The Doctoral School of Communication, Public relations, and Advertising

GUIDE FOR COMPLETING THE PH.D. THESIS

WHAT IS A PH.D. THESIS?

A Ph.D. thesis is a comprehensive, in-depth research paper, that aims to empirically address a specific topic of interest. The paper must be original and relevant to the field of communication sciences and provide new and useful results and information. The quality of the thesis must be at the level of a publishable paper.

THE SUBJECT OF THE PH.D. THESIS

The topic of the Ph.D. thesis must be in the field of communication sciences and be as specific as possible. Innovative, original, creative themes that fit into current social phenomena are recommended. The doctoral student is also encouraged to approach a topic that she/he is passionate about and that she/he considers interesting both scientifically and personally.

In finding the research direction, the following aspects may be considered:

- Is there a puzzle or a paradox (in reality or the scientific literature) that can be approached in-depth?

- Can a representative case study be identified whose analysis can bring valuable results for the existing literature?

- Can a new interpretation or a new perspective be offered to an existing theoretical idea, theme, debate?

The relevance of the topic must be found both at the academic level (e.g. filling an existing gap in the literature, applying theories in new contexts, explaining phenomena, etc.), as well as at the practical level. Interdisciplinary topics with deep practical applicability are encouraged.

FORMAL ASPECTS OF THE THESIS

The Ph.D. thesis can be written in Romanian, English, German or Hungarian. The paper must be at least 150 pages long (without the bibliography and appendices). Page numbering begins with the introductory page.

The paper is written using Times New Roman, characters of 12, 1.5 line spacing. The text is written *Justify*, and the margins are as follows: Top: 2.54 cm; Bottom: 2.54 cm; Left: 3 cm (to be able to cover it); Right: 1.9 cm.

At the end of the thesis writing process, the paper must be submitted in a listed and covered format. Details about the preparation and public defense of the Ph.D. thesis are available on the website of the Institute of Doctoral Studies of Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca (https://doctorat.ubbcluj.ro/ro/pregatirea-si-desfasurarea-sustinerii- public-of-the-doctoral-thesis-in-accordance-with-the-code-of-doctoral-university-studies/).

Below, you can consult a model for the information on the cover and on the first page of the thesis.

Ph.D. thesis cover model	First-page template (title page)
Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca Faculty of Political, Administrative, and Communication Sciences The Doctoral School of Communication, Public relations, and Advertising	Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca Faculty of Political, Administrative, and Communication Sciences The Doctoral School of Communication, Public relations, and Advertising
PH.D. THESIS	PH.D. THESIS *Thesis title*
Ph.D. student: *the name of the doctoral student* Supervisor: *academic title and the name of the supervisor*	Ph.D. student: *the name of the doctoral student* Supervisor: *academic title and the name of the supervisor*
Cluj-Napoca *date*	Cluj-Napoca *date*

THE STRUCTURE OF THE PH.D. THESIS

The Ph.D. thesis must combine the theoretical treatment of the approached topic with empirical research relevant to the respective topic. It is recommended that the theoretical part and the methodological part of the paper be similar in the number of pages. Each of the two parts will comprise several subchapters.

The table below presents the simplified version of the structure of a doctoral thesis.

PH.D. THESIS STRUCTURE MODEL

Title page
Table of contents
Table list (optional)
List of figures (optional)
Abstract
Keywords
1. Introduction
2. Theoretical framework (with specific sub-chapters)
3. Methodological framework (with specific sub-chapters)
4. Conclusions
5. Limits and perspectives of research
6. Bibliography
7. Appendices

Starting from the structure above, the following paragraphs describe in detail what each part of the thesis should contain.

The abstract

An abstract is a summary of the whole work. In general, an abstract includes the following aspects: the topic, its relevance in the current context, the research objectives, the methods used, the most important results. An abstract contains around 200-300 words. The abstract can be accompanied by 5-6 keywords.

Introduction of the paper

The introductory part of the paper is an essential component, being the one that can generate curiosity and interest for reading the following parts of the thesis. The introduction should be about 3-5 pages long.

