

**BRAND**  
**UKRAINE**

# **UKRAINE'S PERCEPTION REPORT IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA**

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## METHODOLOGY

The analysis of Ukraine's perception in Sub-Saharan Africa consists of four pillars:

- **Ukraine-related search trends.** What topics and events are capturing public interest in Ukraine on Google.
- **Public opinion about Ukraine.** The general sentiment and perceptions held by the public towards Ukraine, as reflected in trustworthy social surveys.
- **Ukraine's coverage in local news media.** How Ukraine is represented in news outlets, including the most popular Ukraine-related topics.
- **Interviews with five experts per region.** Analysis of opinions from researchers and experts for a deeper understanding of key trends and the context of Ukraine's perception.

Using the insights from Expert interviews, we have been able to further validate our initial findings. Experts' quotes that either supported or challenged conclusions drawn from desktop research are presented in each section of the report in order to provide a deeper understanding of the results.

## LIMITATIONS

This regional analysis was conducted on a limited number of countries representing Sub-Saharan Africa. While we acknowledge that perceptions of Ukraine may vary across different countries within the region, time and resource constraints led us to focus our analysis on the most influential countries, including South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. These countries were chosen because they represent some of the largest and strongest economies in the region, which in turn affects their strength on the international stage.

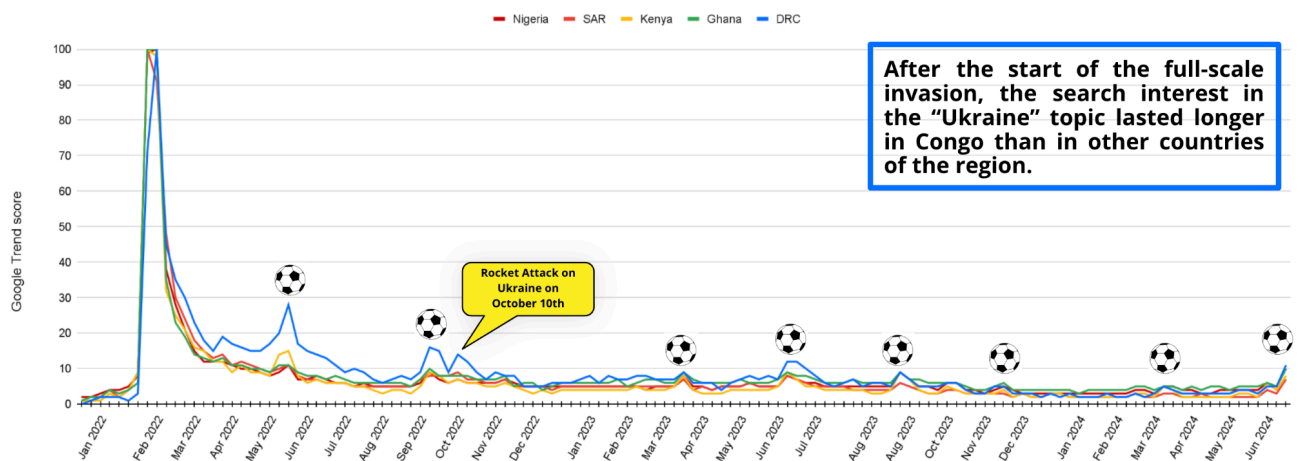
Our media analysis was conducted over a specific, limited time frame (from May to July 2024). While a longer time frame could provide additional insights, we believe that the data provided offers a foundational understanding of how Ukraine is covered in local media.

## UKRAINE-RELATED SEARCH TRENDS ANALYSIS

To identify the genuine interest of the regional audience in specific topics, we conducted a study of search queries using Google Trends and Ahrefs. Given the distinct functionalities of these analytical tools, we selected different timeframes for query analysis. For Google Trends, the analysis covered January 2022 to May 2024, while for Ahrefs, it spanned June 2023 to June 2024. Both tools provided data for SAR, Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, and Congo. This research enabled us to assess the rise of search interest of various events among audiences in the selected countries.

According to our analysis of the data from Ahrefs and Google Trends, the most common reasons for rising search interest over the period from January 2022 to May 2024 in the "Ukraine" topic in Sub-Saharan Africa were as follows (see Chart 1):

**Comparison of Search Activity for the "Ukraine" Query in Sub-Saharan African Countries**



**Chart 1.** Google Search Trends for "Ukraine" in Sub-Saharan Africa

**Ukraine's involvement in football matches.** The Google Trends chart highlights notable spikes in interest from Sub-Saharan Africa during football matches involving Ukrainian national football team. This indicates the region's strong engagement with international football and suggests that Ukraine's participation in football events drives certain interest among audiences there. Some experts highlighted that football could be an important tool to create more connections between Ukraine and Sub-Saharan African countries.

*Expert 1: Sports, football, first of all, this is also a very good tool, and here I understand all the complexities. I myself once tried to talk about Dynamo, but I realized that there is no need to encroach on very high standards. It can be a club of the second league, which will simply come in a human way, this human touch is needed. [...] If it is a club, relatively speaking, from Oboloni, or not of the top league and take it to one or two African countries so that they play there with the same junior or second team. [...] Therefore, I think that sports and folklore elements, they would strengthen.*

Such attention underlines football's role as a unifying platform, fostering connections between diverse regions.

