

SCIENTIFIC ADVISOR'S REFERENCE

Program:	Master in International Business (MIB) Program
Student:	Solomatina, Nina Vsevolodovna
Title of thesis:	Strategic leadership in turbulent environments: case study of Sberbank

<p>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.</p>
<p>The author provides a clear justification for the choice of research topic, highlighting the important role of strategic leadership in volatile environments in general and need for Sberbank to adjust to a changing environment in particular. The thesis' topic, aim and objectives are well-aligned. Key terms are defined.</p>
<p>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.</p>
<p>Generally speaking, the structure of the thesis is clear. The parts are logically connected. In most instances, the transitions between the parts are smooth. In the empirical part, the author tests propositions derived in the theoretical part of the paper. The thesis contains an illustration of its structure (p. 9), in which "practical part" should be labelled "empirical part". There is a break in the connection between the conceptualization of strategic leadership (p. 13) and the adopted definition of this construct (p. 14). The author needs to distinguish more clearly between the presentation and discussion of findings. In the discussion section, the first subheading (7.1) is labeled "Research <i>results</i>: linking theory and practice" (italics added by referee). Managerial implications, conclusions, research limitations and directions for future research should not be subsumed under the heading "Results". There is an additional inconsistency (development of framework, see p. 74 and p. 77, even though an existing framework was chosen for this study), which supposedly is due to lack of due diligence rather than gaps in understanding.</p>
<p>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.</p>
<p>The author presents a comprehensive review of the relevant research literature on strategic leadership and volatile environments. She takes into account recent perspectives and models. The results of various empirical studies need to be discussed in greater depth, though. A new framework of strategic leadership (SIT Framework) that is relevant for volatile environments is used as a conceptual lens to study Sberbank. The hypotheses are clearly derived from the literature, and a considerable amount of interesting data points is presented. The author also effectively uses the conceptual framework as an integrative device in the discussion section (starting on p. 67). Moreover, she compares some research findings to the literature. However, the specific contributions of the present study need to be discussed in more detail. Several limitations are mentioned, but the section dealing with future research needs to be expanded.</p>
<p>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.</p>
<p>In general, the author provides a clear rationale for the specific research design chosen to test the hypotheses, explaining the benefits of qualitative research in general and the merits of the case study methodology in particular. The reasons for the rejection of multiple case studies (absence of other suitable cases, pp. 39-40, among other things) are not convincing, though. More detailed criteria for the selection of respondents (p. 42) are required. The author needs to explain more clearly the basis for the specific questions included in the interview guide (Appendix 2). Additional evidence could possibly to some extent compensate for the small number of interviews (6), but it is not discussed in sufficient detail. The author needs to provide details on qualitative content analysis. In particular, references to the literature on this analytical technique and details on its application in the present studies are required. The appendix needs to include an audit trail in the form of interview transcripts or interview summaries.</p>

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.

Nina demonstrates the ability to effectively integrate a considerable amount of literature and apply relevant concepts to the study object. It is noteworthy that she was very eager to learn, absorbed new ideas quickly and made excellent progress in her research in a relatively short time period. This made it possible for her to achieve excellent results.

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 topic of the study is relevant for executives interested in the Russian market. Some advice is offered on how to operate on this turf, but overall the discussion of practical implications in the thesis needs to be expanded. The author should develop more specific, actionable recommendations.

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

The thesis layout (headings, sub-headings, etc.) is clear, but the author needs to pay more attention to due diligence (consistency, elimination of typographical errors, etc.).

Conclusion:

The Master thesis of Nina Vsevolodovna Solomatina meets the requirements of the Master in International Business (MIB) program. Thus, the author of the thesis can be awarded the desired degree.

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Scientific Advisor:



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