



OPINION

on the submitted works for participation in a competition for the academic position of ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR in the professional field 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences (Integrated Marketing Communications), announced by Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" in SJ, issue 24 from 17.03.2023

Reviewer: Assoc. Prof. Diana Petkova, PhD

Candidate: Assoc. Prof. Alexander Hristov, PhD

I. Evaluation of the scientific and practical results and contributions of the scientific and educational production submitted for participation in the competition

Dr. Alexander Hristov is the only candidate in the competition. He has been an Associate professor at the University of National and World Economy since 2018, he has graduated with a master's degree in International Economic Relations and has a doctorate in journalism (advertising). Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hristov participates in the competition with a habilitation thesis (monograph) on the topic "Integrated marketing communications and digitalization", and together with it he has four more monographs, independent or co-authored. The list of all the candidate's publications contains a total of 73 titles, and the publications selected for the competition are 19. Thus, the set of scientific production presented by the candidate corresponds to the "Regulations on the terms and conditions for acquiring scientific degrees and occupying academic positions at SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" and complies with the legal framework of the relevant normative acts.

The monograph of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Alexander Hristov offers a systematization of the main theories and contemporary views on marketing communications in the digitized postmodern world. The emphasis is placed on synergy and self-regulation, with the author arguing that "integrated marketing



communications should be seen as an approach to promoting brands or companies through multiple activities that work together and reinforce each other" (p. 21). It is the synergetic approach that places marketing communications in a single communication paradigm. According to Associate Professor Hristov, the other mandatory element in modern communications is the ethical self-regulation, that, as a normative basis, does not have long enough traditions in Bulgaria. Thus, Alexander Hristov's monograph brings to the fore important problems for the scientific and professional development of the marketing communications in Bulgaria.

The emphasis on digitilization and digital transformations of public communication is not only important for the technological society of postmodernity, but also offers further reflection on the need for constant dialogue with users, which undoubtedly requires a huge professional and, most often, financial resource. This reflects one of the most significant contributions of the presented monograph, namely that it offers a clear view on the main theoretical issues related to marketing communications in the last decade, but at the same time it also refers to specific practical problems of the work of the marketing specialists, advertising and public relations. Moreover, in addition to the in-depth analysis of the specific problems, the monograph also offers a vision for the evolution of the integrated marketing communications in the future. The further accelerated technology and the introduction of Chat GPT in marketing and advertising communications underlines the need to rethink ethical codes and social responsibility in the digital space.

The monograph "Integrated Marketing Communications and Digitalization" outlines the main challenges that marketing and PR professionals in the age of digitalization face. The research thesis about the synergetic approach in marketing communications, based on ethical self-regulation, stands out for its significance and relevance. I would like to emphasize that this research thesis is important for the communication policies of corporations and business organizations, but at the same time it also leaves its mark on the policies of civil society.

This is another significant contribution of both the monograph and the other studies presented in the competition. Associate Professor Hristov clearly



demonstrates that approaches to efficiency should not focus solely on business results, but should put the well-being of individuals and society first. In this sense, he emphasizes that modern marketing communications must be socially engaged, and that professionalism inevitably includes ethics.

This fact presupposes the colleague's special interest in fake news and its effect on business development. This is the focus of several of the studies and papers presented in the competition. Such a topic is particularly important for Bulgaria, as our country is one of the states most affected by fake news during the global pandemic of Covid-19.

Although there is a number of studies on this question, insufficiently analyzed in Bulgaria is the problem of the detrimental economic consequences and financial losses resulting from fake news. The author clearly defends the position that fake news is not only a means of manipulation, but also a powerful tool for generating income, which, however, in the long run can lead to negative consequences for corporations, such as financial losses, missed profits and damaged reputation. In this way, Assoc.Prof. Hristov's research clearly demonstrates the broad approach to integrated marketing communications, which includes not only marketing and marketing communications, but also emphasizes on the social responsibility of companies.

The presented publications demonstrate the scientific and practical competence of Associate Professor Alexander Hristov. In this regard, I would like to emphasize that the colleague is an established and respected specialist with a high reputation in the field of marketing research, advertising and public relations. In this field, he has proven himself as a professional with scientific and practical experience. His professional biography emphasizes this fact. He is the chairman and member of the board of the Bulgarian Association of PR Agencies (BAPRA), and he was also the chairman of the Bulgarian Society for Public Relations (BDVO).

In conclusion, I will once again confirm that the presented works have both scientific and practical contributions and outline an important territory for the further development of marketing communications as a scientific research field, but also as a practical activity in Bulgaria.



II. Notes and recommendations

I would recommend that in future publications Assoc.Prof. Dr. Alexander Hristov proposes a concrete methodology for empirical research of ethical self-regulation in marketing communications. In this regard, an empirical investigation of the main theoretical propositions put forward in the monograph will add further contribution to his research. It would be particularly useful to support the theses with concrete empirical data.

III. Conclusion

The candidate Associate Professor Dr. Alexander Hristov, meets all the formal requirements for the academic position of ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR in professional area 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences (Integrated Marketing Communications). Together with this, he has significant scientific and practical contributions to the development of marketing communications in Bulgaria. I will definitely vote in favor of his election for the academic position to which he is applying.

Jury member:

(Dr. Diana Petkova)

Date: 15.07.2023