



REVIEW¹

from Prof. Dr. Sc. Petranka Dimitrova Fileva, retired after 5 years, FJMC, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" (*scientific position, academic degree, name, surname, educational / scientific institution*)

for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" / scientific degree "Doctor of Science" in professional field 3.5. Social Communications and Information Sciences.

with a dissertation on the topic: "Personal selling as a communicative competence - semiotic and contextual aspects",

presented by Kiril Grigorov Janev, full -time doctoral student in the Department Communication, public relations and advertising of the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication

with supervisor: Prof. Dr Hristo Kaftandjiev

I. Presentation of the doctoral (PhD) student / applicant on the basis of the submitted documentation

Kiril Yanev holds a bachelor's degree from the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication of Sofia University with a major in Journalism, Printing. He holds a master's degree in engineering from the Higher Institute of Chemical Technology - Sofia. He has extensive professional experience in the field of journalism, marketing and advertising. He has been involved in publishing, and has a series of independent publications and books with practical and applied contributions in the field of marketing and advertising.

II. Assessment of the qualities of the text of the dissertation

The dissertation is 308 pages long and consists of an Introduction, an exposition in three chapters, a conclusion, a bibliography and 10 appendices with a specialized terminology dictionary in Bulgarian and English. The main text contains 41 figures. The bibliography includes a rich set of titles in Bulgarian and English.

There is no doubt about the relevance of the topic, related to the ongoing transformation of media technologies and changes in behavioral patterns and media practices in all spheres of life. The growing importance of soft factors in the valuation of companies confirms the relevance of the theoretical framework and the selected key indicators for measuring the effectiveness of activities that add value in the exchange process.

The author demonstrates good knowledge of the basic theories in the field of marketing management and competently refers to important statements in the field of psychology, semiotics and mass communication. I positively assess the author's intention to build his work structurally on a scientific apparatus from the fields of philosophy and psychology as a research foundation.

To outline his own thesis, the author uses both his long-term experience in the practice of communication management and well-selected theories and concepts. Stepping on a familiar conceptual and terminological toolkit from the field of marketing, the author builds on and interprets the familiar integration of individual elements of a single marketing activity, marketing mix or communication mix, in order to deepen and derive evaluative components in relation to the elements of a sales mix defined by him - product, service, salesperson and company. He supplements his

¹ Note: The text in italics offers reference points for evaluating the research results. Recommended volume of the review - about 6-7 standard pages



theoretical foundation with reference to Marshall McLuhan in order to bind all participants in the sales process in a two-way communication process.

The choice of the subject of the study is clearly proven - personal selling as a multimedia communicative competence, convincingly presented as an expanded and enriched tool in the communication mix of modern marketing. On this basis, he presents personal selling as a multimedia communicative competence and proves that it can be measured empirically by individual key indicators and in relation to different contextual environments.

The author consistently analyzes and synthesizes specialized literature related to the concepts of marketing, personal selling, business negotiations, multimedia communicative competence, performance and semiotics of sales. He builds on the well-known thesis of integrated marketing communication by defining an additional mix of interconnected elements in what he calls the sales mix. I accept the author's statements that selling is not just a technical process, but a creative act of influencing the perceptions and decisions of the client. I approve of the choice of emphasis on the multimedia competence of media content sellers, presenters, advertisers and journalists.

The main goal of the dissertation is clearly formulated and well implemented - to present personal selling as a platform for the exchange of values and to prove the possibilities for measuring multimedia competence as a basis for assessing the effectiveness of activities of a non-commercial nature. He accepts to use "personal selling" as a more accurate translation from the English "Personal selling", compared to the term "personal sales" commonly used in our marketing literature. According to him, presented in this way, the activity more accurately and better expresses the idea of an individual approach to the client and helps to build a logical connection between concepts such as "personalized approach", "personalized offer", etc. He reasonably suggests that personal selling can be considered not only in a narrow sense as a strategic "face-to-face" marketing communication for commercial activities, but also in a broad sense, "in which any human activity, including those of an indirect commercial nature, can be perceived as an act of selling, if we assume that this is a form of communication for the exchange of values". Throughout the work, the author demonstrates a good knowledge of personal selling practices, marketing, advertising, semiotics, and multimedia challenges.

The tasks are set logically and it is commendable that, through a consistent review of specialized literature and good practices, he derives key factors, approaches and indicators based on his own observations, through which he arrives at a model for qualitative assessment of the effectiveness of journalistic, advertising and presentation texts through an online interactive system for measuring and assessing the level of communicative competence. The first chapter presents basic ethical and moral principles that guide the seller in the various phases of the sales process. The emphasis is successfully placed on the concept of added value, insofar as all components of the key indicators derived thereafter fall within the field not only of the value newly created by the seller, but also of the additional intangible assets created by him. The current approach to creating long-term relationships with the buyer or with the public also finds a good place in building the conceptual framework of the work. In the second chapter, "Psychology of Personal Selling", the focus is on presenting important psychological principles and techniques that influence the behavior of the buyer. I would like to draw attention to the author's interest in the ability to negotiate and that he includes it in the techniques of successful sales. In my opinion, this approach of extension to the functions of the seller and personal selling is relatively new and, in my opinion, it is good to pay attention to it because of the basic principle of achieving an acceptable compromise on the "win-win" principle. In the third chapter, "Ideology of personal selling", attention is focused on innovations in communication and the use of modern multimedia technologies and approaches that determine the success and effectiveness of communication. The results of a survey conducted to measure and evaluate personal brand in the social networks Facebook and LinkedIn are also presented.

The stated methods are applied in such a way as to achieve contributions to the study of the effectiveness of communication activities. Among the methods used, I would highlight the method



"semiotic analysis of contextual environments" defined by the author as: the study of signs, symbols and communication codes in a given environment, and in its social, cultural and historical context. He uses this combined method to analyze: advertising messages – how images, colors and words influence consumer perception; media discourses – how journalism and social media build meanings and narratives; brands and marketing communications – how companies use symbols and signs to build identity and recognition; political communication – how language and symbols create ideological messages. Oriented to this method, the author prepares it with independently developed and substantiated evaluation components. He offers a scheme of key indicators for the effectiveness of the work done in several subsectors of social communication.

Referring to Kaplan and Norton's concept of balancing financial and non-financial performance indicators, the author seeks and proposes tools for analyzing and evaluating activities that depend on good communication skills. He develops the thesis that when assessing the effectiveness of value exchange in the non-commercial sphere, the communicative abilities of the seller can serve as a measure. Since the dimensions of communicative competence are multi-layered, he develops an application algorithm for interactive online measurement and evaluation of the effectiveness of communicative competence in various fields - personal selling, presentation and public speaking, journalism, advertising. He adopts David Hughes' approach to examining communication through the prism of the integrating triad "Function-Form-Content" and designates these three elements as key performance indicators /KPI/. For the function, he proposes, following Aristotle's advice to orators, three indicators from his "rhetorical triangle" - respectively KIP1 - ethos, KIP2 - pathos, KIP3 - logos. Regarding the form, i.e. how we communicate, he formulates three more indicators - KIP4 - visual expression, KIP5 - vocal expression, KIP6 - verbal expression. For the content of communication, he derives four more indicators - KIP7 - understandable, KIP8 - interesting, KIP9 - brief, KIP10 - informative. He formulates ten KIPs, warning that each of them should be represented by a semantic field, the signs of which must be highly consistent with the contextual environment and the ways in which its rules and norms are observed.

The methodology proposed by the author has been implemented as an Internet application and is an attempt to objectively measure and assess communicative competence in an online interactive mode of work in different contextual environments. The author warns that the correct alignment of keywords in the semantic fields of their respective key performance indicators is crucial for the accuracy of measuring communicative competence in different contextual environments.

With independently derived characteristics of multimedia communicative competence, the author develops an application algorithm for interactive online measurement and assessment of the effectiveness of communicative competence in different areas - personal selling, presentation and public speaking, journalism, advertising. Develops and includes in the analytical framework key indicators for the specific activity that most accurately express the norms and prescriptions of the contextual environment for achieving success - specifically in the areas of advertising, journalism, presentation.

I confirm that the abstract meets the main theses and conclusions throughout the text. I accept most of the contributions as formulated by the author.

III. Contributions to the dissertation research

One of the stated contributions is a self-defined and explained term sales mix, similar to the marketing mix and communication mix used in marketing theory – i.e. well-integrated elements into one, which should bring synergy and better results. It can be argued that in this way it enriches and builds on existing knowledge in the field of marketing management.



A significant positive element of the work is the stated and fulfilled intention to propose the use of personal selling approaches and tools for non-commercial activities. The way it does so can be defined as a novelty for science with the potential to be applied in practice, specifically in assessing the effectiveness of a series of communicative activities.

The most significant contribution is the author's methodology for an online interactive application with the "Multimedia Performance Index" tool for objective measurement and evaluation of the effectiveness of the exchange of values in different contextual environments: journalism, advertising, presentation.

IV. Notes and recommendations

I would recommend sticking to the usual structuring of the introduction and the presentation for a dissertation, with fewer sub-points, with a clearer and broader theoretical framework, with a clear distinction between concepts and theories. For example, I lack a more in-depth theoretical presentation of competencies as a key factor in achieving competitive advantages for the company, in the case of personal selling. And this should not be done in part on pp. 184-186, but in an attempt to build the theoretical framework of the entire work. I will mention Jörg Freiling's competency-based theory or Chomsky's thesis on the difference between competencies and performance.

I respect and share the attempts to use English terms more precisely in the scientific literature, but I would object to the use of the term „performance“. The use of the term is sufficiently justified by the author on p. 200-203, but I would not agree with its generalizing use when referring to Norton and Kaplan's balanced scorecard. Moreover, a key part of the proposed author's method of assessing the quality of communicative competence is precisely an assessment based on their approach to balancing between many indicators. When citing these authors, it would be good to take into account the term used in translation in Bulgarian literature.

The last note does not diminish my positive assessment of the author's skills to interpret established theories, to offer his own interpretations, the result of many years of experience and the self-confidence of a mature observer.

V. Publications and participation in scientific forums

The author's publications confirm the scientific interest in the topic of the dissertation work and prove the applicability of the author's model of assessing the competencies necessary for success in the field of presentation and journalism. The abstract presents 6 current titles and this seriously exceeds the requirements of the Regulations on the conditions and procedure for acquiring scientific degrees at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

Conclusion

The dissertation work has significant contributions in terms of interpreting established concepts, presenting own definitions and, most of all, an original tool for analyzing approaches and results in practices that rely on the communicative competence of sellers of added values - presenters, journalists, advertisers, prominent personalities. I will confidently vote for awarding the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in professional field 3.5. Public communications and information sciences (Media and communications - Integrated marketing communications) to Kiril Grigorov Yanev with a dissertation work on the topic: "Personal selling as a communicative competence - semiotic and contextual aspects".

Reviewer:

prof. Dr Sc Petranka Fileva

Date: 18.04.2025