

# Ukrainian refugees' use of social media in the Netherlands

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## **Abstract**

Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, many Ukrainian refugees have been arriving in the Netherlands, with little information available on how they are adapting to the Netherlands while retaining their Ukrainian identity. In this article, a qualitative study with fifteen refugees from Ukraine is presented to investigate the use of social media for refugee adaptation and connection to Ukraine. The results indicate that social media is indeed important, especially in the field of finding information about the Netherlands, maintaining a social network and finding news about Ukraine. However, for the purposes of work and education, other online methods, such as websites, and offline social networks were used. This suggests that social media can be utilised more to provide information about life in the Netherlands, whereas the role of social networks can be researched further.

## Introduction

Social media, such as Facebook and Telegram, are an essential tool for refugees. They use it to find information on their host country, stay updated on the situation in their home country and make and keep connections (Alencar, 2018; Smets et al., 2021; Speed et al., 2021). Correspondingly, social media can play an important part in adaptation (Smets et al., 2021, Veronis et al., 2018), as can social networks and social capital (Ager & Strang, 2004). A social network is a network of a specific individual (Sundvall et al., 2021), which can increase social capital (Schafft & Brown, 2003). All in all, social media can be used to uphold and expand these networks and capital (Gillespie et al., 2016).

War broke out in Ukraine when it was invaded by Russia over a year ago and many Ukrainians had to flee their country and seek refuge elsewhere (Dijkstra et al., 2022). As a response, the European Union enacted the Temporary Protection Directive, which is also followed in the Netherlands (Bosse, 2022). Consequently, this gives Ukrainian refugees more rights and faster help than other refugees (Ministerie van Algemene Zaken, 2022). As of July 2023, 95.710 Ukrainian refugees have used this temporary protection in the Netherlands (Ministerie van Algemene Zaken, 2023).

The current research will investigate how Ukrainian refugees in The Netherlands use social media, their social network and social capital. It will specifically look into adaptation to the Netherlands and staying connected to Ukraine. The term adaptation instead of integration is used because many Ukrainian refugees are not sure yet if their stay in the Netherlands will be a long-term stay (Van der Heyden, 2022). Consequently, adaptation and connection to the home country are investigated because both have been shown to be a reason to use social media for refugees (Alencar, 2018; Smets et al., 2021; Speed et al., 2021), but have not yet been researched for Ukrainian refugees. The research will embed itself in the indicators of refugee integration framework of Ager and Strang (2004). This is an often-used framework, which has recently also gained traction regarding digital skills (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019; Potocky, 2022) but has not been integrated with a specific focus on social media.

To investigate this topic, semi-structured interviews and a short questionnaire are conducted. By investigating the Ukrainian group that is different from other refugees, rules and regulations can be reviewed to create the best opportunities for adaptation. They are a marginalised group with little scientific support to help them integrate because they comprise an unexpected and recent group of refugees. Specifically, the role of social media can be optimized to encourage adaptation by refugees while assisting connectedness to the home

country. This can ease the process of adaptation, making adjustment easier for both refugees and the host country.

## **Social media use**

According to Dekker and Engbersen (2014), social media are applications containing user-generated content, which are part of a (semi-)open network and enable social networking. Examples are Facebook, Telegram, WhatsApp and LinkedIn. Social media are in general preferred by refugees over other internet applications (Alencar, 2018; Gillespie et al., 2016). This is because finding information through social media was seen as easier than through official institutions and websites, since this official information was often simultaneously overwhelming and not detailed enough (Udwan et al., 2020). This goes to show the high information accessibility of social media, highlighting accessibilities' importance as this helps refugees participate in their host country's society and stay connected (AbuJarour et al., 2019). Contrary to other new media, social media allows for interaction between users (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014). Given that one of the aspects of adaptation is social connections (Ager & Strang, 2004), the current research will investigate the use of social media to adapt to the Netherlands and maintain a connection to Ukraine.

This adaptation might happen with the aid of varying social media uses, such as finding information on the host country, staying updated on the situation in the home country and staying connected to people, especially those in the home country (Pottie et al., 2020; Smets et al., 2021). Borkert et al. (2018) found that using social media to stay updated on the well-being of the family in the home country was most important, followed by news about the home country, learning a new language and learning the culture of the host country.

Social media use has likely changed since many Ukrainians had to leave their country. Brailovskaia et al. (2020) showed that social media was mainly used before fleeing to fight boredom and pass the time. Alencar (2018) showed that refugees in the Netherlands increased their social media use due to having increased leisure time. However, most Ukrainian refugees have a job (NOS, 2022). Therefore, it can be expected that they have little leisure time to use social media recreationally.

Another change in social media use could be the language in which it is consumed. Russian is the first language for 32.9% of Ukrainians (*Ukraine: country data and statistics*, n.d.) and many more speak it as a second language. Yet, Harding (2023) found that since the start of the war, many Ukrainians have limited their Russian use, especially the younger

generation. This is a response to the attempt by Russia to eventually eradicate Ukrainian culture, which has ironically started in the Russian-speaking part of Ukraine (Harding, 2023). However, discussions about the Russian language have been long ongoing in Ukraine, where the aim was to make Ukrainian the official language (Zhurzhenko, 2002). Yet it took a war to get the larger public behind this (Harding, 2023). At the same time, refugees want to learn Dutch and/or English (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, 2023). Thus, the languages in which social media are consumed might have changed.

Currently, the most used social media in Ukraine are Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, VK and Twitter (Similarweb, 2023). At the same time, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, TikTok and LinkedIn are the most popular among Ukrainians worldwide (Zhyla, 2022). Data showed that Telegram (66%) was seen as the most informative, followed by YouTube (61%) and Facebook (58%) when looking for information about Ukraine (Zhyla, 2022).

However, social media does have its drawbacks. Half of the refugees in the research by Marlowe (2020) found social media controlling their lives, making them feel isolated (Leurs, 2017). Additionally, despite the perceived accessibility of social media (AbuJarour et al., 2019), certain groups might get excluded, as previous experience with social media improves digital understanding (Kutscher & Kreß, 2018). This results in older refugees and those with low digital literacy relying on others to get information through social media (Alencar et al., 2021; Dekker & Engbersen, 2014; Dekker et al., 2018). This lack of digital literacy often emerges in the form of a gender gap (Singh, 2017). Many refugee women face barriers to using social media because of varying factors: lack of educational opportunities, limited institutional opportunities, public access being in places unsafe for women and the leaky pipeline phenomenon (Singh, 2017). The latter refers to the fact that women, either by choice or not, put their families and domestic responsibilities over their personal development. Additionally, in some places, social media is also seen as something for elites and/or men (Kuroda et al., 2019; Singh, 2017). Merisalo and Jauhiainen (2021) found this gender gap for specific apps in particular: Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Viber, which are all popular amongst Ukrainians. However, this gender gap is not expected for Ukrainians, as 53.1% of social media users in Ukraine were female, with women making up 54.2% of the Ukrainian population (Kemp, 2023). This shows that there is a marginal gender difference, which is in line with the good 0.98 gender parity score of Europe, measuring how equally accessible ICT is (*The gender digital divide*, 2022).

