ABSTRACTS

On the scientific publications **of chief assistant prof. Yulia Nikolaevna Hristova**, Department of Economics and management of commerce and services, University of Economics – Varna, submitted for participation in a competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in in the field of Higher Education 3. Social, Economic, and Legal Sciences, Professional Field 3.8. Economics, Scientific Specialty "Economics and Management (Competitiveness and Sustainability of Trade)", announced in the State Gazette, issue No. 44 / 14.05.2026

I. Monograph or equivalent publications (in the professional fields where this is permitted under the Regulations for the Implementation of the Academic Staff Development Act in the Republic of Bulgaria) – pursuant to Art. 101, item 3 of the Rules and Regulations for Academic Staff Development at the University of Economics – Varna

General number	Number within the group	Title, bibliographic description, and a link to their content in electronic format, if available
8.	1.	Hristova, Yulia Nikolaevna (2025). Recommerce in the Context of the Circular Economy. Varna: University Publishing House "Science and Economics", 280 p. **ISBN 978-954-21-1213-6** Link

Abstract: The monograph examines recommerce as a strategic component of the circular economy and as an independent commercial activity of increasing importance for sustainable development. In the context of a deepening environmental, resource, and social crisis driven by the dominant linear model of "take – make – use – dispose," the author argues for the transition to an economic system based on extending product life cycles, promoting reuse, reducing waste, and improving resource efficiency. Within this framework, recommerce—the resale of previously used products—is regarded as a key strategy for achieving the objectives of the circular economy.

The theoretical part of the study conceptualizes the essence, position, and functions of recommerce within the ten "R" strategies of the circular model. The genesis of the concept is clarified, the main actors on the primary and secondary markets are defined, the resale process is analyzed, and an original model of recommerce is proposed as a system of interrelated economic relationships. The monograph emphasizes that the secondary market is not merely complementary to the primary one, but represents an independent economic subsystem with its own logic of value creation, competitive dynamics, and socio-environmental contribution.

The second conceptual focus of the work concerns the determinants of consumers' intention to purchase second-hand goods. Drawing on established behavioral theories—the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and the Norm Activation Model (NAM)—an integrated conceptual model is developed that combines economic, hedonic, critical, and environmental motives, perceived risk, and trust. These determinants are viewed as a complex system of internal attitudes and external factors shaping consumer intention and behavior in the secondary market.

The empirical part of the research has two main dimensions. First, through comparative statistical and correlational analysis, the development of retail trade in second-hand goods across 25 EU Member States during the period 2010–2022 is assessed. Sales volumes, market penetration, employment, labor productivity, wages, and income elasticity of demand are examined. The findings indicate that although recommerce shows positive trends and future potential, its share in total retail turnover remains relatively low. A

relationship between income levels and demand for second-hand goods is observed, confirming the complex and ambiguous economic nature of these products.

Second, based on a survey of 707 Bulgarian consumers and the application of a PLS-SEM model, the relationships between determinants and purchase intention for second-hand goods are analyzed. The results reveal a predominantly rational character of consumer behavior, where economic motives (lower price, savings) are leading, but environmental awareness and alignment with personal values also exert significant influence. Trust in product quality and functionality, as well as perceived risk associated with their use, prove to be of critical importance. Significant direct and indirect effects between the model constructs are identified, confirming the complex nature of consumer decision-making.

The concluding section systematizes the main challenges to the development of recommerce in Bulgaria—limited institutional support, insufficient market infrastructure, weak promotion, and persistent consumer stereotypes. At the same time, economic, technological, environmental, and social opportunities for unlocking the potential of the secondary market are outlined, including the development of online platforms, supportive tax policies, integration of digital technologies, promotion of sustainable consumption, and building trust in the quality of second-hand products.

The monograph defends the thesis that the expansion of recommerce represents a significant prerequisite for transforming contemporary business models from "fast" and "wasteful" toward "circular" and "value-preserving" economic behavior. The scientific contribution of the study lies in conceptualizing recommerce as an integrated economic activity, developing an original model of consumer purchase intention for second-hand goods, and providing an empirical assessment of its economic significance and development prospects in both European and national contexts.

Keywords: trade in second-hand goods, recommerce, circular economy, secondary goods market, determinants of consumer behavior in purchasing second-hand goods, sustainability in trade.

II. Monographs and studies under Article 104, paragraph 1, item 6 of the Regulations for Academic Staff Development at the University of Economics – Varna

General number	Number within the group	Title, bibliographic description, and a link to their content in electronic format, if available
9.	1.	Hristova, Y. (2025). Competitiveness of New Car Commercial Enterprises in Bulgaria. Varna: Monographic Library "Knowledge and Business", Book 26, 185 p. **ISBN (online) 978-619-210-079-7** Link to online access Link to article

The present monograph is based on a defended doctoral dissertation held on June 20, 2014, at the University of Economics – Varna before a Scientific Jury.

Abstract: This monograph examines the competitiveness of enterprises engaged in the trade of new automobiles in Bulgaria, focusing on their activities related to the import and sale of new passenger cars and light commercial vehicles. The main objective is, through a critical analysis of existing theoretical concepts in the field of competition and competitiveness, and by adapting and supplementing established models as well as selecting relevant indicators, to develop a methodology for assessing firm competitiveness in the sector.

The study analyzes the competitive structure of the Bulgarian automotive market, including the influence of market forces, strategic groups, and the positioning of leading enterprises. By applying quantitative and qualitative methods, including surveys among consumers and managers, the competitive positions of firms are evaluated and sustainable sources of competitive advantage are identified.

