

## List of seminar topics

### *Area Marketing & Sales*

Below you will find a list of **90 topics** for your seminar thesis. The topics are clustered into 9 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**

### **Basic Literature for all Topics:**

Homburg, Ch. (2017), Marketingmanagement: Strategie – Instrumente – Umsetzung – Unternehmensführung, 6th Ed., Wiesbaden.

Homburg, Ch., Kuester, S., Krohmer, H. (2012), Marketing Management: A Contemporary Perspective, 2nd Ed., Maidenhead.

## I. Marketing Strategy and Management

### 1. **Competition vs Cooperation - A Review of Marketing Strategy** (Chair Prof. Stahl)

Most firms are competing with others, aiming to attract more consumer attention, market share or profitability. This competition can lead to different strategic behavior, depending on factors such as the intensity, resource flexibility or product lifecycle. Nonetheless, there are also situations in which firms can benefit from cooperating instead.

In this seminar thesis, the student will review the various strategic behaviors of firms and provide instances in which competition or cooperation is the optimal alternative. The focus is on marketing strategy and examples from the industry can be supplemented to illustrate.

### 2. **Putting on a smile - Emotional labor in sales and service 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 illustrated. 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.

### 3. **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 its role and customer management may differ significantly (Lacoste 2018). Key accounts have substantial strategic and financial importance to the company, that is why key account management (KAM) and their team members become ever more important for success. However, due to established suboptimal incentives, ever more pressing external influences and risen organizational expectations towards their sales force, companies lack clear guidance on how to adapt sales team structures. 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.*

### 4. **Leveraging Marketing Assets to Attract and Retain Employee Talent** (Chair Prof. Vomberg)

More than ever before, companies are facing a war for talent. Current forecasts predict that there will be a significant shortage of skilled workers in the coming years. At the same time, the needs and perceptions of younger generations are changing; they are shifting from a focus on salary to a work-life balance and a search for purpose.

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

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Potential employees come into contact with companies in many industries initially in their role as consumers. They tend to transfer their experiences with the company's products to their general perception of the company. Therefore, the question arises about what role marketing can play in the war for talent.

#### **5. A new reality – the Metaverse? Marketing and Sales Implications for Business and their Customers\* (Chair Prof. Homburg)**

The metaverse has the potential to extend the physical world using augmented and virtual reality technologies allowing users to seamlessly interact within real and simulated environments using avatars and holograms. For firms, the metaverse is an opportunity for innovation and experimentation. More precisely, marketing and sales processes could change fundamentally. On the other side, customers will experience a completely new environment. Therefore, the objectives of this seminar paper are threefold. (1) You should conduct a systematic literature overview of how the metaverse influences marketing and sales processes from a company and customer perspective, (2) and identify which managerial implications can be derived, and (3) finally obtain suggestions for future research.

#### **6. It's a Match! Success Factors underlying Corporate Data Exchange (Chair Prof. Stahl)**

While companies are collecting more and more data and using it, e.g., for internal process improvement or new product development, there is also a recent tendency to include additional external (e.g., economic or consumer) data from other institutions in this process. A basic idea behind this is that you can never have enough data (e.g., to train your machine learning model that generates new valuable information for the company). Also, companies such as Airbus exchange internal data with manufacturers so that they can improve their products. This seminar thesis should critically analyze the effectiveness of these data exchange and monetization activities between companies. When does corporate data exchange create real value for the data provider, the data recipient, or both? And under what conditions does data exchange tend not to work?

#### **7. A Literature Review on Business-to-Government (Chair Prof. Homburg)**

Governments are one of the largest buyers in the world. In total, governments spend \$11 trillion, or 13% of global GDP, on procurement every year. Consequently, selling to the government represents a major business opportunity. At the same time, it poses unique challenges such as complex buying processes. In many cases, businesses interested in providing goods and services to public authorities must participate in regulated tenders, which constitute an invitation to submit a proposal regarding the delivery of specific goods or services. Given the importance and uniqueness of business-to-government (B2G), the aim of this thesis is to review relevant literature and outline future research directions.

