

REVIEW

by

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Scientific specialty: Marketing (Pricing Policy)

regarding the materials submitted for participation in the competition

for the academic position of "**professor**"
at Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski"

in: field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional direction 3.8.
Economics (Marketing)

In the competition for "professor" announced in the State Gazette, issue 96 of 11.11.2025, and on the website of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" for the needs of the Department of Marketing and International Economic Relations at the Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Teofana Valentinova Dimitrova-Staneva from PU "Paisii Hilendarski" is participating as a In the competition for "professor" announced in the State Gazette, issue 96 of 11.11.2025, and on the website of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" for the needs of the Department of Marketing and International Economic Relations at the Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Teofana Valentinova Dimitrova-Staneva from PU "Paisii Hilendarski" is participating as a candidate.

1. General presentation of the materials received

By Order No. ПД 22-44 of 09.01.2026 of the Rector of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" (PU), I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury in a competition for the academic position of "professor" at PU in the field of higher education 3. Social, Economic, and Legal Sciences, professional field 3.8. Economics (Marketing), announced for the needs of the Department of Marketing and International Economic Relations at the Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences.

As the sole candidate, Assoc. Prof. Teofana Valentinova Dimitrova, Ph.D., from Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski," Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences, Department of Marketing and International Economic Relations, submitted her application for the announced competition.

The set of materials on paper submitted by Assoc. Prof. Teofana Valentinova Dimitrova, Ph.D., complies with the Regulations for the Development of Academic Staff at Plovdiv University and includes the following documents:

- standard application form to the Rector of PU;
- CV in European format;
- diplomas for Master's degree and Doctorate degree;
- diploma for academic position of Associate Professor;
- list of scientific works;
- publications;
- minimum national requirements;
- declaration of originality and authenticity of the attached documents;
- abstracts of scientific works;
- self-assessment of contributions;
- list of citations;

- separation protocols;
- certificate of work experience;
- teaching work;
- research activity;
- documents for additional requirements of the Faculty of Information and Communication Systems;
- other documents – completed training courses, expert activity.

The list of publications by Assoc. Prof. Teofana Dimitrova includes a total of 65 titles, of which 4 are for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree of "doctor"; 26 for the academic position of "associate professor" and 35 for the academic position of "professor."

The publications for the academic position of "professor" are 1,245 pages long and are distributed by type as follows: 1 habilitation thesis – monograph; 2 published monographs that are not presented as a main habilitation thesis; 1 published book based on a defended dissertation for the award of an educational and scientific degree "doctor"; 12 studies, of which 8 in Scopus and Web of Science and 4 published in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals or published in edited collective volumes; 5 articles and reports in Scopus and Web of Science; 9 articles and 4 reports published in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals or published in edited collective volumes and 1 published university textbook.

The structure of Assoc. Prof. Teofana Dimitrova's scientific output is dominated by co-authored works. There are twenty-seven such works, and in fifteen of the co-authored publications (57.69%), the candidate is listed as the first author. There are eight titles of independent publications, but in terms of pages, they have a large relative share (nearly 50%). Twenty-three of the scientific works (65.71%) are in English and twelve (34.29%) are in Bulgarian.

The 35 scientific papers presented in the competition materials are accepted for evaluation without exception, as they are relevant to the subject matter of the competition and do not duplicate publications from the candidate's doctoral and first habilitation.

The documents in the form of official notes, certificates, separation protocols, evidence of publications in Scopus and Web of Science, and others are presented correctly.

The perfectly presented competition documentation attests to the precision and responsibility of the candidate for professor, which is confirmed after a detailed review of the content of the documents.

2. Brief biographical information about the candidate

Assoc. Prof. Teofana Dimitrova holds a Bachelor's degree in Marketing and a Master's degree in Corporate Finance from Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" (2002-2004). Since 2013, she has been a doctor in the Economics and Management (Industry) program at the same university. The combination of marketing knowledge with knowledge from other areas of economics has proven particularly useful for the teaching and research activities of Assoc. Prof. Dimitrova. In 2014, the candidate for professor was awarded the academic position of associate professor in PN 3.8. Economics (Marketing).

From 2003 to 2004, Assoc. Prof. Teofana Dimitrova was a regional representative of Abagar Finance AD, and since 2005 she has been a lecturer at Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski", Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences, Department of Marketing and International Economic Relations. From 2015 to 2023, she is the head of the Department of Marketing and International Economic Relations. Since 2019, she has been an independent expert at the National Agency for

Assessment and Accreditation. She is a member of the Union of Economists and the Union of Scientists in Bulgaria.

