

6 INTRODUCTION

The introduction (recommended length: 500-1000 words) can be described as “... an executive summary that gives the reader an enticing glimpse of what is to come” (Perry *et al.*, 2003:658). As such, the introduction must grab the reader’s attention by stimulating attention, interest, desire and action (Perry *et al.*, 2003:658). In other words, the introduction must effectively “sell” the study (Summers, 2001:410). Unfortunately, the introduction is often the most difficult part of an article to write (Feldman, 2004:2).

This section deals with three issues related to the drafting of an introduction. The six elements that are generally found in an introduction are first listed. This is followed by two examples of well-written introductions. Finally, the six elements of an introduction are discussed in more detail.

6.1 THE SIX ELEMENTS OF AN INTRODUCTION

An introduction generally consists of six elements:

- Element 1: The writer first has to state the broad theme or topic of the study.
- Element 2: Once the broad theme/topic has been introduced, its academic and practical importance (if applicable) has to be explained. In short, you should provide a convincing answer to the question: “Why should anyone give a damn about this article?” (Bem, 2003:3-4).
- Element 3: The author next summarises the available literature and cites the most important previous studies that are relevant to the current research. If an existing study were replicated, this should be clearly stated here. One should also include an in-text reference to the study that was replicated.
- Element 4: Next, the author indicates the most important gaps, inconsistencies and/or controversies in the literature that the current study will address. The author also explains the study’s *main contribution* in such a way that the benefits to the reader are accentuated.
- Element 5 of the introduction must always provide a clear indication of the following:
 - 5.1 the *core research problem/question* to be addressed in the study,
 - 5.2 the *specific research objectives* that will guide your research,
 - 5.3 the *context* in which the study will be conducted, and
 - 5.4 the *units of analysis* of the study.
- Element 6: Finally, one has to provide the reader with an outline of the structure of the rest of the article.

(Perry *et al.*, 2003:658; Summers, 2001:410; Varadarajan, 1996:3)

Some of the aforementioned elements and sub-elements may be combined. You should not highlight the different elements of the introduction in brackets and bold as were done below.

Carefully study the following three examples¹:

6.2 EXAMPLES OF WELL-WRITTEN INTRODUCTIONS

Example 6:

INTRODUCTION

[Element 1] Little research has been carried out in the area of new service development (NSD).

[Element 2] Although some researchers have paid attention to service innovation and new service success factors (cf. de Brentani, 1989, 1991; de Brentani & Cooper, 1992; Easingwood, 1986; Jones, 1995; Scheuing & Johnson, 1989), little is known about how new services are actually developed (Johne & Storey, 1998; Sundbo, 1997). Furthermore, innovation has traditionally been associated with tangible products. As a result, the literature on new tangible product development is rich, but this literature does not capture the intricacies of NSD (de Brentani, 1989) because of the unique service characteristics of intangibility, heterogeneity, perishability and inseparability (Lovelock, 1983; Shostack, 1977; Zeithaml *et al.*, 1985). That is, the NSD process may be different from the process involved in the development of a tangible product (de Brentani, 1995; Easingwood & Storey, 1995; Martin & Horne, 1993).

[Element 3] A major point of difference between product development and service development is the involvement of customers in services (Ennew & Binks, 1996). Services tend to involve customers in their delivery, and the purchase of services tends to involve a longer commitment and therefore a more intimate relationship with customers (Alam, 2000; Harris *et al.*, 1999; Martin *et al.*, 1999; Sundbo 1997). Thus, customer orientation plays a more important role in service firms than in tangible product firms because of the four service characteristics noted above (Hartline *et al.*, 2000; Kelly, 1992). That is, customer input and involvement in the service innovation process may be more useful than in the development of tangible products (Langeard *et al.*, 1986; Martin & Horne, 1995; Normann, 1991; Vermillion, 1999).

