

## СОЦІАЛЬНІ КОМУНІКАЦІЇ

UDC 070 (316.781)

<https://doi.org/10.23939/sjs2025.01.071>

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### **POLISH MEDIA LANDSCAPE: TRENDS AND PERSPECTIVES ON UKRAINIAN MATTERS**

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This article provides with the information about the evolving Polish media landscape, with a particular focus on its coverage of Ukrainian matters. Drawing on a multidisciplinary approach, the study examines the trends, challenges, and perspectives that shape Polish media narratives in the context of geopolitical proximity and historical ties between Poland and Ukraine. The analysis incorporates content analysis of major Polish media outlets, audience studies, and comparative assessments of traditional and digital media.

Key findings highlight a significant increase in Ukrainian-related coverage following Russia's invasion in 2022, with many outlets introducing dedicated sections to address the war, refugee crisis, and humanitarian aid. The research also underscores the role of media framing, government influence, and audience engagement in shaping public discourse. Furthermore, the study explores the impact of digital media, the representation of Ukrainian voices, and the implications for cross-border narratives and cultural integration.

The findings contribute to academic discussions on media representation, international relations, and the dynamic interplay between media and migration in shaping public opinion. In the article it is concluded that the media market in Poland is quite ambiguous. On the one hand, it is characterized by global trends: a decrease in the number and circulation of printed publications, the creation of online counterparts, an increase in interest and demand for Internet media; on the other hand, the phenomenon of the leading Polish media being owned by foreign companies is quite atypical. Obviously, this has its advantages and disadvantages. Nevertheless, as of today, there are media in Poland that can be called independent of the government.

**Keywords:** media landscape, Poland, war, Ukraine, freedom of speech.

**Introduction.** Polish media plays an important role in depicting current affairs in Ukraine. Due to the geographical proximity, Ukrainian topics have frequently drawn the attention of Polish journalists. Following the events of February 24, 2022, this interest has significantly increased. As a result, some Polish media outlets have even introduced dedicated sections covering events in Ukraine. The theoretical and practical relevance of this subject lies in the fact that Polish media have started to pay considerable attention to developments in Ukraine. This creates a need to analyze such content. Moreover, a substantial

number of Ukrainians have emigrated to Poland, where they have become consumers of local media. This dynamic influences both the demand for Ukrainian-related content and the narratives presented within Polish media.

Additionally, the growing Ukrainian diaspora in Poland not only shapes media consumption but also impacts cultural integration and public discourse. This relationship between media and migration underscores the importance of understanding how Polish media portrays Ukraine and Ukrainians. It also highlights the role of media in fostering cross-cultural understanding, combating stereotypes, and shaping public opinion in a rapidly changing socio-political context.

**Formulation of the problem.** Given Poland's significant role as a neighboring country, a member of the European Union, and a key ally of Ukraine, the way its media engages with Ukrainian issues has broader implications. It reflects how international audiences perceive Ukraine and contributes to the construction of global narratives surrounding the ongoing war and its consequences. Therefore, analyzing the trends, biases, and patterns in Polish online media regarding Ukraine is not only relevant but also essential for understanding the broader regional dynamics and media's role in shaping them. Undoubtedly, journalism is one of the most dynamic fields, because it has always demonstrated the processes taking place in society.