The candidate's continuous striving to build on her competencies by participating in various forms of training in management, particularly marketing issues, is impressive. She has completed training in StrikePlagiarism (plagiarism detection); training on "Improving Digital Skills"; and training on "Digital Psychology." She has participated in training on trademarks and industrial designs, training on "Basic and Internal Auditors ISO 9001/2015," and training on "Artificial Intelligence in Education." It should not be overlooked that Assoc. Prof. Dimitrova is a researcher with an identifier in Web of Science Researcher and Scopus, which allows her research to be promoted not only in Bulgaria but also abroad. Her registration with ORCID also contributes to this.

The biographical data of Assoc. Prof. Dimitrova illustrate her accumulated teaching, research, and professional experience, as well as her desire for continuous improvement. The candidacy of Assoc. Prof. Teofana Dimitrova for the next academic position (professor in the field of the announced competition) is fully justified.

3. General description of the candidate's activities

Assessment of the candidate's teaching and pedagogical activities and preparation

Assoc. Prof. Dimitrova teaches and has taught a wide range of subjects at bachelor's and master's degree level. These include courses in Marketing, Marketing Management, Brand Management, Marketing Research, Industrial Market Marketing, and Sales Management, which correspond thematically to the scientific field of the competition.

The reported classroom workload of Assoc. Prof. Dimitrova for the period 2020/2021 – 2024/2025 academic years amounts to a total of 2,266 hours of exercises in the Bachelor's degree program. The workload for each of the academic years exceeds the accepted norm of 300 hours for full-time lecturers at Plovdiv University. For the 2025/2026 academic year, the planned workload is also above the norm. It is 512 hours of classes in the subjects "Marketing" and "Marketing Management," included in the curricula of the bachelor's degree program for full-time and part-time study for various majors in the Faculty of Information and Communication Technologies, the Faculty of Philology, and the Faculty of Chemistry at Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski".

The high level of classroom workload is matched by the significant amount of extra-curricular work performed by the candidate for professor, which attests to his active work with students, graduates, and doctoral students. This is expressed in consultations and checking course projects; participation in state examination committees and examination committees for doctoral competitions; assigning written tasks for students' self-preparation and monitoring their implementation. The training conducted by Assoc. Prof. Dimitrova is distinguished by its innovative and discussion-oriented nature. Students respect her not only for her theoretical knowledge, but also for her ability to reveal the practical significance and application of the topics taught.

Assoc. Prof. Dimitrova was selected as the academic supervisor of three doctoral students. One of them successfully defended his dissertation and received the educational and scientific degree of "doctor," thereby fulfilling one of the additional requirements of the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences for the academic position of "professor." The other two doctoral students have been expelled with the right to defend their theses.

Assoc. Prof. Teofana Dimitrova has published a textbook entitled "Marketing Management" and a teaching aid entitled "Marketing (Theses, Tasks, Case Studies, Tests)". The textbook

"Marketing Management" is intended to support the training of bachelor's degree students in the majors "Marketing" and "Business Management" in their fourth year at FISN at Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski". It includes basic concepts and definitions, discussion questions, and sample exam tests, and provides basic knowledge about the essence of the concepts of marketing, management, and marketing management. The textbook also covers the main analytical tools and techniques that assist the marketing manager. With this textbook and teaching aid, Assoc. Prof. Teofana Dimitrova has provided the necessary information support for the subjects she teaches and studies.

The creative activity of the candidate for professor is manifested in the preparation of three lecture courses: "Marketing Management" and "Marketing Research" for the Bachelor's degree program and "Brand Management" for the Master's degree program, with corresponding curricula developed. She is the head of two master's programs at the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences at Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski": "Marketing" (discontinued) and "Marketing and Sales" (active).

I firmly believe that the teaching activities of Assoc. Prof. Teofana Dimitrova, PhD, demonstrate accumulated teaching experience and routine, as well as a high degree of preparedness for the academic position of "professor" in the requested specialty.

Assessment of the candidate's scientific and applied scientific activity

In the scientific output of Assoc. Prof. Teofana Dimitrova accepted for review, several areas in the field of marketing can be distinguished: sustainable consumer behavior; marketing in the higher education sector; educational branding; marketing management in various sectors. Given the comprehensive nature of marketing, the identification of these areas is not absolute, as they are interdependent and appear simultaneously in almost all of the candidate's scientific works.