[Element 2 & 3] Moreover, several emerging trends in the market place, such as heightened customer expectations, advances in technology and new forms of competition arising from the Internet and e-commerce and increasing deregulation of many service industries, are bringing increased competition to markets (Bitner *et al.*, 2000; de Brentani, 1995; Lovelock *et al.*, 2001; Wymbs, 2000). Because of this competition, many service firms are developing new services, but there is a lack of strategic focus on NSD and development competencies (Kelly & Storey, 2000; Martin & Horne, 1993). Therefore, the new service failure rate is high (Cooper & Edgett, 1996), caused by the lack of an efficient development process and up-front homework (de Brentani, 1991; Drew, 1995; Edgett, 1994; Edgett & Jones, 1991) and the lack of customer orientation and input (Martin & Horne, 1995). That is, undertaking NSD provides challenges to service firms and their managers (Barczak, 1995). These challenges include deciding how to organise for NSD and how to develop new services that are responsive to customer needs.

[Element 4] Past research on NSD has concentrated only on two broad issues: success factors of new services and normative NSD models. Considering the issue of a NSD model in particular, the literature is almost silent on the details of NSD stages and their interface with the customer. Consequently, we have an incomplete picture of the way new services are developed.

¹ Please note that these examples were adapted from articles that appeared in different academic journals. The referencing methods used in the examples are generally not the same as the method prescribed in the Department of Marketing and Communication Management's guidelines on referencing in academic documents. Always use the referencing method prescribed by your department or by a particular journal.

[Element 5.1] Against this background, the purpose of this research is to answer the research question: “How can a NSD program in the **[Element 5.3]** financial services industry be managed?”
[Element 5.2] More specifically, this research has two objectives:

- (1) To develop models for new financial service development that include the stages in the NSD process; and
- (2) To explore the input that customers provide at various stages of the NSD process.

[Element 4 – main contributions] That is, this research attempts to identify key stages of the development process and ties them to customer involvement and input for the first time. Essentially, this research responds to the call for a new thinking about the NSD process and draws inspiration from Barabba (1995) and Wind and Mahajan (1997) who have stressed the need for creating a new service/product development model that will enable customers to provide input throughout the development process. In addition, this research is delimited to **[Element 5.3]** business-to-business services because business-to-business transactions are by far the more numerous in a modern economy but are under-researched (Gummesson, 1994).

The findings of this research are expected to assist practitioners in developing successful new services by proposing structured processes of NSD and increasing practitioners’ awareness of the need for collaboration with potential customers during a service development project.

[Element 6] The paper has four parts. First, it reviews the extant literature relevant to NSD and customer orientation. Then the research methodology is presented and data analysis techniques are discussed. Next, the findings are discussed and summarised. The paper concludes with a discussion of theoretical and managerial implications and directions for further research.

Source: Adapted from Alam and Perry (2002:515-516); 771 words.

While quite well-written, the introduction in Example 6 does not include a clear indication of the *context* in which the study was conducted or the *units of analysis* investigated. Make sure that you clearly address these two issues in your article.

Example 7:

INTRODUCTION

[Element 1] Today's fast-paced world is becoming increasingly characterised by technology-facilitated transactions. Growing numbers of customers interact with technology to create service outcomes instead of interacting with a service firm employee. Self-service technologies (SSTs) are technological interfaces that enable customers to produce a service independent of direct service employee involvement. Examples of SSTs include automated teller machines (ATMs), automated hotel checkout, banking by telephone, and services over the Internet, such as Federal Express package tracking and online brokerage services.

[Element 2 & 3] Although extensive academic research has explored the characteristics and dynamics of interpersonal interactions between service providers and customers (Bettencourt & Gwinner, 1996; Bitner, Booms & Tetreault, 1990; Clemmer & Schneider, 1996; Fischer, Gainer & Bristor, 1997; Goodwin, 1996; Goodwin & Gremler, 1996; Hartline & Ferrell, 1996; Rafaeli, 1993), much less research has investigated customer interactions with technological interfaces (Bitner, Brown & Meuter, 2000; Dabholkar, 1996). The continuing proliferation of SSTs conveys the need for research that extends beyond the interpersonal dynamics of service encounters into this technology-oriented context. This need is illustrated in many ways: For example, almost half of all

retail banking transactions are now conducted without the assistance of a bank teller (Lawrence & Karr, 1996). In addition, although some SSTs have become commonplace (e.g., ATMs and pay-at-the-pump terminals), more innovative SSTs continue to be introduced. For example, the Internet enables shoppers to purchase a wide variety of products without having to visit a retail outlet or converse with a service employee. In some states, users can file for divorce or evict a tenant using an automated kiosk rather than go through the traditional court system. Electronic self-ordering is currently being developed by fast-food restaurants, and self-scanning at retail stores has been tested and is projected to become widely available in the future (Dabholkar, 1996; Gibson, 1999; Merrill, 1999).

