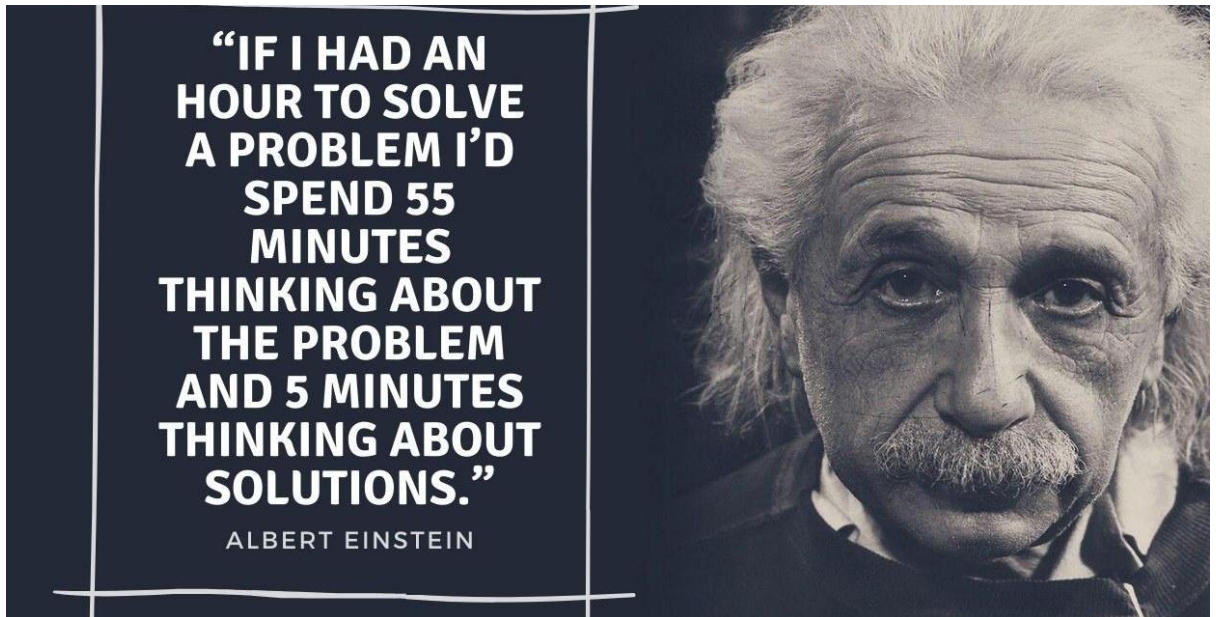


Proposal and Thesis Checklist

Test: If someone asks me what problems students have suggested for their thesis, can I than answer without looking at the documents etc.?



Proposal and Thesis Checklist

	Rating ¹	Observations
Mandatory		
Read the manuals and guidelines		
<i>Italics is from thesis manual</i>		
<i>Only documented agreements and discussions in TMS are binding. Verbal agreements, comments cannot be used in subsequent conversations or issues with the thesis.</i>		
Timing and Deadlines (AB email) CHECK THIS		
If you want to continue with a Master study on 1 September 2026 it is advisable to submit the theses in July. It is also possible to submit in August. However, your supervisor as well as the examiners may take a summer holiday sometime in these months. Coordinate with your supervisor. We want to wrap up the online assessment of the theses before 1 September. Supervisor and second reader will need 2-3 weeks to grade the thesis.		
Reason of the study		
Is the introduction enough to decide for a budget holder to launch the work (clear, 6 times why, so what (relevance), for whom, cause/effect, embeddedness other drivers, the other things of "ceteris paribus").		
How does topic relate to the professional end in mind of the student ?		
Clear what is this contributing that is new and relevant ?		
<i>Is it clear what phenomenon do you study and what questions does the phenomenon pose?</i>		
<i>Why is the phenomenon worth researching from a managerial/societal/academic point of view?</i>		

¹ 0-10 or TBD (to be determined) or NA (Not Applicable) or '?' (unclear) [don't use footnotes in the thesis!]

