

## List of seminar topics

### *Area Marketing & Sales*

Below you will find a list of 92 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. Product and Innovation Management**
- IV. Brand and Communications Management**
- V. Sales Management**
- VI. Digital Marketing**
- VII. Customer Relationship Management**
- VIII. Market Theory and Research Methods**
- IX. Marketing Analytics**

## **I. Marketing Strategy and Management**

### **1. Should I Invest in Marketing or my Employees to Improve my Employer Brand? \***

(Chair Prof. Vomberg)

Employee-based brand equity (EBBE) describes the "value a brand brings to a company through its impact on the attitudes and behaviors of its employees" (Tavassoli, et al. 2014) and explains, among other benefits, why companies with strong brands can pay lower wages and still attract highly skilled employees.

On the one hand, managers can consider improving EBBE by investing in (customer-facing) marketing initiatives to improve brand awareness and public perception, which is also valued by its employees. On the other hand, managers can "invest directly" in their human capital by implementing numerous High-Performance Work Practices and improve employee satisfaction. This approach, however, is likely to be perceived less by the public, in the short term.

The goal of this seminar paper is to summarize the current state of research on the role of EBBE in the "war for talents" and to evaluate these two alternatives in terms of their effectiveness and efficiency to improve employees' motivation and to ensure the long-term success of the company.

Source: Bidwell, M. et al. (2014). I Used to Work at Goldman Sachs! How Firms Benefit From Organizational Status in the Market for Human Capital. *Strategic Management Journal*, 36, 1164-1173.

### **2. Regulatory Disclosure of Marketing Metrics & Information\*** (Chair of Prof. Kraus)

The SEC mandates the disclosure of "material" information of public companies in their regulatory filings. You should focus on the regulatory disclosure of public companies that is related to marketing. You should answer the following questions based on the marketing-finance and interdisciplinary literature: What types of marketing metrics and information is/must be disclosed? What are the effects of these disclosures on company stakeholders? What role do alternative data sources play in this context, e.g., YouGov, Compustat, etc.?

### **3. Marketing in times of inflation** (Chair Prof. Stahl)

According to the German Federal Office of Statistics, the current inflation rate in Germany is 8.6%, and no rapid improvement is in sight. This development can have a significant impact on businesses and their marketing efforts. For instance, as the cost of raw materials, labor, and other inputs rise, businesses may find it necessary to increase prices to maintain their profit margins. At the same time, consumer behavior is also affected, as people may become more price-sensitive and more likely to seek out discounts and deals. This seminar thesis should review

\* Topics can be prepared either in English or German.

literature about how marketers should cope with the present economic situation and what strategies exist for firms to prosper in these inflationary times.

#### **4. Sports teams as role models for business? (Chair Prof. Stahl)**

One of the most rewarding experiences in sports is seeing a team work together, share a common vision and succeed. Championships are won through the efforts of talented individuals working together for a common goal. The same lessons we learn in sports can be applied in the business world. Managers and athletes have similar skills to achieve the same goal: building and leading a cohesive, high-performing team. What exactly can managers learn from sports about leading a high-performance team? The question therefore arises as to which aspects in the composition of a sports team are transferable to the business world.

#### **5. Why simply moving your best salespeople into key account manager roles does not work – an exploratory distinction between sales, KAM, and other B2B teams\* (Chair Prof. Homburg)**

Companies often do not differentiate between sales and key account manager personalities, though their role and customer management may differ significantly (Lacoste 2018). Key accounts have substantial strategic and financial importance to the company, so key account management (KAM) and their team members become more critical for success. However, companies need more explicit guidance on adapting sales team structures due to established suboptimal incentives, ever more pressing external influences, and rising organizational expectations towards their sales force. Against this background, the superordinate goals of this seminar paper are (1) to review and systemize relevant academic literature on the team perspective (skills, traits, personality, role, ...) of sales, key account management, and other B2B areas, (2) to identify and compare potential consequences for the whole organization – inside and outside sales –, and (3) to discuss the implications for researchers as well as for practitioners.

Source: Lacoste, S. (2018). From selling to managing strategic customers-a competency analysis. *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, 38(1), 92-122.

#### **6. Promoting Diversity and Inclusion in Advertising: Measuring Societal and Corporate Benefits (Chair Prof. Stahl)**

Companies can promote diversity and inclusion in a number of ways. One example is inclusive advertising. Some companies have tried to make advertising more inclusive by redirecting their advertising dollars from brand advertising to messages of corporate support for diversity and inclusion. Other companies are changing their wording in job advertisements to attract more female applicants, and yet other businesses are using traditional commercials that feature underrepresented minorities. The goal of the seminar paper is to determine the measurable and important societal and corporate benefits of such approaches and whether it increases corporate profitability.

\* Topics can be prepared either in English or German.

### **7. Beyond advertising budgets: Marketing as the strategy-shaping role in the firm** (Chair Prof. Stahl)

What factors of internal and external conditions let marketing take a leading role in organizations? How can managers shape strategy from a marketing perspective? What role does data analytics play?

## **II. Consumer Behavior and Psychology**

### **8. What causes status quo bias among car dealers?** (Chair of Prof. Kraus)

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.

### **9. The anxiety of Learning** (Chair of Prof. Kraus)

Change is always difficult. When individuals face a change situation, most of them prefer to stick to the current solution and situation. This phenomenon is called status quo bias. There are many underlying reasons why individuals want to stick to the current solution: maybe because they are already used to it and feel comfortable, or maybe because they don't see any reasons to look for another solution. One of the possible reasons is the anxiety of learning. Learning always involves a certain degree of anxiety. Individuals think that learning something new can harm their performance. However, they also ask themselves if they can survive in the future if they do not learn something new. This paper aims to go deeper into the notion of "the anxiety of learning" and find out some practical insights related to it.

### **10. Interpersonal relationships within the metaverse: an analysis of social presence** (Chair Prof. Homburg)

The metaverse is currently gaining tremendous economic importance. Companies like the former Facebook group Meta are investing billions. But how exactly do interpersonal relationships work in the metaverse? The objectives of this seminar paper are threefold. (1) You should conduct a systematic literature overview of the metaverse and social relationships and communication

methods between users (2) and identify how this relates to the concept of social presence (3) and finally derive suggestions for future research.

