

# Guidelines regarding the form, content and language of academic papers

(Bachelor's theses, seminar papers, Master's theses)

Chair of Marketing & Innovation

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## **1. Preliminary comments**

### **1.1 Scope**

The following comments are considered general guidelines for completing a Bachelor's thesis, seminar paper, or Master's thesis (hereinafter known as academic papers) at the Chair of Marketing & Innovation at the University of Mannheim.

### **1.2 Goal of the academic paper**

According to the examination regulations of the Business Administration Department at the University of Mannheim, an academic paper is intended to show that a student is able to independently work through a problem from a specialized area within a defined period of time, according to scientific methods.

### **1.3 Requirements**

The requirement for completing a Master's thesis is successfully completing a seminar in one of the Marketing departments (modules MKT 710, 720, 730, 740 or 750). The prerequisites for attending these seminars are listed by student cohort on the respective chair's informational pages. We also recommend that the seminar paper be written in the department where the student plans to write the Master's thesis. This allows the student to be integrated into the respective department's specific research and projects early on.

### **1.4 Completion period**

- The Bachelor's thesis must be completed within the period established by the Examination Office.
- The seminar paper must be completed within the period established by the department.
- The registration of the Master's thesis can take place each working day and is determined individually.
- The Master's thesis must be submitted four months after the registration date (exceptions may apply depending on the examination regulations). Extensions are only possible in exceptional cases and for urgent reasons, and must be requested in a timely manner.

- The **electronic version** of all academic papers have to be submitted via email until 12:00 (noon) at the final submission date.
- The **printed version/s** of the academic paper has/have to be submitted in person at the Chair or via post until 12:00 (noon) at the final submission date.

### 1.5 Number of copies to be submitted

Bachelor as well as Master theses must be submitted in **duplicate** to the secretary's office. Seminar papers must be submitted as a **single** copy to the secretary's office.

In addition, every paper must be submitted digitally as MS Word document and pdf document. Bachelor- Seminar- and Master theses must be submitted to [kuestsubmit@bwl.uni-mannheim.de](mailto:kuestsubmit@bwl.uni-mannheim.de) (please put the advisor in CC). Thereby, the student's name has to be indicated in the subject line as well as in the file name. The electronic copy must contain the entire paper as a complete file (cover page, lists, text, bibliography, appendix).

For empirical papers (typically Master's theses), the data record and the detailed processes applied during data analysis must be submitted in the format of files in the submission email as well (e.g., as SPSS data file or as Excel file). For further information, please refer to chapter 2.1.2.6 "Appendix".

## 2. Structure of academic papers

The quality of an academic paper depends on its compliance with form, content and language criteria. These are defined in the instructions below.

### 2.1 Format

#### 2.1.1 Basics

Note that the independent preparation of the formal design of a paper on the basis of these guidelines constitutes part of the examination performance.

#### 2.1.1.1 Type of paper and binding for the project

White DIN A4 paper must be used, with one-sided printing. Bachelor's theses and seminar papers must be spiral bound, and Master's theses must have a binding (book format). In addition, Master's theses must have the name of the candidate on the spine.

#### 2.1.1.2 Language

In general, the department prefers papers that are written in English. They can also be written in German.

#### 2.1.1.3 Font and layout

When completing written projects, students should generally ensure a clear, standardized layout and completeness. The following rules apply for font and layout:

- Font:
  - Font: Times New Roman
  - Font size 12 in the text, directories, and appendices
  - At least font size 10 in figures and tables (Possible exceptions can be discussed with the supervisor)
  - First-level headings in 14 point (bold), second-level headings in 12 point (bold), and third-level headings in 12 point (not bold)
- Layout:
  - DIN A4 format
  - Margins: all four margins (top, bottom, left, right) at 2.5 cm
  - No header/footer; exception: page numbers
  - Page numbers bottom right
  - **Double line** spacing for **Bachelor** and **Master** theses, **1.5-line** spacing for **Seminar** theses
  - Spacing before headings has to be set to 12 points
  - Full justification

- Meaningful division into individual paragraphs, consisting of at least three sentences (introductions and transitions before and between chapters are exempt from the three sentence minimum)
- Each chapter at the lowest outline level must contain at least two paragraphs
- Every first line in a paragraph has to be intended by 0.5 cm
- Automatic space after every paragraph: 6 point
- Use automatic hyphenation

#### 2.1.1.4 Figures and tables

It is recommended that students include figures and tables in the text, because these help clarify and/or summarize the material and the context. The placement of figures and/or tables in the text should be chosen accordingly. Especially for figures, be sure that they add value to the text (e.g., by summarizing complex relationships neatly). Otherwise, no figure is necessary.

