

OPINION

Prepared by **Assoc. prof. Ivan Rashkov Marchevski PhD.**, Department of "Marketing" at the Dimitar A. Tsenov Academy of Economics – Svishtov. Member of the Scientific Jury, created by Order No. RD 06-24 from 06/02/2024 of the Rector of University of Economic - Varna, based on art. 9 of ZRAS in the Republic of Bulgaria, art. 30, par. 3 of the Regulations for its implementation and art. 36, para. 3 of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at the University of Economics - Varna and Decision of the FS of the Faculty of Management, Protocol No. 8 from 30/01/2024.

Author: Yordan Todorov Ivanov, PhD student at the department of "Marketing" in the University of Economics – Varna

Dissertation topic: MARKETING INTERVENTIONS IN THE POSITIONING STRATEGIES OF GLOBAL RETAILERS

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE DISSERTATION

A dissertation entitled: "Marketing Interventions in the Positioning Strategies of Global Retailers", an abstract, a reference to scientific contributions and a list of Yordan Ivanov's publications related to the topic of the dissertation are submitted for review.

The *object* of the dissertation is "...positioning strategies of the global retailers". The *subject* of the dissertation is "intra-entra marketing interventions in the positioning strategies of global retail companies". In my opinion, so defined, the object and the subject create different expectations for the content of the dissertation than the real emphasis of the research.

The *research thesis* is that: "marketing interventions in global retailers' positioning strategies are an essential part of firms' 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 enables them to protect their market positions against competitors". The thesis defined in this way poses risks because it implies a comparison between the results of a company/s that makes marketing interventions with another/s where this is not apparent, and such comparisons does not exist in the dissertation.

The *main objective* of the research is: "...to design intra-entra marketing interventions in the positioning strategies of global retailers on the Bulgarian market and to propose a configuration for their implementation.". To achieve this goal, the author sets 6 research tasks.

The work has a volume of 244 non-standard pages of main text which includes an introduction, 3 chapters, a conclusion and a list of references, including 497 titles. There are 43 appendices, as well as a list of abbreviations. *First chapter* has theoretical-cognitive nature. It's includes: 1) the impact of globalization on the market in general and on retailing, in particular, 2) possible strategies for positioning in global markets and 3) the essence of the concept of marketing interventions is defined and is presents "a methodology for designing marketing interventions in positioning strategies". It should be noted that the "methodology" presented in item 3.2. of chapter 1, has the character of a dissertation's thesis plan rather than a methodology to be used

as a tool for managerial impact. *Chapter 2* has two emphases: first, an overview of the state and trends in the global retail and an analysis of the market positions of the main global players (retailers and market countries) and second, a brief history and key stages in the development of one of the biggest global retailers - Amazon. In the *third chapter* the results of an author's field research are presented. The audience of the research are individuals who have experience with the digital channels of some big retailers operating on Bulgaria. Study has two emphasis - first, a general assessment of the digital presentation of the retailers and second, assessment of the customer's degree of satisfaction from their experience with the retailers based on interaction via two alternative forms of selling - shopping through the merchant's "website" and shopping through the merchant's mobile application. The chapter concludes by presenting a conceptual model for making intra-enterprise marketing interventions by global retailers.

ASSESSMENT OF THE STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF THE DISSERTATION

The structure of the dissertation is in line with the standards but in places the internal logic is broken. This can be seen in the first chapter and in point 3 of the second chapter

The relevance of the researched problem is beyond doubt. There are at least *three reasons* for such a conclusion. *Firstly*, the number of scientific publications focused on the changes in the marketing paradigm dictated by the digitalization and the evolution of the e-commerce is persistently high, especially after the Covid-19 pandemic. In this context, offering new tools to improve customer satisfaction and customer experience in retailing would enrich the theory. *Secondly*, the use of an intra-entra approach in carrying out marketing transformations is a prerequisite for increasing firm's strategic competitiveness in a dynamic environment. In this regard, outlining possible strategies and tactics, applicable to retail firms, would enrich both theory and business knowledge. *Thirdly*, obtaining up-to-date empirical data on the attitudes towards e-commerce and the performance of the main retailers, among the Bulgarian consumers, would help the companies in the search for better ways to improve their offering.

