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INTEREST IN HISTORICAL FIGURES ON THE WORLD WIDE WEB AS A MARKER OF HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN CONTEMPORARY UKRAINE

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the article – to determine the specifics and intensity of interest in M. Hrushevskyi from 2004 to 2022 based on statistical data from the Google search engine.

The research methodology. Analysis using computer-assisted methods was performed on two types of data: time series (quantitative data) and sets of keywords (qualitative-textual data). The methods used to examine the time series were: analysis of the central tendency in the whole set and in the set divided into individual periods; extraction of the main trend from the time series by sifting out seasonal and random components using the Hodrick Prescott filter. Computational linguistics methods were used to analyse sets of keywords (text data): a linguistic corpus was created based on the set of keywords, from which words with only grammatical meaning were removed. A table of the frequency of occurrence of specific words individually as well as the frequency of associations between words was then drawn up.

The scientific novelty of the study consists in clarifying the peculiarities of M. Hrushevskyi's reception in cyberspace, manifested in the frequency of searching for information about him using the popular Google search engine, as well as Wikipedia, the largest online encyclopedia.

Conclusions. At the end of our research, we conclude that M. Hrushevskyi appears to be a well-known and important figure to Ukrainian users, but on the contrary, does not generate much interest amongst Internet users from other countries. As we can see from the acquired results, search queries concerning M. Hrushevskyi are mainly dominated by scientific and didactic topics. Therefore, a certain working hypothesis can be derived in that the discourse dealing with M. Hrushevskyi is not noticeably politicized, as might be expected given his dizzying career during the revolutionary years. Instead, the discourse relates more to education, cultural heritage research, memory and history. The obtained data will be useful primarily to sociologists working on establishing the attitude change dynamics of Ukrainians towards our most famous historical figures.

Keywords: M. Hrushevskyi, "born digital" sources, Google search engine, Hodrick Prescott filter, perception

ІНТЕРЕС ДО ІСТОРИЧНИХ ПОСТАТЕЙ У ВСЕСВІТНІЙ МЕРЕЖІ ЯК МАРКЕР ІСТОРИЧНОЇ СВІДОМОСТІ У СУЧАСНІЙ УКРАЇНІ

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АНОТАЦІЯ

Мета статті – на основі статистичних даних пошукової системи Google визначити специфіку й інтенсивність інтересу до постаті М. Грушевського протягом 2004-2022 рр.

Методологія дослідження. Аналіз, виконаний за допомогою комп'ютерних методів, проводився на двох типах даних: часові ряди (кількісні дані) та набори ключових слів (якісні – текстові дані). Методи, які використовуються для дослідження часових рядів: аналіз центрального тренду в наборі та окремих моментів часу, а також виділення основного тренду з часового ряду шляхом відсіювання сезонних і випадкових компонентів за допомогою фільтра Ходріка Прескотта. Для аналізу наборів ключових слів (текстових даних) були використані методи комп'ютерної лінгвістики: на основі набору ключових слів створювали лінгвістичний корпус, з якого видаляли слова, що мають лише граматичне значення. Потім була складена таблиця частоти зустрічальності окремих слів, як окремо, так і частоти асоціацій між словами.

Наукова новизна дослідження полягає у з'ясуванні особливостей рецепції постаті М. Грушевського в кіберпросторі, що проявляється у частоті пошуку інформації про нього в популярному пошуковикі Google, а також найбільшій цифровій енциклопедії Вікіпедія.

Висновки. У підсумку нашого дослідження відзначимо, що М. Грушевський постає як діяч знань і важливий для українського суспільства та, навпаки, не надто запитана постать для користувачів Інтернету з інших країн. Як бачимо з наведених результатів, в запитах стосовно М. Грушевського домінує здебільшого наукова та дидактична тематика. Тож певною робочою гіпотезою є те, що дискурс, описуючий М. Грушевського, не є скільки-небудь помітно політизованим, щоб можна було очікувати з огляду на його карколомну кар'єру в революційні роки. Натомість, згаданий дискурс пов'язаний з освітою, дослідженнями над культурною спадщиною, пам'яттю та історією. Отримані результати стануть у нагоді, насамперед, соціологам, котрі зосереджені на з'ясуванні динаміки зміни настроїв українців стосовно найбільш авторитетних діячів минулого.

Ключові слова: М. Грушевський, джерела «born digital», пошукова система Google, фільтр Ходріка Прескотта, рецепція

INTRODUCE

Active archival heuristics of past studies during the last thirty years have made researchers knowledgeable on the specific content of fundamental source deposits of Ukrainian collections, at the very least¹. In such circumstances, when faced with rapid

¹ Тельвак Віталій. Сучасне грушевськознавство: здобутки, втрати, перспективи. *Український історичний журнал*. 2021. № 5. С. 4-16.

actualization of the traditional (textual & visual) sources, it becomes more relevant to discuss the need to expand the source acquisition horizons of historical science researchers. At the same time, attention is increasingly being directed towards the Internet's informational potential, especially in Western humanitarian sciences. Our research aims to draw attention to the possibilities of studying and interpreting several so-called 'born digital' sources. We use the term 'born digital' in reference to the data that originally appeared as digital, that is, generated in cyberspace or with the help of digital information transformation assets, and did not previously exist in an analog version.

The purpose of our research is to discover the peculiarities of M. Hrushevskyi's perception in cyberspace, manifested in the frequency of searching for information about him using the popular Google search engine Wikipedia, the largest online encyclopedia.

MAIN MATERIAL PRESENTMENT

In enacting our research, we use the extended option of the Google search engine: trends.google. Our use of this function is not incidental, nor is it a consequence of it being simply 'at hand'. In today's world, the Internet's general availability has warped the reality of information research practices in the most robust fashion. Going through library catalogues, encyclopedias, and dictionaries have given way today to entering queries into Internet search engines, among which Google has occupied a dominant position since the beginning of our century. Using Google has become a skill so universal that it has turned into an almost involuntary action. To this end, the Ukrainian language has gained a new verb 'погуглити', which means searching for any information on the Internet, regardless of the search engine used.

This situation generates several cognitive problems. Firstly, the nature of 'objectivity' of the received data is a concern, namely when it comes to the results generated by search engines, primarily in terms of their hierarchy. Another issue is the information omitted by the search engine. Finally, the most relevant concern is the individualization of search results. This happens because Google programs track the user's Internet activity (recognizable by IP address or login data) and, depending on it, select the answer to the question inputted into the search engine. This means that two internet users with different web surfing histories will get different results for identical queries entered in the search engine. These outlined issues, as well as other ones not mentioned, do not change the fact that Google's extensive use makes statistical information on the questions put into its search bar a valuable source of information about Internet users and their interests, which refers to the larger part of humanity.

Created in 2006, the trends.google function provides every user with access to data on the search intensity of a particular query from 2004 onwards. This immediately attracted the attention of business-minded people, who saw in it an opportunity to study the habits of potential customers (finding out the most requested goods and services in a given season, for instance)². This data has also been useful in epidemiology – trends.google was considered an extremely effective tool for predicting flu outbreaks (based on queries entered into the search engine, such as ones concerning flu

² Comp.: Choi Hyunyoung, Varian Hal. Predicting the Present with Google Trends. *The Economic Record*. 2012. Vol. 88. Special Issue. June. S. 2-9.

medicine) in the 2008-2013 period. The underestimation of the 2013 flu outbreak³ made data scientists more distrustful of the received data, exposing the potential pitfalls of this type of information collection. It was a reminder that data does not reliably and assuredly elucidate the audience about the nature of the world but only provides accurate information about what people are searching for on the Internet. This data can be beneficial in social, economic and humanitarian studies, however, it requires critical and careful analysis of the research issues posed by this type of data⁴.

In order to understand whether the statistical data obtained from trends.google can be used to reliably portray the social realities of life in Ukraine, let us try to use it to help us ascertain the well-documented attitude problem of Ukrainians towards their native Ukrainian language as opposed to the Russian language, the influence of which on Ukrainian territory is substantial at this moment in time – especially in the eastern part of the country. According to the data of the 2001 population census, a significant part of the Ukrainian society living in the eastern regions predominantly used the Russian language, not Ukrainian. We present this data in the form of a diagram (fig. 1).

