

FATIGUE



Soft Power: Cats, Branding and the Ukrainian Far-Right



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There are Three Keys to successfully interviewing gangsters (Galeotti, 2019)



1) Convince them you're an academic, so your work is irrelevant



2) Alcohol



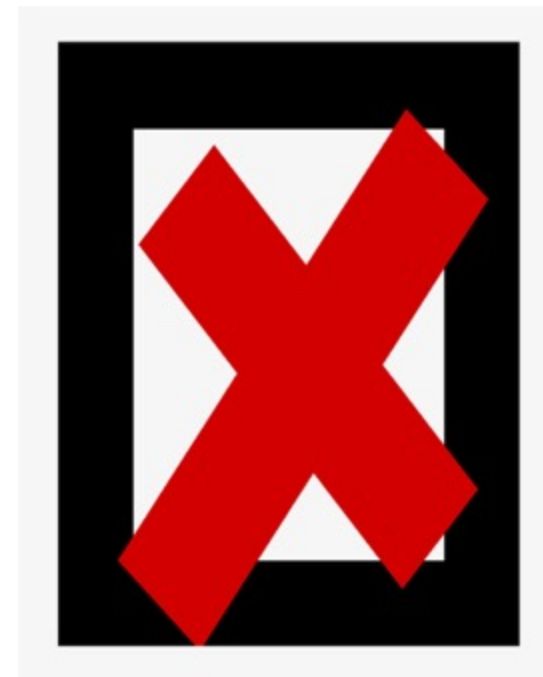
3) Have a cute dog



The first
two were
no problem
for me



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But, the third was more challenging.
I don't have a dog.

But, I do have a cute cat



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@notthemikecole

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Why populists adore cats – and use them in their political propaganda

Italy's rightwing deputy prime minister is using cat pictures to soften his anti-migrant posts on Facebook. This is no surprise. The whitewashed cats of the internet are pure phoneys



▲ Puss in shoot ... one of the cats sent by a fan to Matteo Salvini. Photograph: Matteo Salvini / Twitter

What if researchers weren't the only ones using cute pets to appeal to people they otherwise have little in common with?

<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/shortcuts/2018/nov/27/why-populists-adore-cats-and-use-them-in-their-political-propaganda>

As it turns out, lots of populist leaders are doing it!

Marine Le Pen often
blogs about her cats



<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/france/12196760/Marine-Le-Pen-Not-so-secret-cat-lady-National-Front-France.html>

Geert Wilders made an Instagram account
for his cats –
And it was featured on the Dutch news



<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/happy-hooker-relaxed-at-rise-of-dutch-trump-9zds2566k>



And then there's Mostik – the cat adopted by builders of a bridge between the annexed Crimean Peninsula and the Russian mainland

Mostik was the first Russian to cross the bridge upon its completion – even beating Vladimir Putin

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/spotlight/how-a-wayward-cat-upstaged-putin-and-became-a-russian-celebrity/ar-BBUvWjS?li=AA59G2#image=4>

Why Cats?

1) Cats are part of the populist strategy of presenting leaders as 'one of the people'

2) Pictures of cats get more social media coverage than overtly political posts

3) It's not just cats – it can be dogs, food, sports teams or a whole host of other non-political features

4) It's part of a strategy to soften the image of politicians promoting divisive and discriminatory political views

‘Cossack House’ is a cultural centre in Kyiv which hosts events organized by far right groups such as Azov Battalion



They also organise summer camps for Ukrainian children to learn survival skills and about 'patriotism'

