

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

Advisor: Seongmin Park, M.Sc.

Topic	How To Motivate Dealers To Become OEM Agents: Direct Sales Model In The Automotive Industry (English Only; Registration from FSS 2022 with a possible internship in Stuttgart)
Abstract	<p>Traditional OEMs (automotive companies) have been selling their cars by using the 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 located closer to customers and function independently from OEMs, the OEMs lack of customer relationship, customer data, price control etc. In addition, the automotive industry has been heavily influenced by new threats. For instance, TESLA appeared in the automotive markets with their innovative business model (direct sales model with an eCommerce platform). The traditional OEMs need to find ways to survive in the new competition. Direct Sales Model (or agent model) has been mentioned as the solution for traditional OEMs to survive this competition. However, this model still leaves many considerations - how to motivate existing dealers/ how to manage the new business model and so on. This master's thesis topic aims to find an academic solution to motivate dealers to become agents (e.g. via game theory or social identification)</p>
Advisor	Please contact Seongmin Park, M.Sc. (seongmin.park@daimler.com) for further information.

Topic	How To Take Advantage Of eCommerce In The Automotive Industry (English Only; Registration from FSS 2022 with a possible internship in Stuttgart)
Abstract	Nowadays, you can buy almost everything in online stores. However, can you imagine to buy a car online? Do you want to buy a car online at all? – This question has been one of the hardest question for OEMs to answer. Some of the process such as test-drive cannot be done by online and many assume buying a car solely online is impossible. However, since people’s life has been influenced by COVID 19, the automotive industry has proven its potential for eCommerce usage. In some markets, the eCommerce has been successful already, showing some customers are willing to buy their cars online. But there are still many technical developments and infrastructure. This topic aims to find out how traditional OEMs can take advantage of eCommerce and what kind of advantages/disadvantages OEMs will face.
Advisor	Please contact Seongmin Park, M.Sc. (seongmin.park@daimler.com) for further information.

Advisor: Yasid Soufi, M.Sc.

Topic	Marketing Investment Products: How can Marketing Drive Investor Decision Making?
Abstract	The market for investment products, such as ETFs is booming. Despite a growing base of active retail investors many investors prefer to delegate investment decisions and favor passive investment strategies. Decision making for purchasing financial products and services is subject to high complexity. Amongst risk and return considerations many other product and consumer attributes can influence on purchase decisions, e.g., impatience or sustainability preferences. You should summarize the literature on factors that drive financial product and service choices of individual investors and how marketing has tried to address these factors. Based on a practical case and experiments you should design a strategy for selling financial products and services to a young and well-educated customer base.
Advisor	Please contact Yasid Soufi, M.Sc. (soufi@bwl.uni-mannheim.de) for further information.

Topic	Embracing the Blockchain: How do Companies Profit from Accepting Cryptocurrency Payments?
Abstract	Blockchain projects stand and fall with the number of adopters and platform users. The same holds true for Cryptocurrencies that aim to serve as instruments of payment. Many Cryptocurrencies have been ascribed a speculative investment purpose instead and are criticized for high price volatilities that undermine their utilities for transactions. Nonetheless, countless companies start to accept cryptocurrencies as payments and even first countries have started to establish them as legal tender. Your goal for this thesis is to investigate why companies would accept crypto payments and if this practice can be beneficial to company sales and profitability. You should discuss theoretical underpinnings and analyze empirical data to answer these questions.
Advisor	Please contact Yasid Soufi, M.Sc. (soufi@bwl.uni-mannheim.de) for further information.

Topic	Power to the Players: The Retail Investor Revolution and Marketing
Abstract	<p>The phenomenon of meme stocks like Gamestop, AMC and many others has been shaking the financial markets. Companies and financial institutions do acknowledge the increasing relevance of retail investor trading. Companies with a strong retail investor base can profiteer from raising capital at increased share prices. AMC even targets their retail investor base with product offers. In this thesis you should discuss the development of the role of the retail investors in the retail investor-company-ecosystem. What drives retail investors' decision making? Can the acquisition of retail investment carry over to higher sales? How should you target retail investors via (social media) marketing strategies? Your answers should rely on the literature as well as on empirical findings from secondary data sources.</p>
Advisor	Please contact Yasid Soufi, M.Sc. (soufi@bwl.uni-mannheim.de) for further information.

Advisor: Mengmeng Niu, M.Sc.

