



## REVIEW

by Professor Milena Filipova Ph.D.

in relation to the dissertation thesis for awarding the educational and scientific degree of “Doctor” in professional sphere 3.7. “Administration and Management”, in the scientific specialty of “Administration and Management /Business administration /”, on the subject:

**“BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS AS A CORPORATE IMAGE-MAKING TOOL  
(based on companies from the soft drinks and bottled water sector)”,  
developed by Ph.D. student Tsvetelina Nikolay Nikolova**

*This review has been drawn up pursuant to Order of the Rector of the International Business School № 63/05.04.2022 г. and decision of the first meeting of the scientific jury held on 06.04.2022 г.*

### **I. Brief biographical data**

Tsvetelina Nikolova is a graduate of the University of National and World Economy where in year 2000 she acquired Bachelor’s academic and qualification degree in the specialty of Economic Pedagogy and Psychology. In year 2011 she acquired Master’s academic and qualification degree in the specialty of Financial Management at “D. A. Tsenov” Academy of Economics of Svishtov. In year 2020 Tsvetelina Nikolova was admitted to a Ph.D. degree programme in an independent course of studies under the Ph.D. programme of Administration and Management (Business Administration)“, in the professional field 3.7. Administration and Management” at the International Business School. She was registered pursuant to Order No. 45 from 02.03.2020.

The Ph.D. student is currently employed as a teacher at “Nikola Y. Vaptsarov” Secondary Vocational School of Engineering in the town of Samokov. She is also a Director

for the training and methodological activities at the Vocational Training Centre “LN Progress” EOOD of Samokov. For short periods she also took the positions of a Senior Teacher at the Social Benefits Agency and an Accountant General at the Regional Inspectorate of Education of the region of Sofia. She is an excellent team-worker with organizing, co-ordination and planning skills in work regarding her professional activities. She is highly adaptive with an initiative spirit in the profession.

## **II. General characteristics of the dissertation**

**The title** of the dissertation is clearly formulated and is closely related to the doctoral thesis. The dissertation is dedicated to a current and important for socio-economic practice problem. Its research is aimed at business communications as a corporate image-making tool. It is widely used in the Bulgarian economy and would allow managers to study practices and to identify the problems of in the development of communications and their transformation into a competitive advantage of the company for image formation.

The dissertation has a classical **structure** of introduction, exposition in three chapters, conclusion and bibliography. The total volume of the scientific development is 201 standard text pages. 1017 literature sources were used, , от които на 47 на кирилица, 29 на латиница, 15 интернет източници и 19 други източници. The study is supported by illustrative material in the form of 11 tables, 49 figures and 3 applications.

The used information sources reflect the wide knowledge of the doctoral student in the researched field. **The bibliography reference** shows that the dissertation is based on the use of 101 information sources. The rules for scientific ethics are observed and the literary sources are used in earnestly and correctly in the process of research of the issues, object of the dissertation research.

**The writing style** is concise and understandable. The scientific language and the scientific apparatus correspond to the specifics of the researched problem. **The tools used** are adequate to the issues, based on the methods of statistical analysis, of the expert assessments, the coefficient method, survey and self-assessment, competence approach, comparative parametric analysis, economic-statistical and graphic modeling, method of complex assessment of BC. The results of the empirical study were processed with the SPSS for Windows program.

The obligatory attributes for dissertation research - subject and object of the research, main scientific thesis, research goal and tasks **are highlighted**, which outlines the framework of development. It is characterized by a precise structure of the individual parts of the exhibition and a clear logical connection. The building is subordinated to the purpose and tasks of the research.

**The subject** of the dissertation research are business communications and corporate image. **Its object** are the companies operating in the soft drinks and bottled water sector and especially those engaged in the production and distribution of mineral, spring, and table water. **The main objective** of the dissertation research is to develop a system for business communications and determine their effect on corporate image development. Eight **research tasks** have been formulated, directing the author's attention to: basic theories about the nature of business communications, corporate image and corporate reputation; the approaches and methods for assessing the corporate image; assessment and analysis of the level of business communications; the systematization of competencies in the process of communication and digitalization of communication activities and the development of a System for for evaluation of business communications for image building.

