

Mannheim, 24 January 2022

List of seminar topics

Area Marketing & Sales

Below you will find a list of **77 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. Learning from Failures: How Marketers and Salespeople Can Learn from Past Mistakes (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)

In businesses, hardly everything always works out like it was planned. In this regard, marketers and salespeople have plenty of opportunities to learn from: From innovation flops, service failures to lost customers and failed cold-call acquisition attempts. This thesis takes a learning perspective on failures in the marketing and sales literature to illuminate how and when failures can be an important part of firms' and individuals' learning processes.

2. Does it Pay Off to be Authentic? – A Literature Review on Online Content Authenticity and its Consequences (*Chair Prof. Kuester*)

Millions of pieces of online content are generated each day. Marketers are advised to leverage this content to cultivate consumers' opinion, word-of-mouth (WOM), and purchase decisions. With the mass production of online content, internet users have started becoming suspicious about the authenticity of this content especially when it involves product placements. Content authenticity is defined as an individual's assessment of whether information content is a genuine reflection of the writer's real experiences and thoughts. Research shows that high authenticity increases purchase intention and information sharing while low authenticity provokes distrust and has negative outcomes. The aim of this thesis is (1) to provide a literature overview on online content authenticity, and (2) the potential outcomes for companies when offering authentic online content, and to derive (3) implications for marketing managers.

3. A nudge in the right direction: Applying behavioral insights to foster pro-environmental behavior in a B2B context. (*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. Specifically, nudging is based on the idea of giving people a "gentle nudge" rather than a "hard shove" to foster desirable behavior and inhibit undesired behavior. A popular example is the setting of duplex printing or the re-usage of towels in hotels as a default to encourage pro-environmental behavior. Prior research shows that nudging can contribute to fostering pro-environmental behavior. However, little is known about applying these insights to a business-to-business environment (e.g., establishing a sustainable supply chain). Against this background, the aim of this thesis is to review relevant literature on (1) the use of nudges to foster pro-environmental behavior and (2) the use of nudges in a B2B environment, and (3) outline future research directions.

4. Beyond “Pump and Dump”: The Role of Marketing for Blockchain/Crypto Projects* *(Chair Prof. Kraus)*

Many blockchain projects stand and fall with the number of adopters and platform members. Attracting the necessary capital to finance blockchain projects as well as attracting the critical mass of users and members remains one of the most important challenges for blockchain entrepreneurs. Marketing and promotional activities do play an important role in this context. You should discuss how sophisticated marketing can potentially create value in blockchain projects based on both academic literature and practical examples/cases.

5. The Role of Advertising - Information or Signal? *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

Advertisements are omnipresent, with studies suggesting that the average consumer is exposed to nearly 10.000 commercial messages per day. But are all these ads meant to solely inform consumers or do they serve another purpose? For instance, can firms use advertising to signal quality? Does the main use of ads change along the product diffusion curve? In this seminar thesis, the student will review existing (marketing) research on the purpose of advertising for firms, contrasting the findings for different market situations. Examples from the industry can serve to support the academic claims.

6. What’s next? Virtualization of products, services, and customer experiences – a short-term trend or a glimpse of our long-term future? *(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

Nowadays, businesses are facing tremendous pressures for digitalization in their internal and external environment. But what’s next? The virtualization of products, services, and customer experiences in B2C and B2B settings offers great potential for business as well as customers. Especially interesting and undiscovered is the application of Virtual Technologies, such as Augmented Reality in B2B settings. Therefore, the objectives of this seminar paper are threefold. (1) You should conduct a systematic literature overview of how virtual technologies can be used in B2B marketing (2) and identify which impact they have on B2B customer behavior, and (3) finally derive suggestions for future research.

7. Fighting Commoditization by Servitization: The Decisive Success Factor in B2B? *(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

Servitization, which describes the shift from a product-centric to a service-centric business model, has been a growing trend of B2B firms in recent years. Amongst others through increasing revenue and customer loyalty, the concept promises improved business performance. However, servitization also includes various challenges for practitioners and might even harm business performance. Consequently, the aim of this work is (1) to review existing literature on servitization in the B2B-context, (2) to demonstrate the opportunities and challenges of servitization and to (3) derive implications for the practice of companies.

8. The Effects of Competition on Advertising Strategy *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

Economists have long analyzed how different competitive situations affect firm strategy, but how are marketing efforts designed? Is advertising adapted to the faced competition, and if so how? Or do firms neglect competitive factors when conceptualizing their marketing strategy? Does the importance of these external influences change with the competition level? In this seminar thesis, the student will review existing (marketing) research that discusses appropriate advertising strategies for different competition settings, relating academic findings to insights from the industry.

9. Digital Health: A State-of-the-Art Review *(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

Today, everything is affected by the digital revolution – new technologies are also substantially impacting the healthcare sector. Rapid technological advancements have the potential to transform healthcare in multiple ways, for example through digital health applications. The aim of this thesis is to (1) provide a comprehensive overview of the literature on the digital health landscape. Based on this state-of-the-art review, (2) opportunities and challenges as well as (3) directions for future research and implications for the practice of companies shall be derived.

10. “Power to the Players”: The Retail Investor Revolution* *(Chair Prof. Kraus)*

Retail Investors account for increasingly large proportions of stock ownership and trading. You should investigate whether this new trend has implications on marketing management. Possible questions to investigate in this thesis are: Are there spillovers from retail ownership to product sales? Can products be marketed directly to the retail investors? You should hypothesize answers to these questions based on academic literature and/or empirical data/a case.