All figures and tables must be created by the author. Scanned or copied items are not acceptable, even if an original document is used. All figures and tables must be labeled and explained such that their content is understandable. Each figure must have a frame at the top and bottom.

Figures and tables must be integrated into the text. Reference must be made within the text to the figure or table. All of the figures/tables must be numbered, and must have a title that provides information about their content. The numbering can be sequential or by chapter. The number and title must be centered above the figure/table, using capital letters in the numbering.

References must be positioned directly under the respective figures or tables. The reference information follows the word "Source:". In addition, the page numbers of sources must be given.

*Sample reference for an original figure or table:*

Source: Author's own work

*Sample reference for an figure or table that was changed, expanded or supplemented based on its original source:*

Source: Adapted from Kotabe and Helsen (2004, p. 407)

*Sample reference for an figure or table that was taken from the original source without any changes:*

Source: Kotabe and Helsen (2004, p. 407)

A sample figure and table with complete inscriptions, within an academic paper, can be found in Appendix 1 and 2. In addition, it is recommended that you base new figures and tables on current articles in the *Journal of Marketing*.

#### 2.1.1.5 Length

Bachelor's theses should comprise 20 pages of text body, with a 10% tolerance (in other words, they can be 2 pages longer or shorter). Seminar papers should comprise at least 15 pages and a maximum of 20 pages of text body. Master's theses must not exceed the maximum number of 35 pages of text body. There is no 10% tolerance for seminar papers and Master's theses.

In addition, cover page, abstract, table of content, list of figures, list of tables, other indexes, appendix, and bibliography should usually comprise a maximum of 35 more pages in total (Possible exceptions can be discussed with the supervisor)

#### 2.1.2 Organization of the paper

The following schema is recommended for the formal organization of an academic paper:

- [Cover page](#)
- [Abstract](#)
- [Table of contents](#)
- [List of figures](#)
- [List of tables](#)
- [List of abbreviations](#)
- [\(List of symbols, where applicable\)](#)
- [\(List of appendices, where applicable\)](#)
- [Text pages](#)

- [Appendix](#)
- [Bibliography](#)
- [Affidavit](#)

#### 2.1.2.1 Title page

The title page should include the following information:

- the subject of the paper,
- for seminar papers: title of the seminar,
- the Chair of Marketing & Innovation, Prof. Dr. Sabine Kuester,
- the name of the advisor
- the first and last name of the author and his/her address,
- for seminar papers: the number of semesters and specialization
- for Bachelor's theses: cohort
- matriculation number
- statement of place and date of submission

For a sample title page in German and English, see Appendix 3. The information, which is written in italics in the example, must be adapted accordingly by the author. Please also provide the address under which you are registered with the University of Mannheim.

#### 2.1.2.2 Abstract

Every academic paper must contain an "abstract." The abstract should include a brief description of the goal of the paper, the research, the research methods and structure, the findings and the conclusions, and should be no longer than 200 words for Bachelor's/seminar papers and 300 words for Master's theses. Also it should not be a mere repetition of the introduction.

For Master's theses, three to five keywords must be mentioned under the abstract, which shall reflect the content of the thesis as comprehensively as possible. In addition, the research method of the thesis should be mentioned (e.g., qualitative - interviews; quantitative - scenario experiment etc.).



### 2.1.2.3 Table of contents

The table of contents shows all of the components of the paper that follow the cover page, with the respective page numbers. The table of contents is mainly derived from the outline of the academic paper that was created in consultation with the advisor. The outline must be numerical, using a tiered principle. Please note that each sub-section must have at least two outline points (for instance, a sub-point 1.1 must be followed by a sub-point 1.2, etc.). All of the pages except the cover page must be numbered; the abstract and all of the following lists must use Roman numerals (I, II, III, etc.). It is not necessary to include the table of contents itself in the table of contents. The actual text, any appendices, the bibliography and the affidavit must be numbered sequentially using Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, etc.). The individual items in the table of contents must feature the corresponding page numbers. The outline items shown here must then be located on the specified page in the text, together with the outline number and title.

The table of contents must reflect the logical structure, in other words the central theme of the project, and must provide information about each topic. For that reason, it is important to make sure the individual outline items are formulated in a comprehensible and informative way, and to take the following things into consideration.

A logical, cohesive argument will also be reflected in a clear, logical and easy-to-follow table of contents. Outline points on the same level (e.g., 2.1, 2.2, 2.3) must come from the same overarching topic and must be of equivalent significance. It is recommended that Master's theses have no more than four outline levels (e.g., 2.1.1.1), and Bachelor's theses/seminar papers no more than three (e.g., 2.1.1). The outline items should be as brief as possible and written in nominalized style; sub-items cannot be a word-for-word repetition of the overarching point. In addition, the outline items must be formulated in such a way that they represent the content of the section. Furthermore, headings should not be identical to the title of the paper. Appendix 4 (German and English version) shows a sample table of contents.

