

Prof. Dr. Kristina Klein  
Working Group Consumer Behavior

Max-von-Laue-Str. 1  
WiWi 2-Gebäude  
28359 Bremen, Germany

Secretariat: Tanja Riggers  
Phone: (0421) 218 – 66572  
Fax: (0421) 218 – 66573  
E-Mail: [markstones@uni-bremen.de](mailto:markstones@uni-bremen.de)  
[www.markstones.de](http://www.markstones.de)

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## Guidelines for the Preparation of Seminar-, Bachelor-, and Master Theses

(November 2024)

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**For Bachelor theses:** Please note that the information you received in the introductory event only represents some general information on how to prepare a Bachelor thesis. Please use this document as specific guidelines for preparing your thesis.

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## 1 Time management

- It is advisable to set up a **timetable** at an early stage.
- Do not postpone **actually getting down to writing** for too long. We often do not realize that certain aspects are still unclear until we actually try to formulate them. Of course, this should not mean that you should end up 'just writing any old thing' because you don't really know what you want to say yet.
- You should clarify **the aim of your work** as early as possible.
- The time required for the final '**technical aspects**' such as formatting, creating figures/tables, proofreading, printing and binding etc., should not be underestimated.
- Computer problems (crashes, damaged hard disks, etc.) are not accepted as reasons for an extension. So please ensure you take the necessary backup precautions.

## 2 Searching and evaluating literature

- **Options for carrying out a literature search** (not all of the following search strategies are relevant to all subject areas):
  - Review the most recent volumes of the important journals (amongst others Journal of Marketing, Journal of Marketing Research, Marketing Science, Management Science, Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, Journal of Consumer Research, International Journal of Research in Marketing, Marketing Letters, ZfB/Journal of Business Economics, Zfbf/sbr, DBW, Marketing ZFP; for an overview list of business administration journals, see for example JOURQUAL3, <http://vhbonline.org/service/jourqual/vhb-jourqual-3/>).
  - Search in literature databases (relevant databases: Business Source Complete, PsycINFO, Web of Science). These can be found using the following platforms: EBSCO, GBV, ABI-Inform, JSTOR, ProQuest.
  - Review recent books on the subject.
  - Check cross-references to literature sources that are cited in (current) articles and books (therefore look for the most recent articles first, then you can find the 'standard' sources by looking at the references).
- First check the **relevance of a source** to the topic of your work ('Abstract', Introduction, Figures and Tables, Summary), then save, print or copy the source for further reference.
- Basic rule: **Not everything that is printed in black and white is useful or even accurate**. Quoted sources that you find in the literature should not be simply adopted, but rather must be critically evaluated in how they impact your own topic.
- The **introductory literature** issued by the department is designed to facilitate access to the subject, but may not necessarily be of central importance to the topic you are working on. Seminar papers and theses are written on many topics which we are keen to learn about ourselves and don't necessarily know in advance which sources are particularly relevant. So it is a good idea to look at the introductory literature in a critical way as well.
- The quality of your literature research will not be determined by how many sources you cite, but by whether you cite **sources relevant** to the topic.

- It is essential to read important sources in their **original form**. **Secondary citations** should only be provided in exceptional circumstances (for example, if the source itself is not available to you, but you consider it to be **highly** relevant).
- All thoughts directly or indirectly reflecting ideas from literature sources must be marked as such. Proper citation is an expression of academic honesty. If you are unsure, it is always better to cite too much than too little.
- Lecture materials (texts, slides, transcripts etc.) from this or other universities are not a suitable basis for a seminar paper or thesis and should therefore not be used.