11. Healthcare Data: Opportunities and Challenges *(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

In recent years, the amount of healthcare data is rapidly growing. With the development of new technologies, healthcare data can be collected from an increasing number of sources, beyond clinical records or medical tests. At the same time, these data enable new healthcare data analytics. While this may enable new ways of care, privacy and security challenges arise. The aim of this thesis is to explore the corresponding opportunities and challenges resulting from (new) types of healthcare data.

12. Blockchain Technology and Marketing *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

Blockchains are decentralized, digital ledgers, most commonly known as the technological backbone for cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin and Ethereum. Blockchain technology has evolved to enable many more applications than digital cash. One such field is decentralized finance, built on top of blockchains, currently enabling a \$100 billion DeFi market. In this seminar thesis you will review the brand new field of blockchain technology in marketing and develop an understanding of the state of the art and perspectives of blockchain marketing.

*Topic can be prepared either in English or German.

II. Consumer Behavior and Psychology

13. The Easier, The Better? The Effect Of Processing (Dis)Fluency On Consumer Decisions (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)

Prior research suggests that fluent information is generally preferred by consumers and has positive effects on consumer's product evaluation. However, more recent work also provides support for positive impact of disfluent price information on purchase decisions. Against this paradoxical background, the aims of this seminar thesis are (1) to review and systematize relevant academic literature on processing (dis)fluency, (2) to discuss how processing (dis)fluency could influence consumer's product evaluation and behavioral intentions, and (3) to derive managerial implications and outline future research directions.

14. Nudging (*Chair Prof. Kraus*)

"Human beings are rational": It has been a controversial topic for a long time. However, it was found out that human beings are not as rational as we think and therefore our choice can be affected by many factors such as cognitive boundaries, biases or habits. It indicates that someone can affect (or nudge) the other's decision by simply providing a different context or options. For example, a mom, who is worried about her child's obesity, can lead her child to eat less by providing a smaller plate. The nudging effect has influenced our daily lives. We live in a world created by choice architects, who create backgrounds or contexts in which people make a decision. According to Thaler and Sunstein (2008), a nudge is any aspect of the choice architecture that alters people's behavior in a predictable way without forbidding any options or significantly changing their economic incentives. The aim of this paper is to understand the general knowledge of nudging and think the possible practical implications in the business context.

15. Social-media friends and real-world friends (*Chair Prof. Stahl*)

There is evidence that social-media influencers with fewer followers are more persuasive when it comes to advertising something towards their audience. Some argue this is because influencers with fewer followers can better maintain a closer relationship to their followers and better befriend them. Going beyond influencer marketing, this seminar thesis aims at providing a comprehensive literature overview of how social-network connections correlate to real-world friends. It may also cover the topic of the extent to which social-networks help their users expand their real-life network. This seminar thesis can lead to master thesis where the relationships can be assessed using an already available dataset in the realm of Big Data.

16. A literature Review on Companies' Donation Behavior (*Chair Prof. Kraus*)

It is common that companies donate to organizations, charities to show their social awareness and caring for the community. Current research are mainly focusing on the companies' donation behavior

and the effects on society. This seminar paper requires a thoughtful literature review of the extant research about companies' donation behavior and their impacts on research of consumer behavior.

17. Applying Double Standards: With Whom Do Consumers Share Data Online?* *(Chair Prof. Kuester)*

Due to data protection laws such as the General Data Protection Regulation established in 2018 by the EU, consumers must give their consent concerning which type of data they choose to share on websites. This regulation applies to for-profit as well as to non-profit organizations such as charities. Initial research findings suggest that consumers' willingness to share data online differs for profit companies and charitable companies. The aims of this seminar thesis are to (1) explore when and with which organizations consumers are willing to share their data online by reviewing the relevant literature on data disclosure and privacy, as well as on charitable giving. Additionally, it shall be examined how consumers' willingness to share data online determines their subsequent attitudes and behavior, e.g., the perception and evaluation of the respective company. Based on these findings, (2) managerial implications for website design and the design of data disclosure consent requests, as well as (3) future research directions shall be discussed.

18. Fake Label and Misinformation: Does The Position of Fake Label Matter? *(Chair Prof. Kraus)*

Fake news spreads very fast on social media and in real life. For example, Facebook has been using third-party fact checking website to rate the news published on Facebook. Fake news (or misinformation) will be rated as "fake" if it is proved not true and a "fake label" will be put after the headlines. Interestingly, different fact checker use different ways to label fake news: Some put a "fake" or "false" sign in front of the headlines, some put the label or a so-called "fake rating" after the articles. Combined with the "order effect", this thesis investigates whether the position of a fake label effects people's perception on the misinformation. The purpose of this seminar thesis is a well-structured literature review. A hypothesis based on the current research would be a plus.

19. Distance Matters – The Impact Of Psychological Distance On Consumer Perception And Behavior *(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

According to the construal level theory, psychological distance plays a vital role in individuals' mental representation and systematically affects human judgment and behavior. What implications does this bring for the consumer research? How can psychological distance be leveraged to shape consumer perception and behavior? The aims of this seminar thesis are (1) to review and systematize relevant academic literature on psychological distance in consumer context, (2) to discuss the antecedents and consequences of psychological distance on consumer behavior, and (3) to derive managerial implications and outline future research directions.

20. Cognitive processing in purchase decisions – How online product reviews are used by consumers in purchase decisions *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

Most ecommerce platforms offer an abundance of reviews available to consumers making purchase decisions. But what reviews are perceived helpful? Are more reviews always better? How is the

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distribution of reviews across a star rating scale cognitively processed by consumers? This work provides a thorough overview of current literature and provides an outlook on research gaps that can be addressed from a marketing perspective, including aspects of information processing from cognitive psychology.

