



University of St.Gallen

Institute for Marketing and Customer Insight

Theses at the Institute for Marketing and Customer Insight

Instructions for Master, Diploma and Bachelor Theses

Prof. Dr. Sven Reinecke

From insight to impact.

What is the purpose of the thesis?

- The thesis is an examination paper.
- Scientific work with an independent contribution to knowledge on a relevant marketing topic
- Proper literature
- Solid empirical work
- Critical reflective attitude
- Independent project management

What is the role of the supervisor?

- Topic assignment
- To provide feedback and input (literature, empiricism ...)
- Benevolent support and advice (decisions remain with the student)
- Peer review of the work

Not:

- Project manager of the thesis
- Primary contact for partner companies
- Process manager with Dean's Advisory Office

How are topics assigned at the Institute of Marketing and Customer Insight?

- Topic list on Thesis-Portal: <https://imc.unisg.ch/en/teaching/theses/>
- Applications are only accepted via this portal.
- The listed topics correspond to the research interests of the institute's researchers; supervisors are assigned on a topic-specific basis.
- Student can propose own topics via the portal with a detailed description. The probability of acceptance of an own proposal depends strongly on the topic and the workload of the supervisors.
- It is possible that at times no topics can be assigned at all or that they must be limited to certain programs in which the supervisors are engaged.

Can the work be done in cooperation with a company?

- Possible (e.g. for special data access)
- A dual objective can lead to conflicting goals ("One is the servant of two masters."). A consulting project is not a scientific thesis.
- Coordination and agreement with any corporate partners is the responsibility of the student, not the supervisor.
- It is recommended not to include the name of cooperation partners in the title of the thesis.

How do meetings with the supervisors work?

- In principle, a short paper with the following points is to be sent to the referee by e-mail 3 days before the meeting:
 1. problem statement (2 pages)
 2. objectives (main and sub-objectives) (1 page)
 3. procedure/methodology (empirical) (1 page)
 4. preliminary outline (1-2 pages)
 5. concrete questions to the supervisor
- An updated version shall be provided at each follow-up meeting.
- Discussions (depending on the topic) do not always take place with the supervisor, but also with the scientific staff of the institute (doctoral researchers).
- Number of meeting: depending on the need for support, but at least 2 (also possible by telephone or zoom or, if necessary, by e-mail)
- The entire paper will not be reviewed or pre-corrected by the supervisor beforehand.

Which empirical methods are possible?

- The empirical part of the work is the main factor that determines its own scientific merit. Pure literature work is rare (exception: meta-studies).
- The choice of method ultimately depends on the topic and the objective.
- In principle, both qualitative research (expert interviews, Delphi study, focus groups...) and quantitative research (mostly standardized surveys, experiments) as well as a combination are possible.
- The acquisition of a sufficient database (e.g. acquisition of experts, address pool for standardized surveys) is part of the student's project.
- The speakers will give advice on data collection and evaluation instruments (IT-tools).

How comprehensive should the empirical research be?

- subject-dependent, i.e. there is no basic rule
- in qualitative research: it is always important to ask whether further interviews will lead to a gain in knowledge.
- quantitative research (rules of thumb!!!):
- Below $n = 30$, most quantitative methods are generally not useful.
- Multivariate analysis methods often only make sense when $n > 100$.
- Empirical documentation (e.g. transcription of interviews or data analysis) is usually provided in the appendix of the paper; details are to be discussed with the supervisor.

What principles apply to the structure of the work?

- The introduction always consists at least of the problem, the objective and a description of the research methodology, possibly also definitions and - if not apparent from the disposition - an explanation of the structure of the paper.
- The common thread of the paper must be visible through both the outline and the text.
- A "top-heaviness" of the work (very basic presentation of the topic, general and broad market/company descriptions) is to be avoided. The rule is: diagnoses instead of analyses. The focus should be on the central topic.
- Theses are not textbooks. The current state of research is to be presented concisely.
- A critical (!) appraisal of one's own work and a statement of the need for further research are very important.

What is important regarding literary work, language & formalities?

- The principles of the University of St.Gallen (HSG) for the respective Bachelor and Master theses apply here.
- Citation style and scientific documentation should be as taught in the courses on scientific work. Important are:
 - Consistency (a consistent citation method, e.g., APA method)
 - scientific reproducibility
 - Primary over secondary sources
 - Timeliness of sources
 - Consideration of relevant international scientific research
 - Restraint in and critical reflection on internet sources
- (Own) illustrations improve the structure and clarity and increase the own performance.
- Scientific quality of writing is extremely important.

How is the work evaluated?

- The work is evaluated with the help of the evaluation form of the University of St.Gallen (HSG).
- The highest grade is only awarded if the thesis is outstanding in every respect and fulfils the highest academic standards in terms of content and form. It is only awarded with special justification.
- Students can view the report after the official grade announcement by the university at the Institute for Marketing and Customer Insight (request by mail to the supervisor).
- Concerning the passing on of the work to external persons as well as the release of the work for publication, the rules of the Dean's Advisory Office apply.



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