



**REVIEW**

ИКОНОМИЧЕСКИ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ ВАРНА

Вх. № PA20-151/04.02.2025г.

From: Prof. Dr Stoyan Petkov Marinov

Department "Economics and Organization of Tourism", University of Economics - Varna, scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Tourism)"

**Regarding:** Dissertation for awarding the Educational and Scientific Degree "**Doctor**" in Area of Higher Education: 3. *Social, Economic and Legal Sciences*. Professional Field: 3.9. *Tourism*. Scientific specialty: "*Economics and Management (Tourism)*" at UE-Varna.

**Author of Dissertation:** Dimitar Hristov Kolev

**Dissertation topic:** "Strategies for the Development of Golf Complexes in Bulgaria"

Grounds for drafting the Review: participation in the Scientific Examining Jury on the defense of the Dissertation pursuant to Order No ПД 06-191 of 23 Dec 2024 of the Rector of UE-Varna and Decision of the Scientific Jury of its first meeting of 13 Jan 2025.

**1. Information about the Dissertation defender**

In 2002 Dimitar Kolev received the EQD "bachelor" in the programme "Economic and Financial Control" at the AE "Dimitar A. Tsenov", Svishtov. During the periods 2003-2005 and 2015-2017 he acquired consecutively the EQD "master" in the programme "Economics of Commerce" and the programme "International Tourist Business" at the University of Economics - Varna.

Dimitar Kolev has over 20 years of experience in various tourism enterprises in the area of hotel and restaurant management. He has held the positions of "Bartender", "Director Nutrition", "Manager of Restaurants and Bars", "Complex Manager".

The doctoral student was trained in a doctoral programme with the Department of "Economics and Organization of Tourism", Faculty of Management of UE-Varna: doctoral programme "Economics and Management (Tourism)", pursuant to a Decision of the FC of the Faculty of Management, record No 27/23 Jan 2018 and Order No ПД 17-173/29 Jan 2018 of the Rector of UE-Varna. The training was carried out in full-time form, state quota, during the period 01 Feb 2018 - 01 Feb 2021. The doctoral student fulfilled successfully his individual study plan, accumulated the required number of credits and was disenrolled with the right of defense pursuant to a Decision of the FC of the Faculty of Management, record No 18/24 Feb 2021 and Order No ПД 17-426/05 Mar 2021 of the Rector of UE-Varna.





## **2. General description of the Dissertation**

The presented Dissertation of doctoral student Dimitar Kolev is the result of independent research work.

The Introduction highlights, in a well-grounded manner, the relevance and importance of the issues under study.

The subject of study: "*management strategies for the development of golf complexes*", the object of study: "*golf complexes in Bulgaria*" and the main goal: "*to form strategies for the development of golf complexes in Bulgaria on the basis of a conceptual model for the development of those strategies*", are correctly differentiated.

The aim of the research work is specified in six research objectives: (1) upgrading the concept of the nature of the golf complex as a tourist business, (2) synthesizing a model and developing a methodology for the formulation of a strategy for the development of a golf complex, (3) working out a situational analysis of golf complexes in Bulgaria and their strategic management, (4) assessing the provision of golf complexes in Bulgaria, (5) analyzing the main trends and good practices in the development of golf tourism and (6) outlining guidelines aimed at the elaboration of strategies for the development of golf complexes in Bulgaria.

The research work upholds the thesis that "*a properly formulated strategy for the development of golf complexes is a prerequisite for raising their competitiveness and for the effective development of golf tourism in the respective destination*". In order to prove the main proposition of the Dissertation three hypotheses are tested: Hypothesis 1: *There are no clearly formulated strategies for the development of golf complexes in Bulgaria*, Hypothesis 2: *Visitors to the golf complexes in Bulgaria do not have playing golf as their main purpose*, Hypothesis 3: *There exist favourable conditions for the development of golf tourism in Bulgaria*.

