

REVIEW

by Prof. Dr. Velichko Rumenev

according to an announced competition for the academic position
"ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR" – under the order of the Rector of Sofia
University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

In the competition announced by the Faculty of Philosophy for Associate Professor in professional direction 2.3 Philosophy (Rhetoric), published in the State Gazette issue 61 of August 2nd, 2022, applied one candidate - Chief Assistant Professor Yana Krasimirova Sabeva, PhD, from the Department of Rhetoric of the Faculty of Philosophy of the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

Chief Assistant Professor Yana Krasimirova Sabeva, PhD, meets the necessary requirements for holding the academic position "Associate Professor", according to the Rules on the conditions and procedure for acquiring science degrees and holding academic positions in Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

She has acquired educational and scientific degree "doctor", she held the academic position Chief Assistant Professor for more than four years and she is currently a full-time lecturer at the Department of Rhetoric at the Faculty of Philosophy in Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

She is a serious specialist with proven scientific achievements in the relevant field. She has presented an author's scientific work, which does not repeat those presented for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "doctor". She has also presented other original research papers and publications and is under 65 years of age.

Yana Sabeva participated in the competition for Associate Professor with a significant number of papers. It should be noted that

the relevance and thoroughness of the researches in them deserve attention.

In the relatively short time since she has been a teacher at Department of Rhetoric, Yana Krasimirova Sabeva has published a significant number of works. She demonstrates a certain interest in the rhetorical aspects of communications in crisis and critical situations. As, for example, was that of the global pandemic. The two monographs with which Yana Sabeva participated in the competition for Associate Professor are dedicated to them.

Her habilitation thesis **"Rhetorical aspects of integrated marketing communications in the context of a pandemic"**, Sofia: **"St. Kliment Ohridski"**, 2022, ISBN: 978-954-07-5427-7, throws light on the specifics of rhetoric and its role in integrated marketing communications (IMC) in connection to the search for high campaign effectiveness. The monograph examines the dynamics in the development of integrated marketing communications at the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic - the end of 2019 - the middle of 2021, when in a relatively short period of time huge challenges, on a national and global level, appeared before scientists from different fields and especially to those working specifically on the problem of communications.

First of all, it is the new communication environment. Online communication, while not new in itself, has gone from supplementary to essential during this period. Direct contact between seller and buyer had to be replaced by something new and at least as effective. We are witnessing this pandemic and the problems it has caused. Both in terms of the economy and the purchasing power of people around the world, and the relationship between seller and buyer, and even more, on social and personal sphere. Man has lost to a great extent his character as a social animal, and if this had continued long enough man would have moved more and more towards those from whom he may have sprung becoming more and more ill - physically and mentally during this process. In order to be able to search for solutions, if not for mastering, then at least for some control of these processes, scientists focused on

new business and communication practices in the field of advertising and on decision-making process of buyers.

To the extent that every crisis is also an emergence of conditions for a new beginning, and here an opportunity for the development of new marketing communications was created with a great opportunity to apply rhetorical knowledge and skills. In this aspect is the enormous role of the work and its contribution to the rhetoric.

As a serious contribution, I consider the author's aim to move from a "picture" of integrated marketing communications to a substantiated scientific forecast of their development. This approach gives the monograph an opportunity to become a useful material for thousands of practitioners and theorists dealing with this matter - regardless of whether they accept the author's theses or not.

Yana Sabeva makes an attempt to connect theory with practice, both with the examples she gives and with the interviews of leading professionals included in the text. This is not a new approach for her. I was her doctoral advisor and I am familiar with her development. During the process of work on her doctoral thesis she had follow the same approach, which I think is an excellent, exemplary practice.

At the beginning of her research, the author correctly formulated and clarified the concept of integrated marketing communications, as well as the different views on this issue in the theory. She shows extensive knowledge of the subject, and her primary economic education is also useful here. For the purposes of the study, "they are considered as a strategic process that should ensure a constant flow of news, information and messages about a given product, service or brand from the company to its rhetorical audiences (current and prospective customers, partners, etc.). This process is carried out using an integrated communication approach that covers all channels and sources of information of the company. An important element of it is the identity of the messages to the audiences".

Very interesting for me as a specialist in rhetoric is the third chapter of "Rhetorical Aspects of IMC". I will not discuss it in detail, because it should be read by all colleagues dealing more or less with

rhetoric. I consider those parts of it that emphasize visual and virtual rhetoric to be the most valuable. The specifics of images and text on the Internet, the specific rhetorical tools in this type of communication and specifically in marketing campaigns are well explored.

Adequate attention is paid to advertising and campaign effectiveness, which expresses in increasing or at least maintaining sales while at the same time not damaging the corporate reputation. Focus is also given on the role of influencers as digital orators. And on the specific audience and its types, as well as on the specific feedback. At the same time, the author shows the continuous connection of the virtual with the direct forms of rhetorical communication, some of which were already formulated in ancient rhetoric.

The monograph finish with an optimistic forecast for the future of integrated marketing communications in an increasingly alienated society. Hope she turns out to be right!

