



Bachelor Thesis Seminar in Strategy (B372)

Winter Term 2025/26

I. Overview

In this seminar, students analyze selected topics in Strategy to improve their understanding of how firms can create and capture value in dynamic business environments. Students write a bachelor thesis and present the main results of their written work in a seminar session. Depending on the research question and data availability, the bachelor thesis can have one of the following approaches: (i) theory- or phenomenon-driven empirical work, (ii) conceptual work explaining and developing concepts and testable relationships, or (iii) a literature review building understanding of real-world phenomena.

II. Topics

The topics are categorized into four areas (A-D), which are analyzed by groups of students. Each student writes and presents her/his own bachelor thesis on a specific topic within an area. However, students in the same group are expected to provide feedback on their ideas and support each other in the development of their thesis. While the topic list indicates whether data are available via Wiwi-IT for empirical analysis (data provided by Orbis, LSEG workspace, and zephyr), students can choose to write a literature-based, conceptual thesis on all topics.

The allocation of topics is announced at the kick-off meeting (students are ordered using the "lottery method" and select their preferred topic in that order). Prior to the kick-off meeting, students should therefore familiarize themselves with the topics. Students can also propose their own topic if it is in Strategy and they have access to interesting data or are able to collect data through surveys or interviews in a reasonable timeframe.

A. Business model design and innovation

Topic #	Title	WiWi Data Access
1	How did the Chinese electric vehicle (EV) business model disrupt the German car manufacturing industry?	Yes
2	The evolution of digital business models in stable and turbulent times	Yes
3	Measuring business model innovation: Advances, challenges, and future research	No
4	The relationship between ownership type and business model design	No
5	Business model design by cooperatives: A typological approach	Partially
6	What explains heterogeneity in cooperative performance?	Yes

Literature

- Casadesus-Masanell, R., & Zhu, F. (2013). Business model innovation and competitive imitation: The case of sponsor-based business models. *Strategic Management Journal*, 34(4), 464-482. <https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.2022>.
- Christensen, C. M., Raynor, M. E., & McDonald, R. (2015). What is disruptive innovation? *Harvard Business Review* (online). <https://hbr.org/2015/12/what-is-disruptive-innovation>.
- Christensen, C. M., McDonald, R., Altman, E. J., & Palmer, J. E. (2018). Disruptive innovation: An intellectual history and directions for future research. *Journal of Management Studies*, 55(7), 1043-1078. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/joms.12349>.
- Zott, C., & Amit, R. (2010). Business model design: An activity system perspective. *Long Range Planning*, 43(2-3), 216-226. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lrp.2009.07.004>.

B. Entry, exit, and flexibility advantages

Topic #	Title	WiWi Data Access
7	Exit decisions of digital vs. nondigital firms	Yes
8	Entry timing and expansion strategy of Chinese electric vehicle (EV) manufacturers	Yes
9	Measuring resource redeployment and redeployability: Advances, challenges, and future research	No
10	How does resource type affect resource redeployment?	No
11	How do agency problems and incentive compensation affect resource redeployment? An organizational design perspective	No

Literature

- Ao, J., Mahoney, J. T., & Sakhartov, A. V. (2025). Antecedents and consequences of resource redeployment. *Strategic Management Review*. <https://strategicmanagementreview.net/assets/articles/Ao,%20Mahoney,%20and%20Sakhartov.pdf>.
- Lieberman, M. B., Lee, G. K., & Folta, T. B. (2017). Entry, exit, and the potential for resource redeployment. *Strategic Management Journal*, 38(3): 526-544. <https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.2501>.
- Lieberman, M. B., & Montgomery, D. B. (2013). Conundra and progress: Research on entry order and performance. *Long Range Planning*, 46(4-5), 312-324. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lrp.2013.06.005>.
- Sohl, T., & Folta, T. (2021). Market exit and the potential for resource redeployment: Evidence from the global retail sector. *Strategic Management Journal*, 42(12), 2273-2293. <https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.3285>.

C. Performance shortfalls and corporate restructuring (M&A and divestitures)

Topic #	Title	WiWi Data Access
12	Are M&A deals closed by virtual handshakes? The relationship between COVID-19 related travel restrictions and M&A activity	Yes
13	New CEOs and corporate restructuring: Towards a process model of Intel's restructuring under CEO Lip-Bu Tan	Partially
14	Do for-profit firms owned by foundations pursue M&A differently? An examination of Bosch's acquisition of Johnson Controls' global HVAC business	Partially
15	How do firms use internal vs. external markets in the process of plant relocation? The case of Bosch Power Tools	Partially
16	Do cooperatives respond differently to performance shortfalls? A stakeholder perspective	Partially
17	M&A motives by cooperatives vs. corporations: An investigation of differences and commonalities	Partially

Literature

- Bigley, G. A., & Wiersema, M. F. (2002). New CEOs and corporate strategic refocusing: How experience as heir apparent influences the use of power. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 47(4), 707-727.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/3094914>.
- Feldman, E. R., & Hernandez, E. (2022). Synergy in mergers and acquisitions: Typology, life cycles, and value. *Academy of Management Review*, 47(4), 549-578.
<https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2018.0345>.
- Kotiloglu, S., Chen, Y., & Lechler, T. (2021). Organizational responses to performance feedback: A meta-analytic review. *Strategic Organization*, 19(2), 285-311.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1476127019883361>.
- Maksimovic, V., & Phillips, G. (2001). The market for corporate assets: Who engages in mergers and asset sales and are there efficiency gains?. *Journal of Finance*, 56(6), 2019-2065.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/0022-1082.00398>.

