

TO

**THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SCIENTIFIC JURY DETERMINED BY
RECTOR'S ORDER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS - VARNA
according to the procedure for acquiring the educational and scientific degree "PhD" in
the scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Tourism)"**

STATEMENT

For acquiring the educational and scientific degree "PhD" in professional field 3.9.
"Tourism", PhD program "Economics and Management (Tourism)" according to the
procedure announced by the University of Economics – Varna

1. General information

The statement has been prepared by: Assoc. prof. Ph.D. Veselina Ivanova Atanasova, University "Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov" - Burgas, Department of "Marketing and Tourism".

In accordance for writing the statement: Order No. RD-06-120/01/07/2022. of the Rector of the University of Economics - Varna for the appointment of the Scientific Jury and decision of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Management (Protocol No. 35 of 29.06.2022).

Author of the dissertation: Mira Dimova Dzhendova-Duneva

Dissertation topic: „Innovations in the tourism product of holiday apartments in the Southern Black Sea region”.

General presentation of the dissertation work

The dissertation work of Mira Dimova Dzhendova-Duneva consists of 279 pages, of which: introduction (6 pages); exposition in three chapters (219 pages); conclusion (3 pages); list of references (17 pages) The main text contains 30 tables and 28 figures. The list of cited literature covers 197 sources, including 126 literary and 71 internet pages. The dissertation also has 7 appendices (19 pages).

The author's dissertation work is dedicated to **an extremely topical issue in modern tourism about innovations in the tourist product of holiday apartments**, based on their rapid and dynamic development, as well as the fact that tourist organizations strive to offer a tourist product that changes over time. The author's choice regarding the theme of the exposition is **very well motivated and logically justified**: "Trends in the tourist market place holiday apartments in a situation where, despite the more complicated organization, they are required to offer a variety of services in order to be equally preferred as a place for accommodation as well as hotels.

The subject of the scientific research is clearly and precisely defined, it focuses on innovations in the tourism product of holiday apartments.

The object of research is the holiday apartments in the Southern Black Sea region and their tourist product.

The scientific goal of the dissertation corresponds to the need indicated by the author, and more specifically, based on a theoretical analysis and systematization of the innovations in the tourism product of holiday apartments, to highlight opportunities for their application in the product of holiday apartments in the Southern Black Sea region. In order to achieve the thus formulated scientific goal, PhD student Mira Djendova **defines and implements six tasks of the research**: theoretical analysis and definition of innovations in tourism; revealing the features of innovations in the tourist product of holiday apartments; development of a conceptual model for the evaluation of the application of innovations in tourism; survey of the attitudes of customers, employees and managers about the use of innovations in holiday apartments; analysis and evaluation of innovations in the tourism

product in the Southern Black Sea region; formation of proposals and guidelines for increasing the significance of innovations in the tourist product of holiday apartments in the Southern Black Sea region.

The exposition **successfully verifies and proves the thesis** that 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. The formulated thesis is concretized in **three research hypotheses**.

The selected research methods correspond to the research goal and tasks set in the dissertation. Their totality includes: 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 sources of information are primary and secondary. PhD student Mira Djendova thoroughly reviewed the mentioned publications in the field of the researched topic by Bulgarian and foreign authors, she has organized her own collection of empirical data from two groups of respondents - managers and tourists in complexes with holiday apartments in the Southern Black Sea region. It is also emphasized that with some of the managers, in a situation of epidemiological situation, the research has been conducted via the Internet - Google forms, Zoom, Google meet, email and telephone conversations.

Structurally, the content of the dissertation is logically bound, detailed, coherent, with relatively well-balanced parts, the style is clear and understandable. The dissertation work is distinguished by a clearly expressed authorial position, originality and thoroughness of the conclusions, with a precise scientific apparatus.

The author's approach of the PhD student is consistent with the requirements of the research methods used. There is a clearly expressed authenticity of the source data, consistency and credibility of the conclusions and recommendations.

The research logic and structure of the thesis is correct and well presented. In the structuring, the traditional approach to the writing of this kind of scientific work is followed, first the theoretical foundations of the problem are clarified, secondly the research methodology is presented and thirdly, the described methodology is logically applied to the specific problem and the necessary conclusions and recommendations. The PhD student successfully demonstrates abilities to conduct and analyze independent scientific research, interpret results, generate ideas and proposals.

The dissertation has the character of a complete, original and significant scientific study on the problem of innovations in the tourist product of holiday apartments.

The stated ascertainment stands the opportunity to draw the following conclusion: the dissertation is presented in a form and volume that meets the requirements of Art. 27, para. 2 of the PPZRASRB and of Art. 34, para. 2 and paragraph 3 of the Rules for the terms and conditions for acquiring scientific degrees and holding academic positions at the University of Economics - Varna.

II. Assessment of the structure and content of the dissertation

The dissertation follows the classic structure for a similar type of scientific work: introduction, main content of the scientific research in three chapters, conclusion, bibliographic reference and appendices.

In the **first chapter**, the theoretical aspects for revealing the content of the essence of the concept of "innovation" are presented in detail and in depth, as well as the features of innovation in tourism are defined. It is noteworthy that after a detailed analysis of theoretical interpretations, as well as taking in to account the subject of the dissertation, the author offers a modern definition of innovations in tourism. A theoretical debate is also observed on the topic of innovations in the tourist product of holiday apartments, in which the author stands out by pointing out distinctive features compared to classical hospitality. The author summarizes the conclusion that "innovation management can not only change the

organization, but also bring benefits to it and redefine the company with the diffusion of new ideas. Leadership can effectively drive innovation and new thinking“.

A significant contribution is already noticeable in the **first chapter**. PhD student Mira Djendova in § 1.3. presents a conceptual model for the application of innovations in the tourism product of holiday apartments, through which, with the aim of practical applicability, the author shares his views: "the results of the analysis will contribute to a more concrete and up-to-date assessment of the state and applicability of innovations in the tourism product of the holiday apartments“.

The second chapter, in a structural and logical aspect, is dedicated to an adapted methodology for the evaluation and application of innovations in the tourist region, referring to two main groups of factors - general and specific. The analysis of the state of innovation in the tourism sector in Bulgaria and more specifically in the Southern Black Sea region stands out, conclusions from the management company and the individual tourist.

The third chapter reveals the conceptual justification and logical connection regarding the possibilities of expanding the application of innovations in the tourist product of holiday apartments in the Southern Black Sea region, elements for improvement in the external and internal environment are specified.

Clearly expressed and reasoned points of contribution in this part of the dissertation when presenting the proposals and guidelines for the more successful application of innovations in the tourist product of holiday apartments are the following three priorities: the unexplored possibilities of corporate cooperation; analyzing, monitoring and segmenting consumers as a key to identifying innovations in the tourism product; optimization of work processes through technological and organizational innovations in the management of human resources at holiday apartments.

The abstract prepared by PhD student Mira Djendova has a volume of 48 pages and summarizes to a sufficiently high degree the developed scientific work, accurately and correctly reflects the essential aspects and conclusions. Attached is a list of publications on the dissertation work: 1 article and 2 reports, which correspond to the required number for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "doctor“.

III. Scientific and scientific-applied contributions in the dissertation:

In the dissertation of Mira Djendova-Duneva, the following scientific and applied scientific contributions are highlighted:

1. Modern trends for the development and application of innovations in the tourist product are systematized.
2. The theory is supplemented by an author's definition and classification of vacation apartments as accommodation establishments.
3. Based on the constructed conceptual model, an author's methodology has been developed for the application of innovations in the tourist product of vacation apartments.
4. A survey has been conducted with 2 groups of respondents - managers and tourists in holiday apartments in the Southern Black Sea region to analyze the state of innovation in the tourist product.
5. The main barriers and determinants in the application of innovations in the tourist product of holiday apartments are presented.
6. 3 main priorities have been formed, which will favor the application of innovations in the Southern Black Sea region, in order to improve the state of the tourism product of holiday apartments.

Critical notes and recommendations:

Regarding the dissertation work, the main statement and the argumentation of the author's thesis and the argumentation of the conclusions, I have no critical remarks and recommendations.

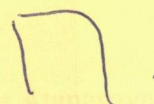
IV. Conclusion

The dissertation proposed by Mira Dimova Djendova-Duneva, a PhD student in the Department of "Economics and Organization of Tourism" at the University of Economics - Varna on the topic "Innovations in the tourist product of holiday apartments in the Southern Black Sea region" significantly enriches science and practice in terms of opportunities for the development of the tourism industry. I adhere to the author's summary that "there are good prerequisites for the overall application of innovations in the tourism product of holiday apartments in the Southern Black Sea region, as well as for their creation, implementation or adaptation".

In conclusion, based on the positive aspects of the dissertation work, the scientific achievements and the personal contribution of the PhD student, I confidently give my categorical positive assessment of it and propose to **the honorable Scientific Jury to award the PhD student Mira Dimova Djendova-Duneva the educational and scientific degree "PhD" in the field of higher education 3. "Social, economic and legal sciences", professional direction 3.9. "Tourism", scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Tourism)"**

25.07.2022
Burgas

The statement has been prepared by:
Associate Professor PhD



Veselina Dimova

STATEMENT

Regarding dissertation thesis for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "doctor" according to the announced procedure from the University of Economics – Varna

1. General information

Author of the statement - Prof. Tanya Dabeva, PhD, professor in 3.9 Tourism, scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Tourism)", department "Economics and Organization of Tourism", University of Economics - Varna;

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 Scientific Jury on 01.07.2022

Author of the dissertation: Mira Dimova Djendova-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"

Research supervisor : prof. Tanya Dabeva, PhD

2. General presentation of the dissertation

The dissertation work of doctoral student Mira Djendova is a in-depth independent study, a logical result of the author's scientific research and professional knowledge of the chosen topic. Holiday apartments, especially in recreational forms of tourism, are an important component of the hotel superstructure. Their product, which can be defined as a hybrid between classic hotel accommodation and real estate, has been realized in various form. They significantly contribute to the regional development of the hotel industry and increase the occupancy of bed-places. These features, as well as the significant presence of vacation apartments on the Bulgarian hotel market, are a major reason for their inclusion in the national classification system of the Ministry of Tourism. At the same time, their characteristics and especially the role and importance of innovations in their product are not studied and analyzed in depth. There is a lack of sufficient scientific research related to the presented topic. The stated arguments proof **the relevance and significance** of the presented research. They were taken into account by PhD student Djendova

and were interpreted both in the chosen **subject and object**, as well as in the **main goal** of the research, which was clearly formulated. Based on this, six specific **research tasks** have been identified and completed.

In the introduction of the work, the research thesis is well formulated. This is proven in the course of the presentation through three main hypotheses. The scientific tools used by the author are appropriate and in accordance with the subject and object of the research. The information base, according to the subject of the research, is rich and diverse. The author's stated limitations are also relevant.

As a result of what has been said so far, it is considered that the dissertation fully **meets the requirements** of Art. 27, para. 2 of the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.

3. Publications and participation in scientific forums

PhD student Jendova presents three scientific publications directly related to the topic of the dissertation work - 1 article (10 pages) and 2 scientific reports (17 pages), with which she realizes 30 points. Reports have been presented at scientific conferences with international participation. The scientific production presented by the doctoral student meets the minimum national requirements for awarding doctoral degree according to Art. 2b para. 2 and 3 of Law for development of the academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria 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 procedures for acquiring the educational and scientific degree "doctor".

4. Assessment of the structure and content of the dissertation

The total **volume** of the dissertation is 279 pages, of which – introduction (6 pages); exposition in three chapters (219 pages); conclusion (3 pages); used literature (17 pages); 7 Appendices (19 p.). Illustrative material is represented by 30 tables and 28 figures. They are needed in order to visualize the extensive information.

The used scientific literature includes 197 sources, of which 43 in Cyrillic, 76 in Latin and 71 are

Internet sites. Literary sources are used appropriately in the context of the research and are cited correctly. Their number is relative to the volume of the dissertation and shows the depth of the research.

Regarding **the content** of the chapters, the dissertation follows the classic model - it includes theoretical, analytical and applied chapters. They are in a logical order and are well balanced in relation to the volume of the research.

In the first chapter, following the approach from the general to specific, the author analyses the characteristics of the innovations in tourism, their type, classification, respectively the innovations in the product of the holiday apartments. The role of managers regarding innovation processes is especially highlighted. The author compiles and proposes a suitable conceptual model for the application of innovations in the vacation apartment product.

The second chapter presents a methodology for the analysis and evaluation of the application of innovations in the product of vacation apartments in the researched region. It starts logically from general factors and moves to specific ones. Special attention is given to innovations in the tourism sector. The implementation of innovations in the object of study by the management company and tourists is researched through a suitable toolkit.

In chapter three, based on the methodology from chapter two and the assessment of respondents' opinions, the main barriers and problems regarding the application of innovations in the holiday apartment product are highlighted. To overcome them, guidelines are systematized for expanding the application of the mentioned innovations with an emphasis on technological and the role of managers.

The introduction and conclusion of the doctorate fulfill their role, appropriate scientific and professional terminology from the field of hospitality and tourism is used, the work is written in clear and correct Bulgarian.

The abstract, in a volume of 48 pages, has been developed and validated according to the requirements and correctly reflects the main elements and results of the dissertation work.

In conclusion, the structure and content of the work presented correspond to the requirements of Art. 34, paragraph 2 and paragraph 3 of the Rules for the terms and conditions for

acquiring scientific degrees and occupying academic positions at the University of Economics - Varna.

5. Evaluation of scientific and scientifically applied contributions in the dissertation

I fully accept the scientific and scientifically applied theoretical contributions highlighted by the PhD student -enrichment of the theoretical statements from the theory of hospitality; as well as the methodological- conceptual model for application of innovations in the vacation apartment product; original empirical research and the applied contributions -appropriate guidelines for extending the application of holiday apartment product innovations. I especially want to emphasize the unique nature of the conceptual model.

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

As a research supervisor, I responsibly declare that no plagiarism was found in Djendova's doctorate.

7. Remarks and recommendations

As a research supervisor, I presented my notes during the work with the PhD student.

8. Questions for the PhD student

As a research supervisor, I have no questions for the PhD student, because they have been clarified in the course of developing and improving the presented work.

9. Conclusion

The presented PhD is an up-to-date and in-depth scientific study, with a definite contribution to the innovation in the vacation apartment product. The research model and methodology are applicable both to the holiday apartments of the Southern Black Sea region and to other tourist areas. The author combines very well her theoretical knowledge and research with her professional competence. This conclusion, as well as the findings presented in the opinion, give me grounds with conviction to give my **highly positive assessment of the presented doctorate** and to recommend to the honorable Scientific Jury **to award the PhD student Mira Dimova Djendova-Duneva the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in professional field 3.9. Tourism, scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Tourism)".**

Varna, 09.08.2022

Reviewer:

/prof.  Duneva, PhD/

OPINION

By Assoc. Prof. Katya Yankova Ilieva, PhD,
Prof. Dr. Assen Zlatarov University - Burgas

regarding a dissertation on:

**“Innovations in the tourist product of vacation apartments in the southern Black Sea Region
for awarding the educational and scientific degree of “Doctor” in
Professional field: 3.9. “Tourism”**

1. General information.

Opinion submitted by: Assoc. Prof. Katya Yankova Ilieva, PhD, Prof. Dr. Assen Zlatarov University - Burgas.

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

Professional field: 3.9. “Tourism”,

Reason for writing the opinion: Order № RD-06-120/01.07.2022 of the Rector of the University of Economics, Varna, regarding the scientific jury selection for the opened defense procedure of the dissertation of the doctoral student Mira Dimova Dzhendova - Duneva on the topic: “Innovations in the tourist product of vacation apartments in the southern Black Sea Region”, Professional field 3.9. “Tourism”, doctoral programme “Economics and management” (Tourism).

Author of the dissertation: Mira Dimova Dzhendova-Duneva, enrolled as a doctoral student for full-time state-subsidized doctoral studies in the area of higher education 3. “Social, economic and legal sciences”, professional field 3.9 “Tourism”, doctoral programme - “Economics and management” (Tourism) within the Department of Economics and Organization of Tourism at the University of Economics - Varna, pursuant to Order RD-17-450/03.02.2015 of the Rector of the University of Economics - Varna.

Topic of the dissertation: “Innovations in the tourist product of vacation apartments in the southern Black Sea Region”.

Scientific supervisor: Prof. Tanya Dabeva Filipova, PhD.

2. General presentation of the dissertation.

The dissertation covers a total of 279 pages and follows the classical format which includes an introduction - 6 pages, a main body of three chapters - 219 pages altogether, a conclusion - 4 pages, and a reference list - 17 pages. The main body includes 30 tables and 28 figures.

The reference list consists of 197 literature and information sources, 43 in Cyrillic script and 83 in Latin script respectively, as well as 71 Internet sites. The paper also includes 7 appendices (19 pages) which clarify the author's concepts and base the research process, the results, and conclusions from the investigation.

The dissertation is devoted to an issue both relevant and significant to the Bulgarian tourism.

The doctoral candidate argues the choice of topic by emphasizing the role of innovations as a factor of change, reflecting the dynamics in the needs of the tourists and tourism industry and the increasing competition, leading to the creation of a new unique and personalized tourist product, while focusing on the efficiency of innovations in implementing the product. In this respect the object and subject of the research are clearly and correctly identified and defined: vacation apartments in the Southern Black Sea Tourism Region (SBSTR) and innovations in the tourist product offered.

The main aim of the research work is accurately formulated: "Outlining the options for applying innovations in the product of vacation apartments in SBSTR on the basis of theoretical analysis and systematization of these innovations." In this respect the author has set herself six research tasks. The main thesis is defined and specified in proving three working hypotheses.

A varied and skillfully selected research toolbox is applied in the research work. The sources of primary and secondary information are well reasoned. The proper research methods and approaches are used: analysis and synthesis, the chronological approach, the systematic approach, observation, questionnaire surveys, situation, comparative and content analyses. The results from the questionnaire surveys are processed by means of the descriptive-comparative method, using SPSS software.

In the process of investigating the problems profound research into the literature and information sources with the respective analyses, generalizations and conclusions was carried out - publications of Bulgarian and foreign specialists, official statistical data of Bulgarian and international institutions, specialized media, data of non-government organizations, laws and regulations, scientific papers, specialized websites, etc. The objective limitations and problems in conducting the research process are well grounded in the research paper.

In my view, the dissertation is presented in form and volume which meet the requirements of Article 27, Paragraph 2 of the Regulations for applying the Law on academic staff development in the Republic of Bulgaria.

3. Publications and participation in scientific forums.

The doctoral candidate Mira Dzhendova has presented three own scientific publications related to the topic of the dissertation: an article, published in an academic journal, and two reports, presented at authoritative international scientific forums in Bulgaria.

The publications presented meet the national minimum requirements for obtaining the scientific and educational degree "Doctor" pursuant to Article 2, Paragraphs 2 and 3 of LASD in the Republic of Bulgaria.

4. Evaluation of the structure and content of the dissertation.

The dissertation is characterized by a well thought-out and logical structure, marked by a correspondence between the subject and object of the research on the one hand, and its aims and tasks on the other hand, and reflects the author's approach to the research process.

In the introduction the doctoral candidate analyzes the connection "innovations, change, possibilities, solutions, successful implementation, management" from the point of view of the development of tourism business in the situation of increasing competition, constant change in tourists' preferences and requirements, and the need for creating a new and unique tourist product. Based on the above, the choice of topic and its relevance, the subject and object of the research, and the aims and tasks of the dissertation are well-argued. The research toolbox, the methods of collecting primary and secondary information, the limitations and issues, related to the research process, are explicitly and accurately presented.

In chapter one "*The essence and distinctive features of the innovations in the tourist product of vacation apartments*" the author discusses the theoretical considerations related to innovations in tourism. The dynamics in the development of innovations as a tool for economic growth (from a historical perspective as well), the existing definitions and systematization, and the role of technology and digitization in everyday life and corporate environment are analyzed. The basic definitions of innovations are summarized as well as the characteristics of the innovations in tourism, the elements and stages of the innovation process, and the kinds of innovations. The author's model of classification of innovations in tourism is systematized.

In order to elucidate the character of the tourist product of vacation apartments, the doctoral candidate introduces a definition which comprises the main characteristics of this

type of accommodation places and their position in the general structure of real estate and tourism industry. The main distinctive features of the operations in the vacation apartments are emphasized in comparison with classical hospitality through the prism of certain criteria: region, class, operational characteristics, product, management. The modern trends in the management of vacation apartments, influenced by technological and marketing innovations, leadership, staff management, communications, and career development opportunities, are outlined.

A conceptual model for the application of the innovations in the tourist product of vacation apartments has been developed, based on the analysis of external, internal, and specific factors of the operational environment, the available resources, parameters, effects and evaluations.

Chapter two of the dissertation presents adapted methodology for evaluation of the application of the innovations in a tourist region. The methodology is based on the introduction of general and specific factors for evaluating the innovations in the tourist product. They are specified and well-argued by the author.

In order to characterize the distinctive features and the profile of the environment which influences the development of the innovations in the tourist product of the vacation apartments in the Southern Black Sea Region, the doctoral candidate makes a profound analysis of the general factors: economic, social and cultural, complemented with political and legislative factors. The demographic and cultural factors are analyzed (using Hofstede's methodology) as representing the group of sociocultural factors which affect the macroeconomic framework important for the development and application of innovations in tourism. The idea of applying the PEST analysis for evaluation and analysis of the business environment is presented.

A detailed analysis of current indices characterizing the state of tourism in Bulgaria has been made in the evaluation of the specific factors and conditions for the development and application of innovations in the tourist product. An author's evaluation has been made of the impact of general and specific factors on the application of the innovations in the tourist product of the vacation apartments in the SBSR.

A critical analysis of the state of the innovations in the tourism sector in Bulgaria is presented. The analysis includes evaluation of the innovations in the tourist product in the Southern Black Sea Region, and of the role and interconnections of the managing companies in applying a different type of innovations and innovative practices in the product of vacation apartments: related to technology, product, process, marketing, organization, ecology and social issues.

The trends in applying innovations in all stages of the "guest cycle" and the bidirectional communications in introducing "closed" or "open" innovations, aimed at the improvement of the quality of the product, are discussed with the focus on customer care.

In order to identify the trends in applying the innovations in the tourist product of vacation apartments, **in chapter three** the results from the questionnaire surveys carried out are analyzed. Their aims and tasks underlie the developed conceptual model. The attitudes and opinions of managers and consumers about the state of the innovations in the tourist product of the vacation apartments in the SBSR have been studied and the respective generalizations, recommendations and conclusions have been made. The capabilities of Internet platforms have been used to help conduct the surveys in the pandemic. The data have been processed by means of SPSS - the statistical software of IBM. Selected methods and approaches aiming to specify the state, prospects and barriers to the development and application of innovations in the vacation apartments, are applied in the analysis.

The barriers (internal and external) and issues in the process of introducing the innovations in the vacation apartments in the SBSR have been identified on the basis of the

collected data on the state of the general and specific factors affecting their development, introduction and application.

Possibilities for improvement of the application of innovations are outlined, with the elements of change in the internal and external environment of the tourism enterprises being specified and investigated. The priority possibilities in creating, developing, and applying the innovations in the tourist product of vacation apartments are well-argued. The priority influence of three groups of technological innovations with different targets to respond to the dynamics in the requirements of the tourists, the personalization and digitization of the services, has been studied. The role of the management team in the process of introducing the innovations and the strategic development of the tourism enterprises has been analyzed.