### 2.1.2.4 List of figures, tables, abbreviations, symbols and appendices

Lists of figures, tables and appendices are required if the paper includes a figure, table, or appendix, respectively. The list of figures, tables, and appendices must include the page numbers where the respective figures, tables, and appendices are positioned. Lists of abbreviations and symbols are only

required to the extent that abbreviations, symbols, etc. were used in the paper and require explanation. Abbreviations that are listed in the Duden dictionary do not need to be included in a list of abbreviations (in German papers, for instance, “f.” for page references that include the following page, “ff.” for references that include more than one following page). In general, please note that abbreviations should be used sparingly for the sake of legibility. Abbreviations must be introduced. In other words, the first time an abbreviation on the list of abbreviations is used in the text, it must also be written out.

*Example:* This Master’s thesis deals with Business-to-Business (B2B) marketing...

If symbols are used in the paper, a separate symbol list must be created, with a brief explanation of the individual symbols. However, this list does not replace the explanation of the symbol the first time it is used within the text. An example of this type of symbol is “n” for the sample size. All of the lists must contain numbering, titles, and page numbers for the respective figures/tables/appendices. Each list must be inserted on a new page.

#### 2.1.2.5 Text pages

The text pages contain the written explanations of the topic, organized by the (sub-)chapters listed in the table of contents.

#### 2.1.2.6 Appendix

The appendix provides additional information that is not needed for an immediate understanding of the text and that would disrupt the overall flow of the paper. Thus it is generally more detailed or supplementary information. For instance, extensive figures such as surveys, literature overviews, statistical evaluations, etc. should be placed in the appendix. Since the individual appendices must always relate to at least one part of the paper, each appendix must be referred to at least once within the text.

Figures or tables that are necessary for understanding the text should not be placed in the appendix simply due to space limitations in the text. Any information that is necessary for understanding the paper cannot be put in the appendix.

For **seminar papers**, the preparation of a **tabular overview of the core literature** on the topic under discussion is a **mandatory** appendix. Exemplary categories for structuring the literature overview table are author(s)/year/journal, research focus, theoretical basis, sample, methodology and key results.

Academic papers that involve analyzing and evaluating data must include this data in a standard electronic format as a data attachment in the submission email (e.g., as SPSS data file or Excel file). Analyses that have been conducted must be replicable. This can, for example, be achieved by providing the SPSS analysis syntax or a word file with a detailed description of the analysis for qualitative analyses as additional files in the submission email. Questionnaires must also be available as an electronic data attachment. Interview transcripts should also be handed in as an electronic data attachment on the flash drive. In the event of any questions in this regard, we recommend consulting your advisor.

#### 2.1.2.7 Bibliography

The guidelines of the American Marketing Association (AMA) and the Journal of Marketing can be used directly for the creation and formatting of a bibliography for seminar, bachelor's and master's theses. Common literature management software (e.g., Mendeley or Citavi) allows easy formatting using the guidelines mentioned above via Word plug-in. The use of this software is strongly recommended.

The bibliography must be organized alphabetically and chronologically by author. Multiple works by one author are organized by publication year, starting with the oldest work. If there are multiple works by one author in the same year, add lower-case letters after the year, beginning with "a". If an author has written a work together with several other authors, this work must be recorded in the bibliography after that author's individual publications. The works with one co-author are cited first, in alphabetical and chronological order, then the works with two co-authors, etc. Even if a work has more than three authors, they must all be mentioned explicitly in the bibliography. Magazines, books, dissertations and online sources are not listed separately, but are integrated into the alphabetical and chronological list. This applies to papers in German as well as in English.

*Example of chronological order in the bibliography:*

Kuester, Sabine (2003)

Kuester, Sabine (2005)

Kuester, Sabine and Silke C. Hess (1994)

Kuester, Sabine and Monika C. Schuhmacher (1990)

Kuester, Sabine and Monika C. Schuhmacher (1995)

Kuester, Sabine, Barbara Broermann and Monika C. Schuhmacher (1995a)

Kuester, Sabine, Barbara Broermann and Monika C. Schuhmacher (1995b)

Kuester, Sabine, Andreas Hildesheim and Monika C. Schuhmacher (1999)

*Sample book citation:*

Homburg, Christian, Sabine Kuester and Harley Krohmer (2013), *Marketing Management*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, London: McGraw-Hill Education.

*Sample magazine citation:*

Kuester, Sabine, Christian Homburg and Silke C. Hess (2012), "Externally Directed and Internally Directed Market Launch Management: The Role of Organizational Factors in Influencing New Product Success," *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, 29(1), 38-52.