21. CSR Or Greenwashing? Consumer Responses To Sustainability Claims (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)

Despite the increasing investments in green advertising, marketers not always succeed in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviors in the desired way. How do consumers respond to green advertising and sustainability claims? When and why do consumers perceive green communications as greenwashing attempts? The aims of this seminar thesis are (1) to review and systematize relevant academic literature on green advertising and green consumer behavior, (2) to discuss how consumers react to green advertising and factors influencing their responses, and (3) to derive managerial implications and outline future research directions.

22. Self-Other Differences in Marketing Placebo Effect (*Chair Prof. Kraus*)

A classic experiment of marketing placebo effect shows that consumers perceived a discounted energy drink as less effective than one without discount. We propose that people's perception of self-other difference can affect the marketing placebo effect in a way that the effect works differently according to whether it applies to a product for me vs. a product for another person. This seminar thesis requires a literature review for marketing placebo effect and possible application in self-other differences. A hypothesis would be a plus.

23. The Role of mHealth in Promoting Consumer Wellbeing* (*Chair Prof. Kuester*)

mHealth describes the use of mobile and wearable devices, such as mobile phones and smart watches, for health services. Often, mHealth uses gamification to engage consumers. Gamification is the use of game-design elements and game principles in non-game contexts. For example, the Apple Watch allows for week-long fitness competitions with friends with the goal to motivate consumers to stay active. The aims of this seminar thesis are (1) to review the literature on mHealth content and gamification to understand their effects on consumer motivation and health-related behavior and (2) to derive implications for the marketing of mHealth products as well as for the adoption of health-promoting behavior.

24. The History of Emotions (*Chair Prof. Stahl*)

Emotions are core to our human experience. These feelings, arising from the complex interaction of both subjective and objective factors affecting an individual, can be highly personal. Beyond that, society also maintains standards for such attitudes and their appropriate expression. For instance, do authors express stronger emotions in their published articles now? How have facial expressions for different image types changed throughout the years? Do severe events (e.g. wars) affect collective emotions and their expression? In this seminar thesis, the student will review existing research that reflects on the study of emotions throughout history, reviewing the encouraged form of human

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conduct and changes in the expression of personal and societal emotion. Thereby, potential influencing factors such as large-scale external events or culture can be included in the consideration.

25. From Dunning-Kruger to Warren Buffet! Debiasing Financial Decision Making* (*Chair Prof. Kraus*)

It has been long shown that investors are not fully rational decision makers. In this context, cognitive biases do influence a plethora of decisions reaching from what stock to buy to far-reaching risk assessments when choosing insurance products. In this thesis you should discuss the concept of 'debiasing' as an approach to re-rationalize financial decision making. You should also elaborate on its implications on the marketing of financial products.

26. All change: The transformation of the consumer behaviour during Covid-19 pandemic* (*Chair Prof. Stahl*)

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted nearly all aspects of our lives. The corona pandemic changes consumer behavior at enormous speed and makes it more complex; for example, since physical movement is restricted, consumers are migrating into virtual worlds at an unprecedented rate and are exposed to newer avenues. Furthermore, changes that provide positive experiences are likely to stay with us, particularly those driven by convenience and comfort, such as adoption to digital life style, value-based purchasing and increased health awareness. In this context, the purpose of this seminar paper is to provide a literature review on what the effects of the Corona crisis are on consumer behavior?

27. Do you really consume sustainable? Sustainable consumer behavior – a gap between attitudes and actions (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)

Nowadays, there is a trend towards the consumption of sustainable products & services. But there is a trade-off: Customers often pretend to be more environmentally conscious on the one hand but often actually hesitate to buy sustainable products on the other hand. Which reasons account for this trade-off in consumer behavior? Especially interesting is the attitude-behavior gap and other underlying psychological mechanisms of consumers when buying sustainable products. Therefore, the objectives of this seminar paper are threefold. (1) You should conduct a systematic literature overview of sustainable consumer behavior (2) and identify which trade-offs play a role during sustainable buying decisions (3) and finally derive suggestions for future research.

28. Social Identity as a Driver of Trust and Identification: The Case of Nonprofit Organizations (*Chair Prof. Stahl*)

Following social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), the individual context is closely related to the individual's social identity, which helps them define themselves according to their group affiliations. From this, it follows that individual social identity affects trust and identification relationships with organizations, as individuals better evaluate those nonprofit organizations that embody their social identity (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). The theory further explains that individuals have greater trust in nonprofit organizations when they can identify highly with the organizational context and its values

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and mission. Given its great importance, the study of trust in nonprofit organizations has experienced a growing interest among scholars in recent years. The purpose of this seminar paper is to provide a literature review on the impact of social identity as a driver of trust and to outline the impact of trust on individual behavior (e.g., positive word of mouth, purchase, donation).

29. Looking inside the customer - What advances exist in using neuroscience and biomarkers to understand customers and their behavior? (Chair Prof. Homburg)

Understanding customer behavior is an ongoing challenge in academic research. However, with the help of neuroscience and biomarkers, it is possible to analyze consumer behavior more precisely. The objectives of this seminar paper are threefold. (1) You should conduct a systematic literature overview of the application of neuroscience and biomarkers in consumer behavior analysis (2) and identify how this knowledge can help in creating successful marketing strategies (3) and finally derive suggestions for future research.

30. Artificial Emotional Intelligence? Exploring Consumers' Relationships with Virtual Conversational Agents* (Chair Prof. Kuester)

Advances in machine learning and natural language processing drive the growing adoption of virtual conversational agents (VCAs). VCAs are natural language user interfaces to data and services through text or voice. VCAs allow users to ask questions or give orders in their everyday language and to obtain responses or services in a conversational style. Siri and Alexa are VCAs that support many consumers in their everyday life. Some consumers even developed social relationships with their VCAs while they were confined at home during pandemic restrictions. Despite their growing popularity and adoption, our knowledge about psychological processes underlying consumer-VCA relationships is virtually nonexistent. The aim of this seminar thesis is to (1) review the literature on VCAs and human-computer interactions—to provide an overview of the current state-of-knowledge regarding the formation of relationships between humans and VCAs. Based on the findings of this review, (2) implications regarding the design of VCAs for marketing research and practice shall be derived.

