



REVIEW¹

of the submitted works for participation in a competition for the academic position of ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR / PROFESSOR in professional field 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences (Digital Communication of Business), announced by Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" in SJ, issue 35 of 18.04.2023

Reviewer: Prof. DSc Petranka Dimitrova Fileva

Candidate: Miroslava Krasimirova Tsenkova

I. Summary data on the candidate (research, teaching and academic activity)

Candidate for the competition is Dr. Miroslava Krasimirova Tsenkova. She has been a full-time teacher at FJMC since 2012, and for two years before she worked as a part-time teacher. She completed two master's programs at the University of St. Kliment Ohridski: "[Communicative Development Disorders]" and "[Public Relations]". In 2010, he defended his dissertation on "Semiotic aspects of sales promotion marketing communications". Her education in two complementary areas of communication science largely predetermines her research interests. Having practical experience as a communication therapist and advertising associate helps guide the search for links between theory and practice.

Dr. Miroslava Tsenkova is an established lecturer in the Department of "Communication, Public Relations and Advertising" and an outstanding researcher in the field of digital communication. All the research and teaching activity documented for this competition gives grounds for high evaluation. She participated in two scientific projects, has scientific supervision of 102 diploma theses, 8 articles in scientific journals, 13 articles in scientific collections and 4 studies, participation with reports in scientific conferences. Evidence of 11 citations in peer-reviewed monographs and collective volumes.

For participation in this competition, Dr. Miroslava Tsenkova submitted 2 scientific monographs: "Digital Communication and PR Toolkit in a Business Environment" (2022) as a habilitation thesis and the monograph "Innovations in the Digital Communication of Business

¹ Note: Recommended review volume - about 6-7 standard pages



Organizations" published in 2023 . There are 14 articles submitted for review, one of them in English. The number of taught courses is impressive, among them one master class, one course in English. All publications and the 7 academic disciplines led by the candidate are on the topic of the announced competition.

II. Characteristics of the candidate's scientific and scientific-applied production

The candidate's scientific output is distinguished by research correctness, with thorough referencing of the most important theoretical propositions in the field of digital communications and innovations, accompanied by classifications, analyzes and conclusions useful for practice. On the basis of this observation, I agree to make an assessment of the works presented.

The monographic study "Digital communication and PR tools in a business environment", presented as a habilitation thesis, contains theoretical and empirical evidence for the evolutionary nature of digital transformation, changing modern communication between corporations and their audiences. I would like to note the author's effort to include references to Bulgarian authors when defining basic concepts or presenting discussion processes. On a second reading, I am also satisfied with the recall of the familiar theoretical communication models, because the specific task in this case is to discover the added value that digital technology brings, and in particular when implementing two-way communication with users. The theoretical review allows delineating several important for practice theses: through the digital PR tools, value is created for clients; by building a complete marketing organization you can achieve leadership positions; it is important to navigate networks, gain from participating in business ecosystems and achieve organizational flexibility. Comparisons between traditional and digital PR toolkits, along with the monitoring tools presented, add value to the theoretical analysis. The author's project for the systematization of PR activities in the digital business communication deserves attention, It is an excellent example of the practical value of the monograph.

A practical contribution and demonstration of expert knowledge is the detailed presentation of the most important modern tools of digital PR - accompanied by theoretical summaries and conclusions from empirical studies by numerous foreign and Bulgarian authors, with an own conclusions about the integrative and communicative functions of each of them and with assessment of specific contributions to the economic results of the companies. The same logical structure is followed to present the 11 tools of the modern PR digital toolkit in a



separate chapter of approximately 100 pages. Many of the individual tools are the subject of some of the referred articles.

The digital transformation in the Bulgarian business is the main subject of the research in this work. One of the proposed hypotheses is that there are Bulgarian companies that do not take enough advantage of the advantages of digital marketing, in particular of social platforms, in order to develop their full potential and achieve a more effective presence in the digital space. The verification is done with an empirical study that definitely deserves high praise for the usefulness of the results and even more for the research precision in the approach and analysis. A conceptual (on the benefits of digital communication) and operational (research tasks and indicators) model was applied for its implementation. 511 small and medium-sized Bulgarian enterprises operating on Bulgarian and foreign markets were surveyed. 44 questions were formulated, the methodology of sampling and data processing was presented very clearly, explanations were added for the concepts used. Among the research tasks, I would highlight the task of organizational performance of the surveyed companies. This topic is also the subject of a separate article in which the results of the survey are discussed. A self-assessment method is used to measure organizational performance as a way to measure small business performance. It is measured by comparison, by comparing the organizational performance of the company's main competitors with respect to 4 indicators: sales growth, market share, profit before tax and overall organizational performance. The conclusions of the empirical study are supported graphically and in general offer a positive picture regarding the use of digital tools to increase the competitiveness of Bulgarian enterprises and to build a sustainable online reputation. The initial hypothesis has been confirmed that there are still companies that do not take sufficient advantage of the opportunities offered by social networks for business development.