**Research methods.** To explore the trends and perspectives of Polish media on Ukrainian matters, a comprehensive and multidisciplinary research approach was employed. The study begins with content analysis, systematically examining Polish media content to identify themes, patterns, and trends related to Ukraine. This involves analyzing articles, opinion pieces, and broadcasts from major outlets such as *Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Rzeczpospolita*, as well as digital platforms and social media. The analysis focuses on the data between 2019 and 2024 to capture pre- and post-invasion trends. Thematic coding is used to classify content into categories such as refugee issues, war coverage, humanitarian aid, and Poland-Ukraine relations, with both qualitative and quantitative measures applied to assess frequency and depth. A comparative media analysis further explores differences in coverage across media types and political spectrums. This includes contrasting traditional outlets (newspapers, TV) with digital platforms (blogs, online news sites) and examining variations in framing and narratives between politically aligned outlets (e. g., left-leaning vs. right-leaning). To delve deeper into the language and framing of media narratives, discourse analysis is conducted. This examines recurring metaphors, terminologies, and narrative structures, focusing on themes such as victimization, solidarity, and security threats. Critical frameworks like agenda-setting and framing theory are applied to understand strategic choices in media representations, with attention to how historical contexts influence narratives.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** The Polish media landscape has been a focal point for scholars and researchers, particularly in the context of its evolving relationship with Ukrainian matters. The geopolitical proximity of Poland to Ukraine, coupled with significant historical and socio-political ties, has made this topic a rich area for academic exploration. This analysis examines recent research and publications that shed light on the trends and perspectives shaping Polish media's approach to Ukrainian issues. A recurring theme in recent studies is the exponential rise in the coverage of Ukrainian topics following Russia's invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022. Research indicates that Polish media outlets have become one of the primary platforms for disseminating information about the war, refugee crisis, and Ukraine's socio-political dynamics. Many outlets, including major news platforms like *Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Rzeczpospolita*, have created dedicated sections or columns specifically focusing on Ukraine. To this topic are dedicated works of such researchers as R. Leśniczak [6], K. Stepniak [13], R. Rozbicka [11], K. Majtas [8] and others. Scholarly work highlights how Polish media has played a dual role: as a source of information and as a medium for fostering empathy towards Ukrainian refugees. Studies have noted the portrayal of refugees as victims of war, emphasizing solidarity and humanitarian aid. However, some critical analyses point to the potential for stereotyping and overgeneralization in such portrayals.

Another group of researchers examined the role of globalization and its influence on the media landscape. In their publications it is also analyzed the role of digital media and social platforms in shaping public opinion. Social media campaigns, hashtags, and viral stories have become critical tools for Polish media to engage younger audiences and amplify Ukrainian voices. This trend highlights the growing importance of non-traditional media in shaping cross-border narratives. For example, A. Kasińska-Metryka and K. Pałka-Suchojad [4] discovered the role of new media as a carrier of information about the war in Ukraine, while A. Łukasik-Turecka investigated disinformation in Polish medialandscape due to Ukraine. So, the research of Polish medialandscape is of a crucial importance in the framework of Russian-Ukrainian war, which is currently ongoing.

**Results.** During the 20th century, inventions appeared and developed that later changed not only the course of communication studies, but also history. One of them was the Internet. As of today, it has become the main platform for the functioning of mass media.

As a result, a global trend towards the creation of online media was born. Moreover, if we talk about foreign experience, then there, some digital media are almost equal to traditional ones and have a great influence. This list includes the following news agencies: Reuters (Great Britain), Associated Press (United States of America) and Agence France-Presse (France).

In Poland the Internet appeared in November 1990 at the Institute of Nuclear Physics in Krakow. It was there that the new computer received its first IP address. The first website in this country was created by physics students from the University of Warsaw in 1993. It was updated until 1998. As of today, it is no longer operational [14].

The first Internet portal in Poland appeared in 1995. It is called «Virtual Poland». It is a multimedia information resource that has its own television, e-mail service and its own application on smartphones. Despite the fact that this website was created back in the 90s of the 20th century, it still remains one of the most popular online platforms in the country. It publishes news about important events, tourism, economics, technology and show business.

The birth of Internet journalism in Poland dates back to the late 90s. Then a number of online resources were created, namely: «Onet» (1996), «O 2», «Interia» (both in 1999), «Gazeta» (2001) and others. In addition to national and world news, they offered their readers the opportunity to chat, blog, and send materials to email.

According to the Dataportal website, which is based on information published by the social media management platform Hootsuite, the population of Poland at the beginning of January 2022 was 37.77 million people. There are 32.86 million Internet users in the country, which is 85 % of the total population [1]. Such indicators are quite high.

