Religious Organizations on social media: Opportunities, Challenges, and Future Prospects for Spiritual Communities in Ukraine

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This article examines the use of social networks by religious organizations in Ukraine for missionary, social, educational, spiritual, and cultural activities within the context of contemporary global challenges. The study's relevance and novelty lie in identifying the role of social networks as a driving force in modern religious practices. The concept of digital religion and its defining characteristics are analyzed. It is observed that social media play a significant role in shaping religious discourse, raising questions about the authenticity of faith and the influence of digital culture on religious experience. The study highlights the role of social networks as a vital tool for religious communication, evangelization, spiritual education, and the construction of religious identity in the digital sphere. The author evaluates both the benefits and potential risks associated with the use of social media algorithms for religious influence, which can simultaneously foster spiritual development and contribute to religious polarization. Furthermore, the article examines key official documents that regulate the use of social networks by religious organizations in Ukraine. Various forms of spiritual, educational, and socio-cultural activities conducted by leading Ukrainian religious organizations on social networks are analyzed, including online sermons and worship services, virtual prayer meetings, thematic groups for mutual spiritual support, the publication of believers' spiritual experiences, social and charitable initiatives, and the organization of religious pilgrimages and tourism. The conclusions underscore the significance of social networks not only as a critical means of communication but also as a powerful instrument for support, coordination of aid efforts, spiritual guidance, and informational resistance. In the face of global challenges, Ukrainian religious leaders actively utilize social media to fulfill both moral and spiritual missions while playing a crucial social role in fostering education and promoting civic unity during a difficult period for the country. Through their activities, they reinforce Ukrainian identity, safeguard national interests, and uphold spiritual independence.

Introduction

As digital communications rapidly expand, encompassing billions of users, religious organizations are compelled to adapt their interaction methods with believers and society. Social networks shape people's worldviews and values, potentially strengthening religious identity or triggering its transformation. Therefore, analyzing the dynamics of religious life under the influence of digital technologies is crucial. Social networks facilitate the dissemination of religious content, the recruitment of new followers, and the execution of missionary, spiritual-educational, and socio-cultural activities. However, the use of social media algorithms raises questions about the authenticity of faith in the digital space, the fight against misinformation, and the risks of manipulation. Religious leaders can leverage social networks to influence public discourse, mobilize believers, and express their stance on political and moral issues, positioning them as significant actors in social life.

During the full-scale Russian invasion, social networks have become more than just a communication tool for Ukrainian religious organizations; they are a powerful means of support, aid organization, spiritual guidance, and informational resistance.

This study aims to identify the primary directions of social media use in the activities of religious organizations in Ukraine. To achieve this, the study will: define the essence of the mediatization of religion in the modern digital world; determine the key areas of social media utilization by leading religious organizations in Ukraine; and outline the mechanisms for shaping the image of religious leaders and disseminating their civic positions through social media.

Research methods

The theoretical foundation of this study is grounded in the works of both foreign and Ukrainian scholars who emphasize the necessity of a comprehensive examination of the use of social networks in the spiritual and educational

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activities of religious organizations in Ukraine. Given the interdisciplinary nature of this issue, an appropriate methodological approach has been adopted.

The phenomenological method has facilitated the analysis of both individual and collective religious experiences in virtual spaces, such as online prayers and digital pilgrimages. The hermeneutic method has enabled an in-depth study of the iconic symbolism present in social networks, considering them as emerging forms of religious communication. Additionally, the comparative method has been employed to contrast traditional religious practices with their digital counterparts.

The study also utilizes several general scientific research methods. The heuristic method was instrumental in identifying relevant sources and establishing the theoretical framework of the research. The logical method was applied in structuring the study, while comparative analysis was used to determine the essential characteristics of various scholarly approaches to the study of digital religion. Furthermore, analysis and synthesis were employed to systematically present the core findings, and generalization was applied in formulating the study's conclusions.

Results and Discussion

The virtualization of the modern religious space in the digital age has emerged as a powerful transformative force, influencing individual identity, religious communities, and the broader cultural landscape. Rather than eroding religious traditions, virtualization reshapes them, generating new opportunities for spiritual engagement while simultaneously challenging established forms of faith and institutionalized religion.