The introduction should include several key elements, including *the context* in which the paper is developed (what we know so far about the analyzed topic, what is the status quo of the research), *the topic* of the paper, *the reasons* for choosing this topic (what is the puzzle of the paper, what is problematic), *the relevance* of the research (both for the academic environment and for the industry), *the elements of novelty and interdisciplinarity*, *the research questions* and *the methods* to be used to answer these questions (without going into methodological design details), *the type of introspection* (exploratory research, descriptive research, experimental research, etc.), *the cases* to be studied, *the structure of the paper*.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical part of the paper involves reviewing the literature on the topic chosen for research. The theoretical documentation must refer exclusively to the topic addressed (not to general aspects) and be extremely specific. The theoretical framework can be divided into several

subchapters, depending on the revised concepts. This part involves both a definition of the concepts specific to the paper and a review of existing theories and research.

The theory must be consistent and as recent as possible. The existing literature in Romanian and the Romanian context are quite limited. Therefore, it is recommended to supplement any sources in Romanian with consistent international literature. Both books and scientific articles from international databases can be used. Scientific articles, comprising both theory and methodology, can be extremely useful in conceptual delimitation and in outlining one's research design. You can also use information from different websites, as long as these sources are credible, and the information is based on documentation.

At the end of the theoretical framework, it is recommended to summarize the information and highlight how the theory already presented is going to be employed in the empirical part. The Ph.D. student is encouraged to pass the information through her/his filter, to use critical thinking, to argue and support her/his ideas by referring to the literature.

Throughout the theoretical framework, it is recommended to paraphrase the ideas, to the detriment of quotation use.

The methodological framework

The methodological framework represents the empirical, original part of the paper. Starting from the already reviewed literature, the doctoral student develops the research part, using one or more research methods. The research methods are chosen according to the theme and the objectives initially proposed.

In general, the methodological framework contains the following subchapters:

The methodological design

It contains information on how the research is designed. For each research method used, the design must include *the research questions*, *the hypotheses* (if any), *the sample* (size, socio-demographic/psychographic details, type of sampling, selection criteria), *description of the instrumen*t - variables used and how they are operationalized (e.g. scales taken from the literature and used to measure certain variables). The methodological design part has the role of providing the reader with all the necessary information in such a way that the research can be replicated.

Results and discussions

This part contains the presentation and interpretation of the results obtained from the application of the research methods (each research method involves a specific way of interpreting the results). The data presented must be clear and comprehensive. Small tables or graphs are welcome in the text. Tables/graphs/images should not be abundant and should not exceed 1/2 of a page (the rest being text). Any large tables or graphs can be attached to the paper in the appendices.

Based on the results obtained, the doctoral student must interpret the data, make connections between variables, explain the effects and implications of these results.

The results and discussions can also be presented in two separate chapters.

The conclusions

The concluding part of the thesis emphasizes the most representative aspects of the paper, both theoretical and empirical. It is also necessary to insist on the way the research questions were answered and/or why the hypotheses were supported/ not supported. The implications of the results for the scientific and business environments must also be articulated.

It is also important to highlight how the empirical results of the thesis connect to those already existing in the literature on similar topics. It is important to note how this research manages to complement the existing literature and empirical data.

Limits and research perspectives

Given that no research is perfect, it is necessary to highlight the limits of research at all levels (both theoretically and empirically) at the end of the paper. Based on these limitations, new research perspectives will be drawn to complement the current approach in the future. These limitations and research perspectives must be taken seriously and must be systematically and thoroughly highlighted. How this introspection is done is an indicator of the maturity of the doctoral student as a researcher.

Bibliography

The bibliography contains all the sources used during the paper. All titles in the bibliography must be found in the text and all references in the text must be introduced in the bibliography.

Ideally, the bibliographic list should contain at least 100 scientific titles. The sources used must be as new as possible and as relevant as possible for the chosen topic. It is recommended that the bibliography be used to contain both literature written by Romanian and foreign authors. The bibliography is written in alphabetical order of the surname of the first author.

