

SCIENTIFIC ADVISOR'S REFERENCE

Program:	Master in International Business
Student:	Dmitry Alexandrovich
Title of thesis:	Influence of relationship marketing on international companies' performance: case of Russian B2B pharmaceutical market

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 problem raised in the topic is of high relevance for both practitioners and academicians. There's an increasing interest in understanding the drivers of success for international companies operating in different markets, especially emerging ones. Moreover, author had a privilege to conduct research in almost laboratory environment looking at how international companies respond to institutional actions (in this case – introduction of the Pharma 2020 strategy). In this regard, relevance and importance of the topic is not a question. However, there are a couple of problems in justification of the research questions. Author mainly takes the perspective of simply relationship marketing approach, which is extensively covered in the literature, and not the perspective of relationship marketing strategies used by subsidiaries of international companies. Surprisingly, there are only 3 references in the extant literature list that are dated within the last 5 years (and these are industry reports). This clearly raises some questions on justification of the overall good and relevant research topic.

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 well written and its readability level is high. The logic of the thesis is consistent with objectives of the study. Author was able to smoothly connect theoretical and empirical parts of the thesis. Importantly, the thesis is well-balanced, i.e. all the parts are covered rather equally which helps to perceive the information easier.

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.

Author was able to clearly formulate the research question and the overall structure of the study was consistent with the questions under investigation. However, author did not use some latest literature that much which could support some of the proposed ideas better.

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.

In this thesis author analyzes case studies of the companies. This method is applicable for the proposed research questions. Author selects 5 top companies in the pharmaceutical market. Analyzing top performers is consistent with similar works using case study as a method of research. However, as a small recommendation, I would suggest author to be more precise when explaining the criteria for case selection. For example, taking only top performers could raise questions about generalizability of the results and some researchers recommend using opposite cases (top performers versus those performing worse) so that the differences in their practice could be derived.

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.

Scientific aspect of the thesis is, unfortunately, its weakest point. The author lacks its own reflection and analysis of the literature and collected data. The thesis seem to be too descriptive, both in theoretical and empirical parts (especially in theory). Though such descriptive approach might be more or less relevant to the first research question (How international companies are using relationship marketing in Russian pharmaceutical market), it is not applicable to the second one, in which performance outcomes are

investigated.

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 topic under study is highly relevant to the Russian managerial practice. There are still mixed results concerning the implementation of relationship marketing approach on the Russian market. For example, Ford Motors Company failed to build strong relationships with Russian suppliers when they just entered the market. However, this research sends clear signal to other companies (at least those operating on the pharmaceutical market) that relationship marketing strategies should be considered more seriously not only because of the Pharma 2020 but because of its impact on firm performance.

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

Overall quality of the layout is good. Author wisely uses tables and figures to summarize some intermediate results so that the necessary information could be assessed quickly. The only note is that author does not provide a reference for some figures and just uses the name of the figure instead (given the fact that these figures are clearly taken from some source).

The Master thesis of Dmitry Alexandrovich meets the requirements for master thesis of Master in International Business program thus the author of the thesis can be awarded the required degree.

Date: 14.06.2013

Scientific Advisor: professor Sergey Kushch

