

Faculty of Economics and Business Administration –Maastricht University

The essential guide to Master theses in Organization Studies and Strategy

**R.L. Olie
W. van Olffen
P. Berends
W. Hendriks**

© 2005 by the Department of Organization Studies and Strategy

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage and retrieval system, without prior written permission from the copyright owner, or, as the cases may be, the publishers, beyond the exceptions provided by the Copyright Law.

Preface

Writing a thesis is part of the academic training at a University. Independently you have to research a topic of your choice. In this respect it is quite different from writing the second year paper, not only because of the greater workload, but also because of the degree of initiative that is required from you: to define a topic, to search for relevant literature, and –often - to conduct empirical research. As a result, writing a thesis is a more time-consuming and frustrating experience than most students expect.

Some of the problems students face cannot be avoided; they are inherent in doing research and are part of the learning process. Others can be avoided, simply because they arise from a lack of knowledge or misunderstanding: about the purpose of the master thesis, how to address a research problem, what to include or not to include in the manuscript, and what supervisors expect. The department of Organization and Strategy has taken the initiative to address these ‘avoidable’ problems in the form of a rough guide. This guide primarily focuses on problems involved in writing a master thesis, and synthesizes our experience in supervising students in master theses.

Most students after graduation profess that writing their thesis was hard work, but one of the most -if not THE most - valuable learning experiences of their entire studies. So take heart: may preceded you and succeeded.... Enjoy!

René Olie *)
Woody van Olffen
Peter Berends
Walter Hendriks

Maastricht, 2005

*) René Olie has left our Department for the Erasmus University in Rotterdam. René was the originator and first author of this guide.

Introduction

The purpose of the master thesis is twofold. The first objective is to learn what is interesting to research, and to understand how to research a specific issue. Knowledge and skills in this area are not only important from a scientific perspective, but they are essential in any business environment. Most companies base their decision making on some kind of research. Thus, knowledge of research methods will be of value: for people who have to evaluate research (proposals) prepared by others and who will use it as input for decision making, as well as for those who are preparing reports for higher management. The second objective is to communicate this research to a (virtual) readership. How excellent your ideas may be, they never come across if you are not able to communicate them in a clear and proper manner. Proficiency in writing documents, reports, brochures etc., therefore is an essential skill for any student. Both these objectives will be addressed in this skill training.

1. Finding a thesis topic

The starting point for most theses is a general, vague idea about a topic. Ideally, you have picked up this idea during your studies in academic journals. But newspapers (e.g. *Financial Times*), or popular management magazines (e.g. [Business Week](#), [The Economist](#)) may also give you inspiration. Once you have developed some idea about the focus of your thesis, the most important point at this stage is reached: finding out what the **scientific** state of the art is in this specific field and to delineate your research focus. **If the scientific literature does not offer 'footholds' on your topic, it is NOT suitable as a thesis topic!!** This prevents you (and us) from dealing with popular and superficial hype-topics that lack theoretical backgrounds to study it properly. Useful starting points to assess this scientific standing of your topic may be the latest editions of the basic textbooks you encountered in your studies, like Daft for organization theory, Robbins for organizational behaviour, and Grant for strategic management/ industrial organization. Pay particular attention to the reference lists they provide, to point your way to more specialized literature. Inevitably, textbooks are quite basic in their treatment of the literature.

The next step is to make a more specific search to find out what is written about your favoured topic in the scientific community. To this end, consult databases at the University library website (catalogues and information resources, especially EBSCO), depending on the focus of your research.¹ **Search smart!** Use names of well-known specialists in the field and limit your search to international peer-reviewed journals. When using EBSCO, select articles with full texts and references, and select scholarly peer reviewed journals. Articles *reviewing* certain topics are often a good starting point for getting an overall view of a field. Again, check the lists of references in these articles. After a while you will notice that certain articles are repeatedly referred to - the classics - whereas others are not. A hint: EBSCO gives information on number of times an article is cited in the database. In general, the more an article is cited, the more influential its role in your research area. Focus first on these classics. Next, proceed with the more recent articles. In this way you can narrow

¹ Notice, the library only contains the most important journals; more peripheral journals can be found in other faculty- or university libraries. Most volumes start in the mid-1980s (the time of the foundation of the Faculty). Check the Nederlandse Centrale Catalogus (NCC) to find out where you can find other books and journals, if necessary.

down your initial reading list to -say- twenty important articles on the topic (less for newer topics, more for 'old' topics). The procedure just outlined is called the 'cross-referencing method'; it enables you to delineate what to read and what not. If done properly, you will be a semi-specialist already after reading these!

Another recommended approach, either to get inspiration for interesting topics or to find additional material on a chosen topic is to browse through a pool of excellent journals. Consult (i.e., physically *get* and *inspect* - very old-fashioned!) the three most recent volumes of leading non-specialized ('generic') journals in the field of organization studies. These are: *Administrative Science Quarterly* (ASQ), *Academy of Management Journal* (AMJ), *Academy of Management Review* (AMR), *Organization Studies*, *Organization Science*, *Journal of International Business Studies*, *Strategic Management Journal*, *Journal of Management*, *Journal of Management Studies*. A period of three to five years is usually sufficient to give you an idea of the state of the art. Once you have found an interesting article, the article's bibliography will be helpful in finding other major articles in that field of inquiry. Again: use the cross-reference method of literature gathering. At some point you will notice that you possess the bulk of references in the articles you read: this means you have found the most important (so-called 'key'-) references in the field. From these general periodicals you will -through their references- quite naturally be redirected to the best more specialized journals on a topic. This method will keep you at safe distance from all kinds of second rated or even plain bad journals you don't want to waste time on.

As regards this literature search, a few additional comments can be made:

- Articles usually provide more up to date information than books. In addition, since most articles are published in internationally refereed journals, they are generally considered of higher quality.
- Do not focus only on theoretical literature, but also look for empirical research in order to find out how research has advanced in this area.
- Although practitioner-oriented literature may contain interesting ideas that can be taken up for research, this type of literature cannot be regarded as reliable sources of information. Most often, it is too anecdotal and fashionable, too much based on individual observations, or too much focused on solving problems than on understanding them.

Students often complain about having to read so much before they can 'start'. Especially in the beginning, it is inevitable that you read more than you will use for your thesis. Initial research questions are usually quite broad and vague and become more focused, or redefined, as knowledge increases about the field of study. You must see it as integral part of the research process. It helps you to put your research question into perspective and develop a deeper understanding of the research topic. It is essential for good academic work that you take and define your place in the broader field of inquiry of a certain topic. You will often find that your idea is not quite as brilliant and original as you have thought in advance! Mind that this is, however, also a big advantage! Having a set of good thinkers doing much of the groundwork *for you*, speeds up the development of your own theoretical model. Don't try to invent the wheel all over again and don't be hesitant in following the leads others provide. However: be honest in mentioning them!!!