Proposal and Thesis Checklist

Problem Definition		
Make sure the problem definition is tight and clear (see end of this note)		
Max 5 bullet points summary: elevator pitch - 5 stories building		
Is it clear from the first page what the full story is? This is <i>not</i> a detective novel or a Ted Talk.		
What research has already been done. Double-check-search. Clear theoretical context (marketing and economics science). Which of 4 Ps? B2C/B2B? Behavioral?		
Search in depth for studies about the topic. "Search" the subject and check number of hits and earlier studies (preface with McK, RSM, EUR, HBR, etc.).		
Is this proposal and thesis focused on a sufficiently limited/ focused aspect/issue?		
After literature search (1 st round for proposal and 2 nd round for thesis): which are the unanswered questions . Double-check-with a search.		
Clear historical context of the problem should be defined.		
MECE of problem definition and sub-questions (mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive – Minto (1981) .		
Clear Conceptual Model that is MECE (isolating other factors is difficult). Clear cause and effect.		
Can " ceteris paribus " be defined and made plausible?		
Conclusions and early warning signals from expert interviews .		
<i>Which prior academic studies may help you to solve the problem?</i>		
<i>Provide and describe a few studies that were published on the topic.</i>		

Proposal and Thesis Checklist

Process		
Name files according to the requirement “ MMDDYY Name version ” e.g., 050624 Johanssen version 2.1 This ranks files from most recent to older and is also recommended for your own filing to avoid sending old versions.		
Make sure every document/file has a title and name of the author (example is this document).		
Attention to quality of first page (avoid turning reader off).		
No surveys before testing and theoretically sound. Has a brief pilot been done? Experts? Sufficient literature research?		
Justify the experimental approach , why are these techniques appropriate to answer the question you are posing? <i>Quantitative or qualitative and why?</i>		
B2C, B2B: Marketing is not only consumer but also producer, channel, and intermediaries. Also, business markets.		
Quantitative is <i>relevant</i> sample size driven. Qualitative has advantages (experts and network)		
<i>Do you plan on using secondary data, primary (e.g., survey) data, qualitative data?</i>		
Keep a “ work-log ”, copy paste and use Scribbr for references and quotes in the text.		
No footnotes in thesis.		
No unethical surveys (e.g., children without parents present)		
Raw data must be included (anyone must be able to re-do).		
Survey at the right moment		
Preparing a survey before a robust literature study doesn't make sense.		
The outcome of the literature study should result in either hypotheses or propositions as the required foundation of a proper survey.		
Do not distribute a survey among your target audience unless you have finished your thesis' literature study and you have received the 'go' from your supervisor.		
This also applies to planning and conducting in depth interviews unless these are of an orientating nature to finetune the proposal and direction of the thesis.		
In depth interview is a good test whether you have done a good theoretical review (surpises...)		

Proposal and Thesis Checklist

Changing Proposal		
<p>It is possible that your initial topic must be adjusted or adapted, according to your supervisor.</p> <p>When the revised topic is approved by your supervisor there is no problem proceeding with the thesis and the research related to that revised topic. You don't have to keep the initial topic (nor the initial academic paper you selected).</p> <p>Some proposal/subject definition tips at AZHIN: Writing: Literature Review Basics: Overview. (z.d.). https://azhin.org/cummings/basiclitreview/overview</p> <p>The revised topic must be approved by your thesis supervisor.</p>		

Proposal and Thesis Checklist

(More) Pitfalls		
Special meanings of words/phrases: define and identify clearly and put between quote marks. E.g., "Car Dealer".		
Spelling, grammar. Have someone check.		
Not enough literature review to learn about the topic		
The thesis must be embedded in the wider marketing theory and not just google articles about the narrow subject, to make sure the fieldwork is not about trivialities but builds on what is known.		
Not identifying the context and other influencing variables leads a survey astray also when cause and effect are mixed up (e.g., Goodreads and reading frequency) a proper CM prevents that.		
Too much behavioral psychology (read Donkers (2013))		
No access plan to reach enough relevant respondents		
No relation to marketing or business economics		
Not zooming in on a partial, well-defined problem		
High " so-what? " content		
Too small surveys . Un-ethical surveys. Not representative surveys. No access to respondents (students with Teslas?)		
Don't mess up correlation and causation . Wrong assumptions (Tiggelaar (2018))		
Don't suggest accuracy where there isn't (decimals)		
Geographic limitation <u>should make sense</u> .		
Underestimating time required		
Hypotheses should be binary: yes/no		

Proposal and Thesis Checklist

Lay-out		
Follow the manual		
Lay-out: make it easy to read with paragraphs etc.		
“I” and “me” is allowed but not recommended.		
Literature list: Use Scribbr don't waste time, no links, no footnotes. Careful with (avoid) copying of illustrations, graphs etc.		
Literature		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Ohmae, K. (1982). The Mind of the Strategist: The Art of Japanese Business. New York: McGraw-Hill. — Minto, B. (2009). The Pyramid Principle: Logic in Writing and Thinking. Pearson Education. — Kotler, P. (1967). Marketing Management (15th Edition, Vol. 2020). PH. — Webster, F. E., & Wind, Y. (1972). Organizational buying behavior. Prentice Hall. — Donkers, B. (2013). The Customer Cannot Choose. Erasmus Research Institute of Management ERIM. https://www.erim.eur.nl/healthcare-business/news/detail/3088-inaugural-address-the-customer-cannot-choose/ — Graff, G., & Birkenstein, C. (2007). “They Say/I say”: The Moves that Matter in Persuasive Writing. W. W. Norton. — Jr., W. S., & White, E. B. (2022). The Elements of Style, Fourth Edition. Independently published. — Hasselt, M.J.L. van (2024). 6 STEPS Goals to Action A Strategy Manual. Amazon.nl 		

Proposal and Thesis Checklist

Proposals and Problem Definition: **Almost always too broad!**

Example: What is the current and desired situation related to customer service and customer friendliness for company X according to the employees, managers, and customers?

This research question has many different parts:

1. Current + desired situation: 2 different times.
2. Customer service and customer friendliness: 2 aspects (and overly broad).
3. Customers, managers, and employees: 3 different groups (what about former customers?).

To answer the central question as defined above you need to answer:

2 moments * 2 aspects * 3 populations = 12 areas to address (at least).

Also needs tight definitions: e.g., what is “customer service”?

Part of thesis	Problems	Solutions
Subject/problem definition Problem definition, research questions, central research question	Too wide Ask: Why 6 times Also answer: And therefore...6 times Is this relevant and practical? Would there be someone who would pay for this research? (If you think so, as a test, explain why) Why, As a result of... How, When, For whom? Not original: google the topic from serious sources (EUR, McKinsey, HBR,...) if the subject has been studied to death: it may be death! Think about what you will add and how...	Think along the acronym “FOMSAR”. focus, objective, method, stakeholders, action, results. This is building the conceptual model (mind map) and in the end the management summary: How do you explain in the elevator¹ what you are going to investigate and why? Question: Even though it is a problem <u>statement</u> it is about the question, the problem. Try one concise phrase. If very long add sub questions. Specific: clearly state what is included (and what not) Relevant: is this clearly adding value (to science, society, other)
think about the diagnosis of a GP. See also: https://www.scribbr.com/research-process/problem-statement/ https://hbr.org/2012/09/are-you-solving-the-right-problem https://www.editage.com/insights/the-basics-of-writing-a-statement-of-the-problem-for-your-research-proposal https://www.stratechi.com/problem-statement/		

¹ Not an elevator in a skyscraper: think 10 floors max without stops 😊

Proposal and Thesis Checklist

References in presentation

Minto, B. (2009). *The Pyramid Principle: Logic in Writing and Thinking*. Pearson Education.

AZHIN: Writing: Literature Review Basics: Overview. (z.d.-b).

<https://azhin.org/cummings/basiclitreview/overview>

Donkers, Bas (2013) The Customer Cannot Choose

<https://pure.eur.nl/en/publications/the-customer-cannot-choose/>

Tiggelaar, Ben (2018) 14 Dec 2018 zo vecht je tegen al te snelle aannames NRC van NRC

Slim Leven elke Maandag