



## OPINION<sup>1</sup>

from prof. Encho Gerganov, PhD, New Bulgarian University  
(scientific position, scientific degree, name, surname, educational / scientific institution)

for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in scientific field 3.5. Social Communications and Information Sciences.

with a dissertation on the topic: "Digital marketing communication - aspects of content marketing",

presented by Teodora Petkova, full-time doctoral student in the Department of Communication, Social relations and advertising of the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication

with supervisor: prof. Dr. Hristo Kaftandjiev

### 1. Evaluation of the qualities of the dissertation text

The dissertation presented for defense is dedicated to semantic technologies and dialogical theory with a view to theoretical research and practical applications in the field of digital marketing communication on the Web. PhD student Teodora Petkova aims to study the conceptualization of marketing communications as a set of practices of dialogic communication, data exchange and building a framework that will serve for the practical application of this conceptualization. The set goal leads to state-of-the-art and significant research on the set problems. In her research, the doctoral student argues, both theoretically and with a lot of empirical data, the thesis that "the World Wide Web has a dialogic potential in its aspect of a data federation environment." The main hypothesis of her empirical research is the following: "Companies do not use to the fullest the dialogic potential of the World Wide Web in terms of the machine-readable aspect of the content of their marketing communication."

Teodora Petkova has formulated 7 research tasks, the completion of which aims the modeling of key artifacts, agents and participants in the process of digital marketing communication on the Web. The tasks are as feasible as possible, such as task 1 "to collect, systematize and analyze the main characteristics of users, platforms and web content in a digital environment with a view to marketing communication." Later in her dissertation the doctoral student describes in detail the solution of each one of the 7 research tasks and receives rich information about the digital environment in terms of marketing communications. The doctoral student clearly describes the object and subject of the research. The object of the research is digital marketing communication on the Web, and the subject of the research are the dialogical and semantic aspects of the content of the digital marketing communications in the Web.

Teodora presents in detail the methods of research, substantiating the need to use each of them. The main research methods she uses in her dissertation research are comparative analysis,

---

<sup>1</sup> Note: The text in italics offers reference points for evaluating the research results. Recommended volume of the opinion - 2-3 standard pages



modeling, typology, design of an interdisciplinary framework, descriptive research and collection of empirical data. The methods are largely operational. For example, the created two-modal framework for web content analysis allows digital marketing communications to be studied both in their function as digital objects and as elements of dialogic communication. The PhD student planned and conducted an empirical study using the presented two-modal framework and obtained data that enriches the semantic content of digital communications on the Web. The study of digital marketing communication on the Web and the semantic annotation of its content in terms of the dialogic potential of the Web is structured in three chapters, which are essentially the structure and content of the dissertation.

The first chapter "Digital Marketing Communications on the World Wide Web - Aspects of the Communication Environment and Web Content" outlines the key players in digital marketing communications online and the main layers of media content on the Web. The communication situation is modeled to reflect its complexity caused by the algorithmic environment. The chapter serves as an overview and includes plenty of related literature on the topics addressed in it. Both theoretical analyzes and empirical research in the field of digital marketing communications are presented. Here the doctoral student introduces new concepts, such as the human user as a multi-text being and the Web as a complex textual assembly of information, experience and knowledge. The model, built on the understanding of the person on the Web as a person actively communicating with texts, builds on the model of marketing communications in the hypermedia environment of Hoffman and Novak. This is a definite contribution of the PhD student in the research of digital marketing communications.

The second chapter studies the relationship between research in the field of dialogic theory and research in the field of the Semantic Web. In this chapter, the PhD student aims to present the various aspects of the Semantic Web and, above all, to identify it as a key factor for digital marketing communications and the digital objects that result from them. Special attention is paid to the dialogue in marketing communications, to its importance for the content of marketing communications. Theoretical frameworks and formulations are considered, with a view to operationalizing dialogue in the context of organizational communication. The socio-technological construct Semantic Web is also studied and presented in detail, highlighting the intersections between the Semantic Web technology and the digital marketing communication challenges. The origin, development and current state of the Semantic Web from the perspective of digital marketing communications are also presented. The PhD student has made an analysis of the potential uses of semantic technologies in the process of marketing communication on the Web. In a separate section, many examples are given that illustrate the idea of using semantic technologies for dialogic marketing communications, and in particular for the knowledge graph. The main features of the technological architecture called the "knowledge graph" are described. A theoretical model of the knowledge graph, created especially to serve the dialogic communication in marketing communication, is also presented.

The third chapter seeks to answer the question "To what extent the studies web content of marketing communications on the websites of the researched companies adheres to the dialogical principles of communication and whether this content is annotated with formal descriptions from the vocabulary schema.org. The first part of this chapter describes the object



and the objectives of the research, presents the research issues and the limitations of the dissertation. The second part describes the tools of the research: the sources of empirical data are presented; the interdisciplinary framework designed for the purposes of the research is described. The third part contains summarized results from the analysis of the data from the empirical research with references to a detailed description of the empirical research given as an appendix to the dissertation. The fourth part presents the conclusions of the research and examines future directions of research and analysis in the field of marketing communications and the dialogic potential of semantic annotations of web content. In conclusion, the doctoral student gave a summary of the results. She presented the conclusions of her theoretical and empirical research. She has identified ideas for future research and has formulated the contributions of the theoretical and empirical research presented in the dissertation.

## **2. Contributions of the dissertation research**

Among the most significant contributions I can name the following:

- A model of user communication with the content of the Web has been created, which takes into account the multifaceted nature of the Web and allows the analysis of marketing communication which incorporates elements and phenomena of the communication scenario such as algorithmic audiences, platforming, multimodality of the website and more.
- The concept of "content marketing" has been clarified and the definition of "web content" has been refined so that it works to analyze digital marketing communications, which takes into account the presence or absence of (semantic) metadata with which they are described.
- An interdisciplinary framework has been created for analysis according to mixed criteria of marketing content on the Web in view of its dialogical and semantic (in the sense of machine-readable) aspects.
- Empirical data on the use of schema.org by the top ten companies in the S&P 500 ESG index have been collected and studied.
- An analysis of the degree of use of dialogic potential of the Web has been conducted in parallel with the use of formal descriptions of web content by leading technology companies.

## **3. Notes and recommendations**

I have no notes or recommendations

## **4. Publications and participation in scientific forums**

On the topic of the dissertation 4 articles have been published, one of which is in English, in peer-reviewed collections. A monograph and two more articles in peer-reviewed editions are in print. This fulfills the requirements of the Regulations on the terms and conditions for acquiring scientific degrees and holding academic positions at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" for approbation and announcement of the results of the research according to art. 5, item 5 and has covered the minimum national requirements under Art. 63, para. 1, item 4 and Art. 69, para. 3.



The scientific contributions indicated by the doctoral student fully correspond to the real scientific achievements in her theoretical and empirical research presented in the dissertation. The abstract accurately and precisely reflects the content of the dissertation.

### **5. Conclusion**

Based on my positive evaluations of the theoretical and empirical research in the dissertation and the excellent methodological training of the doctoral student, who masters both theoretical approaches to analysis and empirical research methods, I propose to award the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" to Teodora Todorova Petkova.

Jury member:

/ prof. Encho Gerganov, PhD/

Date:27.02.2022

Sofia