### 3 Content of a written work

#### 3.1 Introduction/Topic

- The first **section of your work** should provide an introduction including a description of your research question(s), important definitions and a brief outline of the approach you have adopted.
- One of the **most important components** is a **clear formulation of the research question(s)**. In this, you must deal with the following aspects:
  - **What is the topic** that you are investigating?
  - **Why** is it **important**? (fundamental relevance of the issue being studied to theory and practice)
  - **Why** is it not **trivial**? (complexity/challenge(s) related to the solution of the issue in terms of content)
  - **What** do you intend to **contribute** to its solution? (purpose of the work)
- You should only provide **definitions** that are relevant to the issue you are dealing with (of course, you will be expected to use the commonly used definitions - where these exist). Definitions should help clarify what you are dealing with in your work. Hence there is usually little point in discussing or listing any variants of definitions that you find in the literature. At the end of your paper or thesis, check whether or not you really have kept to the definitions and distinctions that you formulated at the beginning.
- It is advisable to begin by **first formulating** your **research question** and, in particular, the aim of your work. This is the only way to ensure your work is topic-orientated. It is commonly the case that papers and thesis contain irrelevant information. Tip: You should review each section/paragraph by asking yourself whether the content really contributes to solve the research question(s) formulated at the outset.
- In the **final chapter of your work** (Summary/Conclusion) you should return to the introduction. In other words: it must be made clear in the summary what **the reader is expected to learn from your work**. Formulating the summary also gives you another chance to thoroughly check which parts of your work are really relevant to the research question(s) defined in the introduction.

### 3.2 Structure of a written work

- You can make a positive impression by appropriately **structuring** your work.
- Create **tables and figures**. They are a very good structuring aid as they deliver information clearly, and in a compact form. **Without exception, an explanation of any tables and figures must be provided in the text.** Your text should also contain references to the tables and figures you create (e.g., "See Fig. 1"). Under no circumstances should a section of your work consist solely of just one (or more) table(s) or figure(s).
- Information on study design, sample, (in)dependent variables, methodology, etc. should only be provided in the text if this is necessary for understanding the content. A better way to present this information is in a **table of studies**, i.e., a table that contains essential information on empirical studies. Always include the column headings on each page if you have a table that extends over more than one page as this makes it easier to read. Discuss with your supervisor which information (= columns) you should include into the table. This table is an important part of your work. The table must be part of the appendix of your thesis (both print and electronic version).
- An important part of your work is the development of an overall **conceptual model**, which depicts the constructs/variables you have identified and the relationships between them that you have discovered from the empirical studies you discuss. This model will also help you to detect research gaps in the literature. The conceptual model needs to be included in the main body of your thesis. The stated number of pages includes the conceptual model.
- The structure needs to be **balanced**. The length of the sections should roughly reflect the level of relevance to the subject of the work.
- The structure should **not be too deep**. As a rule, don't use more than four structuring levels (or more than 5 at the utmost) as this can make your work confusing for the reader.
- Whenever you introduce a **new structuring level**, it should contain **at least two subsections** (don't number a section 3.1.1 if there is no 3.1.2!).
- Avoid **digressions**. They give the impression that you were not able to fit the issue being discussed into your own structure. If an aspect does not fit, then either the structure is inappropriate or the aspect is so unimportant that it can be omitted.
- When providing an overview of various models, methodologies or empirical studies, it generally makes sense to **classify** these first (preferably using tables or figures). **What you must never do:** Simply list sequences of studies or models. Try to summarise the content of similar studies instead. If your work only deals with selected models, methodologies or empirical studies, you should include references to the others (at least in a footnote) and explain why you have chosen the models, methodologies or empirical studies in preference to the other ones.
- If you plan to evaluate different models, methodologies or studies, it is a good idea to define your **evaluation criteria** in advance.
- If you plan to discuss different empirical studies, one interesting way to approach this is to show to what extent the results **agree with each other or contradict each other**.
- If the results of the various empirical studies are contradictory, you should examine how **the differences can be explained**. One way of doing so is to analyse the extent to

which the individual studies differ in their methodology and whether these differences can explain the divergence of the results.

- **Assumptions**, practitioners' experiences, theoretical considerations or plausible knowledge must be distinguished from **empirical results**.
- If the empirical results of a study contradict the hypotheses formulated in the study, you should try to find **explanations**.

