ИКОНОМИЧЕСКИ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ ВАРНА
Вх. № Р220-1968/28.10.2026

# REVIEW

by **Prof. Dr. Lina Georgieva Anastassova**, Professional Field 3.8 (Marketing), Burgas Free University
Subject: Dissertation titled "Marketing Effects of the Application of Information Technologies"
Submitted by: **Plamen Yankov Yankov** for the award of the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor" in Professional Field 3.8 (Economics), specialisation "Marketing"

**Basis for the review**: Order No. RD 06-157/21.09.2026 of the Rector of the University of Economics - Varna, regarding the open procedure for the defense of the dissertation by Plamen Yankov Yankov titled "Marketing Effects of the Application of Information Technologies" and the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor" in Professional Field 3. Economics, scientific speciality Marketing.

***Информация за докторанта***

**Information about the PhD candidate**

PhD candidate Plamen Yankov Yankov is a graduate of the Commercial High School in Stara Zagora and obtained a Bachelor's degree in Finance from the D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics in Svishtov in 2009. He continued his economic education at the University of Economics – Varna, successfully completing a Master's degree in Corporate Business and Management in 2016. From 2018 to 2021, Plamen Yankov pursued his doctoral studies at the Department of Marketing at the University of Economics – Varna, working on his dissertation titled "Marketing Effects of the Application of Information Technologies." The PhD candidate possesses diverse practical experience gained over the last 10 years, which is an asset for the development of his doctoral thesis: between 2015 and 2016, Plamen worked as a duty manager at a hotel complex in the town of Balchik, and in 2017 and 2018, he served as a hotel manager at the Golden Sands resort, thereby enriching his experience and expertise in the hospitality and tourism sectors. Since 2021, Plamen Yankov has been teaching at the Department of Marketing at the University of Economics, while also engaging in research and methodological activities.

Doctoral candidate Yankov possesses an excellent command of English and a good level of proficiency in German and Russian; his excellent language skills greatly assist him in the development of his dissertation. His records indicate that he possesses excellent communication and presentation skills, team management and coordination skills, as well as analytical and research skills.

**Description of the materials submitted for the competition**

The candidate for the doctoral degree, Plamen Yankov Yankov, has submitted the following materials for review and evaluation:

1. A dissertation titled "Marketing Effects of the Application of Information Technologies," with a total length of 174 pages, structured as follows: introduction (6 pages), three chapters

(145 pages), conclusion (2 pages), contributions (1 page), list of references (13 pages), and appendices (7 pages).

The dissertation contains 38 tables, 32 figures, and 4 appendices. The bibliography includes 203 sources, 135 of which are accessible online. Of the sources used, 160 are in English, 41 in Bulgarian, and 2 in Russian.

2. Abstract of the dissertation

3. List of publications: 1 research article in English (2025) and 2 research papers (2023a; 2023b) from international conferences organized by the University of Economics – Varna; The Statement on Meeting Minimum Requirements also lists a chapter authored by the candidate in a published collective monograph;

4. Statement of compliance with the minimum requirements set out in Art. 2, Para. 2 and 3, and Art. 6, Para. 3 of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ADASRB).

5. List of claimed scientific and applied scientific contributions.

According to the submitted Report on Compliance with Minimum Requirements, the doctoral candidate Plamen Yankov has successfully met the minimum requirements set forth in Article 2b, paragraphs 2 and 3, and Article 6, paragraph 3 of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ADASRB) and the Regulations for its implementation.

**I. General characteristics of the presented dissertation**

The title of the dissertation—"Marketing Effects of the Application of Information Technologies"—fully corresponds to the work's content and structure. The topic is timely and significant, given the major role of online presence in the selection of accommodation; it is increasingly necessary to clarify its impact on customer loyalty within the tourism sector, and specifically within urban tourism. The significance of the study stems from the need for accommodation providers to manage their online presence with increasing efficiency and effectiveness amidst the growing competition in digital channels—not only between destinations themselves but also among individual accommodation providers.

The dissertation follows a classic structure—an introduction (pp. 1–8), three chapters (pp. 9–63, 64–108, and 109–143), a conclusion (pp. 144–147), and appendices (pp. 148–167)—logically adhering to the need for a sequential approach to the topic. It begins with the conceptual framework regarding marketing effects and the application of information technologies in the marketing activities of accommodation establishments, proceeds to the methodological foundations of the study, presents and analyzes the primary data, and concludes with recommendations for enhancing the marketing impact of the subject's online presence.

