



# Thematic Study

## What is it?

A thematic study is an in-depth analysis of a sector, business model/s and/or specific topic that collects and documents qualitative and/or quantitative information through academic research, data collection and/or experiences of primary and secondary sources.

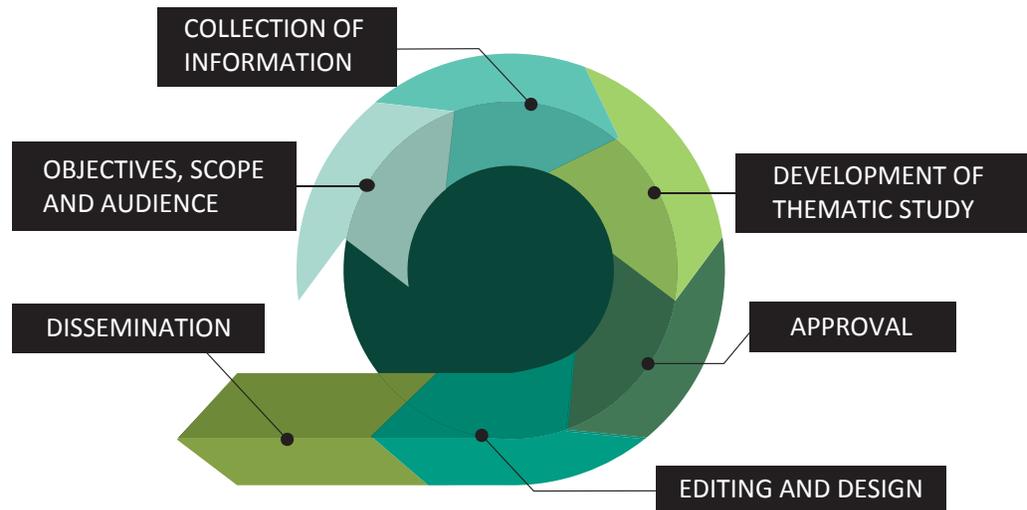
Examples of possible types of thematic studies:

- Monograph on a subject in which the MIF or its partners have no prior knowledge or experience
- Study of a new business model to be tested and supported by one or several MIF project/s
- Reports on lessons learned and/or best practices generated by MIF projects or external actors
- Report on current trends in a specific topic or area

A thematic study should be descriptive and analytical. Its scope should go beyond the performance of individual institutions and take into account all stakeholders in the sector, theme or geography, as well as the dynamics that are shaping their development.

## How is it made?

The phases for the development of a thematic study are:



### 1. Definition of the objective, scope and audience

The first step in developing a thematic study should be to answer the following questions:

1. Objective: what do we want to achieve with the thematic study? It is necessary to define the main goal, for example: analysis of a sector in a country or region, conducting market research, etc.

2. Audience: what is the target audience? We need to identify the intended recipients of the thematic study and what we expect from them, for example, to involve them as a partner in a project, raise funds for a project, generate knowledge that is non-existent in the organization, etc.
3. Scope: what information should we analyze? It's necessary to identify high-level content and key messages that will be included in the thematic study, for example, analysis of the market in an emerging sector in a region.

## 2. Collection of information

In this first phase we should gather and study the material to be used for the production of the analysis. Possible sources of information:

- Statistical data or market data on the subject, sector, region, country, etc.
- Documents relevant to the topic or sector from external sources.
- Interviews and/or focus groups with experts, researchers and other stakeholders in the field.
- Questionnaires or surveys to gather specific data.

## 3. Development of the thematic study

**Structure. Here are the sections that should guide a thematic study:**

- **Executive Summary:** The thematic study must contain an opening section of no more than a page that clearly summarizes its content and scope.
- **Introduction:** This section should present the thematic study's subject at a high level. The introduction should contain a brief description of:
  - » the context in which the thematic study was developed
  - » history and problems to which the thematic study responds
  - » the objectives of the thematic study
  - » the methodology used for the analysis
- **Body of the thematic study:** This is the main section of a thematic study, and must contain a detailed analysis of the sector or theme. The depth and structure of the analysis depends primarily on the topic or sector studied, the project's strategic interests, and factors such as the existence of data and availability of technical and financial resources.