The advancement of digital technologies and artificial intelligence has facilitated novel modes of cultural and religious expression, fostering the emergence of innovative practices and rituals. The interaction between traditional religious practices and contemporary digital technologies, including artificial intelligence, has led to the formation of new modes of religious perception and experience (*Dobrodum et al., 2024*).

The virtualization of religion significantly expands the potential for missionary activities, enabling diverse religious denominations to enhance their self-representation and attract new adherents. Online services and digital sermons have made religious engagement more accessible to a wider audience, particularly benefiting individuals who are unable to attend places of worship due to geographical, health-related, or other constraints. The rapid evolution of digital technologies has facilitated the realization of digital religion as a dynamic phenomenon encompassing all forms of religious activity, communication, and experience within the digital sphere. Digital religion includes both the adaptation of traditional religious practices through technological means – such as online services, prayers, social networks, and mobile applications – and the emergence of entirely new forms of spirituality native to virtual spaces, including digital temples, virtual rituals, and cyber spirituality.

G. Evolvi (*2022*) conceptualizes digital religion as a constellation of interrelated and fluid spaces rather than static entities. In this framework, hypermedia amplifies emotional reactions, thereby instigating social change. Specifically, digital platforms enable individuals to construct religious narratives that swiftly influence like-minded communities or, conversely, evoke fear and hostility toward perceived outsiders. These interactions create a liminal space between alternative and mainstream religious narratives, between public and private religious sentiments, and between tangible and imagined religious experiences. Evolvi thus introduces the concept of "hyper-mediated religious spaces" – spaces that exist across multiple digital platforms, maintain connections with offline material religious experiences, and derive their unique characteristics from the affordances of the internet (*Evolvi, 2022: 20*).

The phenomenon of media religiosity has emerged in response to the proliferation of mass media and popular culture, representing a novel form of religious engagement. Characterized by networked communication principles, media religiosity dissolves traditional distinctions between the sacred and the secular, allowing individuals to participate in religious activities beyond conventional territorial or institutional boundaries. Online religious services, for instance, enable global participation in rituals and worship. Media religiosity can be analyzed through a three-component structure: cognitive (manifesting in rational or irrational engagement with religious content), emotional and motivational (oriented toward either internal spiritual values or external communal interactions), and behavioral (ranging from active participation in religious practices to passive consumption of religious content) (*Kostruba, 2021: 80*).

The mediatization of religion has led to the diversification of religious media resources, encompassing mass media, digital platforms, and communication technologies utilized for the dissemination of religious teachings, spiritual education, missionary activities, and religious communication. While various formats remain available, the ongoing process of digitalization has resulted in the gradual replacement of traditional media by websites, social networks, mobile applications, and podcasts.

P. Phillips, a scholar specializing in digital religion, argues that religious institutions can strategically engage with media, as technology itself does not dictate its usage; rather, its application is shaped by societal influences. The role of society is to regulate and adapt technology for the common good. Consequently, rather than exclusively developing independent religious media outlets, it is advisable to influence existing media platforms to ensure their adherence to established moral and ethical standards. This approach aligns with the doctrinal principles of communal faith, humility, and justice, which should be reflected in the Church's media representation (*Phillips, 2020*).

Analyzing the functions of Christian media resources, M. Balaklytskyi categorizes them into two primary types: media-related and confessional. The media-related functions include information dissemination, external and internal communication, news reporting, value regulation, recreation, archiving and database management, public relations, and fostering connections within religious communities. The confessional functions encompass missionary work, evangelization, catechization, proselytization, coordination of Church ministries, apologetics, and the dissemination of religious content beyond cyberspace. Additionally, religious media resources serve as a crucial instrument for the spiritual development of society by adapting traditional religious practices to the digital realm. While these resources significantly contribute to shaping religious discourse, they also present challenges regarding the authenticity of faith and the impact of digital culture on religious experiences (*Balaklytskyi, 2022: 195*).

