

Master Thesis Guide

Master of Marketing Management

Master of Marketing Analytics

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TiSEM
Tilburg University

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1 Introduction

In the second semester of your MSc program, you write your MSc Thesis. The main goal is that you apply the knowledge and insights from your marketing (analytics) courses to a real-life marketing problem. The topic of your MSc Thesis can be inspired by a practical problem of a company (company-defined topic) or by a research problem provided by one of the supervisors (supervisor-defined topic). The result is an academic paper in which you present a conceptual framework, elaborate on related literature, describe the results of an empirical study, and discuss the academic and managerial implications of your findings.

Your supervisor will guide you through this process. After 4 months (and about 5 thesis meetings), you will hand in your thesis and pitch your research in a 10-minute video, in which you present your work to the members of the jury. Writing your master thesis, and pitching your results, is excellent training to become an independent, problem-solving professional.

After you (i) meet the entry requirements, and (ii) have your research proposal approved, you can start writing your thesis. The Master Thesis has two inflow moments: Fall and Spring. Both inflow moments start in week 1 of the respective semester. We urge you to have your research topic approved before the start of the respective inflow moment. Therefore, start orientating for a topic as soon as possible! This MSc Thesis manual describes each of the steps in the MSc Thesis trajectory of the MSc in Marketing Management and the MSc in Marketing Analytics in more detail.

A timeline of the MSc Thesis is included in Appendix I. Do not hesitate to contact us in case you have questions.

Most importantly, try to enjoy this final step towards obtaining your MSc degree!



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2 Entry requirements

To assure that you have a sufficient amount of background knowledge to successfully complete the Master Thesis, we have set entry requirements. Specifically, you should have followed and passed the majority of your semester 1 courses in your MSc program before you can start writing your thesis.

For the MSc in Marketing Management: 24 ECTS successfully completed of which ...

- Introduction to Research in Marketing (>6 ECTS)
- 2 MSc Marketing Management courses (≥12 ECTS) – Brand Management, Marketing Communication, Marketing Channel Management, Strategic Marketing Management
- 1 MSc Marketing Analytics (cluster B) course (≥6 ECTS) – Conjoint Analysis, Customer Analytics, Research in Social Media, Market Assessment, Experimental Research, Survey Research, Pricing and Monetization

For the MSc in Marketing Analytics: 24 ECTS successfully completed of which ...

- Introduction to Research in Marketing (>6 ECTS)
- ≥24 ECTS completed in total

3 Orientation phase: Finding a topic

Ideally, you start orientating yourself long before your inflow moment. You can choose between two types of MSc Thesis topics: supervisor-defined topics and company-defined topics. For supervisor-defined topics, the research problem originates from the supervisor and is related to the supervisor's area of expertise. For company-defined topics, you work on a problem the firm is interested in. The process of finding a topic, and getting it approved, is slightly different for these two types of theses.

3.1 Supervisor-defined topics

Approximately two months before each inflow moment, supervisor-defined topics will be shared with you via a Google link posted on "The supervisor-defined topics" section of CANVAS. To give everybody a fair chance of getting a topic approved, we (i) restrict the number of applications per topic and (ii) allow you to apply for maximum one supervisor-defined topic. If you find one of the posted topics appealing, you can reserve an application spot by clicking the checkbox of the respective item, after which you have the time to write your proposal (see Appendix II for the format you should use). After you have written your proposal, you can make your application final by uploading your research proposal together with your grade list, and a letter of motivation.¹

The respective supervisor will evaluate your research proposal, will take a GO or NO GO decision, and will inform you of this decision per email. Decisions are based upon (1) the quality of your research proposal and (2) capacity of the topic. If you receive a GO, you can start working on your MSc Thesis. Your first meeting with your supervisor will be in semester 1.

¹ To apply for a topic: open the Google Form link posted on CANVAS. Make sure you **log in via your official Tilburg University Google account** (check <https://www.tilburguniversity.edu/students/it/google-apps> for more information). You can "edit your response" in the Google form after submission to upload your research proposal, but you will be penalized if you do not cash in your reserved topic (that is, you will not be able to choose your topic in a subsequent round).

If you successfully reserved a topic, you will receive a Google Forms confirmation mail that indicates your topic of choice. Please double-check and save this confirmation mail, as it is your proof of reservation. Sometimes it happens that by the time you upload your research proposal, your topic is no longer visible in the list. That does not mean that your reservation was cancelled, but that the topic is full and no longer available for other students to apply.

