



REVIEW

on a dissertation work for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in: field of higher education 3. "Social, economic and legal sciences", professional direction 3.7."Administration and management", scientific specialty "Organization and management of production (forestry and forest industry)"

Author of the dissertation: Nikolay Alexandrov Tashev – regular PhD student at the Department of "Marketing and Production Management" now "Alternative Tourism" at the Forestry University, Sofia

Topic of the dissertation: "Possibilities for the development of sustainable tourism in the forest areas in the Middle Rhodopes"

Member of the scientific jury: Prof. Nickola Ivanov Stoyanov - FU - retired, field of higher education: 3. "Social, economic and legal sciences", professional direction 3.7."Administration and management", scientific specialty "Organization and management of production (forestry and forest industry)"

(Academic Doctor of Science, Name, Surname and Surname, Higher School/Scientific Organization; Field of Higher Education, Professional Area, Scientific Specialty) designated as a member of the Scientific Jury by Order No. RD-ZPS - 88/26.02.2024 from the Rector of LTU.

1. Brief introduction of the candidate.

PhD student Nikolay Alexandrov Tashev was born on 09/04/1984 in the city of Saint Petersburg, Leningrad Region, Russian Federation, a citizen of the Republic of Bulgaria.

He completed his elementary and primary education at the General Education School at the Embassy of the Russian Federation in the Republic of Bulgaria, and received his secondary education in 2003 at the American College in Sofia. In 2014, he graduated from the Forestry University, Faculty of Business Management, Bachelor's Degree, majoring in Business Management, and in 2016, Master's Degree in Business Management, majoring in Environmental Management, with a professional qualification "Business Manager". He was enrolled in full-time doctoral studies on 04.02.2019 at the Department of "Marketing and Production Management", now "Alternative Tourism" with the topic:

"Possibilities for the development of sustainable tourism in the forest areas of the Middle Rhodopes" with scientific supervisor Assoc. Prof. Dr. Emil Kitchukov - FU and scientific consultant Assoc. Prof. Dr. Vladimir Vladimirov from the Institute of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Research at the BAS and has been assigned with the right of protection since 01.02.2023.

2. Relevance of the problem.

With a brief description of the dynamic development of tourism, the low tourist attractiveness and popularity of Bulgaria and the wealth of diverse forest areas, as well as with the presence of natural, historical, cultural, religious and other types of resources on the territory of the Middle Rhodopes, the relevance is proven of the problem considered in the dissertation work.

3. Degree of knowledge of the state of the problem and creative interpretation of the literature review.

In the introduction, more than 20 authors who have studied the problems of sustainable tourism are mentioned.

On the basis of the literature analysis made on the individual nature-oriented forms of sustainable tourism, it was found that the issue is poorly studied and the texts are mostly descriptive in nature. Regarding the specific region of the Middle Rhodopes, the topic is barely touched upon in the scientific literature, and the organizational-economic side of the issue is practically unstudied, which is stated as one of the reasons for choosing the topic of the reviewed dissertation.

4. Purpose, tasks, hypotheses and research methods. Correspondence of the chosen research methodology with the set goal and tasks of the dissertation work.

The aim, tasks, research object, subject, hypothesis, thesis and research methodology are considered at the beginning of the research. The purpose and tasks of the research are correctly set, a suitable object of research is chosen, and the determined hypothesis and thesis will help to reach and clarify the set goal and tasks.

The dissertation uses basic methodological principles used by our and foreign authors from the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century, developed in the field of the theory of sustainable development of tourism. Modern concepts and theoretical studies based on the systematic analysis of

economic processes in the field of tourism are also used. Surveys were developed and used to study the current opinion of tourists and entrepreneurs in order to compare the demand and supply of tourist products and services in the considered region.

The traditional and modern research methods used, as well as the independently developed approach to gathering information with surveys and analysis of the obtained data, are well selected and support the achievement of the set goals and objectives of the dissertation work.

5. Transparency and presentation of the obtained results.

The collected and analyzed data are presented in 38 tables and 34 figures, and part of the studied objects are illustrated with 22 photos in the text of the dissertation. Separately, in the presented 6 appendices, the data from the conducted surveys are summarized in 10 tables, the questionnaires for the surveys are presented, and a calendar of events and holidays in the Middle Rhodopes and a list of 50 species of angiosperms, which are most often the object of specialized visits (botanical tourism) in the Middle Rhodope region.

The collected information is presented in an appropriate way in tables and graphs, which has enabled the dissertationer to make an extensive analysis and comment on the results obtained.