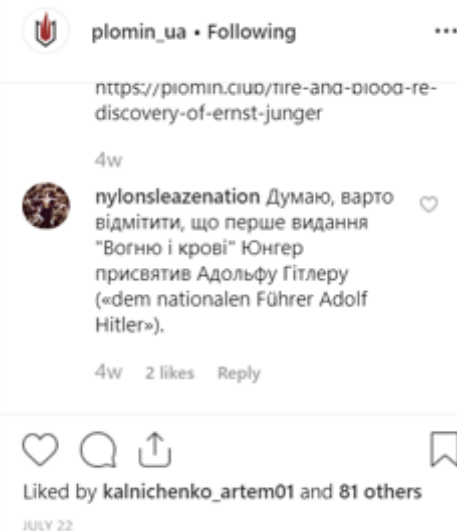
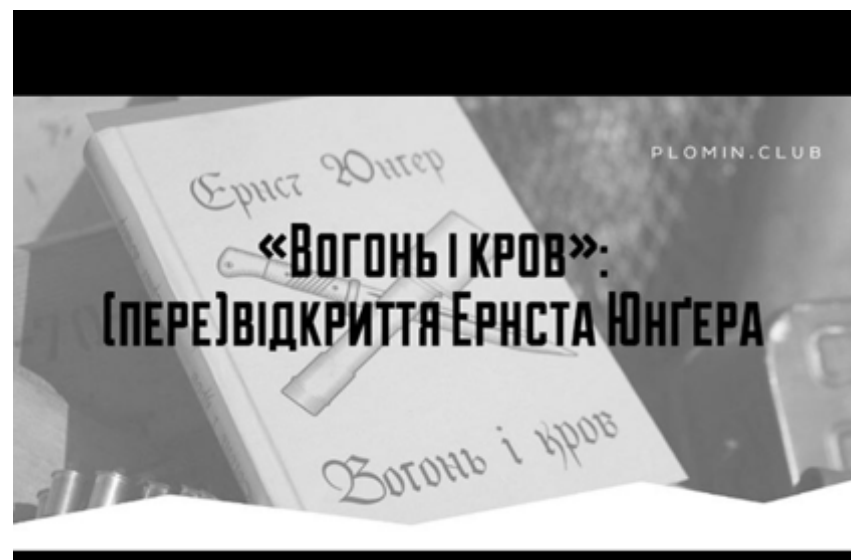


<https://www.theguardian.com/world/video/2017/sep/04/i-want-to-bring-up-a-warrior-ukraines-far-right-childrens-camp-video>

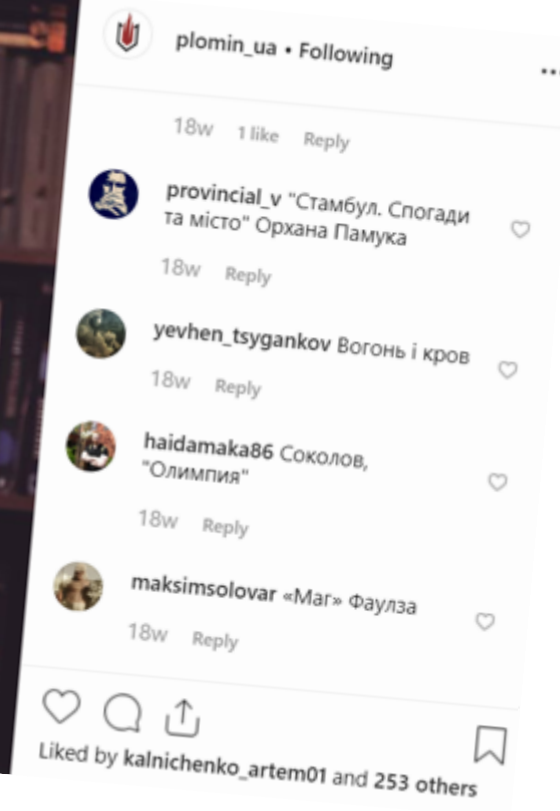


<https://plomin.club/best-materials-summer-plomin-2018/>

One of Cossack House's most popular events is the 'Plomin Literature Club'