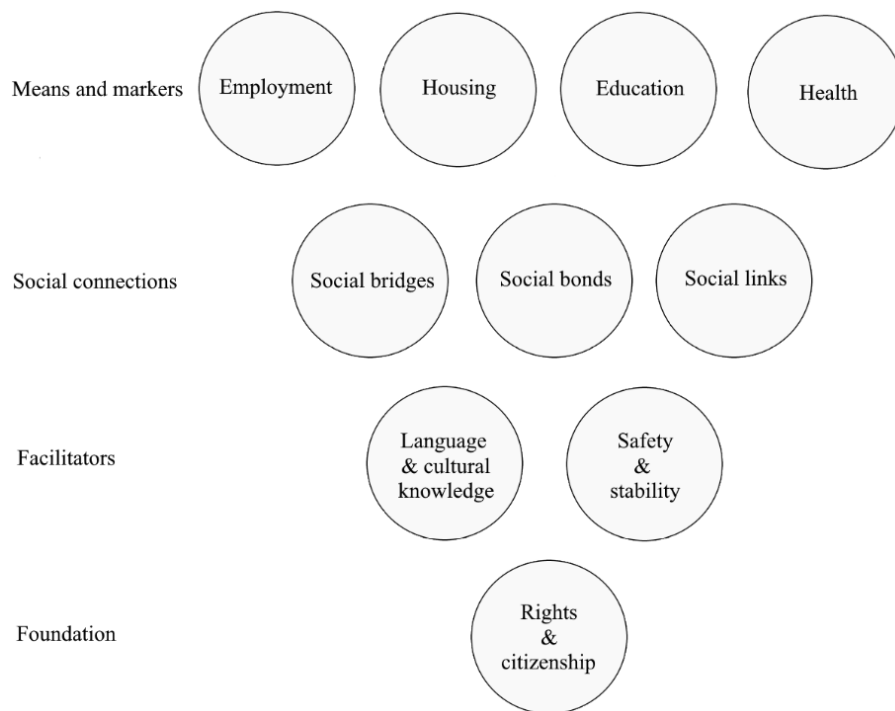
Another disadvantage, the most common problem refugees have with social media, is its trustworthiness (Charmarkeh, 2013; Gillespie et al., 2016). Therefore, encrypted messaging

apps, such as WhatsApp and Viber are used (Gillespie et al., 2016). Additionally, trustworthiness is judged through learning by experience and using a friend's knowledge and opinions (Borkert et al., 2018). Next to that, many refugees do not feel comfortable sharing personal information online. Yet, they do not always have a choice (Veronis et al., 2018; Dekker et al., 2018), seeing as the Netherlands gives a lot of information online and often requires online personal information sharing, for example for a DigiD (Raaijmakers, 2023).

## **Adaptation and Connection to the Netherlands**

While investigating adaptation, the present research will be based on the indicators of refugee integration framework by Ager and Strang (2004), see Figure 1. This framework was created to help plan projects for refugees and assist policy development. The authors created a framework consisting of 10 domains, grouped by four themes. These themes are means and markers, social connections, facilitators and foundation. The first three will be used in this research and be explained further below. Each domain has multiple indicators. A newer version by Ndofo-Tah et al. (2019) was created which included the additional mean and marker of leisure and the additional facilitator of digital skills. Despite its relevance for this paper, the older model is chosen due to its broader focus and its use in previous research that this paper is based on (e.g. Alencar, 2018; Alencar & Tsagkroni, 2019; Damen et al., 2022). Furthermore, there is no one way to read the model, as multiple pathways are possible, not only bottom-up.

Figure 1. Refugee Integration Framework by Ager and Strang (2004)



Social media is used to help with the process of adaptation (Antwi et al., 2022; Smets et al., 2021; Veronis et al., 2018). In the Netherlands, however, Alencar (2018) found that fewer than half of the participants use social media to acquire information about integration in the Netherlands. They prefer to use their personal offline networks. This is not necessarily a bad thing, as making local connections proved essential to integrate into a new society (Oliver et al., 2020). However, as per Marlowe (2020), social media was seen as very important by refugees to connect to locals around them, both for resettlement and participation in the new country they lived in. In addition, fostering existing connections with people from the home country also helps settlement, as it helps overcome adjustment challenges (Alencar, 2018; Smets et al., 2021; Speed et al., 2021). Therefore, the current research will test how often and for which purposes social media is used, simultaneously checking if the results are closer to Marlowe’s (2020) more recent study or Alencar’s (2018) study in the Netherlands.

At the top of the model are the means and markers (Ager & Strang, 2004), which have a twofold purpose. First, as a marker of integration to assess if a refugee has achieved things that are valued within the community and second, as a means of integration. Having achieved one of the domains of employment, housing, education and health, helps achieve other domains (Ager & Strang, 2004). Health and housing are, to some extent, government-provided (*Medical care regulation*, n.d.; *Temporary housing*, n.d.), whereas employment and education are not.

Therefore, investigating the role of social media concerning the latter two may provide valuable insights.

First off, having employment creates independence and financial stability for refugees, something that refugees and society both value (Ager & Strang, 2004). In addition, employment helps to develop language, increase cultural competence and make more social connections (AbuJarour et al., 2018; Ager & Strang, 2004). Ukrainian refugees are allowed to work as soon as they have an IND sticker, making finding employment easier for them than other refugees (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, 2023). This has resulted in over 80% of Ukrainian refugees working in the Netherlands (NOS, 2022). However, there are still barriers. First of all, most Ukrainians do not speak Dutch or even English (*EF EPI 2022*, n.d.). They are also not allowed to be self-employed, while 14.9% were in Ukraine (*Self-employed*, n.d.). Next to that, most job vacancies for non-Dutch speakers are manual labour jobs. This makes it challenging to find a job that matches skills and education level. Finally, many refugees receive a zero-hour contract, which gives them no stable income but does suspend government support (Shaidrova et al., 2022). These limitations and barriers are similar to the ones faced by other refugee groups (AbuJarour et al., 2019).

The other marker, education, creates great opportunities for learning the language, making wider social connections and chances of finding a fitting job (Ager & Strang, 2004). However, information surrounding higher education for Ukrainian refugees in the Netherlands is difficult to find, given that it is not centrally organised (*Studying*, 2023). In addition, most schools providing higher education are no longer receiving government support and thus have to increase the tuition to a general international tariff (around €12.000) instead of the discount given last year (€2209). This also applies to students who already started a programme last year (A. Van Kampen, internal newsletter, May 8, 2023; H. Van Diepen, internal newsletter, June 12, 2023). This makes education less accessible. MBO and VAVO students are an exception as they can apply for free education (*Lesgeld: Asielzoeker of Oekraïner*, n.d.).

The second theme of the indicators of refugee integration framework, social connection, relates to all the different types of social relationships and networks that help integration (Ager & Strang, 2004). The framework identifies social bridges, social bonds, and social links. These are based on theories of social capital (Ager & Strang, 2004). The current research will therefore look at social networks and social capital.

Per Sundvall et al. (2021), social networks are socially connected individuals or groups creating a network. Having a social network is important for refugees, especially in the domains of trust and support (Dekker et al., 2018; Udwan et al., 2020). Contacts on Facebook, for



example, are often trusted contacts who can provide other contacts that can be trusted as well, thus increasing a trusted network. Additionally, being on a platform with trusted people is also likely to increase usage of (similar) online network uses (Valenzuela et al., 2009). This shows that social media can facilitate the growth and upkeep of a social network (Gillespie et al., 2016). Moreover, social media platforms provide an opportunity for an individual to link and be involved with the different kinds of networks someone has, for example from their home and host country (Marlowe, 2020).

Social capital, put simply, are the resources available to people through their social interactions and networks (Lin, 2001). It allows access to otherwise unavailable information (Alencar & Tsagkroni, 2019). As per the research of Dekker and Engbersen (2014), participation in virtual networks increases social capital.

Different kinds of social contacts can be made to build social capital through varying social networks. One type of social capital is making contact with the “out-group”, which are the non-Ukrainians in this case. These contacts are called social bridges and they are important to create social cohesion and create more opportunities regarding integration and support (Ager & Strang, 2004). They can be built through dialogue and active participation in diverse groups (Alencar & Tsagkroni, 2019) leading to increased social connectedness with society (AbuJarour et al., 2018). Participation must come from both sides to create social bridging contacts (Speed et al., 2021).

It is very relevant to highlight the role of social media in building social bridging contacts. The more online contact there is, the closer the bond is (Antwi et al., 2022; Bacishoga et al., 2016). As Marlowe (2020) found in her research, social media is an essential stepping stone for creating connections in the local community. Veronis et al. (2018) found that the barrier to making (first-time) contact was lower on social media with one of the reasons being the many integrated translation services available online and in applications (AbuJarour et al., 2018). Apart from personal connections, social media can also provide information through these bridging contacts (Pottie et al., 2020) or practical help. This can be done in online groups and initiatives such as dedicated Facebook groups. These networks mainly find their success in being started by local organisations and communities, providing clear, valuable and accessible information (Alencar, 2018; Benton & Glennie, 2016). Social media was an important tool in mobilizing people to join such initiatives (Smets et al., 2021). Many initiatives for Ukrainian refugees were started (*Overzicht van initiatieven voor vluchtelingen uit Oekraïne*, n.d.), which often connected Dutch locals and newly arrived Ukrainians.