**Russia's war crimes against Ukraine.** The chart highlights a spike in interest from Sub-Saharan Africa during Russia's massive rocket attacks on Ukraine on October 10, 2022. This surge reflects the region's increasing engagement with issues of war crimes and civilian suffering. Nearly all experts emphasize that Sub-Saharan Africa's historical conflict experiences and pursuit of justice resonate with Ukraine's fight, fostering solidarity and awareness. Such moments underscore the region's potential role in advocating for accountability and reinforcing the international norms that protect sovereignty and human rights.

*Expert 2: I should also mention that in Africa, as in the rest of the world, we only show interest when it comes to stories of atrocity - massacres, civil wars, famines, and floods that have killed hundreds, if not thousands, of people. So, in Kenya, as in most African countries, Ukraine can only get a little attention if it's about some atrocity.*

*Expert 3: Ordinary people still sympathize with Ukraine. If we focus our messages on ordinary people, explain that many ordinary Ukrainians are suffering, the huge number of refugees from Ukraine, and the tragedy of our children, then the points are understandable to ordinary people.*

However, some experts argue that the perspective emphasizes the need to differentiate between genuine political or humanitarian alignment and pragmatic interest rooted in regional challenges affected by the war.

*Expert 1: The cruelty inherent in this war must be appealed to. However, the statistics on victims, destruction, and energy infrastructure do not work. It doesn't work because it doesn't resonate with them. Thank goodness we have non-African numbers that exist there during military conflicts. Therefore, speaking in the language of numbers is a waste of time, it is meaningless rhetoric that will lead to nothing.*



### UKRAINE'S HISTORICAL CONNECTIONS WITH SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN COUNTRIES

Ukraine has a deep and multifaceted relationship with Sub-Saharan Africa, built over decades through historical, educational, peacekeeping, and economic ties. During the 1950s to 1990s, Ukraine, as part of the USSR, played an active role in supporting African independence movements, providing political and material assistance to nations striving for decolonization. Ukraine's contributions extended to the United Nations, where it championed resolutions and initiatives promoting self-determination and sovereignty for African countries. This solidarity laid the foundation for a shared commitment to justice and freedom. Some experts highlighted this topic as a perspective narrative for utilizing:

*Expert 1: Now, in South Africa, a memorial plaque has been added to the general wall of honour and memory of all those who helped Africa gain independence and sovereignty. Gennadiy Udovenko, who was the co-chairman of The United Nations Special Committee Against Apartheid, was introduced there.*

Education and cultural exchange further strengthened these ties, with thousands of African students attending Ukrainian universities during the Soviet era, benefiting from advanced training in fields like medicine, engineering, and the sciences. Even after Ukraine's independence in 1991, this tradition continued, with many African students choosing Ukrainian institutions for their quality education and affordability. These academic exchanges fostered personal and professional bonds that endure today.

*Expert 1: We have to find Africans who underwent such training in Ukraine at that time and find out which of them became a famous hero for their countries. Even if these people simply took part in decolonization but did not become some kind of national hero, it is still a reason to appeal to society by the names of these citizens and to say that we are also involved in this.*

Ukraine's involvement in international peacekeeping missions has also been significant, with Ukrainian forces contributing to operations in **Liberia**, **Congo**, and **Sudan** under UN mandates. Their participation supported regional stability and reinforced Ukraine's commitment to global peace and security.

Economically, Ukraine remains a crucial partner for Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly as a leading exporter of essential agricultural products such as wheat and corn, which are vital for food security in many African nations. Additionally, Ukraine supplies fertilizers critical for local agriculture, further cementing its role in the region's economic sustainability.

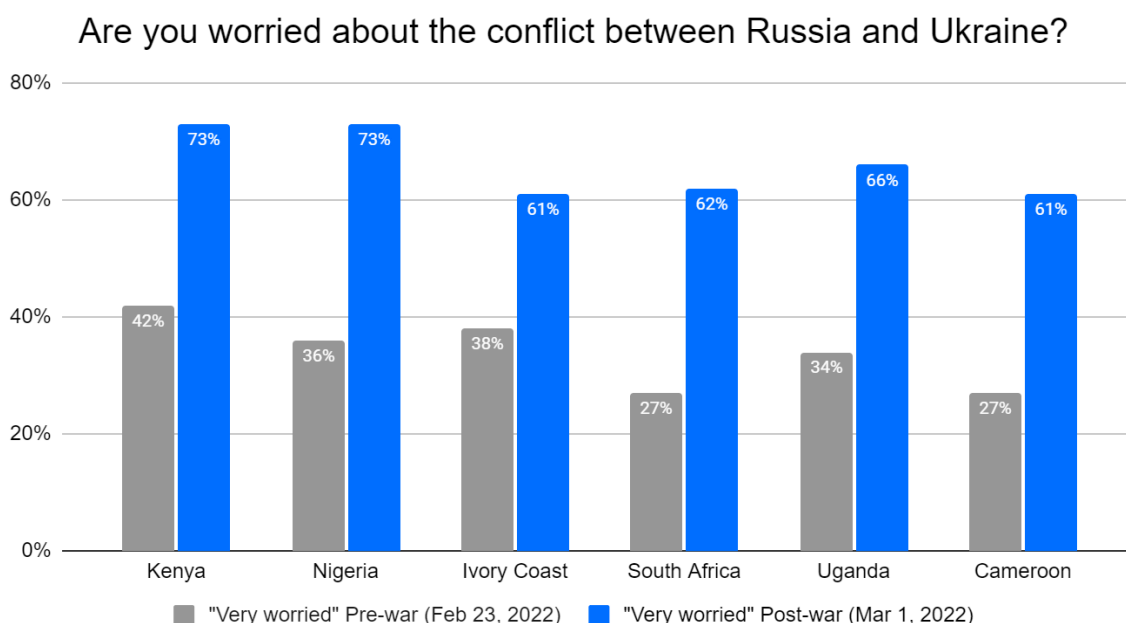
*Expert 2: Ukraine supplies cheap grain to Africa. Because it has the capacity to grow very cheap grain. Many countries in Africa, even those with plenty of land, are not food secure. They still have to import sub-grains, either maize wheat, sunflower seeds, or other things. So it's known, at least to some extent, that Ukraine is a source of affordable food products. That's a good thing.*

