S U M M A R I E S

of the scientific works submitted for participation in the competition

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applicant in the competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" (Docent) in the field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, professional field 3.9. Tourism, scientific specialty "Economics and Management of Tourism (Digitalization and Artificial Intelligence in Tourism)", announced by the College of Tourism – Blagoevgrad in the State Gazette, issue 64 of 14 July 2026.

I. MONOGRAPHS

1. Vasenska, Iv. (2022). Digital Applications of Artificial Intelligence in Tourism [in Bulgarian]. "Neofit Rilski" Publishing House, Blagoevgrad. ISBN 978-954-00-0328-3. (habilitation work)

Summary: The monograph examines the possibilities for applying artificial intelligence and machine learning technologies in the tourism sector. The conceptual apparatus of the field is systematized and the main classes of algorithms are distinguished according to the nature of the task being solved – forecasting, classification, segmentation and natural language processing. The specific areas of implementation in tourism practice are traced: demand forecasting, revenue management, personalization of the offering, automated service and analysis of customer reviews. A separate place is given to forecasting inbound tourist flows through deep learning models on time series, where the requirements for the data, the model architecture and the criteria for assessing forecasting accuracy are derived. The economic effects of implementation are analyzed, as well as the limitations and risks related to data quality and organizational readiness. Recommendations are formulated for the tourism business and for the institutions responsible for tourism policy.

2. Vasenska, I. (2018). Strategic and Economic Features of the Attractiveness of the Tourist Destination [in Bulgarian]. "Neofit Rilski" University Publishing House, Blagoevgrad. ISBN 978-954-00-0162-3

Summary: The monograph examines the attractiveness of a tourist destination as a complex economic category and distinguishes it from the related concepts of competitiveness, image and recognizability. The theoretical approaches to its definition and measurement are systematized, and the factors that shape it – resource-related, infrastructural, managerial and perceptual – are derived. A system of indicators for monitoring attractiveness is proposed, applicable to periodic comparative assessments. The empirical part is devoted to the destination Bulgaria, analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of its profile relative to competing destinations. On this basis, strategic guidelines for destination management are formulated.

II. CHAPTERS IN COLLECTIVE MONOGRAPHS AND ENCYCLOPEDIC EDITIONS

1. Vasenska, I. (2022). Deep Machine Learning for Time Series Inbound Tourism Forecasting. In: Encyclopedia of Tourism Management and Marketing, Vol. 1, pp. 803–806. Edward Elgar Publishing. ISBN 978-1-80037-748-6. DOI 10.4337/9781800377486.deep.machine.learning

Summary: The encyclopedia entry presents the application of deep machine learning to forecasting inbound tourist flows through time-series analysis. The essence of the approach

and its differences from classical econometric methods are clarified, the typical network architectures used with tourism data are reviewed, and the requirements for the volume and quality of input information are outlined. The advantages of the approach in dealing with seasonality and nonlinear relationships are indicated, as well as its limitations. The entry serves as a reference text on the topic in one of the leading international encyclopedic publications in the field of tourism.

2. Stankova, M., Vasenska, I., Stoykova, A., Kaleychev, S., & Paskaleva, M. (2020). From Communism to Capitalism: The Transition of Bulgarian Tourism Sector and Contemporary Discourses. In: Tourism Development in Post-Soviet Nations, pp. 31–48. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.

Summary: The chapter analyzes the transition of the Bulgarian tourism sector from a planned to a market economy. The stages of institutional and ownership transformation, the changes in the structure of supply and in the market orientation of the sector, and the consequences of privatization and of the liberalization of travel are traced. The contemporary discourses through which this transition is interpreted in the academic literature and in the public sphere are examined. The institutional factors that determined the development trajectory are derived, and the long-term effects on the competitiveness of the destination are outlined.