On this basis, strategic alternatives are formulated to enhance competitiveness and improve activities along the value chain. The monograph contributes by proposing an applicable methodology for a comprehensive assessment of firm competitiveness, which can be adapted to other market segments while taking into account their specific characteristics.

Keywords: competitiveness, competitive advantage, competitive strategy, new car dealers, competitive positioning, profitability, consumer behavior in the new car market, sustainability, sources of competitive advantage, managerial assessment, survey research, Porter's five forces analysis.

10.	2.	Hristova, Y. (2025). Competitive Convergence and Digitalization in Bulgarian Retailing. – Economic Studies [Ikonomicheski Izsledvania], 34(4), pp. 36-58. **ISSN (print) 0205-3292, ISSN (online) 0205-3292** Scopus link. Article link Link to article and Scopus screenshot

Abstract: Digitalization changes the limits of modern life in the social and business spheres. Finding themselves in direct contact with and being dependent on the digitally literate and technology-oriented user, retailers seek to build dynamic competitive advantages through the opportunities of digitalization, which increasingly blurs the boundaries between traditional and online formats and brings their strategies closer together in an intensified competitive struggle. In this regard, the aim of the present study is to determine the presence of competitive convergence between the leading traditional and online retailers in the Bulgarian consumer market and to assess the impact of COVID-19 on competition dynamics. The research applies content analysis of documents, as well as descriptive, dispersive and deductive analysis grounded in competitive advantage theory and sectoral structure.

The findings indicate a growing significance of retailing for the national economy, with total sales increasing and e-commerce expanding at a considerably faster rate than

traditional store sales, especially after the pandemic. The results confirm a process of interpenetration between offline and online retailing, reflected in the rising role of hybrid and multichannel retailers, the dynamism of competitive positioning, and moderate levels of market concentration. Competitive convergence is manifested through the integration of digital technologies, omnichannel strategies and ecosystem-based cooperation, which reshape the competitive structure of the sector.

In this context, sustainability is interpreted not only as environmental responsibility but primarily as the capacity of retailers to achieve and maintain renewable and adaptive competitive advantages. Sustainable competitive positioning is associated with the balanced integration of digital solutions, enhancement of operational efficiency, reduction of transaction costs, and strengthening of long-term relationships with consumers and suppliers. The ability to combine physical presence with digital capabilities increases sector resilience in times of crisis and contributes to long-term economic development. Thus, competitive convergence under digitalization emerges as a pathway toward sustainable sectoral development, based on innovation, strategic adaptability and cooperative competition rather than short-term price rivalry

Keywords: competitive convergence; retailing; digitalization; sustainable competitive advantage; competitive structure of retailing

11.	3.	Hristova, Y., Stoyanov, M. (2024). Income Elasticity and Trends in Second-Hand Goods Sales. – Economic Studies [Ikonomicheski Izsledvania], 33(7), pp. 119-141. **ISSN (print) 0205-3292** Scopus link. Article link Link to article and Scopus screenshot and authorship agreement

Abstract: The study aims to show the primary tendencies in second-hand goods trade, determine the significance of disposable income as an economic factor on second-hand goods sales, the income elasticity of their demand and the influence of income inequality on second-hand purchases in 21 selected European economies. The methods of content, comparative and correlational analysis have been applied and secondary sources of data from Eurostat are used, which allows for a national review, international comparisons and a study of the economic significance of second-hand goods trade for GDP to take place for each EU country. The results suggest that in the span of the 2010-2020 period, there is an uneven and mildly descending trend in second-hand goods commerce in the EU-21 which matches the instability of the business cycle in the entirety of the European and separate national economies and contributes, though slightly, to the creation of economic value added. ThFrom a sustainability perspective, the market plays a strategic role in extending product life cycles, reducing waste generation, limiting resource depletion, and lowering environmental externalities associated with overproduction and overconsumption.

Contrary to traditional assumptions that second-hand goods are inferior products, empirical findings indicate that they behave predominantly as normal goods, demonstrating a moderate positive correlation with disposable income in most countries. Income inequality shows weak and statistically insignificant influence in the majority of cases. These findings suggest that non-financial determinants — such as environmental awareness, ethical consumption, minimalism, anti-consumerism attitudes, uniqueness seeking, and social identity expression — increasingly shape demand patterns.

The study confirms that the second-hand goods market cannot be interpreted solely through classical income-based demand theory. Instead, it represents a hybrid economic and sustainability-driven consumption model, integrating financial rationality with ecological responsibility and social values. As such, second-hand trade emerges as an instrument of sustainable development, supporting circular economy principles through reuse, repair, redistribution, and resource efficiency.

Although still economically marginal in aggregate terms, the sector holds significant long-term potential. Strengthening institutional support mechanisms, encouraging repair rights, implementing fiscal incentives, promoting consumer awareness campaigns, and integrating digital resale platforms can accelerate its transformation into a structurally important pillar of sustainable retail systems in Europe.

Keywords: second-hand goods market; disposable income; income elasticity; income inequality; sustainable trade; circular economy; reuse; sustainability.

