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Religious Advertising in Ukraine: Political and Social Contexts¹

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Abstract

Religious advertising is a new phenomenon in the Ukrainian media space. Starting from 2019 to the time of writing, it has been right in the middle of political battles as a public platform that represents the idea of the Independent Ukrainian Church. Religious advertising with a strong political component has become part of the conflict discourse and is qualified by experts as manipulation. In religious advertising with its social convergence, the creative impulse is mainly formed with verbal means that shape a new cognitive style of gaining religious experience. The new features are represented in God's speech behavior, speech style, communicative situations with His participation, role distribution, genre preferences and the emotional background of communicative interactions. Ukrainian religious advertising strives to balance short-term political interests and long-term social interests along with eternal values.

Keywords

Ukraine; Religious Advertising; Political Contexts; Social Contexts

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Introduction

Religious media is an innovative object of Ukrainian scientific research, which leads to scholars' growing interest in the mass-media phenomenon. According to Petryshkevich, the author of one of the first monographs in Ukraine on religious media (2011), religious communication has a complex structure. It is associated with religious traditions and canons, but it must also adapt to the dictates of time. Technical means of transmitting information, namely the press, radio, television, the Internet, new media, cause transformations in religious communication. Manifestations of religiosity are becoming more varied, bringing secular and religious communication closer together. Modern religious media closely interact and create a kind of symbiosis that helps to increase the influence of mass communication on the individual. The new media, especially social networks with their enhanced dialogicity and mass audience, are the closest to this essence of religious communication. The radio and the press are different in that they preserve their one-way communication patterns. They maintain their communicative traditions and continue developing classical religious communication, since they are based on the spoken or written word. The use of digital media draws religious issues into the field of mass communication and destroys the spatial, social and religious boundaries between people ([Petrushkevych 2018](#)). Therefore, this study focuses on the features of religious advertising that use typical language-based approaches.

From a communications perspective, the goal of the study is to explore the evolutionary dynamics of semiotic codes of religious communication that are used in the Ukrainian Christian advertising. According to the current statistical data on changes in religious self-identification of Ukraine's population, the number of believers is constantly growing: the overwhelming majority of Ukrainians (73%) consider themselves Orthodox Christians and 9% think of themselves as Greek Catholic, while 7% claim to be atheist ([Kyiv 2021](#)). Consequently, it is Christian advertising that performs the representative function of communicative dynamic in the religious sphere.

To understand the cognitive meaning of these semiotic codes, the main epistemologies of advertising of Christian denominations in Ukraine are analyzed; factors and consequences of the impact on consumers of religious advertising are qualified linguistically; the cognitive significance of the phenomenon of Christian advertising in the Ukrainian media space is outlined.

Religion and Religious Advertising

It is necessary to note that religious advertising is a completely new phenomenon in the Ukrainian media space. However, the emergence of religious advertising is a natural course of events predicted by researchers of discourse. Thus, an expert at Freedomart ([Halyuta 2013](#)) argues that religious communication in general and brand communication as a form of advertising representation in the modern socio-cultural sphere have many features in common. Some scholars develop this point of view and propose several explanations of this peculiarity. First, the current situation may be the result of the advertising integration process in all areas of social reality. Second, it may be connected with the fact that religion has consciously or unconsciously been using marketing techniques from the very beginning of its existence. After all, advertising in the form of announcements of heralds, posters and albums existed as far back as in Ancient Rome. At present, religious institutions borrow from advertising many new means to exert influence on their audience. Third, what is happening can be explained as a necessity caused by modern realities when consumer loyalty can be secured only with the help of advertising ([Dmitrieva & Shusharin 2013](#)).

The problem that remains unresolved lies in that religious discourse is undergoing a radical change. At the current stage of its development, religious discourse in Ukraine is being transformed simultaneously by several sources of influence. This is primarily an institutional renewal, which has diversified believers' confessional feelings and interpretations of Church doctrine and increased the tendency to socio-political

correction of processes in the religious sphere, including the field of communication. Nowadays it is obvious that initially religious advertising used to function as an information board. Starting from 2019 to the present, it has been right in the epicenter of political battles as a public platform that represents the idea of an Independent Ukrainian Church. Under the current circumstances, the communicative peculiarity of religious advertising is defined by anew semiotic code as a system of strict guidelines, rooted in both political propaganda and religious values. Therefore, in the framework of our study, we consider it important to analyze the epistemological potential of religious advertising messages.

Religious communication has acquired innovative features, typical of mass media advertising. Determined both by extralinguistic and linguistic factors, the evolution of its semiotic code creates new perspectives for the research into religious concepts in general and their postmodern representations in particular. The range of expressive means that provides the basic religious ideas is changing noticeably. Consequently, we believe it is vital to study religious advertising in terms of mechanisms of influence and marketing effects.