#### **8. Marketing during and after the Covid-19 pandemic – Opportunities and Challenges\* (Chair Prof. Homburg)**

As a company's meet-and-greet function, marketing's most important job is to identify, engage with and convert customers into valuable assets that create long-term cash streams. This role has been

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

upended during COVID-19. Marketers have had to rethink their strategies in an era of homebound customers, social distancing, and an unpredictable environment that has forced many companies into crisis management. Additionally, they have to think about future strategies. Against this backdrop, the superordinate goals of this seminar paper are (1) to review and systemize relevant academic literature in this area and (2) to identify potential research gaps which could be investigated in the future, and (3) to derive managerial implications for firms.

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## II. Consumer Behavior and Psychology

### 9. **Can Artificial Intelligence (AI) be genuine? The role of authenticity in AI interactions\*** (*Chair Prof. Kuester*)

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is not only playing an increasingly important role in consumers' daily lives but also in the business sector, where AI interacts with customers or makes crucial decisions like, for example, loan agreements. However, along with this development, research has raised concerns regarding AI's lack of authenticity in dealing with consumers and their affairs. Therefore, the objectives of this seminar thesis are (1) to outline the role of authenticity in customer-AI interactions and (2) to specify how AI needs to be introduced to customers to maximize its authenticity. The seminar paper shall conclude (3) by deriving future research directions at the crossroads of AI and marketing, and by providing managerial implications for companies implementing AI.

### 10. **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.

### 11. **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 and research (e.g., patients donating personal data as part of chemotherapy treatment programs), as well as the quantified self movement in the consumer space (where citizens share data via, for example, physical activity apps), is rapidly gaining momentum and has great potential to improve diagnostics and the delivery of healthcare and treatment. In particular, such accessible data can provide insight into the causes of disease and the effects of treatments, while enabling analyses tailored to an individual's characteristics, referred to as personalized medicine. Despite these possibilities, there are significant privacy and confidentiality concerns that 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 effective marketing of data donation campaigns).

### 12. **Showing Emotions - An Overview of Image Sentiment** (*Chair Prof. Stahl*)

A common phrase suggests that an image is able to convey complex information more easily than a verbal description ("A picture is worth a thousand words"). Currently, text analysis is often used to

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

assess consumer sentiment. However, according to this idea, analyzing pictures should allow for much more precise conclusions. The complexity of this data type provides the opportunity for multiple emotion metrics, for instance the colors used or facial expressions shown. In this seminar thesis, the student will explore how emotions are shown in images by reviewing existing research that uses visual rather than textual data and understanding how different image components can convey certain emotional meaning.

### **13. 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. It 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 inevitably 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 on the use of personal control, and (3) discuss future research directions.

### **14. 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.

### **15. Easier Said Than Done? The Attitude-Behavior Gap In Green Purchasing** *(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

In today's world of global warming and climate change, consumers are reported to have a growing demand for greener products. However, marketers witness a discrepancy between consumers' green purchase attitudes and their actual buying behavior. What accounts for this attitude-behavior gap? When are consumers more willing to buy or pay a price premium for green products? In line with these questions, the aims of this seminar thesis are (1) to review and systematize relevant academic literature on green consumer behavior, (2) to discuss the influencing factors of the attitude-behavior gap and (3) to derive managerial implications and outline future research directions.

### **16. How loyalty program impact consumer's after purchasing behavior** *(Chair Prof. Kraus)*

There are many different types of loyalty program, for example the point-based and cashback loyalty programs. It has been found that whether consumers join loyalty programs impact their choice between hedonic (e.g., Coke) vs. utilitarian (e.g., water) items after a certain purchasing behavior. The topic aims to summarize the existing literature and look into the logic behind it.

### **17. Analyzing Consumers' Reactions to Corporate Data Monetization** *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

Exchanging and selling company-internal data to other public or private entities is more and more on the rise. The European Commission, amongst others, is promoting the creation of a European data

economy, estimating a €500bn+ market by 2025. With so much data being collected and exchanged between relevant parties, the question arises how and when data exchange can be successful without violating consumer privacy or raising other concerns about corporate data sharing practices (if any). This seminar thesis should summarize theoretical and empirical evidence on how consumers perceive data sharing and monetization activities between companies. Based on this, it should outline potential strategies to maximise the value of data monetization between relevant parties taking into account relevant consumer perspectives.

