Psychological features and significance of mass religious communications

N. S. Kostruba

Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University
Corresponding author. E-mail: nataliia.kostruba@vnu.edu.ua

Abstract. The article outlines the growing role of mass religious communications in Ukraine and their impact on modern socio-economic conditions in the country. A brief overview of the features and content of religious discourse in the media are made. Emphasis is placed on expanding the sphere of mass religious communications in Ukraine, not only on radio and television channels, but also on social networks, the Internet and even mobile applications. We have demonstrated empirically that the church discusses and shapes public opinion on important state and social issues.

Keywords: religion, communications, mass media, influence, information policy.

Introduction. Ineffective information policy, ignoring the role of the mass communication component of state policy have become one of the main factors of the difficult foreign and domestic political situation in Ukraine. Ukraine's national interests and security require the immediate development and implementation of a state information policy set (internal and external) with the effective use of modern communication technologies. A good public information policy should consist of general and specific principles for each area of application.

The difficult socio-political situation in Ukraine, the presence of internally displaced persons and the growing number of military personnel contribute to the growth of the religious community. Sociological studies confirm this fact. Thus, the company Research & Branding Group in Ukraine (May 2019) conducted a study that trust in the church and its leaders is the highest among other social institutions (62%). Thus, most Ukrainians trust religious speeches, advice, and the media.

The information technology development, mass digitalization has an impact on religious life and communication. Religious communities now have Internet sites, social media pages, and official all-Ukrainian publications that inform believers about the church's position on various life and political events. In general, religious organizations influence public opinion on important state issues, such as language issues, control citizens through the collection of biometric data, and so on.

Brief overview of related publications. Scholars of various scientific fields study religious communications [1; 4; 8]. These studies are generally aimed at studying the specifics of religious influences (ritualization, symbolism, etc.). The study of religious communications is carried out in various fields. For example, there are studies about dominant messages Internet memes communicate about religion [12]. Research on the provision of online services and virtual embeddedness in connection with COVID-19 [13].

In general, in the phenomenon of communication, the subject and the object are distinguished. The subjects of religious communication are all participants in this type of communication. Participants in turn are divided agents and clients. Agents include those who play an active role in institutional communication, and clients include those who are forced to turn to agents and are members of society. In relation to religious discourse, the agents are the clergy and the clients are the parishioners [3].

The circle of participants expands significantly when religious discourse is carried out in the media. In the media there are 3 groups of participants in religious communications: agents, clients and intermediaries. Agents, as in the religious sphere itself, are representatives of various denominations. The mediators are journalists, as well as the media themselves. Customers, in turn, can also be divided into 2 categories: active and passive recipients. The active ones are those who deliberately choose religious television and radio programs. Passive are those who accept the information offered to them in part. This category of customers makes their choice unconsciously. Religious communication through the media is a complex process involving a large number of participants, each of whom has a special role. It is important to note that the persons we have mentioned as religion agents have great authority, and, therefore, they play a leading role in this type of communication.

Another important component of religious communication is its subject area. This component is one of the most important, so it is the basis of all religious communication. The subject area includes such concepts as God, Faith and Unity. These three concepts are key in religious communication. It is important to note that all these "objects" are not physical realities, but are reflected in certain communicative attitudes that make a person believe in their existence. Thus God - acts as a "superagent" in the chain of communication client - agent - superagent. God is a key religious concept mean objectified supernatural entity serving the object of worship. Possessing magical properties, he stands at the highest hierarchical level. The next component of the subject area is unity. Unity is a process of unanimity, unity in faith, worship of authority, common worldview, views, similarity in judgments. The whole religious system is based on unity. One of the goals of religious communication is the call to unity. Finally, the basis of unity is Faith. Faith is the basis of religion. An ideal object close to the concept of trust. An active force that forces a person to set a goal and move towards it with confidence in a certain authority. It is faith that unites people. Thus, faith is a kind of link between the supeagent - God and the purpose of religious discourse - unity. Thus, it becomes clear that all three components of the subject area of religious discourse are inextricably linked and represent a closed structure, which is the key to the stability of this system. Despite the fact that the subject area is the basis of religious communication, in the media it is not manifested as clearly as other components of religious discourse. Rather, it is a covert

goal pursued by the media as intermediaries in religious communication. Since the media cannot directly conduct religious propaganda, religious broadcasts are a kind of alternative to direct influence. That is why we can say that the function of influence and the subject area are interrelated. Mass media realize this purpose, using other means. Thus, lexical devices (use of biblicisms), allusions, stylistic strategies (program concept) are used in religious TV and radio programs. Thus, the subject area of religious discourse lays the foundation for communication, which is later realized in various forms [6].

Traditional or institutional religions actively use the Internet in their information activities, as it meets the needs and capabilities of religious organizations in the information sphere to a greater extent than other media channels. To a large extent, the presence of traditional religions on the Web is limited to "broadcasting" to both internal and external audiences, the interactive potential and the possibility of "feedback" are less involved. The ability of the Internet to create and maintain horizontal social connections, the mobilization of users around common values and interests contribute to the development and quantitative growth of the religious segment.