At the same time, we emphasize that lack of knowledge about media literacy can lead to communicative manipulations. The linguistic profiles of the entire manipulative communicative process are, however, rather hard to identify. In general, verbal manipulation is manifested in texts which correlate with lies, deception, aggression, conflict, invective, fiction, illusion, fake, and so on. Yet, it should be noted that peculiarities of communicative influence are distinguished in different informational spheres and in the religious space in particular. When it concerns religious advertising, we mainly associate it with verbal suggestion. Therefore, in the analysis, the focus was on the linguistic mechanisms used. Thus, understanding the linguistic mechanisms of religious advertising expands knowledge about how mass media functions as an object of religious communication.

Unfortunately, scholars pay insufficient attention to hybrid types of influence in modern religious communication and its innovative genres in particular. From our point of view, religious advertising is an important factor to stratify values that, on the one hand, shape one's spiritual life and, on the other hand, are used through mass media as means of influence in the modern society. We can view religious advertising as a media practice that translates a religious message from an archaic language into a modern one so that the recipient may perceive it as a personal experience of communion with God.

The emergence of Christian advertising has given an impetus to the development of advertising of other denominations. It suddenly became clear that marketing could help smaller denominations be more successful in the market for religious ideas and goods. What will happen next? What will success bring: an interreligious dialogue or a war of religious narratives? Obviously, further research in the field of religious marketing will clarify the answers to these questions, which are beyond the scope of this study.

Finally, it is our deep belief that religious advertising is quite specific. New advertising goals impose new requirements on the creators of advertising, in particular on **their** media literacy. It is vital to remember that in religious communication we can distinguish between pathogenic and therapeutic text technologies, productive and habitual manipulations, explicit meanings and hidden intentions, established conventions, symbolic and hybrid codes and other aspects of media literacy. From a social point of view, prospects for the development of the media genre lie in the anthropocentric understanding of the phenomenological essence of religious advertising which can be actualized only in a dialogue with society.

It seems to us that the Ukrainian experience of such a dialogue can be useful for those countries that are struggling to resolve identity conflicts and whose governments are seeking a new format of religious narratives in the palette of social, political and cultural values. Experience has shown that the social demand for rethinking the functions of religious discourse has been formed by now in almost all Eastern European countries as well as in other parts of the world. It can be perceived that this is due to the needs of the globalized information space, in which ethnic groups and countries are trying to distance themselves from some forms of life and, conversely, to associate with other, more promising evolutionary models of life.

Methodology

The sample for the study of the evolution of semiotic codes in Ukrainian Christian advertising consists of 30 billboard advertisements, used in Ukraine in 2018-2020. Twenty advertisements are hybrid political and religious texts that were part of Petro Poroshenko's program during the 2019 presidential election. The efficiency of these billboards resulted not only from their extraordinary abundance in Ukrainian cities, but also because they were aggressively broadcast by all media during the election campaign. These advertising presentations marked the formation of a new religious institution, the Ukrainian Local Church, which is not affiliated with the Russian Orthodox Church.

Within the framework of Poroshenko's election campaign, breaking from Russian Orthodox Christianity was presented as a spiritual breakthrough, as the ultimate formation of the institutional independence of Ukrainian Orthodoxy. So, although Petro Poroshenko lost the election, the church was established, and this radically changed the map of Ukrainian denominations, which invests these advertisements with a historical significance and justifies them as the valuable material for our analysis.

Ten examples contain texts that appeared in response to this massive advertising attack. They were created by various Christian denominations to remind politicians and believers of spiritual priorities in activities of church institutions. Due to its linguistic nature, the research focused on analyzing the most expressive examples from this group and those with an accentuated verbal rather than visual component. All the analyzed advertisements were part of the first wave of Ukrainian religious advertising. It should be noted that, since 2019, religious advertising has almost disappeared from the streets of Ukrainian cities and moved to the Internet. The new channel has required new communicative codes and expressive means, which makes the first stage unique and worthy of a special study.

In 2021, statistical surveys confirmed the importance of these two groups of advertising. In particular, the idea of a local church is theoretically supported mainly by young people and people under 50 years of age. According to analysts, this is immediately related to the impact of advertising. Out of 1,200 people who took part in the survey, 67% consider themselves believers, but less than 10% attend church regularly and associate themselves with a particular religious community ([Kyiv 2021](#)). This gives grounds to hypothesize that for the remaining 57%, faith in God is more of an inner state and is rooted in a set of subjective perceptions rather than in a particular ministry and various forms of activity.

