



## **REVIEW**

By Assoc. Prof. Stefan Serezliev

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Department of Journalism and Public Relations

For the attainment of the educational and scientific degree of Doctor (PhD)  
in the professional field 3.5: Public Communications and Information Sciences  
Specialisation: Media and Communications - Persuasive Communication

Dissertation Title: "Models of Persuasive Communication in the Promotion of  
Culinary Brands"

Presented by Antonia Ivanova Ivanova, PhD Candidate

Department of Communication and Audiovisual Production

Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication

Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Mila Serafimova

Field 3.5: Public Communications and Information Science



### **Dissertation text quality assessment**

This dissertation upholds the strong tradition of the Department of Communications and Audiovisual Production at the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski," in addressing significant research topics within the multi- and interdisciplinary domains of modern communications, both as academic theory and as a professional practice.

The dissertation authored by PhD candidate Antonia Ivanova aligns closely with the scientific specialty. I commend the PhD candidate for her bold and rigorous exploration of the complex conceptual territory of branding theory and practice, and for her efforts to apply these concepts to the specific area of culinary branding.

Throughout her research, Antonia Ivanova benefited from the scientific guidance of the late Prof. Chavdar Hristov and, subsequently, from Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mila Serafimova. The topic of building sustainable culinary brands is increasingly relevant, not only within the culinary industry but also across various interdisciplinary fields such as economics, culture, and business.

Examining this topic within the broader context of brand management allows for the intricate application of diverse communication models across specific contexts, including academic and business settings. The theoretical sources, both print and online, are meticulously selected, thoroughly researched, and effectively applied, encompassing all pertinent areas of inquiry.

### **The creative and professional biography of the doctoral student**

In the presented reference for education and professional experience, the following data are distinguished:

Education:



- The doctoral student graduates from the Model Mathematical High School" Acad. Kiril Popov", Profile" Mathematics, Informatics with French Language", Plovdiv, Bulgaria, then successfully Bachelor's degree" Bulgarian Philology", Sofia University" St. Kliment Ohridski", Sofia, Bulgaria, and subsequently successfully Master's degree" Public Relations", Sofia University" St. Kliment Ohridski», Sofia, Bulgaria. In 2022, Rhetoric: The Art of Persuasive Writing and Public Speaking, Harvard University, EDX. Uses the following languages at a basic and good level: Bulgarian, Italian, Turkish, French and English.

Professional experience:

The focus on the areas of some of the strategic disciplines in Integrated Marketing Communications (PR and advertising) and marketing is striking. Consistent development of knowledge, skills and competencies from:

- Office and Marketing Manager" Nero G" EOOD Sofia, Bulgaria;
- "Marketing and advertising" specialist" Vealtrade" OOD, Sofia, Bulgaria;
- From Expert" Public Relations", "Enterteimant" JSC, hotel and casino" Trimontsium", Plovdiv, Bulgaria and Expert" Public Relations" Laboratory and advisory centre for food safety, training and prevention" Alimenti", / Plovdiv, Bulgarians through Specialist" Marketing and Advertising "Musiclive 2017" EOOD, Sofia, Bulgaria and Expert" Marketin "Christ" OOD, Plovdiv, Bulgaria to Director of Directorate" Communications" National Revenue Agency, Central Office, Sofia, Bulgaria;

Certificates also in the fields of marketing, brand management and rhetoric.

### **Object and subject of research.**

They are specified precisely. The object of the research are popular celebrity chefs with a strong personal brand, recognisable in the communication space.

Accordingly, specific models of persuasive communication that are used in brand management are selected as the object of study.

### **Evaluation of the Dissertation's Qualities**

This dissertation continues the strong tradition of the Department of Communications and Audiovisual Production at the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication, Sofia University" St. Kliment Ohridski," in addressing significant research topics that span the multi- and



interdisciplinary aspects of modern communications, both as academic theory and as successful professional practice.

The dissertation by PhD student Antonia Ivanova is fully aligned with the requirements of the scientific specialty. I commend the PhD candidate for her resolute and thorough exploration of the complex conceptual terrain of branding theory and practice, particularly in applying these concepts to the niche area of culinary branding.

