



**UNIVERSITY OF NATIONAL AND WORLD  
ECONOMY**



**REVIEW**

of dissertation

for acquiring the educational and scientific degree “**Doctor**”,  
according to a procedure, announced by the University of **Economics – Varna**

**1. General information**

**Reviewer: Prof. D.Sc. Tanya Parusheva**

UNWE – Sofia, Department “Economics of Tourism”

Field of Higher Education 3. “Social, Economic and Legal Sciences”

Professional Field 3.8. “Economics”

Scientific Specialty “Economics and Management (Tourism)”

**Reason for writing the review:** Order No. RD 06-147/01.10.2025 of the Rector of the University of Economics - Varna on the appointment of a Scientific Jury and decision of the first meeting of the Scientific Jury, held on 07.10.2025.

**Author of the dissertation: Le Thi Thu Hien** – full-time doctoral student in the Department of “Economics and Organization of Tourism” at the University of Economics – Varna

**Topic of the dissertation:** “Positioning the destination Vietnam on the Bulgarian tourism market”

**Research supervisor: Prof. Dr. Stoyan Petkov Marinov**

**2. Data about the dissertation student**

**Le Hien** graduated from the University of Social Sciences and Humanities – Vietnam National University, Hanoi and obtained a Master’s degree (2014 – 2017). She gains in-depth knowledge and practical skills in the specialty “Tourism and Tourism Services Management”.

**Her professional development** began as a lecturer at Hanoi College of Trade and Tourism, where she taught full-time students (2012 – 2022). She has many years of experience in a corporate environment (2003 to 2012) and 10 years of experience in an educational environment. She has the skills and abilities to well organize all learning, research and professional teaching activities. She speaks Russian.

**Le Hien** has been enrolled in **full-time doctoral studies**, state admission by order No. RD-17-279/13.07.2022 of the Rector of the University of Economics – Varna under the Agreement on Cooperation between the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria and the

Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in the field of higher education 3. “Social, Economic and Legal Sciences”, professional field 3.9. “Tourism”, under the doctoral program “**Economics and Management (Tourism)**” at the Department “Economics and Organization of Tourism” at the University of Economics – Varna, for a period of **3 (three) years**, starting from 01.09.2022 to 01.09.2025.

She completed the work specified in the individual plan. She successfully passed the doctoral exams as follows:

- Internet and office applications in scientific research – Excellent (5.50);
- Management theory – Very good (5.25);
- Methodology and methods of scientific research – Excellent (6.00);
- Tourism markets, prices and conjuncture – Excellent (6.00).

During her studies as a doctoral student, Le Hien was assessed with a **positive grade**. The dissertation was discussed at the Department Council of the Department of “Economics and Organization of Tourism”. She was discharged with the right to defend by order No. RD 17-651/25.09.2025 of the Rector of the University of Economics – Varna, effective from 24.09.2025.

*A procedure for defense before a Scientific Jury has been opened, in accordance with Art. 31, para. 1 and para. 2 of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at the University of Economics – Varna, Section II – Conditions and Procedure for Acquiring the Educational and Scientific Degree “Doctor”.*

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

The dissertation submitted for review by doctoral student **Le Thi Thu Hien**, the abstract and the scientific publications related to it, are the result of **independent scientific research**. **The relevance and significance** of the researched issues are highlighted in a well-argued and convincing manner. It is emphasized that the Bulgarian tourism market is small, but with opportunities for expansion to destinations outside Europe, especially among tourists seeking cultural enrichment, exoticism and authentic experiences. Vietnam, for its part, has a rich cultural heritage, natural diversity and stable tourism infrastructure. The topic is also relevant in view of the sustainable recovery of international tourism after the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to diversify tourist flows.

*The object of research – “a national tourist destination in relation to a national emissive tourist market and specifically the destination Vietnam, in relation to the Bulgarian emissive tourist market” and the subject of research – “the positioning of a tourist destination in an emissive market” are correctly distinguished.*

**The main goal** is clearly and precisely defined: *“to propose a solution for optimizing the attraction and use of the Bulgarian tourist market to Vietnam as a tourist destination”*. The goal was achieved by solving **3 (three) specific research tasks**.

**The research thesis** is appropriately formulated: *“effective market positioning of a tourist destination in a new source market requires in-depth knowledge of consumer attitudes, competitive offering and implementation of tailored marketing strategies”*. **3 working hypotheses** are correctly defined.

**The research toolkit** includes the use of a combined approach of **quantitative and qualitative methods**: *scientific analysis and synthesis, survey research, SWOT analysis, descriptive statistics methods, comparative analysis and expert assessment*.

**The scientific novelty and contributions** are expressed in the theoretical and practical significance of the dissertation work. Emphasis is placed on *the scope, duration and limitations of the study*. The scope of *the content, spatial and temporal scope* are considered. **The main limitations** are related to *the lack of previous scientific and practical-applied research on the issue under consideration*.

**The main problems** in writing the dissertation mainly relate to: *gaps and incompleteness in statistical data, incomplete and inaccurate information about the tourist demand of Bulgarian tourists for the destination Vietnam*. **The information provision** of the study was carried out through a systematic study of *specialized scientific publications by Bulgarian and foreign authors*.

*The dissertation meets the requirements of Art. 27, para. 2 of the Regulations for the Implementation of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.*

#### **4. Assessment of the structure and content of the dissertation**

The dissertation is 213 pages **long**. The main text is illustrated with 7 tables, 11 figures and 37 graphs. **The structure** of the dissertation is based on a well-founded logic, consistency and connection between the problems treated. It consists of an introduction (13 pages), an exposition in three chapters (167 pages), a conclusion (5 pages) and used literature (13 pages). **The bibliography** includes 185 literary sources, of which 11 in Cyrillic, 116 in Latin and 58 specialized Internet sites. 2 appendices have been prepared for the dissertation.

Doctoral student Le Hien is well acquainted with the theses and concepts of established authors on the researched problems, and successfully interprets them. The literary sources are used **conscientiously and correctly**.

**The style** of the dissertation is concise and precise. The text is written in **scientific language**. **The content of the dissertation** testifies that doctoral student Le Hien has carried out in-depth **scientific research** and very good **practical proof** of the author's goals and objectives.

**The introduction** presents the logical framework of the presentation. The need for research into the positioning of the destination Vietnam on the Bulgarian tourist market is justified.

**The first chapter** of the dissertation "**Theoretical foundations of the market positioning of a tourist destination**" examines the essence of a tourist destination. The research interest is focused on the theoretical aspects of market positioning. A special place is devoted to the positioning of a tourist destination.

In **the second chapter** of the dissertation "**Analysis of Vietnam's Positions on the Bulgarian Tourism Market**", a characterization of Vietnam as a tourist destination is presented. The peculiarities of the Bulgarian emissive market are indicated. An assessment of Vietnam's competitive positions on the Bulgarian emissive market is made.

In **the third chapter** of the dissertation "**Guidelines for Improving Vietnam's Market Position on the Bulgarian Tourism Market**" an emphasis is placed on a strategic SWOT analysis of tourism in Vietnam, with a focus on the Bulgarian market (2020-2025). Guidelines for the development of tourism supply in Vietnam are formulated. Target segments of Vietnam on the Bulgarian emissive tourism market are studied. Attention is focused on a strategic marketing mix for positioning Vietnam on the Bulgarian market.

**The conclusion** summarizes the main analyses and conclusions related to the positioning of the destination Vietnam on the Bulgarian tourism market.

The highlighted **scientific and applied scientific results** represent an original contribution to science. They provide grounds for the conclusion that the main goal of the dissertation has been **achieved**. The research tasks set have been **fulfilled**. The research thesis has been **confirmed**. The working hypotheses have been **proven**.

*In terms of structure and content, the dissertation corresponds to the requirements of Art. 34, para. 2 and para. 3 of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at the University of Economics – Varna, Section II – Conditions and Procedure for Acquiring the Educational and Scientific Degree "Doctor".*

#### **4. 1. Evaluation of the abstract of the dissertation work**

The abstract is **29 pages in Bulgarian** and **25 pages in English**. It correctly corresponds to the dissertation work and faithfully presents the researched problems in a synthesized form. **The lexical and stylistic characteristics of the text are well-structured and precise**. It consists of 5 parts, which include: 1). general characteristics of the dissertation work; 2). structure and content of the dissertation work; 3). brief presentation of the dissertation work; 4). reference to the contributions of the dissertation work; 5). list of publications on the topic of the dissertation work.

#### **5. Identification and assessment of scientific and scientific-applied contributions in the dissertation work**

Doctoral student Le Hien has **correctly formulated the contributions** in the dissertation. We assess the presented reference for the contributions as correct and realistically reflecting the achieved results.

In our opinion, the dissertation clearly highlights **scientific and practical contributions**, which can be summarized as follows:

**first** – a theoretical framework for strategic positioning of emerging long-distance destinations in developing emissive markets is systematized;

**second** – a comprehensive analysis of the opportunities and challenges facing the positioning of Vietnam as a tourist destination on the Bulgarian outbound market has been made. The thesis has been argued that Vietnam has a significant, but still insufficiently used potential for the development of bilateral tourist exchange with Bulgaria. Key competitive advantages of Vietnam as a tourist destination have been identified – rich natural and cultural heritage, authentic gastronomy and affordable prices. Structural weaknesses have been identified such as limited awareness among Bulgarian tourists, difficult air accessibility and insufficient tourist infrastructure;

**third** – through a strategic SWOT analysis and marketing recommendations, the study formulates realistic guidelines for entering and sustainable positioning of Vietnam on the Bulgarian tourist market. Recommendations have been made for improving Vietnam's tourist offer to Bulgarian tourists. Possible target market segments of the Vietnam destination on the Bulgarian outbound market have been distinguished. Proposals for a strategic marketing mix for positioning Vietnam as a tourist destination on the Bulgarian outbound tourist market have been formulated. Particular attention is paid to the need for culturally adapted marketing strategies, cross-sectoral cooperation and active diplomacy in support of the national tourism brand.

## 6. **Publications and participation in scientific forums**

Doctoral student Le Hien has **6 scientific publications** directly related to the topic of the dissertation. She has achieved 60 points in the group of indicators "G", as follows:

*Articles and reports published in non-refereed journals with scientific review and in edited collective volumes.*

- **3 scientific articles**, independent, *in English*, indexed in secondary databases;
- **3 scientific reports**, independent, *in English*.

**The reports** have been printed in collections of participation in scientific forums, as follows:

- 1). Jubilee International Scientific and Practical Conference “Trade 5.0 - Digitalization and/or Humanization”, University of Economics – Varna, 2023.
- 2). XIX International Scientific Conference - Economic Growth, Business Prospects, Market Positioning during a Crisis; International Business School, 2024.
- 3). Research and teaching of foreign languages, linguistics and international studies in Vietnam: National Scientific Conference, Hanoi, 2023.

The publications of doctoral student Le Hien are **representative** and ensure sufficient dissemination of the results of the research among the academic community and interested circles in the tourism business.

*The scientific production dedicated to the treated issues **meets the minimum national requirements** for awarding the ESD “Doctor”, according to Art. 2b para. 2 and 3 of the LDASRB and Art. 35, para. 1, item 4 of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at the University of Economics – Varna, Section II – Conditions and Procedure for Acquiring the Educational and Scientific Degree “Doctor”.*

## 7. **Confirmed or unconfirmed plagiarism in the dissertation or abstract**

There is no proven plagiarism in the dissertation and the abstract.

## 8. **Critical notes and recommendations**

Some notes may be made to the dissertation that would improve the overall presentation of the work.

1. The study of the recognition of Vietnam on the Bulgarian emissive market would be more effective if the survey covered not only Bulgarian citizens who have visited the destination, but also those who have not visited the country.

2. The competitive analysis should more clearly highlight the competitive advantages of Vietnam on the Bulgarian emissive market, compared to the mentioned competitors – Thailand, Singapore and Cambodia.

The mentioned notes do not reduce the merits of the study and do not affect the general positive assessment of the dissertation work, as an independent study with indisputable scientific and scientific-applied contributions.

Doctoral student Le Hien recommends offering luxury tourism for Bulgarian tourists in Vietnam and in this regard, it is advisable to indicate not only specific sites (hotels and restaurants), but also specific areas suitable for this type of tourism.

#### 9. **Questions for the dissertation student**

The researched issue raises the following question for worthy defense:

1. Would it be effective to organize a “road show” in Bulgaria for B2B meetings as a communication tool to promote Vietnam on the Bulgarian emissive market?

#### 10. **Conclusion**

I confidently give a **positive assessment** of the dissertation on the topic “Positioning the Destination Vietnam on the Bulgarian Tourist Market”. I confirm that it fully **complies with the requirements** of the Act 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 University of Economics – Varna, Section II – Conditions and Procedure for Acquiring an Educational and Scientific Degree “Doctor”.

The dissertation is a **scientific and applied solution** to a real practical problem of public importance. The doctoral student possesses in-depth theoretical knowledge in the specialty “Tourism” and the ability to conduct independent scientific research.

I propose to the esteemed members of the Scientific Jury to make a **decision “FOR”** the awarding of the **Educational and Scientific Degree “Doctor”** in the field of higher education **3. “Social, Economic and Legal Sciences”**, professional direction **3.9. “Tourism”**, scientific specialty **“Economics and Management (Tourism)”** to **LE THI THU HIEN** – full-time doctoral student in the Department of “Economics and Organization of Tourism” at the Faculty of “Management” at the University of Economics – Varna.

Sofia,  
20.10.2025.

**REVIEWER:**

Заличена информация съгласно  
ЗЗЛД и регламент (ЕС) 2016/ 679

(Prof. D.Sc. Tanya Parusheva)



## РЕЦЕНЗИЯ

Вх. № ФД-1658 / 20.10.2025

подготовлена доктором социальных наук, доцентом Вилияном Крыстевым, назначенный рецензентом Научного жюри в соответствии с приказом № РД-06-147/01.10.2025 ректора Экономического университета Варны по диссертации на соискание ученой степени «кандидата экономических наук» по специальности 3.9 «Туризм» на тему: «Позиционирование дестинации Вьетнама на туристском рынке Болгарии»

### 1. Информация о кандидате

Ле Тхи Тху Хиен родилась в 1981 году, гражданка С.Р. Вьетнам. В 2017 году она получила степень магистра по специальности «Туризм и управление туристскими услугами» во Вьетнамском национальном университете в Ханое, а в 2022 году окончила Ханойский колледж торговли и туризма. В период 2022–2025 гг. она была зачислена в очную докторантуру Экономического университета Варны, а 29 мая 2025 г. приказом ректора (РД 17-651) Экономического университета была освобождена с правом защиты диссертации сроком на пять лет.

### 2. Содержание и структура диссертации

Диссертация включает: введение, три главы, заключение, список литературы и 2 приложения. Последовательность всех частей логически соблюдена; теоретическая формулировка проблемы предшествует и корреспондирует с эмпирическими данными и анализом в диссертационном исследовании.



Глава, посвященная теоретическим основам рыночного позиционирования дестинации, базируется на проверенных определениях и мнениях авторитетных авторов и Всемирной туристской организации. Основное внимание уделяется элементам дестинации, процессу и методам позиционирования.

Вторая глава имеет эмпирико-аналитический характер и посвящена туристскому потенциалу Вьетнама и особенностям Болгарии как эмитентного рынка на поле туризма. Подробно раскрыты туристские ресурсы, экономические и политические предпосылки Вьетнама для позиционирования на болгарском рынке. Характеристика Болгарии касается аспектов истории, демографии, экономики и культуры. Анализ данных подкреплен графическими материалами за последние несколько лет. Объясняется тенденция развития вьетнамского туризма и поведение болгарских потребителей на потенциальном туристском рынке.

Третья глава обладает практический характер и посвящена конкретным предложениям и оперативным механизмам, обосновывающим цель диссертации. Акцент сделан на возможностях цифрового позиционирования Вьетнама на рынке Болгарии, что оправдано на фоне повсеместного потребления туристских услуг через цифровые платформы.

### **3. Оценка структуры и содержания диссертации и автореферата**

По структуре, содержанию и тематическому наполнению диссертация соответствует требованиям, изложенным в ПП ЗРАСРБ. Замечены лишь некоторые неточности в оформлении и написании терминов и географических названий, но, учитывая иностранное происхождение автора диссертации, это вполне оправдано. В аннотации отражаются все



структурные элементы, основной тезис и выводы диссертационного исследования.

#### **4. Критические заметки**

Введение слишком длинное и содержит информацию, не относящуюся к вводной части, например, динамику количества туристов в мире, географические координаты Болгарии и т. д. Что касается некоторых структурных элементов объекта и субъекта, определяемых таким образом, то они нуждаются в уточнении для того, чтобы однозначно соответствовать теме диссертации.

В теоретической части я отмечаю неточности, касающиеся понятий в Таблице 1 (на 23 странице). Определение, данное понятию «туристская зона», не соответствует его сути. Также нет ссылок на источники, которые следует понимать как формулировки диссертанта, но они неверны.

Англоязычные рисунки, а они преобладают в тексте, в болгарской версии диссертации следовало бы перевести на болгарский язык. Однако большинство рисунков на самом деле заимствованы и не являются работой автора. Когда речь идет о диссертации, я считаю, что значительная часть используемых графических материалов должна быть работой самого диссертанта. Это означает, что данные, полученные из абсолютных стоимостей, следует быть обработаны путем выведения коэффициентов, процентов, построения цепных индексов и т. д. В том виде, в каком они представлены в диссертации, их быть не должно.

В географическом описании Вьетнама, в котором говорится о границах, рельефе, климате, типах растительности, 16-м месте по биоразнообразию в мире, 400 термальных источников, охраняемых территорий (всего около 10 страниц текста), не указан ни один источник. Неясно, откуда взялась вся



эта информация. В целом это наблюдается и в характеристиках антропогенных ресурсов, транспортной и инфраструктурой размещения. Географическое описание Болгарии также не содержит ссылок на источники. Подчиненная перечислению данная характеристика также содержит много избыточной информации, не имеющей прямого отношения к особенностям туристского рынка. Например, приветствие людей, объятия, поцелуи, подача еды за столом в первую очередь старшему, снятие шляп, жевание жвачки и т. д. Проведено сравнение численности населения и выездного туризма Болгарии (6,5 млн. чел. : 8,5 млн. поездок), что подчеркивает возможности страны по формированию туристских потоков. Однако следовало бы уточнить, что значительная часть этих исходящих миграций представляет собой трансграничные поездки в соседние страны в течении одного-двух дней, что свидетельствует об относительно слабых возможностях Болгарии по отправлению турпотоков в более отдаленные пункты назначения.

В третьей главе SWOT-анализ слишком расплывчатый и сведен к нескольким страницам, с отсутствием авторского анализа.

## **5. Юридическая и научная часть**

Плагиат в диссертации не обнаружен. В автореферате в сжатом виде излагается суть диссертации и достижения автора. Представленные публикации полностью охватывают количественные требования к данному типу процедур.

Вопрос к диссертанту: на стр. 164 дано предложение по усилению различных форм туризма, в том числе «ночного туризма». Что имеется в виду?



## 6. Заключение

На основании проведенной научно-исследовательской работы и соблюденных правил процедуры защиты даю положительную оценку присуждению ученой степени «кандидата экономических наук» Ле Тхи Тху Хиен по специальности 3.9 Туризм.

г. Варна,

20.10. 2025 г.

Заличена информация съгласно  
ЗЗЛД и регламент (ЕС) 2016/ 679

*В*  
д.с.н., доцент В. Кръстев