

## List of seminar topics

### *Area Marketing & Sales*

Below you will find a list of **69 topics** for your seminar thesis. The topics are clustered into 10 overarching categories. Please inform yourself about how to apply in the uploaded documents.

- I. **Marketing Strategy and Management**
- II. **Consumer Behavior and Psychology**
- III. **Price Management**
- IV. **Product and Innovation Management**
- V. **Brand and Communications Management**
- VI. **Sales Management**
- VII. **Digital Marketing**
- VIII. **Customer Relationship Management**
- IX. **Market Theory and Research Methods**
- X. **Marketing Analytics**

### **Basic Literature for all Topics:**

Homburg, Ch. (2017), Marketingmanagement: Strategie – Instrumente – Umsetzung – Unternehmensführung, 6th Ed., Wiesbaden.

Homburg, Ch., Kuester, S., Krohmer, H. (2012), Marketing Management: A Contemporary Perspective, 2nd Ed., Maidenhead.

## I. Marketing Strategy and Management

### **1. The Multichannel Marketing – Blessing or Curse?\*** (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)

Due to recent developments, many new sales channels emerged, opening up novel ways to approach consumers. In response, developing successful multichannel strategies has become a crucial success factor in marketing practice. However, apart from new opportunities, multichannel marketing also involves numerous challenges for practitioners. The aim of this work is (1) to review existing literature on Multichannel Marketing, (2) to demonstrate the influence of multichannel marketing on consumer behavior and to (3) derive implications for the practice of companies.

### **2. The More, the Merrier? The Relationship between Cross-Functional Integration of the Marketing Function and Organizational Performance\*** (*Chair Prof. Kuester*)

The importance of cooperation between organizational functions, also referred to cross-functional integration, has been frequently highlighted over the past decades. The idea is that by working together across departments, organizational silos can be broken up and more differentiated viewpoints emerge. One function that has sometimes been considered in past research on cross-functional integration is the marketing function. The aim of this thesis is to provide an overview of the literature dealing with the cross-functional integration of marketing. In particular, the performance impact of the integration of marketing with diverse other organizational functions should be examined. In this context, different indicators of organizational performance shall be taken into consideration, and relevant moderating variables shall be considered. Implications for research on cross-functional integration of the marketing function and managers thinking about whether and how to integrate marketing with other departments shall be derived.

### **3. In-store advertisement in online stores** (*Chair Prof. Kraus*)

Research has shown that in-store advertisements could be very effective to increase sales and loyalty. Many stores (especially grocery stores) apply to this strategy that they increase in-point sales among many others. In-store advertisement is a strategy that online stores can apply as well. Although many online stores advertise their brands and products in their "stores" and take advantage of this strategy, the researchers have studied this stream poorly. In this paper, we will seek the effects of in-store advertisement in online stores as well as we compare these effects with the effects of in-store advertisement in brick and mortar stores.

### **4. To Cooperate or to Compete, that is the Question\*** (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)

Markets are dynamic systems in which firms choose to compete or cooperate with other firms to satisfy customer needs and generate a profit. When and why do firms compete? When and why do they decide to cooperate? Do firms engage in cooperation – when and why? The goals of this seminar paper are to (1) review and systemize the state-of-the-art literature and theorizing on cooperation and competition of firms, (2) identify antecedents and

\* Master seminar thesis topic can be prepared both in English or in German

consequences of cooperation and competition in dynamic markets, and (3) outline future research directions.

**5. Knowledge is Power! The Knowledge-Based View of the Firm and its Application in Marketing Research\*** *(Chair Prof. Kuester)*

The knowledge-based view of the firm (KBV) considers knowledge as the vital resource determining firms' long-term competitiveness. Knowledge about aspects of the marketing environment, such as customer needs and competitor strategies, can be highly valuable for companies if they manage to leverage the knowledge effectively. The aim of this seminar thesis is to present a general overview of the KBV of the firm. In addition, marketing research that applies the KBV as a theoretical framework shall be discussed in a structured way. Implications for future marketing research opportunities on the basis of the KBV as well as recommendations for applications of the KBV in a management context shall be derived.

**6. How Does Purchasing Device Change The Pain of Paying?** *(Chair Prof. Kraus)*

Consumers feel psychological pain when they make payment. This is called the pain of paying in the literature. Although a huge amount of studies have focused on the reasons and results of the pain of paying, purchasing device isn't one of them. In today's world, consumers could prefer to purchase offline, online, mobile, and smart. In this paper, we will seek how the pain of paying changes through different purchasing channels.

**7. The Digitalization of Business Models in B2B Firms: Past, Present, and Future\*** *(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

While the use of data in business-to-business marketing is not a new phenomenon, the digitalization of business-to-business firms' business models has recently attracted a great deal of attention. Therefore, the objectives of this seminar paper are (1) to offer a brief historical overview of research on digitalization in business-to-business markets, (2) the identification of critical marketing-related success factors for business model transformations in B2B, and (3) the identification of future developments in this context.