[Element 4] It is increasingly evident that these technological innovations and advances will continue to be a critical component of customer-firm interactions. These technology-based interactions are expected to become a key criterion for long-term business success. Parasuraman (1996) lists the growing importance of self-service as a fundamental shift in the nature of services. Although many academic researchers have acknowledged a need for greater understanding in this area (Dabholkar, 1996; Fisk, Brown & Bitner, 1993; Meuter & Bitner, 1998; Schneider & Bowen, 1995), little is known about how interactions with these technological options affect customer evaluations and behaviour.

[Element 5.1] To further our understanding, we explored service encounters involving SSTs to identify sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. **[Element 5.2]** The research questions driving this study are as follows:

- What are the sources of customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction in encounters involving SSTs?
- Are the sources of customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction with SST encounters similar to or different from the sources of customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction with interpersonal encounters?
- How are satisfying and dissatisfying encounters with SSTs related to attributions, complaining, word of mouth communication and repurchase intentions?

To investigate these questions, we combined the critical incident technique (CIT), originally developed by Flanagan (1954), with quantitative measures of attributions, complaining behaviour, word of mouth communication and repurchase intentions.

[Element 6] The rest of the article is structured as follows: First, the extant literature on service encounters, self-service technologies and customer responses to SST encounters are reviewed. This is followed by a description of the research methods and procedures used in the study. The results of our enquiry are then discussed. Finally, implications, limitations, and directions for future research are offered.

Source: Adapted from Meuter, Ostrom, Roundtree and Bitner (2000:50-51); 580 words.

While very good, this introduction again does not clearly indicate the specific *context* and *units of analysis* of the study. Also note that the authors refer to themselves as “we”. You are not allowed to do this. Keep your writing impersonal.

Example 8:

See if you can identify the aforementioned six elements of an introduction in the following example. The answer appears as a footnote at the bottom of page 12.

INTRODUCTION

1 Numerous market trends suggest a growing role for product packaging as a brand communication
2 vehicle. These include a reduction in spending on traditional brand-building mass media
3 advertising (Belch & Belch, 2001), an increase in non-durable product buying decisions at the store
4 shelf (Prone, 1993; Rosenfeld, 1987; Vartan & Rosenfeld, 1987), and growing management
5 recognition of the capacity of packaging to create differentiation and identity for relatively
6 homogenous consumer non-durables (Spethmann, 1994; Underwood, 1999). As with all point-of-
7 purchase communication vehicles, the primary role for product packaging at the shelf is to
8 generate consumer attention by breaking through the competitive clutter.

9
10 Although managerial focus toward packaging has increased of late, a review of the marketing
11 literature reveals relatively little theoretical work in the area of packaging, and specifically, few
12 efforts examining its impact on consumer attention. Early packaging research focused on the
13 general characteristics and role of package design (Cheskin, 1971; Faison, 1961; Schucker, 1959;
14 Schwartz, 1971), including packaging as a means of communication (Gardner, 1967; Lincoln,
15 1965) and as a variable influencing product evaluation (Banks, 1950; Brown, 1958; McDaniel &
16 Baker, 1977; Miaoulis & d'Amato, 1978). Additional research integrated packaging with other
17 extrinsic cues (e.g., price, brand name) to examine the influence on product quality perceptions
18 (Bonner & Nelson, 1985; Rigaux-Bricmont, 1982; Stokes, 1985). Other packaging-related research
19 includes studies examining the veracity and communicative competence of packaging (Polonsky *et al.*,
20 1998; Underwood & Ozanne, 1998); ethical packaging issues (Bone & Corey, 2000); and
21 research measuring the impact of package size on consumer usage (Wansink, 1996). More
22 recently, research examining the visual impact of packaging includes studies measuring the impact
23 of relative package appearance (e.g. typical, novel, colour) on consumer attention, categorisation
24 and evaluation (Garber *et al.*, 2000; Plasschaert, 1995; Schoorsman *et al.*, 1997); and Pieters and
25 Warlop's (1999) examination of visual attention during brand choice. Despite these works, little is
26 known about the specific type and amount of product information (e.g. visual and/or verbal
27 information) that is appropriate for the package stimulus in order to maximise its communication
28 effectiveness at the point of purchase.