It is recommended to use the APA Citation Style (American Psychological Association). Some examples of how to write the bibliographic list can be found below. It is important to consider the specific punctuation and the use of *Italic* writing. For the automatic creation of the bibliographic list, it is recommended to use specific software (e.g. Mendeley, Zotero, etc.).

BOOK
Name, first name initial. (Publication year). *Title of book*. City: Publishing house.

SCIENTIFIC ARTICLE
Name, first name initial. (Publication year). Title of paper. *Journal name*, *Issue* (number), first-page number-last page number. DOI

CHAPTER IN COLLECTIVE VOLUME
Name, first name initial. (Publication year). Title of chapter. In Editors' name (Eds.), *Title of volume* (pp. first-page number-last page number). Publishing house.

WEBSITE
Name, first name initial. (Publication year, month, day). Title. Accessed on X, from URL...

Appendices (optional)

The appendices usually contain tables, figures, images, etc., that are not necessary for the text, and which are too large to be left in the text. Also, in the appendices, you can attach the tools used in the methodological framework: questionnaire, focus group guide, interview guide, analysis grid, etc.

THE WRITING STYLE

The writing style of the paper is an academic one, characteristic of research work. Spelling mistakes are not allowed. It is recommended to use short, clear sentences, without metaphors and style figures.

Throughout the paper, each idea that is written, regardless of source, must have a reference. Normally, not much information is used from the same source in succession. On the contrary, the sources are interspersed even within the same paragraph. All the ideas taken must be paraphrased, processed, and interspersed with others, by other authors.

It is recommended to paraphrase the theoretical ideas to the detriment of the quotes use. Quotes are generally used only when we have a very important definition that must remain as it is in the original.

At the reference level, it is recommended to use text notes (to the detriment of footnotes). Text notes are provided within the text and written in the form (Author name (s), year, page). The rest of the information about that source is given only in the bibliography. As a citation style, the APA Style is recommended.

In the presentation of the theoretical part, as well as in the presentation of the methodological part, graphs, and tables can be used, where necessary. If tables or graphs are used in the appendices, the text will mark the place where they can be consulted. Each table or graph must have a number and a title (e.g., Table 1. The distribution of the sample according to ...).
Plagiarism and other forms of academic fraud are sanctioned accordingly to the FSPAC Code of Ethics, accessible at:
https://fspac.ubbcluj.ro/ro/resurse/administrative/regulamente.

A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH METHODS

The opinion survey

The opinion survey represents a quantitative approach in the research of socio-communicational phenomena. The data collection tool is the questionnaire. Data collection through the survey is done using two techniques, direct or indirect. Therefore, the implementation can be done face to face, by phone, or by completing the questionnaire (by email, online, using specific software tools, for example, Google forms).

Conducting an opinion survey involves formulating at least one hypothesis (as a specific answer to a research question). A hypothesis relates two or more variables, one of which is necessarily a dependent variable, and the others are independent variables. A hypothesis, in addition to the fact that it relates to some variables, indicates the meaning of this relationship. Most of the time, a hypothesis is formulated: The more/ less .... the more/ less .... / If ... then normally, the hypotheses are inspired by and are based on the literature, on previous scientific studies that have treated this issue. They must be general and must be worded as specifically as possible. The verification of the hypotheses implies their validation or invalidation (both variants being accepted).

For the elaboration of a Ph.D. thesis, there is no predetermined number of mandatory hypotheses. Depending on the objectives of the research, the number of hypotheses varies.

Starting from the formulated hypothesis/hypotheses and considering how the main concepts are operationalized, the data collection tool, the questionnaire, is subsequently developed. The questions in the questionnaire are formulated following the process of operationalizing the concepts used in the hypotheses. This operationalization is recommended to be inspired by the literature.

There is no predetermined number of questions required in a questionnaire. It is important to ask as many questions as necessary to be able to test the hypotheses. Moreover, the questionnaire must be balanced in terms of the platform on which it is applied - the questionnaires applied by phone or online will contain a small number of questions compared to those applied face to face.