ON THE USE OF INTERNET

Although very tempting, it is generally not advisable to gather literature through broad sweeps of the Net, using search engines like GOOGLE or whatever. Reason is, that the internet is - for the most part- a huge information **garbage can**. Students - with all due respect- generally have not got the expertise to discern the good from the bad scientific sources. Thus: go for the information infra-structure that has been filtered for you already: our good old-fashioned library. With real books and journal-volumes!!!

Additional literature:

Jankowicz, A.D. (2005). *Business Research Methods* (4th edition), Thompson Learning, London. Chapter 1 & 2.

Saunders, M.N.K., Lewis, P., Thornhill, A. (2000). *Research Methods for Business Students* (2nd edition), Pearson Education, London. Chapter 2

2. Formulating a problem statement

After you have sorted valuable articles that represent the state of the art in your research area, it is time to focus on your problem statement, i.e. the central question that will be addressed in your thesis. To put your thesis endeavours into a wider perspective, let's start with a short exposé on the academic or scientific nature of your thesis. The goal of scientific research is *to advance our knowledge*. More specifically, one could say that the goals of science include:

- *Description*: observing and documenting the 'What' or 'How' of a particular phenomenon; e.g. 'How many firms are involved in e-commerce; does this differ per industry?;
- *Explanation*: understanding how things work; what the (causal) relationship is between two or more phenomena; e.g. 'Which factors determine the successful implementation of empowerment?'
- *Prediction*: predicting the occurrence of a phenomenon; e.g. 'Developments in IT will lead to a convergence of high tech industries'.
- *Application*: using and applying knowledge to fit practical purposes; e.g. 'Controlling management expectancies can be used as a tool to increase the effectiveness of reward systems'.

The purpose of your thesis is to contribute to these scientific goals. Thus, a thesis has to have some *added value*. It is more than just a summary of books and articles that have been written about a particular topic. Reading about what we already know, is as much fun as reading yesterday's newspaper. **Try to add something** in your own work. This doesn't need to be something earth-shocking (better not, even). Think of research others have done and ask yourself: how might I replicate -perhaps a small part - of what has been done here? Can I extend it in some (tiny) way? Can I apply it in a different setting? Or with a different dependent variable? In other words: try to be creative. It makes doing research much more fun! The value of a thesis can reside in two different aspects:

- *Theoretically*: the focus of your theoretical contribution can be either exploration or development. Exploration means that you discover a new territory where few researchers have set foot; development means that you cultivate an existing field and try to increase our knowledge about a particular phenomenon. For example, you explore it in a new, unconventional way, which opens up new ways of research. Or, fragmentation and incoherence characterize the field of study and you try to create some order in this unkept garden. Essential questions in this approach are: what are the white spots on our map? What has been researched, and what hasn't? Which theories have been developed to explain and predict the phenomenon under study? What is the value of these theories? And, how can we explain contradictory evidence? All this is important to prevent that we are re-inventing the proverbial wheel. HINT: Use recent research articles in quality journals and read the sections: future research, and/or research limitations. These sections generally provide interesting ideas and topics for future research.
- *Empirically*: once you have determined the white spots, or unknown territories, in your research field, you may decide to do some empirical research in order to develop a better understanding of the phenomenon in question. Research methods will be discussed in the next section.

In sum, theoretical and/or empirical relevance are two important criteria that define the quality of your work. One may also add a third criterion: practical relevance (how can we apply our knowledge to fit our own purposes?), although this is generally of secondary importance in academic work. Description, explanation and prediction first need to be addressed in order to develop reliable knowledge, before the next step can be taken: applying it.

Additional literature:

Jankowicz, A.D. (2005). *Business Research Methods* (4th edition), Thompson Learning, London. Chapter 7.

Saunders, M.N.K., Lewis, P., Thornhill, A. (2000). *Research Methods for Business Students* (2nd edition), Pearson Education, London. Chapter 3.

3. Research design², data sources and data collection

Empirical research is conducted to answer or enlighten your research question. You should select a research design that allows you to answer your research problem in the best possible way – within the given constraints. In other words, your research design should be effective in producing the wanted information within the constraints put on the researcher, e.g. time, budgetary, and skill constraints. Common mistakes are making wrong and/or irrelevant design choices, e.g. by examining a badly understood problem with a very structured design, or as seems even more common, as qualitative methods have become more popular, by examining structured well understood problems, by unstructured methods making it more difficult to answer the

² This section is to a large degree based on Ghauri and Gronhaug (2002): *Research Methods in Business Studies: A practical guide*.

research problem adequately. This section will discuss a few basic guidelines that help you to structure your research design. First, consider the following examples of research problems

1. A consumer firm wants to conduct a poll to examine its share of customers. This is a structured problem. The firm knows what information is wanted, i.e. the fraction (or percentage) of voters.
2. An advertising company has produced two advertisement copies and wants to know which one is the most effective to be used in the advertising campaigns. Again, the research problem is structured. The advertising agency wants to know which of the two advertisement copies (A and B) is the better one, i.e. whether $A > B$, $B > A$, or $B = A$. Moreover, in this case the advertisement is seen as a cause, which may produce some effects (e.g. awareness, interest or sales).
3. Company X's sales have dropped in the last three months. The management does not know why. In this case the management has made an observation, i.e. dropping of sales. The management does not know what has caused the decline in sales. This is an unstructured problem.

The above examples show that problems may vary in structure, i.e. how well they are understood. Based on the problem structure, we can distinguish between the three main types of research design:

- a. Exploratory: unstructured
- b. Descriptive: structured
- c. Causal: structured

Exploratory research

Exploratory studies tend toward loose structures with the objective of discovering future research tasks. The purpose of exploration is usually to develop hypotheses or questions for future research. Exploration is especially useful when researchers lack a clear idea of the problems they will meet during the study. Hence, the area of investigation maybe so new or so vague that a researcher needs to do an exploration just to learn something about the problem. Exploratory research can be used for instance to obtain some background information where *absolutely nothing* is known about the problem area; or, to define problem areas fully and to formulate hypotheses for further investigation and/or quantification (see example 3). IMPORTANT NOTE: Do not think too quickly that your research is completely new and that you are the first to address these issues. Most of the time, students who claim the right to explore new research areas, just have not read recent research articles, or worse have not read research articles at all.

