



## REVIEW

from Assoc. Prof. Dr. Simeon Vassilev, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski",  
Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication

for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in professional field  
3.5. Social Communications and Information Sciences (Public Relations).

with a dissertation on the topic: " Digital communication and political influence -  
the moral meaning of communication technologies ",

presented by Boris Rosenov Stoyanov, full -time independent doctoral student in  
the Department Public Relations and Advertising of the Faculty of Journalism and  
Mass Communication

with supervisor: Prof. dr. Nikolay Mihaylov

### I. Presentation of the doctoral (PhD) student / applicant on the basis of the submitted documentation

On the basis of the submitted documents, PhD student Boris Stoyanov holds a  
Bachelor's degree from Sofia University, majoring in Public Relations and  
Russian Philology. He holds a Master's degree in Arts, Diplomacy and Foreign  
Policy from Lancaster University, UK. Boris Stoyanov has practical experience  
as Managing Director and PR Manager at All Channels Communication  
Group.



## II. Assessment of the qualities of the text of the dissertation

The presented dissertation "Digital Communication and Political Influence - The Moral Meaning of Communication Technologies" is devoted to important topics - political communication, the process of digitalization, the change of political discourse and the philosophical problematics of communication. The PhD student has focused his attention on the digital environment and online space, and their significance for the formation and change of public opinion. The highly relevant topics of the ethics and philosophical meaning of communication and interaction in a digital environment are addressed, especially the impact of the digitalization process on the communication process and specifically on political communication and audience perceptions.

The ambition to draw conclusions about the impact of platforms and the Internet in general on Bulgarian political discourse is very impressive. In this sense, the topicality of the dissertation stems from the constant need for in-depth research on the changes in public communication and especially in its political and moral aspects. This is a constant academic need for scientific approach and research. It is accompanied by many difficulties caused by the dynamic processes brought about by technology, by the radical changes in the political and media environment, and by the very specificity of the political process, which is under the influence of the increasing commercialization of marketing approaches.

The dissertation text gains significance in its search for grounded conclusions about these multifaceted changes. I also find significance in the fact that the topic of the dissertation, "Digital Communication and Political Influence - The Moral Meaning of Communication Technologies", is set in a philosophical context that has an important role in making sense of the "political system - media



environment" relationship. The doctoral student's efforts are clearly invested in attempting a theoretical analysis of empirical data. An interdisciplinary approach has been applied, which presupposes an interpretation of the "communication - political process" relation. I would note as a very important aspect of the dissertation the ethical principles and moral norms in online political communication and the resulting difficulties in building trust in the digital environment.

The structure of the thesis consists of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, a bibliography, and appendices. The volume is sufficient for a dissertation. The aims of the dissertation and the tasks arising from it are stated. An interesting author's thesis on "communication patterns" is presented.

Chapter One provides an overview of the concepts of political influence, moral sense, political discourse, and misinformation as a means of influence in digital



communication. Digital platforms and social networks are discussed, as well as online political presence and influence.

Chapter Two focuses on the technology of information dissemination and technological development in the context of communications.

Chapter Three analyses certain assertions and hypotheses and provides concrete examples as argumentation.

The Conclusion summarizes the results and attempts to draw relevant conclusions by outlining possibilities for exploring the topic from other theoretical and practical perspectives.

Authoritative sources on the topic are used and cited, publications and online sources in Bulgarian and English are analyzed. The work is presented in 174 pages, with a bibliographic resource of 160 sources in total, which are cited correctly and show good bibliographic awareness.

### III. Contributions to the dissertation research

The dissertation work has a contributory character. I would single out the analysis of data on digital communications over a twelve-year period. The analysis provides a real insight into the complex and highly dynamic process of digital transformation and public communication, and the political and moral aspects involved. The dissertation provides a successful analysis of trends and patterns of information exchange in the digital space and the media and political culture changed by technological developments. The PhD student has convincingly highlighted the need for specific knowledge and skills of communication in the



network society, which need a philosophical analysis of the concept of moral sense, ethical and moral norms.

I would also define as a significant contribution the systematization of data and expertise on digital communications, impressive in quality and quantity, which undoubtedly has a serious practical-applied contribution. The analysis and examples accompanying the visual design of communication models clarify the specifics and main outcomes of specific behaviors in digitally mediated dissemination of political messages. They naturally lead to the main conclusions of the dissertation - innovations in technology lead to a change in public attitudes, and political communication progressively becomes more informal and direct, which directly affects the being of the individual.

#### IV. Notes and recommendations

I have some remarks on the linguistic and stylistic qualities of the submission. My recommendation is that in the future the PhD student should continue to explore more thoroughly the "moral foundations of communication" and especially the mass media as "tools of manipulation" in political communication.

#### V. Publications and participation in scientific forums

Boris Stoyanov's scientific publications on the topic of the dissertation are three and meet the requirements for the PhD. They represent well his publishing activity, which meets the Regulations on the conditions and procedure for the acquisition of scientific degrees and the occupation of academic positions at the



Sofia University. He is a member of the Faculty of Sciences of the University of St. Kliment Ohridski.

## VI. Conclusion

Taking into account the scientific research efforts of Boris Rosen Stoyanov, the relevance and contribution of the issues developed by him in the presented dissertation and other publications, I express my positive assessment and recommend the distinguished jury to award Rosen Stoyanov the degree of Doctor in professional field 3.5. Social Communications and Information Sciences (Public Relations).

Reviewer:

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