At the same time, finding your in-group and staying in touch with this group is also essential. In the current research, this in-group is comprised of Ukrainians. Despite living in a different country, retaining your culture to some extent is very important. This can be done through bonding social capital (Ager & Strang, 2004). Amongst Ukrainians, there is an active search for a Ukrainian community in the Netherlands. They feel a strong love for Ukraine and want to be up-to-date and involved regarding the war and connect with other Ukrainians to participate in social initiatives (Houtkamp & Drost, 2023), which can be hosted both off- and online (Speed et al., 2021). Meeting each other at these initiatives helps create a Ukrainian network in the Netherlands, which are social bonding contacts (Ager & Strang, 2004). These social bonds provide emotional support and a feeling of safety and stability (Bacishoga et al., 2016; Udwan et al., 2020), which helps the adaptation process (Speed et al., 2021). Additionally, other migrants that have come before can share their experiences in the host country through social media, creating accessible information for those that follow which in turn eases the adaptation process (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014).

However, there are disadvantages to an online social network. In the first place, an online social network may decrease in-person contact (Marlowe, 2020). Second, Gillespie et al. (2016) found that relationships in social media networks are shaped by kinship, friendship, pragmatic and ideological factors, and these groups tend to cluster around the latter the most. This makes it more difficult to create a diverse network, especially when arriving in a new country. Refugees may lack the knowledge of how to apply their skills and knowledge to successfully build their social networks and more easily connect to other migrants, whereas the beauty lies in having a diverse network. Likewise, a broader social network, consisting of people similar and dissimilar to the refugees, can serve as a safety net when authorities fail (Damen et al., 2022). Furthermore, because Ukrainian refugees are still very new and rules and regulations for them are very different in the Netherlands than for other refugees (Ministerie van Algemene Zaken, 2022), this broad social network might be extra important.

Lastly, the model of Ager and Strang (2004) includes facilitators which are skills, knowledge and circumstances that help people to integrate. The two domains are language and cultural knowledge and safety and stability (Ager & Strang, 2004). Regarding language, online learning tools and (built-in) translation apps improve opportunities for the communication of refugees, whereas online communities are used to preserve and develop a connection to refugees' culture. Additionally, social media posts are used to express a certain cultural identity and assert ownership of individuals' narratives (Potocky, 2022). Finally, safety and stability are looked at through the lens of feeling welcome.

Non-Ukrainian refugees have noted that the Netherlands is a welcoming country (Alencar, 2018). This is in line with the fact that in 2018, 77% of the Dutch population believed that the Netherlands should welcome refugees that fled their country for war (Kloosterman, 2018). As for the refugees coming here, Brekke and Brochmann (2015) found that there are two categories: those who plan to go to a specific country and keep working towards that goal, and those that seek refuge wherever they can. When choosing a specific country, the two main reasons are opportunities and social networks in the host country. Seeing as the rules for Ukrainians in the Netherlands are less strict than for other refugees (Bosse, 2022), and also looser than in some other countries (Ministerie van Algemene Zaken, 2022), this might make the Netherlands an attractive place to go to.

The current study will explore how social media can help immigrants adapt to life in the Netherlands using the framework by Ager and Strang (2004). This has led to the following research question:

1a. In which ways is social media a facilitator for the indicators of refugee integration?

## **Connection to Ukraine**

Most refugees have to leave family and friends behind in their home country when fleeing. Yet social media can help refugees with staying in touch with their family and friends that stayed behind or moved elsewhere because social media provides a relatively cheap and accessible way of long-distance communication (Dekker et al., 2018).

In addition, social media can be a platform through which refugees can stay up to date with the situation in their country. Because anyone can post on social media anytime, it can be used to quickly spread the news (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014). This is done through both official and unofficial channels (Christiansen, 2004). Telegram, YouTube, Facebook and Viber are the most used social media to find news about the Ukrainian war (DRI, 2022). However, Greene (2019) found that hearing news from mass media was seen as stressful, whereas hearing news from your personal network made refugees feel strong. This is in line with the findings of Gillespie et al. (2016), who found that news is often shared within the trusted network. The way and place refugees look for news depends on what news needs they have at that moment resulting in different sources being used for different purposes (Christiansen, 2004). In some cases, refugees limit their news consumption to preserve their mental health (Greene, 2019).

The present research will look at how refugees use social media to maintain a feeling of connectedness to Ukraine, both through personal contact and by staying updated with the news. This has led to the following research question:

1b. How is social media used to maintain a connection to Ukraine?

Using the literature provided above, interview questions were created followed by the conducting and analysis of said interviews, investigating the role of social media for Ukrainian refugees in the Netherlands.

## **Method**

For this research, a mixed-method approach was used. First of all, fifteen semi-structured interviews were conducted. A semi-structured interview was chosen to ensure getting the information that the research is concerned with while simultaneously leaving space for diving deeper into the topic or unearthing other interesting findings. It is an often-used method in this line of research (e.g. De Jesus et al., 2022; Udwan et al., 2020). Interviews were conducted in person as much as possible. This was done to lower the participation barrier and ensure trust. One interview was conducted through Zoom due to travel time. Thirteen interviews were conducted in English and two interviews were done with the assistance of a translator, from Russian to Dutch. The interviews lasted approximately forty minutes, but times varied a lot. In addition, a small survey with closed questions was asked. The research passed the checklist by the Ethics Assessment Committee Humanities (EACH, see Appendix A).

## **Instruments**

For the interviews, questions on multiple topics were asked, aiming to answer the research questions. The topics focussed on using social media, social networks, settlement, news and feeling of welcomeness. The interview started with finding out the reasoning behind coming to the Netherlands (Why did you come to the Netherlands and not another country?). Next, social media use was investigated, with questions like “Do you use social media?” and “How important is social media to you?”. Both social media and social networks were linked in questions regarding settlement, for example through a question like “Has your social network helped you with social media in finding a job/education? In which ways did they help?”. Questions on social media trust (Do you trust the information you find on social media?) and accessibility were also asked. Additionally, participants were asked how they look for news on the situation in Ukraine (Did the way you look for news change?). Last, the interview ended

with finding out whether the Ukrainian refugees feel welcome in the Netherlands (Do you feel welcome in the Netherlands?). The full version of the interview questions, including the questionnaire can be found in Appendix B.

## **Participants**

Fifteen interviews have been conducted, based on previous research (e.g. Marlowe, 2020). Participants are Ukrainian refugees currently staying in the Netherlands. The requirements were kept broad to create a more generalizable study. Seeing as most participants were found in Nijmegen through only two contacts, most of them lived in the same place, the refugee boats. Two lived in a refugee centre in Meerkerk (interviewees 8 and 9). Interviewee 7 used to live there but now lives in an apartment with family. A host family provides shelter to participant 3 and two participants (2, 14) live with their boyfriends who are Dutch. Many lived with friends, family or a host family on arrival and later moved to the refugee centre. Age ranges from 18 (in line with the EACH guideline) and 77, with an average age of 35. For the fourth interview, a husband was brought along as a translator, however, he participated in the interview as well. This led to fourteen women and two men among the interviewees (Appendix C, table 1). Seeing that 64% of Ukrainian refugees in the Netherlands are female (CBS, 2023), this is a relatively representative sample on the factor of gender. In May 2023, the average time of participants in the Netherlands was 13 months, with a minimum of 9 months.

## **Procedure**

Participants were first explained the aim of the study and handling of the data. They were also asked to allow recording of the conversation. After giving consent, they received the questionnaire (note: the first three interviewees received this afterwards). This asked standard information (age, gender, level of education, nationality/nationalities) and close-ended questions (time in the Netherlands, types of social media used, time spent on social media). Additionally, it included two ranking tasks, ranking social media on use and importance (see Appendix D). The questionnaire was added to ensure correct information and shorten the interview time, making the interview more accessible. It was given upfront to inform participants of the different types of social media. Following this, the interview continued as described above. When allowed, the recording was started.