Descriptive research

Descriptive studies are used to describe phenomena associated with a subject population or to estimate proportions of the population that have certain characteristics (see example 1). The major objective of a descriptive study is to describe something, for instance market characteristics or functions. A major difference between exploratory and descriptive research is that descriptive research is characterized by the prior formulation of a specific research question and

hypotheses. Thus, the information needed is clearly defined, and the problem is structured and well understood.

Causal research (explanatory research)

In causal research the research problem is structured, similar to descriptive research. However, in contrast to descriptive research, causal research is used to obtain evidence of cause-and-effect relationships. The main task is to isolate cause and tell whether and to what extent cause results in effect (see example 2). For instance, managers are often pre-occupied with 'key success factors'. Peters and Waterman (1982) in their well known book *In Search of Excellence* claim that 'being close to the customers' is an important factor in explaining success. Is closeness to customers a cause of success? In order to be a cause there should be a co-variation between the cause (i.e. close to the customer) and effect (i.e. success). Second, the cause should *precede* the effect. If closeness to customers is the cause it should be established that it occurred before the firms' success. In causal research the time order of occurrences is important. Third, other possible causal factors should be eliminated. Can the firms' success be explained by excellent products, superior cost control etc. Hence, the key problem is to rule out alternative causes.

Often, it is very difficult to establish clear cause and effect relations mainly when cause and effect are measured at the *same time*. This type of research is called a *cross-sectional* or *correlational* research design. In this case, the researcher needs some a priori knowledge to assume the time order of variables. For example, it may seem reasonable that gender (sex) precedes choice of occupation.

Additional literature:

Jankowicz, A.D. (2005). *Business Research Methods* (4th edition), Thompson Learning, London. Chapter 8 & 9

Saunders, M.N.K., Lewis, P., Thornhill, A. (2000). *Research Methods for Business Students* (2nd edition), Pearson Education, London. Chapter 4 & 5.

4. Data sources

After you have defined your problem statement, have found the adequate research design that enables you to answer your problem statement, it is time to search for essential data. We can distinguish between primary and secondary data sources. Secondary data contain information collected by others for purposes that can be different than yours. Primary data are original data collected by you for the research problem at hand.

Secondary data

The first and foremost advantage of using secondary data obviously is the saving of time and money. You only need to go to the library and locate and utilize the sources. Many students underestimate the amount of data available from secondary sources. It is wise to first explore secondary data sources relevant to your research problem, before going out and collect your own. As Churchill (1999: 215) puts it: 'Do not bypass secondary data, begin with secondary data, and only when the secondary data are exhausted or show diminishing returns, proceed to primary data'. Hence,

sometimes, secondary data provide enough information to answer the problem statement. In such cases, there is no need to collect primary data.

A good source of secondary data is Ecostat. Ecostat contains all sorts of databases, annual reports, industry analyses, and company information. Other locations with useful data sources include de Koninklijke Bibliotheek (KB) in The Hague, Statline which can be found on the website of CBS (Dutch bureau of statistics), the Economische Voorlichtingsdienst (EVD) in The Hague, Chambers of Commerce, foreign institutions and libraries, trade institutions, etc. Look also at the university library website for secondary data sources such as Datastream etc. (go to www.unimaas.nl, select university library, select UL information resources, select economics and business administration). However, if secondary data do not 'fit' with our specific research problem, they should NOT be used. In this case collecting primary data is essential.

Primary data

When secondary data are not available or unable to help you to answer your research questions, you must collect the data yourselves. These data are called primary data. In general, empirical research in organization studies is not easy when primary data on (internal) organization phenomena are required. Most companies are not very co-operative in helping you with collecting your data, unless they have a direct interest in the research. You need a good 'pitch' to get them interested! Note also that doing research in companies is not always necessary in order to study a phenomenon. Other settings may also provide insight into a phenomenon. For example, the effectiveness of culturally diverse workgroups can also be studied in your own study environment, using a sample of students. Or you can set up an experiment with students or other populations.

The collection of primary data is often time consuming, and you are completely dependent on the willingness and ability of the respondents to cooperate with your research. Therefore, a few tips that can help you with your collection of primary data. First, If you want to study internal organizational aspects such as management teams, employees etc. it is easier to collect data of management teams from 1 firm than from many firms. Try to get support from higher level managers of one specific firm to study employees, groups of employees, managers etc. Second, if you search for names of firms or persons, try to contact industry institutions (branchevereniging) or user groups. Also consider the Alumni files from our own university.

Qualitative versus quantitative research methods

The main difference between qualitative and quantitative research is not quality but procedure. In qualitative research findings are not arrived at by statistical methods or other procedures of quantification. Table 1 emphasizes the differences between qualitative and quantitative methods.

Table 1: The difference in emphasis in qualitative versus quantitative methods.

Qualitative methods	Quantitative methods
Emphasis on understanding	Emphasis on testing and verification
Focus on understanding from respondent's point of view (how and why)	Focus on facts and/or reasons for social events
Interpretation and rational approach	Logical and critical approach
Observations and measurements in natural setting	Controlled measurement
Subjective 'insider view' and closeness to data	Objective 'outsider' view distant from data
Explorative orientation	Focus on hypothesis testing
Process oriented	Results oriented
Generalization by comparison of properties and contexts of individual organism	Generalization by population membership

Source: Reichardt and Cook (1979)

It is generally accepted that for exploratory research qualitative methods are most useful, as they can lead us to hypothesis building and explanations. Qualitative methods employ a limited number of observations. However, although the number of observations is low, several aspects of the problem area can be analyzed. Low numbers are justified because we want to do *in-depth* studies. Most often used qualitative methods are:

Case study

A case study is a description of a management situation. A case study often involves data collection through multiple sources such as verbal reports, personal interviews and observation as primary data sources. In addition, case methods involve data collection through secondary data sources such as financial reports, archives, market and competition reports etc. A case study is not suitable for all types of research. It is especially useful for theory development and testing. The case study method relies on integrative powers of research: the ability to study an object with many dimensions and then to draw an integrative interpretation (Selltiz et al., 1976). It is a method that generally fits an in depth exploratory type of research.

Interviews

In research we use two types of interviews: (i) structured; and (ii) unstructured interviews. A structured interview can be compared with a survey. The emphasis is on fixed response categories. With unstructured interviews, the respondent is given almost full liberty to discuss reactions, opinions and behaviour on a particular issue. The interviewer is just there to give lead questions and to record the responses in order later to understand 'how' and 'why'. The advantage of in depth interviews is that we can have a more accurate picture of a respondent's position or behaviour. This is possible because the open question structure of the interview allow respondents to answer freely, and according to their own thinking, as we have not constrained the answers by only a few response categories as is often the case with surveys (and structured interviews for that matter). Furthermore, the interviewer can ask for further elaboration of answers and attitudes in case of complicated and/or sensitive issues. This method is especially suitable for exploratory types of study. The disadvantage of in-depth interviews is that they demand a skilled and knowledgeable interviewer. Furthermore, interviews are often difficult to interpret and analyse. Your own

background may be greatly influence the interpretations, thereby causing problems of objectivity. Interview data are generally qualitative in nature, but with the right coding procedure can be transformed into quantitative data, with allows for analyses using statistical techniques.