The research applies the methodology of interactional sociolinguistics ([Gumperz 2003](#)) which is grounded on the theory of situational inference in the anthropological perspective. To explain that: the motivational nature of communicative interaction is considered in its connection with cultural and social factors and is related conceptually with Goffman's theory of framing. The methodology is based on a set of discourse analysis methods aimed at identifying and analyzing situational meanings. The ultimate objective of the study lies in exploring discursive strategies. The research draws on the approach put forward by Erving Goffman ([Goffman 1974](#)), who views an interaction frame as the matrix of some events and a set of roles. This model of interaction is created in interactions and perceived differently by each participant. Interactional framing is close to the idea of "type of activity" or speech activity. Contextual framing correlates with interpretation framing. According to Goffman, an interaction consists of frames. The behavior of each communicator is associated with a certain scenario, while the dynamic of a role is regulated by behavior patterns expected from participants of various statuses.

Results and Discussion

Creative impulse of religious advertising and its communicative peculiarities are based on strong convergent tendencies that correspond to political, social and marketing discourses.

RELIGIOUS ADVERTISING AND POLITICAL CONVERGENCE

Within the political project of former Ukrainian president P. Poroshenko (2019), religious advertising was used to introduce and promote the concept of an Independent Ukrainian Church. In order to provide the necessary historical background, it is relevant to mention that Ukrainian Orthodoxy has been split for a while already. From 2000 to 2018, de facto and de jure, there were three large Orthodox churches. The first is the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP); this Orthodox church in Ukraine is a part of the Russian Orthodox Church, yet it is granted self-governance and rights to broad autonomy. The second is the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC-KP) that emerged in 1992 in opposition to the Russian Orthodox Church and demanded full autonomy from Russia. The third is the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UACC) that represented believers of Ukraine's Orthodox tradition preserved by the Ukrainian diaspora of North America and Western Europe. Conceptual discrepancies in ideological doctrines of the abovementioned churches were fueled by Russia, radical-minded Ukrainian political circles and the Ukrainian diaspora.

In December 2018, the project introduced by Ukraine's then president Poroshenko united the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Kyiv Patriarchate) and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Church to establish the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU) that obtained what is known as a *tomos of autocephaly* from the Ecumenical Patriarchate in January, 2019. This *tomos* is one that grants it autocephaly or self-governorship. The new Ukrainian church became the 15th independent local church in the world. It began positioning itself as the uniform national church, from the time that Ukraine proclaimed independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Yet, as early as May 2019, under the influence of numerous factors, the Kyiv Patriarchate revised its decision to recognize the new church institution as legal, qualifying its creation as manipulation and deception of believers. Now the Kyiv Patriarchate has been defending its position in court and demanding the return of its status and property.

In general, ambitions of clerical leaders, political protectionism, reputational damage of Poroshenko as the national leader, aggravating inter-church strife, numerous cases of forcible takeovers and redistribution of church property, the Russian annexation of a part of Ukraine's territory, the change of power from Poroshenko to Zelensky, among other factors, prevented the OCU from becoming the single platform of Ukrainians' spiritual unification. The ideological intention was to transfer UOC-MP clergy and parishioners inspired by the national independence movement to the OCU. However, the plan has worked out only partially. At present, the most active participants in the inter-church strife remain the UOC-MP that is still supported by believers because it emphasizes spiritual rather than political values and the OCU that has the *tomos of autocephaly*. Yet, the Russian jurisdiction of the UOC-MP weakens this church due to the dramatic deterioration of Ukraine's relations with Russia which has led to military confrontation at the time of writing in 2021. The division between the Orthodox churches persists, but the new church is getting stronger. Thus, political actions and religious advertising of the innovative idea to establish a Ukrainian local church have proved to be fruitful.

The new semiotic code was created within the advertising campaign and was developed during the race for the presidency in 2018. That was an ideological code where the fundamental aspects of the ideology of state independence and the religious basis of church independence were used in the diffusive interaction on the idea of Ukrainian statehood. In our case, national identity, political identity and religious or confessional identity were united within the framework of the ideological code ([Stepanov 2012](#)).

Then, if this advertising arose during a presidential election campaign, why is it religious advertising? First of all, because Ukrainian priests and believers were the objects of influence of this advertising ([Fig. 1](#)). Religious beliefs played a significant part in shaping their social behavior. Thus, in modern Orthodox identity, the cultural factor tends to dominate. Orthodoxy is moving towards cultural identity due to the ideological vacuum in society, weak civic awareness, challenges of globalization and the Soviet atheistic heritage ([Boreyko 2017](#)).



Figure 1. 'Tomos for Ukraine!'