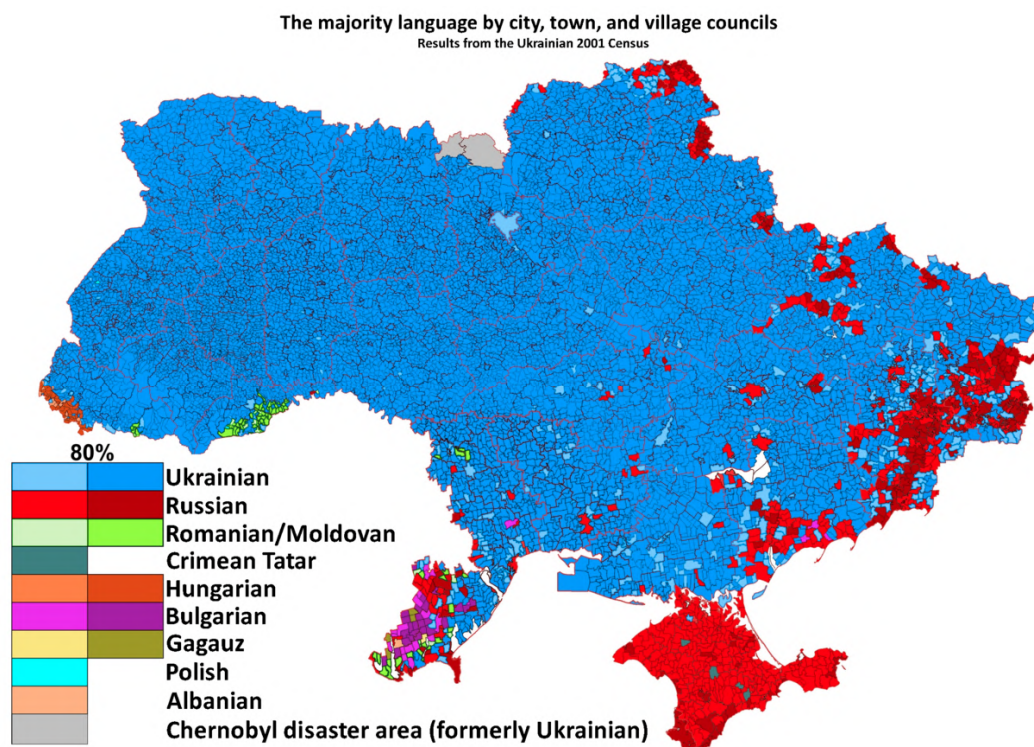


Fig. 1. Data after the 2001 Ukrainian census
(Source: Wikipedia. URL: <http://bit.ly/3IW874S>)

³ Comp.: Lazer David, Kennedy Ryan, King Gary, Vespignani Alessandro. The Parable of Google Flu: Traps in Big Data Analysis. *Science*. 2014. Vol. 343. 14 March.

⁴ Seung-Pyo Jun, Hyoungh Sun Yoo, San Choi. Ten years of research change using Google Trends: From the perspective of big data utilizations and applications. *Technological Forecasting & Social Change*. 2018. Vol. 130. S. 69-87.

Now let us compare these survey results with interest in the 'Ukrainian language' and 'Russian language' topics, measured by the frequency of entering these two queries in the Google search engine (in varying contexts, such as 'History of the Ukrainian language' or 'Russian-language films') by IP addresses operating on Ukrainian territory in 2004-2019. After calculating the received data and assigning it to specific areas, we obtained the following results, which are also presented below in the form of a diagram (fig. 2).

● Russian ● Ukrainian

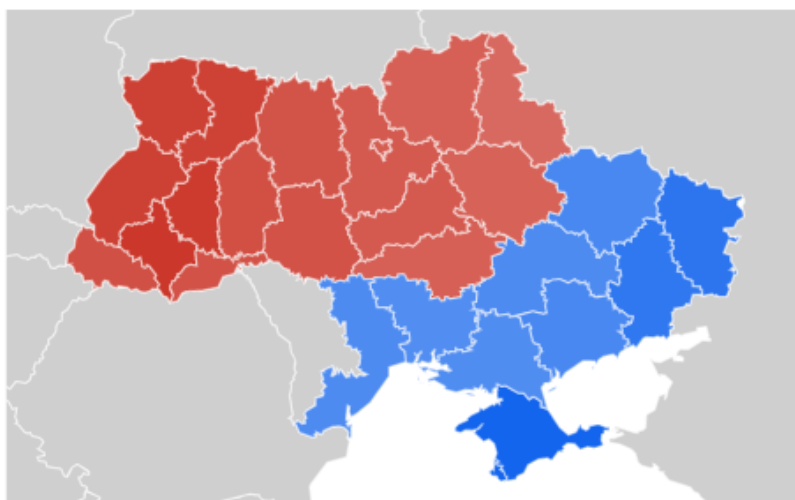


Fig. 2. Russian and Ukrainian languages according to trends.google data in Ukraine, by region

As we can see, the results that were obtained using trends.google help us illustrate the real socio-cultural phenomenon, which is the functioning of two languages on the territory of Ukraine and the significant influence of the Russian language as a means of everyday communication in the country's eastern part.

The provided example was only intended to showcase the cognitive value of statistical data in the Google search system, since the purpose of our article is to determine (on the basis of this data) the specifics and intensity of interest in M. Hrushevskyi. In fact, we will try to demonstrate how trends.google can be helpful for researching the perception phenomenon of M. Hrushevskyi's work among a wide circle of readers, not limited to a niche group of connoisseurs. Also, it is necessary to account for the peculiarity of the gathered data, its relative, and not absolute nature. The data we receive indicates the intensity of searches over a certain period (from 2004 and onwards), measured not in absolute data (the number of queries entered) but in relative (percentage) values, in which the reference points are the maximum intensity of searches for a certain period – 100%. The data attained in this way is expected to showcase a trend – an increase, or a decrease in search tendencies.

Therefore, for any queries concerning M. Hrushevskyi, input anywhere in the world (global search) post 2004, we get the following results (fig. 3).

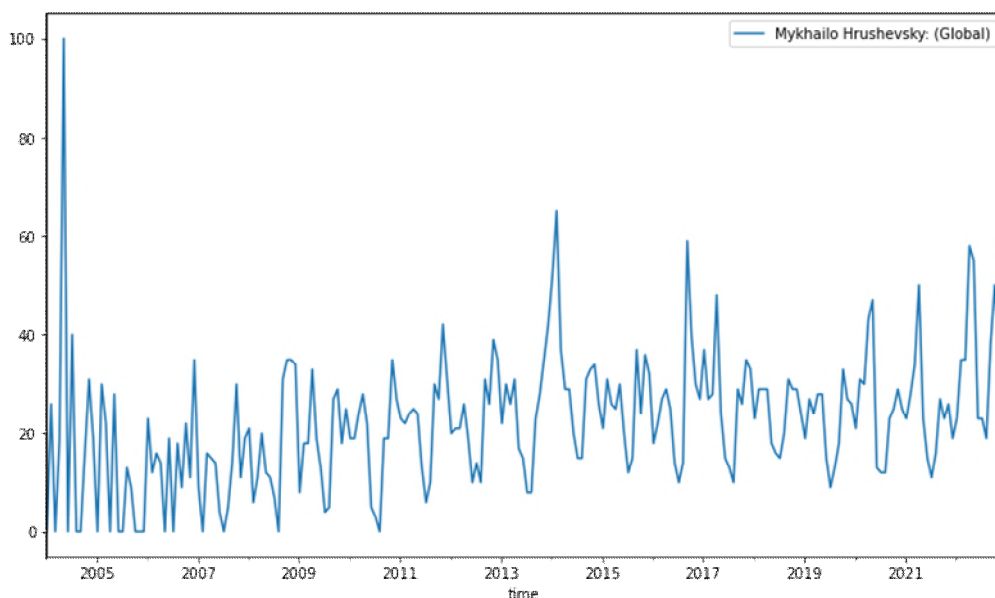


Fig. 3. Interest in the figure of Mykhailo Hrushevsky according to trends.google data (global reach)

From the given graph, we can ascertain that the 2004-2022 period is characterized by drastic changes in interest in M. Hrushevskyi. The intensity of interest peaked in 2004 and 2014, which were the 70th and 80th anniversaries of the scholar's death, respectively. However, in our opinion, the sharp increase in interest in M. Hrushevskyi at that time can be attributed to the actualization of his historical and political opinions in the context of the Orange Revolution and the Revolution of Dignity and the subsequent Russian aggression against Ukraine. In the following years, this level of interest stabilized, with a slight increase during the jubilee celebrations of 2016 and 2021, relating to, respectively, the 150th and 155th anniversaries of Hrushevskyi's birth.

We can increase the informational value of the given data by averaging the quantitative data obtained on trends.google for each year separately. Having done so, we get the following results (Fig. 4).

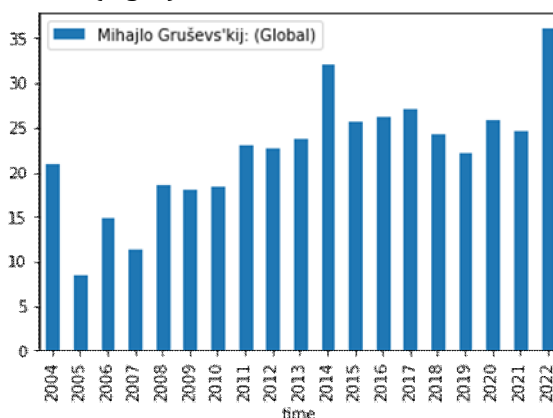


Fig. 4. Interest in the figure of Mikhailo Hrushevsky according to trends.google data (global reach) by year.

The showcased data from trends.google relates to global search. However, it is possible to separate information about each country using this data (ones where the intensity of searches was not less than 1% of the maximum value) and, in this way, establish a makeshift 'hierarchy' of countries in which Internet users searched for information about M. Hrushevskyi.