The important scientific and applied scientific results can be found in the content of the publications, which are briefly discussed by area in the following order:

➤ **Sustainable consumer behavior (Publications: 1, 9, 13, 24)**

Assessment of the monograph

The candidate's monograph, presented as a habilitation thesis, deserves high praise. It was published in English under the title "Sustainable consumer behavior: From global evidence to local insights among Generation Z in Bulgaria." It is devoted to an extremely topical issue for our times – sustainable consumer behavior (SCB) in the context of its relationship with the new consumption patterns of Generation Z in Bulgaria in the face of deepening global environmental challenges. Although numerous studies examine sustainability issues in different countries, activities in this key area in Bulgaria are very limited, and integrated research on the topic is practically non-existent. Therefore, the author's decision to start from global data and move on to local observations among Generation Z in Bulgaria is natural and reasonable.

The topic is marketing-oriented because, on the one hand, marketing influences consumer choice. On the other hand, the growing demand for sustainable products is changing marketing itself. The ambitious goal of the author of the monograph is to systematize and analyze the set of peer-reviewed studies on sustainable consumer behavior and to test a conceptual research framework that captures its manifestation among Generation Z in Bulgaria. This goal has been achieved, as evidenced by the content of the study. The structure of the monograph is very well balanced and demonstrates the logical development of the research.

The first chapter provides the theoretical basis for the subsequent parts of the monograph. It offers a comprehensive review of research on sustainable consumer behavior. Global scientific output is studied and systematized through a bibliometric analysis of publications indexed in two of the most significant international scientific information databases – Scopus and Web of Science – for the period from 1999 to 2024. In the course of the presentation, influential journals, the most relevant sources and their dynamics, the most relevant authors and research networks for collaboration between them, dominant countries, keywords, and thematic areas are identified. A significant evolution in research on sustainable consumer behavior has been observed over the last three decades – from fragmented early publications to a rapidly expanding and increasingly specialized scientific field. The bibliometric approach adopted by the author not only systematizes scientific progress in the selected subject area, but also reveals existing gaps that are potential directions for future research.

The second chapter is theoretical and methodological in nature. The systematic literature review of UPP among Generation Z is presented in accordance with the PRISMA methodology established in international scientific practice. The search for published empirical studies was carried out in three databases – Scopus, Web of Science Core Collection, and ProQuest, using clearly defined inclusion and exclusion criteria. This chapter identifies the main concepts, determining factors, barriers, and mechanisms related to sustainable consumer behavior among Generation Z. The theoretical frameworks and research designs used in global studies are presented. Attention is focused on behavioral outcomes and the degree of influence of the tested mediators and moderators on them. Key gaps in the existing literature and future directions for research are highlighted.

It has been established that research on UPP among Generation Z is largely based on established behavioral models, primarily the theory of planned behavior, which serves as the dominant conceptual framework. In the reviewed materials, most of the behavioral outcomes studied are related to the intentions and behavior of Generation Z consumers. The determinants and manifestations of UPP are not universal but vary depending on the economic sector and the cultural-geographical context. Significant methodological consistency has been demonstrated in measuring the determinants of UPP among Generation Z.

The third chapter, which is evaluative and prescriptive in nature, presents the conceptual framework, methodology, and results of an empirical study on Generation Z's sustainable clothing purchasing behavior in Bulgaria. The conclusions are based on the studies in the previous presentation, as well as on a review of 56 additional scientific articles on sustainable fashion. The conclusions form the basis for formulating the objective of the empirical analysis – to examine the factors influencing the purchasing behaviour of Generation Z in Bulgaria with regard to sustainable clothing. A specific methodology has been proposed to address this objective, which has been tested in the course of the study.

Assoc. Prof. Teofana Dimitrova successfully chooses to test seven determinants considered to be potential precursors of sustainable clothing purchasing behavior: environmental knowledge, subjective norm, attitude toward sustainable clothing purchases, environmental concern, social media, materialism, and intention to purchase sustainable clothing. These determinants are taken into account in the formulation of 15 hypotheses, which are tested using appropriate statistical tools. Twelve of the hypotheses are fully confirmed, while three are rejected.

Based on the results of testing the formulated hypotheses, the main factors influencing consumer behavior when purchasing sustainable clothing among Generation Z in Bulgaria, as well

as the established dependencies between them, are distinguished. In conducting the empirical study and justifying its results, the candidate demonstrates excellent analytical skills, skillfully using the symbiosis of "marketing-statistics." At the end of the third chapter, guidelines for further empirical analysis in the field of study are summarized once again.

The conclusion of the monograph systematizes the most important points from the presentation. The monograph ends with a summary, a list of sources, and appendices.

The reviewed monograph is distinguished by its depth, systematicity, and scientific logic in the presentation of the research results. In proving the defended positions with appropriate scientific and empirical argumentation, theoretical, methodological, and practical achievements are outlined, which are of a contributory nature. With regard to sustainable consumer behavior among Generation Z in Bulgaria, this monograph presents the first study of its kind with such a national scope and research design. The monograph fully meets the requirements for the academic position of "professor".

