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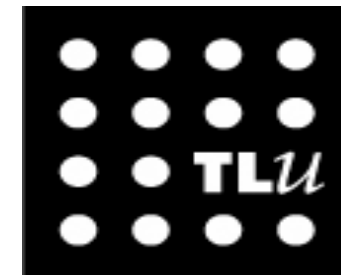
Report Writing

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TEACHING & LEARNING UNIT
FACULTY OF ECONOMICS & COMMERCE

Report Writing in General (1)

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- Variable in terms of content and style (check with your lecturer!)
 - Empirical report (“Research Assignment/Report”)
 - Case Study Report/Analysis
 - Company Report
- Different in style from essays, similar in structure

Report Writing in General (2)

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- Generally require an impersonal “objective” style of writing, e.g., third person (“This report outlines...” ; “It is shown that ...” and so on). Elimination of the first person pronoun.
- Requires careful planning and organisation
- May be reporting on experimental (quantitative or qualitative) research

Report Writing (Empirical) (1)

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In general:

- Use the AIMRaD Structure
 - Abstract (Executive Summary)
 - Introduction (including the Literature Review)
 - Methodology
 - Results, and
 - Discussion
 - (Conclusion/Recommendations)

Report Writing (Empirical) (2)

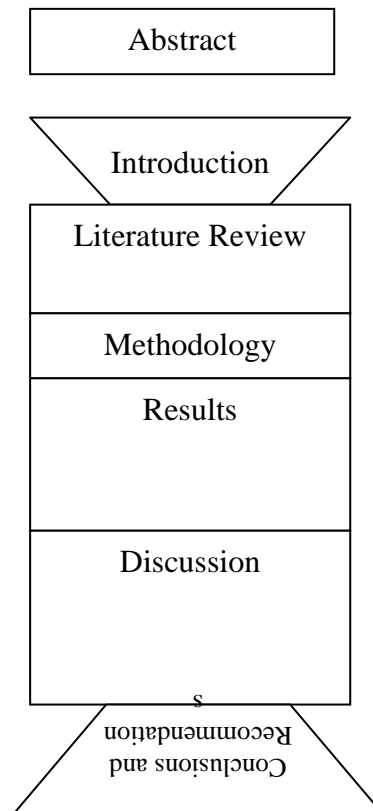
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- Develop a clear, focussed, operational research question and/or hypothesis
- E.g., *The greater the stress experienced in the job, the lower the job satisfaction of employees.*
- Write in any order but write Abstract last!



Structure of Report Writing

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- Similar to Essays except parts and weighting
- The "Abstract" or "Executive Summary" sums up entire report
- In scientific experimental reports a "Procedure" section (explaining how an experiment was set up) sometimes follows "Methodology" **BUT you will can use cases and qualitative data**
- "Introduction" and "Literature Review" sometimes combined
- "Discussion" is the most important section

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[Confidentiality Notice]

Title Page

Table of Contents (can be done automatically in Word)

Executive Summary (sums up *whole* report)

List of Tables

List of Figures

Abbreviations

1: Introduction (c10%)

- Outlines broad problem/issue to be investigated
- Provides background and rationale for study

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Literature Review (c20%)

- Problem Statement and Research Questions
- Defining the 'Gap' (What others have done; what YOU will do)
- Outline of company, policies, resources, need for research
- Nature and type of study, time horizon, study setting and unit of analysis
- Conclusion

Methodology (c10%)

- Research design issues
- Population and sample issues
- Variables and measures used
- Data analysis techniques used in study
- Conclusion

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- **Results (c25%)** NB: This section is sometimes called “Findings”
 - What you found
 - Results of analysis
 - Conclusion
- **Discussion (c25%)**
 - Discussion of interpretation of results
 - Analysis of hypotheses in light of results
 - Analysis of experimental/conceptual flaws/inadequacies
 - Conclusion

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- **Recommendations/Implementations (10%)**
 - Alternatives to solving problem
 - Recommendations
 - pros and cons of implementing recommendations
 - Conclusions
- **Summary**
 - Recaps research question and final conclusions
- **References**
- **Appendices (for diagrams, tables etc that are not central to report)**