### **11. 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.

### **12. When are patients willing to adopt artificial intelligence in healthcare?** (Chair Prof. Kuester)

Artificial intelligence (AI) has the potential to radically change the healthcare sector. For example, the use of AI in the healthcare context implies long-term cost savings for the healthcare sector. Algorithms already outperform medical experts in a variety of healthcare tasks, such as diagnosing complex diseases or recommending treatments. Nevertheless, still little is known about patients' acceptance of AI in healthcare. Initial research findings suggest a resistance of patients to medical AI even in situations in which AI outperforms medical experts. Additionally, digital immigrant and digital native patients, who display different levels of digital health literacy, may influence the design of medical AI for a broad acceptance. The aim of this seminar thesis is to (1) review literature on the reasons for patients' resistance to medical AI and on the role of digital health literacy for the adoption of medical AI. Based on the findings, (2) implications for marketing research and practice shall be derived regarding the design of medical AI.

### **13. Investigating the link between political ideology and sustainable consumption: A research agenda.** (Chair Prof. Kuester)

Political polarization is globally on the rise, shaping current societal developments. A growing body of marketing research suggests that political ideology can influence consumer behavior. In light of global climate change, the consumption of sustainable products is a highly politicized issue. Surprisingly, little research has explored the link between political ideology and sustainable consumption. The aims of this seminar paper are to (1) review relevant consumer behavior and political psychology research and (2) provide an overview of theories and existing research findings that are relevant to understanding the link between political ideology and sustainable consumption. Based on the review, (3) research gaps should be identified. These should then be addressed through (4) the development of a research agenda that should comprise specific research questions having significance for advancing this field of consumer research.

#### **14. Consumption as political action: An investigation of the political consumerism phenomenon.** (Chair Prof. Kuester)

“Fair trade”, “organic”, “vegan”, and “without animal testing” are just a few examples of labels that companies use for their products, thereby politicizing the everyday act of consuming. Political consumerism refers to the intentional purchase or refraining from the purchase of certain products (or certain brands) for political, ethical, or social reasons. A growing interdisciplinary stream of research shows that consumers actively make their purchasing decisions, for example, to show their commitment to a more sustainable lifestyle. This seminar paper aims to (1) analyze relevant research from consumer behavior and political psychology and (2) provide an overview of theories and research findings on drivers and consequences of political consumerism. These insights shall be used to (3) derive implications for consumer researchers and marketing practitioners.

#### **15. How different genders behave on the Internet** (Chair Prof. Stahl)

Gender differences exist in many regards. Psychology literature has reported and explained how different genders behave in different situations (e.g., complaining, praising, receiving critique, negotiating...). This thesis has the goal to collect how gender differences show on the Internet and how women and men potentially behave differently on the Internet. As such, the seminar thesis can lead to master thesis where already existing datasets in the realm of Big Data can be used to quantitatively assess this association.

#### **16. Advertising in Video Games** (Chair Prof. Stahl)

Researchers have addressed the topic of advertising in video games from many perspectives: What does a gamer look like? What are the responses of customers to ads in games? What times and locations in games are best used for advertising? By writing this seminar thesis you will gain insights about the state of research in advertising in video games.

#### **17. The impact of spending vs. saving intentions on donation appeals** (Chair Prof. Kraus)

It is common that donation appeals are appeared purchasing, e.g., at the cashier. Normally, consumer donates small changes after the payment with cash. However, there are some donation appeals aiming to ask people to donate after “saving” or “earning” money. An example is a donation box at the return of the deposit machines. When people return the deposit of the bottles, they have a feeling of “earning” or “saving” money. Would the differences between spending money after purchasing and saving or earning money after getting money back impact the likelihood of consumers’ donation behavior? This seminar topic is aiming to summarize existing research on donation behavior and the position of donation appeals. Based on the extant literature, students should make a sound assumption.

### **18. Option Framing and Impulsive Purchasing** (Chair Prof. Kraus)

Option framing is a type of framing effect in psychology. It manipulates the valence of the choice task by asking decision makers to either accept/add or reject/remove certain options. This seminar topic investigates whether adding or removing certain ingredients for purchasing a healthy food (e.g., salad) or an unhealthy food (e.g., pizza) would impact follow-up impulsive purchasing.

### **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. What drives us to go green? An examination of predictors of sustainable consumer behavior.** (Chair Prof. Kuester)

Consumer adoption of sustainable products can make a difference in the fight against climate change. In recent years, consumer research has increasingly tried to explore factors driving sustainable consumer behavior, such as values, attitudes, social influence, environmental knowledge, or a combination of these and other factors. In this context, the so-called intention-behavior gap is a central issue: Consumers often intend to consume "green" but fail to do so in practice. Based on (1) a review of relevant consumer behavior and sustainability research, this seminar paper shall (2) provide an overview and systemize theories and research findings on drivers of sustainable consumption. Given the intention-behavior gap, (3) the literature review should additionally consider how extant research measures sustainable consumer behavior (e.g., measurement of intention vs. actual behavior). Based on the review, (4) implications for consumer research and marketing practice shall be derived.

### **21. How Personal Control Influences Consumer Behavior.** (Chair Prof. Kuester)

Personal control is the extent to which individuals believe they can influence events in their environment. Personal control can be understood either as a stable personality characteristic, or as a temporary state. The Covid-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, as well as the associated global inflation, are examples of events that may decrease the sense of personal control for many individuals. Through a systematic literature review, this seminar thesis aims to (1) explore how personal control affects product choice and consumer behavior in general, (2) derive managerial

implications regarding the use of personal control in marketing, and (3) discuss future research directions.

## **22. Motivators and Barriers to Sustainable Consumption: A Review of the Literature** (Chair Prof. Homburg)

Sustainable consumption has gained increasing attention in recent years, as consumers are becoming more aware of the environmental and social impacts of their purchasing decisions. While there are various factors involved in sustainable purchasing decisions, it remains unclear what the most important motivators and barriers to sustainable consumption are. This seminar thesis aims to (1) review and synthesize relevant academic literature on motivators and barriers to sustainable consumption, (2) discuss the factors that influence sustainable consumption, and (3) provide managerial implications and outline future research directions.

## **23. Data donation as the new blood donation? Potentials and risks of giving personal data to healthcare** (Chair Prof. Homburg)

The donation of personal data to healthcare (e.g., patients donating personal data as part of chemotherapy treatment programs), as well as the quantified self-movement (e.g., sharing data via smartwatches), is rapidly gaining momentum and has great potential to improve the delivery of healthcare and treatment. Despite these possibilities, significant privacy and confidentiality concerns could affect people's willingness to donate data. Drawing on research on healthcare and consumer privacy, the goal of this seminar paper is to (1) review and systematize the relevant literature on the (1) motivators and potential inhibitors to healthcare data donation, (2) identify the potential and risks of such data donation, and (3) outline future research directions (e.g., on the effective marketing of data donation campaigns).