Therefore, the project team must adapt the size, structure and content of the analysis according to its own needs and available resources. As a guide, this section may contain:

- i. Description of the country/region:
  - » Population/demographics: description of the standard of living of the population in the country or region
  - » Macroeconomic situation: analysis of the main economic indicators of the country or region

ii. Analysis of the sector or topic:

- » History of the sector or topic: its origins and the main events that have catalyzed or hindered its development
- » Regulations and government initiatives: the role of government and government strategies related to the sector or topic, regulations and supervisory structures and, where available, planned reforms
- » Supply analysis: identification of key suppliers, their relative size in terms of market share, services offered, territorial coverage and relevant trends in performance
- » Demand analysis: identification of consumer behavior, segments and market size

iii. Analysis of the key elements of the business model:

- » Value proposition: how will you define and differentiate the offer of products or services? How will you create value for your customers?
- » Customer segmentation: how will you select your clients?
- » Distribution channels, communications and sales: how does it hit the market?
- » Model in relation to different customer segments: how does it interact with individual customers?
- » Inflows: how does it earn profits?
- » Key activities: how are the tasks to be carried out defined?
- » Key resources: how will you configure the resources needed for your activity?
- » Network of partners: what partners will you need for your business? What activities will you outsource?
- » Cost structure: what costs will your activity generate?

iv. Projected growth and development of the sector or theme: identification of areas best positioned for growth and major trends.

- » Opportunities and challenges: identification of intervention opportunities that will have the most impact on the sector or topic

- **Conclusions and considerations:** This section highlights the key points of the paper and the main conclusions based on the analysis of the sector or topic.

**Review.** The review process is time consuming. It is recommended to go through the following steps:

- » Perform an initial check, with all those in the field whose comments have been consulted to ensure that they agree with the way they have been used and shared, especially if they have been quoted directly in testimony or life stories. Often it is not necessary to send the entire document but only the parts that match their contributions.
- » The participation of “peer reviewers.” Peer reviewers could be trusted colleagues or advisors. They should have some independence from, but also some knowledge about the goal of the thematic study, in order to be able to comment on it and hold a discussion. If a group of consultants is working together, a useful way to check their work is to exchange studies between them.
- » Maintain close conversations and share information with the entity that commissioned the thematic study to get feedback and comments, and make sure that the work is adequately addressing the original objectives of the research.

- » In reviewing, employ a panel of experts in the thematic study area, with the capacity to comment in a critical way and confirm the results.

### **Adapt the material to audiences:**

In order to ensure that the information collected is adequate, the needs of its different audiences, should be carefully identified beforehand. The information can be adapted to the needs of an “internal public” or an “external public.”

To achieve material that is adapted to different types of audiences, it is very important that different sections of the thematic study include materials such as:

- » Infographics: do we have data that can be represented graphically?
- » Flows of activities, processes
- » Interviews: could we support a section of the thematic analysis with a short interview?
- » Images: what image or images best represent the section we are writing?
- » Testimonials: what testimonies could be chosen in order to enhance the presentation of a section of the thematic analysis as a good practice?
- » Other resources (maps, graphics, illustrations): what evokes the paragraph we are writing?

## **4. Approval**

Prior to its dissemination, the thematic analysis will require the approval of the contracting organization and the MIF (at least by the MIF specialist in charge of the supervision of the project and anyone else defined by the MIF).

## **5. Editing and design**

Once the final text has been endorsed by all parties involved, it is highly recommended to send it to an editor/journalist to proceed with reviewing and editing grammar and spelling errors. After finishing the editing process, the text should be sent to a graphic designer to format and design it using the standard template provided by the MIF (which you can download from the online toolkit).

After this step is completed, the approval of the MIF’s supervision team leader is suggested.

## **6. Dissemination**

Dissemination is key to guarantee that the thematic study has reached the target audience. This step will require selecting and using the most effective communication channels to reach that audience. Moreover, the information acquired in the field can lead to a whole range of products that support the dissemination of case studies.

### **6.1. Communication channels**

Each communication channel requires a different format and message, hence the importance of having different types of material generated from the thematic study (audiovisuals, images, testimonials, interviews, etc.).

## **6.2. Communications products resulting from the case studies**

As noted above, testimonies and life stories are essential to support the communication of the thematic study. But in some cases they can also be used outside of the publication as material for posters, presentations, websites, social media outreach, etc. It is therefore appropriate to include a list of testimonies and life stories that the researcher deems relevant, whether or not used in the publication.

The interviews that were carried out during the field visit may also constitute, in themselves, material for independent publication on websites, in magazines, etc. So it is important to make a list of the interviews conducted and the location of the material of the interview.

An audiovisual gallery is also a key product for supporting the publication, and could serve to illustrate other communication products and channels such as web, magazine articles, and presentations.

## **6.3. Measuring impact**

It is important to have adequate tools to measure the impact of each dissemination action, and prove whether we are reaching the key audiences and to receive their opinion of the thematic study.

In order to achieve this, each communication channel should be accompanied by an indicator and the most accurate tool to measure its impact.

## **Characteristics:**

- Format: publication, with the MIF's standard template
- Length: It is recommended that the thematic study note have a maximum length of 20-30 pages
- Frequency: Depends on the specifications of the project execution plan
- Responsible for the preparation: Executing Agency in collaboration with the consultant/s hired to do the work
- Responsible for validation and approval: Executing Agency and MIF project specialist in the country office



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