

QUALITATIVE STUDY

**WAR IN UKRAINE:
HOW THE WAR IMPACTS
EVERYDAY BEHAVIOR IN GERMANY**



[m] SCIENCE

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APPEAL FOR DONATIONS

Since the beginning of the war in Europe, our thoughts have often been in Ukraine and with the people who have been affected. We not only condemn this war in the strongest possible terms, but also act in accordance with our values as part of the WPP Group: For example, WPP and GroupM decided to discontinue their business activities in Russia as early as the beginning of March.

Our WPP sister agency Blue State also launched an emergency call for donations together with the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), which we and our staff have responded to ourselves. [m]SCIENCE, as part of WPP and GroupM, is providing this qualitative study free of charge to anyone interested. If you would like to express your appreciation, we would be grateful if you would help us to further support the refugees from Ukraine and

donate to the UNHCR Refugee Agency of the United Nations.

If you are interested, please donate here:
[Ukraine Emergency | WPP | UNHCR](#)

Your appreciation and donation for this good cause would be most welcome.



The following results provide insight into the conscious and unconscious rationales of the respondents. They do not represent the opinion of the authors. As part of the WPP Group, [m]SCIENCE strongly condemns war and explicitly distances itself from any form of xenophobia and racism.

In our group, we are very proud of the diversity of our employees and our approach of “achieving more together”. We have colleagues from dozens of nations with many different cultural backgrounds. We are convinced that “our differences make us stronger”.

We live a culture of diversity, inclusion, belonging.

AGENDA

1

Whitepaper/Summary

Key insights of the study

2

Background and objective

Study design & interviewed target groups

3

Perception of the Ukraine war

How do people deal with the current situation in their daily lives?

4

Ways to deal with the Ukraine war

Which ways of coping with the Ukraine war exist?
What does the respective mindset and purchasing & brand behavior look like?

5

Courses of action for advertisers

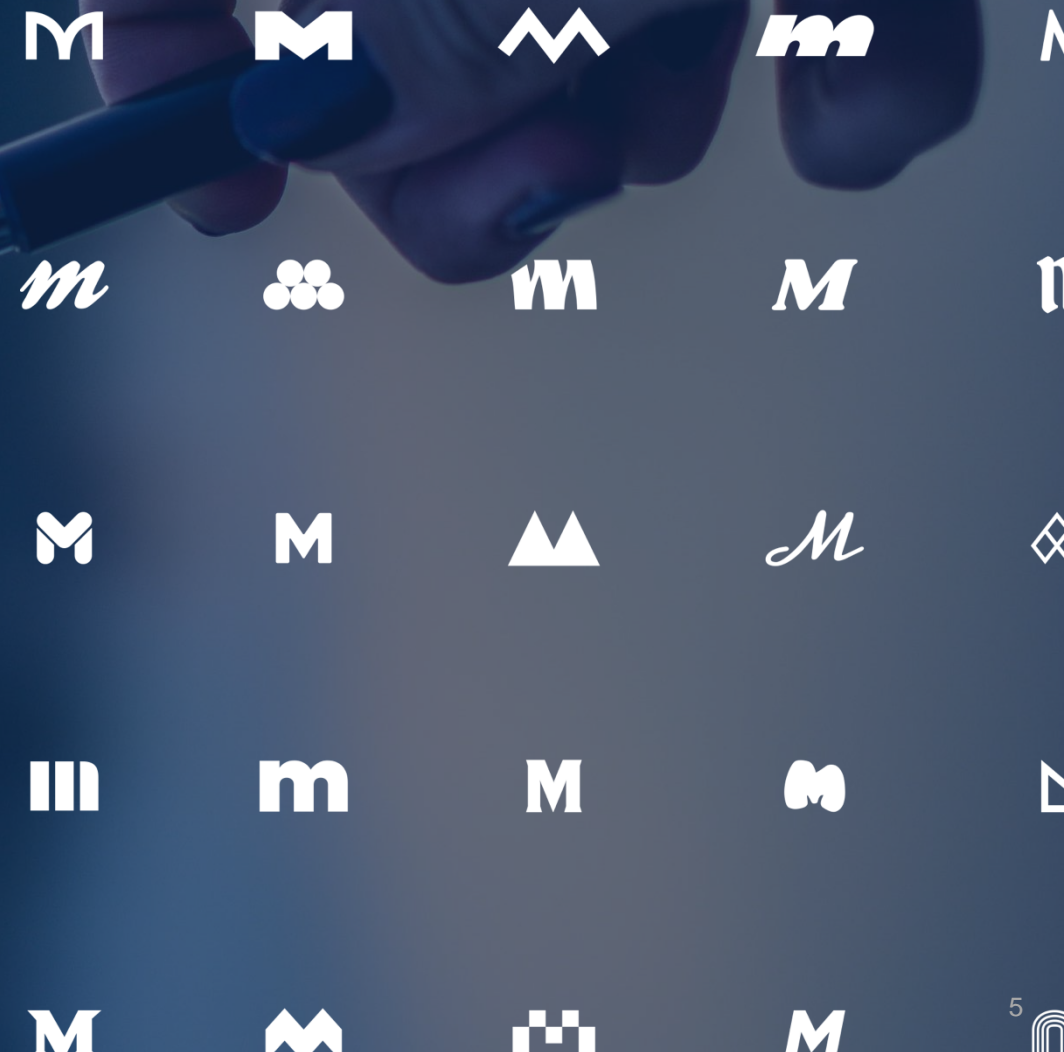
What role do companies play in this context?
Which aspects are important in current communication?