#### **18. Fake Label and Misinformation: Does the position of fake label matter?** *(Chair Prof. Kraus)*

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

#### **19. Personalized Nudging\*** *(Chair Prof. Kraus)*

It has long been shown that economic agents are not fully rational decision makers. In this context, cognitive biases do influence a plethora of decisions reaching from what toothpaste to buy to far-reaching risk assessments when choosing insurance policies. In this thesis you should discuss the concept of ‘nudging’ as an approach to modify decision making and how personalization can be applied to this concept.

#### **20. Deep neural networks and other machine learning applications in online product review research of numeric cognition** *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

Product reviews on online platforms have long been a widely covered field of research. Various biases and insights regarding how consumers perceive reviews have been confirmed. Beyond that, this study aims to provide a detailed overview on research covering the numeric reasoning and cognition part of review perception, and how these questions have been researched with machine learning algorithms. This perspective focuses on the numeric part of product reviews, i.e. scales and their associated values (e.g., perception of more extreme 5- and 1- star ratings vs. more balanced 3-star ratings), not the text-based description of a review.

#### **21. Perceived warmth of customer-firm interactions\*** *(Chair Prof. Kuester)*

Customer-employee interactions can be cold and distant or compassionate and caring (and anything in between). A central construct that describes this difference is the “perceived warmth” of the interaction. The aim of this seminar thesis is (1) to provide a systematic literature review on perceived warmth, how it is displayed by employees, for which tasks it is appreciated by customers, and how it influences customer behavior and marketing outcomes. (2) Furthermore, the current state of knowledge on how perceived warmth plays a role in digital customer-firm interactions (e.g., via

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

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chatbots or AI) shall be displayed. Based on the results, (3) future research directions and managerial implications on the role of perceived warmth in digital customer-firm interactions shall be derived.

## **22. The anxiety of Learning** *(Chair 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.

## **23. How to Influence Consumer Choice - Marketers as Choice Architects\*** *(Chair Prof. Kraus)*

The way and the environment in which a choice is presented impacts consumers' decision-making processes. The person that creates this environment is referred to as choice architect. This seminar thesis shall provide a critical review of choice architecture and its applications in marketing, as well as insights on which choice architecture tools are most suitable in selected marketing contexts.

## **24. Effects of social media use on happiness and psychological well-being** *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

There is conflicting research on the role of social media in causing loneliness and isolation among consumers, leading to calls for revolutionizing social media use. What aspects of social media influence perceptions of loneliness (e.g., intensity of use, type of use, platform)? Are there individual characteristics that correlate with social media use and loneliness? Are there opportunities for social media platforms to foster more meaningful connections compared to social comparisons? With this in mind, the goal of this paper is to review the relevant literature on (1) social media use and its relationship to psychological well-being, and (2) ways in which social media use can enhance user well-being.

## **25. Escaping the humdrum of daily life? An examination of the concept of escapism and its role in the acceptance, adoption, and use of digital technologies\*** *(Chair Prof. Kuester)*

Emerging technologies allow us to escape from something unpleasant or to divert our attention away from problems by, for example, immersing ourselves into virtual realities. Even though escapism has generally a negative connotation, the Covid-19 pandemic has taught us that escapist activities are humane and, to some extent, beneficial. A still nascent stream of research shows that escapism is an influential determinant of technology acceptance, adoption, and use. However, a lack of conceptual clarity about the idiosyncratic properties of escapism impedes theory building. The aim of this seminar paper is to (1) clarify the concept of escapism and to differentiate it from related concepts such as procrastination or distraction. Subsequently, (2) considering existing research, theoretical and practical implications for the role of escapism in technology acceptance, adoption, and use shall be drawn.

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



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**26. 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.

**27. Immersing into the second self: What we can learn from research on virtual worlds and online games for consumer behavior within the metaverse\*** (Chair Prof. Kuester)

The term "metaverse" comprises three-dimensional virtual, augmented or mixed reality in which consumers can experience a digitized environment and interact with others. As consumers increasingly immerse themselves in this "alternative reality", questions arise concerning virtual consumer behavior. Structurally, the concept of the metaverse has similarities to existing virtual worlds (e.g., Second Life) and online games (e.g., Roblox), on which marketing research has already been conducted. The goal of this seminar paper is to (1) look at the existing research streams and to provide an overview of research findings, relevant for understanding virtual consumer behavior in the metaverse. Based on the results, (2) managerial implications for companies seeking to enter the metaverse shall be derived and directions for future research shall be identified.