If you receive a NO GO, you can enter a second application round (with the remaining topics), which is organized in the same way as the first round. That is, you reserve an application spot for a topic that appeals to you, and submit your proposal and accompanying documents before the deadline.

If your research proposal again receives a NO GO in the second application round, you can apply for a thesis-clinic topic (see section 3.3).

An overview of the deadlines for the first and second application round is provided in the table below:

		SUPERVISOR-DEFINED TOPICS	
		Fall inflow	Spring inflow
ROUND 1	Supervisor-defined topics made available	May 29	November 13
	Deadline for submitting research proposal	June 18	December 3
	GO/NO GO notification	June 26	December 17
ROUND 2	Remaining Supervisor-defined topics made available	July 10	December 18
	Deadline for submitting research proposal	August 13	January 7
	GO/NO GO notification	August 28	January 15

3.2 Company-defined topics

Some students prefer to write their thesis in collaboration with a company. There are several ways to find an interesting company-defined topic: You can contact companies yourself. Alternatively, you can look for topics (which are often combined with an internship) on Tilburg University's Career Portal (www.tilburguniversity.edu/careerportal), Integrand, Asset-Marketing and/or on the CANVAS pages of the Master Thesis. Please note that the topics posted on these portals have not yet been approved by the thesis coordinators and that a major rewrite will be required (e.g., What are your

variables of interest? What are the relations you intend to investigate? What is the methodology of your research?)

Company-defined topics can but do not have to be linked to an internship. Note that an internship is very different from writing a MSc Thesis and that internships are not a formal part of the regular MSc programs in Marketing.² It is up to you to decide whether you would like to combine your MSc program with an internship or not. In Appendix V, we list some considerations concerning internships.

If you choose for a company-defined topic, the general procedure is that you work independently on your research proposal, potentially with a company supervisor, and that you submit your proposal (via the Google Form link posted on CANVAS)³ before the deadline indicated in the table below. The format of the research proposal is the same as for a supervisor-defined topics and is included in Appendix II. **Note that your research proposal will only be evaluated if you use this format.** The thesis coordinators will evaluate your research proposal, will take a GO or NO GO decision, and will inform you of this decision per email. If you receive a GO in round 1 or 2, you will be assigned to a supervisor. If you did not receive a GO after round 2, you will participate in the thesis clinics which are designed to help you improve your research proposal (see section 3.3.).

COMPANY-DEFINED TOPIC

		Fall inflow	Spring inflow
ROUND 1	Deadline for submitting research proposal	June 18	December 3
	GO/NO GO notification	June 26	December 17
ROUND 2	Deadline for submitting research proposal	August 13	January 7

² The Extended MSc Program is an exception, see <https://www.tilburguniversity.edu/education/masters-programmes/extended-masters> for more information.

³ To upload your research proposal: open the Google Form link posted on CANVAS, and check the “company-defined topic” box. Upload your grade list and your research proposal (a motivation letter is not needed). Make sure your **log in via your official Tilburg University Google account** (check <https://www.tilburguniversity.edu/students/it/google-apps> for more information).

3.3 Thesis-clinics phase

It is possible that you submitted a research proposal for application rounds 1 and 2, but received a NO GO both times. This means that the academic quality of your research proposal is below par and needs to be substantially improved.

During the first three weeks of the semester, you will get a final chance to rewrite your research proposal and bring it up to standard.

You can either rewrite your company-defined topic, or you can re-apply for a supervisor-defined topic. Supervisor-defined topics are made available at the start of the inflow period (week 1), and will be subject to a first-come-first-served principle. Note that these supervisor-defined topics are the “leftovers” of application rounds 1 and 2.

The thesis coordinators will give you the tools to rework your proposals by means of thesis clinics in the first three weeks of the semester. In the first week of semester 1, you are expected to attend a plenary session with general tips and tricks on writing a research proposal. In weeks two and three, we will provide you with useful tips for writing a research proposal through instruction sessions in small groups. These will be supplemented with web clips. More details on the thesis clinics will follow on the Canvas page of the master thesis.

In week three, you are expected to submit your final research proposal. In case you receive a GO, you can start working on your MSc Thesis under the guidance of the supervisor that is assigned to you. In case you receive a NO GO, you will need to apply for a new topic in the next inflow period (hence the importance to start working in time on your research proposal: to avoid study delay!).

	Fall inflow	Spring inflow
Deadline for submitting research proposal	September 20	February 7
GO/NO GO notification	September 25	February 12

4 Writing phase

Once your research proposal is approved, you are registered in the MaMa system⁴. You will receive an email with the name of your supervisor and the second assessor. Please enter your personal details into the MaMa system. It is *your* responsibility to contact your supervisor to make the first appointment. Your supervisor will guide you in writing your MSc Thesis.

4.1 Feedback meetings

Supervision and guidance from the university's Master Thesis supervisor occur through several meetings. The specific set-up of the meetings will be communicated to you by your supervisor. You will meet approximately every three to four weeks, for a total of around five meetings. Often, the supervision of the MSc Thesis will be a combination of individual and group meetings (the latter are also referred to as thesis circles).

In the first meeting with your supervisor, your chapter 1 will be discussed. If you write your thesis for a company, it is helpful (although not mandatory) if your company supervisor can join this meeting. The goal of the first meeting is to ensure that the expectations of all parties involved are aligned and, if needed, to tweak the research questions. If you already have details about the company data that you are going to use, please provide your supervisor with an overview of these data.

Given that the Master Thesis serves as proof of independent research and critical thinking, the number of feedback meetings with your supervisor is limited. The feedback meetings are always based on written chapters. Typically, every chapter is discussed twice. For example, in your first meeting, your supervisor will provide you with feedback on your first chapter. Before the second meeting, you hand in your revised first chapter and your new second chapter. Your supervisor will now provide you with feedback on both chapters, the revised one as well as the new one. Before the third meeting, you hand in your revised second chapter and your new third chapter, and so on. During the final meeting with your supervisor, you will receive feedback on the full draft of your thesis.

⁴ MaMa stands for Master Marketing and is the secured Master Thesis system we use to exchange information between coordinator, supervisor, and student: http://mystudy.uvt.nl/it10.mam_student

Rules of the game:

- Only complete chapters can be handed in for feedback. Incomplete chapters will be returned and will not be provided with feedback;
- Every chapter should be checked for typos, as well as spelling and grammar errors. Chapters with several typos and errors will be returned and will not be provided with feedback;
- Always add a (provisional) table of contents of your thesis, as well as a (provisional) bibliography which contains all references used in the thesis up to date;
- Make sure your pages are numbered, and that your name is on the first page;
- Submit chapters by email to your supervisor
- Always include the chapter annotated with the supervisor's comments, along with your newly adjusted chapter.

4.2 Structure and content

To provide you with an idea of how a thesis could look like, several examples are provided on CANVAS⁵. Typically, a thesis is structured as follows:

- **Frontpage:** Title (and subtitle), your name, SNR, name of the company (if applicable), the MSc program you are pursuing, names of the supervisor and second assessor, and the date on which the thesis was handed in.
- **Management Summary:** Summary of the contents of the thesis (max. 1 page) explaining the problem indication, research design, and the most important conclusions and managerial recommendations.
- **Preface:** Short 'Thank You' to the people who have contributed substantially to the materialization of the thesis.
- **Table of contents**
- **Introduction and problem indication (Chapter 1):** Indicate what you intend to research and why this is important (both from a managerial as well as an academic perspective). Make sure that the variables included and the relationships between these variables are clear.
- **Theory (Chapter 2):** Do not provide a lengthy literature review, in which you summarize one paper after the other, and "copy-paste" prior research findings. Instead, introduce

⁵ Please be aware of the fact that, although these are examples of good theses, they are not examples of "perfect" theses. Hence, do not blindly copy them.

- your conceptual framework, define your variables, and justify the hypothesized relationships by explaining the underlying mechanisms. Do not shy away from critical comparisons between the ideas of different authors, or from building upon/extending the reasoning of prior work. Use key academic books and journal articles in the field of marketing. An overview of important marketing journals can be found in appendix III.
- **Method (Chapter 3):** Explain your research methodology. Which method do you use and why? Which sample do you use? How do you measure/manipulate your variables (an overview table might be helpful)? How do you collect your data? The information you provide should enable the reader to replicate your research if s/he wished to do so. Hence, provide enough detail.
 - **Analysis and Findings (Chapter 4):** Explain the statistical analysis used to test your conceptual framework.
Note: In case your thesis entails multiple studies (for example, a laboratory experiment followed by a field experiment), you may discuss one study per chapter. For example, describe study 1 in chapter 3, and study 2 in chapter 4.
 - **Conclusions and Recommendations (Final Chapter):** After a summary conclusion (max. one paragraph), this section includes a discussion where you reflect upon your findings. How do your results compare to the existing literature? Where do they align? Where do they deviate? What could be a reason that your findings are not significant or counterintuitive? Next, concrete recommendations are given that are relevant to the company and/or academics. The final chapter concludes with a limitations section and suggestions for future research.
 - **Reference List:** We prefer APA referencing, but other ways of referencing are also acceptable provided you reference **consistently**. Consult (good) scientific marketing journals to find examples. Keep in mind that correct referencing is important in your thesis. A guide to referencing to sources can be found on the Tilburg University website: <http://itswww.uvt.nl/lis/es/apa/apa-guide.pdf>
 - **Appendix (if applicable):** Make sure the appendix is neatly structured and formatted. Hence, do not just copy-paste tables from SPSS/STATA/R... output, but make your own readable tables (one table per page, no acronyms, etc). Also, make sure you clearly refer to every appendix in the main text of your thesis.
 - **Layout:** The number of pages is restricted to **35 at most** (excluding front page, management summary, preface, table of contents, reference list, and appendices). The font is Times New Roman, 12pt, line space of 1.5 between the rows.

