

Master Program: Strategic Management
Department of Strategic Management, Marketing and
Tourism
Team Service Management and Tourism*



University of Innsbruck School of Management

Recommendations for Student's Master's Thesis

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Objectives

The main objective of the Master’s thesis is to enable students to engage in self-standing and original academic research (and project work). Students learn how to extract relevant insights from academic literature, (how to design a research project), and are able to draw practical implications from their theoretical and empirical work.

Topics

Topics will be discussed, developed and allocated in the respective Advanced Research Courses of the three Specializations. All topics are theory-based and related to the research focus of the department of Strategic Management, Marketing & Tourism. Master’s theses often also include a practical problem that is to be solved for a company, based on thorough literature review and empirical analysis.

Planning and Time Schedule

Students develop a research plan with clearly defined milestones at the end of January.
 Two hard copies of the Master’s thesis must be submitted at the end of May at the registrar’s office. Additionally, an electronic version on CD-ROM has to be attached to the inside of the front cover of one of the hard copies of the thesis. The presentation and defense of your thesis will be held at the end of June.

Supervision and Interim Reports

Students and academic supervisors are allocated by topic and mutual agreement. The academic supervisor and the student agree on the frequency of meetings, feedback, and when drafts of chapters and sections should be provided, or whether merely a mature final draft should be submitted.



Guiding Principles for Master's Theses

Introduction

- is there a clear research question?
- is the research question interesting?
- after reading the introduction, did you find yourself motivated to read further?

Theory

- does the thesis contain a well-developed and articulated theoretical framework?
- are the core concepts of the thesis clearly defined?
- is the logic behind the research questions/hypotheses persuasive?
- do the hypotheses or propositions logically flow from the theory?
- is literature appropriately reflected in the proposal, or are critical references missing?

Method (for empirical papers)

- are the methods used appropriate for the research questions formulated?
- is the study conducted with methodological rigor?
- is the data collection method consistent with the analytical technique(s) applied?
- are the analytical techniques applied appropriately?

Results (for empirical papers)

- are the results reported in a comprehensible manner?
- is the interpretation of the findings adequate?
- are there alternative explanations for the results, and if so, are these adequately controlled for in the analyses?

Contribution:

- does the thesis make a value-added contribution to existing research?
- do the authors discuss the theoretical and managerial implications of the work?

Tips for Writing

- Provide a logical thread throughout your thesis, i.e. the line of arguments should display a logical and consistent structure. Explanations of epic dimensions are undesirable. All content should be of relevance to the problem under consideration.
- Formulate chapter and section titles precisely. They should accurately reflect the subsequent content.
- Relate your conceptual (“theoretical”) arguments to state-of-the-art literature in the research field of your thesis. A critical analysis and discussion are of particular importance, in the theory section as well as in the interpretation and discussion of the main findings of your empirical part.
- Choose the empirical method for your field study carefully and provide a sound and well-explicated rationale for your choice. Document your data generation and analysis process so as to demonstrate academic rigor.
- Illustrations constitute an effective means of visualizing complex content. They must be understandable and need to be explained in detail. Illustrations that lack content should be omitted. Illustrations must bear a title and the source, if applicable.



- Avoid incomprehensible multi-clause sentences.
- Eliminate spelling, grammatical and punctuation errors through intensive editing of the thesis. If you are not sure about your English skills, consult a proofreader or copyeditor.

Literature, Writing, and Referencing

Academic writing and referencing follows particular and strict rules. Please refer to the following Internet page for guides and useful tips for good writing: <http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/DocGeneral.html>. When you draw on the work of others, you must give proper credit. The key issues with regard to quotations are to clearly mark the intellectual property of others, give exact information relating to the source, and keep consistency of quotation throughout the entire work. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism.

