

## SCIENTIFIC ADVISOR'S REFERENCE

<b>Program:</b>	<b>Master in Business Analytics and Big Data</b>
<b>Student:</b>	<b>Ren Yifei, Yao Xiwen</b>
<b>Title of thesis:</b>	<b>Data-driven Marketing plan improvement: Case of GSOM SPbU Master Programs</b>

**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.

The goal of this research was to develop recommendations on marketing plan changes to enroll international students in the global political crisis 2022 and to enable GSOM to meet the enrollment target of 30% of international students in 2022 for Master programs. The research is highly actual and provides understanding in wide spectrum of factors that influence enrollment efforts. The student faced big challenge on all steps of data analysis to find the ways of management respond to compensate consequences of crisis.

**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.

The thesis is consisted of a title page, declaration of independent nature of the work, annotation, table of contents, introduction, three chapters, conclusion, list of reference, acknowledgement and appendices. The study itself consisted of the three main parts that are reflected in the organization of chapters and contents of the thesis. The first chapter introduces the influences on GSOM marketing plan under the political crisis 2022, business goal, research goal and tasks. The second chapter of the study is the broad justification on the choice of methodologies and description of empirical data. In the third chapter, 7 sources of empirical data were analyzed, and the results were synthesized to give recommendations on improvement of GSOM marketing plan. Theoretical and practical parts of the thesis are well balanced.

**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.

The authors analyzed the impact of the crisis on GSOM's marketing plan at different levels in the context of political issues, and concluded that 48% of the marketing campaigns could not be completed due to the political crisis, and thus was provided data-driven chance of leading to a decrease in international applicants. Were proposed 3 grounded recommendations on website optimization; give evidence for the necessity to transfer 60% of total traffic from Facebook and Instagram to VK and Telegram; from Google search engine to Yandex Search engine; give recommendations to develop Douyin promoting Channel; develop Weibo promoting channel; collaborate with Chinese overseas educational agency institution. All the recommendations are relevant to reach the master thesis goal.

**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.

To answer the research question on what could be done in the situation of the revealed limitations, 7 sources of data were analyzed, leading to recommendations in three directions: website optimization, marketing channels adjustment, Chinese market development. Students applied valid quantitative and qualitative techniques for data analysis.

**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.

Quality of selecting research tools and methods; data validity, adequacy of used data for chosen research tools and methods; completeness and relevance of the list of references are demonstrated at the good level.

**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 key peculiarity of the paper is the thoroughness and volume of overall data analysis conducted by students. The authors analyzed primary and secondary data: big data form GSOM site GSOM More than 450,000 rows and 130

parameters (Python/Clickhouse database), database of applicants and enrolee of GSOM SPbU for the last 5 years, data on exchanging program universities, detailed current marketing plan of GSOM, In-depth interviews, corporate dashboards info, conducted a survey among respondents from China. The students demonstrated good social skills and a gift in business analytics while conducting the research process. It is gratifying to note outstanding patience and tolerance of students under force majeure circumstances – competences that cannot be overrated in the era of change.

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

Layout fulfils the requirements of the Regulations for master thesis preparation and defence. All tables and figures are given with proper references.

**Originality of the text.** All sources of match identified by the Safe Assign system follow the allowed cases, the paper does not contain any elements of plagiarism.

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The Master thesis of **STUDENTS Ren Yifei and Yao Xiwen** meets the requirements for master thesis of MiBA program thus the author of the thesis can be awarded the required degree.

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