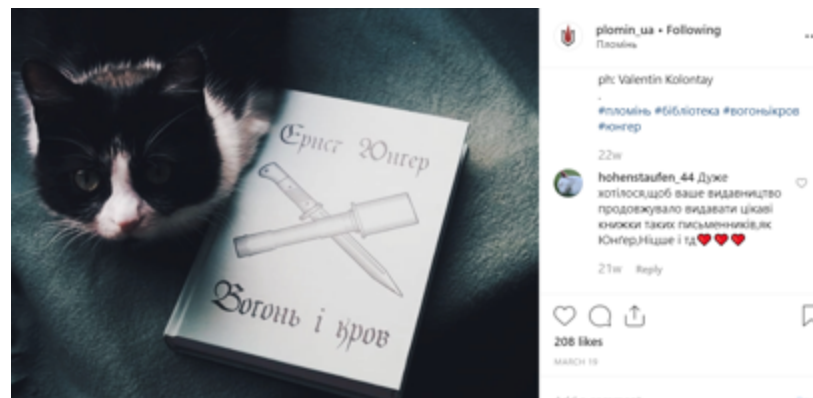
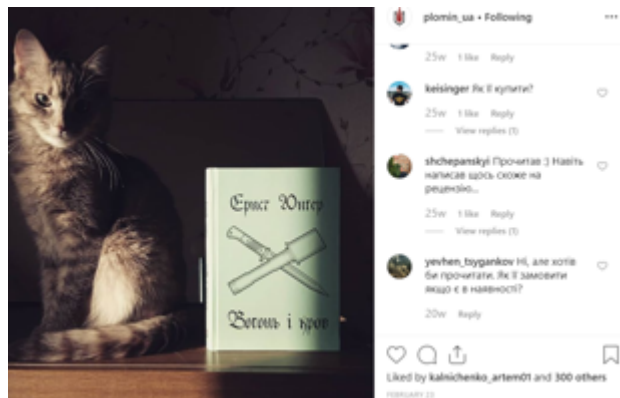
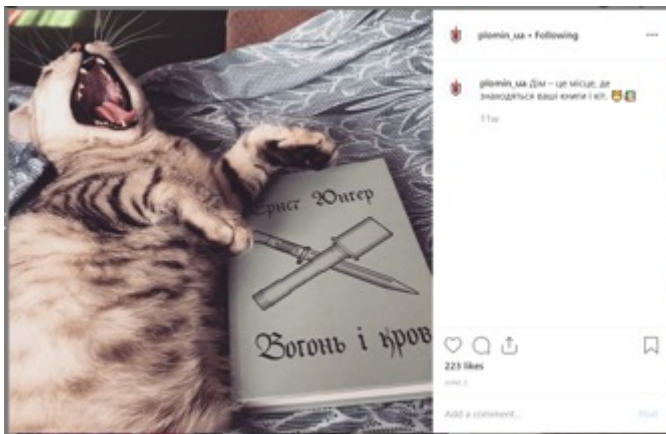


Plomin use various social media strategies to attract attention to their club. But even posts containing pictures of young women reading books are not as popular as...



https://www.instagram.com/plomin_ua/

...Cats!



https://www.instagram.com/plomin_ua/

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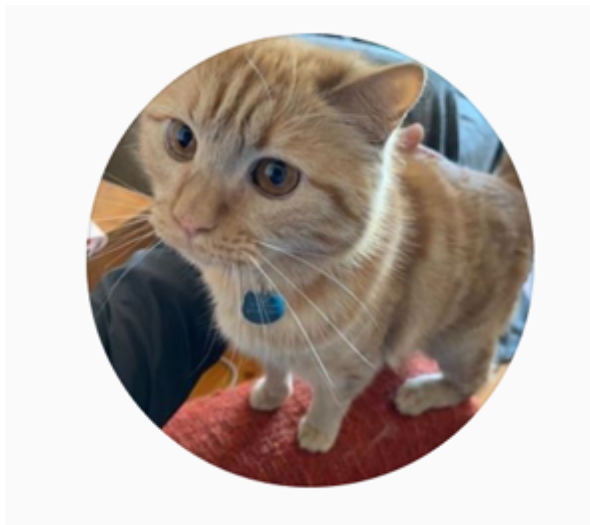
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Inspired by Mark Galeotti's advice, I made an Instagram account for my own cat



Instagram

sootyinestonia

Edit Profile



58 posts

860 followers

2,846 following

Sooty

Jordanian cat 🇯🇴 living in Estonia 🇪🇪 Interested in paper clips and sleeping.
Opinions expressed are my own and not those of my institution.

@notthemikecole

notthemikecole.home.blog

She soon attracted some interesting followers



right_comp

Follow Back



110 posts

3,714 followers

7,485 following

ПРАВА КРАМНИЧКА



Перший український бренд символіки та одягу.



Тільки висока якість товару та приємні ціни.