I will present in brief the other monograph with which Yana Sabeva participated in the current competition - **“Rhetoric and Crisis Communications. Analysis of the 2020 and 2021 crises”**. Sofia: "St. Kliment Ohridski", 2022, ISBN:978-954-07-5475-8.

Mainly because, as she herself emphasizes, it is a kind of continuation of the main habilitation work, although here the focus is on public relations and again on communications in a crisis situation. Unfortunately, reality provides many opportunities for such research. We go from one crisis to another, each of them becoming more severe and manifesting at the same time. As far as a theoretical view is concerned, the study is applicable to any possible crisis. It could be considered in advance to unite them in one composition. This could be done in the future, not only by integration, but also by expanding the research. Here again, emphasis is given on the tools of rhetoric, which are also the canvas of the research, with all the specifics caused by the nature of the crisis and the communication in this type of crisis. The main thing that shook the world and created a global crisis is the Covid-19 pandemic. Since we are not, as it turned out, protected against other

possible crises, this study has a serious contribution both in theory and in practice.

Keeping her style of work, the author has quite appropriately applied research that provides insight into the rhetorical practices employed by three of the leading pharmaceutical companies: AstraZeneca, Moderna, and Pfizer in their campaigns to promote vaccines against the disease. As we well know, this turned out to be a huge weakness for Bulgaria, and we led the negative vaccination ranking. This applies to this day and has even contributed to a strengthening of anti-vaxxer sentiments in general - towards all vaccines. This fact deserves special attention and requires special research of the Bulgarian audience. Why does it raise communication barriers, what is their nature and how to overcome them? Here the study should place additional emphasis in future revision and new edition. It would be extremely helpful. Almost a reference book.

I pay special attention to her article **„Cultural Specificities and Business Rhetoric: Developments and Prospects for Future Research. – In: Newmedia21.eu. 21st Century Media: An Online Edition of Research, Analysis, Criticism, 2022.** It offers a pilot survey among professionals involved in intercultural communication. Intercultural differences as a factor in communication, instead of being extinguished, seem to be gaining more and more importance, which makes this article timely and useful.

The monograph **„Non-verbal aspects in business communication", Sofia: SU "St. Kliment Ohridski", 2020, ISBN: 987-954-07-5016-3** was written on the basis of the doctoral dissertation. I was author`s doctoral advisor, chairman of the jury and reviewer during the defense. It was a quality work, defended without appeal. And at this point, I again express my support for the author.

Yana Sabeva demonstrates her affinity for the rhetorical aspects of communicating and overcoming crises in a variety of fields and in

her shorter texts. Obviously, that is the time we live in. We also observe this in her article „**Rhetoric and management of communication crises in education in the period 2020-2021**” - In: Strategies for policy in science and education, 30 (4), 2022, 369-383. We ourselves fell victim to a similar Covid-19 crisis. Education via Moodle was a necessary but palliative measure. I suppose that there is no disagreement about the inferiority of this kind of teaching and of the academic communication realized in this way. One of the reasons is that personal contact with the direct audience is indispensable in principle, but the other is that the maximum is not reached with indirect forms of learning. Since we are not immunised to repetitions and waves of crises, I suggest Yana Sabeva to write an in-depth monograph on this topic. Such work would be valuable and extremely helpful.

For her participation in the contest, Yana Sabeva, in addition to her monographs, also presented six of her articles in various editions, two of which I addressed in particular.

The list with citations is rich and shows that Yana Sabeva is a noticeable author to colleagues from various spheres of rhetorical communication.

Yana Sabeva's scientific activity was not limited to written works. During the period since she was in the Department of Rhetoric, she took part in a number of conferences - local and with international participation, where she presented not only herself, but also the Department of Rhetoric. She participated in eight projects as a leader and trainer, but mainly as a leader.

For the relatively small period of time in which she was in the Department of Rhetoric, Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Yana Sabeva developed not only as a good researcher, but also as a very good teacher. Immediately after she started work at the Department of Rhetoric, I entrusted her to lead the seminar classes for my lecture courses on

“Rhetoric and communication skills” in Public Administration bachelor program. I also assigned her part of the seminar classes in “Nonverbal Communication in Public Speaking and Business Communication in Psychology” bachelor program. She did a great job. She communicates kindly with students. She takes part in the work of the Department of Rhetoric. She is a member of admissions and defense committees for master's theses at the Department of Rhetoric. She was advisor of five successfully defended theses for Master’s Degree in Rhetoric at the Department of Rhetoric. She leads a wide range of courses in the bachelor's and master's degrees of study in several faculties of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". All of them can be seen in her CV. However, it is worth mentioning some of them here: Communication skills in an educational environment, Non-verbal communication in public speaking and business communication, Rhetoric, Business rhetoric, Rhetoric and communication skills, Persuasive communication and dialogue, Rhetoric and communication skills for doctors of medicine, Rhetoric in Virtual Space, Negotiation Technology and many more.

In conclusion, based on the information provided above, I recommend to the esteemed members of the scientific jury Chief Assistant Professor Yana Sabeva, PhD to be elected to the academic position of Associate Professor in the competition for professional direction 2.3 Philosophy (Rhetoric), published in the State Gazette issue 61 of 2 August 2022.

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