

## **OPINION**

**On behalf of Associate Professor Dr. Asya Pandzherova**

University of National and World Economy – Sofia (UNWE)

Professional Field 3.8. "Economics"

Scientific Specialty "Economics and Management (Project Management in Tourism)"

**Subject:** dissertation for the award of educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in professional field "Economics", scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Tourism)" in Dimitar A. Tsenov Academy of Economics

Author of the dissertation:

**Simeon Ventsislavov Simeonov**

Topic of the dissertation:

**Status and Development of Culinary Tourism in Bulgaria**

**Grounds for the presentation of the opinion:** participation in the scientific jury on defense of the dissertation according to Order № 472 / 11.06.2025 of the Rector of Dimitar A. Tsenov Academy of Economics

### **I. General presentation of the dissertation work**

The presented dissertation on the topic: "State and Development of Culinary Tourism in Bulgaria" has a total volume of 225 pages. It consists of an introduction (3 pages), a main text of three chapters (206 pages), a conclusion (3 pages) and used literary sources (5 pages). A declaration of originality and authenticity is presented (1 page). 1 appendix (7 pages) has been prepared for the dissertation. The information in the dissertation is visualized in 31 figures and 16 tables. The structure of the dissertation is characterized by very good consistency, coherence and logic in the presentation.

The literature used includes a total of 108 contemporary and current titles in Cyrillic and Latin (37 in Cyrillic and 75 in Latin). It supports the in-depth critical analysis of the researched issues, the clarification of the terminological clarifications and the conceptual apparatus, especially in the first and second chapters of the dissertation. Throughout the scientific work, the literary sources have been used in good faith and correctly by the doctoral student, which allows the doctoral student's personal contribution to be highlighted.

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

The choice of the specific topic and the individual motives for the development of the dissertation are very well justified. Undoubtedly, the topic is relevant and significant, with an emphasis on the state and development of culinary tourism as an innovative and significant segment of the modern tourism industry. The object and subject of the study are correctly defined. The object of the scientific research is culinary tourism in Bulgaria, examined in the

context of its role in the economic and social development of the tourism sector. The subject of the study is environmental factors, especially those that have an impact on the satisfaction of practicing culinary tourism in Bulgaria. Within the framework of the dissertation, through detailed theoretical-methodological and practical-applied research, the goal of the dissertation has been achieved, which is aimed at analyzing the state of culinary tourism in Bulgaria, with an emphasis on identifying the main factors influencing its development, and formulating effective strategic guidelines for its sustainable improvement. To achieve the goal, the doctoral student defines five research tasks, which he achieves entirely in the individual chapters of the presented doctoral thesis. The thesis is formulated in the dissertation that improving the environment for the development of culinary tourism, along with taking into account the factors that shape the satisfaction of the culinary tourist, are a significant prerequisite for revealing the potential of culinary tourism and its establishment as an attractive element of the palette of specialized forms of tourism in Bulgaria. To achieve the goals of the development, a methodological toolkit was used, including the application of a literature review, questionnaire surveys, comparative analysis and expert interviews. The main limitations of the study are set. The sources of information provision are mentioned.

The abstract of the dissertation is 44 pages long. It is prepared in accordance with the established requirements for the volume and content of abstracts. The abstract gives an accurate and complete idea of the content, structure and main conclusions of the dissertation. It also includes a declaration of originality and authenticity of the dissertation work.

### **III. Scientific and applied contributions of the dissertation work**

The content of the work gives reason to point out that the structure on which it is built allows for the application of a completely consistent and logically justified research approach. In terms of composition, each of the parts of the dissertation is completely complete and independent, which makes it possible to trace the overall problematic of the study. The obtained scientific and applied results in the dissertation are contained in the introduction and three chapters of the work.

The first chapter of the dissertation presents the essence and specificity of culinary tourism. Its historical development is traced. The scope of the culinary tourism product is studied. Innovative approaches are discussed in the context of this specialized form of tourism. The characteristics of the demand for culinary tourism are highlighted.

The second chapter of the dissertation treats the approaches to establishing the state of culinary tourism. Attention is focused on the author's model for studying culinary tourism in Bulgaria. The factors of the macro and micro environment that influence the development of culinary tourism in Bulgaria are analyzed. Criteria and indicators are summarized in accordance with the developed model for measuring the factors influencing the development of culinary tourism in Bulgaria.

The practical applicability of the theoretical and methodological statements considered in the first and second chapters are illustrated in the third chapter of the dissertation. It presents the state and prospects for the development of culinary tourism in Bulgaria. Attention is focused on the analysis and evaluation of the results of the empirical study. Emphasis is placed on the trends of the world market and the guidelines for managing a culinary tourism destination. The author has identified recommendations for the development of culinary tourism in Bulgaria.



In our opinion, the following scientific and scientific-applied contributions stand out in the dissertation:

- Based on the literary sources used by established scientific researchers, the existing interpretation of culinary tourism has been enriched, and an author's definition has been derived.
- A periodization of the development of culinary tourism in the world has been carried out, highlighting its development opportunities in the nine tourist regions of Bulgaria, in accordance with the concept of tourist regionalization in the country.
- An author's research model has been developed, which contains a new toolkit for analysis and assessment of the state and development of culinary tourism in Bulgaria.
- Through the conducted empirical research, the author's created model has been tested, which validates its practical applicability.
- Specific measures and guidelines for the development of culinary tourism have been formulated, taking into account national specificities and international achievements in this specialized form of tourism.

#### **IV. Questions on the dissertation**

Considering the undeniable merits of the presented dissertation, I have no significant critical remarks towards doctoral student Simeon Simeonov. I would recommend that, in his future research work, the doctoral student continue to explore other specialized types of tourism and the factors that determine their demand.

For the purpose of a worthy defense, I offer the following question to the doctoral student: To what extent can the creation of a national culinary training center in Bulgaria be a driver for innovation and development of destination Bulgaria?

#### **V. General assessment of the dissertation work and conclusion**

In conclusion, my overall assessment of the dissertation work of doctoral student Simeon Ventsislavov Simeonov is positive. The dissertation work „State and Development of Culinary Tourism in Bulgaria“ submitted for review is a comprehensive, original scientific and applied research. It critically presents and analyzes important issues for the theory and practice of culinary tourism and the factors influencing its development. The overall content, conclusions and scientific contributions contained in the study give me reason to recommend to the members of the Honorable Scientific Jury to award the educational and scientific degree Ph.D. to Simeon Ventsislavov Simeonov - a doctoral student in part-time form at the Department of "Economics and Management of Tourism" at the "D. A. Tsenov" Academy of Economics - Svishtov.

Date: 18.07.2025

Prepared the opinion: .....  
(Assoc. Prof. Dr. Asya Pandzherova)