

REVIEW

ЛЕКОТЕХНИЧЕСКИ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ ФАКУЛТЕТ ПО ГОРСКО СТОПАНСТВО
Регистрационен индекс на дата
PTC-6007/20.08.24

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", the scientific specialty "Organization and management of production" (forestry and forest industry)

Author of the dissertation work: Nikolay Alexandrov Tashev, full-time doctoral student at the Department of "Forest Management and Management" at the Forestry University, Sofia

Topic of the dissertation work: "Possibilities for the development of sustainable tourism in forest areas in the Middle Rhodope Mountains"

Member of the scientific jury: Prof. Dr. Nikolay Karev Karev HTMU - Sofia, area of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field 3.7 "Administration and management", the scientific specialty "Organization and management of production" (in branches), designated as a member of the scientific jury by order No. RD-ZPS-406/28.06 2024 by the Rector of LTU.

1. Brief presentation of the candidate.

Master Nikolay Alexandrov Tashev was born in the city of Saint Petersburg, Leningrad Region, Russian Federation on 09/04/1984.

In the period September 1990 - May 1998, he successively completed elementary and primary education at the General Education School at the Embassy of the Russian Federation in the Republic of Bulgaria. He received his secondary education at the American College in Sofia in May 2003. In the period September 2003 - June 2004, he completed the first course of Forestry at the University of Forestry, and in the period September 2011 - May 2014, he graduated from the OCS "Bachelor", specialty "Alternative Tourism" in the Faculty of "Business Administration" of the same university. He continued his education at the Forestry University, and in the period September 2014 - February 2016, he acquired the Master's degree, majoring in "Economic Management", in the Faculty of "Economic Management". For the results achieved during his studies in the bachelor's and master's degrees, Nikolay Tashev was declared the top of the graduations. During the period 2003 - 2019, the doctoral student worked in the field of tourism.

He was enrolled as a full-time doctoral student in February 2019 at the Department of "Marketing and Alternative Tourism" with the topic: "Possibilities for the development of sustainable tourism in forest areas in the Middle Rhodopes" with scientific supervisor Assoc. Dr. Emil Kichukov - LTU and scientific consultant Prof. Dr. Vladimir Vladimirov from the Institute of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Studies at the BAS. He has been charged with the right to defense since January 2023.

Nikolay Alexandrov Tashev speaks English and Russian, speaks German. Has good computer skills.

2. Actuality of the problem.

The dissertation is dedicated to a problem related to establishing the possibilities for the development of sustainable tourism in forest areas of the

Middle Rhodopes. The analyzes carried out show that the importance of tourism activity is constantly growing. This is confirmed by the data of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), according to which there is an annual increase in the number of tourist visits, income from tourism and employment in the tourism sector. This makes the sector an instrument for realizing economic growth and social development within those places that wish to be perceived as tourist destinations. On the other hand, the research on the developed topic has been little affected in the scientific developments so far. The main part of them are related to geography, and the organizational-economic side of the issue is practically not studied. The search and offering of solutions for assessing the degree of sustainability in the development of the tourist environment in the Middle Rhodopes, the ever-increasing importance of the tourist activity and the lack of scientific developments on the subject of the dissertation determine the relevance of the researched problem in a scientific and scientific-applied sense.

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

The literature review includes 164 literary sources /30 in Cyrillic, 51 in Latin and 83 online titles/ related to the topic of the study. The literature review is thorough and includes issues related to: the historical development of tourism; the differences between sustainable and mass tourism; the standards for defining and recording the protected areas; the regulations defining protected areas in Bulgaria and forest areas; natural territories and the development of tourism in the world; sustainable tourism and documents regarding its development; models of sustainable tourism and the prerequisites for their construction; national strategies and legal frameworks for tourism development. Based on the performed literature review, where a critical analysis of the state and problems in the researched field was made, in which the results of other authors are cited and discussed, it can be concluded that the doctoral student is familiar with the scientific developments and achievements in the field that explores and can creatively interpret literary material for the benefit of dissertation development. The degree of knowledge of the state of the problem is also confirmed by the photographs of eco-paths in the Middle Rhodopes presented in the dissertation, the author's personal archive.

