

UNIVERSITY OF NATIONAL AND WORLD
ECONOMY



ИКОНОМИЧЕСКИ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ ВАРНА

Вх. № ПД-06-120/01.07.2022 г.

REVIEW

of dissertation

for acquiring the educational and scientific degree “**Doctor**”,
according to a procedure, announced by the University of **Economics – Varna**

1. General information

Reviewer: Prof. D.Sc. Tanya Parusheva

UNWE – Sofia, Department “Economics of Tourism”

Field of higher education 3. “Social, economic and legal sciences”

Professional field 3.8. “Economics”

Scientific specialty “Economics and Management (Tourism)”

Reason for writing the review: Order № ПД-06-120/01.07.2022 of the Rector of the University of Economics – Varna for appointment of a Scientific Jury and decision of the first meeting of the Scientific Jury on 01.07.2022

Author of the dissertation: Mira Dimova Dzhendova-Duneva – full-time doctoral student in the Department of “Economics and Organization of Tourism” at the University of Economics – Varna

Topic of the dissertation: “Innovations in the tourism product of holiday apartments in the Southern Black Sea region”

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Tanya Dabeva Filipova

2. Information regarding doctoral candidate

Mira Dzendova graduated with a bachelor degree from Veliko Tarnovo University “St. St. Cyril and Methodius”, specialty „Tourism“ (2005). Acquired Masters degree in “International Tourism” also at the University of Veliko Tarnovo (2009) and “Financial Management of the Enterprise” at the University “Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov”, Burgas (2013).

Her professional development began as an administrator in “Dinamik” hotel, Nessebar (2001 - 2002). She continues to work as a front office manager at „Grand Hotel Oasis“, “Sunny Beach” (2003 - 2006); She has also been an administrator at “Bar Harbor Regency Holiday Inn”, Maine, USA (2006); “Marketing and Sales” manager at the “City of Victoria” hotel, “Sunny Beach” (2007 - 2009); hotel manager at “Bora Bora”, “Sunny Beach”

(2009); “Marketing and Sales” manager at “ORKO” EOOD (Green Life), (2010 - 2019). From November 2019 she is director of “Marketing and Sales” at “Green Life Resorts” Ltd.

She has conducted seminars on “Hospitality”. She has skills in working with hotel software Clock Evo, Opera, Fidelio. She was chosen as the employee of the year for 2017 at Green Life Resorts. She speaks English and French.

Mira Dzhendova is enrolled in **full-time doctoral studies** by order № ПД-17-450/03.02.2015 of the Rector of the University of Economics – Varna in the field of higher education 3. “Social, economic and legal sciences”, professional field 3.9. “Tourism”, under the doctoral program “Economics and Management (Tourism)” at the Department of “Economics and Organization of Tourism”, for a period of **3 (three) years**, starting from 02.02.2015 - 02.02.2018.

She has completed the work provided for in the individual plan. She has successfully passed the **doctoral exams** as follows:

- Theory of management – Very good (5.25);
- Hotel and restaurant management - Very good (5.25);
- Research methodology – Excellent (5.50);
- English language – Very good (5.25).

During her doctoral studies, Mira Dzhendova was assessed with a **positive grade**. The dissertation was discussed at the Department Council of the Department of “Economics and Organization of Tourism”, Protocol № 7/22.02.2022. – Varna, as of January 27, 2020.

The dissertation work was discussed at the Faculty Council of the “Economics and Organization of Tourism” department. She has completed her doctoral studies with the right of defense by order №. ПД 17-540/02.03.2018 of the Rector of the University of Economics – Varna, effective from 02.02.2018.

A procedure for dissertation defense before the Scientific Jury has been opened, in accordance with Art. 31, para. 1 and para. 2 of the Regulation for the development of the academic staff at the University of Economics – Varna, Section II – Conditions and procedure for obtaining the educational and scientific degree “Doctor”.

3. General presentation of the dissertation

The dissertation work of Mira Dimova Dzhendova-Duneva presented for review, the abstract of the dissertation work and the scientific publications related to the dissertation are a result of independent scientific research. The **relevance and significance** of the researched issues are highlighted with arguments and evidence. It is emphasized that tourism organizations seek to offer a tourism product that changes with time. The aim is for it to be

promoted, implemented and imposed as “new” and “unique”, and tailored to specific preferences and expectations.

The **object** of research is correctly distinguished – “*vacation apartments in the Southern Black Sea region and their tourist product*” as well as the **subject** of the research – “*innovations in the tourist product of holiday apartments*”. The **main objective** is clearly and precisely defined: “*to highlight opportunities for their application in the product of vacation apartments in the SBSR on the basis of theoretical analysis and systematization of the innovations in the product of vacation apartments*”. The achievement of the objective has been carried out by solving 6 specific **research tasks**.

The **research thesis** is appropriately formulated: “*innovations in the tourist product of holiday apartments are a mandatory element for its improvement, with the aim of reaching new markets and better implementation*”. 3 **working hypotheses** are correctly defined.

The **research tools** include the use of a set of **research methods**: *analysis and synthesis, chronological approach, systematic approach in determining the environment of application of innovations as favorable and unfavorable, observation, survey, situational analysis, comparative analysis and content analysis*. The **limitations** accompanying the dissertation work are related to the lack of sufficiently systematized statistical and empirical data for the research object in Bulgaria; unpredictable market changes in the tourism industry due to the introduction of anti-epidemic measures due to COVID; geographic and time constraints. The **main issues** in the dissertation are in reference to the lack of specialized literature on innovations in vacation apartments; difficulties by respondents in conducting the surveys; lack of statistics on the number of holiday apartment complexes in Bulgaria.

The **information provision** of the dissertation work covers *primary sources* of empirical data from two groups of respondents – managers and tourists in complexes with holiday apartments in the SBSR. The *secondary sources* mainly include publications by Bulgarian and foreign specialists in the field of research, official statistical data until the beginning of 2022, data of non-governmental organizations, legal and regulatory acts, scientific reports from international conferences.

The dissertation meets the requirements of Art. 27, para. 2 of the Regulation for implementation of the Law for the development of academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.

4. Assessment of the structure and content of the dissertation

The dissertation **volume** is 279 pages. The main text illustrates 30 tables and 28 figures. The **structure** of the dissertation is sustained in the spirit of well-founded logic, consistency and connection between the treated problems. It consists of an introduction (6

pages), an exposition in three chapters (219 pages), a conclusion (3 pages) and used literature (17 pages). 7 appendices (19 pages) have been included in the dissertation. **The bibliographic apparatus** includes 197 titles, of which 126 are literary sources and 71 specialized Internet websites.

PhD student Mira Dzhendova is **well acquainted** with the theses and concepts of established authors on the researched problems, and successfully interprets them. Literary sources are used in **good faith and correctly**.

The style of the dissertation is concise and accurate. The text is written in **scientific language**. **The content of the dissertation** testifies that PhD student Mira Dzhendova has carried out **in-depth research** and good **practical evidence** of the author's objectives.

The logical framework of the exhibition is presented in the **introduction**. The need to research innovations in the tourism product of vacation apartments in the SBSR is justified.

The **first chapter** of the dissertation "**Essence and features of innovations in the tourist product of holiday apartments**" the theoretical foundations of innovations in tourism are examined. A variety of definitions for innovations in tourism are presented and the author's own definition is summarized and accepted. The features, elements and types of innovations in tourism are indicated. Research interest is focused on the essence of innovation in the tourism product of holiday apartments. The characteristics of the tourist product of holiday apartments and the features of innovations in holiday apartments are revealed. The role and participation of managers in innovative processes is highlighted. A conceptual model for the innovations application in the tourist product of holiday apartments was developed.

In the **second chapter** of the dissertation "**Application of innovations in the tourist product of holiday apartments in the Southern Black Sea region**" is a developed methodology for the analysis and evaluation of the application of innovations in a tourist area. An in-depth assessment of the factors for the development of innovations in the tourist product of holiday apartments in the SBSR is carried out. The state of innovation in the tourism sector in Bulgaria is analyzed. A special place is devoted to the application of innovations in the tourist product of holiday apartments from the point of view of a management company and from the point of view of the individual tourist.

The **third chapter** of the dissertation "**Directions and opportunities for expanding the application of innovations in the tourist product of vacation apartments in the Southern Black Sea Region**" analyzes the trends in the application of innovations in the tourist product of vacation apartments in the SBSR. Emphasis is placed on the barriers and problems in the application of innovations in the tourist product of holiday apartments in the

SBSR. Attention is focused on the opportunities to increase the application of innovations in the tourism product of holiday apartments in the SBSR.

The **conclusion** summarizes the main analyzes and conclusions regarding innovations in the tourism product of holiday apartments in the Southern Black Sea region.

The outstanding scientific and scientifically applied results represent an original contribution to science. They give grounds for the conclusion that the main goal of the dissertation has been **achieved**. The set research tasks have been **completed**. The research thesis is **confirmed**. The formulated working hypotheses are **proven**.

In structure and content, the dissertation corresponds to the requirements of Art. 34, para. 2 and para. 3 of the Regulation for the development of the academic staff at the University of Economics – Varna, Section II – Conditions and procedure for obtaining the educational and scientific degree “Doctor”.

4. 1. Evaluation of the dissertation abstract

The abstract of the dissertation work is 49 pages long. It correctly corresponds with the dissertation and reliably presents the researched problems in a synthesized form. The lexical and stylistic characteristics of the text are sustained and precise. It consists of 6 parts, which include: 1). general characteristics of the dissertation work; 2). structure and content of the dissertation; 3). brief statement of the dissertation work; 4). reference to the scientific and scientific-applied contributions in the dissertation work; 5). list of publications on the subject of the dissertation; 6). declaration of originality.

5. Identification and evaluation of scientific and scientifically applied contributions in the dissertation

PhD student Mira Dzhendova has **correctly formulated the contributions** to the dissertation. We evaluate the presented report on the contributions as correct and really reflecting the achieved results.

In our opinion, the dissertation clearly distinguishes **scientific and scientifically applied contributions**, which can be summarized as follows:

first – modern trends for the development and application of innovations in the tourist product are systematized;

second – the theory is supplemented by an author’s definition and classification of vacation apartments as accommodation facilities;

third – on the basis of the constructed conceptual model, an author’s methodology is developed for the application of innovations in the tourist product of vacation apartments;

fourth – a survey was conducted with 2 groups of respondents – managers and

tourists in holiday apartments in SBSR to analyze the innovation state in the tourist product;

fifth – the main barriers and determinants in the application of innovations in the tourist product of holiday apartments are identified;

sixth – 3 main priorities have been formed, which favor the application of innovations in SBSR, with the aim of improving the state of the tourist product of holiday apartments.

6. Publications and participation in scientific forums

Doctoral student Mira Dzhendova meets the **minimum national requirements** for the award of educational and scientific degree “Doctor”, according to Art. 2b, para. 2 and para. 3 of the Law for development of the academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria. She has collected **30 points** of publications in unreviewed journals with scientific review and in edited collective volumes.

She has **3 scientific publications** directly related to the topic of the dissertation – **1 article** (10 pages) and **2 scientific reports** (17 pages). Their total volume amounts to **27 printed pages**.

The **article** was published in *Bulgarian* in the magazine “Management and Education”, University “Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov”, Burgas and is indexed in **EBSCO**.

The **reports** have been printed in *Bulgarian* in collections of participation in scientific forums, as follows:

1). Jubilee International Scientific Conference “Tourism in the Era of Transformation”, dedicated to the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the “Tourism” specialty at the University of Economics – Varna;

2). Twelfth International Scientific Conference of Young Scientists “The Economy of Bulgaria and the European Union: Science and Business”, UNWE.

The publications of PhD student Mira Dzhendova are **representative** and ensure sufficient **dissemination of the research results** among the academic community and interested circles of the tourism business. *The scientific production, dedicated to the treated issues, meets the minimum national requirements for awarding the ESD “Doctor”, according to Art. 2b para. 2 and 3 of ZRASRB and Art. 35, para. 1, item 4 of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at the University of Economics – Varna, Section II – Conditions and procedure for acquiring the educational and scientific degree “doctor”.*

7. Confirmed or unconfirmed plagiarism in the dissertation or the abstract

In our opinion, no plagiarism has been found in the dissertation and the abstract.

8. Critical remarks and recommendations

Dissertations can be addressed with notes to improve the presentation of the work.

1. It is expedient to deepen the systematization of the subtypes of vacation apartments, especially their hybrid forms.

2. The dissertation can benefit from broadening the information of the empirical study.

These remarks do not diminish the merits of the research and do not affect the overall positive assessment of the dissertation, as an independent study with indisputable scientific and scientific contributions.

In her future research work, I recommend PhD student Mira Dzhendova expands her research on the product innovation of vacation apartments along the Northern Black Sea and/or mountain resorts.

9. Questions for the doctoral student

The researched issues raise the following questions for worthy defense:

1. Does the inclusion of vacation apartments in the accommodation classification system in our country stimulate the innovation of their product?

2. What kind of innovation in the holiday apartment product is best suited to adapt to contemporary force majeure events?

10. Conclusion

I am convinced to give a **positive assessment** of the dissertation on “Innovations in the tourism product of holiday apartments in the Southern Black Sea region”. I confirm that it fully **complies with the requirements** of LDAS in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its implementation and the Regulation for the development of academic staff at the University of Economics – Varna, Section II – Conditions and procedure for obtaining educational and scientific degree “Doctor”.

The dissertation is a **scientifically applied solution** to a real practical problem of public importance. The doctoral student has in-depth theoretical knowledge in the specialty “Tourism” and abilities to conduct independent research.

I propose to the esteemed members of the Scientific Jury to take a **decision “FOR”** the award of the **educational and scientific degree “Doctor”** in the field of higher education

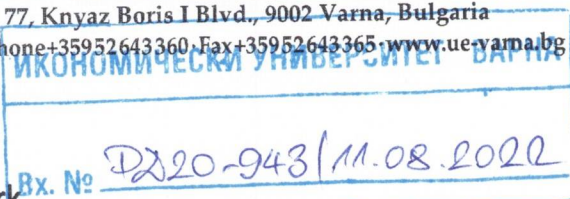
3. “Social, economic and legal sciences”, professional field **3.9. “Tourism”**, scientific specialty **“Economics and Management (Tourism)”** of **MIRA DIMOVA DZHENDOVA-DUNEVA** – full-time PhD student in the Department of “Economics and Organization of Tourism” at the Faculty of “Management” at the University of Economics – Varna.

Sofia,

12.07.2022

REVIEWER:

(Prof. D. Sc. Tanya Parashkova)



REVIEW
of dissertation work

**for the establishment of an educational and scientific degree “Doctor” in the
doctoral program “Economics and Management (Tourism)” of the University of
Economics – Varna**

1. General information

Reviewer: Assoc. Prof. Georgina Lukanova PhD, University of Economics - Varna

Grounds for writing the review: participation in the Scientific Jury, determined by order of the Vice-Rector for Scientific and Research activities at the University of Economics - Varna RD-06-120/01.07.2022, and along with the decision of the first meeting of the Scientific Jury, held on July 1, 2022.

Author of the dissertation: Mira Dimova Dzhendova-Duneva, a full-time doctoral student at the Department of Economics and Organization of Tourism at the University of Economics – Varna.

Topic of the dissertation: "Innovations in the tourism product of holiday apartments in the Southern Black Sea region".

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Tanya Dabeva.

2. Information about the doctoral student

Mira Dzhendova-Duneva graduated from G. S. Rakovski vocational school, Burgas in 2000. She obtained the degree "Specialist" in Organization and Management of the Hotel and Restaurant at the College of Tourism, Burgas in 2003. In 2005 She received her bachelor's degree in Tourism at Veliko Tarnovo University "St. St. Cyril and Methodius". In 2009 she obtained a master's degree in International Tourism at the same university, and four years later, in 2013, she received a second master's degree in Financial Management of the Enterprise at the Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov University, Burgas.

In the period 2015 - 2018, Mira Dzhendova-Duneva was a full-time doctoral student at the Department of Economics and Organization of Tourism, University of Economics - Varna in the doctoral program "Economics and Management (Tourism)". During her studies, she successfully passed all the doctoral minimum exams and published one article and two conference papers.

In addition to English, the doctoral student also speaks French. Her language skills give her the opportunity to freely use foreign specialized and scientific literature and communications, which affects the qualities of the dissertation.

Mira Dzhendova-Duneva has extensive experience in the field of hospitality and tourism. She worked for two seasons as a receptionist in a hotel in the city of Nessebar and in a hotel in Maine, USA. For three years she worked as a front office manager in a high-class hotel in the resort Sunny Beach. Her further work experience was enriched by working positions as hotel manager and marketing and sales manager. Currently, Mira Dzhendova-Duneva is the marketing and sales director in a company for management of complexes and holiday apartments in Bulgaria.

The decision to open a defense procedure was taken at a meeting of the department staff and approved at a meeting of the Faculty of Management, in accordance with the requirements of Art. 30 and Art. 32, para. 2 of the Rules for development of the academic staff in the University of Economics - Varna.

The presented circumstances and the attached documents show that the requirements of Art. 34, para. 1 and Art. 35 of the Rules of the University of Economics – Varna are met and Mira Dzhendova-Duneva has the right to appear in defense of her dissertation.

3. General characteristic of the dissertation

The dissertation consists of 279 pages (259 pages are core text plus 10 pages appendices). The main text is structured as follows: introduction (5 pages), exposition in three chapters (Chapter I - 85 pages, Chapter II – 70 pages, Chapter III - 73 pages, a total of 219 pages), conclusion (3 pages), list of references (17 pages). The exposition

includes rich illustrative material represented by 30 tables and 28 figures. There are also 7 appendices to the dissertation.

The general presentation of the dissertation requires a consistent emphasis on the following essential points:

Relevance. The dissertation is dedicated to the theoretical and empirical study of the possibilities for the development of innovations in a specific hotel product. The chosen topic is relevant and of great practical importance for the development of the hotel industry in Bulgaria, especially in the context of the negative economic, political and social situation. The study of innovations of the hotel product is essential for the activity of the hotel enterprise in view of the timely adaptation of the company's strategies to the new realities in the tourism business.

Research aim and tasks. According to the formulated topic of the dissertation, the doctoral student clearly specifies the research aim: "based on theoretical analysis and systematization of the innovations in the product of holiday apartments, to highlight opportunities for their application in the product of holiday apartments in the Southern Black Sea region ". The six research tasks arising from the aim are formulated, which contribute to its achievement.

The research thesis, which concretizes the essence and directions of the scientific research, links the innovations of the tourism product of holiday apartments with its successful market development. The proof of the thesis is realized by testing three working hypotheses.

The subject and object of the research are logically derived from the aim. The subject of the research are innovations in the tourist product of holiday apartments. The object of analysis are the holiday apartments in the Southern Black Sea region and their tourist product.

Research methods. Appropriate and applicable research methods have been selected to achieve the aim of development and fulfillment of the resulting tasks.

The study's limitations are correctly stated.

The list of references includes 197 titles, of which 76 are in Cyrillic (Bulgarian) and 121 are in Latin (all are in English). The quantitative and qualitative structure of the literary sources shows that the doctoral student knows the literature on the researched topic well. In the list of references predominate contemporary sources; all sources are appropriately selected, correctly interpreted and correctly cited.

4. Dissertation structure

The dissertation structure corresponds to the set aim and research tasks.

The first chapter of the dissertation represents the theoretical-methodological framework of the study. First of all, the features of innovations in tourism are presented. The research deepens by clarifying the nature of innovations in the tourist product of holiday apartments, paying special attention to the role and participation of managers in the innovation development process. An impression is made by the good knowledge of the main theoretical achievements in the scientific field and their appropriate interpretation and generalization. The doctoral student presents her own positions in an argumentative manner, formulates conclusions and generalizations. On the basis of the theoretical overview an author's model for application of innovations in the tourist product of holiday apartments has been developed. This model has a contributory character and demonstrates the ability to develop methodological frameworks based on the interpretation of theoretical statements.

In the second chapter, in accordance with the conceptual model, the application of innovations in the tourist product of holiday apartments in the Southern Black Sea region is investigated. The doctoral student shows very good skills in conducting independent empirical studies and demonstrates analytical capabilities for formulating substantiated conclusions and assessments. The in-depth knowledge of the issues and the professional experience of doctoral student Dzhendova-Duneva help the detailed analysis and reasoned assessments.

The third chapter systematizes the tendencies in the application of innovations in the tourist product of holiday apartments in the South Chitral region. Based on the results of two surveys, the main barriers and problems in their development are

highlighted. The in-depth knowledge of the issues and the precise logical connection between the theoretical reasoning and the conclusions of the conducted empirical study allow the doctoral student to substantiate the identified guidelines for improvement and to formulate recommendations of practical significance.

The conclusion summarizes the implementation of the research tasks and highlights the contributions of research.

We can summarize that the structure and content of the dissertation fully correspond to the set research aim and tasks. Good logical sequence and balance of the individual structural elements have been achieved. The style of the exposition is concise and precise, understandable scientific language is used.

The abstract accurately and completely reflects the content of the paper submitted for review.

5. Main scientific and applied scientific contributions of the dissertation

In the dissertation work of doctoral student Mira Dzhendova-Duneva the following scientific and applied scientific contributions can be distinguished and systematized:

- I evaluate as an achievement and scientific contribution of the dissertation the extending of scientific knowledge about the development of a specific hotel product.

- As a scientific contribution, the addition of the theory through the author's definition and classification of holiday apartments as accommodation facilities can be appreciated.

- I accept as a scientific contribution of the dissertation the proposed model for the application of innovations in the tourist product of holiday apartments.

- An applied scientific contribution is the complex analysis of the research object, which demonstrates the skills of the doctoral student to conduct independent research and interpret its results.

- As an applied scientific contribution, I evaluate the recommendations for improving the tourist product of holiday apartments.

6. Publications related to the dissertation

PhD student applies a list of three publications on the dissertation, including 1 article and 2 conference papers. The publications are closely related to the topic of the dissertation, largely reflect its essential parts and provide it with sufficient publicity.

7. Critical remarks and recommendations

No significant theoretical, logical and methodical errors were found in the dissertation. I would like to recommend the doctoral student to continue working on the problems of the hotel product and the possibilities for its development and to share the achieved results in more publications.

8. Questions

1. How would the doctoral student rank the innovations to improve the tourist product of holiday apartments in the Southern Black Sea region which are proposed in § 3.3.?

2. In what perspective do the managers of holiday apartments in Southern Black Sea region implement innovations in the tourist product?

9. Conclusion

The presented dissertation is a completed individual research that meets the necessary requirements for such scientific work regarding structure, completeness and significance. With this research, certain scientific and applied scientific results have been achieved and contribution could be clearly distinguished. The dissertation work shows that PhD student Mira Dzhendova-Duneva has in-depth theoretical knowledge in the researched scientific field and good abilities to conduct independent scientific research. Based on the overall assessment made in this review, I believe that the dissertation meets the requirements of Law for the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for the development of the academic staff in the University of Economics - Varna.

Based on the positive evaluation of the dissertation, as well as the scientific and applied scientific achievements of the candidate, I propose to the respected members of the Scientific Jury to award doctoral student Mira Dzhendova-Duneva the

educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in professional field 3.9 "Tourism" and specialty "Economics and Management (Tourism)".

August 13, 2022

Varna

Reviewer:

(Assoc. Prof. Dr. Georgina Lukanova)

A handwritten signature in black ink on a yellow rectangular sticky note. The signature is stylized, appearing to be the letters 'G' and 'L' joined together, followed by a period.