

## REVIEW

**From Prof. Dr. Silvia Trifonova Trifonova-Pramatarova,  
University of National and World Economy (UNWE), Sofia**

of a dissertation for the award of the scientific degree “Doctor of Sciences”

in Area of Study 3. Social Sciences, Economics and Law

Field of Study 3.8. Economics

**Author: Dr. Norbert Zyczynski**

**Title: „Marginalization of sales chains and vulnerability to financial and image crisis in the context of the implementation of the omnichannel strategy”**

### **1. General description of the presented materials**

By Order № 28/02.03.2021 of the Rector of the Higher School of Insurance and Finance (VUZF University) Assoc. Prof. Dr. Grigorii Vazov I have been appointed a member of the scientific jury for providing a procedure for defense of a dissertation on the topic “**Marginalization of sales chains and vulnerability to financial and image crisis in the context of the implementation of the omnichannel strategy**” for obtaining a scientific degree “Doctor of Sciences” in the Area of study 3. Social Sciences, Economics and Law, field of study 3.8. Economics.

The author of the dissertation is Dr. Norbert Zyczynski, a lecturer at the Rzeszów University of Technology, Poland. The materials submitted by the Center for Scientific Research and Doctoral Studies at VUZF University include all the necessary documents for the procedure, namely: CV in English, copy of the diploma for the acquired educational qualification degree “Doctor”, dissertation in Russian, abstract in Bulgarian and in Russian, summaries of the publications on the topic of the dissertation in Bulgarian and Russian, reference for fulfillment of the requirements of the Law for Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB) and the Regulations for application of ZRASRB, reference of the scientific and scientific-applied contributions.

### **2. Brief biographical data about the candidate**

Norbert Piotr Zyczynski was born on August 20, 1971 in Lesko.

He graduated in Informatics from the Johannes Kepler University Linz – JKU, Austria, in 1998. In 2006 he graduated in Informatics and Econometrics from the Rzeszów University of Technology, Poland, and in 2008 graduated with a degree in Economics from the same university.

In 2015, he defended his doctoral dissertation at the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, Poland, at the Faculty of Economics. The topic of his doctoral dissertation is “Stability and development of medium and large family enterprises in the context of changing economic conjuncture”.

From 2017 until now, Dr. Norbert Zyczynski has been a lecturer at the Rzeszów University of Technology, Poland.

Since 2013 he has been the CEO of COMMIT POLSKA SP. Z.O.O., Poland, which has over 16 years of experience in the IT industry. Since 2000, the company offers complete business IT solutions, high quality services and professional consulting. Prior to that (2000-2002) he was the CEO of TWIN GROUP POLSKA SP. ZOO, Poland, and previously worked as a manager in the IT department of OESTERREICHISCHES ROTES KREUZ OBEROESTERREICH, Austria (1999-2000), and as an IT developer/consultant in two companies CSC COMPUTER SCIENCES CONSULTING AUSTRIA GMBH (1998-1999), Austria and SCHMID INFORMATIK GMBH, Austria (1996-1998).

### **3. Relevance of the topic and expediency of the set goals and objectives**

The topic of the dissertation research is especially relevant given the rapid development of information and communication technologies (ICTs), which we have witnessed in recent years and which quite naturally led to the emergence of new marketing tools that reach the client much faster and effective compared to traditional marketing channels.

As the author rightly points out, the competitiveness of individual retail chains increasingly depends on their willingness to implement and integrate new solutions that meet the changing needs and requirements of customers in the global information economy, among which the transparent integration of all available sales channels plays an important role based on an integrated IT system, called omnichannel. With the advent of new technologies and the spread of the Internet and various innovative applications, the potential customer has access to an almost unlimited source of information about the company and brand, and removes barriers to the spread of negative opinions about products, services, etc., and the speed and timeliness of order processing, which increase the risk of crisis in commercial enterprises. In the age of digitalization and Internet access, any customer using the services or products of a company can easily publish a negative opinion and cause negative behavior among other users, leading to financial problems and loss of image (image crisis).

The author has set as main goal of the dissertation to make an analysis and assessment of the problems with the marginalization of distributed retail chains as a special type of enterprises, characterized by intersectoral marginalization, which makes them particularly vulnerable in a crisis situation. To achieve the main goal of the study, the author tested and confirmed two scientific hypotheses.