068 165 1865 - для замовлень

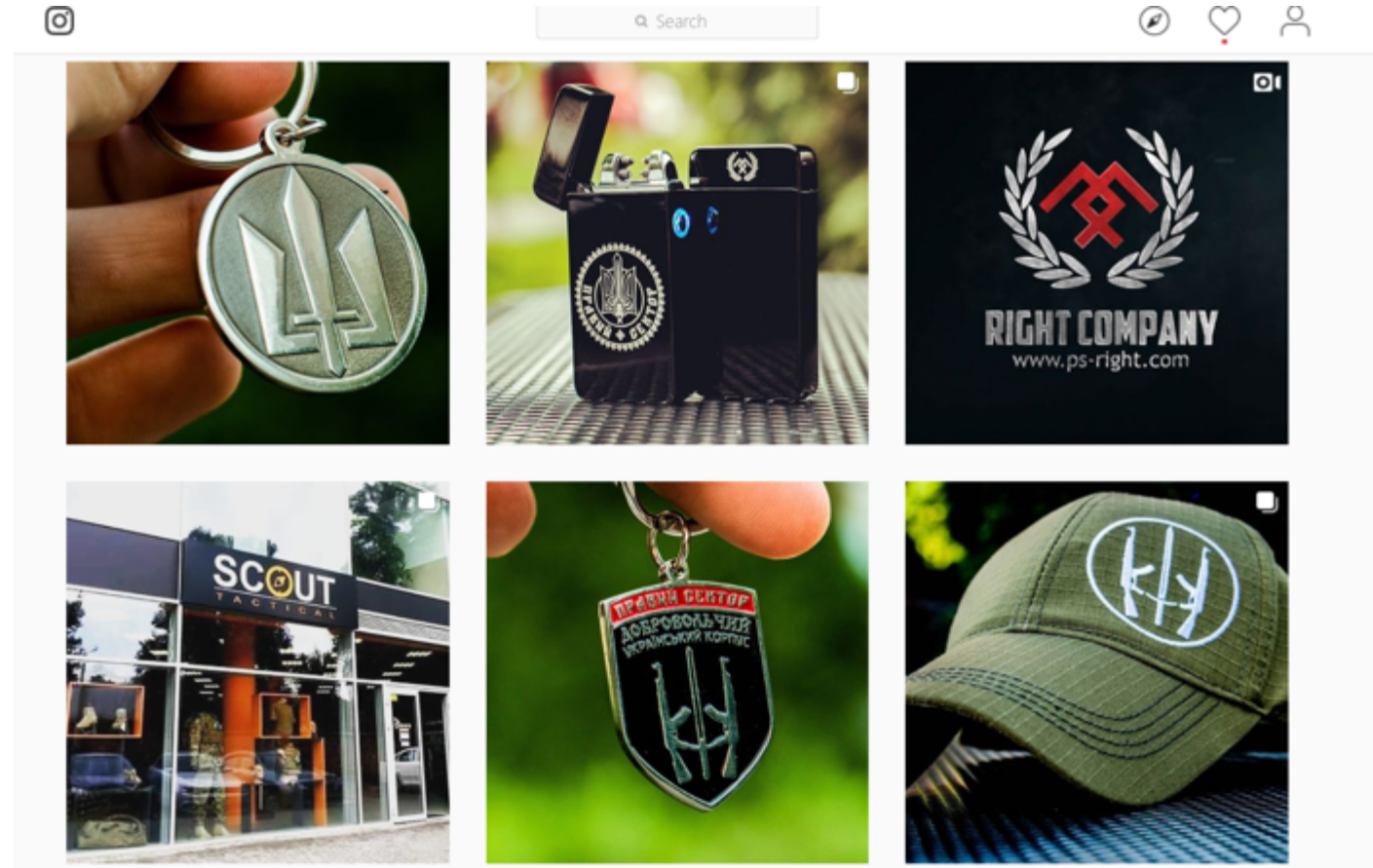


Сайт компанії #rightcomp

ps-right.com

https://www.instagram.com/right_comp/

Right Comp is a fashion brand producing clothes with logos used by Right Sector



https://www.instagram.com/right_comp/?hl=en

The Ukrainian far right focus heavily on community building to increase support through non-political means (Polyakova, 2014)

This increases plausible deniability for extreme political views

It contributes to the increased blurring of lines between patriotism and ethno-centric nationalism

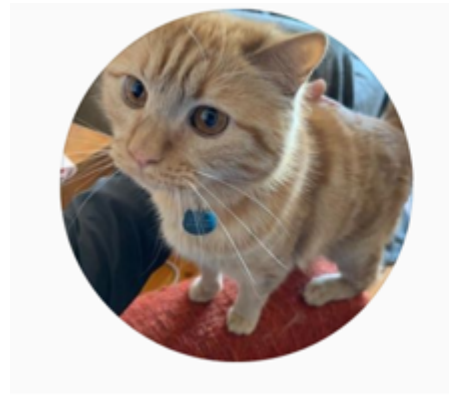
<https://www.haaretz.com/world-news/europe/.premium-the-upcoming-neo-nazi-concert-in-ukraine-that-no-one-is-talking-about-1.7391007>



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