The approach chosen by the author in solving the scientific problem is correct. It follows the usual logic of this type of research - an overview of the existing knowledge with an outline of the currently unsolved problems, a methodological part, testing of the developed toolkit and a discussion of the results. The author demonstrates skills in processing and critical analysis of existing knowledge, as well as an ability to develop this knowledge by arguing own theses and models. In the analysis of the results from the field research, advanced statistical techniques were used (MDS, hypothesis testing, correlation analysis, factor analysis etc.) but there are not enough arguments for their choice.

The language and writing style used by Ivan are clear, without unnecessary complications and meet the standards of scientific research, a fact that is now less and less found in similar studies. However, one could expect more precision in the expression and use of some of the categories accepted in the theory, especially those translated from English.

The references are used correctly. In the dissertation, I did not find any signs for plagiarism.

The abstract correctly present the content of the dissertation and provides the necessary clarity regarding the research tasks and the scientific results achieved by the author.

CONTRIBUTIONS

The contributions of the dissertation work can be divided into two groups:

1. Enrichment of the theory via systematizing key trends in the global retail industry (table 2.1 on pages 17 - 20) and the directions of the digitalization's influence on the retailing (pages 73 - 76).
2. The enrichment of the applied knowledge in two directions. Firstly, introducing a model of marketing "intra-entra" interventions applicable for a global retailer (Fig. 1.11, p. 61) and secondly, proposing a methodology for applying this model in positioning strategies of the global retailers (Fig. 1.12, page 62).

CRITICAL NOTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To the current dissertation as well as to any scientific research, recommendations can be made, which most often reflect the point of view of the reader and do not cast doubt on the qualities of the work. What I mean:

1. Although the general approach used in the study is correct, in some places this logic is 'broken'. For example, item 3.2. from chapter two presents the logic of the overall dissertation, not a methodology for designing marketing interventions, which is stated by the author.
2. The author uses bulgarian versions of popular in theory categories, incorrect or with a controversial interpretation (a large part of the categories included in table 2.5. on page 99, "share of wallet" - page 142, the definitions of "global retailer" and "foreign trade" - page 69, the way of calculating the Net Promoter Score - page 144, etc.).
3. In processing of the data from the field research, a wide range of modern statistical tools were used, but the conclusions drawn are debatable. E.g. the conclusions drawn about the validity of the research hypotheses (pp.78, 86 and 108). The use in the field study of a variety of statistical techniques without a clear connection to the research task leaves the impression that the author's purpose is simply to demonstrate skills in the use of modern statistical tools.
4. In the third chapter, after presenting the results from the field research, the author makes conclusions and recommendations which, contrary to expectations, are mostly systematized views of other authors, which fits to a greater extent the literature review in the first chapter.

QUESTIONS

1. In item 2.2.2, the author talks about a "matrix approach" in segmentation and positioning. What is the meaning of this approach?
2. Which of Amazon's "internal" interventions, presented in chapter 2, item 3.2.1., would author define as "marketing"?
3. Which are the author's arguments for assessing audience attitudes toward global retailers based on information about their impressions of interacting with the retailer

- when shopping on the retailer's website and shopping through its mobile app, and how does this serve the research objectives?
4. What content does he put into the concept of "Zipf - Pareto law" (in the literature there are independent "Zipf's rule/law that is related to urbanization and the famous Pareto law or 80/20 rule) and why he evaluates the validity of its main research hypotheses through her.

GENERAL ASSESSMENT AND CONCLUSION

My general impression of the quality of the dissertation is ambiguous, because there are quite a few discussion points in it. At the same time, Ivanov demonstrates skills for systematization of existing knowledge, critical analysis and offering original solutions. The scientific contributions of the dissertation cannot be doubted. The doctoral student's scientific publications are also completely sufficient. Therefore, doctoral student Ivanov has good research skills and capability for writing a scientific text, which is the goal of education at the ONS "Doctor". Based on this I could summarize that the results achieved by doctoral student Yordan Ivanov meet the criteria laid down in the ZRASRB. This gives me the reason to propose to the respected Scientific Jury to award the educational and scientific degree "Doctor"/PhD in the scientific specialty "Marketing" to Yordan Todorov Ivanov.