During her research, Antonia Ivanova benefited from the scientific guidance of the late Prof. Chavdar Hristov and later from Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mila Serafimova. The growing importance of building sustainable culinary brands is a topic that resonates not only within the culinary industry but also across various interdisciplinary fields such as economics, culture, and business.

Approaching the topic within the broader context of overall brand management enables the complex application of diverse communication models across specific communicative contexts and practices, whether academic or business-related. The theoretical sources, both print and online, are meticulously chosen, thoroughly researched, and effectively applied, covering all pertinent areas of inquiry.

### **Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The aim of the study, as articulated by the PhD student, is "to analyse the communication techniques and strategies in persuasive communication used by different celebrity chefs, examining how these tools influence and change public attitudes, and to identify patterns of persuasive influence in the promotion of culinary brands by constructing specific behavioural matrices through persuasive techniques and strategies." The scope of the study spans a range of celebrity chefs, tracing the historical development of their influence from the sixteenth century, with a primary focus on the evolution of culinary communication from the twentieth century onwards, particularly following the rise of public television appearances and the establishment of culinary brands such as those associated with Gordon Ramsay, Jamie Oliver, Anthony Bourdain, Giada De Laurentiis, and others. The division of persuasive influence mechanisms is successfully applied using Richard Petty and John Cacioppo's Elaboration Likelihood Model.

The tasks set in the dissertation are relevant, e.g.:



- To examine the role of the persuasive communicator and the related components of persuasive communication;
- to identify the techniques and behavioural strategies of persuasive influence in the promotion of culinary brands and to examine visual rhetoric as a function of influence;
- define and examine the concept of a culinary brand as a celebrity chef;
- clarify the relationship between persuasive communication and culinary;
- to delineate the scientific approaches that will help to create a research methodology;
- to delineate patterns of persuasive influence through specific celebrities;
- to conduct and analyse empirical research through a survey and in-depth interviews among a targeted audience of chefs in Bulgaria;
- to perform a comparative analysis between the derived behaviour matrices and the role models used among the interviewees.

### **Research Hypothesis**

The primary hypotheses formulated by the PhD student are closely aligned with the overall research approach and methodology employed in the development of this thesis. Testing these hypotheses facilitates relevant analysis and enables the drawing of conclusions across a broad yet well-defined spectrum. This spectrum encompasses the application of existing models of brand enforcement, which combine various communication techniques and behavioural strategies (such as visual rhetoric), and the integration of personal branding activities at both individual and organisational levels within the context of an extended communication process.

### **The methodological framework.**

The main research methods are successfully applied: modelling as a cognitive method of persuasive influence as an approach of creating matrices with common characteristics; studying good cases from practice (case studies) of celebrities; deductive and inductive approaches; comparative-descriptive method (in the structural analysis of empirical analysis); systematic approach and analysing the data of the conducted research.

The study's limitations are defined despite the extensive period from the 16th century to the present. Twenty-two famous personal culinary brands are considered.

### **The structure of the study.**



Meets the criteria: with a total length of 303 pages (245 pages excluding the " Appendix" and " Bibliography" sections).

The individual chapters systematically develop the study's key themes in a coherent and well-grounded manner.

**Chapter One** addresses the theoretical aspects of persuasive communication and branding, with a focus on the elements of cognition, attitude, and behavior. The distinctions between propaganda, manipulation, and persuasion are examined from a rhetorical perspective, encompassing both verbal and visual techniques.

The chapter includes a presentation and analysis of key theoretical models of persuasive communication, such as Friestad and Wright's Persuasion Knowledge Model (1994), Campbell and Kirmani's (2004) contemporary model of persuasion in the context of interpersonal communication, and Petty and Cacioppo's (1986) Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) of persuasion. Particularly relevant is the presentation and adaptive analysis of Robert Cialdini's six principles of influence—Reciprocity, Commitment and Consistency, Social Proof, Liking, Authority, and Scarcity—which the PhD student applies in several practical case studies.

A noteworthy aspect of the chapter is the well-structured parallel drawn between personal branding and culinary branding constructs, including the exploration of the roles of visual identity, visual rhetoric, and new media in both contexts.

### **Chapter Two Overview**

Chapter Two explores what the PhD student describes as the nature of cookery as " a set of goals for social influence and communication throughout history and the messages it conveyed prior to the documented existence of celebrity chefs." A crucial aspect of this chapter is the exploration of communication channels as key tools for persuasion and influence in creating and reinforcing culinary brands.