In **the conclusion** the doctoral candidate argues her motives for choosing a topic and its relevance, inspired by the increasing role of the innovations in improving the tourist product of the vacation apartments in the SBSR, the need to define and elucidate the character of the business environment, and the appearance of a comparatively new complex tourist product. The set aims and tasks, theoretical analysis, definitions of basic notions, related to the innovations in tourism and hospitality, studies, classifications, evaluations, conclusions, guidelines for improvement are presented in synthesized form in the three chapters of the dissertation. Ideas and directions for future studies in the sphere of innovations in the tourist product of vacation apartments on the Bulgarian tourism market are presented.

The **author's summary** of the dissertation extends over 48 pages and reflects accurately and correctly the individual stages of the research, the summarized results, and conclusions from the research process as well as the contributions and publications on the dissertation. A declaration of originality has been submitted to confirm the presentation of a copyrighted product without infringement of copyright of other authors' publications and research papers.

The research paper, the author's summary of the dissertation and the appended publications are characterized by a modern academic style. They are written in comprehensible scientific language with accurate and correct citing of literature and information sources.

In my opinion, the structure and content of the dissertation are in accordance with the requirements of Article 34, Paragraphs 2 and 3 of the Regulations for the Terms and Conditions for the Acquisition of Academic Degrees and the Occupation of Academic Positions of the University of Economics – Varna, for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor".

5. Identifying and evaluating the scientific and applied-science contributions in the dissertation.

My complex evaluation is that the presented dissertation possesses considerable contributions to the updating and enriching of the existing knowledge of the investigated topic. **The following scientific and applied-science contributions** are easily noticeable:

1. Theoretically, the modern concepts and trends in the development and application of innovations in tourism have been systematized. The author's model for a classification of innovations in tourism has been systematized.
2. Theory has been completed with the author's definition of vacation apartments. Their classification has been systematized as accommodation places with their position in the general structure of real estate and tourism industry.
3. A conceptual model and methodology for applying innovations in the tourist product of vacation apartments have been constructed.

4. The main barriers and determinants in applying innovations in the tourist product are drawn up and principal priorities in the process of improving the tourist product of vacation apartments have been formulated.

6. Plagiarism detected or not detected in the dissertation and the author's summary.

I have not detected plagiarism in the dissertation.

7. Critical notes and recommendations.

The dissertation follows the main aim set and logically presents well-reasoned solutions to the research tasks. I have no significant criticisms about the research paper. I recommend that the doctoral candidate should continue doing research work on the chosen relevant and dynamic tourism-related subject matter.

8. Questions to the doctoral candidate.

I have the following question to the doctoral candidate: In your opinion, what are the possibilities and prospects for applying the concept of social responsibility in business, hospitality, and vacation apartments management in the SBSR?

9. Conclusion.

The dissertation submitted for defense proves that the doctoral candidate Mira Dzhendova-Duneva possesses profound knowledge of the scientific achievements in the theory and practice of tourism, and can conduct her own research, applying modern research methods and approaches as well as defend with arguments her own opinions and views expressed in the paper. The author's position is highly noticeable throughout the paper. The scientific and applied-science contributions mentioned are indisputable and are an original contribution to science. The merits of the work can also be measured with its importance for tourism practice.

The dissertation meets the requirements for obtaining the scientific and educational degree "Doctor" pursuant to Article 6 (3) of the Law on Academic Staff Development in the Republic of Bulgaria (LASD), Article 27, (1) and (2) of the Regulations for its Application (RALASD) as well as the Regulations for the Terms and Conditions for the Acquisition of Academic Degrees and the Occupation of Academic Positions of the University of Economics - Varna.

In view of the opinion presented, I propose to the honourable scientific jury to make a decision for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" to the doctoral candidate Mira Dimova Dzhendova-Duneva in Professional field 3.9. - "Tourism", Scientific speciality "Economics and Management" (Tourism).

09. 08. 2022
Burgas

Member of the Scientific Jury
/Assoc. Prof. K. Ilieva, PhD/