**28. Pink tax, gender pricing and gender differences in user-generated content** (Chair Prof. Stahl)

"Pink tax" is a metaphorical description of gender-specific price differentiation ("gender pricing"). In other words, products for women are significantly more expensive - simply because they were produced for women and are packaged in pink instead of blue. The content is virtually identical. In concrete terms, this means that women have to pay more than men for quite ordinary drugstore items, but also for equivalent clothing and for services such as hairdressing and dry cleaning. At the same time however, they review the same product or experience just as well or even better than their male counterparts. The aim of this thesis is to collect relevant literature around this surprising phenomenon. This seminar thesis can lead to master thesis where pink tax can be assessed using an already available dataset in the realm of Big Data.

**29. The Influence of Political Ideology on Consumption** (Chair Prof. Kuester)

Research in political psychology shows that individuals with different ideologies (e.g., liberals and conservatives) diverge from one another in many ways, including personality characteristics, motivations, and personal values. A study of these ideological differences, especially in the light of rising political polarization on a global scale, has the potential to enhance our understanding of consumer attitudes and behavior. This seminar thesis aims to (1) identify ways in which political ideology can shape consumer behavior, (2) explore the possibilities of overcoming potential negative effects of ideology on product choice, and (3) discuss practical implications of using political ideology as a market segmentation strategy.

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

### **30. 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.

### **31. Alienation from the customer through AI? How implementing AI affects customer relationships\*** *(Chair Prof. Kuester)*

Consumers tend to be algorithm averse preferring humans over algorithms even if these perform better than humans. Despite this fact, companies successively implement Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the form of chatbots or voice-based assistants to interact with their customers. This research shall shed light on the question, of whether companies alienate themselves from their customers by using AI in customer (service) interactions rather than their employees. By drawing on existing literature from marketing, psychology, and information systems, this seminar paper shall (1) examine the consequences of implementing AI on customer relationships. Based on the findings, (2) future research directions in the customer relationship management and managerial implications for companies implementing AI-based customer interactions shall be derived.

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

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

### **33. New wine in old skins? A comparative examination of the emerging “live commerce” phenomenon\*** *(Chair Prof. Kuester)*

By combining online shopping, live streaming, and audience interaction, the Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba opened a new chapter in sales. The “live commerce” trend originating in China is increasingly gaining momentum on market in Europe and the US, so that companies such as Amazon and Meta now offer their own solutions to enable the direct purchase of products presented in live streams. The proximity of the phenomenon to the long-established “teleshopping” raises the question of similarities and differences between the two sales channels and strategies. While teleshopping has been thoroughly addressed by consumer behavior research, research findings on “live commerce” are still scarce. The aim of this seminar paper is to (1) compare the two phenomena of teleshopping and live commerce conceptually. Building upon this analysis, (2) an overview of relevant research findings on teleshopping to explain consumer behavior in the context of “live commerce” shall be provided. Finally, (3) directions for future research and practical implications for stakeholders in live commerce shall be identified.

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

**34. What predicts Green Purchase Behavior?\*** (*Chair Prof. Kraus*)

Sustainable consumption is more important and popular than ever. However, it is not perfectly clear what drives 'green' purchase decisions under which circumstances. You should discuss the (context) factors that drive sustainable consumption and how well it can potentially be predicted during times of Big Data and Artificial Intelligence.

**35. Why Siri and Alexa Should Combat Profanities and Abusive Language\*** (*Chair Prof. Kuester*)

AI-based assistants, such as Amazon's Alexa or Apple's Siri, have become a ubiquitous technology in consumers' daily lives. Additionally, companies successively adopt the technology for customer interactions. However, analyses of user interactions with these assistants show that up to 30% of interactions contain social norm violations such as abusive language, profanities, and even sexual harassment. Although 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 assistants should cope with social norm violations by users towards AI and how this affects the company's reputation. Therefore, this seminar paper aims to review the literature on AI and human-computer interactions and to investigate users' abuse of AI and its consequences on society. Additionally, spill-over effects between AI assistants 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 social norm violations by users.

