
RESEARCH ARTICLES

Adherence to journalistic standards in coverage of religious issues in Ukrainian and Italian media

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ABSTRACT

This article aimed to investigate the adherence to professional standards by the Ukrainian and Italian media in covering the conflict around the UOC MP (Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate) during the war in Ukraine. Thanks to the method of scientific literature analysis, Ukrainian scholars' views on professional journalistic standards and their observance in the media were clarified. With the help of the media monitoring method, we found 97 publications covering the conflict around UOC MP. The content analysis method determined the subject of the relevant publications and the presence of Russian propaganda narratives in them. Quantitative and qualitative adherence indicators to professional standards were also determined using the content analysis method, and the context mentioning the OCU and UOC MP activities was clarified. The main results and conclusions of the study: most of Italian media had a neutral attitude to the conflict, some media ignored it, there were also those openly promoting Russian narratives and even sometimes containing hate speech (Il Giornale) and reacted sharply to the fact of the searches and the statement of Volodymyr Zelenskyi about the banning of the UOC MP (Avvenire). Despite occasional standards violations, Ukrainian media covered the events objectively and in a balanced manner, without inciting enmity towards UOC MP.

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РЕЗЮМЕ

Мета статті: простежити дотримання професійних стандартів українськими та італійськими медіа у висвітленні конфлікту навколо УПЦ МП (Української православної церкви московського патріархату) під час війни в Україні. Для досягнення мети поставлено такі завдання: визначити ставлення італійських й українських медіа до конфлікту навколо УПЦ МП; проаналізувати дотримання професійних стандартів українськими та італійськими медіа під час висвітлення конфлікту навколо УПЦ МП; з'ясувати у матеріалах наявність інформації про діяльність ПЦУ (Православної церкви України). Завдяки методу аналізу наукової літератури було з'ясовано погляди українських вчених на професійні журналістські стандарти та їх дотримання в медіа. За допомогою методу моніторингу ЗМІ було виявлено 97 публікацій, у яких висвітлювався конфлікт навколо УПЦ МП. Методом контент-аналізу встановлено тематику відповідних публікацій та наявність у них російських пропагандистських наративів. Також методом контент-аналізу визначено кількісні та якісні показники дотримання професійних стандартів, з'ясовано контекст, у якому згадувалося про діяльність ПЦУ та УПЦ МП. Головні результати і висновки дослідження: переважна більшість італійських медіа мали нейтральне ставлення до конфлікту, частина медіа його проігнорували, були й такі, що відкрито просуvalи російські наративи та часом навіть мову ворожнечі (*Il Giornale*), і гостро відреагували на факт обшуків та заяву Володимира Зеленського про заборону УПЦ МП (*Avvenire*). Українські медіа, незважаючи на поодинокі порушення стандартів, висвітлювали події цілком об'єктивно і виважено, без розпалювання ворожнечі до УПЦ МП. Щодо діяльності ПЦУ, у зазначеному контексті про неї згадали менше ніж у п'ятій частині публікацій.

КЛЮЧОВІ СЛОВА: професійні журналістські стандарти, українські медіа, італійські медіа, релігійна тематика.

Introduction

Compliance with journalistic standards by Ukrainian media during the war remains one of the most painful and debatable topics for discussion and research. Even before the full-scale invasion, starting in 2014, the question of preserving quality journalism, which would avoid unnecessary pretexts for enemy propaganda, arose.

One of the fabricated “casus belli” or pretexts for the Russian Federation’s war against Ukraine was and remains the religious aspect: “oppression of the Orthodox Church in Ukraine.” The aggressor country began to impose this narrative in its propaganda, like many others, in 2014, in the context of the so-called hybrid war. The religious factor continues to cause a sharp confrontation, probably second only after the language problem. The narrative about the persecution of the Orthodox Church was adopted by many Western media, especially in countries that actively sympathized with the Russian Federation before the start of the full-scale invasion. One of these countries was Italy. From 2014 until 24 February 2022, the Italian press could quickly call the war in the Donetsk region fratricidal, call the separatists and mercenaries patriots of their own land, and meticulously emphasize the “Nazi battalions” from Ukraine. There was a similar approach to the religious issue. The most exciting thing is that reports with such narratives appeared in the most popular private and state media. After 24 February 2022, the attitude towards

Ukraine began to change, but sometimes Russian narratives still appear in the Italian media's news and journalistic analytical reports.