31. Weekend-Loneliness (Chair Prof. Stahl)

Levels of perceived loneliness are shown to vary during a day, during the year and during one's lifetime. This seminar thesis aims at providing a comprehensive literature overview around the phenomenon of week-end loneliness and how loneliness in general influences our decision-making. This seminar thesis can lead to master thesis where weekend-loneliness and its consequences on judgement can be assessed in an already available dataset in the realm of Big Data.

32. Sustainability and Willingness-to-Pay: Are Consumers Willing to Pay More? (Chair Prof. Homburg)

Recently, sustainability is regarded as an important objective by various stakeholders. In particular, the reported interest of consumers in sustainable consumption has grown tremendously. Consequently, companies are increasingly seeking to integrate sustainability characteristics into their product portfolio. While consumers articulate their interest in sustainable products, the question is whether

*Topic can be prepared either in English or German.

they are willing to pay a premium for these products. Consequently, the aim of this thesis is to review the literature in the field of sustainability and consumers' willingness-to-pay.

33. The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Compensatory Consumption Behavior (*Chair Prof. Kuester*)

Despite the rise of connectivity on a global level enabled by digital technologies, people today feel more socially isolated than ever before. Social isolation is even more pronounced in the light of the still ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. As a consequence, individuals may experience deficits triggered by perceived needs and desires that cannot be fulfilled directly resulting in compensatory consumption behavior. This behavior leads individuals to buy and use products to make up for the perceived deficits, for example, by engaging in compulsive and hedonistic shopping or compensatory eating. To study the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on this specific consumption behavior, the seminar thesis has three goals. First, it should provide a literature review of important drivers and key consequences of compensatory consumption. Second, it should explore the impact that COVID-19 has on individuals' compensatory consumption behavior. Third, theoretical and managerial implications shall be derived.

34. The Role of Emotions in Prosocial Advertising (*Chair Prof. Stahl*)

Charities and Nonprofits commonly use images of recipients, such as victims of a flood in their prosocial advertising; however, the literature to date shows mixed results regarding the effectiveness of sad versus happy images in advertising. The aim of this seminar paper is to give a literature review about the advertising content of nonprofit organizations and to elaborate which emotions and content should be used how and under which circumstances to raise donations.

III. Price Management

35. Selling to the Government: Finding the Best Sales and Pricing Strategy (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)

Biontech's vaccine sales during the COVID-19 pandemic is a famous example of B2G sales, i.e. companies selling products and services to the government. In the U.S. alone, government agencies spend more than a trillion on healthcare each year, making the government by far the largest prospect. Companies seeking to sell to the government must employ specific acquisition, marketing, and sales strategies tailored to the sector to accommodate difficult access to buyers (barricaded buyers) and highly-restrictive policies and regulations. Despite the great business importance of B2G sales and the frequently discussed strategic differences from traditional sales to private companies (B2B), research on how to best promote, place, and price products and services in the B2G context is scarce. Against this background, the aim of this thesis is to review relevant literature and outline future research directions. Particular interest should be dedicated to the pricing of offerings in a B2G context.

IV. Product and Innovation Management

36. Go green or go home: How key account management pioneers sustainability endeavors* (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)

Key account managers, being in a close relationship with their customers, only need to stretch out their hand in order to address today's most discussed topic, i.e., sustainability. In fact, key account managers identify market innovation needs on sustainability first-hand and are in the position to act upon them, thereby involving the whole organization behind them and re-aligning the teams that work on the respective customer. Though, despite its current attention, sustainability is yet to be thoroughly put into the context of key account management (KAM). Against this background, the superordinate goals of this seminar paper are (1) to review and systemize relevant academic literature on the different facets of sustainability, (2) to identify the consequences sustainability needs have on KAM, (3) to outline key areas for future research, and (4) to highlight both the challenges and opportunities for practitioners.

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V. Brand and Communications Management

37. Micro-targeting and personalization, a threat for the brand? (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)

More and more manufacturers use micro-targeting in their products and services in order to provide a highly personalized experience for their customers. New-age technologies thereby enable increasingly sophisticated micro-targeting strategies, begging the question of how the value of the brand is affected by the practice of micro-targeting and personalization? If the offer by a manufacturer is entirely personalized, what is the meaning of the brand? The objectives of this seminar paper are (1) a systematic overview of how micro-targeting can be used in marketing and (2) an evaluation of the relationship between personalization and the customers' perception of the brand.

38. The function of brand management in the age of customer experience excellence (*Chair Prof. Stahl*)

While brands are traditionally managed from a perspective of identity providing, emotional storytelling, new trends of experiencing brands and building personal touchpoints are shifting the way brands need to be managed. How can brands create engaging, trust- and loyalty-building brands? The work examines how the function of brands has changed and what organizations need to do to be at the forefront of brand building in a world where (digital) customer experiences are key for success. The work can be applied to a general perspective or focused on a certain industry setting (e.g., automotive OEMs, ecommerce platforms, mobility platforms, ...)

39. Do you trust me? The manufacturers' role in gaining the customers' trust (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)

With products becoming increasingly digitized, forming closer relationships with their users than previously possible, trust is more crucial than ever between manufacturers and their customers. With the help of new-age technologies, many of these products find their own way of interacting and communicating with their users. How can the manufacturer ensure that trust is maintained during these distinct customer journeys? Furthermore, what is the relationship of trust to ROI? The objectives of this seminar paper are (1) a systematic study overview of how customers form their trust in the manufacturer and (2) identification of potential shifts in consumer trust, considering digitized devices.

40. Recent Advances in Branding and Brand Management (*Chair Prof. Stahl*)

Brands are fundamental in marketing and have been studied for decades. Through branding, companies can differentiate their products and build up consumer connections and trust, which may ultimately also result in financial profits. This seminar thesis should summarize the most recent theoretical and empirical insights in branding research and outline future research trends.

41. Multiple Brand Mentions: Success or Failure Technique for Commercial Online Content? (*Chair Prof. Kuester*)

With the rise of the Internet and social media worldwide, there is a mass production of commercial online content (user and brand generated). Some of commercial online content is well accepted by consumers leading to positive outcomes such as increased brand awareness and purchase intention while other might lead to negative outcomes such as negative reviews. There are various factors that influence the success of the generated commercial content. One factors is the level of brand presence in online content. Should the brand be directly or indirectly mentioned? How often should the brand be mentioned? To date, there is no consensus about the optimal level of brand mention in commercial online content. The aim of this thesis is (1) to provide a literature overview on the impact of different types and different levels of brand mention in commercial online content and (2) to derive managerial implications on how marketing managers should plan, target, and leverage the corporate communication in social media regarding the brand mentions.

42. Understanding Brand Image (*Chair Prof. Stahl*)

According to the Forbes ranking of 2020, Apple, Google, Microsoft, Amazon, and Facebook are among the most valuable brands in the world. But what do people generally associate with these and other brands? Which approaches exist to capture the latent image of a brand? And how does brand image relate to other factors like brand value or brand loyalty? In summary, this seminar thesis should provide an overview of possible measurement approaches and effects of a brand's image identified in the literature.

VI. Sales Management

43. Stress, Effort, and Health in Sales (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)

Salespeople often have a lot of tasks to juggle, be it acquiring new customers, retaining existing customers, winning-back lost customers or analyzing the market. Consequently, jobs in sales can be very challenging and stressful. In this context, this seminar thesis deals with stress, effort, and related topics from a sales perspective, also shedding light on health-related topics in the sales domain.

44. How to convince dealers of the direct sales model in the automotive industry (*Chair Prof. Kraus*)

Traditional OEMs (automotive companies) have been selling their cars by using an indirect sales model with dealers as independent entrepreneurs (The cars are sold from an OEM to dealers, and then from dealers to end-customers). However, because dealers are independent from OEMs, the OEMs were lacking customer relationship and data. Since TESLA appeared in the automotive markets with their innovative business model (direct sales model with an eCommerce platform), the traditional OEMs are looking for ways to survive in the new competition. Direct Sales Model (or agent model) has been mentioned as the solution for traditional OEMs to survive this competition. In the new model, dealers will be directly hired by OEMs as “agents” and have totally different tasks. However, because of several factors such as lost sales margin, complicated transformation process and so on, many dealers are reluctant to adapt to this new model. The seminar thesis is based on the question how we can convince our dealers to accept their new role.

45. Salespeople stereotypes: what they are, why they do exist and why should we bother? (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)

What comes to your mind when you think about salespeople? Is it the “used car salesman”, or the “real estate salesman”? Is the stereotype you do have in mind male and characterised by personality traits like “pushiness” “competitiveness” and “forcefulness”? Yes? Did you ever think about how these stereotypes influence your career decision (choosing a career in Sales) and your personal interaction with salespeople? Drawing on research in social psychology, the goals of this seminar paper are (1) to review and systemize relevant literature on the role of stereotypes in Sales (origin, content, impact), and (2) outline future research directions.

46. You get what you pay for: The consequences of compensation structures on sales’ short- vs. long-term orientation and performance* (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)

To create competitive advantages and better serve customers, companies need to shift their mindset to a long-term thinking, not short-term monetary targets. But is this true? In fact, you find a myriad of remuneration structures that serve as antecedent to several “right” goals of selling, i.e., different organizational targets require different compensation systems. Currently, most companies dispose of traditional salary structures with limited transparency on the potentials these bear for their employees in the sales area, especially when adapted. Hence, the superordinate goals of this seminar paper are

*Topic can be prepared either in English or German.

(1) to review and systemize relevant academic literature on sales compensation structures, (2) to draw and discuss linkages among selling behaviors, compensation systems and potential outcomes and/or scenarios, respectively, and (3) to derive the implications these linkages bear for managerial practice and future research.

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

There are many possible factors influencing 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 towards broadening one's product portfolio 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.

48. Supervisory-related versus organization-related influences: Which are more important for the Cross-Selling performance of salespeople? *(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

The sale of additional products is very important in both B2B and B2C sales. Many studies have examined various supervisory- and organization-related influences on the Cross-Selling performance of salespeople. Some of them are easier to adjust than others, yet which ones have the biggest impact on the actual performance? The goals of this seminar paper are (1) to review and systemize relevant academic literature on cross-selling and its supervisory- and organization-related success factors, (2) discuss the pros and cons of the different influences, and (3) outline future research directions.

49. Can Sales Systems be Flexible and Stable at the Same Time?* *(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

Ambidexterity—a recent concept in the management literature—affirms this question. According to first definitions, ambidextrous firms pursue both explorative (such as flexibility) and exploitative activities (such as stability) at the same time. But can this be also transferred to sales systems? Against this background, the superordinate goals of this seminar paper are (1) to review and systemize relevant academic literature on ambidexterity, (2) to identify potential consequences of its effective usage, (3) to transfer this concept to the sales practice, and (4) to discuss the implications for researchers as well as for practitioners.

