

TO

THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SCIENTIFIC JURY

DETERMINED BY ORDER OF THE RECTOR

OF THE "D.A. TSENOV" ACADEMY OF ECONOMY – SVISHTOV

on the procedure for acquiring the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Tourism)"

REVIEW

For acquiring the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the professional field 3.9. "Tourism", doctoral program "Economics and Management (Tourism)" according to the announced procedure by the "D.A. Tsenov" Academy of Economics Svishtov

Reviewer: Prof. Dr. Bratoy Georgiev Koprinarov, College of Tourism at Burgas State University "Prof. Dr. A. Zlatarov"- Burgas, scientific specialty 3.9. "Tourism"

Author of the dissertation: Nevena Rumenova Lyaskova-Velikova, full-time doctoral student at the Department of "Economics and Management of Tourism" at the "D.A.Tsenov" Academy of Economics, Svishtov

Topic of the dissertation: "Potential of innovative tourism products based on the experience economy"

The scientific work submitted for evaluation is intended for discussion by a scientific jury, determined by Order No. 585/ 04.07.2025 of the Rector of the "D. A.Tsenov" Academy of Economics - Svishtov. I have been selected as a reviewer according to the decision of the first meeting of the scientific jury, held on 08.07.2025.

1. General presentation of the dissertation

The author of the dissertation Nevena Rumenova Lyaskova-Velikova is a full-time doctoral student at the Department of "Economics and Management of Tourism", in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field 3.8. "Economics", doctoral program "Economics and Management (Tourism)".

The dissertation work of Nevena Rumenova Lyaskova-Velikova consists of 205 pages, of which: introduction (4 pages); presentation in three chapters (175 pages); conclusion (5 pages); list of used literature (11 pages). The main text contains 23 tables and 26 figures. The list of cited literature covers 161 sources, including 123 literature and 27 websites. The dissertation work also has 2 appendices.

The object of the proposed research is innovative tourist products based on the experience economy, examined in the context of their demand and supply on the tourist market in Bulgaria.

The subject of the research is the potential for development of innovative tourist products that are related and correspond to the experience economy.

The aim of the dissertation is to reveal the potential for the development of innovative tourism products based on experiences, through a theoretically grounded and empirically validated approach, and to propose guidelines for increasing their demand and supply.

The scientific aim of the dissertation fully corresponds to the need indicated by the author, through a theoretically grounded and empirically validated approach, to reveal the potential for the development of innovative tourism products based on experiences, and to propose guidelines for increasing their demand and supply.

To achieve the scientific aim thus formulated, doctoral student Nevena Velikova sets and implements the following research tasks: conducting a theoretical analysis of the experience economy and the types of tourism included in it; characterizing and classifying innovative tourism products, with an emphasis on those related to the experience economy; reviewing the methods for studying the potential for innovative tourism products, on the basis of which a conceptual model for studying this potential is proposed; research and analysis of the attitudes of tourists and experts regarding the use and implementation of innovations in tourism related to experiences, drawing conclusions based on the results of the survey; making recommendations for increasing the demand and supply of innovative tourism products in the field of the experience economy.

The thesis successfully verifies and proves that the modern tourist market in Bulgaria has a high potential for offering innovative tourist products based on the experience economy, which are often preferred in modern conditions by tourists and by enterprises and organizations in the field of tourism.

The scientific research methods used correspond to the scientific research goal and tasks set in the dissertation.

The sources of information are specialized literature, including scientific works by Bulgarian and foreign authors (mainly in English), specialized publications of tourist organizations, research agencies and consulting companies, regulatory acts, etc.

In terms of structure, the content of the dissertation is logically linked, detailed, consistent, with relatively well-balanced parts, the style is clear and understandable. The dissertation work is distinguished by a clearly expressed author's position, originality and depth of the conclusions, with a precise scientific apparatus.

The doctoral student's authorial approach is consistent with the requirements of the research methods used. There is a clearly expressed authenticity of the source data, consistency and reliability of the conclusions and recommendations.