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### III. Product and Innovation Management

#### 36. Innovation and working atmosphere (*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, 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

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

##### **37. Marketing power of emotions (Chair Prof. Stahl)**

Many brands today use emotions to communicate and advertise. Companies can no longer compete with their products or services alone but must increasingly offer outstanding experiences to build an emotional bond between customer and brand. However, the question arises how emotions work in advertising and whether there are differences between products or even between sectors? This seminar paper therefore aims to answer the question of which forms of emotion are used in advertising and which strategy is best for which brand.

##### **38. Micro-targeting and personalization, a threat to the brand? (Chair Prof. Homburg)**

More and more manufacturers use micro-targeting in their products and services in order to provide a highly personalized experience for their customers. New-age technologies thereby enable increasingly sophisticated micro-targeting strategies, begging the question of how the value of the brand is affected by the practice of micro-targeting and personalization? If the offer by a manufacturer is entirely personalized, what is the meaning of the brand?

The objectives of this seminar paper are (1) a systematic overview of how micro-targeting can be used in marketing and (2) an evaluation of the relationship between personalization and the customers' perception of the brand.

##### **39. 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.

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

With products becoming increasingly digitized, forming closer relationships with their users than previously possible, trust is more crucial than ever between manufacturers and their customers. With the help of new-age technologies, many of these products find their own way of interacting and communicating with their users. How can the manufacturer ensure that trust is maintained during these distinct customer journeys? Furthermore, what is the relationship between trust and ROI?

The objectives of this seminar paper are (1) a systematic study overview of how customers form their trust in the manufacturer and (2) identification of potential shifts in consumer trust, considering digitized devices.

## V. Sales Management

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

### **42. Customer advantages of the direct sales model in the automotive industry** (*Chair Prof. Kraus*)

Traditional OEMs (automotive companies) have been selling their cars by using an indirect sales model with dealers as independent entrepreneurs (The cars are sold from an OEM to dealers, and then from dealers to end-customers). However, because dealers are independent 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.

### **43. One step ahead of the opponent? - Digital tools in B2B sales** (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)

In the B2B selling process, a good preparation is half of the battle. In recent years, the digitalization and the ubiquitous availability of data on products, customers and competitors have given rise to the opportunity to support the sales process through digital tools. Therefore, the goals of this seminar paper are (1) to provide a state-of-the-art review on how digital tools can support the sales process in the B2B area, (2) discuss the impact of these tools on the behavior of the seller, the selling process and outcome and (3) derive conclusions on beneficial use cases for the digital tools.

### **44. Dealer advantages of the direct sales model in the automotive industry** (*Chair Prof. Kraus*)

Traditional OEMs (automotive companies) have been selling their cars by using an indirect sales model with dealers as independent entrepreneurs (The cars are sold from an OEM to dealers, and then from dealers to end-customers). However, because dealers are independent 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

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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.

#### **45. 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.

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

Today’s multichannel sales systems are highly complex and often very difficult to manage. Therefore, many firms rely on rules and standardized processes in their channel management approaches. But: Does it really ameliorate organizational performance; or does it rather harm it?

Against this background, the superordinate goals of this seminar paper are (1) to review and systemize relevant academic literature on formalization in sales, (2) to identify potential consequences of its implementation, and (3) to discuss the implications for researchers as well as for practitioners.

#### **47. The Impact of Social Media on B2B Sales Processes\* (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 the 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.

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

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

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

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**49. To sell with AI?! - Artificial Intelligence in Sales Processes\*** (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)

In the next few decades, the fourth industrial revolution will be powered by digitization, information and communication technologies, robotics, machine learning, and artificial intelligence. Decision-making processes will shift from humans to machines. These societal changes will have a major impact on personal selling and sales management. Especially Artificial Intelligence disrupts different kinds of business processes, such as sales processes. Therefore, the objectives of this seminar paper are threefold. (1) You should conduct a systematic literature overview of how artificial intelligence is used in sales processes, (2) and identify which managerial implications can be derived, and (3) finally obtain suggestions for future research.

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

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

**51. Customer Loyalty and Customer Churn in B2B settings\*** (*Chair Prof. Kraus*)

Corporate decision-makers with a good understanding of the determinants of customer loyalty possess a competitive advantage – this also holds for business-to-business (B2B) markets. To investigate which aspects drive customer loyalty and customer churn in B2B settings, researchers have introduced several models in the marketing literature. This seminar thesis shall summarize today’s knowledge on these models and aspects and provide an overview on how insights from behavioral economics can be utilized to increase customer loyalty and circumvent customer churn in B2B settings.

