

REVIEW

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For the doctoral dissertation entitled : "*Global Changes in the PR Business. Effective Management of Social Media*" by Maxim Behar, PhD student at the Department of Communications, Public Relations and Advertising at the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communications of the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the professional field **3.5 "Public Communications and Information Sciences"**.

Scientific supervisor Prof. Dr. Sc. Lyubomir Stoykov

1.Relevance of the chosen dissertation topic

The presented dissertation is very topical in the context of the revolutionary change in the media business in the conditions of rapid development of social networks, which cardinally change public communication, and create new opportunities for creative development of journalism, advertising and PR.

PhD student Maxim Behar is a world-renowned expert , who has more than two decades of experience in the field of PR, a number of international awards, 9 monographs and hundreds of successful PR campaigns. The focus of his dissertation is the global changes in the PR business due to the explosive development of social networks and the general shift in public and personal communication worldwide.

Structure and content of the dissertation.

The dissertation consists of a Preface, four chapters, conclusions bibliography and appendices in a volume of **249pp**. **The bibliography** contains **185 titles**, of which **19 titles** in Cyrillic and **166 titles** in Latin. **Various appendices** are also presented - in-depth expert interviews conducted by the PhD student with 100 world-renowned experts in the field of PR, which provide answers to several key questions. And also **two surveys** with Bulgarian and foreign PR experts, which were conducted between January and April 2024. The first survey includes **38 participants** who answer **29 closed questions**, the second survey includes **30 participants** who answer **29 closed questions**. **Appendices** include the following documents: *the Digital Services Council and the Digital Services Act, Top 10 Words in the Global PR Revolution, an interview by Maxim Behar for The Holmes Report, and the Annual Trust Barometer by global communications corporation Edelman.*

The dissertation has an excellent composition and structure; its individual chapters and paragraphs are distinguished by professional arrangement and systematization. All chapters end with **Conclusions**, which conceptually summarise the research analysis carried out in this chapter. In the final section, the doctoral student offers the reader **summary conclusions** that conceptually address **10 major scientific issues**.

The dissertation demonstrates the doctoral student's excellent knowledge of a particularly important problem in the scientific literature; the language and style of the presentation show respectable scientific erudition and logical clarity.

The preface of the dissertation introduces the reader to the main themes and messages of an original scientific study, which is the first of its kind in the native analyses of the effective management of social networks, from the point of view of global changes in the PR business.

Chapter One is conceptual, addressing the need for a cardinal re-evaluation of traditional communication tools that are difficult to apply in the age of the online universe and social networks.

PhD student Maxim Behar (in the style and tradition of authors such as Philip Kotler and Roger Fidler) presents the change in public communication in a journalistic and poetic language, drawing on his extensive experience in the field of PR, he shares a series of cases from practice that show the need to re-evaluate old PR practices that no longer work because they do not meet the radically different demands of digital communication. And also to the personal communication of each user, "armed to the teeth" with an online spider web of digital media that allow unlimited expansion of his creative possibilities in the field of media, journalism, digital PR.

Chapter One is written with creative imagination and journalistic language, it reads easily, and leaves no doubt about the PhD student's high theoretical and practical training. The conclusions drawn at the end are indisputable- according to Maxim Behar, on the one hand, the changes in the PR business are very significant, revolutionary, and de facto-irreversible. On the other hand, the advertising, digital and PR business is merging at a very high speed, and probably in the next year it will already present itself to clients as a *common business*. On the third hand, the entire toolbox that the PR business has had at its disposal up to now has to be literally thrown in the *trash*, and PR experts have to use radically different media tools and communication moves from now on. Otherwise, they risk completely falling off the "*shot-train*" of digital network communications.

Chapter two is practice-oriented, with Maxim Behar examining the global media transformations in the PR business-the radical implications of the explosive growth of social networks, and their aggressive takeover of the PR business, which is also leading to a cardinal change in the office of any PR agency, which is about to lose its key role. He presents his rule of the three S's(Speed , Simplicity, Self- Confidence) **speed, simplicity, self-confidence**. The final conclusions of the PhD student are correct that : "*There is a whole new generation of experts coming into companies who need to be taught some basic skills*". But also on professional cases from practice, which are deficient in the higher education system. The correct conclusion is that measuring the results of the implementation of certain PR strategies is becoming much faster, credible and precise, which is happening for the first time in this business. The PhD student logically identifies two key concepts: *hyperdynamics* and *ethics*, which are developing as leading characteristics of the modern PR business.

The third chapter presents some case studies from practice and in-depth expert interviews conducted by the PhD student with **100 PR leaders** from 65 countries who answered several questions. This chapter is very valuable and original, it discusses in a detailed and fascinating way some cases of mistakes made in the practice of global PR-the "exploding" batteries of Samsung smartphones, Pepsi's controversial advertisement on You Tube, etc. The doctoral student rightly concludes that "*the development of social media puts crisis management in a completely different situation and changes the requirements for experts in this field*".

