Review

In accordance with the procedure for acquiring the educational and scientific degree "Doctor",

announced in "D. A. Tsenov" Academy of Economics - Svishtov, pursuant to the Rector's Order No. 629 / 27.06.2024

Reviewer: Prof. Dr. Mariya Stankova, with a scientific specialty "Economics and Management of Tourism", member of the Scientific Jury

Author of the dissertation: Galya Koleva Moneva

Dissertation topic: Restaurant menu engineering for revenue management purposes

According to the procedure for acquiring the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" with candidate - doctoral student Galya Koleva Moneva, at the first meeting of the scientific jury, I was assigned to prepare a Review. I was provided with a set of materials in electronic content including: dissertation, Abstract, list with publications, Curriculum Vitae (CV), completed reference for performing minimal national requirements for the educational and scientific degree "Doctor", list of contributions, list of participations in scientific forums.

Galya Koleva Moneva is a part-time doctoral student since 2020 at the Department of "Economics and Tourism Management" at the Academy of Economics "D. A. Tsenov" - Svishtov. As can be seen from the provided CV, she has acquired education in Batchelor and Master degrees on specialties in the field of tourism, but also has extensive professional experience. She is fluent in English, Greek, Spanish and Serbian languages at various levels.

I can definitely draw the conclusion that the candidate has knowledge and competences in relation to the topic on which the structure of the dissertation under consideration is constructed. In this regard, I accept that her work in real tourist practice, under her own brand for consulting restaurants, including the application of strategies of revenue management and menu engineering for the Bulgarian market, is quite important. In addition, I must note that she is also active as a researcher in the period 2020-2024, as evident from the list with her participation in conferences, seminars, round tables, webinars, doctoral research sessions, specialized exhibitions, the total number of which exceeds 20.

I. General presentation of the dissertation:

The dissertation presented by the doctoral student Moneva was elaborated under the scientific supervision of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Petya Ivanova and is dedicated to an important topic for the management of tourism activities. Focused on revenue management in the restaurant industry through the methods of menu engineering, it examines the issues in the specifics of Bulgarian practice in selected establishments. It has been developed in a total volume of 240 pages and is structured in the following main parts: Introduction, Three Chapters: (Chapter One: Theoretical foundations of revenue management and the place of menu engineering in it, Chapter Two: Methodological framework for applying menu engineering in the restaurant business, Chapter Three: Applied aspects of revenue management in the restaurant business), Conclusion, References, Three Appendices and Declaration of originality and authenticity.

The bibliographic references of the work include 158 sources, of which 116 are in Latin and 42 are in Cyrillic. The study is illustrated by 33 figures; there are 23 tables in total.

Chapter one is structured in four paragraphs and traces the development of revenue management theory and attempts to establish the place of menu engineering within it, including the use of specialized restaurant software. The **Second chapter** is also presented in four paragraphs and sets a methodological framework for applying the menu engineering methods and strategies in the restaurant business with special emphasis on constructing a *conceptual model of menu engineering*. Its approbation is the focus of the **Third Chapter**, where the applied aspects of revenue management in the restaurant business are presented, accompanied by specific conclusions and recommendations.

My assessment of the adopted structure is positive, as I consider that the requirement of logical completeness in the individual parts of the thesis has been achieved. Sufficient literature was analyzed, which quantitatively and qualitatively meets the goals of the candidate, showing knowledge of the works of leading foreign and Bulgarian researchers on the issues of revenue management in tourism, optimization and the specifics of the restaurant sector. Citations are correct, according to established standards. The style is good. The doctoral student knows how to express and argue his own positions.

In the dissertation thesis, the author explores menu engineering in the restaurant sector as a means of effective revenue management in tourism. Formulated in this way, the object presupposes the subject of the study as a management optimization process, although it is somewhat more detailed than necessary. Specifically, I mean the clarification that it is about "management operations in the restaurant business by applying the principles of revenue management and the methods of menu engineering." Thus, two duplicate terms in Bulgarian language of "revenue management" are introduced in relation to "menu engineering". Nevertheless, I accept the candidate's idea and consider the object and subject of research formulated in this way to be relevant to the topic.

On my opinion, the stated main goal and research tasks of the dissertation are correctly derived in view of the subject matter. As can be seen from the proposed decomposition in relation to the tasks, the author has bet on a sequence reflecting the individual content aspects, presented as structural elements of the work. As for the research thesis, it is evident from its presentation in the Introduction that it focuses on the development and presentation of a conceptual model for menu engineering, integrating the specifics of the restaurant business and the dynamics of the external environment in the management of restaurant enterprises, with a view to increasing competitiveness.

At the presentation of the statements and reference points for the analysis of the principles of revenue management and the methods of menu engineering, the doctoral student uses acquired knowledge, which he builds on with his own author's contribution. This contribution is clearly visible in the sequence of "steps", which he justifies as the "skeleton"

of the study, directed towards achieving optimization in restaurant management. The combination of applied scientific methods, including interviews, surveys, analyses, case studies, simulation modelling, makes a good impression. It can be assumed that, although quite broad in basis, this combination is an attempt to reflect the complexity in the analysis of restaurant menu engineering and its impact on revenue management, as well as to promote objectivity. As a result, despite the wide scope of the dissertation, the candidate seeks a solution to the tasks by skillfully systematizing and visualizing the results.

II. Evaluation of the form and content of the dissertation

The topic of the dissertation thesis is relevant to a sufficient extent, because it further develops scientific research and experiments in the field of revenue management, as well as supports the researches in connection with the issues of optimization and competitiveness of the restaurant business. The significance of the thesis is determined by the candidate's attempt to contribute to overcoming the insufficient illumination in the scientific literature of the problems of menu engineering in the conditions in which restaurants in Bulgaria work; which is also to some extent a limitation in the elaboration of the thesis. Thus, by exploring theoretical concepts, it offers sustainable solutions to improve operational efficiency and financial results in the restaurant sector. The candidate also specifically focuses its efforts on the Bulgarian practice, confidently expressing the position that the adoption of revenue management and menu engineering strategies for increases the attractiveness of restaurants, respectively for attracting visitors, contributes to the expansion of market share.

In view of the above, I believe that G. Moneva has correctly chosen the process of optimization of management operations in the restaurant business by applying the principles of revenue management and the methods of menu engineering as the subject of her study. It is co-related to the object that is focused on menu engineering. Therefore, it can be concluded that in general, the identified object, subject, goals and tasks, research thesis, set the direction of research efforts and through the applied methodology, confirm the assumptions of the candidate. The doctoral student adds new points to the methodology for the analysis of operations and practices in restaurant establishments, as well as offers his own interpretation on the key aspects for successful implementation of menu engineering in the restaurant enterprise (fig. 2.8, page 112).

As can be seen from the exposition of the text, the author makes an attempt to reflect the innovations in the sector and in relation to the issues he considers. This is evident also from the overall work on the literature review and the statements about the status of the research problem, which shows a sufficiently in-depth study and detailed research work of the doctoral student. Especially, regarding the different menu analysis models in the second paragraph of Chapter Two. At the end of this section (p. 108), the author correctly concludes that more objective menu analysis for revenue management purposes requires "more comprehensive forecasting and analysis models based on a large-scale database." These conclusions are built on the existing theoretical knowledge and practical experience of the development of revenue management and the possibilities of menu engineering to optimize revenue in restaurants. In addition, in relation to the analysis of the state of the problem, the author makes an extensive review of literature sources regarding the necessary features of software products applicable to revenue management (in the restaurant sector). The structural co-subordination of the concepts of revenue management, yield management and revenue management has been studied and traced. Galya Moneva suggests her *own definitions of revenue management*, in the context of strategic management and *menu engineering*, in the direction of strategic planning and revenue optimization. In continuation, she examines the stages of implementing revenue management in restaurant business, systematizing existing models, developing a methodology of empirical research (fig. 2.10, p. 128) and proposing a conceptual model (fig. 2.11, p. 132) (Chapter Two).

This author's conceptual model has been tested in two types of objects operating under different conditions (Chapter three): urban classic restaurant/ classic restaurant next to a mountain hotel. The conclusions and recommendations made after the evaluation of the menu items of the restaurants where the model was tested confirm its effectiveness and applicability.

The generalizations made in the Conclusion further confirm the main thesis of the study. In this part, the importance of software systems for revenue management and menu engineering, discussed above in the text, is once again emphasized. Nevertheless, in this summarizing the research part, the description of the content of the thesis prevails, while the expectations are to highlight the results achieved in view of the set goals and tasks in the Introduction part of the work.

To the dissertation thesis, the author has attached three illustrated applications related to the specifics of the study, as follows: APPENDIX 1: Sample of restaurant sales software; APPENDIX 2: A mathematically developed model for the distribution of menu items by John Nessel; APPENDIX 3: Scorecard for menu items by additional criteria.

As a complete work, **Galya Moneva's dissertation is balanced**, with a certain preponderance of the third chapter as volume, followed by the first; the volume of the second chapter is the smallest. The study is illustrated to a sufficient extent, and **the quality and number of applied illustrative material are satisfactory and correspond to its purpose**. The **volume of the dissertation enables** the author to systematize and present his knowledge in the field of revenue management by using the appropriate scientific tools and approaches.

The **empirical part** of the dissertation work, positioned in Chapter three, is **correctly presented**, so as to achieve the desired effect of implementing the author's model for optimizing operations in 2 restaurant as examples. I accept the candidate's position that in the course of systematizing and analyzing the results, the effectiveness of the model is demonstrated, outlining specific needs in terms of "menus adaptation, scope optimization, technological time management, kitchen stations and serving quality" (p. 42, Abstract).

In the dissertation, there is a conceptual connection of the content, stylistic unity and a relatively good ratio between the different text categories. Despite the predominance of the theoretical and empirical part over the methodological part as a volume by chapters, the text is distinguished by its applied orientation. The scientific apparatus used by the candidate is up-to-date and accurate (with some exceptions), the positions expressed by him are clear and defensible. His aspiration to formulate and propose his own ideas and new definitions of terms and concepts he deals with should be positively evaluated.

In my opinion, the dissertation submitted for review is personal work of Galya Moneva as doctoral student. According to the procedure, a declaration certifying the authorship of the dissertation thesis and its originality is also available. I am sharing the impression that the candidate **has followed the rules of scientific ethics**, used the APA style for writing and citation, as are the general rules in SA "D. A. Tsenov" - Svishtov for bibliographic citation of information sources. I do not find a case of "copy-paste" in his scientific work, when I try to do so and when I search the online resources.

The **Abstract,** submitted according to the procedure of public defence, meets the layout requirements and correctly reflects the main emphasis of the dissertation thesis and its contributions. The results of the Galya Moneva's work have also been popularized through her participation in a total of 5 specialized scientific forums, including 2 doctoral scientific sessions and 3 international scientific conferences. As can be seen from the presented list, 2 studies, 1 article and 2 reports (one of which is co-authored) have been specifically published within the procedure for acquiring the educational and scientific degree "Doctor".

However, without going into detail regarding **the candidate's scientific publications**, the impression is that they are related to the topic of the dissertation and reflect, to varying degrees, the essential research results.

The candidate fulfils the minimal national requirements for the educational and scientific degree "Doctor".

III. Scientific and scientific-applied contributions of the dissertation work

In a separate list signed by the candidate, as well as in the conclusion of the Abstract of the dissertation thesis, 4 main contributions arising from the specifics of the conducted research are presented. It can be assumed that, by their nature and orientation, these are scientific and applied contributions, reasonably stating the author's claims for the results achieved during his studies at the ONS "Doctor".

I believe that the following points could be identified as the main contributions to the candidate's overall creative output:

✓ In-depth analyzes of existing theories and research works in the field of revenue management and menu engineering were carried out;

✓ A systematization of the models for the analysis of the restaurant menu was made, and based on an assessment of their strengths and weaknesses, their degree of applicability in the modern economic environment was highlighted;

✓ A conceptual model for menu engineering, applicable in the Bulgarian restaurant sector, has been developed.

✓ Proposals have been prepared for specific objects in which the author's model for menu engineering has been tested, with a view to optimizing the activity and competitiveness of restaurants.

I believe that the candidate's claims regarding the contribution part of the dissertation are well-founded and defensible. However, among the submitted documents under the procedure, I do not find any data about some kind of recognition of the results achieved in reviews or in the specialized scientific literature. I accept this as an omission that the candidate did not pay attention to, because it is clear from the thesis that there are enough facts to confirm the results achieved by Galya Moneva.

IV. Critical remarks, questions and recommendations on the dissertation

In general, no serious weaknesses can be found in Galya Moneva's dissertation thesis that would reduce its positive quality as research work. However, I would make two recommendations regarding her future as researcher:

✓ in her future research endeavor to refine the terminology she uses, as well as to avoid repetitions. In the dissertation thesis proposed for review, isolated cases of inaccuracy in handling the conceptual and terminological apparatus are found;

✓ to pay attention to her publication activity in specialized periodicals, indexed in international bibliographic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, Google scholar, etc. In this way, she will contribute to the confirmation of some of her conclusions, which may actually have a wider practical response to the tourism industry by increasing exposure and the likelihood that some of the publications will be cited;

The comments made here in no way detract from the candidate's scientific and applied contributions and have the character, above all, of suggestions for Galya Moneva further development as a researcher.

V. Summary conclusion and opinion

Bearing in mind that the dissertation is an independent work of the doctoral student, and meets the requirements of the Law for the development of academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the regulations for its application, as well as the internal requirements of the "D. A. Tsenov" Academy of Economics – Svishtov's rules, as well as the fact that Galya

Koleva Moneva possesses all the qualities, experience and competences to conduct independent scientific research, I suggest to the Honorable members of the Scientific Jury to vote positively and make a decision with which to award the candidate, the educational and scientific degree DOCTOR in Professional Field 3.8 Economics, scientific specialty "Economics and management (tourism).

Date: 22/08/2024   Reviewer: ....
                                              (Prof. Dr. Mariya Stankova)