**Current Topics for Master Theses at the Department of Sales & Services Marketing**

**Advisor: Seongmin Park, M.Sc.**

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| **Topic** | **Customer advantages of the direct sales model in the automotive industry (English Only)** |
| **Abstract** | 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 of OEMs, the OEMs were lacking customer relationships and data. Since TESLA appeared in the automotive markets with its innovative business model (direct sales model with an eCommerce platform), the traditional OEMs are looking for ways to survive in the new competition. The 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 deal with customers on behalf of OEMs. This paper aims to evaluate if the direct sales model fits better with new customers’ demands and journeys. |
| **Topic** | **What causes status quo bias among car dealers? (English Only)** |
| **Abstract** | It has been proven that the direct sales model provides a better fit for the future and advantages to all related stakeholders – OEMs, customers, and dealers. Lately, the profit structure of dealers was fluctuating because of the unstable economy of the world. Shortage of semi-conductor did not secure as much sales margin as they have received before. Delays in shipping and shortage in stock increased their costs as well. In the direct sales model, the dealers’ profit will be mainly from remuneration and therefore a certain amount of profit is secured in the new model. However, every individual has “status quo bias” and dealers are no exception from it. No matter what kind of advantages they receive from the new model, they still prefer the old model because they are used to it. Status quo bias is caused by many different factors – dealers are maybe too optimistic about the future with the current model and do not see any reason to have a change. Or dealers are just too scared if they can perform as well as now with the new model. This thesis focuses on what can be the underlying reason of status quo bias in car dealers. |
| **Topic** | **Biases in the transformation Phase (English Only)** |
| **Abstract** | When it comes to a change or transformation, individuals are usually reluctant to accept the change. There are so many aspects they need to consider before they accept the change. It is maybe also true to say that individuals are somehow biased in a certain way and do not want to accept the change no matter how innovative this change is. This paper aims to investigate which bias has the biggest impact on individual decision-makers to avoid change. |
| **Topic** | **Change Management and Status Quo Bias (English Only)** |
| **Abstract** | Status Quo bias has been named as one of the biggest impacts in a transformation phase. Status Quo Bias indicates that individuals are stuck to the old solution and avoid the new solution. When companies go through a transformation and are stuck with employees’ reluctance, they implement change management (e.g. training, incentives, etc). This paper aims to investigate in which mechanism change management debiases status quo bias. |
| **Topic** | **Dealer advantages of the direct sales model in the automotive industry (English Only)** |
| **Abstract** | This research aims to compare the advantage of dealers in the automotive industry between the traditional indirect sales model vs. the new direct sales model as agents. |
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**Advisor: Yasid Soufi, M.Sc.**

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| **Topic** | **Strategic Firm Orientation and Text Analysis?** |
| **Abstract** | A firm’s market orientation and entrepreneurial orientation will determine its strategic orientation. Strategic orientation influences the most fundamental strategy decisions of managers and its impact on firm outcomes has been investigated in the prior literature. However, in recent years more objective measurements of strategic orientation based on text have gained popularity. You should summarize the literature on text analysis and the strategic orientation of firms. |
| **Topic** | **Prediction of Panel Attrition** |
| **Abstract** | In the context of reducing selection bias and total survey error, it is essential to reduce panel dropouts in surveys. To perform outreach at the right moment to the right participant, it is important to estimate the probability of dropout throughout the cross-section of participants. You should summarize the work on the prediction of panel attrition based on the interdisciplinary literature. |
| **Topic** | **Heterogeneous Treatment Effects for Targeting Strategies in Marketing** |
| **Abstract** | The estimation of heterogeneous treatment effects for (marketing) interventions is extremely useful for personalized strategies. You should discuss approaches to the estimation of heterogeneous treatment effects that were applied in marketing research. Further, you should give an overview of the newest state-of-the-art methods for their estimation and discuss whether these methods have already been or could be applied to marketing problems. Examples of these methods are causal forests or double machine learning algorithms. |
| **Topic** | **Leveraging Blockchain Technology for the Marketing of Green Energy** |
| **Abstract** | The transition to green energy is more prominent and important than ever. Blockchain technology can be leveraged to enable green energy markets, products, financing, etc. You should conceptually elaborate on the application of blockchain-based solutions such as NFTs and Supply Chain Tracking for the marketing of green energy. Your analysis should account for the feasibility of such a concept and should be based on theoretical and practical findings from a variety of data sources such as scientific articles, blockchain whitepapers, legal documents, etc. |
| **Topic** | **What makes a Successful Blockchain Project?** |
| **Abstract** | The success of blockchain projects heavily depends on the number of adopters and platform members. Attracting necessary capital to finance blockchain projects as well as the critical mass of users and members remains the most important challenge for blockchain entrepreneurs. You should discuss what (potentially) drives the adoption of products and services that are enabled by the blockchain, e.g., the level of decentralization or innovativeness of a project. |
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**Advisor: Ann-Kathrin Polenz, M. Sc.**

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| **Topic** | **The Impact of Review Platform Design Choices on Consumer Decision-Making** |
| **Abstract** | Online reviews play a pivotal role in shaping consumer decisions. This study investigates how the design of online review systems influences consumer perceptions and subsequent consumer decision making. To do so, empirical research in form of online experiments is conducted. |
| **Topic** | **User Profile Information in User-Generated Content** |
| **Abstract** | The influence of user profile information, including elements such as name, profile photo, age, and other demographic details, plays a pivotal role in shaping perceptions of user-generated content. This master thesis explores the ways in which these elements impact the interpretation and reception of digital content by conducting an empirical study. |
| **Topic** | **Business-to-Business Online Reviews** |
| **Abstract** | Online reviews have been researched heavily in the B2C sector. However, studies focusing on the B2B have remained relatively scarce. In this master thesis, the student decides to investigate a specific phenomenon in the field of B2B online reviews. The student uses secondary data and applies quantitative methods to investigate a specific research question. |
| **Topic** | **Linguistic and Text Styles in User-Generated Content** |
|  | This master thesis shall examine the role of linguistic and text style in user-generated content. The subtleties of linguistic choices and text styles wield a profound influence on how information is perceived. This master thesis delves into the impact of factors related to linguistic and textual styles on user perception of digital texts. Using empirical analysis methods, this master thesis investigates how such elements shape readability, tone, and overall reader experience. |
| **Topic** | **How Survey Design Impacts Online Reviews** |
| **Abstract** | The design of surveys holds a key role in shaping the quality and authenticity of consumer reviews. This study delves into the impact of survey design on online reviews, exploring how the structure, wording, and methodology of surveys influence the nature and depth of customer feedback. This master thesis uses an empirical approach to test various survey designs. |
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**Advisor: Giuliana Francesca Manganaro, M.A.**

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| **Topic** | **Which communication channel works best for purpose-driven companies?** |
| **Abstract** | Embark on an innovative research project examining purpose-driven companies’ communication strategies. The particular focus within their communication strategies is on exploring which strategy and which channel (traditional and digital) works best in which case. By working case-specific, consider insights into brand perception, stakeholder engagement, and mission alignment. This opportunity for substantive contributions invites researchers dedicated to responsible business practices by shaping the discourse and influencing the future of purpose-driven communication strategies. |
| **Topic** | **How can companies effectively increase their “purpose”?** |
| **Abstract** | Embark on a research journey investigating strategies for companies to effectively increase their sense of purpose. By investigating enhancing strategies, the focus should consider influential variables like employees' motivation or leadership style. By finding the most relevant influencing variable by integrating strict analysis with insightful exploration, you provide critical insights for reshaping organizational trajectories. This opportunity, therefore, is tailored for those dedicated to organizational improvement through organizational purpose. By addressing organizational purpose, the prospect offers the opportunity to shape the future of organizational strategy and societal contribution. |
| **Topic** | **What effect does “purpose” have on organizational stakeholders?** |
| **Abstract** | Undertake a strict exploration of how organizational purpose impacts diverse stakeholder groups. Investigate the impact on each stakeholder group with a nuanced approach combining analytical rigor and qualitative depth. The study aims to unveil the multifaceted dynamics at play and untangle the intricate relationships between corporate purpose and stakeholders’ perceptions, engagements, and expectations — from employees and customers to investors and communities. Understanding stakeholders’ different expectations, you contribute to understanding how purpose resonates across diverse stakeholder landscapes. |

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| **Topic** | **What is “organizational purpose”?** |
| **Abstract** | Undertake a probing exploration to define “organizational purpose” to the fullest. Through addressing the question: “What is ‘organizational purpose’?” this research not only evaluates the level of objectivity required for a compelling purpose but also seeks to find a reliable measurement. By defining and finding a reliable measurement of the whole spectrum of purposes, from inspirational visions to measurable goals, prospective researchers contribute to shaping the ongoing dialogue on what makes organizational purpose impactful and enduring. |
| **Topic** | **Personal Branding and Organizational Brand** |
| **Abstract** | Venture on investigating the interconnected realms of the symbiotic relationship between organizational and personal brand. By uncovering the symbiotic relationship, a particular focus should be set on the effect of "purpose" within this interaction. Elaborate on the interaction with a comprehensive approach to navigating landscapes of corporate image, employee branding, and alignment between personal and organizational values. By doing so, this study offers a unique opportunity to contribute to understanding how a shared sense of purpose enhances both organizational and personal brands. Join this exploratory journey, where insights will brighten pathways to authentic and impactful brand narratives. |
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