12.	4.	Hristova, Y. (2022). Life Insurance Penetration Drivers in Bulgaria. – Economic Studies [Ikonomicheski Izsledvania], 31(6), pp. 98-119. **ISSN (print) 0205-3292, ISSN (online) 0205-3292** Scopus link. Article link Link to article and Scopus screenshot

Abstract: The need for security and protection of human life and health constitutes the fundamental driver of life insurance demand, whose relevance has further intensified in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite this, life insurance penetration in Bulgaria remains significantly lower than the EU average. The present study investigates the macroeconomic, demographic and competitive determinants of life insurance penetration in Bulgaria for the period 2009–2020, applying descriptive and correlation analysis grounded in demand theory and industrial organization.

The findings confirm that although life gross premiums written have followed a generally positive trend over the analyzed period, life insurance penetration and density remain substantially below European levels. Income, GDP per capita, savings, urbanization, dependency ratio, education and life expectancy demonstrate a strong positive relationship with insurance penetration, while factors such as real interest rates, income inequality and social contributions reveal a more complex and context-specific influence. The pandemic exerts an ambiguous effect, simultaneously increasing risk awareness while reducing income stability and demand capacity.

From an industry perspective, the study highlights the structural characteristics of the Bulgarian life insurance market, which is marked by increasing concentration, a declining number of competitors and significant asymmetry in market share distribution. Although major insurers maintain relatively stable market positions, the limited intensity of rivalry constrains innovation, product diversification and proactive demand stimulation. In this regard, the sustainability of competitive positions in the sector depends not only on market share and financial performance, but also on strategic adaptability, digital transformation, product personalization, omni-channel distribution and trust-building mechanisms. Strengthening competitive dynamics and improving the overall competitive structure of the industry are essential conditions for enhancing life insurance penetration and ensuring long-term sectoral stability.

The study contributes to the understanding of the determinants of life insurance development in a small open economy and provides guidelines for increasing financial literacy, improving competitive behavior and unlocking the growth potential of the Bulgarian life insurance market.

Keywords: life insurance; penetration; determinants; life insurance market, sustainable development

13.	5.	Hris ova, Y. (2021). Sustainability of Competitive Positioning and Chal enges for Intermediaries in the New Car Market in Bulgaria. – Upr vlenets / The Manager, 12(3), pp. 67-81. **ISSN (online) 2686-792** DOI Wet of Science link. Link to article and Web of Science screenshot

Abstract: The prese it study analyzes the sustainability of the competitive positioning of the five largest new car mporters in Bulgaria for the period 2015–2019, as well as the main challenges facing th ir development. In the context of intensified globalization, digitalization, and a dynam ic competitive environment, sustainable competitive advantage has become a key factor for market survival and growth. Although the automotive market in Bulgaria is relatively well developed, it remains insufficiently researched in terms of the positioning and performanc of commercial intermediaries.

The theoretical frar ework of the study encompasses both the market-based and resource-based views of cc mpetitive advantage, as well as contemporary perspectives on dynamic capabilities and he temporary nature of competitive advantages. Sustainable positioning is viewed as t e result of the accumulation of diverse types of competitive advantages and the firm's ibility to protect them over time through effective managerial decisions and adaptation to he environment.

The methodological approach is based on a comparative competitive analysis using a system of 11 key result indi ators (KRIs) of both financial and market nature: market share, profit margins (gross, oper iting, and net), cost ratios, total asset and inventory turnover, return on assets and return on equity, financial leverage, DuPont analysis, and sustainable growth rate (SGR). The stu dy applies descriptive analysis, financial ratio analysis, DuPont decomposition, sustainable growth analysis, as well as integrated coefficients of structural change and inequality (ICS and ICIS) to assess the dynamics and stability of competitive positions.

The results indicate high degree of market concentration (CR5 above 60%), relative stability of competitive pos tions, and the absence of significant structural shifts during the analyzed period. The marke leader (Renault Nissan Bulgaria) maintains a dominant position in terms of market share an d inventory turnover, which enables it to achieve high return on equity, albeit at increased nancial risk. Nevertheless, all examined intermediaries operate with low gross and opera ing margins, reflecting the strong market power of suppliers (manufacturers) and the lim itations of the vertically integrated distribution model.

The DuPont analysi reveals that the key factor for competitiveness is the efficient utilization of assets and acc lerated inventory turnover rather than financial leverage. Despite the existence of potential fo higher sustainable growth, the actual sales growth rate remains below the attainable level, i ndicating underutilized managerial potential.

Among the main challenges facing intermediaries are: strong dependence on manufacturers and the high cost of vehicles; competition from the used car market; the need for digital transformation nd transition to an omnichannel business model; pressure on margins and the necessity f r more effective logistics and pricing strategies; and the impact of COVID-19 on sales and onsumer behavior.

In conclusion, the s udy confirms the sustainability of the competitive positions of leading importers, while em phasizing the need for strategic differentiation, diversification of activities, optimization of in ventory management, and integration of digital technologies. The transition toward an omn channel model emerges as a key instrument for enhancing flexibility and competitive dvantage under conditions of increasing market uncertainty.

Keywords: sustainable positioning; car intermediaries; competitive advantage; competitiveness; car market; Bulgaria.		
14.	6.	Hristova, Y. (2021). Chapter Seven. The Impact of Digitalization on Competition in Retail Trade as an Economic Sector. In V. Dimitrova, D. Zhelyazkova, M. Stoyanov, V. Peteva, D. Grozdeva, E. Gramatikova, M. Kaneva, M. Dushkova, Y. Hristova, The Impact of Trade Digitalization on the Economic Development of Bulgaria and Its Regions, p. 254. Reviewers: Prof. Tanya Dabeva, Zoya Mladenova. Varna: University Publishing House "Science and Economics", Tsani Kalyandzhiev Library, Book 70, pp. 165–185. **ISBN (print) 978-954-21-1072-9** Link to article abstracts

Abstract: Chapter Seven examines the impact of digitalization on competition in retail trade as an independent economic sector, focusing on the transformation of the competitive structure, the dynamics of market positions, and the role of multichannel strategies. The analysis is grounded in the theoretical framework of competitive forces, viewing competition through the prism of the intensity of rivalry and the distribution of market power among industry participants.

