

REVIEW

**regarding Sonia Stefanova's dissertation on "Factors for the formation of consumer attitudes when choosing a tourist product"
for awarding the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in higher education 3.
Social, economic, and legal sciences, professional direction 3.2. Psychology (Social Psychology)**

by: Associate Prof. Dr. Krasimira Mineva

The topic of the doctoral dissertation is significant and relevant nationally and internationally with its focus on identifying the factors that influence the formation of consumer attitudes when differentiating consumer behavior patterns and their prognostication. The efforts made by Ph.D. student Stefanova in the search for a model of consumer behavior in the field of tourism are extremely ambitious, with great practical applicability in the sales of tourist products and services, and deserve admiration.

The structure of the dissertation meets the requirements for developing a doctoral dissertation. The work consists of three chapters, an introduction, a conclusion, a bibliography, and appendices in a scope of 290 pages, including 30 pages of appendices. The bibliography is indicated an impressive number of 502 literary sources in Bulgarian, Russian and English, of which 232 are cited in the text, 26 are Internet sources, and another 244 - are used in the development of the dissertation. The results are beautifully illustrated in 70 tables and 15 figures, which makes it easier to perceive the described interrelationships and dependencies.

The theoretical overview is complete, well-systematized, and terminologically precise. It follows a rigorous scientific logic, first describing the basic concepts and theories of social attitude, needs, and behavior; clarifies consumer attitudes and consumer behavior in tourism, as well as the interrelationships between consumer attitudes and behavior, the degree of consistency between attitude and behavior, to reach the identification of the key factors in the personality and social environment for the formation of consumer attitudes. This allows in the second chapter to be created a theoretical research model of consumer behavior.

The first chapter presents the discussion in the scientific literature regarding the definition of the concept of attitude. The retrospective presentation of views on social attitude allows to be revealed the evolution of these views as a result of the formulation of over 100 definitions of the concept. The doctoral student successfully classified the definitions of attitude into two groups by significant signs and came to define her own understanding of social attitudes. The review of definitions is very complete and precise: from the early 20th century views of classics such as Carl G. Jung to current definitions. A significant place is devoted to basic theories in social psychology about attitudes: Daryl Behm's self-perception theory, cognitive dissonance theory, and social judgment theory. Here, Sonia Stefanova introduces and clarifies with impressive ease using scientific definitions and concepts the concepts of "behavior" and "needs". All significant theories of human needs are described very skillfully and with particular competence: from the classical theory of A. Maslow to the modern macro-theory of human motivation by R. Ryan and E. Deci.

The aim and objectives of the empirical study are well defined. The purpose of the research is to derive "connections and regularities proving the strategic role of the factors affecting the attitudes when realizing the intention to choose a tourist product". In the author's research theoretical model of consumer behavior, the following factors influencing the

intention/behavior to purchase a tourist product are identified: motivation, attitudes, subjective norm, and perception of control. Hypotheses are correctly formulated based on the main research question and verified through well-chosen and adequate methods: survey, personality questionnaire (scale for measuring generalized self-efficacy of Schwarzer et al.), and structured interview. The empirical research was carried out with the participation of a sufficient number of respondents: 316 (294 surveyed and 22 interviewed) from five different nationalities, which allows for testing the hypotheses and reaching reliable conclusions.

The presented results confirm the raised hypotheses and outline the complex combination of internal (attitudes, values, etc.) and external factors (influence of family and reference groups, social role, and class) influencing consumer behavior when choosing a tourist product. Socio-demographic factors such as age, family status, gender, and education correlate with the attitudes toward choosing a tourist destination. Another valuable result is the delineation of the dynamics of service consumption decision-making within five phases: awareness of needs; information search; evaluation of alternatives; purchase; purchase evaluation.

The multifaceted processing of the data through various statistical methods such as descriptive, correlation, dispersion, factor, and cluster analysis is also impressive. The limitations of the empirical research are correctly and conscientiously outlined.

The abstract reflects concisely and accurately the structure and content of the dissertation work. Doctoral student Stefanova presents 8 publications on the topic of the dissertation in authoritative scientific journals.

Scientific contributions have a practical-applied nature. An author's methodology for the study of attitudes was created, consisting of an original survey and interview, as well as an adapted scale for measuring self-efficacy. The algorithm for evaluating the influence of tourist product attributes, self-efficacy, and attitudes on consumer behavior is innovative. Target groups differentiated by clustering can be helpful in creating more effective marketing strategies in tourism.

The outlined indisputable scientific merits and contributions of the dissertation work give me the reason to propose to the Honorable Scientific Jury to award Sonia Stefanova the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in psychology.

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