In other publications in the field of sustainable consumption:

- In theoretical terms and through empirical analysis, the effect of individual factors on it is environmental well-being (publication 13). The study "Exploring Factors Affecting SCB" was initially published in an international journal, but was subsequently selected for inclusion in a peer-reviewed (publication 9), as well as the relationship between public awareness and care for ewed collection, which is international recognition of the contribution of its authors (Assoc. Prof. Dimitrova is one of them) to research on SCB.

- The impact of globalization on consumption and environmentally oriented consumer behavior in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic is examined (publication 24). The data used (from Eurostat and the Environmental Protection Index) for the desk study did not yield the expected results. A proprietary methodology and subsequent registration of primary data were developed. The results obtained contribute to a better understanding of the impact of pandemic situations on consumption and environmentally conscious consumer behavior.

➤ **Marketing in the higher education sector** (Publications: 2, 3, 11, 16, 19, 20, 22, 28, 32, 33, 34)

Special attention in the candidate's scientific output is devoted to the marketing management of higher education in Bulgaria. The need to adopt the marketing concept as a management principle by educational institutions that are part of the higher education system is argued. Specific actions for its implementation are indicated. The theory of competitiveness is adapted to the specifics of higher education. Arguments are presented in favor of marketing communications as a key factor in building competitive advantages in the higher education system. The issues of the quality of the educational product of the higher education institution and its decisive role in the process of forming/changing the public image of the educational institution are examined. A draft strategy for building the public image of PU has been developed in line with national and European strategic documents.

➤ **Educational branding** (Publications: 6, 10, 25)

This area of the candidate's scientific interests focuses on the development, construction, and advancement of branding in the education system. In this regard, the importance of studying student brand loyalty for making the right management decisions affecting students as consumers of educational products has been determined. The variables for measuring student brand loyalty, as well as the interrelationships between some of them, have been specified. The perceptions of

students regarding dual vocational education and training in Bulgaria have been studied. The main determinants of student loyalty and word-of-mouth communication in secondary education have been specified.

➤ **Marketing management in various sectors** (Publications: 5, 12, 14, 15, 18, 21, 23, 26, 29, 30, 31, 35)

Due to the special, dynamically changing role of marketing in global business, today there is a growing need for its application in its multi-variability in various sectors of the economy. The candidate's scientific output in this area includes a number of theoretical and empirical studies in this direction. Some of them can be summarized as follows:

- *In the field of finance:* a survey was conducted on end users' perceptions of ethical marketing behavior in the mobile and banking services market in Bulgaria; the application of product innovations in the banking sector through appropriate marketing strategies was analyzed; opportunities for competitive positioning of Bulgarian mobile operators in a digital environment were identified; Bulgarian business practices in the use of cryptocurrencies were analyzed.

- *In the field of healthcare:* applied hybrid model for strategic analysis, improving the functionality of the SWOT method through the mathematical precision of the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) of the Neurology Department at St. Panteleimon Hospital – Plovdiv. Proposed methodology and conducted survey based on data recorded through expert assessment. A methodology was proposed and a survey was conducted based on data recorded through expert assessment. The results obtained by integrating the two methods (SWOT and AHP) allow for a quantitative assessment and analysis of factors that would otherwise be difficult to measure.

- *In the field of industry:* a conceptual model of the product mix management system in the brewing industry was developed and tested; the SPACE analysis method was presented and tested on the example of an industrial enterprise in the "Production of wine from fresh grapes" sector; demonstrated the probability of natural language processing and machine learning methods being applied to analyze expert-written descriptions of Bulgarian wines and to extract patterns related to wine quality and style; examined the process of digital transformation and compared models for assessing its readiness and maturity applicable to industrial enterprises.

The content of Assoc. Prof. Teofana Dimitrova's scientific research activities is distinguished by its theoretical basis, practical orientation, seriousness, and scientific accuracy.

The scientific and applied scientific achievements of the candidate mentioned in the presentation so far can be summarized as follows:

Scientific contributions:

- systematization of theoretical studies in the field of sustainable consumer behavior and further development of existing scientific theories in this field;
- identifying the theoretical frameworks and research designs used in global studies related to sustainable consumer behavior among Generation Z;
- revealing key gaps in the existing literature and empirical analyses in the field of sustainable consumption and consumer behavior of Generation Z, which are potential guidelines for future research;
- further developing theoretical frameworks for the marketing management of higher education in Bulgaria and the strategy for brand development, building, and growth in the education system;

- expanding existing knowledge on marketing management in various sectors - finance, healthcare, industry. Demonstrating the need to rethink marketing behavior in the digital environment and in the context of the green transformation of the country's economy.

