

STATEMENT

Prepared by: **Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mariana Kirilova-Ianeva**, Tsenov Academy of Economics, Department "Tourism Economics and Management"

Author of the dissertation: **Simeon Simeonov**, PhD student at Department "Economics and Management of Tourism" at S. A. "D.A. Tsenov" – Svishtov

Dissertation topic: **"State and development of the culinary tourism in Bulgaria"**

I. General presentation of the dissertation:

The dissertation, prepared by Simeon Ventsislavov Simeonov represents a structured, logical, and in-depth study, consisting of **225 standard pages** of main text, supported by graphical, tables and appropriately processed empirical material. The dissertation is characterized by a relatively **balanced structure**, including an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, and a bibliography. The research is clearly illustrated through tables and figures.

In relation to the development of the various problems, the PhD student has studied a significant volume of scientific literature, the list of which includes **108 titles** in Bulgarian and English, as well as online resources. This testifies to the author's deep awareness of the specific issues discussed, drawing on both Bulgarian and foreign sources.

II. Assessment of the format and content of the dissertation:

The **relevance and importance** of the studied issues are convincingly and thoroughly highlighted, especially in connection with the growing interest in authentic tourist experiences through the consumption of culinary tourism products. These products allow tourists to use their senses to become familiar with the identity of the destination they are visiting.

The **topic** of the dissertation is current, significant and important for shaping the vision of tourism in Bulgaria, through the proper management and positioning of authentic culinary products that attract both Bulgarian and international tourists using sensory experience methods. The relevance is well defined and defended in the introduction of the work.

The **dissertation abstract** consistently and accurately reflects the main work, presenting the three chapters and the conclusion as follows:

First chapter is theoretical and foundational, serving as a basis for the research conducted in the subsequent chapters;

Second chapter is dedicated to the methodological framework for studying culinary tourism in Bulgaria;

Third chapter presents the results and analysis of the conducted survey, trends, and directions for managing culinary tourism destinations, along with a proposed strategic model for the development of culinary tourism in Bulgaria;

Conclusion, which is a synthesized summary of the dissertation, used scientific sources and appendices.

III. Scientific and applied contributions of the dissertation:

In addition to the scientific and applied contributions identified by the PhD student, I believe that the work also contains the following contributions:

- Formation of consumer behavior models and consumer profiles, which can be used both for the development of culinary tourism products and for creating marketing strategies to attract potential groups of tourists interested in culinary tourism;
- Presentation of research methods and approaches for analyzing culinary tourism in Bulgaria, which could serve for future studies on the topic;
- Identification of strategic opportunities to improve the management of culinary tourism through innovative and sustainable practices.

IV. Questions regarding the dissertation:

I do not have any questions on the dissertation paperwork.

V. Summary evaluation and conclusion:

The dissertation is a conscientious, original and large-scale scientific-applied research in a current field of tourism studies, particularly culinary tourism. It meets the requirements of the Law for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and its implementing regulations. Therefore, I give a positive evaluation of the dissertation for awarding the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” in professional field 3.8 Economics, PhD program “Economics and Management (Tourism)” to Simeon Ventsislavov Simeonov.

Date: 04.07.2025

Prepared by:
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mariana Ianeva
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