

REVIEW

from PROF. DR. VESSELINA VALKANOVA
Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication
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for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in scientific field 3.5. Social Communications and Information Sciences with a dissertation on the topic: „THE PERSPECTIVES FOR THE MAGAZINE AS A MEDIA PLATFORM IN THE TIME OF PAPER PRESS TRANSFORMATIONS. STRATEGIES OF QUALITY BULGARIAN-LANGUAGE MAGAZINES IN THE BEGINNING OF THE 21ST CENTURY“

presented by PANAYOT KRASIMIROV STEFANOV, full-time doctoral student in the Department "Press Journalism and Book Publishing" of the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication with supervisor: Assoc. PROF. GEORGI LOZANOV

PRESENTATION OF THE DOCTORAL STUDENT ON THE BASIS OF THE SUBMITTED DOCUMENTATION

Panayot Krasimirov Stefanov was enrolled as a full-time doctoral student in the Department of "Press Journalism and Book Publishing" on July 20, 2020, with scientific supervisor Assoc. Prof. Georgi Lozanov. The doctoral student completed the activities according to an individual plan, successfully passed the exam in the specialty, was dismissed with the right to defense on 20.07.2023. On March 25, 2024, a procedure for preliminary discussion of his dissertation work on the topic „PERSPECTIVES FOR THE MAGAZINE AS MEDIA PLATFORM IN A TIME OF

PAPER PRESS TRANSFORMATION. STRATEGIES OF QUALITY BULGARIAN-LANGUAGE MAGAZINES IN THE BEGINNING OF THE 21ST CENTURY” was opened.

The doctoral student convincingly defended his dissertation work at a preliminary discussion in the extended composition of the “Press Journalism and Book Publishing” Department on 09.05.2024, and in the post-probation phase the work was revised in good faith, the recommendations of the reviewers were taken into account, as a result of which it became scientifically more convincing and finished look.

Panayot Stefanov has a master's degree at the Sofia University, he graduated from a bachelor's program in Journalism at FJMC. His professional experience since 2015 is related to the magazine “032”, of which he is the publisher and editor-in-chief. The colleague is the winner of a number of professional awards, such as the award in the “Clean Journalism” competition of Dir.bg, an award in the “40 to 40” project of Darik Radio – category “Media and Communications”, etc.

DISSERTATION AND AUTHOR ABSTRACT INFORMATION

The dissertation “PERSPECTIVES FOR THE MAGAZINE AS MEDIA PLATFORM IN A TIME OF PAPER PRESS TRANSFORMATION. STRATEGIES OF QUALITY BULGARIAN-LANGUAGE MAGAZINES IN THE BEGINNING OF THE 21ST CENTURY” has a total volume of 313 pages (including bibliography and appendices), structured in an introduction, five chapters, conclusion, bibliography and appendix. The bibliography includes a total of 204 sources, of which 106 are in Cyrillic and 98 in Latin, an own empirical study was conducted using the semi-standardized interview method with open questions and a case study, 1 table, 11 diagrams and 4 images are included.

On the topic of the dissertation, Panayot Stefanov has indicated his publications of three articles in scientific collections and continuing editions,

thereby satisfying the requirements for communicating the results of scientific research for for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree doctor.

The abstract, attached to the defense documentation, has a volume of 26 pages and presents the dissertation work through a description and analysis of: the relevance of the topic, object and subject of the research, its goals and tasks; working hypotheses; the methodology; necessary restrictions; content and main points. Here the author gives the main summaries; raises issues and articulates strategic perspectives to media platforms. The auto-abstract is adequate to the dissertation, reflects essentially the structure, approach and main summaries and meets the requirements for auto-referencing a dissertation work.

ASSESSMENT OF THE ACTUALITY OF THE PROBLEM

At a time of phenomenal transformation of the contents from analog to computer readable, of transformation of the environment and the media, we consider the advantages of the digital turn, significantly increasing the communicative capacity of the media, bringing potential opportunities for integration into networks, for interoperability, for open access to information and for efficient information processing through new data storage and analysis capabilities.