However, digital religion is not merely the mediatization of traditional religious symbols and their reproduction on new media platforms. Instead, it represents a unique phenomenon that encapsulates the anxieties associated with

modern societal transformations, synthesizing religious metanarratives with the ideological frameworks of the digital age. The evolution of digital religion can be conceptualized as a process of cultural "hybridization," wherein secularized consciousness, drawing upon symbolic elements from historical memory – such as rituals, meanings, and traditions – constructs new "traditions" as a response to growing alienation and uncertainty about the future. This phenomenon can be interpreted as an autonomous symbolic environment that emerges at the intersection of traditional culture and the postmodern digital communication landscape (*Zekrist, 2023: 3*).

Social networks have become a fundamental component of digital religion, reshaping religious communication, faith practices, and identity formation while facilitating the widespread dissemination of religious ideas. These platforms function as digital spaces that enable interaction and engagement at various levels—individual, communal, and societal. Broadly speaking, social media encompasses websites, internet pages, podcast portals, blogs, messaging applications, and chat forums. In a more specific sense, social networks serve as platforms for video, audio, and text-based communication within virtual spaces (*Lomachinska, 2024*). Within the context of digital religion, social media acts as a vital tool for religious communication, evangelism, spiritual education, and the construction of religious identity. These platforms allow believers, clergy, and religious organizations to engage with one another beyond geographical limitations, fostering the formation of digital religious communities. Such communities provide spaces for faith-based discussions, mutual support, prayer, and spiritual growth, thereby redefining religious engagement in the digital era.

The role of social media and search engine algorithms in the dissemination of religious content is of significant importance, as they influence what users encounter, how they engage with religious ideas, and how their spirituality evolves. The application of algorithms in shaping religious influence on social media promotes particular religious perspectives or worldviews. While this can contribute to spiritual development, it may also lead to religious polarization.

Smart algorithms, by analyzing user preferences and interests, selectively display a limited number of posts in the feed while filtering out others. This selective exposure distorts the diversity of opinions and perspectives, creating a skewed perception of reality. Consequently, social networks and search engines contribute to the ideological isolation of individuals, reinforcing the illusion that their beliefs and values are universally shared. Since 2009, Google has customized search results based on individual user interests, a practice that raises concerns regarding open public discourse. This phenomenon is particularly relevant to contentious and socially significant topics, as search engines tend to prioritize information that aligns with users' pre-existing beliefs while omitting sources that present contradictory viewpoints (*Hanushchak, 2024: 59*).

On the positive side, social media algorithms facilitate the widespread dissemination of religious content, supporting missionary efforts and spiritual growth. By curating religious materials according to user preferences, algorithms offer sermons, prayers, and religious discussions that align with individual beliefs. Additionally, they foster the formation of digital religious communities and promote interfaith dialogue. However, a significant risk associated with

these algorithms is the creation of "echo chambers," wherein users are consistently exposed to content that reinforces their prior views. This phenomenon diminishes opportunities for critical thinking and may lead to ideological and denominational isolation.

The Catholic Church acknowledges social media as a vital tool for evangelization, interfaith dialogue, and the reinforcement of a global religious community. Social media platforms serve as channels for disseminating Church teachings, engaging with believers, and shaping moral guidance in the digital sphere. Pope Benedict XVI, in his 2013 message for the 47th World Day of Social Communications, titled "Social Networks: Portals of Truth and Faith; New Spaces for Evangelization,

"Underscored the significance of social networks in the propagation of faith and truth. He emphasized that social networks facilitate participation, relationship-building, intellectual engagement, and knowledge-sharing. According to Pope Benedict XVI, "The digital environment is not a parallel or purely virtual world, but part of the daily experience of many people, especially young people. Social networks are the result of human interaction, but they also give a new form to the dynamics of communication that builds relationships: a careful understanding of this environment is a prerequisite for an important presence in it. In the digital world, there are social networks that offer our contemporaries opportunities for prayer, reflection, and sharing the word of God. But these networks can also open doors to other dimensions of faith. Many people are actually discovering, especially through contacts initially made online, the importance of face-to-face encounters, community experiences, and even pilgrimages – elements that are always important in the journey of faith" (*Message of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI, 2013*).

At the same time, the Vatican stresses the importance of responsible social media use, highlighting the necessity of truthfulness, ethical engagement, and the prevention of misinformation, manipulation, and societal discord.

