

## O P I N I O N

on a dissertation of Doctor's Educational and Scientific Degree in the professional field: 3.8. Economics, Doctoral Program in Economics and Management (Commerce), at Dimitar A. Tsenov Academy of Economics, Svishtov

Prepared the opinion: Assoc. Prof. Dobrin Ganchev Ganchev, PhD, Department of "Social and Economic Sciences", Technical University - Gabrovo, scientific specialty 05.02.18 Economics and Management.

Author of the dissertation: Nikola Ilichov Ilchev, PhD, student in part-time at the Department of Commerce, Doctoral Program Economics and Management (Commerce).

Thesis topic: "**BUSINESS MODEL ADAPTATION FOR TRADE OF FOOD AND BEVERAGES IN A DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT**"

Reason for preparing the opinion: Order № 1304, 11 December of 2024 on the opening of a procedure for public defense of a dissertation and approval of the composition of the scientific jury, as well as a decision of the scientific jury at the first meeting held on 13.12.2024.

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

The scientific work submitted for opinion covers 170 pages. The main content consists of an introduction, an exposition and a conclusion, totalling 158 pages. The rest includes a list of references, appendices and a declaration of originality. The bibliography includes 91 sources, of which 58 are in Latin, 22 are in Cyrillic, and 11 are from the Internet. The presentation includes 29 figures and 12 tables.

The presentation is structured in three chapters, including the theoretical and methodological foundations of the market and models for food and beverage trade, a business model for offline trade.

Structurally, the dissertation meets the accepted and traditional requirements for acquiring the educational and scientific degree of "doctor".

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

**The aim** 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.

Four tasks have been defined for its implementation.

**The relevance** of the study is associated with the dynamic development of the food and beverage trade sector and the influence of digitalization processes in online and offline trade.

**The research thesis** presented by the doctoral student is that the transformation of a certain business model for offline food and beverage trade

requires restructuring of core processes in order to simultaneously move to a digital environment, which can improve interaction with customers and lead to increased customer satisfaction.

Four restrictive conditions have been introduced within the framework of the dissertation work.

**The first chapter** is related to identifying basic concepts, distinguishing between separate categories of e-commerce. The trend of growth in online commerce for the period 2018 - 2023 is presented. It is noted that consumer demand is an important driver that encourages entities to increase innovation activity. Factors leading to its growth have been identified. One of the main ones is the digitalization of the food market. The trend towards a continuous increase in the scale of sales has been noted, regardless of the strength and influence of the factors.

Social media marketing involves the use of various platforms, which ultimately leads to an increase in sales for those entities that participate. An important role is played by various search engines, which, through their algorithms, contribute to the identification and localization of consumer search. The doctoral student emphasizes the advantages of search engines in the individual components of the marketing process. Highlights the role of urbanization in the growth of consumers of processed foods and the growth of Internet users worldwide. Evaluates food products based on their nutritional, biological and energy value. It emphasizes food safety and its logistics, environmental practices, and preferences for healthy products.

The doctoral student explores contemporary technological changes. He considers the need to consider specific factors when adapting a store's business model into an online sales strategy. The doctoral student creates an integrative model of consumer actions and behaviour in online shopping. The importance of digital transformation in the food and beverage trade and the role of modern technologies in this process are emphasized.

**The second chapter** focuses on key factors related to digital commerce. It defines four dimensions of e-service quality. The doctoral student reveals the dependence of the long-term success of online food sales on the customer experience with online shopping. It concludes that existing business models cannot be applied to online shopping. It examines the main elements of a business model in online food and beverage trading. It reveals the leading role of innovation in carrying out business activities by presenting combinations between technologies, business models and market presence.

Explores the main trends in online food and beverage commerce. Notes the impact of technology on consumer habits and lifestyle changes. Examines different models of e-commerce in food and beverage on the global market. He gives examples of specific companies and products that give a "human face" to food trade in a digital environment. The author points out that in our country there are three main business models for online food trade.

The doctoral student performs a comprehensive characterization of the

Bulgarian online commerce company "Conviniance" JSC with the corresponding platform - ebag.bg, based on SWOT analysis. Automation, new technologies and the elimination of queues and schedules allow for faster service satisfaction. He believes that thanks to the Dark Houses layout, the management of orders has been significantly improved. A key factor in the competitiveness of the online food and beverage company is the warehouses with their internal organization and modern equipment. Innovators in the sector combine online and offline trade.

Based on the conclusions and analyses made, the doctoral student develops **an algorithm for creating and implementing a business model** for food trade in a digital environment, **consisting of nine stages**.

**In the third chapter**, the researcher presents a business model for offline food and beverage trade. The chosen object of the study is the chain of stores "Pazzoni Market" Ltd, located in the Ruse region.

The doctoral student analyzes the legal and organizational status of the company, examines the main elements of the business model. Notes the specifics of the model - the company exploits and synchronizes physical and digital channels for the distribution of food and beverages.

Based on basic financial and economic indicators, an analysis of main reporting categories has been carried out, which basically highlight positive trends in the economic status of the company for the ten-year period 2012-2021. A critical element in the activities of any business is revenue generation. It reveals the advantages and disadvantages of adapting the offline model to an online hybrid model. Analyzes the attitudes and satisfaction of consumers in online food and beverage shopping based on a previously developed methodology. Based on a questionnaire, respondents from all over the country were covered on a two-criteria basis, who shop both online and offline in the last two years. The doctoral student identifies the factors that play a decisive role among consumers in online shopping. It is preferable among the younger part of them, while the older part prefers offline shopping. Marks possible options for organizational innovations in the business model.

Presents a graphic model of the main points of support for changing the model of "Pazzoni Market" Ltd, as the adaptation itself can be carried out on the basis of four specific elements. The doctoral student develops three possible scenarios of the business model, with the differences hidden in the relationships with customers and partners. Recommends a hybrid model of adaptation combining offline and online presence.

There are relevant conclusions and summaries at the end of each chapter.

**The conclusion** presents in a synthesized form the trends in the development of the food trade sector, in particular the opportunities for market adaptation and the influence of digitalization processes. The presented **abstract** in a volume of 37 standard pages reflects the structure and content of the developed dissertation work. The abstract is written in Bulgarian and English. Four publications are attached to the abstract of the dissertation. Two of them are articles and two are reports, all of

which were developed independently by the doctoral student. One of them was published abroad. The sources used are correctly cited. The presented declaration gives confidence in the independence of scientific research and the scientific results achieved by the doctoral student.

**The language and style** show a thorough knowledge of the specific terminology in the scientific field studied.

**The approaches and methods** used are appropriate for conducting the study. A combination of logical and retrospective analysis of literary sources (including internet research) for the theoretical characterization of the research problem, synthesis of primary and secondary data on the selected object of study, comparative analysis of existing business models, questionnaire survey, historical approach, induction and deduction were applied.

It is necessary to note the role of the scientific supervisor, Assoc. Prof. Svetoslav Iliychevski, Ph.D., in the implementation of the research project.

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

My familiarization with the dissertation work allows me to assess whether the scientific and applied scientific contributions of the candidate indicated in the abstract correspond to the content and results of the dissertation work. The indicated contributions can be indicated as enrichment and specification of existing scientific knowledge and new methods for solving a specific problem from a scientific and practical point of view.

### **IV. Questions about the dissertation**

1. What is the role of blockchain technology in the food and beverage trade?
2. What are the dynamics of personnel costs of "Pazzoni Market " - Ltd in the offline trade business model?

### **V. Summary assessment of the dissertation work and conclusion**

In conclusion, I believe that the dissertation submitted for defence meets the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its Application and the Regulations for the Application of the Law in D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics.

This gives me reason to give a positive assessment and with conviction to recommend to the esteemed members of the scientific jury that we vote for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the doctoral program "Economics and Management (Commerce)" to doctoral student Nikola Ilichov Ilchev.

03 February 2025  
city of Gabrovo

Prepared the Opinion:

(Associate Professor D. Ganchev, Ph.D)