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

I believe that **the thesis** is defended in the dissertation research.

### **III. Assessment of the content and main results of the dissertation research**

In the dissertation submitted for review, all the requirements to the scientifically applied researches are observed, as a result of which concrete results have been achieved. In general, the dissertation is characterized by precision, logical sequence, immersion of the

research and desire to consider the problems in a complex, in their interrelation and dependence.

In the **introduction** of the dissertation is given a clear and precise statement of the initial positions of the author, from which she was guided in organizing and conducting the research work. It thoroughly and argumentatively reveals the relevance of the topic of the dissertation. The individual elements of the introduction are well presented.

**Chapter one** of the dissertation thesis covers a literature review of the theoretical frameworks on interaction, communication, image and reputation. It clarifies the nature of interaction and communication, the similarities and differences between these concepts, and their role in achieving performance and pre-planned goals. A parallel is drawn between the concepts of “interaction” and “communication”. In the first paragraph of chapter one, a summary and own formulation of communication is given, which **I consider a contribution** of the dissertation thesis. In the second paragraph, an analysis of the types of communication and PR activities to build the image of the modern company is made. The types of communication in the organization are discussed in details. A parallel is also drawn between two other closely related concepts "image" and "reputation". A model of corporate image formation and management is proposed. Particular attention is paid in this chapter to the approaches and methods for assessing and analysing corporate image.

**Chapter Two** is devoted to a study of business communications and image-building activities (on the example of companies in the soft beverages sector with a focus on the bottled water sub-sector). It analyses the companies in the soft drinks sector - the types of communications (internal and external) and corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities - responsibility towards customers, staff and the environment to build a positive image in society. It also analyses companies' market positioning, product portfolio and organisational structure, talent development programmes and educational platforms. The companies under study in the dissertation are then presented. This analysis has been done in order to show their unique characteristics, production capabilities, market share, corporate social responsibility, for which the merit of management and their ability to manage these processes and form a corporate image is undeniable.

Finally, chapter two assesses and analyses the level of business communication based on the results obtained from the empirical study. Based on the results of the survey, a summary analysis of the management style in the four organisations and its impact on the management

of communications in the companies is carried out. Based on the results of the analysis, conclusions are drawn.

**Chapter Three** presents the vision for the development of communications and their transformation into a competitive advantage for the company's image formation. Attention is focused on image building in the subjects of analysis through innovative communication activities, building a Business Communications and Corporate Image Evaluation System and a Balanced Scorecard of indicators for achieving efficiency. The place of corporate image in this system is defined from four perspectives - financial, customer relations, business processes and learning and development. Attention is paid to the analysis of communication activities and their digitalization as factors for building corporate image in customers and society. A scheme of communication activities that are formed in a digital environment and build a company's image is developed. I can point out the proposed and approbated with empirical research System for Evaluation of Business Communications and Corporate Image as an important contribution that the Ph.D. student has achieved in the dissertation. The system includes the following main elements: Personal qualities, management and communication styles; Image-building competencies; Five-point ratings and importance levels.

I find the developed and justified in the second paragraph of the third chapter Balanced system of indicators for the development of companies bottling mineral water and soft drinks, as the biggest contribution of the dissertation – it provides a balancing of "external objectives - results" and "internal objectives - factors" by adding non-financial criteria related to the development and management strategy. It also identifies the place of corporate image as a prerequisite for performance through a systematic formula and implementation of strategy in four areas - finance, customer relations, internal business processes, training and development. The four strands of the system: 'Finance', 'Customer Relations', 'Internal Business Processes' and 'Knowledge and Development' allow for a balance between short-term and long-term objectives. In the four strands, the Ph.D. student formulates objectives, indicators and measures to achieve.

The conclusions made at the end of each chapter are a clear summary of the presented opinions and the results of the research, express the opinion of the author and focus on some basic issues.

**The content of the dissertation** is specifically focused, without unnecessary deviations and descriptions. The author analyzes and derives characteristics and features, interrelations and dependencies and expresses views and positions on the problem.

**The abstract** is based on the presentation of the dissertation and reflects the conception and structure of the research. Correspond to the accepted standards for compilation an abstract of a dissertation.

#### **IV. Evaluation of scientific and practical results and contributions**

The dissertation of the PhD student Tsvetelina Nikolova has undisputed scientific values. **The contribution aspects** can be grouped in two separate directions: those of theoretical-methodological nature and those of practically applicable nature.

*The scientific contributions of theoretical and methodological nature found in the dissertation are related:* systematization and derivation of the main theoretical formulations of interaction, communication, image and reputation; a comparison is made between interaction and communication; own formulation of communication is given; a summary of the different models of corporate image and reputation management is made, identifying their common elements.

*In the practically applicable realm, the contributions in the dissertation pertain to the following:* on the basis of the results of own empirical research the necessary competencies for the manager are systematized; a System for the evaluation of business communications and corporate image is proposed and approbated with empirical research; a Balanced system of indicators for the development of companies bottling mineral water and soft drinks is developed and justified, providing a balancing of "external goals - results" and "internal goals - factors", by adding non-financial criteria related to the development and management strategy; the role of corporate image is defined as a condition for the achievement of efficiency.

The contributions are contained in the dissertation and correspond to the positive assessments expressed in the review. I accept them in full. The major scientific and scientifically – applicable contributions accurately reveal the scientific and applied results obtained. They are the outcome of independent and consistent scientific research and further develop in the theoretical and practical aspect the existing scientific knowledge in the field of human resource management in the public and industrial sector.

In the reference attached to the abstract, Tsvetelina Nikolova has indicated **5**

**publications** on the topic of the dissertation, with which covers the required minimum. The most important of them are 1 monograph, 1 study and 1 article are independent and the other 2 are co-authored. The publications are the personal work of the doctoral student and reflect different parts of the dissertation.

## **V. Critical notes, recommendations and questions in relation to the dissertation**

The reviewed labor is a serious attempt for a deep research of the problems related to human resource management in the public and industrial sector in Greece. In order to improve the further work of the doctoral student, some notes and recommendations can be made.

### **Critical notes**

1. In some places in the dissertation words are missing and there are spelling errors.

### **Recommendations:**

1. My recommendation to the PhD student is in her future publications to continue to analyze and study the relationship between business communications and corporate image in the organization, assessing and comparing the competitiveness of companies that have formed an image and those that do not.
2. Based on the relevance of the topic and bearing in mind the need to expand the international fame of research results, I believe that it is important PhD student Tsvetelina Nikolova to make efforts to increase the number of the publications in scientific journals, referenced and indexed in world-famous databases.

The notes pointed out do not reduce the merits of the development and do not affect the overall positive assessment of the dissertation, as an independent study, with proven scientifically applied contributions.

I would like to ask the following clarifying **questions**:

1. Which communications are most important to maintain image sustainability?
2. Which skills and qualities if the manager are most important in shaping the image?

## **VI. Conclusion**

The dissertation of Tsvetelina Nikolova complies with the requirements of the Law

on development of academic faculty in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Rules for its application and The Ordinance for admission and training of doctoral students at the International Business School. In it the doctoral student has demonstrated his capacity to conduct independent research and has accomplished theoretical and applied results constituting contribution to science and practice. The paper proposed is a serious research work, which deserves high appreciation. The dissertation written and the publications thereto enable the PhD student Tsvetelina Nikolova to cover the minimum national requirements for acquisition of the education and scientific degree of “Doctor”.

On the basis of the indisputable scientific contributions and the essential scientifically applied significance of the dissertation I express my positive opinion and **propose to the members of the esteemed scientific jury of Tsvetelina Nikolay Nikolova to be awarded the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the scientific specialty “Administration and Management/Business Administration/”, professional sphere 3.7. Administration and Management.**

05.05.2022 г.

Drawn up by: .....

(Professor Milena Filipova Ph.D.)