In addition, the Dataportal website has information on how much time Poles spend on media every day. However, we were able to find data only for 2021. In particular, users spend 6 hours and 44 minutes on the Internet (all devices are taken into account), 3 hours and 16 minutes watching TV, and almost 2 hours on social networks. In addition, users spend 1 hour and 16 minutes reading news (online and print media), and 1 hour and 51 minutes listening to the radio [1].

Such statistics indicate that the Polish media market is characterized by global trends. In particular, people have begun to spend more time on the Internet, including giving preference to social networks and online media. However, television still does not lose its positions. On the other hand, radio is among the outsiders of this rating.

This conclusion is confirmed by the Krajowy Instytut Mediów. On their website, they published a study called «Founding Research», which states that 92 % of Poles use television as a source of news. With a minimal difference, the telephone came in second place – 90 % of the country's population uses it. The third place is occupied by radio – 80.3 % [7]. However, there is no data on print media in this list.

It can be argued that the media market in Poland, as in Ukraine, and in general throughout the world, is currently going through its transformational stage. Television, radio and print media still function,

however, the Internet and social networks are catching up with them. More and more people prefer them. In addition, almost all traditional Polish media have their online counterparts in the global network. However, there they function as independent media units. As for newspapers, their number is decreasing every year. This is evidenced by the works of Polish researchers. In the period from 2012 to 2014, the number of newspaper titles published in Poland decreased by almost 1,000 units. The circulation of publications that were published several times a week almost halved. But, if we take into account newspapers and magazines, from 1990 to 2015 the number of periodicals more than doubled, gradually increasing by about a thousand every five years. This can be explained by the increase in the number of scientific journals, which led to an increase in the total number of periodicals in the country [2].

As of 2015, the total circulation of Polish newspapers was 629,500, while in 1990 this figure was twice as high – 1,374,972 copies. In contrast, the total circulation of magazines in 1990 was 696,420 units, and in 2015 it was already 1,162,700 copies [2].

Therefore, it can be argued that over the past few years, Poles have preferred magazines. According to scientists, this is due to the fact that mainly magazines (weekly and monthly) i) are universal, and therefore they have high circulations and a large readership. In contrast, as for specialized magazines, they are aimed, as a rule, at a narrow circle of readers. Therefore, people have the opportunity to buy the publication that will be completely interesting to them. Among the magazines with the largest circulations are tabloid publications, as well as those that tell about the news of television and show business stars [2].

In 2016, there were 297 radio stations in Poland. They received a license from the National Council for Broadcasting. Among them are state and private broadcasters, as well as academic stations run by individual religious organizations [4]. The most popular radio stations in the country include: «RMF FM», «Radio ZET», «Polish Radio Program 1», «ESKA» and «Auditorium 17».

It is obvious that Polish radio stations have also joined the processes of globalization in the world. Therefore, each of them has its own online correspondent and pages on social networks. Now all radio stations digitize their content so that it can be distributed on the Internet.

It is also worth adding that almost all radio stations in Poland produce podcasts. «Podcast – (English iPod + broadcasting) is one of the ways of publishing media streams, mainly in MP3 format. Technologically based on the RSS/Atom format. Podcasting technology allows anyone to record their own audio (video) broadcasts and publish them on the Internet» [9, p. 272].

It is worth noting that other media are also engaged in the production of podcasts. For example, sections with them can be found on the online correspondents of newspapers, TV channels and simply Internet media. We can conclude that this type of content is in demand in the country, and therefore many mass media are trying to use it to attract as many audiences as possible.

According to the media information portal «Wirtualnemedi», as of 2021, 270 TV channels were operating in Poland. Over the years, their number in the country has only increased. So, according to this resource, in 2008 there were 145 TV channels, and in 2014 – 206. However, the television market in the country is currently undergoing transformational processes. In particular, more and more people prefer streaming platforms (for example: Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Apple +, Player, Canal + online, HBO Go, Player, Viaplay, Polsat Box Go and others). Because they allow you to watch your favorite programs and series at any time and without advertising. In addition, their cost can be lower than satellite broadcasting, and the quality is higher, and therefore better. On the other hand, cable networks and satellite platforms are becoming less interesting for the audience. The most popular TV channels include: TVP 1, Polsat, TVP 2, TBH and TVN 24 [5].