29
30 The purpose of this paper is to contribute to the theoretical understanding of package design and
31 buyer behaviour by examining one major design component; that is, the effects of incorporating
32 visual product imagery (i.e., product pictures) on the package. Because the existence of product
33 pictures on packages varies within and across product categories, we chose to examine whether
34 brands containing visual information realise a strategic advantage over competitive brands
35 containing only verbal information. If brands gain attention and consideration on the basis of their
36 point of purchase appearance, an understanding of the impact of package design elements is
37 crucial to enhance point of purchase communication. These issues may be particularly important in
38 the case of brand repositioning, new brand introductions, the signalling of product changes, brand
39 extensions, and in categories in which the use of pictures on packages would provide a strategic
40 method of differentiation (Garber *et al.*, 2000).

41
42 A second important issue to address is whether the effects of product pictures vary across
43 products and/or brands. For example, would visual product imagery be more advantageous for
44 high-equity national brands or for less familiar private label and/or second tier national brands
45 whose brand perceptions have historically been more problematic? This article provides a
46 theoretical framework to address these packaging issues and explores some contingencies under
47 which package pictures are more or less effective. We hypothesise that the effects of package
48 pictures are moderated by the degree of brand familiarity and by the degree to which product
49 benefits are experiential. Thus, the paper's central research objectives are:

- 50 • To determine whether the inclusion of a picture of the product on a package significantly
51 influences attention to the brand and product choice.
- 52 • To determine whether the effects of placing a product picture on a package differ according
53 to the degree of consumer familiarity with the brand.

- 54 • To determine whether the effects of placing a product picture on a package differ for
55 products that vary in the level of experiential benefits they provide.
56
57 Information generated from this research should provide managers with a greater understanding of
58 the package's ability to communicate and the nature of its effects on consumer attention and
59 product choice.
60
61 The remainder of the article is structured as follows: First, a conceptual framework explaining the
62 effect of package design on two dependent variables, namely attention to the brand and brand
63 choice, is presented. Next, the procedures used to test the hypothesized effects of package
64 design, brand familiarity, and level of experiential benefits on attention and choice in an experiment
65 is described. The findings of the study are then presented. The article concludes with a summary
66 of the study's research contributions and directions for future research.

Source: Adapted from Underwood, Klein and Burke (2001:403-404); 792 words, see answer in footnote².

6.3 ADDITIONAL COMMENTS ON DRAFTING AN INTRODUCTION

Consider the following additional guidelines when drafting an introduction:

- You should always include all six the aforementioned elements in an introduction.
- **Element 1:** An academic article should be written in such a way that an intelligent layperson (i.e., a non-academic person) will understand what you mean and be able to follow the broad outlines of what you did and why (Bem, 2003:3). It is, therefore, important to introduce the broad theme/topic of your study in an opening paragraph in such a way that the reader understands exactly what the study is all about. This can, *inter alia*, be achieved by clearly defining the core constructs that are covered in the study in non-technical terms and by providing examples to illustrate these constructs where appropriate (see Example 7 above).

Bem (2003:5) provides the following guidelines for writing the opening paragraph of an introduction:

- Write the opening paragraph in plain English without using technical jargon.
- Do not plunge the unprepared reader straight into a problem or theory. Take the time necessary to lead the reader to a formal statement of the research problem step by step.
- Use examples to illustrate unfamiliar constructs or technical terms.
- Use a catchy opening statement, preferably a statement about the behaviour of people or organisations.