*Sample compilation citation:*

Bettman, James R. and Mita Sujan (1987), "Research in Consumer Information Processing," in *Review of Marketing*, Michael J. Houston, Ed. Chicago: American Marketing Association, 197-235.

*Sample online source citation:*

Kuester, Sabine (2013), Research profile for the Department of Gen Bus Ad and Marketing III, (2/26/2013) [URL: <http://kuester.bwl.uni-mannheim.de/de/forschung/uebersicht/>].

Note on the use of online sources: The date given in brackets refers to the date when the information was retrieved from the specified URL. The date when it was retrieved from the website should not be

more than four months before the paper's submission. Especially for online sources, the author is often not known. If this is the case, use o.V. ("ohne Verfasser," author unknown) for papers written in German, and n.p. (no publisher) for papers written in English.

Fundamentally, the author of an academic paper must check the bibliography for accuracy and punctuation before submitting it. Please note that each reference must end with a period. Each citation in the text must be listed in the bibliography. Conversely, each source in the bibliography must be used as a word-for-word or analogous citation in the text.

#### 2.1.2.8 Affidavit

The examination regulations at the University of Mannheim for the Department of Business Administration require an affidavit for each academic paper. An unsigned academic paper will not be accepted. Please note that in addition to the hand-signed print version, digitally submitted versions must **also** include a scanned signature below the affidavit. For works in English, both the English and the German version of the affidavit have to be included. The following wording is to be used:

I hereby declare that I have written this thesis myself and that I have not used any outside help that is not apparent from the information I have provided. I also assure that this thesis or parts thereof have not been submitted by myself or by others as a performance record elsewhere. Literal or analogous adoptions from other writings and publications in printed or electronic form are marked. All secondary literature and other sources are identified and listed in the bibliography. The same applies to graphical representations and images as well as to all internet sources and answers generated by AI-based applications. I further agree that my work may be sent and stored anonymously in electronic form for the purpose of plagiarism checking. I am aware that correction of the work may be waived if this declaration is not given.

Hiermit versichere ich, dass diese Abschlussarbeit von mir persönlich verfasst wurde und dass ich keinerlei fremde Hilfe in Anspruch genommen habe, die nicht aus meinen Angaben ersichtlich wird. Ebenso versichere ich, dass diese Arbeit oder Teile daraus weder von mir selbst noch von anderen als Leistungsnachweise andernorts eingereicht wurden. Wörtliche oder sinngemäße Übernahmen aus anderen Schriften und Veröffentlichungen in

gedruckter oder elektronischer Form sind gekennzeichnet. Sämtliche Sekundärliteratur und sonstige Quellen sind nachgewiesen und in der Bibliografie aufgeführt. Das Gleiche gilt für graphische Darstellungen und Bilder sowie für alle Internet-Quellen und von KI-basierten Anwendungen generierte Antworten. Ich bin ferner damit einverstanden, dass meine Arbeit zum Zwecke eines Plagiatsabgleichs in elektronischer Form anonymisiert versendet und gespeichert werden kann. Mir ist bekannt, dass von der Korrektur der Arbeit abgesehen werden kann, wenn diese Erklärung nicht erteilt wird.

(City, Date)

*[Handwritten personal signature]*

(First- and last name)

A **handwritten signature** is mandatory and cannot be replaced by an electronically inserted signature.

### 2.1.3 Selecting and using literature

#### 2.1.3.1 Finding and reviewing literature

Before writing an academic paper, you will need an adequate selection of literature as well as a correct, critical literature review. Choose a literature framework that is qualitatively as well as quantitatively appropriate. Always use the latest edition of a source, and always use the primary source.

In addition, all literature must be questioned and reviewed for weaknesses and contradictions. This is part of the author's examination performance. In general, an academic paper should represent the current state of research at the time of submission. However, "current" does not mean that only literature from recent years should be used.

When choosing literature, it is important to review the relevance of an article or a book. To do so, always begin by reading the abstract, the introduction and the summary. For a targeted literature search and review, you should choose your research questions early on. These represent the goal(s) of the academic paper, and can be used to create an outline. Research questions as well as the table of contents should be discussed with your advisor. This helps you review the literature in a structured way, and allows you to identify outline items early on for which the literature is still missing.

Statements made within the academic paper must be verified using a variety of literature sources. Sources cannot simply be adopted uncritically, but must be evaluated. However, that does not mean naming as many literature sources as possible; rather, it means that your statements will be diversified using various sources that are relevant to the topic. Here, it should be pointed out that important sources are to be read in the original. Secondary citations are permissible only as rare exceptions, for instance, if the source is not available in Mannheim or through an interlibrary loan. All sources must be read very carefully.

