

RELIGIOUS RADIO BROADCASTING IN UKRAINE IN THE CONTEXT OF DIGITAL MEDIATISATION AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

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Abstract

The study carries out a religious studies analysis of contemporary forms of spiritual communication implemented through audio and digital media platforms. The work highlights the particular features of organizing religious broadcasting under conditions of transformation of the information space, when traditional models of transmitting doctrine become integrated into new technological formats. Mechanisms of the formation of religious identity, ways of maintaining spiritual continuity, and strategies of interaction between religious institutions and their audiences are examined. An analysis is conducted of the structures that ensure access to spiritual content, including forms of catechetical communication, mentoring practices, and models of pastoral support functioning within the media environment. Attention is drawn to the processes of intersubjective interaction that arise in the digital space, where the listener is not only a recipient but also an active participant in spiritual dialogue. It is shown that modern audio formats create conditions for the transmission of sacred meanings regardless of physical presence, ensuring the continuity of religious experience and the possibility of support under conditions of social instability. The adaptation of religious broadcasting to wartime challenges is analyzed, showing how the spiritual word acquires the function of emotional accompaniment, community consolidation, and strengthening of internal resilience. A tendency is identified toward combining traditional theological approaches with the dynamics of digital practices, contributing to the development of new forms of spiritual education and communication. The work demonstrates that the modern media environment functions not only as a channel of information but also as a medium for shaping religious consciousness, spiritual autonomy, and renewed models of religious communication. It is concluded that audio-digital forms of transmitting religious doctrine constitute an integral system of sacred presence that supports spiritual experience, ensures the transmission of religious content, and facilitates the affirmation of religious meanings in contemporary society.

Keywords: religious communication, religious radio broadcasting, discourse, digital mediatization, information society, religious interpretation, religious symbolism, spirituality.

Introduction

Radio broadcasting and television, throughout a long historical cycle, remained key indicators of the formation of mass culture, setting the pace of its development and outlining the worldview horizons of public consciousness long before the establishment of the digital communication era. It was on their foundation that more advanced audiovisual media culture emerged, causing a shift from a textual-linear model of meaning-making to the dominance of visual-associative structures.¹ Its distinctiveness does not lie in the displacement of traditional forms of symbolic interaction, but in the formation of a new semiotic paradigm that radically transforms the representation of spiritual experience, sacred meanings, and religious narratives.

In this context, audiovisual culture enters into a complex interaction with the bearers of traditional religious values, re-orienting the channels of sacred communication and the models of transmitting religious information. The Church, as an institutionalized subject of spiritual authority, is characterized by a high degree of traditionalism, relying on sacralized textuality, liturgical practice, and canonical hermeneutics. The media space, on the contrary, goes beyond established textual formats and enters the everyday sphere, forming new types of religious perception that often externalize inner spiritual experience.²

At the same time, no religious system or confessional community can remain outside the processes of transformation of mass communication, since a lack of adaptation to media changes leads to the marginalization of its symbolic space. Therefore, religious leaders seek to define theologically verified positions regarding the role of media in sacred discourse and to determine strategies for integrating the religious message into the audiovisual environment without violating doctrinal integrity

Despite a certain openness of religious traditions to new communication technologies, their foundation remains the canonical word as the bearer of revealed truth. Audiovisual culture, by contrast, is based on the figurative form, which conveys meaning through symbolic integrity and visual-sensory richness. For this reason, television and radio form different channels of religious

¹ О. Волошенюк. “Сучасні стратегії дослідження візуальної культури.” [Modern strategies for researching visual culture]. *Інформаційне суспільство: науковий журнал*. 2011. № 14. 19.

² М. С. Петрушкевич. Релігійна комунікація у контексті масової культури: монографія. [Religious communication in the context of mass culture: monograph]. Острог, 2018. 256.

reception: radio preserves space for inner reflection, whereas the television image often imposes a ready-made interpretation, limiting possibilities for contemplative immersion, which is an important component of sacred communication.

An analysis of broadcasting in a religious studies context requires accounting for their contribution to the formation of contemporary symbolic reality. Audio communication in radio broadcasting relies on the verbal medium, which is connected with the tradition of preaching, catechesis, and verbal transmission of doctrinal truths. Visual communication of the television type, by contrast, appeals to figurative thinking, which operates at a subconscious level and often forms paraliturgical, simulated forms of religious participation. Audiovisual media create new modes of perception in which the visual image instantly captures attention, bypassing the stage of rational-interpretive processing. In this case, audiovisual media are considered not as a separate technical variety, but as a special mode of mediatized perception, in which the combination of visual and auditory elements changes the logic of reception of sacred content. Such an understanding allows us to analytically distinguish auditory, visual, and audiovisual communication as different ways of organizing religious experience, rather than as formally distinct media. This leads to radical changes in the ways religious experience and spiritual identity are constructed.

The method of presenting a message determines not only the character of its reception but also shapes the anthropological parameters of religious consciousness in the context of mass society. In radio broadcasting, the verbal message preserves multidimensionality and the potential for symbolic unfolding, whereas the television image presents meaning in a ready-made form, reducing opportunities for individual interpretation, which is essential for sacred experience. Television and radio alike become instruments of the hegemony of the media environment, which forms mass religious consciousness and expresses a hidden ideological program.

