How to Write a Master's Thesis
at the Chair of Innovation and Creativity

1. General Guidelines

1.1 Thesis Report

The main objective of a Master's thesis is to demonstrate that you can work on a topic **independently and scientifically**. In your Master's thesis, the context of your topic is of great importance. You are expected to cover your topic, and any relevant aspects of your topic, in a coherent and conclusive way. To achieve this, it is important for your thesis to have a logical line of argumentation and hypothesis development.

At the start of the work on your thesis**,** you should think about the topic in general and your motivation. Why is it interesting? Why is it important? Who will find this useful? Does it have the potential to impact theory or managerial practice? The answers to these questions should be the basis of your thesis**,** and you should discuss them in the introduction. Keep the central theme in mind throughout the thesis. Every paragraph needs to be relevant for the discussion of your topic. You should abandon irrelevant topics, even though they might be near and dear to you.

Besides the content of your Master's thesis, we will grade your use of appropriate language and correct spelling and punctuation. Choose a level of language that is appropriate for a Master 's level thesis. In general, it is helpful to ask someone else to read your thesis draft before handing it in. This is especially helpful if the other person is not familiar with the subject. Finally, read the finished thesis multiple times to improve the language and the writing.

Your Master's thesis is an important, **long-form** academic work and therefore needs to meet academic standards (e.g., citations, independent work, logical flow). If you do not feel confident about citations, sources, or the style of writing, it's always a good idea to refer to the primary (starting) literature for guidance.

On or before the last day of your work period, you are required to hand in two hard copies of your thesis report at the examination office. In addition, please submit your thesis and your data on the same day via email to your supervisor (in PDF **and** docx formats).

1.2 Thesis Presentation

Three to four weeks before submitting your final thesis report, you are **required to formally present** your thesis to members of our chair, including Professor Shashi Matta, post-doctoral and doctoral candidates at the chair. The presentation time is between 30-35 minutes, followed by 25-30 minutes of Q&A and feedback. You will present the main aspects of your thesis using PowerPoint slides, answer questions, and receive input from the members of the chair. You will **not be graded** on your thesis presentation, but are expected to **incorporate the discussed feedback** received during the Q&A session.

2. Structure, Length, and Layout Requirements of the Thesis Report

2.1 Structure:

- Cover Page
- Abstract
- Table of Contents
- Possibly: List of Abbreviations, List of Tables, List of Figures
- **Main Text***
- List of References
- Appendix
- List of Resources used and Acknowledgement (Transparency Statement)
- Declaration of Authorship

2.2 Length:

*We recommend that the **main text** of your thesis should be approximately **65 pages (+/- 10%).**

2.3 Layout Requirements:

- Font and size: Times New Roman (12pt).
- Footnotes should be placed at the end of the respective page (Times New Roman 10pt).
- Spacing: 1.5 for the main text; left-justified.
- Page layout: 1-inch (2.5 cm) margins at all sides, page numbers in the bottom right corner in the footer, no header.

3. Guidelines on the Components of the Thesis Report

3.1 Cover Page

The cover page should include:

- Your name, date of birth, matriculation number
- Type of work: Master's thesis
- Field of studies and semesters studied
- Title of your thesis in English (needs to be identical with the registration title)
- Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt
- WFI Ingolstadt School of Management
- Chair of Innovation and Creativity
- Prof. Dr. Shashi Matta
- Date of submission

3.2 Abstract

It is important to start your work with an abstract: this allows potential readers to quickly identify what your paper is about and decide if it is worth reading. All abstracts should include:

- A statement of your main topic, purpose and objectives;
- A brief description of the methodology;
- An overview of the most significant findings or arguments;
- A summary of your conclusions and recommendations.

Although the abstract appears at the very beginning of your thesis, it should be the last thing you write. The abstract should be around 150-300 words.

3.3 Table of Contents

At the beginning of the thesis there should be a table of contents with corresponding page numbers. The subdivision of sections should be in relation to the length of your thesis, i.e. two or three levels are usually enough. The headings of the sections and subsections are supposed to be meaningful and should represent the line of thinking of your Master's thesis. If you divide a section into subsections, it needs to have at least two subsections (e.g., after 1.1 there is always 1.2). The headings of sections and subsections in the table of contents must be identical to the headings in the text. The table of contents should include the page number (right aligned), referring to the page on which the section begins.

3.4 List of Abbreviations

Please use abbreviations sparingly. A list of abbreviations is only necessary if you make use of abbreviations that are not listed in a dictionary. If you create a list of abbreviations, it must consist of all abbreviations not contained in a dictionary.

3.5 List of Tables, List of Figures

You need to create a specific list if you use multiple tables or figures in the text. All tables and figures have to be listed with the same title as in the main text. All tables and figures have to be consecutively numbered and state their source explicitly. The corresponding page numbers have to be right aligned. In general, you have to use a new page per table or figure.

3.6 Main Text

This section consists of the introduction, the body, and the conclusion.

