



ИКОНОМИЧЕСКИ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ - ВАРНА

СЕРТИФИЦИРАНА СИСТЕМА ЗА УПРАВЛЕНИЕ НА КАЧЕСТВОТО ISO 9001:2008

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Вх. № 2220-1254/20.07.2026

REVIEW

of dissertation for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" by announced procedure of the University of Economics – Varna in professional field 3.8 Economics, doctoral program "Marketing"

candidate: Hristina Dimitrova Aleksandrova

1. General information

Reviewer: Assoc. Prof. Vladimir Sashov Zhechev PhD, scientific discipline "Marketing", Head of the Department of Marketing at the University of Economics-Varna (UE-Varna).

Regarding: participation in an academic jury (ordinance № RD 06-126/03.07.2026) of the Rector of UE-Varna and first meeting of the scientific jury held on 10.07.2026. The above stated ordinance was issued based on a decision of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Management (Protocol № 36 of 26.06.2026).

Author of the dissertation: Hristina Dimitrova Aleksandrova

Title of the dissertation: "Marketing Influences on Consumer Behavior in the Dance Arts Market".

Scientific supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Maria Kehayova-Stoycheva, PhD.

2. Information about the doctoral candidate

Hristina Aleksandrova completed her secondary education at the IV Language High School "Frederic Joliot-Curie" (2009–2014). She holds a Bachelor degree in "Business Economics" from the University of Economics – Varna (2014–2018), and two Master degrees: in "Project Management" from the University of Economics – Varna (2018–2019), and in "Choreographic Directing and Art Management" from Varna Free University "Chernorizets Hrabar" (2018–2020).

Since September 2023, the candidate has worked as an Assistant Professor at the University of Economics – Varna, where she delivers seminars and lectures in the Bachelor programs of the Department of Marketing in the following disciplines: Social Media, Photography and Video Production, Event Marketing and Advertising Technology, and in one of the Master programs in the discipline: Legal and Ethical Principles in Advertising and Media Communications. During her professional experience she also worked in the private sector: between December 2020 and March 2023 she had worked as a Digital Marketing Specialist at "Temax Bulgaria" Ltd., handling digital advertising and client communication; since September 2020 she had occupied a project manager position at "Meladi MP" Ltd., managing projects funded by the National Culture Fund and the Culture Fund of Varna Municipality; and between September 2010 and September 2023 she had worked as a choreographer and director of a dance school at the same organization, where



she organized concerts, performances, domestic and international tours, and training seminars for dancers.

This combination of educational background with over a decade of practical experience as a choreographer and dance-school director, gives the candidate an actual, practitioner's understanding of the dance-arts market that is directly reflected in the practical relevance and applied focus of the dissertation. Finally, and on a more personal note – I know the candidate as very industrious and committed colleague. She is very responsible with deadlines and an excellently appraised tutor by our Bachelor degree students.

3. General presentation of the dissertation

The relevance of the researched matter is well justified by the author. The dance arts market is underexplored in specialized literature and this study is an attempt to fill a niche. The thesis of the dissertation is correctly and very precisely formulated. The same applies to the aim and objectives. Consumers in Bulgaria are continuously exposed to an increasing volume of marketing stimuli, while dance schools in Bulgaria – mainly private micro- and small ones with limited resources - rarely rely on systematic marketing knowledge when designing their advertising. This real-world constraint is set against a recognized decline in cultural partaking: national statistics show a 76% drop in attendance of performing-arts events for the period 2012–2022, and Eurostat data place Bulgaria last among EU member states in terms of this criterion. In this context, the author convincingly argues that the market for dance arts remains a largely unexplored context within consumer-behavior research, which justifies both the theoretical and the applied value of the study.

The dissertation is structured in a logical and consistent manner: an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, a bibliography of 319 sources and a set of appendices, adding 204 pages (263 pages including bibliography and appendices).

The introduction clearly frames the object (aspects of the behavior of consumers of dance classes) and the subject of the research (marketing influences on consumer behavior, with an emphasis on the effect of specific visual changes in advertising stimuli on consumers' attention, reactions and intentions). The aim, research objectives, thesis statement, research questions and the limitations (geographic – the city of Varna; type of dance - performing dance art, excluding sports, folk and street/hip-hop dance; and methodological - the forced-exposure nature of the laboratory experiment) are all clearly stated, which sets realistic expectations for the results.