Chapter four is dedicated to the "dawn of artificial intelligence", how business will change, what to expect, predictions and first results. In it, the PhD student presents the main risks associated with the use of artificial intelligence. It also details the European Parliament's Digital Services Act, which introduces certain regulations in this area. I should note that the **conclusions summarised at the end of the thesis are conceptual and well formulated.**

The abstract is distinguished by its excellent structure, conceptuality and orderliness. It contains all the required components: *structure of the research, general characteristics, relevance of the research topic, object and subject of the research, main scientific problem, leading research thesis, research aims and objectives, methodology, basic concepts, limitations in the scope of the research, reliability, expected results, scientific and theoretical contributions, scientific publications of the author.* The abstract presents relatively fully the content and the leading scientific theses formulated in the dissertation.

1. Scientific and applied contributions

The presented dissertation is an original scientific research, in which for the first time in the Bulgarian PR research the global changes in the PR business are analyzed, based on an extremely rich practical experience, supported by the excellent knowledge and undeniable erudition of the PhD student Maxim Behar, who has a reputation of the best PR consultant in Bulgaria.

The first scientific contribution is the research carried out on the conceptual approaches and the need for a cardinal re-evaluation of the old communication toolkit in the field of PR. I would note the PhD student's theoretical analysis of the global merger of PR, advertising and digital services into a new, common communication business that requires media experts to have integrated knowledge and brand new practical skills.

The second scientific contribution concerns the content analysis of the huge technological transformation of the *press release* and the *press conference*, which are no longer a core component of digital PR. The cardinal change in the main toolkit of the PR profession, the avalanche-like growth of Facebook and social networks such as *Twitter/X, Tic Talk, and Instagram*, has led to a boom in fake news that seriously undermines the PR profession; on a communication scale, they significantly complicate and problematize it.

The third scholarly contribution refers to the PhD student's precise theoretical illumination of some leading techniques and tools of modern PR, the transformation of *the office* as a mandatory element of traditional PR, its subordination to a completely new *hyperdynamics*, which insistently requires a *new ethics* in the relationship between PR experts and their clients.

The fourth scholarly contribution is an online survey conducted by the PhD student with 100 PR leaders from 65 countries, who provide extensive answers to four questions. This survey contains a lot of valuable information about the great digital transformation in the PR business from the perspective of the professionals who practice it today and who, under the pressure of digital media, are forced to change it completely. This survey is presented through an in-depth content analysis that systematizes and shows its contribution and the main trends in the development of the global PR business, as assessed by 100 PR leaders.

The fifth research contribution is the two online surveys conducted in early 2024. The first survey was with PR experts in Bulgaria, which included **38 participants** who answered **29**

closed questions. The second survey is with PR experts from abroad, which includes **30 participants** who also answer **29 closed questions.** These two surveys represent the views of the PR expert community, once at national level and a second time at supranational level.

4. Publications on the dissertation topic.

The PhD student has submitted **3 scientific publications** on the topic of his dissertation, as well as **9 authored books**, which are on the topic of this dissertation.

5. Notes and recommendations to the PhD student

The presented dissertation is an original, first of its kind, scientific study of global changes in the PR business and the role of social networks in it. It will be of great help if this research study is published after some editing. It will be of interest to different types of readers-researchers in the field of digital PR, social networks and new digital practices, specialists in media studies, political science and marketing, experts in crisis management, enlightened readers. The publication of this original research study will be very useful for the development of media literacy in Bulgarian society.

6. Conclusion

The presented doctoral dissertation is the first of its kind in the country scientific research dedicated to "*Global changes in PR business. Effective Social Media Management*". The chosen topic and scientific approach of the PhD student are theoretically convincing, their scientific interpretation is supported by solid arguments from PR theory and practice. PhD student Maxim Behar is a world-renowned PR expert who has had a remarkable PR career, numerous scientific studies dedicated to this issue, and hundreds of brilliant PR campaigns.

The dissertation is written with excellent language and style, it shows the great professional maturity and scientific competence of the PhD student, his serious knowledge in the field of global PR business. Therefore, I recommend **with full conviction** to the esteemed members of the Department of Communication and Public Relations at the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication of St. Kliment Ohridski Sofia University to admit Maxim Behar's dissertation entitled: "*Global Changes in PR Business. Effective Social Media Management*", professional field 3.5. "Public Communications and Information Sciences" (Media and Communications-Public Relations).

Sofia, 11 November 2024.

Signature:

Prof. Dr. Margarita Pesheva