From a methodological perspective, the study applies descriptive, deductive, and content analysis of secondary statistical data for the period 2012–2018. The analysis employs indicators such as growth rates, the concentration ratio of the four largest enterprises (CR4), integral coefficients of structural change (Ks) and inequality (KR), as well as Spearman's rank correlation coefficient. These indicators are used to assess: the growth and structure of sales by channel (store-based, internet, and mobile); the market positions of the Top 20 retailers in both traditional and electronic segments; the role of multichannel retailers; and the relationship between market concentration and economic well-being (GDP per capita).

The results indicate that despite the dominant share of store-based sales, internet—and particularly mobile—sales are growing at significantly higher rates, although their share in total retail turnover remains relatively modest at the end of the period. A strong positive relationship is observed between the development of internet sales and economic well-being, measured by GDP per capita, confirming the economic significance of digital transformation.

From a competitive perspective, the market demonstrates a relatively stable but moderately concentrated structure, with a clearly pronounced role of large retail chains. The e-commerce market, however, exhibits higher concentration compared to the traditional segment and more dynamic structural changes. The concentration of leading online retailers has a strong and statistically significant impact on the level of economic development at both national and regional levels. A key conclusion of the chapter is that digitalization leads to the blurring of boundaries between traditional and electronic retailing and to the convergence of distribution channels. Multichannel and omnichannel retailers are gradually displacing pure "brick-and-mortar" and "pure player" models by combining physical presence with digital platforms, logistics innovations, and big data analytics. This shifts the focus of competitive rivalry from "where" the purchase takes place to "how" and "when," making customer experience, convenience, and personalization key sources of competitive advantage.

In conclusion, Chapter 7 demonstrates that digitalization not only transforms the competitive structure of retail trade but also acts as a sustainable source of competitive advantage, a driver of market convergence, and a catalyst for economic development. Retailers that integrate technological solutions throughout the entire value chain and develop hybrid business models achieve leading market positions and exert a stronger impact on both the national and regional economy.

Keywords: retail competitiveness; convergence of online and offline channels; sustainable competitive advantage; role of online retail in economic well-being; digitalization of retail trade.

15.	7.	Dimitrova, V., Hristova, Y. (2014). Chapter Five. Competitiveness in Trade. In N. Sŭlova, D. Danchev, V. Dimitrova, H. Traykov, Ts. Tsvetkov, M. Dushkova, E. Gramatikova, D. Grozdeva, V. Peteva, Y. Hristova, D. Shopova, Development of Trade in Bulgaria – State, Problems and Challenges, p. 356. Reviewers: Rumen Kalchev, Teodorina Turlakova. Varna: University Publishing House "Science and Economics", Monographic Library "Prof. Tsani Kalyandzhiev", Book 34, pp. 236–263. **ISBN 978-954-21-0772-9, ISSN C624-5927** Link to article, Authorship Agreement

Abstract: Chapter Five focuses on the competitiveness of trade as an economic sector, placing emphasis on its essence, determinants, and the methodological challenges related to its assessment at sectoral level. From a theoretical perspective, competitiveness is interpreted as a complex and dynamic category reflecting the sector's ability, through continuous renewal and improvement, to create and sustainably maintain competitive advantages leading to higher efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainable economic growth.

The analysis highlights the interrelationship between firm-level, sectoral, and national competitiveness, emphasizing the role of productivity, return on investment, the institutional environment, and market design. Special attention is paid to issues concerning the choice of level of analysis, the selection of indicators, the measurement of efficiency, and the evaluation of the sector's competitive structure.

The empirical part presents a comparative analysis of the competitiveness of trade in the Republic of Bulgaria and the EU Member States based on sectoral statistical data. The assessment covers the dynamics of wholesale and retail sales, the size and structure of the market, employment, and labor productivity. The results indicate that despite the significant share of trade in gross value added and employment in Bulgaria, the sector is characterized by lower labor productivity and a more pronounced decline in sales after the economic crisis compared to a number of Central and Eastern European countries.

The study identifies key sources of competitive advantage, including an efficient sectoral structure, sustainable demand, innovation, balanced supply chain relationships, and improvements in the institutional environment. The conclusions underline the need for policies and managerial decisions aimed at enhancing productivity, stimulating investment, and strengthening the competitive position of trade in both national and European contexts.

Keywords: competitiveness of trade; sectoral competitiveness; labor productivity; efficiency and effectiveness; competitive structure of the sector; market design; sales dynamics; employment in trade; Bulgaria–EU comparative analysis; competitive advantages.

III. Scientific articles under Article 104, paragraph 1, item 6 of the Regulations for the Academic Staff Development at the University of Economics – Varna.