In the Ukrainian context, the Roman Catholic Church does not maintain a centralized Facebook page; however, individual parishes do have their own social media presence[1]. In contrast, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC) was the first Ukrainian religious institution to establish official guidelines regulating the online presence of church structures and clergy. These regulations emphasize ethical digital engagement, prohibiting the dissemination of false information, restricting interactions with minors, limiting access to personal profiles, and forbidding participation in political talk shows and election campaigns. The document, which consists of seven sections, addresses various aspects of digital engagement, including "The Internet as a Tool for Evangelizing Society," "Functions of Social Media," "Principles of Maintaining Institutional Profiles," "Principles of Maintaining Individual Accounts and Profiles," "Etiquette in Social Media," "Activities in Social Media Groups," and "Behavior in Social Media During Election Campaigns" (*Instructions on the Presence of Church Structures, 2020*). According to these guidelines, UGCC clergy should primarily use social networks for catechesis and the dissemination of Christian teachings. The publication of copyright-infringing content is strictly prohibited on both official and personal pages. Moreover, content shared on official Church web resources must adhere to professional journalistic standards. Special emphasis is placed on the role of social media groups, which are expected to fulfill pastoral, evangelistic,

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[1]Rymo-Katolyts'ka Parafiya Narodzhennya sv. Yoana Khrestitelya (Starokostyantyniv) [Roman Catholic Parish of the Nativity of St.

John the Baptist (Starokostiantyniv)]. https://www.facebook.com/groups/1930356800552745?locale=uk_UA

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and educational functions while maintaining respectful interaction in the digital environment (*The UGCC Has Entered into Force the Instruction, 2020*).

The UGCC maintains an official Facebook page[2] with 75,000 subscribers, providing news, events, and other relevant information for the faithful. Additionally, the UGCC has launched its own Internet television channel, Zhyve.TV, which operates through voluntary donations. Designed for an online audience, particularly young people, the project broadcasts live via YouTube, thereby expanding the Church's digital outreach[3].

The Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU) does not currently possess a distinct regulatory document that comprehensively governs the presence of church structures and clergy on social media. However, the OCU maintains an active presence on various social media platforms, utilizing them to disseminate information about its activities, provide spiritual guidance, and engage with believers. The official Facebook page of the OCU has approximately 160,000 followers and is regularly updated with news, spiritual messages, and event announcements[4]. In August 2020, the OCU launched an official Instagram page to expand its digital outreach. Concurrently, it established an official Twitter account to provide timely updates and foster audience interaction (*The OCU has created official pages on Instagram and Twitter*, 2020). Additionally, the OCU maintains an official YouTube channel that publishes video content, including live broadcasts of services, sermons, and other religious events.

Beyond its official pages, the OCU also promotes social initiatives through dedicated projects. For instance, the Facebook page "Social Service of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church" highlights various charitable and social projects aimed at assisting those in need. Similarly, Eleos-Ukraine[5], a public organization that officially represents the Synodal Department of Social Service and Charity of the OCU, is highly active on social media. This organization facilitates the development of the OCU's social ministry by implementing diverse charitable projects.

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC) is also significantly engaged in social media, with approximately 128,000 followers on its official Facebook page[6]. The UOC's content is frequently updated, with over a hundred new posts published daily.

Social media plays a crucial role in the promotion and expansion of religious tourism and pilgrimage. These forms of travel focus on visiting sacred sites, temples, monasteries, and other spiritual heritage landmarks. Social media enhances these experiences by disseminating information about the historical and spiritual significance of religious sites through multimedia content such as photographs, videos, and virtual tours. Additionally, social media facilitates the creation of online communities for pilgrims, the announcement of religious events, discussions on

travel routes and logistics, and the sharing of recommendations and personal experiences.

It is essential to distinguish between religious tourism and religious pilgrimage in terms of their representation on social media, as they differ in communication methods, target audiences, and content types. Religious tourism is generally oriented toward exploring spiritual and historical monuments, regardless of visitors' religious affiliations. Content related to religious tourism often includes historical and cultural information about sacred sites, video and photographic tours, tourist reviews, and practical travel advice regarding logistics, routes, and accommodations. The primary audience for such content typically consists of secular individuals, including historians and cultural scholars. For example, a Facebook feed recommending visits to the Kyiv Pechersk Lavra[7] as a cultural and historical landmark exemplifies religious tourism.

