REVIEW
of a dissertation for awarding the ESD of "Doctor"
in PF 3.8. Economics,
Doctoral Programme Marketing

Review drawn up by: Prof. Dr Evgeni Petrov Stanimirov, academic
specialty Marketing, Rector of University of Economics - Varna.

Grounds for submitting the review: membership in a scientific examining
jury under order No РД-06-24/06.02.2024 by the Vice Rector for AAQ (pursuant to
order РД-14-30/05.02.2024) and first meeting of the scientific examining jury of 15
Feb 2024 in hybrid format.

Author of dissertation: Yordan Todorov Ivanov, doctoral student with the
Faculty of Management, Department of Marketing at the University of Economics
- Varna.

Dissertation topic: Marketing Interventions in Global Retailer Positioning
Strategies.

I. Information about the doctoral student

Yordan Ivanov is a bachelor degree holder in Finance and Tourism from the
University of Economics - Varna (2006 - 2010) and Master of Business
Management and Technology from the University of Sheffield (Great Britain) -
2012 - 2014. From 2016 to 2019 Yordan Ivanov was a full-time doctoral student in
the programme of Marketing at the University of Economics – Varna, his academic
advisor being Prof. Dr Bistra Vasileva.

From 2012 to 2015 the doctoral student held the position Assistant Business
Development at Ardes Information Technologies EOOD. From 2016 to 2019 he
worked as a mentor at Sitel Bulgaria EOOD. Since 2019 until present he has been
Department Manager (Customer Marketing Payments - Australia), Internal Control
and Team Manager (Customer Objections - Great Britain) at Coca-Cola Europacific Partners Services Bulgaria EOOD.

Mr. Ivanov is fluent in English, Spanish, Russian and German.

An examination of the achievements of Yordan Ivanov shows that there is unceasing aspiration for development. In 2015 he became Vice President for Growth and Development of Junior Chamber International - Varna. In 2013 he received a Certificate of Academic Excellence (University of Sheffield). He has been awarded awards and prizes for excellent results by the University of Economics - Varna and by the High School of Mathematics Dr Petar Beron - Varna.

All of the above details make Yordan Ivanov stand out as a personality of a very good potential for development.

II. Assessment of the structure and contents of the dissertation

The dissertation is devoted to a topical and significant issue - *Marketing Interventions in Global Retailer Positioning Strategies*. The dissertation is structured as follows: contents, introduction, three chapters, conclusion, bibliography and appendices with a total volume of 411 pages, 189 of which constitute the body. The dissertation includes 44 tables and 57 figures as well as 43 appendices. The bibliography contains 497 sources in Cyrillic and Latin, which shows the excellent literary knowledge of the author.

The introduction of the dissertation presents the framework of the study. The author adheres to the classical approach by presenting arguments in support of the relevance of the research work. A good impression is made by the attempt on the part of the author at generalizations and working out of trends, even at this early stage, and his effort to take a comprehensive view on the issue under study along the line "actions - effects" (that is seen from the binding between marketing interventions and positioning strategies). The areas in which research on the topic has been carried out are very clearly indicated. As at the time of writing, the study
of intra-enra marketing interventions in the positioning strategies of global retailers is evaluated as rather poor.

The author defines the goal of the dissertation, six research tasks, the object and subject of the study as well as the research thesis. A commentary with respect to the methodology of the research and the expected contribution is given (which I cannot take as totally adequate in view of the significant results actually achieved in the dissertation). Two constraints of the research work are defined, which specify the scope of validity of the obtained results.

In **Chapter One**, in three paragraphs the doctoral student presents the theoretical and methodological formulations of marketing interventions in the global industries. A theoretical analysis of a large volume of literature, connected with the globalization and the changes in global markets and industries is performed. The types of strategies for positioning on the global markets, as well as models and methods of their development and use are analyzed. The author has developed the concept of marketing interventions in the strategies for positioning. To that end he has discussed in detail theoretical formulations of marketing interventions and presented a methodology for designing marketing interventions in the strategies for the positioning of global retailers.

