

REFEREE'S REVIEW

Program:	Master of International Business
Student:	Vadim Balandin
Title of thesis:	Subscriber retention strategy on the b2c segment of the fixed communication services market in the telecommunications industry

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.	<u>5</u>	4	3	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	<u>4</u>	3	2
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.	<u>5</u>	4	3	2
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.	<u>5</u>	4	3	2
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	<u>4</u>	3	2
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.	<u>5</u>	4	3	2
Quality of thesis layout. Layout fulfils the requirements of the Regulations for master thesis preparation and defense, correct layout of tables, figures, references.	5	<u>4</u>	3	2

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

Additional comments:

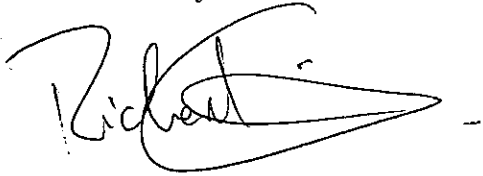
Let me start by commending Vadim Balandin for his thesis. He has crafted a highly managerial thesis that I am certain would be well received by management at any telecommunications service provider. The topic is relevant, interesting, and provides useful decision-related and actionable information. I do, however, have suggestions and comments that would improve the thesis. My first concern centers on the ordering of the findings. The churn rate material (Table 18) could have been presented first. The churn analysis provides information on the idea that complaints associate with customer churn. Presumably, complaints arise from a lack of service quality or a gap in service quality. Thus the student should first demonstrate that service quality (through complaints) affects performance (through customer churn). The student should then move onto the analysis of service quality. My second concern is more serious. For each of the 22 statements on the survey, Table 14 presents the expected (E) and perceived (P) level of service. In the Table, the student provides the difference, the percentage difference, and then on page 39 draws conclusions on the differences. The student should have assessed the differences through paired difference t-tests. All inferences drawn are currently undertaken on the "eyeball" test – that is, the difference looks large, therefore a difference exists. The student takes great effort to support the notion that 5 dimensions to service quality exist. The student should have therefore collapsed the items across the 5 dimensions (along with reporting reliabilities) and reported paired difference t-tests for just the 5 dimensions (this means that the analysis of the 22 items is actually redundant). This would provide a much more powerful understanding from a managerial perspective: e.g., "of the five dimensions of service quality, it is in the area of reliability where a statistically significant gap exists between expectations and realized service performance – in the other four dimensions, no gap exists." It is my estimation that this is what a paired difference analysis of the 5 dimensions would have revealed (of course, I might be wrong, but it important to flush this issue out and to report statistical results). If we look at the SERQUAL rankings (Table 15), we can see that reliability possesses the highest rank. This combination of a high rank for reliability and a significant gap for reliability provides a meaningful managerial insight. This information could have been presented in a positioning map with dimension importance on the horizontal axis and gap extent on the vertical axis. Dimensions in the lower left hand quadrant would

represent “managerial focus points” (important plus a large gap). Essentially, one dimension would be very obvious: reliability. This approach would render the material presented in Picture 3.1 (and other similar pictures) less useful.

Master thesis of Vadim Balandin meets the requirements of the MIB program, and deserves a “good” grade, thus the author can be given the desired degree.

Date: 14.06.2012

Referee: *Professor Richard Germain*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard", with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.