

# REVIEW

For the dissertation work of IVAN ALEXANDROVICH ZACHARIEV  
for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor"  
according to 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences –  
Media and Communications - Manipulation in Communication  
on the topic: "MANIPULATIVE TECHNIQUES IN THE LANGUAGE OF  
PHOTOGRAPHY (PHOTOGRAPHIC SIGNS AND THEIR VISUAL INFLUENCE IN  
NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION)"

by PROF. DR VESELINA VALKANOVA

## INFORMATION FOR THE DOCTORAL STUDENT

Ivan Zahariev holds a master's degree from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" in Russian philology. He has considerable professional experience - for almost 30 years he worked as a professional photojournalist in the newspapers "168 Chasa", "Otechestven Front" and "24 Chasa". He was deputy editor-in-chief of "168 Chasa" and of "Bulgaria Today". The colleague has many publications of photographs in print and electronic media. He led a course on "Photography and Journalism" for bachelors and masters at the Department of "Visual Arts" at NBU. He was awarded a diploma for "Artist Photographer" by the Club of Photographers in Bulgaria at the Committee for Culture, he has awards from the salon for experimental photography "Stilb", from the "Political Photography" exhibitions, the "Fodar" biennial, etc. He participates in many public exhibitions organized by the Club of Photojournalists in Bulgaria, and is

the author of a number of independent photography exhibitions, the latest of which are "Photo enlargement - photos from the Great Poetry Reading in 65th Auditorium", "Sofia in rhymes - the urban landscape" and others. The preferred genres and themes in his work are event reportage, portrait and sports photography.

### DISSERTATION AND ABSTRACT INFORMATION

The dissertation with a total volume of 327 pages consists of an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, a bibliography of 206 titles, of which 183 are in Cyrillic and 23 in English. The author reference for the scientific contributions is attached to the abstract. For visualization, 12 more graphics, 5 tables and 38 photos are included with the text.

The abstract attached to the documentation has a volume of 126 pages and presents the dissertation work through a description and analysis of: the general characteristics of the dissertation work, the topicality of the dissertation topic, field, object, subject and limitations, goals and objectives, scientific novelty of the work, practical significance, research and analysis methods, doctoral thesis, volume and structure, and main content.

Although excessive in volume, the abstract is adequate to the dissertation, reflects substantially the structure, approach, and main summaries, and meets the requirements for self-referencing a dissertation.

The dissertation work has been faithfully revised and edited and after the preliminary discussion - the justifications and the presentation of the author's concept have been strengthened; terms are specified; the bibliography is

presented according to standard; some technical imperfections have been fixed. Thus, as a result of a number of substantive and technical changes in the dissertation during its post-probation editing and taking into account the opinions and recommendations of the reviewers and participants in the discussion, the dissertation work is more precise and more effective from the point of view of proving the research theses.

On the topic of the dissertation, the doctoral student has published three articles in scientific periodicals, thus meeting the requirements in this regard.

#### ASSESSMENT OF THE ACTUALITY OF THE PROBLEM

Beyond any doubt, there is a dissertation that sheds light on a current and important topic related to manipulation in visual communication, with the specific features and techniques of psychological impact on the audience. It is known from the psychology of perception that professionally shot and well-edited photographs are stored much longer in a person's long-term memory than verbal information.

The focus on the manipulative side of photographic communication is justified and completely understandable – the directed image in the media has a powerful persuasive effect, and misleading human perception through photographs is as old as the photographic process itself. On the other hand, the digital environment today more than ever in human history provides a breeding ground for misinformation and fake news. Therefore, building a photographic culture together with technical knowledge, the necessary experience and reflexes not only on the part of professional journalists, but also on the part of the audience turns out to be a particularly important and valuable filter in a

time of visual "flood" and hyper-visualization in communication, of the entry of new applications for processing and post-visualization, of subjective perspectives, of the lightning-fast dissemination of journalistic photo information.

Here the author limits himself to media photography and deals mainly with those images intended for the information and news sections of the media. Collage, photomontage, and other interpretive photo image genres are excluded from the researcher's focus.

#### ASSESSMENT OF CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE DISSERTATION

When stratifying the object and the subject and when deriving the scientific problem, the complexity of the researched area was taken into account, as well as the multifacetedness of the existing contradictions, properties and relations of the object, which characterize the investigated problem situation.

The main goal of the dissertation is to identify the manipulative techniques that are possible and specific to photography as the main means of expression and communication channel of the media, to analyze the approaches to masking, replacing and distorting semantic lines and layers of visual messages in journalism.

The author conscientiously formulates the tasks of the research, proceeding from the purpose and the approach to stratification of the object he applies, among them is the study of the mechanism of manipulative influence with photographic images in the media. Undoubtedly, the dissertation represents a novelty for visual communication research through the analysis and summary of manipulation through photographic techniques in the media, and the derived practical-applied methods and principles for

manipulation and targeted psychological impact on the audience have a contributing character.

To fulfill the goals and tasks, the doctoral student relies on a methodology that includes: theoretical overview, analysis of examples from practice, analysis and synthesis, comparative analysis, empirical research and qualitative analysis.

