

## REFEREE'S REVIEW

<b>Program:</b>	Master in International Business Program
<b>Student:</b>	Shutilova Anna
<b>Title of thesis:</b>	ANALYSIS OF RELATIONS OF DIFFERENTIATION COMPETENCE, INTERNATIONALIZATION AND COMPANY'S PERFORMANCE: EVIDENCE FROM RUSSIAN AND INTERNATIONAL MANUFACTURING COMPANIES

<b>Justification of the topic choice. Accuracy in defining the aim and objectives of the thesis.</b> 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
<b>Structure and logic of the text flow.</b> Logic of research; full scope of the thesis; alignment of thesis' structural parts, i.e. theoretical and empirical parts.	5	4	3	2
<b>Quality of analytical approach and quality of offered solution to the research objectives.</b> 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
<b>Quality of data gathering and description.</b> 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
<b>Scientific aspect of the thesis.</b> 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
<b>Practical/applied nature of research.</b> 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
<b>Quality of thesis layout.</b> 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:

The research question (what is the influence of company's differentiation competence and level of internationalization on company's performance?) and, respectively, goal of the study are a good match of each other. An empirical examination of the relationship between the company's differentiation competence and internationalization, on one side, and the company's performance, on the other, assumes specification and measurement of the respective concepts. Therefore, the author faces academically challenging problems of what and how to measure with regard. However, the set of the study objectives looks a bit strange, since the author skips the issues of operationalization and measurement of the concepts analyzed, which are critical to study's goal.

Unfortunately, this mismatch of the study's goal and objectives becomes deeper in Chapter 1 Methodology. The Reviewer could not find description of operationalized concepts of company's differentiation competence, internationalization and performance. The Chapter is mainly a text on core competencies, some marketing and strategic issues with almost no relevance to the concepts in question. Formulated hypotheses formulated in 1.5 do not rely on the theoretical review.

Chapter 2 "Methodology" mainly describes the data sample available from the Outsourcing project of the DB and RZD Center of International Logistics and Supply Chain Management. Further analysis of data with the help of a hierarchical multiple regression model is not given neither explanation, nor reasoning. At page 39 the author provides calculation results without mentioning dependent variable. It is hard to understand how and where from the author get to the conclusion that "differentiation competence associates positively with company's performance" as well as other conclusions about the hypotheses made. Surprisingly the size parameter has been studied although it was not declared as the parameter of interest in the study.

Reasoning of submitted at page 'H2: Internationalization associates positively with company's performance' looks strange since it is not related to the data sample utilized in the study.

Similar disparities can be continued. Ultimately, it should be mentioned that the analytic level of study is not that high as it pretended to be. Finally, the paper submitted turned out to be rather descriptive, with increments of some quantitative methods applied in non-systemic way.

Recommendations submitted have are weakly related to the study completed. Conclusions claiming that the main goal of the study was achieved look wrong since the concept under investigation were not operationalized and measured properly.

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

Master thesis of Anna Shutilova meets (doesn't meet) the requirements of Master in International Business program, and deserves a "good" grade, thus the author can be given the desired degree.

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Referee: *Associate Professor Yuri V.Fedotov*