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Type: Motivation letter

Degree: MBA

University: Maastricht School of Management

Dear Members of the Admissions Committee,

I wasn't necessarily fond of business and economics. Being a student at a school specializing in finance, I watched my peers declare with certainty that their future career will somehow be related to business. Such confidence in destiny was not something I could relate to — that is, before I took summer language courses in the UK. I made numerous friends in the process, and a breakthrough moment occurred for me when one of them confessed his familial hardships to me — his parents were going through a divorce. Having several conversations regarding this issue, I was able to comfort my new friend and help him view the situation through various perspectives in order to get past his emotional state. In light of this, I became determined to learn psychology and gain a deeper understanding of human nature — in turn providing valuable support to others.

As a result, I pursued a bachelor's degree in Psychology at the Higher School of Economics. Those four years were full of experiences and people that I will value for the rest of my life — I believe that even basic knowledge of psychological principles can play a crucial role in anyone's personal and professional existence. My favorite topics were related to social psychology, conflictology, and conformism. Social psychological phenomena were often observed through marketing cases, which usually represent a wide variety of social dynamics. For this reason, both my studies and further career aspirations were related to consumer behavior and marketing. In addition, most of the methods used in social psychology were quantitative, allowing me to attain basic skills in analysis and statistics.

Though I was inspired by any and all things marketing, I lacked knowledge of the economic and managerial principles necessary to work in a corporation. As such, I was determined to further my academic ambitions and receive a master's degree in Management from Moscow State University. During my studies, I took on an analyst role at Dixi, one of the largest FMCG retailers in Russia — and subsequently revealed a newfound love for numbers. Upon graduation, I got a job at Adidas, which greatly influenced my personal and professional views — at the heart of the brand's marketing strategies lie the products in and of themselves. Indeed, the focus on products is so strong that my coworkers and I became devout fans of Adidas garb. Before working for the company, I had no idea that clothes (and, of course, sneakers) could be so functional and comfortable. Afterwards, I began to perceive self-expression through fashion as a separate art form — a product plus the context of its owner. In this situation, the product can be perceived as a work of art. Being a loyal consumer and an inherent lover of the arts, I developed a genuine interest in product management.

Along with the marketing component, there are a large number of other aspects in product management that are worthy of fascination. From logistics and finance to quantitative product metrics, I was able to explore these aspects through my work in the buying department, where I eventually got promoted to lead buying specialist. In this role, I supervised the team and led several cross-functional projects, including the optimization of budgeting procedures. Later transitioning to a lead category specialist, I directly managed products in several categories, including those concerning marketing campaign launches for strategic products. My favorite category was basketball — a small category in the Russian market, but one that has grown significantly under my leadership. Basketball has a mix of athleticism and culture: basketball shoes use many cutting-edge technologies, while the Jordan brand, for example, maintains an undeniable importance as the fashion icon of Nike (since then, I have only worn basketball shoes). Overall, Adidas' strong corporate culture and focus on employee development allowed me to develop my expertise in product management, cross-functional collaborations, and strategic planning — in other words, a helicopter view of the total process.

After spending a fair amount of time at Adidas and understanding the cross-functional processes that surround products in retail, I developed an interest in other industries. One of the fastest-growing industries in Russia are e-commerce platforms. To gauge a thorough understanding of the differences between e-commerce and retail, I decided to work at OZON — sometimes dubbed “the Amazon of Russia”. Unlike that of mono-brands, the category manager position in large marketplaces is more focused on commercial relations with suppliers and effective budgeting. Granted, I gained important experience in negotiating with counterparties, which is useful for any managerial position. Because of the analytical skills gained while working at Adidas' buying department, I was yet again able to implement a cross-functional budgeting procedure at OZON. At the same time, I yearned for further career development in product management and marketing — thus, I decided to take on the role of a product marketing manager at Burger King Russia.

My experience at Burger King definitely led to my professional development and allows me to fully immerse myself in the world of product management. Combining elements of retail, digital processes, and a very complex operational structure, Burger King provides challenging, yet very interesting projects. In my capacity as a product marketing manager, I am lucky to lead the creation of a cross-functional process for new product launches and promotions, conduct a/b testing of product hypotheses, and engage in market research and strategic planning. Apart from my core responsibilities, I took a deep-dive into a project with a main goal of evaluating the operational complexity of the Burger King menu. Being a huge fan of burgers, the process of creating, testing, and launching them is something I do with great interest — with that in mind, I was elated when the upper management asked me to take the lead in managing the marketing calendar and its performance. In my current role as a senior product manager, I face complex tasks that I love to solve in tandem with my colleagues — in the end, we release impressive products into the market.

