

## THE "FIRST ROUND" OF THE THESIS

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When starting a thesis with me, the first three outputs I ask to be sent to me are:

- 1) The Thesis Proposal**
- 2) An Empirical Strategy**
- 3) The Thesis Table of Contents.**

The **Thesis Proposal** is intended to indicate the central idea around which the thesis revolves. To do so, the student will be called upon to apply the same drafting process applied to the final thesis, even if in this case to a shorter extent. This method, moreover, is based on the drafting method typical of articles published in international journals. This method consists of the following steps:

- 1) The student must first contextualize his idea and write its actual "scope." To do this, it is necessary to start with a survey of the phenomenon to be analyzed and the related literature.
- 2) As a first step, the student will need to find out about the specific topic he or she intends to analyze using generic sources (e.g., Google) and industry sources (The Economist, Financial Times, ...) so as to have a rough idea of the processes that are to be analyzed.
- 3) Next, it will be necessary to find the relevant scientific literature. To do this, it will suffice to use international article databases (e.g. ISI - Web of Science: see Appendix A of this text). Here we are talking about writing half a page, so it is not necessary to do an extensive analysis of scientific articles on the topic, but it will be necessary to compare (and demonstrate that you have compared) your idea with the literature on the topic, at least at the general level.
- 4) Once you understand how the scientific literature has treated the topic in question, you will then need to contextualize the thesis idea within this framework. If the topic you have in mind has already been covered extensively, a lot of data on it has been analyzed, and a solid theory explaining the phenomenon in detail has arisen, the topic will obviously be less attractive. If, on the other hand, your idea concerns a phenomenon that has not yet been fully studied or understood, the resulting thesis will certainly be more interesting, although it will obviously have a higher level of complexity due to lack of studies.
- 5) A useful way to make this process of comparing the student's thesis idea with the literature identified in the previous points simple is to come up with a research gap and then a research question.
  - a. A research gap is a gap in studies on the topic. The student will easily get a sense of whether the idea he or she has, has already been extensively explored or whether some sub-themes or details or processes have not yet been fully analyzed and understood. Indeed, the thesis must aim to close that gap.
  - b. To better define the research gap in terms of the research to be done, it is useful to construct a research question. This is a one- or two-line question that identifies exactly the problem that the thesis proposes to solve, and which obviously starts from the research gap. It follows that it can neither be a question with trivial answers (yes/no) nor be a question with a "consulting" background such as "How to increase sales of company X?"
- 6) It is important at this point to argue in favor of the scientific importance and necessity of answering the identified research question, to exclude unanswerable questions as irrelevant (e.g., "Is the moon made of cheese?"). The research question may be deemed relevant from a theoretical point of view (since it aims to define a missing logical step in the understanding of certain processes) or empirical (since it seeks to describe a phenomenon that is not fully

understood) or both. In any case, it is necessary to keep in mind that the text must be able to convince me that the identified research question is interesting and that the related analysis must be undertaken.

7) As the last part of the Thesis Proposal, it will be necessary to include the bibliography, i.e., the list of texts used to write the proposal

**EXPECTED OUTPUT: half a page (EXCLUDING the bibliography).**

The purpose of the **Empirical Strategy** is to identify and describe the empirical methodology that the student intends to apply. It must obviously be a methodology that has both a high degree of feasibility and an adequate ability to shed light on the topic identified in the Thesis Proposal.

1) Using the Thesis Proposal to focus on the theme of the analysis, the student should indicate the methodology to be followed by choosing among desk analysis (i.e., from documentation available on the Internet and other sources), case studies and interviews (one -Gioia method- or multiple -à la Eisenhardt-), data collection by means of questionnaires or through databases already compiled or through experiments. These are all possible methods, and there are of course many others, in principle all legitimate.

2) The method chosen must be:

a. **Rigorous:** it must be a methodology whose ability to capture the relevant empirical elements must have been objectively proven.

b. **Relevant:** it must be a methodology suitable for providing a comprehensive answer to the research question identified in the Thesis Proposal.

c. **Pursuable** in the time specified by the student to complete the thesis: the student must already be familiar with the chosen methodology. Failing that, he/she must explain how he/she thinks he/she can access it in a timely manner.

d. **Concrete:** it is essential to report in the Empirical Strategy how concretely the student intends to proceed in order to begin as of now to create the conditions for carrying out the analysis. For example: the student is doing an internship in the company whose case is to be developed, the student has access (through her/his network) to the channel through which to distribute the survey, the student can use specific facilities to do the experiments, etc. This point is central: it is necessary to ask, "What empirical research opportunities do I have at my disposal?"

**EXPECTED OUTPUT: half a page**

The **Thesis Table of Contents** is intended to show how the student wants to develop the thesis.

1) The issues raised in the Thesis Proposal should be proposed first, showing how the study of what has been written previously leads to defining the research gap and outlining the research question. Usually the first chapter proposes the identified theory and maps it out, coming to define research gap and research question.

**This chapter is made of "concepts" that lead to the research question**

2) This is followed by a description of the empirical context (e.g., the industry), whose evolution over time and characters directly related to the thesis topic should be highlighted. **This chapter is made of "numbers" that describe the phenomenon the thesis focuses on**

3) The last part of the thesis must propose the Empirical Strategy, describing the method and explaining why it is appropriate. Then, there will be a part reporting the empirical results, comparing them with the research question and conclusions are drawn. **This chapter builds on the empirical evidence to respond to the research question derived in chapter 1 and in the context described in 2.**

**EXPECTED OUTPUT: index**

The purpose of these outputs is to allow me to understand what lines of development the work can take and to allow the student to become familiar with a methodology that provides scientific rigor to the analysis and the text (it is not the only one, but it is perhaps the simplest). This means that the time spent at this initial stage will be time well spent, as not only the content but also the method used can be profitably re-purposed in further thesis work.