**52. 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.

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

Multichannel sales systems have become “the rule rather than the exception” (Frazier 1999; p. 232). However, research regarding the antecedents and consequences of multichannel sales is relatively scarce.

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



Against this background, the superordinate goals of this seminar paper are (1) to review and systemize relevant academic literature on multichannel sales systems, (2) to identify potential antecedents and consequences of various aspects of channel decisions (e.g., length, width, and depth), and (3) to discuss the implications for researchers as well as for practitioners.

#### **54. To sell is (fe)male: Why are women still underrepresented in B2B Sales? (Chair Prof. Homburg)**

Gender diversity has been shown to have a positive impact on both corporate culture and the company's profit line. These results contrast with the continuing under-representation of women in B2B sales. Among others, the persistence of gender stereotypes in sales has been shown to contribute to this phenomenon. However, research on gender stereotypes in sales is sparse. Against this background, the aim of the seminar paper is (1) to systematize relevant academic literature on gender stereotypes in sales and (2) identify barriers that prevent women from choosing a career in B2B sales.

#### **55. 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.

#### **56. 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.

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

Ambidexterity—a recent concept in the management literature—affirms this question. According to first definitions, ambidextrous firms pursue both explorative (such as flexibility) and exploitative activities (such as stability) at the same time. But can this be also transferred to sales systems?

Against this background, the superordinate goals of this seminar paper are (1) to review and systemize relevant academic literature on ambidexterity, (2) to identify potential consequences of its effective usage, (3) to transfer this concept to the sales practice, and (4) to discuss the implications for researchers as well as for practitioners.

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

**58. Killing me softly: Digitalization as the slow death of the salesperson?** (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)

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

## VI. Digital Marketing

### **59. The human side of the ongoing AI transformation** (*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). Potential reasons are that employees fear replacement and that customers have an aversion to algorithms.

This seminar paper aims to review potential hurdles companies need to surpass to effectively implement AI technology.

### **60. 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.

### **61. Selling the Inside - An Overview of Recent Content Monetization Research** (*Chair Prof. Stahl*)

Content in the scope of this seminar thesis is closely related to the notion of information goods, i.e., products and services whose value results from the content they contain (e.g., books, newspapers, apps, or livestreams). Obviously, such goods differ from physical consumer or industrial goods, e.g., in terms of their cost structure and pre-purchase quality assessments. While initial theoretical literature has laid out different suitable selling strategies (e.g., offering different versions or bundling products), today's empirical research on content monetization is very extensive. This seminar thesis should summarize and compare recent research insights on how content providers can optimally monetize their content online depending on the medium.

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

The evolution and implementation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for service personalization will lead to a gap between early adopters and laggards. For early adopters, there will be additional challenges (e.g., high costs) associated with forging a new path in the largely uncharted application of AI in business. On the other hand, AI laggards will not face such challenges but might experience disadvantages since the customer experience they provide may not be as refined in comparison to the early adopters.

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The objectives of this seminar paper are (1) a systematic study overview of how AI can be used to leverage the customer experience and (2) an evaluation of potential threats to AI adoption success regarding the customers' perception of technology usage.

**63. Applying double standards: With whom do consumers share data online?\*** (*Chair Prof. Kuester*)

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

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

The discussions about fake news are not new. But, fake news issue is currently more important than ever, because it has now further proliferated due to the popularity of social media and the advancement of technologies that allow quick dissemination. From marketing perspective, fake reviews are not only dangerous for consumers, but also for companies and brands. The aim of the seminar paper is to review the related literature to better understanding of the various impact of fake reviews on consumers and companies.

**65. Artificial emotional intelligence? Exploring consumers' relationships with virtual conversational agents\*** (*Chair Prof. Kuester*)

Advances in machine learning and natural language processing drive the growing adoption of virtual conversational agents (VCAs). VCAs are natural language user interfaces to data and services through text or voice. VCAs allow users to ask questions or give orders in their everyday language and to obtain responses or services in a conversational style. Siri and Alexa are VCAs that support many consumers in their everyday life. Some consumers even developed social relationships with their VCAs while they were confined at home during pandemic restrictions. Despite their growing popularity and adoption, our knowledge about psychological processes underlying consumer-VCA relationships is virtually nonexistent. The aim of this seminar thesis is to (1) review 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.