## 4 Formal layout of the work

### 4.1 Formatting your written work

- Only the pages of your text should be numbered using Arabic figures. The pages of the table of contents, list of tables, list of illustrations, list of abbreviations, list of symbols and bibliography as well as the appendix must be numbered sequentially using Roman numerals.
- **Fonts and line spacing:**
  - **Font: Times New Roman throughout (including footnotes)**
  - **Font size: 12 point for main text (bold headlines), 10 point for footnotes & for labelling figures and tables**
  - **Line spacing: 1.5 lines in the main text, 1.0 in the footnotes & for labelling figures and tables**
  - **Margin: left 2.5 cm, right 3.5 cm, top 2.5 cm, bottom 2 cm**
- For greater visual appeal and readability of your work, the **text body should be fully justified** and you should use the **hyphenation feature**. Where possible, try to avoid the sort of typographical defect in which single lines of a paragraph are separated by a page break (e.g. so-called 'orphans').
- The main text should be formatted consecutively, thus there is no page break after a chapter, as long as the following text comprises at least 3 lines. Within the given margins, all lines of the resulting page should be used. For the use of paragraphs, usually a return is sufficient and no additional space in between the two lines is necessary. For the content wise and structural separation of text parts within a chapter, two returns (one blank line) can be used.
- Don't allow problems with space to force you to shift important figures and tables to the appendix. The appendix is intended for supplementary information only which is not necessary for the understanding of the text. A figure or table which clarifies the issues presented in the text must therefore be provided **at the appropriate location in the text**. Tables and figures, and in particular their headings and explanations, must be legible without a magnifying glass.

## 4.2 Citation

- **The source of every idea taken from the literature must be acknowledged.**
- Sources should be identified either **in the text or in a footnote** (choose one variant and use it consistently) **by means of abbreviated citations**: cf. author(s), year, pages cited

Example:

Various approaches to the valuation of brands exist (cf. Sattler, 2005, p. 33 ff.).

or: Sattler (2005, p. 33 ff.) points out that various approaches to the valuation of brands exist.

or: Various approaches to the valuation of brands exist.<sup>14</sup> => Footnote 14 at the end of the page contains the source: cf. Sattler, 2005, p. 33 ff.

- **For Bachelor's thesis: Citation in footnotes!**
- For sources with more than one author, all authors must be cited. In the case of four or more authors, it is only necessary to list all the names the first time you refer to the source in the text. All other references to the same source can be made by citing the first author followed by "et al." (example: "Sattler et al., 2013, p. 823").
- If multiple references are cited for a single statement, then only one abbreviated citation is sufficient. In other words: **an abbreviated citation** (i.e., brackets in the text or as a footnote) **can contain multiple sources**. Each of the sources should be separated from one another by semi-colons.
- The source of a particular sentence should be identified **at the end of the sentence in brackets before the full stop** or **as a footnote after the full stop**. If a paragraph has only a single source, this source can be identified at the end of the paragraph in brackets in the text or in a footnote. (It should not be repeated after each sentence in the paragraph!)
- Special case: if, exceptionally, *only one specific source* is being referenced in a section or subsection, this can be indicated in a footnote right at the beginning of the section (i.e., put the footnote number in the heading or within the first sentence; example of a footnote text: "The entire contents of Section 2.1 are based on: Fischer/Völckner/Sattler, 2010, pp. 823-839"). Further citation of this source within this section is then no longer necessary.
- If **several publications** by the same author **that appeared in the same year** are used as sources, these sources can be differentiated by using the letters a, b, etc. after the year. Example: "Keller, 2014a, p. 773; Keller 2014b, p. 119."
- If the author, place of publication or year of publication is missing in the source, the abbreviations n.n., n.p., n.d. should be used instead
- When referring to **multiple pages of a source**, you should specify the first relevant page followed by "f." in the case of a single additional page or "ff." if the relevant source continues for several subsequent pages.
- In the literature, you will find a number of variations of the citation methods listed here. **Which one** you use doesn't actually matter. The important things are clarity and identifiability in the bibliography. Choose one variant and apply it **consistently**.
- You can indicate the source of any information you have found online by identifying the provider of information (e.g. "cf. Boeing website"). The source citation in your

**bibliography** must include the **full URL address** and **the date on which you viewed the website** (see also section 4.4).

- Sometimes articles published in journals are also available on the internet to download. In this case you should always cite the original source, i.e., the journal!

### 4.3 Verbatim quotations

- **Verbatim quotations** should be used **sparingly**. Try to limit their use to quotations in which an author has formulated an issue in a particularly concise way (e.g., because he or she first developed a particular theoretical construct and introduced it into the literature).
- **Verbatim quotations** are to be provided in the original language.
- **Verbatim quotations** in the text are placed between **quotation marks**. When citing the reference, do not use "cf.".
- Verbatim quotes must be reproduced **accurately**. Any omissions are indicated by sequential dots "(...)" and any additions you make by "[...]".