The first chapter of the dissertation "COMMUNICATION - CONCEPTS, MODELS, THEORIES" introduces the theoretical basis of the subject, for which the doctoral student has thoroughly studied concepts, theories, researches of leading authors in this field. Here I think that a faster entry into the subject and the abandonment of the determination of concepts, goals and models known to science for a long time, functions of communication (to which the author does not add his contribution) and a more direct focus on the essential for the object - the structure of the photographic image and nature of the manipulation, would be more complete for the more effective proof of the author's theses.

In the second chapter "PHOTOGRAPHY FOR THE PURPOSES OF MANIPULATION IN MASS COMMUNICATION", the doctoral student undertakes the task of clarifying the concept of manipulation and how it can be realized through the photographic language. Based on the main sources on the subject, I. Zahariev derives concepts, makes typologies, looks for different understandings of the object, derives the ways photography functions, applies classic models to the classification of manipulation. The conclusions on the activity of professional photographers and photojournalists as subjects carrying out manipulation, as well as on the professional qualities of the photojournalist for the realization of a manipulative effect, can be cited as contributions. Here,

the author's 30-year experience as a participant in the communication process is linked to theoretical accumulations and leads to helpful summaries and results.

The third chapter "PHOTOGRAPHIC TECHNIQUES FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT IN VISUAL COMMUNICATION TO ACHIEVE MANIPULATIVE GOALS" focuses on the analysis and summaries of those techniques of the photographic language that can affect the audience - the concepts of the frame, the point of view, the compositional frame are the subject of research, the angle, the lighting, the focus, the pose. Essential to the scientific problem are undoubtedly questions of visual framing, framing, plans of photography, composition of signifiers, figure and background, focus and sharpness for the purposes of manipulation. Analysis of media image selection as a tool to construct trust should be noted. Here, empirical research would objectify the conclusions and support the proof of the author's theses.

In the fourth chapter "EXAMINATION OF NONVERBAL IMPRESSIONS THROUGH THE BEHAVIOR IN FRONT OF THE CAMERA OF 12 POLITICAL LEADERS", the author undertakes an investigation of manipulative techniques in the language of photography in print and digital media, conducted on the basis of a case study. The empirical material consists of photographic images, through which the behavior in front of a camera of 12 political leaders - representatives of different cultures is examined, through which not only the behavioral patterns are seen, but also the manipulative photographic techniques involved in the shooting process, as well as the approaches to non-verbal suggestions that affect the audience.

QUALITIES OF THE DISSERTATION PAPER

The development clearly demonstrates the doctoral student's professional reflection and his lasting interest in the research field to which he has devoted himself.

The text is read with interest and ease, there is a marked analyticalness. The objectives of the dissertation are precisely and concretely formulated, the scientific problem is stated in the introduction, scientific theses are formulated, the assumptions and questions made are methodically investigated and proved in the chapters. Structuring and orientation are unambiguous; the bibliography is accurate and precise, as is the overall design and presentation of the dissertation. The volume is tentative. The parts are logically and meaningfully connected.

The research and theses are original and original. The obtained results are described and analyzed comprehensively, the fulfillment of the set tasks is proven.

The dissertation constitutes a contribution to the research field. Key findings are directly derived from and relate to practice. The PhD student has demonstrated a high level of critical thinking towards the research problem.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- In view of the future publication of the text, to remove technical, spelling and punctuation errors;
- There is much to be desired in terms of the quality of the tables and images in the text, especially in the abstract - a dissertation devoted to visual communication requires a more precise presentation of the visual materials.
- To strengthen the author's theses and conclusions, which often "sink" behind citations and references.

### QUESTIONS:

- Besides ethical rules, what professional regulations and professional standards on the work of photojournalists and photo editors should there be in news photojournalism?
- Where is the line - research shows that more than half of news photographers sometimes stage photos, manipulate the scene, even use software to add and remove objects?
- Is staged photography admissible in conflict and disaster situations, and should bill editors search the raw files for errors when there are doubts about the authenticity of the photographs?

### CONCLUSION:

- With the developed current theoretical framework of the research object;
- With the generalized mechanism and researched process for manipulative impact of photography and its elements;
- With the developed own comparative typology of the semantic aspects in the visual message of disinformation, propaganda, PR and advertising;
- With descriptions and analyzes of a wide range of manipulative photographic techniques

the current dissertation work has a certain contribution to research on public communications and information sciences, on press photography and manipulation in communication.



The above contributing points of the research give me grounds to SUPPORT BEFORE THE RESPECTED SCIENTIFIC JURY THE AWARDING OF IVAN ALEXANDROVICH ZACHARIEV THE EDUCATIONAL AND SCIENTIFIC DEGREE "DOCTOR" BY 3.5. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION SCIENCES - MANIPULATION IN COMMUNICATION FOR THE DISSERTATION PAPER "MANIPULATIVE TECHNIQUES IN THE LANGUAGE OF PHOTOGRAPHY (PHOTOGRAPHIC SIGNS AND THEIR VISUAL IMPACT IN NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION)":

Reviewer:



PROF. DR VESELINA VALKANOVA

17.12.2022 г.