STATEMENT

By Prof. Dr. Stefan Dimitrov Serezliev

(Associate Professor in Professional Field 3.5. Public Communications and Information Sciences at the Department of Journalism and Public Relations, St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Turnovo; Professor in Professional Field from the latest habilitation 8.4. Theatre and Film Arts / Lyuben Groys Theatre College)

Regarding: for the award of the scientific degree Doctor of Sciences in the professional field within the doctoral program "Media and Public Communications", professional field 3.5. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION SCIENCES (MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS - PUBLIC RELATIONS)

Candidate: Prof. Dr. Desislava Lyubomirova Boshnakova

Before proceeding to the mandatory elements of the statement, the role of the doctoral program at New Bulgarian University deserves to be highlighted. The academic environment in the program once again demonstrates sustainable support for conducting large-scale inter- and multidisciplinary research. It is precisely this institutional vision that creates the necessary conditions for the realization of scientific works that transcend narrow profile boundaries and integrate contemporary digital realities with the in-depth theoretical analysis of public communications in the context of good professional practice.

Scientific and scientific-applied significance of the researched problem

The dissertation of Prof. Dr. Desislava Boshnakova, "Christmas Communication: Sustainability of Values - From Classical Campaigns to Digital Transformation", submitted for the award of the scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences", is dedicated to a phenomenon of key importance for contemporary communication science, namely Christmas communication viewed as a decentralized, global meta-campaign. The topic possesses high relevance, as it places at the center of research the question of the sustainability of fundamental human values under conditions of intensive digital transformation and mediation, as well as the commercialization of public space.

The foundational significance of the work is determined by the author's ability to overcome the fragmentary approach to the holiday that is traditional in global literature. While existing studies in the international academic context examine the phenomenon mostly partially (from the perspectives of cultural history, the anthropology of the gift, neuromarketing, or affective economics), the present work builds a comprehensive, conceptualized, and well-argued communication framework. Synthesized within it are fundamental theories from the fields of branding, semiotics, communications, media, behavioral economics, as well as the psychoanalytic framework for analyzing digital platforms.

The scientific-applied value of the study lies in the systematic analysis of the mechanisms through which authentic social and emotional content preserve their significance across new digital environments and platforms. The concept of value resistance formulated in the work, combined with the author's theoretical models and the proposed method for predictive analysis, confirms the scientific contribution of the study and its applicability in the field of public communications.

Substantiation of the goals and tasks in the dissertation

The main goal formulated in the dissertation is logically substantiated and stems from the posed research problem. Prof. Boshnakova sets the task of deconstructing and analyzing Christmas communication in its capacity as a global meta-campaign, investigating the mechanisms for preserving and transforming its value core under conditions of digital realignment, platform economy, and mediation. The goal is defined with high academic precision, balancing between the theoretical generalization of the phenomenon and its practical dimensions in contemporary public communications.

The formulated research tasks follow a strict methodological consistency and ensure the full achievement of the set goal. They are organized in a logical gradation that proceeds from clarifying the theoretical-historical genesis of the holiday and its conceptual architects, through deconstructing the ritual, sensory, and brand components, to the empirical study of consumer perceptions and the application of innovative predictive analysis. Each of the formulated tasks addresses a specific aspect of the object of study, guaranteeing the holistic nature of the scientific approach.

The interconnectedness between the goal, the tasks, and the methodology used demonstrates conceptual clarity and systematicity. The posing and sequential resolution of the complex of tasks defined in this way confirm the correctly chosen research trajectory and fully comply with the requirements for a dissertation for the award of the scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences".

Compliance between the chosen methodology and research methodology and the set goal and tasks of the dissertation

The chosen methodological approach and the specific research techniques are in full compliance with the goal set and the tasks formulated toward it. The complexity and multifaceted nature of Christmas communication as a decentralized meta-campaign requires an interdisciplinary scientific framework, which the candidate constructs in a methodologically sound and systematic manner.

The research design combines research approaches applied sequentially across the individual parts (chapters), such as theoretical-critical analysis, semiotic deconstruction, content analysis of media and branding case studies (even across wide temporal boundaries), quantitative empirical study, and the author's predictive method ("3AIalog"). The application of this complex toolkit enables a consistent transition from fundamental theoretical generalization to the detailed uncovering of specific communication and emotional models of perception.

Scientific and scientific-applied contributions of the dissertation (description and evaluation), including the presence of an original contribution to science

Evaluation of the presence of original contribution and personal comments. I accept the scientific, scientific-applied, and applied contributions formulated by the candidate. They are the result of systematic theoretical research, creative inspiration, and large-scale empirical work, possess an original character, and significantly enrich knowledge in the fields of public communications, branding, and media sciences. The formulated contributions are the candidate's personal achievement and represent an undeniable original contribution to science and practice. The dissertation proposes new conceptual frameworks and analytical tools with lasting value for communication theory and various professional algorithms across individual communication disciplines.

