

## REVIEW

**Reviewer:** Assoc. Prof. Iskra Marinova Panteleeva, PhD,  
D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics, Svishtov,  
Field of higher education: 3. Social, economic and legal sciences;  
Professional field 3.8. Economics,  
Scientific specialty: Economics and Management (Industry)

**About:** Dissertation for acquisition of Doctor's Educational and Scientific Degree (Doctor of Philosophy) in the professional field 3.7. Administration and Management, Doctoral Program in Social Management, at the Dimitar A. Tsenov Academy of Economics, Svishtov

**Author of the dissertation:** Pencho Malinov Malinov

**Scientific Leader:** Assoc. Prof. Anatoly Stefanov Asenov, PhD

**Topic of the dissertation:** „Achieving competitiveness by implementing innovative strategies (following the example of companies in the industrial sector)"

**Grounds for submitting the review:** Order No 315/11.05.2022 of the Rector of the D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics, Svishtov, and Decision of the Scientific Jury, taken at the First Meeting, held on 16.05.2022.

### I. General presentation of the dissertation

The presented dissertation on **Achieving competitiveness through the implementation of innovation strategies (following the example of companies in the industrial sector)**, developed by part-time doctoral student Pencho Malinov Malinov, is the subject of study: competitiveness of organisations on the example of non-financial enterprises in industry, achieved through the use of different innovation strategies.

The dissertation has a total *volume* of 169 pages, of which 146 are in the main text.

The *structure* of the research has the following format: abbreviations used, list of figures and tables, introduction, three chapters, conclusion, references and appendices.

The *introduction* substantiates the topicality, based on numerous arguments and references to the achieved scientific knowledge on the studied issues. The object, the subject, the goal, the tasks, the main thesis, the used methods, the formulated limitations and the approbation of the research development are briefly, precisely and clearly defined.

*Chapter one* reviews the main theoretical views on competitiveness, innovation strategies and their interdependence. The emphasis is on clarifying their essential classification aspects. The views of various researchers on the definition context of competitiveness, its measurement in Bulgaria and the European Union, its connection with



innovation as a way to maintain and increase, especially in the dynamic development of science and business are presented.

The *second chapter* is devoted to the author's research aimed at identifying possibilities for designing an algorithm in the context of competitiveness and innovation. The innovation policies (strategies) are considered from different angles, following the direction: competitiveness of the world economy through the prism of some of its key players – Bulgaria's competitive focus in terms of targets, approach, strategic tools, orientation, etc. – algorithm for researching competitiveness by applying innovation strategies.

The *third chapter* examines the competitiveness of companies in the industrial sector through the implementation of innovation strategies. The author of the dissertation presented a situational analysis of the industrial sector in the context of competitiveness and innovation. Based on the main characteristics of the studied sites, a SWOT-analysis of three companies was made: Bio Fresh Ltd, Bulltech Ltd and Elplast Ltd. Empirics follows the logic: SWOT-analysis – competitiveness achieved through the implementation of innovation strategies – opportunities to increase competitiveness through innovation strategies.

In the *conclusion* are summarised, conclusions and achieved results.

The reference includes 54 sources in Cyrillic and 40 – in Latin. 6 Internet resources were used. The main text presents 8 figures and 11 tables. The questionnaire used as part of the empirical tools for gathering the necessary research information is attached.

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

The *topicality* of the topic is dictated by the need to maintain a sustainable level of competitiveness based on innovation – as one of the most successful means of achieving success and synergies by combining innovation and competitiveness. This requires a good theoretical basis on which to base the business, as well as sufficient convincing evidence of the need for innovation, the benefits and effects of their practical application. In substantiating the relevance of the developed scientific problem, the author of the dissertation uses two starting points: (1) The ever-increasing role and importance of theoretical and practical aspects of achieving competitiveness through the implementation of innovative strategies, and (2) Highlighting and verification of scientific and scientific-practical problems related to effective and stable construction of systems for achieving competitiveness through the implementation of innovation strategies (following the example of companies in the industrial sector). The topic is undoubtedly relevant for the scientific community, business and society as a whole.

The *object* of study of the dissertation is the competitiveness of organisations.

The *subject* of research is the competitiveness of organisations through the implementation of innovation strategies (following the example of companies in the industrial sector).

The *aim* of the dissertation is to study the specific mechanisms by which competitiveness is achieved through the application of innovation strategies.



The *tasks* of the dissertation are divided into two directions – with theoretical-research character (2 tasks) and with practical-applied character (3 tasks), they are formulated in accordance with the set goal.

The main *research thesis* that the author tries to prove in the dissertation is that if business organisations working in the industrial sector do not implement innovative strategies, they can not achieve high competitiveness. The research thesis is logical, directing the analytical focus of the main text.

The dissertation presents the *views of various domestic and foreign authors* working in the field of competitiveness and innovation. The opinion (position) of the PhD student finds its specificity through the developed algorithm for researching competitiveness, through the application of innovation strategies, testing of the model and the author's comments and interpretations. The PhD student's ideas are clearly formulated, well systematised and argued. A significant part of the novelties is affected (in purely theoretical or practical terms).