The appropriate research tools are used, which include *the historical and the systematic approach, the method of analysis and synthesis, the comparative method, the method of induction and deduction, analogy and comparison*. The empirical method of the *survey* is applied, the data from which is processed using methods of descriptive statistics for calculating the arithmetic mean values and the standard deviations in their empirical distributions. The *correlation and regression analyses* are used in order to obtain information about the statistically significant correlations between empirical data.

***The Dissertation complies with the requirements of Art 27, Para. 2 of the Implementing Regulation of The Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in Republic of Bulgaria.***

## **3. Assessment of the structure and the contents of the Dissertation**

The Dissertation is 244 pages long. The structure of the Dissertation is presented in the spirit of well-grounded logic, consistency and connection between the issues under consideration. It consists of an Introduction (4 pgs), Body of three chapters (199 pgs), Conclusion (4 pgs), Bibliography (11 pgs), 6 Appendices (17 pgs). A *wealth of illustrations* is also used: 34 tables and 25 figures.





The bibliographic material includes 146 sources, of which 40 are in Cyrillic, 97 are in Latin and 9 are specialized Internet sites.

The style of the Dissertation is *concise and accurate*. The text is written using scholarly language. The contents of the Dissertation testify to the fact that doctoral student Dimitar Kolev has produced *a piece of research the results of which are presented in a structured and logically sequential manner*.

***In terms of structure and contents, the Dissertation is in line with the requirements of Art. 34, Para. 2 and Para. 3 of the Regulations on the Development of Academic Staff at University of Economics – Varna, Section II – Conditions and procedure for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor".***

#### **4. Scientific and applied research contributions in the Dissertation**

Doctoral student Dimitar Kolev has achieved the following **contributions** in his Dissertation:

First, the specific features of the business model of golf tourism are systematized. An author's methodology, which includes a conceptual model for working out a strategy for the sustainable development of a golf complex, is prepared. The methodology is operationalized in a set of methods and tools of the research work: an author's survey form. (Chapter One).

Second, a situational analysis of golf complexes in Bulgaria is prepared. An evaluation of the competitive standings of golf complexes in Bulgaria, based on the results of the conducted survey of visitors, is done. (Chapter Two).

Third, worked out are the trends and are formulated guidelines for developing strategies of golf complexes in Bulgaria. (Chapter Three).

The outlined scientific and applied research results constitute the *author's contribution* to science. They give us reason to conclude that the main goal of the Dissertation has been achieved. The research tasks set in the work have been fulfilled. ***The research thesis has been confirmed through testing the stated hypotheses.***

#### **5. Publications and participation in scientific forums**

Dimitar Kolev submitted 6 publications on the theme of the Dissertation, including an independently written article and 5 papers, two of which are written independently and three as a co-author. The papers are in proceedings volumes from scientific forums in Bulgaria. The presented publications reflect substantial results of the dissertation and provide the latter with sufficient publicity.

The Dissertation defender *fulfils the quantitative requirements* under Art 35, Para. 1, items 1-4 of the Regulations on the Development of Academic Staff at the University of Economics – Varna and *meets the minimum national requirements* for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor", as per Art 2b, Para. 2 and Para. 3 of The Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in Republic of Bulgaria.

#### **6. Evaluation of the summary**

The presented summary sums up the contents of the main structural parts of the Dissertation and complies with the normative requirements.



**7. Has there or hasn't there been found any evidence of plagiarism in the Dissertation or the summary**

There is no lawfully proven plagiarism in the Dissertation.

**8. Notes and recommendations**

I would recommend that Dimitar Kolev extend his research work on the subject and include the economic efficiency of golf tourism at micro level and macro level.

**9. Questions to the Dissertation defender**

What sort of challenges does the European Green Deal pose to the business model of golf complexes in Bulgaria?

Does the Dissertation defender think that investments in new golf complexes in Bulgaria would be profitable?

**10. Conclusion**

The Dissertation constitutes an *applied research solution* to a real practical problem of public significance. The doctoral student possesses theoretical knowledge in the subject "Economics and Management (Tourism)" as well as the ability to conduct independent research.