The purpose of this paper was to trace the observance of professional standards by the Ukrainian and Italian media in covering the conflict surrounding the UOC MP (Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate) during the war in Ukraine. Achieving the envisions the following objectives: 1. To determine the attitude of the Italian and Ukrainian media to the conflict surrounding the UOC MP. 2. To analyze the observance of professional standards by the Ukrainian and Italian media during the coverage of the conflict surrounding the UOC MP. 3. To find out in the reports the presence of information about the activities of the OCU (Orthodox Church of Ukraine).

Method

In the first stage of the research, the method of analyzing research literature was applied, which helped clarify Ukrainian scholars' views on professional journalistic standards and their observance in the media. The media monitoring method contributed to the identification of publications that covered the conflict surrounding the UOC MP in Ukraine during the war. Thanks to the content analysis method, the relevant publications' topics and the presence of Russian propaganda narratives in them were established. Quantitative and qualitative indicators of compliance with professional standards were also determined using the method of content analysis, and the context in which the activities of the OCU and UOC MP were mentioned was clarified. Three parameters were taken for analysis: the attitude to the conflict surrounding the UOC MP (negative, neutral), the promotion of Russian narratives (promoted, not promoted), and mentions of the OCU (yes or no) in the media texts.

13 of the most popular Italian media were included in the monitoring: *Corriere della Sera*, *Rai News*, *Il Giornale*, *Il Tempo*, *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, *Avvenire*, *Famiglia Cristiana*, *TV 2000*, *Il Sussidiario*, *La Repubblica*, *Euronews*, *La Nuova Europa*, *Il Foglio*. Besides, 15 Ukrainian media with a high rating were selected for analysis: *TSN* (*tsn.ua*), *Ukrainian Pravda*, *UNIAN*, *Obozrevatel* (*obozrevatel.com*), *Ukrinform*, *Znaj.UA* (*Znaj.ua*), *RBC-Ukraine* (*rbc.ua*), *Censor.NET*, *Gordon* (*gordonua.com*), *Correspondent* (*korrespondent.net*), *Gazeta.ua* (*gazeta.ua*), *Zaxid.net*, *Hromadske*, *Livy Bereg* (*lb.ua*), *Interfax-Ukraine*. According to *SimilarWeb* (Most Visited Websites in Ukraine in February 2023, 2023), which is based on Google Analytics and has a good reputation, in February 2023, the most popular Ukrainian media were: *Censor.NET*, *Ukrainian Pravda*, *Obozrevatel*, *RBC*, *TSN*, *Correspondent*, *UNIAN*, is a list in descending order.

The empirical basis for the study was 97 media reports for the period from June 2022, when the mayor of Lviv, A. Sadovyy, voiced a proposal to ban the UOC MP, until January 2023, when the head of the UOC MP Onufriy complained to the UN about the persecution of his parish.

Results and Discussion

Ukrainian media in wartime demonstrate unity in defending national interests, trying to adhere to ethical principles and professional standards of journalism, both Ukrainian and international. According to the Institute of Mass Information (Kuryata, 2021), modern Ukrainian professional standards for quality media provide a balance of opinions and points of view, credibility, separation of facts from comments, accuracy, completeness, and efficiency. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), among its editorial guidelines, distinguishes audience trust, freedom of expression, independence, compliance with the public interest, honesty and accuracy, impartiality, editorial integrity, protection of vulnerable groups, avoidance of unjustified offenses, respect for privacy as the central editorial values. Back in 2014, the Institute of Mass Information published a list of standards that operate in war conditions: accuracy, efficiency, impartiality,

ethics, completeness, separation of facts from comments (Standards of journalism during the war. How to write about tragic events - infographic. 2014, 11 August).

Compliance with professional standards has always been in the field of view of Ukrainian researchers. "The main criteria for evaluating a journalist's activity is his objective and truthful reflection of reality. The criteria are quite correct, and the desire for objectivity and truthfulness should be the basis of the activities of those on whom the fate of society and man depends", Rizun notes (2004, p. 45).

In research, educational and methodological publications of Ukrainian authors, the need to comply with standards is deeply and comprehensively substantiated as the only possible way of functioning in professional journalistic activity: Rizun (2008), Ivanov and Serdyuk (2008), Kuznetsova, (2007), Prystupenko (2011), Chekmyshev (2021). The analysis of compliance with standards in practice is reflected in the scientific investigations of Dzholos (2019, pp. 38-44) and Budivska (2019, pp. 27-35). Analyzing the problems of compliance with the standards of information broadcasting, Dzholos emphasizes that the standard of balanced information involves giving a voice to all parties. Budivska traces trends in the perception of professional standards by Ukrainian journalists who work with socio-political issues and notes certain discrepancies between theory and practice.

Revealing typical violations of professional standards in publications on religious topics, particularly journalists' inclination towards sensationalism and "fried facts," Boyko notes that the media attracts propagandists as the most massive and effective means of spreading any ideas. Consequently, professional propagandists often try to hide the promotion of the desired idea, disguising it under the facade of journalistic publications. These include pseudo-news, pseudo-analytical and pseudo-historical articles, interviews with the "necessary" person, and fake ratings and polls (Boyko, 2015, pp. 284-294). According to Potyatynyk, compliance or non-compliance with professional standards is the watershed that determines whether texts of various forms of mass communication belong to journalism (Potyatynyk, 2010).

Today, we can say that the time when Italian state media, such as Rai News, broadcast documentaries like "Fratello contro fratello" (Brother against brother)⁶, where separatists were depicted as heroes of Donbas, is already in the past. However, complaints about official Kyiv continue, for example, because of the SBU's (State Security Service) searches in the structures of the UOC MP. Some media even called it a religious war of President V. Zelenskyi or Ukraine's authorities against the church; others treated it neutrally and followed the standards. We explored the violations of standards and the overall narratives that appeared in news stories, analytical pieces, and reviews.

The most radical messages were promoted on the website of one of the most popular Italian newspapers, Il Giornale, owned by the Berlusconi family. The website is also viral - 35 million views in February 2023. After Volodymyr Zelenskyi's statement about the possible ban of the UOC MP, Il Giornale reacted with the following lines: "After eight years of *civil war* in Donbas and ten months of Russian intervention, Ukraine is also preparing to deal with the dramatic wounds characteristic of *religious wars*."⁷ (emphasis added). These are the first two sentences after the title, i.e., all the accents were immediately placed at the beginning of the lead. Further, the article discusses Russia's crimes against Greek-Catholic priests in occupied Berdyansk. However, the general impression and context in which the events are considered are stated at the be-

⁶ «Fratello contro fratello». Reportage sulla guerra civile in Ucraina(2015, 23 Febbraio) Rai News <https://www.rainews.it/archivio-rainews/media/Fratello-contro-fratello-Reportage-sulla-guerra-civile-in-Ucraina-68ddc78f-f7a0-4c6c-b921-caaedb208375.html>

⁷ Gian Micalessin. (2022, 3 Dicembre). Chiesa ortodossa russa, pugno duro di Zelensky «Sono collaborazionisti». Il Giornale. <https://www.ilgiornale.it/news/politica/chiesa-ortodossa-russa-pugno-duro-zelensky-sono-2091518.html>

gining of the text. Especially since the publication ends with “The large-scale repressive action does not seem to be giving many results so far.”

A similar article appeared in *Avvenire*, a newspaper owned by the Italian Bishops’ Conference. There, the return of the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra’s part to the OCU was called “the last act of the Kyiv authorities’ crusade against the largest church of Ukraine.”⁸ This is no longer the position of the Berlusconi family but of the Catholic Church bishops, who are directly or indirectly related to the papal curia and the Pope himself.