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per. (EC) 10/6/79

11/03/2024

Assoc. prof. Ivan Marchevski, PhD



Вх. № 220-396 / 18.03.2024

STANDPOINT

by **Bistra Konstantinova Vassileva, PhD, Professor from the University of Economics-Varna**

on a dissertation for the award of an educational and scientific degree PhD
in the field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences,
professional field 3.8 Economics, scientific specialty „Marketing“

1. General information.

This standpoint was prepared by Bistra Vassileva, PhD, Professor from the University of Economics-Varna, appointed as a member of the scientific jury according to the Order of the Rector of the University of Varna No. RD 06-24/06.02.2024. The decision to prepare a standpoint was taken on the first meeting of the scientific jury on 15 February 2024 at 13:00.

The author of the dissertation is Yordan Todorov Ivanov with the topic of the dissertation “Marketing interventions in positioning strategies of global retailers”.

2. General presentation of the dissertation (in accordance with the requirements of Article 27, Paragraph 2 of the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria)

Structurally, the dissertation consists of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, references and appendices in a total volume of 411 pages, of which 189 pages are the main text (three chapters), 9 pages of a conclusion, 40 pages of a bibliography and 43 appendices in a volume of 150 pages. The bibliography includes 497 information sources, of which 35 are in Bulgarian. There are 44 tables and 57 figures in the dissertation. The appendices include the survey that conducted the empirical study, the results of the statistical analyses, including factor analysis, and the application of the Zipf-Pareto power law. The author uses and correctly cites the scientific literature in the dissertation. He builds his conceptual model on the basis of the systematization of fundamental theoretical propositions in the field of marketing interventions and positioning strategies and their modern modifications in the context of global retailing.

The topic of the dissertation fully corresponds to its content and is increasingly relevant in the modern global world. Strong competition in the global retail industry forces companies to implement more technology and innovation to maintain their competitive advantage, market



share and consumers, while looking for opportunities to enter new markets and serve new market segments. On the other hand, the dynamic development of online commerce and commercial activities in social media has intensified competition with the entry of a huge number of new market participants.

The object and subject of the dissertation work, the main research thesis and research objective are defined correctly. The formulated research tasks specify the set goal, namely the design of intra-enter marketing interventions in the positioning strategies of global retailers on the Bulgarian market and configuration for their implementation in six main aspects. The author has justified the main limitations of the study, which demonstrates a good knowledge of the object of study.

3. Publications and participation in scientific forums: compliance with the quantitative requirements under Art. 35, para. 1, items 1-4 of the Regulations for the development of the academic staff at UEV.

According to the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at UEV, the doctoral student's publications and participation in scientific forums must meet the minimum national requirements for awarding the educational and scientific degree PhD, according to Art. 2b, para. 2 and para. 3 of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, if the dissertation work is not published as a monograph.

According to the reference-declaration submitted by the dissertation student for the fulfillment of minimum national requirements for awarding the educational and scientific degree PhD in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, according to Art. 26 of ZRASRB, he has published 2 independent scientific articles, published in non-refereed journals with scientific review and 1 conference paper with a total of 30 points for the indicators in Group D, which corresponds to the quantitative requirements under Art. 35, para. 1, items 1-4 of the Regulations for the development of the academic staff at UEV.

4. Assessment of the structure and content of the dissertation (compliance with the requirements of Article 34, paragraph 2 and paragraph 3 of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff at the University of Economics - Varna), opinion on the correctness of the dissertation abstract and the lexical and stylistic characteristics of the dissertation.



The dissertation work in structural terms consists of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, references and appendices. The chapters are balanced in volume and structure. The author takes the traditional approach to scholarly research, beginning in Chapter One with a thorough and extensive review of theoretical positions in the field of globalization, global industries, and global markets. The essence and typology of positioning strategies in global markets, as well as the models and methods for developing and implementing these strategies, are presented. Chapter One concludes by summarizing the theoretical statements about marketing interventions and developing a methodology for designing marketing interventions in the positioning strategies of global retailers. In Chapter Two, the author has analyzed the positioning of global retailers in the following sections: 1/ market positions of the market regions in the global retail industry, 2/ market positions of the leading market countries in the global retail industry and 3/ market positions of the leading global retailers according to the Deloitte methodology. The author has developed position maps for visualization of the analyzes performed and correctly applied the Zipf-Pareto power law to test the research hypotheses formulated by him. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the Amazon business case, which is focused on the marketing interventions that the firm implements in its positioning strategies in the different phases of its life cycle. In the Third Chapter, based on the methodology for designing marketing interventions in the positioning strategies of global retailers, presented in par. 3.2 of the First Chapter, marketing interventions are designed in the positioning strategies of global retailers in Bulgaria. In the three paragraphs of the Third Chapter, the author has done, respectively: 1/ assessment of the digital performance of global retailers in Bulgaria, 2/ determination of factor interrelationships in online shopping by global retailers in Bulgaria and 3/ design of configuration of intra-enter marketing interventions in the positioning strategies of global retailers.

The abstract is written in accordance with the requirements and adequately reflects the key moments of the content of the dissertation and the results of the conducted empirical research. In the abstract, the author has presented the relevance of the topic, object, subject, main research thesis, aim and tasks of the research, its methodology and limitations, as well as the contributing moments. The content and main parts of the dissertation are presented correctly.

The dissertation student demonstrates good knowledge of specialized terminology and uses it professionally. The writing style is strictly scholarly.



5. Identification and assessment of scientific and scientific-applied contributions in the dissertation.

I accept the dissertation's contributions to the dissertation in the following two directions: theoretical-methodical and practical-applied. The theoretical-methodological benefits of the dissertation include the development of a toolkit for designing intra-entra marketing interventions in the positioning strategies of global retailers. The practical-applied contributions are two: 1/ offering an author's four-stage process for implementing intra-entra marketing interventions in the positioning strategies in the global retail industry and 2/ analysis and evaluation of the positioning strategies of global online retailers in Bulgaria based on conducted empirical research among their users.

6. Detected or undetected plagiarism in the dissertation and the abstract.

In my work on the dissertation and the abstract, I did not find direct borrowings from authors and materials in the scope of global marketing interventions and positioning strategies. I conclude that I have not detected plagiarism in the dissertation and the abstract.

7. Critical notes and recommendations.

As a research supervisor, I am familiar with the doctoral student's work in detail, the process of developing the dissertation work and a total of five versions of it. My recommendations to the author are mainly related to developing the skills to achieve the logical connection of the elements in the relationship "identifying a business problem/market opportunity - defining a research problem and research objective - developing the research methodology - interpreting the results".

8. Questions to the dissertation student.

- (1) Based on the results of the factor analysis carried out in Chapter Three, what kind of marketing interventions in positioning strategies would you suggest to, for example, Ardes.bg?
- (2) Using the sample internal (intra) environment configuration presented in Table 3.30 (p. 184), what positioning strategy do you think would be appropriate for a retailer specializing in the sale of handmade jewelry that targets GenZ in Bulgarian market?



(3) In what way you can identify the critical processes in retailing, the automation of which you talk about in par. 3.3.2 (pp.189-190)?

The questions asked are constructive and aim to stimulate a fruitful scientific discussion during the defense.

9. Conclusion.

The findings and conclusions made in this standpoint allow me to give a positive assessment and vote “YES” for awarding Yordan Todorov Ivanov the educational and scientific degree PhD in the field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, professional field 3.8 Economics, scientific specialty „Marketing“.