Surveys

Surveys refer to a method of data collection that utilizes especially questionnaires. A survey is an effective tool to get opinions, attitudes, descriptions, and cause-effect relationships. Questionnaires are among the most popular data collection method in business studies. You can distinguish between two types of questionnaires: (i) analytic and (ii) descriptive. Analytic surveys are used to understand relationships between variables (see section casual (explanatory) research). In this type of research the emphasis is on specifying independent, dependent and extraneous variables. It demands from you a good knowledge of the existing literature and research while you conceptualise and structure your research (i.e. 'standing on the shoulder of giants'). This type of research is not suited for exploratory approaches where relatively little is known about the topic. Often much research has already been conducted, and a critical review of this literature is therefore of utmost importance. Recall that your thesis should add something to the already existing knowledge.

Descriptive surveys are concerned with identifying the phenomena whose variance you wish to describe. The survey is concerned with particular characteristics of a specific population of subjects, either at a fixed point in time or at varying times for comparative purposes. Here the focus is more on a representative sample than on the analytical design, as you are concerned with accuracy of the findings and whether these findings can be generalized. Even in the descriptive type surveys review of earlier research and literature is important to determine what kind of questions are to be included in the questionnaire. In business studies, descriptive surveys are often used to obtain consumer attitudes towards a certain product, and to ascertain views and opinions of employees in an organization.

Additional literature:

Saunders, M.N.K., Lewis, P., Thornhill, A. (2000). *Research Methods for Business Students* (2nd edition), Pearson Education, London. Chapter 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 (depending on research method choice)

5. Writing your thesis proposal

Writing a readable proposal is not an easy job and is almost never achieved in a single effort. Writing is a skill, and because most students lack substantial experience in writing academic texts, it requires more time than expected. '*Schrijven is schrappen*', 'writing means rewriting', is probably the most accurate description of crafting a paper. It's a bit like sharpening your pencil. With each new version you try to become more accurate in your communication.

As regards your audience, you don't write for your supervisor. That's why we refer in this text to 'the reader', instead of 'your supervisor'. Your audience is the educated person who has only superficial knowledge of the topic you discuss. In most cases your readership will be limited to your supervisor, an occasional friend or

relative. But how limited your readership of your proposal will be, even these readers like to be entertained and do not appreciate idiosyncratic writings that are only comprehensible to the author himself. The following sections address the 'readability' of the paper

Objectivity

Characteristic of academic writing is its objectivity. This doesn't mean that personal preferences and opinions do not matter, but they go beyond the 'sounds like a good idea' argument. Argumentation, analysis and accountability are central to any scientific work. The reader must understand on what arguments and evidence the author has based his conclusions. And, if it concerns empirical research, ideally he must be able to replicate the research and reach the same conclusions. Related with the issue of objectivity are the following recommendations:

- Avoid the excessive use of 'I' (e.g. 'I find..', 'I think..', 'I believe.', 'As I discussed before..'). This suggests too much identification with your topic, and too little objectivity and distance. The way you structure information and critically evaluate a scientific debate already underlines your personal position (if relevant).
- A paper is not supposed to read like a pamphlet. Interest in your topic is important, but too much identification is often annoying for a neutral reader. Some papers read like 'Business Process Reengineering is a panacea to all our problems; let's find some evidence to support this opinion!'. An attitude like this normally leads to a biased piece of work. This is quite acceptable if you're working in a marketing department and trying to 'sell' a product; in a scientific context it is undesirable.
- Also avoid phrases that express personal views; for example: 'Stewart (1994) has provided a very useful ..'. Don't copy information brochures when they merely express the opinions of a 'biased' source (e.g. a company presenting itself). Usually, this information reads like a folder: 'Company x is a leading company in internet technology, it has highly qualified personnel, it has an outstanding reputation, blabla, '. A more objective tone would be: 'Company x views itself as a major player in the field with ..'.

Notice that most of these comments try to prevent that the author acts as medium between text and reader. The reader should be able to draw his own conclusions!

Structure

People possess limited cognitive capacities to process information. This also applies to your readers, including your supervisor. In order to make information comprehensible, you have to structure it: offer it in bits and pieces. Organizing your research proposal (and thesis) in sections and paragraphs, or visualizing information in figures, graphs and tables, are examples of providing structure. The issue is to find the right balance in this structuring effort. While structure is important, too much structure ('overstructuring') leads to annoyance on the part of the reader. For example, 'In the next section we will discuss ...' followed in the next section by: 'As explained, in this section we will discuss...'. , is in most cases redundant. Other examples are the excessive use of section headings (e.g. '2.3.4.1, part a. '), and summations (a,b,c.). As a result, the story loses momentum and the reader easily

loses track because of all the detail. It also suggests that the author is unable to integrate the different passages into a coherent story.

The opposite problem is: too little structure. Sections last more than 3 pages with no intermission; sections comprise different topics with no apparent relationship, etc. A common error is that the line of reasoning in the author's head is not the same as is understood by the reader because important connecting arguments, facts, etc are omitted. As a result, subsequent paragraphs or sections appear unrelated. The best way to correct these errors is to put aside your work for a couple of days once you have finished it. You'll soon find out that some parts of your work appear redundant, superfluous or incoherent. Other recommendations are:

- Sections should reflect a logical order. In most articles, sections are interlinked and their order cannot be changed. Thus, you need to read section two in order to understand the section three and four, etc. In some papers, however, section five can easily be changed with section two, or vice versa. They are 'stand alone' units. This may indicate that there is something wrong with your line of argument. In fact, it may indicate that there is no current thread at all, or it may indicate redundancy: nice to read if you have the time and motivation, but not necessary. Thus, each section has to have a function in the whole story. A paper should read like an American film scenario: there are no loose ends, everything has its place in the plot of the film.
- Sections tell a coherent story; they are not simply a summary of different articles, but an explanation, analysis and critical evaluation of the literature. Use connecting sentences to link different paragraphs.
- Keep in mind that, after having read several articles and books on a particular topic you have already developed into a semi-specialist: you probably know more about the topic than most people do, including your supervisor. So, what may sound logic and obvious to you may not be true for your reader.
- Titles should convey the basic message of a section. Titles like 'Theory', 'The conflict', or 'Literature review' are not very informative or appealing.