The activities of traditional religious organizations on the Internet are complicated by two factors: a) the fact that the Internet promotes the expression of radical views and becomes a breeding ground for extremist movements that position themselves as legitimate representatives of traditional religions. b) fierce competition from esoteric, pagan and quasi-religious movements (New Age beliefs), the nature of which is more organic to the network organization of the Internet [5]. But today, traditional churches are also actively involved in communication in the media. In addition to many sites, priests communicate on social networks, where they design educational posts about religious life. Also, several religious apps have been created, where there is a religious calendar, which rites and prayers are appropriate for the holidays. "The newest social media and mobile apps or application software oftentimes play an integral role in concert with existing communication landscapes and media ensembles, to augment and sustain pastoral legitimacy and power" [7].

At the most basic level, the Internet has influenced religious community, authority, and identity. However, new media have also changed ritual practices, religious information, and even the types of religious experiences in humans. Internet religious activity is a complex event that can be interpreted in different ways. Although it takes place in a "virtual reality" environment, it is often perceived as natural and real. Cyberspace has created a new environment where the sacred can occur in new and dynamic ways [2]. Others argue that the Internet world is a human technological construct that has no spiritual value. But in reality, religious activity thrives on the Internet. Consequently, we can consider it as a new form of religious and cultural expression [9].

There are differences between the service in virtual reality and the usual church services. In general, many practices and ways of communication - the formal structure of the meeting, part of the content, as well as the role - are transferred from the services of the real world to the virtual. However, some practices are transformed by technology and can worsen the meaning of a religious gathering:

verbal exchanges become shorter, emotional solidarity with participants weakens, and there is less order in prayer meetings. But this technology also has certain advantages: the virtual church allows for more open exchange between participants, it provides access from around the world and allows experimentation in the use of virtual space, less limited than the church in the real world [11].

The church is a powerful tool for managing the masses. The church often expresses its attitude to important state or social problems. Therefore, it is important to study the content of information messages of the church.

Goal. Content analysis of the headlines of information messages of churches in Ukraine.

Materials and methods. The material for the study we chose the headlines of information messages of the most numerous churches in Ukraine (Christians: Orthodox, Catholics, Protestants). In total, the headlines of 4 official websites were analyzed: the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU, https://www.pomisna.info), the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP, https://news.church.ua), Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC, http://ugcc.ua) and Protestant Churches of Ukraine (https://www.baptyst.com). In total, we analyzed 48 news headlines (OCU - 12, UOCMP - 22, UGCC - 5, REPCU - 7 headlines) for the period 12-19.03.2020. All news headlines for the selected period were taken into analysis.

We used Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC 2015) [10] computer software to perform meaningful analysis.

Results and its discussion. In total, we combined all the headings into one file (518 words) and used LIWC we identify the meaningful characteristics of the text. The words space (8,49%) and time (2,32%) are most often used in headlines. That is, the headlines often cover specific events. The most frequent words in these categories are "year" and "time". Much of the information concerns the commemoration of significant dates, as well as the generalized name of the pandemic times. Also, the text contains many references to past events (1,16%).

We found a lot of text related to drives (7,14%). Among them, the largest number of words applies affiliations (1,54%). These results confirm that religious communications are always aimed at attracting new members and unity. As a confirmation or reinforcement of this fact, much of the text deals with social processes (1,35%). Most churches talk about "supporters", "meetings", "celebrations". This is also a call to unite in religious communities.

The text is also full of religious terms (1,74%). The most frequently mentioned words are "temple", "gospel", "prayer", "Lord". Frequent use of such terms is also a striking feature of religious discourse. Processed titles demonstrate the appeal to cognitive processes (1,93%). That is, religious communications are based not only on faith but also on causation. Yes, such words "explanation", "change", "expectation" are most often used here.

Conclusions. Thus, religious communications in the media space turn religion into a kind of social product that people disseminated and perceived (passively or actively). Religious discourse in the media is realized in different ways, has its own characteristics. Religion goes beyond one particular denomination and becomes integrated into the social life of people, regardless of their social status or

religious affiliation. Participants in such communication are almost all people in one form or another who participate in communication through the media. At the same time, some of them are active participants in such communication, others - passive recipients of information. As for the goals, they are no different from the goals of religion and religious discourse. The theme of religious discourse is represented by three key components (God, faith and unity).

Most processed headlines are related to coronavirus

crisis. The headlines are full of guidelines for the conduct of clergy and the faithful during the pandemic. A cross-cutting feature of all the headlines is the calls for church involvement, for common prayers.

Thus, we have demonstrated empirically that the church not only calls for unity, but also discusses the main problems of society (for example, the coronavirus). That is, the church not only cares about retaining and attracting new adherents, but also influences public opinion on important civil and social issues.

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