



OPINION¹

from Prof.D.Sc. Valentina Milenkova, SWU “Neofit Rilski”.

(scientific position, academic degree, name, surname, educational / scientific institution)

for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" (PhD) in professional field 3.5. Social Communications and Information Sciences.

with a dissertation on the topic: “Business reputation management in pandemic crises (2020-2023)”,

presented by Bogomila Vasileva Koleva full-time doctoral student in the Department Communication and audiovisual production of the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication

with supervisor: Prof. Dr. Nikolay Mihailov

I. Evaluation of the qualities of the text of dissertation

The topic of the Ph.D. thesis is very current and significant, given the various crisis phenomena that the world is experiencing and that affect the functioning of modern economies and organizations. The Covid pandemic not only caused border closures and imposed restrictions on the population and the movement of goods and services, but also created social distances, increased unemployment, reduced incomes of the population and slowed down economic efficiency. The dissertation is aimed at researching the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the business reputation of organizations and the construction of new models for dealing with the negative consequences of the crisis. It shows how companies are re-adjusting to the new crisis reality.

The theoretical sources on the subject have been studied thoroughly and exhaustively. The PhD student knows the publications and research of the authors who work in the field of crisis management, reputation and trust, crisis communications and the media as an intermediary between business and the state. The knowledge of the publications in the problem field and the information obtained are reflected in the overall theoretical concept of the dissertation, as well as in the research model of the used empirical methods, the construction of samples and the selection of respondents.

Ways for companies to deal with the crisis environment have been developed and presented, as well as strategies for protecting the company's reputation in the conditions of crisis realities. The research approach is focused on tracking how business organizations react to the crisis they face and how they overcome new challenges by applying anti-crisis models. Thus, the role of crisis and communication management for building fast, adequate and flexible solutions to deal with the crisis is shown in an innovative way. On this basis, classifications of the behavior of companies are developed, based on the actions of the management in the time range of: the warning signals of the approaching crisis, its outbreak, spread, development of the crisis from the Covid pandemic in various business sectors.

Managerial behavior is summarized according to the size of the companies and the organized environment for anti-crisis actions. Typologies of media publications reflecting business protest actions against existing measures at the state level have been developed. Within the framework of the dissertation, systematized information is presented about the reactions of companies from various

¹ Note: The text in italics offers reference points for evaluating the research results. Recommended volume of the opinion - 2-3 standard pages



industries, which allows to explain the main characteristics of the ongoing social processes as a response to crisis situations and how to deal with them.

Developed: theoretical model, questionnaires, hypotheses, criteria for forming samples. The defined research problem and tasks reflect on the application of the toolkit, the field activity, as well as on the analytical work on the obtained results. The chosen methods in the dissertation are applied correctly and correspond to the prescriptions for obtaining reliable and objective information. The data collection was done following the methodological requirements for the various methods used: conducting in-depth interviews with managers, executive directors of companies, analysis of media publications about the reactions of businesses in the conditions of a pandemic crisis, case studies of real reputational crises, measuring crises by means of the number of media publications, conducting a survey in google forms, analyzing the obtained results, formulating conclusions and recommendations for crisis management.

The essential role of the media in the process of covering crises and forming public attitudes is shown. In the analysis of reputational crises, 467 publications were analyzed in the three television stations: Nova TV, BTV and BNT in the period 2020-2022 (Covid pandemic), highlighting the stages through which crisis events pass. The analyzed publications reflect the protests of hoteliers, restaurateurs, tour operators and the change of ministers of tourism in the period under review. The causes of dissatisfaction, the relevant audiences and the communication strategies and actions that the Ministry of Tourism undertakes to satisfy the demands of the key social subjects are shown. Protest actions are presented as a means of communication with the government, health authorities and local authorities. As a result of the realized theoretical and empirical analysis, a series of new facts related to crisis management were obtained, classifications of different types of crises were made, the principles of anti-crisis communication and its corresponding communication activities were shown.

Bibliographic awareness

The PhD student has demonstrated a very good level of knowledge of the literature on the topic of the dissertation, as well as of various approaches, data, and existing and available empirical information, which demonstrates excellent skills in working with existing information.

Compliance with the compositional requirements for the dissertation text

The dissertation text is fully compliant with the compositional requirements. It is 223 pages long and is structured in: introduction, three chapters, conclusion, bibliography, 2 appendices. The main text includes: 3 tables, 7 graphs, 19 diagrams. A Reference to Scientific Contributions and a List of Publications have also been added.

The dissertation is distinguished by excellent linguistic and stylistic qualities and is in accordance with the literary grammar, spelling and punctuation norms. The style is clear and the parts are logically connected, the exposition presents a variety of evidentiary material and formulates conclusions and generalizations.

The summary fully corresponds in terms of content to the dissertation work and meets the requirements for its presentation.

II. Contributions of the dissertation research

I can define the contributions of the dissertation research as enrichment and critical analysis of existing knowledge. Contributions are based on reliable information obtained through correctly selected methods and their adequate and objective application. Contributions are related to the research work performed, reflecting the author's overall conceptual vision.

I accept the made self-assessment of the contributions of the Ph.D. thesis and evaluate it as completely correct and objective, corresponding to the dissertation.

5 publications are presented: 4 released in the digital space and one approved for publication. The publications are on the topic of the dissertation and present various aspects of the dissertation research, based on the results obtained from the methods used.

The dissertation is based on real events and problems. The overall empirical information derives from the behavior of real social actors with different hierarchical beingness, attitudes and participation in



crisis management, which also creates the practical-applied side of the dissertation. The obtained results show opportunities for companies to deal with the crisis environment, as well as to protect the company's reputation in the conditions of crisis situations.

III. Notes and recommendations

The dissertation has been developed at a very good theoretical and empirical level, with a variety of information obtained from the author's research and from the use of already existing data.

I recommend greater precision when using empirical methods.

I recommend that the dissertation be published as a monograph, given the in-depth analyzes and research carried out on the subject.

IV. Publications and participation in scientific forums

The 5 publications presented are in full compliance with the requirements.

The doctoral student participated in 4 scientific forums with reports in which she presented her dissertation research.

The requirements of the Regulations for the terms and conditions for acquiring scientific degrees and occupying academic positions at SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" for approving and disclosing the results of the research according to Art. 5, item 5 and the minimum national requirements under Art. 63, para. 1, item 4 and art. 69, para. 3 are accomplished.

V. Conclusion

The Ph.D.thesis "Business reputation management in pandemic crises (2020-2023)" shows that the doctoral student Bogomila Vasileva Koleva has in-depth theoretical knowledge and skills for research work. On this basis, I confidently give my positive assessment of the presented dissertation and propose to the scientific jury to award the educational and scientific degree "doctor" to Bogomila Vasileva Koleva in professional field 3.5. Social Communications and Information Sciences.

Jury member: Prof. D.Sc. Valentina Milenkova

Date: 1.06.2023