This hegemony is realized through screen culture – a specific type of cultural existence based on the audiovisual representation of artifacts, symbols, and meanings. Screen culture creates a new informational-semiotic environment in which immaterial values, symbolic resources, and networked forms of knowledge dominate.³ It produces a new mythologized reality that shapes

³ M. McLuhan. “Understanding media: The extensions of man.” McGraw-Hill. <https://designopendata.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/understanding-media-mcluhan.pdf>

eschatological images of the future, models collective representations, and at the same time conceals mechanisms of control over the mass audience.

Thus, two main tendencies can be observed. The first is the divergence between radio broadcasting and television as instruments of religious communication based on different models of semiosis. The second is their integration into a unified media complex that includes the press, the Internet, and new digital media, resulting in a holistic communicative reality that significantly influences the formation of the “mass person” type and transforms into a mechanism of spiritual and cultural hegemony.

Ecclesiological Foundations of Religious Communication and Institutional Strategies of Church Communication in the Catholic Church

In contemporary religious communication in Ukraine, the Catholic Church occupies a leading position, demonstrating the highest level of institutional activity and communicative organization. Its participation in the public sphere reflects the Church’s aspiration not only to reintegrate the sacred word into mass communication but also to affirm its ecclesial subjectivity in a media environment long dominated by secular discourse. Catholic media projects function not merely as information channels but as forms of ecclesial presence, through which the Church carries out missionary service, spiritual pedagogy, and symbolic representation of Christian teaching in a mediatized culture.

Their activities serve as media-religious mediation, transmitting existential meanings, fostering spiritual reflection, and actualizing religious identity. In this way, media become part of a broader ecclesiological paradigm, in which the Church appears as a “communicative community,” interacting with the faithful through various channels of symbolic communication.

Among Catholic media initiatives, Radio Maria stands out, which reaches approximately 50,000 listeners daily and is part of a global network of Catholic radio stations in over 70 countries.⁴ In this context, Radio Maria functions as an element of translocal ecclesial infrastructure, where local churches are organic parts of a worldwide communicative unity. This networked structure actualizes the idea of the Church as a community of communion, realizing its unity not only in theological and sacramental dimensions but also in the communicative one.

⁴ “Радіо Марія.” [Radio Maria]. <https://radiomaria.org.ua>

Founded in Kyiv in 2010, Radio Maria has evolved from simple music broadcasts to multidimensional religious programming. Today, its 24-hour transmission covers regional frequencies in Vinnytsia, Rivne, Khmelnytskyi, Zhytomyr, and Volyn regions. The program structure is designed according to an ecclesiological perspective of religious communication and includes three key thematic segments.

The prayer segment serves as a form of “mediatized liturgical presence.” The Liturgy of the Hours, the Rosary, and broadcasts of the Holy Mass create an auditory sacred environment in which listeners participate in the Church’s prayer rhythm. This participation reproduces an aspect of “*communio sanctorum*” in a media format, providing spiritual proximity even without physical presence in a church.

The catechetical segment is a form of “catechetical media platform,” implementing the Church’s teaching function. Priests, exegetes, and theologians interpret Scripture, present the fundamentals of Christian doctrine, and engage in dialogue with listeners. This forms a media environment where the faithful receive spiritual guidance and the communication itself takes on an ecclesial didactic character.

The socio-ethical segment extends the Church’s pastoral activity into everyday life: moral responsibility, family ethics, Christian anthropology, and ecological dimensions of faith. This is a media form, accompanying individuals in contemporary culture and creating space for reflecting on life choices in light of Christian ethics.

Radio Maria’s refusal of commercial advertising and political campaigning underscores its status as a pastoral-evangelical media, maintaining autonomy from economic and political pressures and ensuring the Church’s continuous spiritual presence in the information field.⁵

For a wide audience, the first spiritual broadcasts became a sign of hope and a symbol of post-totalitarian spiritual awakening. At that time, *Voskresinnya* emerged in Ukraine in 1989.⁶ Its establishment marked the return of the “voice of the Church” to a space from which it had long been absent. Thanks to the initiative of Greek-Catholic priest Fr. Andriy Onuferko, the radio was conceptually envisioned as a tool for pastoral renewal and the revival of religious memory.⁷

⁵ “Радіо Марія.” [Radio Maria]. <https://radiomaria.org.ua>

⁶ “Воскресіння. Живе радіо.” [Resurrection. Live radio]. https://www.facebook.com/radio.voskresinna?locale=uk_UA

⁷ “Живе інтерв’ю: спогади про мужність, покликання і надію.” [Live interview: memories of courage, calling and hope]. *Живе телебачення*. <https://zhyve.ugcc.org.ua/video/8135-zhyve-intervyu-spogady-pro-muzhnist-poklykannya-i-nadiyu>

For a wide audience, the first spiritual broadcasts became a sign of hope and a symbol of post-totalitarian spiritual awakening. At that time, *Voskresinnya* remained the only regular source of Christian preaching and theological information in Ukraine's media space. With the opening of the Lviv editorial office in 1992, the range of programs expanded significantly: intellectual-theological, cultural, historical, and literary programs shaped a Catholic cultural-intellectual segment in the public space. The broadcast schedule included interviews, analysis, historical research, radio sermons, narrated theological texts, liturgical calendar commentaries, and reviews of Christian art and sacred music. Thus, *Voskresinnya* implemented a model of a media-religious educational center, combining theology, culture, spiritual experience, and the Church's cultural memory.

Programs such as *Palestine at the Time of Jesus*, studies on Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky, and broadcasts on the religious dimensions of Ukrainian literature were particularly influential.⁸ In this respect, *Voskresinnya* became an ecclesiological platform for spiritual reflection, integrating faith, culture, and scholarly thought into a unified space of the Catholic intellectual tradition.⁹ Radio Voskresinnia operates as an independent religious media project that distances itself from political and financial institutions, maintaining the autonomy of editorial policy and an orientation towards spiritual and pastoral ministry.

Radio Dzvony, founded in 1996 by Bishop Sofron Mudry, also holds significant influence in the Catholic community.¹⁰ Its emergence coincided with a pivotal moment in the history of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church, the period of emerging from the underground after decades of totalitarian persecution, when the Church needed to restore its public presence and return its voice to societal consciousness. In the context of a shortage of pastoral and catechetical tools, there arose a need for a new type of spiritual communication capable of transmitting the ecclesial voice to people beginning to recover their religious identity.

Radio Dzvony appears as an educational-pastoral media project aimed at fostering deep awareness of human existence in light of Christian anthropology and Church tradition. Its content is designed to awaken spiritual sensitivity, cultivate the inner life, moral maturity, and perception

⁸ “Блаженніший Святослав у програмі “Добра розмова” на радіо Воскресіння.” [His Beatitude Sviatoslav in the program “Good Conversation” on Radio Voskresinnia]. *Живе телебачення*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-m-53y5cccA#:~:text=Першим%20гостем%20програми%20«Добра%20розмова»%20на%20оновленому,митрополита%20Андрея%20Шептицького.%20Кінець%20розмови%20в%20чаті>.

⁹ “Радіостанції України”. [Radio stations of Ukraine]. *Свим Радіо*. <https://www.proradio.org.ua/syndication/tr.php>

¹⁰ “Радіо Дзвони.” [Radio Bells]. <https://dzvony.org.ua>

of God as a real, existentially present foundation of human existence. This media not only informs but also performs the function of spiritual pedagogy, shaping individuals as subjects of faith capable of confronting life's challenges through the lens of Christian hope.¹¹

Unlike commercial or entertainment formats, *Dzvony* maintains complete autonomy from political or financial institutions, making it an exceptional phenomenon in the modern Ukrainian media space. Its broadcasts are enriched with Ukrainian classical and folk music, spiritual chants, and Christian compositions, giving the programs the character of cultural-ecclesial communication that combines spiritual tradition with national cultural memory.

During the Russian-Ukrainian war, the broadcast structure introduced Prayer Watch – a symbolic spiritual front broadcasting hourly prayers for peace and freedom in Ukraine. This form of broadcasting is an act of ecclesial solidarity and spiritual communion with a nation experiencing the tragedy of war, demonstrating the Church's ability to transform the media space into a field of prayerful resistance and spiritual resilience.¹²

Another notable Catholic project is *Radio Svitnok*,¹³ which began broadcasting in March 2002 with the blessing of Bishop Mykhailo Sabryha, based on the Ukrainian Wave radio station. Symbolically, its first broadcast was the Divine Liturgy from the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This gesture signifies not only a media launch but also an act of renewing ecclesial communion, as the sacred space of the church entered people's homes via radio waves, initiating a mediatized liturgical unity.

The radio station was founded by Hryhoriy Burbza, Fr. Andriy Hovera, and Yuriy Fartushnyak. The early broadcasts were produced by volunteers, who regarded their work not as journalism but as missionary service to the Word, overcoming technical limitations and forming a new type of ecclesial communication. Initially, programs included broadcasts of services and prayers, but later the programming structure expanded: segments such as "Reflections on the Important," "Light of Hope," and "Spiritual Pearls of the Eastern Fathers" appeared.¹⁴ These

¹¹ "Християнська радіостанція Дзвони." [Christian radio station Dzvony]. *Згромадження Воплоченого Слова*. <https://iveukraine.com.ua/hrystyianska-radiostancziya-dzvony>

¹² "Українське радіо під час війни #12: удосконалення локальних станцій та мовлення за тимчасовими дозволами." [Ukrainian Radio During the War #12: Improving Local Stations and Broadcasting under Temporary Permits]. *Mediasat*. <https://mediasat.info/uk/2023/02/25/ukrainske-radio-pid-chas-viyny-chastina-dvanadczyata>

¹³ "Радіо Світанок." [Radio Svinok]. <https://radiosvitanok.org.ua/istoriya>

¹⁴ "Світанок християнське радіо." [Dawn Christian Radio]. *Тернопільсько-Зборівська архієпархія Українська Греко-Католицька Церква*. <https://tze.org.ua/2008/02/radio-qsvitanokq>

programs activate the patristic teaching tradition, the historical memory of the Church, and the spiritual experience of the saints.