Part of the Italian media completely ignored this topic. Some purely Catholic media decided to follow a different strategy: they simply did not cover these events at all (*Famiglia Cristiana* - about a million readers, *TV2000* - Catholic television, about 3 million viewers). *Rai News*, owned by the Italian government and financed by taxpayers, took the same position. Thus, on the one hand, we see *Avvenire*, which released four negative articles, and on the other, a bunch of Catholic media that ignored the event, as did Italy’s state broadcaster, like the British BBC.

We included 17 reports from the Italian media in our analysis: from short notes to large analytical items.

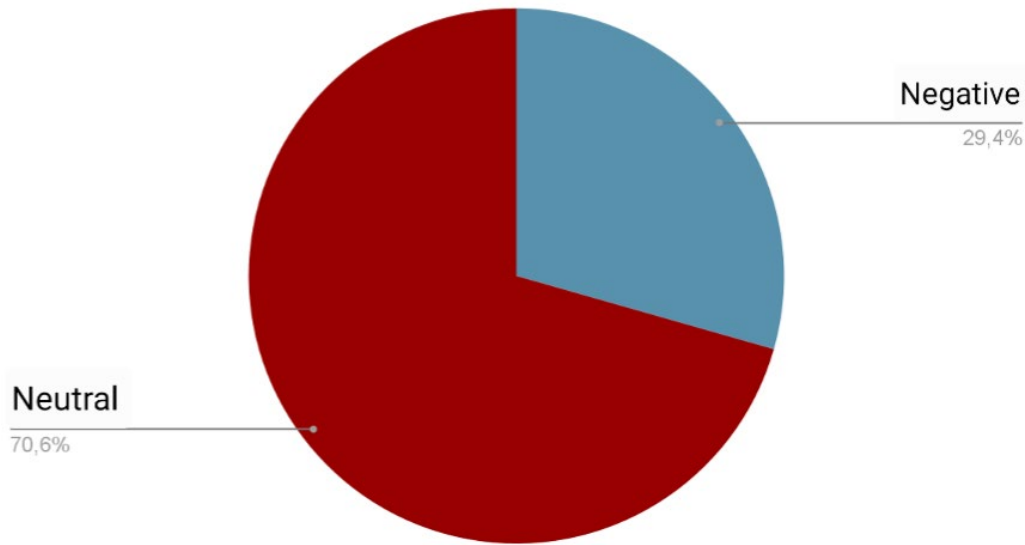


Figure 1. Italian media’s attitude towards the conflict.

We believe that neutrality in conflict coverage is essential for impartial journalism. An impartial journalist should cover the event from different angles, providing a balanced perspective on why it is happening. This is particularly important in analytical reporting, where journalists should avoid using inflammatory phrases like “religious war,” “oppression of believers,” or “Zelensky’s crusade against Orthodoxy” to prevent any bias in their reporting.

⁸ Giacomo Gambassi (2023, 6 Gennaio). Monastero delle grotte. Kiev caccia dalla Cattedrale i monaci ortodossi legati a Mosca. *Avvenire*. <https://www.avvenire.it/mondo/pagine/ucraina-il-governo-di-kiev-caccia-gli-ortodossi-di-mosca-dal-monastero-simbolo>

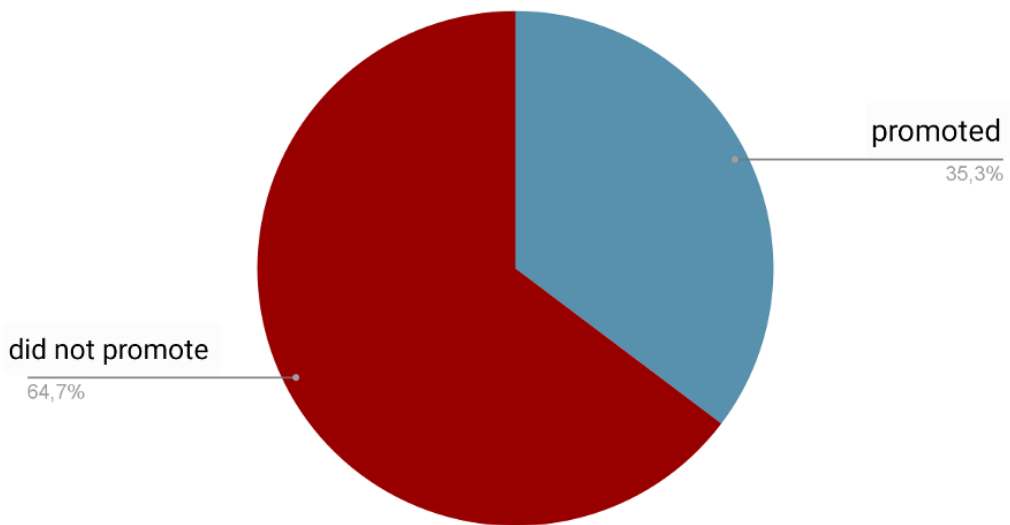


Figure 2. Promoting Russian narratives.

The most radical Russian narratives have already been named above, e.g., the “religious war,” but the most popular narrative, which in one way or another was broadcast in every media report where Russian narratives were promoted, was the statement that the persecution of the Orthodox Church was beginning in Ukraine without any grounds: believers not guilty, but they are interrogated, monks are not guilty, but they are also interrogated. However, of course, such reports did not mention the existence of the OCU, so it seemed as if an infringement was directed against the entire Orthodox Church.

Against the background of news about searches in the churches of the UOC MP, publications about the “war that spilled over into the church,” and reports about the eviction of the Moscow Patriarchate from part of the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra, there is a lack of media content mentioning the existence of the OCU. Only 6 of 17 reports mentioned another Orthodox jurisdiction in Ukraine besides the UOC MP. Sometimes the reader, far from Ukrainian realities, may get the impression that the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra is being taken away from all Orthodox, and nothing is known about its future fate. In the same way, when they talk about “repression of the UOC MP,” for some reason, they do not mention that there has been an alternative OCU for many years. I.e., Italian journalists present this conflict rather one-sidedly, forgetting such an extremely essential detail that could completely change the view of an Italian reader who does not know Ukrainian realities.

Ukrainian media, compared to Italian ones, are much more attentive to details: they carefully separate facts from comments, do not give a vibrant color to the events, present reliable facts and verified information from the first sources (usually official websites, in particular, the SBU), as a rule, maintain a balance of opinions. Even Znaj.ua, which does not belong to quality media, did not abuse the situation. It is also worth noting that the top Ukrainian media, while not sympathizing with the UOC MP, decently covered the conflict and did not use negatively colored vocabulary regarding this Orthodox jurisdiction. Out of 80 analyzed materials, facts, comments, and opinions were presented neutrally. As for the promotion of Russian narratives, there are conflicting interpretations in two materials, more precisely in the titles of these publications.

In the content on the TSN website covering the conflict around the UOC MP, adherence to professional standards can be observed: reliability of facts, the balance of opinions (opinions of Ukrainian Orthodox Church representatives were presented), no inflaming of the conflict or heat-

ing the topic with snappy headlines. However, one of the 12 analyzed materials of the website, perhaps unknowingly, but completely defeats the statements of the Russian side that the “persecution” of the UOC MP is only a political decision of the Ukrainian authorities and not the eradication of a spy network and a real threat to the integrity of the state. “This is a political decision: Sadovyy commented on the ban of the Moscow Patriarchate in Lviv.”⁹ - the headline of the news article. The text further explains that the political decision refers to the position of the Lviv City Council, which cannot ban the activities of UOC MP in the region - that should be done by other state bodies. E.g., one of the Lviv media named this news as follows: “The ban on the activities of the UOC MP in Lviv is political, not legal in nature” - Sadovyy¹⁰. Thus, calling the ban a “political decision,” the mayor of Lviv confirmed an obvious pro-Russian narrative.