Writing your thesis proposal

Writing a proposal boils down to putting your ideas on paper in way that is consistent with what has been written above. A good proposal consists of about 2 pages of literature overview that logically culminates into the problem statement. Then, a couple of sub questions are formulated that will assist you in a step –by-step answering of the problem statement. Finally you end with a rudimentary idea of how you are going to deal with the (empirical) research; this includes method, sample etc. Of course, a list of used references should be used. An example proposal has been added as an appendix to this guide.

The basic purpose of your thesis proposal is to inform the reader about the purpose and background of your study. In brief, the introduction should inform the reader about the topic/ problem statement of the study (What?), the reasons why you undertake this particular study (Why?), and how you are going to deal with the topic (How?).

Many students tend to disregard the value of the research proposal. This is fatal. Students who have not really explored these what, why and how questions, tend to get lost in their own writings and lose track of the big picture. Thus, no matter how provisional your research proposal may be, ***it is important as a road map*** for yourself and your supervisor. Furthermore, it must contain the papers' purpose in a nutshell. If you cannot summarize the purpose of your paper in three sentences, something is wrong.

A second objective of the research proposal is to *raise the interest of the reader*. Ask yourself: 'why would anyone read this story?'. 'What makes it interesting?'. Avoid standard openings like: 'The world is changing rapidly, companies have to adapt, etc.' This may be an eye-opener to your grandmother, but the more informed reader knows that about 90% of all master theses in organization studies since the mid-1990s, has this type of introductory statement.

In sum, the following recommendations can be made:

- **The thesis proposal should contain the following information: (1) Relevance of the topic to the reader; (2) Shortcomings in current research; (3) Your contribution to this debate; (4) Problem statement; (5) Research methodology, i.e. method of data collection and sample characteristics; (6) Overview of the thesis.**
- Don't wait too long before you present the central question of your paper. Some students take numerous pages to get to the point. Until then, the reader is kept in the dark about which way the author is heading. A very straightforward way of communicating your message is to phrase it in the first line. For example, 'This thesis is concerned with the effects of national culture on decision making in different organizations. More specifically, etc.'. Newspaper articles are usually structured along the same lines: first, a brief summary ('abstract'), followed by more detailed information. Of course, this is only one way of approaching it.
- Make sure that central concepts are properly introduced. When empowerment is an important concept in your paper, make sure that the reader understands what empowerment is, even if you elaborate on the different interpretations of the concept in later sections. This is especially important for broad concepts like 'culture', 'flexibility', etc.

Finally, it is important to note that a well formulated research proposal can serve, with some minor adaptations, as the introduction chapter of your final thesis.

6. Form and how to annoy your thesis supervisor?

One task of the supervisor is to comment on your thesis as it progresses. Annoying however, is when a supervisor has to correct your writings concerning aspects that indicate sloppiness: things that you could and **should** have corrected yourself, if you had given it a little bit more attention. Here's a list of important 'wrong doings':

Plagiarism

Ideas are considered intellectual property. Therefore, plagiarism, or the use of someone else's ideas without mentioning their source is a serious offence in general, and in science in particular. Copying text without citation marks is equally reprehensible. Besides, the difference in style is always noticeable: the fluency of the

original text and the more 'bumpy' tone of the novice. *When detected, plagiarism will be reported to the Exams Committee to take necessary steps.*

The reference list

This has a high irritation factor, simply because you have been explained how to make a reference list already in the first year. Check the guide to the second year paper, or any book or article for the proper format.

- Include all (and only those) sources in the bibliography which you use in the text;
- Book titles and journals should be underlined (or italicized), not the article or book chapter;
- Always include: Name, Initials (or first name), Year, Title (article), Title of Book or Journal, Volume (article), Pages (article), Publisher (book), Place of publication (book). Do not include the (student) edition reference. Do not use " " for titles. For citing electronic sources, see Cooper and Schindler (1998: p. 606-607).
- The precise order of references may vary (for example, sometimes the year of publication is put in brackets directly after the author, sometimes at the end). But, in any case: be consistent! Do not change the order of information provided, do not underline *and* italicise! If you use capitals for titles, do it everywhere or leave them out.
- The most usual form is to mention the author and year of publication in your text: e.g. 'Mintzberg (1984) distinguishes ...'. Or: 'As is believed by some authors (e.g. Mintzberg, 1984)...'. Do not include initials.
- Do not use endnotes: they require the reader to go back and forth in order to check a reference.
- Avoid long citations. If you do quote literally, use quotation marks and include the page of the source, e.g.: 'Five coordinating mechanisms seem to explain the fundamental ways in which organizations coordinate their work (..). These should be considered the most basic elements of structure, the glue that holds organizations together' (Mintzberg, 1983, p. 4).
- Once you have referred to the work of three or more authors, at later stages you may use the construction 'et al.' (not: et. al.). For example, Blanchard, Carlos and Randolph (1996) are later referred to as: Blanchard et al. (1996). For two authors, you have to repeat the names.

Spelling

Spelling mistakes cannot completely be avoided. Most books or articles contain a few. However, two or three per page already start to irritate the reader. Most mistakes can easily be avoided by using the spell check on your computer. A grammar check may also be useful, especially when you tend to write 'there' instead of 'their', or 'where' instead of 'were'.

Usage of American and British English

Be consistent in your choice of American and British English. Do not write 'organization' *and* 'organisation', 'emphasise' *and* 'emphasize', or 'behaviour' *and* 'behavior' in the same text. Again, a spell check is very helpful to avoid this type of mistakes.

Grammar and syntax

Confusing grammar or incorrect syntax do much harm your message as they are usually interpreted as a sign of incompetence. Examples that can be found in any paper are:

- Overly complex or grammatically incorrect sentences:
'The one Balanced Scorecard of the newly to be formed firm which is described as the above as the result of the negotiations and analyses, is the one on which the decision to go ahead can be made'.
'The relationship between departments is often set by the organisation. This is mainly done through their ability to ascribe different levels of interdependence between departments.'
'Each individual manager has about 20 employees under its operation'.
- Sentences that are incomprehensible:
'(.) It implies the existence of an ability that is capable of discriminating between specific aspects'. Very profound, but what does it mean?