At the same time, some experts point out that the narratives built on historical events are not so important, and they will not be able to become drivers of support for Ukraine in the region:

*Expert 4: In our approach, we tried to focus more on creating new points of contact, that is, not to explain the very ancient and great history of Ukraine, but rather to create a new cultural context where Ukrainian and South African cultures intersect.*

*Expert 5: And we now need to spend effort to build this historical image. And the question is, where do we want to spend our efforts? Will we shape the image of Ukraine as a modern country, IT is interesting, it is young and progressive, and it is a place where you can do something cool? Or we will dig into the past.*

## PUBLIC SUPPORT OF UKRAINE



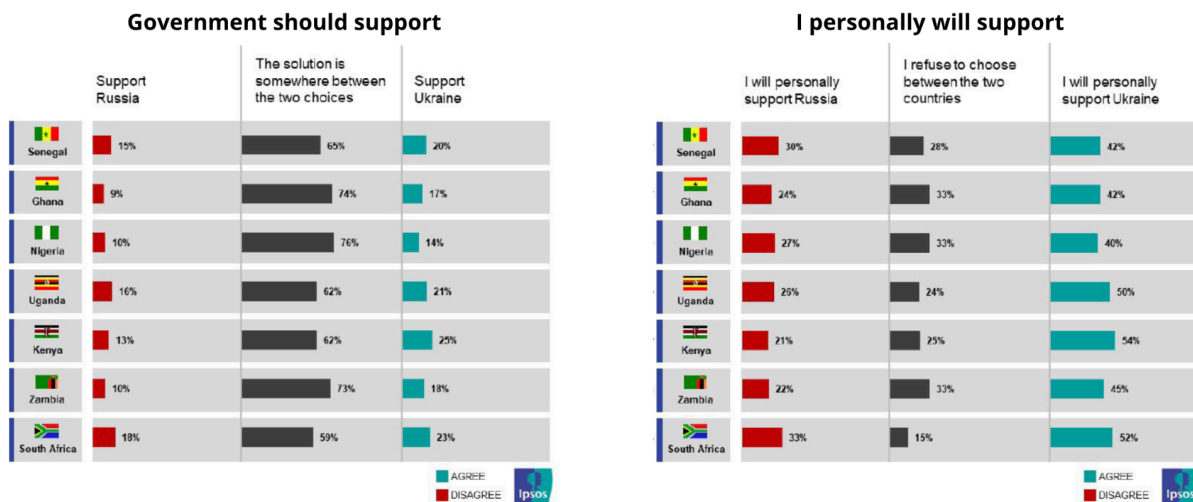
**Chart 2.** The number of people who are "concerned" about events in Ukraine in the context of Russian aggression. Source: [Sagaci Research](#)

People in Kenya and Nigeria show the highest levels of concern about the war (see Chart 2), with **73%** expressing worry. Notably, Nigeria experienced the largest increase in anxiety, with a **37%** rise among all surveyed countries. It is worth noting that we do not have more relevant statistics for comparison in a wider time frame. However, the experts we interviewed pointed to the growing indifference among the African population due to the remoteness of the conflict and internal political and economic problems.



Expert 2: They're indifferent. They don't care. They either don't have information or even if they got it, they still would not care.

Expert 5: Of course, this war is far away. For African countries, there are enough daily challenges that each of these countries are working on. They are different for each country, but there are a lot of them. The issue of the war in Ukraine is clearly not a matter of daily dialogue or discussion on the street.



**Chart 3.** The attitude of the population of Sub-Saharan African countries regarding the issue of support for Ukraine

When we talk about the support of Ukraine by the population of the countries of the region, it is worth noting that such attitudes have a negative effect on the mobilization of support for Ukraine. For example, the [IPSOS](#) study states (see Chart 3):

*"Generally, the Sub-Saharan population supports Ukraine more than Russia. However, there is a clear distinction in public opinion about personal preferences and official government position regarding the support of Ukraine. Citizens tend to be more firm on their own opinion towards supporting either Ukraine or Russia but mostly think that the government should stay "Somewhere in between".*

Such a position can be explained by various factors: mistrust of one's own institutions, mistrust of the Ukrainian government, and limited resources (both financial and informational) that citizens are willing to sacrifice to help another state.