² Answer to Example 8:

[Element 1] – Starts at the beginning of line 1.

[Element 2] – Starts at the beginning of line 10 and continues at the start of line 58 until the end of line 60.

[Element 3] – Starts in line 12, before “Early packaging research ...”

[Element 4] – Starts in line 26, before “Despite these works ...”

[Element 5] – Starts at the beginning of line 31.

[Element 6] – Starts at the beginning of line 62.

Consider the following examples of opening paragraphs provided by Bem (2003:5):

Example 9:

Wrong: Several years ago, Ekman (1972), Izard (1977), Tomkins (1980) and Zajonc (1980) pointed to psychology's neglect of affects and their expression.

[Comment: This statement, which is not particularly catchy, contains an unfamiliar term, affects, and it not a statement about the behaviour of people].

Correct: Individuals differ radically from one another in the degree to which they are willing and able to express their emotions.

Example 10:

Wrong: Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance [unfamiliar term] received a great deal of attention during the latter part of the twentieth century.

[Comment: This is not a statement about the behaviour of people and is also not particularly catchy].

Correct: An individual who holds two beliefs that are inconsistent with one another may feel uncomfortable. For example, a person who knows that he or she enjoys smoking, but believes it to be unhealthy, may experience discomfort because of the inconsistency or disharmony between these two thoughts or cognitions. This feeling of discomfort was called *cognitive dissonance* by social psychologist Leon Festinger (1957), who suggested that individuals will be motivated to remove this dissonance in whatever way they can.

Note how this last example leads the reader from familiar terms (*beliefs, inconsistency, discomfort, thoughts*) through transition terms (*disharmony, cognitions*) to the unfamiliar technical term *cognitive dissonance*, thereby providing an explicit, but non-technical, definition of it (Bem, 2003:5).

- **Element 2:** The academic importance of a topic/theme (i.e., Element 2) can be motivated by referring to a lack of previous academic research on the topic or by highlighting important gaps, inconsistencies and/or controversies in the academic literature that warrant further investigation. The practical importance of a topic can be accentuated by referring to a specific management question/problem highlighted in industry publications or by quoting appropriate industry statistics to illustrate its practical importance. These approaches are often combined. Consider the following two examples:

Example 11:

[Practical importance] Over \$100 billion is spent per year in the USA alone on gifts (Ruth *et al.*, 1999), making understanding gift-giving behaviour an important issue for many retailers and brand managers. **[Academic importance – lack of previous research]** While research has been conducted on the value of gifts purchased (e.g. Belk, 1979; Garner & Wagner, 1991), for whom gifts are purchased (cf. Heeler *et al.*, 1978; Komter & Vollebergh, 1997; Laroche *et al.*, 2000; Otnes *et al.*, 1993; Sherry *et al.*, 1993; Sprott & Miyazaki, 1995), and why gifts are purchased (cf. Andrus *et al.*, 1986; Belk, 1979; Belk & Coon, 1991; Beltramini, 2000; Komter, 1996; Komter & Vollebergh, 1997; Mick & Faure, 1998; Laroche *et al.*, 2000; Wolfinbarger, 1990;), little attention has been given to the reasons why gifts are chosen and, more particularly, the use of brand associations for a gift.

Source: Adapted from Parsons (2002:237).

Note that it is not enough to simply state that little or no previous research have been conducted on a specific topic. If you want to use this argument, you will have to show that you have extensively reviewed the most recent South African and international literature on the topic using an approach similar to the one illustrated in Example 12.

Example 12:

A key instrument of many retailers' communication strategy is their store window displays (Chain Store Age Executive, 1989). Previous research suggest that consumers are very likely to attend to and acquire information from window displays (Castaneda, 1996; Fletcher, 1987). **[Practical importance]** Similarly, a renewed faith among retailers in the ability of window displays to capture consumers' attention and draw them into a store has generated renewed interest in this communication tool after years of neglect (Discount Store News, 1994; Horvitz, 1998). **[Academic importance – lack of previous research]** An extensive search of leading electronic journal databases, including EBSCOHost, Emerald, Google Scholar, Proquest and ScienceDirect, suggest that no academic research has examined whether, how, and for whom window displays work.

Source: Adapted from Sen, Block and Chandran (2002:237).

- **Element 3:** The summary of available literature (i.e., Element 3) should be very concise (see the three examples provided earlier) and should be limited to the most recent studies that are DIRECTLY relevant to your own research. Summers (2001:410) suggests the following generic approach for summarising the available literature on a topic:

"Previous research has addressed several aspects of [topic]: (1) _____ (cite two or three relevant articles), (2) _____ (cite two or three relevant articles), and (3) _____ (cite two or three relevant articles)."

It is always best to focus on studies that were conducted in the recent past (i.e., in the last three to five years).

If you have replicated existing research, this should be clearly indicated in Element 3. You should also include an in-text reference to the study that was replicated.

- **Element 4:** Since academic research is aimed at expanding our knowledge of a specific topic, a study should aim to address or solve specific gaps, inconsistencies and/or controversies in the literature. A researcher should explicitly state the major gaps, inconsistencies or controversies that an article will address in Element 4 of the introduction and explain why addressing these issues are important (also see the preceding discussion of Element 2). One should also discuss the main contribution of a study here. Summers (2001:408) lists 17 ways in which a study can contribute to the "body of knowledge" in a particular academic discipline. These 17 possible contributions can also be used to motivate the importance of a study.
- **Element 5** of the introduction must always provide a clear indication of the following:
 - 5.1 the *core research problem/question* to be addressed in the study,
 - 5.2 the *specific research objectives* that will guide your research,
 - 5.3 the *context* (e.g., industry, market, geographic area, organisation and/or culture) in which the study will be conducted, and
 - 5.4 the *units of analysis* of the study.

Each of these four issues is discussed in more detail below.

Element 5.1 - A statement of the core research problem / research question: To be successful, a research project must have a specific and clearly defined main purpose or goal. In other words, one must be able to briefly, but convincingly, answer people when they ask the question: What exactly is the main goal of your research?

When defining the main purpose or goal of a study, it helps to think in terms of a specific academic or managerial problem that the study will attempt to solve, or in terms of a core question that the study will attempt to answer. Experts refer to this as a study's problem statement or its core research question.

The problem statement or core research question should be phrased in such a way as to present the "... single goal of the total research effort" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:47).

One can explain the main purpose or goal of a study either in the form of a concise problem statement **OR** in the form of a core research question. You do not have to do both! A problem statement should be in the form of one or more grammatically complete sentences, while a core research question should be in the form of a single question. Consider the following examples:

Example 13: Problem statements

"The main purpose of this study was to investigate South African consumers' attitudes towards female nudity in print advertisements and also to determine how these attitudes are related to consumers' religiosity – i.e., the degree to which consumers regard religion as an important aspect of their lives."

"The main goal of this study was to determine if the domain specific innovativeness (DSI) scale could be adapted to identify innovators in the category of alcoholic beverages among undergraduate students in Pretoria."

"The main purpose of this study was to investigate the attitudes of young, amateur skateboarders (aged 10-17) in Pretoria East towards the wearing of protective gear when practising the sport in a skate park. The study also sought to identify demographic and psychographic factors that could explain these attitudes."

Example 14: Core research questions

"The core research question that guided this study can be stated as follows:

What are South African consumers' attitudes towards female nudity in print advertisements and how are these attitudes related to consumers' religiosity?"

"The core research question that guided this study is:

Can the domain specific innovativeness (DSI) scale be adapted to identify innovators in the category of alcoholic beverages among undergraduate students in Pretoria?"

"This study attempted to answer the following core research questions:

What are the attitudes of young, amateur skateboarders (aged 10-17) in Pretoria East towards the wearing of protective gear when practising the sport in a skate park? Which demographic and psychographic factors can be used to explain these attitudes?"

Element 5.2 - The research objectives: Once you have formulated a clear problem statement or core research question reflecting the main goal or purpose of your study, it is time to consider the more specific research objectives that you want to achieve.

Achieving your research objectives should lead you to solve the main research problem or answer the core research question. One of your objectives may be to test specific hypotheses, while others may relate to the gathering of descriptive data or to the development of a conceptual framework based on available literature.

You should consider the following guidelines when drafting research objectives:

- Research objectives must be presented in a bulleted list and should be phrased in the form: "To determine ...", "To investigate ...", "To evaluate ...", "To compare ..."
- Research objectives should be listed in order of importance or from the most general to the most specific.
- Research objectives can be viewed as a set of "promises" made to the reader; promises that the researcher undertakes to achieve in the study. Be realistic in the promises you make! Limit the number of objectives you set by focussing your attention on four or five core objectives that will enable you to solve the research problem or answer the research question posed. Make sure that your study is properly designed to achieve these.
- Each objective should focus on a single issue. Be careful for objectives containing the following words: "and", "or", "as well as". These words often indicate a composite objective dealing with more than one issue.
- The objectives should logically flow from the problem statement or core research question. The reader should be able to see why it is necessary to achieve a specific objective in order to solve the main research problem or answer the core research question.
- Do not confuse research objectives with managerial objectives. Research objectives will focus on the things you want to do or achieve as a direct result of your research effort. As such, research objectives usually contain the following verbs:
 - To analyse ...
 - To compare ...
 - To describe ...
 - To determine how many / which percentage ...
 - To develop a typology / classification scheme / conceptual framework ...
 - To identify ...
 - To investigate ...
 - To review the most recent literature ...
 - To test ...

Your research objectives should **not** focus on any managerial actions or activities that may result from the study. It is, therefore, incorrect to have research objectives in an academic study such as the ones listed in Example 15 below:

Example 15: Incorrect research objectives

- To advise management on how best to improve the quality of service delivered to customers at Kievits Kroon Country Estate
- To develop an intervention plan in order to improve internal communication between top management and operational staff.

Consider the following two examples of well-written problem statements and the associated research objectives:

Example 16:

The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of nudity in print advertisements on consumers' ability to recall the brand being advertised and to investigate gender differences in consumers' attitudes towards nudity in advertising.

More specifically, the study aimed to achieve the following specific research objectives:

- To determine whether more brand names can be recalled in print advertisements containing non-sexual appeals than in print advertisements containing sexual appeals.
- To determine whether there are gender differences in the influence of nudity in advertising on consumers' ability to recall the brand name involved.
- To determine whether there are gender differences in consumers' attitudes towards nudity in advertising.

Example 17:

This study firstly analysed how consumers perceived certain elements of the servicescape - layout accessibility, facility aesthetics, seating comfort, electronic equipment or displays and cleanliness - at three different leisure events (i.e., a rugby match, live music performance and viewing a film in a cinema). Secondly, the purpose of this study was to determine how customers' perceptions of these servicescape elements are correlated with their perceptions of the overall functional quality of the service.

The following specific objectives were guided the research:

- To replicate Wakefield and Blodgett's (1996:45-61) study in a South African context, specifically in three previously unexplored leisure contexts, namely a rugby match, a music performance and a movie theatre.
- To determine and compare customers' perceptions of selected servicescape elements, namely layout accessibility, facility aesthetics, seating comfort, electronic equipment or displays and cleanliness, across the three leisure contexts mentioned above.
- To determine and compare how customers' perceptions of the selected servicescape elements correlate with their perceptions of the overall functional quality of the service at the three leisure contexts mentioned above.

Element 5.3 – The context of the study: Element 5 of the introduction should also contain a clear, but brief description of the specific context in which your study was conducted. Depending on the nature of your study, the context could refer to the

specific country, region, industry, industry sector, organisation, culture and/or consumer groups in or among which the study was conducted (e.g., spectators at a rugby match at Loftus stadium; middle managers in the South African retail baking industry; undergraduate commerce students at the University of Pretoria). It could also refer to the specific forms / variants of a phenomenon or object that you have studied (e.g., nudity appeals in fashion magazine advertisements, product placements in movies; the effects of music tempo on visitors to regional shopping malls in Gauteng; the motivations of shark cage divers in Vals Bay).

The context may be specified as part of the core problem statement / research question or in the research objectives. Alternatively, it can also be described separately as part of Element 5 of the introduction.

In Example 17, the researchers described the context as part of the problem statement and research objectives. They specifically indicated that the study focused on five elements of the servicescape - layout accessibility, facility aesthetics, seating comfort, electronic equipment or displays and cleanliness - at three different leisure events (i.e., a rugby match, live music performance and viewing a film in a cinema) in South Africa. The researchers could have been more specific by indicating that these three leisure venues are situated in Pretoria.

In Example 16, the researchers highlighted two contextual aspects in their problem statement and objectives. They mentioned that the study focussed on print advertisements and also that they investigated gender differences in consumers' attitudes. The researchers could have been more specific by, for example, also indicating that the study was conducted among undergraduate students at the University of Pretoria.

Try to describe the context of your study as precisely as you can.

Element 5.4 - The units of analysis:

The units of analysis of a study refer to the entities about which the researcher wishes to draw conclusions (Terre Blance & Durrheim, 2004:37). The units of analysis can, therefore, refer to individuals, families, organisational sub-units, organisations, buyer-seller relationships, regions, countries, cultures, nations or any other "grouping" or entity about which a researcher wishes to draw conclusions.

In most cases, the units of analysis are individuals (e.g., individual consumers or individual employees), but, in other cases, the units of analysis refer to some "grouping" of individuals or to other entities. For example, if we want to compare the levels of anxiety about research methodology of students in different faculties, then we will have to calculate a single "anxiety" score for each faculty based on data obtained from individual students in the faculty. Since our focus is on comparing the faculties and not the individual students, the faculties are our units of analysis. Similarly, if we want to compare the new product development practices of one- and two- versus four- and five-star hotels, the two groupings of hotels – one- and two-star hotels versus four- and five-star hotels – are the units of analysis (see Trochim (2006) for an additional explanation).

One can identify the units of analysis of a study by asking the following question: "About which entity or entities do the researchers want to draw conclusions?"

While in many cases the *units of analysis* and the *sampling units* (i.e., the entities from which data is collected) are the same, this is not necessarily always the case. For example, to evaluate the relationship between employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction in a franchised firm such as Wimpy, one would have to collect data from the individual customers and employees of several Wimpy outlets. The individuals from whom data is collected are the *sampling units* of our study. However, since we wish to draw conclusions about the relationship between employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction across the franchised Wimpy outlets included in the study, these outlets – not the individual respondents – are the *units of analysis* of our study.

As this example illustrates, it is important to clearly identify and, where necessary, distinguish between the *sampling units* and the *units of analysis* of a study. One should also clearly describe the units of analysis of a study in the introduction, either as part of the problem statement or research objectives, or in a separate sentence or paragraph.

Note how the researchers in Example 18 described the units of analysis of their study in a separate sentence:

Example 18:

“In previous studies, the concept shopping value was used to refer to both the value derived from the shopping process itself and the value derived from the products purchased, resulting in a confusion of concepts. In this study, we define shopping value as consumers’ evaluations of the shopping process itself, rather than of the products purchased. The object of the evaluation is a retail outlet, such as an individual store, shopping mall or online store. Consequently, the unit of analysis is the retail outlet rather than the products purchased.”

Source: Adapted from Shun and Yunjie (2006:274).

- **Element 6:** The introduction should always end by giving the reader an overview of the structure of the rest of the article (see Examples 1-3 above).
- While the introduction appears at the start of an article, it can only be written once you have completed the rest of the article and have a firm view of its structure and content (Bem, 2003:14).

7 LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review (recommended length: 1 000-1 500 words) represents the theoretical core of an article. In this section, we will discuss the purpose of a literature review. We will also consider how one should go about to find appropriate literature on which to base a literature review and how this information should be managed. Finally, we will answer four questions that first-time researchers often battle with when compiling a literature review. These questions are:

- Which aspects should I include in a literature review?
- How should I go about to synthesise information in a literature review?
- How should I structure a literature review?
- What writing style should I use when compiling a literature review?