

Opponent report

Author: Dexter He

Opponent: Kim Dikert

Date: 12.12.2012

Particularly good qualities in the work

- Use of the English language
- The text is very fluent
- The references are presented by summarizing the most interesting points, and analyzing them. This is a correct way, opposed to presenting the references as a walkthrough that is just referring the content.

Discussion

If the aim is to combine business and academia we must play by the academic rules. Productive or not in the perspective of our own business case or company, the academic rhetorics must be followed in the written report. Of course, if something valuable is created in the research process it is both good for business (obviously) and it sets good ground for the research. However, when it comes to reporting the findings in writing we must follow the academic format. That includes mainly two things: 1) use of references, and 2) use of a methodology.

The bachelor's thesis is an academic report in the sense that the two above mentioned qualities must show. In the scope of a bachelor's thesis the research methodology plays a lesser part. This is because Aalto university regards the bachelor's thesis primarily as a minor literature review, and it does not need to have an experimental component. In other words, it is enough that the bachelor's thesis does a well formulated and solid overview of the topic. In plain numbers, "enough" for a bachelor's thesis at Aalto university is 15-20 references (as I have understood).

Why then references? By including references you present *expert knowledge in your (academic) subject area*. Presenting expertise is one of the main goals of the bachelor's thesis, and I guess it is even officially stated somewhere. Basically, you are simply asked to show that you know which are the most relevant articles related to your subject. By not including references you will let your work become a subject of criticism and doubts. If you have a good list of references (around 20, and of quality) the point in your work will be taken more seriously. It is a fact that people quickly judge bachelor's thesis based on the number of references, mostly as a minute quality check.

My personal experiences: I have come to understand the field of research related to my bachelor's thesis by reading through a bunch of papers. Such an effort takes time, but having done it I feel also confident when reading new papers in the field. I can estimate the quality of some paper in my field by looking at its references. This is because I have read through or otherwise know the referenced papers. I know the most important papers and authors in my own field, so I know which authors to follow up.

Particularities

- You state that there is very limited research in pricing. There should be stronger evidence of this. For instance S. Dutta et al. (2003) states: *"Very little literature, however, has directly*

addressed the process by which firms set or change prices, perhaps because [...] (Rao, Bergen, and Davis 2000)”. Take note on how they use references for their claim. However, I think that it is not enough in your case to refer to Rao et al. solely (note the original reference). This is because the research is over 10 years old, and I have difficulty to believe that there has not been anything new in that time. For instance, in my own field of research (software engineering processes) there was blank nothing on the topic of my bachelor's thesis 10 years ago, but now I was able to scramble together a decent literature review.

- Avoid using a personal inclination in this work. This is a bachelor's thesis, and there is no place for personal opinions. The inclination could however be corrected by minor adjustments. Examples:
 - *“From my own experience from the IT industry, optimal pricing is [...]”* → Any argument following this sentence becomes irrelevant in the context of a bachelor's thesis. Obviously this kind of personal knowledge is highly valuable in business, but you can not argue with your professional success in academia. Basically it's just a matter of rhetorics. So if you are very firm with the point following, the thing that you need to do is find a reference for your statement. If you then exclude any other viewpoints that might exist only the point that you selected will be heard.
 - *“Finding the optimal price offer, however, is both a science as well as an art.”* → Nicely stated argument, and I think this goes well even if there is no reference. However, note that this statement becomes your own opinion without citing a reference. I think that as such this viewpoint would not need any references. Compare the strength of the statement to the aforementioned one which definitely would need some reference.
 - *“In this paper, I will learn from three particular pieces of literature that I have found to be very relevant to the research question”* → Again, the entire statement becomes irrelevant, because you state it as your own opinion. It becomes good just by removing your own viewpoint: *“In this paper, I will introduce three particular pieces of literature that **are** very relevant to the research question”*. However, this statement adds quite little, as it should be obvious that each source included in the paper is most relevant to the research question.
- You can not call this a systematic literature review. On the other hand you do not need to, as the type of work is bachelor's thesis. A bachelor's thesis does not need to exhibit the rigor of a “real” systematic review. However, consider these points:
 - Very generally, identifying only three sources does not give enough material for a literature review.
 - In order to present a literature review there must be existing research.
 - If there is not enough sources for a literature review then the research method of choice is some primary study method. For example, performing some experiment, doing interviews, reporting on some quantitative numbers in your company, etc. (As a junior researcher I have the gut feeling that less than 30 high quality researches in the field of study is too little for an SLR)
 - The general goal of a bachelor's thesis is to perform a literature review, not an experimental study or an interview. Therefore the subject area should be picked so that there is enough source material for a simple literature review. For a bachelor's thesis one should not choose a topic area without prior research.

- However, I find it very hard to believe that there is no research on pricing or strategic pricing. If there really is no research on combining strategic pricing to BI, then it would be interesting to consider closely adjacent areas such as BI in general and pricing in general.

I hope I have been helpful in this report, and that my viewpoints help you in the search of the connection between business to academia!