



REVIEW

by Assoc. Prof. **Alexander Hristov**, PhD, Communication, Public Relations and Advertising
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for the award of the educational and qualification degree of PhD in professional field 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences

about a doctoral thesis with a title:

Personal selling as a communicative competence – semiotic and contextual aspects

Presented by **Kiril Yanev**, doctoral candidate in professional field 3.5. “Public Communications and Information Sciences – Integrated marketing communications” at the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication, with research supervisor Prof. D.Sc. Hristo Kaftandjiev

I. Presentation of the PhD candidate

The PhD candidate has submitted the necessary documents for the public defense of his dissertation. It is mentioned that he has the required number of publications in academic journals, all of which focus on the main topics – personal selling, communicative competence and multimedia. Five monographs on the same and similar topics, which are clearly more popular in its essence, are also mentioned. According to these indicators, the performance of the PhD candidate is at the required level.

The content of the prepared dissertation, the remaining documents, as well as the achievements of the candidate show that he is a researcher with significant experience in the field of personal communications. Kiril Yanev is the author of several books – and although a significant part of them are not of an academic style, their content is a prerequisite for the formation of his profile as a professional in the field.

During the internal defense of his dissertation, some areas for improvement were noted, and very specific recommendations were given. The PhD candidate complied with some of them, and with regard to the other part, in most cases presented sufficiently reasoned positions as to why he left the statements in question or further developed them in the preferred direction. This also predetermines the positions in this review.



II. Evaluation of the qualities of the thesis

The dissertation of Kiril Yanev dissertation is focused at first glance to a private, but at the same time quite interesting topic. Communicative competence in sales in all ways has the potential to ensure better achievements in general in business and in the public sphere, contributing to the achievement of benefits and satisfaction for both parties – sellers and buyers.

The text follows an interesting structure, with the first two chapters being rather theoretical, and the third – with a practical focus. At the beginning, basic and principled statements are presented, especially with regard to sales, in which the personal positions of the doctoral student are also involved.

The text has its own interdisciplinary profile, combining knowledge and methodology from different fields. The positions are presented and stated firmly, a good part of them are clearly and solidly grounded. The content of the abstract shows good correspondence with the text of the dissertation. The bibliography is good, includes sources in Bulgarian and English and relatively relevantly applied in the text. All this contributes to creating prerequisites for the high degree of applicability of the results in practice.

The author brings out the notion of “personal selling” as a new and key statement – and has tried to clarify it well enough. In the context of the text of the dissertation, it represents an interesting and at the same time border area between communications (actually, marketing communications) and commerce, and in a number of cases the text steps precisely on its side. However, the commercial aspects do not monopolize the text, but remain at the level of personal influence to make a sale, for which the study of communicative competence is necessary. It is in this way that the research field of the dissertation work can be outlined, which is truly interdisciplinary in nature and in this sense can – with appropriate conceptualization – contribute to the development of communications in sales.

In this situation, the contributions, although correctly formulated, can be considered relatively basic. It could be added to them – perhaps with a little more courage – the development and imposition of the concept of personal selling as a relatively promising area of research and improvement of communications to achieve certain commercial effects on the one hand, and on the other – the use of the presentations in other areas, as indicated in the third chapter of the text.

III. Benefits of the PhD thesis

In terms of content, several very important advantages of the PhD thesis developed by Kiril Yanev can be highlighted.

First - this is the practical focus, which can easily be turned into benefits in terms of improving the communication activities of companies, consumers and institutions. The dissertation is extremely pragmatic, contains sufficiently strong statements, derived and experienced from practice, which makes it highly useful.



Second, the text obviously relies on the positions of leading professionals in the field of sales, which are sufficiently well and clearly expressed and relatively well schematized. The interpretation of this information collected in the course of the research by the author is developed at a sufficiently good level, and there is also a clearly visible author's contribution, including in terms of style. The arrangement of the positions also contributes to the positive impression, the aspects of personal selling are considered in several main key components – marketing aspects, personal aspects, communicative aspects and others.

Third, the professional experience of the author on the topics discussed is evident everywhere, which experience is useful in ensuring that the main positions are brought out with reason, a constructive attitude, and – as the question has become – a good connection with practice.

Fourth, the concept is on the borderline between commerce and communications, and it is very easy, depending on the experience of previous influences, for an author to gravitate towards one or the other. The necessary balance has been achieved here, what is more, the author has managed to present the topic as an exceptionally good amalgam of those two.

Fifth, an inherent, but for some reason atypical for the communication sphere topic – negotiations – is sufficiently widely developed. In essence, they have a clearly expressed aspect related to communication, and in most cases, especially in practically oriented sources, there is a certain schematization and mechanicalness of the process. In the present PhD thesis, this has been avoided, as the consideration of this aspect is distinguished by a certain depth.

Sixth, the main conclusions from the presentation are well reflected in the concluding part, which provides sufficient completeness in terms of structure and content. This gives serious grounds to confirm that the dissertation work is characterized by comprehensiveness and completeness.

IV. Notes, recommendations, guidelines for further research

Along with all this, some notes and recommendations can be highlighted, which can be paid attention to when further developing the dissertation.

First, it would be of serious value to link personal selling with the processes of digitalization in communications, but not only in terms of multimedia – and how it is changing and developing in the new world. Of course, the part with negotiations can hardly be supplemented and further developed in this direction, but it is important to see in its entirety how a concept, the foundations of its development are rooted in a time when online communications did not exist, is changing in the truly profound structural changes in publicity generated by digitalization.

Secondly, the chapters in the text are named respectively philosophy, psychology and ideology of personal selling. However, it is difficult to make a connection between these titles and their content. Moreover, in an academic text these terms are related to completely different propositions, some of them even represent entire scientific fields, and if they are used metaphorically here – and this is obviously the case – then this must be explained and related to the positions in the text.



Thirdly, there is a continuing need for the practical part of the study to be more clearly outlined and separated, so that it can be fully confidently assessed as such with a significant contribution to the theory and practice of communications. Moreover, if it were more convincingly terminologically related to the rest of the issue under consideration, this would contribute to achieving an even higher degree of consistency with regard to the proposed propositions.

Fourth, there is still a need for a more detached and objective style of presentation and a complete clarification of the more loudly presented opinions in the text. The author's commitment to the issue is visible, but this strong motivation should not spill over into the expression of positions that are easily formulated, but difficult to empirically verify - or even not subject to such verification.

The recommendations for further work are related to a deeper attention to the processes of personal selling and more efforts to impose and confirm the concept, which may also have significant benefits for practice.

The above-mentioned remarks do not change the overall positive assessment of the dissertation and the significance of the achievements mentioned. The text presents the author as a researcher with good knowledge and skills in the field under consideration, which brings potential for further positive developments.

V. **Publications and participation in scientific forums**

From the documents submitted, it is clear that the requirements of the Regulations for the terms and conditions for acquiring scientific degrees and occupying academic positions at SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" for approving and publicizing the results of the research, as well as the minimum national requirements for awarding the PhD degree.

VI. **Conclusion**

Considering the benefits of the dissertation, the topicality and specificity of the problems studied, their practicability, the good theoretical level of the problems studied and analysed and everything else, my overall assessment of the PhD thesis is positive. In this regard, I would like to recommend to the esteemed scientific jury to award the PhD degree to Kiril Yanev in the professional field 3.5. "Public Communications and Information Sciences; Media and Communications – Integrated marketing Communications".

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Reviewer:

Assoc. Prof. Alexander Hristov, PhD