

## SCIENTIFIC STATEMENT

**From:** Assoc. Prof. PhD Krasimir Vladimirov Aleksandrov,

Professional field 3.9 Tourism, Department of Tourism, AU-Plovdiv

**Regarding:** Acquiring of an educational and scientific degree "doctor" in a professional field 3.9. Tourism, doctoral program "Economics and Management (Tourism).

**Candidate:** *Yanislav Ignatov Markov,*

Dissertation "*MARKET POSITIONING OF A WINE TOURISM DESTINATION (EXAMPLE OF PAZARDZIK REGION)*".

**Grounds for the statement:** Order 06-203/09.11.2023г of the Rector of EU-Varna for determination of the Scientific Jury and decision of the Scientific Jury from 13.11.2023.

### 1. Candidate data.

Yanislav Ignatov Markov was born in 1969. The candidate obtained a master's degree in Tourism from IU-Varna. From the autobiographical data, it is evident that Yanislav Markov has accumulated solid experience in the tourism sector and enterprises related to FF industry.

### 2. Overview of the dissertation work.

The dissertation work of Yanislav Ignatov Markov is dedicated to the current issues regarding the role of destination positioning. In this aspect, it is considered a central and critical element in all future efforts for the tourism and economic development of a specific region. The object and subject of the research are clearly defined.

The work is developed based on a thorough review of existing publications on the topic by both Bulgarian and foreign authors, as well as through the conduct of independent empirical research. The methodology used by the candidate for research is in line with the stated scientific goal and research objectives. Considering the characteristics of the dissertation work, we can conclude that in terms of type, volume, and attributes, it meets the requirements of Article 27, paragraph 2 of the Regulations for the Preparation and Defense of Doctoral Theses.

### 3. Structure and Content of the Dissertation Work.

The dissertation work of Yanislav Markov has a total volume of 216 pages, including the conclusion and appendices distributed as follows: introduction (6 pages)



contains 27 tables, 19 figures, and 9 appendices. The list of used literary sources consists of 276 titles.

Summarizing existing developments on the topic, the author skillfully demonstrates his own approach in formulating the purpose and methods of the present study. He clearly and categorically defines the main thesis, namely that the proper market positioning of a destination for wine tourism is based on an original marketing mix, orientation towards appropriate target segments, and engagement of stakeholders. The research toolkit is rich, including theoretical analysis, synthesis, summarization, structural-functional modeling, surveys, interviews, expert assessment, targeted (research) observation, and mathematical-statistical methods. A conceptual model for the market positioning of a wine destination has been developed for practical application.

The results of the conducted empirical study—one for the owners of wineries in the Pazardzhik region and one for the visitors-consumers of these wineries—have been transformed into specific practical insights for the effective positioning of the wine destination and achieving several positive effects. These effects include enhancing the competitiveness of the Pazardzhik region as a wine tourism destination through cooperation and collaboration in the sector. Collaboration between winemaking and culinary arts, winemaking and tourism organizations, winemakers, and cultural institutions. The interest in wine and food while traveling is increasing, expanding into new, more engaging, innovative, and ecological modalities. Improving accessibility to facilities is a key condition for destination development, and more.

The dissertation is presented in a form that meets all the requirements for this type of scientific work. It provides a scientific-applied solution to a real problem related to the market positioning of a destination for wine tourism. The structure and content of Yanislav Ignatov Markov's dissertation work are considered to meet the requirements of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of the University of Economics – Varna.

The candidate submits an abstract with a volume of 26 pages, which sufficiently reflects the developed research. The attached list of publications related to the dissertation work contains the necessary number of titles for obtaining the educational and scientific degree of a doctor.



#### **4. Scientific and Scientific-Applied Contributions in the Dissertation**

The original scientific contribution with a theoretical-methodological nature lies in clarifying the essence and role of marketing positioning for a specialized (wine) tourism destination.

As scientific-applied contributions, the following can be highlighted:

- An author's model for the market positioning of a wine tourism destination and a toolkit for studying the market positions of destinations of this type.
- Identification of the strengths and weaknesses of the wine destination in a marketing context.
- Identification of opportunities and delineation of guidelines for competitively positioning the Pazardzhik region as a destination for sustainable wine tourism.

#### **5. Critical Comments and Recommendations**

I recommend to the doctoral candidate to continue working on the issues related to wine tourism in Bulgaria and the possibilities for enhancing its quality, and to share the achieved results in more publications, including internationally.

#### **6. Conclusion**

The developed dissertation work demonstrates that Yanislav Ignatov Markov possesses knowledge of scientific achievements in tourism theory and practice. He is capable of independently conducting scientific research in the field of tourism, using contemporary scientific methods and approaches. The presented dissertation work contains contributions in both theoretical-methodological and applied aspects and can be used to enhance the quality and marketing positioning of wine destinations.

