



## STATEMENT

With regards to a habilitation procedure to the academic position "associate professor" in  
Field of higher education: 3. Social, Economic and Legal sciences; professional field 3.8 Economics, scientific  
discipline - Marketing – Brand Management

New Bulgarian University

Faculty of International Finance, Department of Economics, State Gazette issue 56/02.07.2024 г.

Candidate: Chief Assist. Prof. Dr. Dimitar Ivanov Trendafilov

### 1. General information

*Author of the statement:* Assoc. Prof. Vladimir Sashov Zhechev PhD, scientific discipline "Marketing", Head of the department "Marketing" at the University of Economics-Varna.

*Regarding:* participation in an academic jury (ordinance № 3-PK-349/26.09.2024 г.) of the Rector of New Bulgarian University and first meeting of the scientific jury held on 02.10.2024. The stated ordinance has been issued based on a decision of the Academic Council of NBU (1/24.09.2024 г.).

### 2. Evaluation of the compliance with the minimum national requirements and the requirements of New Bulgarian University

With regards to the provisions of Art. 4, paragraph 8 of the Act on Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, I confirm that the documents submitted by the candidate, Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Dimitar Trendafilov, meet the minimum national requirements and the requirements of the New Bulgarian University.

### 3. Research (creative) activities and results

*3.1. Evaluation of the monographic work, including an assessment of the author's scientific and applied scientific contributions.*

The topic of the monograph is relevant and significant from a social and economic point of view. The author has studied abundant number of sources, cites many examples from the business of companies of different size and presents different standpoints (research, consulting, sociological, etc.), which shows the complexity of thinking and depth of understanding. My evaluation is presented according to the logic of appearance of the chapters in the monographic work and from the perspective of the set aim. I must admit that it was difficult for me to highlight it (albeit there are texts such as: "... present a broader picture of the market in both global and local, digital and traditional aspects, and in terms of production and sales, directing interested individuals and companies at least in a certain direction of thinking" and "my desire is to examine the phenomenon of the mobile user from several points of view.").



A significant part of the first chapter is presented in an interesting way, giving examples of “mobile users” from the perspective of digital nomadism, online networks, etc. Subsequently, references are made to the digital marketing environment, the building of digital competencies, the creation of added value through technologies. Some of the generalizations made do not fully correspond to the content of the chapter.

Chapter II compares qualities of generations Y and Z, paying attention to the process of segmentation, communication with both generations, placing them in the context of classical tools for analyzing the macro environment, describing perceptual differences and value systems. Despite the multi-layered comparisons, the presentation in places seems quite chaotic and difficult to follow logically.

Chapter III is dedicated to user experience. The beginning develops the thesis about the role of the brand in the relationship with consumers, putting special emphasis on the personalization of communications. Further, the chapter presents segmentation as a fundamental process in the formation of the user experience, examples of the dimensions of the experience are given, and three groups of marketing solutions are proposed. Before the overviews of this chapter are made, the author shapes the idea of mass personalization as a means of creating an experience. It is objective to point out that in the final part of the third chapter, the conclusions about the user experience through the prism of personal data and experience management are somewhat frivolously mixed.

The Fourth chapter encompasses creating convenience for consumers through multichannel setting, examining the specifics in online and offline environments. This chapter also presents the concept of a brand-consumer relationship, paying distinct attention to its integration into the provision of experience through numerous practical examples. Across this chapter, a certain degree of criticality of the presentation is observed from a theoretical and practical point of view.

Chapter V offers a comparative analysis of the marketing practices of the brands “Nike” and “Adidas” from the standpoint of creating consumer experiences. The comparison is made from the position of different dimensions of competitive rivalry (product portfolio, communications, growth, and environment). Finally, a summary of methods for improving the consumer experience is offered. It is not entirely clear how these brands were selected and what is their role in this context.

Chapter VI compares Bulgarian and global trends in profiling the so-called "neotraditional consumer". It also covers the role of social media, access via device types, online shopping experience, factors in choosing online purchases, etc. Some of them are presented through the prism of the behavior of generations Y and Z. The incorporation of the author's own research leaves a good impression.



Chapter VII, which is also the final chapter, outlines some significant trends in marketing. Special attention is dedicated to A.I., VR, AR, subscription business models, the role of packaging in forming contact with consumers, online streaming, etc. I believe that grouping trends would make this chapter easier to comprehend.

The conclusion has the nature of a summary and draws attention to the fact that the seven chapters presented are (somewhat) semantically separate, while still emphasizing the role and place of the "mobile consumer" in the contemporary development of marketing.