Varna

15 March 2024

Standpoint prepared by:

/ Prof. Bistra Vassileva, PhD/

Заличена информация съгласно
ЗЗЛД и регламент (ЕС) 2016/ 679

SCIENTIFIC OPINION

Prepared by: **assoc. prof. Svetla Boneva, Ph.D, CGAP**
University of National and World Economy – Sofia
“International Economy and Policy” Faculty
Department of “International Economic Relations and Business”
Dan of International Economy and Policy Faculty
Scientific specialty 05.02.10: “World Economy and International
Economic Relations”, Professional field 3.8: “Economy”

Object of the scientific opinion: Ph.D thesis in the doctoral program
“Marketing” within professional field 3.8.
“Economy” at University of Economics - Varna,
Department of “Marketing”, Faculty of
“Management”

Prepared on the ground of: Order of the rector of UE-Varna and Decision
of the Faculty council of the faculty of
Management at UE-Varna, Protocol No
8/30.01.2024

Author of the Ph.D thesis: Yordan Todorov Ivanov

Title of the Ph.D thesis: **MARKETING INTERVENTIONS IN THE
POSITIONING STRATEGIES OF
GLOBAL RETAILERS**

1. Information regarding the candidate and the presented materials in the procedure

Yordan Todorov Ivanov has been a Ph.D students in the “Marketing” Doctoral program at the department of “Marketing” at UE-Varna, within the Faculty of “Management”.

UE-Varna has provided the members of the scientific jury with the following documents: the doctoral thesis (dissertation), the annotation of the dissertation, a list

of the publications of the candidate, and a list of the main scientific contributions in the doctoral thesis suggested by the author.

The doctoral thesis consists of an introduction, an exposition in three chapters, a conclusion, a list of references and 2 appendixes. The text covers 411 pages and contains 44 tables, 57 figures and 43 appendixes. The used literature covers a total number of 497 sources in Bulgarian and English languages.

2. General characteristics of the doctoral thesis

The first part of the doctoral thesis presents the theoretical and methodological positions of marketing interventions in global industries and analyzes: globalization and changes in global markets and industries; strategies for positioning in the global markets; and the concept of marketing interventions in positioning strategies. The systematization of the theoretical bases of globalization and the development of global markets and industries comes to the conclusion that retail is one of the most affected industries by globalization changes in recent years. The second paragraph clarifies The relationship between marketing concepts "segmentation - targeting - positioning" has been clarified and the main methods and models in the development and implementation of positioning strategies (PS) in global markets and in particular in the global retail industry have been presented. The term "positioning" is analysed from the point of view of the cognitive understanding of the place that the brand occupies in the minds of consumers as well as from the market positions that the company seeks to occupy in the global market. The theoretical foundations of marketing interventions have been studied in the research pointing out the lack of consensus in the literature regarding marketing interventions. While the term "marketing intervention" presents in Bulgarian and foreign scientific publications and official documents, few authors clarify the concept of marketing interventions in positioning strategies (MIPS).

The second part of the dissertation presents the results of the research on: the status and trends of the global retail industry; the positioning of market regions in the global retail industry; and the market positions of the leading global retailers. The research analyses the trends of the global retail industry over the past decades. Retail trade is subject of research by a number of international organizations. The definition of the National Retail Federation has been quoted (Gaul, 2020), defining global retail companies that should meet criteria such as: to be a retailer or caterer that resells products and services to end users; to carry out direct sales in at least three countries, one of which must not be a neighbouring territory of the country in which the headquarter of the trader is located; and in cases of franchise as a strategy for global expansion, to own the global franchise license of the brand in most countries where the franchise operates. The dissertation analyses the market positions of the leading global retailers engaged in strategic partnerships and acquisitions, implementing innovative technologies, offering more products and services through various sales

channels, and striving to provide personalized customer service to maintain their competitive positions and market expansion.

The third chapter of the dissertation presents an assessment of the digital performance of global retailers in Bulgaria; analyses the factor interrelationships in global retailers' online shopping in Bulgaria and outlines a configuration of intra-entra marketing interventions in the positioning strategies (MIPS) of global retailers. The digital performance of global retailers in Bulgaria has been assessed through an online survey. The author reveal two trends: from all the trends in global retailing, it is clear that customers are the key target of marketing interventions by global retailers; and Bulgaria in particular is a leading retail destination for global retailers investments according to A.T.Kerney's Global Retail Development Index (GRDI). The research analyses factor interrelationships in global retailers' online shopping in Bulgaria as well.

