

SCIENTIFIC OPINION

**On a dissertation for the acquisition of Doctoral degree
In the program "World Economy and International
Economic Relations"**

**At the Department of International Economic Relations –
"D. A. Tsenov" Academy of Economics - Svishtov**

Prepared by: Dr. Dimitar Ivanov Trendafilov, Associate Professor (Docent),
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Author of the dissertation: Aneta Ivanova Lazarova

Topic of the dissertation:

"Opportunities for Internationalization of Own Fashion Brand of Bulgarian
Small and Medium-sized Enterprises"

I. General presentation of the dissertation:

1. The subject of the study is the complex of strategies, factors and mechanisms for building, **developing and internationalizing** a *Bulgarian SMEs' own fashion brand*;
2. The subject of the dissertation work are *SMEs in the fashion industry*, which are developing their own brand and have the potential for internationalization;
3. Objective - to develop a methodology for building a brand strategy and assessing the effectiveness of SMEs in the fashion industry;
4. Total volume of the dissertation is 228 pages;
5. Structure – introduction, conclusion and three separate chapters;
6. List of references used – 225 titles in Bulgarian, Russian and English;
7. Number of attachments to the text – 1 (questionnaire form).

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

1. The dissertation considers a current topic in the context of key factors for any business enterprise, such as achieving faster growth, optimizing operations and achieving greater return on investment through internationalization in the conditions of the Single European Market and

the relatively easy access to an audience outside the EU and the continent; other important subtopics in the text are: first, "branding" and more precisely the systematic building of a brand in the highly competitive fashion sector, with the aim of long-term investment of efforts and resources in marketing, and, second, the development of a certain mindset among SMEs, which, given their key role both in our country and in most economies around the world, must make the most of the available marketing knowledge, as well as the advantage of being more flexible and creative in implementing their plans.

2. The volume of the dissertation work is above the required, but within reasonable extend; it is well distributed and logically developed so as not to lose or omit information, although at times in the second and third chapters a certain fragmentation in the presentation has been noticed;

2.a The language and style of the text are professional and correct from the point of view of understanding and use of the conceptual apparatus (an important remark, however, is made regarding the use of the adjective "own" brand in the title, since from a legal perspective every brand is "owned by someone", and as a term in marketing - "own brand" refers specifically to the "private brands" developed by retail chains);

2.b The approach to work (structuring and construction of the presentation, set of applied analyses, research methodology) can be defined as appropriately selected in view of the subject, object, thesis and objectives of the dissertation, but the results of the conducted survey can be presented more correctly;

2.c The list of references is rich enough to conclude that the PhD candidate has established a solid foundation in her research, she can substantiate her arguments and build on the existing knowledge on the topic in theoretical and practical terms (however, there is a lack of references in entire parts of the text, as well as the use of old sources on important and current issues covered in the content).

3. The abstract reflects the presentation of the dissertation correctly, sufficiently, and without significant changes.

III. Scientific and scientific-applied contributions of the dissertation work.

1. The dissertation proposes scientific and applied approaches in the form of various analytical tables, models and concepts.
2. Overall, it offers a systematized protocol for the realization of SMEs and their brands on the international market.
3. The attached questionnaire and the case study formed on the company-object of the study are original and provide valuable information.

IV. Questions about the dissertation.

In light of what I have read, I would like to ask the following questions to the dissertation:

1. What are the first three questions that the management of a fashion brand should ask itself when identifying a market(s) for developing international trade operations?
2. How specifically can determining the current value of a brand (brand equity) help a company make decisions about whether and how to enter a new market(s)?

V. Summary evaluation of the dissertation work and conclusion.

After a thorough study of the text, I conclude that the dissertation of Aneta Ivanova Lazarova, entitled "Opportunities for Internationalization of Own Fashion Brand of Bulgarian Small and Medium-sized Enterprises", **covers the necessary legal and academic requirements**, on the one hand, and on the other, substantive and formal ones. Therefore, I give **a positive assessment** of the work and propose that **the candidate receive the educational and scientific degree "Doctor"** in professional field 3.8 Economics at the Department of International Economic Relations of the Faculty of Management and Marketing - AE "D. A. Tsenov" - Svishtov.

Date: 30/Jan./2026

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(Assoc. prof.  Dr. D. Trendafilov)