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

For a successful AI transformation, companies likely need to realize network effects: AI technology becomes valuable the more users adopt and frequently use the software. However, realizing network

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

effects can be challenging for companies. Companies likely find themselves in a catch-22 situation-the cold start problem. For an AI transformation to create value, a diverse set of users must adopt and frequently update the AI technology. However, for users to adapt and frequently update the AI technology, users require good results first.

This seminar paper aims to review effective AI implementation from the network theory perspective.

### **67. 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, 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. Especially the gap between digital immigrant and digital native patients, which display different levels of digital health literacy, complicates the adequate 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.

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

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

### **69. Value drivers of NFTs in a sports marketing context** *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

The sports world has caught on to the NFT hype and athlete collectible NFTs, metaverse experiences, and other crypto-based applications have come to live. Goal of this research is to provide a comprehensive view on current and emerging literature regarding the reasoning for value and its drivers for NFTs in the sports world. This includes, among other points, what factors generate value, how consumers perceive value, and what influences their willingness to pay for such NFTs.

### **70. "Please Rate Your Experience Online" – The Characteristics and Impact of Online Customer Reviews\*** *(Chair Prof. Kuester)*

Online Reviews are an important tool for customers to inform themselves about products and services before a purchase. One obvious question in the online context is whether customers should in fact rely on the opinion of unknown others. Simply relying on other people's opinion is especially critical since readers do not know reviewers' motivations to post a review and their possible biases. Thus, this

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

seminar thesis aims to (1) provide an overview of the literature on online reviews, their impact on customers and sellers, and their advantages and disadvantages for both parties. These findings should be used to (2) critically discuss the use of online reviews and to derive theoretical implications and implications for managers of companies running platform-based and traditional business models, as well as to (3) provide an outlook for future research.

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

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

### **72. “To Respond or Not to Respond” – Companies’ Response Behavior to Online Customer Reviews\*** *(Chair Prof. Kuester)*

Companies frequently ask their customers to review their products and services online, for example on online review platforms, on companies’ homepages, or via targeted e-mail or telephone surveys. Online review systems have started to allow companies to respond to customers’ online reviews. Should companies seize the opportunity and respond to online reviews? If so, how should they respond? This seminar thesis aims to provide an overview of the literature regarding (1) companies’ response behavior to online reviews and (2) the effectiveness of response techniques companies could apply for the purpose of customer relationship management. The findings should be used to (3) identify effective response behavior and to derive implications for future research and managers dealing with customers’ compliments and complaints.

### **73. 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.

### **74. “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

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

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, how it is 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.

#### **75. You really are a true friend – Social media friends and real-life friends** (*Chair Prof. Stahl*)

Research suggests that social media influencers with fewer followers are more persuasive when it comes to promoting something to their audience. Some argue that this is because influencers with fewer followers are better at maintaining a closer relationship with their followers and becoming more closely connected to them. In addition, it is often said that smaller influencers are more trusted and are seen as friends from "real" life. Beyond influencer marketing, this paper aims to provide a comprehensive literature review on how social network connections correlate with real-life friends and what other characteristics of influencers evoke trust among followers.

#### **76. 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.

#### **77. Authenticity of Brand Generated Content – Implications for Digital Marketing** (*Chair Prof. Kuester*)

Authenticity, defined in marketing as "encapsulating what is genuine, real, and/or true" (Beverland and Farrelly 2010, p. 839), is an important objective for brands as it contributes to a unique brand image. Marketing and brand managers try to produce authentic brand content that matches their brand image and enhances brand commitment. In the last decade, digital and social media marketing are in the spotlight of content creation. Millions of pieces of online brand content are generated each day aiming to cultivate consumers' opinions, word-of-mouth (WOM), and purchase decisions. Internet users have started becoming suspicious about the authenticity of the generated content, especially when it involves product placement. Hence, the aim of this seminar thesis is (1) to provide a literature overview on brand generated content authenticity with a focus on online content and to derive (2) implications for marketing managers regarding online content authenticity.

