



Guidelines of Writing a Bachelor's or Master's Thesis at Marketing in the Digital Economy

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1. Empirical Theses

At Marketing in the Digital Economy, it is possible to conduct an empirical study as part of your thesis. If you wish to write a thesis with an empirical study, you can either apply for one of our topics provided in the topic list or suggest your own research idea. Please note that the application process, dates, deadlines, etc. remain the same independent of whether you conduct an empirical study or not. If you intend to conduct an empirical study, you should obtain ethics approval beforehand. Please contact your thesis supervisor to obtain the protocol for such ethics approval.

Writing Process

2. Supervision

Your thesis will be supervised either by Prof. Dr. Andrea Giuffredi-Kähr or an assistant at Marketing in the Digital Economy. Please remember that a thesis is autonomous work by you as a student. Usually, there will be around 2-3 meetings with your supervisor (can be up to 3-4 meetings for theses containing empirical studies).

3. Proposal

Please submit your proposal to your thesis supervisor within 3-5 weeks after the start date. The scope of the proposal should be around 5-10 pages and contain the following:

- Description of the initial situation
- Problem definition
- Objective and research question of your thesis
- Theoretical foundation (short overview of the main literature you intend to use) and, if ready, already first ideas for a conceptual framework
- Methodological procedure and broad outline of your thesis (can also be a table of contents)
- Timeline of your thesis with milestones

Please ensure that you use correct citation in the proposal and add a reference list.

4. Scope

- Bachelor's Thesis: 30 pages ($\pm 10\%$)
- Master's Thesis (non-empirical): 40 pages ($\pm 10\%$)
- Master's Thesis (empirical): 40-60 pages

The number of pages refers to the main text including tables and illustrations. Cover page, abstract, table of contents, reference list and appendices are not included.



5. Structure

- a. Title page (see [template](#))
- b. Abstract
 - The abstract should consist of approximately 100-150 words. It should provide your reader a first impression of the content and results of your thesis.
 - Specifically, the abstract should give an overview of the problem and research question under investigation, the approach you used to answer the research question, your most important findings, and conclusions.
- c. Table of contents
- d. List of abbreviations / list of figures / list of tables
 - Figures: All the figures used in your thesis must be mentioned in the text and be referred to. Please make sure that your figures are of good quality, numbered consecutively, and that the description is clear and comprehensible. Please consult the following link for further information on how to handle figures in your thesis: <https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/tables-figures/figures>
 - Tables: The same requirements as with figures apply (i.e., mentioning and referencing in the text, good quality, numbering, and description). For further information on how to use tables in your thesis, please see the following link: <https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/tables-figures/tables>
- e. Introduction
 - This first chapter of your thesis pursues the goal to introduce the reader to your topic. This chapter should start with more general information regarding the topic and briefly summarize the most relevant existing literature and theoretical ideas the thesis is based on. It should describe the problem you wish to investigate, outline the research gap, and explain how the findings of your thesis should be relevant to solve the mentioned problem.
 - Based on this initial situation and problem definition, the specific research question should be introduced. Please ensure that your research question addresses an existing research gap and provides new insights in the topic of interest, whereas originality is a plus. Furthermore, it is important to formulate a precise, rather narrow than broad, and comprehensible research question which can be answered with the chosen methods.
 - Subsequently, the introduction should present a short overview of the methods you intend to use and how they help in answering your research question.
 - Finally, it should provide the reader with an overview of the structure of your thesis.
- f. Literature review, theoretical background, and research gap (and hypotheses)
 - For your literature research, please use the [searching facilities of the library of the University of Zurich](#), [literature data bases](#) like [EBSCO](#) or [JSTOR](#) as well as internet search pages like [Google Scholar](#).
 - When conducting a literature review, try to use the most recent articles addressing the topic as starting point to ensure that the literature you base your own work on is current and relevant. It is also highly important to identify and



adequately refer to the seminal papers which first introduced a certain idea or theory in your topic area.

- When concluding your literature review section, please make sure you not only list all the existent work relevant to your topic, but also analyze, question, discuss and summarize it. Based on your literature review you should then be able to identify the existing research gap that you would like to address in your thesis.
- For an empirical thesis, based on your research question, you should formulate hypotheses that you intend to test with the proposed methods. A hypothesis is a prediction of what effect you expect to find. It is derived from the existing literature, existing theoretical ideas, and your own justified assumptions.
- A hypothesis for an experiment predicts that there is some difference between conditions, such that when we manipulate the independent variable (IV), the dependent variable (DV) will change in the way predicted by the hypothesis.
- A hypothesis can be either nondirectional (e.g. the performance of an experimental group (with medical treatment) and a control group (no medical treatment) differs) or directional (e.g. the experimental group (with medical treatment) performs better than the control group (no medical treatment)).