The dissertation presents a clearly defined research thesis—specifically, the research thesis posits that the online presence of accommodation establishments plays a crucial role in fostering

customer loyalty within the context of urban tourism. Accordingly, the study aims to evaluate the significance of online presence and the customer loyalty management techniques employed by these establishments, as well as to determine the relationship between them. It should be noted that PhD candidate Plamen Yankov has clearly defined the primary objective of the dissertation—thereby supporting the research logic and process—specifically to examine the marketing effects resulting from the application of modern information technologies. and to develop a methodological toolkit for their assessment within the context of urban tourism accommodation, focusing on the impact of online presence on building customer loyalty. To achieve the research objective, four clear tasks have been formulated; as is standard practice, these serve to operationalize the aim of the dissertation research.

**II. Object, subject, and hypotheses of the dissertation research**

An examination of PhD candidate Yankov's dissertation reveals the following defined object of study: the marketing activities of tourism accommodation enterprises operating within the urban tourism..I consider that the definition of the object could be slightly refined, as the object typically refers to the target population from which the sample is drawn; in this specific case, the object of study comprises the representatives of urban accommodation establishments, alongside the marketing activities these enterprises conduct across digital channels and platforms. The subject of the study is articulated very clearly and accurately—namely, the impact of online presence on customer loyalty within the context of digital marketing activities for accommodation establishments in the urban tourism sector. Every empirical research study incorporates working hypotheses into its design; in this instance, the author has developed and proposed three working hypotheses related to the central thesis. The first examines the relationship between the establishments' online presence and customer loyalty; the second concerns the impact of service quality on loyalty; and the third addresses the link between an establishment's online presence and its service quality. In my view, it would have been preferable to include a larger number of such explanatory hypotheses, and to present them following the research objectives—rather than introducing them in the third chapter during the analysis phase.

**III. Research Methodology and Methods**

The quality of any empirical or marketing study depends on the correct choice of research methodology: a clearly defined target population, a sampling method for selecting research units, an appropriate choice of primary data collection methods, relevant statistical methods for data processing and analysis, and sound conclusions drawn from the aggregated results. The entire second chapter of this dissertation is developed with a high degree of professionalism and demonstrates the doctoral candidate's excellent research competence. Plamen Yankov has convincingly presented his perspective on the research paradigm and methodology, the methodology and toolkit used in the empirical research, as well as the statistical methods for processing and analyzing the raw data. Regarding the research paradigm within which the research

questions, hypotheses, and approaches to empirical verification are formulated, the doctoral candidate has justified the choice of the post-positivist paradigm; this is because, in the fields of social and economic sciences, the phenomena and events under study can rarely be reduced to entirely objective and unambiguously measurable relationships. I concur with the doctoral candidate's assertion that this hybrid approach—post-positivism—serves as a suitable foundation for the present dissertation,

Regarding data collection methods, I believe that combining a quantitative approach (surveys) and a qualitative one (in-depth interviews)—complemented by an analysis of actual data on the online presence of hotel properties—provides a sufficiently robust research toolkit for the empirical study. Another positive aspect of the dissertation research is the integration of two perspectives: the managerial perspective, examined through surveys of accommodation facility managers, and the consumer perspective, addressed through surveys of guests; this approach broadens the interpretation of the primary data.

**IV. Content of the Dissertation and Results**

The aim of this dissertation research, as previously noted, is to examine the marketing effects resulting from the application of modern information technologies and to develop a methodological toolkit for assessing these effects within the context of urban tourism accommodation facilities.

The structure of the dissertation under review is classic and aligns with the established aims and objectives: an introduction, three main chapters with subsections, a conclusion, a bibliography, and appendices. The doctoral candidate has employed a style that is academic yet clear and accessible to a broader audience.

The first chapter is devoted to the nature of marketing effects and the application of information technology within the marketing activities of organizations. The doctoral candidate devotes significant attention to the section covering the key dimensions of business effects; I fully endorse Plamen Yankov's perspective that marketing impacts should be viewed as a subsystem of business effects, given that the outcomes of marketing activities are manifested in a company's market performance—encompassing branding, financial results, and corporate reputation. A strong aspect of the theoretical chapter is the conceptual distinction drawn between business effects and marketing effects, achieved through a substantive, historical analysis of the terms based on a comprehensive review of definitions found in the scholarly literature—encompassing various researchers and schools of thought. The chapter includes a table detailing the semantics of the term "effect" and its related meanings (p. 12), as well as an original classification of business effects based on key criteria for their manifestation and assessment—a contribution that further enhances the theoretical value of the work (pp. 17–18). Given that the definition and analysis of marketing effects require an integrated and systematic approach, the clarification of the category "marketing effect" is complemented by a scientometric analysis in Scopus and Web of Science to establish the main directions and trends in the specific research area. An adapted visualization of the concept for scientometric analysis, which the author used in the office dissertation study, was also prepared.