**Chapter Two** of the dissertation is connected with the positioning of global retailers. An analysis of the state and the trends in the global retail industry is conducted. The analysis is developed further towards the positioning of the market regions in the global retail industry. Within this chapter the doctoral student conducts an analysis of the market positions of the leading global retailers following the methodology of Deloitte. Using the appropriate methodological tools the doctoral student performs an analysis and reaches conclusions, connected with marketing interventions in the strategies for positioning according to life cycle stage of global retailers (using the example of Amazon).

**Chapter Three** is devoted to the design of marketing interventions in the positioning strategies of global retailers. The doctoral student makes an
assessment of the digital performance of global retailers in Bulgaria, using consumer ratings for that purpose. Factor correlations in online shopping from global retailers are examined in two aspects: through websites and through mobile applications. A configuration of intra-entra marketing interventions in the positioning strategies of global retailers is presented. The set of methodological tools that is used is adequate and allows the doctoral student to draw reliable conclusions associated with the individuals covered in the survey (in accordance with the supplied constraints).

In the presented conclusion the author sums up the obtained results, both in theoretical and practical plan. The doctoral student has somewhat overstepped the boundaries of reasonable self-assessment and has unduly entered rather deeply into the field of self-examination of the achieved results (which is the job of the people evaluating the work).

The bibliography shows the excellent literary knowledge of the author of the dissertation. I find no evidence of incorrect citation of literary sources.

The language and style of the work are scholarly. I perceive the defined goal and tasks as achieved.

The summary corresponds to the main work of the author.

Based on all of the above I can conclude that the doctoral student possesses extensive theoretical knowledge in the topic of intra-entra marketing interventions in the positioning strategies of global retailers. I find the ability to do independent research work, with which the requirements for acquiring the ESD of "doctor", laid down in the LDASRB and in the Regulations on the Development of Academic Staff at the University of Economics - Varna, are fulfilled.

III. Evaluation of the publications of the doctoral student

Four publications connected with the topic of the dissertation are submitted. Three of those are scientific papers and one is an article (all of them are published in scientific journals). One of the papers is in co-authorship. The volume of academic production of the doctoral student and the nature of the journals conform
to the requirements and the procedure for acquiring the of ESD of "Doctor". The verification for compliance with the national requirements under the RALDASRB shows that the number of points required for acquiring the ESD of "Doctor" is met.

IV. Scientific, practical and applied contributions of the dissertation

The presented statement of usefulness of the dissertation contains 3 contributory points. As a result of the analysis of the presented dissertation I confirm the existence of the aforementioned contributions, which is in conformity with Art. 6 Para. 3 of the LDASRB.

*The theoretical contribution* is connected with the development of a set of tools for designing intra-entra marketing interventions in the positioning strategies of global retailers.

*In the practical and applied aspect* I confirm two contributions:

*First.* A process for the use of intra-entra marketing interventions in the strategies for positioning in the global retail industry is justified.

*Second.* The strategies for positioning the global online traders in Bulgaria on the basis of the conducted empirical survey among their customers are assessed.

V. Critical remarks and recommendations to the doctoral student

1. In the introduction of the dissertation it is logical for the subject and the object of the research work to precede the goal and the tasks. Normally, the reader is first made acquainted with what will be studied, and after that - in what aspect this will be done. Upon comparison of the dissertation and the summary, it is established that there is a difference in the arrangement of the introduction's elements. Also, in the introduction of the dissertation there is defined a contribution, which does not correspond to those described in the summary and the contributions actually achieved by the doctoral student.

2. From my viewpoint the object of the study is defined correctly: strategies for the positioning of global retailers. As regards the subject of the study, it would have been sufficient to state that it is the intra-entra marketing interventions.
Obviously, it is about interventions with respect to the strategies for positioning, insofar as the object has already been defined.

3. One of the main characteristics of marketing interventions is connected with the fact that those are used when there are identified issues or opportunities in the external (entra) environment. In this regard my question is whether the doctoral student shares the following view: "Do not waste the brilliant opportunities that accompany every crisis!"

VI. General evaluation of the dissertation and opinion

The dissertation constitutes a research work on a relevant and significant issue. The contributions of the author enrich the existing knowledge in the sphere of marketing interventions in the positioning strategies of global retailers. The dissertation complies with the requirements of the LDASRB, therefore I propose that the members of the esteemed scientific examining jury take a favourable decision for awarding the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor" in the doctoral programme Marketing to doctoral student Yordan Todorov Ivanov.