Conversely, new technologies and social media platforms, as fundamental components of digital communication, contribute to the enhancement of travel experiences and facilitate sustainable development in religious tourism. These digital tools enable travel agencies to redefine and enhance the brand image of religious tourism destinations. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) significantly influence perceptions of religious sites, customs, and traditions. Furthermore, ICTs allow travel agencies and organizations managing religious sites to engage with tourists, gathering insights from their feedback and perspectives (*Romanelli et al., 2021*).

Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube provide a space for religious communities, travel agencies, and enthusiasts to share visual and textual content related to Ukraine's sacred sites. The active presence of religious institutions, including monasteries, on these platforms significantly contributes to the promotion of religious tourism[8] by raising awareness and fostering interest in spiritual centers. This, in turn, encourages visits to these sites. Furthermore, social media serves as a valuable tool for organizing virtual tours, allowing prospective visitors to familiarize themselves with religious shrines before undertaking physical pilgrimages. This approach is particularly relevant during periods of travel restrictions or for individuals planning future journeys. Additionally, various online communities facilitate the exchange of experiences by enabling travelers to share their impressions, recommendations, and insights regarding religious travel in Ukraine, thereby motivating others to participate in such journeys.

Religious pilgrimage constitutes a spiritual practice driven by religious motivations, aiming to provide a profound spiritual experience through acts of worship, prayer, and religious observance. Consequently, religious content dominates pilgrimage-related communities on social media, encompassing spiritual reflections, sermons, prayers,

[2] Ukrayins'ka Hreko-Katolyts'ka Tserkva [Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church]. https://www.facebook.com/ugcc.ua/?locale=uk_UA&utm_source=chatgpt.com

[3] Zhyve. TV. [Live TV] https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=Живе.ТБ

[4] Pravoslavna Tserkva Ukrayiny [Orthodox Church of Ukraine]. https://www.facebook.com/Orthodox.in.Ukraine/?locale=uk_UA&utm_source=chatgpt.com

[5] Eleos-Ukrayina [Eleos-Ukraine] https://eleos.com.ua

[6] Ukrayins'ka pravoslavna tserkva [Ukrainian Orthodox Church]. https://www.facebook.com/groups/230895004271-4897/about?locale=uk_UA

[7] Shcho vyriznyaye ukrayins'ki khramy: istoriya y osoblyvosti arkhitektury Kyievo-Pechers'koyi lavry. [What distinguishes Ukrainian churches: history and architectural features of the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oMQjfWzzw1g

[8] Svyato-Troyits'kyi Monastyr. Pravoslavna Tserkva Ukrayiny. [Holy Trinity Monastery. Orthodox Church of Ukraine] https://www.facebook.com/groups/1139896943115062/?locale=uk_UA

and personal testimonies from pilgrims regarding their religious experiences. The primary audience for such content consists of believers seeking to embark on pilgrimages for spiritual enrichment. A pertinent example is the Patriarchal Pilgrimage Center of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC), an official online community that provides information on pilgrimage routes, events, and relevant updates. This community's Facebook page, for instance, has amassed 27,000 followers[9]. Additionally, independent social media groups have been established by and for believers to coordinate and facilitate pilgrimages to sacred sites, such as the Resurrection Pilgrimage Center, which organizes journeys to Orthodox shrines[10].

Protestant organizations in Ukraine actively leverage social media to disseminate spiritual materials, communicate with their followers, and promote their religious activities. This engagement enables them to reach a broad audience and maintain connections with both believers and the wider public. A notable example of this engagement is reflected in the Resolution of the Protestant Evangelical Churches, issued on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. In Part 3, "Reformation of Society," under the section "Culture and Media," the resolution states:

> "We recognize that the media sphere has become a powerful instrument in the struggle for power, often serving as a manipulative tool for distorting the truth and promoting destructive ideas and ideologies. We acknowledge that the representation of the Gospel remains insufficient in the domains of culture and media, which is inconsistent with the Church's historical role at the forefront of cultural development. We call upon Christians and all citizens of Ukraine to critically assess and responsibly disseminate information obtained from the media, social networks, and the Internet. Furthermore, we emphasize the importance of maintaining dignity and decorum in online interactions. We urge Christians to collaborate in the development of professional Christian media that accurately reflect the truth and contribute to the betterment of society" (*Nedavnya, 2022, 107*).