This chapter also discusses the results of the keyword scientometric analysis using the VOSviewer software. The main purpose of this analysis is to identify the most frequently used terms in the scientific literature and their interrelationship. As a result, scientometric maps from Scopus (Fig. 8) and Web of Science (Fig. 9), which visualize the current terms most frequently used in the publications under study.

In the present study, marketing effects are systematized into a three-level taxonomic structure—comprising type, class, and kind—aimed at providing greater conceptual differentiation and facilitating the investigation of marketing effects; this establishes a sound framework for their comparison, empirical research, and interpretation. This section also includes a visual model of the author's own "General Classification of Marketing Effects" (Fig. 11). Following an examination of the doctoral candidate's perspective on the concept of a "marketing effect" I support his view that the term "marketing effect" should be understood as the results stemming from the application of marketing strategies, tactics, and tools—results that can manifest at both the organizational and market levels. This encompasses measurable changes in consumer behavior, market share, customer loyalty, and financial performance, as well as intangible outcomes such as brand image, awareness, and engagement. The author, Plamen Yankov, also examines various types of marketing effects based on different criteria, including time horizon, direction of impact, nature of the impact, and the degree of planning involved which facilitates their use in various studies, depending on the specific objectives. In summary, a positive aspect of this chapter is the extensive literature review—covering books, articles, research studies, and online sources—which helps capture the diversity of opinions and perspectives regarding the research problem. At the end of Chapter One, four key conclusions are formulated; these summarize the findings from the desk research and scientometric analysis, and establish a foundation for the methodological framework of the subsequent empirical study.

In the second chapter, titled "Research Methodology," the doctoral candidate, Plamen Yankov,begins by presenting information on urban tourism as a tourism product, including data on the three regions where the studied sites are located. The author also examines a classification of urban tourism types; however, there is a lack of information regarding existing Bulgarian publications that explore festival tourism as a factor in the branding of urban destinations. This section also provides an overview of platforms that establish an online presence for accommodation establishments (Table 9). The doctoral candidate discusses the hybrid research paradigm applied, the methodology and methods used for primary data collection, as well as the statistical analysis methods employed in the dissertation research. The online audit tracked eight key indicators of the digital presence of accommodation establishments—covering a total of 235 properties, including Class A (hotels), Class B (family hotels and hostels), and Type C (guest rooms and apartments) in Varna, Burgas, and Dobrich. Given the size of a country like Bulgaria, this sample size of accommodation establishments is sufficient, offering a confidence level of 95%. The primary method for data collection was a survey involving managers, representatives of the accommodation

establishments, and their guests.

Regarding the methodology, a significant strength of the dissertation is the extensive toolkit of methods employed in conducting the research. The methodology includes a qualitative approach—in-depth, semi-structured interviews with hotel owners and managers—and a descriptive approach—surveys targeting several specific groups. Additionally, desk research was conducted for the scientometric analysis, alongside an online audit and observation of the digital marketing activities of the studied accommodation establishments. This approach enables the formulation of reliable conclusions regarding the marketing impacts resulting from the application of information technologies in urban tourism. This chapter also presents an algorithm for evaluating key digital marketing effects, as well as an excellent visualization of the study's conceptual model (Fig. 26). Furthermore, a range of appropriate statistical methods was employed for data processing and analysis: the chi-square ($\chi^2$) method, frequency distribution, Cronbach's α coefficient, regression analysis using standardized beta coefficients, confirmatory factor analysis, and several absolute fit indices for assessing model adequacy, among others.

