SCIENTIFIC ADVISOR’S REFERENCE

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Program:</th>
<th>MIB</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student:</td>
<td>Anastasia Antonova</td>
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<tr>
<td>Title of thesis:</td>
<td>Ecological orientation as a source for competitive advantage of international company on Russian market: case of ecological food product market</td>
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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.

The topic selected by Anastasia is one of the most important nowadays both for research in marketing in general, and for research in emerging markets. The level of awareness of ecological products in Russia is rather low, which is supported by emerging field of research. But still, despite emerging interest of research to consumer behavior and sustainable marketing in Russia, there is no sufficient evidence, providing a basis for international companies to make decisions. The goal of the research is formulated as increasing empirical and theoretical knowledge in the field of consumer behavior study, and develop recommendations for international companies in Russian market. The research objectives correspond with the research aim.

**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 consists of six parts, including introduction, theory on ecological orientation as a part of corporate strategy and as a determinant of consumer behavior, methodology description, data analysis and conclusions. The structure of the thesis is well aligned with the aim and objectives of research.

**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 thesis’ content provides a logical coverage for all the research objectives formulated. Theoretical analysis is profound and covers both aspects of ecological orientation – from the company perspective (considering that recommendations development is essential part of the thesis objectives) and from the consumer behavior perspective. Besides analysis of research literature, Author is also paying attention to the Russian market data, secondary data on companies, operating in Russia and following ecological orientation strategy. Empirical part provides all the required parts: description of methodology, sample, descriptive data analysis results, results of hypotheses testing.

**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.

Data collection was conducted in alignment with recommendation for consumer studies, thus a pilot study has been implemented on the base of 20 respondents, after that a full scale survey has been conducted, resulting in 125 respondents from three Russian cities. Anastasia has applied both descriptive tools for data analysis, and statistical inference to test the hypotheses. Discriminant analysis method, used in the thesis, is well aligned with the nature of research, topic and the need to develop practical recommendations. This method has predictive power and can provide valuable and practical insights for the companies, operating in Russia or aiming to enter the market. The list of references is profound and reflects the key works in the field.
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.

The thesis has a true scientific nature. It is a good basis for further research, and can be considered as a foundation for continuation of research within PhD program studies. The use of methods, demonstrated by Anastasia reflects a professional, high quality approach to research process.

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 research questions formulated in the thesis, as well as the methods selected and conclusions drawn by the Author reflect practical nature of research. Initially, the questions have been formulated with the aim to propose recommendations for international companies in Russian market. This task has been successfully fulfilled by the Author.

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

The thesis meets all the requirements in terms of layout, its structure, references, parts, tables and figures.

The Master thesis of Anastasia Antonova meets the requirements) for master thesis of MIB program thus the author of the thesis can be awarded the required degree.

Date June, 16th 2011

Scientific Advisor: Associate Professor Maria M. Smirnova