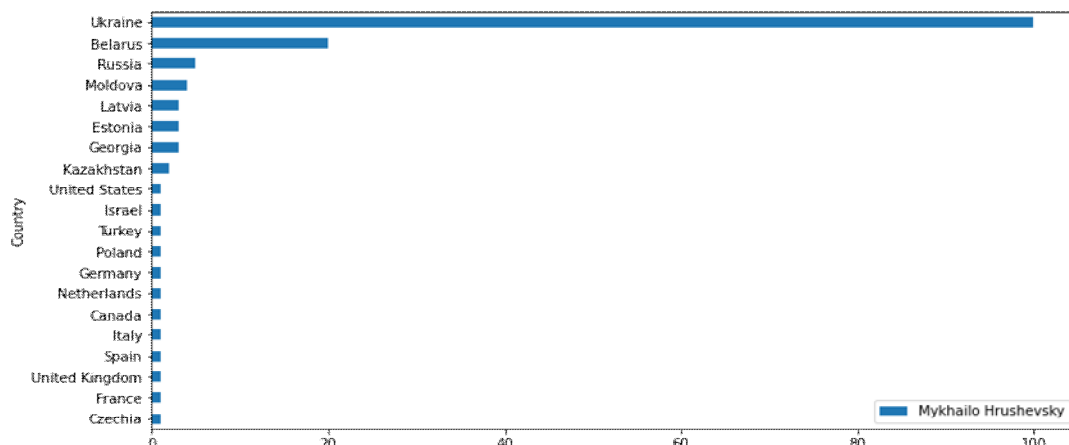


Fig. 5. Global interest in the figure of Mikhaïl Hrushevsky according to trends.google data by the percentage of searches by country.

This data is useful because it can serve to verify many established stereotypes. Therefore, as expected, Ukraine is leading in the number of inquiries about M. Hrushevskyi. Next come users from Belarus (20% of Ukrainian activity), Russia and Moldova (about 10% of Ukrainian activity), Estonia closes the top 5, whose users have almost the same intensity of queries as those from Georgia (about 3% of Ukrainian activity). Then, in descending order, there are searches from Kazakhstan, Latvia, Israel and the Czech Republic, which close the top 10 in terms of search intensity. The last two countries exhibit only 1% of Ukrainian activity. We have similar results, with minor differences, for Internet users from Lithuania, Poland, Germany, the Netherlands, Romania, Canada, Spain, Italy, the United Kingdom, France, the USA and Turkey. It should be noted that in the context of the given data, it is essential to compare it with the traditions of M. Hrushevskyi's reception during his lifetime in the Czech Republic⁵, Germany⁶, Romania⁷ and France⁸.

According to the criterion of the language implemented in the search queries, the Ukrainian segment also clearly dominates. The interest of Russian-speaking users is not

⁵ Telvak V., Telvak V. Mykhailo Hrushevsky in Czech historiography (the first third of the 20th century). *Codrul Cosminului*. 2019. Vol. XXV. No 2. P. 265-286.

⁶ Telvak V., Yanyshyn B., Telvak V. Between history and politics: the image of Mykhailo Hrushevsky in German Slavic studies of the first third of the 20th century. *Przegląd nauk historycznych*. 2021. R. XX. Nr 2. S. 103-125; Telvak V., Yanyshyn B. 'Geschichte des Ukrainischen (Ruthenischen) volkes' of Mykhailo Hrushevsky in the discussions of the beginning of the XXth century. *Studia Historica Nitriensia*. 2021. Vol. 25. No 1. P. 71-90.

⁷ Telvak V., Ilytskyi V. Mykhailo Hrushevsky and Nicolae Iorga: scholars' struggle over the national history. *Codrul Cosminului*. 2018. Vol. XXIV. No 1. P. 53-64.

⁸ Тельвак В., Тельвак В. Михайло Грушевський у колі французьких колег: проблеми рецепції. *Емінак*. 2022. № 4 (40). С. 120-138.

decidedly inferior. English-, Polish-, German-, French-, Czech-, Spanish-, Japanese- and Italian-speaking users, however, are significantly less interested in the subject.

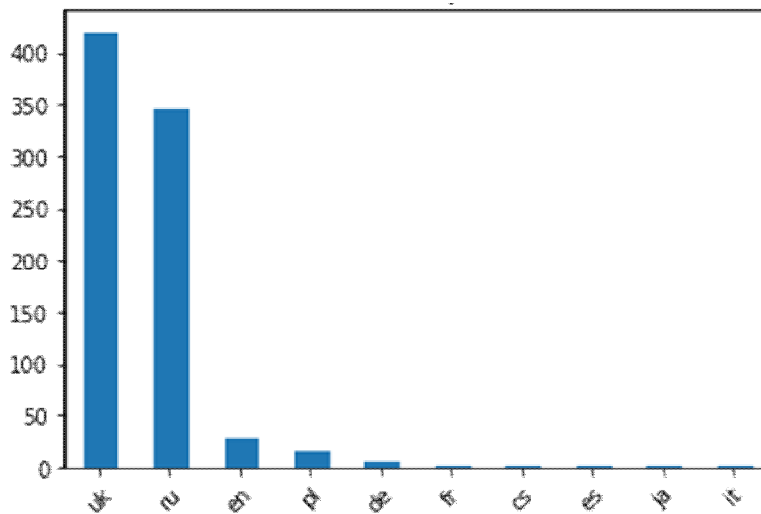


Fig. 6. Entries to pages dedicated to Mikhail Hrushevsky posted on Wikipedia (global coverage) with a breakdown of the language versions of the pages.

The monthly average search data is interesting. It shows a stable interest in M. Hrushevskyi throughout the year, except for the summer months, which might be explained by the searchers' dominant didactic motivation. Another relevant fact is that most searches occur in September and November, when the anniversaries of the birth and death of Hrushevskyi are celebrated, respectively.

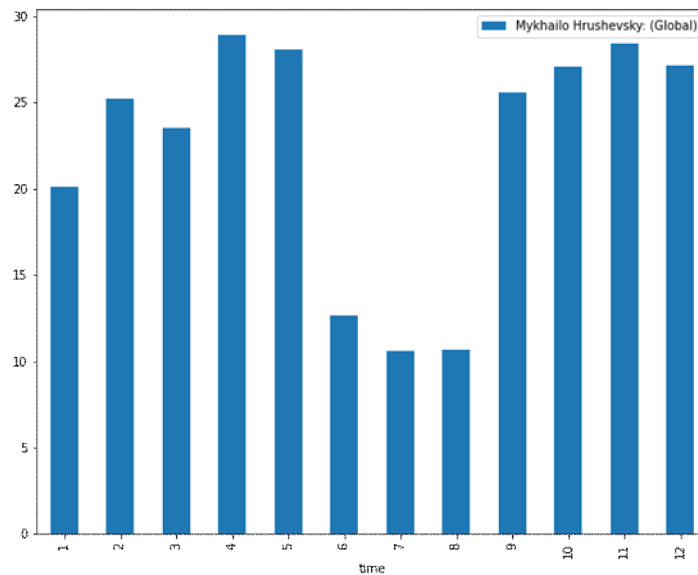


Fig. 7. Interest in the figure of Mikhail Hrushevsky according to trends.google data (global reach) by month of search

As demonstrated, the data obtained from trends.google is in the 'time series' format, a two-dimensional data table showing quantitative measurements of a certain variable (i.e., search volume) at regular intervals. We can perform a transformation on the time series, which will separate its components: the general trend from seasonality and irregular components (outliers). In the provided example below, we have figured out the underlying trend for the time series using the python stats models programming language module to apply the Hodrick-Prescott filter, which is a 'smoothing' option for data distribution⁹, to show the underlying trend separated from temporal increases and reductions. As a result of the computations above, we got the graph showcased below, which testifies to a completely unknown until now a tendency towards moderate growth (on a global scale) of interest in M. Hrushevskyi.

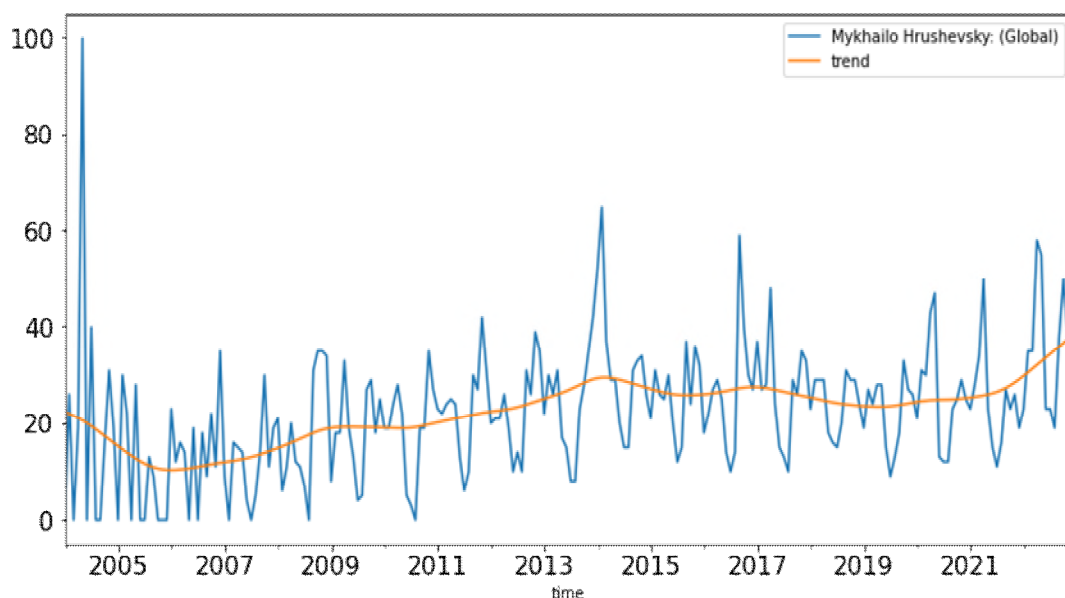


Fig. 8. Interest in the figure of Mikhalio Hrushevsky according to trends.google data (global coverage) with the general trend extracted – seasonal components of the time series sifted using the Hodrick-Prescott filter.