6. Discussion of results and used literature.

In the first part of chapter 3, a detailed analysis of the state and opportunities for using natural and plant resources for the implementation of sustainable tourism in the forest territories of the Middle Rhodopes by municipalities is made. A description of the existing eco-trails is given, the rare, protected and disappearing plants are described in a special list, as well as a description of the various types of events, holidays, and other elements of event tourism. National strategies and plans in the field of tourism, national laws, as well as stakeholders in the development of tourism at the national, regional and local levels are described in detail.

In the second part of Chapter 3 (items 3.4 - 3.8) a detailed analysis of the results of the surveys conducted among tourists and entrepreneurs is made, the results of the same and similar questions are compared for both groups about the state of the tourist environment and its visitors in the Middle Rhodopes, the degree of sustainability of tourism forms in the Middle Rhodopes was determined, as well

as the strengths and weaknesses of the tourist environment in terms of the sustainability of its development in the Middle Rhodopes.

The dissertation consists of 3 chapters, an introduction and a conclusion with a volume of 216 pages, incl. bibliography with 164 titles, of which 25 in Cyrillic, 50 in Latin and 141 online titles, list of abbreviations and list of appendices. The dissertation has a separate scroll with 6 appendices on 11 pages and 10 sheets of Excel files with tables of survey results.

Literary sources are cited correctly and used both to prove certain theses and to show the diversity of opinions, opinions and definitions of different concepts.

7. Contributions of the dissertation work.

In the statement of contributions, the author has indicated three contributions that are not assigned to the categories of scientific or scientific-applied contributions, namely:

- Six municipalities were studied - Asenovgrad, Chepelare, Smolyan, Borino, Devin, Banite, in general Middle Rhodope, and the tourist environment in them. The area has been visited multiple times in the period 2020-2023, collecting information from local sources, walking and describing popular routes, collecting data on the state of tourism and related space according to 271 representatives of tourists and local representatives of the tourism sector .
- An annual event calendar has been prepared for the events held annually or periodically on the territory of the Middle Rhodopes
- An innovative approach for the region was applied to collect, process and evaluate information on the development of tourism. It is based on both objective facts and the personal impressions of tourists and entrepreneurs from individual aspects of the tourist environment.

The specified contributions can be defined as scientific and applied.

8. Evaluation of the degree of personal participation of the PhD student in the contributions.

It is clear from the information contained in the dissertation, both regarding the data collected and the analysis made and the conclusions and conclusions stated, that the dissertation holder personally conducted the research and analysis and made the contributions indicated.

9. Critical Notes and Questions.

Some questions and notes can be addressed to the PhD student:

- Although rare, there are some omissions and spelling and typographical errors in the dissertation (pages 6, 8, 10, 61, etc.), the second page of the table of contents is missing, etc.
- For some international organizations there are accepted requirements when mentioning them - e.g. FAO instead of OPZON, etc.
- There is a lack of description, characterization and analysis of the forest territories in the studied municipalities - area, types of forests and their characteristics, distribution by ownership, etc.
- No connection is made between the forest areas in the study area and the tourism services offered by the forest owners (eg are there forest cooperatives that offer tourism services)?
- Almost nothing is mentioned about hunting tourism as practiced in forest areas.
- What is the relationship and dependence between the owners/keepers of the forest territories and the entrepreneurs/tour operators offering different types of tourism on these territories in relation to their protection (biodiversity, rare and protected species, collection for personal needs and sales of herbs, mushrooms, use game, etc.).
- When plants and animals are mentioned in the Latin text, after their name, the author who defined them must be written, as is done in Appendix 6.

10. Published articles and citations.

The PhD student has submitted a list of 4 publications, of which two are independent and two are co-authored with the supervisor.

No citations are provided in the reference.

11. Evaluation of the publications on the dissertation work: number, nature of the editions in which they are printed. Reflections in Science - Use and Citation by Other Authors.

The published works were reported at conferences with international participation and were printed in the journal Management and Sustainable Development, published by the Faculty of Business Administration at FU and in scientific collections from an international conference held in Kutaisi and Batumi, Georgia.

The published materials are part of the dissertation, which shows that the research has received publicity both in our country and abroad.

The presented abstract reflects objectively the structure and content of the dissertation work.

CONCLUSION:

Based on the above and the results obtained, synthesized in the presented scientific and applied contributions, summaries, conclusions and recommendations by the PhD student, I consider that the presented dissertation meets the requirements of the Law for the Development of Academic Staff in Republic of Bulgaria and the Rules of the Forestry University for its application, which gives me the reason to rate it **POSITIVELY**.

I take the liberty of proposing to the honourable Scientific Jury to also vote positively and award PhD student Nikolay Alexandrov Tashev the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in: field of higher education 3. "Social, economic and legal sciences", professional direction 3.7. "Administration and management", scientific specialty "Organization and management of production (forestry and forest industry)"

Date: 05.04.2024

Sofia

REVIEWER: 

(Prof. Dr. Nickola Stoyanov)