Chapter one establishes the theoretical framework: the specifics of the "product" on the dance-arts market, the evolution of consumer behavior research, a critical review of consumer-behavior models (including S-O-R, EKB and AIDA) and of the environmental and individual (organism) factors shaping consumer behavior, the influence of the marketing mix (7P) on consumer behavior, and the stages of the purchase-decision process. The chapter ends with the author's own



conceptualization of consumer behavior on the dance-arts market, which sets the stage for the design of the conceptual model. The literature review is comprehensive and demonstrates good command of both the traditional and the modern sources in the specialized literature.

Chapter two presents an analysis of the dance-arts market in Bulgaria (in a European context, using Eurostat and NSI data, as well as national culture-fund data and online trends data) and the methodology of the empirical research. The author applies methodological triangulation, combining qualitative and quantitative methods across three phases: a preparatory stage (expert evaluation with 10 industry experts and content analysis of 117 existing advertising materials, used to construct the experimental advertising stimuli and the questionnaire), a main stage (an online survey, $n=217$, and a laboratory experiment combining eye-tracking and biometric measurement, $n=47$) and an analytical stage (MANOVA, ANOVA, correlation and factor analysis, hypothesis testing). The resulting research design is adequate to the presented research questions.

Chapter three presents the results: respondents' profile; the effect of the advertising stimulus (background color, image type, presence/absence of price) on positive emotional and cognitive reactions and on the intention to seek further information and to purchase ($S \rightarrow R$, $S \rightarrow D$); the effect of the stimulus on visual attention and physiological reactions ($S \rightarrow A$); the relationships between visual attention, physiological reactions, emotional and cognitive reactions and intentions; the influence of organism factors (prior experience, gender, age); the conditions for choosing a dance school in terms of the marketing mix; and color associations with the word "dance". The results are presented thoroughly and are reliably.

The conclusion summarizes the accomplishment of the aim and objectives of the dissertation. The empirically tested S-O-A-R-D conceptual model is presented as the fundamental outcome of the research, together with practically applicable recommendations for dance schools' advertising materials. Directions for future research are structured around extending the model to other performing-arts and cultural services, widening the geographic scope, and comparisons across dance styles or between amateurs and professionals.

The bibliography demonstrates the author's thorough commitment with the research matter and good knowledge of the specialized terminology.

4. Assessment of the structure and content of the dissertation

The language, style and structure of the dissertation correspond to the requirements for a monographic work. No signs of unregulated use of other authors' texts were identified. The exposition flows logically from the theoretical framework, through the market analysis and methodology, to the empirical results and the practical recommendations. Each chapter is clearly related to the aim and the research questions.



Overall, the dissertation demonstrates that the candidate is capable of independently designing and conducting a complex, methodologically-sound empirical study and of interpreting its results in a manner relevant to both theory and practice, which is the most important condition for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor".

5. Identification and assessment of scientific and applied contributions in the dissertation

The contributions claimed by the author can be summarized as follows:

- 1) The theoretical contribution involves the design of a novel conceptual model (S-O-A-R-D) of marketing influences on consumer behavior on the dance-arts market, which adapts and integrates elements of the AIDA, S-O-R and EKB models, presenting attention as a mediating element between the stimulus and consumers' reactions, and distinguishing between physiological, emotional and cognitive reactions.
- 2) The methodological contribution resides with the study of unconscious physiological reactions and conscious consumer assessments, and in establishing the relationship between them through the blend of expert review, content analysis, an eye-tracking experiment, and a survey, within the empirical testing of the S-O-A-R-D model in the context of the Bulgarian dance-arts market.
- 3) The applied contributions relate to (1) the management of the 7P, through the identification of the criteria that consumers consider most important when choosing a dance school; (2) the optimization of advertising stimuli, through the identification of background color, image type and price-inclusion effects on visual attention, emotional and cognitive reactions and intentions, as well as the color associations closest to the word "dance"; and (3) developing relevant marketing content for specific segments.