The merits of the dissertation work give me reason to provide a positive evaluation and to vote for the award of the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor" to Yanislav Ignatov Markov.

17.11.2023

Plovdiv

Signature:

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

/assoc. prof. PhD Krasimir Aleksandrov/

## SCIENTIFIC STATEMENT

of the dissertation of **Yanislav Ignatov Markov**,  
PhD student at the Department of Economics and Organisation of Tourism  
at the University of Economics – Varna  
on the topic: *“Market positioning of a wine tourism destination  
(example of Pazardzhik region)”*

Scientific field: 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences

Professional field 3.9. Tourism

Specialty: Economics and Management (Tourism)

Scientific consultant: prof. Stoyan Petkov Marinov, PhD

Author of the Scientific Statement: prof. Velina Ivancheva Kazandzhieva, PhD  
Department of Economics and Organisation of Tourism  
University of Economics – Varna

This scientific statement has been developed based on the decision of the Scientific jury from 13.11.2023 г., appointed by order № RD-06-203/09.11.2023 of the Rector of the University of Economics – Varna.

### I. Brief introduction of the PhD candidate

The author of the dissertation, Yanislav Markov, was born on September 14, 1969. His special secondary education was completed at the Technical School of Mechanical Engineering in the town of Pazardzhik, specialty “Mechanical Engineering”, profile “Cold Processing”. In the period 2013 - 2016, he studied “Management of hotels and restaurants” at the College of Tourism - Varna at the University of Economics - Varna. In 2018, he received a master's degree from the same university, majoring in “International Tourism Business”. PhD candidate's rich professional experience has helped to develop an in-depth study with a clearly expressed scientific and applied character. All fulfilled responsibilities in the process of his professional development have helped in binding the theoretical aspects in the dissertation with the guidelines for the positioning of the Pazardzhik region as a destination for wine tourism.



## **II. General evaluation of the dissertation work**

For his participation in the public defense procedure, PhD student Yanislav Markov presented the following research production:

- dissertation work in a total volume of 245 standard pages;
- abstract in 26 standard pages;
- 7 scientific publications related to the topic of the dissertation, of which 2 articles, 4 reports from scientific conferences and 1 co-authored chapter from a collective monograph. The articles were published in 2021 and 2022 in specialized refereed journals, respectively in the “Izesstia” Journal of the Union of Scientists - Varna, “Economic Sciences” series (vol. 10, no. 2, 2021, pp. 52-60) and Scientific works of the Agricultural University - Plovdiv (vol. LXIV, no. 2, 2022, pp. 110-119).

The presented scientific works reflect to a sufficiently high degree the main parts of the content of the dissertation work, thereby giving it the necessary level of publicity. PhD candidate Markov presents a dissertation dedicated to a significant topic for national and regional competitiveness, related to the sustainable market positioning of a wine tourism destination. The work is distinguished by high importance in a scientific, methodical and practical-applied aspect. The choice of topic is very well motivated and justified by modern market changes and the rich experience gained by wine producers in the implementation of projects developing wine tourism. Structurally, the dissertation is presented in a classic model of three main chapters, which are relatively well balanced and do correspond to the research tasks correctly formulated in the introduction. The content of the dissertation is logically bound and consistent, which determines the successful realization of the scientific goal set. The structure of the text corresponds to the defined methodological framework for analysis and evaluation, and the applied research toolkit for “operationalizing the systematized model for market positioning of a wine tourism destination”. This way, the author's thesis that “the correct market positioning of a wine tourism destination is based on an original marketing mix, orientation towards appropriate target segments and stakeholder engagement” is proven. The presented study unequivocally shows a well-mastered specific terminological apparatus and scientific style in the considered subject

area. A large number of specialized information sources in Bulgarian and English were used for the preparation of the dissertation. With the significant share of foreign literature used, PhD student Markov directs attention to the study of contemporary and internationally recognized leading publications related to the topic. The information sources are cited precisely according to the requirements.

### **III. Evaluation of the scientific and practical results and contributions of the dissertation work**

The presented dissertation highlights the following significant contributions of a scientific-applied nature:

*firstly*, the theoretical aspects of the market positioning of a wine tourism destination were enriched and expanded, the relevant scientific and conceptual apparatus was specified;

*secondly*, an author's conceptual model was constructed and has been tested through researcher's own quantitative and qualitative study of the market positions of the Pazardzhik region as a destination for wine tourism;

*thirdly*, a relevant methodological toolkit was adapted, which was applied for an in-depth study of the market positions of a wine tourism destination;

*fourth*, the advantages and disadvantages of the wine destination were analyzed from the marketing point of view.