In turn, social media as “technologies for providing space for deep social interaction, forming communities and tackling joint projects” (according to Axel Bruns and Mark Bahnisch), add capacities, opportunities for connection, participation, can improve communication and inside and outside, generate interest groups, facilitate “social cohesion”, openness and discoverability of contents, motivate active engagement of the audience.

Convergent models of communication, where one medium is all media, creates the new media – hybrid in nature and systemic in functioning, accepting technologies with a specific purpose (according to Peter John Chen) and developing in the digital environment. In the complex processes of diffuse effects of digitization on the media, which catalyze changes and dynamic developments of the media environment, in times of complex socio-cultural transformations, media formats undergo radical transformations with all the consequences on the contents, reception, audience and with its active participation on all processes of reconfiguring communication patterns.

In a time of globalization, of massification and unification, of eclecticism and of excess – there are territories of taste and imagination, territories of influence, motivating and inspiring their audiences, influencing the world around us. Magazines have always been one of the most creative territories of the press, and this is in the nature of this medium with already nearly 350 years of history, already developing in a hybrid environment.

Before us is a dissertation that sets itself the ambitious task of researching and analyzing the trends, problems, and strategic perspectives of quality Bulgarian magazines in the light of the significant transformations of the media and print journalism in the first decades of the 21st century. In the radically changed paradigm of traditional media, a similar study dedicated to the quality press and its transformations, to the author's interpretive journalism through socio-political magazines, to media influences and to the critical functions of this segment of the press in publicity is relevant and important. There are not many developments dedicated to the topic, the focus of professional and academic attention is increasingly more “viral” objects related to online communication and Internet culture.

Therefore, the academic efforts of the author, who devoted years after his graduation to publishing and editorial work on the magazine “032”, to

dissolve the “aperture” of his activities and to focus scientifically on the field of the magazine and its developments, on the interpretations and research on the development of traditional media in a digital environment, deserve admiration.

ASSESSMENT OF THE QUALITIES OF THE DISSERTATION TEXT

The doctoral student sets himself the goal of establishing “the current strategic problems and prospects for Bulgarian consumer magazines” (p.9), in order to achieve a scientifically reasoned proposal for the “realization” of the media platform. In the dissertation, the main tasks are identified, the implementation of which is related to the verification of the formulated hypotheses. To achieve the goals, the author chose the methodology of: theoretical overview, methods of direct observation, discourse analysis, synchronic and diachronic analyzes were made, empirical research was conducted using the methods of semi-standardized interview and case study.

In the first chapter of the dissertation “THE MAGAZINE AS A MEDIA PLATFORM”, the doctoral student sets himself the task of following the relatively short history of magazines, everywhere in the dissertation called “the media platform”, and in a wide scope – from the birth of civil publicity, the development of magazines is examined diachronically during the industrial age, between the two world wars and in the twentieth century. The author clarifies concepts and formulates a definition of the journal, based on basic criteria and principles, presents existing classifications of journals, recognizing the information-functional classification as working and adhering to it. The author claims that the study of the subject is “holistic” across three “dimensions”: content, substance and business. I fully support the adoption by Panayot Stefanov as a legitimate term for this typological type of media to be “interpretive journalism”, as well as

the line of research of the content passing not only through the verbal but also through the visual language of the media.

Thus, through this theoretical overview, the author outlines the complex nature of magazines, “problematized through the intertwining of economic and journalistic rationality” (p.225). I must note that the research capabilities and skills of scientific interpretation on the subject of the dissertation are demonstrated here, based on theoretical accumulations and expert knowledge on the researched problem with its sides, connections and regularities.