General number	Number within the group	Title, bibliographic description, and a link to their content in electronic format, if available
16.	1.	Stoyanov, M., Zhelyazkova, D., Grozdeva, D., Hristova, Y. (2024). Does Trade Development Depend on Road Network Quality? – *Narodnostopanski Arhiv (Economic Archive)*. Svishtov: Tsenov Academic Publishing House, 77(4), pp. 3–19. **ISSN (print) 0323-9004, ISSN (online) 2367-9301** Link File link Link to article, Authorship Agreement

Abstract: Market globalization today presumes a free movement of people, goods, and capitals, which, in turn, is intended to stimulate growth of various economic sectors and trade in particular. To this end, the development of a high-quality road infrastructure with large territorial coverage is an essential condition for the successful operation of any commercial enterprise. This study contributes to understanding how road network development affects the commercial activities of individual countries within the European Union. The correlation between domestic sales and road network length was assessed using official statistical data. The findings support the opinion that the coverage and level of development of transportation infrastructure strongly correlate with the increase of trade volumes although this relationship is manifested differently across its subsectors.

Keywords: road network, trade, sales.

17.	2.	Hristova, Y. (2019). The Second-Hand Goods Market: Trends and Challenges. – Izvestia Journal of the Union of Scientists - Varna. Economic Sciences Series, Varna: Union of Scientists - Varna, 8(3), pp. 62-71. **ISSN (print) 1314-7390, ISSN (online) 2603-4085** Link Link to article

Abstract: This article analyzes the development, significance, and challenges of the second-hand goods market in the context of digitalization, changing consumer values, and the transition toward sustainable trade. The market for used goods, which originated in the era of barter exchange, is now establishing itself as a global economic phenomenon that extends beyond the boundaries of a marginal segment and is becoming a strategic component of modern retailing. Its accelerated growth is driven by digital technologies, platform-based business models, social media, and the increasing environmental awareness of consumers.

The study aims to outline the main trends in the development of the second-hand goods market, to systematize the factors that motivate consumer participation in it, and to assess its impact on traditional trade in new goods. Methodologically, the paper is based on content analysis of academic publications and reports, as well as logical, inductive, and deductive analysis and secondary statistical data. Due to the limited availability of systematized official statistics for this segment, the research relies on fragmented sources, enabling the identification of generalized trends and comparative conclusions.

The results indicate a steady global growth of secondary markets—particularly in clothing, automobiles, furniture, and electronics—where growth rates in many cases exceed those of primary markets. Digitalization reduces transaction costs, expands the geographical scope of trade, and facilitates the redistribution of resources among different social groups. Online platforms and omnichannel models are transforming traditional retail and creating a new competitive environment in which the boundary between primary and secondary markets is becoming increasingly blurred.

Four main groups of drivers of consumer behavior in second-hand purchases are identified: economic (lower price, resale opportunities, budget optimization), emotional (uniqueness, nostalgia, the "snob effect"), social (influence of communities and social media, global redistribution of goods), and ecological (extending product life cycles, reducing waste, limiting overproduction). These motives often operate in combination, forming a new consumption model based on rationality, experience, and social responsibility.

From the perspective of sustainable trade, the second-hand goods market performs a key function within the framework of the circular economy. Through reuse, repair, refurbishment, and resale, product life cycles are extended, pressure on natural resources is reduced, and the negative environmental externalities of mass production are limited. The secondary market not only contributes to more efficient resource utilization but also stimulates entrepreneurship, the creation of small and medium-sized enterprises, and the generation of added value for the national economy.

At the same time, the growing influence of this market creates competitive pressure on producers and retailers of new goods. This compels them to adapt their business models by implementing buy-back policies, recycling initiatives, leasing schemes, and integrating new and used products within a unified retail strategy. In this way, sustainability becomes not only an ethical or environmental category but also a source of competitive advantage.

In conclusion, the second-hand goods market emerges as a dynamic and strategically significant segment of contemporary trade, combining economic efficiency, social integration, and environmental responsibility. Its development is directly linked to the transformation toward sustainable models of production and consumption and represents an important element of the long-term competitiveness of trade in the context of a digital and green economy.

Keywords: second-hand goods market; retailing; competitive advantage; sustainability in trade.

18.	3.	Hristova, Y. (2013). Blind spots in the management of the automotive business. – *Vanguard Scientific Instruments in Management*. Sofia: University of National and World Economy, 2(7), pp. 233–247. **ISSN (online) 1314-0582** Link, Link to article

Abstract: The article examines the problem of "blind spots" in the management of the automotive business that arise as a result of subjective perceptions, limited information, and incorrect assumptions in managerial decision-making. In a dynamic and uncertain market environment, the correct strategic choice requires a systematic analysis of the competitive and market environment. In practice, however, managers often rely on intuition and personal beliefs, which leads to ineffective decisions and reduced competitiveness.

The aim of the study is to identify the "blind spots" in the management of new car importers in Bulgaria by comparing managers' assessments of the competitive position of their companies with consumer evaluations, market analysis, and financial performance indicators. The study covers the five largest importers of new cars and is based on a survey conducted among the dealer network, as well as on an analysis of market share and the profitability of the enterprises.