3. Vasenska, I., Stoykova, A., & Paskaleva, M. (2020). Smart Analysis of Tourism Policy Efficiency in Bulgaria for the Period 1980–2017. Sciendo. ISBN 978-83-957713-9-2

Summary: The study assesses the effectiveness of Bulgaria's tourism policy in the long term through an analytical toolkit combining quantitative methods and data covering nearly four decades. The stages in the sector's development are periodized and the goals of the policy pursued are compared with the results achieved in terms of tourist flows and revenues. The periods of greatest divergence between declared priorities and actual effects are identified. The results are applicable in substantiating management decisions at the national level.

4. Stankova, M., & Vasenska, I. (2019). Competitiveness Factor Analysis of an Operating Tourist Destination. In: Tourist Destination Management, pp. 257–272. Springer, Cham. DOI 10.1007/978-3-030-16981-7_15

Summary: The chapter proposes and tests a methodology for factor analysis of the competitiveness of an operating tourist destination. The factors that determine the competitive position are systematized, and their grouping by degree of controllability by destination management is substantiated. The methodology is applied to a specific destination, and the factors with the greatest explanatory weight are derived. The approach is applicable to periodic measurement and to comparative analysis between destinations with a similar profile.

5. Vasenska, I. (2017). The liaison between culture, tourism, tourism destination competitiveness, attractiveness and image. In: Fulbright International Summer Institute 2014: Interdisciplinary Doctoral Papers. Avangard Prima, Sofia. ISBN 978-619-160-819-5

Summary: The work builds a theoretical model of the interrelations between culture, tourism, competitiveness, attractiveness and image of the tourist destination. The concepts are distinguished, and the mechanism through which cultural resources are turned into a competitive advantage and reflected in the perceived image of the destination is explained.

The model serves as a conceptual basis for the author's subsequent empirical research on the destination Bulgaria.

6. Stankova, M., Filipova, M., Krasteva, R., Hadzhikotev, V., Kaleychev, S., Vasenska, I., Daleva, A., Dimitrov, D., Daleva, D. (2015). State and Development of World Cultural Tourism and the Potential of the Destination Bulgaria [in Bulgarian]. Electronic edition, Blagoevgrad, 276 pp., of which 46 pp. are the author's own contribution.

Summary: The collective monograph examines the state and trends in the development of world cultural tourism and assesses Bulgaria's potential as a cultural destination. The leading models of organization of cultural tourism, the profile and motivation of consumers, and the role of cultural heritage as a resource for the economic development of regions are reviewed. The author's own contribution (46 pages) focuses on the analysis of the relationship between cultural resources and the attractiveness of the destination, as well as on the assessment of the potential of Bulgarian cultural heritage for forming a competitive tourism product.

III. STUDIES

1. Stankova, M., & Vasenska, I. (2017). Improving destination management effectiveness. Faculty of Economics, University of Niš, Serbia, pp. 135–160. ISBN 978-86-6139-136-1

Summary: The study examines the factors that determine the effectiveness of tourist destination management and proposes a framework for improving it. The role and functions of destination management organizations, the mechanisms of coordination among stakeholders and the sources of managerial inefficiency are analyzed. Criteria for assessing managerial performance are substantiated, and specific guidelines for improving it are formulated, applicable to destinations with a fragmented institutional structure.

IV. ARTICLES AND CONFERENCE PAPERS PUBLISHED IN PUBLICATIONS REFERENCED AND INDEXED IN SCOPUS AND WEB OF SCIENCE

1. Paskaleva, M., & Vasenska, I. (2025). The BTC Price Prediction Paradox Through Methodological Pluralism. Risks, 13(10), 195. DOI 10.3390/risks13100195

Summary: The article examines Bitcoin price forecasting by comparing alternative methodological approaches and formulates the concept of methodological pluralism for working with highly volatile time series. It shows that the individual classes of models produce divergent results depending on the chosen time horizon and the evaluation criterion, which calls into question the practice of searching for a single "best" model. The thesis is substantiated that the simultaneous use of several approaches provides a more reliable basis for interpretation. The conclusions are also applicable to forecasting other volatile economic series.

2. Vasenska, I. (2025). Comparative Analysis of Machine Learning and Deep Learning Models for Tourism Demand Forecasting with Economic Indicators. FinTech, 4(3), 46. DOI 10.3390/fintech4030046

Summary: The study compares the forecasting ability of machine learning and deep learning models in forecasting tourism demand with macroeconomic determinants included. A

comparative research design has been developed that evaluates the models under equal conditions and by uniform accuracy criteria. The results show the effect of including economic indicators as exogenous variables on forecasting accuracy and make it possible to derive the relative importance of the individual indicators. Recommendations are formulated for choosing an approach depending on the available data and the forecasting horizon.

3. Kiryakova-Dineva, T., Vasenska, I., & Koyundzhiyska-Davidkova, B. (2022). Glamping: An Active Back to Nature Trend in the Post-Pandemic Tourism Reality. In: Proceedings of the 5th International Conference on Tourism Research, Porto, pp. 183–190. ISBN 978-1-914587-32-0

Summary: The article examines glamping as a form of tourism consumption that combines a stay in nature with the comfort of organized accommodation. Its spread in the post-pandemic period is traced, and the factors behind the increased demand are derived – the desire for low crowd density, the search for an authentic experience and a changed attitude to risk. The consumer profile and the prerequisites for developing the offering are analyzed. Conclusions are drawn about the opportunities of this segment in destinations with suitable natural resources.

4. Vasenska, I., Dimitrov, P., Koyundzhiyska-Davidkova, B., Krastev, V., Durana, P., & Poulaki, I. (2021). Financial transactions using fintech during the COVID-19 crisis in Bulgaria. Risks, 9(3), 1–28. DOI 10.3390/risks9030048

Summary: The study analyzes the changes in the use of financial-technology solutions in Bulgaria during the crisis caused by COVID-19. Using empirical data, the changes in payment behavior and in preferences for cashless and remote forms of payment are traced. The determinants of the adoption of these solutions are identified, including trust, perceived risk and consumers' technological readiness. It is established that the crisis accelerated processes that under other conditions would have unfolded much more slowly. The publication has the highest resonance among the author's works in referenced publications.

5. Kiryakova-Dineva, T., Vasenska, I., & Koyundzhiyska-Davidkova, B. (2021). New forms of tourism: A matter of neologism formation or a reality in the tourism practice. In: Proceedings of the International Conference on Tourism Research, pp. 279–286. DOI 10.34190/IRT.21.120

Summary: The article raises the question of the extent to which so-called new forms of tourism are real market phenomena and the extent to which they are the result of terminological neologism. A number of concepts established in the literature are analyzed, and the existence of independent content behind them is examined – a distinguishable consumer profile, a specific offering and sustained demand. A criterion for distinguishing between the two categories is proposed. The work brings conceptual clarity to a research field characterized by the rapid accumulation of new terms.

6. Vasenska, I., & Koyundzhiyska-Davidkova, B. (2021). Tourism customer attitudes during the COVID-19 crisis. Springer Proceedings in Business and Economics, pp. 295–309. DOI 10.1007/978-3-030-72469-6_19

Summary: The study traces the changes in the attitudes and behavior of tourism consumers during the crisis caused by COVID-19. Using empirical data, it analyzes willingness to travel, changes in preferences for destinations and types of accommodation, and the importance of perceived safety in decision-making. A typology of consumer reactions to

the crisis is derived. The results are applicable to planning marketing actions in periods of heightened uncertainty.

7. Vasenska, I. (2018). Global creative economic interpretations of the Valley of the Thracian Kings on the example of Starosel, Bulgaria. In: Globalization and Its Socio-Economic Consequences, pp. 1417–1424. 18th International Scientific Conference, Rajecke Teplice, Slovakia. WOS:000681676300181

Summary: The article examines the archaeological heritage of the Valley of the Thracian Kings through the lens of the creative economy. Using the example of Starosel, it analyzes the potential of the heritage to be interpreted and presented in a way that creates economic value without compromising its authenticity. The conditions under which such interpretation leads to the formation of a specialized tourism product are derived, and the risks of excessive commercialization are indicated. Recommendations are formulated for local authorities and site operators.