4.3 Writing Style

What you say in terms of information is important, but equally important is *how* you say it. It is important that you use a clear and compact academic writing style: Your readers (including your jury) must be able to understand your research and its contribution to society (both from an academic as well as a managerial point of view). To this end, use the active voice as this adds impact to your writing (e.g., “This study combines three constructs” instead of “three constructs have been combined in this study”).

A very useful guide with tips about cohesion, sentence grammar, and the use of scientific phrases is Tanvi Mehta’s “The Academics’ Little Helper” (please see <http://www.tanvimehta.com/assets/files/downloads/theacademicslittlehelperweb.pdf>).

If you report numbers, adhere to English number formatting. For numbers with decimals, use a period (e.g., the average age of the subjects is 25.14; NOT 25,14). When separating digits in groups of 1,000, use a comma (e.g., the data set contains 1,512,241 customers; NOT 1512241).

For tables and figures, use clear, self-explanatory titles and labels that are consistent with your variable names (do not use acronyms). Do not copy-paste statistical output in your thesis, but construct your own tables and make sure you use the same format consistently throughout your thesis.

In case you experience difficulties with academic writing, we wholeheartedly recommend Tilburg University’s Scriptorium. The Scriptorium provides writing assistance (in individual sessions), as well as tips and tricks on how to search the relevant background literature, use databases, and referencing. More information can be found at:

<https://www.tilburguniversity.edu/students/studying/writing-skills/scriptorium/>.

Please use the form “Application Scriptorium”, and fill in the name of your education coordinator/study advisor.

5 The end: Handing in and assessment

The deadline for handing in your Master Thesis and uploading your web clip is either December 31 (Fall inflow) or May 31 (Spring inflow)⁶. Your jury, consisting of your supervisor and a second assessor, will evaluate and grade your thesis. The specifics regarding these final steps are explained below.

5.1 Handing in the thesis

The deadline for handing in the thesis is indicated in Appendix I.

Proceed as follows:

- Send a soft copy of your thesis per email to your supervisor as well as your co-reader
- Send your raw data file and your syntax by email to your supervisor
- Upload a digital copy in the CANVAS system:
 - Go to Assignments → Hand in your Master Thesis and Video Pitch → Submit assignment → **File Upload**
 - Fill in the thesis title in the comments section. This is the title as it will appear on your diploma. Hence, double-check for spelling mistakes!
 - Your digital copy will be subject to a plagiarism check. If plagiarism is found, we will contact the examination committee.
 - Following government regulations, your digital copy will be archived for seven years in a secured system as proof that you completed the Master Thesis.
 - All theses and data remain confidential.
 - **DO NOT** provide the Educational Office and/or the Library with either a hard or a digital copy of your thesis (not even when they ask for it), as we then can no longer guarantee the confidentiality of your work (this is especially relevant for company-defined topics).

5.2 Sending in a thesis clip

In addition to your thesis, you are expected to submit a thesis clip (.mp4 format) in which you present yourself and your thesis. In this 5 minute clip, you briefly pitch the most important elements

⁶ *Exceptions to these deadlines can only be decided upon by the Examination Board. In case there are special circumstances that cause study delay, please contact your Education Coordinator / Study Advisor as soon as possible.*

of your thesis. In this video pitch, you show that you can present your work compactly and comprehensively to your audience (marketing professors as well as professionals in the field). This thesis clip replaces the defense, which is no longer held. In case your supervisor and/or second reader still have questions after reading your thesis and watching your web clip, they can ask you to address some extra questions. Your supervisor will communicate the details of how this will proceed.

