

**TO THE MEMBERS OF THE SCIENTIFIC JURY  
UNDER THE PROCEDURE FOR ACQUISITION OF  
EDUCATIONAL AND SCIENTIFIC "PhD" DEGREE  
IN DOCTORAL PROGRAM "ECONOMICS AND MANAGEMENT (COMMERCE)"**

**REVIEW**

**Reviewer:** Prof. Teodora Dimitrova, PhD, Department of Finance and Credit, D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics – Svishtov, scientific specialty "Finance, Money Circulation, Credit and Insurance"

**Author of the dissertation:** Nikola Ilichov Ilchev, part-time doctoral studies, state-funded education, field of higher education: 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field: 3.8. Economics, doctoral program: "Economics and Management (Commerce)"

**Topic of the dissertation:** "BUSINESS MODEL ADAPTATION FOR TRADE OF FOOD AND BEVERAGES IN A DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT"

This review has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the existing Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its implementation and the Regulations for the Development of Academic Staff at the "D. A. Tsenov" Academy of Economics - Svishtov.

**I. General presentation of the dissertation.**

The dissertation is 170 pages long, illustrated with 29 figures and 12 tables. In terms of composition, it consists of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, used and cited literature, and appendices. There is a balanced and logical classical structure. 91 literary sources were used. The author's work has become available to the public through 4 publications on the topic of the dissertation.

**The chosen topic is distinguished by its relevance, significance and dissertation ability.**

**The relevance of the research** is determined by the constantly growing role and importance of the theoretical and practical aspects of business models for food and beverage trade in a digital environment. The dissertation has a clearly defined object, subject, goals and objectives of the scientific research, as well as a formulated dissertation thesis.

**The object of research** are companies that offer food and beverages, respectively in offline and digital environments, with a view to comparing their activities, drawing generalizations and recommendations necessary for adapting a hybrid business model.

**The subject of research** is business models for trading in food and beverages in a digital environment and the possibility of their implementation in an enterprise developing traditional trade.

**The main goal of the dissertation** is to adapt a hybrid business model of offline activity, parallel to functioning in a digital environment, based on theoretical and empirical interpretation of the features, factors, practices and processes of online food and beverage trade.

To achieve the main goal, the following tasks have been formulated:

First. Outlining the theoretical foundations of the online market and food and beverage.

Second. Presentation of the methodological basis of existing business models for food and beverage trade.

Third. Comparative analysis of the features of online and offline commercial activity and adaptation of a hybrid business model for food and beverage trade.

Fourth. Empirical testing of the business model for food and beverage trade and identification of recommendations for improving core processes.

**The main research thesis** that the author defends in the dissertation is that the transformation of a certain business model for offline food and beverage trade requires restructuring of core processes in order to move in parallel to a digital environment, which can improve interaction with customers and lead to increased customer satisfaction.

**Research methods were chosen** for the dissertation: logical and retrospective analysis of literary sources for the theoretical characterization of the issue; synthesis of primary and secondary data on the selected object of study in order to identify trade models; comparative analysis of existing business models for trade in food and beverages; survey research, through which current quantitative knowledge about the attitudes, preferences and satisfaction of consumers regarding the offers of the research object is accumulated; historical approach; induction and deduction.

In developing this dissertation, some **limitations in the scope of the study were adopted**, as they are tied to certain group boundaries - trade in food and beverages in a digital environment. The main focus of the dissertation work is on the study of an enterprise that sells online, as well as another one that owns offline sites, with a view to adapting a hybrid business model for the implementation of trade in food and beverages. A survey was conducted on consumer satisfaction and attitudes, as well as an analysis of the activities of a business entity, as a result of which an algorithm for adapting the activity in a digital environment is derived.

**The scientific literature used** has been cited correctly. Current Bulgarian and foreign specialized publications have been thoroughly researched and analyzed.

## **II. Assessment of the form and content of the dissertation.**

The research logic and structure of the dissertation are well-established. The dissertation is based on research on scientific works of Bulgarian and foreign researchers in the field of economics and trade management.

In structuring, the doctoral student first of all (in the first chapter) clarifies the theoretical foundations of the study – a basic interpretation of the food and beverage market is presented. An in-depth analysis of the characteristics of buyer behavior when shopping online is carried out. The importance of customer groups in the food and beverage trade is emphasized in terms of consumer preferences. Commercial practices and processes in the food and beverage trade in a digital environment are studied.

Chapter Two has a strongly analytical and research character, due to the accumulation of a large volume of economic information, combined with the author's abilities for its processing and analysis. Emphasis is placed on the methodological basis of business models for food and beverage trade. An analysis of the world experience in online food and beverage trade is made, as well as relevant factors of food and beverage trade in a digital environment. The main characteristics of a business model for food and beverage trade and an option for its adaptation in a digital environment are presented.

Chapter three focuses on the practical aspects of adapting a business model for offline food and beverage trade in a digital environment. The results of the empirical part of the study

of consumer attitudes and satisfaction in online food and beverage trade are presented. A business model for offline food and beverage trade is studied with the author's assessment of its impact on commercial activity. The focus is on the guidelines for adapting the business model for food and beverage trade in a digital environment.

The recommendations formulated in the concluding paragraph give completeness to the thesis, and the summarizing conclusions and statements presenting the author's views at the end of each chapter further emphasize its qualities. In the conclusion of the thesis, the doctoral student systematizes the main generalizations, conclusions and achieved results, which can be considered as scientific contributions - the essence of any study of this type. This, in turn, provides grounds for confirming the research thesis set at the beginning of the thesis.

Following the above research logic, the Abstract is developed in accordance with the main points of the dissertation work, emphasizing the author's contributions. It reflects in a synthesized form the content, the main results and conclusions reached in the research process. It contains all the necessary elements for compiling an abstract for a dissertation work, including substantiation of the relevance of the topic, outlining the object, subject, goal, tasks, research thesis and methodology of the study, presentation of the structure and content of the work, as well as guidelines for future research on the topic of the dissertation, a reference for contributions, a reference for compliance with national requirements, a list of the doctoral student's publications, a declaration of originality of the dissertation work.

Four publications on the topic of the dissertation are presented - proof that key aspects of the research have been made available to the scientific community, including through participation in scientific forums, as well as that the national requirements for a minimum number of points according to the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria have been met. A good impression is also made by the fact that the doctoral student presents the guidelines for future research work on the chosen topic.

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

The dissertation builds on existing and presents new scientific ideas with scientific and practical significance for the economy and management of trade. A careful reading of the dissertation gives reason to highlight the following scientific and scientific-applied contributions:

1. Based on an in-depth review of the scientific literature on the related issues, the author offers a complex systematization of the theoretical aspects in the field of online food and beverage market.

2. After the author's economic analysis and analysis of existing algorithms in specialized theory and practice, the author adapts a business model for food and beverage trade, adapted for an offline retail outlet, parallel to activity in a digital environment, and formulates guidelines for the future development of trade in Bulgaria.

3. As a result of an empirical study through the author's survey, the results of consumer attitude and satisfaction with the trade in food and beverages in a digital environment have been outlined and their specificity has been distinguished based on key indicators.

4. Using the tools of economic analysis, the author validates the research business model, presents his own view of its significance as a prerequisite for efficiency in the field of trade, and formulates specific recommendations for improving processes in food and beverage trade in a digital environment.

#### **IV. Critical notes, questions and recommendations on the dissertation.**

Regarding the dissertation work, including the main presentation and the author's argumentation, I have no significant critical remarks or recommendations.

Questions about the dissertation:

1. Comment on the main risks in adapting food and beverage business models to a digital environment.

#### **V. Summary conclusion and opinion.**

The dissertation submitted for review has the characteristics of a comprehensive, in-depth and completed scientific study on a significant economic problem. I believe that the goal and objectives of the dissertation set out in the introduction have been achieved in the course of the study. The scientific and applied scientific contributions formulated in the conclusion and the results of the practical study conducted can be defined as real achievements of the doctoral student.

For the purposes of making a decision by the Scientific Jury to award the Educational and Scientific Degree "PhD" in the doctoral program "Economics and Management (Commerce)", I give a positive assessment to the dissertation on the topic "BUSINESS MODEL ADAPTATION FOR TRADE OF FOOD AND BEVERAGES IN A DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT " and I propose to the members of the Scientific Jury to award the educational and scientific degree "PhD" (in Economics) to Nikola Ilichov Ilchev.

Date: 06/02/2025

Reviewer: .....  
(Prof. T. Dimitrova, PhD)