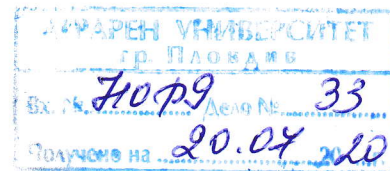


REVIEW



of dissertation for obtaining a doctorate degree in: higher education field: 3. Social, business and legal sciences, professional field: 3.8 Economics, scientific field: Organization and management (agriculture and sub-sectors).

Author of the dissertation: Meriton Naim Ismaili – extramural PhD student at the Department of Management and Marketing at the Agricultural University, Plovdiv.

Theme of the dissertation: "Rural Tourism Marketing Management in Kosovo".

Dissertation reviewer: Prof. Asen Ivanov Konarev PhD in Economics, University of Food Technology - Plovdiv, higher education field: 3. Social, business and legal sciences, professional field: 3.8 Economics, scientific field: Economics and Management (by branches), appointed for a Member of the Scientific Jury with Order No. ПД-16-265 / 05.03.2020 of the Rector of the Agricultural University - Plovdiv.

1. Brief introduction of the applicant

Meriton Naim Ismaili was born on 14th May, 1992 in Shtime (Kosovo), where he completed his primary education at "Emin Duraku" School. He then completed his secondary education at "Naim Frashëri" High school in his hometown.

He has been awarded a bachelor's degree in technology at AAB College. He has a master's degree in two specialties:

- first master's degree in Management and Technology, awarded at AAB College;
- second master's degree in public administration at Haxhi Zeka University.

He has two brothers and two sisters.

He has versatile interests by reading literature about business, anthropology, physics, history and etc.

He expands his professional training, actively focusing on the development of the educational system. He shows an active civil position, participating in many formal and informal associations and organizations for work with youth.

He speaks two languages: Albanian and English. He masters the following computer programs: Microsoft Office, Word, Excel, Power Point. He has worked as a lecturer and currently works for the Post and Telecom of Kosovo.

2. Relevance of the problem

The problem of rural tourism marketing management is of growing relevance and significance, especially after the Covid-19 pandemic, which hit alternative tourism the most. Mass tourism and large tourist places will be much easier to adapt to the specific requirements of the market, but in small places, including those for rural tourism, are needed national and municipal support, exemption from certain local taxes and investment activity programs.

In general, I highly appreciate all developments for marketing of alternative types of tourism, due to the complexity of the issue, the specifics of marketing tools and the insufficient number of empirical studies. In this regard, I believe that the topic of this dissertation is highly relevant and important.

3. Purpose, tasks, hypotheses and research methods.

The main goal of the dissertation is classified into the following three elements:

- presentation of the problems and trends in the management of rural tourism marketing in Kosovo;
- determining the overall level of investment in this area so far;
- revealing the necessity for new investments in rural tourism in Kosovo;

I believe that the goal could have been better defined in terms of marketing and investment.

The main goal is relatively well specified into four goals, which are consistently presented in the dissertation.

The main hypothesis is well formulated, and then the hypotheses and research questions are logically well defined and arranged.

Different methods have been used for the development of the dissertation, the main of which for the empirical research is the method of the survey.

4. Visualization and presentation of the results obtained

The dissertation is well-illustrated. It is presented on 205 pages, including 190 pages of presentation, 27 tables, 19 figures and 30 photos.

Some figures and tables could be better structured and named. My main recommendation in this part is that the separate table (figure) should be indicated whether it is an author's product, adaptation or borrowing from another author.

Due to the limitations in the volume, the abstract is significantly inferior to the dissertation on the criterion of "visualization and presentation of results".

5. Discussion of the results and the literature used.

The volume of the dissertation is relatively large and exceeds the optimal for the professional field 120-150 pages. The main elements are harmoniously combined: text, table, figure, photo.

Structurally, the dissertation is well designed in the style:

- theory and methodology;
- methodology and research;
- analysis and proposals;

The first chapter defines important concepts such as:

- marketing as a process;
- marketing as a function;
- tourism as an activity;
- rural tourism as a type of tourism;
- the impact of tourism on the economy;
- direct marketing;
- the essence of the strategy;
- marketing strategies, etc.

In this part of the dissertation Meriton Ismaili very well presents the strategic management process, strategic alternatives, variables of marketing strategies and etc.

As I pointed out, the second chapter is devoted to methodology and research. In this chapter are very well presented:

- the objectives of the study;

- the tasks of the study;
- the method of selection;
- the data collection procedure;
- the tools used;
- strategic analysis.

The doctoral student included 210 people from rural municipalities in Kosovo in the study. The geography of the study is indicated. The data on the ten research questions are presented correctly.

The concluding part of the second chapter identifies the regions and municipalities with the greatest potential for rural tourism development. The doctoral student reveals and forms a set of five marketing methods for a stable marketing concept.

In the third chapter, Meriton Ismaili makes a relatively in-depth analysis of the results of the study. On this basis, he convincingly proves the need to create a strategic document for the organization and financing of marketing campaigns by the Government of the Republic of Kosovo and municipalities with potential for tourism development. The recommendations for the need for a national advertising campaign for mountain tourism in Kosovo, including rural tourism, are well-founded.

In this part of the dissertation the doctoral student correctly concretizes some of his statements about:

- the role of marketing;
- strategic planning;
- marketing goals;
- marketing strategies;
- corporate strategies;
- the impact of marketing on the development of mountain and in particular, rural tourism;
- the importance of anthropogenic factors for the development of tourism;
- the factors for the development of rural tourism;
- the infrastructure of rural tourism;
- the reverse influence of rural tourism on anthropogenic factors (some repetitions on pages 32-33 of the Abstract are allowed);
- the interrelationship between agricultural tourism and rural tourism.

In the final part, the doctoral student synthesizes the most important aspects of his research.

The used literature is presented in 151 sources, 14 of them are internet sources. In quantitative terms, the literature is quite sufficient for the development of a good dissertation. It is allowed to mix the literary sources in Latin and Cyrillic, including those with transliteration. In my opinion, the citation and presentation of the literature could have been better specified.

6. Dissertation contributions.

I accept the report on the contributions to the dissertation, considering that they are relatively modestly summarized in four main positions. I allow myself to distinguish them as follows:

Scientific contributions:

- the defined basic concepts and processes of the marketing approach in rural tourism;

Scientific and applied contributions:

- the identified risk factors in the development of the tourist product in the rural municipalities;
- the revealed and analyzed benefits and costs for the rural municipalities from the development of the rural tourism;
- the developed strategic framework for rural tourism management in the Republic of Kosovo.

7. Critical notes and questions

I objectively assess the difficulties that arise in the management of foreign doctoral students. I noted some critical remarks in the review itself, and here I recommend a better translation of the Abstract.

I have the following questions for the doctoral student:

1. What impact has the Covid-19 pandemic had on rural tourism in Kosovo?
2. Is it possible for the government and municipalities to stimulate the development of rural tourism in Kosovo by changing some national and local (municipal) taxes and fees.

8. Published articles and citations

A list of 5 publications on the dissertation is presented, which in quantitative terms meet the requirements of the Regulations of the Agricultural University of Plovdiv. They are distributed as follows:

- independent - 3 pieces
- in co-authorship - 2 pieces

In the collective publications the doctoral student is a leading author.

No reference is provided for the cited.

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

Conclusion

Based on the various research methods and the applied by the doctoral student, the correctly performed experiments, the summaries made and the conclusions drawn, I believe that the presented dissertation corresponds to the Act for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations of the Agrarian University for its proposal, which gives me a reason to rate it POSITIVE.

I also allow to propose to the Honorable Jury to vote positively and award Meriton Naim Ismaili the educational-qualification degree PhD in Organization and Management (Agriculture and subsectors).

22.06.2020
The city of Plovdiv

The review was prepared by:
Prof A. Konarev, PhD in Economics