Contentwise, your clip should include the following components:

- Your problem statement and its relevance, both from an academic as well as a practical point of view.
- Your theoretical/conceptual model (your variables of interest and their proposed relationships)
- A description of your empirical study and the main findings
- The conclusion(s)
- Recommendations for practitioners and academics

Below, we summarize some tips & tricks that can help you to make your video pitch:

- The audience of your clip are not only the marketing professors that will grade your thesis work but also practitioners from the field. That is, your clip should be of interest to academics as well as professionals from business. Ask yourself: “to what extent can my clip stimulate future employers to invite me for a job talk?”
- You can use a camera to shoot your video, or you can simply use your smartphone. It is not a must to be in view (for example, you can also use a slide deck with a voice-over), but make sure that it is clear that it is your work (it should be you who does the talking)
- There are various free software packages that you can use to make your clip: PowToon, Moovly, and iMovie can help you to add comprehensive presentation materials to your video (for more advanced options (such as exporting your file) you might need to pay; always check what the “free” software offers before you start).
- Presenting your work in a 5-minute pitch can be a challenge (300 seconds is not that much). Write a script before you start, so you can structure your thoughts and focus on the key aspects of your work
- Be creative (there is no strict format; you can use presentation slides, animations, music, interviews,..., but make sure that it is clear what you investigated);
- Don't hesitate to ask friends or fellow students to help out with the video shooting
- Smile when you are in front of the camera :-)
- More tips on how to make a thesis clip can be found on CANVAS.

The deadline for submitting your video pitch is the same as for the master thesis. See the timeline in Appendix I.

To submit, proceed as follows:

- Send your 5-minute video pitch via Surf Filesender⁷ to your supervisor and co-reader
- Upload your video pitch in the CANVAS system:
 - Go to Assignments → Hand in your Master Thesis and Video Pitch → Submit assignment → **Media Folder**

5.3 Thesis assessment

Appendix III includes the assessment form that is used to grade your Master Thesis. One month after the deadline (at the latest), your grade will be communicated by your supervisor. In case your Master Thesis and thesis clip are rated “insufficient”, you are invited to a feedback session in which your supervisor will inform you which aspects you should improve upon autonomously to bring the Master Thesis up to the required level. You will be given an extension of two months to improve your thesis. Of course, this extension *can* affect the final grade.

In the event your thesis is again evaluated as “insufficient” during the re-sit, the project is terminated, and you will have to start a new Master Thesis research project in the next thesis round.

5.4 Graduation

For many students, completing the Master thesis coincides with completing the MSc program. If you complete your MSc program, please do the following:

- Register for the next Graduation Ceremony (see CANVAS General Program Information page for dates, procedures, etc.);
- De-register from the program (see CANVAS General Program Information page for more information);
- Celebrate!

⁷ Surf Filesender is a web based application that allows students and staff of Tilburg University to securely and easily exchange arbitrarily large files (up to 100 GB) with other users. See <https://www.tilburguniversity.edu/surf-filesender> for more information.

APPENDIX I: MSc THESIS TIMELINE

Thesis fall inflow

Students that started the MSc program in February, are considered “thesis fall inflow” students as they will start writing their thesis in Fall.

Calendar week	Deadline	Who?	Action
22	May 29	Supervisors	Post supervisor-defined topics (round 1)
22-25	May 29 -June 18	Students	Apply for supervisor-defined topic /company-defined topic (round 1)
27	June 26	Supervisors	Communicate GO/NO GO (round 1)
		Thesis coordinators	Communicate GO/NO GO for company-defined topics (round 1), and assign supervisors in case of GO
28	July 10	Supervisors	Post (remaining) supervisor-defined topics (round 2)
28-33	July 10-August 13	Students	Apply for supervisor-defined topic (round 2)/company-defined topic
35	August 28	Supervisors	Communicate GO/NO GO for supervisor-defined topics (round 2)
		Thesis coordinators	Communicate GO/NO GO for company-defined topics, and assign supervisors in case of GO
36-38	August 31-September 18	Students	If NO GO: Attend thesis clinics If GO: Contact supervisor, start writing thesis
38	September 20	Thesis-clinic students	Apply for supervisor-defined topic (round 3)/company-defined topic
39	September 25	Thesis coordinators	Communicate GO/NO GO for thesis-clinic students, and assign supervisors in case of GO
		Thesis-clinic students	If GO: contact supervisor, start writing thesis If NO GO: Apply for new topic next semester
39-52	September 25-January 3	Students	Write thesis
1	January 3	Students	Hand in thesis + thesis clip
1-4	January 3- 29	Supervisors and second assessors	Grade thesis + communicate results (between January 24 and 27)
1-12	March 26	Students	Resit: Hand in Resit thesis + resit clip

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Thesis spring inflow

Students that started the MSc program in September, are considered “thesis spring inflow” students as they will start writing their thesis in February.

