



## OPINION<sup>1</sup>

by Prof. Dr. Totka Monova, Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski“

for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree „**Doctor**“ in professional field 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences (Media and Communications - Visual Communication) with a dissertation on the topic: „**Multimodal stimuli and construction of meanings and visual messages. Analysis of the communicative tools of traditional and online media through the theory of framing**“, presented by **Yotka Valentinova Pancheva**, full-time doctoral student in the „Press Journalism and Book Publishing“ Department of the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication with scientific supervisor: **Prof. Dr. Vesselina Valkanova**

### I. Evaluation of the quality of the dissertation text

A dissertation of **157 pages** is brought to our attention, the text is structured in an introduction, four chapters, conclusion and contributions, appendices, tables, bibliography. The exposition of the text is well structured, the standard requirements for the presentation of a scientific paper are met.

The excellent knowledge of the scientific literature on the topic of the dissertation is impressive and the author's three presented studies demonstrate **a high level of scientific competence**. The bibliography includes **140 titles**, of which 34 are in Cyrillic, 106 in Latin.

**A significant and extremely relevant work** has been brought to our attention. In my opinion, **this is still one of the few comprehensive and in-depth studies by a Bulgarian author** focused on a new type of communicative situation provoked by online media and social networks, which has undoubtedly led to the most radical and dynamic genre diversification in the history of the media to date. This new communicative situation poses the task for researchers to seek and develop new methodologies for describing, studying, analyzing and predicting the rapid changes in the new media spaces that we are already witnessing every day, and the need for such a methodology for rapid reflections regarding media content is clearly visible in periods of global - such as the Covid pandemic or the wars in Ukraine and Gaza – or social and political crises of a more private nature, such as the current situation in our country.

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<sup>1</sup>Note: Text in *italics* suggests points of reference for evaluating research results. Recommended length of the opinion – 2-3 standard pages



In the bestselling research essay „Thumbelina“, the French philosopher and anthropologist Michel Serres is categorical in his statement: „Cognitive science proves that using the Internet, reading and writing messages with a lightning-fast tap of the thumbs... do not stimulate the same neurons, nor the same cortical areas, as working with a book, a blackboard or a notebook.“ According to M. Serres, today's children „no longer have the same head“, „no longer inhabit the same space“, „no longer speak the same language“ and „since they no longer have the head of their parents, he or she understands differently“. (M. Serres, „Palechka", Sofia: Sonm, 2021, p. 15-17) In this context, the focus of the dissertation on „the specific toolkit of the theory of framing and the phenomenon of media effects, serving to frame messages and convey meaning through visual communication“ in contemporary traditional and online media is not just relevant today, it is relevant in perspective. Traditional methods of discourse analysis are no longer sufficient to explore the multitude of manifestations and effects generated by the complex contaminations of verbal and visual text, and also to describe and analyze in depth the enormous potential effect for manipulations of the most diverse kind, which the entire complex (but most often imperceptible by the audience!) network of visual presuppositions literally „floods“ the mass audience. **The most significant contribution** of the dissertation work is in the methodology proposed by Yotka Pancheva for the study of textual framing „through a combination of the interpretative qualitative approach and the automated one“, combined with the description and analysis of visual framing „through the theories and tools of visual communication at four different levels“. The doctoral student's text can (and should, in my opinion) become a starting point for a series of discussions between experts from different scientific fields who observe, study, and analyze the contemporary media situation. The global media narrative today is impossible, in my opinion even pointless, to be examined outside the context of all the specifics that visual communication objectively „inserts“ into the classic verbal media text. Placed in the context of the classic definition of text by R. de Beaugrande and V. Dressler, which describes the text through 7 mandatory and 3 regulative principles, without the presence of which the text is non-communicative, the scientific work presented by Yotka Pancheva gives us grounds to discuss that the individual components of visual communication can be considered, if not as part of the mandatory principles, then at least in the order of an additional fourth regulative principle.

**The abstract** is 32 pages long (A4 format) and is prepared according to the accepted scientific standard. Its structure follows the content of the dissertation. The abstract faithfully and completely



reflects the content of the original work and gives an objective idea of the purpose, tasks, stages and results of the conducted research.

## II. Contributions of the dissertation research

Accepting the conclusions made and the findings formulated in the dissertation presented by Yotka Pancheva as contributions, I would summarize that:

- The dissertation convincingly achieves the main goal and the three scientific tasks that it postulates in its introductory part. The scientific research conducted proves the two research hypotheses stated in the introduction.
- The theoretical statements in the first chapter, the historical-descriptive critical analysis in the second chapter, the analytical presentation of theoretical statements in the framing process and the multimedia tools of framing for constructing meanings and visual messages in the third chapter, and the presentation of **the authors' three studies** in chapter four undoubtedly prove that Yotka Pancheva would establish herself in the future as an authoritative theorist-researcher of the contemporary dynamic processes in the new media environment.

## III. Notes and recommendations

My recommendation for this dissertation is that it be published as a book, mainly due to the particular relevance of the proposed and approbated in three different studies new interdisciplinary methodology for analysis, evaluation, case studies and extended research of contemporary media. Such a book would be useful both for students and future researchers not only of the media, but also in other humanitarian scientific fields.

## IV. Publications and participation in scientific forums

Yotka Pancheva presents a list of **seven publications**, directly related to the text of the dissertation – two of them in scientific journals and five articles in scientific collections, some of which have previously been presented as reports at scientific conferences. With this **all legal requirements** for the approbation and disclosure of the results of the study **are fulfilled** and the



required national scientific-metric indicators are met, with the total number of points presented in the NACID report being 140.

## V. Conclusion

Considering:

- the research qualities of the proposed text,
- the scientific competence of the author,
- the ability to adapt different research methodologies to the specific scientific problem,
- the contribution of the theoretical conclusions and generalizations made,
- **the demonstrated qualities and skills for conducting modern scientific research using her own, tested and proven methodology,**

**I strongly propose to the members of the esteemed scientific jury to award Yotka Valentinova Pancheva with the educational and scientific degree „Doctor“ for the presented dissertation on the topic: „Multimodal stimuli and construction of meanings and visual messages. Analysis of the communicative tools of traditional and online media through the theory of framing“.**

Date: March 24th, 2025

Reviewer:

Prof. Dr. T. Monova