



## OPINION<sup>1</sup>

from **Assoc. Prof. Dimitrina Stefanova, PhD**, Southwest University “Neofit Rilski”, Blagoevgrad

for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" (PhD) in professional field 3.5. Social Communications and Information Sciences.

with a dissertation on the topic: **“Visual Communication and the Digital Environment: Content Management, Information Architecture, and Online Media Design – Communication and Accessibility”**, presented by **Iveta Vanelinova Yordanova-Aneva.**”, full-time doctoral student in the Department of Press Journalism and Book Publishing of the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication

**Scientific supervisor: Prof. Dr. Vesselina Valkanova**

### **I. Evaluation of the qualities of the text of dissertation**

The dissertation consists of an introduction, three main chapters, a conclusion, a section on contributions, a bibliography, and appendices, totaling 259 pages. The bibliography includes 126 sources, 60 in Bulgarian and 66 in English.

A content analysis of the dissertation reveals a detailed understanding of the multifaceted components of visual communication in the digital environment. Explored as a key factor influencing perception, a tool for impact and manipulation, and as an element of design, the topic aligns with the contemporary format of a complex society that operates through intricate forms of communication. Visual communication, as an independent field within communication studies, remains a relatively new academic discipline that continues to seek more in-depth and comprehensive approaches to the analysis of visual design and its effects on audiences. The growing importance of visual culture in online media underscores the necessity of systematic research in this area.

The introduction provides a well-argued rationale and motivation for a comprehensive investigation of the selected topic. The main research aim, objectives, subject and object of study, and the scientific thesis are clearly articulated. Chapter One presents a literature review that outlines the theoretical foundations regarding the influence of visual communication on audiences, with a focus on its role in mass communication and the digital media landscape. It analyzes cognitive processes such as perception, memory, and attention, which determine how visual information is received. In addition, key concepts in user perception are identified as a basis for evaluating online media design, including color, typography, and navigation. The conclusions drawn are based on conceptual

---

<sup>1</sup> Note: The text in italics offers reference points for evaluating the research results. Recommended volume of the opinion - 2-3 standard pages



perspectives from both global and Bulgarian scholars, demonstrating the doctoral candidate's strong information literacy, excellent theoretical preparation, and well-grounded critical assessments of the subject matter.

Chapters Two and Three combine theoretical and empirical approaches. From a methodological standpoint, the criteria are scientifically grounded, and the empirical data from selected websites is accurately collected, processed, and analyzed. Results from a content analysis of 30 of the most visited Bulgarian online media outlets are presented. An appropriate approach was used to examine their level of accessibility using specialized tools such as the Accessibility Checker and WAVE. The systematic approach and analysis of visual elements identify specific design aspects that hinder access for users with visual impairments. The study highlights significant progress in the digital technologies and visual design of various Bulgarian online media but also points out lagging areas in terms of current trends and principles of psychological impact on users. The research confirms that media websites are often visually overloaded with excessive advertising, colors, and images. The layering of these elements over textual content disrupts visual balance and impairs user perception. Nonetheless, users themselves are not particularly critical of such design flaws, as they tend to focus primarily on content.

The conclusions drawn from the dissertation are grounded in a clear theoretical framework related to design and information architecture and reinforce established principles regarding the effectiveness of visual communication in the digital environment. The communicative and content-specific analysis of the examples studied, along with the critical approach to visual communication effectiveness, is key to the continuous refinement of strategies for adapting online media to rapidly evolving technological and social realities. Despite certain limitations, the findings of the study offer valuable theoretical and practical insights for the precise composition of visual design and the development of more accessible media platforms that reflect the diverse needs of users, including individuals with visual impairments.

## II. Contributions of the dissertation research

The dissertation is an interdisciplinary study positioned at the intersection of management, communication, and psychological disciplines. It highlights the multifaceted nature of visual communication and the relationship between information architecture and design, as well as their impact on perception and content accessibility across different user groups. In this context, I support the contributions of the dissertation and recognize them as scientific and applied achievements with genuine potential for practical implementation.

## III. Notes and recommendations

I have no critical remarks. The dissertation demonstrates both theoretical depth and practical relevance, featuring original contributions that could be of significant interest to a wider academic and professional audience. Following appropriate editorial refinement, I recommend the work for publication.



#### IV. Publications and participation in scientific forums

The abstract adequately summarizes the content and contributions of the dissertation. The doctoral candidate presents three independent publications in reputable journals, each reflecting different aspects of the research. This fulfills the requirements of the Regulations on the Conditions and Procedures for the Acquisition of Academic Degrees and for Holding Academic Positions at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" concerning the validation and dissemination of research results under Article 5, item 5, and demonstrates compliance with the minimum national requirements pursuant to Article 63, paragraph 1, item 4, and Article 69, paragraph 3.

#### V. Conclusion

The dissertation titled "Visual Communication and the Digital Environment: Content Management, Information Architecture, and Online Media Design – Communication and Accessibility" is a comprehensive scholarly work dedicated to a dynamic field, with original scientific and applied contributions.

Doctoral candidate Iveta Vanelinova Yordanova-Aneva demonstrates a high level of informational literacy, excellent theoretical grounding, and well-formulated conclusions on the issues addressed. The dissertation, the abstract, the summary of contributions, and the accompanying scientific publications reflect the perspectives, models of design, perception, and application of visual communication. The work meets the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB) and the regulations of Sofia University for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor."

In light of the above, I propose to the esteemed members of the scientific jury to accept the dissertation work of PhD student Iveta Vanelinova Yordanova-Aneva as successfully completed and, based on her proven scientific and research qualities, to confer her the educational and scientific degree "doctor/PhD" in professional field 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences (Media and Communications - Visual Communication). As a member of the jury, I vote with conviction "YES".

Date: 24.04.2025

Jury member:  
/Assoc. Prof. Dimitrina Stefanova, PhD/