The level of trust in the media in Poland is 42 %. This is evidenced by a report prepared by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at Oxford University. By the way, the Digital News Report 2022 describes changes in the media market in 46 countries over the past year. It is based on a study conducted using an online survey of a group of 93,000 people. According to their data, the most trusted among the audience is the radio station RMF FM – 51 %. In second place are radio ZET and TVN News, trusted by 47 % of respondents. In fourth place, and at the same time the first among Internet portals, was Onet with a result of 45 % [10].

At the same time, only about 20 % of respondents perceive the Polish media as independent of political or business pressure. In addition, Poland has dropped from 18th place in 2015 to 66th place in 2022 in the press freedom index. There has been no increase in the ranking over these years. Nevertheless, the authors of the report emphasize the clear differences between trust in independent and public media. Thus, 49 % of respondents express distrust of «public broadcasting» (public broadcasting), and only 24 % trust it. By the way, this is the worst result in the rating [12]. It can be assumed that the reason for such low trust in the media is the fact that most of the media in Poland are in the hands of private entrepreneurs, most often foreign companies. In particular, this concerns the United States of America, Germany, the Czech Republic and Switzerland. Therefore, this raises concerns among people about the objectivity of the information provided, in particular that related to politics, economics and international relations. On the other hand, such mass media can openly criticize the authorities.

It is undeniable that the concept has been built all over the world that politicians and their parties or wealthy people are the owners of media or media holdings. This principle can be observed even in the example of Ukraine. In contrast, the leading media in Poland are usually owned by foreign companies, which is a cause for concern in society.

Therefore, in 2021, legislators proposed to prohibit foreign companies from owning more than 49 % of shares in Polish media companies. Thus, only those companies that are located in the European Economic Area can own controlling stakes in Polish media. radio broadcasters. The European Economic Area includes all EU member states and three other countries: Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein. The bill was unofficially called «Lex TVN» [3].

However, it caused outrage among citizens. Instead, the Polish authorities conditioned this initiative on the danger of media acquisition by investors from undemocratic countries, namely the Russian Federation, China or the Arab world. However, in reality, this law was intended to strike at the TVN group of channels, which are critical of the current government. Its owner is the American concern Discovery.

Although the bill was approved by the Sejm, the lower house of parliament, the upper house of the Senate rejected it. However, a few months later, the Sejm unexpectedly voted to override the Senate veto. Lawmakers were not supposed to vote on the bill, but it ended up on the Sejm agenda after a committee met to discuss the issue. However, the President of Poland, Andrzej Duda, vetoed it. He justified his decision by concerns about business agreements and investment agreements with the United States of America and the anxiety in society and because of this.

This law was only a part of the repolonization process. It provides for a reduction in the ownership of media companies by foreigners in Poland. However, there is an opinion that in this way the authorities want to strengthen their control over the mass media, which in turn criticize the current government. In particular, we are talking about those media owned by German and American companies.

An example of the repolonization policy was one of the largest media companies in the country, Polska Press. It was purchased from the German company Verlagssgruppe Passau by the state-controlled oil refiner Polish Oil Concern Orlen. As a result, this led to a purge of the editorial management in the regional branches of the newspapers it owns and the appointment of new people to this position. According to media experts, the newly appointed employees will only be executors of political recommendations.

One example of political pressure on the media in the country is the public broadcaster called «TVP» (Polish Television). The first program was broadcast in 1952. Later, a public radio station appeared – «Polish Radio», in 1958. In the early 90s of the 20th century, the channel received the legal status of a broadcaster, which is enshrined in the Law on Television and Radio Broadcasting. As of today, this company is financed mainly from the state budget, to a lesser extent from advertising, sponsorship orders, subscriptions and the sale of programs created by them. The heads of «TVP» are elected by the National Media Council. The company owns a number of Polish TV channels, including: TVP 1, TVP 2, TVP 3, TVP ABC, TVP Historia, TVP Sport, TVP Kobieta, TVP Kultura, TVP Info, TVP Dokument and others [10].