In 2014, the information-analytical program Christian Bulletin was launched, highlighting Church life in Ukraine and the world and thus forming a space of ecclesial information. Since November 2019, the radio has switched to an online format, continuing the Christian mission in a digital environment that increasingly becomes a space of digital evangelization and a new “arena” of spiritual testimony.¹⁵ The transition of radio to an online format did not change its ecclesial identity, but it transformed the nature of media influence. Digital broadcasting expanded the spatial boundaries of the audience and gave the content an asynchronous nature, which strengthened the analytical-reflexive dimension of perception. At the same time, the effect of direct on-air presence decreased, giving way to a regime of digital accessibility, within which spiritual testimony is integrated into a broader informational context.

The pinnacle of Catholic religious radio broadcasting is Radio Vatican,¹⁶ founded in 1929 on the initiative of Pope Pius XI after the Lateran Treaty established the independence of the Holy See. From the beginning, it was conceived as an instrument of the universal mission of the Church, intended to spread the Word of God and the Pope’s voice to the “ends of the earth,” in accordance with the biblical imperative of apostolic witness.

In 1939, the Ukrainian editorial office of Radio Vatican was launched – the fifth among all language sections. It was established with the blessing of Pope Pius XII at the request of Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky and Bishop Josaphat Kotsylovsky, who recognized the threat to the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church under totalitarian regimes and sought to preserve its ecclesial unity with Rome. The organization of the office was entrusted to the Basilian monks under Fr. Josaphat Laba. The first director was Fr. Mykhailo Vavryk, and the first announcer was Hryhory Bukatko, a student of the College of St. Josaphat and future bishop of the Kryzhopets Diocese.¹⁷

For decades, the Ukrainian service of Radio Vatican remained a symbol of spiritual continuity, conciliarity, and Roman unity of Ukrainian Catholicism. The combination of

¹⁵ “Слухати християнське радіо.” [Listen to Christian radio]. *Українська греко-католицька церква в Німеччині. Персональна парафія бл. Климента з Унева*. <https://ugcc-frankfurt.de/Радіо-га-ТВ>

¹⁶ “Радіо Ватикану українською мовою.” [Vatican Radio in Ukrainian]. <https://radiomap.eu/va/play/rv-ukr>

¹⁷ “85-річчя Української редакції Радіо Ватикану – Vatican News.” [85th anniversary of the Ukrainian edition of Vatican Radio – Vatican News]. *Апостольський екзархат для українців візантійського обряду в Німеччині та Скандинавії*. <https://ukrainische-kirche.eu/contacts>

theological depth and high journalistic culture created a space where the Church's word was simultaneously a word of hope, truth, and spiritual support for Ukrainians worldwide.¹⁸ Today, the Ukrainian editorial office continues its work, upholding Catholic teaching, preserving spiritual heritage, and shaping a space of global communion for Ukrainian believers. In this sense, Radio Vatican is not only a mass media instrument but also a symbol of the ontological presence of the Church in the world, where the word becomes a form of being and the act of broadcasting becomes an act of living preaching. This distinguishes Vatican Radio from television stations, where the church's presence is built primarily through visual representation. The radio format maintains the priority of the word as the normative carrier of theological meaning and supports the interpretive nature of religious experience, while television media tend to perceptually mediatize the sacred.

Confessional Communicative Practices of Religious Organizations in the Modern Information Environment

The contemporary stage of the development of religious communication in Ukraine is characterized by the intensive penetration of the church's message into the digital space, where the message of faith acquires a new technical, semiotic, and existential dimension. Internet radio or web radio emerges as a specific form of mediatized spiritual communication, utilizing streaming technology to transmit content within the networked environment. Unlike print media, which naturally integrate into the Internet due to their textual nature, religious radio belongs to the auditory forms of mass communication, where the main task is not only to inform but also to convey meaning—that is, to transmit the sacred content of the word in the context of digital culture.

For the effective functioning of religious broadcasting in an online environment, a web platform is required that provides a hypertextual architecture for religious communication: the ability to create electronic archives, thematic search, access to past broadcasts, interactive engagement, and a space for spiritual dialogue with listeners. In a functional sense, this also partly applies to print media present on the Internet. However, for digital versions of print publications, the web platform primarily provides expanded access, archiving, and navigation of text content, while for religious broadcasting it performs a communicative and event function, supporting the duration and repeatability of the act of proclamation. In this format, Internet radio appears not only as an information tool but as

¹⁸ “Українське радіо Ватикану – погляд із середини.” [Ukrainian Radio of the Vatican – a view from the inside]. *День*. <https://day.kyiv.ua/article/aktsiya-dnya/ukrayinske-radio-vatykanu-pohlyad-iz-seredyny>

an intersubjective digital community in which faith is combined with technology, and the sacred with digital space, forming a model of a “digital parish.”

Operating on traditionalist and value-conservative foundations in Ukraine is the Protestant radio station Voice of Hope,¹⁹ which represents one of the most resilient formats of religious communication in post-totalitarian Ukrainian society. Its mission is to disseminate evangelical principles, provide spiritual support to listeners, and reinforce Christian behavioral models. From a religious studies perspective, the radio’s activity is aimed at forming morally responsible individuals, strengthening family life, and supporting religious identity through mass media.