In a questionnaire, depending on its purpose, opinion questions can be used (regarding the respondent's opinions and attitudes; these will be the most numerous), factual questions (regarding the respondent's behavior), motivation questions (regarding the reasons for certain actions), knowledge questions, control questions (questions asked to verify a previous answer), socio-demographic questions. Normally, being aspects of a personal nature, the socio-demographic variables (age, gender, level of education, income, the environment of residence, etc.) are addressed at the end of the questionnaire.

The questions in a questionnaire can be both with predetermined answers and with the possibility of an open answer. However, questions with default answers are preferable. When questions are closed, the answers are recorded on a grid that is unambiguous, unique, and discriminatory (answer options are mutually exclusive).

The sample, the group of people answering the questionnaire, must be appropriate/representative for the topic of the paper. The sample can be both probabilistic (randomly selected individuals) and non-probabilistic (convenience).

The data obtained from the application of the questionnaire must be presented in the paper and interpreted. In addition to frequencies for each relevant variable, data interpretation also involves making associations, correlations, or regressions. These links between variables can help support or not the hypothesis/hypotheses.

It is recommended to process data in specialized programs (e.g., SPSS).

The semi-structured interview

The interview is a technique for obtaining qualitative information, to describe in-depth the socio-human phenomena. The interview is based on verbal communication and is based on an interview guide, developed based on the operationalization of hypotheses or research questions. The application of the interview guide can be done either face-to-face or intermediated (by phone or online).

In conducting the interviews, a small number of cases are used to obtain as much deep and rich information as possible from each subject included in the research approach. Thus, the analysis focuses on the common elements to the research subjects, as well as on those specific to each case. The questions can be related to experiences, behaviors, opinions, values, knowledge, socio-demographic characteristics of the individuals included in the study. The way the question is formulated can influence the opinions expressed and the amount of information provided. It is recommended not to ask questions whose answers may be limited to "yes" and "no". There is always a need to invite the interlocutor to the most in-depth answers.

In the case of semi-structured interviews, the guide specifies the most important questions but also leaves the possibility to add additional questions during the interview, based on the answers provided by the interviewee. The interviewer thus has the freedom to explore the answers and the researched problem in the way she/he deems appropriate. The guide should contain around 10-15 questions (depending on the complexity of the topic).

The group interview (focus-group)

Both the semi-structured or unstructured individual interview and the focus group produce data with a strong ethnographic character, both have an acceptable degree of validity, and both have the same limit: when it comes to representativeness, they must be supplemented with quantitative methods.

The focus group can be considered a kind of semi-structured group interview, with between 4 and 12 participants. The duration of a focus group differs and can start from 1 hour to 2 hours. The focus group is carried out in a neutral framework, it would be best for the participants to be seated at a table (round) and the discussion to be recorded for further processing and analysis of the data collected. The focus group starts from several research topics that the moderator establishes and that result from the research questions that underlie the paper. The audio recording

must then be transcribed and analyzed thematically. Focus groups should be carried until no new answers are provided (until the information starts to repeat itself).

The first advantage of this qualitative method of research is that if they do not feel judged and are in a comfortable environment and in the presence of people who are familiar and unknown at the same time, most people tend to detail to the nuance of the motivation of some actions performed. Also, the focus group is more useful than the interview if we study the subjects involved in a situation. They will complement and correct each other, activating each other's memory of the situation in question, in a process of collective recollection. The focus group is a method of data collection located at the intersection between participatory observation and unstructured interview.

As with any type of interview, focus group discussions should be recorded and transcribed later. The data analysis will be based on these transcripts. The analysis involves the creation of categories, the grouping of respondents' answers. Eloquent quotes or important parts of the subjects' answers should be used in the interpretation of the results to support the development of the categories.