## EDITING NOTES

Whenever ideas from others (anyone else's) are used, the source must be cited by mentioning the author's name and the year of publication, e.g., "The concept of common-note practice (Mongelli et al., 2017) is crucial to the study described" then placing the source in the bibliography, for which it is essential to indicate all authors, year, title, journal or publisher (e.g., Mongelli, Rullani, Versari (2017). Hybridization of diverging institutional logics through common-note practices. An analogy with music and the case of social entrepreneurship, *Industry and Innovation*, 24:5, 492-514). When the exact words of others are used they should always be placed in quotation marks indicating the source in parentheses at the end of the sentence. **The final thesis text will be scanned with anti-plagiarism software.**

For the conscious and proper use of **Artificial Intelligence**, I apply the same guidelines as adopted by the Academy of Management. You can find them here: <https://aom.org/research/publishing-with-aom/aom-artificial-intelligence-policy>

## *Appendix A*

### Conducting Web of Science research, for dummies

Starting from <https://www.unive.it/data/10913/>:

1. Log into the "Web of Science" dataset (make sure you have set your browser to access the dataset, possibly with the correct proxy. Instructions can be found at the library pages: <https://www.unive.it/pag/4759/>).
2. Select "Topic" in the drop-down menu where "All Fields" appears and then enter a keyword next to it (e.g., "Project Management," using quotation marks to search for whole sentences). Perform the search. Generally, this filter will not be sufficient for an excellent search. Then:
3. Refine the search in the light blue box on the left by marking the subject area of interest, the "Web of Science Categories" (e.g., "Business" or "Management," possibly click on "more options").
4. If needed, refine the search in the box on the left by adding a new "keyword" so as to skim the previous results (e.g., "Aerospace").
5. Refine the search further by selecting, again in the light blue box, Document types: "Articles."
6. At this point if the search produces a reasonable number of articles, I encourage you to read them all.
7. Otherwise, if there are still many articles, I recommend that you "sort the search" on the right where you find the "Sort by": checkmark FIRST by Publication date (newest to oldest), marking the most interesting ones among the first screens (say the first 40-50), THEN by Times Cited (highest to lowest) and again looking only at those that appear in the first screens (again the first 40-50). That way, in addition to reading the newest ones, you will also read the ones that are most cited, so they had the most impact on subsequent studies.
8. Try to see if some of the tools offered by the site might be useful for you to further focus on the most interesting articles, such as the "Highly Cited in Field" options on the left or by clicking on a relevant article and then going to see which articles cite the article you are viewing (in the "Citation Network" section on the right, click on the number indicated for "Times Cited").
9. Finally, again in the above box, select "Publication/Source Titles" and click on "more options." This will open a page where you can select journal titles and select the ones most relevant to the topic you are interested in, or the most important ones.

The major management journals are:

**Academy of Management Annals (useful for topic overviews)**

**Academy of Management Journal (the main one)**

**Academy of Management Review (theoretical only)**

**Administrative Science Quarterly (sociological).**

**Management Science (very technical)**

**Strategic management Journal**

**Organization Science**

**British Journal of Management**

**Journal of Management Studies**

**Journal of Management**

*For a thesis in Strategies also look at*

**Strategy Science**

*For a thesis on Innovation also look at*

**Research Policy**

**Journal of Product Innovation Management**

**Industrial and Corporate Change**

*For a dissertation on Entrepreneurship also look at.*

**Journal of Business Venturing**

**Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice**

**Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal**

*For a thesis in Marketing also look at.*

**Marketing Science**

**International Journal of Research in Marketing**

**Journal of Consumer's Psychology**

**Journal of Consumer's Research**

**Consumptions, Markets and Culture**

**Journal of Marketing**

**Journal of Marketing Research**

**Journal of Academy of Marketing Science**

*For a thesis in Operations also look at.*

**International Journal of Operations and Production Management**

**Production and Operations Management**

**Journal of Operations Management**

**European Journal of Operational Research**

**Operations Research**

*For a thesis in International Business also look at.*

**Journal of World Business (formerly Columbia JWB)**

**Journal of International Business Studies**

*For a dissertation in Organizational Studies also look at.*

**Human Relations**

**Leadership Quarterly**

**Organization Studies**

**Organizational Research Methods**

*For a dissertation in Economic Geography also look at.*

**Economic Geography**

**Journal of Economic Geography**

*For a dissertation on issues related to Social Entrepreneurship also look at.*

**Business Ethics Quarterly**

**Journal of Business Ethics**

*For a thesis on topics related to Digital Technologies also look at.*

**Information Systems Research**

**MIS Quarterly**

**Journal of Management Information Systems**

**Journal of the Association of Information Systems**

*For a dissertation on topics related to Public Administration also look at.*

**Journal of Public Administration: Research and Theory**

**Public Administration: An International Quarterly**

**Public Administration Review**

*For a dissertation on specific industries also look at*

**Annals of Tourism Research**

**Tourism Management**

**Journal of Travel Research**

**Journal of Service Research**

**Energy policy**