Founded in 1995, the station structures itself according to Protestant theological anthropology, where key ideas include personal responsibility, upbringing in the spirit of the Holy Scriptures, spiritual discipline, and Christian witness. The station’s programming serves as a mediatized catechesis, through which Christian truths are conveyed in an accessible and practical form.

The main goal of the radio is to support traditional family values, promote the moral stability of believers, foster patriotic upbringing of children and youth, and satisfy the spiritual needs of listeners.²⁰ This is realized through diverse formats, spiritual, educational, family-oriented, social, musical, and health-related programs, that function as part of pastoral communication aimed at deepening faith and strengthening the church community.

In 2016, a studio opened in Lviv, launching programs such as “Alphabet of Marriage,” “Radio School Erudite,” “Cheat Sheet for Parents,” “Lifestyle,” and “Siesta.” These programs create a space for practical biblical mentorship, where listeners receive spiritual guidance for everyday life situations. The same year, a studio was founded in Chernivtsi, which since September 2022 has operated as a production center for recorded programs. In this format, shows like “The Bible Continues to Speak,” “Strings of the Heart,” and “Rose-Colored Glasses” implement the concept of auditory biblical teaching. A studio in Vinnytsia, also opened in 2016, began producing “Evening Stories” and “Parenting Mosaic,” later followed by “Lunch Break” and “ZooTime.” Additional programs such as “BibleEnglish” and “Status Mom” demonstrate the station’s orientation toward inclusive religious communication aimed at various age groups. In autumn

¹⁹ “Радіо Голос Надії.” [Radio Voice of Hope]. <https://radio.hope.ua>

²⁰ “Голос Надії Радіо.” [Voice of Hope Radio]. *BestRadio*. <https://bestradio.fm/uk/ukraine/3827-golos-nadii-radio.html>

2020, a studio opened in Poltava, creating programs “Life Matters” and “Practical Christianity,”²¹ implementing the format of practical theology aimed at understanding faith in the context of everyday moral decisions.

The radio’s activity gained particular significance after the onset of the full-scale war. Part of the team was relocated to Western Ukraine, but broadcasting continued: the Lviv studio remains operational, and new programs and audiobooks are recorded by hosts at home in different regions of the country. During this period, the radio launched cycles such as “Discovering Hope,” “Morning of Hope,” “The Power of Prayer,” “Reliable Message,” and “Letters of Hope,” “Reading Psalms Together.”²² These broadcasts serve as crisis spiritual communication, aimed at strengthening faith during danger and uncertainty. Since September 2022, a live broadcast studio has been operating, providing about 11 hours of live transmission daily. Programs such as “WakeUp,” “InTime,” “To the Maximum,” “Faina Music,” and “Goodnight Show” are aired. Podcast production has also become an active area, allowing religious communication to adapt to the demands of the digital environment.

One of the most notable phenomena in the religious audio space is the Christian Ukrainian Radio,²³ which functions as a communication platform for spreading Christian ideas, moral guidelines, and theological thought among listeners of different age and social groups. This radio network integrates Ukrainian and foreign Christian radio stations, forming a networked ecclesial community that transcends geographical, cultural, and denominational barriers. In this way, a trans local form of church presence is created, where the spiritual word circulates beyond specific territories and institutional jurisdictions.

The main advantage of this type of broadcasting is the universal accessibility of Christian content: listeners can participate in worship, prayer practices, or theological reflection regardless of their location. For those temporarily or permanently unable to participate in parish liturgical life, Internet radio becomes a form of home church community, providing participation in prayer, spiritual guidance, and a sense of unity in faith.

²¹ “Регіональні радіостанції.” [Regional radio stations]. *Ефірне телебачення та радіомовлення в Україні*. <https://ukrtvr.org/trk/484>

²² “Радіо Голос Надії.” [Radio Voice of Hope]. <https://radio.hope.ua>

²³ “Християнське українське радіо.” [Christian Ukrainian Radio]. https://joymylife.org.ua/ukr/hrystyianske_radio/index.php

The program spectrum of Christian Ukrainian Radio is extremely broad and includes: religious broadcasts (services, prayers, biblical commentaries, which affirm the auditory form of liturgical experience and allow listeners to immerse themselves in the rhythm of church time); Christian music (from contemporary compositions to traditional hymns, creating a continuum between spiritual heritage and modern culture); theological and spiritual programs (interviews with spiritual leaders, exegetical reflections, catechetical cycles, forming the intellectual dimension of religious communication); religious news (analysis of church life, reviews of theological publications, information on socio-religious events, allowing listeners to remain within the confessional informational field); children's programs (a form of Christian pedagogy where biblical truths are conveyed in artistic and imaginative form).²⁴

A distinguishing feature of Christian Ukrainian Radio is the combination of professional journalism with theological culture, providing multi-level content: from catechetical explanations to social ethics and spiritual interpretation of cultural phenomena. Clergy, theologians, journalists, educators, and psychologists are involved in program creation, forming polyphony and diversity of content. In its editorial policy, the radio follows principles of Christian ethics, so each program is aimed at the moral improvement of listeners, the reinforcement of spiritual virtues, and the formation of ethical guidelines in society. The channel also actively participates in charitable projects and social initiatives, implementing the Christian concept of love as service to one's neighbor. Through this, Christian Ukrainian Radio functions as a moral-communicative bridge between the Church and society, transforming the digital media space into a spiritual space of solidarity, mutual support, and collective spiritual action.

One of the most prominent radio stations within Christian Ukrainian Radio is Radio M,²⁵ created on February 27, 2012, and officially launched on February 26, 2013. This media explicitly demonstrates the synthesis of missionary, social, and civic functions of religious broadcasting, allowing it to be considered a media platform of Christian social theology. Radio M positions itself as a space for open dialogue, discussing spiritual, moral, social, and cultural issues of contemporary society. Programs involve doctors, volunteers, chaplains, artists, scholars, and representatives of various religious organizations, contributing to the formation of the moral and

²⁴ “Християнське українське радіо.” [Christian Ukrainian Radio]. https://joymylife.org.ua/ukr/hrystyianske_radio/index.php

²⁵ “Радіо М.” [Radio M]. <https://radiom.ua>

intellectual horizon of modern individuals. In this way, the radio becomes a socio-cultural platform, expanding the paradigm of Christian communication toward social service.

The radio station is actively involved in public projects, supporting internally displaced persons, assisting the military, and implementing charitable initiatives. This demonstrates the theology of action, where service to God is integrated with service to one's neighbor. Broadcasting is conducted in Ukrainian and English, opening possibilities for intercultural dialogue and international communication in light of Christian values. Among Radio M's strategic goals are spreading patriotic and spiritual ideas, forming moral responsibility, supporting family values, and fostering a Christian understanding of human dignity. In this sense, Radio M functions as an ethical-philosophical media project aimed at forming mature civic-religious consciousness, where public morality is in dialogue with biblical anthropology.

Within Christian radio stations oriented toward systematic theological education, a leading position is held by Radio New Life.²⁶ Its mission is to proclaim biblical truth, disseminate the teaching of the Holy Scriptures, and provide catechetical formation for a broad audience. The project is based on the apostolic principle of "preparing the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ," and its activity can therefore be defined as a media form of apostolic ministry.

Radio New Life's broadcasts have catechetical, dogmatic, and soteriological character: they aim to strengthen faith, counter spiritual disorientation, and foster critical attitudes toward pseudo-religious teachings and moral relativism. The station's central theological principle is the formula "speaking the truth in love," corresponding to the Christian understanding of anthropological integrity and spiritual maturity. The editorial concept of the station is based on the idea that Christian radio is not intended to replace parish community ministry but has an auxiliary, supportive role, providing spiritual resources for strengthening faith. Consequently, Radio New Life functions as a form of mediatized pastoral service, aimed at deepening the spiritual unity of believers and affirming Christian truth within the context of the information society.

A new and illustrative phenomenon in Christian Internet radio broadcasting is the youth online radio station Just True Radio (JT Radio), which positions itself as the first youth-oriented web radio of Christian orientation in Ukraine.²⁷ Its emergence demonstrates the entry of religious

²⁶ "Радіо Нове Життя." [Radio New Life]. <https://novezhitya.net/o-nas>

²⁷ "Just True Radio." [Just True Radio]. <https://ua.jtradio.pro/about>

communication into the postmodern cultural dimension, dominated by the digital environment, with an audience for whom the Internet is a natural space for existence and spiritual search. JT Radio's main priorities are popularizing Christian music, supporting young performers, creating creative associations, and building communication with well-known Christian figures, media professionals, and Internet evangelists. In this format, a new culture of Christian communication is formed, where art, media, and spirituality are integrated into a single space.

JT Radio is characterized by openness and interdenominational orientation: the station does not differentiate listeners by denominational affiliation but operates on the principle of universal unity in Christ. An innovative broadcasting system allows combining various musical styles and genres without losing spiritual focus. For the station's creators, every musical work created with faith is an act of worship. JT Radio aims to serve as a model in media ministry, combining sound aesthetics with the ethics of faith. Its philosophy is based on the idea of music as a form of spiritual unity, through which youth can experience a personal encounter with Christ in the context of contemporary cultural dynamics.

Considering the characteristics of religious radio as a segment of mass communication, it is necessary to emphasize its structural interaction with other types of media such as television, the Internet, and the press. In the modern information environment, radio does not operate in isolation but is part of a broad system of multimedia confessional practices, where the auditory format is combined with visual, textual, and digital channels of sacred communication. At the same time, such a combination does not deny the theoretically outlined differences between media, but indicates their functional interaction within the framework of a common communicative space. Radio retains its inherent mode of verbal proclamation and auditory perception, while visual and textual elements play a supporting role, expanding access and the context of reception of sacred content. In this way, multimedia appears not as a mixing of media forms, but as a modern form of coexistence of different channels of religious communication. An example of such an integrated approach is the activity of Islamic Media, founded in 2013 under the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Ukraine.²⁸ This structure produces and disseminates educational multimedia content, developing projects aimed at popularizing Islamic tradition using modern, technologically adapted methods.

