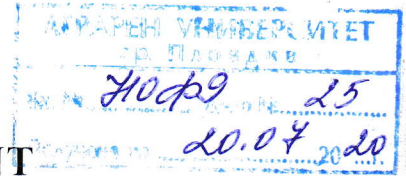


SCIENTIFIC STATEMENT



on a dissertation for obtaining the "**DOCTORATE DEGREE**" in Higher Education 3.0. Social, business and legal sciences, Professional Field 3.8. Economics Scientific Specialty - "Organization and management (agriculture and sub-sectors)"

Author of the dissertation: Vladan (Dusan) Cogoljevic

Part time PhD student at the Department of Management and Marketing at the Agricultural University, Plovdiv

Thesis topic: The impact of personal selling strategy on the development of Serbian agriculture and food industry

Reviewer: Assoc.Prof. Dr Keranka Nedeva,

Agricultural University, Plovdiv, 3.0. Social, business and legal sciences, Professional Field 3.8. Economics Scientific Specialty - "Organization and management, appointed as a member of the scientific jury by order No RD-16-462/11.06.2020 from Rector of the AU-Plovdiv

1. The relevance of the topic under the consideration

Predictions of annual growth in world consumption of agricultural and food products by 2050 indicate that it could be around 1.1%. The main factors that generate growth in demand for agricultural and food products are population growth as well as average income growth, especially in developing countries. Although global population growth is projected to slow, the trend of rapid population growth is expected to continue in some parts of the world, especially in the African continent where they have not yet had adequate nutrition, and the scarcity of available resources for agricultural production (land, water) is becoming more and more pronounced than before. It is estimated that, globally, food products account for 10% of total US \$ 5,000 billion in consumption, and that approximately 40% of the total number of employees are engaged in their realization. The latest environmental studies indicate that the food and agriculture sectors also have a significant impact on the environment (especially in terms of greenhouse gas emissions).

In such a situation, the matter of production in the agriculture and food (human nutrition) sectors comes to the fore. Agriculture and the food industry are becoming a relevant factor. Therefore, research in agriculture and the food industry is gaining in importance.

This thesis to shed light on some matters concerning the agriculture and food sectors in the Republic of Serbia from the strategic aspect of personal selling. In this sense, the research starts from the assumption that the personal selling strategy has (or may have) an impact on the improvement of the development of the agriculture and food industry of the Republic of Serbia. In this way, a well-crafted sales strategy becomes a generator of economic progress.

Doctoral thesis research is a meticulous and analytical approach conducted on two economic hierarchical levels – the national macroeconomic level and the strategic level of the business entity. From the national macroeconomic level, the research examines the problems of the economy of the agriculture and food industry within the Republic of Serbia. The strategic level of the business entity examines the sales strategies and marketing mix as well as the contemporary understanding of the use of personal selling as an immanent part of integral marketing communications, including their influence on the development of the said sector. Based on the research presented in this way, the objective of the research can be defined.

The objective of the research within this doctoral thesis could be summarized as follows: to determine, from an economic standpoint, the place, role, scope and importance of the agriculture and food industry in the Serbian economy, to determine, from a strategic standpoint (mission, goals, strategy, tasks), the personal selling of legal entities from the agriculture and food industry

of Serbia, to theoretically and practically investigate what kind of an impact (qualitatively and quantitatively) the personal selling strategy has (or may have) on improving the development of the agriculture and food industry of Serbia.

In this context I believe that the topic chosen addresses important and relevant research questions to clarify the overall economic role the personal selling strategy has on improving the development of the agriculture and food industry of Serbia.

2. Purpose, tasks, hypotheses and methods of research.

The goals, objectives and methods of the study are set out logically and consistently.

Strategic marketing is a modern marketing management approach, which implies a continuous process of market adaptation, and is implemented as an active implementation of the following key marketing activities: analysis of environmental factors, analysis of strengths and weaknesses of companies, planning marketing activities, defining marketing strategies, implementing strategies, and control and review of marketing results, and directing and guiding thereof toward marketing goals or changes in the environment.

The general hypothesis (H_0) of research within this thesis can be determined by the following statement.

Personal selling strategy is a marketing strategy that has a dominant influence on the development of the agriculture and food industry of Serbia, which is reflected in the intensification of economic activities, primarily in the following areas of business of the said industry, namely: increasing sales of agricultural and food products, increasing innovation in the sector, improving business efficiency.

In the realization of this thesis, several different scientific research methods, applied in the social sciences, have been applied, of which the following could be singled out, namely:

The method of theoretical desk top research (desk research),

Empirical research methods, Mathematical statistics methods Logical reasoning methods. The historical method, Methods of analysis, comparative analysis and synthesis, The descriptive method, The analogy method.

3. Visualization and presentation of the obtained results.

The dissertation is located on 168 pages. It is structured in an introduction, a four-chapter exposition, a conclusion, a bibliography and appendices. The dissertation research is illustrated with 13 figures, 55 graphs, 20 tables and 2 appendices. The used figures, schemes and tables present in detail the information gathered from the dissertation research.

The results show that the PhD student has in-depth theoretical background, knowledge and ability for independent scientific research.

4. Discussion of the results and the references.

The content of the thesis is structured into eight sections, which are presented and briefly explained below. The first part, i.e. the Introductory Considerations chapter, points to the relevance of the research, briefly presents the research concept, that is, the research subject, objective, hypotheses (general and special), as well as the methodology of scientific research and the thesis structure or summary. In the second part, that is, in the chapter *Economics of the agriculture and food industry of Serbia*, the economics of agriculture and the food industry in the world is first discussed. Then the focus turns to the economy of the agriculture and food industry in Serbia. In that sense, first comes a brief review of the historical development of agriculture in Serbia, followed by the domain of research, that is, the sector of agriculture and food industry of Serbia, from the standpoint of definition, as well as from the legal, strategic and institutional points of view. Finally, the situation in the agriculture and food industry of Serbia is discussed and

the results of a theoretical (desk-top) study of key economic indicators of the agriculture and food industry of Serbia are presented. In the third part, within the chapter *Sales strategies and marketing mix of companies*, the focus of the research is now on marketing. In this regard, sales strategies are first considered, i.e. the strategy is considered as a phenomenon, and then a special consideration is given to sales strategies. Then, within the marketing mix, the strategies of the business entities indicate the specifics of the marketing communication system and the marketing mix in the function of the sales strategy of the business entities from the said sector. Finally, this chapter points to the direction in which the business entity in the mentioned sector should focus its future marketing and sales efforts. The fourth part, that is, the chapter *Personal selling of companies of the agriculture and food industry of Serbia*, discusses in detail and from various aspects the personal selling of business entities and the way they should communicate with their target customers, as well as modern ways of communication (digital marketing), including ways to promote personal selling. In the fifth part, that is, in the chapter *Empirical research of the impact of personal selling strategy on the development of agriculture and food industry in the Moravica District of the Republic of Serbia*, an impact model is built in order to establish the relationship between personal selling strategy on the one hand and the development of the agriculture and food industry of Serbia on the other hand. In this regard, the design of the empirical research is briefly presented first. After that, the results of the empirical research are presented, including a discussion of the results. Finally, an impact model of the personal selling strategy on the development of the agriculture and food industry of Serbia is built.

In the sixth part, that is, in the *Concluding observations*, the research results are briefly summarized, the author's opinion on whether and to what extent the hypotheses introduced were confirmed is presented, the author's own assessment of the scientific contribution of the thesis is given, as well as possibilities for further research in this field. In the seventh part, that is, in the *Literature* chapter, the references used in the thesis are presented. The eighth part, that is, in the *Appendixes* chapter, presents the original supporting materials derived from the previous research, such as a created empirical research questionnaire and other relevant documents.

The dissertation contains specific results and empirical evidence that objectively demonstrates the effectiveness of using different types of the personal selling strategy has on improving the development of the agriculture and food industry of Serbia.

5. Contributions to the dissertation.

I accept the scientific contributions presented by the doctoral student from which the following may be mentioned:

1. The thesis highlights the importance of agriculture and the food industry in overall economic activities.
2. The thesis presents the results of the realized theoretical (desktop) research regarding the state of the economy of agriculture and food industry in the world, then in the EU, with special reference to the situation in the Republic of Serbia at the end. Regarding the relevant data related to agriculture and the food industry in the Republic of Serbia, it is important to emphasize here that this is a particular problem that the author faced during the collection thereof. While global and EU data are available, relevant data from the Republic of Serbia have not been structured in the same way, and it has therefore taken a great deal of effort to obtain them, as was the case with the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia where special searches on the available database had to be applied.
3. The thesis highlights the sales strategies and marketing mix of business entities. Sales strategies were examined as a phenomenon both from the standpoint of strategy and standpoint of sales strategy. The marketing mix strategy of business entities was examined from the standpoint of specificity of marketing communication system and marketing mix, in function of sales strategy

of business entities from the agriculture and food industry. Particular emphasis was placed on directing the future marketing and sales efforts of companies from the agricultural and food sectors.

4. The thesis sheds light on the Personal selling of business entities of the agriculture and food industry of Serbia from multiple perspectives, namely: the way companies from the sector concerned should interact with their target customers; modern ways of communicating, with special emphasis on digital marketing, as well as; opportunities for personal sales promotion.

5. The thesis implemented an Empirical research on the impact of personal selling strategy on the development of the agriculture and food industry in the Moravica District of the Republic of Serbia, Model of the impact of the personal selling strategy on the development of the agriculture and food industry, made on the basis of the results presented.

On the basis of everything that has been realized within this thesis, future research in this field can be traced: When it comes to future research in this field, adjustments should be made for all variables (questions) within the scores of the Research Questionnaire, where the realized Cronbach's alpha values, according to (WikiCA, 2019), are found to be less than 0.5: Future research in this area should be carried out in several other districts in the Republic of Serbia, and especially for the purpose of comparing data, it would be useful to conduct it within the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, which is highly agricultural oriented, or in one of its administrative districts (North Bačka, Central Banat, North Banat, South Banat, West Bačka, Srem, South Bačka).

6. Critical remarks and questions.

I have no critical remarks on the work of the doctoral student

7. Published articles and citations.

Vladan (Dusan) Cogoljevic has one independent publication and six co-authored, which covers the required minimum for publishing activities for scientific degree Doctor.


The presented materials correspond to the topic of the dissertation research. The presented abstract objectively reflects the structure and content of the dissertation.

CONCLUSION:

Based on the scientific and applied by the doctoral student various methods of research, correctly performed experiments the summaries made and conclusion drawn, I believed that the submitted dissertation work meets the requirements of the Application of the Act for the Development of the Academic Staff the Republic of Bulgaria and the regulation of the agricultural University for its application which gives me a reason to evaluated **POSITIVE**.

I allow myself to propose to the venerable Scientific Jure also vote positively and to award to **Vladan (Dusan) Cogoljevic** the education in scientific degree Doctor in organization and management

Date: 09.07.2020
Plovdiv


.....
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Keranka Nedeva