**8. Chief behavioral officer vs. chief marketing officer: The impact of C-suite executives on firm performance\*** *(Chair Prof. Kraus)*

An increasing number of Fortune 500 companies have a Chief Behavioral Officer (CBO) at the C-suite level. Yet, research in marketing has yet to understand differences and similarities between CBOs and Chief Marketing Officers and their impact on firm performance. Therefore, the goal of the present seminar thesis is to develop a framework that helps distinguishing both roles within an organization.

**9. Marketing and finance: are the disciplines a pair of siblings or complete strangers?\*** *(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

Both marketing and finance aim to create value for firms. For marketing in particular, it has become more important than ever that it is able to display and specify its contribution to (financial) firm performance and shareholder value. In research, however, the two disciplines oftentimes appear as fundamentally separate fields. Bringing the two together, the goal of this thesis is to provide a literature review on the marketing—finance interface.

#### **10. Marketing Mix for Generation Z\* (Chair Prof. Homburg)**

After focusing on Millennials for quite some time, marketers should start to concentrate on the Generation Z. Digitally savvy, the so-called “Gen Zers” grew up with iPhones and do not remember a time before the internet. Unsurprisingly, this generation needs to be marketed differently in comparison to customers in historic times. Having a digital marketing strategy surely is a good starting point, but certainly not a blanket approach. Against this background, the superordinate goals of this seminar paper are (1) to review and systemize relevant academic literature on Generation Z and its consequences on the marketing mix, (2) to outline a roadmap for future research, and (3) to highlight both the challenges and opportunities these particularities bear for managerial practice.

#### **11. Purchase Behavior in the digital era – Do Online Customer Reviews lead to Firms losing their Influence on Customers?\*** (Chair Prof. Homburg)

The rise of the internet drastically changed the consumer’s role in the market place. Given the easy access to online customer reviews, some observers suggest that customers will bypass marketer-influenced signals and instead rely on unfiltered recommendations from other consumers. However, does that really mean that marketing lost its impact? The aim of this work is (1) to review existing literature on the effects of online customer reviews on firms and customers, and (2) to examine how firms can effectively influence customers despite the effects of online customer reviews.

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## II. Consumer Behavior and Psychology

### **12. Personalization vs. Privacy: The crux of digitized products\*** (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)

The academic literature suggests that customers prefer personalization over privacy, since personalization offers the benefit of addressing unique needs and requirements. When looking at the real world on the other hand, personalization of a product or service requires customers to give up personal information to the company. As a result, there is a privacy and utility tradeoff. The objectives of this seminar paper are (1) a systematic overview of behavioral and psychological theories that look at privacy and security needs on a personal level, and (2) an evaluation of the nature of data that is considered private or personal and how this differentiation might vary across customer backgrounds.

### **13. “The Abstract Green” – The Role of Construal Level in Eco-Friendly Product Purchases\*** (*Chair Prof. Kuester*)

Research has shown that the mindset held by customers is an important factor in eco-friendly purchases as the mindset influences the way customers perceive and think about eco-friendly benefits. More specifically, customers can think about these benefits in an abstract or concrete way. Researchers frequently apply the construal level theory in this context which describes the relation between psychological distance and the extent to which individuals' thinking is abstract or concrete. Literature suggests that purchasing eco-friendly products involves sacrificing more concrete and proximal individual benefits (such as superior functionality and design) for benefits that are perceived as abstract and distant from the self. For example, when purchasing eco-friendly products customers obtain eco-friendly benefits such as biodegradability and reusability. These benefits pertain to society and are realized in the future indicating a more abstract way of thinking—also referred to as construal level. The aim of this thesis is to provide an overview of research on the impact of construal level on eco-friendly purchase decisions. Based on the latest state of research, implications for customer behavior research and practice shall be derived.

### **14. Approaches to Capture Consumer Opinion** (*Chair Prof. Stahl*)

In the past, researchers and practitioners have mainly used methods such as surveys and interviews to gather consumers' opinions. However, the issue of dishonest or inaccurate responses and a variety of biases, stemming either from the participants themselves or from the observer, has been raised several times. Recent advances show researchers also analyze online user generated content to assess consumer opinion. In this seminar thesis, the student will review and compare different methods used to capture consumer opinion and discuss their suitability and accurateness.

### **15. Consumer Psychology and Advertising/Purchase Behavior\*** (*Chair Prof. Kraus*)

As more and more sophisticated models enable real-time prediction of a consumer's psychology, it is of interest which psychological traits are linked to which types of purchase

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behaviors and ad efficiencies. You should discuss literature analyzing general interdependencies between consumer personality and purchase related behavioral patterns. Additionally, you should present research related to psychologically tailored advertising and derive managerial implications for businesses trying to adapt purchase and advertising processes based on presumed knowledge of a consumer's psychological traits.

