



## OPINION

on a dissertation submitted for the award of the educational and scientific degree of **Doctor (PhD)** in:

Field of Higher Education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences,  
Professional Field 3.8 Economics,  
Scientific Specialty “Organization and Management”

**Author of the dissertation:** Dean Naskov Kurdov  
full-time doctoral candidate at the Department of Management and Marketing, Agricultural University – Plovdiv

**Title of the dissertation:**  
“Marketing Strategy for Managing the Production and Marketing of Honey”

**Reviewer:** Professor DSc Petar Borisov Borisov  
Agricultural University – Plovdiv, Field of Higher Education 3.0 Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, Professional Field 3.8 Economics, Scientific Specialty “Organization and Management”

Appointed member of the Scientific Jury by Order No. RD-16-478/02.04.2026 issued by the Rector of the Agricultural University.

### 1. Brief Presentation of the Candidate

The doctoral candidate, Dean Naskov Kurdov, holds a Master’s degree in Agricultural Marketing from the Agricultural University – Plovdiv (2021) and a Bachelor’s degree in Agricultural Economics from the same university. His professional experience combines practical involvement in agricultural production, particularly in the production and trade of bee products at Kurdov Group Ltd., with managerial and technological expertise acquired in both agriculture and the IT sector. This interdisciplinary professional background provides a strong practical basis for his scientific research on honey production and marketing management.

### 2. Relevance of the Research Problem

The dissertation topic is highly relevant in both theoretical and applied terms. The Bulgarian honey sector operates in a dynamic and highly competitive market environment shaped by the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union, changing consumer preferences, and increasing international competition. Bulgaria possesses significant competitive advantages in

honey production, yet the sector faces persistent market challenges related to product positioning, pricing, distribution channels, and market penetration. In this context, the development of effective marketing strategies is essential for strengthening the competitiveness and sustainability of honey-producing agricultural enterprises. The author correctly identifies strategic marketing as a key factor influencing the organization, production, and commercialization of honey.

### **3. Aim, Objectives, Hypotheses, and Research Methods**

The aim of the dissertation is clearly defined: to determine the impact of strategic marketing on the management of honey production and commercialization. Six specific research objectives are formulated in logical sequence and correspond directly to the overall aim.

The main thesis—that strategic marketing under contemporary market conditions significantly influences the organization and production of honey and strengthens the market position of honey-producing agricultural enterprises—is well grounded and consistently defended throughout the dissertation.

The research applies appropriate scientific methods, including systems approach, retrospective analysis, situational analysis, comparative analysis, statistical methods, diagnostic analysis, and prognostic analysis. These methods are suitable for the complexity and interdisciplinary character of the research problem.

### **4. Visualization and Presentation of Results**

The dissertation consists of 124 pages, including 120 pages of main text, 13 tables, and 26 figures, which ensure excellent visualization of the analytical results. The structure is logically coherent and includes an introduction, three chapters, conclusion, bibliography, and appendices. The presentation of findings is systematic, well organized, and supported by clear tabular and graphical materials, facilitating the interpretation of the main conclusions.

### **5. Discussion of Results and Literature Used**

The dissertation demonstrates substantial theoretical depth and practical relevance in the discussion of results. In the theoretical part, the author provides a comprehensive analysis of the essence and characteristics of marketing strategy, with particular emphasis on its application in agribusiness and the honey sector. The first chapter successfully integrates classical and modern

theories of strategic marketing, drawing upon recognized scholars such as Philip Kotler and Jean-Jacques Lambin, while also adapting these concepts to the specific characteristics of honey production. The review of literature is conceptually well structured and demonstrates strong familiarity with both general marketing theory and specialized agricultural marketing literature.

Particularly commendable is the way the author contextualizes strategic marketing within the unique economic and biological characteristics of agriculture. The dissertation highlights the specificities of honey as an agricultural product—seasonality, environmental dependency, product authenticity, perishability concerns, and the importance of consumer trust—which makes the theoretical discussion highly relevant and sector-specific. This reflects a mature understanding of the interdisciplinary links between marketing theory, agricultural economics, and production management.

The second chapter provides a thorough empirical analysis of the state of honey production and marketing in South Bulgaria. The candidate identifies major market tendencies, structural weaknesses, and opportunities for development. The analysis of production processes is especially valuable because it combines internal operational factors with external market determinants, including demand trends, pricing pressures, competition, and regulatory constraints. The examination of distribution channels is particularly strong, as it highlights the comparative advantages and disadvantages of direct sales, intermediaries, retail networks, and digital channels.

A notable strength of this chapter is the SWOT analysis of existing honey marketing practices, which provides a clear strategic framework for evaluating the sector. The author successfully identifies strengths such as product authenticity and natural quality, weaknesses such as fragmented production structures, opportunities related to premium and organic market segments, and threats arising from counterfeit honey and market volatility. This analytical approach significantly enhances the practical value of the dissertation.

The third chapter represents the core original contribution of the research, where the author develops a complete marketing strategy model for honey production and commercialization. The proposed strategy is logically derived from the theoretical and empirical findings and includes a well-developed marketing mix model covering product, price, distribution, and promotion strategies. The strategic priorities are clearly articulated and aligned with the realities of Bulgarian honey producers.

Particularly valuable is the inclusion of risk assessment and sustainability evaluation in the proposed strategic model. The author recognizes that honey production is highly vulnerable to climatic, biological, and market risks and incorporates adaptive mechanisms into the strategic framework. This adds considerable applied value to the dissertation and makes the model practically useful for producers and agricultural managers.

The bibliography includes 80 scientific sources, which is a significant strength of the dissertation. The references encompass both classical foundational works and recent contemporary studies in strategic marketing, agricultural economics, and agribusiness management. The literature is relevant, diverse, and well integrated into the argumentation. The extensive use of scholarly sources demonstrates the doctoral candidate's strong academic preparation and ability to synthesize theoretical perspectives into a coherent analytical framework.

Overall, the results are interpreted convincingly and in direct relation to the stated research objectives. The dissertation combines theoretical rigor, empirical depth, and practical applicability, making it a valuable scientific contribution to the field of agricultural marketing and management.

## **6. Contributions of the Dissertation**

The dissertation contains both scientific and applied scientific contributions:

### **Scientific Contributions:**

1. Theoretical systematization of the principal concepts and approaches to strategic marketing in the context of honey production and agribusiness.
2. Development of a methodology for studying the influence of strategic marketing on honey production and commercialization.
3. Formulation of an original conceptual model for marketing strategy adapted to the specifics of honey production.

### **Applied Scientific Contributions:**

1. Identification of major strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in the honey production and marketing sector in South Bulgaria.
2. Development of specific strategic recommendations for improving marketing practices among honey producers.
3. Creation of a practical strategic marketing model applicable to honey-producing agricultural enterprises.

## **7. Critical Remarks and Questions**

Despite its merits, several recommendations may be made to further improve the scientific value of the dissertation. In the empirical section, a more detailed quantitative presentation of the research sample would be beneficial, particularly regarding the exact number of surveyed honey-producing farms, criteria for their selection, and their regional distribution. Such clarification would strengthen the representativeness of the empirical findings.

In some sections, a clearer distinction between literature-based theoretical formulations and the author's own analytical interpretations would make the personal scientific contribution more visible. Additionally, occasional stylistic repetitions and linguistic inaccuracies are observed, which should be editorially refined for greater textual precision and academic polish.

### **Question to the doctoral candidate:**

How can the proposed marketing strategy model be adapted for small-scale family-owned apiaries with limited financial and logistical capacity?

## **8. Published Articles and Citations**

The doctoral candidate has presented publications related to the topic of the dissertation, reflecting the main aspects of the research. The publication activity meets the formal minimum requirements for dissertation defense. No citation data have been provided.

The submitted dissertation abstract accurately reflects the structure and content of the dissertation.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the scientific methods applied by the doctoral candidate, the correctly conducted analyses, and the well-grounded conclusions and generalizations, I consider that the submitted dissertation meets the requirements of the Academic Staff Development Act in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations of the Agricultural University for its implementation, which gives me grounds to evaluate it **POSITIVELY**.

I respectfully propose that the esteemed Scientific Jury also vote positively and award Dean Naskov Kurdov the educational and scientific degree of **Doctor (PhD)** in the scientific specialty “Organization and Management”.

Date: 22.04.2016

Plovdiv

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във връзка с чл.4, т.1 от Регламент (ЕС) 2016/679  
(Общ Регламент относно защитата на данни).