The appropriateness of the literature should be discussed with your advisor in individual cases. Fundamentally, however, the following shall apply (in descending order of importance):

- Articles in renowned international scientific journals (e.g. *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Marketing Research*, *Journal of Consumer Research*, *Marketing Science*, *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, *Journal of Service Research* and all other journals that are relevant for the respective topic) are by far the most important source for the literature selection. The current JOURQUAL ranking by the Verband der Hochschullehrer für Betriebswirtschaft (Association of Business Administration Professors) offers a ranking of business administration-related journals. The fundamental rule of thumb for demonstrating an argument: the more renowned, i.e., the higher the journal's ranking, and current the source, the better.
- Textbooks: Since textbooks simply summarize research results, such references should be kept to a minimum.
- Online sources: Generally, only reputable sources can be used as a reference. For instance, Wikipedia is helpful for gaining a general understanding of the material, but trade journals should be used as sources for the paper.
- Other works on the relevant topic, dictionaries, etc.

The following approaches have proven especially successful when looking for literature:

- Subject catalogues and database searches, for instance of the "Business Source Premier" from EBSCO (<http://search.epnet.com>, accessible through the Mannheim University Library)

- Direct research in scientific journals (e.g. Journal of Product Innovation Management: [http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/\(ISSN\)1540-5885](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/(ISSN)1540-5885); Journal of Consumer Research: <http://www.ejcr.org/>)
- Google Scholar (<http://scholar.google.de/>)
- List of publications by relevant authors, often found on the (university) homepage
- Cross-references: Previously discovered articles as well as (text)books that are relevant to the topic will contain literature references. Some online databases (including Google Scholar) also refer to sources that cite the article you are currently reading.

#### 2.1.3.2 Citations and source information

The guidelines of the American Marketing Association (AMA) and the Journal of Marketing can be used directly for the creation and formatting of a bibliography for seminar, bachelor's and master's theses. Common literature management software (e.g., Zotero or Citavi) allows easy formatting using the guidelines mentioned above via Word plug-in. The use of this software is strongly recommended.

Citations (word-for-word or analogous) are used in the text to refer to other people's ideas. Word-for-word citations should be the exception, and analogous citations should be the rule. In general, all third-party ideas must be indicated as such. Correct citations are an expression of academic honesty.

Analogous (i.e., not word-for-word) citations are indicated in the text using the author and year only. This approach is used for up to three authors, as shown in the examples below. If there are more than three authors per source, only the first author is named, followed by "et al." (e.g., Kuester et al. 2008).

##### *Example 1:*

Unter dem Begriff Befragung kann man ein schriftliches, persönliches, telefonisches oder elektronisches Interview verstehen (Atteslander 2003; Kuester et al. 2008).

The term survey can be defined as a written, personal, telephonic or electronic interview (Atteslander 2003; Kuester et al. 2008).



*Example 2:*

Verschiedene Autoren geben eine Übersicht über Vor- und Nachteile verschiedener Befragungsformen (Atteslander 2003; Czaja und Blair 1996; Schnell, Hill und Esser 1999). [Note: for multiple sources, the list is alphabetical.]

Several authors provide an overview of advantages and disadvantages of different types of interviews (Atteslander 2003; Czaja and Blair 1996; Schnell, Hill, and Esser 1999). [Note: for multiple sources, the list is alphabetical.]

The word-for-word reproduction of a textual passage or sentence from another author is considered a verbatim citation, and must be indicated as such using quotation marks at the beginning and end of the word-for-word citation. When quoting word-for-word, it is necessary to provide a page number.

*Example 1:*

“Nicht der Interviewer, sondern der Fragebogen muss schlau sein.” (Schmidtchen 1992, S. 9)

“Not the interviewer, but the questionnaire must be smart.” (Schmidtchen 1992, p. 9)

*Example 2:*

Atteslander (2003, S. 145) versteht unter dem Begriff Befragung „ein schriftliches, persönliches, telefonisches oder elektronisches Interview.“

Atteslander (2003, p. 145) defines the term survey as “a written, personal, telephonic or electronic interview.”

Word-for-word citations should be used sparingly. These should only be used if an author formulated the material in an especially concise way, or if there is no way to formulate the section in one's own words without losing the meaning. If word-for-word citations are used too often, this may create the impression that the text does not represent the writer's own ideas, but is simply a series of statements by others. This indicates that the literature was not adequately processed.

Verbatim citations and references fundamentally require precise accuracy. Any deviations from the original must therefore be indicated by a comment in brackets, for instance “(author’s note).” Any emphasis in the cited text must fundamentally be included; your own emphasis must be indicated by the comment “(author’s emphasis).” Any omissions are indicated by ellipses, “...”. A word-for-word citation should not be more than two or three sentences long. Finally, every citation should be reviewed to ensure that it does not create a false impression when taken out of context.