**16. A nudge in the right direction: Applying behavioral insights in a digital environment\***

*(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

"Nudging" is an important concept in social sciences to alter people's behavior in a predictable way without banning any options or significantly changing people's economic incentives. A popular example is the setting of duplex printing as a default to foster pro-environmental behavior. While the concept has been successfully applied to several physical settings, a knowledge gap exists with respect to nudging in an online environment. Against this background, the aim of the seminar paper is (1) to review relevant literature on the use of nudges in both offline and online environments and (2) to outline future research directions.

**17. "I Do It for You – or for the Money?" A Literature Review on the Effect of Distance from the Consumption System on Customers' Service Perceptions\* (Chair Prof. Kuester)**

Due to the proliferation of platform-based business models (such as Couchsurfing, AirBnb or Uber), peer-to-peer services are soaring. However, due to the high-touch nature of these services, the borders between market and social norms in these services seem to blur. While some services are perceived by customers as more market -driven (e.g., Uber), others are perceived as more socially-driven (e.g., BlaBlaCar). The seminar thesis aims to investigate the drivers of the difference in these customer perceptions, as well as their consequences on customer attitudes and behavior. Based on the generated findings, implications for research and practice shall be derived.

**18. The Relationship between Trust and ROI (Chair Prof. Stahl)**

Trust is more important than ever between marketers and their customers. How can the firm ensure trust is maintained during the customer journey? What is the relationship of trust to ROI? At what stages during the customer journey is it especially important to build trust and how can this be achieved?

**19. The behavioral consequences of mental imagery: A literature review\***

*(Chair Prof. Kraus)*

Past research has demonstrated the power imagination can have on actual consumer behavior. The goal of the present seminar thesis is to summarize existing effects of mental imagery and to derive future research questions in the domain of post-purchase behavior.

**20. Spoilt for Choice? The application of choice-tactics to simplify purchase decisions\***

*(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

People make countless decisions every day - many of which are purchasing decisions. However, it is not always easy to make a decision, especially in light of the immense and ever-growing range of consumer products. How do people find their way in this world flooded with offers? Which strategies do they use to make satisfactory decisions? The aim of this work is to answer these and related questions by (1) reviewing existing literature on consumer choice tactics and (2) providing a systematic overview of different tactics consumers apply when making purchase decisions.

**21. “Drive, Buddy!” A Literature Review on the Effects of Peer-to-Peer Interactions on Service Perceptions\*** *(Chair Prof. Kuester)*

Existing research on service employee-customer relationships viewed service personnel as an entity, that is clearly distinct from customers. However, with the proliferation of peer-based platform companies, such as Uber and AirBnb, the boundaries and roles between customers and service providers are becoming increasingly blurred. As customers now increasingly interact with (semi)professional peers as service providers, the question arises of whether customers exhibit different behavioral patterns than they do with traditional service employees. By conducting a thorough literature research, this seminar thesis shall explore whether there are differences in customer behavior towards peer service providers and traditional service providers. Based on the insights gained, important implications for marketing research and practice shall be derived.

**22. How Consumers Deal with a Product (un)related to a Crisis** *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

Consumer research has evaluated from different angles how consumers react to similar stimuli or environmental cues in their shopping behavior. However, so far there are only few examples addressing how a clearly negative associated event affects consumer behavior. In this master seminar thesis, the goal is to address this shortcoming and elaborate ideas how to deal with such an event in terms of brand communication.

**23. The impact of incentive framing in customer referral programs\*** *(Chair Prof. Kraus)*

Although the effects of framing an outcome as loss (vs. gain) have been studied extensively, research in marketing has yet to examine to what extent framing could be strategically used in customer referral programs. Lastly, the present seminar thesis discusses potential downstream consequences.

**24. Let me show you how I use it: Gaining insights from customer usage behavior\***  
*(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

Many IoT-/Smart devices enable companies to track customer usage behavior. Academic literature describes the benefits for research and development, new product inventions, as well as improvements for the user interface. The objectives of this seminar paper are (1) a systematic overview of how customer usage behavior can be used in marketing, and (2) an evaluation of best practices in the industry with a categorial overview of devices that are most promising for the marketing field, based on academic literature.

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**25. My Data, Whose Benefit?\*** (*Chair Prof. Kuester*)

Frequently companies request personal information from their customers in exchange for providing products or services. Companies use these data, for example, to personalize the user experience or to gather ideas for developing new products. This seminar paper should focus on how the intended use of customer data affects customers' willingness to disclose their personal data. For this purpose, a structured literature overview shall be developed to derive implications for research and practice.

