**REFEREE’S REVIEW**

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| **Program:** | **Master in Management (MIM)** |
| **Student:** | **Aleksandra Tomilova** |
| **Title of thesis:** | **Application of customer-based brand equity model for strengthening the competitive position of UNIQLO brand on the Russian market** |

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| **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. | **5** | 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** | 4 | 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. | 5 | **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. | **5** | 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 | **4** | 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.  | **5** | 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 | **4** | 3 | 2 |

Each item above is evaluated on the following scale, as applicable: 5 = the thesis meets all the requirements, 4 = the thesis meets almost all the requirements, 3 = a lot of the requirements are not met in the thesis, 2 = the thesis does not meet the requirements.

**Additional comments:**

*Please, elaborate on the above mentioned criteria (about 250 words)*

Research problem and objectives are well defined and the study is relevant - the brand is relatively new on the Russian market and is rapidly expanding; also has ambitious goals in Russia until 2020 and the study gives recommendations regarding brand building activities and overall strategy.

Research parts are well aligned and the general structure is clear and logical, the study has a balance between the theory, including theoretical background for customer-based brand equity and empirical part, which contains research design, theoretical model explanation, results of empirical study and discussion. Theoretical background is comprehensive and has a good structure, thorough literature review is provided using the deductive approach from more general areas (brand equity) to specific ones (retail brand equity).

The list of references is extensive and up-to-date. The author justified the choice of proposed research tools and theoretical model, explained data collection methods and presented questionnaire data. Neither typographical nor calculation errors were found in the thesis and the overall text flow is logical. Detailed situational analysis for the brand is given; competitive positioning is analyzed through various frameworks, including Porter’s Five Forces and Pestel for apparel industry.

Concerning quality of analytical approach and quality of offered solution to the research objectives, the author provided managerial implications for the company, which are comprehensive and unambiguous.

*Strengths o*f the study include the following:

* Research problem is well defined and the study is relevant - the brand is relatively new on the Russian market and is rapidly expanding; also has ambitious goals in Russia until 2020 and the study gives recommendations regarding brand building activities/overall strategy.
* Research design is well-explained, theoretical framework proposed for the study is appropriate.
* Theoretical background is comprehensive and has a good structure; thorough literature review is provided using the deductive approach from more general areas to specific ones.
* Managerial implications are clearly stated and not ambiguous.
* Detailed situational analysis for the brand is given; competitive positioning is analyzed through various frameworks, including Porter’s Five Forces and Pestel for apparel industry.
* Moreover, some theoretical insights are formulated. Regarding the areas for improvement, the author could pay more attention to the brand’s parent company history and business model and potentially also add some more items in the questionnaire.

Appreciating the quality of the research, it is necessary to make some *critical comments*.

* The author could pay more attention to the brand’s parent company (Fast Retailing) history and business model.
* Theoretical implications were formulated on the basis of only one brand (the study focused on one particular brand rather than several brands across various product categories).
* The author could potentially add more items in the questionnaire.

Summarizing the above facts, the referee can conclude that the thesis is presented in a clear and meaningful way and the results of the study are properly interpreted and are easily understandable.

Master thesis of Aleksandra Tomilova***meets the requ*irements** of the Master in Management program, and according to the reviewer’s opinion deserves an **“*excellent (B)*”** grade, thus the author can be given the desired degree.

Date: 04/06/2016

Referee:

Candidate of Economics (marketing)
Senior lecturer, Advertising and Public Relations Department
Peter the Great St. Petersburg Polytechnic University

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 A.V. Mazurenko