### **4. Knowledge of the problem**

The author is undoubtedly very well acquainted with the research problem given his extensive professional experience in using the latest IT technologies, offering system solutions that meet the requirements and expectations of individual customers, consulting and project management.

As the subject of the study are indicated theoretical and practical aspects of the functioning of distributed trade networks in the context of their marginalization and ways of implementing the omnichannel strategy. The dissertation analyzes the possibilities of the distributed retail chains to apply an omnichannel strategy, i.e. methods for integrating traditional and electronic sales channels into a single, multi-channel and transparent customer service system. In the context of conducting anti-crisis policy in enterprises, the implementation of a strategy of this type is a proactive and preventive action that allows obtaining and maintaining a competitive position by using modern technologies in response to rapid changes in the technological environment that shapes consumers' behaviour and expectations, and leads to a synergistic effect.

## **5. Research methodology**

Various research methods have been used for the development of the dissertation work – theoretical and methodological analysis, systematic approach, descriptive analysis, observation method, survey method, empirical analysis, method of analysis and synthesis.

## **6. Characteristics and evaluation of the dissertation**

Structurally, the dissertation consists of the following parts: introduction, three chapters, conclusion, bibliography, list of figures and list of tables. The dissertation is accompanied by an Abstract, which briefly sets out the author's theses and research results. The dissertation is written in Russian, and the abstract is in Bulgarian and Russian. The total volume of the dissertation is 213 pages. The dissertation includes 77 figures and 56 tables.

The bibliography includes numerous literature sources, which, however, are not numbered. They are divided into sections of scientific literature, legislation and Internet resources.

The first chapter of the paper is devoted to the nature and importance of distributed sales, the peculiarities of trade, sales, stages of development of retail trade and in particular the state of retail trade in Poland. On this basis, innovations in retail trade and in particular the omnichannel strategy are derived.

The second chapter is devoted to the analysis of omnichannel in the context of the marginalization of the trade network. The marginal industry is defined as one in which the risk of a crisis is so high that it must be integrated into standard management activities. Used in this context, the word 'marginalization' is referred to an unpleasant and difficult situation for organizations working in such an industry. In this regard, an analysis is made of the marginalization of industry in the context of the company's functioning and its market sales of goods.

Special attention is drawn on crises, including of the image crisis and its impact on online sales and the functioning of the company in the market. The role of the Crisis manual as an element of anti-crisis management, of the anti-crisis headquarters for support of management processes, of the trainings on communications and sales networks, of the anti-crisis structure and PR cells in the company, of the

press secretary as element of the PR cell of the company and the communications manager in the company, is considered.

The criteria on the basis of which this analysis is made are: whether the company operates on the market or the company is in a state of liquidation / acquisition; whether the company trades or does not trade in Internet; whether the company sells or does not sell products; whether the company has or does not have a sales network. This analysis is of some scientific interest.

The third chapter is dedicated to the IT support of the sales network to increase the economic efficiency of omnichannel sales. The issues studied concern a group of Polish companies with scattered multi-channel retail chains. Their structure, architecture and using an interface that supports inter-channel integration, processing of orders from the Internet in the head office and processing of online orders in a stationary store are considered. It is convincingly shown that the ERPwincash system is a modern solution designed to manage the entire processes of production, logistics, distribution and sales in the distributed sales network.

The complex processes of purchases management, warehouse management, production, logistics, as well as dynamic multi-channel sales, together with advanced business analysis allow to the efficiency to be increased and significant savings in the company's operations to be realized.

The conclusion of the dissertation presents the main findings from the study. In general, it can be summarized that the author has managed to achieve the goal of the dissertation and to confirm the formulated hypotheses of the study. The rich professional experience of the author contributes to this.

### **7. Contributions and significance of dissertation for science and practice**

The author's contributions are listed in the submitted Reference of contributions. The contributions are divided into two groups – scientific contributions of theoretical nature and scientific-applied contributions of practical nature. I acknowledge the contributions of Dr. Norbert Zyczynski's dissertation mentioned in the reference – a total of 4 contributions (two of a theoretical nature and two of a practical-applied nature), which are based on a long-lasting study and a relatively large research sample. The conclusions of the study are scientifically justified.

The author proves that his proposal for the implementation of the omnichannel strategy, supported by a properly implemented IT system, would allow for transparent integration of sales through different channels in the studied retail networks, and that every company, even if it has a stable market position, it must constantly monitor market trends and its competitors' actions, and constantly modify its anti-crisis structure.