14 Mar 2024
Varna

Review drawn up by
(Prof. Dr Evgeni Stanimirov)
on: dissertation on „Marketing Interventions in the Positioning Strategies of Global Retailers“

for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree „Doctor“ in professional direction 3.8 - Economics, doctoral program „Marketing“

presented by PhD student: Yordan Todorov Ivanov
research supervisor: Prof. Dr. Bistra Vasileva
reviewer: Prof. Dr. Boyan Lyubomirov Durankev

By order of the Rector of the University of Economics - Varna No. RD-06-24 dated 06.02.2024, I was appointed as a member of the Scientific Jury, and at the first meeting of the Scientific Jury, held on 15.02.2024, I was appointed as a reviewer. In fulfillment of the above, I present the following findings and conclusions, trying to basically follow the recommended review structure of the University of Economics - Varna.

1. General presentation of the dissertation work

1. The starting point for the review are the presented:
   1. Dissertation work „Marketing interventions in the positioning strategies of global retailers,“ in a volume of 411 standard pages (205 pages are the text, bibliography and appendices are separate).
   3. Publications – 3 in number, completely sufficient. I consider that all publications are directly related to the research in the dissertation and reflect different aspects of it.

2. Response to formal requirements
   The doctoral student has submitted all materials that are formally required. I find that even if only the volume and content of the dissertation work are taken into account, it sufficiently accurately allows to evaluate the scientific work of the doctoral student
Yordan Ivanov from different points of view, as well as to formulate a proposal for a solution.

The main focus of my assessment is on the dissertation work presented, although the other scholarly publications are directly relevant and reflective of many of the ideas developed more broadly and in greater depth within it.

II. Main conclusions on the form and content of the dissertation work

1. The title of the dissertation - „Marketing interventions in the positioning strategies of global retailers“ fully corresponds to the content. In some places (in a limited volume) the text goes beyond the title, but in favor of the search for additional evidence and indirect argumentation.

2. The topic of the research is dissertable, current and significant. The topicality of the issues of the present study is determined by the active transformation processes in the global retail trade, which - in parallel with the growth of physical sales points - developed and continues to build an Internet system of communication with customers.

The fact is that just as the marketing of industrial goods has moved significantly to an online system of supply and sales, so the marketing of consumer goods has developed like an explosion on the Internet, especially with the transformation of homes from a place to sleep to a center for a full life during of the 2020-2022 pandemic. It is in these conditions that the Internet-based online marketing centers of transnational corporations managed to take a qualitative strategic advantage over their physically operating competitors, although this process was already started at the beginning of the XXI century.

Even after the „unlocking“ of homes and the return to the „normal“ way of life, it turned out that a huge share of buyers (individuals) are now strictly oriented to online shopping, instead of traditional „expeditions“ in search of something in malls and stores.

Today, we are witnessing the fiercest competition in global retail, a competition that forces corporations to implement more and more high technology and real innovation in order to maintain and develop their competitive advantage, seek ever higher market share and cover more customers, while simultaneously discovering
opportunities to enter new markets and eliminate local competitors. It is in this aspect that positioning has returned to the tried and tested formula: „Differentiate or Die!“.

The above reasons allow me to claim that the topic is new, extremely original and sufficiently current.

3. The subject of the dissertation is the positioning strategies of global retailers, and the subject of the research is the intra-enter marketing interventions in the positioning strategies of transnational corporations operating in the retail trade system - i.e. with the object and subject thus defined, the focus of this study is placed on the retail marketing characteristics related to positioning, and aimed at financial results and elimination of competition.

The restrictive frameworks in which scientific research is carried out are most correctly described. The main limitation of the dissertation work is in the scope of the research: first of all, the author considers only the final buyers as the object of marketing interventions; secondly, the survey was implemented with a sample of 328 respondents formed on the „principle of respondents“. The perceived limitations of the study do not deprive it of theoretical and empirical meaning and represent a „blessed field“ for future research and further development of the instrumentation and methodology for researching the selected issues.

4. The goal of the author of the dissertation is ambitious: to design intra-enter marketing interventions in the positioning strategies of transnational retail corporations on the Bulgarian market and to propose an (analytical-prognostic) configuration for their implementation. The specific objective determines both the scope of the study and the methodology. As you can see, the base is sufficiently wide and interesting, it provides opportunities for creativity and discussions in theoretical depth and derivation of modern management solutions.

