

## SCIENTIFIC ADVISOR'S REFERENCE

<b>Program:</b>	Master in International Business Program
<b>Student:</b>	<i>Fedorova Yulia</i>
<b>Title of thesis:</b>	<b>INFLUENCE OF EXPERIENTIAL BRANDING ON RETAIL BRAND IMAGE</b>
	<b>(CASE OF SPAR INT.)</b>

**Justification of the topic choice. Accuracy in defining the aim and objectives of the thesis.** Justification of the topic choice; accuracy in defining the aim and tasks of the thesis; originality of the topic and the extent to which it was covered; alignment of the thesis' topic, aim and objectives.

The author has selected for his study a topic which is exceptionally *actual* in branding activities—experiential branding . Experiential branding has proved to be a helpful concept and practical tool for marketers enabling them to gain significant strategic benefits in daily and long term brand management activities.

The *main goal* of the following paper is to prove the existence of the interconnection between experiential retail brand benefits, (i.e. sensory brand experience), and the retail brand image, estimating the effect that brand experience has on the retail brand image

At the very beginning of the thesis, *clear goals and objectives* were stated by Yulia Fedorova , which defined further character of research, structure of the thesis and the conclusions which were supposed to be formulated as a result of the thesis. The topic of master thesis is fully covered and opened.

**Structure and logic of the text flow.** Logic of research; full scope of the thesis; alignment of thesis' structural parts, i.e. theoretical and empirical parts.

The paper is *well structured*. The paper consists of five chapters. The first three chapters are dedicated to the concept of brand image, brand experience and retail marketing. Each chapter investigates the phenomenon and leads to the creation of the conceptual model that is then investigated in the fourth chapter. The research chapter examines the actual model and searches for the variables of brand image that are affected by the sensory stimulation. Based on the findings, set of strategic recommendations is provided concerning the experiential brand management and retail marketing. The last chapter is a case study of the supermarket chain SPAR. For its purpose the sensory brand potential is investigated and the specific recommendations are developed.

. The author found an *optimal balance* between theoretical and empirical parts of the thesis.

**Quality of analytical approach and quality of offered solution to the research objectives.** Adequacy of objectives coverage; ability to formulate and convey the research problem; ability to offer options for its solution; application of the latest trends in relevant research are for the set objectives.

Experiential branding, as a new concept was carefully studied to find valuable theoretical implications that can be further investigated in order to achieve the main goal of the paper.

1. Practical and theoretical consideration of retail branding is justified in this paper, providing up to date frameworks and analyzing contemporary international practices;
2. There is a *scientific value* of the conducted empirical study due to the under investigation of the retail brand experience as a whole and holistic brand experience within the store in particular. Provided industry wide implications and practical case solutions add to the value of the study.
3. Data is provided by the company that is interested in the research results and set of managerial decisions that can be created after the investigation. This fact fully demonstrates the importance of the paper and its *practical applicability*.
4. The *theoretical value* of this paper is to develop and test the model “retail brand image determinants, affected by the experiential brand variables”. The sensory brand experience is taken holistically for the first time. The following paper favors further in-depth analysis regarding the effect on the brand image.

**Quality of data gathering and description.** Quality of selecting research tools and methods; data validity adequacy; adequacy of used data for chosen research tools and methods; completeness and relevance of the list of references.

The *quality of selecting research tools and methods* is very high.

There were used a huge amount of different sources of information, which allow to make multi-layer analysis of the topic. It is important that author collected some data from the previous sources, which are of great importance for such kind of research.

The list of *references* is complete and relevant.

**Scientific aspect of the thesis.** Independent scientific thinking in solving the set problem/objectives; the extent to which the student contributed to selecting and justifying the research model (conceptual and/or quantitative), developing methodology/approach to set objectives.

There is a need to point out that the work represents a *valuable independent creative research*, which is logic and well structured. From the very beginning till the end of work we can see that there is a very clear statement of the goals of the research and its objectives

The *theoretical value* of this paper is to *develop the theory of experiential branding*. Relying on the created hypotheses a conceptual model was developed. The model was tested with the help of regression analysis based on the information gathered during conducted survey. As a result of analysis, tested links in the conceptual model were proved to be significant. It was proved that private labels positively affect customer loyalty towards retail chains.

**Practical/applied nature of research.** Extent to which the theoretical background is related to the international or Russian managerial practice; development of applied recommendations; justification and interpretation of the empirical/applied results.

The results of the marketing research have *practical value*. The practical value of this paper is in the study international retailer brand image in the Russian market. SPAR was deliberately taken as an example since it is the last retailer who entered the market when it was already saturated and highly competitive. The main task is the investigation with the relation to the brand image creation via extension of the brand experience, customer store journey and sensory stimulation within the store.

**Quality of thesis layout.** Layout fulfils the requirements of the Regulations for master thesis preparation and defence, correct layout of tables, figures, references.

*Layout* fulfils the requirements of the Regulations for master thesis preparation and defence.

As for the *bibliography list*, it looks representative as it includes various sources of publications. The articles and monographs were picked up in accordance with the topic and helped the author to make an theoretical overview of the current problem. As the result the master thesis has neat appearance and makes a positive overall impression.

The Master thesis of *Yulia Fedorova meets* the requirements for master thesis of Master in International Business program thus the author of the thesis can be awarded the required degree.

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Scientific Advisor:

Associate Professor



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