

REFEREE'S REVIEW

Program:	Master in international business
Student:	Daniil Barkalov
Title of thesis:	Reforming railway cargo transportation: the Russian way compared with international experience

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 = excellent, 4 = good, 3 = satisfactory, 2 = poor.

Additional comments:

The research aim is "to provide insights as to what path would provide most opportunities for further development of cargo railway transportation industry in Russia". The aim and objectives align the thesis topic. The research problem is formulated quite well being based on literature review, covering latest trends in the analysis of the industry.

The thesis covers different aspects of railway reform in Russia. But it is worth to provide more detailed information about peculiarities of the industry, because the performance of the railways depends on different factors in different countries.

Quantitative analysis of efficiency of the reforms in Europe and Russia is done using following variables:

1. Gross hauled tonne-kilometers (output)
2. Number of rolling stock units excluding locomotives (input)
3. Total length of railway tracks (input)
4. Staff employed (input)

The author mentions the existence of limitations connected with the provided model, but nevertheless, makes conclusions on comparatively higher efficiency of Russian railways. Nevertheless, the results should be analyzed not only using numerical data but also having information about types of carried cargo, existence of alternative transportation system, etc. Otherwise the conclusions can fail to be correct.

In qualitative analysis, carried out in chapter 6, the size of a country is taken as a supplementary criteria in order to decrease the impact of exogenous factors such as geography. But in the case of the analysis of the transportation system, network density should be necessarily taken into account too.

Layout fulfils the requirements of the Regulations for master thesis preparation and defense. Final conclusions given by the author coincide with those made by R.Pittman, who used approximately same dimensions to analyze Russian railways, but Russia was compared with Mexico (mostly on the basis of network density). Results of the research have practical applicability for RZD management and politicians.

Master thesis of Daniil Barkalov meets the requirements of Master in international business program, and deserves an "excellent" grade, thus the author can be given the desired degree.

Date 15.06.2011

Referee:

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke at the bottom.

Senior lecturer, Sokolova Ekaterina