Scientific-theoretical contributions also open opportunities in the following directions:

- **Decentralized Branding Systems:** The author's concept enriches the theory of branding and integrated communications by revealing how decentralized systems maintain a sustainable identity and global consensus without direct administrative control.
- **Phenomenological Systematization:** Broad scientific information on the communication of the global phenomenon of Christmas has been systematized, covering historical, psychological, sociological, and media dimensions, establishing it as a legitimate object of scientific research. The systematization creates a solid interdisciplinary foundation for subsequent research into the role of seasonal and cultural phenomena in strategic branding, carrying a strong integrative impetus.
- **The Concept of "Value Resistance":** The contribution is of major importance to contemporary communication theory, proving that the most resilient brand identities are built around deep and authentic value cores.
- **The "Maslow's Christmas Tree" Model:** This model provides a new applied tool in communication management for the precise positioning of brand messages relative to levels of consumer motivation, which also represents a distinct creative impulse.
- **Historical Branding Audit:** A critical analysis of the replacement of Santa Claus with Grandfather Frost in the period 1945-1989. The analysis offers valuable insights for political and media branding, illustrating the limits and possibilities of institutional replacement of established cultural symbols, and makes a distinct contribution to the overall audit within the branding concept.
- **Conceptual Coding "adeloc" / "аделоК":** (with "Koleda" - Christmas in Bulgarian - spelled backwards). The concept enriches critical communication theory by demonstrating how resistance and antipodes can organically reinforce the resilience of the brand system itself in complex contemporary processes and across various directions, such as the post-truth framework, for example.

- **Innovative Predictive Method "3AIalog":** The method lays pioneering foundations for the use of generative artificial intelligence in the predictive modeling of brand strategies and public communications. A strong creative impulse, fully argued across various perspectives.

The scientific-applied contributions are well formulated, and their results are of major importance in both tactical and strategic conceptual terms for digital branding in the researched category.

The applied contributions contain specific practical tools that provide new opportunities in the field of communication management - from the creation and understanding of digital storytelling to optimizing the creative process and optimizing various communication and creative algorithms, such as agency and creative briefing, evaluation of individual stages, etc.

To the contributions systematized in this way, I would like to make an addition from the perspective of my research and professional expertise in the field of branding. In the study, a special place is occupied by the development of the concept of brand personality through the theoretical framework of David Aaker. I consider this an exceptionally valuable contribution point, as the developed approach creates a solid foundation for the study to be used and further elaborated in branding practice as a primary mechanism for building brand distinctiveness and, consequently, shaping consumer preferences in the researched category (according to current studies and results).

Assessment of publications on the dissertation: number, nature of the publications in which they are published

The publications on the dissertation meet the requirements according to the relevant criteria.

Citations by other authors, reviews in the scientific press, etc.

Citations by other authors, reviews in the scientific press, etc., are in full compliance with the requirements.

Opinions, recommendations, and remarks

My opinion of the dissertation of Prof. Dr. Desislava Boshnakova is completely positive. My recommendations are directed toward future horizons of this type of specific branding, to be researched synchronously with other key elements in branding. The impressive results of the multi- and interdisciplinary research serve as a solid springboard into such a relevant and still under-researched territory.

Another recommendation is directed toward systematizing the new concepts and creating new ones within the framework of a future terminological dictionary in the researched category. In this regard, it would be beneficial to consider the substantiated use of the terms trademark/brand (marka) and brand (brand, branding as a process) in the context of Bulgarian and established international academic theory and professional practice, considering, of course, certain specific characteristics.

Conclusion with a clearly formulated positive or negative assessment of the dissertation

The dissertation "Christmas Communication: Sustainability of Values - From Classical Campaigns to Digital Transformation" by Prof. Dr. Desislava Lyubomirova Boshnakova represents a completed, large-scale, and highly professional study. The work possesses indisputable scientific, scientific-applied, and applied merits, constructs a new conceptual framework for understanding decentralized communication systems, and offers innovative analytical tools of high value for academic theory and professional practice in media, communications, and branding.

The presented dissertation, the summary of dissertation (Autoreferat), and the scientific publications fully satisfy the requirements of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act, the Regulations for its Implementation, as well as the specific regulatory requirements and criteria of New Bulgarian University for the award of the scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences".

I would particularly like to share my personal impressions of Prof. Dr. Desi Boshnakova. Over the years, I have always been charmed, yet filled with deep respect for her overflowing, almost childlike curiosity toward everything new, combined in an incredible amalgam with a high academic spirit and ironclad professionalism...

Based on the indicated merits of the work, the thorough methodology, the originality and applicability of the formulated contributions, and the candidate's demonstrated research independence, I give my decisive POSITIVE EVALUATION of the dissertation.

I propose to the honorable Scientific Jury to award the scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences" to Prof. Dr. Desislava Lyubomirova Boshnakova in professional field 3.5. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION SCIENCES (MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS - PUBLIC RELATIONS).

Date: October 05, 2026
Sofia

Member of the Scientific Jury:
(Prof. Dr. Stefan Serezliev)
Signature: .....