The second chapter, succinctly named “QUALITY JOURNALISM”, focuses on the study and overview of the main theories and concepts of quality journalism, although the classic quality-mass press dichotomy is actually based on news journalism. With the ambition to subject to a critical analysis or at least to doubt the “dominant normative requirements” (p.88), as the author calls the main functions of journalism in democratic publicity and to discover a “horizon for the renegotiation of journalistic conventions”, in this chapter a certain “non-political utility” (p. 226) and others. characteristics of the magazine press such as “emotional density” that are able to attract and direct audiences to current events and the agenda of society.

On the basis of 8 basic indicators, the author develops a methodology adapted to the subject for defining and categorizing the magazines from the studied typological group.

In the actual proof of theses, the third chapter of the dissertation, “TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE PAPER PRESS”, the focus is on the transformations of magazines over the decades – from their emergence to the digital age, and the analysis goes through the technological transfer and the reflections it has on the publication of magazines, on their distribution and economy. Here the author

introduces the idea of the “paper premium” in the perspective of a traditional media publicity, the journalistic-demanding press and its selected audience.

The results of research in the fourth chapter of the dissertation “STRATEGIES OF QUALITY BULGARIAN-LANGUAGE MAGAZINES IN THE 21ST CENTURY” are decisive for proving theses, in which the trends in the development of magazines from the studied typological group are shown, political, socio-cultural, economic factors that formed were analyzed the development of magazines after the change and especially in the first decades of the 21st century. In the media concentration and in the unclear ownership of the media, the author looks for the reasons for the state of the press in Bulgaria. Through an empirical study using the method of semi-standardized interviews with media professionals, Panayot Stefanov makes generalizations not only about the specifics of the magazine as a media platform, but also about the financing mechanisms and about the understanding of quality journalism among the respondents. On the basis of the research, in a separate chapter, problems are presented, examined in a social context, the perspectives and opportunities of magazines to address new audiences are summarized.

QUALITIES OF THE DISSERTATION PAPER

The development demonstrates the professional reflection of the doctoral student 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 tasks of the research are precisely and concretely formulated, the scientific problem is stated in the introduction, clear scientific hypotheses are formulated, the assumptions and questions made are methodically investigated and proven in the chapters. The bibliography is accurate and precise. 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 represents a definite contribution to the researched field. The research and theses are original and original, the doctoral student has demonstrated a high level of critical thinking towards the researched problem. Empirical scientific research has a certain preponderance in the dissertation.

QUESTIONS:

- What are the grounds for the magazines – subject of the research, to be determined as consumer?
- What are the grounds for considering the magazine as a “media platform”? The term is in circulation mainly with a meaning related to social media platforms, with interactive technologies that facilitate the creation, sharing and collection of content and other forms of expression through virtual communities, networks, social media services and is defined mainly by interactive participation.
- One of the major global trends in the digital environment is the explosion of formats and channels that publishers can use to reach consumers. What are the dominant practices of the world's quality magazines to engage new audiences – beyond text and images, beyond owning and managing websites? Are there “borrowings” from news journalism in the studied typology group to create and “mix” more unique and specialized content, and if so, which are the predominant ones?

CONCLUSION:

The current dissertation work has a certain contribution to research in public communications and information sciences, in media studies, press journalism, typology of the magazine, mass culture.

The above contributing points of the research give me reasons to SUPPORT BEFORE THE RESPECTED MEMBERS OF THE SCIENTIFIC JURY THE AWARD OF THE EDUCATIONAL AND SCIENTIFIC DEGREE "DOCTOR" UNDER 3.5. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION SCIENCES – DOCTORAL PROGRAM "MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS" (MASS CULTURE) OF PANAYOT KRASIMIROV STEFANOV FOR THE DISSERTATION ON THE TOPIC: "THE PERSPECTIVES FOR THE MAGAZINE AS A MEDIA PLATFORM IN THE TIME OF PAPER PRESS TRANSFORMATIONS. STRATEGIES OF QUALITY BULGARIAN-LANGUAGE MAGAZINES IN THE BEGINNING OF THE 21ST CENTURY".



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