50. The Formalization of Channel Systems: Blessing or Curse?* *(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

Today's multichannel sales systems are highly complex and often very difficult to manage. Therefore, many firms rely on rules and standardized processes in their channel management approaches. But: Does it really ameliorate organizational performance; or does it rather harm it? Against this background, the superordinate goals of this seminar paper are (1) to review and systemize relevant academic literature on formalization in sales, (2) to identify potential consequences of its implementation, and (3) to discuss the implications for researchers as well as for practitioners.

*Topic can be prepared either in English or German.

51. Determinants and Consequences of Multichannel Sales* (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)

Multichannel sales systems have become “the rule rather than the exception” (Frazier 1999; p. 232). However, research regarding the antecedents and consequences of multichannel sales is relatively scarce. Against this background, the superordinate goals of this seminar paper are (1) to review and systemize relevant academic literature on multichannel sales systems, (2) to identify potential antecedents and consequences of various aspects of channel decisions (e.g., length, width, and depth), and (3) to discuss the implications for researchers as well as for practitioners.

52. Trust Thyself: Confidence as the Secret Ingredient in Sales? (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)

Confidence in his or her own ability to perform a task successfully or to achieve a certain desired outcome is an important construct for understanding behavior. Furthermore, it is associated with (work-related) performance. Unsurprisingly, salespersons’ confidence and its impact on behavior, attitudes and performance have been of major interest in research and practice. Against this background, the superordinate goal of this work is (1) to assess the relevance of salesperson confidence in the selling process, (2) to evaluate from the perspective of the company potential up- and downsides of salesperson confidence and (3) to analyze how businesses can foster the potential benefit of a confident salesperson.

53. Killing Me Softly: Digitalization as the Slow Death of the Salesperson? (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)

Business-to-business (B2B) firms are increasingly introducing digital sales channels and are thereby transforming the role of their salespersons. Given the versatile applications, digital sales channels not only give rise to new opportunities for salespersons but also threaten their right to exist. Consequently, the aim of this work is (1) to review existing literature on the digitalization of the sales process, (2) to demonstrate the potential benefits and challenges for the salespersons and (3) to elaborate the future role of a salesperson in a digitalized B2B environment.

VII. Digital Marketing

54. Explain It and I Appreciate It? Explainable AI as a Measure to Increase AI Appreciation* *(Chair Prof. Kuester)*

Prior research on algorithm aversion and AI points out that consumers avoid AI technologies because they cannot fully understand how AI makes recommendations or decisions. As a consequence, AI is often referred to as a “black box”. Explainable AI (XAI) explains to users how AI generates results and, thus, XAI has been proposed as a strategy to make AI more transparent, more trusted and more appreciated. The objective of this seminar paper is to investigate the concept of XAI and to determine which approaches of XAI represent a successful strategy to increase users’ trust in the technology and their attitude towards AI. Based on the results of the study, it shall be discussed whether the concept of XAI represents a measure to increase AI appreciation. The seminar paper shall conclude by deriving managerial implications and formulating avenues for future research.

55. The Diminishing Effect of Influencer Marketing *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

Nowadays, brands are using influencers to promote their products and services because influencer marketing and its strategies have been witnessing an increased success lately by reaching a wider potential group of customers through influencers. When studying these new phenomena, one of the noticeable areas of interest regarding this topic is the diminishing sales effect of influencers. Which marketing theories are in line with this phenomenon. Is the diminishing effect intuitive or counter-intuitive? Practically a brand needs to work with an influencer to ‘learn’ his/her effectiveness on promoting the brand. Yet, the dynamic effect makes it challenging. But what might be driving the diminishing effect?

56. Distinguishing between Diverse and Integrated Content versus Uniform and Dispersed Influence *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

Similar to energy which has different states (potential versus kinetic energy), we can distinguish influence into potential and active influence. Potential influence could be characterized by the quantity and quality of followers and active or kinetic influence could be characterized by engagement with posts and follow-through behaviors (purchase/donations/etc...). We recognize influencer content can be diverse, broadly categorized as: (1) Personal - influence to promote oneself (increase personal brand equity) (2) Commercial - use influence to promote some commercial objective (increase \$) (3) "Pro" Social - use influence to promote some social or political objective (increase support for social cause). So how does creating/posting content that is relatively more diverse/integrated versus uniform/dispersed influence how the receivers of the content view the influencer and their associated brands/social causes?

*Topic can be prepared either in English or German.

57. Is Location really dead? The role of location proximity in online Sales *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

The literature on the role of geographical distance in eWOM effectiveness is not decisive. On the one hand, a common belief for the effectiveness of eWOM is that technology bridges the geographical distance between consumers. Information technology reduces communication costs by decoupling the interaction process from geographic constraints. For instance, mobile devices enable shopping and communication between consumers independent from location, while the internet allows instant access to message exchanges and marketplaces. These reduced communication and access costs have led some scholars to pronounce the “death of distance” and “end of geography”. On the other hand, geographical distance may still play a role in online consumer behavior and WOM for several reasons. These include location-specific goods as well as economic costs related to shipping, contracting, monitoring, enforcement, travel, and inconvenience. Local user preferences and spatially correlated social ties as well as limited regional availability of alternative product options can also lead to commonalities in product adoption among nearby consumers.

58. Marketing in Virtual Realities *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

Since acquiring the VR headset producer Oculus, Facebook has increased his efforts on creating a mass market virtual reality metaverse and finally went all in by rebranding as "Meta". We may currently experience the creation of a "new internet", that can provide many opportunities for marketing professionals to innovate. In this seminar thesis you will outline the current state of research in this novel field.

