

# OPINION

on a dissertation presented for the acquisition of the educational  
and scientific degree „PhD”  
to the Department of „Preschool and Media Pedagogy“  
at the Faculty of Education and Arts of Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski“

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**TOPIC:** *The role of public relations (PR) in football to foster media literacy*

**Author of the dissertation work:** Dimitar Radoslavov Penev

**Dissertation Supervisor:** Prof. DSc Bozhidar Angelov

The understanding of sports and football, which is the most popular type of sport, as significant public products, implies a study of the meaning, functions and specifics of PR in them. Establishing their significant interrelationships and influences is necessary to achieve goals such as a positive image, reputation of a sports club, athlete or sports organization, as well as increasing the potential audience of professional sports and in particular in football.

Everything related to the presentation and functioning of the connections and dependencies between elite football clubs and media structures in Bulgaria, through the role of PR specialists in the context of creating prerequisites for the formation and development of media literacy, deserves approval and increased research interest. This is also my point of view from which I will analyze and give my assessment of the ideas and results in the dissertation work on the topic: „The role of public relations (PR) in football to foster media literacy“.

The dissertation work is formed in one book with a volume of 158 pages, of which 137 main text containing 9 tables and 28 diagrams, 1 page of publications on the topic, 6 pages of used literature, as well as 14 pages of appendices. Structurally, the work is properly

constructed, including an introduction, four main chapters, a conclusion and conclusions, a handbook of football PR, scientific contributions, publications on the topic of the dissertation, references and 5 appendices. In terms of structure, volume and sequence of the presentation, the proposed dissertation meets the basic requirements for this kind of development.

In the introduction, the topicality of the issues of the dissertation research is purposefully and substantiated.

In the first chapter in a volume of 8 pages, Dimitar Penev introduces us to the program orientation of the study, including in the first and second sub-chapters, respectively, with the actuality and terminological justification of the problem, including the concepts: football; media and communications; image, publicity and public space; football club, image and public space; media literacy. In the third sub-chapter, the author has presented the conceptual parameters of the study – in a logical sequence, the goal and the resulting six main tasks are presented, formulated clearly and precisely and giving a clear idea of the doctoral student's intentions. The object and subject of the research are presented, and at the end of this sub-chapter, the doctoral student has developed a short, clear and well-constructed working hypothesis, which forms the concept of the dissertation work.

In the second chapter „Theoretical analysis of the problem area“, which is developed in a volume of 39 pages, the author introduces us to the theoretical formulation of the problem. In the first sub-chapter, the essence of football as a unique communication medium is revealed, as well as the game of football and business relations, and last but not least, football clubs and public space. In the second sub-chapter, we are very thoroughly acquainted with the conceptual interpretation of media literacy. A historiography of media literacy, the interrelationship between media pedagogy and media literacy, as well as a model for the formation and development of media literacy are also presented. In the third sub-chapter, special attention is paid to football PR – a mediator between the club and the media. We are consistently aware of the relationship between management and football pundits with supporters, the relationships at internal club level – football pundits, management, owners and sponsors, as well as the club's relationship with footballers.

In this part of the work, an excellent impression is made by the creative study of the literary sources on the investigated issues. The study of the state of the problem was carried out competently and in the necessary scientific style. For the preparation of the first and second chapters, 105 sources were used, of which 79 were in the Cyrillic alphabet, 15 were in the Latin alphabet, and 11 were on the Internet.

In the third chapter „Methodological and organizational parameters of the research“, in its logical sequence in a volume of 9 pages, the methodology of the research is presented through the analysis of the literary sources and the 5 surveys used to research the opinion of PR-specialists, journalists, professional football players, supporters, as well as owners, sponsors, members of governing and supervisory boards of professional football clubs, coaches and managers.

The statistical methods for processing the information, as well as the organization of the study, are presented in detail.

Structurally, the development of chapter three is scientifically sound and fully satisfying, and its content contributes to the high value of the dissertation work.

The analysis of the results in chapter four, in a volume of 57 pages, makes it possible to derive important generalizations for theory and practice. A huge amount of research and analysis has been done, which in terms of scale fully meets the requirements of a doctoral thesis.

The fourth main chapter consists of five sub-chapters, each of which is related to the solution of the relevant research task in the dissertation work.

In the first sub-chapter, an analysis of the results of the survey was made, regarding the orientations of 12 PR specialists, as mediators in the relations between professional football clubs, the media and the public space. In the second sub-chapter, the results of the survey are presented, regarding the orientations of 31 sports journalists from leading media on the relations between football clubs, the media and the public space. In the third sub-chapter, the doctoral student presents the results of the interviews with 18 owners, members of management boards, sponsors, managers, coaches, sports-technical and executive directors of football clubs about relations with football specialists, the media and the public space, and in the fourth chapter, the doctoral student makes a successful presentation of the results of the survey, regarding the orientations of 49 professional football players regarding the relations with the clubs, the media and the public space. In the last fifth sub-chapter, the analysis of the results obtained from the survey with 162 supporters of football clubs is presented, regarding their ideas about the relations with the club, the media and the public space.

From the extended scientific search, the research and analysis done in the dissertation work, allow me to point out the following main contributions to practice:

1. The theory has been enriched in the field of football PR as a mediator between the club and the media, as well as in the field of relations between the management and football experts

with the supporters, relations at the internal club level and the relations of the club with the players.

2. An author's methodology for researching the orientations of the following groups of respondents has been developed and tested:

- PR specialists as mediators in the relations between professional football clubs, the media and the public space;
- Sports journalists from leading media;
- Professional football players;
- Supporters of football clubs.

3. A Football PR Handbook was developed: „How to mediate between the football club, the media and the public in the context of communication“.

The contributions of the dissertation work have both scientific and scientific-applied significance and contribute to the enrichment of knowledge in the field of football PR work.

The doctoral student has six publications that fully reflect scientific research on the topic. The abstract meets the requirements.

I also have a question for the doctoral student: Do you think that an additional study with football referees would contribute to an even more complete presentation of the football picture for the average reader in the presented dissertation work?

In conclusion, I will note that Dimitar Penev is a respected young sports journalist in our country. My personal positive evaluations of Dimitar Penev as a researcher are complemented not only by the accumulated journalistic experience in the field of sports and in particular in football, but also by my direct observations of his pure personal growth in his study process at the University, as my student.

The positions he fulfills in his professional and public activities allow the doctoral student not only to have detailed information and a comprehensive view of the general situation regarding the problems with PR specialists in sports on a national and global scale, but also to participate directly in organizational- management processes when working with them. All this has enabled the doctoral student to do research of such a thorough nature.

Based on the above and taking into account the personal qualities of the author, I consider that the dissertation work on the topic: „The role of public relations (PR) in football for the education of media literacy“ has a finished form. The work has been developed at the necessary scientific level and is of high theoretical and applied value. The developed author's methodology for researching the orientations of the researched respondents, as well as the developed Handbook of football PR, the experiment conducted and the results obtained in it,

as well as the relevance of the problem chosen for research give me grounds with conviction to propose to the respected members of the scientific jury at SU „St. Kliment Ohridski“ to award the educational and scientific degree „PhD“ to **Dimitar Radoslavov Penev** in professional field 1.2. Pedagogy, doctoral program Media pedagogy.

10 August 2023

Prepared the opinion:

/Prof. Georgi Ignatov, PhD/