A media report in Obozrevatel with a considerable volume of 5,400 characters turned out to be ambiguous: “The UOC MP priest, because of whom Lomachenko was disgraced, again spoke about the bloodshed in Ukraine and the violation of God’s laws. Video”¹¹. The only fact of this publication was the speech of UOC MP Metropolitan Longin, in which he lambasted the OCU and talked about the “desecration of shrines.” At first glance, the standards were met because it was not indicated in any way that the editors shared such opinions, and Longin’s statements were presented in his own words. The problem is that 5,400 characters are the volume of the analytical genre that Obozrevatel devotes to the speech of the UOC MP metropolitan, in which he calls the OCU “Satanists.” In our opinion, a note of up to 1000 characters is enough for such a message. Knowingly or unknowingly, providing such a large platform as Obozrevatel for a whole sermon to spread pro-Russian narratives can be considered a violation of professional standards. It is worth emphasizing that there was no balance of opinions, no adequate refutation of Mr. Longin’s words, or an explanation of why searches are being conducted in the churches of the UOC MP. 7 direct quotes from Longin were used in the report, and his words were paraphrased several times. “These people (priests of the OCU) want to desecrate our shrines and our church,” “They forced people into the church, which these wolves in sheep’s clothing took to desecrate our shrine - the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra,” “We see how today the Constitution of our of the state - free religion for each of us – is violated,” - such narratives of the Metropolitan of the UOC MP are no better than the remarks of the head of the Russian Orthodox Church Kiril. I.e., nothing would have changed if Obozrevatel had provided a platform for preaching to a Russian propagandist.

In addition to the cases of promotion of Russian narratives in our mass media, it is worth paying attention to several violations of journalistic standards that were discovered during the content analysis.

⁹ «Це політичне рішення»: Садовий прокоментував заборону Московського патріархату у Львові [“It’s a political decision”: Sadovyy commented ban of Moscow Patriarchate in Lviv]. (2022, 30 June). TSN. <https://tsn.ua/ukrayina/ce-politichne-rishennya-sadoviy-prokomentuvav-zaboronu-moskovskogo-patriarhatu-u-lvovi-2100256.html>

¹⁰ Заборона діяльності УПЦ МП у Львові має політичний, а не правовий характер – Садовий [Ban of UOC MP in Lviv has political, but not legal nature - Sadovyy]. (2022, 30 June). Varyanty. <https://varianty.lviv.ua/89090-zaborona-diialnosti-upts-mp-u-lvovi-nosyt-politychnyi-a-ne-pravovyi-kharakter-sadovyi>

¹¹ Ragutska, L. (2023, 9 January). Священник УПЦ МП, через якого зганьбився Ломаченко, знову заговорив про кровопролиття в Україні та порушення законів Божих. Відео [The UOC MP priest, because of whom Lomachenko was disgraced, again spoke about the bloodshed in Ukraine and the violation of God’s laws. Video]. Obozrevatel. <https://news.obozrevatel.com/ukr/society/svyaschenik-upts-mp-cherez-yakogo-zganbivsia-lomachenko-znovu-zagovoriv-pro-krovoprolittya-v-ukraini-i-porushennya-zakoniv-bozhih-video.htm>

The headline on the Ukrainian Pravda website is “The SBU exposed another enemy accomplice in a cassock.”¹² contributes to forming a negative stereotype and labels not only the priests of the UOC MP but also any other person in a cassock. According to this logic, every priest becomes a potential accomplice of the enemy, which is highly destructive. I.e., the technology of generalization works: a man in a cassock is an enemy henchman. For comparison, the headline, which corresponds to the truth, to the same news from UNIAN: “He waited for the occupation of Zaporizhzhia: SBU exposed a deacon of the UOC MP who promoted “Russian world””¹³ - not a single attribution of people in cassocks to “enemies.”

Another case of professional standards violation was revealed in the report on the website of Ukrainian Pravda – “The authorities explained why the UOC MP is banned: it is dangerous for health and life.”¹⁴ The problem is that the headline does not correspond to the report content, i.e., the news does not explain why or how the UOC MP is dangerous to health and life. Therefore, we can call such a headline manipulative, which does not carry a serious threat but is designed to attract as much attention as possible. This news item contains nothing manipulative, only an appeal to the Center for Strategic Communications message under the Ministry of Information Policy “Spravdi.”

