PRELIMINARY REPORT OF AN EXAMINER ON A THESIS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

The candidate: **Ing. Vu Minh Ngo**

Title of thesis:
Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and the Financial Performance of Small and Medium Enterprises in Dynamic Environment: An Investigation in Vietnamese Tourism Industry

Name of the Examiner: **doc. Ing. Jozefina Simova, Ph.D.**

1. Relevance of the thesis to the need of the study

Technological developments and intense competition in tourism in the recent years have increased the need for companies operating in tourism to concentrate on retaining and attracting the right consumers. Knowing how customers perceive their services, what they considered important and what factors guide and influence their behaviour, is crucial for the success of companies in tourism industry. They need to understand the underlying dimensions of customer attitudes and satisfaction and how to improve them. This puts different requirements on companies that no longer can run their activities and operate in the market in the same way as in the past. Companies are forced to search for new ways to differentiate themselves and gain a better competitive position in order to improve their service perceptions and customer loyalty. Developing a successful strategy in response to dynamic changes in the market thus requires knowledge of the preferences and attributes that consumers use to evaluate services in tourism. This is possible only by having a very good information system that allows not only constant data collection and analysis but also effective and efficient management of business process. CRM is the most common and known concept in terms of strategy, information and management concepts used by many companies to gain competitive advantage. CRM attracts a lot of attention not only among practitioners but also among academics and researchers because it offers many aspects to be explored under different conditions and within various business settings.

2. Study objectives and research methodology

The objectives of the study were clearly and logically stated. The candidate has clearly engaged with the questions addressed and is aware of the research problems associated with the questions. The thesis gives the impression of conscientious and sustained effort. Within the context of such a study the research methodology seems to have been generally well thought out and fit for purpose. The candidate has applied both, quantitative and qualitative, positivistic and phenomenological approach in the research. A considerable amount of background data has been collected to develop the initial sections of the research.

The literature sections are extensive and well researched. The candidate is clearly aware of the value and limitations of the existing literature. The topics addressed in the literature review are broad and related to the presented model. The literature review covers a good deal of

relevant literature and provides a theoretical framework for the study. The sections explain the terms used in the study and in the comprehensive model of CRM.

The presentation of the findings is clear and comprehensive. The statistical analysis and the methods used are adequate. The candidate showed good knowledge and skills in conducted statistical analysis. The model proposed is made possible through the methodological approaches taken to address the stated questions. The model provides an interesting interpretative framework.

3. Contribution of the thesis to knowledge of the subject (science and practice)

The thesis deals with the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and its impact on the financial performance of SMEs operating in the tourist industry in Vietnam. The main objective of the study was to identify the determinants for successful CRM implementation in SMEs. A lot of attention has been devoted to the study of CRM in large companies in B2B market, particularly in the manufacturing sector. The thesis significantly contributes to the present knowledge of CRM implementation under the specific conditions of the SMEs in service sector by developing a comprehensive model that incorporates all important aspects (antecedences, moderators and consequences) that positively influence SMEs´ financial performance. The thesis provides evidence of originality by bringing a dynamic aspect – the change mechanism to the CRM process. As the main driver of a change in a dynamic business environment are customers, the model includes Customer Agility concept that along with Dynamic capabilities and Operational capabilities in business process contributes to the performance and enhances competitive advantage of companies.

4. Literary presentation and succinctness

The structure of the thesis follows the requirements of the PhD thesis. However, some parts of the thesis are conceptually not well structured and arouse some confusion. For example, the theoretical part is related to the proposed CRM model that is presented afterwards in chapter 4 (p. 114-115). As the main topic of the thesis is CRM, one would expect that the theory would be devoted to CRM and other aspects associated with it. Instead, the theoretical chapter starts with neoclassical economy theory. CRM is explained somehow within other theoretical aspects. Theoretical chapter in the thesis should provide a conceptual framework for the study which is not quite a case. It seems that the conceptual framework was developed and the theory has been adjusted to it. The link between the theory and the concept of the study is not apparent despite the fact that the candidate mentions the applicability of the presented theories in the study a few times (p. 33, 39, 52, 55, 57, 59, 61, 64 and 70). I find it confusing. I think that a good, solid theory on CRM and CRM models, concept of a company (financial) performance and performance measurement system, and a critical summary of the existing literature review (the gap in a theory) would have strengthened the (back)ground for the proposed CRM model and the conceptual framework of the study.

The writing style of the thesis is satisfactory. In matters of presentation, the thesis conforms to academic conventions. However, the thesis contains many grammatical and spelling mistakes. A number of typographical corrections are thus required. Using pronoun "we" is not appropriate. Some adjectives and nouns (e.g. important and importance) are used in a wrong way. A limited number of presentational matters might be considered for modification, as well.

5. Publications of the candidate

The list of publications of the candidate consists of 13 titles published in the conference proceedings and journals. The most frequent topic of the papers concerns customer satisfaction and loyalty. The same number of the papers is devoted to the topics related to CRM, corporate performance or tourism. The publication activity of the candidate is relevant to the study and meets the requirements of the PhD study programme.

Overall, this thesis conforms to the standards expected at PhD level and research clearly shows a significant contribution to knowledge. The objectives of the study were fulfilled.

For the reasons stated above, I fully recommend the thesis to be defended by the candidate, and after the successful defense, I recommend awarding the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) to the candidate.

Questions to be answered and discussed:

1. Please explain the reasons behind your methodological approach to the study. In other words, what was your conceptual framework of the research?
2. Explain the specifics of the CRM model between SMEs and large companies, similarly between manufacturing and service sectors. How did you incorporate the specific conditions in your CRM model?
3. Would you consider your CRM model suitable (implementable) in the retail sector? If so, would it require any adjustments?
4. Why did you explore your CRM model in relation to PMS and not to performance indicators?
5. Why did you explore the impact of CRM model on the performance indicators by case study method? Please explain.
6. Why did you use purposive sampling? Could you use a probability sampling?

Liberec, 11 June 2018

doc. Ing. Jozefína Simová, Ph.D.