As a rule, direct citations from English sources do not need to be translated for papers written in German. Citations in any other foreign language must be translated, and the translator’s name must be given. In general, references are inserted at the end of the clause or sentence, unless they explicitly refer to only one term or part of a sentence. Furthermore, references and citations require the greatest precision, including punctuation and formatting.

## **2.2 Content**

Fundamentally, the following rules apply to the content of an academic paper:

- The logical structure is the most important element of a successful paper, and the key to creating a consistent theme. To this end, you should work with your advisor to create an outline. The instructions in 2.1.1 through 2.1.4 provide guidelines for this. Based on the outline, you will create the table of contents for the academic paper in a timely manner.
- It is important that the individual (sub-)chapters be balanced. The length of a (sub-)chapter should reflect the topic’s significance for the paper as a whole. This will provide a structure for the next steps. Each outline level must contain at least two (sub-)chapters (for instance, 2.1.1 must be followed by 2.1.2).
- Statements must be formulated as precisely as possible. Indiscriminate judgments are to be avoided. It is essential that judgments be well-founded and that the literature be viewed critically. In addition, it is important to continuously reflect on what has been read and what is being written. This makes it easier to discuss the material, and it helps give the paper a logical structure.
- Each main chapter (e.g., 3. Method) should begin by positioning the material to be handled in the chapter. Furthermore, each main chapter should end with a summary of what was

addressed in the chapter. There should be short transitions between the individual sub-chapters to clarify their logical relationship.

- Digressions are not desirable; in an academic paper, they give the impression that the author was unable to work this aspect into the outline. Thus digressions indicate that the structure of the paper is incomplete. The same is true for footnotes.

### 2.2.1 Introductory chapter

An academic paper begins with an introduction that describes the academic and practical relevance of the topic and its derivation, and explains the research questions and the investigation approach. Thus the introduction reveals the significance of the issue in a larger context, and limits the range of the topic. Next comes a derivation of the research question(s) (the question/problem statement), clearly and adequately formulated. Answering this question(s) is the real goal of the paper. Fundamentally, it is recommended that the research question(s) be formulated as early as possible. This will also facilitate a targeted and efficient literature selection and literature review. Also, you should not talk about the findings of the project. Finally, provide an overview of the structure of the paper and possible next steps. In summary, the introduction should answer the following questions:

- What is the problem statement? Why is it important/relevant?
- What will you do to help resolve the problem and answer the research questions?
- Which overarching contribution (to research) does your work deliver?
- How will you proceed in order to achieve the goal of the paper?

Do not simply use “Introduction” as the heading for this point, but choose a heading that describes the content. In general, the introductory chapter must include relevant and current literature sources.

### 2.2.2 Theoretical and conceptual foundations

Every academic paper needs a chapter that discusses the *fundamental* definitions, concepts and theories (in other words, those needed for a general understanding of the approach to the question). This should be provided as early as possible.

Terms should be defined if their content cannot be considered generally agreed. Terms that become relevant in the course of the work must be defined in a timely manner. Definitions should be chosen according to whether they contribute to an understanding of the present issues. If a general,

acknowledged definition is available, this is to be used. It should be noted here that it is generally not productive to list or discuss various alternate definitions used in the literature. Once a definition has been chosen, it should be used consistently throughout the entire paper.

In this foundations part of your work, you need to provide a theoretical framework for the rest of your work that helps to understand and structure your work. Present and discuss only those theories and concepts that you actually apply in the course of your work. Apply these theories and concepts consistently in your work and thus confirm the relevance of the chosen foundations for your research.

### 2.2.3 Literature overview

For literature-based theses (usually seminar and bachelor theses), you need to answer your research questions here. Critically discuss the results of existing literature and present different points of view. If you are writing a thesis based on your own empirical research (usually a Master's thesis), this is the chapter in which you should derive your hypotheses as a starting point for the following empirical part of your thesis.

In the case of literature-based work, this part of the work is devoted to elaborating on and answering the research questions formulated in the introduction. A complete, non-contradictory line of argument and evidence must be developed. The research questions must be addressed fully in the manner initially described. All statements should thus exclusively concentrate on answering the research questions. For each aspect addressed, you should therefore ask yourself whether it contributes to this goal. If a section is not a necessary step in the line of argument, it must be omitted.

If a large number of relevant empirical studies is available, it is recommended that you give an overview of the findings of these studies. This can be done using a table. In the process, you should specifically explain how the findings correlate or contradict. It should also be discussed why the findings are similar or different. For instance, you should investigate how the approaches of the individual studies differ, and whether this explains the differing findings. This critical analysis of the scientific studies in an area is an essential component of the paper.

### 2.2.4 Own empirical work

In the case of empirical work, this chapter deals with and answers the research questions. A complete and consistent chain of evidence must be developed. The research questions must be dealt with in

their entirety in the announced form. All statements are to be directed exclusively towards answering the research questions. The course of the investigation presented in the introductory chapter must be complied with.

Make sure that you provide detailed information and justification for the chosen methodology. It is recommended to address the following aspects and to structure this chapter accordingly by sub-chapters: Method (data sources, data processing approach, information on the measures taken to ensure the reliability and validity of your data) and results (again, attention should be paid to the logical structuring of your results).

### 2.2.5 Summary

Every academic paper must end with a final chapter. Here, you must address the question/problem statement described in the first chapter, since it is important to show what you learned in the course of the paper. The initial question is answered here in order to bring the paper “back around,” so that a balance is created between the question/problem statement and the thematic findings described in the summary. No new aspects should be introduced here.

In order to round off an academic paper, the following aspects should also be addressed:

- A critical discussion of the findings, with reference to existing academic findings
- A summary of the findings and an explanation of the academic contribution
- Implications for research and practice
- Limitations (references to methodological limitations in the validity of the findings, as well as references to questions that were not addressed, but are related to the topic)
- References to further required research, and estimates or predictions about the further development of certain structures and/or processes, where appropriate

## 2.3 Language

An academic paper must consist of a clear sequence of clear thoughts; in other words, trains of thought must be recorded in an unambiguous, meaningful and concise manner. A paragraph should correspond to a train of thought (not a single thought). Clear, objective language is required, with linguistic diversity. Where possible, use short sentences with clear references; in other words, every sentence

must have its “right to exist”. Be sure that every train of thought you begin is completely demonstrated. Also please do not use journalistic or casual writing style.

An academic paper must be free from grammatical, spelling and punctuation errors. If the paper contains multiple such errors, this will result in a deduction of points. When using specialized English terms in a German paper, the following rule applies: if a corresponding German term exists, use that. If not, use the specialized English term. In general, foreign terms should be used only where absolutely necessary.

An academic paper written in German should not use “I” or “we.” This is because in an academic work, any third-party ideas used must be indicated as such. Thus the remaining passages are automatically understood to be the author’s own work. Academic papers written in English can use “we”, but not “I”.

### **3. Examination regulations**

The Bachelor’s or Master’s thesis is part of the examination file. The copyright may lie with the author, but the Department Chair must still be contacted if the Bachelor’s thesis, seminar paper or Master’s thesis is to be published or sold.

### **4. Requirements for ensuring good academic practice**

It is extremely important that all academic papers meet the strictest standards for good academic work. Although this really goes without saying, it should be noted again here that any sources used in the paper must be fully identified, without exception. This also applies to your own work (for instance, using ideas from a seminar paper in your Master’s thesis). If a statement is not clearly assigned to a source, it will be assumed that it is an original idea from the author of the academic paper. In case of doubt, consult your advisor.

Please note that the Chair of Marketing & Innovation will rigorously review each paper for potential plagiarism. If this is found, the student will be subject to examination sanctions as a result of failing to complete the Bachelor’s thesis, seminar paper, Master’s thesis, or else the received university degree may be revoked retroactively.

## **5. Final Note**

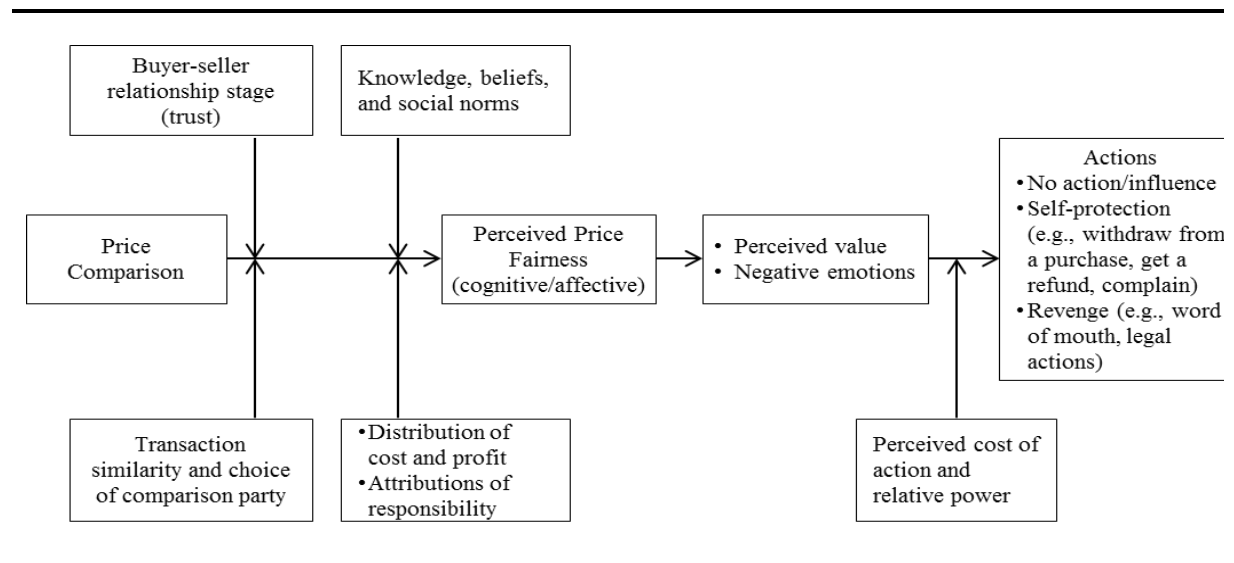
These recommendations on the formal structure of academic papers do not make any claim to be complete. Furthermore, they do not represent generally applicable principles, but rather binding regulations of the Chair of Marketing & Innovation. The personal conversations held with the Department Chair or the Assistant are definitive.

## 6. Appendix

### Appendix 1: Sample figures

FIGURE 1

#### Pricing fairness: A conceptual frame of reference



Source: adapted from Xia, Monroe and Cox (2004, p. 2)



## Appendix 2: Sample table

TABLE 1

## National competition rankings

<i>Country</i>	<i>Points</i>	<i>Ranking</i>
USA	72.6	1
Hong Kong	62.6	2
Finland	60.0	3
Sweden	59.9	4
Belgium	59.1	5
Singapore	58.9	6
Great Britain	58.1	7

Source: adapted from Kotabe and Helsen (2004, p. 36)

Appendix 3: Titelseite (German)

Falls Seminar: Titel des Seminars

Titel der Bachelorarbeit/Seminararbeit/Masterarbeit

vorgelegt am

Lehrstuhl für Marketing & Innovation

Prof. Dr. Sabine Kuester

Betreuer/in:

Titel, Name des Betreuers

Universität Mannheim

von

cand. rer. oec. Vorname Nachname

Straße mit Hausnummer

Postleitzahl und Ort

E-Mail

Matrikelnummer

Falls Seminararbeit: Semesteranzahl Fachrichtung

Falls Bachelorarbeit: Kohorte

Mannheim, Tag Monat Jahr

Cover page (English)

In case of seminar: Title of the seminar

Title of the bachelor thesis, seminar paper, or master thesis.

Chair of Marketing & Innovation

Prof. Dr. Sabine Kuester

Advisor:

Advisor's Name

University of Mannheim

by

cand. rer. oec. First and last name

street and house number

area code and city

email address

matriculation number

In case of seminar paper: number of semester and field of study

In case of bachelor thesis: cohort

Mannheim, Day Month Year

Appendix 4: Inhaltsverzeichnis (German)

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**Appendix 5: Checklist for submitting the academic paper**

- ☐ The outline texts for the initial outline are identical to the outline texts used in the project.
- ☐ All of the elements of the topic are contained in the outline headings.
- ☐ The tables shown in the list of tables are in the text, and each one is referenced within the text. Each table is correctly numbered.
- ☐ The figures shown in the list of figures are in the text, and each one is referenced within the text. Each figure is correctly numbered.
- ☐ The abbreviations shown in the list of abbreviations are in the text.
- ☐ The appendices shown in the list of appendices are attached, and are relevant to the text. Each appendix is correctly numbered.
- ☐ The bibliography is correct and complete.
- ☐ All of the page numbers are correct.

All of the following aspects are addressed:

- ☐ Flowing text with consistent, conscious paragraph formation.
- ☐ The lowest-level outline item in each chapter consists of at least two paragraphs.
- ☐ Definition of the fundamental terms for the topic.
- ☐ Citation style is correct, and page numbers are correct.
- ☐ All of the sources cited in the text are listed in the bibliography, and all of the references in the bibliography are cited in the text.
- ☐ The findings presented in the summary correspond to the research findings announced in the question/problem statement.
- ☐ The initially defined “work approach” corresponds to the actual research conducted.
- ☐ The definitions for individual terms correspond to how they are used throughout the paper.
- ☐ The paper does not contain any passages that are irrelevant or unnecessary for the topic (every sentence is necessary).
- ☐ The line of argument is complete and does not contain any contradictions.
- ☐ The paper is free from pure claims and speculations, value judgments, impreciseness and/or superficiality, triviality, unnecessary repetitions and stylistic defects.