A common trend in the coverage of the conflict by the Italian and Ukrainian media is a small number of mentions in the texts about OCU as an alternative to UOC MP. However, of course, Ukrainian society is much more informed about the existence of OCU because according to the latest KMIS survey (Press releases and reports. Dynamics of religious self-identification of Ukraine’s population: results of a telephone survey conducted July 6-20, 2022, 5 August 2022), 54% of Ukrainians enroll themselves in the Orthodox Church of Ukraine. Thus, even according to the harshest estimates, more than half of Ukrainians know about OCU, which is an audience feature. On the other hand, Italians’ awareness of the OCU is much lower, which creates a vast space for manipulating the fact of the existence of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine by default.

¹² Romanenko, V. (2022, 10 December). СБУ викрила ще одного поплічника ворога в рясі [The SBU exposed another enemy accomplice in a cassock]. Ukrainian Pravda. <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2022/12/10/7380178/>

¹³ Чекав окупації Запоріжжя: СБУ викрила диякона УПЦ МП, який просував «русский мир» [He waited for the occupation of Zaporizhzhia: SBU exposed a deacon of the UOC MP who promoted “Russian world”] (2022, December). UNIAN. <https://www.unian.ua/incidents/chekav-okupaciji-zaporizhzhya-sbu-vikrila-diyakona-upc-mp-yakiy-prosuvav-russkiy-mir-12073656.html>

¹⁴ Balanchuk, I. (2022, 2 December). Влада пояснила, чому забороняють УПЦ МП: небезпечна для здоров'я і життя [The authorities explained why the UOC MP is banned: it is dangerous for health and life]. Ukrainian Pravda. <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2022/12/2/7378985/>

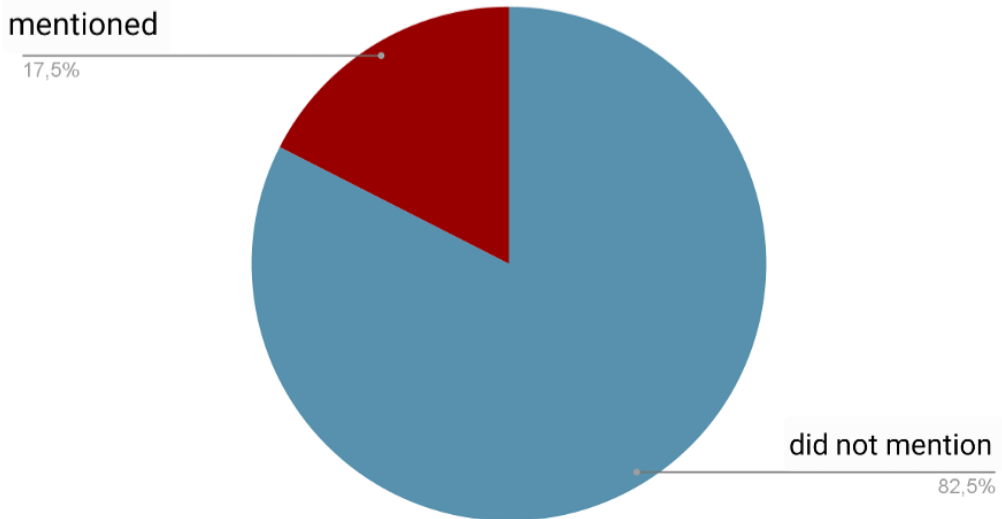


Figure 3. Mentions about OCU in Ukrainian media.

Therefore, only 14 out of 80 media reports in Ukraine mentioned the existence of the OCU. However, it was evident in short news messages, such as: “The SBU came with an inspection to the facilities of the UOC MP in Khmelnytskyi region.”¹⁵, there is no mention of the OCU. And in another article by Hromadske: “54% of Ukrainians support the complete ban of the UOC MP – survey”¹⁶, which also does not mention the existence of OCU; it would be pretty appropriate to supplement it with statistics from KMIS: 54% of Ukrainians count themselves in the Orthodox Church of Ukraine and only 4% in the UOC MP. Out of 14 reports, in two, the OCU was mentioned exclusively negatively - in quotes from representatives of the UOC MP. E.g., “The UOC MP priest, because of whom Lomachenko was disgraced, again spoke about the bloodshed in Ukraine and the violation of God’s laws. Video” from Obozrevatel, which we have already analyzed above. No opposition to the words of Longin was given.