Data on the frequency of search queries related to M. Hrushevskyi or visits to his Wikipedia page will not tell us much about his work's perception without juxtaposing it with the data relating to other personalities – his famous contemporaries. The trends.google option makes it possible to compare search intensity according to different keywords or topics. In order to evaluate M. Hrushevskyi's popularity amongst Internet users next to his contemporaries, we chose two iconic Ukrainian scholars of the past, as well as two leading politicians of that chaotic era of Ukrainian history. These are historians Volodymyr Antonovych and Vyacheslav Lypynskyi, as well as Pavlo Skoropadskyi and Symon Petliura.

⁹Harvey Andrew, Thomas Trimbur. Trend estimation and the Hodrick-Prescott filter. *Journal of the Japan Statistical Society*. 2008. Vol. 38 (1). S. 41-49.

moving averages (trends)

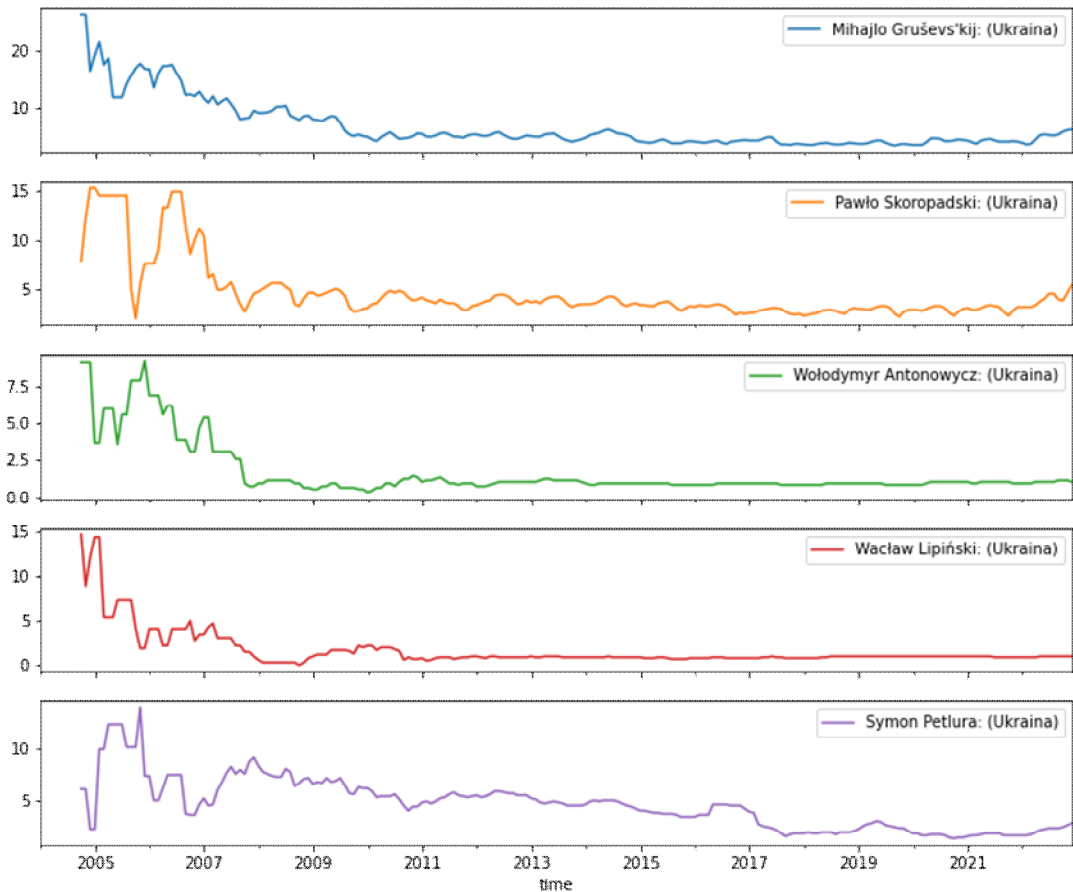


Fig. 9. Interest in the figure of Mikhail Hrushevskyi in comparison with other historical figures from modern Ukrainian history according to trends.google data (coverage for Ukraine)

In order to increase the informational value of the given data, we will provide an average number for each year separately below. The results are as follows (fig. 10).

The data shows that M. Hrushevskyi has a notable advantage over his fellow historians V. Antonovych and V. Lypynskyi. The situation is similar in regard to the aforementioned political figures as well. Even though the number of searches for P. Skoropadskyi was also fairly high (in 2004 in particular, which can be written off as a sort of after-effect of the 130th anniversary of his birth a year earlier), the average interest in M. Hrushevskyi among Internet users remains greater. In descending order of popularity according to average annual searches, Hrushevskyi is followed by his political rival P. Skoropadskyi, and then V. Lypynskyi, S. Petliura and finally, V. Antonovych. The average monthly indicators of Internet users' interest are also all in favor of M. Hrushevskyi, who is once again followed by all the same people in the exact order.

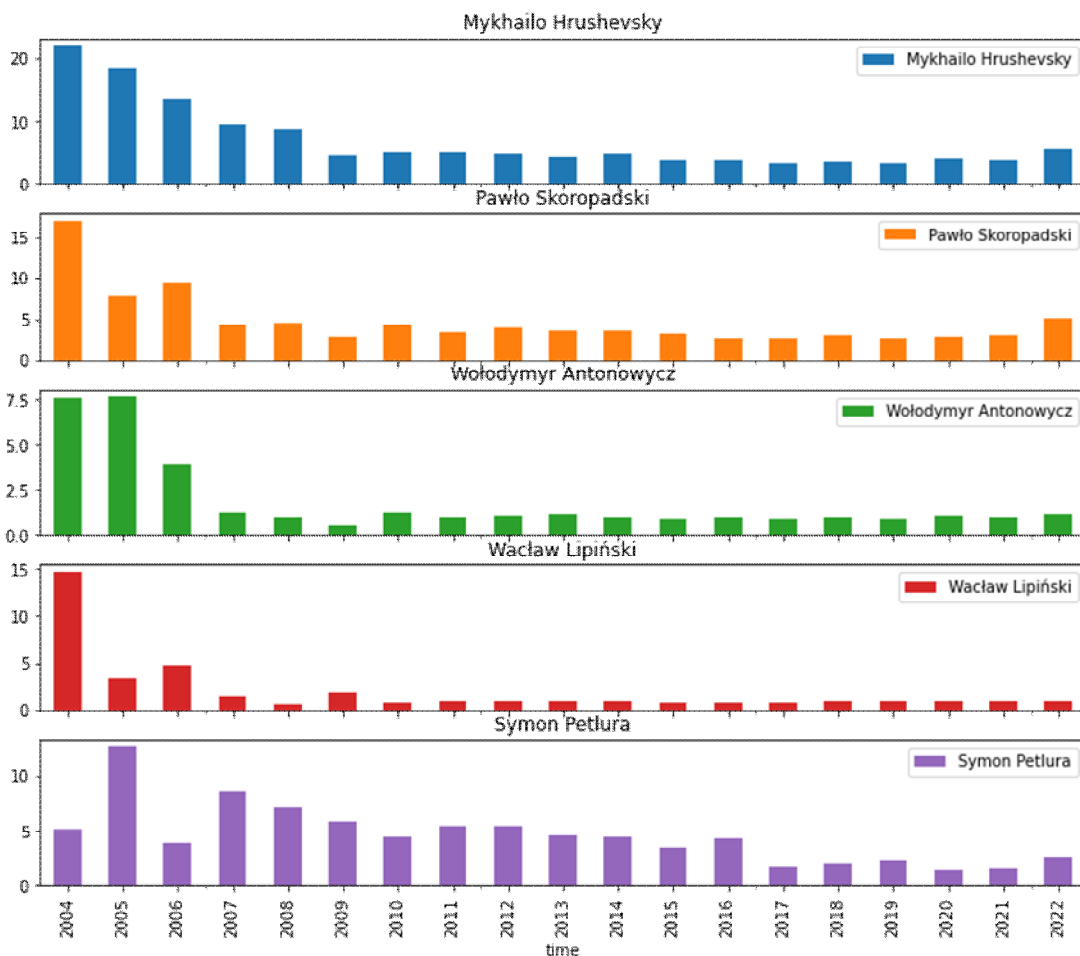


Fig. 10. Interest in the figure of Mikhaïlo Hrushevsky compared to other historical figures from modern Ukrainian history according to trends.google (coverage for Ukraine) data by year of search.