Participants were found through personal networks and the snowball sampling technique. This is in line with previous research (e.g., Alencar, 2018; Udwan et al., 2020).

## **Analysis**

If participants agreed to the recording (participant 5 did not), interviews were afterwards transcribed. This was done using Otter.ai and Microsoft Office 365. Manual transcriptions and further revisions were performed in Atlas.ti. In the case of participant 5, precise minutes were taken during the interview to create text close to transcription. The transcriptions were then used to do a thematic analysis, also in Atlas.ti. A codebook consisting of 14 codes was created and used accordingly (see Appendix E).

The questionnaire was analysed using Excel. Specific analyses will be explained with the relevant figures and tables in Appendix F.

## **Results**

Through the interviews, it was found that all participants have been using social media since they arrived in the Netherlands. How much time participants spent on social media varied: the shortest time was two hours and the longest was eight hours, with an average of four and a half hours. Excluding messaging apps, the average was two and a half hours with a range from zero to five hours. These usage levels can be ascribed to the high perceived accessibility of social media by the participants.

In line with all participants using social media, all participants also perceived social media as important. It was even proclaimed very important by eight participants, largely because of the importance of finding information and staying connected through social media, whereas only three participants saw social media as slightly important. The most important and most used platforms were Telegram, WhatsApp and Instagram (see Appendix F).

However, this high use and importance also brought disadvantages, the most prominent one being that multiple participants felt that they spent too much time on social media, with one even calling it an addiction:

I feel like I'm addicted to social media, social networks. Because I think that people get some nice... I don't know how to call, like, dopamine when they searching. (P14)

The six major purposes of social media in this research were connection, finding information, relaxation, finding news, learning and work. These purposes have, however, changed from how social media was used in Ukraine. The purpose of staying up to date with the news has grown the most, followed by using social media to find information, especially about life in the Netherlands. In general, social media is used more, whereas an increase in

Facebook use is due to its popularity in the Netherlands. Telegram is also being used more because of its multiple functions: channels can be created for very large groups and attachments can be shared with better quality (unlike e.g., WhatsApp). Additionally, Telegram is seen as more secure and trustworthy than Viber, which by many is used less since the war started because of its association with Russia.

An additional change is the language in which social media was used. Despite Ukrainian still being the most popular language for social media consumption, ten participants indicated using social media in English. This was for a variety of reasons, including the presence of international social networks and the lack of Ukrainian- and Russian-language apps:

Sometimes English because some apps not working with Russian or Ukrainian language. But nothing more. (P7)

Additionally, Dutch was used in social media by eight participants, often to learn the language or to specifically connect to Dutch people. Seven people used social media in Russian, with one participant stating how she felt guilty for doing this. In general, over half of the participants spoke less or no Russian since the start of the war. Whereas some made this choice themselves, others catered to the wishes of those who have ceased speaking Russian:

If that, my friends in Ukraine, I write in Ukrainian language because I can speak Russian, Ukrainian, depends on what person language uses. (P10)

Regardless of language, connection to others was the main purpose of social media use, most often through Telegram, Facebook and Viber. Especially connection to the other Ukrainians, both in Ukraine and in the Netherlands was seen as important. Connection to Dutch people was mentioned sparingly and only in the case of colleagues or host family members. One participant explained how she's "crazy when [she's] not speaking with my friends" (P15). Interestingly, since she moved from a host family to a Ukrainian refugee shelter, her social media use decreased because she had a Ukrainian network around her.

This is an example of making new real-life contact, which was the preferred method of making new connections for the majority of participants, with trust being one of the reasons. Yet some people had no preference for new on- or offline contacts, explaining that they "just make contact in the easiest way, whether it's on- or offline" (P12, translated). As for the contacts that were first made online, these were often made for work purposes and tended to remain online-only contacts.

Keeping in touch with varying contacts often happened in social media groups. There were globally two types: friend and community/informative groups. Friend groups were often in Telegram or WhatsApp and had more involved participants:

But of course, if it's a group with my friends, for example in Telegram or WhatsApp, then of course I participate because I know everyone and I know that I'm not bothering them something. (P14)

Additionally, groups for community purposes were created, with some organising local events, especially through Facebook:

Interviewee: For example yesterday we have event for support Ukraine here in the *Gemeente* [transl: municipality].

Interviewer: And that is also through social media, that you find that event?

Interviewee: Yeah yeah Facebook. (P4, husband)

Another way of connection is through helping each other. This happened largely in two ways. The first is helping people or the war in Ukraine, often by sharing information, providing support or sending money:

For example, I was sending money for the zoo because it was left without money and was closed and just people were asking: "Buy the ticket and it will go to us just to save animals." Because they had no... like dying from hunger so I just sent him a few tickets okay, just do something at least. What can I do? (P1)

Secondly, helping Ukrainians in the Netherlands was also done through information sharing and providing support as well as providing services and helping find housing and employment. This was not only done through social media but also personal (offline) networks: two participants mentioned the concept of Arabic radio. They would tell the people in their networks what they were looking for, who would tell their networks and so forth until a solution or answer was found. This was mainly used in relation to job searching and finding information about the Netherlands.

Yet, all participants also used social media to find information on the Netherlands. More specifically, all participants were in social media groups with this specific purpose, most often on Telegram and Facebook. However, no one described themselves as an active participant, all participants used it more to look than to ask or answer questions themselves. One participant described this as a very inefficient way of information searching:

Information social media is everything and what I saw that our people really don't understand nothing. They really don't know where they can find it. Only what they do they add into the Facebook groups groups for Ukrainians like refugees help, help in Nijmegen, you know, focus in one town or city. And when someone asked the question, they always read their comments. Just to try to find answer on his own question, so they don't use the social media they use, use it only for the answers and they just... I hear



from someone about this one, you know? So that's that's like a not like a straight way to find the information [...]. (P2)

The majority of these groups were Ukrainian-only, with a few exceptions. This would concern groups such as Ukrainians in Nijmegen, which featured a minority of Dutch inhabitants of the city. Only two people mentioned being in more general Expats in the Netherlands groups with other internationals. Other ways in which information was found are the above-mentioned Arabic radio, TikTok and receiving links from friends.

Relaxation was the third most prevalent use of social media, with Instagram being the most popular platform, followed by Pinterest and Facebook. Reels are especially popular on Instagram and Facebook, whereas Pinterest is used more to be inspired by and for art. However, contrary to the purposes of information finding and connection, only four participants were in groups for leisure purposes. These groups were most often on Telegram, with some of them on Facebook and WhatsApp.

Looking for news was the fourth most used purpose of social media while only two participants mentioned finding news through their social networks. Some participants followed the news very intensely, whereas others have lessened their news consumption over time in favour of mental health:

In the past it's [checking the news] very often but not for today because we have to live with our mental health. It's very difficult, we just ask our family how they are. Maybe we are reading in the one channel, news channel, but not more. It's very hard to adaptation here and it's like a break for your mental. Because it's very very important to adaptation here with family so now we limit... channel news. (P4, husband)

Official news channels were the most popular among participants, whereas half followed unofficial channels and two of the participants followed international news media. Some news is followed through Instagram and YouTube but the majority of news is followed through Telegram channels due to its perceived trustworthiness. In general, reasons for trust were receiving the information from friends or the channels being official or previously proven. On the other hand, reasons for distrust were the news being unofficial or incomplete. Even government news was not trusted by some interviewees, due to them not being able to discern news from propaganda. Interestingly, some people trusted pictures from Ukraine due to their authenticity whereas others did not trust them because it is a one-sided, single-moment snapshot:

I can use it, but as I told, sometimes when we get information from social media, we just see for example one picture or some link and it's not I. I tried to open. I try if it's

just a. Just a picture with some text, I don't use it as a trusted information because anyone can put anything on picture. (P10)

To verify what can be trusted and what not, participants used multiple methods. The most common ones are to consult different media and channels, research who owns the media and ask someone trusted, preferably someone who is still in Ukraine:

And we have channel with my colleagues Ukrainian and when it's day when so many bombs everybody say "Ohh I'm live in Kiev" and another street another. And everybody: "No, bombs not here" and somebody else. Oh, it's too much. "Yeah, it's my, my street bombs building, where I live." And this is really true because people. I know these people. (P15)

Using social media for learning purposes was done by nine of the participants, although for many participants learning has an overlap with information searching. The most sought-after knowledge is in the field of language and culture. YouTube clips are used most for this purpose:

But for YouTube, it's the most popular channel to have information. To study to have information to find something. (P9)

Additionally, real-life classes are followed by about two-thirds of the participants to learn Dutch whereas two participants are learning English. Homework for these classes is spread through apps like Telegram and WhatsApp. The lessons themselves are often found through personal networks, but also sometimes through promoted posts on social media.