**26. Influence of Moral Identity on Consumer Behavior: Implications for Cause-Related Marketing** (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)

According to Blasi (1984), moral identity is the extent to which notions of being moral (e.g., being fair, just, kind) are central and essential to one's self-identity. Individuals with strong moral identities are more likely to care about others and to provide support to marginalized members of society (Reed and Aquino 2003; Winterich, Mittal, and Ross 2009). Cause-related marketing (CRM) is a marketing tool that allows companies to raise money for social causes while at the same time to affect consumers' attitude toward the firm and purchase intent (Ross et al. 1992). The goal of this seminar paper is to conduct the literature review on the effect of consumer's moral identity on his or her attitude toward the company implementing CRM.

**27. "Free" Applications in Exchange for Consumer Data: A Faustian Bargain?\***  
(*Chair Prof. Kuester*)

In the online context, many business models build on providing services or products free-of-charge in exchange for consumer data. For example, Facebook serves as a free-of-charge online social network gathering user data for targeted advertisements. It is the aim of this seminar paper to provide a comprehensive literature review exploring under which circumstances consumers are most likely to provide their data in exchange for using online offerings. The seminar paper shall derive implications for both research and for platform providers and e-commerce companies.

**28. The Effect of Retail Crowding on Customer Satisfaction: A Moderating Role of a Store Type** (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)

Research has shown that an increase in perceived crowding (spatial and social crowding) in a retail store can decrease the level of customer satisfaction (Iacobucci et al. 1995). However, the factors moderating this relationship were not yet extensively explored. One of such moderating factors can be a store type (Machleit et al. 2000). For instance, in the case of discount or outlet stores, shoppers can even define the "value" of product offerings by the number of people shopping there. Whereas in the case of higher-priced stores, in-store social crowding can be a disturbing factor. The goal of this seminar paper is to systemize the existing research on the influence of retail crowding on consumer behavior.

### **29. "Everyone Needs a Nudge" – The Role of Choice Architecture in Decision Making\***

*(Chair Prof. Kuester)*

The presentation format of choices, also referred to as choice architecture, can influence customer behavior. In fact, companies can intentionally design the format of choices to influence decisions taken by the customer. The design of choice formats is referred to "nudging". The well-known concept of nudging stems from behavioral economics and companies increasingly apply it to promote, for example, healthier lifestyles and eco-friendly products. Nudging suggests that small changes in the choice setting subconsciously influence the decision-maker e.g., setting standard choice settings and giving feedback. The aim of this thesis is to provide an overview of research on the positive and negative effects of nudging on customer behavior. Based on the latest research findings, this seminar paper shall derive theoretical and managerial implications.

### **30. Self-Discrepancy as a Driver of Conspicuous Consumption: Self-Discrepancy Theory**

**Approach** *(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

Self-discrepancy theory (Higgins 1987) postulates that in order to maintain a stable perception of themselves, individuals monitor the distance between their present state (actual self) and a goal state (ideal self). Inconsistency between one's ideal and actual self is called self-discrepancy. The existing research shows that when self-discrepancies arise in terms of belongingness to a social group, individuals are more likely to increase their levels of conspicuous consumption and to buy products that signal social status (Lee and Shrum 2012; Wan et al. 2014). The goal of this seminar paper is to conduct the literature review on the effects of self-discrepancies on conspicuous consumption.

### **31. "This feels difficult" – The Role of Processing Fluency in Customer Evaluation and Decision Making\* (Chair Prof. Kuester)**

With the proliferation of competing products available online, companies actively need to manage customers' perceptions of products at the point of purchase. In fact, research shows that customers' experiences in processing product information systematically influence product evaluation and decision-making. Processing fluency, or the subjective experience of ease with which customers process product information, is one such experience. While studies show that purchase likelihood increases if a product feels easy to evaluate, other studies demonstrate a negative relationship between processing fluency and purchase likelihood. Given these results and the various forms of processing fluency, this seminar paper shall provide an overview of the literature on the role of processing fluency in customers' product evaluation and decision-making. Based on the findings, this seminar paper shall derive theoretical and managerial implications.

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### III. Price Management

#### **32. Trends in Pricing: How Information Technology Systems Boost Price Decisions\***

*(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

Pricing is one of the most important elements of the marketing mix – without creating substantial costs, it ultimately decides about company success or failure. As for every part of the organization, digitalization has also revolutionized the pricing practice: Dynamic or behavior-based pricing are only some of today's manifold possibilities of employing the "right" pricing strategy. Against this background, the superordinate goals of this seminar paper are (1) to review and systemize relevant academic literature on trends in pricing, (2) to identify the consequences of effective usage of information technology in pricing, and (3) to discuss the implications for researchers as well as practitioners.

#### **33. Dynamic Pricing – Customers' Reactions and Organizations' Benefits** *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

A company using dynamic pricing sets prices in a flexible manner adapting them to current market demands or other influencing factors. Examples would be Uber that increases prices when demand is high or Airport duty free shops that increase prices when incoming flights have a high proportion of first class and business class passengers. How do consumers react to surge pricing or to other types of dynamic pricing? How transparent should a firm be in their pricing strategy? Is "radical transparency" a beneficial strategy?