Punctuation

Some of the more common errors:

- Semi-colon (;) instead of colon (:)
Semi-colons are often used instead of full stops, in cases where sentences are grammatically independent but where the meaning is closely connected. Colons are used before explanations, before a list or to introduce quotations.
- Apostrophe (')
In English we normally add 's to a singular, and an apostrophe ' to a plural. Thus, *the manager's job* (singular) or *the managers' job* (plural) instead of *the managers job*;
- Full stop at the end of a title

Typical Dutch errors

Many of the abovementioned mistakes of Dutch students are to some extent acceptable because you are writing in another language. Some of the most common mistakes are:

- Incorrect English translations, such as: 'industry' (the correct translation is *bedrijfstak*; the Dutch word *industrie* refers to the manufacturing sector, whereas the English word refers to any sector including services), 'paragraph' (which means *alinea* instead of *paragraaf*) and 'administrative' (normally should be translated as *bestuurlijk* instead of *administratief*).
- Incorrect use of words like *than* and *then*; *number* and *amount*, (e.g. 'a certain amount of employees'), *to extend* and *extent*, etc.
- Funny abbreviations like 'f.e.' or 'f.i.'.
- Another difference between English and Dutch language are compound nouns. Compound nouns are words that are made of two or more parts, such as 'top management'. While in English these parts are separated, in Dutch language they are *always* conjoint (thus, 'topmanagement').

Unacceptable errors however, are mistakes in your *own* language! A sentence like '*De inhoudt van dit verslag..*', may be an occasional mistake, but you have a serious problem when you write lines like '*De klant bepaald wat geproduceert gaat worden...*'.

Colloquial speech

Given the formal character of the thesis, usage of colloquial speech or informal language should be avoided. Examples are: 'don't', 'a lot of times', 'have got'. The same applies to other forms of 'informal' address, such as 'you': e.g. 'As a company you do...'; 'As a manager, you want to be the leader...'; etc.

Writing style

Apply a lively style:

- Use the present tense as much as possible in order to make your text more direct: e.g. 'Robinson *defines* empowerment as follows ..'(instead of 'defined'; this suggests that Robinson no longer believes in his own ideas). Use the past tense when the activity refers to something that happened in the past: e.g. 'Robinson found in his study that...'
- Avoid too many passive phrases: e.g. 'In section 3.1 an analysis of the indicators of empowerment will be conducted'. A better formulation would be: 'Section 3.1 analyses indicators of empowerment'.
- Write, if possible: 'this' instead of 'that', 'these' instead of 'those', etc.

Figures and tables

Figures and tables should be numbered and referred to in the text. Don't write: 'see the figure below' or 'on the next page', or whatever. This also unnecessarily hinders you when editing the text; just write: 'see Figure 1',

Figures and tables have titles! The title should inform the reader at a glance what the table or figure is displaying. They have to 'speak for themselves'. This means, that it should not be necessary for the reader to first read the text in order to understand what is being displayed.

Layout

A proper format is an important aspect of the presentation of your work. The most important function of the layout is that is supportive and emphasizes what the reader should note. Anything that distracts the reader from the content of your work should be avoided. Examples are:

- Unconventional letter types;
- Too much spacing between sections;
- Letter size of headings which do not correspond with letter size of text (e.g. 20 points vs. 12 points);
- Unconventional left/right and top/bottom margins.

7. Evaluation of your thesis

The criteria used for evaluating a paper are an integral part of all the aforementioned aspects. They include:

Content: originality and level of sophistication

- To what extent is the student original in his treatment of the topic?
- What is the added value of the paper in terms of theory development and empirical research?
- To what extent does the student display a good understanding of the topic and is able to explore it in all its details.
- Does the student acknowledge and understand the **limitations** of his work?

Form, style and structure: readability

- Is the message of the paper clear and comprehensible?
- Correct usage of grammar, syntax and punctuation?
- Proper layout?

Example thesis proposals

Thesis proposal:

The relation between union density and outsourcing activities within the Dutch ICT industry?

More and more firms are using outsourcing to increase their competitiveness in modern business practice (Gilley & Rasheed, 2000). This does not mean that outsourcing is something from the past few years. The term as such may be relatively young, the practice of outsourcing goes all the way back to the Roman age, where tax-collection was subcontracted (Kakabadse & Kakabadse, 2002). Although no generally agreed definition exists for outsourcing (Deavers, 1997), it will be dealt with here as described by Chase et al. (2004: 372): “[...] *the act of moving some of a firm’s internal activities [...] to outside providers*”. This does not necessarily mean that, contrary to popular belief, the outsourced activity is moved to another country. On the contrary, many firms rely on local firms for outsourcing activities because limited spatial distance allows simple communication and logistics management (Jones, 2005).

Although a large stream of research about the reasons for outsourcing firm operations exists, the influence on firm performance has not been convincingly proven yet (Gilley & Rasheed, 2000). Reasons for outsourcing vary from a desire to reduce operating costs, gain access to additional resources that are not available within the firm, expanding production capacity (Deavers, 1997), and the wish avoid risks and make additional capital funds available (Outsourcing Institute, 2005). Additionally, the potential traps and pitfalls concerning outsourcing have been shed light upon as well (i.e. Barthélémy, 2003; Bettis et al., 1992). These articles investigate the potential hazards occurring while a firm sizes down, partially based on the article published by Prahalad & Hamel (1990) about the necessity of a core competence for the corporation. Barthélémy (2003) states that one reason why outsourcing initiatives fail can be assigned to the fact that the psyche of employees is not taken into consideration. When employees find out about the plans of senior management to move jobs outside the boundaries of the firm, sense of job security among employees generally drops, even when their positions are not under a direct threat. One could imagine what this does to employee productivity, not to mention the times labour is suspended due to strikes or other actions (Dickerson & Geroski, 1997). Worker unionisation plays an important role in this, as correlations between unionisation and strikes have been identified in the past (Ross & Irwin, 1951).

Nevertheless, the majority of research on outsourcing provides theoretical frameworks only being supported by anecdotal evidence (Gilley & Rasheed, 2000). Moreover, a gap in research concerning outsourcing can be identified. Thus far, no link between the type of outsourcing of firm activities and the role of worker unions has been investigated (Perry, 1997). This link is supposedly important since worker unions can still be considered, despite their steady decline (CBS, 2005) as important factors in the current society. Worker unions unite workers with the purpose of improving or maintaining their employment (Mackenzie King, 1897). With the current trend of downsizing firms, maintaining employment is important as ever before so

unions still have an important role to fulfil. Yet, no study exists to link these two issues (Gilley & Rasheed, 2000).

The aim of this thesis is to investigate if any relation between unionization of the workforce and the type, breadth, and depth of outsourcing can be found. The central question this thesis will seek to answer is:

- What is the relation between union density and outsourcing activities within the Dutch ICT industry?