Apart from language classes, only two interviewees have followed a study programme in the Netherlands. However, all four young people interviewed want to start a new study at a higher education institution in the Netherlands. They are looking for information regarding higher education through websites and not social media:

I usually just focus on the academic side. Academic side is so you can clearly see it on the website, so it's mostly what I use. (P3)

In reality, starting education proves to be difficult due to monetary restraints, required previous knowledge and maximum capacity on the number of students.

Lastly, social media is used for work purposes. Three participants had a job in the field of recruitment and thus used it for work, whereas others used it to search for employment for themselves. The most common platform for this was LinkedIn, followed by Facebook and Telegram. In the end, only one person found work through social media while another used a combination of social media and her social network to secure employment.

When using their personal network for employment purposes, most people used their Ukrainian network. However, participant 9 explained she and her partner used her Dutch network because they “want to stay in Netherland. That’s why it’s in a Dutch way (P9).” Yet two participants purposefully did not use their network, because they were looking for work in a specific field, which their network was not in. Even so, the most popular way of searching was through search engines and websites. Specifically, the job site Indeed was mentioned a lot. Even so, two people found employment by approaching the company without the use of social media, their personal networks or sites. They explained this as not waiting around and just taking initiative:

So after 1 1/2 months. I think, oh, why should I wait and I just go to McDonald's and ask, like, could I work there? (P7)

Despite all those willing to work having employment at the moment, multiple barriers were encountered. The most prevalent problem was the language, with most jobs requiring Dutch. Additionally, one participant wanted to start her own business, as she had in Ukraine, but this is not allowed according to the current rules. Problems with the jobs, once found, were the low salary and zero-hour contracts.

Regardless of these barriers and disadvantages, job satisfaction was high. This largely has to do with the fact that participants wanted to have something to do and give back to the community.

It’s my pleasure. First of all, that I have something to do. Not just sit and look at the window, the walls. I have something. I like it. (P6)

Next to that, it has helped participants to understand society better and connect with Dutch colleagues. Dissatisfaction had to do with the job not being at the previous level, low salary and high uncertainty due to zero-hour contracts.

Nonetheless, all participants felt welcome in the Netherlands. Willingness to help and kindness of the Dutch were mentioned most often, whereas other positive factors were that the country looked nice and clean and, interestingly, that the Dutch smiled a lot.

Although this may be true, many participants also mentioned aspects that made them not feel welcome. Two interviewees mentioned how they felt that Ukrainians were seen as dumb. One even noticed this discrimination in her school classes:

Because about the kids, if something has happened. In outside, when they're playing every time it's Ukrainian children fault. Every time. (P2)

Due to all the separate rules and regulations for Ukrainian refugees, some also did not feel like equal citizens. This is also related to the type of work that can be found and the zero-hour contracts provided.

Given these points, it is clear that social media has a big impact on the adaptation of and connection to Ukrainians. This role of social media has changed since the beginning of the war and is continuing to change. Especially social media groups, mostly in Telegram, proved important.

## **Conclusion**

This research illustrates that social media indeed plays a role in the life of Ukrainian refugees in the Netherlands. Regarding the first research question, *in which ways is social media a facilitator for the indicators of refugee integration*, it was found that social media was used in multiple ways for this purpose. It was used to create and maintain a connection to a local Ukrainian community, as well as to the people still in Ukraine. Additionally, everyone used social media to find information about the Netherlands. Regarding job search, social media was used by half of the participants, whereas the majority used search engines and social networks. All but one of the participants have found work in the Netherlands and most were satisfied with their job. In regards to education, all young people wanted to follow higher education in the Netherlands and searched for information on this online, but not through social media. Dutch lessons, which were followed by most participants, and English lessons were often also not found through social media but through social networks.

The second research question, *how is social media used to maintain a connection to Ukraine*, found that following the news about the situation in Ukraine was seen as very important. This was done more than before the war, despite some participants having limited their news consumption in favour of mental health. Almost everyone followed the news through social media, often in Ukrainian-only online groups. The most followed and trusted sources were official channels, yet news through the social network was also often trusted. Some other ways of connectivity were helping each other for example by sending money to Ukraine and speaking only Ukrainian, not Russian. This language preference was also present in social media.

## Discussion

Based on the findings of this study, social media are particularly relevant to Ukrainian refugees in the areas of social connections and facilitators (Ager & Strang, 2004).

Maintaining social connections with Ukrainians was the most important use of social media. Family and friends in the home country were contacted to obtain emotional and social support (Udwan et al., 2020). On the other hand, support was provided to Ukraine in monetary ways and to Ukrainians in the Netherlands through services. Both on- and offline help was also provided through the concept of Arabic radio, where social capital was utilised through personal networks to find help where needed. The Ukrainian contacts in the Netherlands comprising these networks were most often made in real life, contrary to findings by Veronis et al. (2018). This could be explained by the fact that not everyone saw social media as very important, as opposed to Marlowe's (2020) findings, and thus did not feel the need to connect online.

One of the most used methods to sustain a connection to the Ukrainian community in the Netherlands was through social media groups. These groups would also sometimes organise initiatives to meet in real life (Houtkamp & Drost, 2023; Speed et al., 2021). However, most people adopted a passive role in these groups, missing a chance at building more bonding social capital (Alencar & Tsagkroni, 2019). Similarly, these groups were often Ukrainian only, thus avoiding a chance at increasing bridging social capital, whereas multiple authors sketched the importance of making local connections for adaptation (AbuJarour et al., 2018; Ager & Strang, 2004; Alencar & Tsagkroni, 2019) and even highlighted the importance of online contact (Antwi et al., 2022; Bacishoga et al., 2016).

As for facilitators, the most prevalent use of social media was to find information on the Netherlands (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014; Marlowe, 2020). This role proved more important than in previous research (Borkert et al., 2018), providing an explanation for the increased use of Telegram in the current research compared to general data (Similarweb, 2023; Zhyla, 2022), seeing as Telegram is especially important for finding information (Zhyla, 2022) and news (DRI, 2022). The main approach to finding information through Telegram and other social media was through groups. Despite one participant describing it as an inefficient way of information finding, all interviewees were positive about these groups. This could be due to the double purpose of finding information or news and connecting to the Ukrainian community.

Likewise, almost everyone followed the news through social media, even though some have limited their news consumption in favour of mental health (Greene, 2019). The news was mainly followed through Telegram and YouTube (Zhyla 2022), with Instagram replacing

Facebook as the preferred platform. This is an interesting finding, given that Facebook use generally increased since arriving in the Netherlands. Nonetheless, there was a general preference for official channels across all platforms, but unofficial channels were used as well (Christiansen, 2004). Even so, the news was not always trusted (Gillespie et al., 2016). Distrust for news through social media was often lessened when it came from a known contact or it could be verified through said contacts (Borkert et al., 2018; Gillespie et al., 2016; Valenzuela et al., 2009). Moreover, sources and origins were verified in different media channels.

In addition to finding information, news and connection, the social media purposes of relaxation, learning and work were also mentioned (Alencar, 2018; Pottie et al., 2020; Smets et al., 2021; Speed et al., 2021). Except for finding information, the general importance of the varying purposes was the same as in previous research (Borkert et al., 2018).

