

REFEREE'S REVIEW

Program:	MIB
Student:	Ilya Rassalov
Title of thesis:	Factors of relationship quality for companies on foreign B2B markets: The case study of Finnish companies in the Russian 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.	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:

Please, elaborate on the above mentioned criteria (about 500 words)

The research objective has been formulated as identification what relationship quality is and determination of factors, influencing it in international context.

The overall logic of theoretical part is correct, and the main topics are addressed. At the same time, major parts of theoretical section do not contain substantial number of references, as for example, paragraph 1.1.2, that is devoted to differences between b2b and b2c markets, does not contain any single reference. These aspects are well described in existing research literature and should have been quoted in the thesis.

The section devoted to relationship quality comprises a number of sources in the field, but while many approaches and models are listed, no Author's position is expressed.

Some parts of the theoretical chapter seem to be included in wrong places, as Table 4 in part 2.1. This part would be of higher value introduced earlier in the thesis, but in part 2.1., which is devoted to the presenting factors of relationship quality this theoretical frameworks do not have direct linkage, or it is not explained properly in the text. Generally, there is no obvious reason to separate parts 1.3. and 2.1. If there is a reason, this should be properly justified; while at this moment this is a rather artificial approach to structuring the thesis.

Finally, part 2.2. is presenting the research hypotheses derived from the theory analysis. Starting from the first hypotheses (actually, also in accordance with the topic of the thesis), international

perspective is presented. This perspective has not been properly included in the previous theoretical part. It would be more valuable to see hypotheses derived in the previous parts, integrated with the theory analysis, and not presented separately. More than that, the aspects of the questionnaire (Appendix B) were not enough discussed in the theoretical parts. There seems to be a structural gap between the theory presented in part 1, and empirical part of the study.

The method selected for the analysis is appropriate and well executed. All the companies were contacted in advance, which had to ensure higher response rate. The only concern of the empirical study is the way the questionnaire was built. Since (as mentioned above) there is certain gap between the theoretical analysis and specifics of the questionnaire. Sources of questions used in the questionnaire are also not mentioned. In Chapter 2, where results of empirical study are presented, it is rather difficult to understand the details of analysis, since there is no link between the number of questions (see, e.g. Table 5, p. 40) and questionnaire (Appendix B). This type of presenting the results is not helping the reader. The way the descriptive results are presented (see Table 8, p. 43) is also not corresponding with accepted practice (e.g. number of digits after comma).

Qualitative study is added to comment on the results of quantitative survey. Four highly qualified respondents were involved in the study; profiles of the companies are also included in the thesis.

The conclusion to the thesis is made on the main variables, which were included in the empirical part, but not discussed in detail in the theoretical part of the thesis.

All in one, it seems that from the overall logic perspective the thesis is falling apart in the theoretical and empirical part. There should be a refinement of the theoretical part in accordance with the design of empirical study, hypotheses and questionnaire.

The main advantage of the thesis is the approach the Author is selecting for the empirical part. B2B markets are very difficult to study. Methodologically, the research is representing a very good basis for the master thesis, particularly combination of the quantitative and qualitative study.

There are also certain violations of the requirements to Master thesis at MIB program, among which proper citing requirement (e.g., no sources for Table 1, p. 16; Figure 3, p. 20, Figure 4, p. 21, etc).

Master thesis of Ilya Rassalov meets the requirements of MIB program, and deserves a "good" grade, thus the author can be given the desired degree.

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Referee: *Associate Professor Maria M. Smirnova*