5. The (hypo)thesis (in principle, it is correct to state a hypothesis in the introduction, and after it is proven - if it is proven! - it becomes a thesis in the conclusion) of the dissertation is: „Marketing interventions in the positioning strategies of global retailers are an essential part of companies' strategic marketing decisions. Understanding their essence and their adequate application creates prerequisites for companies to be more sustainable and adaptable to the dynamics of the global market and gives them the opportunity to protect their market positions against competitors“. Arguments for its proof are sought throughout the work.
6. In terms of structure, the dissertation is structured in a neat and logical manner. The classic three-link structure is used. In my opinion, it (the structure), the balance between the parts and, above all, their content, present doctoral student Yordan Ivanov in a pleasant light as a researcher and a clearly articulate prospective colleague.

Chapter one, entitled "Theoretical and Methodological Approaches to Marketing Interventions in Global Industries" is an attempt to explore, summarize and integrate theoretical statements regarding the nature of globalization and changes in global markets and industries. It examines the theoretical foundations of positioning strategies in global markets, proposes their classification, and examines the methods and indicators for determining their effects. The concept of marketing interventions in positioning strategies is substantiated, arriving at a methodology for designing marketing interventions in positioning strategies.

Chapter two is titled "Analysis of the Positioning of Global Retailers" and is made up of three paragraphs with an expanded structure. It presents and critically dissects the state and trends of the global retail industry; the positioning of market regions in the global retail industry; analysis of the market positions of the leading global retailers.

Chapter three is entitled: "Designing Marketing Interventions in the Positioning Strategies of Global Retailers," It carries out a rigorous test of the empirical validity of the hypothesis. Its purpose is to analyze and interpret the data in order to confirm or reject the conceptual hypothesis. For these reasons, a precise assessment of the digital performance of global retailers in Bulgaria was carried out; the main factor interrelationships in online shopping by global retailers in our country are revealed; a configuration of intra-enter marketing interventions in the positioning strategies of global retailers is proposed.

The conclusion contains the proven main propositions and conclusions of the dissertation work.

I accept the structure (logic of research) as successful, and the presented assessments and conclusions - accurate and correctly (personally) formulated.

7. The language is clear and scientific, the dissertation is richly decorated with figures and illustrations. Reading the dissertation is facilitated by the fact that the doctoral student clearly presents both the analyzed or criticized foreign ideas, as well as his own views, conclusions and conclusions.
8. Classic and modern, our and foreign scientific literature and information base, a total of 497 volumes, were conscientiously researched. In terms of quantity and quality, the used literature is much more than sufficient. In addition to being vast and time-consuming to study such a gigantic amount of theoretical and informational sources, it approaches or exceeds the standards of „big” PhD theses and the standards of high-end monographs. This effort of the doctoral student is commendable and is not self-serving (for example, to demonstrate literacy), it is a guarantee of the quality of the deductions made and the propositions made.

9. According to the sought-after contributions, which have been proposed by the author of the dissertation, I will allow myself some expansion to introduce a more precise definition. „Modesty beautifies a man” (golden rule), but accuracy leads me to more contributions:

9.1. Based on a study of theoretical sources and facts, a clear picture of the ongoing economic globalization and the response process of deglobalization is proposed. A classification of the forms of globalization has been made; economic globalization and its future are analyzed in depth, the development of global markets and industries - multinational and global - is assessed.

9.2. Major theoretical propositions regarding the nature of marketing interventions in positioning strategies from different perspectives are explored, critically analyzed, summarized and integrated. A typology of positioning strategies in global markets is assessed. and Trout (see Chapter Three). Positioning in the broadest sense is considered: both from the point of view of the positions that the company occupies in the global market and the marketing strategies for positioning that it applies internationally. A toolkit for designing intra-enter marketing interventions in the positioning strategies of global retailers is proposed.

9.3. A comprehensive methodology for evaluating marketing interventions in positioning strategies has been developed and approved. The research methodology uses various methods of marketing analysis and marketing management, specific methods and techniques of marketing engineering (positional analysis), tools for marketing research and statistical methods, incl. factor analysis and application of the Zipf-Pareto power law in the analysis of the dynamics of the positions of market countries and global retailers. It has been examined to what extent a similar methodology has been adopted in intra-entra marketing interventions in the positioning strategies of global retailers.
9.4. An author's conceptual model for a four-stage process for implementing intra-enter marketing interventions in positioning strategies in the global retail industry is proposed.