The second monograph "Innovations in the Digital Communication of Business Organizations" is an up-to-date study that builds on the candidate's research interests with an assessment of the role of new technologies for successful digital communication and better results. The main thesis is that digital technologies are not just tools, but a complete way of thinking and working in modern business. The general impression of this work is of growth in the candidate's skills for structuring a compact monographic text containing a thorough and comprehensive study of a current topic. As in the first monograph, the theoretical framework is presented with the help of a comprehensive overview of definitions, positions and classifications of a sufficiently wide range of foreign and Bulgarian authors. Innovation is



formulated as a process, and for its implementation, models for introduction and categorization according to the life cycle of enterprises are proposed. Various formulas for business adaptation to the requirements of the new communication environment have a practical contribution. The theoretical framework that presents innovation as a process allows to present the topic of innovation and competitiveness more convincingly. For example, the thesis that competition is what drives innovation sounds convincing, and for it to happen, a suitable innovation environment is needed. And even more – innovation potential of the region and work in networks, supported at the micro level by system and design thinking, from a user-oriented approach.

Against the background of the theoretical framework for innovation, the monograph presents the latest technologies that elevate the digital communication of companies to the level of process automation. The section on digital marketing platforms sounds very innovative with the proposed definitions and classifications based on functions important to marketing, with ideas for their automation and getting closer to audiences. With the same structure and with a rich set of sources, the presentation of the essence and potential of cloud technologies, chatbots and artificial intelligence, robotic process automation and augmented reality follows. A central place in the reasoning is the improving relationship with consumers, the potential of new technologies for diversifying their emotions is highlighted. And the most valuable thing in this monograph follows: the empirical study of successful innovations in the digital communication of Bulgarian business organizations. Case analysis is used as a method of empirical research, the object is start-up Bulgarian organizations. In addition to the presented cases serving as an illustration of the theoretical reasoning and conclusions, this part of the monograph also presents young Bulgarian companies that offer innovative marketing services. The conclusion is that a number of Bulgarian companies are increasingly succeeding in winning remarkable successes in the field of innovation and achieving global recognition on international markets.

Apart from the two monographs, the candidate offers 14 scientific articles for reference, in which several recurring themes are outlined - about the online reputation of the brand and consumers; on cyber threats and crisis resolution; about the changes in marketing in the conditions of digital technologies; about social responsibility and working for causes. There is also an article on media literacy, which demonstrates the ability to expand the objects of observation.



The empirical sociological research for the period 2015-2018 conducted for the purposes of the habilitation work is presented in several articles and reports. This allows the results to be viewed with a different focus, opening up an opportunity for specific recommendations to the business. Empirical results show that the implementation of digital communication in corporate policy and practice enables Bulgarian enterprises to acquire a number of advantages, such as building a stronger relationship with consumers, increasing corporate profits, increasing competitiveness and improving the overall performance of the organization.

Some of the publications are dedicated to the management of the online reputation of the Bulgarian business. I would like to pay attention to the thesis about the digital connection of the brand with the users, presented in an article. (Number 19 of the general list of publications). It formulates mechanisms of digital engagement, for example to create trust and emotional experience. Close to this topic is the studio "Interactive communication as a PR strategy in digital platforms", presented at number 10 in the general list. Along with the graphically compared growing opportunities for interactive communication in the network, the author brings out several activities important for the positioning of companies and illustrates them with concrete cases of successful practices in the world. The presented cases confirm Miroslava Tsenkova's ability to use empirical analyses, in this case case analysis, to prove the presented theoretical reasoning and business recommendations.

I will also note the article "Managing the online reputation of the Bulgarian business in the new communication environment", presented under number 9 in the general list. This publication has been cited in 8 peer-reviewed sources, and for that reason at least deserves special attention. It focuses on challenges and threats, particularly cyber-attacks. To prove the main theses, a new own empirical study covering 140 Bulgarian companies for the period January 2020 - November 2020 is presented. The results give an idea of the level of preparedness for the current level of the cyber threat, and the results indicate that there are still quite a few enterprises, which do not meet the minimum requirements for the protection of data and the corporate communication environment.

IV. Notes and recommendations



I have a note about the way the candidate presents her scientific contributions. There are over 20 contributions listed and I generally agree with their validity. However, their nature is limited to important conclusions from the individual publications submitted for review. My recommendation is to make a self-assessment of what is new, of what has been added to the knowledge of digital communication, even more so regarding the implementation of digital transformation in Bulgarian enterprises. I recommend that the contributions be presented in a compact form and take into account the actual nature of the output proposed for review, which I believe can be described as a technological change-driven dynamic review of accumulated theoretical and conceptual knowledge, followed by a thoughtful and reasoned offer of business recommendations .

V. Conclusion

On the basis of the positive assessment made for the works presented and for the contributions in them, I can recommend to the respected members of the scientific jury to award the academic position of "associate professor" to Miroslava Krasimirova Tsenkova, the only participant in this competition, announced in professional direction 3.5. Public communications and information sciences /Digital communication of business/.

Date: 27.07.2023

Reviewer: Prof. DSc Petranka Fileva