Answering this question, our experts indicated similar reasons for this situation as explaining the previous chart:

*Expert 5: Do you think that Ukrainians are being bombed there, that it is normal? Everyone will say, no, it's not normal. If you say whether my government should, instead of building a school, a toilet, or a new farm, deal with a ceasefire in Ukraine, then they will probably say no.*

*Expert 4: This may even be caused by the fact that they, like in Ukraine, have very low trust in the state and state institutions, and there, while, especially in South Africa, this topic is very difficult, they have disappointment after disappointment and expectations for leadership very, very little from your country,*

However, if we talk about the diplomatic support of Ukraine in the international arena, then we can talk about a more or less consistent situation (see Table 1). From March 2022 to February 2023, the UN General Assembly passed 6 major resolutions regarding the Russian invasion of Ukraine. These resolutions related to various aspects of the war, from humanitarian issues and attitudes towards the annexation of Ukrainian territories to more specific decisions regarding Russia's position in the international arena.

Sub-Saharan Countries' Votes on UN Resolutions regarding Ukraine							
	ES-11/1	ES-11/2	ES-11/3	ES-11/4	ES-11/5	ES-11/6	Total Votes
Yes	25	26	9	26	15	26	127
No	1	0	8	0	5	2	16
Abstain	16	19	22	18	23	14	112
No Vote	7	4	10	5	6	7	39

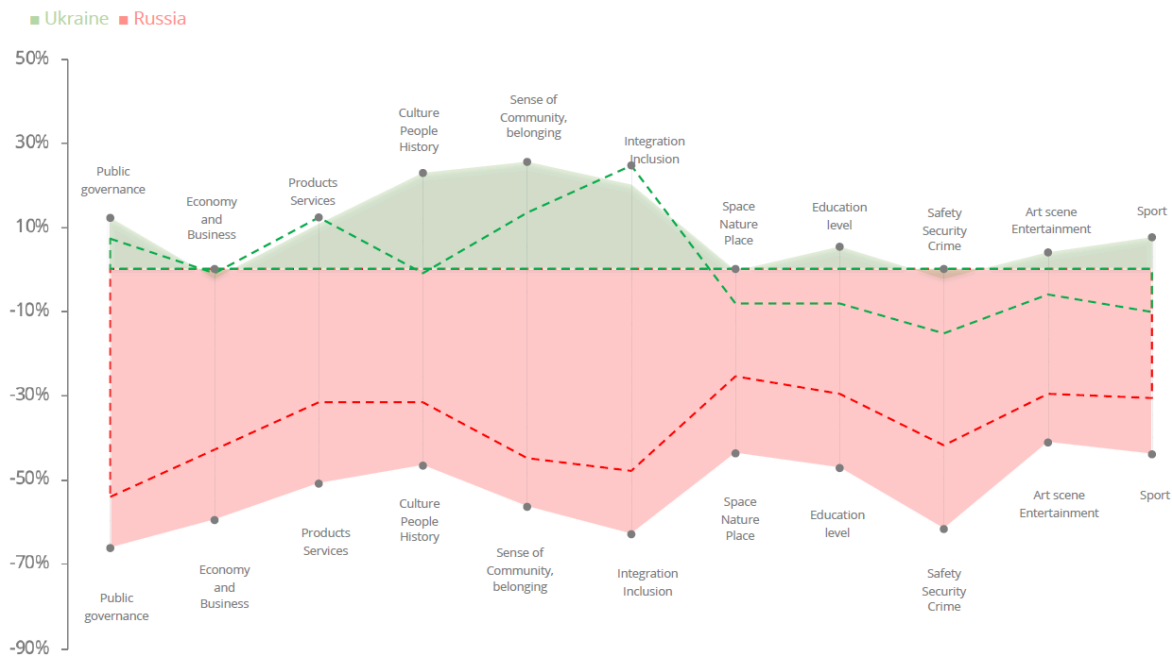
**Table 1.** Sub-Saharan Countries' votes on UN Resolutions regarding Ukraine. Source: [Danish Institute for International Studies](#)

ES-11/4 received the most support among these resolutions, which recognized the annexation of 4 Ukrainian regions by Russia as illegal. Russia did not receive a single vote in its favour, and there was an average rate of countries that avoided voting. However, the vote to suspend Russia's participation in the Human Rights Council ES-11/3 was the most "unsuccessful" for Ukraine.

Resolution ES-11/5, designed to prepare a legal basis for the payment of reparations by Russia, also received low support among the region's countries. Although other resolutions received more support, the number of country representatives who abstained from voting remained consistently high compared to other regions studied by us.

## PERCEPTION OF UKRAINE: SOFT POWER AND ASSOCIATIONS

Global public polls conducted by Bloom Consulting in March-April 2022 reveal that, following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, people in Africa reported a more positive view of Ukraine (see Chart 4). This shift was especially notable in areas such as Culture, People & History, and Sense of Community and Integration. Conversely, Russia experienced a decline in positive perceptions across all areas covered in the poll.



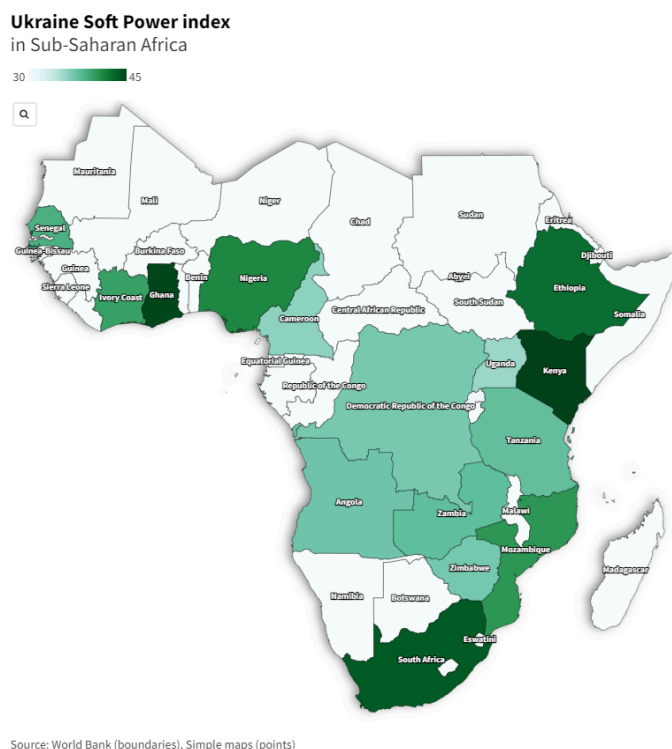
**Chart 4.** Concerning Ukraine (Russia), rate how much your perception is being affected by the Russia-Ukraine war in these specific areas. Source: Bloom Consulting

In Ukraine Message Testing Research Social Survey in 12 countries conducted by Zink Network for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine highlighted (see Chart 5) that in 2023 Ukraine mostly evokes positive associations across multiple dimensions, including its courage and perseverance in the face of conflict, its vast agricultural potential and resource richness, its strong European identity, and its historical and cultural significance. However, negative associations are largely shaped by the ongoing war and its devastating impact (see Chart 5).

*Expert 4: Whatever we say about Ukraine in the context of war and politics, we need to give them some perspective for the future. What are we doing today to bring peace closer? What are we doing tomorrow? In our approach, we tried to focus more on creating new points of contact, not to explain Ukraine's ancient and great history, but rather to create a new cultural context where Ukrainian and South African cultures intersect.*



In the Sub-Saharan Africa region, Ukraine scores the lowest on the People & Values pillar of the Soft Power Index, with a rating of **1.75** out of 10.00. This pillar reflects perceptions of a country's people as being "trustworthy," "generous," "friendly," and "tolerant and inclusive."



**Chart 6.** Ukraine's Soft Power Index in the Sub-Saharan region. Source: Brand Finance, Global Soft Power Index 2024

## CONCLUSIONS

- Despite Ukraine's long-standing relations with African countries, its perception across the continent remains complex and multifaceted.
- Overall, people in Sub-Saharan Africa tend to favour Ukraine over Russia in the ongoing war, with significant concern sparked by Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.
- There is a noticeable difference between public opinion on personal preferences and the official government stance regarding support for Ukraine. While individuals tend to hold strong personal views on supporting either Ukraine or Russia, they generally believe that their government should adopt a more neutral or balanced position.
- Among people in Sub-Saharan Africa, positive associations with Ukraine are multifaceted, encompassing its courage and perseverance in war, agricultural potential and natural resources, European identity, rich history and culture, and deeply personal sentiments like sympathy, love, and kindness.

## UKRAINE'S COVERAGE IN LOCAL NEWS MEDIA

Despite having relatively low Internet penetration in the region, Internet connection remains one of the main sources of information for people. The Internet is mostly being accessed through mobile devices. However, purchasing a mobile phone would still cost, on average, 25% of a person's monthly income. Thus, affordability remains a significant barrier to Internet access for the low-income, women and rural populations.

Other most popular media outlets are Television and Printed Press. The government owns the biggest broadcasting companies in many countries, providing significant media control (see Table 2). [Independent journalists often face censorship](#), harassment, intimidation, and even imprisonment.

Country	Media	Average Monthly visits
South Africa	<a href="#">News24</a>	38800000
Ghana	<a href="#">Ghanaweb</a>	18100000
South Africa	<a href="#">Cape Argus</a>	17900000
Nigeria	<a href="#">Vanguard News</a>	14500000
Kenya	<a href="#">The Star</a>	6400000
Kenya	<a href="#">Standard Digital</a>	6300000
Nigeria	<a href="#">Premium Times</a>	4500000
Kenya	<a href="#">Business Daily</a>	2600000
Nigeria	<a href="#">This Day</a>	2600000
South Africa	<a href="#">Sowetan</a>	2500000

**Table 2.** 10 Most popular media websites in sub-Saharan Africa are English-speaking.

It is important to point out that languages like English and French are often linked to the colonial period, and some people may still associate them with cultural domination, suppression of local languages, and historical oppression.