6

Appendix & Contact

Details regarding the interviewed target group

1 WHITEPAPER/ SUMMARY

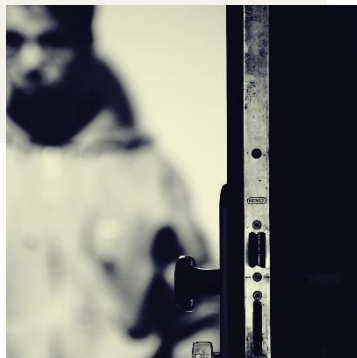


WHITEPAPER/SUMMARY

1

The Ukraine war is frightening

- Due to the proximity and the perceived cultural similarity, the respondents can empathize well with the Ukrainians and their fear.
- Even for Germany a real threat is perceived.
- Respondents feel powerless, uneasy, sad and anxious.

**2**

How do respondents deal with this situation in everyday life?

- Seven different coping strategies have been developed:
 - *Safe world*
 - *Emotional retreat*
 - *Surrender to fate*
 - *Actionism*
 - *The in and out*
 - *Showing one's colors*
 - *Emotional arming*

**3**

Purchasing & brand behavior is also influenced

- Depending on which of the seven coping strategies the respondents are currently using, shopping and brand behavior is also influenced differently.
- For example, some respondents completely remove Russian brands/products from everyday life and generally cut expenses, while other respondents like to treat themselves on special occasions.



WHITEPAPER/SUMMARY

4

Companies & brands can provide support in times of crisis

- Especially in times of crisis, consumers are looking for stability, orientation and security.
- Companies/brands can offer this by communicating their own consistency and providing orientation, thus conveying security.



5

A clear position against the Ukraine war shows attitude

- By taking a clear stance against the war in Ukraine, companies are perceived as socially engaged and as allies for the consumers in times of crisis.
- This attitude should be practiced consistently and sincerely – but somewhat discreetly and without giving the impression of trying to improve one's own image.



2 BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVE

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BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVE

Background

In a qualitative study, [m]SCIENCE investigated how the everyday lives of different generations in Germany are changing as a result of the Ukraine war and how they are coping with it. In a two-stage process, respondents first kept a diary over a period of 5 days, documenting their emotional changes in relation to the daily news events and the effects on their own purchasing and brand behavior. Based on this, individual depth psychological interviews were conducted to enhance the understanding of how the respondents cope and behave in relation to the war in Ukraine.

Objective

- Understanding the way different generations are coping with the Ukraine war.
- Identifying changes in buying behavior and brand perception.
- Offering options for brand positioning and approach during the current crisis.

Study design

16 online in-depth interviews (each including pre-task)



Target groups (n=4 each):

ZG 1: Youngsters 16-23 years

ZG 2: Young adults 24-39 years old

ZG 3: Experienced 40-65 years

ZG 4: Golden oldies 66-80 years of age



Sample:

16 Online-Interviews à 1,5 h.



Locations:

Berlin, Munich, Hamburg, Duesseldorf und surrounding areas



Field Time:

2 CW, Beginning of April 2022

3 PERCEPTION OF THE UKRAINE WAR

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THE DYNAMICS OF THE INTERVIEWS SHOWED VERY DIFFERENT WAYS OF DEALING WITH THE WAR

In many interviews, the conversations stayed superficial

- Respondents remained objective as well as detached and did not want to let the topic get too close to them.
- Outbursts of sadness, anger and frustration were only hinted at and not actually acted out.

„There's always a war going on somewhere in the world, and no one gets upset there either.“

In other interviews, the full weight of the issue became clear

- At times it got very emotional and almost dramatic.
- Some were close to tears and could hardly contain their sadness and anger.

„ I am so sorry that these people have to go through this. Seeing the pictures immediately brings me to tears.“

THE IDENTIFICATION IS VERY HIGH, THE RESPONDENTS ARE SUFFERING ALONG

Respondents can identify well with Ukrainians, as they appear to be similar to people living in Germany in many ways:

- The respondents assume that they share a similar culture and values and can therefore easily picture the everyday life of Ukrainians.
- This ability to identify with them leads to strong sympathy.
- Even though for Germans the war in Ukraine mainly takes place in the media, it seems close and immediate.
- They keep emphasizing how nearby Ukraine is and how close they feel to Ukrainians.