In the third chapter—as is standard—an analysis of the processed empirical data is presented. It begins with an overview of the current state and trends in urban tourism within the Black Sea regions of Bulgaria. The chapter proceeds to analyze the results of the conducted studies and the statistical data processing, while also comparing indicators regarding the online presence of accommodation establishments in the Varna, Burgas, and Dobrich regions. The study presents the similarities and differences in attitudes toward digital marketing activities between two groups—managers and representatives of accommodation establishments, on the one hand, and the consumers of their products, on the other providing highly useful information for planning digital marketing strategies for such establishments. The third chapter offers an in-depth analysis of the online presence of these establishments including the existence of dedicated websites and participation in various social networks and digital channels—with a particular focus on the differences in marketing behavior among establishments across the three regions. Given the wealth of empirical data available, it seems to me that there should be further analysis regarding the differences between various types of establishments—specifically, how these differences relate to distinct marketing approaches and varying advertising budgets—conducted via cross-tabulation. Based on the results obtained, this section derives sound conclusions and practical recommendations aimed at enhancing the marketing impact of information technology implementation within the urban tourism sector. Consequently, this research can prove highly beneficial to managers of accommodation establishments when planning their digital marketing strategies.

*Research Limitations*

Regarding the limitations of the dissertation research, the author has identified several, though I would argue that some of these do not constitute limitations; rather, they help to more clearly define the object and subject of the study. At the same time, I consider only the geographical factor to be

a genuine limitation; it would have been preferable to include an urban destination outside the Black Sea coast for instance, Plovdiv, Sofia, Stara Zagora, or another similar location.

## V. Evaluation of the candidate's abstract and publications

The documents submitted for the defense include the abstract of doctoral candidate Plamen Yankov; it is 45 pages long and fully complies with the requirements regarding the structure and format of such a document. The abstract presents a concise overview of all sections of the dissertation—the theoretical review, research methodology, results, and their analysis and interpretation in relation to the established goals and objectives. Like the dissertation itself, the abstract is characterized by proper academic language, making it easy to read. A positive aspect of the abstract is the comprehensive and concise presentation of the conceptual framework and the results of the dissertation research.

The abstract also includes a summary of the dissertation's contributions, a list of the doctoral candidate's publications, and a declaration of the work's originality.

*Doctoral candidate's publications*

The documents submitted for review include four publications by the candidate related to the dissertation topic: one research article in English in the international journal *Business & Management Compass* and two papers in Bulgarian included in the proceedings of the 2022 International Jubilee Conference at the University of Economics – Varna. The candidate has also authored a standalone chapter in a monograph in Bulgarian. All of the candidate's publications address various issues within the scope of the dissertation topic and are written in proper scientific style and fit to the standard of such kind of scientific publications.

One of the key topics addressed in the publications is the use of quantitative methods to examine how the online presence of accommodation providers influences the formation of customer loyalty (#1). The doctoral candidate's reports discuss other issues related to the dissertation topic: specifically, one report analyses consumer reviews within the urban tourism sector in Varna (#2), while the second presents the author's perspective on a unified classification of marketing effects (#3)—a classification that constitutes one of the dissertation's significant contributions.

**Summary of Contributions in the Dissertation**

Having reviewed the scholarly work of the doctoral candidate Plamen Yankov, I accept the contributions he has formulated without reservation. The fulfillment of the set tasks and the achievement of the dissertation's primary research objective highlight the following contributions:

1. A scientific contribution that is essentially theoretical in nature: the content of the concept of "marketing effect" has been defined, and a classification framework for marketing effects has been developed—including a specific classification of effects resulting from the application of information technologies, categorized by their measurability, temporal variability, and time horizon.

*2. Scientific-methodological contribution (which I consider quite significant):*

An integrated research approach for assessing the effects of digital marketing on accommodation establishments has been developed and tested; it combines managerial and consumer perspectives, enabling a comprehensive analysis of online presence, service quality, and customer loyalty.

*3. Scientific-applied contribution:*

A positive and statistically significant relationship has been empirically established between online presence and practices for building and maintaining customer loyalty in accommodation establishments ($\beta = 0.612$; $p < 0.05$), with the results further substantiated by an analysis of the consumer perspective for managing online presence and customer loyalty in the context of urban tourism.

I accept with some reservations part of the first contribution cited by PhD candidate Yankov—specifically regarding the systematization of forms of urban tourism—given the abundance of existing publications on the subject in international literature.

**VI. Questions and critical remarks for the author**

Plamen Yankov's dissertation possesses many merits and presents an empirically grounded study that has been professionally prepared and conducted; it features numerous strong points, which I have already highlighted earlier in this review.

As a reviewer and an experienced researcher, I have only one critical observation—mentioned previously—namely that the extensive research toolkit, which includes a qualitative method for data collection, offers ample scope for formulating more than three research hypotheses regarding the existence and degree of correlation between the various variables under investigation.

During the defense meeting, I would like the doctoral candidate to briefly answer the following two questions:

1. Is there a link or correlation between the size of the accommodation establishments and the level of their digital activity?
2. Among the accommodation establishments in the three studied areas, which area has the highest number of published videos on their websites—that is, which one demonstrates the most developed video marketing?

