



OPINION

From Prof. Dr. Lalka Borisova

International Business School – Botevgrad

Professional field 3.7. Administration and management, Scientific specialty: “Economics and Management (by industry)”

Subject: Dissertation for the award of educational and scientific degree "Doctor", in professional field 3.9. Tourism

Author of the dissertation: **Mila Zdravkova Gaidarska**

Subject of the dissertation: "Innovative structural and marketing approaches for tourism development"

Grounds for submitting the review: Participation in the composition of the scientific jury for the defense of the dissertation, according to Order № 246/01.12.2021 of the Rector of the International Business School (IBS) of - Botevgrad.

I. Summarized data on the scientific production and the activity of the candidate

1. Information for the doctoral student

Mila Gaidarska is a doctoral student in an independent form of study at the International Business School. The development of the doctoral student's creative biography eloquently shows the concentration of research activity in a well-structured direction in the field of tourism development through innovative structural and marketing approaches.

2. Overall characteristics of the presented dissertation

The presented dissertation consists of 233 pages, which synthesizes the synthesized structural elements of scientific research - Introduction, three main paragraphs (which are not designed as chapters, which I consider an omission), Conclusion, References, Appendices, Literary sources. Bulgarian and foreign authors, websites).

The title of the dissertation is clearly formulated and is closely related to the doctoral thesis. The chosen topic is relevant from the point of view of the role of the importance of tourism for the country's economy.

The research logic and the structure of the dissertation are well developed. The structuring follows the traditional approach to writing such works - first clarify the theoretical statements on the topic, secondly present the various models and classifications, and thirdly make your own research by analyzing the data from it and reveal opportunities, suggestions and guidelines for improvement.

The object and the **subject** of research are properly formulated, and the thesis formulated in this way leads to a change in the functioning of the entire chain of marketing processes, and hence to higher profitability.

This position is supported by two working hypotheses, subsequently developed and proven in the overall presentation with the help of analyzes and results of our own empirical research.

The **main goal** outlines the logical steps of the research. The doctoral student systematizes approaches for studying the behavior of the consumer of tourist products, innovative methods for developing a competitive product, possible innovative marketing components in the tourist business.

I **believe** that the thesis and working hypotheses are protected in the dissertation research.

In the **first chapter** (Theoretical Aspects of the Innovative Potential of the Tourism Business, 74 pages), a literature review of the theoretical productions of various authors is made and the characteristic features and peculiarities of the tourism business are considered; the risks accompanying tourism are classified, in the conditions of the Pavid-19 pandemic there is a reported decrease in tourist visits; the main and specific factors for its development are systematized; the peculiarities of the innovative activity in tourism; the cluster approach as a potential for innovative tourism business. Based on this analysis, a “Tourism Innovation Potential Assessment System” was presented. The structure of the system of indicators in four blocks, characterizing the innovation potential in the field of tourism at regional level, is proposed. There are systematized ways to use the mechanism of public-private partnership in the tourism business.

The main factors for the development of tourism are discussed in detail, in my opinion quite explanatory, without this being necessary, as it is not directly related to the topic of development. In my view, these factors can be considered in the following order:

- Tourist resources;
- The material base;
- Human resources involved in various areas of tourism.

The doctoral student also touched in great detail on the topic of innovation and innovative development in the field of tourism. Based on the cited research, the doctoral student systematizes the peculiarities of innovation in tourism and the factors for its development. On this basis, the specifics of innovation, the principles and characteristics that characterize it are considered. Based on this analysis, it is concluded that it is most appropriate to apply a specific cluster approach to managing the innovation activity of the tourism business. Emphasis is placed on the importance and essence of innovative management in the field of tourism, which is defined as "a type of cultural, economic and entrepreneurial activity to achieve the goals of tourism companies".

The development follows a logical connection between the individual paragraphs and upgrading the content. The role of the Cluster Approach is highlighted as a potential for innovative tourism business, which I believe is a significant contribution of the PhD student in development. There are seven working clusters in tourism and perhaps they should have been characterized by two features - clusters on a localization principle and a thematic principle. In the dissertation they are distinguished by geographical (spatial and sectoral) characteristics, but there is no classification and examples. It is not necessary to talk in general, but specifically about tourism.

As a scientific contribution I also appreciate the developed System for assessment of the innovation potential of tourism. I believe that the factors can be supplemented by: the environment; social; technological and competition. I should note that the PhD student successfully builds on the topic of the cluster approach by analyzing the need and appropriateness of the formation of tourism innovation clusters, for which it is necessary to assess the innovation potential of regional tourism systems and summarizes a system of indicators. to adequately assess the level of potential of a region in the field of tourism.

The doctoral student not only quotes famous authors on the topic, but based on the theory, draws her own conclusions and formulates definitions, which is a significant contribution to the theory of tourism.

In this chapter the doctoral student demonstrates knowledge of the nature and features of the tourism business and shows the ability to assess and outline the importance of the cluster approach as a potential for innovative tourism business, to draw sound conclusions and formulate appropriate conclusions.

In the **second chapter** (Methodological features of marketing in tourism, volume of 76 pages), a study of the specifics of marketing in the tourism business; the methodology of marketing research; innovative methods for developing a competitive product; approaches to research the behavior of the consumer of tourist products, an online survey of consumer behavior in choosing a tourist product in a digital environment - a personal file of the doctoral student.

In this chapter the doctoral student justifies the relevance of the methodology of marketing research with the fact that the constant increasing role of tourism in the world economy implies the need to seek innovative marketing approaches in the field of tourism in the fight for competitive advantage. They are also determined by the new pandemic situation, the characteristic feature of which is the disrupted dynamics of supply and demand. In these conditions, the role and place of marketing is constantly growing.

The doctoral student has made a thorough analysis of the main methodological approaches and their role in reducing risk in the decision-making process and the successful operation of the travel company. The main goals of marketing research in the tourism business are also presented. The research process goes through 8 stages, using primary and secondary information in the analysis.

As a contribution I consider the systematization of innovative methods for developing a competitive product, consumer behavior and approaches to its research. The analysis is supplemented by the stages in the process of consumption. On this basis, the types of consumers are systematized according to certain criteria - in terms of innovation and risk, as well as assessment approaches. A Matrix of a new tourist product has been compiled.

In item 2.43, item 142 - Criteria for consumer segmentation - according to whom, is this a contribution of the doctoral student? Strategies, specializations and market segmentation approaches are listed in the same way. Table 12 - the quote is "Ib." - where?

Are Formulas 13 - 15, pp. 152 - 153 authors, it is not clear, there is no cited source?

The doctoral student conducted her own empirical study of consumer behavior when choosing a tourist product in a digital environment. Respondents could be asked about expectations (satisfaction, choice of alternatives, increased spirituality, hospitality) as well as travel factors (eg personal motivation, perception, learning, attitude...). As a result, the conclusion had to be drawn in this direction - factors for the formation of consumer behavior.

In this chapter the doctoral student shows the ability to conduct empirical research, to analyze the results. In my opinion, it is necessary to make substantiated summaries and conclusions, to link the survey with the profile of the tourist. In practice, hardly two motives

are a priority when choosing destinations. Today, tourism performs many important functions, which makes it a real necessity. Through it, people provide recreation, entertainment, exploring other cultures and that is why it should be fun. The consumer of various tourist products focuses more on spiritual pleasure and not so much on material values. So, the new type of user is characterized by certain psychological and behavioral features.

The doctoral student conducted her own empirical study of consumer behavior when choosing a tourist product in a digital environment. Respondents could be asked about expectations (satisfaction, choice of alternatives, increased spirituality, hospitality) as well as travel factors (eg personal motivation, perception, learning, attitude...). As a result, the conclusion had to be drawn in this direction - factors for the formation of consumer behavior.

In this chapter the doctoral student shows the ability to conduct empirical research, to analyze the results. In my opinion, it is necessary to make substantiated summaries and conclusions, to link the survey with the profile of the tourist. In practice, hardly two motives are a priority when choosing destinations. Today, tourism performs many important functions, which makes it a real necessity. Through it, people provide recreation, entertainment, exploring other cultures and that is why it should be fun. The consumer of various tourist products focuses more on spiritual pleasure and not so much on material values. So, the new type of user is characterized by certain psychological and behavioral features.

The **third paragraph** of 52 pages contains an analysis aimed at improving the organizational and economic mechanism, as one of the components of the tourism cluster. The author tries to clarify the essence of the tourist cluster, to give a more specific definition of it. It is proposed that the tourism cluster be understood as an economic institution. In particular, this section focuses on possible innovative marketing components in the tourism business, offers regionalization of tourism based on a cluster approach, analyzes the digitalization of the marketing environment, discusses the features of graphic design and advertising and marketing positioning of the tourist brand in social networks.

In my opinion, here the author should have focused on offering the possible innovative marketing components in the tourism business, here is not a place to make a theoretical analysis, this should find a place in Chapter One. The third chapter should contain suggestions and recommendations for improving existing practice.

On page 164, three types of clusters are identified, according to the innovation activity and a brief description of their content is made. I believe that a wording of this type "The share of innovative production is predominant in the total volume of production within a given type of cluster" is not for this analysis. What kind of production is it about in tourism? Here the

doctoral student had to justify how clusters of the economy can be successfully formed in the field of tourism and what services will be used to achieve competitiveness? Could a model of the cluster type be offered, which is applicable and preferably in the field of tourism?

The doctoral student presents models for determining the effectiveness and profitability of advertising and marketing on social networks by calculating coefficients and indicators. The Model of the performance indicators through the action of the user is graphically presented and what efficiency is measured by the respective indicator, which I consider to be a contribution to the development.

Page 196 cites data from a Yahoo study, but no source is cited.

The doctoral student reviews the marketing positioning of the tourist brand in social networks and makes a reasonable conclusion that social networks are used mainly in front of the websites of travel companies. When illustrating profiles on social networks, I think it is more appropriate to give examples of travel companies - agencies, tour operators, etc., not food and beverage companies and etc. n.

The doctoral student substantiates her claims about the role of the respective strategy for the effectiveness of a tourist marketing campaign. There are 9 steps in a certain sequence in the development of a successful marketing strategy, which in my opinion is a contribution of the doctoral student and enriches the existing practice. The categories of consumer behavior are illustrated graphically. The main conclusions under paragraph 3rd are missing.

II. Scientific and applied scientific achievements in the dissertation

I accept the scientific contributions (5) in the dissertation research, formulated by the doctoral student. The application of these achievements can improve the management practice in the field of tourism. The mentioned scientific and scientific-applied achievements in the dissertation are the personal work of the doctoral student.

III. Critical notes to the content of the dissertation, recommendations to the PhD student

The dissertation research meets the content and requirements for the development of such work. The critical remarks made in the text of the Opinion are not of a principled nature and cannot significantly affect the positive assessment of the substantive part of the dissertation research.

I have a question: What factors determine the consumer behavior when choosing a tourist product?

IV. Other questions

The abstract gives an idea of the object, subject, thesis, purpose and objectives of the study, as well as the methodology used, the structure and content of the work as a whole.

The doctoral student has indicated 3 publications on the dissertation - article and reports, in the country and abroad.

V. Conclusion

The dissertation is a complex scientific research of a topical and significant theoretical-methodological and scientifically applied problem contains scientific contributions in the field of innovative marketing approaches for tourism development and can definitely be evaluated positively.

This gives me reason to conclude positively that the dissertation meets the requirements of ASDARB and the Regulations for its implementation in, the Regulations for its implementation, as well as the Regulations for competitions for academic degrees and academic positions at the IBS, therefore with full conviction I propose to the esteemed jury to vote for the award of Mila Zdravkova Gaidarska educational and scientific degree "**Doctor**".

Sofia, 08.01.2022

SIGNATURE:.....

(prof. PhD Lalka Borisova)