

OPINION

under the procedure for acquiring the educational and scientific degree "Doctor"
in "D. A. Tsenov" Academy of Economics - Svishtov

Prepared by: Assoc. Prof. Teodora Filipova, PhD, Department of Commercial Business at D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics – Svishtov, scientific specialty “Economics and Management (Trade)”

Author of the dissertation: part-time PhD student Nikola Ilchev Ilchev, d020420200

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

Reason for writing the opinion: Order No. 1304 of December 11, 2024 of the Rector of "D. A. Tsenov" Academy of Economics - Svishtov to open a procedure for public defense and approve the composition of the scientific jury

I. General presentation of the dissertation work

1. Subject. The subject of this study is the business models for food and beverage trade in a digital environment and the possibility of their implementation in an enterprise developing mainly traditional trade. A leading aspiration of all retail companies is to develop strategies that generate competitive advantages oriented towards customers. Innovative e-commerce business models are considered as the main driver of the dynamics of retail trade. The author's interest is focused on the possibilities and options of online business models and the best practices for attracting customers and managing the business in the sector.

2. Volume. The dissertation submitted for review has a total volume of 167 pages of main text, detailed as follows: introduction, three chapters, conclusion, bibliography, list of figures and tables, Declaration of originality and authenticity

3. Structure. The content of the dissertation is presented in 3 chapters, dedicated respectively to: the theoretical interpretation of the online food and beverage market; methodological basis of business models for offline and online trade; practical and applied testing of the adapted algorithm for offline activity in a digital environment. The logic of a traditional scientific research, in the form of a dissertation, is adhered to. Nikola Ilchev rightly sets himself the following frameworks for the doctoral thesis: the concept, the methodology, the empirical, as well as the summary with recommendations and guidelines for improvement.

4. Literature. A list of used and cited literary sources is presented – a total of 91 works in Bulgarian and English. The bibliography testifies to in-depth scientific research activity, good awareness and familiarity with the topic. All studies are narrowly specialized in the field of the issue.

5. Applications. The PhD student has developed three applications that visualize the content and present the questionnaire of the author's study.

II. Assessment of the form and content of the dissertation

A study dedicated to online commerce can be defined as topical in content, distributable in meaning, permanently necessary in terms of time. Today, when digitalization is helping all sectors, the implementation of trade is undoubtedly influenced by adequate business models. The PhD student appropriately justifies the importance of the conducted study for theory and practice, emphasizing digitalization and digital platforms. Modernity offers numerous developments on the topic, but what is valuable in the dissertation work is the focus on a specific sector and the adaptation of a hybrid business model for trade in food and beverages - both in physical objects and electronically. In terms of structure and content, the dissertation research is subordinate to the title.

The introduction of the doctoral thesis outlines the relevance of the research and defines the goal, the thesis defended, the tasks to be implemented, the object and subject of the study. Several limitations are rationally set due to the scope of the study.

The first chapter of the dissertation is dedicated to the theoretical interpretation of the online food and beverage market. The in-depth study of the scientific literature, the discussion with the opinions of other researchers, the author's position on important points of the dissertation's issues, the derivation of his own generalizations and definitions are impressive. From clarifying the main characteristics of consumers and their behavior, good practices in online shopping are reached.

The second chapter of the dissertation is methodological in nature. It covers issues related to existing business models, as well as the adaptation of a hybrid trading algorithm in offline and online environments.

The third chapter of the dissertation is based on a practical and applied study. An information resource on consumer satisfaction in a digital environment was accumulated through a suitably developed questionnaire. For the purposes of practical testing, economic information was used, which was summarized and analyzed by the author in the necessary sections in order to test the proposed model for a retail outlet carrying out traditional trade, in parallel with online sales.

The conclusion of the dissertation presents the main conclusions drawn as a result of the scientific and empirical research conducted.

The proposed manuscript is structured at a very good scientific, stylistic, grammatical and technical level. The volume corresponds to the requirements for this type of research. The tools used are suitable for proving the scientific thesis.

Abstract is 38 pages long, reflecting – general characteristics, structure and content of the dissertation, a brief statement of the achievements in the dissertation, a reference to the contributions in the dissertation, a list of publications on the topic of the dissertation and a declaration of originality and credibility. It presents the main points of the research in a synthesized form, accurately and precisely reflects the text, and contains the most important highlights.

References to other people's opinions are made in the accepted style. I cannot say with complete certainty, but I think that the PhD student did not use "copy-paste". Apart from the texts transmitted verbatim, the rest is scientifically interpreted by Nikola Ilchev.

The publications related to the dissertation work include: 2 independent articles and 2 independent reports, one of which was published abroad. All of them are thematically focused, oriented towards individual aspects of e-commerce in food and beverages.

III. Scientific and applied scientific contributions of the dissertation work

The following more important contributions can be drawn from the dissertation:

- a) *in a theoretical aspect* – discussing the opinions of other authors and highlighting the essential characteristics of the online food and beverage market;
- b) *in a methodological aspect* – an overview of existing business models and adaptation of an algorithm for carrying out offline activities, parallel to a digital environment;
- c) *in a practical and applied aspect* - based on own research, highlights of consumer attitudes and satisfaction have been identified, as a result of which recommendations have been proposed for improving the trade in food and beverages in a digital environment.

IV. Notes and questions on the dissertation

I do not have a specific question for the PhD student. I have one remark regarding the technical layout of the figures from the author's survey: their names are not the same for all of them (in some places the question from the map is indicated, in others - not). This does not belittle the work and research of the PhD student.

V. Summary evaluation of the dissertation work and conclusion

The dissertation is a completed scientific and applied product that meets the requirements for such a type of research. It contains the necessary theoretical, methodological

and practical-applied summaries, analyses and conclusions. The accompanying documents presented supplement the possibility of preparing a statement on the occasion of applying for the educational and scientific degree "Doctor". Considering that the PhD student:

- demonstrates the ability to research, systematize and critically analyze theoretical and empirical information resources;
- presents the author's position on the researched problems;
- successfully handles the methodological tools necessary for scientific research;
- demonstrates creative ambition to explore current, complex and significant problems for contemporary science and practice;

I can conclude that **my overall assessment is positive** and I support with a **"YES"** the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" by **Nikola Ilichov Ilchev** in the professional field 3.8 Economics, Doctoral Program "Economics and Management (Trade)".

Svishtov,
13.02.2025

Prepared the opinion:.....
(Assoc. Prof. **Т. Filipova**, PhD)