

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

Advisor: Gökhan Gecer, M.Sc.

Topic	The Number of Products to Be Sold over Different Sales Channels for Luxury Brands (English only)
Abstract	The companies could develop different marketing strategies for their sales channels in time. Some companies offer the same products for different prices over different channels. They could offer coupons or gift cards as well. However, this kind of price differentiating strategies may not be a good idea for luxury brands. As a result, luxury brands offer different number of products over different channels. For example, they sell certain products over only the mobile channel. The aim of this project is to figure out product number over sales channels strategy, its reasons and consequences; to develop an analytical model to calculate the optimal products numbers for the sales channels. The student who wish to work on this project should have a good analytical background.
Advisor	Please contact Gökhan Gecer, M.Sc. (gkhngcr@gmail.com) for further information.

Topic	New Product Preannouncement Content over Time (English only)
Abstract	New products preannouncement is a difficult and important process for the companies. New product preannouncement prepares the customers to the new product but it cannibalizes the demand for the existing product. It could be a good advantage against the competitors if the product is preannounced properly and could be a disaster the other way. The company could give more or less information to the customers. More information could affect the customers dramatically but the competitors learn about the new product in this case. The aim of this project is to figure out how much and what kind of information the company should share about its new product from the start of new product development until its launch.
Advisor	Please contact Gökhan Gecer, M.Sc. (gkhngcr@gmail.com) for further information.

Topic	How Do Customer Segments Value Hardware and Software? (English only)
Abstract	Smart phones and tablet PCs include hardware and software. They could advertise one or both of these components while promoting the new products. Different customer segments could value hardware and software differently. The aim of this project is to determine which customer groups value hardware and software in which ways, how the company should promote these components, and how big innovations in hardware and software affect the customers. The student who wish to do this project should have knowledge in experiment design.
Advisor	Please contact Gökhan Gecer, M.Sc. (gkhngcr@gmail.com) for further information.

Topic	Mobilization (English only)
Abstract	The Internet had changed the retail world dramatically. Companies had to adapt this new era that they changed their organizational schema as well as their sales and marketing strategies. Since then, mobile devices have been the new big change for the retail companies. For an interaction to be mobile, at least one of the companies (the firm or the customer) should be mobile which means the company isn't at a fixed location. Mobile devices have been used within the last decade. The scholars working on this stream have mainly focused on the customers. However, mobilization of the companies has been poorly studied. The aim of this project is to focus on mobile retailing from the company's window.
Advisor	Please contact Gökhan Gecer, M.Sc. (gkhngcr@gmail.com) for further information.

Advisor: Linda Gebhardt, M.Sc.

Topic	Influence of social identity on consumers' eating behavior
Abstract	Existing research outlines the importance of social processes in psychology of intergroup and individual behavior. By definition, a social group consists of a certain number of individuals who perceive themselves as members of the group. In addition, the group is perceived as one social group to outsiders. Social identity is one part of the individuals' self-concept that is based on a perceived membership in social groups. Thereby, some individual behavior can be explained by self-categorization and related group norms. Influencing consumers' eating behavior, social identity can e.g. affect the way or quantity of food intake, as well as the degree of health-consciousness. Based on that, hypotheses regarding the role of social identity in consumers' individual eating behavior should be drawn and empirically tested.
Advisor	Please contact Linda Gebhardt, M.Sc. (gebhardt@bwl.uni-mannheim.de) for further information.

Topic	The relationship between exciting store atmosphere and motivational shopping orientation in consumer behavior
Abstract	Motivational shopping orientations affect the way consumers behave in a shopping situation. Task-oriented consumers are more rationale in nature when purchasing a needed product effectively and efficiently. Their shopping activity is more related to a purchase intent rather than to enjoy shopping. Hedonic-oriented consumers, on the other hand, are characterized by seeking for fun, pleasure, and to alleviate boredom to gain satisfaction from the shopping activity itself. Their shopping activity is freely chosen with no need for a specific purchasing outcome. This master thesis focuses on the determinants of an exciting store atmosphere and how they can influence task- and hedonic-oriented consumers' shopping outcome. Therefore, hypotheses should be derived and tested empirically.
Advisor	Please contact Linda Gebhardt, M.Sc. (gebhardt@bwl.uni-mannheim.de) for further information.

Topic	The role of redundant information in consumer decision quality
Abstract	<p>Product descriptions and advertising often include redundant information that is less relevant for evaluating the relevant product or unnecessary for the current purchase decision. One stream of researchers shows that such redundant information evokes negative feelings such as unpleasantness. More specifically, providing irrelevant information impacts consumers' decision quality negatively. On the contrary, other researchers find that irrelevant information does not significantly affect consumer decision making. Thus, the purpose of this master thesis is to define the moderating variable to explain these contrary findings. Hypotheses regarding the relationship between redundant information and consumer decision quality should be derived and tested empirically.</p>
Advisor	<p>Please contact Linda Gebhardt, M.Sc. (gebhardt@bwl.uni-mannheim.de) for further information.</p>

Advisor: Mengmeng Niu, M.Sc.

Topic	The effect of package size on self-regulation for luxurious products (English only)
Abstract	A number of researches have looked into the effect of package size on self-regulation for hedonic products, such as tempting food. However, it is still missing whether the package size impacts people's perception and self-regulation for luxurious products (e.g., a luxurious watch or bracelet etc.). This question is especially interesting since luxurious products have different meanings as normal hedonic products have. However, similar to the effect of package size of normal hedonic products on self-regulation, package size of luxurious products could also impact people's self-regulation behavior. Developed hypotheses should be tested empirically.
Advisor	Please contact Mengmeng Niu, M.Sc. (mengmeng.niu@bwl.uni-mannheim.de) for further information.

Topic	Depletion in monetary resource and participation in reward program (English only)
Abstract	Previous researches have investigated the impact of financial constraints on people's sharing behavior. They argued that people with financial constraints generally don't want to remind of their previous purchasing and therefore they are reluctant to share their purchasing experiences on social media. In this master thesis, we would argue that since financially constrained people don't want to remind of previous purchasing, they are less likely to participate in reward program offered by companies, since reward program encourages frequent purchasing and this can lead to ruminative thinking of previous consumption.
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Topic	Framing Effect (English only)
Abstract	According to prospect theory, positive and negative framed messages could influence people's perception on gains and losses. In consumer behavior context, framing the same situation in opposite ways could lead to different behaviors. The purpose of this topic is to investigate the impacts of framing effect on consumer behavior with logical hypotheses and empirical evidence.
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Topic	The effect of psychological distance on risk perception (English only)
Abstract	Psychological distance is a term from construal level theory and is defined as the subjective experience that something is close to or far away from the self, here, and now. There are four types of psychological distance, namely, spatial distance, temporal distance, social distance, and possibility. It has been examined whether temporal distance influence people's health risk perception and risk prevention actions. However, it is still unclear whether other risks (such as risks toward gaining fat) are impacted by different types of psychological distance, therefore, the aim of this project is to focus on exploring the impacts of psychological distance on consumer's risk perception and subsequent behaviors.
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Advisor: Maximilian Gärth, M.Sc.

Topic	“Mirror, mirror, on the wall, who is the busiest of them all? The effect of busyness on judgment and decision making
Abstract	Previous research has found perceived busyness to serve as signal for high status in our modern society. In this master thesis, we argue that busyness may also have implications for other situations (e.g., consumer judgments & decision making). Thus, potential downstream consequences of high (vs. low) busyness should be discussed and tested in an experimental study.
Advisor	Please contact Maximilian Gärth, M.Sc. (mgaerth@bwl.uni-mannheim.de) for further information.

Topic	To bundle or not to bundle: On the strategic use of bundling for reducing consumer guilt
Abstract	Consumer guilt has been shown to play an important role in the consumption process. However, no research has particularly investigated how consumers process bundles of two guilt inducing products. Is the level of guilt when purchasing a bundle of two chocolate bars exactly twice as much as the level of guilt experienced when purchasing one chocolate bar? In a nutshell, the purpose of this master thesis is to summarize existing research about self-regulation and consumer guilt and to discuss which impact product bundling of multiple vice products may have on consumers’ feelings of post-purchase guilt. Developed hypotheses should be tested empirically.
Advisor	Please contact Maximilian Gärth, M.Sc. (mgaerth@bwl.uni-mannheim.de) for further information.

Topic	Coping and individual differences: The influence of known strength of individual self-control on the extent of coping efforts
Abstract	By definition, coping is described as the adaptive process involving cognitive or behavioral efforts to reduce stress stemming from external and/or internal stressors (Lazarus and Folkman 1984). In particular, consumers engage in coping efforts in highly ambiguous situations, in which they do not know what exactly the situation will be like or what the outcome will be. Thus, among others, the known strength of individual self-control may have an effect on the probability and the intensity of coping strategies. That is, consumers with known relatively weak individual self-control may be more likely to engage in coping efforts than consumers with known relatively strong individual self-control. Based on the abovementioned proposition, hypotheses regarding the role of known strength of individual self-control for the development of coping strategies should be drawn and empirically tested.

Advisor	Please contact Maximilian Gärth, M.Sc. (mgaerth@bwl.uni-mannheim.de) for further information.
Topic	“After the choice is before the choice”: On the relationship between anticipated and experienced self-conscious emotions
Abstract	Recent work in psychology has begun to examine anticipated emotions and their impact on consumer decision making. An interesting and relevant extension to this literature stream would be the investigation of the interdependence between anticipated and experienced emotions. Relevant here could be the impact of anticipated negative as well as positive emotions on the valence of experienced emotions. Because in the context of long-term relationships between brands and consumers experienced emotions that result from the purchase undoubtedly influence expected emotions from future decisions, one might expect that a relationship between pre-choice as well as post-choice emotions can have a reducing effect of the discrepancy between both of them in subsequent decisions. Considering this proposition, this master thesis should provide a comprehensive literature overview of the impact of self-conscious emotions on consumer choice. Based on the underlying mechanisms of the effects of anticipated as well as experienced emotions on consumer-related outcomes, hypotheses on the impact of the relationship between expected emotions and post-choice emotions (e.g., guilt and shame) should be drawn and empirically tested.
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