Parts of a thesis

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Thesis Introduction

Main purposes

- To describe the context
- To identify a specific issue to be studied
- To say how the thesis will address the issue
- To summarise key findings

Thesis Introduction

Paragraph 1 – attracts attention and gives background information

This paper presents evidence on the trade expansion potential of improvements in Sub-Saharan Africa's road network. At present, overland transport is so difficult and costly that Africa's diverse regions remain largely isolated from one another. Overland trade between the large urban centres of West Africa and South Africa is almost non-existent. …

Thesis Introduction

Paragraph 2 reviews the literature

Numerous empirical studies have examined the economic impact of poor road conditions (see, e.g., Henderson et al., 2001, for a review). Amjadi and Yeats (1995) find that the relatively low level of Sub-Saharan African exports is essentially due to high transport costs. In a study of transport costs and trade, Limao and Venables (2001) find that poor infrastructure accounts for 60% of transport costs for landlocked countries, as opposed to 40% for coastal countries. Improving cross-border infrastructure is therefore an important part of the development agenda in Africa: 'The vision and ultimate objective for Africa should be to create a single market of 750 million people that is competitive within itself and within the global economy. A critical pre-requisite to this is regional infrastructure integration across Africa.' (Simuyemba, 2000, p.3).

Thesis Introduction

Paragraph 3 – reviews the situation in the world

The World Bank and the African Development Bank (ADB) have both launched initiatives to encourage more integrated infrastructure development. The [World] Bank's Sub-Saharan Africa Transport Policy Program (SSATP) has focused on … The ADB has proposed …. Such programmes could give a significant boost to regional integration efforts on the continent (Deichmann and Gill, 2008; Naudé, 2009).

Thesis Introduction

Paragraph 4 – situates the research in relation to previous work

How much difference would an integrated, functional road network make for African development? This paper extends the previously cited work by developing an analytical framework for quantifying the benefits and costs of continental road network upgrading. In contrast to the trade literature on the topic discussed in what follows, we estimate the costs as well as trade benefits of transport improvements and we base our analysis on geographically explicit modelling of a realistic trans-African transport network. In contrast to project cost-benefit analysis or engineering studies, we estimate the continent-wide economic benefits from transport improvements, rather than focusing on local benefits alone, which are often measured as traffic volume increases or imputed time savings.
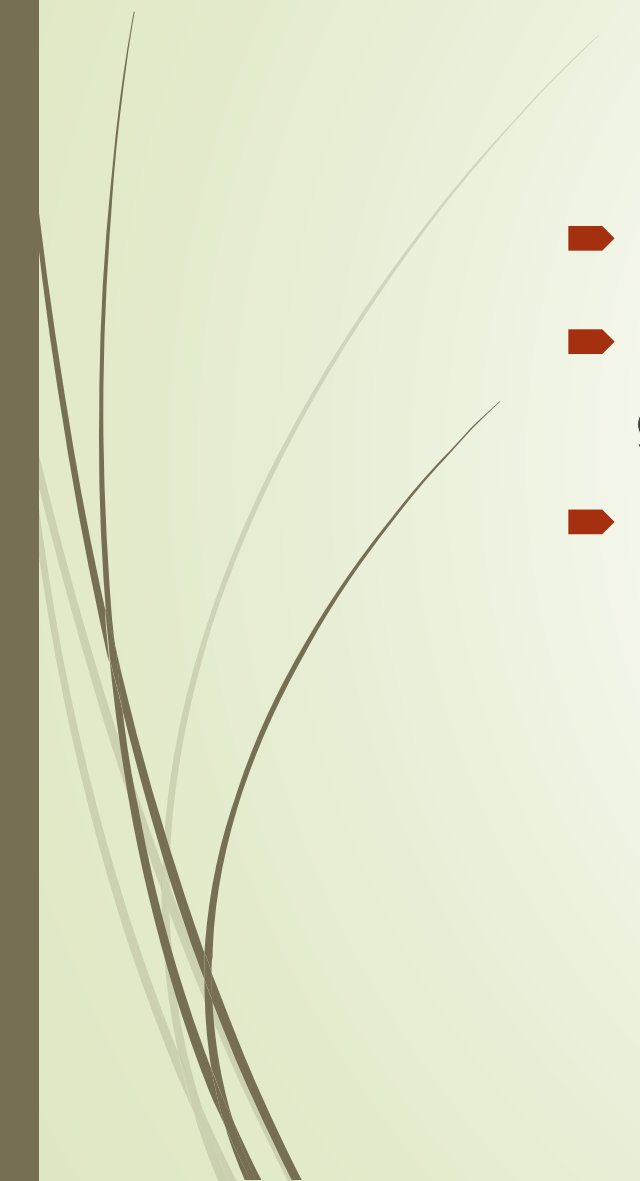
Thesis Introduction

Paragraph 5 – describes the organization of the paper

The remainder of the paper is organised as follows. Section 2 reviews the theoretical and empirical literature on gravity models, highlighting evidence on overland trade flows in developing countries. In Section 3, we identify a network of primary roads connecting all 42 mainland Sub-Saharan capitals ... Section 4 estimates a gravity model for Sub-Saharan Africa … We use the results to estimate current trade flows in the inter-city network and to simulate the impact of a major improvement in road network quality. We then explore the implications of our results for trade expansion at the regional, country and city levels. In Section 5, we estimate the costs of network improvement, using a World Bank database ... Section 6 concludes the paper. (Buys et al., 2010)

Literature Review

- It shows what you have read about the topic
- It justifies your research showing there is a gap you are going to fill
- It can be organised in various topic areas

Methods Section

- It describes the procedures used to answer the research questions

- It can be brief, particularly when the method is quite simple or widely accepted

- Words commonly found in Methods sections: data, methodology, participant (or subject),procedure, questionaire, respondent, sample, survey…

Results Section

- In this section, you will guide the reader to what you think are the most important results and you may begin the proces of commenting on the results

- Findings are usually presented in figures and talked about in the text.

Discussion Section

- While the Results section reports results, the Discussion section interprets them

- Purposes:
  to compare the result with previous research,
  to relate the result to theory,
  to interpret a result,
  to note a limitation of the research,
  to suggest further research

Abstract

- A brief summary of a thesis
- A „teaser"
- Usually the last section that you write (together with a conclusion)

Material used

- Hewings, M. & Thaine, C. (2012). *Cambridge Academic English Advanced*. Cambridge University Press

- Oxford Learner's Dictionary of Academic English (2014)

- www.uefap.com/writing