The results show significant discrepancies between managerial assessments and actual market performance, which confirms the presence of "blind spots" in management. The main reasons for these are related to information opacity, psychological factors, and the insufficient systematic collection and analysis of information about the market and

competitors. The analysis of "blind spots" enables a more accurate identification of managerial weaknesses and creates conditions for improving strategic decision-making and increasing the competitiveness of enterprises in the automotive sector. **Keywords:** "blind spots", new car importers, competitive advantages, managerial assessment.		
19.	4.	Hristova, Y. (2012). Model for studying business competitiveness. – Economics, Sociology and Law: Journal of Scientific Publications, Moscow: Scientific Information Publishing Center, Institute for Strategic Studies, 1–2, pp. 105–113. **ISSN (print) 1995-9648** Link to article
Abstract: The article presents a model for studying business competitiveness, aimed at systematizing and analyzing the key factors that determine the market positions of enterprises in a dynamic economic environment. The theoretical foundations of the concept of "competitiveness" are examined, with emphasis on the interrelationship between a firm's internal resources, management practices, and the external business environment. The proposed model integrates quantitative and qualitative indicators, enabling a comprehensive assessment of enterprises' competitive strengths and weaknesses. The methodological approach allows for comparative analysis between firms and sectors, as well as the identification of strategic directions for enhancing competitiveness. The research findings highlight the importance of innovation, effective management, and adaptability to market changes as essential prerequisites for sustainable business development. **Keywords:** competitiveness, business model, competitive advantages, strategic management, firm performance, market environment, innovation		

IV. Conference papers under Art. 104, para. 1, item 6 of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at the University of Economics – Varna.

General number	Number within the group	Title, bibliographic description, and a link to their content in electronic format, if available
20.	1.	Hristova, Y. (2023). Is Digitalization Really a Competitive Advantage? – In: Conference Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference "Commerce 5.0 – Digitalization and/or Humanization", 13 November 2023, Varna: Nauka i Ikonomika Publishing House, pp. 296–302. **ISBN (online) 978-954-21-1160-3** Link CEEOL FILE LINK Link to article

Abstract: The modern age is that of digitalization. It is present in every aspect of people's lives, and this makes it a way of doing business. It is considered that the more technologically developed companies, using if not a fully digitized channel, then omnichannelity, have an advantage in the realization of their product. The purpose of this article is to provide some arguments that prove or disprove this assumption. The study examines the main advantages and limitations of digital technologies in trade and their impact on managerial decisions and competitive positioning. It also discusses the conditions under which digitalization can generate sustainable competitive advantages for modern commercial enterprises.

Keywords: digitalization, competitive advantage, trade, technology competitive strategy.

General number	Number within the group	Title, bibliographic description, and a link to their content in electronic format, if available
21.	2.	Hristova, Y. (2018). Digital Technologies Reshaping the Competitive Structure of Retail Trade. – In: Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference "Commerce 4.0 – Science, Practice and Education", 12 October 2018, Varna: Nauka i Ikonomika Publishing House, pp. 215–225. **ISBN (print) 978-954-21-0980-8** Ceeol Link Link to article

Abstract: Digitization penetrate more and more into the business world, and hence becomes a weapon of competitive struggle between traders. In the development of their competitive strategies, more and more economic agents use the achievements of the digital economy to create a product capable of satisfying the consumer's needs for purchases in convenient place, time and way, which is today's most important source of competitive advantage. In the light of free data and information traffic, the competitive structure of traditional retailing is transformed into the application of a omnichannel trading model, intensifying competition, cooperation with suppliers, the role of buyers and reducing entry barriers in the industry. The purpose of this paper is to describe the disruptive impact of digitalization on the competitive structure of retailing and certain technologies that cause it.

Keywords: competition, competitive structure, digital technologies.

General number	Number within the group	Title, bibliographic description, and a link to their content in electronic format, if available
22.	3.	Dimitrova, V., Hristova, Y., Dushkova, M. (2018). Competitive Structure of Electronic Retailing in Bulgaria. – In. [FIFTH] 5th International Multidisciplinary Scientific Conference on Social Sciences and Arts SGEM 2018, 26 August - 01 September 2018, Albena, Bulgaria: Vol. 5. - Sofia: STEF92 Technology Ltd., 2018.

		Iss. 1.5 Business and Management, pp. 161 - 168. **ISSN (print) 2367-5659, ISBN (print) 978-619-7408-65-2** DOI Link to article, Authorship Agreement

Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to examine changes in the competitive structure of electronic retailing (e-retailing) compared to traditional retailing and to identify the processes of their mutual influence. The development of two key indicators used to assess the intensity of competition—market growth and market concentration—is analysed. Based on these indicators, the dynamics of the competitive structure of retail e-commerce are compared with those of traditional retail trade. For the purposes of the analysis, data from the National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria and Euromonitor were used.

The study finds that, during the period under review, the growth rates and the level of market concentration in retail e-commerce in Bulgaria were significantly higher than those observed in traditional retail trade. The group of the four companies with the largest market shares in retail e-commerce also includes firms that initially started their business by establishing physical stores and have continued to operate them. The results support the hypothesis of mutual penetration between different forms of retail sales and the development of an omnichannel distribution model that employs various communication tools in the consumer decision-making process.

Keywords: e-retailing; omnichannel retailing; market concentration; competitive structure

23.	4.	Hristova, Y. (2018) Bulgarian Passenger Car Market: Dynamics and Perspectives. – In. 5th International Multidisciplinary Scientific Conference on Social Sciences and Arts: SGEM 2018, 26 Aug. - 01 Sept. 2018, Albena, Bulgaria: Vol. 5. – Sofia: STEF92 Technology Ltd., 5, 2018, 1.4, pp. 61-68. **ISBN 978-619-7408-59-1** DOI Link to article

Abstract: The European car market is progressing in the development of the automotive industry, which plays a key role in the development of the economy. The research focuses on the dynamics and the structure of the passenger car market through an investigation and comparison of the Bulgarian car market with that of the European Union. Using descriptive and comparative analysis, indicators such as the motorisation rate, the average vehicle age, and the state of the passenger car fleet are examined for the period 2012–2017. Data from the National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria and the Ministry of Transport are used.

