



OPINION¹

from assoc. prof. Hristina Hristova, PhD, Faculty of Modern Languages, “St. Cyril and St. Methodius” University of Veliko Tarnovo

for obtaining the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” (PhD) in professional field 3.5. Social Communications and Information Sciences (Media and Communications – Psychology of Communication).

with a dissertation on the topic: “Creating a Political Image in Bulgaria: Perceptions and Influence in Public Communications”,

presented by Plamena Dinkova Papazova, doctoral student in the Department of Communication, Public Relations and Advertising of the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication

with supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Diyana Petkova

I. Evaluation of the qualities of the text of dissertation

The dissertation consists of 247 pages comprising an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion and bibliography. The chapters contain the results of four studies conducted by the author on topical issues about the specificities of creating and maintaining a desired political image in the socio-political conditions in Bulgaria over recent years, and in the context of the advancement of digital culture.

The comprehensive structure of the dissertation is dependent on the aims, problems and subject of the research which are defined in the introduction where details are given on the time period of the study, the perimeter of the study and the methodology used. The two foundation theses are also laid out here. The introduction provides information on the type and aims of the separate studies, which are included in the dissertation to substantiate hypotheses which support the main theses of the work.

The detail with which the theoretical foundation is outlined in the separate parts of the work, primarily in the first chapter, fully coincides with the stated research goal: “to establish a framework of political image study and its creation in the Bulgarian context”. The research framework merges the in-depth analysis of the relationships between: *public communications – public relations, audience – media PR communications, perception – image, corporate image – corporate identity – corporate reputation, desired image – reputation, social media – politics*, as well as the convincingly deduced position on the role of the image network (using Grahame Dowling’s terminology) in communicating modern brands.

The contribution of social media to the establishment and development of a political brand image is thoroughly discussed in the second and third part of the dissertation, based on the author’s own research, which is presented in detail in the aforementioned chapters. The analysis of the Facebook profiles of the leaders of the three major parties on the ballot for the 2021 elections adheres to one of the researcher’s main priority perspectives: to emphasise the role of the most popular social network, among Bulgarian users, to implement image strategies in the dynamic context of an election campaign.

The author’s pursuit of conceptualising the basic notions and the arguments for the questions set in separate chapters are based on well-studied theoretical sources on the topic of the dissertation. The methods applied – observation, surveys and comparative analysis – correspond to the aims and problems of the study.

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



The investigated facts are offered in support of convincing theoretical formulations, research hypotheses set and substantiated in the dissertation.

The seamless segue between the chapters of the dissertation and their balanced contribution to the defence of the main research hypotheses are among some of the merits of the work.

The visual components (figures, graphs and photographs) masterfully included in the analysis accentuate key observations that aid in important theoretical formulations and correspond to clearly defined semantic leading points in the text.

The comprehensive structure of the work is represented in the abstract of the dissertation which includes a motivation for the choice of topic, a clear definition of the subject, aims and problems of the research, as well as the main hypotheses. The conclusions reached at the end of each chapter of the dissertation are also included in the abstract.

II. Contributions of the dissertation research

I acknowledge that the merits the author set in the dissertation have been achieved.

This work comprises an in-depth analysis of one of the major trends in political life in the country in recent years and a convincingly deducted position on the role of the image in managing political brands on social media.

The main merits of the dissertation, in my opinion, are the four studies conducted by the author and the focus on the significance of comparative analysis of Internet use by political parties.

III. Notes and recommendations

In my opinion for the public defence approval procedure, I issued some notes and recommendations on the necessity of more detailed summaries in the subchapters of the dissertation and addressing some stylistic and technical shortcomings. I am pleased to find that my recommendations have been considered.

My question is as follows: **Which do You think are the major factors in establishing an effective communication strategy on social platforms in order to facilitate a favourable image of a new political brand?**

IV. Publications and participation in scientific forums

Doctoral student Plamena Papazova has presented a sufficient number of publications (a chapter of a collective monograph and four articles on the topic of the dissertation). The procedure is compliant with the requirements of The Rules on the Conditions and Procedure for Acquiring Science Degrees and Holding Academic Positions in Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, art. 5, section 5 and with the minimal national requirements per art. 63, par. 1, section 4 and art. 69, par. 3.

V. Conclusion

Based on the observations of the merits and contributions of the dissertation on the topic “Creating a Political Image in Bulgaria: Perceptions and Influence in Public Communications”, I recommend with strong conviction to the honourable academic jury to award Plamena Dinkova Papazova the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” in professional field 3.5. Social Communications and Information Sciences (Media and Communications – Psychology of Communication).

Jury member: assoc. prof. Hristina Hristova, PhD

Date: 24.08.2023