4. Purpose, tasks, hypotheses and research methods. Compliance of chosen methodology of research with the aim and tasks of the dissertation work.

The purpose of the dissertation is clearly stated. It requires establishing and evaluating the organizational forms of alternative tourism in the forest territories of the Middle Rhodopes, which lead to the sustainable development of tourism in the region.

For the fulfillment of the goal, five tasks were set and solved, which outline the directions of the doctoral student's research. These include:

1. Establishing the essence of sustainable tourism and researching the forms suitable for practice in natural and forest areas;
2. Summarizing the main methods for analyzing sustainability in different organizational forms of tourism;
3. Development of an adapted methodology for assessing the sustainability of various forms of tourism in the Middle Rhodopes according to the ratio of demand and supply in the field of tourism in the considered region;
4. Assessing sustainability and determining guidelines for its improvement in various forms of alternative tourism in the Middle Rhodopes;

5 Evaluating the economic contribution of the selected organizational forms of tourist supply.

The object of research has been successfully selected. These are the territories of the municipalities - Smolyan, Chepelare, Asenovgrad, Borino, Devin and Banite, collectively called Middle Rhodopes.

The subject of the study - the organizational forms of alternative tourism in forest areas in the Middle Rhodope region is significant from a social and economic point of view.

The working hypothesis is based on the statement that following the requirements for "sustainability" in the area, more and more diverse forms of sustainable alternative tourism can be developed, as well as their combinations, especially those suitable for practice in forest areas and in accordance with the resources and the specifics of the region, which will lead to the resolution of important socio-economic problems and increase the tourist popularity and attractiveness of the region.

The realization of the set goal and the fulfillment of the tasks in the dissertation work was achieved with traditional approaches and methods suitable for the conduct of the research. The innovative methodical approach used, developed by the author, for collecting, processing and evaluating information on the development of tourism in the considered area makes it possible to assess the state of the tourist environment, to establish the possibilities for the development of sustainable tourism in forest areas in the Middle Rhodopes and to make recommendations to improve and stabilize the sustainable development of tourism and the related environment in the area under consideration. The application of the used research approaches was carried out in a combination of the methods of analysis and synthesis, graphical and tabular methods, methods of inquiry and observation, methods of expert evaluations, method of survey studies, SWOT analysis.

5. Visualization and presentation of the obtained results.

The presented dissertation work is well illustrated with 38 tables, 34 figures, 14 photographs designated as figures and 9 photographs that are not numbered and designated in the text of the dissertation. The list of abbreviations used at the end of the dissertation and the six appendices including: a calendar of annual events in the Middle Rhodopes also help to provide a good overview. two surveys, respectively, to survey the opinion of tourists and representatives of the tourism sector; table with the results of the "Tourists" surveys; table with survey results "Entrepreneurs" and a list of 50 species of angiosperms that are most often the object of specialized visits (botanical tourism) in the Middle Rhodope region.

The graphic, tabular and photographic presentation of the results in chapter three is done in an appropriate way to visualize and comment on the investigated factors and indicators. The way in which the analyzes of the results of the surveys among entrepreneurs and among tourists are presented facilitate the perception of the analyzed information. I believe that the transparency of the presented and obtained results is completely sufficient.

6. Discussion of results and used literature.

The dissertation was developed on 216 pages. The main text is 202 pages including an introduction, exposition and conclusion. The rest include a list of references, abbreviations used, and appendices. The exposition is structured in three chapters. The first chapter is theoretically oriented. It analyzes and

systematizes information from various literary sources about the essence of sustainable tourism and the possibilities for the development and practice of tourism in natural and forest areas. In the second chapter, on the basis of summarized information from various authors, the scientific approaches for defining the concept of "sustainable development of tourism" are presented - in connection with the peculiarities of territorial development and the possibilities for modeling the sustainable development of nature-oriented and ecological tourism. The methodical approach of the experimental research used by the author is also presented - Own research model, based on a territorial survey. The proposed model aims to collect up-to-date information on questions related to the three pillars of sustainable development - economic benefits, social aspects of the tourist environment and interaction with nature and the environment. The third chapter of the dissertation is of an appended nature. In it, on the basis of the information received, an analysis of the situation was carried out and the possibilities for sustainable tourism in the forest territories of the Middle Rhodopes were considered. The national strategies and current plans in the field of tourism are described, the existing legislative framework of the country providing the political conditions for the development of tourism, as well as the parties interested in the development of tourism at the various levels of territorial division of the country. The existing eco-paths by municipality are presented with detailed information about each one. In this chapter, an in-depth analysis of the results obtained from the questionnaire survey conducted among entrepreneurs and tourists is made. The results obtained from the same and similar questions for the two surveyed groups about the state of the tourist environment and its visitors in the Middle Rhodopes were compared. The degree of sustainability of tourism forms in the Middle Rhodopes, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the tourism environment in terms of the sustainability of its development, has been determined.

Based on the collected information and its analysis, six well-formulated recommendations are proposed for maintaining and increasing the level of sustainability, the rate of development of the tourist environment and the individual forms of alternative tourism in the Middle Rhodopes.

The literature used includes 216 sources related to the topic of the dissertation work. They are correctly cited in the text of the dissertation and show the author's good knowledge of the topic being developed.

7. Contributions of the dissertation work.

Acquainting yourself with the dissertation work allows you to judge that the previously set goal of the research has been achieved and the set tasks have been solved. As a result, contributions were formulated:

- Six municipalities were studied - Asenovgrad, Chepelare, Smolyan, Borino, Devin, Banite, in general Middle Rhodopes, 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 compiled 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. They are related to enrichment and concretization of existing scientific knowledge and application of a specific approach to solving a problem with formulated conclusions and recommendations for practice.

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

The listed contributions are the personal work of the doctoral student. My assessment is that the doctoral student personally participates in the preparation of the literature review, the development of the methodological approach for gathering information, the processing and analysis of the obtained results and the formulation of the conclusions, recommendations and contributions.

9. Critical notes and questions.

I have no significant critical comments on the developed dissertation work.

In my opinion, in order to achieve uniformity in the development of the dissertation work, it is good that the figures /photos/ from pages 45 to 47 are numbered and labeled in the text of the dissertation, as the figures /photos/ in chapter three are numbered and labeled. In order to gain a better idea of the contents of the individual points, it would have been good to include the sub-points from 3.1.3.1 to 3.1.3.7 of the third chapter in the content of the dissertation work. For better readability, it is good to look for the possibility to put table 3.23 on one sheet. These are recommendations that the author could take into account in his future work.

I have the following question for the doctoral student: Why does the Rhodope Mountains attract tourists and what is the reason for choosing the Middle Rhodope region as the object of research?

10. Published articles and citations.

Four publications are presented on the topic of the dissertation. Two co-authored with the supervisor and two independent.

No citations are provided in the attached reference.

11. Evaluation of the publications on the dissertation work: number, pattern of the editions in which they are printed. Reflections in science - use and citation by other authors.

The publications were reported at conferences with international participation and were printed in the Journal of Management and Sustainable Development and in scientific proceedings of an international conference held in Kutaisi and Batumi, Georgia. They reflect main parts of the content of the dissertation work and the results achieved during its development.

The presented abstract has a total volume of 40 pages. It contains a brief summary of the dissertation work by chapter, a reference to the contributions of the dissertation work and the list of publications of the doctoral student related to the developed topic are attached. My overall assessment of the presented abstract is that it objectively reflects the structure and content of the dissertation work.

CONCLUSION:

Based on the various research methods learned and applied by the doctoral

student, the correctly performed experiments, the generalizations and conclusions made, I believe that the presented dissertation meets the requirements of the ŽRASRB and the Rules of the Forestry University for its application, which gives me the reason to evaluate it **POSITIVELI**.

I take the liberty of proposing to the honorable Scientific Jury to also vote positively and award Nikolay Aleksandrov Tashev the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the scientific specialty "Organization and Management of Production" (forestry and forest industry).

Date: 20. 08 2024

Sofia

Reviewer:

(Prof. Dr. Nikolay Karev)