



## REVIEW

### regarding a dissertation for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree “Doctor”

*Reviewer:* **Prof. Mariyana Varbanova Bozhinova, PhD**, D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics - Svishtov, Department of Tourism Economics and Management

*Author of the dissertation:* **Yoana Angelova Konstantinova**, PhD student at the Department of Tourism Economics and Management, D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics – Svishtov

*Title of the dissertation:* **„Development of Cultural-Historical Tourism through the Implementation of Innovations”**

The dissertation submitted for evaluation is intended for discussion by the academic committee appointed by Order No. 317/10.04.2025 of the Rector of D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics – Svishtov. I was selected as a reviewer at the first meeting of the scientific jury, held on 14.04.2025.

#### I. General characteristics of the dissertation

The dissertation by Yoana Angelova Konstantinova is a well-structured, logically coherent, and in-depth study consisting of **202 standard pages** of main text, supported by graphical, tabular, and appropriately processed empirical material.

The dissertation is distinguished by its **balanced structure**, comprising an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, and a list of references. The research is clearly illustrated with 7 tables and 14 figures. The dissertation includes a declaration of originality and authenticity, as well as 7 appendices.

In the course of addressing the various research problems, the PhD candidate has reviewed an extensive body of academic literature, comprising 151 sources—54 in Cyrillic and 97 in Latin script. Additionally, 78 strategic documents, 18 legal and regulatory documents, and 44 online sources were examined. This demonstrates the author's thorough awareness of both Bulgarian and international research related to the specific topic under discussion.

**The main aim** of the dissertation is to examine, both theoretically and practically, the potential for the development of cultural-historical tourism in municipalities within the Danube tourist region through the implementation of innovations, and to propose a suitable model with an algorithm for measuring this potential.

To achieve this aim, *five research objectives* were formulated, each aligned with the main aim of the study. I believe that PhD candidate Yoana Konstantinova has successfully achieved her primary research aim and fulfilled the stated research objectives. On this basis, she substantiates her main research thesis, namely: "... innovations play a key role in the sustainable development of cultural-historical tourism, and therefore, suitable models can be proposed for implementation concerning the municipalities within the Danube tourist region, with the aim of introducing innovations into this type of tourism."

**The object** of the research encompasses the municipalities within the Danube tourist region that offer cultural-historical tourism products.

**The subject** of the research is the measurement of the potential for the implementation of innovations in cultural-historical tourism within municipalities.

I consider the aim, objectives, thesis, object, and subject to be well-defined.

A variety of research *approaches and methods* have been applied in the dissertation, including induction and deduction, analysis and synthesis, SWOT analysis, content analysis, the Likert scale, observation method, survey and interview methods, historical method, and statistical methods.

Overall, the study correctly identifies certain *limitations*. The cited literature sources are appropriately referenced.

In conclusion, *the dissertation complies with the requirements of Article 27, Paragraph 2 of the Regulations for the Implementation of the Act on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.*

## **II. Evaluation of the Form and Content of the Dissertation**

**The topic** of the dissertation is notable for its relevance, practical significance, and academic merit. Its relevance is well justified in the introduction. The dissertation demonstrates originality, evidenced both by its focus on the development of cultural-historical tourism in Bulgaria through the implementation of innovations and by the anti-plagiarism report, which indicates a similarity rate of only 6%.

The scientific exploration of the subject matter is important for both academic theory and tourism practice. PhD candidate Yoana Konstantinova successfully addresses the specificities and challenges of cultural-historical tourism and its product, including possible innovations. She proposes models for the implementation of innovations in cultural-historical tourism and for measuring the potential for innovation at the municipal level. Based on the validation of these models, she substantiates concrete measures for the development of cultural-historical tourism in the Danube tourist region (DTR) through innovation.

It must be emphasized that developing such a topic requires strong theoretical preparation and analytical skills. In her dissertation, the author demonstrates a critical approach to scientific perspectives and maintains a consistent academic writing style.



The structure and content of the study are logically and sequentially organized. Thus, the exposition meets the main qualitative requirements for evaluation: originality of the research; deep insight into the essence of the problem; methodological rigor in achieving the research goal through the application of appropriate analytical tools.