For example, in **Nigeria** where English is an official language, in more rural areas and among [cultural activists](#) who emphasize indigenous languages, English is often viewed as a language of the elite, and many see the need to prioritize local languages for cultural preservation. In **Congo**, where is French being widely spoken, there is a push for Swahili and other local languages as expressions of national pride. French is sometimes seen as a leftover of the Belgian colonial rule. One expert pointed out that using the languages of former colonizers is a normal practice, as there are different perceptions of this situation:

*Expert 1: The French language is a war trophy. That is, it remained as a trophy from that war, and they won it; as they say, they gained their independence, expelled the French from their land, and their language remained, which is a trophy.*

Still, many people in Sub-Saharan Africa **see English and French as pragmatic tools for economic and educational global opportunities**. These languages are essential for the African people to have access to international markets, higher education, and diplomatic engagement. One of the experts indicated that 4 European languages, as well as Swahili, would be the most effective for communication with the countries of the region:

*Expert 1: Four languages, I think French, English, Spanish and Portuguese would be the key languages. Of course, Swahili is the official language of the African Union. More than 100 million people speak Swahili there in various variations.*

### Country and language distribution of publications about Ukraine in major online media

	Total number of publications about Ukraine		Total audience
Kenya	145		15 300 000
South Africa	95		59 200 000
Nigeria	51		21 600 000
Ghana	10		18 100 000

**Table 3.** Source: Looqme media monitoring database, May-July 2024

Table 3 shows the distribution of online publications about Ukraine in Kenya, South Africa, Nigeria, and Ghana, along with their audience reach. Kenya leads in publications (145) with an audience of 15.3 million, while South Africa, with fewer publications (95), reaches the largest audience of 59.2 million. Nigeria has 51 publications and 21.6 million readers; Ghana has the fewest publications (10) but still reaches 18.1 million. The data highlights varying levels of media coverage and audience engagement across these countries.

Aid to Ukraine is actively observed in most media (see Table 4). It is important to note that several experts immediately noticed that the topic of international financial aid is important for the countries of the Sub-Saharan region because they rely on it even in their development plans.

Key topics about Ukraine in terms of the % of published articles	
Topic	Share of Voice
International support and Western weapons	22%
Russian shelling of Ukrainian cities	8%
Putin's Statements	8%
Discussions on Peace Negotiations	6%
China's role in the Ukraine-Russia war	6%
Daily Life in Ukraine	5%
Russian Offensive	5%

**Table 4.** Key topics about Ukraine in terms of the % of published articles

Therefore, the war in Ukraine and the costs that arise from it have resulted in losses of financial support for African countries.

*Expert 1: Some tend to accuse Ukraine of taking over the financing that could theoretically be distributed among African countries for the implementation of these projects. Africa, in fact, turned out to be a victim of food and energy insecurity. It also became the object of insufficient financing of projects for the development of the continent.*

*Expert 5: If we look at the long-term consequences of the war, it is the financing of support for the countries of the African continent. So far, surprisingly, it is not in the information space. Because we now have Ukraine covered by a large number of programs that were not covered before. And this funding is actually divided once, secondly, because defence spending increased by 8% globally in 2023-24.*

To gain a deeper understanding of the nuances in Sub-Saharan African local media coverage, We have some key findings on the media coverage of Russian shelling of Ukrainian cities

The sentiment surrounding the topic was measured on a scale from -1 to 1, where '-1' indicates full support for the Russian vision and narratives of the situation, '0' represents neutral or balanced coverage, and '1' signifies support for the Ukrainian position on the shelling and condemnation of the Kremlin terrorist attack. The final score shows the average sentiment of the publications.

- Overall, news media in Sub-Saharan Africa maintain a positive stance (**sentiment score = 0.88**), acknowledging Russia's responsibility for the deaths of Ukrainian civilians.
- The majority of news about the shelling of Ukrainian cities (20 out of 25) covers the Russian missile attack on a children's hospital in Kyiv. The rest focuses on strikes on the energy infrastructure.



- Every second article on the Russian hospital strike includes photos from the scene, with half featuring emotional images of rescuers, wounded families, and medical staff. Additionally, some pieces include the reporters' personal compassion.
- Official Russian statements were quoted only three times.

## CONCLUSIONS

- Sub-Saharan African news outlets pay significantly less attention to Ukraine compared to other analysed regions.
- Media focus on Ukraine usually intensifies around international political initiatives, Putin's statements and foreign visits, and tragic events.
- Kenyan news media outlets demonstrate the highest interest in the topic of Ukraine.
- A sentiment analysis of the second most popular topic that is frequently manipulated by the Kremlin (Russian shelling of Ukrainian cities) suggests that local media generally maintains a positive stance, noting Russia's responsibility for the deaths of Ukrainian civilians.
- While media attention on Ukraine often increases due to Putin's public appearances, an in-depth analysis of the topic 'Putin's Statements on Ukraine'—as popular as 'Russian Shelling of Ukrainian cities'—reveals that newsrooms do not exhibit favouritism toward him.

## EXPERT OPINIONS ON MESSAGES ABOUT UKRAINE'S IMAGE IN THE REGION

To gain a deeper understanding of Ukraine's perception in different regions, we conducted interviews with five experts per region. Contacts were identified using a snowball sampling method, asking civil society organizations for recommendations on knowledgeable experts. This ensured a diverse pool of participants.