Because I worked in international brands, I often interacted with colleagues from other markets. I have always believed that important experiences and expectations come about from international interactions — the unique context of each market allows for the development of a unique expertise for both parties. At the same time, my experience in the Russian market has allowed me to gain invaluable skills in crisis management. As a result, I have an energized incentive to gain experiences abroad and attain global competence in product management. Surely, in order to keep developing in this area, I need to be in a perpetual state of learning. While I gained metamorphic knowledge during my studies at the Higher School of Economics and Moscow State University, my experience with international companies revealed just how dynamic trends and tools for product and marketing management tend to change. Based on my desire to have modern competencies and globally relevant expertise, I want to continue my education and career path within the framework of the Dutch market.

With this in mind, I find that the Master of Business Administration program at the Maastricht School of Management offers the ideal environment for me to extend my calibre to a global level. By all means, the curriculum's strong emphasis on social responsibility and sustainable development correspond with my personal values and desire to understand how businesses implement necessary changes in response to current trends and issues. Given my previous work experience, the Changing World and Global Responsibility segments particularly caught my eye — when I first came to Burger King, I realized that there was no concrete structure regarding most business processes related to my sphere of responsibility. Coming from Adidas, a company with a strong corporate culture and effective processes, I was able to create and apply cross-functional strategies within my new role. However, in order to have a bigger impact on the inner-workings of larger corporations, I need to attain more relevant skills in leadership and organizational procedures. Additionally, with a goal of becoming a global manager, it is necessary to grasp the diversity aspect of management — while I am highly sensitive and compassionate towards the world around me, I cannot fully understand the challenges faced by other cultures. Coming from a country that has certain limitations when it comes to inclusivity, I feel responsible for deepening my knowledge and skills in communication with those who differ from me.

Moreover, I find that the mentioned courses would provide strong foundational knowledge for the Global Social and Economic Impact Project. I would be especially interested to base my research on water, energy, and climate issues — it is an unquestionable fact that environmental questions are as dire as ever, seeing as the possibility for future generations to live their lives to the end has become nominal. Big corporations maintain large production processes, and the consequences of their ruinous actions are evident even in our flesh — are microplastics in the oceans, air, and now our blood not a reason for concern? For this reason, one of my pivotal aims is to direct the investment trajectory of large corporations towards sustainability trends. Correspondingly, critical insights about consumer behavior and changes within the market often come from research data — as such, I wish to delve deeper into the methods and approaches used to understand the factors affecting market tactics and strategies within the Business

Research Tools segment. With the help of socially responsible marketing, it is possible to not only strengthen the sustainability trend, but also expedite it.

Given that the number of existing digital channels grows with each and every day, I am especially interested in the Digital Economy expertise track. Work in a modern company requires constant growth and learning in order to keep up with the times and maintain the competencies necessary to apply the most innovative practices. The digital sector is one that I have not yet had the chance to work with, though I am fully aware that innovation increasingly relies on digital business. Certainly, the Digital Commerce and Marketing course would provide the necessary tools to expand my expertise. In working with upcoming generations, starting with Gen Z, classic channels of marketing are not the most optimal in terms of ROI. Thus, new digital marketing channels must be developed in companies of even traditional industries. Similarly, given that I worked in retail, I am used to classical means of analysis — Big Data & Business Analytics provides an understanding of how to use analytics in such a way that I attain accurate insights and predictions based on big data. New sectors of the economy are further addressed in FinTech and Industry 4.0 — new, digitized financial instruments are gaining equal footing with current banking methods, means of data collection are rapidly changing, and the automation of production should be at the forefront of consideration in regards to both efficiency and cost-reduction.

I wasn't necessarily fond of business and economics — but then I became familiar with the art of product creation and the manner through which it is possible to affect my surroundings with effective marketing. Granted, I aim to become a global expert and gain cross-market competencies at the Maastricht School of Management.

Sincerely,