

REVIEW

by Prof. Dr. Vanche Boykov

Subject: Dissertation for the award of educational and scientific degree "Doctor", field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, in professional field 3.7. Administration and Management (Business Communications)

Author of the dissertation: Tsvetelina Nikolova

Dissertation topic: Business communications as a tool for forming a corporate image (on the example of companies in the market segment "Soft drinks and bottled water")

Grounds for submitting the review: Public defense

I. Summary data on the scientific production and the activity of the candidate

1. Information about the doctoral student

Tsvetelina Nikolova is a doctoral student in an independent form of study at the International Business School, according to Order № 45 / 02.03.2020 of the Rector of MFBU. The development of the doctoral student's creative biography eloquently shows the concentration of research in a well-structured field in the field of communications and image building and management in an organization.

2. General characteristics of the presented dissertation

The doctoral dissertation consists of 201 pages. The structure consists of an introduction, three-chapter presentation, conclusion, bibliography (101 sources in total, of which 47 in Cyrillic and 29 in Latin, 25 Internet resources and periodicals) and appendices.

The dissertation includes 11 tables and 49 figures and 3 appendices.

The title of the dissertation is clearly formulated and is closely related to the doctoral thesis. The chosen topic is **relevant** in terms of systematization of competencies to be applied in practice in order to communicate effectively with external and internal audiences of a company, to stimulate trust and open dialogue in

management - at horizontal and vertical levels, which is part of the winning formula of modern management to build a positive image of the organization. The dissertation is characterized by in-depth research, insight into the nature of the studied problems, objective analysis and sound conclusions, own definitions.

The research logic and the structure of the dissertation are well developed. The structuring follows the traditional approach to writing such works - first clarify the theoretical statements on the topic, secondly present the various models and classifications, and thirdly make your own research by analyzing the data from it and reveal opportunities, suggestions and guidelines for improvement.

The subject of research of the dissertation are business communications and corporate image.

The object of research are companies from the "bottled water" sector, which has as its subject of activity the production and distribution of mineral, spring and table water.

The main goal of the development is to develop a system for evaluating business communications and to determine their impact on the formation of corporate image.

The doctoral thesis *is based on the statement that business communications are a condition for building a positive corporate image of the organization and there is a connection between them that can be assessed.*

This position is supported by two working hypotheses, subsequently developed and proven throughout the presentation. I believe that the thesis and working hypotheses are protected in the dissertation research.

For the purposes of the study, the term "business communication" is defined as "a set of communication system (information, communication channels, information links and forms) and the resulting business relationships as a result of their use." company. Each chapter contains three paragraphs.

The first chapter, 41 pages long, traces the theoretical and methodological foundations of communication as a means of image formation. them, as well as a comment by the author of the study.

This chapter contains a review of the literature, the doctoral student makes a comparison between "communication" and "communication", cites the definitions of famous authors on the topic, made a comparison between communication and communication, and are systematized in a table of comparative characteristics.

The PhD student formulated a working definition of "communication", which I consider a scientific contribution: *"purposeful exchange of information, thoughts, ideas, positions, emotions and evaluations between people in the process of their joint activities in order to achieve effective communication."*

According to the author, two main components are clearly distinguished - exchange and understanding. Communication is the exchange of information between participants. It is effective when understanding is achieved between the participants.

A thorough analysis of the nature of communications has been made and those relevant to the dissertation research have been distinguished. After analyzing the definitions of various authors, the doctoral student summarizes, *"that communication is a concept rich in content and volume, a complex and multi-layered process. Good communication is a prerequisite for creating a basis for understanding between organizations and their counterparties, between representatives of different social groups and participants in this process"*.

The doctoral student emphasizes the types of communications and PR activities to build the image of the modern company, clarifying that communication is influenced by both the choice of communication channel and its style. Makes a detailed analysis of the types of communications according to the environment of implementation (internal and external); according to the number of participants; according to the senses used in communication, it is divided into visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory and tactile communication, according to whether or not feedback is provided; according to the way of expression - verbal, non-verbal and para verbal.

The PhD student upgrades the topic with an analysis of PR activities to build the image of the modern company. Draws a parallel between the concepts of "image" and "reputation", analyzes the differences between them, traces the etymology and from the point of view of communication theory the concept of "image" can be defined as "purposefully created idea in the mind of the recipient". is the relationship between "image" and "identity" in which the image is defined as a "tool" to achieve external corporate identity. According to the author, such a definition imposes several basic aspects of the image:

1. Image is a means of influencing public attitudes towards an object;
2. The image does not necessarily contain realistic and / or existing characteristics of the site;

3. The image is a consequence of purposeful communication activity and directly results in the interpretation of information.

Based on the analyzed definitions of famous authors, the PhD student makes a working **definition of corporate image**: *"intangible asset, of great importance - attracts customers to a company and brand, formed in the process of communication"*, which I consider a contribution to the dissertation research.

To clarify the essence of corporate image and corporate reputation, the PhD student presents and systematizes Models for formation and management of Corporate Image and Corporate Reputation and based on this analysis, presents her own Model for formation and management of corporate image, which I accept as a contribution to the dissertation research. Here, in my opinion, the author had **to conclude which of the models is applicable in the object of study?**

The development **follows a logical connection** between the individual paragraphs and upgrading the content.

After the analysis of the literature, approaches and methods for assessment and analysis of corporate image are presented. The main conclusions of the first chapter are made, emphasizing the role of corporate image and reputation: Corporate image and reputation can be accepted as part of the assets of the organization: in addition, they are assets of an intangible, intangible nature, but nevertheless affect its condition, development, and even market success.

I should note that the topic of communications, corporate image and reputation is being successfully upgraded, summing up that "image is a strategic resource and can be a source of competitive advantage. Its interaction with other factors such as culture, communication, reputation, helps to understand the cumulative nature of this resource.

The doctoral student simply quotes well-known authors on the subject, and based on the theory, draws his own conclusions and formulates definitions, which is a significant contribution to the theory of communication, motivation and management of the educational institution. A good solution in the content of the dissertation research is to analyze the types of communications, the role of PR activities in the formation of corporate image and to present their own vision of a model for corporate image management.

In this chapter the doctoral student demonstrates excellent knowledge of the theory of communications, the role of image in achieving efficiency and

competitiveness, shows the ability to assess and outline the importance of their management, to draw sound conclusions and formulate appropriate conclusions. of literary sources and on this basis to make their own proposals, which complements the scientific literature, to formulate working definitions, to defend scientific theses, to make sound summaries and conclusions.

The second chapter, 72 pages long, in three paragraphs, has a practical focus. The object of research (4 companies for bottled water and soft drinks), their positioning on the market, corporate social responsibility, internal and external communications are presented and analyzed. An own empirical study was conducted according to a certain methodology, an analysis of the dependence of business communications - image formation. A total of 120 respondents took part in the survey. The questions were divided into three parts - general information; communications and management style; image formation in society.

The doctoral student shows ability to critically and purposefully use the analysis and synthesis of methodological ideas and on this basis to compile the necessary methodology, to conduct in-depth empirical research, professionally analyze the results and make sound summaries and conclusions. As a result of the analysis, the PhD student summarizes that the four companies have developed strategies to maintain a positive image in society. Based on these strategies, internal programs have been developed for staff development and security, in terms of work and protection of health and life. The programs for external communications have been developed - PR activities, promotions, competitions, sponsorships, environmental initiatives, etc.

In the third chapter, the doctoral student skillfully builds on the content of the dissertation research, emphasizing the vision for the development of communications and their transformation into a competitive advantage of the company for image formation. An analysis of innovative communication activities is made as a condition for achieving an image in the clients and the society and their digitalization. 10 communication competencies of the person in the process of communication are systematized. An adapted Performance Management Model is presented. The author offers a model of communication activities that are formed in a digital environment, which I accept as **a contribution to the development**.

The steps that are followed in the digitalization of communication activities (internal and external) are systematized in a certain order. Internet communications

are justified, and the determining factor for each organization is the creation of a virtual Internet environment so that employees can receive and use Internet resources when necessary in their work and for business communications. The most used browsers in the world are tracked; summarizes that digital technologies automate communication processes, meet information needs, facilitate communication processes.

In the second paragraph the System for evaluation of business communications for image building, author's development is considered. Here, too, the skills of the doctoral student to make analyzes and give her own definitions stand out, which I appreciate as **a scientific contribution**. The PhD student substantiates her vision of the developed system as a necessity, in order to be manageable, business communications as a factor in the formation of corporate image must be evaluated and thus prove that there is a connection between them. They are assessed by the results of a study of the personal qualities of managers, management style and communication and image competencies. Evaluation characteristics and an evaluation scale have been developed.

In her vision of the place of corporate image in the activities of the organization and the relationship with communications, the PhD student offers the "Balanced Scorecard" as a means of forming a corporate image, which I consider **a contribution to research**.

Clarification of the nature of the Balanced Scorecard is done in order to draw attention to the need to ensure the implementation of strategic objectives adopted by a company by setting internal requirements for its development. These internal requirements include the role of business communications in the formation of **corporate image**. According to the author, this system can be applied in the companies subject to research, and it should be used as a system of communication, information and training, and not as a control system. the company's mission by realizing the prospects in the four directions, the result of which is the formation of a corporate image. summarized conclusions and recommendations have been made.

This chapter systematizes and summarizes proposals, guidelines and recommendations for improving and enhancing the processes in the activities of the companies under study.

I believe that the dissertation research has practical applicability not only in the objects of research, but also in other companies, as useful with analyzes and

recommendations the role of image in the organization, its place in the balanced scorecard and the role of communication in this process. The doctoral student has correctly chosen the topic of her dissertation, has proved the formulated thesis and both hypotheses, has made sound conclusions and recommendations.

In the conclusion of the dissertation the doctoral student has made the necessary summaries and main conclusions from the dissertation research. In all parts of the dissertation research the doctoral student's own presence and handwriting is clearly visible, which definitely shows qualities of constructiveness and logical consistency, ability to discover, define and solve scientific and applied problems in the field of communications and corporate image.

It should be emphasized that the peer-reviewed dissertation research is distinguished by its complexity, breadth, depth and justification of a wide range of appropriate proposals and innovative approaches.

II. Scientific and applied scientific achievements in the dissertation

In all parts of the dissertation research the doctoral student's own presence and handwriting is clearly visible, which definitely shows qualities of constructiveness and logical sequence, ability to discover, define and solve scientific and applied problems. The results and suggestions in the dissertation research can be applied in other organizations after adaptation.

The research logic and the structure of the dissertation are well developed. The traditional approach has been successfully applied in the structuring: theory - practice - guidelines and proposals. The dissertation research is well balanced, focused and focused. Scientific problems are clearly articulated and scientific conclusions and suggestions are well-founded. It should be emphasized that the study is characterized by specificity, breadth, depth and justification of a wide range of appropriate proposals. It is a good idea for the doctoral student to give her own definitions; to make their own main conclusions and recommendations for building a corporate image.

The scientific contribution of the dissertation can be sought in several thematic areas. I accept scientific-applied contributions in the dissertation research, formulated by the doctoral student. The indicated scientific and scientific-applied achievements in the dissertation are personal work of the doctoral student. The report on the contributions correctly presents the scientific achievements in the dissertation.

III. Critical notes to the content of the dissertation, recommendations to the PhD student

The dissertation research meets the content and requirements for the development of such work. The critical remarks were corrected in a timely manner and confirmed by a Report of the Supervisor. The remarks were of a principled nature and did not significantly affect the positive assessment of the content of the dissertation research.

I have a question for the PhD student: **What strategies should be set in the Balanced System of Performance Indicators in order to form a positive image in society?**

IV. Other matters

The abstract gives an idea of the object, subject, thesis, purpose and objectives of the study, as well as the methodology used, the structure and content of the work as a whole.

The doctoral student has indicated 5 publications on the dissertation - publications in refereed and indexed editions: monograph, studies, article, 2 reports in the country and abroad.

V. Conclusion

The dissertation is *a comprehensive, in-depth and conscientious scientific research* of a topical and significant theoretical-methodological and scientifically-applied problem, contains significant scientific and scientific-applied contributions in the field of modern dimensions of communications and management processes and can definitely be *positively assessed*.

This gives me reason to conclude positively that the dissertation **complies** with the requirements of ZRASRB, the Regulations for its implementation, as well as the Regulations for competitions for academic degrees and for academic positions at MFBU, so I offer to the esteemed members of the scientific jury **to expel with the right of defense** doctoral student Tsvetelina Nikolova.

Sofia, May 16, 2022

REVIEWER:

(Prof. Dr. Vanche Boykov)