

Literature Review: Developing a Research Topic

A research topic should:

- lie in the area of business studies or economics (e.g., human resources, organizational behavior, leadership, corporate finance, accounting, marketing, management, international business, strategic management, corporate governance, behavioral economics).
- can be linked to the appropriate academic theory in the area of business studies or economics.
- can be completed within the given time and resources (e.g., by the end of November).
- lie within your capabilities (e.g., avoid too technical topics if you do not have enough knowledge about them).
- provide personal motivation and interest.
- has enough academic literature. For example, if you cannot find a lot of literature for your topic, you may consider revising either your search keywords or your topic.

If you do not have an initial idea of your possible topic or do not know where to start, you may do the following:

- Textbook search: you may start by searching for textbooks. You can start with general textbooks with quite broad titles such as corporate finance, marketing management, management accounting, organizational behavior, and human resource management. You can search the table of contents, and then you screen those headings, subchapters, specific sections, or paragraphs that are interesting to you. You may also read the most interesting paragraphs. These might lead you to a textbook with a narrower topic. For example, you start with a Marketing Management book, and after that, you may narrow your topic down to a Strategic Brand Management or Consumer Behaviour book. Then you can repeat the process explained in this point (searching the contents, screening sections, ...) until you find some potential ideas for your topic.
- Topic and keywords formulation: based on initial literature search and screening (e.g., from the previous point), formulate your preliminary topic (e.g., trade-off theory of capital structure or relationship between knowledge management and firm performance) and corresponding keywords. Then you can use these keywords to build a search string. For example, a [Google Scholar](#) search string could be "capital structure" + "trade-off theory" or "knowledge management" + "firm performance".
- Checking the availability of sources: once you have your search string, you can check the availability of studies since you need enough studies that you can review. For example, you could use your search strings in [Google Scholar](#) (not the ordinary Google). It is very useful if you check whether the titles and abstracts of your search results match the topic you were looking for. In this regard, you can quickly read the titles, abstracts, and even parts of the studies if necessary. If you do not get enough results or the results are not relevant to your topic, you may consider modifying your keywords in the search string or even revising your topic (second point above).
- Check titles and abstracts in top academic journals (e.g., in the last one or two years). [VHB ranking](#) provides a quite comprehensive list of top journals. You may check a few A-ranked journals from your field to find some ideas for your topic. This last step is optional.

Checking the titles of literature reviews in academic journals might help you in formulating your working title. Please find some examples of literature review titles from academic journals below (parts of the titles such as "a literature review" were omitted). Read these examples carefully so that you get a grasp of how academic titles are written (i.e., the academic style). Do not underestimate this

part. Your reader gets the first impression of your academic paper from your title, and students often make mistakes about their titles (e.g., too informal, too long).

1. Linkages between service quality, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty
2. Online behavioral advertising
3. Cross-cultural variations in consumer behavior
4. Determinants of customer loyalty
5. International market entry mode
6. Customer knowledge management antecedent factors
7. Determinants of brand equity from the consumer's perspective
8. Antecedents and consequences of participation in brand communities
9. Current trends within social and environmental accounting research
10. The use of fair value measurement in financial reporting
11. Control systems and strategy
12. Earnings management
13. Business angels research in entrepreneurial finance
14. Supply chain finance
15. The contribution of large banking institutions to systemic risk
16. Small business financial management practices in North America
17. Private equity performance
18. The HR role in corporate social responsibility and sustainability
19. Leadership and lean six sigma
20. Sustainable human resource management
21. Business model innovation processes
22. Strategic planning—organizational performance relationship
23. Systems of innovation and innovation ecosystems
24. Big data analytics in supply chain management
25. Lean production