59. Old vs. New – The competition between digital laggards and early AI adopters in marketing? *(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

The evolution and implementation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for service personalization will lead to a gap between early adopters and laggards. For early adopters, there will be additional challenges (e.g., high costs) associated with forging a new path in the largely uncharted application of AI in business. On the other hand, AI laggards will not face such challenges but might experience disadvantages since the customer experience they provide may not be as refined in comparison to the early adopters. The objectives of this seminar paper are (1) a systematic study overview of how AI can be used to leverage the customer experience and (2) an evaluation of potential threats to AI adoption success regarding the customers' perception of technology usage.

60. Anthropomorphized Algorithms – Can Errors Make Algorithms Seem More Human?* *(Chair Prof. Kuester)*

“To err is human” is a common saying implying that committing mistakes is normal and can be even expected. But what about technology committing mistakes? This question becomes of particular interest with more algorithms influencing consumers' everyday lives. Moreover, numerous documented incidents and academic studies have proven that algorithms commit mistakes. However, it remains unclear, how consumers perceive algorithms that err and how errors influence their subsequent behavior and attitudes about algorithms. Thus, this seminar paper (1) shall review the literature on erroneous

*Topic can be prepared either in English or German.

algorithms within the marketing domain as well as the literature on anthropomorphism. Further, (2) the seminar paper shall evaluate the impact of algorithmic errors on consumers and, specifically, investigate whether errors make algorithms seem more human. (3) Future research directions at the crossroads of erroneous algorithms and anthropomorphism shall be derived.

61. Non-fungible tokens (NFTs) and Marketing *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

Copies from digital goods can be 100% identical to the original, which has made it hard to distinguish original from copy and thereby prove ownership of a digital good in the past. This has changed with the creation of NFTs, which now allow buyers to own digital assets like images or videos and prove their ownership. According to the 2021 Gartner Hype Cycle for Key Technologies, NFTs may significantly transform marketing functions. In this seminar thesis you will examine how marketing researchers are approaching this new technology.

62. Algorithmic Biases - The Dark Side of AI* *(Chair Prof. Kuester)*

Although we often perceive artificial intelligence as a neutral entity, it can be heavily biased. A prominent example is Amazon's hiring AI, which only hired men. For AI-based product recommendations similar biases prevail. The goal of this seminar thesis is (1) to conduct a structured literature review on algorithmic biases in marketing and how they affect consumer behavior. (2) Furthermore, open research gaps should be identified.

63. "Likes Don't Save Lives, Money Does" – How Nonprofits Effectively use Social Media to Raise Funds *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

Within just over 10 years, social media has arguably become both non-profits' best ally and worst enemy when it comes to advocating for the people and communities they serve. Nevertheless, a mere like does not help and NPO. This so-called slacktivism of committing to a small act of support and not engaging in the meaningful behavior of donating afterwards is shown in the campaign "likes don't save lives, money does" by UNICEF Sweden and highlights the need for action. The purpose of this seminar paper is to provide a literature review on how NPOs can use social media as a tool to raise funds.

64. Empathic Artificial Intelligence* *(Chair Prof. Kuester)*

Empathy, which is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another, is known to play a crucial role in customer-employee interactions and can increase customer satisfaction. But with advancing digitalization, customers are interacting more and more with AI-based systems instead of human employees. This development raises the question of whether AI needs to behave empathically as well? The aim of this seminar thesis is (1) to conduct a structured literature review on the role of empathy in customer-AI interactions and (2) to identify open research gaps.

*Topic can be prepared either in English or German.

65. Living on a Thin Line Between Online Privacy and Personalization *(Chair Prof. Kuester)*

Internet giants such as Google, Facebook, and Amazon are in control of an increasing amount of personal data. In recent years, there have been growing concerns over the rights of companies and intelligence agencies to collect individual information. Typically, these actions are justified by claims of personalized offers by companies and increased security by governments. However, recent reports show that people today are more interested than ever in who collects the data and how they are used. If consumers perceive that their privacy is under threat, this may decrease trust and alter preferences concerning the product or brand choice. The goal of this seminar thesis is to explore the latest state of research on consumer online privacy concerns and derive relevant implications for marketing management. A particular focus is on investigating the trade-off between the willingness to give away personal data in exchange for value in the form of individualized experience.

66. The determinants and consequences of social media eWOM* *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

The social media has enabled consumers to share freely their opinions and experiences about products and services anytime, anywhere. Nowadays, consumers search for more information about products and brands from social media. In this seminar study, the student will review ongoing research about determinants of social media eWOM (involvement, information value, perceived ease of use, etc) and consequences of social media eWOM (purchase intention, etc) based on opinion seeking.

67. Fake online reviews from the perspective of marketing* *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

The discussions about fake news are not new. But, fake news issue is currently more important than ever, because it has now further proliferated due to the popularity of social media and the advancement of technologies that allow quick dissemination. From marketing perspective, fake reviews are not only dangerous for consumers, but also for companies and brands. The aim of the seminar paper is to provide a comprehensive approach to better understanding of the implications of fake reviews from consumer and brand perspective.

68. Caught in the Act. Scandals and the online employer brand *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

A firm's reputation is a valuable asset both towards potential customers as well as towards potential employees. Scandals that companies are involved in pose a threat to their reputation. User- & employee-generated online content can lead to such scandals spreading even quicker and even broader. At the same time, electronic word-of-mouth (with a focus on online employer reviews) might be able to forecast the likelihood of such a scandal happening. The aim of this seminar thesis is to provide a comprehensive literature overview of a relationship between scandals and online employer reviews in both directions. This seminar thesis can lead to master thesis where the relationships can be assessed using an already available dataset in the realm of Big Data.

*Topic can be prepared either in English or German.

VIII. Customer Relationship Management

69. Should We Have a Personal Relationship With AI?* (*Chair Prof. Kuester*)

Many customers have a restaurant, a hairdresser, or a doctor they visit regularly. They know these places' employees and tend to build personal relationships with them. Conversely, employees know their customers and their specific needs and can respond to them individually. But with advancing digitalization, customers are interacting more and more with AI-based systems instead of human employees. So far, most AI-based systems, like chatbots, always respond with the same answer to the same question. But shouldn't AI-based systems also get to know their human users and adapt to them? The aim of this seminar thesis is (1) to conduct a structured literature review on the personalization of interactions with AI-based systems and (2) to identify open research gaps.

70. Did you Get a Badge Yet? – Investigating the Role of Member Badges in eWOM (*Chair Prof. Kuester*)

The features incorporated in social networking websites keep improving. Facebook, Tripadvisor, and other online services have started to add a new layer to members' engagement information by introducing badges such as "Valued Commenter", "Top Fan", or "Admin" appearing with the names of users who are members of its online communities. It is, however, not yet clear which effects the use of these badges have on customer-related outcomes like electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). Are these members viewed as opinion leaders and might they be perceived as more trustworthy by other members? This thesis aims (1) to analyze the existing literature regarding the role of "badges" in digital communication. Based on the generated findings, (2) theoretical implications regarding opinion leadership and implications for social media managers shall be derived.

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

Customer satisfaction has been a strategic imperative for companies for decades. Research has repeatedly confirmed the positive effects of customer satisfaction on firm performance while measuring customer satisfaction has become a common practice among marketing researchers and practitioners. However, a lot of marketing programs designed to increase customer satisfaction do not lead to desired results. 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. The goal of this thesis 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 marketing practitioners and researchers shall be provided.

*Topic can be prepared either in English or German.

IX. Market Theory and Research Methods

72. Understanding AI-Induced Errors: Literature Review and Model Development* (*Chair Prof. Kuester*)

Artificial intelligence (AI) is, unlike other technologies, characterized by its self-learning capabilities. As making mistakes is part of the learning process, AI-induced errors can and should be expected. Marketing scholars have begun to investigate erroneous AI, but do not provide a mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive taxonomy of errors. By drawing on existing literature from marketing, psychology, information systems, and robotics, this seminar paper shall (1) develop a categorization that incorporates possible error types that AI can commit. Further, this seminar paper shall (2) identify research gaps and derive managerial implications.

73. Interdisciplinary Research in Marketing (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)

Marketing – like management – is interdisciplinary in nature, with strong influences from psychology, mathematics, and informatics. Yet beyond the most influential disciplines, researchers have successfully linked marketing-related questions with disciplines like neuroscience, biology, economics, ethics, philosophy, linguistics, sociology and beyond. Interdisciplinary research in marketing can relate to both the investigated topics (e.g., ethical questions in marketing) or the methods used (e.g., the use of genetic data to understand consumer preferences). The goal of this thesis is to create a systematic overview of marketing-related studies using interdisciplinary approaches. In this regard, the thesis identifies and analyzes major touchpoints with other disciplines and outlines future interdisciplinary research opportunities from a marketing perspective.

74. The Role of Self-Monitoring in international B2B-Sales: How Important is self-awareness and self-adjustment for salespeople? (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)

Self-monitoring describes the degree to which people monitor their own behaviors, cognitions and affects to control and alter them. This ability can come in very handy for salespeople when it comes to adjusting their behavior to their customer's needs. But is self-monitoring really necessary to become a successful international salesperson, or is adjusting one's sales behavior according to a certain scheme enough? The goals of this seminar paper are (1) to review and systemize relevant academic literature on B2B sales, self-monitoring theory and adaptive selling, (2) discuss the importance of self-monitoring skills in international sales and B2B sales in detail, and (3) outline future research directions and practical implications.

*Topic can be prepared either in English or German.

X. Marketing Analytics

75. Excellent experience – Metrics measuring customer experience along the customer journey *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

An end-to-end customer experience has been a core focus of designing ecommerce apps and websites. Also, traditional brick-and-mortar businesses like automotive sales are aiming for frictionless customer journeys including product trials, payments, delivery and service. But what makes a customer journey smooth and frictionless? What features do customers value, which are “nice to have”? A review of state-of-the-art metrics for customer experience quality along the customer journey and an associated importance ranking provides answers. The work can be applied to a general perspective or focused on a certain industry setting (e.g., automotive OEMs, ecommerce platforms, mobility platforms, ...)

76. Will predictive analytics substitute key account managers? How the role of human interactions becomes affected by analytics tools* *(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

Online and digital tools are omnipresent, especially in the B2C area. However, in the B2B context, customer relationship building as well as communication happen rather face-to-face or on the phone. With the emergence of ever more intelligent CRM and analytical tools, “online” relationships may become more intense and successful, as the necessary foundation based on facts and numbers can be easily built. However, caution is essential, as technology may lack the necessary emotional and interpersonal components relevant for relationship-building activities. Against this background, the superordinate goals of this seminar paper are (1) to review and systemize relevant academic literature on predictive analytical tools, (2) to identify the consequences for key account management practice, (3) to outline a future path for research, and (4) to deduce areas of improvement and threat for managerial practice.

77. The Potentials and Pitfalls of Automatic Video Analyses *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

Every day, people upload thousands of videos on platforms like Instagram or TikTok. If related to a brand, companies may use this type of user-generated content to better understand their target group and optimize their brand management. However, as videos consist of a sequence of images, a systematic analysis of video data seems quite complex. This seminar thesis should, therefore, discuss to what extent it is still possible to automatically extract information from videos, and identify potential obstacles in doing so. Finally, existing marketing research applications should also be illustrated.

*Topic can be prepared either in English or German.