The theoretical and methodological contributions are well supported by the literature review and the empirical design. The applied contributions are also well grounded, although it should be noted that the limited sample ($n=47$) and a forced-exposure design, and that both empirical components of the study are confined to Varna and to amateur dance schools. This limits generalizability of results the recommendations to the wider Bulgarian dance-arts market.

6. Publications and participation in scientific forums

The doctoral candidate declares three single-authored articles. Two of them are published in English language in the Business Compass journal of UE-Varna. They are well-grounded in the context of the dissertation. This shows compliance with the quantitative requirements under Art. 35, para. 1, items 1-4 of the Regulations for Promotion of Academic Staff at UE-Varna and the minimum national requirements for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" within the framework of Higher Education Act in the Republic of Bulgaria.



7. Detected/not detected plagiarism in the dissertation and the abstract

The reviewer did not find any plagiarism in the dissertation. It is important to note that an additional check was carried out with an online tool – Strike Plagiarism prior to the final meeting of the Department of Marketing, which was presented to the attention of its members.

8. Critical remarks and recommendations

The laboratory experiment (eye-tracking and biometric measurement) is based on a forced-exposure design and a comparatively small sample ($n=47$). As the author outlines, this may not fully reflect consumers' behavior under real, uncontrolled exposure conditions, and some of the correlations stated between visual attention, physiological reactions and the conscious evaluations are described as weak, which should be noted when interpreting the practical implications.

The study would benefit from a broader geographic scope and from testing the transferability of the S-O-A-R-D model head-to-head with other cultural services, as the author herself suggests as a direction for future research. Finally, closer attention shall be paid to formulation of hypotheses in future research by the author related to reactions of different gender given that the majority of them in the current research were female. This creates a certain degree of disparity.

These critical remarks do not diminish the merits of the dissertation. They are intended as recommendations for the candidate's future research endeavors.

9. Questions for the doctoral candidate

1) How could the S-O-A-R-D model and the specific findings on background color, image type and price inclusion need to be adapted for other performing-arts or cultural services (e.g., theatre, exhibitions), which the conclusion identifies as a recommendation for future research?

10. Conclusion

Based on my review of the submitted dissertation on the topic "Marketing Influences on Consumer Behavior in the Dance Arts Market", as well as of the scientific works related to this procedure, and taking into account their significance and contributions, I find sufficient grounds to give a positive assessment and to recommend to the esteemed scientific jury to award the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in doctoral program "Marketing" to Hristina Dimitrova Aleksandrova.

Date: 20.07.2026

Signature:



UNIVERSITY OF NATIONAL AND WORLD ECONOMY

REVIEW

From: *Prof. Krasimir Marinov Marinov*
University of National and World Economy
Scientific specialty "Marketing"

Subject: *Dissertation for awarding an educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the scientific specialty "Marketing" at the University of Economics - Varna*

Author of the dissertation: *Hristina Dimitrova Alexandrova*
Topic of the dissertation: *Marketing Influences on Consumer Behavior in the Dance Arts Market*

Grounds for submitting the review: *Participation in the scientific jury for the defense of the dissertation according to Order No. RD-06-126 / 03.07.2026 of the Rector of the University of Economics - Varna.*

1. Dissertation information

The doctoral candidate studied on the PhD program "Marketing", professional field 3.8. Economics, at the Department of Marketing of the Faculty of Management of the University of Economics - Varna, according to the Order of the Rector of the University of Economics - Varna NoRD-17-902 / 20.09.2021. The training was carried out in a full-time form in the period 2021-2024, and in 2024 (Order RD-17-530/ 10.10.2024) Hristina Alexandrova was granted permission to defend her thesis.

The dissertation student graduated from the Fourth Language High School "Frédéric Joliot-Curie" in 2014 and in 2018 received a bachelor's degree in Business Economics from the University of Economics - Varna. In 2019, she obtained a Master's degree in Project Management from the University of Economics - Varna, and a second master's degree in 2020 from Varna Free University "Chernorizets Hrabar" in the specialty "Choreographic Directing and Art Management".