## **24. Communication strategy with current dealers to involve them in the retail of the future** (Chair of Prof. Kraus)

Since TESLA has shown its potential with the direct sales model, most OEMs plan their next step to convert their sales model into the direct sales model. As it has been proven in many studies, such a change faces lots of challenges. Dealers, who are in the center of transformation, are the ones who have to deal with most changes. This paper aims to find out if OEMs can develop a communication strategy to make dealers more acceptant and involved with the transformation.

## **25. The Influence of Expectations on Customers' Evaluations and Remembering of Customer Experiences.** (Chair Prof. Kuester)

Customer experience (CE) is a multidimensional construct consisting of cognitive, emotional, social, sensorial, and behavioral customer responses across their entire journey with a company. Thus, managing CE is challenging, but it has become one of the leading management objectives



of successful companies. So far, little attention in the CE literature has been devoted to the role of customer expectations in shaping the evaluations and the subsequent remembering of CEs. For example, does negative anticipation of a dental visit shape how this experience is perceived and recalled? Does positive anticipation of a music festival or a vacation influence how such experiences are stored in one's memory? This seminar thesis aims to (1) provide a systematic literature review on positive and negative customer expectations of CEs and (2) explore how such expectations shape customer experience evaluations and subsequent remembering. Based on these findings, the thesis shall (3) discuss future research directions and potential managerial implications.

## **26. The role of social shame and nudging in influencing green purchase decisions** (Chair Prof. Homburg)

As values shift in today's world, individuals are increasingly blamed for taking environmentally harmful actions, including being targeted by activists who self-identify with green values. These activists want to persuade people to make more environmentally friendly purchasing intentions. It is unclear, however, to what extent strong criticism by activists (e.g., actions by the so-called "Last Generation") is conducive to this goal or whether subtly influencing individual behavior, referred to in research as "nudging," is better suited to changing people's behavior. Does it have to be the heavy-handed approach, or can a gentle nudge do the trick? Given this intriguing open question, the goal of this seminar paper is to (1) systematize the relevant literature on consumer decisions in a sustainability context, (2) compare different approaches by activists in their underlying motivation and their expected effects on customers, and (3) outline future research directions.

## **27. 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.

### **III. Product and Innovation Management**

#### **28. Innovation and corporate culture (Chair Prof. Stahl)**

Organizations strive to be innovative as it can generate a sustainable competitive advantage for them. Some, like Google, even allow for their employees to spend some of their work time for projects completely unrelated to their core work. Also, the atmosphere created by supervisors can either favor or harm the creative potential of the workforce. First, this seminar thesis has the aim to establish what plays into a positive working atmosphere and corporate culture, second how innovation can be measured, and third and most importantly, what kind of atmosphere may potentially lead to being an innovative organization. As such, the seminar thesis can lead to master thesis where already existing datasets in the realm of Big Data can be used to quantitatively assess this association.

#### **29. What drives the Adoption of the Blockchain Technology?\*** (Chair of Prof. Kraus)

Most 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. You should identify what drives the adoption of products and services that are driven by the blockchain technology, e.g., by the level of decentralization or innovativeness of an offering.

### **IV. Brand and Communications Management**

#### **30. “Greener” Line Extensions: Avoiding Greenwashing Claims.** (Chair Prof. Kuester)

In the past decade, global concerns about the natural environment and resources have positioned sustainability in the spotlight. Corporate sustainability, referring to policies and actions oriented toward realizing sustainable development of the natural environment, society, and economy, is now expected from companies. Most companies have started enriching their portfolios with “green” line extensions. However, how “green” line extensions should be effectively marketed remains unclear. This thesis aims to (1) provide a research overview of successful marketing strategies for line extensions of sustainable products, and (2) derive theoretical and managerial implications on how marketing managers should plan, target, and leverage corporate communication of the “green” line extensions.

#### **31. Healthy Food Claims and Authenticity Perception.** (Chair Prof. Kuester)

Food plays a pivotal role in our lives, and healthy food is a current trend. Many food brands advertise their healthy products, but how customers perceive these claims remains unclear. Healthy food claims focus on the presence of good (vs. the absence of bad) ingredients and the sustainable production of their products. Do consumers perceive these claims as authentic?

\* Topics can be prepared either in English or German.

Which factors could play a role in the customers' authenticity perception? This seminar thesis sets out to (1) provide a literature overview on healthy food marketing impact with a focus on perceived authenticity and (2) derive implications for marketing managers regarding "healthy" food marketing.

### **32. Prosocial Motivation vs. Incentives – The Impact of Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) on Firms' Financial Performance\*** (Chair Prof. Vomberg)

SHRM sometimes also referred as High-Performance Work Practices, combines HR practices in areas including employee recruitment and selection, rewards, and capability building (e.g., Batt, 2002). Previous research clearly shows a positive relationship between firms' investment in SHRM, employees' motivation, and improved financial outcomes.

In this seminar paper, the student will gather knowledge on existing SHRM practices, categorize these into prosocial motivation (e.g., work-life-balance, top employer awards) and incentives, and discuss their respective influence on firms' financial outcomes.

Sources: Huselid M., & Becker, B. (2011). Bridging Micro and Macro Domains: Workforce Differentiation and Strategic Human Resource Management. *Journal of Management*, 37, 421-428. Besley, T., & Ghatak, M. (2018). Prosocial motivation and incentives. *Annual Review of Economics*, 10, 411-438.

### **33. The Complexities of Brand Purpose, Political Beliefs, and Consumer Behavior** (Chair Prof. Stahl)

The pandemic and political polarization are having an enormous impact on companies' marketing activities. To what extent do demands for sustainability, social justice, and other forms of corporate social responsibility affect marketing decisions? If companies then decide to incorporate such issues into their branding and brand positioning how can they avoid losing consumers who may no longer buy brands they feel are not in line with their values and political views? Furthermore, how can such a brand positioning be used strategically to increase WOM or even eWOM?

### **34. How does the distance between production site and an outlet store impact brand perception of luxurious brands?** (Chair Prof. Kraus)

Research by marketing consulting company shows that when an outlet store is located next to the production site of the brand, the discounted price at the outlet store won't damage consumer's perception of a luxurious brand. However, this has not been investigated by academic research. This seminar topic is aiming to fill this gap in the field of retailing by investigating the impact of the distance between production site and an outlet store on brand perception.

\* Topics can be prepared either in English or German.

