



UNIVERSITY OF NATIONAL AND WORLD
ECONOMY



REVIEW

for acquiring the educational and scientific degree “doctor”,
at the D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics – Svishtov

Reviewer: Prof. D.Sc. Tanya Petrova Parusheva

University of National and World Economy – Sofia, Department of “Economics of Tourism”
Field of Higher Education 3. “Social, Economic and Legal Sciences”

Professional field 3.8. “Economics”

Scientific specialty “Economics and Management (Tourism)”

Registered in the Academic Staff Register of the Republic of Bulgaria at the National Center for Information and Documentation (NACID)

Author of the dissertation: Yoana Angelova Konstantinova, full-time PhD student in “Economics and Management (Tourism)” 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”

Grounds for writing the review: Order No. 317/10.04.2025 of the Rector of D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics – Svishtov, requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for the implementation of the Law at D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics – Svishtov, and decision of the scientific jury meeting held on 14.04.2025

Academic supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Lyubka Mincheva Ilieva, PhD

I. General presentation of the dissertation

The dissertation of **Yoana Angelova Konstantinova** is developed in the field of Higher Education 3. “Social, Economic and Legal Sciences”, professional field 3.8. “Economics”. The presented dissertation corresponds in type and volume to the specific requirements of Article 27, paragraph 2 of the Regulations for the Application of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria. **The topic** is highly relevant and connected to the need for sustainable development of cultural-historical tourism in Bulgaria through the implementation of innovations. **The structure** of the dissertation consists of **an introduction, three chapters, conclusion, bibliography, and appendices**.

The work totals 221 pages: introduction – 8 pages, main text – 153 pages, conclusion – 2 pages, sources – 32 pages, appendices – 19 pages.

The author’s theses and analyses are illustrated by 7 tables, 14 figures, and 7 appendices. The used literature is extensive, consisting of 151 sources (53 in Bulgarian, 95 in English, 2 in Italian, 1 in Russian), 78 strategic documents, 18 normative acts, and 44 internet resources, demonstrating the breadth and depth of the research.

II. Assessment of the dissertation format and content

The dissertation work of PhD student **Yoana Angelova Konstantinova**, the abstract and the accompanying scientific publications, submitted for review, are the result of an independent scientific study. It examines a scientific issue that is of essential importance for the modern economy, focusing on the need for innovative development of cultural-historical tourism at the regional level. The choice of topic is **extremely relevant** and corresponds to both the strategic European and national priorities for the development of tourism and the regional economy. The close connection between **the object, subject, aims and objectives of the study** is logically consistent and conceptually sound, and their formulation demonstrates a clear awareness of contemporary scientific research in the field of innovation and tourism sector management.

In **the introduction**, the author successfully defines the framework of the study, focusing on measuring the innovation potential of the municipalities in the Danube tourist region. **The thesis** that the implementation of innovations is key to the development and sustainability of cultural-historical tourism is consistently developed throughout the dissertation and finds argumentation in both the theoretical review and the empirical analysis.

The development of the research problem is distinguished by **a deep knowledge** of the existing literature and **a critical view** of the already established scientific statements. The study is not limited to the systematization of foreign concepts, but introduces an original contribution by creating **two author's models** – one for measurement and for the implementation of innovations in cultural-historical tourism. It is through these models that PhD student Yoana Konstantinova builds on the known approaches and offers new opportunities for the practical application of innovations in the regional tourism sector.

The volume of the work fully **complies with the requirements** for a dissertation research. The structure is logical, with a smooth transition between the individual parts, which facilitates the comprehension of the main scientific line and the sequence of the analysis.

The first chapter covers the theoretical and methodological foundations of the topic, with particular attention being paid to the concepts of cultural-historical tourism and the role of innovations in its development. A special place is devoted to open innovations and innovation networks, which enriches the theoretical framework of the study.

The second chapter is an analytical review of the real state of cultural-historical tourism in the Danube tourist region. Through a questionnaire survey and applied SWOT analysis, the author successfully identifies the strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the innovative development of the region. The empirical data are processed in depth, and their analysis is directly aligned with the set scientific objectives.

Chapter three marks the practical achievement of the dissertation, where the two author's models have been developed and tested. The model for measuring innovation potential offers an objective methodology for assessing municipalities, and the model for the implementation of innovations provides a practically applicable algorithm for directing development. Their testing with data from the Danube tourist region adds additional value and validity to the proposed solutions.

The illustrative material is adequately selected and supports the analytical presentation of the results. The tables, graphs and diagrams are integrated in a way that not only visualizes the data, but also interprets them in the context of the research objectives.

The scientific apparatus is precisely constructed, and the language of the presentation is concise, clear, and scientifically sound. The balance between theoretical argumentation and empirical analysis is achieved at a high level, which lends persuasiveness to the main conclusions and recommendations.

The applied **methods** for data collection and processing have been selected appropriately and used professionally in relation to the research objectives. **The statistical procedures** have been carried out correctly, and the interpretation of the results is analytical and justified.

In terms of **scientific ethics**, the study strictly complies with all requirements. No cases of incorrect citation, plagiarism, or other violations were identified, which further strengthens confidence in the scientific value of the work.

The abstract of the dissertation is a concise and precise summary of the main elements of the dissertation work in a volume of 44 pages. It not only presents the main object, subject, aims, objectives, methodology and results, but also highlights the contributing points of the research, while demonstrating the high degree of scientific maturity of the author.

III. Scientific and scientific-applied contributions of the dissertation

PhD student Yoana Konstantinova has correctly formulated the contributions in the dissertation. We assess the presented report on the contributions as correct and realistically reflecting the achieved results.

In our opinion, the dissertation clearly highlights **scientific and scientific-applied contributions**, which can be summarized as follows:

Theoretical and methodological contributions:

- The theoretical enrichment of the concepts of cultural-historical tourism and innovation is a significant contribution of the dissertation, through which a systematization and critical review of the existing scientific statements in the field is carried out. The author not only analyzes the established definitions, but also offers further developed interpretations, integrating modern concepts of open innovation and innovation networks in the context of cultural tourism. This allows for a deeper understanding of the interaction between cultural heritage and innovation processes in the tourism industry.

- The development of models for measuring and implementing innovations in cultural-historical tourism is an original scientific contribution, through which new methodological tools for analysis and intervention are created. The model for measuring innovation potential offers a structured system of criteria for assessing the opportunities for innovative development of municipalities, and the model for the implementation of innovations formulates a step-by-step algorithm for implementing innovative solutions in practice. Both models build on existing theoretical frameworks and enrich the scientific literature in the field of tourism and innovation.

Practical-applied contributions:

- Testing the developed models in real conditions, in specific municipalities of the Danube tourist region, ensures practical validity of the derived theoretical propositions. The empirical research conducted allows for an assessment of the applicability and effectiveness of the proposed models, thus creating a real opportunity for their use in the management of local tourism potential. This contribution proves that the scientific work can serve as a basis for practical decision-making in the tourism policy of local authorities.

- The proposed specific measures to stimulate the development of cultural-historical tourism through innovations are consistent with both regional characteristics and European trends for sustainable growth. The measures include recommendations for digitalization, building innovative partnerships, developing new tourism products and improving marketing practices. Their practical focus contributes to the opportunities of the public and private sectors to increase the competitiveness of their tourism products and services.

- The proven applicability of the research results for the needs of the public and private sectors further emphasizes the practical value of the work. The developed models and recommendations provide concrete solutions for both strategic planning by local authorities and for improving the operational activities of tourism enterprises. This combines theoretical innovation with direct applicability, which significantly increases the social and economic relevance of the study.

IV. Critical notes, questions, and recommendations on the dissertation

The dissertation may be subject to **comments** that would improve the overall presentation of the work.

1. In some parts of the presentation, the terminology used could be further specified and refined, in order to achieve even greater clarity and conceptual consistency of the main concepts. Such clarity in defining the terms would contribute to increasing the analytical value of the study.

2. The interpretation of some of the empirical results could be further expanded by integrating a comparative analysis with international good practices. Such an approach would increase the validity of the conclusions drawn and would expand the applicability of the results beyond the Danube tourist region.

The above comments do not diminish the merits of the study and do not affect the overall positive assessment of the dissertation as an independent study with undeniable scientific and applied scientific contributions.

The researched issues raise the following **questions** for worthy defense:

1. In what direction would you develop the models you proposed, taking into account the need for municipalities to implement innovations aimed at digitalization, circular economy, green technologies and sustainable management of tourism resources, in accordance with the new strategic requirements for sustainable development?

2. To what extent can the models proposed in the dissertation be adapted to other types of tourism (e.g. rural, ecological), outside the framework of cultural-historical tourism?

I would **recommend** that in her future research work, PhD student Yoana Konstantinova investigate the long-term effects of the implemented innovations in cultural-historical tourism, especially in relation to the sustainability and competitiveness of tourist areas.

V. Overall conclusion and opinion

I confidently give a **positive assessment** of the dissertation work on the topic "Development of Cultural-Historical Tourism through the Implementation of Innovations". I confirm that it **fully complies with the requirements** of the Act on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for its application at the D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics – Svishtov.

The dissertation work is a **scientific and applied solution** to a real practical problem of public importance. The doctoral student possesses in-depth theoretical knowledge and abilities to conduct independent scientific research.

Conclusion: I propose to the esteemed members of the Scientific Jury to vote **"FOR"** of awarding the **educational and scientific degree of "Doctor"** in the field of higher education 3. **"Social, Economic and Legal Sciences"**, professional field 3.8. **"Economics"**, scientific specialty **"Economics and Management (Tourism)"** of **YOANA ANGELOVA KONSTANTINOVA** – full-time doctoral student in the Department of Tourism Economics and Management at the D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics – Svishtov.

Date: 02.05.2025

Reviewer:
(Prof. D. Sc. Tanya Parusheva)