

SCIENTIFIC ADVISOR'S REFERENCE

Program:	Master in International Business
Student:	Ekaterina Geta
Title of thesis:	Online Relationship Marketing Development: Case of 4- and 5-star Hotels in Russia and Austria

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 of the present master thesis fits into very interesting and up-to-date but the same time rather unexplored research stream in marketing science: relationship marketing in the World Wide Web. In the relevance of the topic the student stated that due to short history of the online relationship marketing research no works presenting a holistic view of the whole scope of online relationship marketing are available in scientific and business-oriented open sources at the moment (p. 7). The paper represents the contribution to this research gap. The aim of the study was to "elaborate practical recommendations of online relationship marketing development for the hotel managers by analyzing online relationship marketing development in 4- and 5-stars hotels in Russia and Austria" (p. 8). The tasks of the study, the research questions, the justification of the methods chosen and the structure of the paper are presented under the goal of the research in a logical way, providing a clear outline of the form and content of the thesis.

In general, the topic, the aim and the tasks of the study are stated accurately and are well aligned with each other and the content of the work. The topic of the study is fully covered in the paper, under the assumption that there is no research without limitations.

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.

Logical parts of the work are well aligned and structured, representing a comprehensive way from theoretical research and hypothesis to the results and conclusions of the qualitative study. The paper consists of two chapters. The first one analyzes theoretical basis for the research. The second one presents an empirical study of the research model consisting of 3 main directions of online relationship marketing in hospitality industry: websites' online relationship marketing development, e-mail response behavior and online customers' reviews and scores (p. 8). The paper finishes with managerial implications, conclusions and limitations and recommendations for further research. Thus, no logical parts that are mandatory for master thesis are absent in this paper.

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 objective stated in the paper is entirely covered by the author. She formulates the research problem on the basis of the analysis of an extensive body of scientific literature in relationship marketing, on-line relationship marketing and marketing research, mostly modern, and offers an original integrated solution to the research gap.

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.

One of the most valuable parts of the present research is literature review with an analysis of the broad

range metrics and scales used for testing the level of online relationship marketing relevant for hotel business context. The author selects appropriate research tools and methods for each of the three elements the research model on the basis of this analysis with respect to the limitations of the student's research, thus there are no questions to the justification of their quality. The sample was formed with respect to all requirements to the representativeness and data was gathered thoroughly and adequately, thus resulting in high validity. The list of references can be evaluated as complete, containing many modern sources.

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 revision of the work showed the individual approach of the student to the stated problem. It is proven by the literature that was chosen and analyzed, methodology of the research and the practical application. The student chooses an original topic, develops conceptual model of the research object, formulates the hypothesis controlling for such factors as hotel size, location and affiliation type, elaborates the measurement techniques and scales that allow for statistical data analysis using SPSS 17.0. This shows the individual approach to the analysis of the material and the ability to build own frameworks on the issue as it should be done in a scientific work.

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 theoretical background represented by the analysis of previous research is more relevant to the international than Russian managerial practice, but it is mostly due to the fact that neither the original modern hotel management practices nor the scientific research in this industry is developed in Russian so far. However, the author develops a comprehensive list of recommendations for Russian hotel managers on the basis of research results and personal experience of the researcher that was obtained during the research process. Additionally, she summarizes the results of the hypothesis testing presented not only verbally but also graphically in tables and figures, which can be very interesting for Russian hotel managers and researchers in the field. Thus the authentic theoretical framework and the outcomes of this paper can be considered as new piece of theoretical foundations in relationship marketing relevant for Russian managerial practice.

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

The layout of the paper fulfils the requirements of the regulations for master thesis preparation and defense. The work in general has a good appearance and gives a positive impression. All non-results based figures and tables of the work have sources and references. The results-based tables and figures represent well-performed reader-friendly graphical solutions.

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

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