The dissertation holder has significant experience with cultural and creative activities in the field of dance and performing arts. For more than 13 years, Hristina has been a choreographer and

head of a dance school, responsible for the training of a large group of dancers, for organizing concerts and performances, for organizing seminars and training courses. In recent years, Hristina has also been engaged in cultural and creative activities in the field of performing arts, but already as a project manager in this field, including to the National Culture Fund, as well as to the Culture Fund in the Municipality of Varna.

Special mention should be made of Hristina's work from 2023 to the present at the University of Economics - Varna as an assistant professor in disciplines in the Bachelor's Degree (such as Social Media; Photography and Video Production; Event Marketing; Advertising Technology, etc.), as well as in the Master's Degree (such as Legal and Ethical Principles in Ecclesiastes and Media Communications; Digital and Social Media; etc.).

2. General characteristics of the presented dissertation

The presented dissertation is 263 pages long and includes an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, a bibliography and appendices. From the point of view of its volume and structure, the present work has parameters that are acceptable and within the limits of what is usual for similar scientific products. The dissertation meets the requirements of Art. 27, para. 2 of the Regulations for the Implementation of the Academic Staff Development Act in the Republic of Bulgaria.

In the introduction of the work, the dissertation, following good practice, has presented the concept and methodological framework of his dissertation.

Regarding the *relevance of the topic* and *the significance of the research*, it can be argued without a doubt that they are present. The arguments for this statement can be systematized in several directions. *Firstly*, the importance of the study for micro-businesses and entrepreneurs in the field of performing and dance arts is related to a better understanding of the factors, prerequisites, business conditions, etc. in terms of the launch and development of dance schools as a kind of intersection of modern social trends, such as the one for participation in, and development, of cultural trends on the part of the modern Bulgarian; striving for movement and a more active lifestyle, woven into everyday life; the desire for self-expression and engagement of modern man with new activities, refracted through the prism of modern urban culture. *Second*, the study treats the problem of optimizing advertising materials, which is a reflection of the broader problem of combining marketing incentives and company-controlled marketing tools in order to obtain a more attractive and better appreciated result by the consumer. *Third*, the importance of research for marketing science and practice can be linked to enriching the research database with data on the relationship between advertising stimuli, visual appeal, physiological responses, consumer evaluations, and behavioral intentions in the context of educational dance classes.

The object and the subject of the study are correctly formulated and correspond to the research contained in the work. The object of the study is certain aspects of the behavior of users of

educational dance classes. The subject of the study is the marketing influences on consumer behavior with an emphasis on the impact of specific visual changes in advertising stimuli and their impact on the attention, reactions and intentions of consumers in the dance market Arts.

The formulation of the *goal* – to offer an empirically tested conceptual model for the impact of specific changes in an advertising stimulus on various aspects of consumer behavior in the dance arts market – is precise and adequate to the selected object and subject of the study.

The dissertation transforms the goal formulated in this way into a well-founded complex of four *research tasks*, which are logically arranged and clearly formulated. They are sufficiently specific; their implementation allows to achieve the set goal; and direct the research in the right direction.

The thesis that the dissertation thesis has defended is that specific changes in advertising stimuli (a change in the primary background color, the type of image, and the presence or absence of price) affect the way users of educational dance classes perceive advertising; the distribution of visual attention; physiological responses; positive emotional responses and cognitive attitudes to advertising; and consumers' intentions to learn more Information about training dance classes and for purchase. This allows us to derive a pattern of marketing influences on consumer behavior in the dance arts market.

The scientific literature used includes 319 sources – books and monographs; articles in scientific journals and reports from scientific conferences; sites for market information. The literature sources are in Bulgarian, English and Spanish. The number of cited sources corresponds to, and even exceeds – the requirements for such scientific work. The bibliography is relevant to the object and subject of research and reflects the current achievements on the range of issues under consideration. scientific sources testify to the very good awareness of the dissertation student on the problems of the dissertation.

3. Evaluation of the scientific and applied scientific results obtained

The structure of the presented work reflects the logical completeness of the study and is an expression of the existing connections and dependencies between the elements of the presentation - both between the individual chapters and between the points in them. The logical arrangement of the chapters allows the author to ask the right questions to the research problem and to make correct generalizations about the factors for choosing a dance school. The style and language of the PhD student are distinguished by scholarship, while at the same time being understandable and clear.

In the *first chapter* of the work, an analysis of previous studies on factors that influence consumer behavior is made. The specifics of the product on the market for dance arts and in particular of the training dance classes are clarified. Models of consumer behavior and their applicability to the object of study are presented and analyzed.

The following points can be taken as scientific results in this part of the work:

First, the place of dance art in the context of the performing arts is singled out and a classification of the products of the dance schools is proposed. The typology is built on the basis of the criteria style; interaction with users; and level of knowledge and age of the participants. The author correctly points out the limitations of the proposed classification. They combine both classic characteristics of the services and specific features - such as emotional impact, intellectual property and unique author's handwriting.

Secondly, the development of the understanding of consumer behavior proposed by different authors is systematized. The author's understanding that over time the focus in defining consumer behavior shifts from its external manifestations to more holistic understandings, which include cognitive processes, emotions and social influences, providing a broader and more integrated view of consumer behavior. art where consumer behavior is strongly influenced by emotional experiences.

Thirdly, a review of the main groups of models of consumer behavior is made and on this basis the conclusion is substantiated that classical models of consumer behavior are detailed and offer useful analytical frameworks, but at the same time they are too general and difficult to empirically test. It has been found that there are not enough empirical tests of models on the art market, and in practice such tests are not found in the dance arts market. which limits the understanding of the specific stimuli and factors that influence consumer behavior in this unique context. The author's merit in this part is also that on the basis of the systematization of studies related to the influence of the elements of the marketing mix on consumer behavior on the consumer behavior of the arts market, generalizations and adaptations have been drawn about their impact specifically on the dance arts market.

Fourthly, taking into account the above, I find the author's attempt to conceptualize consumer behavior in the dance arts market by proposing a model for studying the influence of marketing incentives on consumer behavior in the dance arts market to be scientifically applied. The model integrates elements of other models of consumer behavior known in theory, summarizing the main theoretical assumptions and forming the basis for development of the research methodology.

It is noteworthy that the dissertation is well organized. The literature sources used are correctly cited. It is very important that the dissertation student has expressed his own opinion and has given arguments which of the other people's opinions he accepts and which he does not.

The second chapter is devoted to the methodology of the study, and the scientific result in it is the justification for the implementation of a blended research program. The latter is organized into two independent but complementary stages, which provide different types of empirical information.

The first stage is an experiment conducted among 47 subjects using eye tracking and

biometric examination techniques and aims to investigate the participants' unconscious reactions to an advertising stimulus – general visual attention, distribution of visual attention, skin resistance and pulse. Each respondent is presented with all 8 variants of advertising stimuli, and on the screen in front of the participants, each stimulus is projected for 5 seconds.

The second stage is a survey of 217 respondents, aimed at measuring participants' assessments of their level of emotional response, cognitive attitude towards advertising, intention to receive more information about dance training classes and purchase intention, as well as the criteria for choosing a dance school and color associations of the study participants. Among the participants in the survey study, 47 also went through the experiment, which allows the data from the two stages of the study to be linked.

For each of the two stages, its objectives are justified; A comparative description of the respective methods of data collection is made and the choice of a specific method is justified.

Another scientifically applied result in this part of the study is the developed tools for data collection, and the justification of the target population, model and sample size.

In *the third chapter* of the work, an analysis of the results of empirical studies of marketing influences on consumer behavior is made. The results show that changes in advertising stimuli lead to significant differences in the scores of emotional response and cognitive attitude to advertising (S→R) and partly on the intentions of potential consumers (S→D). The influence of the stimulus on physiological responses and on attention (S→A and S→R) is not unambiguous and depends on the the specific change in the advertising stimulus and the indicator that was studied. It has also been found that visual attention is not evenly distributed between the different areas of interest (AOI), and there is an additional redistribution of visual attention with certain changes in advertising. The results showed that body factors influenced some of the measures measuring visual attention (O→A) and physiological responses in respondents (O→R), but no statistically significant differences were found between the scores of emotional responses, cognitive attitudes to advertising, intention to learn more information, or purchase intent in the segments considered (O→R and O→D).

A scientifically applied result in this part of the work is also contained in the analysis of the criteria for choosing a dance school and for color and verbal associations, which expands the understanding of consumer behavior in the dance art market and outlines practical guidelines.

All of the above regarding the achieved scientific and applied scientific results gives me grounds to conclude that the tasks set for the dissertation research have been fulfilled, and thus the purpose of the dissertation has been achieved.

4. Evaluation of scientific and applied scientific contributions

In the abstract, the dissertation has formulated five contributions. They are described in the

abstract of the work and therefore I do not reproduce them in this review. Reading this study gives me grounds to highlight three contributing points that are indisputable and undoubtedly found in this study. By their nature, the contributing moments have a scientifically applied nature, which is normal for a researcher at the beginning of his scientific search. I would systematize the contributions as follows:

1. Substantiation of the methodology of simultaneous study of unconscious physiological reactions and conscious consumer assessments, as well as establishing a relationship between them, through the integration of expert assessments, content analysis of advertising materials, eye tracking experiment and biometric research and questionnaire research within the empirical testing of the S-O-A-R-D model for the study of marketing influences on the dance arts market in Bulgaria.
2. Identifying marketing factors that influence consumers in the process of choosing a dance school, which contributes to identifying the most important criteria for consumers that organizations can focus on when managing the marketing mix.
3. Identify changes in advertising incentives that affect the attraction and distribution of visual attention, on users' emotional reactions, on the intention to learn more about the service, and on their purchase intent, which contributes to the creation of more effective advertising content

I would like to emphasize that my scientific and applied contributions constitute *sufficient grounds for awarding the desired educational and scientific degree*.

5. Evaluation of dissertation publications

The dissertation presents three publications – two articles in a scientific journal and a report from a scientific conference, as follows:

1. Aleksandrova, H. Dance School Choice: Exploring the Relative Importance of 7P Marketing Mix Elements Across Segments. Business & Management Compass, Varna : Science and Economics Publishing House, 69, 2025, 4, 44–59., ISSN(онлайн) 3033-0106.
2. Georgieva, H. Characteristics and Analysis of the Culture and Arts Sector, Specifically the Performing Dance Sector in Bulgaria : [Електронен ресурс]. Business & Management Compass, Varna : Science and Economic Publ. House, 68, 2024, 1, 3-15., ISSN(онлайн) 3033-0106.
3. Georgieva, H. Digital Marketing in Dance Art Schools in Bulgaria – Initial Assessment. Remarketing of reality = Remarketing the reality: Collection of reports: International scientific conference dedicated to the 25th anniversary of the establishment of cat. "Marketing" at the University of Economics - Varna, Bulgaria,

17 June 2022, Varna: Science and Economics, 2022, 137-146., ISBN(online) 978-954-21-1134-4.

All publications are on the topic of the dissertation and present to the scientific community essential parts of the work. In terms of their type and volume, the publications fully meet the minimum national requirements for awarding the Doctor degree.

6. Evaluation of the abstract

The abstract is presented in Bulgarian and English and is 43 pages long. The abstract contains all the necessary elements. It correctly, completely and adequately reflects the content of the dissertation.

7. Academic Correctness

During the reading of the dissertation and the abstract, no plagiarism was found.

8. Critical remarks and recommendations

I have no critical remarks to the author. My recommendation is to continue and expand your research on performing arts marketing issues, as this is an area with serious research potential.

9. Questions

In this study, a S-O-A-R-D conceptual model has been proposed and tested in relation to dance arts. My question is whether the dissertation sees obstacles to the application of the same model for the study of consumer behavior in other product categories – both services and material products?

10. Conclusion

The presented dissertation is an independently conducted scientific research, containing its own critical analysis of the publications on the subject and subject of research. The study is based on an empirical study developed by the author, conducted according to a well-founded methodology. The work contains clearly defined results and scientific and applied contributions, corresponding to the requirements for such scientific work. **This gives me a definite reason to recommend to the scientific jury to award Hristina Dimitrova Alexandrova the educational**

and scientific degree "Doctor" in the scientific specialty "Marketing". I myself will vote with conviction with "Yes".

21.07.2026

Sofia

Prof. Dr. Krasimir Marinov