#### **34. The adaptive brain: Using the concept of mental accounting in a consumer context\***

*(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

When making purchasing decisions, people tend to allocate resources to different accounts (e.g. account for food, leisure activities, utilities). The tendency to allocate money differently according to its intended use is often referred to as "mental accounting". The aim of this seminar paper is to (1) systematize relevant academic literature on the effect of mental accounting on consumer decisions and (2) to derive possible marketing strategies.

#### **35. Influencer Marketing – How can a Pricing Model be Established?** *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

The effectiveness of influencer marketing is unclear and difficult for marketers to assess. Which key performance indicators are crucial for which kind of marketing objectives and which pricing models could be derived from this? In this master seminar thesis, the purpose is to develop a possible pricing model based on performance characteristics of the influencers.

\* Master seminar thesis topic can be prepared both in English or in German

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#### IV. Product and Innovation Management

##### **36. Sustainable Consumption: A Product Lifecycle Perspective\*** (*Chair Prof. Kuester*)

Sustainable products are becoming more and more relevant in times of climate change, limited availability of natural resources, and a growing world population. However, it is unclear when and to what extent customers consider and assess the sustainability of products. It is the aim of this seminar paper to investigate in which phases of the product lifecycle from development, production, use, to disposal, customers pay particular attention to the sustainability of products. Additionally, the seminar paper should explore additional factors influencing customers paying attention to sustainability aspects of products. For this purpose, this seminar paper shall provide a structured literature overview to derive implications for research and practice.

##### **37. “I Don’t Need You to Be Myself” – The Impact of Using Anthropomorphism in Product Communication** (*Chair Prof. Kuester*)

Research suggests that the boundary between human and non-human is not as clear as it might seem. People typically make this distinction intuitively. This insight helps explain the increasing focus of researchers on “anthropomorphism” – a term which describes the perception of human aspects in non-human forms, events or objects such as products. Prior research has identified potential benefits for companies using anthropomorphized products in their communication strategy. For instance, customers tend to like products better when they are anthropomorphized. However, more recent work suggests that certain customer needs, e.g., the need for distinctiveness, can also lead to a negative impact of anthropomorphism on customers’ subsequent evaluations. The goal of this seminar paper is to explore the conditions under which anthropomorphism can backfire for companies. This seminar paper shall derive implications for research on product anthropomorphism and for marketing management.

##### **38. “This Product Was a Success, Wasn’t It?” – The Challenge of Measuring The Success of Innovations in Marketing Research\*** (*Chair Prof. Kuester*)

Many studies in marketing and innovation research examine innovation success as a performance variable of interest. Despite the frequent use of this construct, there is no agreement on how innovation success can best be measured. For example, many survey-based studies ask managers for self-report data on the success of innovations, which might be affected by reporting biases. However, objective data on innovation success is typically kept confidential by companies, and is hence difficult to obtain for researchers. Therefore, some studies have resorted to proxy variables available in secondary data sources. The aim of this thesis is to present an overview of different categories of measures that have been used in past research to measure innovation success. In addition, the benefits and pitfalls of different types of measures shall be discussed critically. Implications for designing research on innovation success shall be derived.

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## V. Brand and Communications Management

### **39. The balance between information and entertainment - Brand management in social media\*** (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)

The introduction and marketing of new products can be very costly and might not reach the initially targeted audience. But via modern social media platforms, firms can fast spread their new products, offers and events to potential buyers. But there is a twist to it: Social media mostly is designed more towards providing entertainment and less towards providing information. Concerning this background, the objective of the seminar paper is (1) to review and systemize relevant academic literature on social media branding and brand management strategies (2) to identify the potential of brand management social media compared to other media channels and (3) to outline future research directions.

### **40. Advertising Strategy** (*Chair Prof. Stahl*)

When designing advertisements, marketers generally consider where and how often to place which type of ads. Is there a systematic difference between the ad strategy of companies competing on price and those competing on quantity? How does product involvement type affect the chosen strategy? These exemplary questions show how an advertising campaign must consider many factors to ensure effectiveness. In this seminar thesis, the student will review existing research on effective advertising strategies for different industry and product types.

### **41. Brand Positioning** (*Chair Prof. Stahl*)

The question how brand positioning influences the customer “mindset” and, consequently, contributes to the financial health of firms is of major interest to both academics and practitioners. Given that building a successful brand requires thorough consideration of possible brand positioning strategies and tactics, this master seminar thesis aims reviewing recent research on brand positioning.

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## VI. Sales Management

### **42. Consultative Selling – How New Technologies Upgrade Modern Sales Practices\***

*(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

A salesperson who practices consultative selling develops a holistic and nuanced understanding of the buyer's needs before proposing a customized solution to fulfill those needs. According to this definition, salespeople have to gather and systemize a myriad of information about their customers. New technologies such as Big Data and Predictive Analytics open up brand-new possibilities to win the customer, and therefore constitute one of the major trends in today's sales practice. The superordinate goals of this seminar paper are (1) to review and systemize relevant academic literature on the process of consultative selling, (2) to identify the consequences new technologies have on the selling process, (3) to outline a roadmap for future research, and (4) to highlight both the threats and opportunities these changes bear for managerial practice.