The investigation establishes that the motorisation rate in Bulgaria remains below the average levels observed in the European Union. At the same time, Bulgaria is one of the countries with the oldest passenger car fleets, which leads to a continuous increase in the average age of vehicles and a growing number of registered cars. These trends contribute to the intensification of competition among car dealers and independent car distributors.

Keywords: passenger car market; motorisation rate; vehicle age; competition

24.	5.	Hristova, Y., Peeva, P. (2018) Consumer Attitudes Towards Life Insurance in Bulgaria. – In. 5th International Multidisciplinary Scientific Conference on Social Sciences and Arts SGEM 2018, 26 Aug. - 01 Sept. 2018, Albena, Bulgaria: Vol. 5. –Sofia: STEF92 Technology Ltd., 5, 1.5, pp. 185 - 192. **ISBN 978-619-7408-65-2** Link Link to article, Authorship Agreement

Abstract: The aim of the paper is to analyze the consumer attitude towards life insurance in Bulgaria during 2018, considering the contemporary European trends and the increased necessity for life insurance. The European life insurance market has been developing with a rapid pace for the past several years, indicating that on average a European spends 1159 EUR annually for life insurance products. According to this indicator Bulgaria is one of the least developed countries among the EU member states. This begs the question as to what the reasons are which lead to this. The methods of the descriptive and comparative analyses have been applied to the statistical information of the state as well as to the tendencies of the Bulgarian and the European life insurance markets. The research has been conducted using data from Insurance Europe and the Bulgarian Financial Supervision Commission as well as from primary sources of data obtained via survey questionnaires where the method used is through proactive respondents providing their consumer opinions and attitudes towards life insurance products in Bulgaria for 2018.

The investigation established that the lack of popularity of life insurance products among the Bulgarian consumers was based mainly on the lack of awareness of the potential benefits of these products and services. Based on the primary data findings, it could be concluded that the respondents were not aware of any life insurance companies or brokers. Most of the respondents didn't have life insurance but indicated that they were interested to purchase such a product in the future which confirms that there is a potential for development of life insurance market in Bulgaria. The results of the study support the hypothesis for the necessity of products and the necessary consultation services in the areas of life insurance.

Keywords: life insurance, consumer attitudes towards, competition

25.	6.	Hristova, Y., Peeva, P. (2016). Competitive Positioning of Life Insurance Companies in Bulgaria. – In: Proceedings of the Conference "Trade and Tourism Business in the Conditions of Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth". Svishtov: Tsenov Academic Publishing House, Vol. 1, pp. 277–282. **ISBN (print) 978-954-23-1150-8** Link to article, Authorship Agreement

Abstract: The article examines the competitive positioning of life insurance companies in Bulgaria for the period 2003–2015, focusing on the distribution of market shares. Using statistical time series analysis, concentration ratios, and the Herfindahl-Hirschman Index, the authors assess the stability of the market structure.

The results indicate that despite a growth in premium income of over 400%, the market remains highly concentrated with low competition. Four leading companies – ZAD Allianz Bulgaria Life, ZAD Bulstrad Life Vienna Insurance Group (formerly Bulstrad DSK Life), DZI AD, and IC Unica Life AD – control an average of 65.9% of the sector, confirming their dominant role. The analysis establishes the stability of the leaders' positions over time and an uneven distribution of revenues, which hinders the entry of smaller competitors and the alteration of the status quo.

Keywords: life insurance, competitive positioning, market share, market concentration, structural analysis of the life insurance market

26.	7.	Hristova, Y. (2016). Omnichannel Retailing as a Source of Competitive Advantage in the Sale of New Automobiles. – In: Proceedings of the Conference "Omnichannel Retailing and Innovations". Sofia: UNWE Publishing Complex, pp. 61–68. **ISBN (print) 978-954-644-901-6** Link to article

Abstract: The conference paper examines omnichannel retail as a strategic tool for achieving competitive advantage, with a focus on the new car market. It analyzes the limitations of the traditional dealer model and standalone online channels, which no longer satisfy the modern informed buyer. The study traces changes in consumer behavior requiring a symbiosis between digital convenience and physical contact with the product. The author argues that the integration of heterogeneous channels (test centers, city stores, online platforms) is a mandatory transformation for the automotive sector. This approach allows the customer flexible management of the purchasing process at every stage. In conclusion, it is deduced that the omnichannel strategy generates added value, optimizes distribution, and increases long-term customer loyalty, becoming a necessary condition for success in a hyper-competitive environment. **Keywords:** omnichannel retail, competitive advantage, car market, consumer behavior, channel integration.		
27.	8.	Hristova, Y. (2013). Strategic Positioning of New Car Importers in Bulgaria. – In: *Scientific Conference of Young Researchers*. Varna: Nauka i Ikonomika Publishing House, pp. 277–286. **ISSN (print) 1314-4812** Link to article
Abstract: The conference paper examines the competitive environment and the strategic positioning of new car importers in Bulgaria within the context of market conditions as of 2010. The primary objective is to define opportunities for repositioning to increase profitability by assessing positions within the strategic space. Strategic group analysis is employed as the primary methodological tool. Based on two key criteria—average price and number of retail outlets—the importers are classified into six strategic groups. The results indicate strong polarization: the first two groups, comprising the market leaders, control the majority of the market share and achieve high efficiency and positive profitability. In contrast, the participants in the remaining four groups report negative results. The report analyzes mobility barriers (capital requirements, image, services) and concludes that lagging firms require a radical strategic shift to overcome competitive pressure and the unfavorable distribution of income within the industry. **Keywords:** strategic positioning, strategic groups, new car market, competitiveness, profitability, mobility barriers.		
28.	9.	Hristova, Y. (2010). Prospects for the Development of the Competitiveness of the Automotive Sector in Bulgaria. – In: Proceedings of the Jubilee International Scientific and Practical Conference "Horizon 2020 before Economic Knowledge and Business", 7–8 October 2010, Svishtov: Tsenov Academic Publishing House, Vol. 2, pp. 64–74. **ISBN (print) 978-954-23-0480-7** Link to article
Abstract: The paper analyzes the competitiveness of the automotive sector in Bulgaria in the context of the global economic crisis of 2008–2009, focusing on the impact of macroeconomic and institutional factors on the development of the industry. The automotive market is identified as highly vulnerable due to the high price sensitivity of demand and the limited purchasing power of the population. To assess the market environment and the competitive positions of leading automotive dealers, the McKinsey matrix and Michael Porter's Five Forces model are applied. The results indicate medium to low market attractiveness, high intensity of competition, and significant bargaining power of both customers and suppliers.		