The content analysis

The content analysis is a method located at the boundary between qualitative and quantitative, that is suitable for many research approaches. The analysis tool consists of a grid that includes the elements that will be followed in the corpus of investigated materials/documents (advertisements, speeches, posters, etc.). The analysis grid can be taken from research already done by other authors (specifying the source), can be created based on theoretical aspects found in the literature, or, in some cases, based on the preliminary identification of common or distinct aspects between various materials under scientific investigation. The corpus of materials, the materials/products to be included in the content analysis, will be systematically selected, based on logical arguments, and the choice made will be justified.

Based on the analysis grid completed with elements from the analysis corpus, a narrative report will be made, which descriptively presents the results and then analysis, concerning the previously established hypotheses or research questions.

Quantitative content analysis can be combined with a qualitative, in-depth analysis.

The experiment

The experiment is the most appropriate method when exploring causal relationships. So, if we ask what effect the X variable (independent variable) on the Y variable (dependent variable) has, probably the best method to obtain a scientifically substantiated answer is the experiment. But there are some rules for conducting and analyzing an experiment in the social sciences. To prove that X affects Y we often need a comparison, and this is done by comparing a control group with one or more experimental groups.

The experiment is performed based on one or more hypotheses. A hypothesis must be based on the previously consulted literature.

One of the basic rules when designing an experiment is to start from simple to complex. In the communication sciences, the independent variable is usually the stimulus that is mostly a media one (some advertisements, social media posts, etc.).

Participants must be randomly selected, thus resulting in a random distribution (approximately equal in terms of gender, age, and other characteristics that may influence the results of our research). This is called a randomization check. For reasons related to the statistical analysis of the data, each group must have a minimum number of 30 participants in each of the groups.

Another important concept is the verification of the effects of experimental manipulation (manipulation check). In other words, it must be proved that the experimental group observed the specific message transmitted to this group.

When talking about any research method, two aspects must be considered: fidelity (in repeated measurements, using the same instrument and the same context, we must have similar results) and validity (measuring exactly what the researcher intends). To ensure the fidelity of our approach, it is important here to propose a questionnaire based on measurements already tested by other authors (e.g., scales).

In the case of the experiment, we are talking about obtaining internal and external validity. Internal validity means to conceive the experimental design so that the results are not influenced by other variables. That is, to simplify as much as possible. External validity means to bring as close as possible the conditions for carrying out our experiment to the real conditions in which the phenomena we analyze take place. The high external validity allows us to generalize the results. Internal and external validity are often inversely proportional. We need to find a balance between internal and external validity. The external validity is ensured by sampling. Laboratory conditions, the use of simplistic stimuli, and unique exposure to them decrease the external validity of an experiment.

At the level of data analysis, it is necessary to perform tests specific to the experiment, tests that can be performed using specialized software, such as SPSS (e.g., chi-square, T-test for experiments with two groups, ANOVA test for experiments with more than two groups).

The ethical dimension is very important in scientific research in general and at the experimental level in particular. Thus, the way we frame the information provided (e.g., stimuli) must be carefully thought so as not to affect the mental and physical condition of the subjects. At the end of the experiment, a debriefing process is required in which information is provided about the true purpose of the experiment and the relevance of the research of this topic.

The Observation

Observation is a qualitative research method that tries to understand a researched population. The aspects that can be observed are the physical, social, cultural, economic context,

etc.; relationships between individuals, contexts, ideas, norms, events; the behaviors and activities of individuals (what they do, how often, with whom, etc.).

The observation can be both *direct* (observing the subject in a given situation; most often, it involves the technique of unidirectional window observation) and *participatory* (involves observing the individual in a natural/everyday context; the researcher becomes part of the studied community).

The observation guide/grid is the set of aspects/variables that the researcher follows at the analyzed entity (individual, group of individuals, etc.). This grid aims to help find an answer to the research question originally formulated. The observation guide can be structured (predetermined) or unstructured (developed during the observation process). Both options are accepted.

Data collection involves the systematic taking of notes/recording of information. Usually, data collection is done over a longer period (e.g. hours, weeks, months, etc.). Data analysis involves encoding and classifying information (similar to how content analysis is performed).