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- Statements about field (General)
- Statements about other research (Literature Review);
- Reason for research (The 'Gap')
- Purpose of research (Advantages – why it is needed)
- Value/justification of research (Specific)



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- Use mix of appropriate modal verbs to express degrees of tentativeness: *might, may, could*, etc. Don't try to pretend that your report is the final word on the issue! However BE CERTAIN ABOUT WHAT YOUR REPORT DOES AND SHOWS, e.g.
 - This report investigates the health card program implemented in Indonesia in 1998 using Indonesian Family life Survey data from 1997-2000.
 - This report claims that rises in interest rates will adversely affect ...



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Example of Introduction (1)

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- [General Area] In recent years economic imperatives have provided the pressure for governments to reassess their relationships with universities. Government are no longer prepared to accept unquestioned institutional autonomy and the culture of self-regulation that have for so long been features of these relationships. Governments are now concerned that universities be more publicly accountable, productive and efficient than in the past. As a result, the move to increase student retention in our universities in an era of rapidly increasing enrolments has become a key goal and easing the transition from school to university is seen as a significant element in this process.

Example of Introduction (2)

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- [Other research] *The focus on retention and transition has been reflected in a recognition that an emphasis on how students learn and the complex interactions that take place in the learning process are as important as the traditional focus on teaching methodology (see for example Barr and Tagg, 1995). School leavers face a number of challenges in making the adjustment from school to university (Jones, 1999; Smith, 2003). They are expected to learn challenging material and to be capable of independent thought, and to adjust to different teaching styles and an expanded social environment. [Gap in Research] Until recently, in many disciplines, including the Commerce related disciplines, little attention has been given to student learning and the effects of teaching on the learning process.*



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Example of Introduction (3)

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- [Purpose of Research] *The Faculty of Economics and Commerce at the University of Melbourne conducted two surveys of the first year Bachelor of Commerce intake in 1999 as part of a program to ease the transition of students from school to university and to improve the quality of the teaching and learning environment.* [Justification of Research] The surveys were seen as a first step in gaining a better understanding of student perceptions of their approaches to learning and their expectations and experiences in their first year in the Faculty. In order to gain an understanding of their perceptions of their previous year of education and their expectations of the learning context at university, students were surveyed after they had enrolled, but prior to the start of semester. A second survey was conducted towards the middle of the second semester to gather student perceptions of the Faculty environment and to compare these perceptions with those reported in the first survey. [Overview] This report presents the results of the surveys and discusses the implications of these for first year teaching and learning.



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Literature Review (1)

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- A literature review is the presentation, classification and evaluation of what other researchers have written on a particular subject.
- It makes your research stand out from other similar research. It “locates” your work.
- It shows you are not “reinventing the wheel”



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Literature Review (2)

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- The review is not simply a “shopping list” of what others have said, however.
- It is organised according to your *research objective, research question, and/or the problem/issue you wish to address*.
- Without this, the literature review is a useless list of what other scholars have said and done.
- With the research objective, the literature review forms a focussed and carefully structured outline of what others have done in the area *that has been shaped to suit your own purposes*.

Before doing research ...

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- Have a research question in mind (otherwise you won't know what to read)
- Look for the "Gap" in the research – that your study can fill
- Write the LR with research question and gap in mind.
Progressively narrow down from the general area to the specific area then to the gap.



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Literature Review (3)

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Think of the process of doing research on a topic in this way:

- The general area is a particular “conversation” among academics in the field of study
- *The specific area is you—the student—focusing in on a particular part of the bigger “conversation” (a sub-set of a larger conversation)*
- *The “gap” is you noticing that something needs to be said in the conversation (which has not been said before, or which needs addressing in more detail)*
- The research question and/or hypothesis is the question/statement asking/stating something that precisely addresses what needs to be said (the gap)
- The “thesis statement” is your suggested or tentative answer to this question.