*fifth*, the possibilities were argued and the directions for competitive positioning of the Pazardzhik region as a destination for sustainable wine tourism were defined.

The indicated scientific and scientific-applied contributions in PhD candidate's dissertation work are the result of independent, purposeful and in-depth research activity. The dissertation is a comprehensive and fully completed research on a topical subject, aimed at the possibilities for improving the positioning of the Pazardzhik region as a destination for sustainable wine tourism.



#### IV. Notes and recommendations

No significant theoretical, logical, methodological or stylistic mistakes can be found in the presented dissertation work of PhD student Markov. Some inaccuracies, technical omissions, detailed descriptions, etc., which are inevitable for this kind of scientific research, have been admitted. However, they do not diminish the merits indicated in the statement and the author's significant scientific-applied contributions contained in the work.

#### V. Conclusion

**Yanislav Ignatov Markov's** dissertation "*Market positioning of a wine tourism destination (example of Pazardzhik region)*" contains the necessary theoretical and scientific results. They have an original contribution to science and meet all the requirements of the regulatory framework. The dissertation paper shows that the doctoral candidate possesses in-depth theoretical knowledge and research skills in professional field 3.9. Tourism, and demonstrates qualities and skills for independent scientific research. As a result of the above-mentioned arguments, I strongly recommend that the doctoral student **Yanislav Ignatov Markov be awarded the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in Professional field 3.9. Tourism, Specialty „Economics and Management (Tourism)"**.

15.11.2023,

Varna

Author of the Scientific Statement:

Member of the Scientific Jury (prof. Velina Kazandzhieva, PhD)

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

Bx. № ПД-1387/22.11.2023г.**STATEMENT**

**for dissertation thesis for acquiring the scientific degree "doctor" according to a procedure announced by the University of Economics - Varna**

**1. General information**

**Prepared the Statement** - Assoc.Prof. Ph.D. Mincho Nikolov Polimenov, Associate Professor in Professional Field 3.9. Tourism, 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, at the University "Prof. Dr. As. Zlatarov" Burgas

**Grounds for submission of the statement:** order № ПД-06-203/09.11.2023 of the Rector of the University of Economics – Varna and decision of the scientific jury from 13.11.2023

**Author of the dissertation:** Yanislav Ignatov Markov, full-time doctoral student at the Department of "Economics and Organization of Tourism" at the University of Economics - Varna;

**Dissertation topic:** MARKET POSITIONING OF A WINE TOURISM DESTINATION (ON THE EXAMPLE OF PAZARDZIK DISTRICT)

**Scientific consultant:** Prof. Stoyan Marinov, PhD, University of Economics - Varna

**1. Information about the PhD Student**

Yanislav Ignatov Markov, born in 1969, has acquired a master's degree in tourism at the University of Economics - Varna, has experience as an administrator and manager in the tourism and commercial business with organic products. He also works as a specialist in the field of tourism and manager of a vegetable and fruit processing enterprise.

**2. Relevance of the problem developed in the dissertation in scientific and applied - scientific terms**

The topic of the dissertation focuses on the market positioning of a destination for wine tourism. The focus of scientific research is on the study of a destination for wine tourism based on the example of the Pazardzhik region, and on the basis of broadening perspectives through systematization and rethinking of theoretical knowledge and practical skills, the scientific information is supplemented and a conceptual model is derived to meet the tourist practice.

**3. Evaluation of the structure and content of the dissertation work**

**The dissertation work developed** by doctoral student Yanislav Ignatov Markov has a total volume of 216 pages, with a conclusion and appendices of which: introduction (6 pages), main text in three chapters (199 pages in total), conclusion (5 pages). The text contains 27 tables,



19 figures and 9 appendices.

**The used literary material** includes 276 titles, of which 25 in Bulgarian, 157 in Latin, as well as 18 Internet sources. The literary sources, which are used are precisely and correctly selected and reliably and critically presented in the text.

**The dissertation is constructed properly**, which gives it a good balance for a scientific exposition of the research and proof of theses. The text is meaningful and is presented in a good methodological and logical sequence. **The object and the subject** of the research are correctly selected. The style of the exposition, analyzes and conclusions correspond to the specifics of the researched topic. All texts are written comprehensibly and legibly in Bulgarian. The title page, conclusion and appendices are properly formatted.

The doctorate is dedicated to **topical issues** related to the idea of determining the right marketing concept of destinations to achieve sustainable success and competitive advantages in the tourism industry. Niche wine tourism is the basis of the development of the regions and provides significant support for the innovation of the destinations. Despite sufficient world literature sources, as well as information in national theory and practice, the phenomenon of niche wine tourism has not been sufficiently researched.

Relevant to the sector from a scientific and practical point of view, the PhD answers the main question: How accumulated assets and their application will position a certain destination for wine tourism, following the example of the Pazardzhik region? This implies a research design that is not limited to, but oriented towards, a wider professional environment. In this regard, we define the results of the research as positive for the development of niche wine tourism and its application in a certain destination.

The research **aim** corresponds to the set topic, striving to fully and comprehensively explore the essence of the specific problems related to wine tourism. Five detailed, correctly and clearly defined **scientific research tasks** have been formulated to achieve them.

The author's main research thesis seeks to identify problems and outline an opportunity for development by defining three working hypotheses. We also accept the objective limitations of the study, related to the information security of the dissertation work and the time periods of the studies examined by the doctoral student. Despite the lack of scientific and practical-applied research on the issue in Bulgaria, in order to achieve and prove the dissertation aim, a sufficient amount of scientific information on the selected issue has been collected, processed and systematized. The doctoral student correctly selects and applies the various scientific methods and approaches in wine tourism research in order to prove its application in practice through empirical data and research methods that provide an objective opportunity to draw well-

motivated conclusions. My opinion is that through a combination of different research methods, empirical research is well systematized and presented in the study. The survey research is comprehensive, related to winery managers, types of technological and boutique segments of the tourism wine industry, which creates an opportunity to draw correct conclusions.

All the applied scientific information on the doctorate is well selected and correctly spelled out as the authoritative sources and authors are clearly systematized. The research theses of both Bulgarian and foreign authors have been examined, and the opinions and statements are justified, despite the limited literature on the issue. The doctoral student has correctly mastered the application of scientific methods in accordance with the requirements of research methods. The justifications and conclusions made in the scientific work as a result of the studies speak of authenticity and strengthen the scientific results.

The 26-page **abstract** replicates the content of the dissertation and meets the legal requirements. It is well constructed, reflecting the general characteristics, structure, content and summary of the work in three parts, a statement of contributions and a list of publications. The abstract is well-written in terms of text, and its skillful composition and logical acknowledgment give it scientific awareness.

#### **4. Scientific achievements in the dissertation work**

The dissertation includes a classic structure, arranged logically, where the content fully corresponds to the chapters and paragraphs in the text and attests to the author's thesis. **The scientific contributions** in the proposed thesis statement can be systematized as:

**4.1.** Through an analysis of Bulgarian and foreign authors, the theoretical statements in the field of niche wine tourism are enriched

- the main factors and mechanisms for the origin and development of wine tourism are presented, using the example of a wine tourism destination;

- the defining characteristics of the positioning of a wine tourism destination (on the example of the Pazardzhik region), which contribute to its implementation in wine tourism, are justified;

- an author's conceptual model was created for the positioning and implementation of wine tourism in a certain destination, based on the example of the studied area of Pazardzhik.

**4.2** The presented author's model for wine tourism through niche market positions reveals new approaches through analysis of the results by looking for specificities in company strategies to create an opportunity for application in tourist wine tourism.

**4.3.** A study was conducted on the state of niche wine tourism, and based on the model and proposed methodology, scientific hypotheses were tested that have not yet been empirically



verified.

4.4. Possibilities have been identified for the practical application of teristic wine tourism in certain destinations. The competitive advantage and positioning of Pazardzhik region as a destination for sustainable wine tourism is justified.

## 5. Critical remarks and recommendations

As with any scientific work, there are definitely weaknesses that can be brought out as recommendations for removal, and also serve the author in future research. The many long sentences and verbosity in them create a feeling that the author deviates from the logical path of his reasoning. My recommendations are for more precise and clear sentences that lead to scientific conclusions more quickly.

## 6. Questions for the PhD student

What legal and certification systems are applicable to wine tourism in order to increase the quality and competitiveness of a certain destination for the development of niche wine tourism?

## 7. Conclusion

The dissertation confirms the research thesis of a wine tourism destination, which I appreciate as a positive side and an opportunity to improve the environment in tourism practice and development, through the implementation of niche tourism products in Bulgaria. This also gives me reason to evaluate the positive aspects and scientific achievements of the doctoral student, considering that the basic requirements of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, its Regulations and the Internal rules of IU-Varna have been met. I give a positive assessment to the presented doctorate and recommend to the honorable scientific jury **the scientific degree "Doctor" in the scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Tourism)" in the professional field 3.9 Tourism to be awarded to PhD student Yanislav Ignatov Markov.**

11.11.2023/ Burgas

Member of the scientific jury:

/ Associate Professor Mincho Polimenov, PhD /

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