### 4.4 Bibliography

- List your sources in alphabetical order by the first author's surname (**no** subdivision in monographs, journal articles, websites etc.). The first forename of the authors has to be written out in full; middle names can be abbreviated. In case of uncertainty, please talk to your supervisor.
- If multiple sources with the same author: oldest source first
- **Completeness:**
  - Each source you refer to in the text must be listed in the bibliography. (But no more than that. Sources which you have read but not directly discussed should not be listed. In other words, the bibliography should not list sources that are not quoted in the text).
  - Literature references must contain all the necessary information so that the source can be easily found. For example, for some journals the issue number must be provided as well as the page numbers because the page numbering starts with 1 again in each issue (for example: Journal of Marketing).
- **Monographs:**
  - Surname(s), forename(s) (year of publication): Title, edition if appropriate (only if **not** the first edition), place(s) of publication: Publisher.
  - Example: Homburg, Christian (2015): Marketingmanagement: Strategie – Instrumente - Umsetzung - Unternehmensführung, 5th edition, Wiesbaden: Springer.
- **Articles in collected editions/handbooks:**
  - Surname(s), forename(s) (year of publication): Title, in: Name(s) of the author (or authors) (ed.): Title, edition, place(s) of publication: Publisher, page numbers.



- Example: Sattler, Henrik, Schnittka, Oliver und Völckner, Franziska (2012): An empirical analysis of brand image transfer in multiple sports sponsorships, in: Diamantopoulos, A., Fritz, W., Hildebrand, L. (Ed.): Quantitative marketing and marketing management - marketing models and methods in theory and practice, Heidelberg: Springer, p. 517-530.
- **Journal articles:**
  - Surname(s), forename(s) (year of publication): Title, in: Name of the journal, year of publication or volume in a periodical, issue number of the journal, page numbers.
  - Example: Fischer, Marc, Völckner, Franziska und Sattler, Henrik (2010): How important are brands? A cross-category, cross-country study, in: Journal of Marketing Research, Vol. 47, No. 5, p. 823-839.
- The same rules that apply to citation of sources in the text also apply to the bibliography. There are various ways of formatting a reference for each type of source. Choose one variant and apply it **consistently**. This also includes consistently using either upper case or lower-case initial letters when citing titles. For journal articles, you should also choose a **consistent** format with regard to "Year" or "Vol.", "Num." or "No." or "Issue" or 'just' 47 (5), i.e., figures only.
- For **websites**, indicate the exact address and the date on which the information you are using was found on the website you cited; i.e., not [www.lufthansa.com](http://www.lufthansa.com), but: "Lufthansa (2012): <http://www.lsgskychefs.com/lsg/home/de/jsp/index.jsp> (retrieved on 1 Oct. 2012)." Please save all cited websites as files and include them with your submission on a CD/DVD.

For further information on source types not listed here, please see: American Psychological Association (2009), Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 6th edition, Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.

#### 4.5 Figures and tables

- Figures and tables must be **numbered** consecutively. They should be given a **title that provides information on their contents**. If you use figures and/or tables, then you should include a list of figures and/or a list of tables (using the table of contents function found in most word processing programs).
- Figures and tables should have associated **headings and explanations (e.g., a key or legend for an item from the table/figure)** which provide a basic understanding of the content even without explanation in the text.
- **However, this is not a substitute for the requirement to explain tables and figures in the text.** Also, the text must contain references to the tables and figures you create (e.g. "See. Fig.1"). In no circumstances must a section of your work consist of only one (or more) table(s) or figure(s). The **identification of the sources** of tables/figures should follow the word "Source:" directly below the table/figure. If any tables/figures have been modified from the original, they must be identified as "Adapted from: (author)". Label any tables/figures you have created independently with "Source: own illustration".
- Tables/figures should be large enough to be **read without a magnifying glass** (this is not necessarily the case at 9pt and is certainly not the case at 8pt). Try not to use these to 'eke out' space.

- An important part of your work is the development of an overall **conceptual model**, which depicts the constructs/variables you have identified and the relationships between them that you have discovered from the empirical studies you discuss. This model will also help you to detect research gaps in the literature. The conceptual model needs to be included in the main body of your thesis and the stated number of pages includes the conceptual model (see also 3.2).

