



ST. CYRIL AND ST. METHODIUS
UNIVERSITY OF VELIKO
TARNOVO
FACULTY OF ECONOMICS



STANDPOINT

by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Boycho Boychev Boychev,
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of "Economic Theory and International Economic Relations"

Grounds for presenting the standpoint: participation in a scientific jury, determined by order No. 1196/19.12.2023 of the Rector of the "D. A. Tsenov" Academy of Economics - Svishtov and decision of the first meeting of the scientific jury of 19.12.2023 (Decision of the Faculty of Finance, Minutes No. 4/19.12.2023).

Regarding: public defense of a doctoral student in the field of higher education: 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, Field of study: 3.8. Economy.

Dissertation topic "Challenges to e-commerce pricing in our country in the conditions of a pandemic".

Author Georgi Stoilov Anev, with doctoral student number D010219208, doctoral student full-time in the doctoral program "Finance, money circulation, credit and insurance" (Finance).

Scientific supervisor: Prof. Dr. Stefan Simeonov.

This standpoint has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Rules for the Development of the Academic Staff in the "D. A. Tsenov" Academy of Economics, and procedurally all requirements have been met.

I. General presentation of the dissertation

The presented dissertation on the topic "Challenges to pricing in e-commerce in our country in the conditions of a pandemic" with author Georgi Stoilov Anev is 206 pages long. **Structurally**, it consists of an introduction, an expose in three chapters, a conclusion, references with a total of 148 sources, and appendices. The three chapters are well balanced and logically related to each other. The dissertation contains 49 figures and 23 tables. 5 publications have been made on the subject of the dissertation - four articles and one report, three of which are in English.

The title is well formulated and clearly directs the reader to the researched issue. The dissertation has a clearly defined object, subject, goal and tasks of the scientific research and a formulated dissertation thesis. **The subject** of research is the pricing models for products and



ST. CYRIL AND ST. METHODIUS
UNIVERSITY OF VELIKO
TARNOVO

FACULTY OF ECONOMICS



services in the e-commerce sector. **The subject** of research is e-commerce pricing in Bulgaria in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The main goal of the dissertation is to evaluate the applicable models for pricing products and services used by Bulgarian companies in the field of e-commerce and to look for opportunities to optimize the pricing process considering the new economic realities. **The defended thesis** is that the application of adaptive pricing models, considering the specifics of e-commerce and consumer behavior, can lead to the maximization of sales in the conditions of dynamic economic processes caused by external shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

A total of **six tasks** corresponding to the objectives of the dissertation were derived:

- performing a critical analysis of views on the essence, functions, elements and structure of prices, as a basis for clarifying the stages and elements of pricing in the company;
- clarification of the role of price policy and strategy within the overall price management process in the company;
- carrying out a critical review of the emergence and development of electronic commerce as a basis for clarifying the place and role of companies in the new economy;
- analyzing applicable business models and approaches for generating revenue from companies in the field of electronic commerce, with a view to clarifying the specifics of the pricing process for their products and services; assessment and research of the state and trends in the e-commerce sector in our country as a result of the pandemic situation and applicable pricing models for products and services used by Bulgarian companies;
- searching for opportunities to optimize the pricing process and by testing the effectiveness of different pricing models in order to give recommendations and suggestions for optimizing the pricing process in Bulgarian companies in the field of e-commerce, considering the new economic realities.

The methodology used corresponds to the specifics of the research, including literature review, historical research, analysis and synthesis, systematic analysis, comparative method, descriptive method, observation method, inductive-deductive method, survey and other methods combined with appropriate graphic and statistical toolkit. Data from SearchNode's research were used to assess trends in e-commerce and our own survey on the territory of Bulgaria among 1000 online merchants through an online survey. The survey used the respondent method. The completed and valid survey cards are from 98 online merchants. Empirical data were processed with MS Excel 2016, illustrated with figures and tables.

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

The dissertation follows the established as a standard structure, including an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, references and appendices. The text is consistent in terms of the



ST. CYRIL AND ST. METHODIUS
UNIVERSITY OF VELIKO
TARNOVO
FACULTY OF ECONOMICS



terminology used. The data and statistical processing used conform to the rules of computing and scientific ethics.

In the **introduction**, the main formal requirements regarding mandatory attributes are fulfilled and the object, the subject, the research thesis, the purpose and the tasks of the research are correctly defined. Its content clearly substantiates the relevance of the research.

In the introduction, the limiting conditions of the research are very precisely defined, namely that the issues related to the purely technological aspects of electronic commerce, which would shift the focus of the research, remain outside the scope of the present work.

In the **first chapter**, an in-depth theoretical review of the literary sources dedicated to the essence, functions, factors, elements and structure of the price and the main stages and methods of pricing in the company is carried out. In the dissertation, special attention is paid to the pricing policy and strategy of the company as part of the overall price and financial management of the company.

In the **second chapter**, the emergence, essence and types of electronic commerce are considered, and on this basis, the place, role and interaction between companies in the electronic market is also examined. The author has also analyzed the applicable business models and approaches for generating revenue in e-commerce.

In the **third chapter**, an analysis of the impact of the pandemic on the economy and consumer behavior, as well as on e-commerce, is presented, through a comparative analysis of global trends and trends in Bulgaria, which are revealed by the conducted survey. The chapter tests the possibilities of implementing a dynamic pricing system by using Big data and artificial intelligence.

In the **conclusion**, the main conclusions of the conducted research are presented in a synthesized form, they correspond to the set goal and tasks and show their implementation and categorically reflect what was done by the author.

A total of 148 sources are included in the **bibliography**. The used definitions, opinions, methods and others are presented correctly and are reflected by citation and in the list of the literature used.

The author's summary of the dissertation is 53 pages long and reflects the content, main results and conclusions in a synthesized form. It contains all the necessary elements for an abstract of a dissertation, including justifying the topicality of the topic, outlining the object, subject, purpose and tasks, the research thesis, the structure and content of the dissertation, as well as a reference to the contributions, a list of the doctoral student's publications, a reference to compliance with the national requirements under the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and declaration of originality of the dissertation.



**ST. CYRIL AND ST. METHODIUS
UNIVERSITY OF VELIKO
TARNOVO**

FACULTY OF ECONOMICS



The 4 articles and 1 scientific report included in the abstract are on the topic of the dissertation, two of the articles are in Bulgarian, the other publications are in English. All are in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals.

III. Scientific and scientific-applied contributions of the dissertation

The presented dissertation represents an independent and completed study. The doctoral student convincingly demonstrates his skills for scientific research work on significant and current issues, including to systematize and formulate problems and seek guidance for their solution.

The main contributions of the dissertation are related to the introduction of its own definition of the term e-commerce, presents its own view on the importance of pricing policy and pricing strategy in the overall price management process in the company, as well as on the specifics of the pricing process and applicable business models and approaches to generate revenue from businesses in the field of e-commerce. An author's study was conducted in order to highlight the main problems and challenges in the e-commerce sector in Bulgaria in the conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic. The changed business environment is outlined, which causes a number of changes in the strategic vision for the business. These changes are mostly related to the digitalization of business, including by improving the software products used and online marketing campaigns, as well as the ever-increasing importance of artificial intelligence in business, especially in the area of improving personalization, forecasting, marketing and sales, incl. and by improving the efficiency of pricing methods. A proprietary dynamic pricing model has been developed and tested using big data and artificial intelligence, based on a recurrent neural network and implemented through specialized software for intelligent and automated price determination for each product, where the merchant will have the highest profit. As a result, differences in consumer behavior were found in markets where the company operates. The model allows the firm to develop and implement specific pricing policies to maximize its profit.

IV. Dissertation critical notes, questions and recommendations.

A thorough familiarization with the dissertation gives me reason to conclude that there are no significant omissions, inaccuracies or contradictions in it. I believe that the dissertation enriches the available knowledge, contains significant ideas and real results have been achieved.

As a main note and recommendation to the doctoral student, in order to improve future developments, is the need to improve the stylistic and linguistic layout of his texts. The thesis has areas where it could be improved. Technical errors are noted such as on page 7 "Results of the study have been popularized among the scientific community through the publication of 5 articles and 1 report" written 5 instead of 4, and others of this type of technical errors. However, these notes of mine do not invalidate the dissertation's qualities.

Another note and recommendation to the author is to avoid using Wikipedia as a source, due to its unreliability in future papers.



ST. CYRIL AND ST. METHODIUS
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FACULTY OF ECONOMICS



Another recommendation to the doctoral student is to increase the publication activity in global and indexed databases with the aim of greater visibility and recognition of the achieved research results.

Questions for the PhD student:

1. In your opinion, what are the main reasons for the observed differences in the behavior of the studied Bulgarian Internet users during the pandemic, compared to those in the leading world economies?
2. In the event that the model you developed is used in a real environment, what are your observations on its applicability and effectiveness?

V. Summary Conclusion and Opinion

The presented dissertation meets the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for its implementation, as well as the additional requirements of the Regulations of the "D. A. Tsenov" Academy of Economics. It represents a completed research paper containing scientific and applied contributions on a current and important topic.

Bearing in mind that the dissertation is an independent work of the doctoral student, as well as the fact that the candidate possesses qualities, experience and competences for conducting independent scientific research and fulfills the minimum national requirements for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "doctor", I propose to the respected members of the scientific jury to vote positively and make a decision to award Georgi Stoilov Anev the educational and scientific degree "DOCTOR" in Field of Study 3.8. Economy.

Date: 22.01.2024

Prepared by:.....
(Assoc. Prof. Dr. Boycho Boychev Boychev)