The interviews followed a semi-structured, in-depth approach, combining the flexibility to explore emerging themes with a framework based on prior desktop research. This method allowed us to gain detailed qualitative insights while ensuring comparability across interviews.

### EXPERT GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

- **Local Experts:** Scholars and journalists from African institutions and media outlets with an interest in Ukraine, capable of reflecting on how news and events related to Ukraine are perceived in the region.
- **Ukrainian Experts and Communicators:** Practitioners engaged in Ukraine's external communications in the African region, offering insights into the effectiveness and specifics of such efforts.
- **Soft Power Contributors:** Individuals involved in cultural, economic, and experiential exchanges relevant for discussions on Ukraine's soft power.

### Understanding the target audience

This region represents a growing political and economic force on the global stage, and its countries play a pivotal role in international forums such as the United Nations. All experts noted that a clear definition of the target audience of communication can significantly increase the effectiveness and quality of communication. Firstly, in communications, it is important to understand the internal political situation of the country in relation to which the messages are being formed. Understanding these internal contexts is critical, but it is also possible to communicate at the level of regional organizations such as the African Union or SADC.

*Expert 5: We need to work not at the level of Sub-Saharan Africa, a term that Africans really don't like or tolerate at all, but at the level of SADC, at the level of the African Union, that is, regional organizations that are clear, for the countries of the African continent itself, that is, if you say, we work at the level of African Union countries, of course, or we work with SADC countries.*

*Expert 1: Reality is very far from theory, and it becomes obvious when decisions are made either at the level of the African Union or at the level of regional African associations, which in some places contradict or go against the interests of other members of the same associations.*

Ukraine can emphasise innovation, technology, and educational collaboration for younger generations, who often drive societal change and are more connected through digital platforms. For middle-aged and older generations, the focus could shift toward shared historical experiences, agricultural partnerships, and humanitarian efforts. This approach ensures that Ukraine's communication resonates across demographics, fostering broader and more inclusive support within these states. Targeting age-specific groups also amplifies Ukraine's soft power by fostering people-to-people connections and cultural exchanges.

*Expert 5: The population of the continent is one thing, the government is another. If we want to use these historical narratives to influence the government, then it seems important for us to pull them out of the drawer and remind them all the time.*

### **Economic and cultural cooperation on the basis of equality**

Communicating the potential for economic cooperation on an equal footing with sub-Saharan African countries is crucial for Ukraine. Sub-Saharan Africa is a region of immense untapped potential, with rapidly growing economies and a wealth of natural resources. By presenting itself as a partner interested in mutual benefit rather than exploitation, Ukraine can build trust and secure access to critical resources such as rare earth metals, agricultural products, and energy markets. Additionally, such partnerships can create opportunities for Ukrainian industries, including agricultural technology, engineering, and renewable energy, to find new export markets and invest in joint ventures. This approach strengthens Ukraine's economic resilience and positions it as a proactive and trustworthy player in the global economy.

*Expert 3: Food, "Grain from Ukraine", is not always in our favour, also because they want not just to get something, but to develop their agriculture. Here, too, the thesis is sometimes used that this aid does not have harmful effects because it is an agent that does not contribute to the development of agriculture. This is a well-known thesis. Give us a rod so we can catch fish ourselves, not vice versa.*

*Expert 3: There are some elements of African development programs that we would like to follow and possibly use in our realities. We have an interesting experience in the post-conflict reconstruction of African countries. This is very important. There are countries that survived wars and were destroyed very much, and their experience of returning to a peaceful life and then recovering is interesting to us.*

For example, one of the experts indicated the opportunity to share the experience of using drones in agriculture. Ukraine could not only train specialists from countries that prefer to develop their food sectors, but also teach how to create these drones.

Cultural cooperation based on equality fosters mutual understanding, soft power, and deeper connections between Ukraine and sub-Saharan Africa, which is vital in building long-term partnerships. Through cultural exchanges, Ukraine can showcase its unique heritage while learning from African nations' diverse and rich traditions. Such initiatives — from student exchange programs to joint artistic and academic projects

— help break stereotypes, combat neocolonial perceptions, and highlight the shared values of freedom, resilience, and creativity. This cultural diplomacy strengthens people-to-people ties, creating a foundation for stronger political and economic alliances while enhancing Ukraine's global image as an inclusive and culturally sensitive nation.

*Expert 5: The maximum number of journalistic and musical exchanges, that is, that representatives of the African continent go to Ukraine, see, communicate, destroy any stereotypes that they have, and also that we Ukrainians are more involved, understand better, because in we, in fact, have a lot in common, we simply have an incredible number of opportunities for cooperation and common interests, and historical reflections, and reevaluation of values, and the search for identity, all of these processes, they are extremely interesting and run in parallel.*

One of the experts pointed out that some cultural figures, in particular from Kenya, have the experience of holding artistic events with cultural monuments of the country, which were returned from the property of the former colonizer. This experience can be very useful for Ukraine in the context of the huge number of works of art that were stolen by Russian troops from the occupied territories.