The research work entitled "Strategies for the Development of Golf Complexes in Bulgaria" *complies with the requirements* of LDAS in the Republic of Bulgaria, The Regulations on its Implementation and the Regulations on the Development of Academic Staff at the University of Economics – Varna.

I give a positive assessment and vote in favour of awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Tourism)" of professional field 3.9 Tourism, to Dimitar Kolev.

Varna,  
22 Jan 2025

Review drawn up by

(Prof. Dr Stoyan Marinov)

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





ИКОНОМИЧЕСКИ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ ВАРНА

## REVIEW

of dissertation

Ex. No. 2220-115/29.01.2025

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 No. RD-06-191/23.12.2024 of the Rector of the University of Economics – Varna for the appointment of a Scientific Jury and the decision of the first meeting of the Scientific Jury, held on 13.01.2025.

**Author of the dissertation: Dimitar Hristov Kolev** – full-time doctoral student in the Department of “Economics and Organization of Tourism” at the University of Economics – Varna

**Topic of the dissertation:** “Strategies for the development of golf complexes in Bulgaria”

**Research supervisor: Prof. Dr. Tanya Dabeva Filipova**

### 2. Data about the dissertation student

**Dimitar Kolev** graduated from the Academy of Economics “D. A. Tsenov” – Svishtov, with a Bachelor’s degree in “Economic and Financial Control” (2002). He obtained a Master’s degree in “Trade Economics” (2005) and a Master’s degree in “International Tourism Business” at the University of Economics – Varna (2017).

**His professional development** began and continues in tourism. He has extensive experience in tourism practice. From 2020 to the present, he is the general manager of Spa Resort “St. Ivan Rilski” in Bansko. He speaks English.

**Dimitar Kolev** was enrolled in **full-time doctoral studies** by order No. RD-17-173/29.01.2018 of the Rector of the University of Economics – Varna in the field of higher education 3. “Social, economic and legal sciences”, professional direction 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 01.02.2018 – 01.02.2021.

He completes the work specified in the individual plan. Successfully passes the **doctoral exams** as follows:

- Research Methodology – Excellent (5.50);
- Hotel and Restaurant Management – Excellent (5.50);
- Business Economics – Good (4.25);
- English – Good (4.00).

During his doctoral studies, he carried out expert work. He was a consultant for the company “Bibendum”. He participated in the work of a doctoral-level course organized by the University of Economics – Varna.

During his studies as a doctoral student, Dimitar Kolev was assessed with a **positive grade**. The dissertation was discussed at the Department Council of the Department of Economics and Organization of Tourism. He was discharged with the right to defend by order No. RD 17-426/05.03.2021 of the Rector of the University of Economics – Varna, effective from 01.02.2021.

*A procedure for defense before a Scientific Jury has been opened, in accordance with Art. 31, para. 1 and para. 2 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”.*

### **3. General presentation of the dissertation work**

The dissertation work of doctoral student **Dimitar Hristov Kolev**, the abstract and the scientific publications related to it, submitted for review, are the result of an independent scientific study. **The relevance** of the researched issues is highlighted in a well-argued and convincing manner. It is emphasized that golf tourism is one of the market niches in sports tourism. The sector is growing steadily worldwide with increasing trips by golf players, as well as sales of golf-related goods and services.

***The object of research** – “the development of golf complexes in Bulgaria” and **the subject of research** – “management strategies for the development of golf complexes” are correctly distinguished.*

**The main goal** is clearly and precisely defined: “the formation and derivation of strategies for the development of golf complexes in Bulgaria based on a conceptual model for the development of these strategies”. The goal was achieved through the solution of **6 specific research tasks**.



**The research thesis** is appropriately formulated: *“a properly formulated strategy for the development of golf complexes is a prerequisite for increasing their competitiveness and for the effective development of golf tourism in the respective destination”*. **3 working hypotheses** are correctly defined.

**The research toolkit** includes the application of a set of **research methods and approaches**. Among them are the historical and systematic approach, the method of analysis and synthesis, the comparative method, the method of induction and deduction, analogy and comparison. Of the empirical research methods, a survey and statistical and descriptive methods of analysis were used, given the specifics of the issues under consideration.

**The main limitations** in writing the dissertation relate to: lack of sufficient scientific and applied research on the issue in question in world literature and especially in Bulgaria; limiting field research to a specific period covering the summer tourist season of 2022; limiting field research only to golf complexes in Bulgaria and to golfers residing in the Bulgarian destination.

**The main problems** in developing the dissertation are the gaps and incompleteness in the statistical data, as well as the low level of engagement of golfers and representatives of golf complexes in survey research.

**The information provision** of the study was carried out through a systematic study of specialized scientific publications by Bulgarian and foreign authors.

*The dissertation meets the requirements of Art. 27, para. 2 of the Regulations for the Implementation of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.*

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

The dissertation is 244 pages **long**. The main text is illustrated with 34 tables and 25 figures. **The structure** of the dissertation is based on a well-founded logic, consistency and connection between the problems treated. It consists of an introduction (4 pages), an exposition in three chapters (199 pages), a conclusion (4 pages) and references (11 pages). 6 appendices have been prepared for the dissertation. **The bibliography** includes 137 literary sources and 9 specialized Internet sites.

Doctoral student Dimitar Kolev is well acquainted with the theses and concepts of established authors on the researched problems, and successfully interprets them. The literary sources have been used **conscientiously and correctly**.

**The style** of the dissertation is concise and precise. The text is written in **scientific language**. **The content of the dissertation** indicates that doctoral student Dimitar Kolev has

carried out in-depth **scientific research** and very good **practical evidence** of the author's goals and objectives.

**The introduction** presents the logical framework of the presentation. The need to formulate guidelines for the development of strategies for golf complexes in Bulgaria is substantiated.

**The first chapter** of the dissertation "**Theoretical foundations of the strategic management of a golf complex in tourism**" examines the features of strategic planning. The research interest is focused on the essence of the golf complex as a tourism business model. A methodology for developing a strategy for the development of a golf complex is presented.

**In the second chapter** of the dissertation "**Situational Analysis of Golf Complexes in Bulgaria**", a characterization of golf complexes in Bulgaria is made. The natural environment is considered as a prerequisite for the development of golf tourism in Bulgaria. A special place is devoted to the characterization of existing golf courses in Bulgaria. An analysis of the business environment of golf complexes in Bulgaria has been carried out. A quantitative and qualitative assessment of the supply of golf complexes in Bulgaria has been made. Statistical data and results of a survey are presented.

**In the third chapter** of the dissertation "**Guidelines for the development of strategies for the development of golf complexes in Bulgaria**" trends in the development of golf tourism and good practices are examined. An in-depth analysis of the target market segments of golf complexes in Bulgaria has been carried out. Guidelines for the development of strategies for golf complexes in Bulgaria have been formulated.

**The conclusion** summarizes the main analyses and conclusions related to the strategies for the development of golf complexes in Bulgaria.

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

*In terms of structure and content, the dissertation corresponds to the requirements of Art. 34, para. 2 and para. 3 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".*



#### **4. 1. Evaluation of the abstract of the dissertation work**

The abstract is **28 pages in Bulgarian** and **26 pages in English**. It correctly corresponds to the dissertation work and faithfully presents the researched problems in a synthesized form. **The lexical and stylistic characteristics of the text are well-developed and precise.** It consists of 5 parts, which include: 1). general characteristics of the dissertation work; 2). structure and content of the dissertation work; 3). brief presentation of the dissertation work; 4). reference to the contributions in the dissertation work; 5). list of publications on the dissertation work.

#### **5. Identification and assessment of scientific and scientific-applied contributions in the dissertation work**

Doctoral student Dimitar Kolev has **correctly formulated the contributions** in the dissertation. We assess the presented reference for the contributions as correct and realistically reflecting the achieved results. In our opinion, the dissertation clearly highlights **scientific and scientific-applied contributions**, which can be summarized as follows:

**first** – scientific knowledge in the research field of golf tourism has been enriched with a specific model, which contributes to the theoretical understanding of the business model of the golf complex and reveals new approaches to its analysis;

**second** – based on the constructed conceptual model, an author's methodology has been developed and a study has been carried out on the state of golf complexes in Bulgaria, with which scientific hypotheses have been tested;

**third** – based on testing the theoretical model by conducting an empirical study, it was established which are the potential market segments of golf complexes in Bulgaria, which are the tourist motives when choosing a trip and which characteristics of the golf complex influence the decision-making process;

**fourth** – based on the results of the conducted empirical study and the emerging trends, guidelines have been formulated for the development of strategies for golf complexes in Bulgaria, tailored to the conditions of Bulgaria and having a potential impact on the development of a sustainable model of golf tourism in Bulgaria.

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

Doctoral student Dimitar Kolev has **6 scientific publications** directly related to the topic of the dissertation. He has achieved points in the group of indicators “G”, as follows: *Articles and reports published in non-refereed journals with scientific review and in edited collective volumes.*

- **1 scientific article**, independent, in English, indexed in secondary databases;

• **5 scientific reports**, 2 independent and 3 in co-authorship, in Bulgarian, included in the National Reference List.

**The reports** are printed in collections of participation in scientific forums, as follows:

- 1). International Student-Doctoral Conference of the Department of Tourism, Faculty of Economics, 2019.
- 2). Anniversary Scientific Conference with International Participation “Tourism and Connectivity”, Varna, 2020.
- 3). Anniversary International Scientific Conference “Economic Science, Education and Real Economy: Development and Interaction in the Real Era” Varna, 2020.
- 4). Seventeenth Black Sea Tourism Forum “Green and Digital Transition – Challenges and Opportunities for the Development of Tourism”, Varna, 2024.
- 5). International Scientific Conference “Tourism, Education, Business”, College of Tourism – Burgas, 2024.

The publications of doctoral student Dimitar Kolev are **representative** and ensure sufficient dissemination of the results of the study among the academic community and interested circles in 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 the 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 abstract**

There is no proven plagiarism in the dissertation and the abstract.

#### **8. Critical notes and recommendations**

Some notes may be made to the dissertation that would improve the overall presentation of the work.

1. The dissertation would benefit if the general explanatory text regarding the methodology of scientific research were reduced.
2. The study could be enriched with an analysis of the attitudes of golf complex managers regarding their strategic management.

The mentioned notes do not reduce the merits of the study and do not affect the general positive assessment of the dissertation work, as an independent study with indisputable scientific and scientific-applied contributions.



I would recommend, in his future research work and based on his professional experience, doctoral student Dimitar Kolev to research and recommend strategies for managing high-category complex hotel properties.

#### **9. Questions for the dissertation student**

The researched issues raise the following questions for worthy defense:

1. What strategy would you suggest to managers regarding the management of the depreciated hotel superstructure in a large part of Bulgarian golf resorts?
2. Do you consider it appropriate to prepare a national strategy for the development of golf resorts in Bulgaria as part of the Strategy for Sustainable Development of MT?

#### **10. Conclusion**

I confidently give a **positive assessment** of the dissertation on the topic “Strategies for the Development of Golf Resorts in Bulgaria”. I confirm that it fully **complies with the requirements** of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its Implementation and the Regulations for the Development of Academic Staff at the University of Economics – Varna, Section II – Conditions and Procedure for Acquiring the Educational and Scientific Degree “Doctor”.

The dissertation is a **scientific and applied solution** to a real practical problem of public importance. The doctoral student possesses in-depth theoretical knowledge in the specialty “Tourism” and the ability to conduct independent scientific research. I propose to the esteemed members of the Scientific Jury to make 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 direction **3.9. “Tourism”**, scientific specialty **“Economics and Management (Tourism)”** by **DIMITAR HRISTOV KOLEV** – full-time doctoral student in the Department of “Economics and Organization of Tourism” at the Faculty of “Management” at the University of Economics – Varna.

Sofia,  
25.01.2025

**REVIEWER:**

(Prof. D.Sc. Tanya Parusheva)

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