### **8. Evaluation of publications on the dissertation**

The candidate has presented a total of 25 scientific publications on the topic of the dissertation, including 2 monographs and 23 scientific articles. They are listed in the abstract to the dissertation. Most of them are co-authored – only 3 publications are individual.

The publications are related to the issue of dissertation and show that the candidate's research has received a sufficient degree of popularity among the academic and professional community. However, the summaries of the publications in Bulgarian are given in only 7 publications.

### **9. Assessment of compliance with the minimum national requirements**

From the submitted Reference for fulfillment of the minimum national requirements for awarding the scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences", which the applicant has applied, it is evident that there is an overfulfillment of these requirements.

The total number of scientific publications is 22, including: 1 published monograph in co-authorship; 7 articles and papers published in scientific journals, referenced and indexed in world-famous databases with scientific information; 1 study, published in scientific journal, referenced and indexed in world-famous databases with scientific information; 9 studies published in non-referenced peer-reviewed journals or published in edited collective volumes; 4 published chapters from collective monographs.

8 scientific publications are indexed in international databases, including: 4 publications in SCOPUS and 6 publications in Web of Science, two of which are indexed in both world databases. All publications of the author are directly related to the issues of the dissertation research.

Regarding the citations, in the presented Reference for fulfillment of the minimum national requirements for awarding the scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences", are indicated: 4 citations in scientific journals, referenced and indexed in SCOPUS and 6 citations in Google Scholar. The publications and citations of the candidate's scientific production show that his research has received the necessary degree of popularization.

### **10. Personal participation of the candidate for "Doctor of Sciences"**

There is all the evidence that the dissertation is the work of the candidate himself, the result of his research on issues that are closely related to his professional experience.

### **11. Abstract**

The abstract corresponds to the content of the dissertation. The abstract is prepared in Bulgarian and Russian, and the dissertation – in Russian.

### **12. Critical remarks and recommendations**

It is only formulated the subject of research in the dissertation, while the object of research is missing. The dissertation points out that the industries can be divided into more marginal, therefore, more vulnerable to crises, and less marginal, i.e. less vulnerable to crises. However, I do not think that this is correct financial and economic terminology. In some places in the dissertation, higher-risk and lower-risk industries are mentioned, which is more correct than marginal and non-marginal ones. There are also not enough arguments in the dissertation why the construction industry, energy, finance, pharmaceuticals, automotive, food industry, mining, transport industry, meat processing industry and

others are accepted as marginal industries. And the group of industries categorized as low-risk includes aviation, metallurgy, furniture industry, ICT, chemical industry, insurance, public relations. A single Polish literature source is cited (on page 72 in the dissertation) about which are the marginal industries in Poland.

Notes can also be made from a technical nature to the dissertation – incorrect numbering of the content of the dissertation, lack of numbered literature sources in the bibliography, etc. It would be good for the indicated year on the title page of the dissertation and the abstract to be the same – 2021, not 2020. The candidate has submitted abstracts in Bulgarian only 7 publications on the topic of dissertation out of a total of 23 publications in the Reference for fulfillment of the minimum national requirements.

### **13. Personal impressions**

I do not know the candidate and I have no personal impressions of him.

### **CONCLUSION**

The dissertation on the topic „**Marginalization of sales chains and vulnerability to financial and image crisis in the context of the implementation of the omnichannel strategy**” developed by Dr. Norbert Zyczynski is of interest from a scientific and practical point of view, as it contains important theoretical and practical summaries of the functioning of distributed retail networks in the context of their marginalization and the ways to implement the omnichannel strategy. The dissertation shows that Dr. Norbert Zyczynski has in-depth knowledge and skills in the field of study 3.8. Economics, and demonstrates qualities and skills for conducting independent research. The presented materials comply with the requirements of the Law for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB) and the Regulations for implementation of ZRASRB, and the Regulations for admission and training of doctoral students at VUZF University.

Based on this, I give my **positive assessment** of the research presented by the above-reviewed dissertation and abstract, and **I propose to the esteemed scientific jury to award the degree of “*Doctor of Sciences*”** to Dr. Norbert Zyczynski in the area of study 3. Social Sciences, Economics and Law, field of study 3.8. Economics.

08.04.2021

Sofia

Reviewer: .....

(Prof. Dr. Silvia Trifonova-Pramatarova)