9.5. An analysis and evaluation of the positioning strategies of global online retailers in Bulgaria has been carried out based on an empirical study conducted among their users, and on this basis proposals for their development and improvement have been made. The conducted research can be useful to marketers, experts and researchers who work in the field of marketing interventions and positioning strategies. The conclusions drawn can serve in making strategic marketing decisions for global and/or national retail markets.

In my opinion, the contributions formulated in this way are correctly and clearly expressed.

10. The publications are a categorical illustration of the fact that this topic has been worked on for a long time (from 2016 to now) and responsibly, that a significant part of the hypotheses and questions have been previously tested on authoritative forums.

11. Upon checking, I do not find facts of plagiarism. It is declared that this dissertation is a completely author's product and in its development no foreign publications and developments were used in violation of their copyrights.

My general opinion is: the doctoral student has developed a dissertation that has a clearly formulated problem, goal and objectives, implying scientific research; the dissertation is proof that the colleague Yordan Ivanov knows the scientific literature and scientific achievements in this scientific field, he basically identified the unsolved or partially solved problems, systematized and critically interpreted the existing theses and in most cases took a reasoned position, correctly interpreted the results from scientific research, he shaped them and presented them intelligibly and logically; has published or presented at conferences and in scientific publications some of the most important results and conclusions.

I claim that even in this form, the dissertation presents in a very good light both the doctoral student and his scientific supervisor, as well as the teaching Department of Marketing.
III. Questions and recommendations

In principle, claims can be made to any dissertation work - big or small, questions can be asked and recommendations can be made for its improvement. With the most collegial attitude, I make a recommendation and ask a difficult question:

1. In the beautiful Bulgarian language, the foreign word retail (Einzelhandel in German, vente ouch détail in French, etc.) has a clear translation, as the PhD student also pointed out. In my opinion, it is right to keep the Bulgarian original, foreigners do not bring added benefits. The same applies to other foreigners.

2. The PhD student has researched a topic that is multidisciplinary. It is no accident that he developed the issue of globalization in detail at the beginning. Globalization is not only a market phenomenon, but also a political and sociological issue, which cannot be considered only from the side of the new ideology - "market economy".

The strong starting positions of the transnational corporations that invaded Bulgaria and the countries of the former "real socialism" are differential rent. Or, as it is called in modern language, their differential rent serves not economic development, but expansion - through takeovers and mergers that destroy local competitors, leaving the local population primarily in the role of wage earners and workers. And further, after securing the local markets, the next scheme comes into play: increasing profits through covert and open increases in profitability. The latter is magnificently illustrated on pp. 86, 100, 102 (for Eastern Europe), etc. (real economic growth is slower!).

From corporate greed (corporate greed - a scientific term) and the use of differential rent suffer all citizens. For example, in the USA, corporate profits after tax deductions (if they are paid at all!) grow many times faster than the general economic growth, income flows from the bottom up.
The situation is similar in Bulgaria, even taking as an example only the banks (mostly foreign by definition).

The big question is: how to protect the national wealth in weak countries like Bulgaria (the issue has been considered since Adam Smith), in particular: what barrier legal „defense walls“ should be placed in front of foreign global retailers and in front of their positioning?

I ask this question not with the expectation of receiving an accurate and detailed answer during the public defense, but above all to provoke the creative thinking of the doctoral student in his future studies.

**V. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION:**

The dissertation work is in a finished form, it meets the high requirements for combining theory, practical research and the resulting conclusions. I suggest that the members of the Scientific Jury accept the work as final, creatively personally created,
reflecting the achievements of the doctoral student at this stage of his scientific development. For this reason, I give my categorical support: a high positive evaluation for the dissertation work for the awarding of the educational and scientific degree „Doctor“ in scientific direction 3.8 „Economics“ and in the scientific specialty „Marketing“ to doctoral student Yordan Todorov Ivanov.

Reviewer:

(Prof. Dr. Boyan Lyubomirov Durankev)

February 20, 2024