



OPINION¹

from Prof. Tolya Stoitsova, PhD, D.Sc. New Bulgarian University
(*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 Slacktivism. Effectiveness of the implementation of social causes (Civil Society in Bulgaria in the period 2013 – 2022)",

presented by Zarina Boikova Vassileva, full-time doctoral student in the Department of Press journalism and book publishing of the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication

with supervisor: Prof. Greta Dermendjieva, PhD.

I. Evaluation of the qualities of the text of dissertation

The relevance and significance of the problem developed in the dissertation is beyond doubt. The realization of social causes, long before the emergence of the Internet, has a serious history in Bulgaria. That is why PhD student Vassileva thoroughly studies the sources related to social causes and charity by turning the tape back in time, although the subtitle of the topic is related to civil society in Bulgaria in the period 2013 – 2022.

I would like to point out in particular that the review of the scientific literature covers essential sources on the subject with authors from various scientific institutions. The sources are both on a book carrier and naturally publications on Internet sites, as is the subject of the study. The bibliographic awareness of the doctoral student is impressive – 145 titles in Bulgarian, English and Russian were used.

Proven by new means are definitions and existing hypotheses. Against this background, new hypotheses have been raised. An author's model of connection between the studied phenomena has been created, supported by empirical research, in-depth analysis of specific online and offline campaigns related to social causes and charity. In order to penetrate deeper into the essence of the topic, three interviews were conducted and analyzed – with representatives of the Agency for Child Protection, an NGO and a parent of a child with serious health problems.

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



The methods of the studies are adequate to the problems and are bound in a single model. The data is correctly collected and richly illustrated. The reader has the opportunity to draw his/her own conclusions.

The analysis of the results is adequate – without over-interpretation and without neglecting the data obtained. The material on which the contribution moments are formulated is reliable, which is especially important. For me, PhD student Vassileva shows the skills of a good researcher – both in theoretical and empirical analyses.

I would like to draw special attention to the texts in the first chapter concerning the clarification of the concepts of activism and slacktivism. I was very impressed by the analysis, especially of the second term, which I think is more popular in our country with its negative connotation. The way in which PhD student Vassileva links positive slacktivism with activism and the opportunity to achieve real results as a way out of campaigns related to social causes also deserves admiration. New data specific to the Bulgarian participants mainly in the Facebook platform are presented.

In terms of the requirements for dissertations, the reviewed dissertation is consistent with the compositional requirements. Although not in the classic three chapters, I believe that the PhD student has a good reason to introduce another – a fourth chapter to separate the analysis of specific campaigns from the results of the empirical study of his own.

The language in the text of the dissertation is scientific and at the same time clear and unambiguous.

The author's abstract fully corresponds to the text of the dissertation.

II. Contributions of the dissertation study.

With regard to the formulated 7 contributions, which I accept in principle, I believe that the first and second (1 and 2) of them can be combined into one. In my opinion, there is an opportunity to bring together also contributions 4 and 5.

I am sure that the results obtained, as well as the recommendations made, can be used in practice, which is another contribution of the dissertation.

III. Notes and recommendations

I have three small notes and one question (more out of curiosity):



1. There are repetitions in the dissertation of specific conclusions – once in chapters, then in the conclusions part and finally in the general conclusion. Although in different sentences, it is about the same thing.
 2. I do not take very well the expressions with "proper/right" communication/strategy and "correct" communicating. It is more appropriate to replace the evaluative term "proper" with the term "adequate" one.
 3. In several places, the citation of online sources is several lines, because of the multitude %, which come out. They can be removed without problem and replaced with text. I allow myself this note, because the dissertation is related to online social networks.
- My question is: Is or was Vassileva engaged not as a participant, but as an organizer of campaigns dedicated to social causes?

IV. Publications and participation in scientific forums

PhD student Zarina Vassileva goes beyond the requirements for the publication activity related to the dissertation, as well as those for participation in scientific forums. Specifically, the abstract presents: Participation in a chapter of a monograph with a team; 3 independent publications in scientific journals; 4 articles in scientific proceedings of conferences and 7 papers at national/international conferences. She is also involved in one scientific project.

V. Conclusion

PhD student Zarina Vassileva presents a seriously developed analytical dissertation with conclusions, supported by the results of her own research. The abstract accurately recreates the content of the dissertation with the contributions in it. The PhD student has more than the necessary publications on the topic. To emphasize that my notes are benevolent aimed rather at the possible publication of the work in a monograph and do not degrade in any way the merits of the dissertation. Congratulations to the PhD student, as well as to her supervisor prof. Dr. Greta Dermendjieva. For me, undoubtedly, the work satisfies the highest requirements under the law for the requested degree, that is why I strongly suggest to the honorable colleagues from the scientific jury to award the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" to Zarina Vassileva for her dissertation on "Activism and Slacktivism. Effectiveness of the implementation of social causes. (Civil Society in Bulgaria in the Period 2013 – 2022) ".

Date: 14.03.2023

Jury member: Prof. Tolya Stoitsova, PhD. D.Sc.