



Международно Висше Бизнес Училище  
International Business School

## STATUS

by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mariana Usheva

Member of the scientific jury in the competition for the award of educational and scientific degree "Doctor", announced by the International Business School

*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 administration)

*Author of the dissertation:*

**Tsvetelina Nikolai Nikolova**

*Topic of the dissertation:*

**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 the opinion:*

Participation in the composition of the scientific jury for the defense of the dissertation, according to Order № 63/05.04.2022г. of the Rector of the International Business School

### **I. Overall evaluation of the candidate**

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 International Business School. The biographical data provided to the doctoral student follow her desire to develop and acquire new knowledge, skills and competencies. Her research

clearly shows an emphasis on business communications and building and managing an image in an organization.

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

The dissertation submitted for evaluation is properly structured and balanced and contains an introduction, a three-chapter presentation, a conclusion, a bibliography and appendices, with a total volume of 201 standard pages. 101 literature sources were used correctly, of which 29 in Latin and 47 in Cyrillic, 25 Internet resources and periodicals. The dissertation includes 11 tables, 49 figures and 3 appendices.

The topic of the dissertation is topical and significant, which is well justified by the doctoral student. The title of the dissertation is clearly formulated and is closely related to the scientific thesis. There is a clear logical connection between the individual paragraphs, and there is a reasonable upgrade of the content.

The research thesis, subject, object, purpose and tasks of the dissertation are well related and aimed at clarifying the role of business communications as a condition for building a positive corporate image of the organization and there is a connection between them that can be assessed.

This justifies the relevance of the chosen topic. The conducted research is in-depth, the essence of the researched issues is covered, an objective analysis is proposed, and the substantiated conclusions are accompanied by own definitions. The used methods, the thematic, temporal and territorial limitations of the research, the methodology and the scope of the developed dissertation are correctly indicated.

The amount of information presented through the used literature, which the doctoral student has studied and systematized, is enough to prove the scientific thesis, and together with her own research is a prerequisite and basis for in-depth development of the research problem. The used literature sources are relevant in terms of content and have a clear focus on the researched scientific problem. They are cited in accordance with established standards.

The dissertation is characterized by precision, logical sequence, in-depth research and the desire to consider the problems in a complex, in their interrelationship and dependence.

Based on all the above, it can be argued that with the above characteristics *the dissertation is a completed scientific study*, covering a complex of theoretical, methodological and scientific-applied issues of the research conducted by the PhD student.

### III. Content of the dissertation

The first chapter traces the theoretical and methodological foundations of communications as a means of image formation. It has rightly begun with an in-depth and thorough literary review of the theory on the subject. Along with the systematization of the definitions of leading authors and the clarification of the basic concepts, the doctoral student draws a parallel between them and her conclusions, comments and working definitions related to the presented theoretical statements.

In this chapter, the doctoral student compares "communication" and "communication", citing definitions of famous authors on the topic, and the comparative characteristics are systematized in a table.

The PhD student formulates 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"* (p. 12 ).

The doctoral student offers a thorough analysis of the nature of communications, distinguishing those relevant to the dissertation research. I especially note the definition proposed by the doctoral student, *"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 "*(p. 20).

Emphasizing on the types of communications and PR activities to build the image of the modern company, the doctoral student clarified that communication is influenced by both the choice of communication channel and its style. The detailed analysis of the types of communications presented should be noted.

The doctoral student draws a good parallel between the concepts of "image" and "reputation", analyzes the differences between them, clarifies the relationship between "image" and "identity" where image is defined as a "tool" to achieve external corporate identity.

Based on the analyzed definitions of famous authors, the **PhD student offers a working definition** of corporate image: *"intangible asset, of great importance - attracts customers to a particular company and brand, formed in the process of communication"* (p. 36), **which I consider contribution** to the dissertation research.

I especially note that in order 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 (pp. 44-48) and based on this analysis, presents her own Model for formation and corporate image management (p. 48). I accept the proposed Model as a **contribution** to the dissertation research.

**The second chapter** has a strong 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.

In the research conducted by the doctoral student, the questions are divided into three parts - general information; communications and management style; image formation in society. An analysis of the dependence "business communications - image building" was performed and as a result, the PhD student summarizes that the four companies have developed strategies to maintain a positive image in society. It is noted that on the basis of these strategies are developed both internal programs for staff development and security, in terms of work and protection of health and life, and programs for external communications - PR activities, promotions, competitions, sponsorships, environmental initiatives, etc.

On the basis of our own in-depth empirical research by building a methodology with the help of analysis and synthesis of methodological ideas, interesting results were obtained, which were analyzed and substantiated summaries and conclusions were made.

**In the third chapter**, the doctoral student 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. I especially note the analysis of innovative communication activities as a condition for achieving an image in customers and society and their digitalization. Of interest is the systematization of ten communicative competencies of the individual in the process of communication (p. 128). An adapted Performance Management Model is presented (p. 130). The PhD student offers systematization of the communication activities that are formed in a digital environment, which I accept as a **contribution** to the development (pp. 132-133).

**In the conclusion** of the study the doctoral student made the necessary summaries of the results of the study. Synthesized main conclusions from the research in the field of communications and corporate image realized in the present dissertation are formulated.

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

The doctoral student has formulated 6 contributions that reveal what was done in the dissertation. They are precisely defined and correctly reflect the achieved scientific and applied results. The contributions are contained in the dissertation and I accept them in full.

The doctoral student has managed to achieve the set goals and objectives and to prove the research thesis.

The dissertation is an independent development with high scientific value and practical significance. The problem posed in it has the potential to develop both future research and practical application.

#### **V. Publications related to the dissertation**

The results of the problems developed in the dissertation are presented in 5 publications, which include one monograph, one study, one article and two reports. The number of publications and the participation of the doctoral student in them meet the minimum national requirements for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor".

#### **VI. Abstract and reference to the contributions**

The developed abstract meets the requirements and corresponds exactly to the content of the dissertation. The report on the contributions correctly reflects the achievements of the doctoral student.

#### **VII. Critical remarks and recommendations**

The dissertation research meets the content and requirements for the development of such work. A critical remark can be made to the PhD student, *but it is not of a principled nature and cannot significantly affect* the positive assessment of the content of the dissertation research. The critical note is as follows:

1. Following the derivation of her own definitions, the doctoral student could, from the point of view of her professional and personal experience, emphasize even more clearly and emphatically her own opinion on some theoretical issues and strengthen the criticality of the analysis when considering the opinions of the presented authors.

I would also like to ask a question to the PhD student:

1. In what time frame, in your opinion, could the "right image" of a new company be built and what does that depend on?

## VIII. Conclusion

The presented dissertation on the 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")" is in accordance with the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its implementation and the Regulations for competitions for the acquisition of scientific degrees and for holding academic positions at the International Business School. The PhD student meets the set national requirements for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor". The presented scientific and applied results, contained in the dissertation, present the PhD student as a researcher who has knowledge and skills for independent research in the field of business administration. For these reasons, I positively evaluate the dissertation research and call on the esteemed members of the scientific jury to vote for the award of **Tsvetelina Nikolai Nikolova educational and scientific degree "Doctor"**, field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field 3.7. Administration and management (Business administration).

Blagoevgrad, May 8, 2022

SIGNATURE: .....

(Assoc. Prof. Dr. M. Usheva)