

## REFEREE'S REVIEW

<b>Program:</b>	Master in International Business
<b>Student:</b>	Svetlana Komulainen
<b>Title of thesis:</b>	The Application of Buzz Marketing Tools in Repositioning the Brand: Cases of Launching Automotive Brands in the International Markets

<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	<u>4</u>	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	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	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	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	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	<u>4</u>	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	<u>4</u>	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	<u>3</u>	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	<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:

The submitted work is devoted to buzz marketing, which is a topical issue in modern marketing theory and practice due to rapid development of communication means and complexity of evaluation and management of such constructs as perception and attitude.

The structure of the text is consistent with the stated goals, however some critical comments will be presented further. The layout in general fulfils the requirements of the Regulations for master thesis preparation and defense; however there are several pitfalls in formatting that will be listed further.

The theoretical review is mostly based on relevant and up-to-date literature. The chosen research method can be considered as relevant to the stated goal of the research.

A number of the thesis work drawbacks and questions to the author can be considered as principal ones and decrease the overall impression:

- 1) The structure of the work looks unbalanced (Part 4 is only 3 pages long which is significantly shorter than the other parts), some structural parts of the text are not numbered properly. The methodology description (pp. 49-52) could have been placed in the appendices.

- 2) The research goal is formulated in a descriptive way, which partly leads the exceedingly extensive list of the research questions.
- 3) The style of literature review is inclined to descriptiveness which makes the text look less analytical as it could have been, and one could wish to see more of the author's own point of view and conceptual position apart from citing related works behind the theory-based conclusion. Moreover, there is too little analysis on repositioning in general although this is actually the topic of the thesis (at least partly).
- 4) Although the work by the author's research advisor is listed in bibliography, it never is cited, even in the branding part of the theoretical background.
- 5) The summary of the theoretical part is not thoroughly explained, and the link to the further empirical part is not clearly written. The author further never uses the developed model to illustrate the analyzed cases.
- 6) On p. 28 the author makes conclusions on the case brands, although the cases have not been introduced.
- 7) On p. 30 the author puts together "salespersons in the dealership" influence together with "advice from family, friends, anyone else" to calculate the word-of-mouth which is conceptually incorrect. Moreover, the percentages in the graph and in the text do not correspond.
- 8) For Skoda case the author discusses the methods that could have been used, but these methods were described later than the real life situation happened.
- 9) The BMW case lacks a clear wording of the real issue. It takes an effort to identify one behind the descriptions. The correspondence of buzz and stereotypes is not thoroughly discussed.
- 10) The empirical research validity stays under question due to sample size.
- 11) Managerial implications are rather short and look weaker than one would expect based on the analysis made.
- 12) The language style is not purely academic (e.g., p. 7, p. 10). Mistypes do occur rather often.

However, the work possesses several strong points. First, there is an obvious personal contribution of the author, namely the developed decision-tree model for buzz marketing approach when deciding to reposition the brand. Second, the general design of the research is rather interesting, obviously personally developed by the author and well thought-out; the analysis is quite good and mostly corresponds to the objectives.

Master thesis of Svetlana Komulainen meets the requirements of Master in International Business program, and according to the reviewer's opinion deserves a "good" grade, thus the author can be given the desired degree.

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Referee:  
*Candidate of Science (Economics),  
Assistant Professor Olga Alkanova*