Regarding the facilitator of language, Ukrainian was the most used language in social media, while Russian was used less in both real life and social media (Harding, 2023). However, there was no generational difference here, contrary to the findings by Harding (2023). Seeing as the young generation was a very small part of the sample, no hard conclusions can be drawn on this. Regardless of this, since arriving in the Netherlands, both English and Dutch were used more in social media, the latter for practice. This agrees with the fact that refugees want to learn the language (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, 2023) and that many participants followed Dutch lessons. These lessons were mainly found through personal networks and rarely through social media. Learning the language is an important part of adaptation to the country (Ager & Strang, 2004). As for the young participants, they wanted to start higher education in the Netherlands. Information on varying schools and programs is found on websites rather than social media, due to the objectivity and academic focus of websites. Another reason might be that there is no clear overview of information for Ukrainians wanting to study (*Studying*, n.d.), requiring more in-depth searching.

Similarly, employment was sought mainly through search engines and not social media. A potential explanation is that search engines provide a clearer overview than social media. Another possible explanation lies in the answer of some participants about not using their social networks, because their social networks were not active in the field of work these participants were looking for. This would forego the use of your social network through social media, such as is the case with LinkedIn. Additionally, the barriers to finding a job were similar to other refugees (AbuJarour et al., 2019) and as expected: language posed the main problem, self-employment was not allowed and jobs provided little salary and stability (Shaidrova et al., 2022; *Self-employed*, n.d.). Nevertheless, most had found a job (NOS, 2022) and saw having

employment as positive due to the opportunities it provided for improving cultural competence and social connections (AbuJarour et al., 2018; Ager & Strang, 2004).

The most prevalent change in social media use was an increase in usage time, similar to other refugees in the Netherlands (Alencar, 2018). This result was unexpected, given that most Ukrainian refugees have a job and thus do not necessarily have more leisure time (NOS, 2022). Yet they do have an increased desire to stay connected and up to date with both people and the situation in Ukraine, as well as information about the Netherlands. Even so, refugees did not like this increase in time (Leurs, 2017; Marlowe, 2020). Another notable difference is the little use of TikTok in the present research in comparison to general data (Similarweb, 2023; Zhyla, 2022). This could be due to the on-average middle-aged sample, whereas TikTok is often seen as an app for younger people. On the other hand, Telegram, Facebook and WhatsApp were all used more since arriving in the Netherlands whereas Viber was used less due to its association with Russia. Still, this finding proves somewhat surprising given its importance for news updates amongst the general Ukrainian population (DRI, 2022).

As expected, there was no digital gender divide in this limited sample (Kemp, 2023; *The gender digital divide*, 2022). Given that all participants used social media with varying purposes, it can be assumed that digital literacy is high, despite one interviewee claiming Ukrainians were not good at searching for information.

All in all, the present research underlines how social media is used for adaptation (Antwi et al., 2022; Smets et al., 2021; Veronis et al., 2018), by using it to learn about the language and culture, find education and employment but also by staying connected to Ukraine through following the news and keeping and creating a Ukrainian network, both in Ukraine and the Netherlands.

## **Limitations and Recommendations**

The current research does have some limitations. First of all, the literature review is based on different refugee groups. Seeing as the rules for Ukrainian refugees in Europe are very different from other refugees, this makes the results and literature difficult to corroborate, which only highlights the importance of researching this specific group.

Secondly, the present research covered a large base. It looked at adaptation and connectivity through the lens of social media, with an additional minor focus on social networks. This led to incomplete data on the latter, no conclusions could be drawn on the use of social networks in e.g. news searching, because this was not a direct question. Therefore, it

would be interesting to more closely investigate the interaction effect between social media and social networks. This can be done through interviews or take a different approach by using focus groups.

Concerning the participants, they can be largely split into three groups: most were from Nijmegen, some from Meerkerk and two from elsewhere. Everyone from Meerkerk knew each other and most people from Nijmegen were found through the same people. Especially the latter might pose a problem, as being in close contact with each other might result in having similar mindsets and using social media in similar ways. This makes the sample less representative. For future studies, it is encouraged to either forego generalizability and focus on one group or take a broader sample. In general, a larger sample is recommended. This was, however, beyond the scope of the current study.

Following up, concerning the sample as well, the present research has very few men. Although this is in line with there being few Ukrainian male refugees in the Netherlands, it does prevent finding gender differences in social media use, whereas this has previously provided interesting and varying findings. They are not expected with Ukrainian refugees, but data could test this hypothesis.

Lastly, the declining use of Russian could be further researched in the context of social media, as this is a new phenomenon regarding this specific language. Additionally, the use of the Ukrainian language online can be investigated, since many participants used social media increasingly in English. The effect of resettlement on social media language use provides an interesting ground for future research, which could benefit from quantifiable methods. Additionally, linguistic generational differences could be investigated, as highlighted by Harding (2023).



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# Appendix A Checklist EACH

(version 1.9, December 2022)

*You fill in the questions by clicking on the square next to the chosen answer*

*After clicking, a cross will appear in this square*

1. Will you be collecting data from social media platforms?

Yes → consult the guidelines and contact the EACH to see if assessment is necessary

No → continue with questionnaire

2. Will you use an existing dataset?

Yes → continue with questionnaire

No → go to question 4

3. When using an existing dataset, do you comply with the EACH guidelines\*\*?

Yes → continue with questionnaire

No or in doubt → contact the EACH to see if assessment is necessary

\*\* Guidelines: - ethics approval is obtained for the original data collection, - participants have consented to the reuse of the research data, or the reuse fits within the original research purpose.

4. Will you be collecting data from participants?

Yes → continue with questionnaire

No → end of checklist

5. Is a health care institution involved in the research?

*Explanation: A health care institution is involved if one of the following (A/B/C) is the case:*

A. One or more employees of a health care institution is/are involved in the research as principle or in the carrying out or execution of the research.

B. The research takes place within the walls of the health care institution and should, following the nature of the research, generally not be carried out outside the institution.

C. Patients / clients of the health care institution participate in the research (in the form of treatment).

No → continue with questionnaire



Yes → Did a Dutch Medical Institutional Review Board (MIRB) decide that the Wet Medisch Onderzoek (Medical Research Involving Human Subjects Act) is not applicable or does the research comply with one of the standard research methods described by the EACH

Yes → continue with questionnaire

No → This application should be reviewed by a Medical Institutional Review Board, for example, the Dutch CMO Regio Arnhem Nijmegen. If review by an MIRB has already taken place → continue with questionnaire. If this review has not yet taken place → end of checklist

6. Does the research include medical-scientific research that might carry risks for the participant?

Yes → This application should be reviewed by a Medical Institutional Review Board, for example, the Dutch CMO Regio Arnhem Nijmegen → end of checklist

No → continue with questionnaire

### **Standard research method**

7. Does this research fall under one of the stated standard research methods of the Faculty of Arts or the Faculty of Philosophy, Theology and Religious Studies?

Yes → 9, Standard in-depth interview → continue with questionnaire

No → assessment necessary, end of checklist

### **Participants**

8. Is the participant population a healthy one?

Yes → continue with questionnaire

No → assessment necessary \*\*, end of checklist → go to assessment procedure

\*\*Exception for studies with patients participating in one of the described standard studies in the field of language and speech pathology

9. Will the research be conducted amongst minors (<16 years of age) or amongst (legally) incapable persons?

Yes → assessment necessary, end of checklist → go to assessment procedure

No → continue with questionnaire

## Method

10. Is a method used that makes it possible to produce a coincidental finding that the participant should be informed of?

