Key Success Factors

Theses

Investigation and Report Writing

If I had an hour to solve a problem I'd spend 55 minutes thinking about the problem and 5 minutes thinking about solutions.

~ Albert Einstein
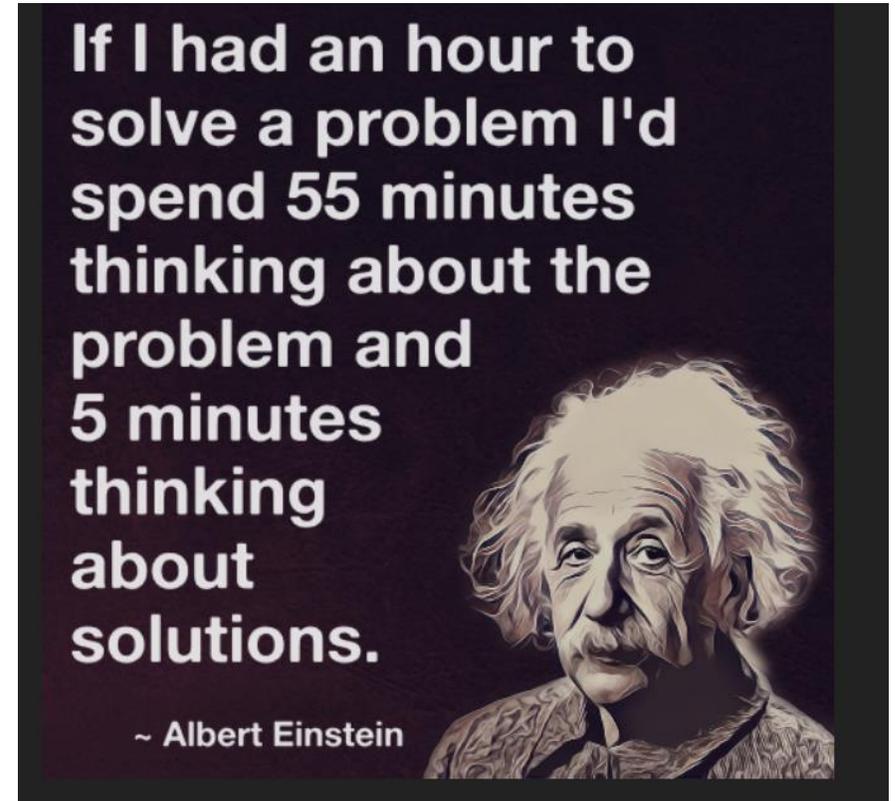
Key Success Factors Thesis and Report Writing

A complete and clear, narrowly defined proposal (avoids getting lost in the woods and complete re-starts.)

Clear definition of the problem (FOMSAR!)

Building on the research already done (McKinsey reports, HBR, etc.)

Real, in the field research (as opposed to non-representative survey samples)

In depth interviews and expert interviews (can still be followed by a quantitative survey)

Theoretical Context explained (part of the literature study: wider marketing theory e.g., customer decision process)

Identifying the context and other variables clear distinguishing cause and effect (e.g., Goodreads and reading frequency)

Sequence: key points > what is written about the subject > hypotheses > research > conclusions (**not a detective novel**)

Proposal Checklist

Marketing is not limited to promotion and advertising

Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and

processes for creating, communicating,

delivering, and exchanging offerings that have

value for customers, clients, partners, and society

at large.

(AMA Approved 2017)

✓ ***Follow all points of the manuals and guidelines*** *Italics is from thesis manual*	
✓ The **introduction** is enough for a budget holder to decide launching the work (clear, 6 times why, so what (relevance), for whom)	
✓ The topic relates to the **professional EIM** of the student	
✓ This study contributes insights that are **new and relevant**	
✓ *The problem is worth researching from a **managerial, societal and academic** point of view*	
✓ The study definition addresses **F**ocus, **O**bjective, **M**ethod, **S**takeholders, **A**ction, **R**eview	
✓ Clear **5 bullet points** summary: elevator pitch - 5 stories building	
✓ **Clear** from the first page what the full story is ✓ This is **not a detective** novel or a Ted Talk.	
✓ Clear what **previous research** was been done. Double-check-search.	