The research presents the configuration of intra-entra marketing interventions in the positioning strategies of global retailers based on the methodology for design of MIPS, the conducted online survey and the analysis of the obtained results. The results of the analysis outline the key factors for the choice of online retailers: the shopping process, the quality of product information, additional shopping services, and size and reputation of the retailer. They are included in the presented configuration as targets of marketing interventions.

The research topic is contemporary and important within the context of the current challenges for today's global business. The doctoral thesis stands out with well formulated research questions, research objectives and research tasks, clearly corresponding to the research topic. The literature sources are well selected, both Bulgarian and foreign authors research are tracked. No critical remarks concerning the structure, contents, style and technical design of the thesis – they demonstrate an excellent level.

3. Evaluation of the research results and research contributions and the importance of the dissertation

The results of the scientific research and publications of the candidate involve scientific and applied results: analysis, methodologies, evaluations, empirical results, practical conceptions in the above-mentioned main directions of the scientific research of the candidate. They fulfil the requirements for awarding the doctoral (Ph.D) degree.

The results of the research are clear and precisely formulated and can be used by other researchers, experts, consultants and analysts. The main contributions that could be outlined in this thesis are three and I accept them as formulated by the author of the thesis. The theoretical and methodological benefits of the dissertation include the development of a toolkit for designing intra-entra marketing interventions in the positioning strategies of global retailers. The practical benefits of the development include: 1) a proposal of an author's four-step process for implementing intra-entra

marketing interventions in positioning strategies in the global retail industry; and 2) an analysis and assessment of the positioning strategies of global online retailers in Bulgaria based on an empirical survey conducted among their users.

4. Evaluation of the publications

The four publications of the author prove his excellent professional preparation and knowledge regarding the main Bulgarian and foreign authors in the field; application of proper research methods; her ability to formulate adequately motivated conclusions and proper recommendations based on her research:

Ivanov, Y., 2016. Offshoring and Outsourcing in Central and Eastern Europe: Opportunities and Perspectives. *Knowledge International Journal*, 15(1), pp. 175-181, Institute of Knowledge Management, Skopje, 2016.

Иванов, Й., 2017. Пазарна динамика на глобалните ритейлъри в Европа. Сборник с доклади от Международна научна конференция „Маркетингът – опит и перспективи“ 29-30.06.2017, том 1, с.697-704, ИУ-Варна, 2017.

Vassileva, B., & Ivanov, Y. (2017). “3G” Business Model for Marketing 4.0: Implications for Circular Economy. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Marketing and Management*, 1(1), 124- 134.

Ivanov, Y. (2022). Analysis of the Positioning of the Market Regions in the Global Retail Market. *KNOWLEDGE-International Journal*, 50(1), 21-30, Institute of Knowledge Management, Skopje, 2022.

5. Evaluation on the minimal national requirements

The materials that have been presented fulfil the minimal national requirements for awarding the doctoral (Ph.D) degree. This is valid for the quality of the doctoral thesis (the full text of the dissertation), the annotation of the dissertation and the list of the publications of the candidate and the indexations of the publications.

6. Critical remarks and recommendations

No substantial critical remarks to the candidate and his research. I have one recommendation to the candidate – to translate in English (after the end of the procedure for the awarding of the academic degree “Doctor”) and to publish in proper foreign editions her doctoral thesis which is currently written in Bulgarian language and defined in Bulgaria. Thus the research will reach a broader audience.

7. Conclusion

The doctoral thesis titled **“MARKETING INTERVENTIONS IN THE POSITIONING STRATEGIES OF GLOBAL RETAILERS”** and the

publications presented by the doctoral student Yordan Todorov Ivanov in the current procedure for awarding the academic degree "Doctor" (Ph.D) announced by UE – Varna cover all necessary requirements for the occupation of this academic degree. The publications of the candidate are original and valuable pieces of research, demonstrating the adequate scientific style of their author.

All of the abovementioned arguments and facts give me the ground to vote "YES" for the awarding of the academic degree "Doctor" to Yordan Todorov Ivanov.

16.03.2024

Sofia

Signature:

(*assoc. prof. Svetla Boneva, Ph.D*)