#### 4.6 Language

- A trivial point maybe, but perhaps not so self-evident – **grammar, spelling and punctuation mistakes** create a sloppy impression and if they occur frequently this will lead to a lower grade.
- Try to express yourself **objectively** and with **precise wording**.
- Avoid frequent repetitions. Also, make sure you avoid stating the obvious in the text (e.g.: "profits can rise or fall.").
- If you write your seminar paper or thesis in German: You will often encounter technical terms in English. There is no general rule on whether or not these should be translated. If there is a corresponding German technical term, then use it. The same applies if the English term translates well into German. In many cases it is better to adopt the English term than trying to 'be creative'.
- **Abbreviations** are to be avoided, since they interfere with the flow of the text. The only abbreviations that are accepted are common ones ("etc.", "e.g." and so on). Common abbreviations taken from the dictionary should not appear in the list of abbreviations.
- With the exception of verbatim quotations and English terminology, the work should be written in the same language throughout. This also applies to tables and figures both in the text and in the appendix.
- Be sure to use an academic writing style. It is not usual to use the first-person form in German specialist academic literature. You are therefore advised to avoid its use if you are writing in German.
- Avoid formulations which imply generalisations, such as "the variable X therefore **always** has an effect on...". Phrases such as "The authors **prove**..." are also to be avoided, since 'proof' can only be based on the kind of empirical evidence that is obtained in the natural sciences.

#### 4.7 Terminology

Use terminology **as consistently as possible**. Example: Once specified as such, an 'attribute' should continue be referred to as an 'attribute' and must not subsequently be called a 'feature' or a 'variable' or described using any other term.

#### 4.8 Other aspects

- **Sequence** of the parts of the written work:
  - Title page (see appendix for seminar papers; for degree theses the template available from the Examination Office must be used; <https://www.uni-bremen.de/markstones/>)
  - Table of contents
  - List of figures (if required)
  - List of tables (if required)
  - List of symbols/abbreviations (if required)
  - Text
  - Appendices (include a list of appendices if there is more than one)
  - Bibliography
  - For degree theses only: Statutory declaration (**see the regulations of the Examination Office**).
  - For seminar papers only: Declaration that the author has written the paper him-/herself (**as specified in the examination rules Paragraph 5, Section 3: Seminar papers**)
  - For degree theses only: CV
- If **symbols** are used in formulas, you must also provide a table of symbols. This does **not** mean that you will not be required to explain symbols in the text (at least at the point at which they are used for the first time).
- The pages of the table of contents themselves are not listed in the table of contents. Indexes, appendices and statutory declaration are to be listed in the table of contents, but they are not assigned a number (for example: "Appendices" but not: "Section 6: Appendices").
- Make sure that headings/titles in the text and in the tables match exactly and that the page numbers are correct. It is also advisable to use a word processor program to generate an index.
- Creative design of the layout is allowed, but not required. Make sure that you do not neglect the really important things for the sake of creating an attractive appearance.
- The following rules apply to **seminar papers**: Please submit two copies of your paper and a CD with the digital version of your work (as a PDF and as a Word file) to the institute (with reference to WG Klein). Seminar papers do not need to be bound; stapling is sufficient. The cover page of seminar papers should only show your forename and surname, your address, the name of your course of study and your semester and NOT your enrolment number or exam number (see model cover page at the end of this information sheet).
- The following rules apply to **degree theses**: You must submit three bound versions and one digital version to the Examination Office. To allow us to keep on top of the many degree theses written in our department, we also ask you to submit a CD/DVD together with your thesis paper. The CD/DVD should include the entire thesis (as a PDF and a Word file), and, where information from websites has been used, the relevant pages (e.g. as screen shots or PDF files) as well as all journal articles used in electronic form. For empirical research papers, include the dataset together with a brief description of the data.

- In the case of empirical research papers, a separate sheet ("Declaration on the use of data from empirical Bachelor's / Master's theses) regarding the collected data that you will receive from your supervisor must also be completed.
- All data collected or used as part of the Master's thesis must always be submitted to allow the results to be reviewed. Any exceptions must be agreed with the supervisor.

#### 4.9 Other helpful literature

Among other sources, additional information can be found in: Bänsch, Axl & Dorothea Alewell (2013): *BWL Starter Kit: Wissenschaftliches Arbeiten*, 11th edition, München: Oldenbourg Verlag. In the case of any inconsistencies, the requirements specified here are binding.