Calendar week	Deadline	Who?	Action
46	November 13	Supervisors	Post supervisor-defined topics (round 1)
46-49	November 13 - December 3	Students	Apply for supervisor-defined topic (round 1)/company-defined topic
51	December 17	Supervisors	Communicate GO/NO GO (round 1)
		Thesis coordinators	Communicate GO/NO GO for company-defined topics (round 1), and assign supervisors in case of GO
51	December 18	Supervisors	Post (remaining) supervisor-defined topics (round 2)
51-1	December 18 - January 8	Students	Apply for supervisor-defined topic (round 2)/company-defined topic
2	January 22	Supervisors	Communicate GO/NO GO for supervisor-defined topics (round 2)
		Thesis coordinators	Communicate GO/NO GO for company-defined topics, and assign supervisors in case of GO
3-5	January 25 - February 12	Students	If NO GO: Attend thesis clinics If GO: Contact supervisor, start writing thesis
5	February 14	Thesis-clinic students	Apply for supervisor-defined topic (round 3)/company-defined topic
6	February 19	Thesis coordinators	Communicate GO/NO GO for thesis-clinic students, and assign supervisors in case of GO
		Thesis-clinic students	If GO: contact supervisor, start writing thesis If NO GO: Apply for new topic next semester
7-22	February 19 - June 4	Students	Write thesis
22	June 4	Students	Hand in thesis + thesis clip
22-25	June 4 - 25	Supervisors and second assessors	Grade thesis + communicate results
33	August 20	Students	Hand in resit thesis + resit clip

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APPENDIX II: FORMAT RESEARCH PROPOSAL

RESEARCH PROPOSAL

MASTER THESIS MARKETING MANAGEMENT/MARKETING ANALYTICS

SPRING 2019

<<<You are supposed to remove / replace all red text! Keep the text in black. >>>

<<< Proposal may be written in English or Dutch. The subtitles are provided in English and Dutch. Delete the irrelevant language. All instructions are given in English>>>

<<<Format requirements:

Times New Roman, 12 point, 2.5 cm margins on top, bottom, left, and right; 1.5 line spacing. Maximum 7 pages, excluding this cover page and the reference list>>>

Name:	Fill out last name, first name
SNR:	Fill out 7 digit SNR
Company:	Fill out the company name (if applicable)

1. Business Problem: Background / Probleemachtergrond

Guideline: 1 page

Use this section to introduce the business problem for which you are writing this research proposal. You may address a problem that the company faces, or a problem that multiple companies (often within the same industry) are struggling with. In either case, you have to make clear that ‘your’ business problem is important to study. You can do so, amongst others, by using numbers (e.g., the percentage of firms that is facing a particular problem, or the dollar loss a company is facing if it does not solve a specific problem, etc.) and/or quotes (e.g., from managers or public policy makers) that demonstrate the significance of the problem you are studying. You can look for such numbers and quotes in newspapers (the university offers access to the LexisNexis newspaper database), the business press (e.g., The Economist, Business Week, Fortune, which can all be accessed through the university’s library), publicly available reports from consultancy firms (e.g., Deloitte, KPMG, AC Nielsen), trade journals, company websites, annual reports, etc. Use at least one reference from one of these practical/business sources to help you establish the importance of your topic.

We also expect you to use at least one high-quality academic reference to introduce the topic of your research. If you cannot find academic references, this is an indication that the topic you intend to research is too broad (e.g., “how can firm ABC increase its profits”). Also make sure your research topic can be translated into specific variables, since we expect you to use a deductive research strategy (e.g., describing a manager’s or consumer’s decision making process does not fall within the scope of the thesis). Note that a prior study does not have to be carried out with exactly the same variables or in exactly the same industry in order to support the relevance of your thesis (indeed, if such a study would exist, your thesis would probably be superfluous in the first place). What is important is that you connect the extant literature to your own research.

While the introduction is not supposed to list all the variables you are going to study (you should not even be using the term “variables” at this stage), it should make clear what the focal variable(s) of your proposal will be so that a smooth transition to section 2 (Problem Statement and Research Questions) can be made.

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2. Problem Statement and Research Questions/ Probleemstelling en onderzoeksvragen

Guideline: Tailored to your needs

Use this section to present the problem statement and research questions. The problem statement should follow logically from the Background section. In addition, the problem statement should mention the variables that are expected to play a role in answering the business problem. If relevant, use overarching and meaningful terms (e.g., supplier characteristics, consumer demographics, product attributes, ...) that you can then detail later on in your conceptual framework (e.g., use the overarching terms “supplier characteristics” in the problem statement, while using specific variable names, such as “supplier assets”, “supplier leverage”, and “supplier’s R&D investments” in the conceptual model). Note that if you intend to study only a limited number of variables (as is often the case in experimental research), you should of course mention these variables individually.