### **43. Follow us on LinkedIn – How Does LinkedIn Change Direct Sales?\***

*(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

LinkedIn is a web-based social network founded in 2002 to maintain existing business contacts and make new business connections. It is available in 24 languages and has over 660 Mio. users in 193 different countries and regions. With this wide reach and its range of uses in the context of company sales (e.g., recruiting, targeted advertising, influencer marketing, lead generation), the question arises: How does LinkedIn change direct sales? Based on this question, this seminar paper aims (1) to work out the possibilities of sales for companies on LinkedIn and to clarify related terms, to (2) consult and summarize results of scientific studies regarding the topic, and (3) evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of the new sales strategies related to LinkedIn in order to identify research needs and implications for practice.

### **44. To sell is (fe)male: Why are women still underrepresented in B2B Sales?\***

*(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

Gender diversity has been shown to have a positive impact on both corporate culture and the company's profit line. These results contrast with the continuing under-representation of women in B2B sales. Among others, the persistence of gender stereotypes in sales has been shown to contribute to this phenomenon. However, research on gender stereotypes in sales is sparse. Against this background, the aim of the seminar paper is (1) to systematize relevant academic literature on gender stereotypes in sales and (2) identify barriers that prevent women from choosing a career in B2B sales.

### **45. Uncover the secret of Amazon – Insights and Challenges of a Successful Sales Strategy\***

*(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

Amazon became the dominant e-commerce marketplace in the world by offering hundreds of millions of products at competitive prices. How is this possible? Is it the personalized customer approach, the embedding of third party suppliers or the systematically optimized logistical

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handling of the sales process that underlies the success of the company? This is the starting point of a seminar work, which aims to derive success factors and patterns in Amazon's sales strategy that could be helpful for managers of other growing companies. The main objectives of this term paper are to (1) elaborate the most important aspects for success in Amazon's sales strategy, to (2) provide a comprehensive state-of-the-art review of academic literature regarding these sales strategy aspects, and to (3) process an evaluation of the current state of research vs. practical findings to derive suggestions for future research and implications for practice.

#### **46. Mind the Gap: Is Social Network Analysis Relevant for Sales Research?\***

*(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

Not least because of its interdisciplinarity, marketing research always makes use of existing approaches and methods also from other research areas. It is therefore understandable that methods such as social network analysis, derived from empirical social research, are highly relevant and interesting for marketing areas, such as sales. Although there are some recent studies including the analytical method, its use represents a gap, especially in sales research. In order to explore this gap through a comprehensive state-of-the-art review of the academic literature the main objectives of this term paper are to (1) give an overview of sales studies including social network analysis, (2) classify the investigated topics within the related studies, (3) evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of the study's methodology, and (4) give an outlook for potential further studies.

#### **47. Do you want bytes with that? Cross-Selling in offline and online B2C contexts\***

*(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

Cross-Selling is a means to sell additional products to already existing customers. It has long been part of sales and good trading strategies. But in the digital age, Cross-Selling approaches between platforms and between offline and online providers differ. The goals of this seminar paper are (1) to review and systemize relevant academic literature on cross-selling, both in offline and online settings, (2) discuss how different media channels could influence cross-selling initiatives positively and/or negatively, and (3) outline future research directions.

#### **48. Selling and Cross-Selling: How important is the knowledge about the own firm's product portfolio?\*** *(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

There are many possible influences of a salesperson's sales performance. Knowing about the firm's product portfolio is one of them. It enables salespeople to adaptively adjust to the needs of their buyers and create a customer-oriented atmosphere. But are trainings and other measures worth their cost in the long-run? The goals of this seminar paper are (1) to review and systemize relevant academic literature on selling and cross-selling, (2) discuss the pros and cons of broadening salespeople's product portfolio knowledge, and (3) outline future research directions.

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## VII. Digital Marketing

### **49. Online reviews: an overview of the state of the art in research and practice\***

*(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

Within the last decade, the power of customers over firms' success has grown and grown. Regarding this empowerment, customer reviews play a central role, as they give customers the opportunity to evaluate firms' performances publicly, with great influence on other customers and prospects. The purpose of this seminar thesis is to systematically summarize literature on online reviews, focusing on effects related to the reviewed firms, other (potential) customers and the reviewers themselves.