## **V. Sales Management**

### **35. The Great Resignation: A literature review on salespeople's turnover behavior.** (Chair Prof. Homburg)

Understanding and managing a salesperson's turnover intentions and behavior is essential for firm performance. Salespeople do not only negotiate the final prices for products and services but also tie close bonds with their customers. Thus, firms do not only lose a potentially skillful and experienced employee but also a key link to their customer when a salesperson leaves the company. Salespeople's turnover behavior thus constitutes a major challenge for the firm's sales function. Against this background, the goals of this seminar thesis are (1) to review existing literature on the consequences of salesperson's turnover behavior, (2) to systemize the drivers of salesperson's turnover behavior, and (3) to identify managerial levers firms can take to impact salespeople's turnover behavior.

### **36. Between the fronts: Managing salespeople's role conflict.** (Chair Prof. Homburg)

Salespeople are boundary spanners between companies and their customers. As a result, they usually operate in a challenging and often contradictory field of tension: on the one hand, there are guidelines from their own company, while on the other hand, the customer has expectations and wishes. An understanding of this situation and its effects is indispensable for a company. Therefore, this paper aims to (1) provide a systematic overview of the relevant literature dealing with the relevance and drivers of salespeople's role conflict and (2) build on this to determine which aspects companies should consider when designing their organization.

### **37. Set up for success: Market insights and data analysis for distribution strategy development** (Chair Prof. Stahl)

What data and insights are critical for distribution strategy development? Which blueprints exist for different industries and markets? How have distribution strategies evolved with increasing availability of market data?

### **38. Customer advantages of the direct sales model in the automotive industry** (Chair of 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 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.

### **39. AI tools and the salesperson: A story of love and hate.** (Chair Prof. Homburg)

AI (artificial intelligence) tools are becoming increasingly relevant within the salesperson's professional work. Through the automation of sales functions, AI tools promise to create additional value for firms. However, many firms struggle with the successful implementation of AI tools. One major challenge is the salesperson's reluctant AI acceptance. Against this background, the goals of this seminar thesis are (1) to review existing literature on the impact of AI tools on the sales process, (2) to discuss salespeople's reluctant acceptance of AI tools, and (3) to identify managerial levers companies can take to implement AI tools within their sales function successfully.

### **40. You get what you pay for: The consequences of compensation structures on sales' short- vs. long-term orientation\*** (Chair Prof. Homburg)

To create competitive advantages and better serve customers, companies need to shift their mindset to long-term thinking, not short-term monetary targets. But is this true? You find various remuneration structures that serve as antecedents to several "right" selling goals, i.e., different organizational targets require other 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 (1) to review and systemize relevant academic literature on sales and key account management compensation structures, (2) to draw and discuss linkages among compensation systems and appropriate selling behaviors, and (3) to derive the implications these linkages bear for managerial practice and future research.

### **41. Sales Performance and Customer-Orientation: Antagonists or co-symbionts?** (Chair Prof. Homburg)

There are many possible factors influencing a salesperson's sales performance. In an increasingly competitive environment, pressure on salespeople rises. Meanwhile, the customer experience gains continuously more importance in the selling process, as it is and important tool to set oneself apart from other organizations. This bears the question, whether salespeople have to make a trade-off between performing high sales numbers on the one hand and providing customer-focused advice to increase customer lifetime value on the other or if a higher performance in sales goes hand in hand with a customer-oriented mindset.

The goals of this seminar paper are (1) to review and systemize relevant academic literature on sales performance and customer orientation, (2) discuss the difficulties and synergies of the relation between the two domains, and (3) outline future research directions.

\* Topics can be prepared either in English or German.

**42. Dealer advantages of the direct sales model in the automotive industry** (Chair of 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 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 & how dealers are better off in the direct sales model.

**43. 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.

**44. Buyer-Seller Relationships in Tender Contexts** (Chair Prof. Homburg)

Competitive tenders refer to a purchasing model in which a customer requests suppliers to submit a proposal regarding a product or service that meets predefined requirements. Next to the definition of product or service specifications, the buying firm establishes selection criteria in the request for proposal (RFP). Due to that, the buyer can, for example, better compare different offerings. The question arises how the characteristics of competitive tenders affect the relationship between the buying firm and the supplier. In particular, the presence of (objective) buying criteria might have an impact on the role of salespeople. Against this background, the aim of this thesis is to examine buyer-seller relationships in tender contexts.

**45. The Impact of the Digital Transformation on B2B Sales Forces** (Chair Prof. Homburg)

The rise of new digital technologies has fundamentally changed companies, including sales processes and the way salespeople operate. The benefits of new technology to increase sales performance have already been shown in numerous studies. Nevertheless, the digital transformation in sales involves challenges for the sales organization and salespeople. In

particular, the question arises how it affects and is affected by sales forces. Consequently, the aim of this thesis is to provide a comprehensive literature overview on the impact of the digital transformation on the sales forces of B2B companies.

#### **46. How to Sell Value: The Implementation of Value-based Selling (Chair Prof. Homburg)**

B2B firms focus increasingly on selling value to customers, building on a value-based selling (VBS) approach. However, translating this strategic focus into sales practice remains a challenging task. In particular, many salespeople are reported to be unable to practice VBS. Therefore, it is critical to understand how firms can effectively implement VBS in their sales organizations. Against this background, the aim of this thesis is to examine the antecedents and related performance outcomes of VBS.

#### **47. The metaverse as the sales platform of the future? – Perspectives for B2C and B2B markets (Chair Prof. Homburg)**

The metaverse is likely to bring new forms of e-commerce. More precisely, buying food, clothing, art, or even real estate in the metaverse would be possible. For example, on Roblox, brands like Nike and Ralph Lauren already sell virtual clothes to avatars. The objectives of this seminar paper are threefold. (1) You should conduct a systematic literature overview of the metaverse and new arising forms of B2C and B2B e-commerce (2) and identify how this can change customer journeys (3) and finally infer suggestions for future research as well as implications for B2C and B2B markets.

#### **48. The transformation of B2B sales – Implications for practice and future research (Chair Prof. Homburg)**

New technologies such as augmented reality, artificial intelligence, and digitalization will fundamentally change B2B sales processes. But what will sales of the future look like? The objectives of this seminar paper are threefold. (1) You should conduct a systematic literature overview on the development of B2B sales processes over time (2) and identify which changes will disrupt the state of art of B2B sales as well as B2B customer relationships (3) and finally infer suggestions for future research as well as implications for sales managers.