Out of 12 neutral reports, the OCU is mentioned the most in the news background, e.g.: “On 2 December, the representative of the OCU Yevstratiy Zorya reported that the Holy Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra was registered as a monastery within the OCU.”¹⁷ (the news was about the expiration of the UOC MP’s lease of some buildings of the Lavra). Therefore, on the one hand, the issue of not mentioning OCU in the texts of Ukrainian media is also worth raising. However, on the other hand, it is worth understanding that the specifics of the Ukrainian audience are entirely different, and there are essentially fewer opportunities to manipulate this topic.

¹⁵ Kramar, O. (2022, 29 December). СБУ прийшла з перевіркою до об’єктів УПЦ МП на Хмельниччині [The SBU came with an inspection to the facilities of the UOC MP in Khmelnytskyi region]. Hromadske. <https://hromadske.ua/posts/sbu-prijshla-z-perevirkoyu-v-obyekti-upc-mp-na-hmelnychchini>

¹⁶ Lutsenko, Y. (2022, 29 December). Цілковиту заборону УПЦ МП підтримують 54% українців — опитування [54% of Ukrainians support the complete ban of the UOC MP – survey]. Hromadske. <https://hromadske.ua/posts/povnu-zaboronu-upc-mp-pidtrimuyut-54-ukrayinciv-opituvannya>

¹⁷ Stavska, Y. (2022, 27 December). В УПЦ МП сплив термін оренди двох найбільших храмів Верхньої Лаври: Павло «заволав» [In UOC MP the lease of two biggest churches in Upper Lavra: Pavlo grumbled]. UNIAN. <https://www.unian.ua/society/v-upc-mp-spliv-termin-orendi-dvoh-naybilshih-hramiv-verhnoji-lavri-pavlo-zavolav-12091401.html>

Conclusions

As a result of this study, we can conclude that the adherence to professional standards by the Ukrainian and Italian media in covering the conflict surrounding the UOC MP contributes to the protection of Ukrainian interests. According to the analysis, a large part of the Italian media had a neutral attitude toward the conflict (70.6%) and did not promote pro-Russian narratives (64.7%); some of the media showed a negative attitude (29.4%). Some media openly promoted Russian propaganda narratives and sometimes even used hate speech, such as *Il Giornale*, and reacted sharply to the fact of searches and Volodymyr Zelenskyi's (*Avvenire*) statement about the banning of UOC MP - only 35.3%. Some popular Catholic and secular media refused to mention the event (*Rai News*, *Famiglia Cristiana*, *TV 2000*). Therefore, most Italian media had a neutral attitude to the conflict and did not promote pro-Russian narratives. However, the problem of ignoring the OCU exists. Therefore, if Italy actively supports Ukraine in other areas, Russian narratives are still being actively promoted around coverage of church problems.

Ukrainian media approached the coverage of the events in a much more professional manner: most of them were limited to referring to official sources and comments by UOC MP representatives when appropriate. That is, we can confidently confirm that the field of Ukrainian popular media, in the absolute majority, does not contain pro-Russian narratives regarding events related to UOC MP, but here it is not without mistakes. Perhaps the two detected violations were unconscious, but they happened. It is worth noting that, unlike the Italian media, Ukrainian media, despite occasional violations of standards, covered the events objectively and in a balanced manner without inciting enmity towards the UOC MP. As for the mentions of the existence of the OCU, whose activities were discussed in this context in only 17.5% of Ukrainian media publications, the situation is not entirely unambiguous and requires a more detailed study of the context of all publications and focusing on this issue. Nevertheless, we generally have a much more positive trend among this field's most popular Ukrainian media.

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