

INSEAD

The Business School
for the World®

Différences de structure entre une thèse par essais et une thèse classique

Pierre Chandon (*INSEAD*)

AFM 16 Novembre 2018

The Big Picture: France vs. US

●●●
**Traditional dissertation
(France)**

“The dimensions, antecedents,
and consequences of X”

- Exhaustive literature review.
One citation every 2 sentences.
- Qualitative interviews
- Integrative conceptual models
with many hypotheses
- Scale development and
purification, Lisrel, PLS
- One large non-experimental
survey, all self reported.

**Dissertation with 2/3 essays
(USA)**

Each essay should ideally be
one counter-intuitive effect on a
new important topic.

- Almost no literature review, just
cite papers if you use them (and
cite possible reviewers in the
intro).
- Simple and straightforward
conceptual model.
- Few or no hypotheses.
- 3 to 5 experimental studies,
including one with real choices.
- Simple ANOVAs, regressions

INSEAD
●●●

Choosing the Right Topic

Principles ●●●

- Primary: What do you want to be known for?
- Secondary: Opportunities.
- KISS (Keep It Simple and Stupid): reductionist approach (not comprehensive)
- Use substance as starting point. Work on big issues.
- Start with a problem. Answer the question “what would marketers, consumers, or policy makers do differently after reading your work.
- A phenomenon is not just any outcome – it’s an outcome whose cause is in question, and particularly one which is ‘highly unexpected.’ because prior expectations went in a different direction.

Right combination of topic, method, and theory

- The Results: Are they useful to someone with a pragmatic interest in a consumption phenomenon
- The Procedures: Do the methods used to test the explanation inspire some confidence in the results?
- The Theory: Does the explanation of the results conform to and extend theory within a discipline?

General tradeoffs

●●● Quality vs. quantity

- Many PhDs believe in the additive model of CV building.
- Most faculty use an averaging model when evaluating CVs.
- Some (senior) faculty at prestigious schools use a peak model.
- Evaluation committees want to know how smart you are first, how productive second:
 - They dislike it if you have too many co-authors.
 - They are suspicious if you have too many papers.

Output vs. rate

- No pre-doc clock: People don’t even know how much time you spent on your dissertation.
- No post-doc time out: You will be evaluated compared to people who graduated the same year as you.
- It is very unfair but even maternity breaks aren’t really taken into account (but people say that it’s even more difficult to have children when you are older...)

Key tradeoffs

Relevance vs. rigor

- Premium for novelty and “big” issues (obesity, financial crisis).
- The state of the art is often crowded.
- If there is no literature on your topic... it’s great news!

Depth vs. breadth

- Specialization works, especially on the method side. Very few people can master both CB and quant tools.
- For tenure, people want to know what’s your field, big idea, mentor?
- Leave time for emerging ideas. First ideas lead to better ones.

Alone vs. with others

- Seek co-authors, cultivate a relationship with a mentor.
- Do not work with other PhD students.
- Go to conferences, present your ideas as much as possible.
- Write the paper after you have done the analyses. Do not get bogged down by the literature review.
- Elevator speech: craft your title and abstract...why is your paper important...what have you contributed

Pragmatic Issues

Practical issues

- Figures and tables should tell story independent of the text. Spend time on them. Add “notes” at the bottom of them.
- Respect formatting rules scrupulously. It shows that you’re not a novice.

Titles and abstract

- Provide results in abstract, not just the variables that were studied.
- Do not say that “your paper has implication for XXX”, of course it does!
- Use long titles, starting: “Clever naming or question: Role of IV and Moderators on DV”
 - Pleasure as a Substitute for Size: How Multisensory Imagery Can Make People Happier with Smaller Food Portions.
 - From Fan to Fat? Vicarious Losing Increases Unhealthy Eating but Self-Affirmation is an Effective Remedy.