

OPINION

from

prof. DSc Kliment Naydenov,

Department of "Regional Development",

Faculty of Geology and Geography,

SU "St. Kliment Ohridski"

regarding protection of dissertation on

Vasya Verchova Yaneva

on topic

"LIFE CYCLE OF THE TOURISM PRODUCT OF THE DESTINATION SAMOKOV MUNICIPALITY"

The opinion was prepared and presented on the basis of the order of the Rector of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" RD-38-608/21.10.2024 for determining the composition of the scientific jury and scheduling a date for public defense and the decisions of the first meeting of the scientific jury for participation in the composition of the scientific jury for the defense of a dissertation work "Life cycle of the tourism product of the destination Samokov municipality" for the awarding of the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in professional direction: 4.4. Earth Sciences, scientific specialty: Geography of recreation and tourism by doctoral student Vasya Verchova Yaneva.

It complies with the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Rules for its Implementation and the Rules for the Terms and Conditions for Acquiring Scientific Degrees and Holding Academic Positions at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

Brief biographical data

Vasya Yaneva was born on September 14, 1969. He graduated from the language high school in Vratsa with a degree in French and Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". He speaks French, Russian and English. He is a university lecturer in the "Geography of Tourism" department.

General characteristics, structure, content and relevance of the dissertation

Tourism is one of the key sectors in the Bulgarian economy, as destinations with natural and cultural resources play a significant role in the development of the regions. In this context, the dissertation work is particularly relevant, since the municipality of Samokov, with the central location of the Borovets resort, is an example of a destination with rich potential, but also with challenges in terms of the sustainable management of the tourist product.

The author successfully motivates the choice of the topic, emphasizing the need to apply the concept of the life cycle of the tourism product in small municipalities. This contributes not only to theoretical knowledge in the field, but also to the development of practical guidelines for management and development.

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

The dissertation is well structured and balanced. The main goal and tasks of the research are clearly formulated in the paper. The tasks are logically related to the main goal.

In the first chapter of the dissertation, a theoretical overview of the concept of the life cycle of the tourist product is presented. This serves as a basis for further research. The author thoroughly examines and defines the main stages of the life cycle, such as introduction, growth, maturity and decline. In addition, the concept is adapted to the specific conditions and characteristics of the municipality of Samokov. This provides an opportunity to apply theoretical principles in practice in the context of the region, which gives the research relevance and applicability.

In the second chapter of the dissertation, various aspects of the life cycle of both the tourist product and the tourist destination are examined in detail. In this part, an in-depth critical analysis is made, through which the similarities and connections between the two cycles are explored. The author seeks to identify how they influence each other and how they are subordinated, which means that their dependence and interaction is analyzed. In this way, the complexity of tourism resource management is highlighted, explaining how the development stages of the tourism product can affect the overall condition and life cycle of the destination.

In the third chapter of the dissertation, the primary offer of tourist services in Samokov municipality is described, and this is examined through the prism of the concept of the life cycle of the tourist product. Attention is directed to the main elements that form the tourist offer in the region. This includes the natural resources that underpin tourist attraction, the anthropogenic

(cultural) factors associated with local traditions, historical sites and cultural events, as well as the general infrastructure that supports tourism development. This analysis provides a comprehensive view of the municipality's resources and their role in the life cycle of the tourism product.

In the fourth chapter of the dissertation, a detailed follow-up of the tourism development of the municipality of Samokov is presented. Key absolute indicators related to tourist activity, as well as indicators of the intensity of tourism development in the region, were examined. The structure and type of tourism were analyzed in order to understand the main characteristics and trends in the tourism sector of the municipality. Chapter four also includes empirical research based on surveys conducted in different periods: in 2013, 2015, as well as an actual survey from the spring of 2024. These surveys were carried out among accommodation establishments in Samokov municipality, which provides first-hand information on the state and development of the tourism industry. A SWOT analysis was made for an additional assessment of the state of tourism. It identifies the strengths and weaknesses of tourism in the region, as well as the opportunities and threats that affect its future development. This complex approach provides a comprehensive picture of tourism activity in Samokov municipality and offers a basis for formulating recommendations for sustainable development.

The fifth chapter of the dissertation examines the research related to the life cycle of tourist destinations in Bulgaria. The analysis provides a general picture of the development of tourism in the country, emphasizing the methodologies and results of previous studies. Special attention is paid to the life cycle of the tourist destination municipality of Samokov. The various stages of tourism development in the region have been traced, taking into account the current state and the main factors that determine it. In the final part of the chapter, specific recommendations are proposed for the sustainable development of tourism in Samokov municipality. They are aimed at optimizing resources, reducing negative impacts on the environment and improving tourism services, with the aim of attracting more visitors and extending the life cycle of the destination. These recommendations have a practical focus and can be implemented in future strategies for the development of the region.

In the conclusion of the dissertation, it is emphasized that all set research tasks have been fulfilled convincingly and with clear argumentation. The author succeeds in achieving the objectives of the study by providing reasoned analyzes and conclusions that support the main propositions of the paper. This shows a systematic and thorough approach to the subject under

consideration, as well as the significance of the results for the development of the tourist destination.

The dissertation demonstrates that the doctoral student has made a serious effort both in analyzing the existing literature on the topic under consideration and in conducting his own empirical research. This shows a thorough understanding of the subject and an ability to apply theoretical knowledge in practice. In addition, the writing style and use of scientific terminology indicate a high level of academic literacy and professionalism on the part of the author.

The abstract of the dissertation work accurately and clearly reflects the content of the main work, as well as the contributions achieved from the conducted research. It presents the key aspects, analysis and conclusions of the dissertation, providing a synthesized but comprehensive view of the significance and results of the research. This makes it a useful tool for familiarizing yourself with the main achievements of the work.

Critical notes and recommendations

In general, I have no critical comments on the content and essence of the dissertation work.

1. It is recommended that the PhD student strengthen his publication activity by publishing his research in refereed and indexed editions included in the prestigious SCOPUS and Web databases of Science. This will enable a wider dissemination of the results of his work, increasing his scientific authority and integration into the international scientific community.
2. I believe that it is necessary to shape the dissertation as a monograph and to publish it.

Questions:

1. How do demographic, economic and social trends in the region affect the life cycle of the tourism product?
2. What marketing and management strategies are implemented in the municipality of Samokov to extend the life cycle of the tourism product and what recommendation would you give?

Conclusion

I believe that the dissertation research has the necessary personal contribution of the doctoral student for this kind of development. The main motive for this is the knowledge, the qualities he possesses and the huge volume of self-processed information contained in the

dissertation work. In support of this is the sometimes unclear argumentation in the dissertation, the logical structure and credibility of the scientific theses. The dissertation work was carried out on a clearly defined issue with scientific and scientific-applied topicality.

I convincingly declare that the doctoral candidate possesses the necessary qualities for awarding the scientific and educational degree "Doctor". Given the merits of the dissertation work, I allow myself to propose to the Honorable members of the Scientific Jury to award Vasya Yaneva an educational and scientific degree "doctor" in professional direction 4.4. "Earth Sciences", scientific specialty "Geography of Recreation and Tourism".

Prepared by :

Prof. DSc Kliment Naydenov

28.11.2024

Sofia