*Chapter One* (pp. 15–63) has a theoretical and conceptual nature, which is appropriate and forms the foundation for the research in the following chapters. This chapter is divided into four sections, which consecutively clarify: the specific features of cultural-historical tourism; the scope of its product; innovations in the context of cultural-historical tourism; and the opportunities and challenges related to innovation implementation. A literature review is conducted, covering the perspectives of various Bulgarian and international authors on the essence of cultural-historical tourism and related concepts, as well as the peculiarities of innovation in this sector. Key challenges for innovation implementation are systematized, and good practices are presented.

*Chapter Two* (pp. 64–117) has a methodological focus and is dedicated to approaches for analyzing cultural-historical tourism with the aim of implementing innovations. This chapter reflects well on the competencies of PhD candidate Konstantinova. It is divided into three parts. The first one covers key methods and models for tourism analysis. The second part focuses on the development of a model for measuring the potential for the implementation of innovations at the municipal level. The third part proposes a model for the implementation of innovations in cultural-historical tourism, based on theoretical concepts related to the innovation cycle and open innovation.

*Chapter Three* (pp. 118–167) has a practical orientation. It begins with an analysis of the macro- and microenvironment and the critical points in the development of cultural-historical tourism in the DTR, where the proposed models are tested. The second section assesses the current state of cultural-historical tourism and innovation in DTR municipalities. Based on this, the third section outlines guidelines for innovation implementation, and the final section presents specific measures for the development of cultural-historical tourism in the DTR through innovations.

A notable strength is that each chapter concludes with summaries that reflect the candidate's views.

The illustrative material is of high quality and enhances the reader's understanding of the subject matter.

The writing style adheres to the standards for a doctoral dissertation.

**The abstract** accurately reflects the key elements of the dissertation content. The scientific and applied contributions listed in the abstract are consistent with the actual contributions of the dissertation and are the original work of the candidate.

There are four independent **publications** related to the dissertation - two articles and two conference papers. These contributions earn the candidate 40 points, exceeding the 30-point minimum required by the Act on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria. These publications demonstrate that key parts of the dissertation have been publicly presented and have received scholarly recognition.

### **III. Scientific and Applied Contributions of the Dissertation**

The main merits of the dissertation can be summarized as follows:

*First*, the existing knowledge of cultural-historical tourism and the scope of its product, as well as the characteristics of innovations in the context of cultural-historical tourism, has been enriched through in-depth exploration, synthesis, and critical analysis of key theoretical concepts (scientific contribution).

*Second*, the study conducts a synthesis and critical analysis of key theoretical and applied models and methods for analysis in tourism, taking into account the concepts of the innovation cycle and open innovation, which serve as the foundation for the development of original models (scientific-applied contribution).

*Third*, a Model for Measuring the Potential for the Implementation of Innovations at the Municipal Level and a Model for the Implementation of Innovations in Cultural-Historical Tourism have been developed, complete with specified algorithms aimed at achieving maximum effectiveness (scientific-applied contribution).

*Fourth*, the proposed models have been tested in municipalities within the Danube tourist region, based on which specific measures and guidelines for the implementation of innovations have been formulated to support the development of cultural-historical tourism in the region (scientific-applied contribution).

In summary, the contributions of the dissertation, in my view, relate to enriching the existing body of knowledge, applying scientific achievements to tourism practice, and contributing to its enhancement.

### **IV. Critical Remarks, Questions, and Recommendations on the Dissertation**

During the internal departmental review process, and in my capacity as an internal reviewer, I provided critical remarks and recommendations, which PhD candidate Yoana Konstantinova has responsibly and thoroughly incorporated into her work.

The dissertation addresses an engaging and important topic that raises several questions. I would like to pose the following to the candidate:

1. How could the proposed Model for Measuring the Potential for the Implementation of Innovations in Cultural-Historical Tourism at the Municipal Level support strategic management processes at the local level?
2. What organizational decisions should be implemented to ensure the effective functioning of the proposed Unified Information System for Cultural-Historical Tourism?

### **V. Summary Conclusion and Opinion**

The reviewed dissertation is a thoroughly conducted, original, and extensive scientific-applied study in a relevant field of tourism research, specifically in the area of cultural-historical tourism. It meets the requirements of the Act on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the regulations for its implementation.



This provides me with full grounds to confidently give a *positive assessment* of the dissertation and to recommend to the esteemed jury that *Yoana Angelova Konstantinova* be awarded the educational and scientific degree *Doctor* in the scientific specialty Economics and Management (Tourism).

05.05.2025  
Svishtov

Reviewer: .....  
(Prof. M. Bozhinova, PhD)