Example of Literature Review (1)

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In the literature it is recognised that a dichotomy exists between agricultural and business marketing because the marketing management approach is not prominent in agricultural marketing theory. Bateman (1976) suggests that agricultural marketing has traditionally incorporated everything that happens between the farm gate and the consumer, therefore encompassing areas which 'the purist' may not consider marketing. While analysis of government intervention and policy form the focus of agricultural marketing theory, studies of the objectives and decisions confronting individual businesses are central to business marketing theory (Martin, 1990; Smith, 2001; Harry, 2003).

Example of Literature Review (2)

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Muelenberg (1986) also identifies the differences between the two disciplines. He notes that agricultural marketing theory has not adopted the marketing management approach of business marketing theory or examined competitive strategy in the same way as business literature. According to Richardson (1986) the marketing management approach (which he refers to as the agribusiness concept) has “gained very little acceptance ... and no significant analytical or research results” in the area of agricultural marketing (p. 100). However, it appears that parts of agricultural marketing theory seem to be moving towards the marketing management approach.



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Example of Literature Review

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- Add 'Gap' and purpose (research topic) and include a statement of practical/theoretical value at the end of the LR.
- Concepts from marketing management have recently been applied to almost every industry from insurance to travel and hospital services, but not often to farming. Concerns have also been raised about the distinction which appears to exist between agricultural marketing theory (AMT) and business marketing theory (BMT). In this report, the role of AMT and BMT is described in detail. We examine BMT in relation to the farming industry. This has benefits for farmers as well as marketing practitioners. *We support the view that business marketing theory is not appropriate in the farming sector and that the distinction between BMT and AMT needs to be maintained.*

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- **The Gap must be clear;** the **hypothesis** can be explicit or implicit

(implicit) This report will assess the ../We examine..

(explicit) H1: There is a difference in the ...



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The Thesis Statement

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- After identifying the gap, make your argument or thesis statement:
 - It is argued that ...
 - It is claimed that ...
 - This report argues that ...
- What was the **thesis statement** in the example?



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Example of Literature Review

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- Concepts from marketing management have recently been applied to almost every industry from insurance to travel and hospital services, but not often to farming. Concerns have also been raised about the distinction which appears to exist between agricultural marketing theory (AMT) and business marketing theory (BMT). In this report, the role of AMT and BMT is described in detail. We examine BMT in relation to the farming industry. This has benefits for farmers as well as marketing practitioners. *We support the view that business marketing theory is not appropriate in the farming sector and that the distinction between BMT and AMT needs to be maintained.*



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Literature Review (4)

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Group information by:

- Difference of approach
- From distant to closely related
- Chronologically
- **Make the GAP clear as often as needed**

- "While Jones (1982) argues ... Smith (1990)... claims that "
- "Smith (1991) and Jones (2001) both show that ... However Hutchison (1985) demonstrates that..."
- "Early marketing theory owes its development to ... Many studies contributed to ... for example, Jones and Smith (1986). Hunt (1987) was recognised for ... but later Jamison (1999) showed that..."
- **Note past tense for completed work—present tense for "current" work**



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Another Example

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- The apparent differences between agricultural marketing and business marketing theories may not present a problem because both disciplines examine issues which are likely to require different theories and techniques for analysis. However, concern must be expressed at the failure of researchers to comprehensive examine the marketing strategies undertaken by individual farm businesses. Businesses in the agricultural sector include farmers and other often larger and more sophisticated agribusinesses, such as input suppliers and merchants. Business literature contains published articles examining the marketing strategies of large agribusiness companies; however, little research appears to reach down to the farm business level.

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Use different ways of reporting data:

- Information prominent (present tense)
- Weak author prominent (present perfect tense)
- General (present perfect tense)
- Author prominent (past tense)

We return to this topic in a later class



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Describe materials in some kind of logical order

- Overview (**present tense**)
 - “The choice of sampling method for this experiment requires great care.
 - Participants are crucial for the success of the ...”
- Description of parts/samples (**past tense**)
 - “A measuring device was used to ... A sample was taken ...”
- Use of spatial/functional... organisation (**past tense**)
 - “The tests were conducted under strict conditions ... First the ... was ...”