After having introduced the problem statement, present your research questions. These are the questions that *collectively* need to be answered in order to address your problem statement. The research questions should follow a logical sequence and are typically ordered from broader to more specific questions. Make sure that (i) your questions are precisely worded, and (ii) *can* and *will* be answered by your research proposal.

3. Theoretical Framework/ Theoretisch kader

Guideline: 1-1.5 page

3.1. Conceptual Model/Conceptueel model

(Only if applicable. For e.g. conjoint studies/MDS/segmentation/machine learning we ask for a graphic that provides a clear overview of your research idea tailored to your needs)

Use this section to briefly introduce your conceptual model (but avoid repetition with the introduction section!). Include a schematic representation in which you include all variables that you intend to include in your research. Try to organize the variables in logical overarching groups (if relevant). Make sure the problem statement and conceptual model are consistent!

3.2. Hypotheses

Use this section to (i) define all your variables and (ii) formulate a hypothesis for each relationship (i.e., every arrow) depicted in the conceptual model. Do not first offer a long list of all definitions, one after the other, followed by a list of hypotheses. This is boring to read, and the reader will have forgotten the definitions by the time s/he arrives at the hypotheses. Instead, define a variable (don't forget the reference!), then move straight on to the justification of your hypothesis (based on some literature, and on some logical reasoning from your side), followed by the hypothesis itself. Then, do the same for the remaining constructs.

4. Research Design/Onderzoeksmethode

Guideline: 0.5 page

Indicate which research strategy you will use to test your conceptual model (i.e., archival research, survey research, or experimental research). Provide a table in which you list how you will measure each variable, so the reader has a first idea of your operationalization. Briefly explain briefly how you will gather your data (e.g., which subjects will you target, and how will you target them?) Support your choices by high-quality references. Finally, indicate the statistical analysis you intend to perform.

References/Referenties

We expect you to use a minimum of eight references. At least six of these references should stem from high-quality academic journals (see CANVAS for a list of high-quality journals). Do not forget to use a consistent reference format (see, e.g., Sekaran and Bougie, Chapter 4, page 66 or the reference lists of major marketing journals, such as the *Journal of Marketing* or the *Journal of Consumer Research*). All publications in the reference list should be referred to in the body of the text. Under-referencing is not appropriate, but neither is over-referencing. References should always serve a purpose – they should help you to back up your arguments.

Since a research proposal should have a neat, professional appearance, also pay attention to writing style, grammar, and spelling.

APPENDIX III: EXCELLENT AND GOOD MARKETING JOURNALS

Excellent:

- Journal of Marketing (JM)
- Journal of Consumer Research (JCR)
- Journal of Marketing Research (JMR)
- Marketing Science
- Management Science

Good:

- International Journal of Research in Marketing (IJRM)
- Journal of Consumer Psychology (JCP)
- Quantitative Marketing and Economics (QME)
- Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science (JAMS)
- Marketing Letters
- Journal of Retailing
- Journal of Services Research
- Journal of Interactive Marketing
- Marketing and Psychology
- Harvard Business Review
- Journal of Business Research
- Journal of Marketing Management
- Sloan Management Review

APPENDIX IV: ASSESSMENT FORM

Assessment form for Master Thesis

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☐

Thesis supervisor:.....

Second supervisor:.....

Student name:..... Master:

ANR:.....

Date of assessment:.....

CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION	ASSESSMENT	NOTES
1. Research Question	Is the reason (practical or academic) for the research clearly formulated. Are the problem statement and research questions presented in a clear and analytical way and is it both relevant and feasible. Is it formulated in a simple and understandable manner, for example similar to: "How does mediator A influence the effect of stimulus B on response C", or "To what extent can theories A, B, and C explain the empirical phenomenon D"?	Circle your choice: I – S – G – VG	
2. Theory	Are the constructs that are being used defined carefully, and is explained what will NOT be studied. Has the author examined the appropriate literature and explicitly and carefully compared the various studies and positions in the literature, and shown the similarities and differences. Are the theories described relevant and are they explained in an understandable, structured and convincing manner? Is explained where past research went wrong and what is missing from the existing literature to make it applicable for this specific case?	I – S – G – VG	
3. Method	Has the author distilled the right elements from the literature to stress the issue/point that is made in the paper? Are the methods used in the study explained in a clear manner (description of methods). Is the choice for certain methods motivated in a convincing way (justification of methods)? Are the data gathered in a correct way, without biases caused by the way of sampling? Are scenarios, questionnaires or other research related tool used correctly?	I – S – G – VG	
4. Findings	Where appropriate, has the author used the appropriate quantitative and/or qualitative techniques? Are the data and results presented in a structured manner and according to an explicit ordering principle (synthesis)? Is the use of tables, figures, diagrams and schemata illustrative? Are the analyses techniques used appropriate to answer the central problem of the research? Are the analysing techniques used according academic standards?	I – S – G – VG	
5. Conclusions and Recommendations	Does this paper have a clear message / is there a contribution? Do the conclusions result from the findings of the study? Do the conclusions give a clear answer to the main research question of the thesis? Are the conclusions and recommendations interesting and/or relevant for others (academics, organizations or policy-makers)? Are shortcomings of the research clearly communicated and do they result in future research areas.	I – S – G – VG	

6. Style	Is the length of the thesis in accordance with the requirements? Is the length congruent with its contents? Are there (many) typographical and grammatical errors? Is the thesis easy to read? What is the quality of English writing? Are appendices used appropriately? Are references made correctly and are they complete? Is the division into paragraphs and sections consistent and sound?	I – S – G – VG	
7. Independence	To what extent has the student shown that s/he is able to conduct scientific research in an independent and profound manner? Did the student have a good deal to contribute in the discussion and where the ideas original and well-thought-out.	I – S – G – VG	
Special circumstances	Are there any special circumstances or factors that are, in a positive or negative sense, relevant for the assessment of this thesis? (please explain). Did the thesis pass the plagiarism check?		
Final Grade	<p>Guidelines:</p> <p>5 or lower if thesis scores <i>insufficient</i> on at least one of the six criteria; 6 if thesis scores <i>sufficient</i> on all six criteria; 7 if thesis scores <i>good</i> on at least three criteria, while <i>sufficient</i> on the remaining ones; 8 if thesis scores <i>good</i> on all criteria (or every <i>sufficient</i> is compensated by at least one <i>very good</i>); 9 if thesis scores <i>very good</i> on at least two criteria and <i>good</i> on the remaining criteria; if thesis scores <i>very good</i> on all criteria.</p> <p>When the assessment, using the first six criteria, results in a grade with a margin (for example 6.5 to 7), the thesis supervisor may use any information on “Special circumstances” and “independence” to decide about the final</p>	<p>Proposed Grade Supervisor:</p> <p>.....</p>	<p>Proposed Grade Co-reader:</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Final Grade:</p> <p>.....</p>

APPENDIX V: INTERNSHIPS

The MSc programs in Marketing do not contain a formal internship. If however you do want to fit an internship into your program (possibly with the intention to write your thesis for the company) you must take into consideration the following:

- The internship is not part of your program. Hence, **we are not allowed to sign any contracts or documents** related to the internship. The only exception to this rule is the NUFFIC agreement international students sometimes need to be accepted as an intern. The NUFFIC agreement can only be signed by Simone Hofland at Career Services.
 - For most internships, you need to be **enrolled as a student**. This means you will continue paying tuition fee even if you are not on campus. In case you need a “student statement” (i.e., proof that you are still registered as a student at Tilburg University), you can contact the Student Desk
 - Some companies insist on a so-called ‘geheimhoudingsverklaring’ (confidentiality agreement) or ‘arbeidsovereenkomst’ (working clause) before they allow you to carry out your research. We do not intervene in such instances: these agreements are made between the company and the student. Note however that all materials that you upload via the MaMa system are treated by us with the utmost confidentiality
- If you combine an internship with a company-defined topic, you should make sure that you are able to spend at least 4 days per week on your Master Thesis. Spending too much time on other activities of the company will endanger the successful and timely completion of your thesis
- Including an internship in most cases causes a **study delay** which in turn causes an extra semester of paying tuition fee.
 - Note that in your first three study units, you still have courses to attend. It is wise to negotiate with the company up front that you are permitted to attend the lectures. Alternatively, you may want to **start your internship after your third unit exams**.
 - If you have to work **4 or 5 days per week** for the company, it is not feasible to also write your thesis. It would be wise to first start your internship and start in a later thesis cycle.
 - If you can negotiate to **work 3 days per week**, and you do not have a lot of other activities on the side (paid job, social life, sports), a good planning (and many hours of thesis work in the weekends!) should allow you to write your thesis simultaneously.