- Yes → assessment necessary, end of checklist → go to assessment procedure
- No → continue with questionnaire

11. Will participants undergo treatment or are they asked to perform certain behaviours that can lead to discomfort?

- Yes → assessment necessary, end of checklist → go to assessment procedure
- No → continue with questionnaire

12. Are the estimated risks connected to the research minimal?

- Yes → continue with questionnaire
- No → assessment necessary, end of checklist → go to assessment procedure

13. Are the participants offered a different compensation than the usual one?

- Yes → assessment necessary, end of checklist → go to assessment procedure
- No → continue with questionnaire

14. Should deception take place, does the procedure meet the standard requirements?

- Yes → continue with questionnaire
- No → assessment necessary, end of checklist → go to assessment procedure
- deception is not applicable

15. Are the standard regulations regarding anonymity and privacy met?

- Yes → continue with questionnaire
- No → assessment necessary, end of checklist → go to assessment procedure

## Conducting the research

16. Are participants recruited via the Radboud Research Participation System (SONA) and/or is the research conducted in the CLS Lab?

- Yes → assessment necessary, end of checklist → go to assessment procedure
- No → continue with questionnaire

17. Will the research be carried out at an external location (such as a school)?

Yes → Do you have/will you receive written permission from this institution?

No → assessment necessary, end of checklist → go to assessment procedure

Yes → continue with questionnaire

No → continue with questionnaire

18. Is there a contact person to whom participants can turn to with questions regarding the research and are they informed of this?

Yes → continue with questionnaire

No → assessment necessary, end of checklist → go to assessment procedure

19. Is it clear for participants where they can file complaints with regard to participating in the research and how these complaints will be dealt with?

Yes → continue with questionnaire

No → assessment necessary, end of checklist → go to assessment procedure

20. Are the participants free to participate in the research, and to stop at any given point, whenever and for whatever reason they should wish to do so?

Yes → continue with questionnaire

No → assessment necessary, end of checklist → go to assessment procedure

21. Before participating, are participants informed by means of an information document about the aim, nature and risks and objections of the study? (see explanation on informed consent and sample documents).

Yes → continue with questionnaire

No → assessment necessary, end of checklist → go to assessment procedure

22. Do participants and/or their representatives sign a consent form? (see explanation on informed consent and sample documents).

Yes → checklist finished

No → assessment necessary, end of checklist → go to assessment procedure

## Appendix B Semi-structured interview

- 1) Why did you come to the Netherlands and not another country?
  - a) Did you consider any other countries?
    - i) What was the deciding factor in choosing the Netherlands?
      - (1) Was language a factor (high-level of English speaking)?
      - (2) Did you know someone who was (coming) here?
- 2) Do you use social media?
  - a) What do you use social media for? With which purpose?
    - i) Do you (also) use it to gain information about life in the Netherlands?
  - b) How important is social media to you?
  - c) In which language(s) do you use social media?
    - i) Does your social media language use differ per goal?
    - ii) Has your spoken language changed (to people who speak multiple same languages)?
  - d) Do you use TikTok?
- 3) Do you have any work/education in the Netherlands?
  - a) How did you find this?
    - i) Did you use social media to find this?
      - (1) Which social media did you use?
        - (a) Do you have a LinkedIn profile?
          - (i) How do you use LinkedIn?
      - ii) Did you use your personal network to find a job/education?
        - (1) How did you use your personal network in this way?
          - (a) Did this include Dutch people?
          - (b) Did this include Ukrainian people?
            - (i) People that you knew before or since you moved to the Netherlands?
      - iii) Has your social network helped you with social media in finding a job/education?
        - (1) In which ways (e.g. sending a link, sharing a post)?
          - (a) Was this in a social media group?
          - (b) Did you know the person who you connected with?
    - b) Are you satisfied with your current job/education?
      - i) Is it at the level you had in Ukraine?
      - ii) Is it in the same field as you worked before/want to work in?
      - iii) Are you looking for something else?

(1) How? (see questions above)

- 4) Who do you connect to on social media?
  - a) Dutch
  - b) Ukrainian refugees
  - c) Other refugees
  - d) Internationals
- 5) Do you connect to people in real life first and then social media or the other way around?
- 6) Are you active in any social media groups
  - a) Which ones?
  - b) On which platform?
  - c) Who are active in this group?
  - d) Why did you join this group?
- 7) Do you trust the information you find on social media?
  - a) What/who makes you trust something?
- 8) Do you find information on social media accessible?
- 9) Has your social media use changed since you came to the Netherlands?
  - a) How?
  - b) Have you started using Signal?
  - c) Have you stopped using Viber?
  - d) Did the way you look for news change?
    - i) Do you use official channels?
- 10) Do you feel welcome in the Netherlands?
  - a) In what ways?
  - b) In which ways not?
    - i) Can you give a concrete example?

## Appendix C Demographics

Table 1. Demographic Information of All Participants with age in years, education pertaining to the highest education followed and job to job in Ukraine.

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Job</b>	<b>Months in NL</b>
1	43	Female	PHD	Professor	13
2	24	Female	Higher education master	Customer support	13
3	22	Female	Higher education bachelor	Private tutor English	9
4	missing	Female (+ male)	Higher education bachelor	Yoga instructor (own business)	13
5	45	Female	Higher education master	-yes-	13
6	77	Female	Higher education bachelor	-yes-	13
7	19	Male	Upper secondary education	-yes-	14
8	18	Female	Higher education bachelor	Kitchen help	15
9	39	Female	Higher education master	No*	14
10	40	Female	Higher education bachelor	Head of accounting & own company	13
11	42	Female	Higher education master	-yes-	14
12	29	Female	Higher education bachelor	-yes-	10
13	34	Female	Higher education master	Administrator	14
14	26	Female	Higher education master	-yes-	14

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15	37	Female	Higher education bachelor	Florist	12
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\* Probably yes, in the interview she talked about a previous job

## Appendix D Additional survey

Name you wish to be called (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

Age (in years): \_\_\_\_\_

Nationality/nationalities: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Highest level of education followed:

Primary education

Lower secondary education

Upper secondary education

Higher education bachelor

Higher education master

PHD

Did you have a job in Ukraine?

Yes, \_\_\_\_\_

No

How long have you been in the Netherlands? \_\_\_\_\_

Types of social media used (mark all that apply):

WhatsApp

Signal

Telegram

Facebook

Instagram

Viber

Twitter

Snapchat

TikTok

YouTube

Pinterest

LinkedIn

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Approximately how many hours do you spend on social media including messaging apps?

\_\_\_\_\_

Approximately how many hours do you spend on social media excluding messaging apps?



\_\_\_\_\_

Please make a top five of the social media you use most:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

Please make a top five of the social media that is most important to you:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix E Codebook

Table 2. Codebook and Explanations Used in Coding Transcribed Interviews.

Code	Comment
Accessibility	How accessible is social media?
Contact	How is contact made with people?
Contact: first offline	First contact offline, then online
Contact: first online	First contact online, maybe later offline
Contact: with Dutch	Connecting to Dutch people on social media
Contact: With internationals (other)	Connecting to international people on social media
Contact: With Ukrainian	Connecting to Ukrainian people on social media
Education	Anything regarding education
Education: barriers	Difficulties in following education
Education: Dutch lessons	Have/are following Dutch language courses
Education: Education general	General education (that does not fit other subcodes)
Education: English lesson	Have/are following English language courses
Education: Netherlands	(Aspirations to) Following education in NL
Education: social media	Connection between education and social media (mainly in searching)
Education: social network	Connection between education and social network (mainly in searching)
Education: Ukraine	Education followed or currently following in Ukraine (online)
Employment	Anything regarding work in the Netherlands
Employment: advantages	Why get a job
Employment: barriers	Difficulties in finding a (suitable) job
Employment: Employment general	General employment (that does not fit other subcodes)
Employment: satisfaction -	Are they happy with the job > no
Employment: satisfaction +	Are they happy with the job > yes
Employment: social media	Connection between employment and social media (mainly in searching)
Employment: social network	Connection between employment and social network (mainly in searching)