Unionization (or union density) is the number of union members divided by the total number of employees in a firm (Mason & Bain, 1993). Union density is an important indicator of the relative strength of the union (Perry, 1997). On the other hand, outsourcing will be approached in the same manner as defined by Gilley & Rasheed (2000). This means that the dimensions that will be measured are the type, breadth, and depth of the outsourcing activities of the firm. The *breadth* of outsourcing is related to the functional area in the firm that is affected by the outsourcing activity. This list is based on the several value-creating activities that a firm can conduct such as accounting, advertising, shipping, training, etc. The *breadth* of outsourcing activities comes down to the number of these functional activities that are outsourced as opposed to the total number of activities that the firm could potentially fulfil. This is derived from Harrigan's (1984) conceptualization of breadth of vertical integration and means that the relative downsizing of the firm will be measured. The *depth* of outsourcing investigates the magnitude of the outsourcing activity as such. For example, two firms, both active in the segment of consumer electronics, can outsource activities in the field of after-sales support. Firm A lets an external provider take care of the collection and shipping of faulty products back to the firm. There Firm A conducts the reparation and replaces, if necessary, the product in-house. Then, the product is shipped back to the point of initial collection where the client can pick up the product. On the other hand, Firm B leaves this entire process to a third-party, from the transport of the products, the eventual reparation and/or replacement, to the shipment back to the customer. The third-party taking care of this process bills Firm B according to the agreed terms. Although both firms outsource a value-adding activity, namely after-sales service, the *depth* of the activity is different. So in order to get a clear picture of the outsourcing activity, both are necessary to measure.

To improve the chances of finding significant results the industry that will be subject of measurement is the Dutch ICT industry. In this industry, relatively few employees are currently member of any union, but this is expected to change in the near future. Mason & Bain (1993) state that one primary driver for employees to join an union is fear of unemployment. According to the CWI, 16,000 jobs were lost in 2003 in the Dutch ICT industry (Schop, 2003) which could be a good indication for an increase in union participation in the industry. Furthermore, it is expected that union density will rise because of the increased attempts of the unions to attract employees from this specific industry.

Sub-questions

The following sub questions will form the framework for the development of the thesis:

1. Which underlying theories are used for explaining outsourcing and its effect on firm strategy?

2. Which underlying theories are used for explaining union density (and consequently bargaining power) and what are the effects on firm strategy?
3. Which distinctive factors can be identified on the Dutch ICT industry and to what extent do these influence possible outcomes?
4. What is the influence of high union density opposed to low union density in regards to outsourcing behaviour within the Dutch ICT industry?

Method

As stated above, the sample for this thesis will be firms in the Dutch ICT industry (BIK code 72). Firms in this particular industry are active in fields such as software engineering, network formation and maintenance, computer hardware supply and consultancy, etc. Union density will be derived from secondary data which is available through databases such as CBS Statline and information from Unions such as FNV Bondgenoten. To obtain information about the various dimensions concerning outsourcing activities, databases with firm data such as REACH will form a secondary data source. Among other sources, annual reports will provide information regarding downsizing activities of firms in the investigated industry. Data will be processed in SPSS for statistical results.

References

- Barthelémy, J. (2003). The Seven Deadly Sins of Outsourcing, *Academy of Management Executive*, 17(2), 87-100.
- Bettis, R.A., Bradley, S.P. & Hamel, G. (1992). Outsourcing and Industrial Decline, *Academy of Management Executive*, 6(1), 7-22.
- CBS. (2005). *CBS Statline*. Retrieved from the World Wide Web on January 25th from:
[http://statline.cbs.nl/StatWeb/table.asp?PA=37183vb&D1=a&D2=0&D3=\(I-11\)-I&DM=SLNL&LA=nl](http://statline.cbs.nl/StatWeb/table.asp?PA=37183vb&D1=a&D2=0&D3=(I-11)-I&DM=SLNL&LA=nl)
- Chase, R.B., Jacobs, F.R. & Aquilano, N.J. (2004). *Operations Management for Competitive Advantage*. 10th Edition, Boston: Irwin/McGraw Hill.
- Deavers, K.L. (1997). Outsourcing: A Corporate Competitiveness Strategy, Not a Search for Low Wages. *Journal of Labor Research*, 18(4), 503-519.
- Dickerson, A.P. & Geroski, P.A. (1997). Productivity, Efficiency, and Strike Activity. *International Review of Applied Economics*, 11(1), 119-135.
- Gilley, K.M. & Rasheed, A. (2000). Making More by Doing Less: An Analysis of Outsourcing and its Effects on Firm Performance. *Journal of Management*, 26(4), 743-790.
- Harrigan, K.R. (1984). Formulating Vertical Integration Strategies. *Academy of Management Journal*, 9(4), 638-652.
- Irwin, A.M. & Irwin, D. (1951). Strike Experience in Five Countries, 1927-1947: An Interpretation. *Industrial & Labor Relations Review*, 4(3), 323-343.
- Jones, M.T. (2005). The Transnational Corporation, Corporate Social Responsibility and the 'Outsourcing' Debate. *The Journal of American Academy of Business*, 2(March Issue), 91-97.
- Kakabadse, A. & Kakabadse, N. (2002). Trends in Outsourcing: Contrasting USA and Europe. *European Management Journal*, 20(2), 189-198.
- Mackenzie King, W.L. (1897). Trade-Union Organization in the United States. *The Journal of Political Economy*, 16, 201-215.

- Mason, B. & Bain, P. (1993). The Determinants of Trade Union Membership in Britain: a Survey of the Literature.
- Outsourcing Institute. (2005). *Top Ten Outsourcing Survey*. Retrieved from the World Wide Web on January 24th from:
[Http://www.outsourcing.com/content.asp?page=01i/articles/intelligence/oi_top_ten_survey.html&nonav=true](http://www.outsourcing.com/content.asp?page=01i/articles/intelligence/oi_top_ten_survey.html&nonav=true)
- Perry, C.R. (1997). Outsourcing and Union Power. *Journal of Labor Research*, 18(4), 521-534.
- Prahalad, C.K. & Hamel, G (1990). The Core Competence of the Firm, *Harvard Business Review*, 68(3), 79-91.
- Schop, D. (2003). Dit jaar opnieuw duizenden banen in de ICT verdwenen. *Automatiseringsgids*, 52, as retrieved on January 28th from:
<http://www.automatiseringgids.nl/news/default.asp?artId=15437>.

Thesis proposal

The importance of partner selection criteria on different types of strategic alliances.