„ There was a woman who was just about to go to the gym, just like me, and then she had to flee.“

THE THREAT IS REAL

There is a real chance that Germany will become an active part of the war - this fear is clearly palpable:

- For the first time in decades, Germany is in danger of becoming involved in a war.
- In the eyes of the respondents, the Bundeswehr seems like a laughingstock that could not defend Germany in an emergency.
- The threat of a nuclear attack is very frightening.
- Reports that bunkers in Germany are being checked and iodine tablets are being procured make the fears seem even more real.
- Former members of the Bundeswehr mentally review their military service and/or worry about their role in an emergency.

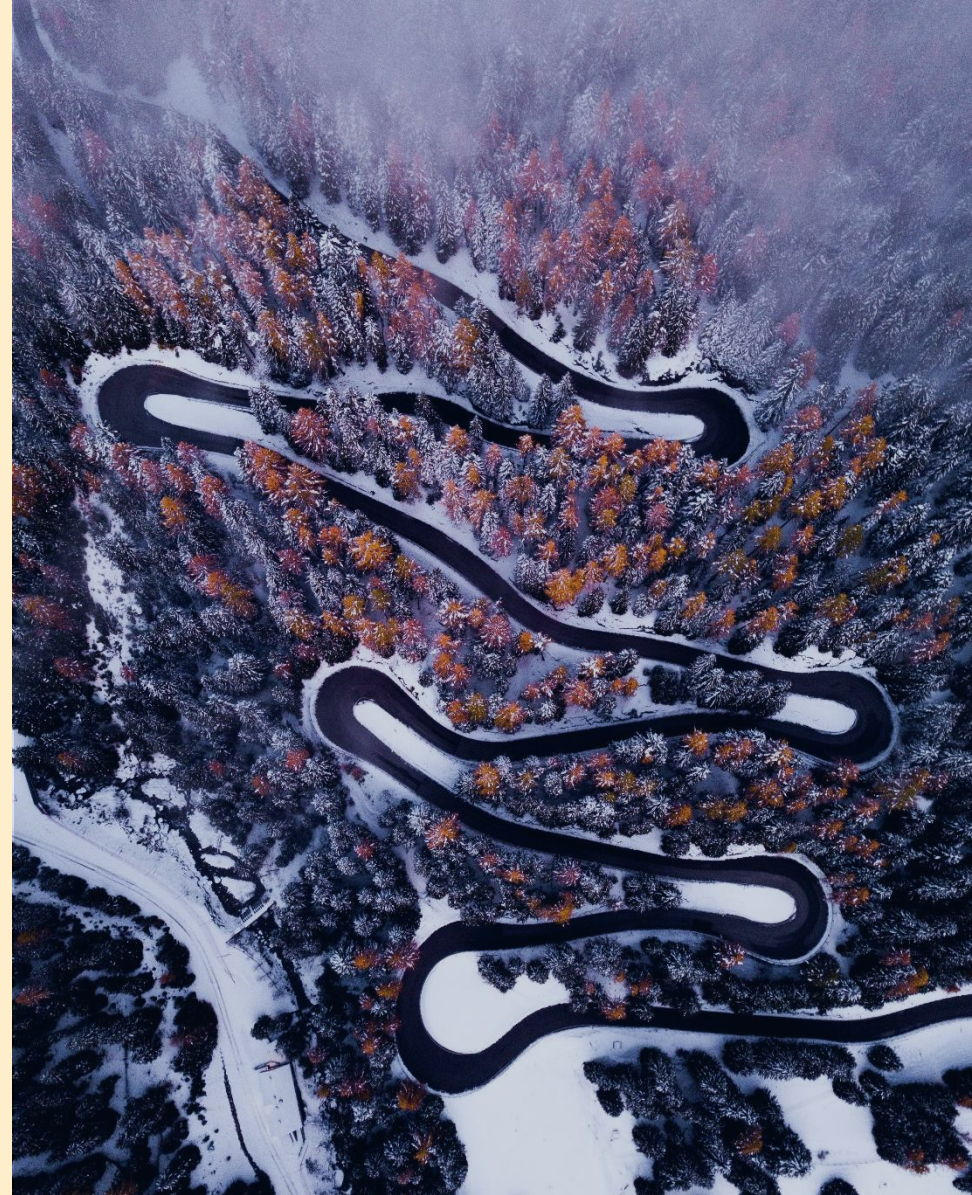


4 WAYS TO DEAL WITH THE UKRAINE WAR



Seven different coping strategies to deal with the Ukraine war were identified

- A coping strategy, by definition, is a "way of dealing with other people, the environment, or a situation in difficult times."
- However, not every person moves only within one strategy to mentally cope with the war in Ukraine.
- People sometimes change their coping strategy, depending on the environment and their emotional state.