#### 4.10 Use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools and the declaration of authorship

- Please be aware that we check every work for **plagiarism** with appropriate software.
- For this purpose, you must submit a form, the **declaration of authorship**, on registration. You can find the form on the ZPA website at: <https://www.uni-bremen.de/zpa/formulare/>
- If AI – based applications are used, this must be stated in the declaration of independence and documented in the appendix.

##### Use of AI – based applications

- Use of AI [XY] to translate the sources [X, Y, Z] from English into German.
  - Use of AI [XY] to generate first information on the topics [X, Y, Z].
  - Use of AI [XY] to summarise the articles [X, Y, Z] as a basis for the independent presentation of the state of the literature.
  - Use of AI [XY] for grammatical and verbal optimisation of the texts written by me for this bachelor thesis (proof-reading).
- ➔ It is better to enter too many applications than too few!

##### Limits and regulations of AI use

- The first version of the text for the thesis must be written by the student themselves.
- All content generated by an AI must be verified by other sources. Scientific sources must be verified, as the sources provided by ChatGPT, for example, are often incorrect.
- Image-generating applications of an AI may only be used to create stimuli as part of an experimental study (use must be clarified with the thesis supervisor on a case-by-case basis). The use of image-generating AIs is not permitted for any other applications.

## 5 Supervision

- Please arrange to meet with your **supervisor during their office hours**. To make effective use of the supervision sessions, you should **prepare yourself for the appointment**. You should thus **set out the points or questions you wish to discuss in advance in writing and send them to your supervisor by email (at least one day before the appointment)**. Your supervisor may not agree to meet with you if your email does not arrive in time.
- If you wish to discuss the structure of your work, you are expected to **provide a relatively detailed suggestion of your own (which you must email to the supervisor at least one day before the appointment)** and be prepared to sketch out **the contents of each section and sub-section(s)**. A 'structure' of the type '1. Introduction, 2. Main body, 3. Conclusion' is not sufficient for a fruitful discussion.
- We will advise you as well as we can with the aim of guiding you and helping you improve your work. **But nothing will be given a 'stamp of approval' in advance**. We will only be able to evaluate your written work properly once we are able to read the complete finished (submitted) version. We will thus not accept claims that certain passages have already received a 'stamp of approval' (this also applies to type B Master's theses).
- Introductory courses for research in subject databases are regularly offered at the State and University Library (<https://www.suub.uni-bremen.de/infos/unser-schulungsangebot/#2>). The Studierwerkstatt (<https://www.uni-bremen.de/studierwerkstatt.html>) also offers much helpful material.

The use of statistical software is especially necessary for empirical work. Students can use **SPSS free of charge** in the course rooms of the ZfN. Discounted software packages for students can be purchased via [studentdiscounts.com](http://studentdiscounts.com). Alternatively, the open-source software 'R' is available for free download on Windows and for IOS at: <https://www.r-project.org/>.

**Cover Page for a Seminar Paper**

University of Bremen  
markstones Institute of Marketing, Branding & Technology

Prof. Dr. Kristina Klein

Seminar Paper

**„Topic“**

Seminar on „*Title of the seminar*“  
Supervisor: XYZ, M.Sc.

Summer/winter semester 20XX/20XX

Max Mustermann  
Administration  
Musterstr. 1  
12345 Bremen

Phone: 0221/111 111  
Email: [mustermann@uni-bremen.de](mailto:mustermann@uni-bremen.de)

Course of studies: Master Business

2. Semester  
Matriculation number:

Deadline: 01.02.2019

<b>COVER PAGE FOR FINAL THESIS</b>
------------------------------------

Max Mustermann  
Musterstr: 1  
12345 Bremen  
Email: mustermann@uni-bremen.de

Matriculation number: 1234567  
Course of studies: Business Administration (B. Sc./M. Sc.)

Bachelor's thesis (or Master's thesis)

**Title**

Submitted to  
**markstones Institute of Marketing, Branding & Technology**  
Faculty: Economics of the University of Bremen (FB 7)  
University of Bremen

First examiner: Prof. Dr. Kristina Klein  
Second examiner: Prof. Dr. X

Bremen, date of submission