8. Dimitrov, P. M., Stankova, M. Z., Vasenska, I., & Uzunova, D. (2017). Increasing attractiveness and image recognition of Bulgaria as a tourism destination. Tourism & Management Studies, 13(3), 39–47. WOS:000475290300005

Summary: The article examines the attractiveness and image recognition of Bulgaria as a tourist destination. Using empirical data, the elements that shape the perceived image of the destination among external markets are established, and the discrepancies between the desired and the actually perceived image are identified. A system of indicators for monitoring attractiveness is proposed, and guidelines for targeted action on the image are formulated. The results are applicable to the development of a national marketing strategy.

V. ARTICLES AND CONFERENCE PAPERS PUBLISHED IN NON-REFERENCED PEER-REVIEWED JOURNALS AND IN EDITED COLLECTIVE VOLUMES

1. Vasenska, I. (2024). Economic implications of deep machine learning for tourism time series. Ekonomicko-manazerske spektrum, 18(1), 90–101. DOI 10.26552/ems.2024.1.90-101

Summary: The article analyzes the economic implications of applying deep machine learning to tourism time series. The benefits of increased forecasting accuracy are weighed against the costs of data, computing resources and expertise required to implement such models. The conditions under which the investment is economically justified are derived, as well as the areas of management – capacity planning, pricing and revenue management – in which the effect is most tangible.

2. Vasenska, I. (2024). Deep Machine Learning for Time Series Inbound Tourism Forecasting. 7th International Scientific Conference ITEMA. DOI 10.31410/ITEMA.2023.73

Summary: The paper presents the application of deep learning models to forecasting inbound tourist flows. The process of data preparation and model training is described, and the results are compared with those of classical time-series forecasting approaches. Practical limitations related to the length of the available series and to structural breaks in them are discussed.

3. Vasenska, I. (2021). Tourism 4.0 and Open-Air Museums – an Opportunity for Safe Tourism after COVID-19 [in Bulgarian]. “Cultural Routes of the Balkans: Cultural Tourism, Concepts, Careers”, Madzharovo. ISBN 978-954-452-070-0

Summary: The paper examines the “Tourism 4.0” concept and the potential of open-air museums for organizing safe tourism consumption in post-pandemic conditions. The advantages of open exhibition spaces in terms of dispersing visitors are analyzed, and the digital solutions that complement the experience are outlined – audio guides, augmented reality and contactless services. Recommendations are formulated for adapting open-air museums to the changed expectations of visitors.

4. Vasenska, I., Krastev, V., & Koyundzhiyska-Davidkova, B. (2021). Bibliometric analysis of publications on Corporate Social Responsibility and COVID-19. SHS Web of Conferences, 129, 07007. DOI 10.1051/shsconf/202112907007

Summary: The study applies a bibliometric approach to map the scientific output linking corporate social responsibility with the COVID-19 pandemic. The dynamics of publications, the leading journals, author networks and thematic clusters are analyzed. Research gaps are identified, and promising directions for future research in the field are outlined.

5. Fialova, V., & Vasenska, I. (2020). Implications of the COVID-19 Crisis for the Sharing Economy in Tourism: The Case of Airbnb in the Czech Republic. Ekonomicko-manazerske spektrum, 14(2), 78–89. DOI 10.26552/ems.2020.2.78-89

Summary: The article examines the consequences of the crisis caused by COVID-19 for the sharing economy in tourism, using the example of Airbnb in the Czech Republic. The changes in supply, occupancy and price levels during the period of restrictions are traced, as well as the reorientation of part of the properties to long-term rental. Conclusions are drawn about the vulnerability of this market segment to systemic shocks, applicable also to other markets in Central and Eastern Europe.

6. Vasenska, I. (2020). Measuring Attitudes to Travel in Risky Conditions. Anniversary Scientific Conference “Tourism and Connectivity 2020”, University of Economics – Varna, pp. 204–213. DOI 10.36997/TC2020.204

Summary: The paper proposes a measurement toolkit for assessing attitudes to travel under conditions of heightened risk. The structure of the scale is substantiated, and the components of perceived risk, trust and willingness to travel are operationalized. The instrument has been tested empirically and is applicable to periodic monitoring of consumer behavior in crisis periods.

7. Vasenska, I., Stoykova, A., & Koyundzhiyska-Davidkova, B. (2018). Interpretation Specifics of Santorini's Intangible Cultural Heritage. International Scientific Conference „The Cultural Corridors of South-Eastern Europe: Cultural Tourism without Boundaries“, Conference Proceedings, pp. 109–125. ISBN 978-954-00-0176-0

Summary: The article examines approaches to the interpretation of intangible cultural heritage in building a tourism product, using the example of Santorini. The ways in which local traditions, crafts and customs are presented to visitors are analyzed, and an assessment is made of the extent to which this interpretation preserves its authenticity under high tourist pressure. Interpretive principles are derived that are also applicable to other destinations with intensive tourist load.

8. Stankova, M., Vasenska, I., Stoitsova, A., Dimitrov, M., & Aleksandrova, E. (2018). Security and sustainability in tourism through adaptive schemes. 10th World Conference for Graduate

Research in Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure, Avanos, Turkey, Proceedings Book, p. 94. ISBN 978-605-68389-3-4

Summary: The paper examines the tension between security and sustainability requirements in the management of tourist destinations and proposes adaptive schemes for reconciling them. It is argued that security measures can be designed so that they do not conflict with sustainable development, provided that they take into account the scale and profile of the destination.

9. Stankova, M., Vasenska, I., & Uzunova, D. (2017). The initiative „European Capitals of Culture“ – challenges and perspectives ahead destination Bulgaria. Proceedings Book, p. 279. ISBN 978-954-07-4327-1

Summary: The article analyzes the opportunities and challenges facing Bulgarian cities within the “European Capital of Culture” initiative. The effects of the initiative on tourist flows, cultural infrastructure and the image of the destination in the experience of other European cities are examined. Conclusions are drawn about the conditions under which such events lead to long-term, and not only short-term, effects.

10. Stankova, M., & Vassenska, I. (2017). Tourist destination Bulgaria attractiveness analysis. International Conference Proceedings “Bulgaria and Romania – countries members of the EU, part of the global economy”, Institute of Economic Research at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. ISBN 978-954-9313-08-6

Summary: The study offers a comparative analysis of the attractiveness of the destination Bulgaria. A system of indicators is applied to assess the country’s relative position against competing destinations in the region. The factors limiting attractiveness are identified, and priority areas for action are proposed.

11. Stankova, M., & Vassenska, I. (2017). Theory and practice of management under threats in tourism. Marketing and Branding Research, 4(3), 217. DOI 10.19237/MBR.2017.03.01

Summary: The article systematizes the theoretical approaches to managing tourist destinations under conditions of threats and compares them with the observed management practice. The types of threats are classified by origin and duration of impact, and the requirements for the management response to each of them are derived. The discrepancies between the theoretical recommendations and the actual behavior of the governing structures are established.

12. Vasenska, I. (2016). Tourism destination attractiveness: The case of Bulgaria. International Scientific Conference “Cultural Corridor Western Trans-Balkan Road – Cultural Tourism without Boundaries”, Meteora – Lefkada (Greece). ISBN 978-954-300-158-3

Summary: The paper presents an empirical assessment of the attractiveness of the destination Bulgaria. The components of attractiveness are operationalized and a measurement approach is applied, through which the strengths and weaknesses of the destination profile are derived. The results serve as a basis for formulating guidelines for increasing attractiveness.

13. Stankova, M., & Vassenska, I. (2015). Raising cultural awareness of local traditions through festival tourism. Tourism & Management Studies, 11(1), 120–127.

Summary: The article examines festival tourism as a tool for raising awareness and strengthening the viability of local traditions. Using empirical data, the impact of festival

events on the local community's attitude toward its own cultural heritage is traced, as well as on its willingness to maintain and pass it on. The mechanism through which tourist interest becomes a factor in preserving tradition is derived. The publication is the author's most-cited work.

14. Stankova, M., & Vasenska, I. (2015). Competitiveness and tourism development – in search of positive image-representations of Bulgaria as a destination. Ekonomika, 61(3), 1–18. DOI 10.22004/ag.econ.212936

Summary: The article analyzes the relationship between competitiveness and tourism development through the lens of building positive image representations of the destination Bulgaria. It traces how image perceptions influence the competitive position and what the sources of negative perceptions are. Guidelines are formulated for the targeted building of a positive image of the destination.

15. Stankova, M., Kirilov, S., Kaleichev, S., & Vasenska, I. (2015). Innovation and tourism – getting sustainability through good practices. Regional Studies Program, p. 172. ISBN 978-954-411-220-2

Summary: The paper systematizes good practices through which innovation in tourism contributes to achieving sustainability. Product, process and organizational innovations are examined, and their contribution to the environmental and social sustainability of destinations is assessed. The conditions for transferring good practices to other regions are derived.

16. Vasenska, I. (2014). The Game Theory with Applications to the Tourism Sphere. Entrepreneurship, 2(1&2), 84–102.

Summary: The article tests the toolkit of game theory in analyzing the interactions among stakeholders in a tourist destination. Situations of competition and cooperation between tourism enterprises, and between them and local authorities, are modeled. It is shown under what conditions cooperative strategies lead to better results for the destination as a whole than individually optimal behavior.

17. Vasenska, I. (2014). Experiencing the local food and tourism. Proceedings of the International Tourism Forum "SPA and Wine", Sandanski – Corfu. ISBN 978-954-680-954-4

Summary: The paper examines local cuisine as an element of the tourism experience and as a resource for differentiating the destination product. The ways in which food contributes to forming the perception of authenticity are analyzed, and the conditions under which the gastronomic component creates added value for the destination are derived.

18. Stankova, M., & Vasenska, I. (2013). Projections of Culture and Local Diversity upon Tourism Destination Attractiveness. TMS Algarve 2013: Tourism & Management Studies International Conference.

Summary: The article examines how culture and local diversity are projected onto the attractiveness of the tourist destination. It is argued that cultural diversity functions as an independent factor of attractiveness, and not only as a supplement to natural resources. Implications are drawn for the positioning of destinations with a pronounced cultural profile.

19. Vasenska, I. (2013). The liaison between culture, tourism, tourism destination competitiveness, attractiveness and image. Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference "Cultural Corridor Via Diagonalis – Cultural Tourism without Boundaries", Sofia – Belgrade. ISBN 978-954-300-128-6

Summary: The paper formulates the conceptual link between culture, tourism, competitiveness, attractiveness and image of the destination. The individual concepts are distinguished, and it is shown how the cultural resource affects each of them in turn. The work lays the theoretical foundation for the author's subsequent research in this direction.

20. Vasenska, I. (2013). Organizational learning and employee empowering increasing tourist destination performance. Proceedings of the Management, Knowledge and Learning International Conference, pp. 615–624.

Summary: The article examines the relationship between organizational learning, employee empowerment and the performance of the tourist destination. It is argued that in a service with a high share of direct customer contact, the management practice of empowerment directly affects service quality. The conditions under which investments in training and delegation of authority lead to measurable results are derived.

21. Vasenska, I. (2012). Via Pontica – a sustainable model of total tourism product based on common cultural heritage. Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference "Cultural Road Via Pontica – Cultural Tourism without Boundaries", Duni – Istanbul. ISBN 978-954-300-119-4

Summary: The paper substantiates a model of the total tourism product built on shared cultural heritage on a cross-border basis, using the example of the Via Pontica cultural corridor. The prerequisites for joint offering between neighboring destinations are analyzed, and the institutional mechanisms needed for its functioning are outlined. The conditions for the sustainability of such cross-border products are formulated.

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