Employment: type of work	Manual vs. “intellectual”
Groups	Being part of groups on social media
Groups: informational	Groups with educational purpose
Groups: leisure time	Groups with relaxing purpose
Groups: participants Dutch	Groups where Ukrainian and Dutch are mixed
Groups: participants international	International groups
Groups: participants Ukrainian	Groups for Ukrainian only
Groups: Participation: active	Actively participate or not in SM group?
Groups: participation: passive	Actively participate or not in SM group?
Healthcare system	Healthcare system in the Netherlands
Helping each other	Helping in one way or another
Housing	Where they live/have lived in the Netherlands
Language	Language used (on social media)
Language: Language general	General language (that does not fit other subcodes)
Language: SM EN	Using social media in English
Language: SM NL	Using social media in Dutch
Language: SM RUS	Using social media in Russian
Language: SM UKR	Using social media in Ukrainian
Language: Speak less Russian	Speaking less Russian since the war
News	Following the news about the war
News: follow not so much	Choosing to follow the news less
News: follow very closely	Being very up to date with the news
News: News general	General news (that does not fit other subcodes)
News: Official channel	Following the news about the war through an official e.g. government channel
News: Social network	Getting news through social networks
News: Unofficial channel	Following the news about the war through an unofficial channel
NL	Why come to the Netherlands/opinion on the Netherlands
NL: arrival conditions	Coming to the Netherlands because of living conditions/opportunities
NL: Arrival contacts	Coming to the Netherlands because of contacts here
NL: arrival no choice	Coming for no specific reason

NL: Feeling welcome	Do feel welcome in the Netherlands
NL: Not feeling welcome	Ways in which one does not feel welcome in the Netherlands
Privacy	Positive and negative feelings towards privacy
SM	Use of social media (applications)
SM: Change	How did social media use change
SM: disadvantages	Disadvantages to using SM
SM: importance: little/none	How important is social media to you > not important
SM: importance: somewhat	how important is social media to you? > a bit
SM: importance: very	how important is social media to you? > very
SM: purpose connecting	Using social media to stay in touch with people
SM: purpose learning	Using social media to learn (e.g. language)
SM: purpose news	Following the news about the war through social media
SM: purpose NL info	Using social media to find information about life in the Netherlands
SM: purpose relax	Using social media recreationally/to relax
SM: purpose work	Using social media for work
Trust	Trust of information found on social media
Trust: Distrust	No trust in social media
Trust: Do trust	Trust information on social media
Trust: somewhat trust	Trust some of the information/always a little bit
Trust: Verify sources online	Check information through checking multiple sources
Trust: verify sources with friends	Check information through social networks

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Note: Subcodes have the head codes before them.

## Appendix F Platform use

Table 3. Most Often Mentioned Platforms and Purposes with the Number of Mentions Between Brackets

<b>Platform (mentions)</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
1. Telegram (46)	Finding information on the Netherlands, staying connected, relaxing, finding news, learning and work
2. Facebook (40)	Finding information on the Netherlands, staying connected
3. Instagram (36)	Finding information on the Netherlands, staying connected, relaxing, finding news and work
4. Viber (15)	Staying connected, finding news
5. LinkedIn (12)	Work
6. YouTube (11)	Finding information on the Netherlands, relaxing, finding news and learning

Note: Some platforms were also mentioned as not being used, mainly Facebook and sometimes Instagram. These mentions were counted and included in the table.

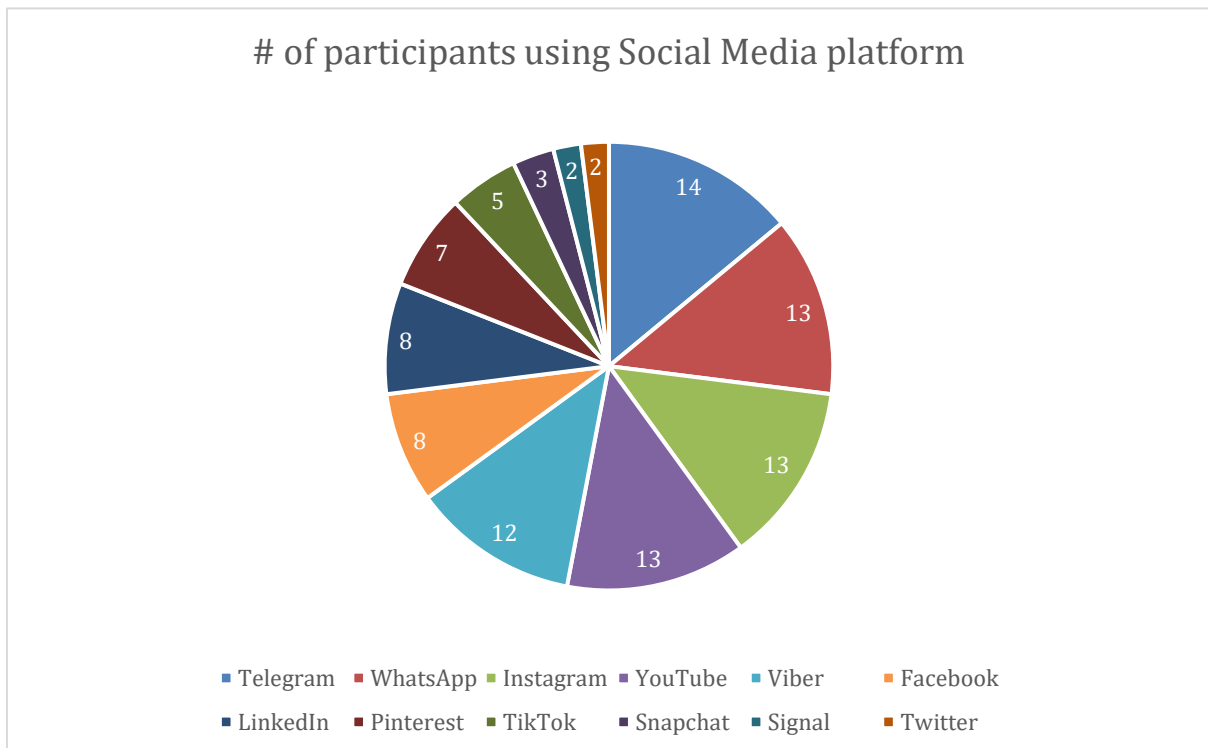
Table 4. A Ranking on Use and Importance of the Social Media Used in this Research.

<b>Social platform</b>	<b>Rank use (points)</b>	<b>Rank importance (points)</b>
Telegram	1 (41)	1 (46)
WhatsApp	2 (35)	2 (33)
Instagram	3 (30)	3 (32)
YouTube	4 (24)	4 (24)
<i>Viber</i>	<i>5 (18)</i>	<i>6 (14)</i>
<i>Facebook</i>	<i>6 (16)</i>	<i>5 (16)</i>
LinkedIn	7 (9)	7 (5)
Pinterest	8 (7)	7 (5)
TikTok	9 (6)	8 (3)
Snapchat	10 (2)	9 (2)
Signal	11 (0)	10 (0)
Twitter	11 (0)	10 (0)

Note: Points relate to which location the social media were placed in the ranking system. The points were calculated in the following way: participants ranked their top five social media on both use and importance. First place received three points, second and third place two points and fourth and fifth place just one point.

Viber and Facebook rank differently in use and importance and are hence in *italics*.

**Figure 2.** Platform Use by Number of Participants



## **Appendix G Statement of Own Work**

By signing this declaration, the undersigned

*Jodie Boogerd, -----*

Master's student at the Radboud University Faculty of Arts,

declares that the submitted MA thesis is entirely original and was written exclusively by herself, and without the use of AI tools, such as ChatGPT. The undersigned has indicated explicitly and in detail where all the information and ideas derived from other sources can be found by referencing all sources used, both in the text and in the bibliography.

By signing this declaration, the undersigned also declares that the research data presented in this MA thesis were collected by the undersigned herself using the methods described in this thesis.

Place and date:

*Nijmegen, 28-04-2023*

Signature:

-----
-------

## Appendix H Declaration Plagiarism and Fraud

The undersigned [first name, surname and student number],

*Jodie, Boogerd-----*

Master's student at the Radboud University Faculty of Arts,

declares that the assessed thesis is entirely original and was written exclusively by himself/herself. The undersigned has indicated explicitly and in detail where all the information and ideas derived from other sources can be found. The research data presented in this thesis were collected by the undersigned himself/herself using the methods described in this thesis.

Place and date:

*Nijmegen, 31-07-2023*

Signature:

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