Protestant organizations in Ukraine actively utilize social media for various religious and community-oriented activities. Among their primary online engagements are virtual worship services and spiritual support initiatives. Many Protestant denominations, including Baptists, Pentecostals, and Adventists, regularly conduct online sermons and prayer sessions, making them accessible to believers both within Ukraine and abroad (*Ukrainian Protestants in Times of War, 2024*). Additionally, Protestant communities leverage social media to disseminate information about their activities, announce upcoming events, and share spiritual materials. These platforms also serve as vital tools for coordinating aid collections, organizing volunteer initiatives, and providing support to individuals in need, particularly during times of crisis[11].

Similarly, Muslim organizations in Ukraine actively employ social media to inform the public about their activities, promote Islamic culture, and engage with the wider community. A prominent example is the Religious Administration of Muslims of Ukraine "Umma" (RAMU "Umma"), which extensively utilizes digital platforms to disseminate information about Islam and facilitate educational and cultural events. The organization's Facebook page[12], which has approximately 10,000 followers, serves as a central hub for communication. It features announcements regarding upcoming and past events such as prayer services, conferences, and memorial gatherings; video publications of speeches by the mufti and other significant figures; photographic documentation of community activities; and official messages and public addresses. These efforts contribute to raising awareness of Islamic culture and fostering a greater understanding of events related to the Muslim community in Ukraine.

Beyond Facebook, RAMU "Umma" also employs YouTube to extend its outreach. However, according to Ukrainian religious scholars, an analysis of the content available on the YouTube channels of Muslim religious organizations in Ukraine indicates several limitations. First, these channels tend to have a relatively small audience, as reflected in the number of subscribers and video views. Second, their content primarily consists of reports and spiritual or educational programs. Third, live broadcasts are notably scarce. Furthermore, the Ukrainian segment of YouTube remains underdeveloped in this context due to relatively low consumer demand (*Slyusar et al., 2023*).

Social media also serves as an effective mechanism for shaping the image of leading religious leaders in Ukraine and promoting their civic position. Religious leaders actively use social media to disseminate their messages, quotes from sacred texts, and comments on social and political events. They can also publish videos or live broadcasts of their sermons, which allows them to get closer to their faithful. In particular, the Primate of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine Epifaniy[13], the Head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church Sviatoslav (Shevchuk)[14], and the Mufti of the Religious Administration of Muslims of Ukraine "Umma" Murat Suleymanov[15] actively use YouTube for spiritual sermons. Social media communities that unite believers around certain religious leaders help spread their message and create an environment of support. Given the importance of moral and ethical aspects in religious activities, religious leaders try to meet standards that maintain their credibility and create a positive image. They can express their position on current social issues, which allows them to be part of important public discourses.

In particular, for the RAMU "Umma", Ukrainian scholars identify the following tools for shaping the image of a leader as инсьrelevant: coverage of the activities of regional offices and their leaders, blogging by imams on the organization's official website, and maintaining official pages of imams and regional organizations on social networks, pri-

[9] Patriarshyy Palomnyts'kyy Tsentr UGCC [Patriarchal Pilgrimage Center of the UGCC]. https://www.facebook.com/pilgrimage.in.ua/?locale=uk_UA

[10] Hrupa Palomnyts'kyy tsentr "Voskresinnia" [Group "Pilgrimage Center "Resurrection"]. https://www.facebook.com/-groups/258059281815180

[11] Baptysty [Baptists]. https://www.facebook.com/groups/213615345423978

[12] Dukhovne upravlinnya musul'man Ukrayiny "Umma" [Religious Administration of Muslims of Ukraine " Umma"]. https://www.facebook.com/umma.ua?locale=uk_UA

[13] Pravoslavna Tserkva Ukrayiny [Orthodox Church of Ukraine]. https://www.youtube.com/@pomisna-ocu

[14] Blazhennishyy Svyatoslav: #dostupno_pro_vazhlyve | Zrostayuchy u spilkuvanni z Bohom: molytva pokayannya [His Beatitude Sviatoslav: #accessible_about_important | Growing in communion with God: the prayer of repentance]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xaoDI7kerKE

[15] DUMU Umma [RAMU Umma]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tVNyJw4ga8M

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marily on the Facebook platform. Analysis of media content shows that the latter tool is the most popular among the audience (*Slyusar et al., 2024*).

