



## OPINION<sup>1</sup>

from Assoc. Prof. Stella Angova, UNWE, Media and Public Communication Department  
(*scientific position, academic degree, name, surname, educational / scientific institution*)

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

with a dissertation on the topic: "ACTIVISM AND SLAKTIVISM. EFFICIENCY OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SOCIAL CAUSES (CIVIL SOCIETY IN BULGARIA IN THE PERIOD 2013 – 2022)",

presented by Zarina Boykova Vassileva, full-time doctoral student in the Department Press Journalism and Book Publishing of the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication

with supervisor: Prof. Greta Dermendjieva

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

The dissertation examines the current topic of social causes in the context of new technologies and their effect on societal change. The focus is on the new phenomenon of online activism, or as it has already gained publicity - slacktivism (clicktivism, lazy activism). The term prompts a public debate about the effect of creating and supporting social causes in an online environment. The main question in terms of discourse is whether digital activism leads to real change and whether serious problems are not being alleviated by online campaigns. It is interesting how the clarification of this term (both as support and criticism of the phenomenon) includes the serious topics of the day: politics, health care, economy, education, income, privilege, etc. There are ample examples of online activism that has produced real and measurable results, and it could be argued that the "click" can also produce legitimate results. The dissertation analyzes all this by offering a scientific and practical reading through various proofs of solidarity of virtual communities for public benefit through the prism of the Bulgarian experience.

### II. Contributions of the dissertation research

145 sources are cited in the dissertation. This is definite proof of knowledge of scientific publications on the subject. The subject bibliography covers authoritative scholars of traditional media, new media, social psychology, philosophy, activities, and social cause toolkits. The quoted sources are

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<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



in Bulgarian, English and Russian languages. The literature review is comprehensive, in-depth and critically considered.

On the one hand, already existing theories and hypotheses have been confirmed in the dissertation work, and on the other hand, one's own scientific point of view has been stated and some popular and/or controversial theses have been contested through evidence.

An author's working definition of slacktivism is proposed. Based on analyzed polar opinions about the essence of the phenomenon, the author perceives slacktivism as a "social phenomenon conditioned by digital technologies" (p. 25). The important clarification he makes is that "it is not the absence of an act of will, but on the contrary - it is a conscious behavior and as such carries with it concrete consequences" (ibid.). Agreeing with the author's thesis and accepting the research results, it is probably a good idea to move in the direction of imposing another, more correct term. As the world becomes more and more virtually real, taking an active stance and participating in causes through digital tools and social media should not be denied or downplayed. Online activism can lead to completely legitimate results and, although the name sounds trivial, achieve social, economic, political change.

The author has chosen an interdisciplinary research method. To the classic approach to research, systematization and critical analysis of scientific literature, more methods are integrated such as content analysis of media content on the Internet related to social causes, research and analysis of social causes in social networks, associative experiment analysis of audience attitudes, surveys and interviews. This approach allows the author to show a broader picture of the researched problem by capturing the opinion of more interested parties.

Several novelties can be highlighted: (1) the author's model for the formation of prosocial behavior in the context of slacktivism, in which the essential role of the media and quality journalism is brought out; (2) the recommendations for communicating the charitable causes, which help their effectiveness in compliance with ethical norms and standards and (3) the systematization of effective recommendations for the success of protests by provoking positive slacktivism and stimulating activity.

Scientific correctness is noted in the choice of methodological apparatus, in the collection of the empirical material and the conduct of the surveys and interviews.

The scientific contributions could have been structured and achieved, but even in this way the work done by the author is correctly defined. The text formulates a theoretical and practical-applied upgrade of existing theories, concepts and hypotheses.

The author proves empirically that a phenomenon can be examined in its polarity and trends and directions can be derived for the use of this phenomenon to support important social activities.

The text is structured according to scientific practice. It contains four chapters and goes from the theoretical overview to an analysis of the collected empirical material. It is written in good scholarly language and style. The abstract corresponds to the dissertation work.

In theoretical terms, the main scientific contribution is in the clarification of slacktivism as a social action in the context of the theories about the activity and passivity of the person and society and the definition of the phenomenon. In a practical-applied plan, the contributions are the author's model for the formation of prosocial behavior in the context of slacktivism and the formulated recommendations for communicating charitable causes.

### III. Notes and recommendations

The dissertation should be published as a book because it complements the topic of civil movements in Bulgaria and the activation of people and communities for positive causes. I would like



to get an answer to the question: does the term slacktivism need to be replaced, or does it still accurately reflect online action for social change?

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

The PhD candidate's publications exceed the minimum national requirements. Congratulations on your active publication career, which includes a monograph chapter, three articles in scientific journals, and four articles in scientific conference proceedings.

#### V. Conclusion

The dissertation is a contribution to modern Bulgarian media studies. The text is written in a reasoned and analytical manner. There is research correctness and precision. Its relevance is indisputable. An interdisciplinary approach was used and important research was conducted. I will vote positively for the awarding of the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in professional direction 3.5. Public communications and information sciences (media and communications - online journalism) of Zarina Boykova Vasileva for the dissertation work on the topic: "ACTIVISM AND SLAKTIVISM. EFFICIENCY OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SOCIAL CAUSES (CIVIL SOCIETY IN BULGARIA IN THE PERIOD 2013 – 2022)".

Jury member:

Date: