



Research methodology – Master Thesis

Méthodologie MFE

ICN 3

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What is a THESIS?



**In a nutshell, a THESIS
is an answer
to a research question!**

THESIS – PARTS



I. Literature
review &
research
question

II. Data
collection &
methodology

III.
Results &
Conclusion

Why is writing a good thesis important?



- 1) Be able to organize your thoughts in a succinct and synthesized manner
 - 2) Improve your analytical skills
 - 3) Develop critical thinking abilities
- 4) Enhance your knowledge on a particular topic
 - 5) Time management

RESEARCH TOPIC – RESEARCH PROBLEM



- **RESEARCH TOPIC** – a phenomenon or a theme to be studied
- **HOW DO I FIND A RESEARCH TOPIC?**
 - Course materials
 - Internships
 - General interests & observations
 - Can be useful for your future career



SOMETHING THAT MOTIVATES YOU!

RESEARCH QUESTION – HOW TO FIND IT?



- **Develop the attribute of curiosity & doubt (critical thinking!)**
 - Observe, search, explore but do not accept anything as ‘a fact’
 - Keep an open mind – cultivate curiosity to find and develop new ideas
 - Read, skip and skim publications for data, ideas and the motivation behind these ideas

WHAT IS A GOOD RESEARCH QUESTION?



- It has to be precise/concrete but not too narrow
 - You know which direction to take (prevents you from wasting time)
 - ‘A question properly-defined is often half-solved’
 - A wide enough question may allow you to develop alternate solutions
- It has to be a question:
 - How? Where? What? Why? When? Who? ..
- It has to be relevant (for business studies)!
- It has to imply feasibility of the project (can you do it?)!

RESEARCH QUESTION – IT IS IMPORTANT!



- To state the research question precisely in the written report (you cannot assume that other can read your mind!)
- If the research question is stated several times (in the introduction and in the literature review, make sure you state the same question!)
- Occasionally, people talk about the question but never actually state the question!

RESEARCH QUESTION – PIECE OF ADVICE



- Learn how to process information productively
- Before loading your mind with data, other people's opinions, and so-called *facts*, list all possible tentative solutions you can think of for your main problem and any sub-problems.
- **Reasons:**
 - Provides with direction and scope in your search
 - Enables you to utilize imagination before being influenced by prevailing thoughts and theories

SUB-QUESTIONS



- The research question may have sub-questions:
 - Each sub-question should be independent
 - Each sub-question should be related to the research topic
 - Sub-questions should not be many (2 or 3!)

Why is the research question so important?

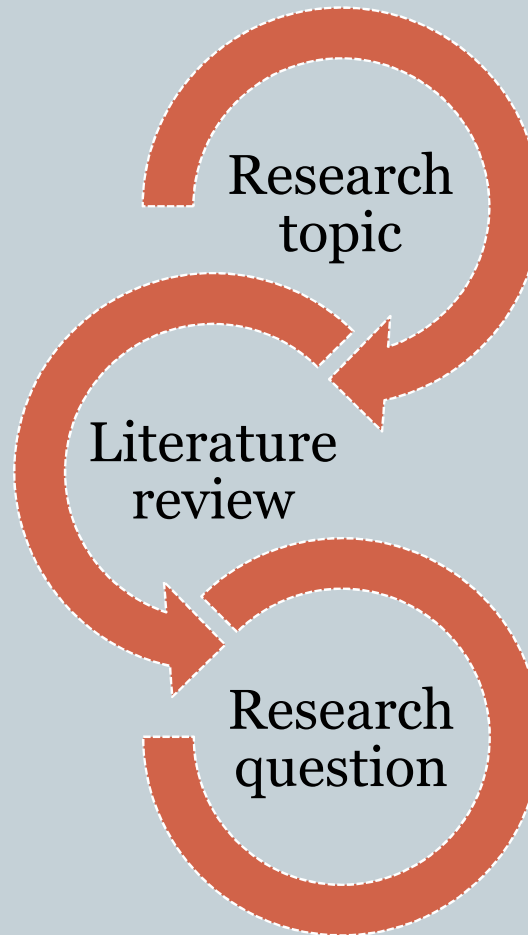


- If you do not identify relevant question → your research has no value!
- If you do not identify the research question well →
 - You will not collect the appropriate data
 - You will not choose the appropriate methodology to analyze the data
 - You will not make correct conclusions

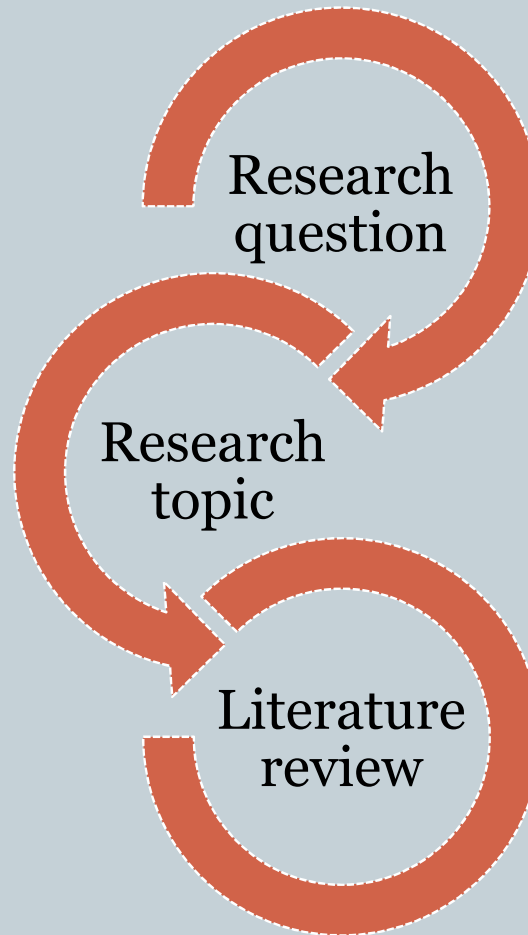


VALIDATE THE RQ WITH YOUR SUPERVISOR!

DEFINING THE RESEARCH QUESTION – CLASSICAL APPROACH



DEFINING THE RESEARCH QUESTION – BASED ON EXPERIENCE



What is a good literature review?



- **Prior work** – what has been already said on the topic?
 - **Collect**
 - ✦ Academic articles (at least 5 in your bibliography)
 - ✦ Practitioners-oriented articles
 - ✦ Books
 - ✦ Videos..
 - **Evaluate** – make a point on how they relate to your question
 - **Synthesize** – summarize the findings of these articles, books, videos
 - **Organize** – the literature review should flow (lead the reader!)

Purpose of the literature review



- Frame the research question → narrow down the topic and formulate a clear question
- Identify relevant concepts, methods, facts
- Position the study (intended contribution)

EXAMPLES..



- RESEARCH TOPIC: internationalization, foreign entry modes
- RESEARCH QUESTION: *What is the entry mode chosen by e-commerce firms when they first decide to internationalize their activities?*

EXAMPLES..



- **RESEARCH TOPIC:** The importance of service quality for customer satisfaction
- **RESEARCH QUESTION:** *How does the service quality impact the financial performance of a company?* (The case of the third-party logistics service providers)

EXAMPLES..



- RESEARCH TOPIC: M&A process
- RESEARCH QUESTION: *What are the consequences of the Sarbanes-Oxely on the M&A transactions?*



THESIS FORMAT



THESIS STRUCTURE



Front page
List of abbreviations
Table of Content
List of Figures/Tables

Introduction

- **PART I: LITERATURE REVIEW**
 - Research question

- **PART II: DATA COLLECTION AND METHODOLOGY**

- **PART III: ANALYSIS**
 - Results of the analysis
 - Contributions & recommendations
 - Conclusion

Appendices
Bibliography

THESIS FORMAT



- **Guide the reader!**
 - Table of content
 - Introduction
 - Connecting paragraphs
- **Times New Roman, 12 pt, 1.5-space, aligned**
- **Body of the text**
 - Avoid copy & paste from different info sources (Compilatio!)
 - Rather interpret and analyze the information

THESIS FORMAT



- **Bibliography**
 - All information sources should be cited!
 - References should be arranged by last name, following the format presented to you in the GUIDE MFE
 - Information accessed online should be cited by providing the last name of the author, the title of the website and the date when it was accessed

Bibliography



- Hair, J. F., Jr., Celsi, M. W., Money, A. H., Samouel, P. & Page, M. J. (2011), « Essentials of Business Research Methods », 2nd edition, M.E. Sharpe, Inc.