Conclusions

In the contemporary digital landscape, social media has emerged as a powerful instrument for religious organizations to shape public consciousness by facilitating the dissemination of spiritual teachings, providing moral support, and fostering active dialogue with society. Through strategic engagement in digital platforms, religious organizations can effectively propagate their doctrinal messages, offer prayer support to believers, and undertake various social, educational, and charitable initiatives. The proficient utilization of social media not only enables these organizations to fulfill their spiritual mission but also ensures their adaptation to modern realities while preserving their authenticity and theological depth.

In the context of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, social media has assumed a crucial role for Ukrainian religious organizations, serving as a vital communication channel and a potent tool for support, aid coordination, spiritual sustenance, and informational resistance. Clergy actively employ social media to provide spiritual encouragement, instill hope, and bestow blessings upon both military personnel and civilians. Additionally, digital platforms facilitate the organization of humanitarian assistance, fundraising efforts, and the coordination of volunteer initiatives, thereby enhancing the efficiency of relief operations.

Moreover, social media contributes significantly to the preservation of national and spiritual identity, as many religious leaders emphasize the importance of nurturing Ukraine's spiritual heritage and promoting the Ukrainian language and culture within religious practices. In this regard, religious leaders are not only spiritual mentors but also modern communicators who must adapt to the evolving digital environment to effectively engage with diverse audiences.

Amidst global challenges, Ukrainian religious leaders leverage social media not only to fulfill their moral and spiritual duties but also to assume a critical social role in fostering civic unity during this period of national crisis. Their online activities serve as a means of reinforcing Ukrainian identity, advocating for national interests, and upholding spiritual sovereignty. By integrating traditional religious values with modern communication strategies, these leaders contribute to societal cohesion and resilience in the face of adversity.

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Релігійні організації в соціальних мережах: можливості, виклики та перспективи для духовних спільнот України

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Стаття присвячена аналізу особливостей використання соціальних мереж релігійними організаціями в Україні задля здійснення місійної, соціально-просвітницької та духовно-культурної діяльності в умовах глобальних викликів сучасності. Актуальність та новизна дослідження полягає у визначенні ролі соціальних мереж як рушійного чинника сучасних релігійних практик. Проаналізовано сутність феномену цифрової релігії та її змістовні ознаки. Зазначено, що соціальні мережі відіграють значну роль у формуванні релігійного дискурсу, ставлять виклики щодо автентичності віри та впливу цифрової культури на релігійний досвід. Визначено роль соціальних мереж як важливого інструменту релігійного спілкування, євангелізації, духовної освіти та конструювання релігійної ідентичності в цифровому середовищі. Охарактеризовано позитиви і небезпеки використання алгоритмів соціальних мереж для релігійного впливу, що може як підтримувати духовний розвиток суспільства, так і сприяти релігійній поляризації. Досліджено базові офіційні документи, що регулюють використання соціальних мереж релігійними організаціями в Україні. Проаналізовані різні форми духовно-просвітницької та соціально-культурної активності провідних українських релігійних організацій в соціальних мережах: онлайн-проповіді та богослужіння; проведення онлайн-молитовних зустрічей; створення тематичних груп для взаємної духовної підтримки; публікація духовного досвіду віруючих; соціальна і благодійна діяльність; організація релігійного паломництва і туризму. У висновках підкреслюється значення соціальних мереж не лише як важливого засобу комунікації, а й потужного інструменту підтримки, організації допомоги, духовного супроводу та інформаційного спротиву. В умовах глобальних викликів сучасності українські релігійні лідери в соціальних мережах не лише виконують морально-духовну місію, а й відіграють значну соціальну роль, здійснюючи просвітницьку діяльність та сприяючи громадянській єдності в складний для країни час. Своєю діяльністю вони підтримують українську ідентичність, виступають на захист національних інтересів та духовної незалежності.

Ключові слова: соціальні мережі, релігійні організації, цифрова релігія, соціальні медіа, медіатизація релігії, онлайн-богослужіння, релігійні лідери.