

OPINION

by **Associate Professor Dr. Kirilka Simeonova Tagareva,**

Associate Professor and Head of the Department at the Pedagogical Faculty of

Plovdiv University "Paisiy Hilendarski",

of a dissertation of **Sonya Yordanova Stefanova**

on topic: **"Factors for the formation of consumer attitudes when choosing a tourist product"**

for awarding the educational and scientific degree "doctor" by: field of higher education
3 Social, economic and legal sciences professional direction 3.2. Psychology

Doctoral program Social Psychology

1. General presentation of the procedure and the doctoral student

By order No. UMO 17/3.10.2022 of the Rector of the Burgas Free University, I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury to ensure a procedure for the defense of a dissertation on the topic: "Factors for the formation of consumer attitudes when choosing a tourist product" for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional direction 3.2. Psychology, doctoral program Social Psychology. The author of the dissertation is Sonia Yordanova Stefanova. The scientific supervisor is Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mihail Prodanov from the Burgas Free University.

The dissertation work was discussed at a meeting of the SC in Psychology at the Center for Humanities at Burgas Free University and is directed for public defense.

2. Relevance of the topic

Sonia Stefanova's dissertation is dedicated to human behavior in the field of tourism. The problem is topical in a scientific and scientific-applied sense. Psychological factors that determine consumer behavior in the tourism sector are an important and less developed line in the study of tourism. The study of consumer behavior has practical value for the effective management of activities involving the production and supply of tourism products and services.

3. Knowing the problem

Sonia Stefanova knows the state of the problem and creatively evaluates literary material. The literature review includes 502 sources, of which: 232 are cited; 244 are used and 26 are free to apply resources from the Internet. This shows a serious work of the doctoral student with the existing scientific literature in the subject area of the study.

4. Research methodology

S. Stefanova uses an original author's methodology in her research and this allows her to achieve the set goal and to get an adequate answer to the tasks solved in the dissertation work. Three main methods have been applied – a survey, a personal questionnaire as part of the survey and a structured interview.

The survey includes: 1) questions that aim to establish the preferences and attitudes of tourists, as well as to determine their attitude to the particularities and characteristics of the specific destination; 2) questions through which information is obtained about the socio-demographic status of the respondents; 3) issues related to self-efficacy as a major component for decision-making, realization of a tourist trip and achievement of destination selection goals.

The main tool in the study is the questionnaire based on the generalized self-efficacy scale of Schwarzer et al. (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995), adapted by the PhD student's supervisor (Prodanov, 2021). The structured interview contains 13 questions that partially match the questions from the questionnaire. The interview data was used by the PhD student to support the survey data.

5. Characterization and evaluation of the dissertation work and contributions

The presented dissertation has a volume of 290 pages, of which 237 pages are the main text. The structure includes an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, a list of cited and used literature and appendices.

The first chapter is theoretical and analytical. The essence and conceptual framework of the construct "attitude" is presented, examining major theories of attitudes such as Cognitive Balance Theory (Heider, 1958); Cognitive Dissonance Theory (Festinger, 1962); Social Judgment Theory (Sheriff & Hovland, 1961) and Self-Perception Theory (Behm, 1967). Special attention is paid to the analysis of consumer attitudes and consumer behavior in tourism, the psychological interrelationships between them and the main factors forming consumer attitudes.

The second chapter presents the design of the empirical study. Object, subject, goal, tasks, two hypotheses and four sub-hypotheses in the study are correctly formulated.

In the third chapter, an analysis of the results of the empirical study of attitudes when choosing a tourist product and tourist destination is presented. A descriptive analysis of the data from the questionnaire surveys of tourists from Bulgaria, France, Russia, Great Britain and Germany, correlation and dispersion analysis was carried out. Results of factor and cluster analysis are presented. Summaries and conclusions are made, which are a logical consequence of the obtained results.

Sonia Stefanova claimed six contributions. I believe that they have a place in the presented dissertation work.

6. Evaluation of the publications and personal contribution of the doctoral student

The publications that reflect the results of the dissertation are a total of eight: seven of them are independent and one is co-authored. Four of them are in international scientific conferences, two are from scientific conferences and two are articles in the academic journal "Management and Education". I believe that the formulated contributions and obtained results are a personal merit of the dissertation student.

7. Abstract

The abstract gives a clear idea of the dissertation work. It is made according to the requirements and reflects the main results achieved in the dissertation.

8. Recommendations for future use of dissertation contributions and results

I am impressed by the high quality of the evaluated development. I recommend future study of the problem in the context of the new dimensions of positive psychology.

CONCLUSION

I confidently give my positive assessment of the conducted research and propose to the honorable scientific jury to award the educational and scientific degree 'doctor' to Sonia Yordanova Stefanova in the field of higher education: Social, economic and legal sciences, professional direction Psychology, doctoral program Social Psychology.

21.10.2022г.

Prepared the opinion:

/Ass. Prof. Dr. Kirilka Tagareva/