The research logic and structure of the dissertation are correct and well presented. The structuring follows the traditional approach in writing similar scientific papers, first the theoretical foundations of the issue are clarified, secondly the research methodology is presented and thirdly the described methodology is logically applied to the specific issue and the necessary conclusions and recommendations. The doctoral student successfully demonstrates the ability to conduct and analyze independent scientific research, to interpret results, to generate ideas and proposals.

The dissertation has the character of a comprehensive, complete, original and significant scientific study on the problem of innovative tourism products based on the experience economy, the conclusion that the "experience economy" focuses on the creation of unique and personalized tourism experiences that meet the individual needs and preferences of tourists is argued.

The above findings allow me to draw the following conclusion: the dissertation work is presented in a form and volume that meets the requirements of Art. 27, para. 2 of the PPZRASRB and Art. 34, para. 2 and para. 3 of the Rules for the conditions and procedure for acquiring scientific degrees and occupying academic positions at the SA "D.A.Tsenov"-Svishtov

II. Assessment of the form and content of the dissertation work

The scientific work submitted for review follows the classical structure for similar types of scientific works: introduction, main content of the scientific research in three chapters, conclusion, bibliographic reference and appendices and corresponds to the necessary requirements for developing a dissertation scientific work.

The merit of the doctoral student is the successful combination of the dissertationability of the dissertation work with relevance and practical significance. The conducted scientific research is of essential importance not only for theory, but also for tourism practice in the light of current trends in the development of tourism demand. Doctoral student Nevena Velikova has successfully managed to cover the specifics and trends in the development of innovation processes in tourism products in the context of the "experience economy".

I clearly and categorically emphasize that in the development of the dissertation work the author reveals that he has the necessary theoretical training and expresses his analytical abilities for scientific research. There is a clearly expressed critical analysis, a reasoned author's position and a scientific style.

Chapter one is introductory in nature and it studies the theoretical foundation of the experience economy, its essence, characteristics and emergence. The types of tourism and

tourism activities that are part of the experience economy are examined. Innovations in tourism and types of innovative products in tourism are presented. As a result of a critical analysis of the specialized Bulgarian and foreign literature, the essence of the concept of "experience economy" is clarified and the main aspects of its earliest manifestation are deduced.

Doctoral student Velikova successfully participates in the existing theoretical debate on the topic of "experience economy", in which she highlights her generalized conclusion that "experience is becoming a basic "resource" and "capital" of the tourism economy - a resource that is not exhausted by consumption, but can generate long-term loyalty, positive reputation and competitive advantage". In this aspect, the dissertation indicates that innovative products in tourism, based on the experience economy, represent innovative solutions and services designed to improve the experience of tourists.

The interpretations, inferences and conclusions of PhD student Velikova allow us to confirm that the first chapter forms a solid theoretical basis for understanding the importance of experiences as an economic value and emphasizes the need to develop innovative approaches in creating tourism products that meet modern consumer expectations and trends in the tourism sector.

The research in the second chapter of the dissertation is related to methodological issues regarding the potential for the development of innovative tourism products. It covers a theoretical analysis of the methods for studying the potential for innovative tourism products and, on this basis, the development and justification of a conceptual model for studying the potential for innovative tourism products. A significant contribution is also noted in the second chapter, in which PhD student Velikova presents a conceptual model for studying the potential for innovative tourism products based on the experience economy.

The developed conceptual model for studying the potential for innovative tourism products based on the experience economy provides a comprehensive analytical framework that unites the main factors influencing the formation, development and perception of experience-related tourism.

The issues examined in the second chapter give grounds for doctoral student Velikova to draw the following findings and conclusions:

First, the introduction of innovations in tourism is a key element for increasing the competitiveness and sustainable development of the tourism sector;

Second, in the context of innovative tourism products, potential can denote the ability of a given territory, organization or community to create and offer experiences that meet modern trends, needs and expectations of tourists;

Third, the application of various methods for studying the potential for innovative tourism products allows for a more in-depth and objective understanding of the opportunities and challenges facing their development.

Fourth, the proposed conceptual model for studying the potential for innovative tourism products based on the experience economy represents a comprehensive, structured and practically applicable approach. The model offers a logical sequence of stages that encompass an analysis of the resources and superstructure of the destination, as well as a study of the demand and supply of innovative products through direct surveys of tourism enterprises and consumers.

The third chapter presents an application of the model for studying the potential for innovative tourism products. In the process of developing the dissertation, the author has performed statistical analyses of the surveyed cities/destinations: Varna, Veliko Tarnovo, Dobrich, Nessebar, Svishtov, Troyan, Harmanli, as well as an analysis of the natural and anthropogenic tourist resources of the studied territories. There is a precise analysis of the questionnaire survey, the study and assessment of the attitudes and preferences of tourists for the use of innovative tourism products, as well as the study and assessment of the attitudes of tourism enterprises for the provision of innovative 25 tourism products are presented. Based on the results of the theoretical and empirical research, specific recommendations are made for increasing the demand and supply of innovative tourism products in the field of the experience economy.

In conclusion, the third chapter provides a solid empirical basis that supports the main theoretical propositions for the potential of innovative tourism products based on the experience economy. In the context of the analysis of the data carried out by the doctoral student, it is emphasized that the sustainable development of the tourism sector in Bulgaria requires a systematic and comprehensive approach, including a differentiated understanding of the needs of tourists, adaptation to the specific conditions of the destinations and the implementation of innovative practices that will improve the quality and attractiveness of tourism experiences.

The abstract prepared by doctoral student Velikova is 37 pages long and summarizes the developed scientific work to a sufficiently high degree, accurately and correctly reflects the essential aspects and conclusions. A list of publications on the dissertation is attached: 1 study (co-author); 1 articles and 2 reports, which meet the required number for acquiring the educational and scientific degree "doctor". I have no comments regarding the abstract of the dissertation and more specifically the lexical and stylistic characteristics of the text;

No plagiarism was found in the dissertation and the abstract.

III. Scientific and scientific-applied contributions in the dissertation:

The following scientific and scientific-applied contributions are highlighted in the dissertation:

1. There is an enrichment of the existing knowledge about the experience economy, about the typology of the associated alternative forms of tourism and innovative tourism products, through an in-depth examination, generalization and critical analysis of fundamental theoretical propositions.

2. A study and critical analysis of basic theoretical and applied methods of analysis in tourism has been carried out, in the context of the experience economy and innovative tourism products, as a basis for building an author's model.

3. A conceptual model has been developed to study the potential for innovative tourism products based on experiences, indicating an algorithm of steps/stages, the implementation of which is related to achieving effective results.

4. The proposed model has been tested in various destinations, on the basis of which recommendations have been formulated for increasing the demand and supply of innovative tourism products in the field of the experience economy, which could help in the formation of policies for sustainable development of destinations.

IV. Critical notes, recommendations and questions:

Regarding the dissertation, the main presentation and argumentation of the author's thesis and the argumentation of the conclusions, I have no critical notes and recommendations.

I have the following questions for doctoral student Velikova:

1. What are the key factors and conditions determining the possibility of successful implementation of innovative tourism products based on the experience economy in Bulgarian tourism practice?

2. Based on the research conducted, which strategic directions and innovative approaches have the highest potential to increase the competitiveness of tourism enterprises by integrating experiences into the products offered?

V. Conclusion

The proposed doctoral dissertation by Nevena Rumenova Lyaskova-Velikova, a full-time doctoral student at the Department of Tourism Economics and Management at the D.A.Tsenov University of Applied Sciences in Svishtov on the topic "Potential of innovative tourism products based on the experience economy" significantly enriches science and tourism practice in terms of the possibilities and potential of these products.

In conclusion, based on the positive aspects of the dissertation work, the scientific achievements and the personal contribution of the doctoral student, I confidently give my categorical positive assessment of it and propose to the esteemed Scientific Jury to award doctoral student Nevena Rumenova Lyaskova-Velikova the educational and scientific degree of

“doctor” in the field of higher education 3. “Social, economic and legal sciences”, professional field 3.9. "Tourism", scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Tourism)"

12.07.2025

Reviewer:

Burgas Prof./Dr. B. Koprinarov