**CONCLUSION**

The dissertation meets the requirements set forth in Article 2b, paragraphs 2 and 3, and Article 6, paragraph 3 of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB), as well as the Regulations for its implementation, regarding the integration of theoretical training with appropriate methodological tools and the skills required for scientific analysis and the derivation of well-founded conclusions. The dissertation encompasses original empirical research, theoretical generalizations, and systematized findings, alongside conclusions and recommendations for addressing scientific and practical challenges in the field of online

marketing for urban hotels in Bulgaria, with the aim of enhancing customer loyalty.

Highly evaluating the dissertation of doctoral candidate Plamen Yankov, I will cast a firm vote in favor, and I urge the other members of the scientific jury to also vote to award the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor" in the professional field of Economics (3.8) and the scientific specialty of "Marketing" to doctoral candidate Plamen Yankov.

27th October 2026 .

Burgas

Signature:... [redacted]

Prof. Lina Anastaassova PhD

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ИКОНОМИЧЕСКИ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ ВАРНА
Вх. № Р-20-1873/16.10.2026

**REVIEW**

for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor (PhD) in Marketing" according to an announced procedure by the University of Economics - Varna

## 1. General information:

*Prepared by*: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Svilen Ivanov, University of Economics – Varna, Faculty of Management, Department of Marketing

*Grounds for writing the review* (Order of the Rector of the University of Economics – Varna No RD-06-157/21.09.2026 for the appointment of a scientific jury and Decision of the scientific jury from its first meeting on 30.09.2026. for the appointment of reviewers)

*Author of the dissertation*: Plamen Yankov Yankov

*Topic of the dissertation*: "Marketing effects of the application of information technologies"

## 2. Dissertation data:

PhD student Plamen Yankov is enrolled at the Department of Marketing at the University of Economics – Varna. During his doctoral studies, he has fully fulfilled the set educational and research tasks according to his individual plan, has successfully passed the planned doctoral exams and has actively participated in the research life of the department and has been expelled with the right to defend for a period of five years. The professional biography of the dissertation outlines a deep interest in the field of digital marketing, information technologies and their application in the hotel sector. After his expulsion, the PhD student continues to teach classes at the University of Economics – Varna as a part-time lecturer.

## 3. General presentation of the dissertation:

The dissertation contains an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, a description of the contributions, literature used, and four appendices.

*Total volume*: 175 pages (main text 153 pages). The text includes 28 figures and 13 tables that systematize the conceptual models, scientometric data and the results of the analyses of the collected empirical data.

*Bibliography*: 189 literature sources are used, of which publications of foreign authors in refereed and indexed journals (Scopus and Web of Science), as well as current normative acts and statistical sources (NSI, Eurostat, etc.) predominate.

*The* transformation of marketing activities under the influence of information technologies and the search for measurable digital effects in specific sectors such as urban tourism pose important theoretical and practical challenges for the doctoral student.

4. **Assessment of the structure and content of the dissertation**:

**The structure of the** dissertation is logically constructed and corresponds to the goals and objectives. Structurally, it includes the following parts and their respective characteristics:

The **introduction** clearly and precisely defines the object (the marketing activities of the tourist enterprises for accommodation in an urban environment), the subject (the impact of the online presence on customer loyalty), the purpose, the research tasks, the main research thesis and the research limitations (at the micro level, as well as at the level of the districts of Varna, Burgas and Dobrich). This sets a clear basis for the scope and purpose of the conducted research.

The **first chapter** presents the conceptual formulations of marketing effects and the development of information technologies (IT). The application of scientometric analysis with the VOSviewer software is impressive, through which the dissertation systematizes the terminological scope of marketing effects in the Scopus and Web of Science databases. A three-level hierarchical classification (type, class, type) of marketing effects has been developed, which is undoubtedly a strong point and can be taken as evidence of an in-depth author's reading of the literature sources related to the studied problems.

In **the second chapter** the methodological framework and methodology of the study are presented. Urban tourism is conceptualized as a complex product, which is in accordance with the classical marketing perspective. The choice of the chosen research paradigm is defended and a detailed algorithm for the study is constructed. The methodological apparatus combines

quantitative and qualitative methods, as well as the application of statistical methods for studying the consumer perspective of the problem under consideration.