²⁸ "Islamic Media – Іслам в Україні." [Islamic Media – Islam in Ukraine]. <https://www.facebook.com/islamicmediaukraine>

In this context, it is also worth mentioning the launch of the first Muslim radio station M Plus, initiated by the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Ukraine and implemented by the Minaret studio. The radio broadcasts exclusively online, reflecting trends of religious mediatization and the growing importance of digital space for religious self-identification. At the same time, the station's content is not solely aimed at a Muslim audience: the founders intended the programs to be of interest to members of other religious communities, serving as a "window into the Muslim world."

The chief editor of M Plus, Aisha, emphasizes that the radio aims to provide unbiased, authentic information about Islam and Muslims, while countering media stereotypes linking Islam with extremism. She notes that the station's name comes from the word "minaret," referring to the symbol of spiritual light and the call to prayer. Accordingly, the radio serves as a tool of informational demythologization, intended to correct the image of Islam in secular and interfaith environments. The station's art director, Ahmad, stresses that a wide range of guests will be invited to the studio: religious leaders of various denominations, government representatives, politicians, and community leaders. Formats include open discussions, the possibility of phone calls to the studio, and interactive communication. In the initial phase, listeners can leave questions and comments on the station's website, creating a networked communicative platform where intersubjective dialogue between religious communities is formed.

The Mufti of Ukraine, Sheikh Ahmed Tamim, commenting on the creation of the radio station, emphasized the strategic importance of such an initiative in the context of growing "internetization" of society, especially among young people. Contemporary youth rarely turn to printed literature, preferring short audio formats and the ability to consume information at convenient times, corresponding to the logic of digital mobility in religious communication. Therefore, religious leaders must ensure youth access to high-quality, reliable, and spiritually meaningful content.²⁹ The creation of M Plus is seen as a response to the educational task of the Muslim community to provide youth with tools for developing religious competence and a coherent worldview.

²⁹ "В Україні з'явилася перша мусульманська радіостанція." [The first Muslim radio station appeared in Ukraine]. *РБК – Україна*. <https://www.rbc.ua/ukr/news/v-ukraine-poyavilas-pervaya-musulmanskaya-radiostantsiya-02072013093500>

Thus, M Plus demonstrates how religious radio in the digital age transforms into an interactive platform for theological education, a tool for interfaith communication, and a mechanism for constructing a positive image of the Muslim community in the Ukrainian socio-cultural space. This combination of institutional organization, digital technology, and religious educational mission characterizes a new stage in the development of confessional media, which now function not only as sources of information but as platforms for religious identity, social integration, and spiritual dialogue.

Communicative Strategies of Religious Organizations in Processes of Symbolic Construction

The formation of the symbolic image of religious organizations in the media environment is largely determined by the specifics of radio broadcasting as a particular form of mediatized sacred communication. Radio functions not only as a technical channel for transmitting sound but also as a space for spiritual-communicative interaction, within which the sacred word acquires a new format of presence and is embedded in the broader religious semiosphere. The asymmetry between the broadcaster and the listener, characteristic of radio broadcasting, creates a distance without direct feedback, but at the same time allows for the formation of an imagined image of the spiritual addresser. In this context, the radio host's voice is interpreted by the recipient not as an individual personality but as a representative of tradition, a carrier of institutional authority, and a symbolic mediator of transcendent meanings.³⁰

An informational address to a religious radio station has a pronounced spiritual-existential nature for the listener, as it is aimed not only at acquiring knowledge but also at seeking moral guidance, experiencing inner balance, and supporting religious identity. In this sense, informational needs acquire the features of spiritual needs, the desire to participate in a meaningful space that goes beyond empirical experience. Radio broadcasting acts as a mechanism for continuous mediatized access to the sacred, supporting the internal structure of religious self-awareness and ensuring the rhythm of spiritual life in a remote communication format.

An important component of religious radio functioning is the use of psychological mechanisms of influence, which gain particular significance in the context of spiritual interaction.

³⁰ С. В. Позднишев. "Головні соціально-психологічні особливості впливу радіомовлення на процес формування іміджу." [The main socio-psychological features of the influence of radio broadcasting on the process of image formation]. *Актуальні проблеми психології: зб. наукових праць Інституту психології імені Г. С. Костюка*. Житомир: ЖДУ ім. І. Франка. 2010. Т. 7. Вип. 22. 173.

Persuasion, archetypal representation, emotional identification, and symbolic modeling of behavior constitute the core means through which the mediatized sacred word forms religious motivation, strengthens inner discipline, and structures moral guidance. In situations of spiritual crisis, social instability, or emotional vulnerability, the recipient may perceive radio messages uncritically, giving the word special emotional-semantic significance and the ability to direct individual and collective behavior.³¹ This process demonstrates the ambivalence of religious communication: it can be a source of spiritual support while simultaneously serving as a subtle instrument of influence on consciousness structures.

Another fundamental feature of religious radio broadcasting is its universality and impersonality. Radio messages are not directed at a specific individual but at the community as a generalized subject, creating a space for collective symbolic action.³² The broadcaster's voice acquires the function of an "anonymous sacred presence," embodying not the personal experience of the host but the voice of the religious tradition, which acts as a supra-individual spiritual authority. This is the particular strength of religious radio: it constructs the image of a religious organization not through personal narratives but through a voice perceived as a carrier of spiritual truth and a representative of a community with a supra-personal character.