Please put special emphasis on your **introduction**. It should:

- Motivate the topic (Why is the specific topic important and interesting? How will it change or contribute to theory and/or managerial practice?).
- Narrow down your topic (What does your thesis deal with? What does it not deal with?).
- Provide a short overview of the relevant literature that goes beyond the few intensively discussed papers in the main part.
- Summarize the most important findings of your thesis.
- Explain the structure and central theme of your thesis.

The **body** can be divided into two sections: literature review and your own research. In general, you should provide a well-rounded discussion of your topic. In the course of this, you should present and discuss the main findings from extant literature. It is important that the different parts of your thesis flow logically and fit well together. It helps to explain at the beginning of each chapter what you are doing in this chapter and how it relates to the other chapters in your thesis. At the end of each chapter, a short summary of your main results may be helpful but focus on the most important aspects.

In choosing further literature (in addition to the references given to you), you are mostly free to focus on those articles that you find most important or relevant for the topic of your thesis. However, you should ensure that your additional references are from "high-quality" sources. The best way to guarantee this is to choose papers that have already been published in peer-reviewed international journals (see section 6). If you want to use a working paper as a key source, make sure that it is included in a large Working Paper Series (such as SSRN) and/or that it is from well-known authors that have already published successfully in good

international journals. Please check if the working paper has been published (if it is published, you should use the published version!). Some working papers explicitly state that you cannot cite the paper without the authors' permission. In such cases, please contact the authors for permission to cite their working paper. You should also complement your primary literature with your own independent analysis across multiple papers/sources.

Use your own words when explaining the argumentation of another author. The closer your explanation is to the argumentation of the original literature, the harder it is to document your own work. Carefully weigh which of your findings are of no importance and thus not noteworthy, which findings are of low relevance and thus should only be introduced briefly, and which findings play a central role.

In the second part of the main body of your work, concentrate on your own empirical research. Here it is important that you document precisely, with all intermediate steps, what you have done. You can use an appendix for the finer details. State clearly, where you depart from the existing literature and what your own results are. Your supervisor will help you to design the experiment/survey or provide you with the existing data set. You should focus on the formulation of your empirical research question and methods of data analysis.

Importantly, you should provide a **detailed, intuitive explanation** for the results of the papers that you are using in your thesis and your own empirical research. In addition, make sure to discuss your results in detail with all necessary statistical tests**.** Furthermore, a critical examination of your findings is important. To do so, you need to be familiar with alternative approaches to your findings. Besides the literature discussed in detail, you need to present your own important findings that add to the literature.

Summarize your findings in the **conclusion** and provide the reader with a short but compelling outlook for future research and implications. Please highlight the managerial implications of your work. Your conclusion should not exceed two to three pages.

3.7 List of References

The list of references has to contain all references cited in your thesis report. References not included in the text should not be included in the list of references. Generally, the list of references of a Master's thesis should contain at least 60 entries.

Order publications alphabetically by authors. If you used more than one publication by a single author, you have to list the publications chronologically according to the dates of publication. Should an author have more publications within the same year, distinguish them by small letters (e.g., Slemrod 2006a, and Slemrod 2006b). The key to a good list of references is consistency in design and complete presentation of all relevant information (all authors, complete title, year of publication, if applicable edition, volume number of the

journal ...). Please use the **American Marketing Association Journals Reference Style** (see here).

Here are some examples from the *Journal of Marketing* citation style:

- Articles in an academic journal:

Vargo, Stephen L. and Robert F. Lusch (2004), "Evolving to a New Dominant Logic for Marketing," *Journal of Marketing*, 68 (1), 1–17.

- Chapters in edited volumes:

Twain, Ellen and Peter Singer (2004), "Structuring your knowledge," in *The* Art *of Writing*. *Scientific Publishing*, Vol. 14, Francis Frey, ed. Sheffield: Quickpress, 88–170.

- Books:

Diamond, Jared (2004), *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed.* New York: Penguin Audio

- Web pages:

Davies, Daniel (2016), "Gaps and holes: How the Swiss cheese was made", *Crooked Timber*, (accessed December 4, 2018), [available at http://crookedtimber.org/2016/04/08/gaps-and- holes-how-the-swiss-cheese-was-made/].

You can use software as Citavi or EndNote to cite the sources and create your bibliography. Every student at Catholic University can access Citavi for free. For further information, refer to the library webpage (http://www.ku.de/bibliothek/service/citavi/). However, it is also important to check your references manually.

3.8 Appendix

Make sure to integrate calculations, tables, graphics, interview transcripts, survey design, survey measures, etc., necessary for the understanding of your paper in your main text. Only use an appendix for information that is not essential for the understanding of the text, but may be of interest to the reader. The appendices should be listed in the table of contents. Refer to the respective appendix in your main text. To do this, include a reference to the appendix ("see Appendix 1") at the relevant place in the text. Scrutinize whether an appendix is really necessary.

3.9 List of Resources used and Acknowledgement (Transparency Statement)

At the end of the paper, you should include an acknowledgement and a list of all the resources used (software and AI tools).

In the first part, you should list all persons who have contributed to the work (in addition to any thanks expressed). This includes, for example, all persons who have familiarized themselves with the topic; who have explained how the software works; who have provided data; who have proofread the text and possibly contributed corrections. This exemplary list is not exhaustive. In addition to the actual acknowledgement, the purpose of this list is to make the influence of other people on the work transparent.