Introducing the terms " culinary globalisation" and " gastrodiploMACy" into the thesis is particularly noteworthy, especially concerning entrepreneurial strategies, training programs, the personal brand communities of celebrity chefs, and the unique characteristics of cooking shows. The chapter also



provides a well-developed perspective on the audience, emphasising its role in the increasingly significant concept of the brand community.

### **Chapter Three Overview**

Chapter Three centers on the creation and reinforcement of celebrity chef culinary brands, as well as the application of persuasive communication models. The chapter examines four key personal brands within the context of successful case studies, yielding relevant findings.

The analysis includes twenty-two carefully selected chefs who have encountered challenges in their careers and who serve as exemplars of personal brands cultivated through their communication strategies. These chefs' sub-brands, persuasive communication models, and behavioral matrices are presented and analysed across a broad historical timeline.

### **Chapter Four Overview**

Chapter Four concentrates on the methodology and results of the study. The aims and objectives are relevant, with the object and subject of the study clearly defined. The research instruments—surveys to assess chefs' opinions and in-depth interviews—are effectively designed and applied, leading to accurate and well-founded results.

The PhD student has appropriately chosen and justified the focus on studying the communication processes involved in creating and developing Bulgarian celebrity chefs, using the examined global culinary brands as examples rather than seeking to develop new models of persuasion in personal branding.

### **Conclusion and Evaluation**

The conclusion and scientific contributions of the dissertation are thoroughly detailed and well-justified. The appendices and bibliography adhere to the established research criteria. Based on this assessment, I determine the following:

- The selection and application of the research methods are fully appropriate and effective for the study's objectives.
- Academic rigor has been consistently maintained in the collection, processing, and analysis of the various data throughout the research process.



- The contributions identified during the research are significant, valid, and have been achieved with a high degree of credibility, based on the robust materials used by the PhD student.
- Throughout the work, the PhD student has demonstrated excellent bibliographical and factual knowledge. The global impact of the selected culinary brands has been carefully and comprehensively researched.
- At the same time, I find that in a particularly appropriate way, the PhD student manages to incorporate his personal authorial, creative and research explorations and solutions to the various problems into his personal culinary branding, demonstrating a corresponding affinity.
- The dissertation text meets the requirements, both on a substantive and formal level. It consists of a preface, four chapters, a conclusion, a bibliography of 333 titles, 83 in Bulgarian and 250 in foreign languages, and a list of scientific contributions and publications related to the dissertation topic.
- The well and logically structured study has a total length of 303 standard pages;
- The linguistic and stylistic qualities of the exposition are at the appropriate academic level, as the doctoral student's efforts are consistently in the direction of a high degree of readability and conceptual and terminological clarity. No deviation from literary norms of grammar, spelling and punctuation is found.
- The text of the abstract corresponds to the text of the dissertation.

### **Contributions of the dissertation research**

I accept the scientific and applied contributions of the dissertation. They directly relate to the doctoral student's achievements in his professional, creative, teaching and research work over the years.

### **Questions and recommendations**

There were several issues and recommendations in the preliminary review that the doctoral student addressed in finalising his thesis:

1. *Clarify what he meant in defining the scholarly contributions concerning the use of the terms "visual rhetoric", "behaviour matrix", "social ego", and "culinary globalisation";*
2. *Identify possible brands in the culinary category in the context and of different*





*organisational brands;*

*As a question:*

*The PhD student clearly states a solid academic and professional interest in personal culinary branding. Does he have specific plans, and how would he justify them?*

### **Publications and participation in scientific forums**

The three publications on the thesis topic in specialised scientific journals meet the legal requirements.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the dissertation submitted by doctoral candidate Antonia Ivanova on the topic "Models of Persuasive Communication in the Promotion of Culinary Brands", along with the accompanying abstract and procedural materials, fully meets the requirements outlined in the Regulations for the Conditions and Procedure for the Acquisition of the Degree of Doctor. Based on my thorough evaluation, I strongly recommend that the esteemed and authoritative jury award Antonia Ivanova the educational and scientific degree of Doctor (PhD) Field 3.5: Public Communications and Information Sciences Specialization: Media and Communications - Persuasive Communication.

August 12<sup>th</sup> 2024

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