

OPINION

by

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For the PhD thesis of Vasya Verchova Yaneva

with theme

“LIFE CYCLE OF THE TOURIST PRODUCT OF THE DESTINATION
SAMOKOV MUNICIPALITY”

for the awarding of the educational and scientific degree "PhD" in professional direction: 4.4.
Earth Sciences, scientific specialty: Geography of recreation and tourism

This opinion was prepared on the basis of Order № RD-38-608/21.10.2024 of the Rector of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” for participation in the scientific jury for PhD thesis defense on theme “LIFE CYCLE OF THE TOURIST PRODUCT OF THE DESTINATION SAMOKOV MUNICIPALITY” for the awarding of the educational and scientific degree "PhD" in professional direction: 4.4. Earth Sciences, scientific specialty: Geography of recreation and tourism of PhD student Vasya Verchova Yaneva. It is in compliance with the requirements of the Act for the development of the academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ADASRB) and the Regulation for its application, as well as the Regulations for the conditions and the order for acquiring scientific degrees and holding academic positions in Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”.

Short biographic information about the candidate

Vasya Yaneva was born on 14.09.1969. She graduated from the language school in Vratsa with a degree in French, and later from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". She is fluent in French, Russian and English. Has many years of experience as a university lecturer in the Department of Tourism Geography.

General characteristics, structure, content and relevance of the dissertation work

The presented dissertation has a total volume of 277 pages (including the appendices) and is structured as follows: introduction, five main chapters, conclusion, bibliography with 365 titles (in Cyrillic 90 and 275 in Latin, 14 Internet sources) and 5 appendices.

The dissertationability and relevance of the topic chosen for research is based on:

- The need for careful planning and diagnosis of the status in the life cycle of the tourism product in a specific municipality;
- The risks of climate change on the development of the main type of tourism in the target municipality.

The dissertation is well structured and balanced. The introduction argues for the relevance of the chosen topic and presents the subject, object, main goal and hypothesis, tasks and methods used in the research.

The first chapter examines the theoretical foundations of the study, clarifying the conceptual and terminological apparatus used, related to the tourist site, the tourist product and the tourist destination.

In the second chapter, various aspects of the life cycle of the tourism product and the life cycle of the tourist destination are analyzed, with a critical analysis being made, an attempt to establish parallel similarities between them and to establish their subordination.

Chapter three presents a description of the primary supply of tourist services in the municipality of Samokov according to the concept of the “core model” of the life cycle of the tourist product. This includes natural, anthropogenic (cultural) factors and general infrastructure.

The fourth chapter traces the tourism development of the target municipality, examines the absolute indicators of its tourism development, indicators of its intensity, indicators of the structure and type of tourism. An empirical study is presented, which includes surveys conducted in 2013, 2015 and a current survey conducted in the spring of 2024, implemented among accommodation establishments in the municipality of Samokov. A SWOT analysis of tourism in the municipality of Samokov has also been made.

The fifth chapter reviews the life cycle studies of tourist destinations in Bulgaria, examines the life cycle of the tourist destination Samokov Municipality, and provides recommendations for the further sustainable development of tourism in it.

The conclusion shows that the research tasks set have been convincingly and well-arguedly solved in the dissertation.

The presented dissertation demonstrates that the PhD student has done significant work in analyzing the literature on the research topic and in conducting her own empirical research. The style of expression and the use of scientific terminology demonstrate a high level of literacy of the author.

The abstract of the dissertation correctly reflects its content and the contributions resulting from the research conducted.

Critical notes and recommendations

I have no serious critical comments on the content of the dissertation. I recommend that the PhD student focus on publication activity in refereed and indexed journals on SCOPUS and Web of Science and to continue her academic growth.

Conclusion

The relevant topic of the dissertation, its structure, content, results and contributions presented constitute sufficiently convincing evidence of the PhD student's competence. The candidate has also presented three independent publications, one of which is in print, thus covering the required 30 points according to the minimum scientometric requirements. This gives me the reason to express my positive assessment and to propose to the scientific jury to award Vasya Yaneva an educational and scientific degree "PhD" by professional field 4.4. "Earth Sciences", scientific specialty "Geography of Recreation and Tourism".

18.11.2024

The opinion is prepared by:

Assoc. prof. Desislava Varadzhakova PhD