#### **49. The evolving role of the salesperson in a digital world research (Chair Prof. Homburg)**

The role of the salesperson is changing dramatically: In order to succeed in today's highly digitized world salespeople need to develop distinctive knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA), such as data management skills, analytical skills and high customer orientation. However, it remains open to research which specific KSA are crucial in a digitized world and how those capabilities differ in a B2B and a B2C context. Against this background, the objectives of this seminar paper are (1) to review and systemize relevant academic literature on current and future

challenges in Sales and (2) to identify how the required salesperson capabilities have changed throughout digitization, both in a B2B and a B2C context.

## **VI. Digital Marketing**

### **50. Should Siri and Alexa Combat Profanities and Abusive Language?** (Chair Prof. Kuester)

AI-based agents, such as Amazon's Alexa or Apple's Siri, have become ubiquitous in consumers' daily lives. Moreover, companies successively adopt AI-based agents for customer interactions. However, analyses of user interactions with such agents show that up to 30% of interactions contain consumer antagonisms such as abusive language, profanities, and even sexual harassment. Although the technology can identify such interactions, most assistants are programmed to "overlook" profanities and to remain polite. This tactic prompts the question of how companies employing AI-based agents should cope with consumer antagonism toward AI. Therefore, this seminar paper aims to review the literature on AI and human-computer interactions to investigate users' abuse of AI and its consequences on society. Additionally, potential spill-over effects between AI agents and companies employing AI shall be reviewed. Based on the findings, implications for marketing research and practice shall be derived regarding potential coping strategies after consumer antagonism.

### **51. Artificial Intelligence as a Moral Authority - Can Users and Companies Benefit from Moral AI?** (Chair Prof. Kuester)

Human moral psychology posits that moral competence involves individuals' ability for (a) moral cognition and affect, (b) moral decision-making and action, and (c) moral communication. As Artificial Intelligence (AI) continuously progresses, it is only a matter of time before these competencies will be incorporated into AI applications. Yet, it remains the question of how users perceive moral AI. Moreover, can users and thus companies benefit from moral abilities incorporated into AI? This seminar paper aims to present the current status quo of the literature on AI and Morality and to reveal potential advantages and difficulties related to moral AI. Based on the findings, future research and practice implications shall be derived.

### **52. Online Employer Reviews as a Competitive Edge?\*** (Chair Prof. Vomberg)

According to Glassdoor, one of the leading websites for employer reviews, 86% of job seekers read reviews before applying for a job. Recent research shows the importance of employer evaluations for the perception of employer attractiveness and the overall reputation of the company.

The objectives of this seminar paper are threefold. (1) To provide an overview of the opportunities and risks for employers created by the increasing relevance of employer reviews. (2) To discuss factors that influence the relevance of online reviews (e.g., industry, age of the company). (3) To evaluate whether employers should actively intervene in the evaluation process

\* Topics can be prepared either in English or German.



and different strategies to do so (e.g., incentives for employees to publish reviews or request review deletion in case of policy violations).

### **53. Cold Start Problems of an AI-Implementation** (Chair Prof. Vomberg)

Scientific publications and releases from the business press emphasize the value-creating potential of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies. By 2030, the McKinsey Global Institute predicts annual growth in the global economic output by \$13 trillion due to AI-enabled technology (Bughin et al. 2018). However, AI-enabled technology does not seem to live up to its potential. Only one in ten companies reports significant financial benefits from implementing AI (BCG 2022), and many companies refrain from adopting AI technology. Potential reasons are that employees fear replacement and that customers have an aversion to algorithms.

This seminar paper reviews potential hurdles companies must surpass to implement AI technology effectively.

### **54. Marketing and Web3** (Chair Prof. Vomberg)

The business press frequently discusses crypto, blockchain technology, or non-fungible tokens, representing focal building blocks of Web3. Web3 technologies promise novel opportunities; blockchain-enabled technology such as SAP's Cantena-X network offers unique opportunities for channel management, moving from people- to system-based trust. Moreover, brands like Adidas employ non-fungible tokens to revolutionize their customer relationship management approach. Nevertheless, the decision to jump on the Web3 bandwagon cannot be taken lightly. Most marketing departments still lack a profound understanding of such technologies (Harvey, Moorman, and Toledo 2018) and thus need substantial resources to become competitive in this area.

The seminar paper reviews the current knowledge of Web3 technology in marketing.

### **55. Are your product reviews better than mine?** (Chair of Prof. Kraus)

Online reviews are helpful sources for making purchase decision. People not only read other customers' reviews but also write own reviews after trying out the products. It is not surprising that people think their own reviews would be more helpful than others'. However, would this perception change depending on the valence of the experience? This seminar thesis aims to explore the impact of self-other differences on positive vs. negative online reviews.

### **56. The future of marketing in a cookieless world** (Chair Prof. Stahl)

As the use of cookies to track and target online advertising continues to decline, marketers are being forced to find new ways to reach and engage with their customers. While this shift towards a "cookieless" world has generally been welcomed by consumers, it presents a big challenge for

businesses looking to effectively market their products and services. This seminar thesis should examine the strategies and tactics in which marketers could adapt to a world without cookies, e.g., by using alternative tracking technologies or first-party data. By working on this topic, students can gain a deeper understanding of the evolving landscape and recent trends in digital marketing.

### **57. The value of social media data for businesses** (Chair Prof. Stahl)

Social media has become an invaluable place for businesses and organizations looking to better understand and engage with their customers and stakeholders. With billions of people using social media platforms every day, these platforms generate massive amounts of data that can provide valuable insights into consumer behavior, preferences, and sentiment. But how do companies leverage such data and turn them into real value? Is there a difference in how firms can use Facebook vs. LinkedIn data? And what drives the value of this data? What are methods to evaluate how valuable the data of a social media platform is? This seminar thesis should deal with questions like these, exploring the various ways in which social media data is being used by businesses, the benefits it offers, and the challenges and ethical problems that must be considered when working with social media data.

### **58. Is It Ethical to Let Artificial Intelligence Make the Decision? Consumer Perspectives on Algorithmic Decision-Making.** (Chair Prof. Kuester)

Companies have begun to apply algorithms based on artificial intelligence (AI) in various industry sectors, where they make critical decisions, including loan agreements, hiring job candidates, or accepting students to university. This seminar paper explores consumers' perceptions of decision-making algorithms from an ethical point of view. This seminar thesis aims to (1) review relevant literature on ethical AI applications and (2) outline the status quo of consumers' attitudes toward algorithmic decision-making through an ethics lens. The seminar paper shall conclude with (3) deriving future research directions at the crossroads of marketing, AI, and ethics.

### **59. 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, for example, when 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 literature on VCAs, human-computer interactions, and

relationships to provide an overview of the current state-of-knowledge regarding the formation of relationships between humans and VCAs. Based on the findings, (2) implications regarding the design of VCAs for marketing research and practice shall be derived.

**60. Empathetic medical AI – Making artificial intelligence in healthcare compassionate.**  
(Chair Prof. Kuester)

Empathy, i.e., the ability to share another person's feelings by imagining what it would be like to be in that person's situation, is one of physicians' most important skills. With the ongoing digitization, it is expected that more and more physician visits can be replaced by AI. However, there may also be reservations about medical AI – consumers often perceive it as cold and do not feel understood. A potential solution could be the use of artificial empathy, i.e., designing AI to be able to communicate in an empathetic way. The aims of this seminar thesis are (1) to provide a systematic literature review on the perception of empathy in medical interactions and (2) to critically discuss the potential advantages and disadvantages of empathetic medical AI. Furthermore, (3) existing applications of artificial empathy in the medical context shall be outlined. Based on the findings, (4) future research directions and managerial implications shall be derived.

**61. Multiple Brand Mentions: Success or Failure in Commercial Online Content?** (Chair Prof. Kuester)

With the rise of the Internet and social media worldwide, there is mass production of commercial online content (user and brand-generated). Some commercial online content is well accepted by consumers leading to positive outcomes such as increased brand awareness and purchase intention. In contrast, other commercial online content might lead to adverse outcomes such as negative WOM or firestorms. Many factors influence the success of commercial online content. One of the factors often explored in online marketing research 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 has yet to be a consensus about the optimal level of brand mention in commercial online content. The aim of this thesis is (1) to provide a research overview on the impact of different types and levels of brand mention in commercial online content and (2) to derive managerial implications on how marketing managers should plan, target, and leverage corporate communication in social media regarding brand mentions.

**62. The importance of social media in the context of sports marketing** (Chair Prof. Stahl)

The world's brands have adapted to changes in advertising, which has led to an increase in overall conversion rates and customer engagement. Sports organizations today rely on social media for their continued success and growth. As more people spend more time online, fans are using social media to engage with sports-related topics and content. Organizations are also developing creative ways to promote their sports teams and foster conversations about sports. Social media acts as an intermediary between brands and audiences. The goal of this seminar

thesis is to provide a critical overview of the existing literature on this topic. What impact do game results have on the rate of change of followers on social media? Is there a correlation between social media presence and on-field performance? Based on this overview, the thesis shall derive and identify promising avenues for future research.

### **63. Exploring the Impact of Discrimination in Online Marketplaces: The Role of Algorithms and User Identification** (Chair Prof. Stahl)

Markets can be discriminatory. One example is that blacks and women don't get the same deals as white men when buying a new car. Online marketplaces such as eBay, Airbnb, or online job portals, have the potential to reduce racial, gender, and other forms of bias that affect the off-line world. However, as such platforms began to include photos, names, and other means of identification, bias emerged in areas ranging from labor markets to credit applications to housing. How can such marketplaces reverse the tide? What information is needed so as not to limit the user experience. Should we make our algorithms sensitive to discrimination? In which cases are algorithms biased to begin with?

### **64. Online anonymity and its consequences** (Chair Prof. Stahl)

On some platforms on the Internet users are completely anonymous, on others they have a pseudonym which might reveal something about them (i.e., a username), and on other platforms users tend to reveal their full identity (LinkedIn). This seminar thesis aims to collect how different identity cues are associated with different behavior online and what the underlying mechanisms might be. As such, the seminar thesis can lead to a master thesis where already existing datasets in the realm of Big Data can be used to quantitatively assess this association.

### **65. "Trust is Very Hard if You Don't Know What You're Trusting" – Trust in Digital Contexts.** (Chair Prof. Kuester)

Trust can be broadly defined as the confidence one party has in the integrity and reliability of a partner in a transaction. Researchers from multiple disciplines have extensively investigated trust in pure offline settings. However, in an online context and with an almost unlimited number of transaction partners available for communicating and exchanging knowledge, it is important for companies and individuals to understand how trust develops in the diverse online contexts. Thus, this seminar thesis aims to (1) provide an overview of the literature in marketing, psychology, and related disciplines on trust. More specifically, how is trust conceptualized, applied, and influenced by companies active in online contexts? Based on the results of this literature review, (2) theoretical and managerial implications for companies active in online contexts, as well as (3) a future research outlook shall be derived.

**66. Tit for Tat? – A Literature Review on Two-Sided Rating Systems on Platforms.** (Chair Prof. Kuester)

User-generated online ratings for products and services allow consumers to share their experiences and, thus, help other consumers in their own purchase decisions. However, some consumers also use online ratings in a retaliatory manner, expressing their discontent with a particular company or an offering. To prevent such retaliatory behavior, two-sided rating systems were introduced to allow service providers (e.g., Uber drivers or Airbnb hosts) to rate their customers, too. This seminar thesis aims to (1) provide an overview of the literature on online rating systems in the context of platform-based business models. Specifically, this thesis shall explore the consequences of two-sided rating systems on platform participants (i.e., customers, service providers, as well as platform itself). These findings shall be used to (2) critically discuss the use of two-sided rating systems, (3) derive implications for both marketing research and practice (e.g., platform managers), and finally (4) provide an outlook for future research.

**67. When You Are More Than Just a Customer – A Literature Review on Customers' New Role as Prosumers on Platforms.** (Chair Prof. Kuester)

With the proliferation of platform-based businesses, such as Uber, Couchsurfing, or Airbnb, the role of customers is changing. Today, customers no longer only consume services, but can act as service providers themselves and thus become 'prosumers'. But how does being a prosumer shape customers' view of the services? And how do prosumers impact the processes on platforms? This seminar thesis aims to (1) provide a detailed overview of the roles and motivations of 'prosumers' on platforms and consequences for platforms dealing with prosumers. These findings shall be used to (2) critically discuss the new role of prosumers on platforms, (3) derive implications for both marketing research and practice (e.g., platform managers), as well as (4) provide an outlook for future research.

**68. Crypto Marketing: NFTs, Attention Token, Blockchain Governance and more** (Chair Prof. Stahl)

Cryptocurrencies and Blockchain Technology in general have been applied in digital marketing for multiple years now and researchers are beginning to catch up, to a point, where major marketing journals are dedicating special issues and conference tracks to these topics.

In your seminar thesis you will gain a broad oversight of the crypto marketing landscape, identify research trends, overarching themes, favored research methods and research gaps.

**69. Malvertising: Online Advertisers under Attack!** (Chair Prof. Stahl)

Online advertising platforms have been exploited by cybercriminals for many years. Click fraud, twitter bots and actors masquerading as popular YouTubers are some of the methods these criminals use.

In this seminar thesis you will review the scientific literature that explores the field of malvertising and gain insights in the multidisciplinary topic of online advertising and cybersecurity.

### **70. 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 thesis, 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.

### **71. 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 today many individuals are more interested than ever in who collects their data and how they are used. 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.

### **72. Firm generated content and consumer engagement in social media** (Chair Prof. Stahl)

The Internet and social media has become a prevalent source of information changing the way firms and consumers connect and communicate. FGC (firm-generated content ) is referred as the messages posted by firms on their official social media pages like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, or corporate blogs. FGC can assist in enhancing the relationship between customers and firms. When firms post content in social media, customers can respond by “ liking”, ” sharing” or “commenting” on the content that are associated with the consumer engagement in social media. In this regard ,the goal of the seminar thesis is to investigate what features and characteristics of FGC drive consumer engagement in social media by reviewing relevant literature.

### **73. Customer Experiences in a changing world** (Chair Prof. Stahl)

Customer experience (CX) is the heart of the relationship between a business and its customers. By purchasing a product or service, customers want to feel cared for in return, and brands that offer this positive customer experience will inevitably thrive. Currently, customers have higher expectations when it comes to customer experience. They demand more convenient and empathetic experiences and businesses are rethinking their customer care practices to stay ahead

of the curve. Furthermore, businesses have invested heavily in tools and technologies to understand their customers more deeply and to gain the advantages of superior customer experience. In this regard, the aim of this seminar paper is to review the literature about what general principles exist for improving customer experiences, particularly by use of technology (AI, machine learning, etc.) and how use of technology can improve or detract from customer experience.

#### **74. E-commerce and product returns: how can sustainability issues be successfully addressed** (Chair Prof. Stahl)

The firm–customer exchange process consists of three key parts: (1) firm-initiated marketing communications, (2) customer buying behavior, and (3) customer product return behavior. To date, the literature in marketing has largely focused on how marketing communications affect customer buying behavior and, to some extent, how past buying behavior affects a firm’s decisions to initiate future marketing communications. However, the literature on product returns is sparse, especially in relation to analyzing individual customer product return behavior. Although the magnitude of the value of product returns is known to be high (\$100 billion per year), how it affects customer buying behavior is not known because of a lack of data availability and understanding of the role of product returns in the firm–customer exchange process.

#### **75. Crypto-marketing: how non-fungible tokens (NFTs) challenge traditional marketing** (Chair Prof. Stahl)

“Who spends \$140,000 on a CryptoKitty?” the New York Times wondered in 2018, reporting on an emerging class of digital collectibles that is known as non-fungible tokens or NFTs. A couple of years later, digital art from CryptoKitties, CryptoPunks, Bored Apes, and other groups were valued in the millions of dollars, with sales projected to reach \$35 billion in 2022. While the value of NFTs—and of crypto-currencies—fluctuates, and at times dramatically, NFTs have made major inroads into consumer markets. Fueled by Coca-Cola, Gucci, Pizza Hut as well as several luxury brands, NFTs have become part of the strategy of consumer brands. Adidas, for example, made over \$22 million in one afternoon by selling 30,000 NFTs tied to a new hoodie and tracksuit for \$765 each.

#### **76. Reputation burning: Analyzing the impact of brand sponsorship on social influencers** (Chair Prof. Stahl)

The influencer marketing industry was reportedly worth USD 6.0 billion in 2020 and is projected to grow to USD 84.89 billion by 2028 (a compound annual growth rate of 30.3%; Globe Newswire 2021). Market reports show that 75% of brands dedicated a specific budget to influencer marketing to engage consumers and promote brands. For example, The Ordinary paid TikTok influencers to post videos about the brand’s Peeling Solution product and generated more than \$1 million in sales in two weeks. Influencers are effective marketers because they engage large audiences on social media platforms and appear as experts or trustworthy sources of

information to their fans. They build authentic reputations by creating relevant and interesting organic content. Once an influencer is sufficiently popular, they can profit from their reputation by collaborating with brands—creating sponsored content. Avery and Israeli (2020) suggest that reputation is key in influencer marketing because reputation is the foundation of an influencer’s ability to obtain profitable offers from brands. Hence, it is crucial to understand whether and how sponsored content impacts the influencer’s reputation. It remains an open empirical question, though prior theoretical work on influencer marketing (Fainmesser and Galeotti 2021; Mitchell 2021) implicitly or explicitly assumes that an influencer who posts sponsored videos will damage their reputation.

## **VII. Customer Relationship Management**

### **77. Transitioning from “market to” to “market with” the customer: How agile sales teams foster value selling\* (Chair Prof. Homburg)**

Customer centricity is a buzzword in every company nowadays, but in reality, sales organizations still need to incorporate this mindset fully. Sales organizations, especially key account management teams with a solid connection to their customer base, need to pay special attention to the dyadic perspective of value selling to avoid exploiting the buyer but co-creating value resulting in a fair share (cf. Badot and Cova 2008). To support this, agility, a concept that stems originally from the information technology sector, has moved into focus on servicing the customer in a better way. Against this background, the superordinate goals of this seminar paper are (1) to review and systemize relevant academic literature on sales team agility, (2) to identify the consequences of value-based selling, (3) to outline a future path for research, and (4) to deduce areas of improvement and threat for managerial practice.

Source: Badot, O., & Cova, B. (2008). The myopia of new marketing panaceas: the case for rebuilding our discipline. *Journal of marketing management*, 24(1-2), 205-219.

### **78. Putting on a smile - Emotional labor in offline and online contexts. (Chair Prof. Kuester)**

When in contact with customers, employees are often asked to control their feelings and show desired emotional responses. For example, service employees are often encouraged to smile and express happiness. This management of one's emotions is called emotional labor. The aim of this seminar thesis is (1) to provide a systematic literature review on emotional labor, how it is displayed by employees, and how it influences customer behavior and marketing outcomes. (2) Furthermore, the current state of knowledge on emotional labor in digital customer-firm interactions (e.g., via chatbots or AI) shall be discussed. Based on the results, (3) future research directions and managerial implications on the role of emotional labor in digital customer-firm interactions shall be derived.

\* Topics can be prepared either in English or German.