However, in recent years, the television company has been increasingly criticized for its pro-government stance. In particular, in 2016, there were personnel changes. Leading positions were taken by

people who had connections with one political party. The National Broadcasting Council has repeatedly received complaints from viewers about violations of journalistic standards on the air. In general, the direction of the channels was determined by the change in political leadership in the country. In addition, as already noted above, 49 % of the country's citizens express distrust of TVP, and only 24 % trust it. It can be argued that due to the fact that the company is mainly financed from the state budget, it chooses the vector of informing the audience that the current government dictates to it.

**Conclusions.** The Polish media market has its own characteristics. First of all, it is worth mentioning that most of the mass media is owned by foreigners. And this, in turn, worries the government, because it makes it impossible to exert pressure on the authorities. In addition, specialized magazines are very popular. Therefore, the printed press in this country is currently experiencing a rapid rise. Another characteristic feature is the creation of podcasts, which are in demand. This section is present on almost every mass media website.

Thus, it is worth saying that the media market in Poland is quite ambiguous. On the one hand, it is characterized by global trends: a decrease in the number and circulation of printed publications, the creation of online counterparts, an increase in interest and demand for Internet media; on the other hand, the phenomenon of the leading Polish media being owned by foreign companies is quite atypical. Obviously, this has its advantages and disadvantages. However, the government has already begun to implement a policy of repolonization in order to further gain influence over all independent media. At the moment, it has not quite succeeded. Moreover, it is difficult to predict whether further attempts will be made. Nevertheless, as of today, there are media in Poland that can be called independent of the government.

#### **Acknowledgements**

*This work was supported by the Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange (NAWA ULAM, grant BPN/ULM/2023/1/00188/DEC/1).*

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Мар'яна Кіца

### **ПОЛЬСЬКИЙ МЕДІАЛАНДШАФТ: ТЕНДЕНЦІЇ ТА ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ КРИЗЬ ПРИЗМУ УКРАЇНСЬКИХ ПИТАНЬ**

Ця стаття є результатом дослідження розвитку польського медіаландшафту з особливим акцентом на висвітленні українських питань. Спираючись на мультидисциплінарний підхід, дослідження розглядає тенденції, виклики та перспективи, які формують наративи польських медіа в контексті геополітичної близькості та історичних зв'язків між Польщею та Україною. Аналіз містить контент-аналіз основних польських медіа, дослідження аудиторії та порівняльні оцінки традиційних і цифрових ЗМІ. Основні висновки підкреслюють значне збільшення висвітлення тем, пов'язаних з Україною, після повномасштабного вторгнення росії у 2022 році, причому багато ЗМІ запровадили спеціальні розділи, присвячені війні, кризі біженців і гуманітарній допомозі. Дослідження також підкреслює роль медіафреймінгу, впливу уряду та залучення аудиторії у формування публічного дискурсу. Крім того, у дослідженні розглянуто вплив цифрових медіа, репрезентацію українських голосів та наслідки для транскордонних наративів та культурної інтеграції.

Отримані результати сприяють науковим дискусіям про репрезентацію ЗМІ, міжнародні відносини та динамічну взаємодію між медіа та міграцією у формуванні громадської думки. У статті зроблено висновок, що медіаринок у Польщі є досить неоднозначним. З одного боку, це характеризується глобальними тенденціями: зменшенням кількості та тиражів друкованих видань, створенням онлайн-відповідників, зростанням зацікавлення та попиту на інтернет-ЗМІ; з другого боку, помітне явище, коли провідні польські медіа належать іноземним компаніям, що є досить нетиповим. Очевидно, що це має свої переваги та недоліки. Проте сьогодні в Польщі є ЗМІ, які можна назвати незалежними від влади.

**Ключові слова:** медіаландшафт, Польща, війна, Україна, свобода слова.