Source: vyborypravda.com.ua

It is necessary to note that Ukraine is a predominantly Christian country. Under current conditions, the tendency to a high level of declared religiosity of the population persists (Boreyko 2017). Religion is an element of culture that pervades every aspect of a society. It should be noted that cultural dimensions are very dynamic in a society, but religious tenets form a stable and static social basis. This condition of stability and manageability attracts politicians who want support from a stable and manageable religious electorate (Fig. 2).



Figure 2. 'We are Ukraine. The local church is the key to independence. Petro Poroshenko'

Source: starovina.LiveJournal.com

Ukrainians have also shown increased attention to the intentional level of this hybrid advertising and recognized the manipulation. This draws linguists' attention to language markers of manipulation. Manipulative influence was based on verbalizing the attention-drawing correlation of the concept Ukrainian Church and the concept Independent Ukrainian State. As a result, a new version of Ukrainian identity was suggested to the citizens of Ukraine, as is shown in Figure 3. This understanding of identity has become a major epistemology of Ukrainian conflict discourse. The hybrid advertising (both political and religious)

helped deliver the politically important information about the ideological confrontation between Ukraine and Russia that marks the present stage of their relations. However, the demarcation line was drawn in the spiritual sphere. As a result, the new strategic narrative reconstructed the ‘*we/our vs they/their*’ opposition.



Figure 3. ‘We are Ukraine. The Army defends our land. The language defendss our heart. The Religion defends our soul’. *Petro Poroshenko*

Source: vybory.pravda.com.ua



Figure 4. ‘Tomos 2018’

Source: spzh.news



Figure 5. 'For where is your treasure, there your heart will be! Lipetsk confectionery factory "Roshen". Matthew 6.21'

Source: politeka.net

Thus, the new connotations of axiological components in the structures of the analyzed concepts formed the new evaluative meanings associated with the binary oppositions, including 'war vs peace', 'enemy vs patriot', 'freedom, democracy vs slavery', 'past vs future', 'fake vs truth', 'Russian language vs Ukrainian language', 'Russian Orthodox vs Ukrainian Orthodox', 'righteous person vs sinner', 'believer vs unbeliever', and so on. In this case, both the ideological worldview and the religious worldview merge into the new worldview, written in black and white mental codes with the same pragmatic potential as is seen in [Figure 4](#).

Within this approach, the concept of Ukrainian Church has acquired some signs of socio-semantic concepts that correlate with certain political references in particular. In the textual representations, such concepts are loaded with a believer's self-identification followed by their further identifying with a group that has developed its own ideological categorization, on the one hand. On the other hand, the meaning is determined by the religious references and arguments based on differences in interpretation of church doctrine. In addition, these three components, namely, self-identification, group identity, and ideological categorization, are combined with marketing inventory that controls the believer's interpretations of symbols and signs within manipulative communicative strategies. Personal aspects that accompanied the processes of political identification, were objectified by the content of religious media.

As part of such propaganda, the following was explained to Ukrainians: 'Where is God in Ukraine? Who does He support? Who among the leaders of Ukrainian Churches hears His voice better and brings the truth to people? What language is to be spoken in church? Does the Bible translated into modern Ukrainian remain a ritual text? What language should be used in confession, prayer and repentance? Which of the churches is the house of God – Kyiv Patriarchate or Moscow Patriarchate, Ukrainian Orthodox Church or Russian Orthodox Church?' among others matters.

Massive religious advertising has erased Soviet atheism from Ukrainians' social consciousness and made people reconsider their personal relations with God. In this sense, religious advertising as a mass media phenomenon has proved its cultural uniqueness.

The next type of religious advertisement is of an intertextual nature and is also constructed according to the manipulative strategies and tactics of political discourse (see [Figure 5](#)). Speaking about the close connection of such advertising with political aims, we rely on the key values in the Ukrainian worldview. The attitudes to the army, language and faith are transformed into imperative for Ukrainians. All these

values stem from cognitive processes of conceptualizing the Ukrainian reality and its religious spectrum in particular. Fighting in some regions of Ukraine, conflicts over language, the struggle of churches for parishioners have caused changes in lives of Ukrainians and forced them to reconsider their life priorities.

The advertising representations appeared in the context that explicated the binary oppositions mentioned above, which, in its turn, actualized Ukrainians' values. However, the presence of the president's name in the advertisement changed the semantic vector of text decoding. In this case, the oppositional semiotic principle was used in other religious advertisements. The tendency to fuse political and religious meanings in an advertising text for the sake of ironic modalities is represented in the text that appeared in Cherkassy: "*For where is your treasure, there your heart will be!*" *Lipetsk confectionery factory "Rosben". Matthew 8.21.* (Fig. 5)

The purpose of the advertisement lies in eroding Poroshenko's political image. This advertisement is a kind of provocation, anti-advertising; it attempts to draw the target audience's attention to the declarative nature of the presidential program and spurs emotional protest against his position. The allusion to the Sacred text, the Gospel of Matthew, is used as subtle yet easy-to-decode hint at the President's financial well-being in the state with weak economy and poor people. The text *Lipetsk confectionery factory "Rosben"* is the implicit reference to Poroshenko, who has some business interests in the country-aggressor of Ukraine. Hence, there is an obvious verbalization of such values as Goodness, God and Truth, Honour and money. The advertisement employs the communicative tactic of exposing double social standards. The allusion to the Holy Scripture as a specific form of intellectually and emotionally marked continuum which correspond to God and Truth is quite explicit. There are such key words in this part of the mass media message as *treasure* and *heart*. The word *treasure* is used in its primary meaning, but the word *heart* is actualized in its figurative meaning *the essence*. The complex stylistics of the advertisement based on the specific connection of the sacral text rhetoric with the speech nominative sentence: "*Lipetsk confectionery factory "Rosben"*" determines the effect of the protest perception. The interpretation frame of the advertising message is also based on the oppositional-semiotic principle and is realized as a conflict of Goodness and evil, Truth and falsehood that the advertisement implicitly correlates with the President's activity.

The author's intentions are objectified as a polycode text which includes three semantic components for values categorization: religious, political and moral. Among various types of communicative models, it is the inferential model that assumes that when communicators are interpreting or receiving a message, the informative intention they must infer or recognize is what their interlocutor wanted to communicate or share with them (Scott-Phillips 2015).

Within the framework of this approach, different popularized versions of advertising perlocutions were created in the Ukrainian media sphere. As a result, the frequency of lexemes that verbalize the Ukrainian Church concept in the political slogans of then-president Poroshenko (for example, *'Army, Language, Faith!'*, "*The church is our civilization right!*", "*The tomos is our historical choice!*", "*We are Ukraine. The Army defences our land. The language defences our heart. The Religion defences our soul. Petro Poroshenko*"), its functional encumbrance in the program manifestos of the players (Local Ukrainian) became a characteristic feature of the Ukrainian presidential campaign in 2019.

So, the means of expressing positive or negative attitudes, verbalization of such concepts as good and evil, the categories of "owe/our" and "they/their" were implemented into the manipulative strategy of influence on the electorate. In this case, "totalitarianism" (as it is interpreted by Kaftandzhiev 2005) of political propaganda and "totalitarianism" of religious ideology merge to produce the technology of verbal influence. At the same time, the concept of Political Orthodoxy not only became part of the Ukrainian information space, but was also institutionalized through this advertising.

However, the stylistic palette used in texts of religious advertising demonstrates that religious banner advertising in Ukraine has managed to overcome the limitations of political contexts. It has not turned into a propaganda resource of 'political religion', 'nationalist religion' or 'civil religion' (Kormina 2017, p. 131)

that are located in the functional grey zone compared to the world religions. Instead, Ukrainian religious advertising is an epitome of the communicative dynamic peculiar to the modern stage in Christian religious discourse.

RELIGIOUS ADVERTISING AND SOCIAL CONVERGENCE

One of the crucial challenges that this advertising has succeeded in resolving is modernization of communicative codes used to transmit, receive and store the communicative experience with God. As a rule, this communicative experience of existential contact is systemically determined as ‘transfer of the sacred doctrine’.

In our view, convergence to the social problematic is the most natural for religious advertising. At present, there are two tendencies to reproduce information about God in religious communication. The first is the conservative direction, related with the content of canonical ideas, and the second is the dynamic trend to update the communicative code in accordance with the general tendency towards informative interaction. It has become a major research topic for media linguistics in recent years to solve this contradiction by setting up new standards of understanding the functionality of religious messages. In our opinion, achieving any pragmatic goals in modern religious media is impossible without promoting the development of a new cognitive style adapted to the general media specifics and formed according to the innovation of technologies and current people’s needs.



Figure 6. ‘Jesus blesses travelers’

Source: <https://credo.pro/2011/04/4433>

Modern tendencies in advertising text building are enriched with such a new category as a “narrative mask” that is created according to a concrete situation and speech behavior of different narrators. It should be noted that religious registers of communication with God were determined by the sacred textual tradition and canonical conventions. Within the framework of traditional approaches, we can define the following narrative masks: “Lord”, “Father”, “Fair Judge”, “Creator”, “God the Defender” and so on. In such

a case, a narrator can be represented with the help of anthropic visualization and appeal to the Sacred Text. There are cases when we can see such religious advertising in Ukraine (eg [Figures 6](#) and [8](#)).