### **50. Research Shopping Phenomenon – How Big is the Problem Really? (Chair Prof. Kuester)**

With the proliferation of digital channels by which companies can interact with customers, and due to the rise of multichannel marketing, there have been several accounts of customer behavior referred to as research shopping. Research shopping is used to describe behavior of customers who search and gather information in one channel and then make a purchase on another channel. Research has identified two important research shopping behaviors: showrooming (offline-to-online) and webrooming (online-to-offline). However, most of these studies do not provide any conclusive evidence regarding the potential consequences of research shopping behavior on company-related outcomes. The aim of this thesis is to determine the implications of research shopping for companies and to identify strategies to deal with this shopping behavior by conducting a thorough review of the literature. Implications for academic research shall also be derived.

### **51. Digital Customer Experience (Chair Prof. Stahl)**

In today's business environment and the age of the digital customer, companies need to put particular emphasis on delivering excellent customer experiences, in particular using online channels. Accordingly, this master seminar thesis aims at reviewing existing research devoted to digital customer experience management strategies.

### **52. Is a Star Worth a Thousand Words? A Literature Review on Customers' Perceptions of Numerical Ratings and Written Reviews\* (Chair Prof. Kuester)**

Companies often employ online ratings and reviews as information tools for customers to evaluate and share their experience with services and products. These reviews and ratings come in different shapes and forms: Text-only, numerical stars, or a combination of both. However, only little is known about customers' perceptions of these different rating and review formats. This seminar paper sets out to provide a comprehensive overview of the literature within this field of research. Based on the insights generated, important implications for both research and practice shall be derived.

### **53. Contextual Advertising and its Effects on Advertising Effectiveness (Chair Prof. Stahl)**

\* Master seminar thesis topic can be prepared both in English or in German

In contextual advertising, the advertisements themselves are selected and served by automated systems based on the context of what a user is looking at. Examples would be a car ad shown after a Youtube video of TopGear or a HelloFresh ad shown when you try to order something on Lieferando. In what way does it pay off to display advertisements in a context where they fit into? Which ad metrics are improved? Can the effects of an audience that is more aligned with the advertised product be disentangled from the fitting context? Should the “creepiness factor” of contextually fitting advertising be mitigated?

**54. Micro or Macro Influencers – Which are the better Ones to target? (Chair Prof. Stahl)**

Attention loss and the availability to skip ads makes it difficult for marketers to reach their designated audience. The common seeding recommendation are Macro influencers. Nevertheless, we see more and more industry articles pointing out the value of micro influencers. The common assumption in the seeding literature in marketing is that macro influencers (or hubs) generate a high return. Given the accumulating evidence that this return is not that high does it really pay off to engage macro influencers?

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## VIII. Customer Relationship Management

### **55. The Effects of Digitalization on Customer Value in B2B Markets\*** (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)

Customer value has been a key focus of relationship marketing for decades. However, the increasing digitalization has deeply changed the customers' buying behavior, needs and expectations. Therefore, the objectives of this seminar paper are (1) a systematic literature review on the topic of customer value in B2B markets, and (2) the identification of changing customer value against the background of digitalization.

### **56. Is Customer Delight Worth It?** (*Chair Prof. Kuester*)

For decades, customer satisfaction has been a strategic imperative for many companies. Research has repeatedly confirmed the positive effects of customer satisfaction on firm performance, and measuring customer satisfaction has become a common practice among marketing researchers and practitioners. However, a number of marketing programs designed to increase customer satisfaction do not lead to the expected results. For this reason, some authors suggest that the goal of customer satisfaction should be abandoned as a means to enhance firm performance, while others advocate the re-evaluation of the satisfaction-profit relationship. Prior research suggests that the effect of customer satisfaction on firm performance is asymmetric in nature and non-linear, which opens the door to investigating the threshold points for which a small change in customer satisfaction may lead to a disproportionate leap in the outcome measures, such as customer retention, customer engagement, or company profit. In light of this, the goal of this seminar paper is to identify the conditions under which it is worth or not worth investing effort and resources to move from the stage of customer satisfaction to customer delight. By conducting a systematic review of the state-of-the-art literature, important implications for researchers and marketing practitioners shall be provided.

### **57. Customer Experience Management** (*Chair Prof. Stahl*)

Companies around the world recognize the importance of customer experience measurement and management for the ultimate success of their businesses. In fact, firms can no longer compete solely on the basis of their products or services; instead they must increasingly offer outstanding experiences aimed at building an emotional bond between the customer and the brand. This master seminar thesis aims at reviewing recent customer experience management research.

### **58. The Essence of B2B Customer Relationship Management: Current Research and Future Developments\*** (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)

The management of customer relationships (CRM) is core in B2B markets. Therefore, the objectives of this seminar paper are (1) the elaboration of the specifics of B2B customer relationships, (2) a systematic review of the current research in the field of B2B CRM, and (3) the identification of future developments of CRM in the context of B2B markets.

\* Master seminar thesis topic can be prepared both in English or in German

**59. Customer knowledge value: how firms benefit from what customers know and share\****(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

Products and services are created for customers. However, it seems that not all firms always listen to their customers as they should. But what is the value of customers' shared knowledge, e.g., through feedback, online reviews or as part of a co-creation process? This thesis aims to answer the question what this knowledge about products and services can be worth to firms. The thesis consists of a systematic literature review on the state of the art of research on customer knowledge value and related areas.