**Chapter Three** presents the practical and applied results of the empirical study. The state of urban tourism in the Black Sea regions is analyzed. The findings of the surveys conducted among 235 managers/owners of accommodation establishments and the guests who responded are presented. Specific guidelines for improving the digital presence of service and product providers on the studied market are formulated.

The text is written in a correct academic style, with good terminological precision. The **abstract** reflects correctly and credibly the content, logic and main results of the dissertation.

5. **Identification and evaluation of scientific and applied contributions to the dissertation**:

In general, I accept the contributions formulated by the dissertation, and they can be summarized in the following two main directions:

*Scientific and theoretical contributions*:

A sufficiently in-depth scientometric and syntactic-etymological analysis of the categories "business effect" and "marketing effect" has been carried out, and key thematic clusters in the world databases Scopus and Web of Science have been identified through software tools.

A three-level hierarchical classification framework (type, class, type) is proposed for systematization of marketing effects, as well as a specific classification of marketing effects from the application of IT (by measurability, variability and timeframe).

*Scientific, applied and practical contributions*:

A methodological algorithm for studying digital marketing effects, combining the managerial and the consumer perspective, has been developed and tested.

The fundamental role of online presence as a digital prerequisite and management resource for building customer loyalty in the urban tourism sector in the Black Sea regions of Bulgaria (Varna, Burgas and Dobrich) has been proven.

Practical guidelines have been developed for property managers to optimise booking channels, visual content, and online reputation management.

6. **Publications and participation in scientific forums**:

PhD student Plamen Yankov has presented the required number of scientific publications on the topic of the dissertation. The range of publications includes articles and reports published in scientific journals and collections of scientific conferences. The published works fully comply with the minimum national requirements under Art. 2b, para. 2 and 3 of the Law on Academic Development, as well as the specific criteria of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at the University of Economics – Varna.

7. **Found or unfound plagiarism in the dissertation and abstract**:

No plagiarism has been found in the presented dissertation and abstract. The dissertation has strictly complied with the academic standards for citation and reference to the sources used.

8. **Critical remarks and recommendations**:

Despite the indisputable merits of the dissertation, the following weaker points and critical remarks of a constructive nature should be pointed out:

In the first chapter, a significant place is devoted to general business effects, syntactic and etymological analyses. Although this shows academic precision, some etymological deviations dilute the focus to the main research thesis. This disturbs the balance between the theoretical review and the empirical part of the research, partially breaking the connection between the literature review and the presentation of the research results.

The limitation of the study to the three Black Sea regions (Varna, Burgas and Dobrich) is justified by the author with the high concentration of overnight stays, but this deprives the work of the possibility of comparative analysis with year-round urban tourist destinations such as Sofia or Plovdiv. This means that the geographical and sectoral scope, indicated as restrictions, do not allow for a wider application of the survey results.

The author explicitly points out as a restrictive condition that Artificial Intelligence and chatbots are considered only as context, but are not included in the empirical LSM model. In the modern conditions of digitalization, the integration of AI algorithms in shaping the online

presence would significantly enrich the research model. From the point of view of the sought theoretical and practical and applied contributions, this restrictive condition cannot be rationally argued.

There is a certain discrepancy between the depth of the applied LSM model from a management perspective and the more limited static analysis from the user perspective, which makes the second point of view illustrative rather than fully integrated into a single hybrid LSM model.

9. **Questions for the dissertation**:

In connection with the above-mentioned weaknesses in the dissertation, I address the following two questions to PhD student Plamen Yankov:

1. To what extent would the dependence established by LSM between online presence and customer loyalty in the Black Sea regions remain valid for internal urban destinations with pronounced business and cultural tourism (e.g. Sofia and Plovdiv), where seasonality is significantly lower?

2. How does the penetration of generative AI (e.g., AI algorithms for automatic bid personalization and the use of chatbots in real-time) change the defined conceptual framework of "online presence" and to what extent can generative AI be expected to displace the role of traditional platforms in real-world market conditions?

10. **Conclusion**:

The dissertation of Plamen Yankov Yankov on the topic "Marketing Effects of the Application of Information Technologies" is a complete, independent and in-depth scientific research. It contains original scientific, theoretical and applied results that meet the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its Implementation and the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at the University of Economics - Varna.

Based on the above merits of work, scientific contributions and empirical work done, I give my POSITIVE ASSESSMENT and propose to the scientific jury to award Plamen Yankov Yankov the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor" in the field of higher education 3.

Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, professional field 3.8. Economics, scientific specialty "Marketing".

Reviewer: [redacted]

(Assoc. Prof. Dr. Svilen Ivanov)