g. Methods

- For an empirical thesis, the method section should provide a detailed description of your study design, the participants, the apparatus, or materials you used in your study and the procedure.
- If you intend to conduct an empirical study, you should obtain ethics approval beforehand. Please contact your thesis supervisor to obtain the protocol for such ethics approval and discuss it with your thesis supervisor.

h. Results

- In the results section, you report your findings. At this point, you don't have to interpret them already as this will be part of your discussion section.
- With quantitative data you normally report two aspects of your findings: (1) descriptive statistics to describe the key features of the data you obtained (e.g., measures of variation, measures of central tendency) and (2) the analyses you ran on these data and the results you received using inferential statistics (e.g., t-tests or analysis of variance). Make sure to provide a detailed description of your analyses and results.

i. Discussion

- In this section, you interpret the results and comment on your findings.
- You provide a general interpretation of the results in the context of other evidence.
- Discuss any possible limitations of the literature you used and of your process.
- The discussion section should answer the following questions:
 - For empirical theses: How well do the findings fit with your predictions? Did you accept or reject the null hypothesis?
 - For empirical theses: What do the findings mean? Discuss your findings here and the acceptance or rejection of the null hypothesis, does this mean that there isn't or is a causal relation or did you



encounter things such as confounding variables, weaknesses, etc. which may allow for alternative explanations?

- How can you answer your research question based on your work?
- What are the implications of these findings? Discuss how your work advances or challenges existing knowledge in research but also current industry practice.
- What would you recommend for future research in this field?

j. Reference list

- Please use APA Style for your reference list.
- Please reference not more or less than the sources you cited in the text.

k. Appendices

- Tables and figures should always be reported in the text. Only include aspects in your appendix which are too long to be reported in the text, such as full questionnaires, or sets of stimuli.
- Reference to your appendices in the text, such as “The full questionnaire can be found in Appendix A.” Every appendix starts on a new page and is consecutively named (A, B, C, ...).

l. Statutory declaration (see appendix A)

6. Formal Criteria

- Layout: left-aligned and hyphenation
- Font and font size: Times New Roman, 12 pt.
- Line spacing: 1.5 lines
- Paragraph spacing: 6 points after each paragraph
- Margins: 2.5 cm (everywhere)
- Header and footer: Each page should contain the title of the thesis (or a short version of it) and your name. The header also contains the page number. The header and footer are in the same font as the main body but may have a smaller font size.
- Footnotes: Please avoid footnotes.

7. Citation and References

Please cite in APA Style and also cite the page numbers of the reference that you used (e.g., Belk, 1988, p. 141).

- General webpage: <https://apastyle.apa.org/>
- Style and grammar guidelines: <https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines>
- APA Style Blog 7th Edition (up to date): [APA Style Blog 7th](#)
- Book: American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association 2020: the official guide to APA style (7th ed.)*. American Psychological Association.

Avoid plagiarism under any circumstances: [Factsheet Plagiarism of the Faculty of Business, Economics, and Informatics](#)



8. Submission

Submission of your thesis takes place on OLAT. No physical copy is required. Please submit the following:

- Full thesis (pdf)
- Thesis without reference list and appendices (pdf)
- [Publication agreement](#)
- [Declaration of independence](#) (should be in your appendix)
- [Declaration of AI usage](#)
- Data (for empirical thesis)
- Data analysis including syntax (for empirical thesis)

9. Evaluation

Your thesis will, among other things, be evaluated based on the following mainly content-related aspects:

- Quality of your literature search
- Critical reflection of the existing literature and your own topic
- Originality of your topic and its relevance
- Contribution of your thesis to the existing literature and industry practice in the respective field
- Quality of your study design, data collection, and analysis (empirical theses)
- Correct interpretation of the results (empirical theses)

Furthermore, the following conceptual and formal aspects of your thesis will be evaluated:

- Conceptual structure
 - Structure of your thesis
 - Adequate objective and scope of the thesis
 - Appropriate use of theoretical principles
 - Independent writing of the thesis
- Formal aspects
 - Language (e.g., comprehensibility, scientific language)
 - Formal design (e.g., correct citation, reference list)

After receiving your grade, you can arrange an optional meeting with your thesis supervisor for feedback and comments.

10. Literature

For further information on how to write a scientific thesis, we recommend the following books (many more available at the university library):

- Einführung in das wissenschaftliche Arbeiten (2012) by Werner Sesink
- Studienarbeiten schreiben (2014) by Georg Disterer ([available online](#))
- Designing and reporting experiments in psychology (2008) by Peter Harris

We wish you all the best in writing your thesis!