Due to a substantial increase in the occurrence of inter-firm collaboration not restricted by boundaries such as industries or borders, attention devoted to international strategic alliances has risen accordingly (Nielsen, 2003). This phenomenon, an international strategic alliance, can be described as an agreement between companies located in different nations that strive toward commonly achieving individual goals while utilizing resources from at least two autonomous companies (Parkhe, 1991). Explanations for the increase in popularity of international strategic alliances can be associated with the benefits provided by this event. One benefit related to alliance formation is the possibility to learn new capabilities and skills from your partner (Lei & Slocum, 1992). In addition, alliances can serve as a tool to create local market access and accelerate international expansion (Cracia-Canal, Lopez Duarte, Rialp Criado & Valdez Llanez, 2002), reduce risk and costs of development (Bayona, Garcia-Marco & Huerta, 2001) and create synergies from resource complementarity (Harrison, Hitt, Hoskinsson & Ireland, 2001).

Although international strategic alliances become increasingly popular and provide various benefits to organizations, a high failure rate is believed to exist. Estimations state that the objectives set by the partners entering an alliance are not realized in approximately 50-60% of the times an alliance is formed (Dacin, Hitt & Levitas, 2001). It is not appropriate to fully ascribe the failure to meet pre-set alliance objectives to partner selection, while various reasons can be the cause of this outcome. A reason that often causes alliance failure is that one party behaves opportunistically and strives to achieve own goals instead of focusing on the collective objectives (Park & Russo, 1996). Other potential reasons for alliance failure could include poor management and differences in culture. Nevertheless, the selection of the partner does determine the available set of skills and resources for the alliance (Luo, 1996). Consequently, the success of any alliance formed can at least partially be related to the selection of the partner (Dacin et al., 2001).

While international strategic alliances in it self have been subject to study on many occasions, less research has been devoted to the criteria that determine the selection of the partner for an international strategic alliance (Nielsen, 2003). on the other hand, various studies on partner selection criteria have deepened our understanding of this aspect of the alliance formation process so far. Early research on partner selection criteria by Tomlinson (1970) attempted to identify the relative importance of selection criteria in joint-venture formation in India and Pakistan. Geringer (1991) added to this field of research by making a clear distinction between partner-related and task-related selection criteria in the partner selection process. The findings of Geringer where further investigated by Glaister & Buckley (1996) who investigated the importance of task-related and partner-related selection criteria among a United Kingdom based sample of joint-ventures. Recent research by Hitt et al. (2000) focused on the difference in partner selection criteria applied by companies from emerging and developed economies, while Nielsen (2003) investigated the relative importance of partner selection criteria among firms with different

backgrounds. Analyzing the available research on the relative importance of partner selection criteria, space for further investigation is still present. One aspect of partner selection for international strategic alliances that needs further research is the question of how the importance of selection criteria varies between different forms of alliances that can be adopted (Hitt et al., 2000).

This thesis will discuss partner selection criteria in international strategic alliances. To be more specific, the emphasis lies on how partner selection criteria vary with different possible types of strategic alliances adopted. In order to investigate the importance of partner selection criteria among varying types of alliances one question will serve as a guideline throughout this thesis. This central question will be:

How does the importance of partner selection criteria vary when different types of international strategic alliances are chosen?

In order to answer this question the problem will be approached from different angles. The first step will be to review existing literature on the relative importance of selection criteria in the partner selection process. The findings of these previous studies will be used to create a better understanding of the influence of partner selection criteria and to develop (possible) explanations for how they might vary with different types of international strategic alliances. Secondly, I will try to acquire a deeper understanding on the subject matter through investigating which partner selection criteria are most important for Dutch companies entering in different types of alliances first hand. Through combining the two different approaches, I will attempt to identify the most important selection criteria depending on the type of international strategic alliance.

While the focus in this thesis is on answering the central question, several sub-questions need to be addressed to shape the thesis. The sub-questions will serve as a framework for this thesis.

- 1) Which different types of alliance forms are recognized in the existing literature?
- 2) Which theoretical perspectives provide explanations for the rationale behind the different types of alliances?
- 3) How do the findings in the literature on the rationale for alliances relate to the partner selection criteria chosen?

Method

In order to define which partner selection criteria are most valued in a specific type of alliance an explorative study will be conducted. In order to create a deeper understanding of this subject matter, insights of experts with practical experience will be necessary. Through interviews with managers, that have practical experience with a variety of alliances, an in-depth overview of the most important partner selection criteria can be prepared. The outcomes of the interviews conducted, will be used to generate propositions of which partner selection criteria will play the most critical role in the partner selection process for a specific alliance form.

References

- Bayona, C., Garcia-Marco, T & Huerta, E. (2001). Firms' motivations for cooperative R&D: an empirical analysis of Spanish firms. *Research Policy*, 30, 1289-1307.
- Dacin, M.T., Hitt, M.A. & Levitas, E. (1997). E. Selecting partners for successful international alliances: Examination of U.S. and Korean firms. *Journal of World Business*, 32 (1),
- Geringer, M.J. (1991). Strategic determinants of partner selection criteria in international joint ventures. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 1991 (1), 41-62.
- Glaister, K.W. & Buckley, P.J. (1997). Task-related and partner-related selection criteria in UK international joint ventures. *British Journal of Management*, 8, 199-222.
- Gracia-Canal, E., Lopez Duarte, C., Rialp Criado, J. & Valdes Llana, A. (2002). Accelerating international expansion through global alliances : a typology of cooperative strategies. *Journal of World Business*, 37 (2), 91-108.
- Harrison, J.S., Hitt, M.A., Hoskisson, R.E., Ireland, D.R. (2001). Resource complementarity in business combinations: Extending the logic to organizational alliances. *Journal of Management*, 27 (6), 679-691.
- Hitt, M.A., Dacin, M.T., Levitas, E., Arregle, J. & Borza, A. (2000). Partner selection in emerging and developed market contexts: Resource-based and organizational learning perspectives. *Academy of Management Journal*, 43 (3), 449-467.
- Lei, D. & Slocum, J.W. jr. (1992). Global strategy, competence building and strategic alliances. *California Management Review*, 35 (1), 81-98.
- Luo, Y. (1996). Partner selection and international joint venture performance: Chinese evidence. *Academy of Management Proceedings*, 161-166.
- Nielsen, B.B. (2003). An Empirical investigation of the drivers of international strategic alliances. *European Management Journal*, 21 (3), 301-322.
- Park, S.H. & Russo, M.V. (1996). When competition eclipses cooperation: An event history analysis. *Management Science*, 42 (6), 875-891.
- Parkhe, A. (1991). Interfirm diversity, organizational learning and longevity in global strategic alliances. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 22, 579-601.
- Tomlinson, J.W.C. (1970). *The Joint Venture process in International Business: India and Pakistan*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA