



OPINION

from Prof. PhD Iliana Pavlova Koleva, St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo

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 digital environment. Content management, information architecture and design of online media - communication and accessibility",

presented by Iveta Vanelinova Yordanova-Aneva,

doctoral student in the Department „Press journalism and book publishing“ of the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication

with supervisor: Prof. Dr. Vesselina Valkanova

I. Evaluation of the qualities of the text of dissertation

The dominant role of visual content in a digital environment is undoubtedly a determining factor for the relevance of the topic of Iveta Yordanova-Aneva's dissertation. The increased possibilities for visual communication are becoming increasingly diverse and interactive, with an increasingly strong impact and engagement of audiences, which, in turn, determines the significance of the presented work. Considered at the intersection of content management with information architecture and design of online media, the topic successfully resonates in the important relationship between communication and accessibility of content for the modern media environment.

The dissertation is distinguished by a clearly developed methodological apparatus, the subject of research is online media in Bulgaria in the period July - December 2024 (which is decisive for the relevance of the presented results), the goal is to study the approaches used and the visual strategies that serve to facilitate user interaction, increase audience engagement and optimize the information flow in the digital environment. I completely positively assess the applied interdisciplinary approach to the research topic with the integration of various fields of knowledge such as graphic design, visual communications, journalism, psychology (in particular, psychology of perception), sociology, media regulation, etc.

Structurally, the dissertation follows the classic scheme of three chapters, with an introduction, conclusion, bibliography and appendices, in a total volume of 259 pages, of which 179 pages are the main text. The parts are well balanced.

The theoretical sources on the topic have been studied in depth and are presented correctly in the first chapter of the dissertation ("Theories of visual communication: influence of cognitive processes on perception and psychological impact of visual language in the digital



environment"). The mechanisms and effects of visual communication on the audience, the cognitive processes that occur during the perception of visual information are well presented.

Chapter Two presents the results of a content analysis of 30 media sites in Bulgaria. In the research, the ways in which online media use visual communication tools to attract the attention of users and have an impact on them were identified and analyzed. The results of an online survey to determine user preferences and attitudes regarding the design of online media are also presented. The study of Bulgarian online media identifies specific problems in some of the websites (lack of intuitive content navigation and clearly structured content, etc.).

In the third chapter, attention is focused on the accessibility of content and digital inequality as a problem in the field of design. It is important to emphasize how accessibility affects the perception and interaction of users with websites, especially for people with visual impairments. Using the possibilities of the experiment as a method in scientific research and with the help of web tools, doctoral student Iveta Yordanova-Aneva successfully conducted a study on 30 online media in Bulgaria. In addition to this analysis and in order to present the current state of online media in Bulgaria, while also deriving certain recommendations for improving digital inclusiveness and reducing digital inequality, this part of the dissertation also presents the results of 7 online interviews with media representatives.

The overall research approach of the dissertation is distinguished by correctness in the collection, processing and analysis of empirical data, which is an important prerequisite for the credibility of the material on which the contributions are built. The combination of various research methods (observation, description, content analysis, comparative analysis, online survey, online interview, experiment) allows the dissertation to achieve comprehensiveness and multi-facetedness in the study.

The language of the presented work is clear and precise, the presentation is distinguished by logic and consistency, it stands out for precision in the systematization of observations, good argumentation and analytical skills.

The abstract (in a volume of 42 pages) is prepared according to the established scientific standard and provides an objective idea of the conducted research and its results.

II. Contributions of the dissertation research

I positively assess and fully support the contributions of the dissertation research. The results of the conducted studies have a significant practical contribution and would help improve the communication environment in terms of design and accessibility. It is in this aspect that I would highlight the research conducted in relation to the impact of online media design in Bulgaria and the effectiveness of various visual strategies, as well as the part with the specific proposals made for improving the design and accessibility of online media.

As a contribution, I also highlight the study of accessibility in terms of the impact of user perception and interaction with websites, especially for people with visual impairments.



Content accessibility and digital inequality as a problem in the field of design are undoubtedly important for our time.

III. Notes and recommendations

In my opinion one of the important qualities of the dissertation is its research focus on content accessibility and digital inequality as a problem in the field of design. Therefore, I recommend its inclusion among the contributions of the dissertation and its explicit highlighting, especially in the aspect of perceptions.

The results of the conducted study of Bulgarian online media and the conclusion that “design shortcomings and violated accessibility standards negatively affect the perception and interaction of users with visual impairments” (p. 178), unequivocally show the need to improve digital inclusiveness and reduce digital inequality in Bulgaria. In this sense, I fully evaluate the work of Iveta Yordanova-Aneva positively and recommend its continuation and future deepening.

IV. Publications and participation in scientific forums

On the topic of the dissertation work, 3 publications and 5 participations in scientific conferences have been presented, which fulfills the requirements of the Regulations on the terms and conditions for acquiring scientific degrees and holding academic positions at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" for testing and disclosing the results of the research, also covers the minimum national requirements.

V. Conclusion

Considering the noted contributions and the overall qualities of the presented dissertation work, I express my positive attitude and propose to the members of the esteemed scientific jury **to award Iveta Vanelinova Yordanova-Aneva the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" (PhD) in the professional field 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences (Media and Communications - Visual Communication).**

Prof. PhD Iliana Pavlova

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