and its personal significance. Similarly, Dagens Nyheter's article "Ukraina väljer laddat ESC bidrag" from 2016 discusses the historical background of Ukraine's song choice, emphasizing its political and emotional context.

On the other hand, British media outlets like BBC and The Guardian tended to place greater emphasis on geopolitical aspects and international reactions to Ukraine's victory. Their articles

explored in more detail how victory in the ESC affected relations between countries and the geopolitical dynamics in the region. For example, BBC's article "Eurovision Song Contest: Ukraine and Russia stunned by Jamala win" from 2016 focused on the geopolitical implications of Ukraine's victory and the reactions from Ukraine and Russia. Similarly, The Guardian's report "Zelenskiy hails Ukraine’s Eurovision win and plans to ‘one day’ host final in Mariupol" from 2022 delved into President Zelenskiy's response to Ukraine's victory and its potential impact on the conflict in the region.

It is also possible to identify differences between the years based on the reporting from the analyzed articles. In 2022, the focus in reporting from both Swedish and British media seemed to be more centered around the political and geopolitical context of Ukraine's participation and victory in the Eurovision Song Contest. This can be seen through articles like "Ukraina tar hem ny politisk ESC-vinst" from TTELA and "Russia can compete in Eurovision 2022 despite Ukraine invasion, organisers say" from The Independent. On the other hand, the reporting from 2016 tended to be more focused on the personal stories of the artists and Ukraine's political position towards Russia and Europe. Examples of this include articles like "Ukrainas politiska utspel i ESC" from SVT and "Eurovision Song Contest: Ukraine’s Poroshenko hails win" from BBC.

This shift in focus between the years 2022 and 2016 can be partially explained by changes in the political situation and the international climate. In 2016, Ukraine was in an active conflict with Russia due to the Crimea crisis in 2014, and was seeking to strengthen its national identity and position in Europe. This may have contributed to the increased emphasis on Ukraine's political actions and personal stories in media reporting. On the other hand, in 2022, with the ongoing situation in Ukraine with the invasion from Russia, the focus in reporting was more on the broader geopolitical implications of Ukraine's victory in Eurovision and its relationship with Russia and the international community.

The differences in reporting between Swedish and British media can partly be explained by their different interests and focuses. Swedish media tend to emphasize personal and cultural aspects of events, whereas British media more often focus on geopolitical aspects and international relations. This likely reflects Sweden's tradition of interest in political and social issues and Britain's historical role as a global actor with strong ties to international affairs, particularly in Europe and Eastern Europe.
These differences in focus between the years 2022 and 2016 demonstrate how media reporting can be influenced by the political context and current events. The different emphases in reporting may also reflect the strategies of the media outlets to engage their readers and report on relevant issues in line with the prevailing events.

When analyzing media coverage of Ukraine's participation in the Eurovision Song Contest, it's important to consider the role of professional journalism. The rise of higher standards and journalistic integrity affects how journalists and editors cover politically sensitive topics like international conflicts. Additionally, the mix of political and cultural motives complicates decision-making. Journalists and editors must balance professional standards with the pressure to address political and cultural agendas. This balance shapes the selection of stories, framing of narratives, and the overall tone of media coverage.

Based on the above stated, it can be argued that this study is highly relevant in line with Ethan C. Busby, James N. Druckman, and Alexandria Fredenhall’s argument that seemingly irrelevant events such as the ESC serve as platforms for political positioning, where strategic narratives are used to shape Ukraine's nation branding. Additionally, it highlights how British and Swedish media outlets support this nation branding in their reporting on Ukraine's participation in ESC.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study significantly advances the field of journalism studies by delving into the intricate interplay between media representation, strategic narratives, and nation branding within the context of Ukraine's participation in the Eurovision Song Contest. Through an analysis of 16 selected articles from British and Swedish media outlets spanning the years 2016 and 2022, this research illuminates two distinct themes of narratives: "Ukraine's Resistance Against Oppression and Invasion" and "Support and Solidarity from Europe."

By scrutinizing how these narratives are constructed and disseminated across different media platforms, this study unveils the pivotal role of media outlets in shaping public perceptions and influencing nation branding efforts. Specifically, it highlights how Swedish media outlets focus on the political actions within the ESC and the personal narratives of the artists, thereby underlining the significance of Ukraine's victory for its national identity and political stature. Conversely, it reveals how British media prioritize geopolitical dimensions and international
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responses, offering insights into the broader implications of Ukraine's success within regional
dynamics.

Moreover, this study offers valuable insights into the dynamic nature of media coverage,
illustrating how shifts in the political landscape and international climate shape the framing and
emphasis of media narratives. By tracing the evolution of media representation between 2016
and 2022, the research underscores the responsiveness of media coverage to changing socio-
political contexts, thereby enriching our understanding of the complex interplay between media,
politics, and public discourse.

In essence, this study serves as a critical addition to journalism studies by shedding light on the
mechanisms through which media narratives are constructed, disseminated, and received in
contemporary society. By offering a nuanced analysis of media representation within the
specific context of Ukraine's participation in the ESC, it not only deepens our understanding of
media dynamics but also provides valuable insights for future research at the intersection of
media, politics, and nation branding.
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9. Reference list


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