

REFeree'S REVIEW

Program:	Master in International Business (MIB) Program
Student:	Tsypushkin, Aleksey
Title of thesis:	Influence of MNEs' multinationality degree on performance of foreign operations: Evidence from U.S.-based companies

1. 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.	5	4	3	2
2. 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.	5	4	3	2
3. 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.	5	4	3	2
4. 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.	5	4	3	2
5. 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.	5	4	3	2
6. 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.	5	4	3	2
7. Quality of thesis layout. Layout fulfils the requirements of the Regulations for master thesis preparation and defense, correct layout of tables, figures, references.	5	4	3	2

Each item above is evaluated on the following scale, as applicable: 5 = excellent, 4 = good, 3 = satisfactory, 2 = poor

Additional comments:

Summary of reviewer's comments:

The aim of the present study is to test five competing hypotheses regarding the relationship between MNEs' degree of international involvement and the performance of their subsidiaries. While the author presents a comprehensive literature analysis, the evidence of original and critical thinking is limited. In addition, the methods used are subject to criticism. Overall, the thesis is imbalanced (only a minor part is dedicated to the presentation and discussion of actual results), and there is limited evidence of significant contributions.

Details:

1. Justification of the topic choice. Accuracy in defining the aim and objectives of the thesis.

- The study aim should be defined more precisely (see summary above – mention: “test competing hypotheses”; “international involvement” instead of “internationalization”).
- The author does not show clearly which significant contributions he intends to make.

2. Structure and logic of the text flow

- In general, the structure of the thesis is clear. However, the thesis does not include all standard chapter headings (e.g., the “Results” and “Discussion” chapters should be separated) and the sequence of chapters needs to be improved (limitations should be discussed after the conclusions).
- Good chapter summaries, but redundancy at the end (summary on pp. 53-54 and another summary with overlapping content in the conclusions immediately after that section)
- “1.6 Criticism of existing studies on the multinationality-performance linkage” should be decomposed and weaved into the individual sections dealing with the various facets of the literature.
- Imbalance: Results of statistical tests presented on page 51 (out of 64). Findings/discussions cover only 2 pages.
- Discussion of findings needs to be more closely aligned with literature review (see below).

3.-4. Analytical part, data, solution

Literature review

- Clear definitions provided, but competing definitions are not explored in sufficient detail. Example: “Some researchers (e.g., Hennart 1982) suggest other definitions, which, however, do not change the concept of the term” (p. 9).
- Comprehensive set of relevant theories *described* and integrated (1.3), but not critically examined.
- Off-shoring not discussed.
- Comprehensive set of empirical studies analyzed. Some evidence of critical thinking in this section.
- “1.6 Criticism of existing studies on the multinationality-performance linkage” – author does not state his own conclusions.

Theory development and hypothesized research model

- Lack of theoretical contributions.
- Positive hypotheses formulated as normative statements (“should”).

Methods

- Sample
 - Appropriateness of the sampling frame not clearly demonstrated (the author could only use a small part of the total sample; reduction from 9871 to only 42 firms).
 - To analyze a U-shaped or S-shaped relationship between multinationality and performance, a longer time horizon is needed (the sample covers only three years).
 - The filtering method needs a *theoretical* justification (“Moreover, several companies which report negative segmented profits for one of the years under consideration are excluded. This is done due to the specifics of the dependent variable described in the next paragraph.” p. 42).
 - More details on the filtering method required in the main text (“The sample was adjusted for outliers.” p. 42).
- Measures
 - New index introduced: Comparative Efficiency Index (CEI)
 - Detailed description of measures used
 - Limited set of control variables

- Procedures: Reversed causality considered.

Findings and discussion

- Implications of newly introduced Comparative Efficiency Index (CEI) not explored.
- Author should include a more detailed discussion of findings in the light of the previous research. The “conflict” with previous studies needs to be further explained (“Interestingly, this result conflicts with the suggestion made by Ruigrok and Wagner (2003) regarding the pattern of US-based companies’ internationalization.” p. 51).

Practical implications

Due to the high level of aggregation, general nature of conclusions and lack of specific, actionable recommendations, the study is not very relevant for practitioners.

Research limitations and outlook

- Important limitations of the studies are discussed.
- Directions for future research need to be more specific.

5. Scientific aspect of the thesis

- Limited evidence of independent, critical thinking (see above); the author does not offer an interesting new angle on the investigated subject.
- Contributions (such as the introduction of the CEI and analysis of reversed causality) are not substantial.

6. Quality of thesis layout

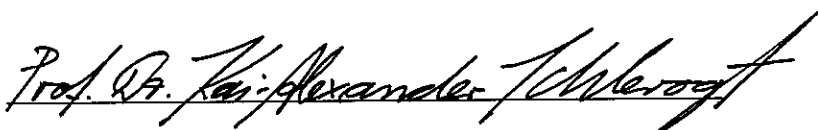
- Sample size and dependent variable not mentioned in the statistical tables that are included in the main text (only mentioned in the appendix).
- Type of regression coefficient (standardized vs. non-standardized) not mentioned in the tables.
- No need to number alphabetically sorted references.

Conclusion:

The Master thesis of Tsypushkin, Aleksey meets the requirements of the Master in International Business program and deserves a “SATISFACTORY” grade. Thus, the author can be given the desired degree.

Date: 15 June 2012

Referee:



Prof. Dr. Kai-Alexander Schlevogt (D.Phil. Oxford)
Professor, Holder of Endowed Chair in Strategic Leadership
Graduate School of Management, St. Petersburg State University