In the second part, you must list all the tools and software used and also state what they were used for. This includes, for example, programming and analysis software such as SPSS and plugins, MAXQDA, etc., and generative artificial intelligence tools such as ChatGPT.

3.10 Declaration of Authorship

Every thesis has to contain a declaration of authorship signed by the student. You could use the following phrasing:

"I affirm that I wrote this Master´s thesis without any unauthorized third-party support. I indicated all used references and resources. I referenced all quotes and citations properly. I have not previously presented this work to another examination board, and I have not yet published it."

4. Formalities

4.1 In-text Citations

The **careful documentation of sources** is crucial for an academic paper. Whenever you draw on the work of another person or institution with new thoughts, you must document your source (try to cite the author who expressed it first). You do not have to cite standard knowledge from textbooks or scripts. The relation between the reference and your own reasoning should be apparent from the context. Often this requires an additional explanation, for example, "A critical review and meta-analysis of the reported findings on customer satisfaction can be found in Syzmanski and Henard (2001)".

In the text, refer simply to the last name of the author(s) followed by the year and, if necessary, the precise page number. Then there is no need for a footnote. For example:

- An alternative approach is discussed by Boadway et al. (1998). The authors show that ...
- The pioneering study by Feldstein (1976) found a…
- Whinston (1983, p. 16) shows that…

Please use the **American Marketing Association Journals Reference Style** (see here).

If you want to make **comments or add explanations** in addition to the reference, please use a footnote. In particular, you can use footnotes to give an example of a general statement or to point out a fundamentally different opinion, which is not further investigated. Your reader should understand the text without reading the footnotes. If a footnote refers to a word, place the footnote behind this word; if it refers to a sentence, place it after the full stop. If an entire paragraph is based on a reference, you can clarify this with a footnote at the end of the paragraph (e.g., "See Desai et al. (2004)."). Each footnote is a complete sentence.

Use direct citations **sparingly** and only where the author makes an especially memorable statement. Direct citations are to be marked with quotation marks. If you remove or modify words in a quote, you have to label this change, using brackets ([…]). In the case of direct citations, always specify the relevant page number within the source that you are citing.

4.2 Figures, Tables, and Equations

Number all **figures and tables** consecutively; their titles should be centered and typed in all caps above the table/figure (e.g., TABLE 1, FIGURE 1, …). Primary heading should be placed under the title, and all first letters should be capitalized (e.g., Customer Data Vulnerability: Selected Relevant Literature). You have to refer to each figure or table in the text (e.g., see Table 1). Tables and graphs should be included in the body of the paper.

Do not use screenshots of tables (e.g., regression results) from the original article, but type them yourself. All tables should be editable in Word. This allows you to only present the information that is relevant to your thesis. You can copy figures that contain specific data from the article (but quote the source!). If you have created a graph or table by yourself, then clarify it by "Source: own representation" or "Source: own calculations" (possibly supplemented by "on the basis of...") below the table/figure. State the data sources that you have used to compile graphics and tables.

Tables and figures should have a caption. Explain their content in the text. Think about appropriate units, e.g., use percentages (it is often easier to understand a number as 2.3 percent rather than 0.023). Align all decimals; there should be no zero before the decimal point in any number (.97).

Use a formula editor (integrated in all regular word processing programs) to write **equations** by yourself. Never use screenshots of equations from the article. All equations should be indented, numbered, and centered on the page. Since your thesis should be understandable without reading the original article, you must clearly define all the **symbols and variables** that occur in the equations. Make sure that the reader can understand everything without looking at the original papers that you discuss in your thesis. Standard deviation should be abbreviated as SD, standard error as SE, and Mean as M. Do not place a zero before any decimal points (.97).

4.3 Literature Research

You must base your thesis on academic literature, which is mostly in English in the field of marketing, innovation, organization/strategy, consumer psychology, and management. To find relevant literature, you can use Google Scholar, followed by a search on the online resources of the university library, Web of Science, Scopus, etc. Also, the list of references of your primary literature may help you find further relevant articles.

Make sure that you use the most recent version of the paper. If you find an interesting working paper, check if it is already published. You can find published articles in the "Electronic Journals Library" on http://www.ku.de/bibliothek/. Try to assess the quality of any work before using and citing it, for example, by looking at the **VHB Rating 2024** (https://www.vhbonline.org/services/vhb-rating-2024/teilratings). It is preferable to use high-ranked peer-reviewed journals (in VHB ranking: A+, A, and B categories), e.g., *Journal of Marketing (JM), Journal of Marketing Research (JMR), Journal of the Academy of Marketing Research (JAMS), Marketing Science, Journal of Product Innovation Management (JPIM), Research Policy (RP), Entrepreneurship Theory & Practice (ET&P), Academy of Management Review (AMR), Management Science, Journal of Management Studies (JMS), Strategic Management Journal (SMJ), Journal of Business Research (JBR), Journal of Consumer Research (JCR), Consumer Psychology (JCP), etc.*

We wish you every success with your Master´s thesis!

Prof. Dr. Shashi Matta and Team