Equally interesting is the question of M. Hrushevskyi's popularity among Internet users compared to other prominent Ukrainians. Here, we have chosen for comparison the figures of ancient Ruthenian, Cossack, and modern (to Hrushevskyi himself) periods – those of Danylo Halytskyi, Ivan Mazepa, Bohdan Khmelnytskyi and Stepan Bandera. As we can see, the latter prevails in popularity here, albeit over a short period. who prevails in popularity here, albeit over a short period. In 2014 and 2022, there was a sharp increase in Stepan Bandera's popularity among Internet users, which is undoubtedly rooted in social and political circumstances, influenced by the events of the Revolution of Dignity and Russian aggression, which amplified the search intensity for iconic figures of the Ukrainian liberation movement. S. Bandera is closely followed in popularity by B. Khmelnytskyi and M. Hrushevskyi and then by I. Mazepa and Danylo Halytskyi (fig. 11).

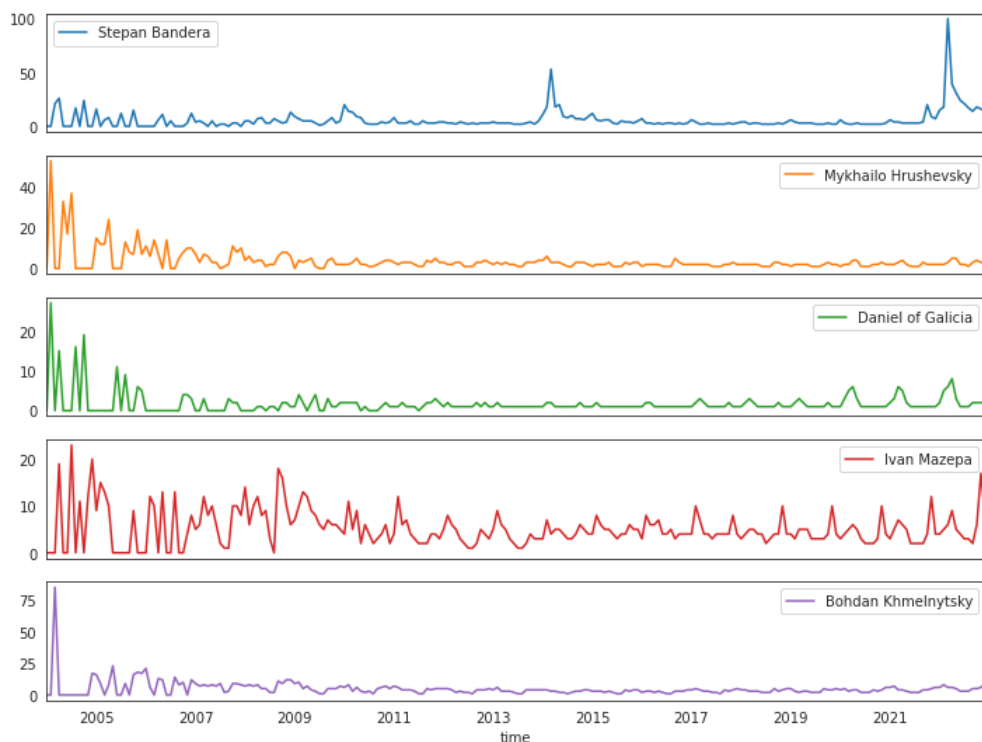


Fig. 11. Interest in the figure of Mikhail Hrushevsky in comparison with other historical figures from modern Ukrainian history according to trends.google data (coverage for Ukraine).

On the other hand, as for the average indicators during the 2004-2022 period, S. Bandera is followed by I. Mazepa, and then, in descending order, by B. Khmelnytskyi, M. Hrushevskyi and Danylo Halytskyi (fig. 12).

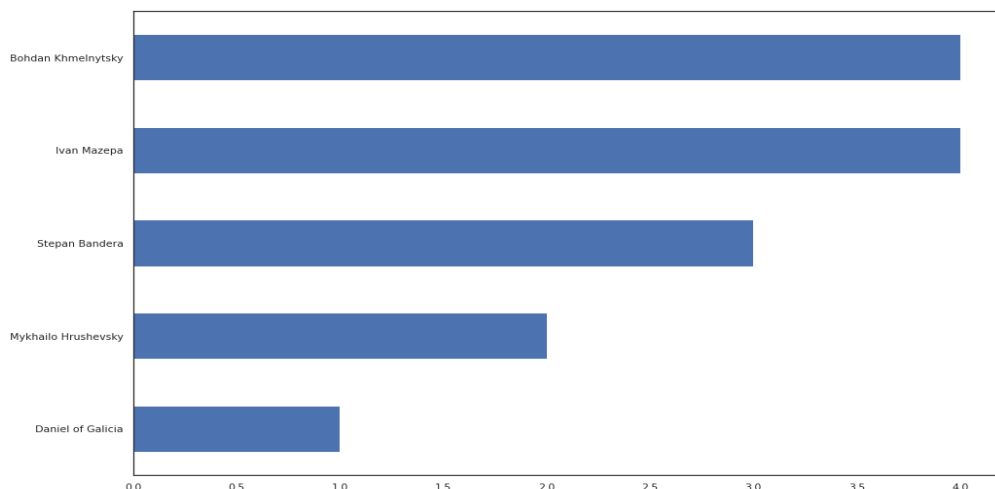


Fig. 12. Averaged annual values of interest in selected historical figures according to trends.google data

After separating the general tendencies using the Hodrick-Prescott filter for the aforementioned historical figures (the values show the intensity of searches in

Ukraine), it turns out that the general trend of the data distribution (after the removal of temporal fluctuations) is in some places distinctly different from the initial impression caused by viewing unfiltered data. Thus, for searches related to S. Bandera, this difference is significant (fig. 13).

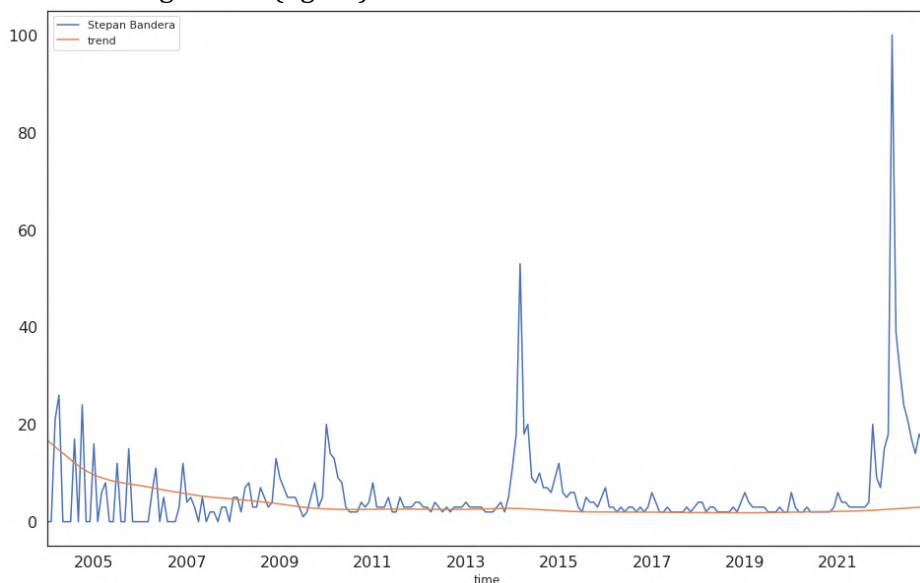


Fig. 13. Interest in the figure of Stepan Bandera according to trends.google data (for searches from within Ukraine) with the general trend extracted (seasonal elements of the time series extracted using the Hodrick Prescott filter).

Whereas for the searches regarding M. Hrushevskiy, the filtered tendencies coincide with unfiltered data (fig. 14).