Figure 7. 'Let's meet on Sunday ... God'

Source: vlasti.net/news/210827



Figure 8. "Noah's days"

Source: hromadske.ck.ua

Ukrainian media reality confirms the fact that, while retransmitting religious ideas, mass culture has replaced systematic knowledge with a set of relevant constructs that are offered to consumers of this culture. In the context of information overload, clip-perception, drastic decline in book-reading, advertising is an instrument of de-mythologizing that introduces into everyday consciousness of the Ukrainian Orthodox believer artificially constructed stereotypes based on binary oppositions originating from the depth of folk tradition ([Boreyko 2017](#), p. 330). Here belong also binary oppositions of the religious picture of the world and the axiological paradigm. Hence, this advertisement contains an image of God with the iconic allusion,

transparent symbolism of a ritual gesture; the textual component is a biblical paraphrase that best simplifies and facilitates understanding of the religious message.

Meanwhile, powerful effects of the most resonant religious advertising are generated by the postmodern rejection of the traditional cultural ways of textual representation of the primary sacral source. The range of deviations may vary but is inevitably perceptible. Note that in Ukrainian religious advertising the characteristics of God's substitution and various evaluative connotations were modernized not by appealing to modern anthropic visualizations of God (famous advertising images of God-baby, God-rock musician, and so on) but by using markers of Ukrainian reality. Thus, church representatives condemned the introduction of a system of identification numbers for Ukrainian tax payers. The advertisement shown in [Figure 8](#) emphasizes the idea of God's wrath through the use of 666, the symbol of the Antichrist.

Another approach is connected with the process when adopting patterns of modern everyday conversations helps to substitute for the religious reality. Within the framework of social convergence, the creative potential of religious advertising is explicated by a deviation from standards of religious communication which represents the substitution for God.

In our opinion, religious advertising can serve as convincing example of the dynamic matrix that complements the static matrix, as they are defined by [Pocheptsov \(2011\)](#). In this regard, linguistic analysis should focus on the new techniques to refer to the distinct concepts "we/our" - "they/their" as they are expressed in religious advertising. Besides, in accordance with these approaches, the function of the main correlates of meaning "OWN" is embodied by characteristics of God's linguistic personality which corresponds to the national worldview.

According to Dubchak's viewpoint expressed in his doctoral thesis ([2009](#)), entitled *Conceptual opposition "WE/OUR" – "STRANGER" in the Ukrainian language model of the world*, the core of concept 'WE/OUR' is formed by the basic segments 'ownership', 'kinship' and 'spiritual unity'. It has three context levels: physical space, family space, and spiritual space. These units of meaning are very stable for the national language consciousness. They support information and value structure at all historical stages in the Ukrainian language model of the world. The units of meaning 'own space', 'own faith' and 'own language' belong to its core, whereas lexical units 'usually', 'habitual' and 'normal' are on the periphery. These lexemes do not have a direct lexical meaning 'WE/OUR', but they are able to express it in context and through synonymization with the key words in relevant syntagmatic relations. The awareness of 'OUR' objects in the Ukrainian language model of the world is represented as positive or neutral ([Dubchak 2009](#)).

In modern Ukrainian banner advertising, meanings are creatively represented in God's speech behavior, speech style, communicative situations with His participation, role distribution, genre preferences and the emotional background of communicative interactions. The semantic characteristics are contained mainly in the prosody of speech and the intonation model, which are determined by speech genres. Contemporary connotations arise here from the way God speaks. God demonstrates a partner style of communication, and at the same time, it is an inspiring, caring, friendly, and open talk. For example: "I love! I love! I love! God" ([Fig. 9](#)) and "Let's meet on Sunday ... God" ([Fig. 7](#)). It is necessary to note that stylistically, both of these examples are of colloquial nature. The former is a love note, and the latter is a friendly invitation. These are the so-called secondary genres (cf., not a love confession, but a love note, not a business proposal, but an utterance from an everyday dialogue). They are used primarily in informal communication and marked by the background of contacts. The addressor of the advertising message is God.

Alston, the author of *Perceiving God: the Epistemology of Religious Experience* ([1991](#)), notes that it is important to differentiate between sensory and non-sensory experience in perception. Non-sensory experience has much in common with an image that contrasts with abstract thinking in the same way sensory perception does, yet it lacks a sensory component ([Alston 2010](#), p. 200). However, the non-sensory experience may be turned into a religious narrative with the help of advertising. This substitution of



Figure 9. 'I love! I love! I love! God'

Source: atanoissapa.livejournal.com

God as 'Our', based on the postmodern deformation of his linguistic personality does not agree with the canonical assumptions but it does agree with 'faith'. Communicative effects of this advertising facilitate the transformation of the invisible into the visible through emotions and bodily experiences that arouse this process in a believer (Orsi 2006, pp. 73–74).

The semantic code: "God is love" is used in the first text. It is actualized by the communicative tactic of emotional influence which draws on the biblical idea that correlates with one of the most fundamental human needs. The communicative tactic of emotional influence is carried out with the help of the verbal predicate with positively estimated value: love. The suggestive effect is achieved by reiterating thrice the emotionally marked regulative verb. It is known that the need to be loved is the biopsychological, social, and spiritual need of the human. Substituting the figure of God for an emphasis on love arouses in recipients of the advertisement the pleasant feelings of high self-esteem, peace, security, care, associated with God as the subjective source of these states.

In the advertisement "*Let's meet on Sunday ... God*", the substitutive function is actualized by God's informal register that corresponds to the meanings "belonging". It is also developed within the frame 'God is ours'. As we can see, God's communicative style corresponds to the meanings "friend" or "comrade". In this case, mental units such as acquaintance, like-minded person, colleague, accomplice, comrade, friend, brother correspond to different levels of their incorporation in 'our' circle (Dubchak 2009).

The pragmatic effect of the utterance determined by the content and the form of the advertising message can certainly be interpreted in a very wide range of communicative situations. However, in our opinion,

the syncretism of the ethical, cultural and religious components of the national worldview will determine perceptions that Ukrainian people hold.

God's linguistic personality, implicitly modeled by the characteristics of "our", "close", "loving", "safe", "native", "partner", "open", "accessible", "friendly", etc., creates the basis for the appropriate identification of God, which, on the one hand, corresponds to the intentions of traditional approaches to the transmission of religious experience, and, on the other hand, modernizes the narrative content, making its style up to date. In the advertisement, the substitution is represented as a complex of the sensory experience verbalizations of the concept, own, and the variety of verbal techniques of creating intimacy. This type of substitution causes the comfortable feelings of high self-esteem, relaxation, security, care, associated with God as the subjective source of these states. As a result, renewal of subjective perceptual model of communication with God are achieved. The social perception of God, through the objectification of His virtual presence in informal interpersonal interaction, including sexual, domestic, cognitive, and so on is also enriched. Due to this, the level of tolerance in society to various manifestations of deviations from traditional normative ideas (religious, ethnocultural, gender, etc.) is growing. Instead, the ecumenical, cross-cultural, cross-spiritual components of the cognitive process are developing.

In turn, violating the rules of ritual speech leads to the language play effect: God appears to participate in communication and to display the hybrid communicative behavioral model. In the advertisement, the positional role of God in human life with its behavioral standards, canonically defined, ritually fixed and rhetorically decorated by the culture of sacred text, merges with the situational role and its everyday communicative manifestations. This fact changes the nature of God's speech, because everyday speech is determined by genre forms in general. In our case, the examples belong to colloquial genres.

It should also be mentioned that, in these examples, genres are markers of a profane locus which, according to evaluation parameters, is in opposition to the sacred world. Thus, the nature of the communicative situation in both advertising texts indicates a contextual framework atypical for the discourse in general, since there is no differentiation between the sacred and the profane zones. The role structure of the communicative situation, nevertheless, follows the norm for religious communication where the subject of communication is God and the human acts as a silent listener. All this feeds the intrigue of the advertising representation and enhances its attention-drawing function and influence on recipients. This technique produces an illusion of the reduced distance between God and recipients. Apparently, the most effective way to establish the contact between God and the human is to use a communicative genre which is the best for close, informal, private relationships. Thus, the necessary foundation for the implementation of God image as "our" is created.

RELIGIOUS ADVERTISING AND MARKETING CONVERGENCE

In addition, we should not forget that religious advertising is a tool of religious marketing. At the same time, it is also an innovative object of marketing linguistics, which has positioned itself as a new applied science. In this context, it is worth mentioning Mara Einstein, an Associate Professor of Media Studies at Queens College and a professor at the business school at New York University, who points out that modern marketers should be familiar with psychological methods of working with an audience. Prior to teaching, the researcher worked as a marketing executive for NBC and MTV Networks as well as for a number of major advertising agencies. She argues that "to get consumers to buy mostly unnecessary products, advertisers became experts in psychology — at first through the use of surveys and other quantitative methods, and later through more sophisticated qualitative methodologies, such as focus groups and personal interviews" (Einstein 2008).