### **Direct work with media and opinion leaders**

Direct engagement with media and opinion leaders in Sub-Saharan Africa is crucial for Ukraine to counter Russian narratives and build support within the region. Sub-Saharan Africa is a strategic geopolitical zone where Russian influence remains strong, often propagated through misinformation and historical ties. By proactively working with local journalists and thought leaders, Ukraine can offer a balanced perspective, highlight its sovereignty struggle, and underscore the broader implications of the conflict for global peace and security. Effective communication can also help debunk false narratives that may paint the conflict as irrelevant or align Ukraine with Western neo-imperialism, which resonates negatively in post-colonial societies.

*Expert 1: I mean, of course, about the elite of these societies, which forms public opinion, it includes, for example, the same bloggers, the same influencers, several of whom, for example, were at the same table with the president last Saturday.*

*Expert 2: I would say get as much information into the mainstream media as possible. In this way, influence the elite and the elite tend to influence the rest of the country. So, the strategy must always be not to post things on the Ukraine embassy website and expect people to take that seriously. No. Go through the mainstream media. They're the gatekeepers.*

Establishing a positive narrative in these countries can lead to greater political support for Ukraine in international forums and open avenues for bilateral cooperation in trade, education, and technology. By amplifying shared values like sovereignty,

resilience, and self-determination, Ukraine can foster solidarity with African audiences and lay the groundwork for a more robust partnership in the future.

### **The importance of effective explanation of controversial situations**

Effectively addressing and explaining controversial issues like allegations of racism is essential for Ukraine to maintain and strengthen its relationship with Sub-Saharan Africa. Perceptions of racism can deeply harm Ukraine's image, especially in a region where the legacy of colonialism and racial discrimination still resonates strongly.

*Expert 2: That is the reality that we know very little and that the little we know was negative and that it was shaped by the videos shared on social media of African students being taken off trains and buses. This isn't just some videos which may have been cooked up or created fake videos.*

*Expert 5: In part, of course, we had cases of racism, in part, they were not cases of racism, and in part they were cases of misunderstanding. For example, if it is a man trying to leave, and the trains were for women and children, and he was asked to get off the train, respectively, due to language barriers, that was not understood.*

*Expert 3: We know that positive information spreads much more slowly and is much less interesting than some negativity, this is the nature of the media space. Accordingly, this thesis about alleged racism during the evacuation, this thesis was so dominant. The first six months, maybe the first 10 months of the war, that Ukrainians are in the war, but why sympathize with them because they are racists?*

If left unaddressed, such controversies can provide fertile ground for adversaries like Russia to exploit and spread misinformation, framing Ukraine as unsympathetic to African interests and values. By proactively acknowledging these issues and offering clear, empathetic explanations, Ukraine can demonstrate respect for African audiences and a commitment to fostering understanding.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

- Understanding the diverse cultures, histories, and values of Sub-Saharan Africa allows Ukraine to make messages and strategies that resonate with local audiences, ensuring meaningful engagement.
- By recognizing the region's youth-driven initiatives and technological trends, Ukraine can engage with the image of future of Sub-Saharan Africa, fostering long-term and sustainable partnerships.
- Engaging directly with Sub-Saharan African media and opinion leaders helps Ukraine combat misinformation, counter Russian narratives, and present a balanced perspective on its sovereignty and global security concerns.
- Transparent communication about sensitive topics, such as racism, is key to maintaining Ukraine's positive image in Sub-Saharan Africa and preventing negative exploitation of such issues.

## GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

**Complex Regional Dynamics:** Ukraine's relationship with Sub-Saharan Africa is multifaceted, influenced by historical ties, current geopolitical tensions, and economic interests. While there's generally more support for Ukraine over Russia in the ongoing conflict, public opinion often diverges from official government stances. Many citizens prefer their governments to maintain a neutral position, reflecting the region's complex political landscape and historical non-alignment policies.

**Media Coverage and Public Awareness:** Sub-Saharan African media outlets pay relatively less attention to Ukraine than media in other regions. However, interest spikes during significant events such as international political initiatives, Putin's statements, and tragic war-related incidents. Kenya shows the highest media interest in Ukraine among the analyzed countries. The war in Ukraine and football-related news are the two most popular Ukraine-related search topics in the region, indicating areas of public engagement.

**Economic and Humanitarian Concerns:** Ukraine's role as a major exporter of agricultural products and fertilizers is crucial for food security in many African nations. The "Grain from Ukraine" initiative has garnered attention, though some experts caution that aid should not hinder local agricultural development. The war's impact on international financial aid to African countries is a concern, as it may divert resources from development projects in the region.

**Cultural and Educational Ties:** Historical educational exchanges, with many African students studying in Ukraine during and after the Soviet era, have created potential for enduring personal and professional bonds. Experts suggest leveraging these connections and focusing on creating new cultural intersections between Ukraine and African countries. There's potential in promoting cultural exchanges, particularly in areas like dance and sports, to foster mutual understanding and strengthen soft power.

**Communication Strategies and Challenges:** Effective communication about Ukraine in Sub-Saharan Africa requires a nuanced approach. Experts recommend focusing on relatable human stories rather than abstract statistics about the war. It is necessary to address sensitive issues like allegations of racism transparently to maintain trust and avoid misunderstanding, such as at the very start of the full-scale invasion. It is better to tailor messages to different age groups, with emphasis on innovation and technology for younger generations and shared historical experiences for older demographics through direct work with local media and opinion leaders to counter misinformation and present balanced perspectives on Ukraine's sovereignty and global security concerns.