The dissertation has a *volume* that allows to develop a good scientific work with its typical three-element nature: theoretical basis – empirical projections – opportunities and suggestions for improvement (contributing moments on the research).

The *figures and tables* adequately illustrate the key aspects of research, making it easier for the reader to perceive and make sense of them.

To achieve the goal and objectives, as well as to prove the research thesis, PhD student used a variety of *research methods* (analysis, synthesis, content analysis, content analysis, interviewing, observation, SWOT analysis, survey method, induction, deduction, graphic and tabular presentation of the information), contributed to the development of a good scientific work and to the theoretical and empirical development of the research views of the dissertation.

The *style* of the dissertation is scientific. The terminology is appropriately used.

*Scientific ethics* are respected. The dissertation has passed an authentication through software to establish the correctness of scientific periodicals and papers.

2 articles and 1 report on the topic of the dissertation have been published in specialised editions, all independent. Parts of the dissertation are presented at 3 scientific forums – 2 doctoral sessions and 1 conference/scientific discussion. The PhD student also participated in another doctoral session (with attendance). The publications cover the minimum national requirements. Qualitatively and quantitatively, they meet the requirements for obtaining PhD.

The abstract is 48 pages long. In structural, content and style it is well formed and accurately reflects in a synthesized form the main points of the dissertation: object, subject, purpose, tasks, thesis, methodological tools, theoretical and empirical research, results, conclusions and proposals. The abstract includes views on future research, a reference to the contributions and a list of publications related to the dissertation.



### **III. Scientific and scientific-applied contributions to the dissertation**

The dissertation can be considered as an enriched scientific research. The author declares the achievement of the following scientific and applied scientific results:

1. The current state of the scientific problem is analysed and the guidelines for achieving competitiveness through the application of innovation strategies are synthesised.
2. Some unresolved (controversial) from a scientific point of view theoretical issues related to achieving competitiveness through the implementation of innovation strategies.
3. The practical aspect of taking action to achieve competitiveness through the implementation of innovation strategies is summarized.
4. Based on an empirical study, the main practical problems related to achieving competitiveness through the implementation of innovative strategies in the area of the industrial sector are identified and we made recommendations to business practice.

I believe that the results formulated in the dissertation are of a contributing nature and represent enriched and further developed moments in the field of competitiveness and innovation.

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

The development presented for review has the necessary characteristics and qualities for a dissertation, giving grounds for proceeding to the final step of acquiring PhD - public defense in front a scientific jury. The dissertation would benefit if a few additional accents were added:

- Presentation of empirical data in additional sections from the positions of a type of innovation strategy and a specific way of influencing the parameters of competitiveness, achieving better results by simultaneously applying different types of innovation strategies, etc .;
- Presentation of the innovation picture in a strategic context for the last years and commenting on its impact on the company's competitiveness.
- Discussion of possible innovation interventions based on the “upgrade” of strategic documents in the field of innovation at the level of Bulgaria and the EU.

Please answer the following questions:

- To what extent can the incorporation of alternative tools and the introduction of flexible components in the implemented innovation strategies “minimize” the risks and adverse effects of a very dynamic environment and change in the input elements and resources of the innovation subsystem of enterprises? To what extent can this be seen as a “buffer zone”, presupposing a balancing approach in the pursuit of enterprises to maintain and increase their competitiveness in an unfavourable environment and unexpected abrupt changes in some of its elements?
- To what extent should innovation strategies focus only on the purely technical and technological aspect and to what extent should company management comply with the need to implement corporate social responsibility?

- What is the PhD student's view on the direction of strategic development of enterprises in the field of innovation given the impact of a number of constraints on business due to COVID-19 and geopolitical and economic changes that disrupted logistics chains and rethought the agenda of economic and innovation politics? How will this affect the efforts to maintain the company's competitiveness, as well as the pace of its increase?

## **V. Summarised evaluation of the dissertation and conclusion**

The dissertation on **Achieving competitiveness through the application of innovation strategies (following the example of companies in the industrial sector)** has the qualities of a scientific work in its final form and shows that the PhD student has acquired theoretical knowledge and practical skills for independent research. The dissertation fully meets the requirements for obtaining the PhD under the Law for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for Application of the Law for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, as well as Regulations for Application of the Law for the Development of the Academic Staff in the D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics, Svishtov.

I give my **positive evaluation** of the submitted dissertation and I **recommend** to the Scientific Jury, appointed by Order 315/11.05.2022 of the Rector of D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics, Svishtov, unanimously to award **Pencho Malinov Malinov PhD (Doctor of Philosophy) in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences; Professional field 3.7 Administration and Management, Doctoral programme in Social Management.**

25.05.2022 r.  
Svishtov

Reviewer:  
(Assoc. Prof. Iskra Panteleeva, PhD)