In this regard, the question of what religious advertising sells is objectified. In our opinion, religious discourse, and advertising in particular, must be realized through the continuous positive interaction

between church representatives and consumers. Researchers point to the positive role played by religious media in the development of discourse in general. New media actively promote identity affirmation, including religious group identity; they have a pronounced humanistic aspect: religious figures, priests, who in traditional culture have always been distanced from the flock (mentors, bearers of wisdom, in fact, the voice of God) appear as ordinary people open to communication and willing to help, removes a kind of communicative fear in such an interaction ([Lawrysh 2017](#)).

However, at the present stage of development of religious advertising conceptualization, the study has revealed the significance of the self-referential model of perception ([Alston 2010](#)) of religious experience. It should be noted that within this approach, there are remarkable differences between traditional churches and newer denominations ([Klymentova 2018](#)). At the same time, despite its ambivalent nature and unconventional features, such experience can be of great value. Of course, if it is difficult to understand the events of the outside world and there are different interpretations of them, people may be more likely to trust their inner feelings.

The research supports the views of other modern experts who believe that communication studies and religious advertising have much to offer to each other and that findings may be mutually beneficial. Marketing linguistics provides analysis of religious advertising with scientific resources that enhance the accuracy of its self-understanding as well as with effective methods to achieve the desired goals. What appears to be vital here is to establish a dialogue. In this regard, it is important to emphasize that religious marketing is based on psychographic data about hopes, needs and fears of people. In the modern Ukraine the Church institutions are able to satisfy the needs for security and respect, fear of loneliness, giving people faith in life after death, forgiveness and understanding. In fact, it is widely believed among people that religious communication is a separate informational continuum associated with the locus of God. Although the environment of religious marketing communication is getting better and great progress has been made in new media, the road ahead is still beset with difficulties, requiring the concerted effort of various religious, political, social, cultural, educational institutions and the entire society. It is important to establish a dialogue that will fill the gaps in the Ukrainian media landscape, in accordance with modern standards of psycho-environmental informative interaction.

Conclusion

The study has revealed a new phenomenon, namely religious advertising, in Ukrainian information space that used to be dominated by atheistic propaganda. To understand the cognitive significance of religious advertising for Ukrainians, it is necessary first of all to identify some of the qualitative factors of its influence on the consumers. The research has shown that religious advertising is implemented in different forms in the communicative activities of the political and religious forces. Religious advertising with a strong political component has become part of the Ukrainian conflict discourse and, in a certain sense, an activator of many further processes.

Since the beginning of the war in late February 2022, the religious map of Ukraine has been changing rapidly. Thus, the UOC of the Moscow Patriarchate (this Orthodox church in Ukraine is a part of the Russian Orthodox Church, yet it is granted self-governance and rights to broad autonomy), which before the war retained a fairly large number of loyal people and emphasized spiritual rather than political priorities, is currently experiencing a split. It is divided between those who support the Russian invasion and those who side with Ukrainian soldiers. But there is also a separate 'Donetsk position', which cannot be reliably represented due to lack of information, but it can be assumed that this special position is rooted in very fierce battles for the jurisdiction of Donbass and huge human losses. The war created a situation in which this church was forced to become politicized and to choose between Russia and Ukraine as political subjects. At the same time, the position of those who sympathize with Ukrainian soldiers is motivated by

the idea of protecting their native land, by the desire to convey to Putin and to the people from the Russian Federation the pointlessness of a fratricidal war, and not by hatred for everything Russian. In turn, this radical militant stance and appeal to anger distinguishes the OCU.

The study of religious advertising with social convergence has revealed that the visual expression of advertising representations is very restrained. The creative impulse of religious advertising is formed primarily by verbal manifestations in which mental meanings are produced by emotional components. The dynamics of expressive means in religious advertising indicate the formation of a new cognitive style in the processes of obtaining religious experience. At the same time, within the traditional approaches to text retransmission of sacred knowledge, the projection of the religious worldview serves as a reminder to people of the eternal values. There are not only peculiarities based on different understandings of doctrine but also specific national features of religious advertising that constitute for Ukrainians the core of their spiritual priorities. Within this trend, religious narratives correspond to the consensus formulas of various communicative spheres. Thanks to the 'storytelling metaphors' of God image as "ours", consumers reveal the problematic aspects of religious communication as a socialization activity. As we can see, the epistemological potential of religious advertising is multi-dimensional. In fact, Ukrainian religious advertising strives to achieve a balance between short-term political interests and long-term social interests along with eternal, timeless values. In this context, the phenomenon of religious advertising is a convincing example of communicative dynamism peculiar to contemporary religious discourse, its mass media segment in particular.

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