**78. How does unethical firm behavior impact employee satisfaction? (Chair Prof. Stahl)**

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

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

In the Internet and the social media world, there is a mass production of user and brand generated commercial online content. Some commercial online content is well accepted by consumers leading to positive outcomes such as increased brand awareness and purchase intention while other commercial online content leads to negative outcomes such as negative WOM and even online firestorms. There are many factors that influence the success of commercial 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 is no consensus about the optimal level of brand mention in commercial online content. The aim of this thesis is (1) to provide a literature overview on the impact of different types and levels of brand mentions 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.

**80. 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.



**81. Online Communities: Participation Motives and Value Creation** *(Chair Prof. Kuester)*

The ubiquity of the internet has accelerated the rapid growth of online communities, which are online groups of individuals who share specific interest, such as food, sports, music, or travel. These online communities are usually guided by norms specific to this community and usually overseen by a host. Researchers mainly categorize online communities based on the type of the community host, leading to two categories: brand-hosted and member-hosted communities. This seminar thesis shall focus on member-hosted communities. In these communities, generating and maintaining members' engagement is critical for the community hosts to enhance relationships between the members and gain member loyalty. The aim of this seminar thesis is to provide a literature overview on (1) members' motives to participate in these member-hosted communities, (2) the potential benefits for the members and the hosts, and (3) to derive practical implications for community hosts on how to leverage member participation.

**82. Effectiveness of promotional activities in online networks based on types of network structures and relationships** *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

Online social media networks are an established part of online marketing. The goal of this research is, to provide a comprehensive review on recent literature addressing how individuals and brands acquire status and disseminate content most effectively, a given set of promotional activities of a social network (e.g. sharing content, messaging content, reposts, ...)

**83. 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.

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## VII. Customer Relationship Management

### **84. 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 the reality in sales organizations still deviates from these desirable goals. Sales organizations, especially key account management teams with strong 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 for 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 for 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.*

### **85. Authenticity is everything – or nothing? The role of authenticity in the marketing of services\*** (Chair Prof. Kuester)

Authenticity describes being true to one’s own personality, values, and spirit. While the literature in services marketing has explored the role of authentic behavior of employees, the role of authenticity in digital customer-company encounters has been far less investigated. The aim of this seminar thesis is (1) to provide a systematic literature review on customers’ perceived authenticity in service interactions, identifying tasks where authenticity matters most for customers, and on how authentic vs. unauthentic employee behavior influences customer behavior and marketing outcomes. (2) Furthermore, the current state of knowledge on how perceived 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.

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

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## VIII. Market Theory and Research Methods

### **86. Estimating Heterogeneous Treatment Effects for Marketing Research\*** (*Chair 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 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.

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

Self-monitoring describes the degree to which people monitor their own behaviors, cognitions and affects to control and alter them. This ability can come in very handy for salespeople when it comes to adjusting their behavior to their customer's needs. But is self-monitoring really necessary to become a successful international salesperson, or is adjusting one's sales behavior according to a certain scheme enough?

The goals of this seminar paper are (1) to review and systemize relevant academic literature on B2B sales, self-monitoring theory and adaptive selling, (2) discuss the importance of self-monitoring skills in international sales and B2B sales in detail, and (3) outline future research directions and practical implications.

### **88. Text Analysis - A Review of Different Methods** (*Chair Prof. Stahl*)

Text data is available in abundance and often used to gather valuable information. For instance, while online reviews are generally intended as a form of WOM to share experiences with others, firms and researchers are increasingly monitoring such data sources to obtain insights from the market. Different methods are applied and used for strategic decisions, however how reliable and valid are these approaches?

In this seminar thesis, the student will gather and describe different existing methods used to extract information from text, contrasting their usefulness for different situations or types of text.

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

**IX. Marketing Analytics****89. The Era of the Retail Investor\*** *(Chair Prof. Kraus)*

The phenomenon of meme stocks like Gamestop, AMC and many others has recently been shaking the financial world. Companies and financial institutions do acknowledge the increasing relevance of retail investor trading. You should discuss the spillovers of product and financial markets. More specifically, you should examine whether retail investor popularity can impact on product market goals such as sales revenue.

**90. What drives the Adoption of the Blockchain Technology? \*** *(Chair 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.

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