Topic	Fake Label and Misinformation: Does The Position of Fake Label Matter? (English only)
Abstract	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. Empirical data is required for a completion of the thesis.
Advisor	Please contact Mengmeng Niu, M.Sc. (mengmeng.niu@bwl.uni-mannheim.de) for further information.

Topic	Magnified Drawbacks of Products with New Technology (English only)
Abstract	When a product using a new technology, it attract lots of attentions once it is launched to public and consumers have high expectations of it. Therefore, it is not surprising that any drawbacks of the new product can be magnified, even those shared by the old versions or common ones. For example, it is common that headphones have sound leakage. However, when a headphone with an on-bone technology has the same problem, consumers might be very upset and easier to give up purchasing it than a headphone without the on-bone technology. This master thesis investigates how consumers perceive drawbacks of products with new technology compared to an ordinary products. Empirical data is required.
Advisor	Please contact Mengmeng Niu, M.Sc. (mengmeng.niu@bwl.uni-mannheim.de) for further information.

Topic	Framing Effect (English only)
Abstract	According to prospect theory, positive and negative framed messages could influence people's perception on gains and losses. In consumer behavior context, framing the same situation in opposite ways could lead to different behaviors. The purpose of this topic is to investigate the impacts of framing effect on consumer behavior with logical hypotheses and empirical evidence.
Advisor	Please contact Mengmeng Niu, M.Sc. (mengmeng.niu@bwl.uni-mannheim.de) for further information.

Topic	Psychological Closure by Following an Influencer on Social Media (English only)
Abstract	Psychological closure has been researched for years. Extant research focuses on how consumers sought for psychological closure after interruption and how incompleteness induces consumers' will to pursue psychological closure. However, there is no research investigating how becoming a follower on social media leads to psychological closure and then affects consumers' perceptions and behaviors to the influencers they have followed. This master thesis aims to summarize existing literature on psychological closure and social media in the context of consumer behavior. Developing proper hypotheses and designing studies are mandatory for a completion of the thesis.
Advisor	Please contact Mengmeng Niu, M.Sc. (mengmeng.niu@bwl.uni-mannheim.de) for further information.

Advisor: Dr. Maximilian Gärth

Topic	The Impact of Timing on the Effectiveness of Emotional Expressions: An Empirical Investigation
Abstract	While past research has found that the consequences of appreciation are oftentimes underestimated (Kumar and Epley 2018), the present master thesis is concerned with examining the impact of the timing of emotional expressions. Is a late reply really better than no reply? Furthermore, the author should compare perceptions of expressers and recipients. The master candidate will be instructed to design an experimental study to empirically test the derived hypotheses.
Advisor	Please contact Dr. Maximilian Gärth (mgaerth@bwl.uni-mannheim.de) for further information.

Topic	When the Same Boring Task Feels Less Boring: A Case of Managing Expectations?
Abstract	Consumer boredom is a ubiquitous experience that can result in serious problems for consumers' health. Thus, recent research has begun to develop an understanding of strategies to reduce the experience of boredom. Yet, it remains unanswered whether expectations could help consumers prepare for an upcoming boring task, which could make the same boring task feel less boring. Thus, the goal of this master thesis is to summarize existing literature on boredom and to shed light on the underlying mechanism that could make expectations an effective tool to reduce the experience of boredom.
Advisor	Please contact Dr. Maximilian Gärth (mgaerth@bwl.uni-mannheim.de) for further information.

Topic	Behavioral Science Inspired Price Promotions: An Empirical Investigation
Abstract	Price promotions are ubiquitous and consumers need to exert almost no effort to access them. At the same time, marketing managers are constantly looking for approaches to increase the effectiveness of price promotions. The present master thesis should develop a behavioral science inspired communication strategy of price promotions and empirically test its effectiveness. The master candidate will be instructed to design an experimental study to empirically test the derived hypotheses.
Advisor	Please contact Dr. Maximilian Gärth (mgaerth@bwl.uni-mannheim.de) for further information.

Topic	Reputational Concerns and Consumer Behavior: An Empirical Investigation
Abstract	Oftentimes consumers use certain behaviors to signal high status. For example, consumers have been found to give larger tips in high (vs. low) status contexts (Bluvstein Netter and Raghurir 2021). The present master thesis should identify a novel behavior that consumers strategically exhibit in circumstances in which they have reputational concerns. At the same time, the author should examine to what extent the identified behavior is an effective status-enhancing strategy. The master candidate will be instructed to design an experimental study to test derived hypotheses.
Advisor	Please contact Dr. Maximilian Gärth (mgaerth@bwl.uni-mannheim.de) for further information.