In religious radio broadcasting, the issue of rational-emotional balance is particularly important, as it determines the persuasiveness of spiritual content and the effectiveness of its reception. The audio format, as a form of acoustic mediatization of the sacred, can transmit not only verbal content but also the emotional-intonational structure of the utterance, appealing to the listener's internal religious experience. Media theory explains this by noting that auditory perception activates symbolic imagination, contributing to the formation of "auditory images of faith" that integrate more readily into the structure of religious consciousness.³³ Therefore, complex theological concepts are more naturally perceived in textual form, whereas short prayers,

³¹ "Радіо і війна: довіра, зброя і психологічна допомога." [Radio and war: trust, weapons and psychological help]. *Радіо Свобода*. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/27549253.html>

³² І. Кудрявський. "Інформаційно-психологічний вплив, його суб'єкти та об'єкти як базові поняття сфери державного управління за напрямком захисту безпеки інформаційного простору." [Informational and psychological influence, its subjects and objects as basic concepts of the sphere of public administration in the direction of protecting the security of the information space]. *Наукові інновації та передові технології. Серія "Управління та адміністрування."* 2024. № 4 (32). 101. 94–106.

³³ М. С. Петрушкевич. Релігійна комунікація у контексті масової культури: монографія. [Religious communication in the context of mass culture: monograph]. Острог, 2018. 265.

instructions, liturgical fragments, and catechetical remarks are more effective in audio format, where they are accompanied by timbral and rhythmic nuances.

Research on religious communication shows that the choice between a rational or emotional presentation strategy depends on the novelty of the information and the level of its existential significance.³⁴ Highly significant topics, moral dilemmas, pastoral guidance, doctrinal commentaries, require structured rational presentation. At the same time, repeated spiritual formulas, prayers, and practices familiar to the audience are more effectively perceived through an emotionally rich audio format, which engages the recipient in a state of “acoustic co-presence.”³⁵

Sound images (intonation, pause, musical accompaniment, speech rhythm) function as peripheral communicative stimuli, enhancing the influence of religious messages and facilitating their emotional retention. Auditory elements create an effect of “sensory immersion,” making it easier for the listener to enter the symbolic space of the sacred text. At the same time, such stimuli reduce the level of critical information processing, transferring perception into the realm of emotional trust. In media influence theory, this is associated with the phenomenon of “auditory dominance,” when sound displaces cognitive analysis and activates religious imagination at a pre-rational level.

The figure of the radio host as a bearer of spiritual authority and a symbolic mediator is of particular importance. The host’s verbal competence, timbral voice structure, speech style, and linguistic expressiveness form the listener’s image of a trusted spiritual mentor. In religious communication, this elevates the host to the category of a “significant figure,” whose statements acquire increased weight. The authority of the voice, in this context, serves as a functional analogue of pastoral authority, transferring the traditional model of spiritual guidance into the media format.

Together, these mechanisms show that religious radio functions not only as an informational resource but also as a channel for constructing spiritual identity, symbolically representing religious organizations, and facilitating mediatized participation in the sacred space. Its influence is based on a combination of emotional suggestion, symbolic identification, rationally

³⁴ “Вплив медіа на суспільство – психологічний аналіз і наслідки.” [The influence of media on society – psychological analysis and consequences]. *Інформаційно-аналітичний портал “ФАКТ”*. <https://fact-news.com.ua/vpliv-media-na-suspilstvo-psixologichnij-analiz-i-naslidki>

³⁵ “Вплив медіа на суспільство – психологічний аналіз і наслідки.” [The influence of media on society – psychological analysis and consequences]. *Інформаційно-аналітичний портал “ФАКТ”*. <https://fact-news.com.ua/vpliv-media-na-suspilstvo-psixologichnij-analiz-i-naslidki>

structured arguments, and the phenomenon of acoustic co-presence, transforming radio broadcasting into an instrument of spiritual socialization and religious integration.

Conclusions

The study demonstrates that religious radio broadcasting in Ukraine functions as a form of mediatized sacred communication, within which the symbolic image of religious organizations is constructed and their spiritual-pastoral presence in the public sphere is realized. Radio appears not only as a technical channel for transmission but also as a space for spiritual interaction, where the broadcaster's voice serves as a symbolic mediator and carrier of institutional authority. The asymmetry of communication inherent in the radio format creates conditions for forming the listener's imagined image of the spiritual addressee, fostering a sense of community and supporting religious identity.

Religious radio satisfies not only the informational but also the existential needs of its audience, providing access to sacred meanings in a remote format. Psychological mechanisms of influence, such as persuasion and symbolic identification, play a significant role, forming spiritual motivation and supporting moral guidance. The effectiveness of reception is determined by the rational-emotional balance and the ability of auditory stimuli to activate religious imagination.

Religious radio in contemporary Ukraine is an important social and spiritual institution, capable of influencing worldview orientations, supporting religious identity, strengthening the internal solidarity of believers, and simultaneously forming a positive symbolic image of religious organizations in public consciousness. It integrates tradition and modernity, combining theological content with mediatized forms of its transmission, making religious radio one of the key mechanisms of spiritual communication and cultural-value continuity amid current informational transformations.

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