Some of the contributions that can be highlighted in the work are: (1) some contemporary trends in marketing are systematized and put into critical discussion; (2) applied aspects in the behavior of generations Y and Z are emphasized, which can serve companies from different industries in the design of marketing programs.

*Critical remarks:* (1) Given the declaration of a monographic work, I was unable to identify a specific scientific problem; (2) According to the additional provisions of the the Act on Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and, in particular, the definition of "monography", in many places in the work, generalizations of existing knowledge are made without applying specific empirical evidence based on a designed author's methodology; (3) the logic of constructing the work and the place of the mobile user in some of the examples is difficult to follow; (4) the style of presentation is in the field of narrative texts - typical characteristic of many sources in business literature, but in my opinion - not entirely suitable for a scientific work. The titles of the chapters and paragraphs are in a similar stylistics.

Despite what has been mentioned so far, I have reason to believe that creativity in this type of work should be encouraged and not restricted.

## *2. Evaluation of the contributions in the other publications*

The publications are mainly oriented towards two areas – marketing management and brand management (incl. brand positioning). Most of the works are conceptual, but with a strong practical orientation, which suggests their wider circulation not only among scientific, but also in business communities. In terms of volume, structure and content, the candidate's scientific production corresponds to the profile of the announced procedure for the academic position of "associate professor".

## **4. Registered citations by other authors**

A total of 10 citations were registered, which indicates that the scientific output generated by the candidate is not particularly visible to the scientific community. Part of the reason for this may probably be rooted in the priority of publishing in Bulgarian language.



## **5. Evaluation of the results of participation in research and creative projects and application of the obtained results in practice.**

It is evident that Chief Asst. Prof. Dr. Trendafilov has taken active part in numerous projects aimed at consulting and training business; creative initiatives with students; supporting management decisions at NBU. All this demonstrates the candidate's high competence and motivation to apply the results of his research experience in practice.

## **6. Didactic and teaching activities**

The candidate for the academic position "associate professor" works primarily in programs that are directly related to this procedure. The inclusions as a program consultant within the framework of joint programs of NBU with foreign universities, the active participation in interuniversity events (Olympiads, projects, etc.) are impressive.

A total of 362 contact hours have been declared for the academic year 2021/2022, 278 for 2022/2023, 244 for the academic year 2021/2022 and a large number of hours (measured in terms of extracurricular employment), which is a credential of commitment to the inherent marketing function of the department of the candidate. In addition, 5 foreign language courses are presented, which Dr. Trendafilov leads (including 3 with the University of Sheffield/York). The candidate works actively with students in various fields (including under the "Student Practices" project of the Ministry of Education and Science and through student Olympiads). A certificate of the candidate's excellent work is also the declared high average score for student satisfaction at NBU.

## **7. Administrative and public activities**

Dimitar Trendafilov is engaged in areas of high priority for NBU, such as international relations, strategic partnerships with foreign universities, membership in consortia and boards for managing joint programs. Activities related to attracting students to the various programs that New Bulgarian University offers have also been declared. Participation in two committees and three councils at the HEI level should also be acknowledged here.

The candidate also affirms participation as an institutional coordinator of NBU in the European University Alliance - with the aim of creating a university network in the period November 2020 - October 2023. It is objective to point out that the criterion of attracting funds for external university projects is key for the habilitation of academics in the UK. All stated facts are a great example of commitment and involvement in the academic life of the institution.

## **8. Personal impressions of the candidate (if any)**

My personal impressions are highly positive and were shaped within the framework of scientific conferences, at which I had the pleasure of exchanging ideas with Dr. Trendafilov, as well as during the "For Better Branding" conference, held on March 10, 2023.



## **9. Opinions, recommendations and notes on the candidate's activities and achievements**

The documents presented concerning the candidate's scientific and professional work experience give me reason to make the following recommendations for future activities: (1) join scientific teams; (2) carry on working in international projects and (3) focus scientific research in more specific domains (publications shall be predominantly in English language).

## **10. Conclusion**

Based on the review of the provided scientific works, their significance, the academic and applied contributions found in them, as well as the additional presented evidences, **I find sufficient reasons to propose Chief Asst. Prof. Dr. Dimitar Ivanov Trendafilov to be promoted to the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the field of higher education 3. "Social, Economic and Legal Sciences", professional field 3.8 "Economics" ("Marketing - Brand Management") at New Bulgarian University.** I am convinced that occupying the academic position of "Associate Professor" will provide opportunities for his future scientific development as a researcher and lecturer.

Date: 31.10.2024

Signature: