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

Advisor: Ann-Kathrin Polenz, M. Sc.

Topic	**Exploring Minority Experiences Online: An Eye Tracking Study**
Abstract	Within this thesis, the student investigates minorities and perceptions of minorities in user-generated content using eye tracking technology. By focusing on attention patterns, we aim to uncover the challenges and opportunities faced by minorities online. The study will be conducted at least partly in Mannheim.
Topic	**The Impact of Review Platform Design Choices on Consumer Decision-Making**
Abstract	Online reviews play an important 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	**How do Minorities vs. Majorities Express their Viewpoints Online?**
Abstract	Within this thesis, the student examines how the expression of opinions differs between members of minority vs. members of majority groups. Does being part of a minority group change what we share, or how we share it? To find out more about this, empirical research in form of an online experiment is conducted.

Topic	**Corporate Sociopolitical Activism – State of the Art in Germany**
Abstract	This thesis examines the emerging role of corporations in sociopolitical activism, focusing on their motivations, strategies, and impacts. It analyzes how German corporations navigate the intersection of commerce and advocacy, weighing the benefits and risks of such involvement. This master thesis uses a qualitative approach to investigate current developments.
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Advisor: Giuliana Francesca Manganaro, M.A.

Topic	**Does Industry Shape Brand Personality? Investigating the Optimal Fit Across G7 Stock-Listed Companies**
Abstract	This Master's Thesis explores the relationship between industry and brand personality, analyzing whether certain brand personality traits align more effectively with specific industries. Using stock-listed organizations from the G7 countries, this research examines how companies craft their brand identities to match industry expectations and stakeholder perceptions. By leveraging brand personality frameworks and industry classifications, the study aims to identify optimal industry-brand personality fits, offering insights for corporate branding strategies. The findings provide valuable recommendations for organizations seeking to enhance brand authenticity and market positioning in competitive global markets.
Topic	**Motivating Sustainability: A Study of Values, Motives, and Sustainability Hotspots**
Abstract	In this Master Thesis you delve into the psychology of sustainability to uncover how Schwartz's values and psychogenic motives shape perceptions of SDG relevance. By leveraging survey data, your research will provide a roadmap for organizations and policymakers to engage different audiences in sustainability efforts effectively. Thus, this project is ideal for students passionate about sustainability, psychology, and behavioral science, contributing to more tailored sustainability strategies.
Topic	**Primed by Values: The Role of Basic Human Values on the Perception of Organizational Purpose**
Abstract	Do people perceive an organization's purpose differently based on their fundamental values? This master's Thesis explores the interplay between Schwartz's Basic Human Values and the perception of a predefined sample of organizations and their purpose through survey-based research. The study aims to identify whether individuals with different value orientations—such as self-transcendence, openness to change, or conservation—interpret corporate purpose differently. By bridging psychological insights with corporate strategy, this research provides practical recommendations for companies aiming to craft a purpose that resonates deeply across diverse audiences.

Topic	**Corporate Pathways to Sustainability and Profitability: Analyzing Impact Models Across G7 Stock Indices**
Abstract	This study explores how companies listed in G7 stock indices (e.g., S&P 500, TSX, Nikkei, FTSE) engage with SDG-related market opportunities. By mapping each company's sustainability initiatives to the 60 identified SDG-aligned "hot spots," the research classifies how firms implement impact-driven strategies—whether through (a) Impact Centers, (b) Impact through Operations, (c) Cross-Subsidy, or (d) Profit Donation. Through a quantitative analysis, the study investigates whether certain types of hot spots are predominantly approached through specific impact models and how industry classification (based on the Global Industry Classification Standard) influences these patterns. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of corporate sustainability approaches, offering insights into how firms integrate impact into their business models.
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Advisor: Vladislav Kucher, M. Sc.

Topic	**Enhanced Market Analytics: Harnessing Network Analysis in Graph Theory**
Abstract	Graph theory is a powerful branch of mathematics that examines structures and models relationships between objects. In this study, we will explore graph analysis from two perspectives: (1) as a method for extracting predictive features using graph-based metrics and (2) as a tool for uncovering valuable insights into complex relational data, offering significant business opportunities. By leveraging graph analysis, we aim to infer and optimize marketing strategies, identifying key patterns and connections that drive customer behavior and engagement. To ensure transparency and a deeper understanding of our models, we will employ interpretability techniques which will allow us to explain how different graph-based features influence model predictions, providing actionable insights for data-driven decision-making in marketing. This study will not only enhance predictive performance but also offer a clear and interpretable framework for applying graph theory to real-world business challenges.
Topic	**Driving Marketing Success: Personalization, Optimization, and Strategic Insights**
Abstract	This thesis explores the comprehensive application of recommender system (RS) algorithms across various facets of marketing. The focus is on showcasing their potential to revolutionize marketing strategies and operations. By integrating RS algorithms into marketing practices, businesses can achieve goals such as personalized customer experiences, optimized product pricing, and efficient inventory management. The study highlights the role of RS in enhancing customer engagement, increasing sales, and improving operational efficiencies. It also examines the use of RS in market segmentation and predictive analytics, enabling marketers to anticipate customer needs and tailor their strategies accordingly. Moreover, this study will take a closer look at how different factors influence model outcomes. As a part of this project, we will gain deeper insights into how RS models make decisions. State-of-the-art interpretability techniques will help us understand the key drivers behind recommendations, making the results more actionable and transparent for marketing professionals. Overall, this study establishes the indispensable value of recommender systems as a tool for achieving marketing excellence and driving business growth in an increasingly competitive market environment.

Topic	**Exploring Machine Learning Approaches to Enhance Business Performance Through Predictive Analytics**
Abstract	Marketing analytics often employ a variety of machine learning models, each with distinct characteristics that make them optimal for specific applications. Fine-tuning these models is a key element in the data mining process. In data-driven marketing, the methodology involves applying multiple models to a particular case, adjusting their hyperparameters, and assessing their performance. This thesis will focus on a specific marketing use case, where we will conduct a data-driven analysis and compare the effectiveness of various machine learning models, while emphasizing on the technical aspects of each algorithm.
Topic	**Inference, Explainability, Causality and Generalization in Machine Learning: Enhancing Algorithmic Understanding and Efficiency**
Abstract	The modern data science workflow starts with understanding the business context, followed by data collection, model development, and deployment. While causality can be part of this process, it is often overshadowed by the focus on improving predictive accuracy. However, recent advancements in both algorithmic techniques—particularly in causal inference—and the field of explainable AI (XAI) have equipped 21st-century marketing researchers with tools that not only predict outcomes but also explain the performance of complex machine learning models. In this study, we will develop and evaluate various machine learning models to address key marketing research questions, with an emphasis on interpreting model outputs, deriving and validating causal relationships, and ensuring robustness and generalizability.
	Please contact Vladislav Kucher, M.Sc. (vkucher@mail.uni-mannheim.de) for further information.