**60. Personalization: Is it helpful to increase brand attachment?\*** *(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

In a digital world, the personalization of products and services is becoming more and more important for companies to incorporate. How do customers perceive this trend to more personalized products and services, and does it leverage the brand attachment? The objectives of this seminar paper are (1) a systematic overview of academic literature to brand attachment and its origins, and (2) an evaluation of psychological and behavioral theories that can be used to explain an increased brand attachment due to more personalized products and services in a digital era.

## **IX. Market Theory and Research Methods**

### **61. All Fun and Games? Economic Games and Market Realities\* (Chair Prof. Homburg)**

In behavioral research, scientists often revert to economic games to probe the decision making of human actors. These games vary in their degree of complexity and their reflection of reality. What can we learn from human behavior in economic games? The goals of this seminar paper are to (1) review and systemize the literature on economic games probing cooperative and competitive behavior, (2) synthesize the literature to highlight when economic games allow relevant inferences, and (3) identify application areas of economic games in strategic marketing research.

### **62. Optimized Communication in Investor Relations\* (Chair Prof. Kraus)**

Skillful and adapted communication with investors is a key element of investor relations. You should describe the concept of investor relations and its stakeholders. In this context different communication channels (e.g. financial filings) and types of investors (e.g. retail vs. institutional) should be discussed and implications for tailored and impactful investor communications should be derived.

### **63. Is Marketing Science missing the Advent of the Computational Social Sciences?\***

*(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

Digital technology has not only changed business practice but also how we study markets. Extensive computational power allows computer simulations to explore the realm of what is theoretically possible. Specifically, the use of agent-based models enables researchers to grow and study artificial markets. The goals of this seminar paper are to (1) review applications of agent-based models in marketing research, (2) synthesize the literature to highlight areas where agent-based modeling is underutilized, and (3) explore the limitations of agent-based models and how to overcome these.

## X. Marketing Analytics

### **64. Text Analysis in (Marketing) Research** *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

As an application of machine learning, text analysis has proven useful in various disciplines. For example, researchers have investigated the development of 10-K reports over time. Furthermore, text can be assessed with respect to underlying characteristics such as the overall sentiment or complexity. Such analyses of various forms of textual data pose substantial potential for valuable insights for academic researchers and practitioners alike. In this seminar thesis, the student will review existing (marketing) research using various text analysis approaches, comparing the methods and contrasting the findings.

### **65. What makes a successful paper?\*** *(Chair Prof. Kraus)*

The question to examine is, whether it is possible to predict a paper's success, i.e. citations, based on its textual content and characteristics (e.g. title length, author affiliations etc.). You should first examine state of the art literature in the area of predicting scientific article success. You might also suggest a research design for predicting article success in marketing research.

### **66. Advertisement Detection in Historic Newspaper Images** *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

Analysing print advertisements in newspapers dating back all the way to the early 18th century can help us understand the history of marketing. Many historic newspaper archives have been made digitally available to researchers over the last decade, but are we able to automatically detect ads on newspapers, if all we have are scans of newspaper pages with no metadata attached? In this seminar thesis the student will review existing research on advertisement detection and image segmentation in newspaper images and gain insight in modern classification methods that can later be applied in a multitude of research situations.

### **67. Big Buying Days** *(Chair Prof. Kraus)*

Big buying days are certain days throughout a year when retailers offer special discounts. The biggest big buying days are Black Friday, Singles' Day, and Cyber Monday. They can be a treat or opportunity for the retailers. On the one hand, they could create excess demand. On the other hand, some customers could postpone their purchases to spend less money. The rate of discounting takes an important role here. In this paper, we will analyze the big buying days' effect on retailers' profit focusing on the optimal discount rate. The aim of this paper is doing a literature review on big buying days/special discounts and developing a simple analytical model to find the optimal discount rate.

### **68. Automatic Understanding of Advertisements** *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

With increased computational power at our hands university researchers are now able to generate knowledge from large sets of data that we had to pass on just a few years ago. Using machine learning and other statistical methods we can now detect patterns and rules in data

\* Master seminar thesis topic can be prepared both in English or in German

that are sometimes even counterintuitive. In this seminar thesis the student will review the new field of automated image understanding that can be applied to advertisements.

**69. Review of Image Complexity Research** (*Chair Prof. Stahl*)

Over the last centuries print advertisements have transformed from plain text paragraphs to magazine size full page empty spaces with a tiny symbol in the middle. To study this aspect of advertisement history we need to measure the complexity of an image. In this seminar thesis the student will review existing research on image complexity in the overlapping fields of both psychology and computer vision. The intent is to find image features that can be used to automatically quantify advertisement complexity.