Under crisis conditions, defensive strategies aimed at protecting and optimizing market positions prevail, while a trend toward restructuring of the sector in favor of more competitive participants is observed.

Keywords: automotive sector, competitiveness, market attractiveness, economic crisis, Bulgaria, Porter's Five Forces, McKinsey matrix, competitive strategies

V. Textbooks and Teaching Materials under Art. 104, para. 1, item 6 of the Regulations for the Academic Staff Development at the University of Economics – Varna.

General number	Number within the group	Title, bibliographic description, and a link to their content in electronic format, if available
29.	1.	Grozdeva, D., Hristova, Y. (2023). Fundamentals of Trade Business. Varna: University Publishing House "Nauka i Ikonomika", 198 p. (Chapters 3, 4, 7, and 8). **ISBN 978-954-21-1140-5** Link
In the teaching manual "Fundamentals of Trade Business" (2023), Yulia Hristova is the author of Topics Three, Four, Seven, and Eight, which follow the structure of the textbook and include key concepts, discussion questions, case studies, tasks, and test questions. The developed topics examine the main prerequisites and conditions for conducting trade activities, as well as the market and competitive dimensions of the trade business. Particular attention is paid to the essence of the market, the factors influencing demand and supply, and the role of competition in building competitive advantages for enterprises. A separate topic analyzes prices and trade margins as important tools for managing trade activities and achieving market efficiency. The economic results of trading activities are also examined through the analysis of revenues, costs, financial results, and profitability of trading enterprises. The manual has a practical orientation, as through discussion questions, case studies, tasks, and tests it supports students in mastering theoretical knowledge and applying it in the analysis and management of trading activities.		
30.	2.	Danchev, D., Hristova, Y. (2017). Fundamentals of Trade Business. Varna: University Publishing House "Nauka i Ikonomika", 463 p. (Chapters 4 and 8). **ISBN 978-954-21-0925-9** Link
Yulia Hristova is the author of Chapter 4 and Chapter 8 of the textbook. Chapter 4 analyzes the essence and structure of the market, the types of markets, and the mechanism of interaction between demand, supply, and prices as the main elements of the market system. The chapter examines the factors influencing market demand and supply, as well as the role of prices as a regulator of market relations. Special attention is paid to competition in trade, its forms, determinants, and its importance for building competitive advantages of enterprises. Chapter 8 explores the economic results of trading activity through the analysis of revenues, costs, profit, and profitability of trading enterprises. The essence and structure of revenues are discussed, together with the factors influencing their formation and the main types of costs in trade. The process of forming the financial result and the indicators used to evaluate profitability are analyzed as a basis for assessing the efficiency of trading activities.		
31.	3.	Dimitrova, V., Zhelyazkova, D., Hristova, Y. (2016). Competition and Competitiveness. Varna: University Publishing House "Nauka i Ikonomika", 289 p. (Author of methodological guidelines for Topic 5, items 2 and 3; discussion questions, case studies, tasks, test questions and literature for Topics 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10.). **ISBN** 978-954-21-0895-5 Link

The textbook "Competition and Competitiveness" develops a comprehensive theoretical and methodological framework for studying competition – from its essence and industry structure to firm positioning, strategic decision-making, and the national dimensions of competitiveness, with particular emphasis on the behavioral and strategic approach to analysis.

Chief Assistant Professor Yulia Hristova, PhD is the author of the methodological guidelines for Topic 5 (sections 2 and 3), related to the sources and sustainability of competitive advantages, as well as the discussion questions, case studies, practical tasks, and test questions for Topics 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10.

Topic 5 (sections 2 and 3) systematizes the nature and classification of competitive advantages and their sources—resource-based, innovation-based, organizational, marketing, and managerial—while emphasizing their dynamic character and their dependence on the enterprise's ability to combine and develop key competencies in a changing environment.
The development of discussion questions, case studies, practical exercises, and test questions across all topics has significant methodological value, as it transforms theoretical knowledge into applied skills, fosters analytical and critical thinking, supports students' independent learning, and facilitates the assessment of their understanding of key concepts through active and problem-oriented learning.

Заличена информация съгласно ЗЗЛД и регламент (ЕС) 2016/ 679

Varna **Signature:**

22.06.2026 **/Yulia Hristova, Chief Assist. Prof., PhD/**