Scientific applied contributions

- presented a conceptual framework and developed a methodology for researching sustainable clothing purchasing behavior among Generation Z. Conducted empirical research to validate the methodology and summarized results on the effects of key factors on purchase intention and actual sustainable consumer behavior;
- adaptation, development, and validation of models, methodologies, and approaches for measuring consumer behavior, taking into account the specific characteristics of Bulgarian research participants, thereby enriching the methodology of marketing management of sustainable consumer behavior in the Bulgarian context;
- deriving useful practical results from empirical research in the field of marketing management in higher education and other sectors;
- conducting a pioneering study in Bulgaria on the communication practices and activities of Bulgarian higher education institutions. Provided valuable advice to interested public groups, prospective students, current students, and employers;
- proposed an original conceptual model for measuring the innovative performance of biotechnology companies with a corresponding set of tools, whose testing revealed its practical applicability.

Assoc. Prof. Dimitrova has participated in 7 research projects, of which 1 in the role of leader and 1 in the role of coordinator.

The scientometric requirements for citing scientific research by other scientists fully meet the requirements for holding the academic position of "professor". Both the number and the significance of the references to the candidate's publications by other scientists are remarkable: 44 citations in scientific publications, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases of scientific information; 4 citations in monographs and collective volumes with scientific review; 19 other citations in non-refereed journals with scientific review. The number of citations shows that the candidate's scientific production has received public recognition among scientific circles in our country and abroad.

To account for compliance with the minimum requirements, Assoc. Prof. Dimitrova has submitted a completed card in the competition materials, which shows that she meets the minimum national and additional requirements for holding the academic position of "professor" in the FISN at the "Paisii Hilendarski" University.

The rich research activity of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Teofana Dimitrova is evidence of an exceptionally high level of professional expertise. In the peer-reviewed scientific works, critical understanding of theories and methodological approaches, clear definition of problems and design of guidelines for their solution are observed.

4. Assessment of the candidate's personal contribution

I accept the scientific and applied scientific contributions formulated by Assoc. Prof. Dimitrova, which are actually contained in her scientific production. In essence, they correspond to the scientific achievements presented in the review, but presented in more detail. The contributions are the candidate's own work or a team work with other co-authors, but with his significant creative

participation. Assoc. Prof. Dimitrova has noted in the annotations her personal presence in the collective developments and has declared the originality of the results and contributions

5. Critical remarks and recommendations

I have no critical remarks on the content, structure, style and the achieved scientific and scientific-applied results of the candidate. Considering the relevance and importance of the topic of the monograph, I recommend that Assoc. Prof. Dr. Teofana Dimitrova continue her research on the gaps in theoretical and empirical research in the field of sustainable consumer behavior that she has outlined. I also take the liberty of advising her to further develop her research on marketing topics, placing an emphasis on independent monographic publications.

6. Personal Impressions

I know Dr. Teofana Dimitrova as a conscious, responsible and thorough researcher with significant scientific potential and teaching capabilities. Her ability to combine theory with practice is remarkable, by applying theoretical constructs to the study of specific objects and, conversely, building her theoretical hypotheses on the basis of empirical data.

CONCLUSION

The documents and materials presented by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Teofana Valentinova Dimitrova-Staneva meet all the requirements of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ADSRB), the Regulations for the Implementation of the ADSRB and the relevant Regulations of the University "Paisii Hilendarski."

The candidate in the competition has presented a significant number of scientific papers published after the materials used in the defense of the ONS "doctor" and for occupying the academic position "associate professor". The candidate's works contain original scientific and applied contributions that have received international recognition, with a representative part of them being published in journals and scientific collections published by international academic publishing houses. His theoretical developments have practical applicability, with some of them being directly oriented towards academic work. The scientific and teaching qualifications of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Teofana Valentinova Dimitrova are unquestionable.

The results achieved by the candidate in academic and research activities fully comply with the minimum national and additional requirements of the Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences at Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski", adopted in connection with the Regulations of the Faculty for the Implementation of the Law on the Education, Training and Research of the Republic of Bulgaria.

After reviewing the materials and scientific papers presented in the competition and in view of the analysis of their significance and the scientific, applied and applied contributions contained therein, I find it reasonable to give my positive assessment and to recommend to the Scientific Jury to prepare a report proposal to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences for the election of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Teofana Valentinova Dimitrova-Staneva to the academic position of "professor" at the "Paisii Hilendarski" University in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field 3.8. Economics (Marketing).

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Reviewer:
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