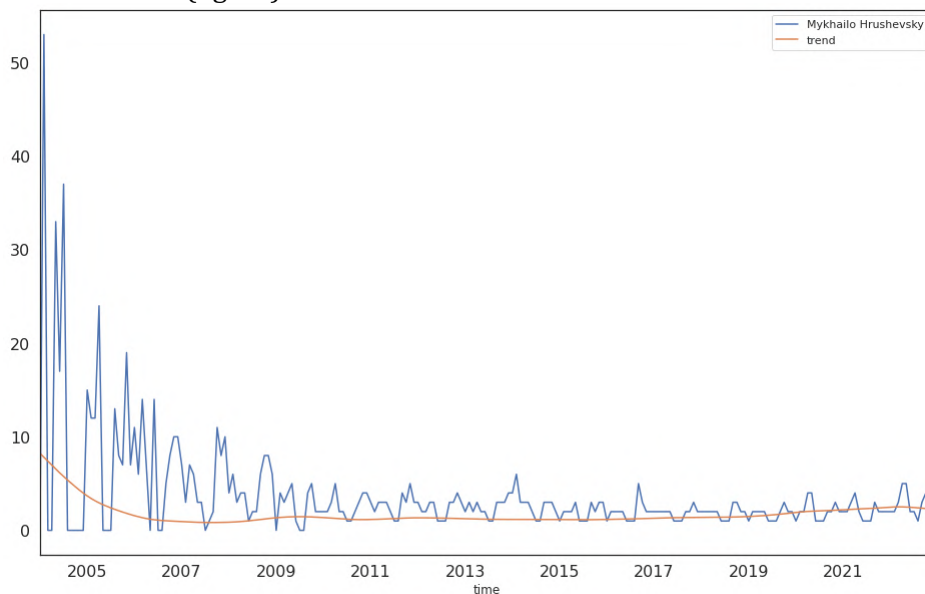


Fig. 14. Interest in the figure of Mykhailo Hrushevskiy according to trends.google data (for searches from within Ukraine) with the general trend extracted (seasonal elements of the time series extracted using the Hodrick Prescott filter).

Highlighting the trend indicates a slight (since 2019) increase in interest towards the 'pro-Western' king Danylo Halytskyi (fig. 15).

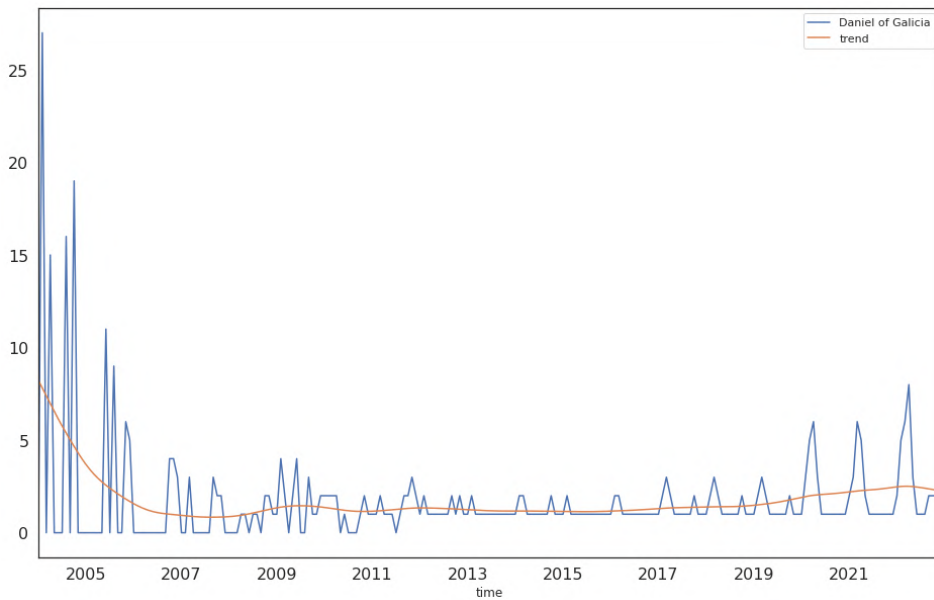


Fig. 15. Interest in the figure of Daniel of Galicia according to trends.google data (for searches from Ukraine) with the general trend extracted (seasonal elements of the time series extracted using the Hodrick Prescott filter).

A slight increase in interest can also be observed in I. Mazepa's case (fig. 16).

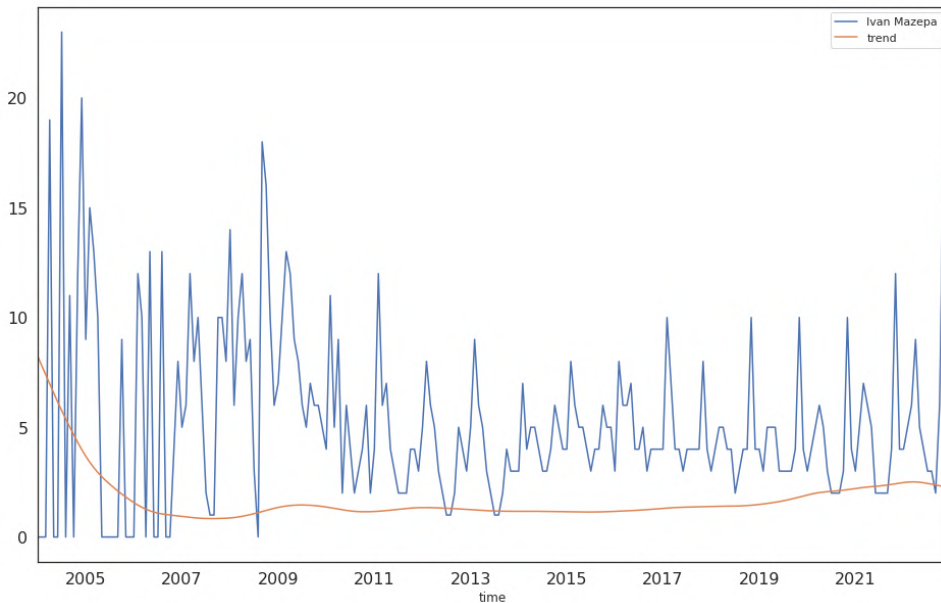


Fig. 16. Interest in the figure of Ivan Mazepa according to trends.google data (for searches from Ukraine) with the general trend extracted (seasonal elements of the time series extracted using the Hodrick Prescott filter).

Filtration of data showcases that in the case of B. Khmelnytsky, interest does not increase or wane, it is consistent, and its fluctuations are only cyclical, which can be seen in the chart below, which shows unfiltered data, cyclical fluctuations and a very stable tendency overall (fig. 17).

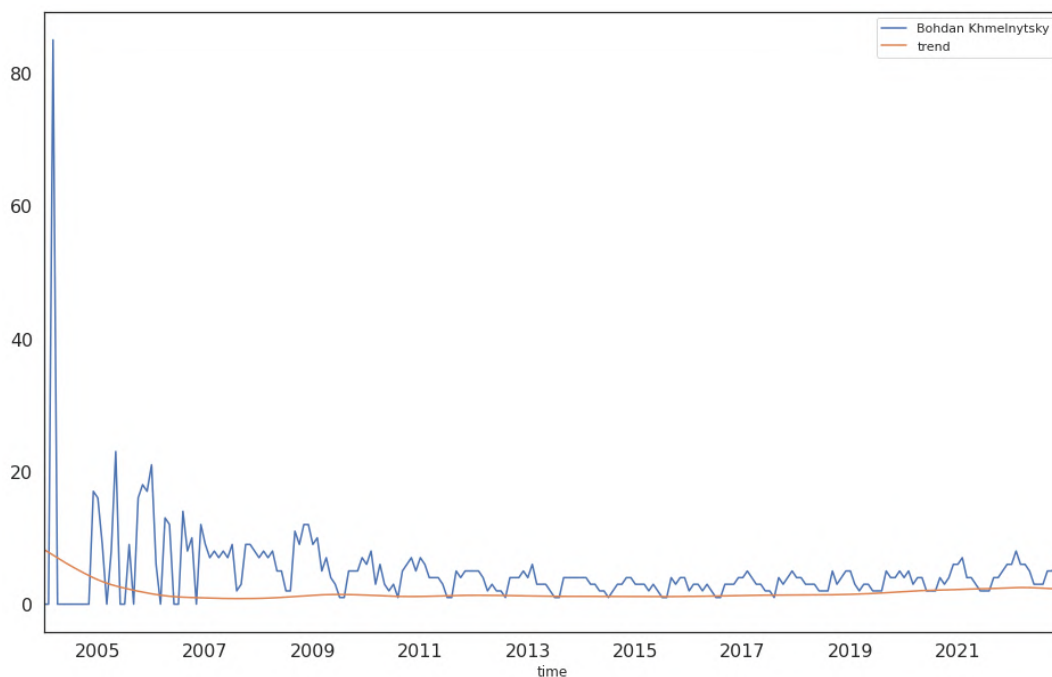


Fig. 17. Interest in the figure of Bohdan Khmelnytsky according to trends.google data (for searches from Ukraine) with extracted general trend (seasonal elements of the time series sifted using the Hodrick Prescott filter).

It also seems productive to expand the topicality of our research by comparing interest in M. Hrushevskiy with that of other historical figures in different countries (localizations). The data from Wikipedia (page visit stats) is the most valuable here since this website provides it in an irrelative form. Therefore, we can compare M. Hrushevskiy's popularity in Ukraine to the interest in figures who played similar roles in the histories of other Slavic nations: Tomáš Masaryk for the Czechs, Pavel Milyukov for the Russians, and Michał Bobrzyński and Roman Dmowski (author of Polish historiosophy and political philosophy) for the Poles. The comparison of popularity dynamics of these figures on Wikipedia in 2022 looks as follows (fig. 18).

Now let us compare the average value – the number of daily entries (again, the provided data is irrelative) (fig. 19).

Also let us showcase the total number of entries (fig. 20).

If we are interested in the specifics of interest in M. Hrushevskiy (the aspects of his life/work/his work's reception), then we should analyze the keywords that are used in the Google search engine queries alongside with the historian's name. The stats for such words are as follows (Fig. 21).

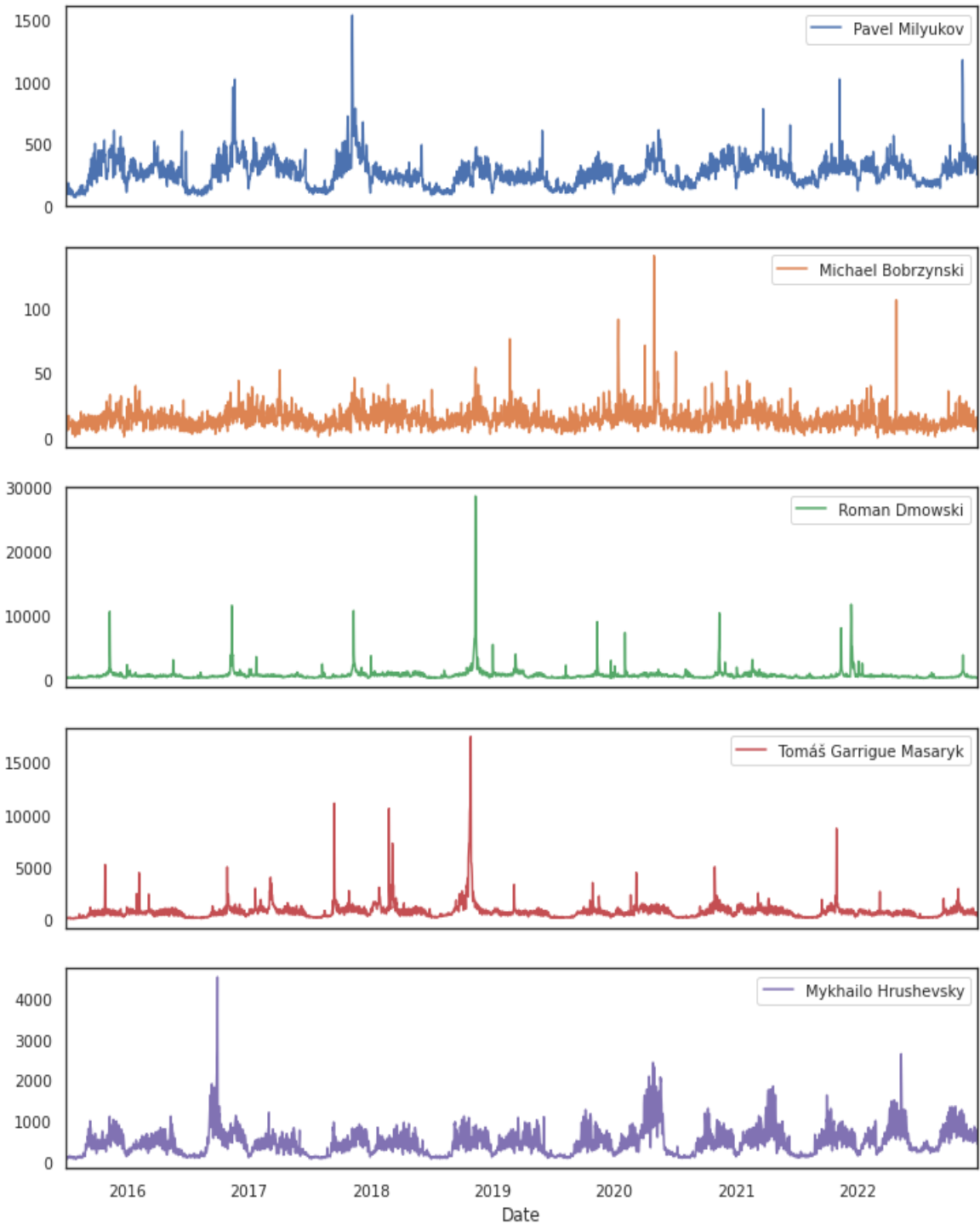


Fig. 18. The number of entries to Wikipedia pages (in the period 2016-2022) dedicated to figures from Polish, Ukrainian and Czech history: intellectuals and also politicians.

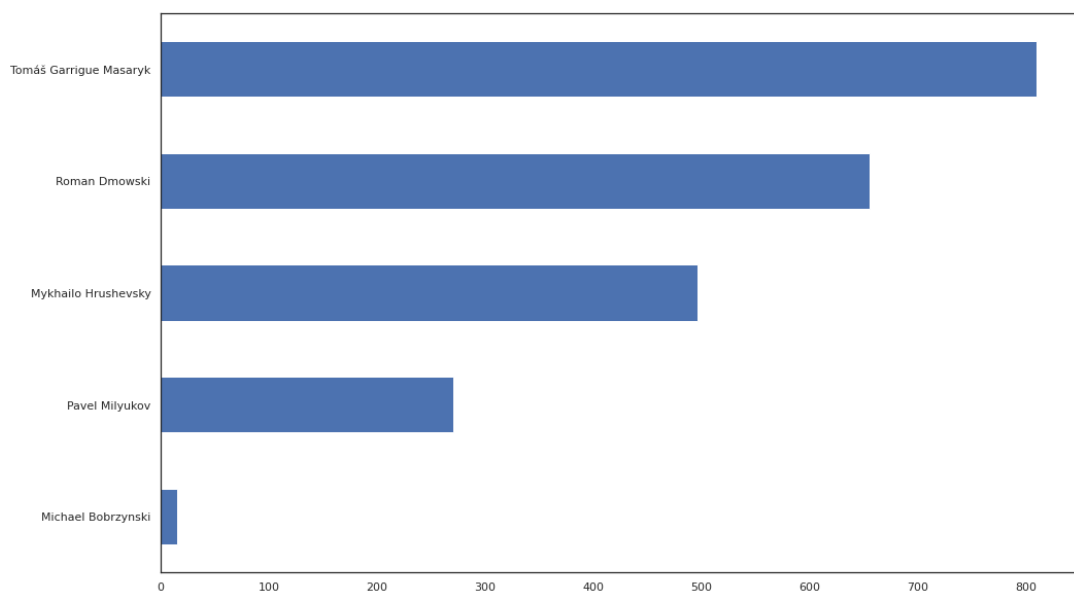


Fig. 19. Average daily number of entries to Wikipedia pages (in the period 2016-2022) dedicated to figures from Polish, Ukrainian and Czech history: intellectuals and also politicians.

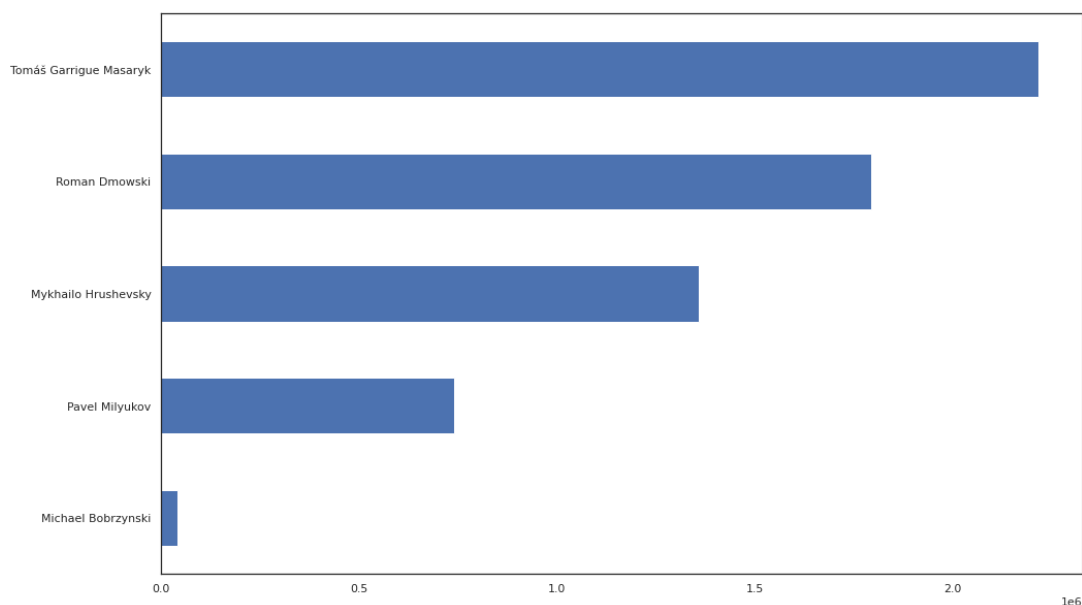


Fig. 20. Total number of hits (in millions) on Wikipedia pages (in the period 2016-2022) dedicated to figures from Polish, Ukrainian and Czech history: intellectuals and politicians.

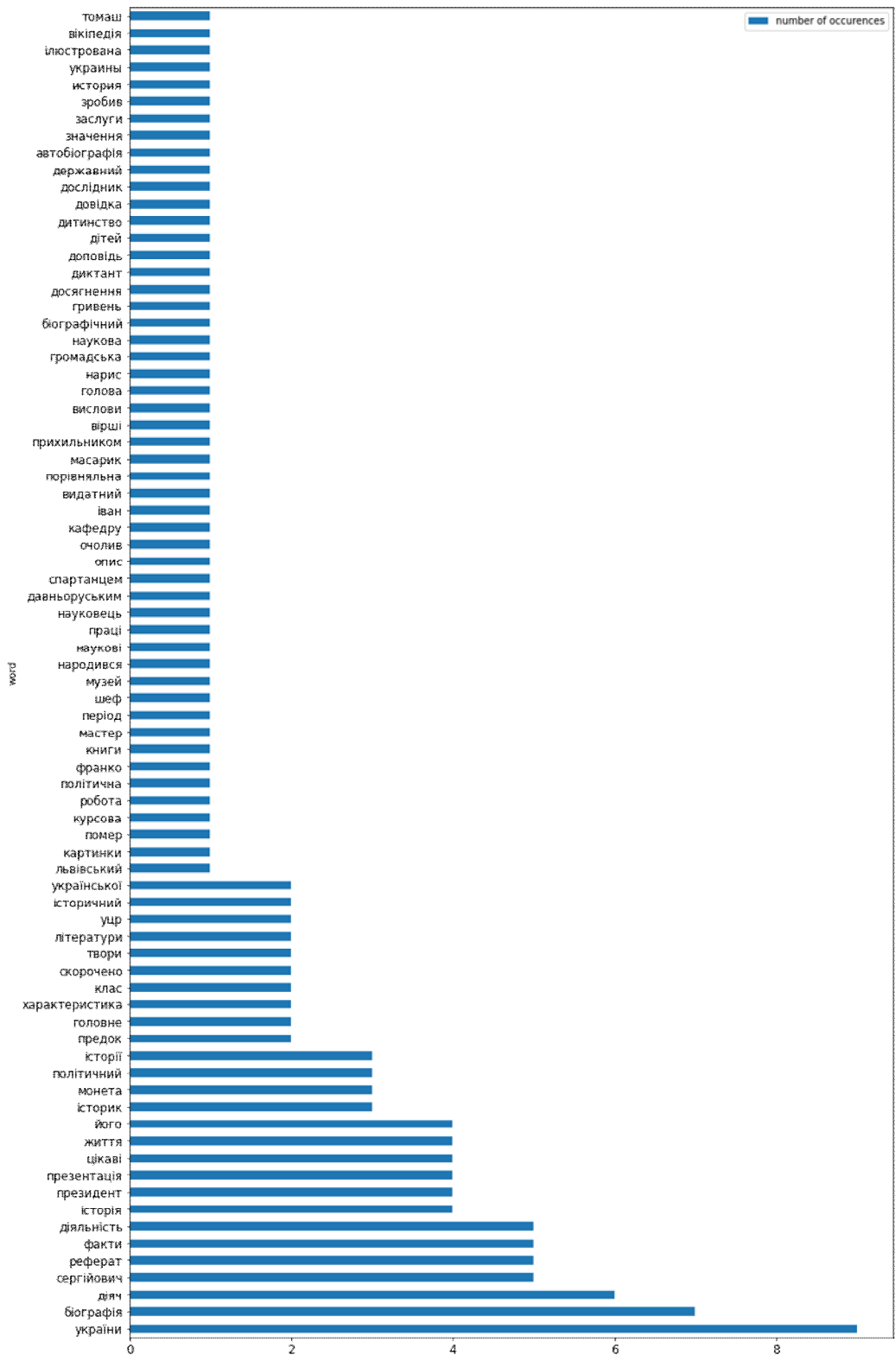


Fig. 21. Number of occurrences of the word in keyword searches related to the character of Mikhail Hrushevsky

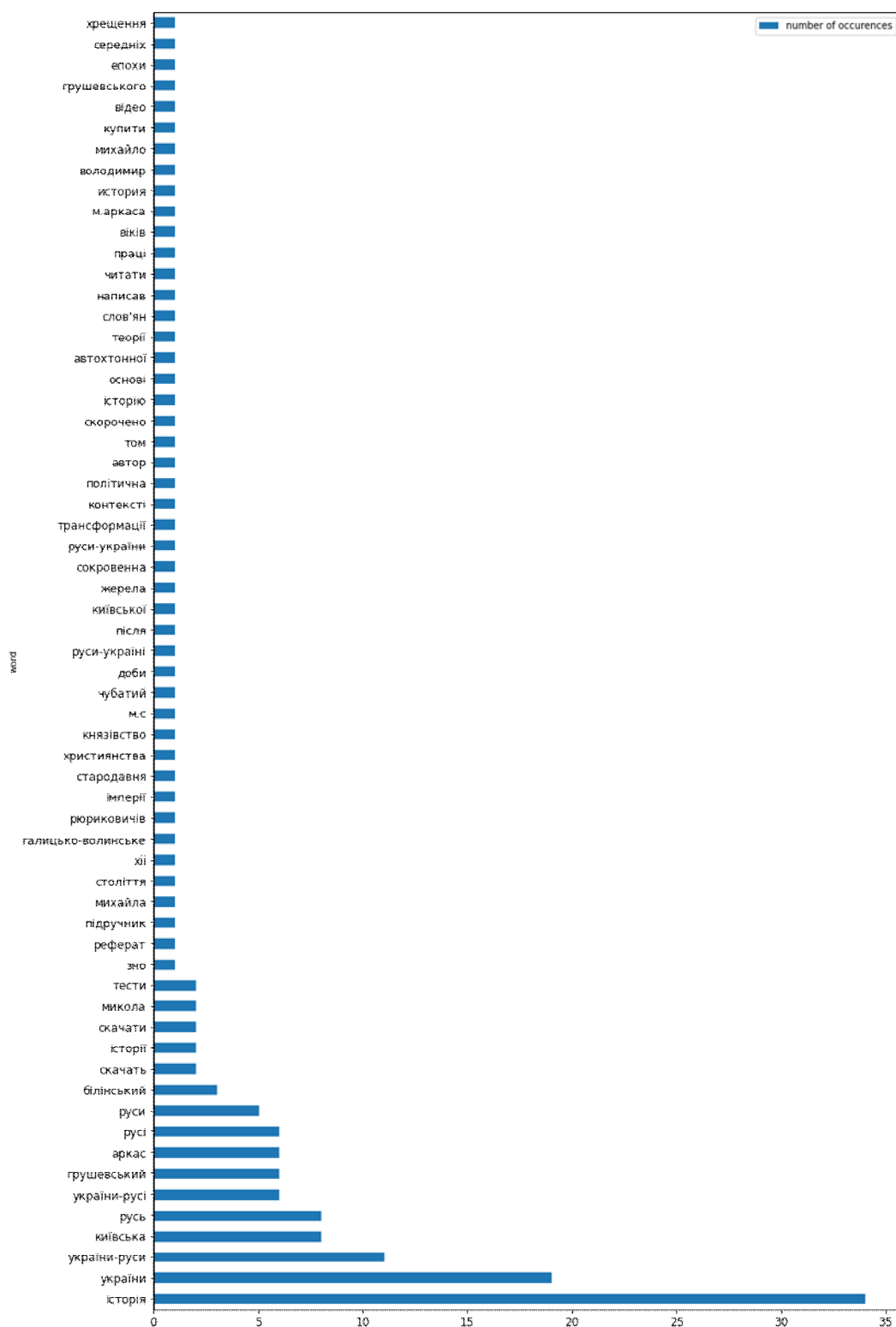


Fig. 22. Number of occurrences of the word in keyword searches related to "History of the Ukraine_Rus" (M. Hrushevsky's magnum opus)

As shown by the provided stats, many of these words refer to general information about the scholar (facts about his life, biographical info, personal characteristics). Also, these queries indicate the scientific or didactic nature of the interest (research paper and essay writing). Some of the queries relate to Hrushevskiy's main hobby (coin collecting) and some to his political activities (as Chairman of the Central Council of Ukraine).

If the question of whether there is a connection between the search for information about M. Hrushevskiy himself and his principal historical work, "History of Ukraine-Rus'", interests us, then these instances are directly related, as we can see in the following chart (fig. 22).

An important footnote aiding the demystification of M. Hrushevskiy's figure among today's intellectuals, relates to the lack of correlation between the 'Hrushevskiy' and the 'first president of Ukraine' search queries. Therefore, we can claim that modern historians have successfully overcome the myth surrounding M. Hrushevskiy's presumed status as the first president of the Ukrainian People's Republic.

CONCLUSIONS

As a result of our research, we can surmise that M. Hrushevskiy is a well-known and respected figure in Ukrainian society and, on the contrary, is not very popular amongst Internet users from other countries. As we can see from the gathered data, queries regarding M. Hrushevskiy predominantly relate to scientific and didactic topics. Therefore, a certain working hypothesis can be put forth that the discourse surrounding M. Hrushevskiy is not as politicized, as could be expected given his meteoric career during the revolutionary years. Instead, the discourse is much more closely related to education, cultural heritage research, memory and history. The results obtained from this research will be helpful to sociologists working on the attitude dynamics study of Ukrainians regarding the most famous and influential figures of the past.

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