Problem Definition

✓ Clear **theoretical context** (marketing and economics science). Which of 4 Ps? B2C/B2B? Behavioral?	
✓ **Focused** on a limited aspect/issue	
✓ The **unanswered questions** are clearly identified. Double-check-search. ✓ Clarify **historical context**.	
✓ **M**utually **E**xclusive **C**ollectively **E**xhaustive of problem definition and sub-questions.	
✓ Clear **C**onceptual **M**odel that is MECE (isolating other factors is difficult).	
✓ Conclusions and early warning signals from **expert interviews**.	
✓ ***Prior academic studies*** *that may help you to solve the problem are identified and accepted or rejected*	
✓ *Provide and describe a few **studies that were published** on the topic*	

Process

✓ Attention to **quality of first page** (invite reader to continue).	
✓ **No surveys before testing** and theoretically sound. ✓ Do a brief pilot. Interview Experts.	
✓ **"Google" the subject** and check number of hits and earlier studies (preface with McK, RSM, EUR, HBR, etc.).	
✓ **Justify the experimental approach**, using appropriate techniques to answer your question. ✓ *Define Quantitative or qualitative and give reasons why.*	
✓ **B2C, B2B**: Marketing is not only consumer but also producer, channel, and intermediaries. Also, business markets.	
✓ Quantitative is *relevant* **sample size** driven. ✓ Qualitative has advantages (experts and network)	
✓ *Do you plan on using secondary data, primary (e.g., survey) data, qualitative data?*	

Process 2

✓ When in doubt go back to the **customer** (marketing basics)	
✓ **Iterative**	
✓ Summarize, paraphrase, summarize, **link** to next section	
✓ Avoid "**fat words**" - enough, decreasing, negative, "big problem", unusual, "inefficient", .	
✓ When interviewing "**don't lead the witness**"	
✓ Name files according to the requirement "MMDDYY Name version" 042324 Thesis Checklist Van Hasselt version 2.1.doc	
✓ **Word** document files to allow for notes until final **pdf**	
✓ Keep a "**work-log**", copy paste and Scribbr	

Pitfalls

✓ **Special meanings** of words/phrases: define and identify clearly	
✓ **Spelling**, grammar. Have someone check. Short phrases.	
✓ Do enough **literature review** to learn about the topic	
✓ Identify the **context and other influencing variables** to focus a survey make sure that cause and effect are not mixed up (e.g., Goodreads and reading frequency) a proper CM should prevent that.	
✓ Limit the dependence on **behavioral psychology** (read Donkers)	
✓ Have a clear plan how to reach **enough relevant respondents**	
✓ Show the relation to **marketing** and/or **business economics**	
✓ Not having a **second pair of eyes** co-reading the thesis	

Pitfalls 2

✓ High "**so-what**?" content	
✓ Too small **surveys**. Un-ethical surveys. Not representative surveys.	
✓ No access to respondents (students with Tesla's?)	
✓ Don't mess up **correlation and causation**. Wrong assumptions	
✓ Don't suggest **accuracy** where there isn't (decimals)	
✓ Geographic limitation.	
✓ Underestimating time required	
✓ Hypotheses should be binary: yes/no	

Layout

✓ *Follow the **manual***	
✓ Lay-out: make it **easy to read** with paragraphs etc.	
✓ **"I" and "me"** is allowed but not recommended.	
✓ Literature list: Use **Scribrr** don't waste time, no links, no footnotes.	
✓ Careful with (avoid) copying of **illustrations**, graphs etc.	
✓ **Raw data** must be included (anyone must be able to re-do).	

Key Reading

1. Ohmae, K. (1982). *The Mind of the Strategist: The Art of Japanese Business*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

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

3. Kotler, P. (1967). Marketing Management (15th Edition, Vol. 2020). PH.

4. Webster, F. E., & Wind, Y. (1972). Organizational buying behavior. Prentice Hall.

5. 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/

6. Graff, G., & Birkenstein, C. (2007). "They Say/I say": The Moves that Matter in Persuasive Writing. W. W. Norton.

7. Jr., W. S., & White, E. B. (2022). The Elements of Style, Fourth Edition. Independently published.

8. Hasselt, M.J.L. van (2024). 6 STEPS Goals to Action A Strategy Manual. Amazon.nl