The following Journals are good sources for your Master's thesis:

- *Harvard Business Review*
- *Sloan Management Review* for managerial articles and practical examples
- *Journal of Consumer Research*
- *Consumption, Markets & Culture*
- *Journal of Marketing Research*
- *Journal of Services Research*
- *Journal of Marketing*
- *Marketing Theory*
- *Management Science*
- *Academy of Management Review*
- *Administrative Science Quarterly*
- *Journal of Product Innovation Management*
- *The Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*
- *Journal of Business Research*
- *Journal of Travel Research*
-

Please use parenthetical (in-text) quotation, for example:

(Johnson and Scholes 2005); (Barney 2005, p. 313); Bougon et al. (2006, p. 117) show that ...

Literal quotations of a text passage should be put in quotation marks; a page number of the cited text has to be provided. Omissions in the quoted text can be made apparent by the use of three full stops. Non-literal quotations are not put in quotation marks but referenced at the end of the respective paragraph.



Provide a detailed bibliography where the sources used are listed in alphabetical order by author or origin at the end of the thesis. Example references are given below:

- *Books:*
author(s), with full first name (year of publication), *book title*, place of publication: publisher.
Aldwin, Carolyn M. (1994), *Stress, Coping, and Development: An Integrative Perspective*, New York: The Guilford Press.
- *Journals and Conference Proceedings:*
author(s), with full first name (year of publication), “title of the contribution,” *name of journal*, volume (issue), pages (from-to).
Stokburger-Sauer, Nicola und Wayne D. Hoyer (2008), “Consumer Advisors Revisited: What Drives Market Mavens and Opinion Leaders and Why?,” *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 8 (March-June), 100-111.
- *Edited books:*
author(s), with full first name (year of publication), “title of the contribution,” in: editor(s) with full first name (Ed. or Eds.), *title of the book*, place of publication: publisher, pages (from-to).
Bagozzi, Richard P. and Hans Baumgartner (1994), “The Evaluation of Structural Equation Models and Hypothesis Testing,” in: Bagozzi, Richard P. (Ed.), *Principles of Marketing Research*, Oxford: Blackwell Business, 386-422.
- *Internet sources:*
author(s) with full first name, (year, date of publication), “title of the contribution,” Electronic journal title (if applicable), from source <http://> [date of retrieval].
Vigneron, Franck and Lester W. Johnson (1999), “A Review and a Conceptual Framework of Prestige-Seeking Consumer Behavior,” *Academy of Marketing Science Review (Online)*, <http://www.amsreview.org/articles/vigneron01-1999.pdf> [01.04.2009].

Format

The page range of a Master's thesis strongly depends on whether you apply qualitative or quantitative methodology, or a purely theory-based work. Qualitative findings usually need more space than quantitative ones. On average, our students produce 60 pages *excluding* the cover pages, table of contents, table of figures, list of references and appendices. We accept no more than 80 pages of text including tables and figures.

A standard format for your work is

- DIN A4
- 1.5 line spacing
- Times New Roman 12 point
- 2.5 cm margin



Evaluation Criteria

- Clarity of the problem formulation and objectives of the thesis
- Structure
- Consistency and strength of the arguments brought forward
- Quality of the description and analysis
- Contribution to research and practice
- Soundness of the proposed solution
- Argumentation and originality of the work
- Writing style
- Format

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly....

We invite you to have a look at some Master's theses, which have been written at our department, in order to provide some guidance concerning quality and length requirements of your Master's thesis. Many of them take a different approach. Find out which one is most appropriate for your own purposes.

Oral Presentation and Defensio

The oral presentations and defenses are public oral exams. They take place in front of the official examiner, the thesis supervisors, and - most likely – other Master students. The duration of the presentation and defense is 55 minutes. Of these, a maximum of 25 minutes are allocated to the presentation, 30 minutes to the defense of the thesis. Candidates should concisely present their theoretical framework, the empirical study, and the main findings of their work. Following all presentations, the examiners will decide on the grade of the Master thesis (27.5 ECTS) and the defensio part (2.5 ECTS).