



REVIEW

from Professor, PhD Yanica Dimitrova, University of Library Studies and Information Sciences

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

with a dissertation on the topic: " Stigmatisation in Political Discourse in the 20th and 21st Centuries: Semantic Analysis ",

presented by Lazar Svetlozarov Shishmanov full -time doctoral student in the Department "Communication, Public Relations and Advertising" of the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication

with supervisor: Prof. PhD Diyana Petkova

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

Doctoral student Lazar Shishmanov holds a bachelor's degree in Public Relations and a master's degree in "Semiotics, Language and Advertising" from the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", where he continues as a full-time doctoral student at the Department of "Communication, Public Relations and Advertising". His professional experience is closely related to the specifics of the doctoral program, as his primary employment is in the field of digital marketing.

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

In his dissertation research "Stigmatisation in Political Discourse in the 20th and 21st Centuries: Semantic Analysis", doctoral student Shishmanov focuses on different perspectives related to the study of political stigmatisation - through the prism of linguistics, social psychology, the question of the "Other", the media and, last but not least, marketing communications.

The purpose of the dissertation work and the tasks arising from it are formulated correctly, the object is clearly defined - titles of articles related to the issue under consideration, specifically in four online sources - BBS, Associated Press, Btv news and Nova news, and the subject of the study - the stigmatization



of specific social groups, carried out through the media, in the context of specific political goals.

The hypothesis of the study is formulated in relation to the period under consideration between the 20th and 21st centuries, when stigmatisation in political discourse is based on the systematic construction of the image of the enemy through the use of various semantic fields, with the ultimate goal being to transform the political opponent into a symbol of threat at multiple levels. In the context of the above, the stigmatisation of a political opponent becomes a strategic tool for acquiring and maintaining power by manipulating public opinion. Doctoral student Shishmanov clearly outlines the study's limitations. The methodology employed in the dissertation is relevant to the set goals and objectives, and it is also sufficient to support the study's hypothesis.

Structurally, the dissertation consists of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, and eight appendices, totalling 198 pages. The bibliography lists 304 literary sources, in both Bulgarian and English.

The first chapter, "Social Aspects of Stigmatisation," explains stigmatisation as a phenomenon in light of the perspectives developed by the author of the dissertation. Here, the role of stigmatisation as a tool is presented, specifically in the context of politics and marketing.

Chapter two – Stigmatisation in political discourse in the 20th century – focuses on three main manifestations of political stigmatisation during the period – namely, the repressions in the USSR, the genocide of Jews during World War II and the "Cultural Revolution in China".

In the third chapter, "Political Stigmatisation in the 21st Century: My Own Study," there is a contribution by doctoral student Lazar Shishmanov. Here, he examines the manifestations of political stigmatisation through the prism of the "War on Terrorism", the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Russia-Ukraine war. Doctoral student Shishmanov reaches the following conclusions: Political stigmatisation is based on a dichotomous language, supported by emotionally charged and evaluative concepts, which impute or, respectively, cancel the "moral right" as a legitimation for the performance of specific actions. The context is variable, allowing for the stigmatisation of a particular group of people, their views, or their ideas. The distinction from the "Other", understood as "Foreign", is clearly justified. The semantics of "us" versus "them", which is based on terminology with a positive connotation associated with "us" and that with a negative one, in relation to the description of "others", is also examined in depth.



Doctoral student Shishmanov concludes that stigmatisation is based primarily on specific actions, beliefs, and positions taken by the stigmatised and the group to which they belong, rather than on a denial of their human nature, which represents a change in both stigmatisation strategies related to political discourse, but is also a sign of cultural changes related to communication violence, hate speech, and the characteristics of the communication environment.

The author of the dissertation research demonstrates in-depth knowledge of the theoretical aspects of the researched issues, as well as the ability to implement and subsequently test the results of empirical research, thereby achieving the implementation of the goals and tasks set in the work.

The presented abstract, in terms of volume and content, adequately reflects the dissertation work.

I accept the bibliography indicated by the doctoral student as sufficient for a thorough analysis of the theoretical aspects of the dissertation work.

III. Contributions to the dissertation research

The contributions of the dissertation research are formulated, in general, as enriching the understanding of stigmatisation as a social phenomenon, based on existing theories; distinguishing the concept of stigmatisation from insult and discrimination; offering an author's definition of political stigmatisation; analyzing media headlines in the context of the issue under consideration, which can serve as a basis for creating a tool for research of a similar nature. A semantic analysis of the main terms used by the media to describe stigmatised groups within the specifically defined parameters was conducted. A comparison was made between marketing communications used to promote goods and services and the methods of persuasion employed in political marketing.

I accept the contributions of doctoral student Shishmanov because they can serve as a starting point for future scientific research, offering not only a theoretical foundation but also a framework for conducting empirical research.

IV. Notes and recommendations

My recommendations to doctoral student Lazar Shishmanov are in two directions: one, regarding the presentation of the dissertation work results through his participation in national and international scientific forums. The other approach is to direct his research efforts toward expanding the scope of his scientific research to encompass the manifestations of political stigmatisation in its various aspects.



V. Publications and participation in scientific forums

Doctoral student Shishmanov has presented three publications related to the topic of the dissertation research, as well as two more that are in press.

Two of the publications – “On the issue of political stigmatization” and “Cinema as a cultural ambassador in Bulgaria: A statistical look at cinemas (01.01.2015 – 28.10.2024) are in the same publication – “Media and Language”, which is in no way unacceptable, but from the point of view of popularizing the results of the dissertation research, it is better to present the results, as I have indicated in the recommendations, in various scientific publications and through participation in scientific forums.

Regardless of the remark, I accept the presented publications of Lazar Shishmanov as sufficient for receiving the educational and scientific degree “PhD”.

VI. Conclusion

After becoming acquainted with the dissertation work "Stigmatisation in Political Discourse in the 20th and 21st Centuries: Semantic Analysis", developed by Lazar Svetlazarov Shishmanov, I propose that he acquire an educational and scientific degree "PhD" in the professional field 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences.

Reviewer: Yanica Dimitrova

Date: August 25, 2025