D. Disasters and firm adaptation strategy

Topic #	Title	WiWi Data Access
18	The COVID-19 pandemic, ownership type, and firm performance	Yes
19	Armed conflicts, ownership type, and firm-level employment: Evidence from Ukraine (2018-2024)	Yes
20	Floods and performance heterogeneity: Evidence from European SMEs	Yes
21	A critical assessment of the debate on strategy and climate change	No

Literature

- Bansal, P., Durand, R., Kreutzer, M., Kunisch, S., & McGahan, A. M. (2025). Strategy can no longer ignore planetary boundaries: A call for tackling Strategy's ecological fallacy. *Journal of Management Studies*, 62(2), 965-985.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/joms.13088>.

- Foss, N. J., & Klein, P. G. (2025). Do we Need a 'New Strategy Paradigm'? No. *Journal of Management Studies*, 62(2), 986-1002.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/joms.13081>.
- Pan, X., & Qiu, B. (2022). The impact of flooding on firm performance and economic growth. *PLoS one*, 17(7), e0271309.
<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0271309>.
- Wickert, C., & Muzio, D. (2025). What is the strategy of strategy to tackle climate change?. *Journal of Management Studies*, 62(2), 954-964.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/joms.13114>.

III. Empirical approach

Students are encouraged to conduct independent empirical work as an alternative to a literature-based, conceptual thesis. While the Chair of Strategy provides guidance in how to find secondary data via Wiwi-IT, students should be able to independently download data and use statistical software (e.g., Stata) needed for data analysis. If a thesis has an empirical approach, students must submit together with their thesis the data and code (quantitative approach) or interview dates and, if possible, names and positions of interviewed managers (qualitative approach) for verification.

Literature

Quantitative analysis

- Allison, P. D. (2014). *Event history and survival analysis: Regression for longitudinal event data* (Vol. 46). SAGE publications.
- Wooldridge, J. M. (2010). *Econometric analysis of cross section and panel data*. MIT press.

Qualitative analysis

- Eisenhardt, K. M. (1989). Building theories from case study research. *Academy of Management Review*, 14(4), 532-550.
<https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1989.4308385>.
- Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods* (Vol. 5). SAGE publications.

IV. Dates and requirements

The number of seminar participants is limited. Students must attend the kick-off meeting and register via ALMA to secure their place in the seminar. The sessions will be held in English to facilitate participation of international students and practice business English. The bachelor thesis can be written in English or German (the presentations are in English).

Date	Activity	Room
Friday, 17.10.2025 9:00 – 13:00 c.t.	Kick-off meeting: - Workshop “Research topics in Strategy and academic writing” - Topic assignment	U006, Nauklerstr. 47
Sunday, 19.10.2025	Registration via ALMA (required is attendance to the kick-off meeting)	
Monday, 10.11.2025 9:00 – 13:00 c.t.	Guidelines for empirical analysis Research plan presentation & feedback	Fakultätssitzungsraum, Nauklerstr. 47
Tuesday, 11.11.2025 9:00 – 17:00 c.t.	Research plan presentation & feedback	Fakultätssitzungsraum, Nauklerstr. 47
Friday, 19.12.2025 By noon (12:00) s.t.:	Submission of bachelor thesis: office 107, Nauklerstr. 47 + upload in ILIAS. You can also drop the paper version of your bachelor thesis in the letterbox outside the faculty (addressed to the Chair of Strategy, Nauklerstr. 47) or send it by mail (stamp date is relevant).	
Monday, 12.01.2026	Feedback session – meetings will be coordinated individually	Nauklerstr. 47
Thursday, 22.01.2026 09:00 s.t.	Upload of presentation in ILIAS	
Friday, 23.01.2026 9:00 – 17:00 c.t.	Final presentations & feedback	U006, Nauklerstr. 47
Monday, 26.01.2026 9:00 – 13:00 c.t.	Final presentations & feedback	E 04, Mohlstr.

V. Course credit

Students in this seminar will acquire the necessary tools to write a research-based thesis, with the support of an obligatory academic research workshop at the beginning of the term and mid-term “research plan presentations” showcasing each student’s current progress. As part of the seminar, students will write their bachelor thesis and present the key insights of their thesis in a final presentation (12 ECTS). Grades will be announced at the end of the seminar. The final thesis must be submitted in paper and PDF format. Late submission will result in exclusion from the seminar and a grade of 5.0 (“nicht ausreichend”).

To obtain course credit, students must meet the following criteria:

- Students participate in all mandatory meetings.
- Students submit their 12-page thesis on time.
- Students present their thesis during the seminar.
- Students actively participate during the seminar.

The final grade consists of 50% from the thesis and 50% from the final presentation and seminar participation.