



OPINION

from

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

Author: Mila Zdravkova Gaidarska

Subject: "Innovative structural and marketing approaches for tourism development"

Ground: 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 biography shows the 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, 3 main chapters, conclusion, references, appendix, bibliography** - Bulgarian and foreign literature, internet sites.

Theme actuality

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

Structure of the dissertation

The structure of the dissertation is logical developed as follows:
Firstly, clarify the theoretical statements on the topic;

Secondly, present the various models and classification;
Thirdly, make your own research by analyzing the data;
Fourthly, it reveals opportunities, suggestions and guidelines for improvement.

Thesis object and the subject of dissertation

The object and the subject of research are clearly 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.

Research goals and objectives

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.

In the **First Chapter “Theoretical Aspects of the Innovative Potential of the Tourism Business” (74 pages)** the following **contributions** can be highlighted:

- ✓ a literature review of the theoretical productions of various authors is made;
- ✓ the characteristic features and peculiarities of the tourism business are considered;
- ✓ the risks accompanying tourism are classified under the conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic;
- ✓ the main and specific factors for its development are systematized;
- ✓ the cluster approach as a potential for innovative tourism business is revealed;
- ✓ the system of Tourism innovation potential was presented;
- ✓ the structure of the system of indicators of innovation potential in the field of tourism at regional level is proposed;
- ✓ the ways to use the mechanism of public-private partnership in the tourism business are systematized.

In my opinion, in first 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.

The contributions in the **Second Chapter” Methodological features of marketing in tourism” (76 pages) are the following:**

- ✓ a *study* of the specifics of marketing in the tourism sphere and *innovative methods* for developing a competitive product are made;
- ✓ an *online survey of consumer behavior* in choosing a tourist product in a digital environment is carried out;
- ✓ the thorough *analysis of the main methodological approaches* and their role in reducing risk in the decision-making process was made;
- ✓ the main *goals of marketing research* in the tourism business are also presented;
- ✓ the systematization of *innovative methods for developing a competitive product*, consumer behavior and approaches to its research are presented.

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 the last **Third Chapter „Possible Innovative Marketing Components of Tourist Business“ (52 pages)** the following **practical contributions** are included:

- ✓ *three types of clusters* are identified, according to the innovation activity and a brief description of their content is made;
- ✓ several *models for determining the effectiveness and profitability* of advertising and marketing on social networks by calculating coefficients and indicators are presented;
- ✓ the *marketing positioning* of the tourist brand in social networks is reviewed;
- ✓ the *reasonable conclusion* that social networks are used mainly in front of the websites of travel companies is made;
- ✓ the role of the *strategy for the effectiveness* of a tourist marketing campaign is suggested;
- ✓ *nine steps* in a certain sequence in the development of a *successful marketing strategy* is proposed;
- ✓ the *categories of consumer behavior* are illustrated graphically.

In my opinion the contributions of the doctoral student enriches the existing practice.

II. Assessment of scientific and practical contributions

In conclusion, the assessment of the major scientific and applied contributions of the Mila Gaidarska is high. The contributions in the dissertation work are formulated by the author. The resume of the study gives an idea of the object, subject, thesis, purpose, objectives, methodology, structure and content of the dissertation work as a whole. The doctoral student has indicated 3 publications on the topic of the dissertation - article and reports in the country and abroad.

Undoubtedly, the topics covered in dissertation work are up-to-date.

A comprehensiveness of the analysis is achieved as well as tangible mechanisms for implementation of the proposed solutions. The dissertation allows for a number of practical studies in this area and the effectiveness of its application is expected to be high enough. I think that the application of these **contributions** can improve the management practice in tourist industry.

III. Critical notes and recommendations

The dissertation work is developed on solid theoretical basis and analysis of a rich empirical material. The practical recommendations are well reasoned. I have no specific critical comments on the content of the scientific work and study of Mila Gaidarska.

The following **recommendations** for her future research and teaching activities can be made:

- ✓ continue expanding the theoretical foundations and the scope of its research;
- ✓ continue the research activity;
- ✓ continue to publish articles on the subjects taught by her.



IV. Other questions

To what extent can it be predicted the future tourist behavior under the conditions of Covid-19 pandemy on the basis of the study research and what are so called “push and pull” factors determinating the choice of tourist product?

V. Conclusion

The dissertation work is a scientific research of significant scientific, theoretical and methodological problem and contains practical contributions. 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 jury to vote of **Mila Zdravkova Gaidarska** educational and scientific degree "Doctor".

Date: 15.02.2022

Signature:

Assoc. Prof. Milena Karailieva