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Use active or passive voice to describe procedures:

- **Active** if no human agent is involved
 - “The monitor is placed in a suitable location and turned on...”
- **Passive** if human agent involved
 - “The survey was presented to all employees ... ”

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Use statements which:

1. Locate the results/diagrams/figures (**present tense**)

- There are no obvious features in Table 1 which indicate groupings associated with age, sex, language or schooling. ... Figure 3 shows that ...

2. Present the most important findings (**past tense**)

- The immediately noticeable feature was the rise in ... As it can be seen, there were three ways in which ... The results also showed that ...

3. Comment on the findings (**present tense+modal auxiliaries or tentative verbs**)

- These results suggest that ... Another interesting fact seems to be the ...



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Using Diagram and Graphs

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Text, text, Text, text, Text, text, Text, text, Text, text,
Text, text, Text, text, Text, text, (see Figure 1) Text,
text, Text, text.

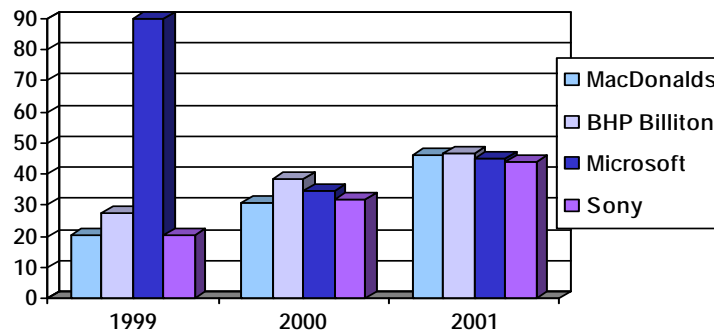


Figure 1: Histogram showing the percentage of people who participated in company training programs from 1999-2001 (Johnston, 2002).

- Position them in the text near where you refer to them
- Give them a clear label explaining what the diagram shows (Don't leave it up to the reader to work it out!)
- Identify the kind of chart: pie, scatter, histogram, etc
- Relegate peripheral diagrams to an Appendix and identify (see Appendix 3)



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- **Reference to purpose/hypothesis of study (past tense)**
 - The principle of ... was not followed in conducting the research. We originally assumed that physical decrements would be more apparent in speed jobs than in skill jobs. However we saw that ... and that there was a
- **Review of important findings (past and present+modals)**
 - We found that ... Results showed that participants might be less inclined to assist managers if ... This seemed to show that ...



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- Possible explanations for or speculations about findings (present tense + modals)
 - Results seem to indicate that there was a ... This suggests that ... On the other hand, there may be a ...
- Limitations of study (present tense)
 - While there is little chance of ... The study is not concerned with establishing ... the aim is not to ... but to ... We do not attempt to ... only to look at ...



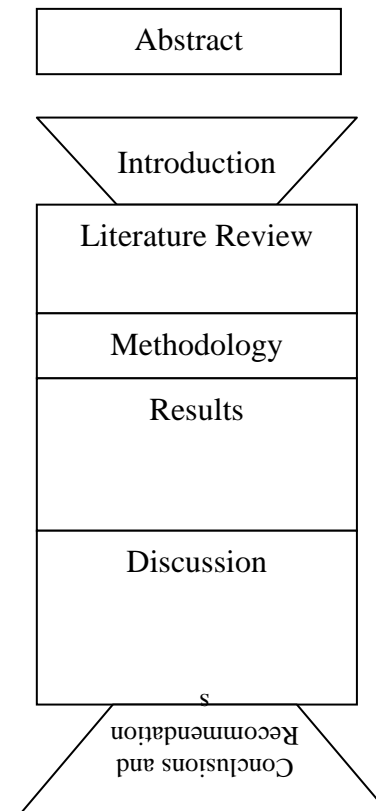
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- **Summing up (present perfect+modal auxiliaries)**
 - This report has looked at the importance of marketing management to the farming industry. The report has provided a practical ...which seem to ...
- **Implications of study (present+modal auxiliaries)**
 - Results from the experiment seem to indicate that if managers adopt a ... they will more than likely develop a ...This suggests that ...(Main Results ONLY—put details in Discussion)
- **Recommendations for future research (present+modals)**
 - While the report did not discuss the ... there are clear implications for ...It does seem to suggest that if ... then ... This may give rise to more ... in future.



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- Express as precise statements of what needs to be done
 - “The Australian government need to take advantage of the expansion of the Chinese market. This can be done by expanding its networks in the gas and fuel industry; facilitating more exchange between ...
- This needs to have been justified by your analysis and discussion.



Executive Summary (“Abstract”)

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- Background information (present tense)
- Principal activity (present or present perfect tense)
- Methodology (past tense)
- Results (past tense)
- Conclusions (present tense/tentative verbs and or modal auxiliaries)



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Example of an Abstract (1)

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- This project proposes a strategic planning model for P. T. Polysindo Eka Perkasa which is currently unavailable. The model is developed by combining ... and ... A SWOT analysis and a review of the company's mission was used to ... The key policies were then translated into actions necessary in each of the key areas of marketing, human resources, operations and finance. Internal scanning revealed how the company's net sales will continue to ... The SWOT analysis indicated that P.T Polysindo ... has three main strategic issues arising from internal weaknesses and threats from its external environment. This report suggests that these problems ... The report recommends that the company should consider increasing working capital turnover and pursue aggressive collection procedures.

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Accreditation of ISO 9000 continues to grow. Whilst manufacturing organisations were early adopters, in recent years, many organisations from the service sector have pursued accreditation. In this paper, attitudes towards the standard were compared to determine if there were significant differences between the views of manufacturing and service organisations. Empirical data was taken from a survey of 149 service and 160 Australian manufacturing organisations. Results showed that differences were not insignificant, particularly in terms of the benefits sought. For example, [*specific results*] The implication of the results suggest that service organisations need to be careful when applying the lessons learnt from the experiences of the manufacturing sector to overcome the problems associated with the implementation of ISO 9000. Further, the results of this study lend support to the argument that the standard is not universally applicable and may need industry-specific tailoring.



Example analysed (1)

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1. Background information (present tense)

Accreditation of ISO 9000 continues to grow. ... Whilst manufacturing organisations were early adopters,...

2. Principal Activity (past tense/present perfect tense)

In this paper, attitudes towards the standard were compared to determine if there were significant ...

2. Methodology (past tense)

Empirical data was taken from a survey of 149 service .

4. Results (past tense)

Results showed that differences were not insignificant,

5. Conclusions (present tense/ tentative verbs and modal auxiliaries)

The implication of the results suggest that service organisations need to be careful when applying the lessons learnt from the experiences of the manufacturing sector to overcome the problems associated with the implementation of ISO 9000. Further, the results of this study lend support to ...

[1] Accreditation of ISO 9000 continues to grow. Whilst manufacturing organisations were early adopters, in recent years, many organisations from the service sector have pursued accreditation. [2] In this paper, attitudes towards the standard were compared to determine if there were significant differences between the views of manufacturing and service organisations. [3] Empirical data was taken from a survey of 149 service and 160 Australian manufacturing organisations. [4] Results showed that differences were not insignificant, particularly in terms of the benefits sought. For example, [*specific results data needed here*] [5] The implication of the results suggest that service organisations need to be careful when applying the lessons learnt from the experiences of the manufacturing sector to overcome the problems associated with the implementation of ISO 9000. Further, the results of this study lend support to the argument that the standard is not universally applicable and may need industry-specific tailoring.

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In the academic literature and the business press, there seems to be a lack of guidance and lack of cross-cultural models to support companies localization strategies on the Web. To address this deficit in literature and to provide marketers and Web designers with insights into website localization, this paper conducted a comparative analysis of the US based international companies, domestic websites and their Chinese websites. A framework to measure cultural adaptation on the Web is presented. Forty US-based Fortune 500 companies are surveyed to investigate the cultural adaptation of their Chinese websites. Content analysis of the 80 US domestic and Chinese websites reveals that the web is not a culturally neutral medium, but it is full of cultural markers that give country specific websites a look and feel unique to the local culture.



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Example analysed (2)

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- [1] Background
- [2] Objective
- [3] Method
- [4] Measurement
- [5] Main outcome measures
- [6] Participants (more detail)
- [7] Method (more detail)
- [8] Measurement (more details)
- [9] Results

[1] In the academic literature and the business press, there seems to be a lack of guidance and lack of cross-cultural models to support companies localization strategies on the Web. [2] To address this deficit in literature and to provide marketers and Web designers with insights into website localization, [3] this paper conducted a comparative analysis of the [4] US based international companies, domestic websites and their Chinese websites. [5] A framework to measure cultural adaptation on the Web is presented. [6] Forty US-based Fortune 500 companies are surveyed to investigate the cultural adaptation of their Chinese websites. [7] Content analysis of the [8] 80 US domestic and Chinese websites reveals that [9] the web is not a culturally neutral medium, but it is full of cultural markers that give country-specific websites a look and feel unique to the local culture.

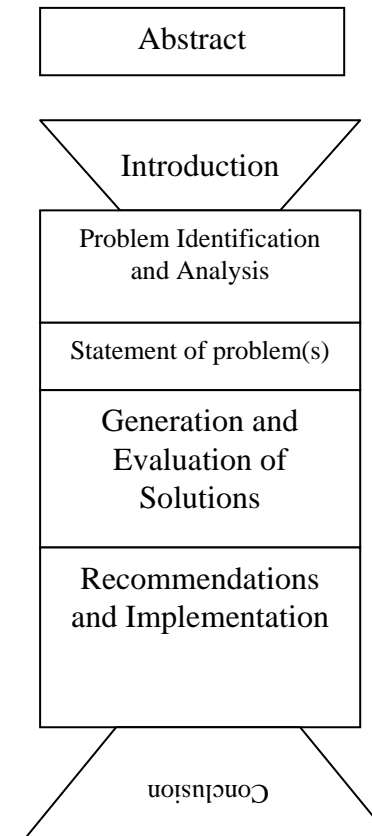
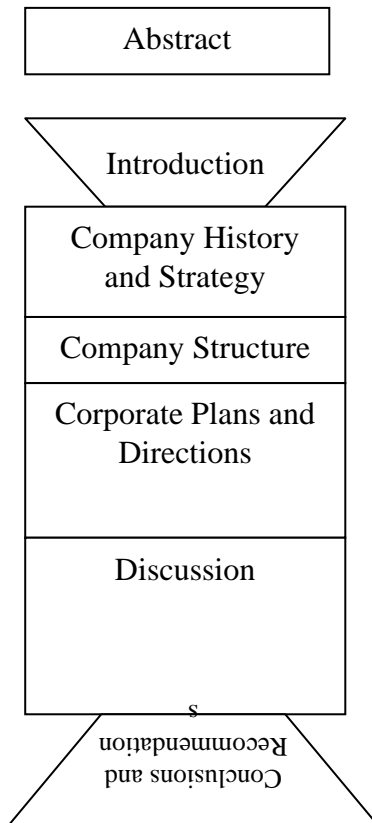
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- **Essay Report!** Some departments will use “report” to mean “argumentative essay” (e.g., Management). Make sure you are clear what your lecturer means!
- **Business Reports.** These reports need not require a methodology section or even a literature review. May instead focus on company history, structure, etc.
- **Case-based reports** might require a detailed analysis of a particular company with different sections devoted to aspects of company (see lecture: Case Study Method)



Other Report Formats (Continued)

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- Plan you report well
- Use correct format, layout and structure (if empirical style, the AIMRaD model)
- Use correct tenses
- When tables, etc are used in text they should be labelled correctly
- The abstract should sum up all sections of the report



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For more information

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- Sekaran, Uma, *Research Methods in Business: A Skills Building Approach*, Wiley (1992).
- Weissberg Robert and Buker Suzanne, *Writing Up Research: Experimental Report Writing for Students of English*, Prentice Hall, (1990).
- Yin, Robert, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, Applied Social Research Methods Series Vol 5, Sage, (1994).