**79. Authentic or unauthentic? That is the question.** (Chair Prof. Kuester)

Authenticity describes being true to one's personality, values, and spirit. Especially in service settings, the authentic behavior of service employees proved to be important. This seminar thesis aims (1) to provide a systematic literature review on (un)authentic employee behavior and its influence on customer behavior and marketing outcomes. (2) Furthermore, the current state of knowledge on how authenticity plays a role in digital customer-firm interactions (e.g., via chatbots or AI) shall be explored. Based on the results, (3) future research directions and managerial implications on the role of authenticity in digital customer-firm interactions shall be derived.

**VIII. Market Theory and Research Methods**

**80. Attrition in Panel Surveys\*** (Chair of Prof. Kraus)

Dropout of participants in panel surveys can introduce problematic biases and lead to increases in total survey error. The phenomenon of dropping out of repeated surveys of participants, i.e., panels, is called panel attrition. You should give a comprehensive overview of (1) problems that go along with attrition and (2) approaches to deal with attrition. You should base your findings on both the management and social sciences literature.

**81. Transitioning from “market to” to “market with” the customer: How agile sales teams foster value selling\*** (Chair Prof. Homburg)

Customer centricity is a buzzword in every company nowadays, but in reality, sales organizations still need to incorporate this mindset fully. Sales organizations, especially key account management teams with a solid connection to their customer base, need to pay special attention to the dyadic perspective of value selling to avoid exploiting the buyer but co-creating value resulting in a fair share (cf. Badot and Cova 2008). To support this, agility, a concept that stems originally from the information technology sector, has moved into focus on servicing the customer in a better way. Against this background, the superordinate goals of this seminar paper are (1) to review and systemize relevant academic literature on sales team agility, (2) to identify the consequences of value-based selling, (3) to outline a future path for research, and (4) to deduce areas of improvement and threat for managerial practice.

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## **IX. Marketing Analytics**

### **82. Perception of Online Review Sentiment and Numeric Ratings\*** (Chair Prof. Vomberg)

Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) involves the exchange of information between individuals about services (e.g., hotels), products, or even employers via online platforms, social media, or mobile communication. Online reviews, an important form of eWOM, have long been an area of research that has received much attention.

The goal of this seminar paper is twofold. (1) To provide a detailed overview of research on the role of text sentiment vs. numerical ratings in the perceived helpfulness of online reviews, which ultimately determines the impact of the review on decision making of potential product buyers or job seekers. (2) To analyze the extent to which machine learning algorithms (Random Forest, Deep Neural Networks, etc.) have been used in previous research on this topic and their respective performance.

### **83. Image Analytics in Marketing** (Chair Prof. Vomberg)

Images are ubiquitous. People share more than 6.5 billion images daily on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Many components of product design, packaging, brand elements, advertising, and design of shopping outlets, use visuals. The wealth of visual data and the development of image processing tools and advanced modeling techniques provide marketing researchers with unique opportunities to study the customer-business relationship in depth and gain insights that can be applied to a wide range of people and contexts.

The seminar paper reviews the current development of image analytics in marketing.

### **84. Prediction of Panel Attrition\*** (Chair of Prof. Kraus)

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.

### **85. Estimating Heterogeneous Treatment Effects for Marketing Research\*** (Chair of Prof. Kraus)

The estimation of heterogeneous treatment effects for (marketing) interventions is essential to develop sophisticated 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 in the context of Big

\* Topics can be prepared either in English or German.

Data and discuss whether these methods have already been or could be applied to marketing problems, e.g., causal forests or double machine learning algorithms.

### **86. Data-driven approach for sports business and marketing** (Chair Prof. Stahl)

Data is ubiquitous in sports. The concept of using data to make decisions in sports was popularized by the book and movie Moneyball. Coaches routinely used data to assess players' talent and potential. On the business side of sports, executives also regularly tracked ratings and broadcast revenue to determine success. Although the basic purpose of data analysis in sports is universal - to gain a competitive advantage through statistics and data analysis - different sports use different methods to efficiently collect and analyze data for their sport. The goal of this seminar paper is to provide an overview of how and why analytics is used in sports management and marketing and how data can be used to make decisions.

### **87. How to do it right: Key success factors of data based decision-making in organizations** (Chair Prof. Stahl)

Many companies talk about analytics and aim for a praised 360-degree-perspective on customers. But what really makes analytics an measurable impactful asset to organizations? What organizational and processual aspects drive success?

### **88. Avatars and their Application in Marketing\*** (Chair Prof. Kraus)

Avatars have gained an increasing popularity in recent marketing strategies. However, their effectiveness to achieve goals such as increasing purchase likelihood, or improving customer satisfaction, varies widely in practice. The goal of this seminar thesis is to provide a critical overview of the existing literature on this topic, and to examine the determinants of successful avatar implementation in practice. Based on this overview, the thesis shall ultimately derive and identify promising avenues for future research.

### **89. Marketing in the Metaverse\*** (Chair Prof. Kraus)

Using augmented and virtual reality technologies, the metaverse has the potential to extend our physical world, allowing users to interact within real and simulated environments using avatars and holograms. This seminar thesis shall systematically analyze the benefits and value which the metaverse entails from a marketing perspective, as well as address potential problems. Furthermore, an outlook on further research possibilities shall be provided.

### **90. Business-to-Business Online Reviews\*** (Chair Prof. Kraus)

Online reviews have become an integral part of business-to-consumer (B2C) marketing. They offer a valuable insight into customers' minds, current industry and product trends or issues. In recent years, however, an increasing number of reviews has also been published in business-to-

\* Topics can be prepared either in English or German.

business (B2B) contexts. This seminar theses shall summarize current literature on B2B online reviews and underlying publication motives, as well as address the issue of how B2B online reviews differ from B2C online reviews.

**91. Share Your Opinion: Incentivizing Consumers to Write Online Reviews\*** (Chair Prof. Kraus)

Consumer word-of-mouth (WOM) is mostly goal-driven and self-serving. Yet, firms can greatly benefit from (electronic) WOM, for instance in the form of online reviews. Online reviews increase consumer learning and drive sales. Thus, firms try to increase the number of reviews posted. This seminar thesis shall provide a critical review on what motivates consumers to post online reviews and how to best incentivize them to do so.

**92. Social Media in Business-to-Business Settings\*** (Chair Prof. Kraus)

While social media and its impact on marketing and sales metrics have been extensively researched in the context of business-to-consumer (B2C) settings, research on its use and impact in business-to-business (B2B) settings remains relatively scarce. The goal of this seminar thesis is to provide a critical overview of the existing literature on this topic, and to examine the determinants of engaging and successful content for social media in B2B settings. Based on this overview, the thesis shall ultimately derive and identify promising avenues for future research.