WE HAVE IDENTIFIED SEVEN DIFFERENT WAYS OF COPING WITH THE SUBJECT OF WAR



SAFE WORLD



**EMOTIONAL
RETREAT**



**SURRENDER TO
FATE**



ACTIONISM



**ENTERING AND
STEPPING OUT**



ATTITUDE



**EMOTIONAL
ARMING**

SAFE WORLD



The horrors of war has stimulated the desire to create a piece of an intact world on a small scale



Mindset

- Against the backdrop of the war, the respondents want to enjoy themselves one more time.
- Taking care of oneself and others becomes the focus - respondents are more likely to treat themselves to something, such as a spa day.
- Joint activities and harmonious company become more important, e.g., organizing family activities, hosting dinners for friends, etc.
- At the same time, planning tends to be neglected - respondents find new appreciation for what they already have and they focus on maintaining the current status quo.



Influence on purchasing & brand behavior

- Monetary spendings on “the present” are higher, e.g., respondents buy higher quality food for themselves and others - they want to treat themselves and others.
- Already known brands are repurchased, which gives security and preserves the ideal world.
- However, large purchases and financial risks tend to be avoided.



O-Sounds

„We now focus more on experiencing nice things with the family and doing activities together.“

„I treated myself with a facial treatment, which I don't usually do, but I wanted to do something good for myself.“

EMOTIONAL RETREAT



In order to maintain a normal everyday life and take an emotional break, the topic is avoided



Mindset

- The respondents do not want to acknowledge the war and all the fear, suffering and disaster it brings.
- News and talk about the topic are avoided; they live in their own little bubble.
- One's head is literally busted in the sand.
- Through repression, the respondents take a mental break from the emotional burden and can concentrate on their usual lives again.



Influence on purchasing & brand behavior

- Since the topic of war is avoided, any (donation) advertising on TV or online is quickly switched off.
- For this type of person, advertising should be free of stressful topics and offer a short break.
- When shopping, everything stays the same.



O-Sounds

"Right now, I'm not even following what's going on anymore because it's stressing me too much."

"I blocked out the fear, otherwise I'd drive myself crazy."

SURRENDER TO FATE



Respondents suffer from the situation, feel helpless and left alone by politics



Mindset

- The war is perceived as a real personal threat, which makes the respondents feel helpless and sad.
- The respondents are disappointed in the government and wish for more protection and support.
- They see themselves as being shaken by fate and suffer strongly from the first "symptoms" of the war: the high prices and the sold-out products.
- It is difficult to get out of this situation alone, because the own suffering has a firm grip on the person.



Influence on purchasing & brand behavior

- Respondents tend to make "inexpensive" hoarding purchases so that they have everything they need.
- Favorite brands continue to be bought, and if these brands also speak out against the war, this has a relieving effect.
- It creates the feeling of being validated in one's behavior and having an ally.



O-Sounds

"We pensioners are forgotten by politics, we can't afford anything anymore."

"I can see myself sitting in the basement like my grandparents did back in World War II."

ACTIONISM



To stop feeling helpless, respondents take action and do something good



Mindset

- The respondents show social commitment help the people in Ukraine.
- They fight the perceived powerlessness within their own comfort zone: So that they still feel comfortable.
- They are happy to donate, to volunteer, to join a demonstration against the war, or even to take in refugees from Ukraine in their own homes.
- This makes them feel easier and able to act again.



Influence on purchasing & brand behavior

- Actionism is apparent in all areas: for example, recreational activities related to Russia are also being abandoned (e.g., ballet).
- People make specific purchases for refugees.
- Brands that do not draw any consequences and for example stay in Russia no longer reflect the respondents' values – respondents are open to trying out new brands as allies against the war.



O-Sounds

"I want to volunteer at the women's shelter, I feel like I have to do something!"

"We took in a refugee from Ukraine and even restructured the entire room arrangement for him."

ENTERING AND STEPPING OUT



Respondents dive in highly emotionally and suffer along, but also manage to emerge again and put the issue aside



Mindset

- Individual fates are explored, and people empathize with the circumstances - the respondents mentally put themselves in the situation and suffer along.
- At the same time, they also 'sympathize' with Ukraine, they admire the "bulwark" of the heroic Ukrainians, who, in the eyes of the respondents, are also fighting to prevent the war from reaching Germany.
- They mentally go through how they would act in case of an emergency: The respondents picture themselves with weapons in hand or on the run.
- But they also manage to put these stressful thoughts aside and carry on as before.



Influence on purchasing & brand behavior

- In the moments of diving in, the respondents are very sensitive and open-minded to everything that is pro-Ukraine and contra-Russia.
- However, once they have resurfaced, the topic tends to be suppressed in everyday life, so that no real changes in purchasing behavior occur.



O-Sounds

"With the pictures from Butcha, all I could do was start crying."

"It's really incredible how Ukraine is fighting back. I would have thought that Putin would march through there in two days."

ATTITUDE



The Ukraine war leads to a need for (re)orientation and the desire for a clear stance



Mindset

- The current values are questioned due to the war, and there is longing for a change in values and in society.
- The respondents "show their colors" or take a clear stance on social issues - but they would like support in this.
- They want companies and politicians to take responsibility and turn the horrors of war into something positive.
- The respondents focus on promising aspects, such as the acceleration of long-overdue processes: Energy transition, reformation of the Bundeswehr, new skilled workers, etc.



Influence on purchasing & brand behavior

- Taking a clear stance can lead to the inclusion or exclusion of a brand from one's own Relevant Set.
- Brands that have not withdrawn from Russia, for example, are rejected - these brands no longer fit into one's own set of values.



O-Sounds

"All this shit can also become a transformational accelerator."

"It is also good economically that so many Ukrainians are coming to us. If some decide to stay, it will help us in terms of the shortage of skilled workers."

EMOTIONAL ARMING



The central goal of this coping strategy is to prepare both physically and mentally in order to be ready



Mindset

- Several news channels are followed in order to be optimally informed and always up-to-date.
- The information is "hoarded," but there is no emotional immersion; instead, a wide variety of scenarios and solution strategies are developed rationally.
- Overall, this gives respondents the feeling that they are prepared for everything, and their own anxiety no longer weighs so heavily on them.
- Because the respondents are so well informed, they feel that they are above things - they don't let the situation get to them.



Influence on purchasing & brand behavior

- In some cases, mainly FMCG products are "hoarded" as a de facto safeguard in case of an emergency (food) shortage.
- The respondents are well informed and aware of the activities of the companies/brands and draw the appropriate conclusions.

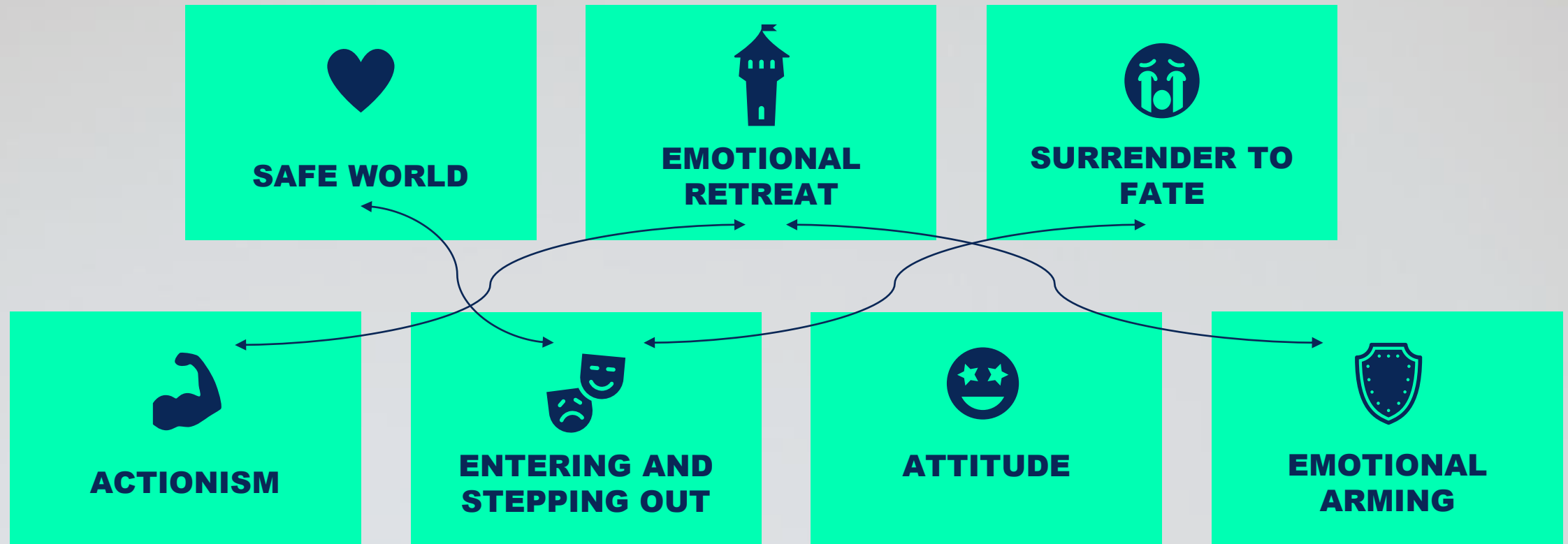


O-Sounds

"I was able to convince the warehouse worker to give me two more bottles of oil ."

"It means I'm prepared for anything - nothing can shock me that easily!"

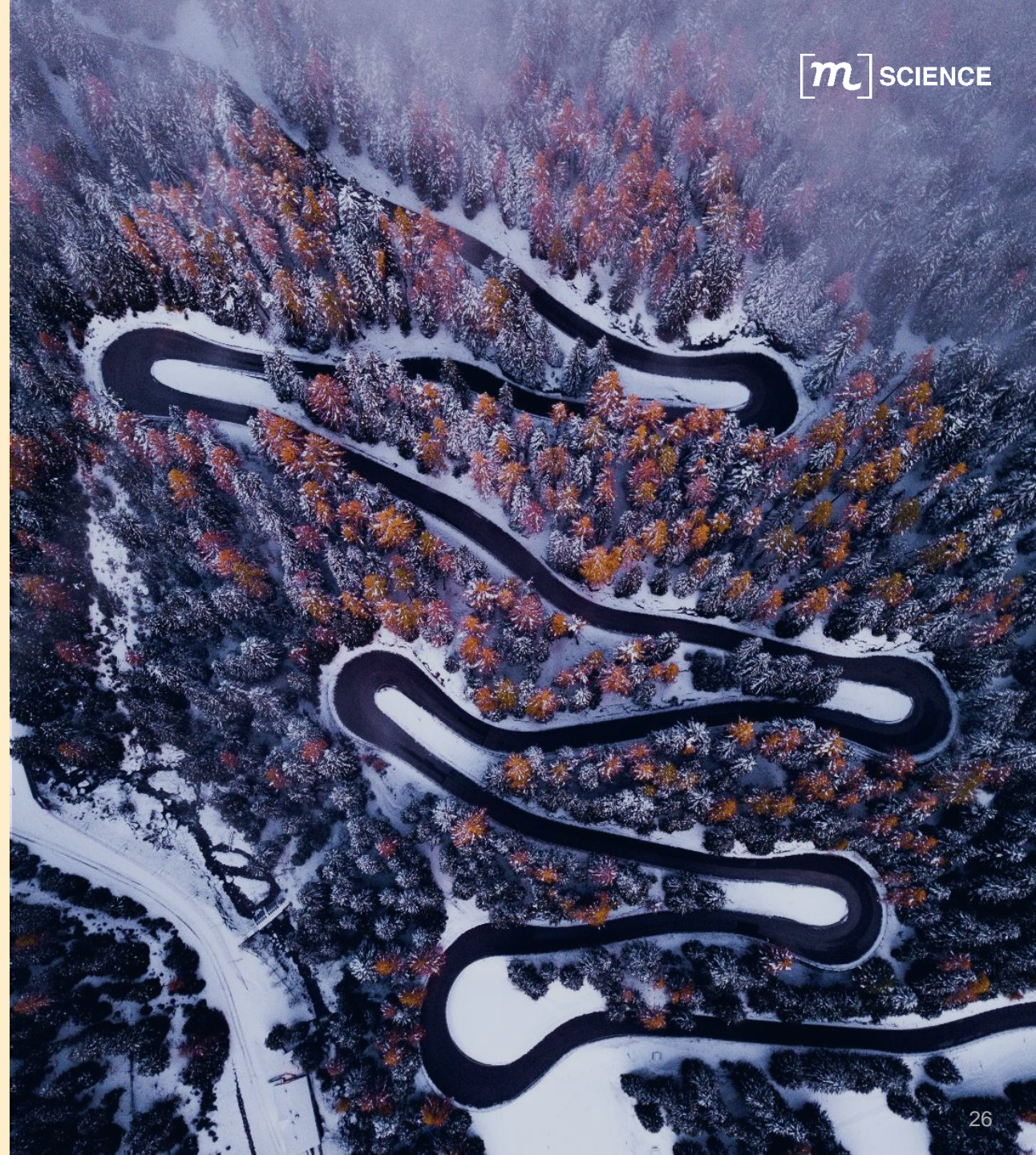
IN ORDER TO DEAL WITH THE WAR, PEOPLE KEEP SWITCHING FROM ONE WAY OF DEALING WITH IT TO ANOTHER



5 COURSES OF ACTION FOR ADVERTISERS



Although brand perception is affected in different ways, depending on the displayed coping strategy, we can still make some general recommendations for advertisers.



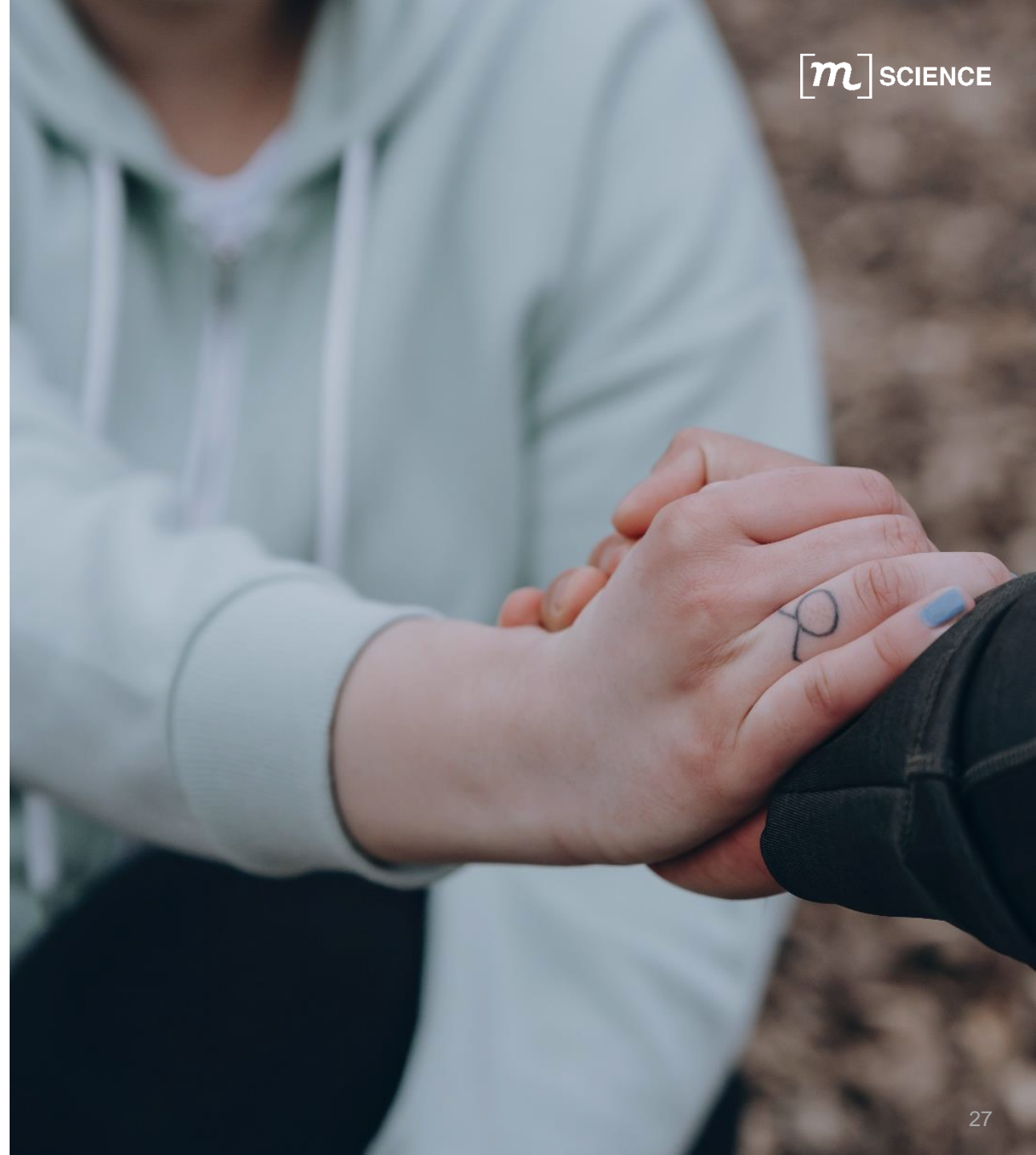
ACTION OPTIONS FOR ADVERTISERS

TIMES OF CRISIS ARE TIMES OF INSECURITY AND DISORIENTATION

Consumers are driven by the desire for security and peace:

- Brands can provide support and relief here by communicating clearly and consistently what they currently stand for and what they will stand for in the future.
- Positive, solidary and hopeful brand messages are gratefully embraced.

This way, brands provide a glimpse into the future and can offer support and orientation in uncertain times.



ESPECIALLY IN TIMES OF CRISIS, IT IS IMPORTANT FOR CONSUMERS THAT BRANDS SHOW CONSISTENCY, OFFER ORIENTATION, SHOW THE WAY AND PROVIDE SECURITY.

ACTION OPTIONS FOR ADVERTISERS

CLEAR ATTITUDE AND SINCERE SYMPATHY ALSO PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE

Ignoring the issue is not a good idea:

- Some of the respondents actively checked and even researched which companies continue to produce in or for Russia.
- For the most part, respondents no longer support these companies.
- Companies that have made an explicit and believable stand against the war receive credit and are secretly seen as an ally in this time of crisis.



**A CLEAR POSITION AGAINST THE WAR IN
UKRAINE ALLOWS COMPANIES TO BE SEEN AS
SOCIALY ENGAGED AND TO APPEAR AS AN
ALLY TO CONSUMERS.**

LESS IS MORE - THE CREDIBILITY OF THE STATEMENT IS SHOWN IN HONESTY AND SIMPLICITY

1

Authenticity

- The honesty and authenticity of a company is very important - companies should state their opinion against the war openly and support it with clear actions.
- For example, people want to feel that a company is collecting donations and positioning itself against the war out of solidarity and not because of its image.



2

Sympathy

- Sympathy should not be self-promotional or even appear in combination with product advertising.
- It should rather be communicated in a simple and small way.
- Small, supportive actions can also have a big impact: In addition to clear standpoints & consistent actions, companies can for example post their logo in the colors of the Ukrainian flag or a #againstWar on social media platforms.

#НЕТВОЙНЕ
#nowar

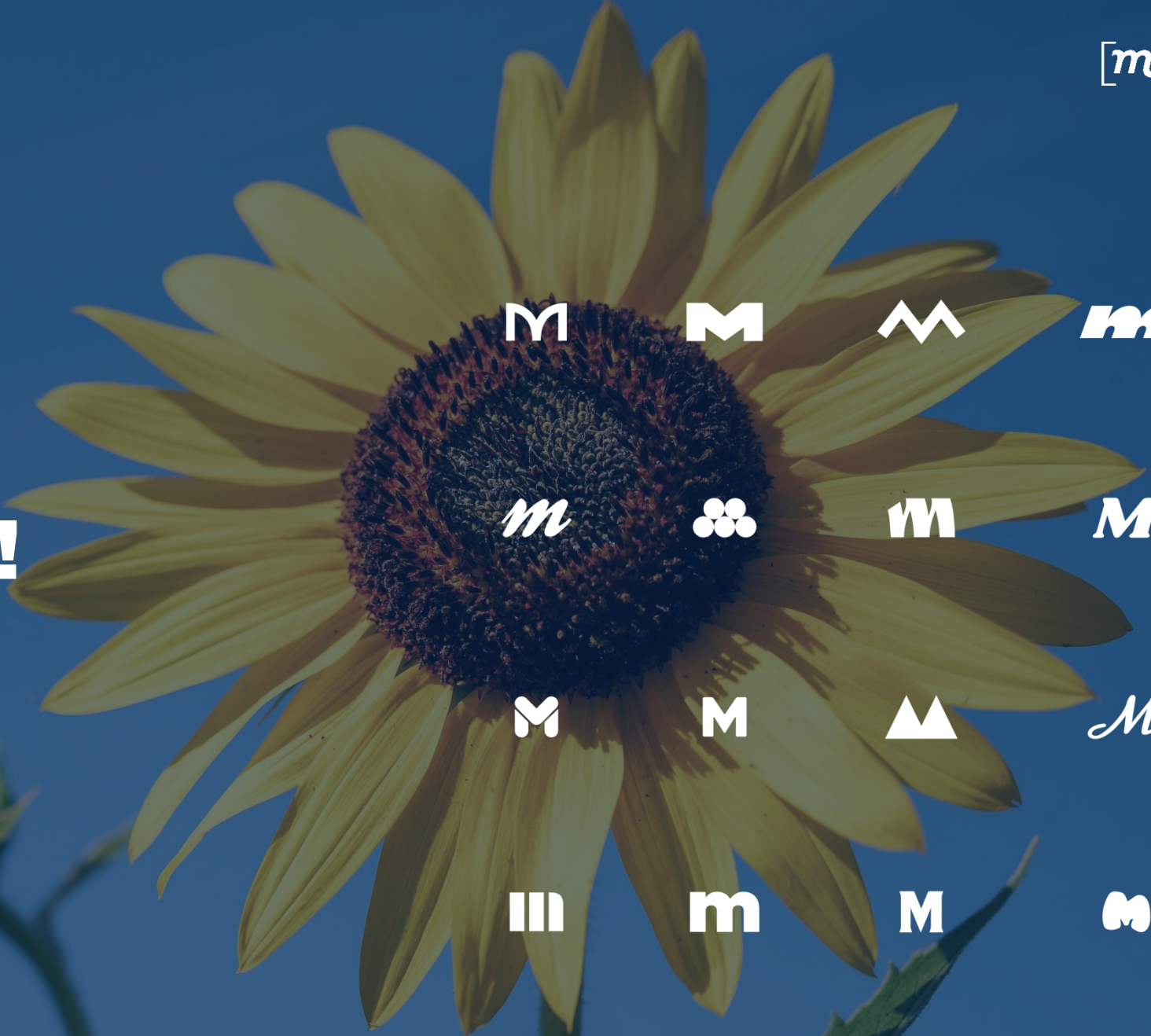
3

Minimalism

- A plain and simple communication-design regarding the war in Ukraine has a particularly credible and authentic effect.
- Colorful and shrill colors tend to appear too cheerful, loud and turbulent in combination with this painful topic.



THANK YOU!



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APPEAL FOR DONATIONS

Since the beginning of the war in Europe, our thoughts have often been in Ukraine and with the people who have been affected. We not only condemn this war in the strongest possible terms, but also act in accordance with our values as part of the WPP Group: For example, WPP and GroupM decided to discontinue their business activities in Russia as early as the beginning of March.

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6 APPENDIX & CONTACT

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RELEVANT RESEARCH GROUPS: CONSUMERS OF DIFFERENT GENERATIONS BETWEEN 16-80 YEARS



Characteristics of the study groups:

- 25% Youngsters 16-23 years, 25% Young adults 24-39 years
- 25% Experienced 40-65 years, 25% Golden Oldies 66-80 years
- 50% who are/were in the armed forces, 50% who are/were not in the armed forces
- 50% with children, 50% without children
- All informed themselves about current events.
- All were concerned with the Ukraine war.
- Equal distribution of gender
- Good mix in terms of occupation, housing, living situation, and education level.
- All were purchasing decision-makers and did so regularly themselves.
- No rejection of advertising.

Additional criterion: No hardliners / conspiracy theorists

CONTACT

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