MKT 7X0 Research Seminar HWS 2025 – Topics

Area Marketing & Sales

Below is a list of **77 topics** for seminar theses in the Area Marketing & Sales. The topics are clustered into **ten categories**. For details on the **application process**, please refer to our websites and the provided documents.

I. Marketing Strategy and Management

II. Consumer Behavior and Psychology

III. Price Management

IV. Product and Innovation Management

V. Brand and Communications Management

VI. Sales Management

VII. Digital Marketing

VIII. Customer Relationship Management

IX. Marketing Theory and Research Methods

X. Marketing Analytics

I. Marketing Strategy and Management

1. Adapting Global Sustainability Strategies to Local Market Cultures *(Chair Prof. Kraus)*

This thesis examines the relationship between Hofstede's cultural dimensions and sustainability intensity. Drawing on Hofstede's framework, you dive into understanding how organizational culture affects sustainable orientation through internal marketing mechanisms. By integrating cross-cultural management theory with marketing strategy, the study provides insights into how global brands can tailor sustainability efforts to achieve both local relevance and strategic consistency.

2. Best Practices in Strategic Brand (Re-)Positioning in the Age of Generative AI *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

Brand positioning has long been a core element of competitive marketing strategy, helping firms differentiate themselves in crowded markets. But with the rise of generative AI, the rules of positioning and positioning strategies may be shifting. This seminar thesis should explore how generative AI influences actual brand (re-)positioning possibilities, tools for positioning strategy & analysis, and how firms are positioned in large language model responses.

3. Confirmation Bias and the Endurance of Gender Stereotypes in Group Evaluations *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

Gender stereotypes are more likely to persist when people evaluate groups rather than individuals. While individual evaluations may encourage person-specific judgments, group evaluations often activate category-based thinking, increasing reliance on stereotypes. This seminar paper examines how confirmation bias—the tendency to seek, interpret, and remember information in line with existing beliefs—plays a central role in this phenomenon. In group evaluations, confirmation bias reinforces generalized gender-based expectations, making stereotype-consistent information more salient and memorable. Drawing on social psychological theories and empirical studies, this paper explores the cognitive mechanisms

behind biased group evaluations and highlights their implications for fair assessment in organizational, educational, and social contexts.

4. From Visibility to Accountability: Measuring the Impact of Sustainable Sponsorship in Theory and Practice *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

As sustainability becomes a central expectation for organizations, sponsorship has evolved from a branding tool into a potential vehicle for social and environmental impact. Despite growing interest in value-based sponsorships, the measurement of their effectiveness remains underdeveloped. This study addresses the gap between theoretical evaluation models and their practical application by exploring how organizations measure impact, communicate outcomes, and integrate sustainability objectives within sponsorship strategies.

5. Managing International Sales to and from Emerging Countries: A Systematic Literature Review *(Chair Prof. Homburg)**

Emerging countries are increasingly shaping the global sales landscape—as both target and origin markets. This seminar thesis aims to (1) review and synthesize academic research on international sales involving emerging economies, (2) examine the unique challenges and success factors in outbound (export) and inbound (import) sales processes, and (3) derive managerial implications while identifying research gaps for future academic inquiry.

6. Profits, Principles, and Public Opinion: Navigating Corporate Sociopolitical Activism *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

Companies increasingly take public stances on sociopolitical issues, but the outcomes of such activism are far from predictable. This seminar paper aims to explore empirical findings on corporate sociopolitical activism, focusing on success factors, potential risks, and long-term effects on firm reputation and performance. It will compare first movers, laggards, and companies that choose not to engage, evaluating whether reputational benefits or damages persist over time or fade away. By synthesizing current research, this paper seeks to shed

light on how firms can navigate sociopolitical engagement strategically while balancing opportunity and risk.

7. The Added Value of Value-Based Joint Sponsorship: Exploring Impact on Sustainability Perception and Behavior *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

This study investigates the comparative effectiveness of value-based, joint sponsorship models versus traditional sponsorship approaches, particularly in the context of sustainability initiatives such as sustainable transportation. It examines whether collaborative, purpose-driven sponsorships enhance awareness of sustainability topics, improve public perception of both the project and the sponsoring brand, and foster behavioral intentions aligned with environmental sustainability.

8. The Marketing of Misinformation: How Political Campaigns Leverage Persuasion and Deception *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

Political misinformation has emerged as a strategic communication tool in shaping public opinion and influencing voter behavior. This seminar thesis explores how misinformation is used strategically to influence public opinion and shift voter behavior.

Through a structured literature review, students will examine theoretical perspectives from marketing, psychology, and communication research to understand how deceptive messaging is designed, distributed, and received. The thesis aims to synthesize key findings from prior research and uncover how misinformation campaigns affect trust and decision-making. It should provide a foundation for future research.

9. The Value Behind Transparency: How Digital Product Passport Impact Business Performance Outcomes *(Chair Prof. Homburg)**

With growing regulatory requirements and consumer demand for product transparency, companies are beginning to pilot and implement digital product passports (DPPs). While the influence of transparency and DPPs on consumer behavior is well-understood, their concrete impact on business performance remains an open question. Understanding these effects is essential for firms aiming to justify and optimize their DPP investments. The goal of this

seminar thesis is to (1) investigate how the implementation of DPPs can influence firm-level business performance outcomes, (2) identify which specific performance dimensions are most affected, and (3) explore how these outcomes can be measured and evaluated in practice.

II. Consumer Behavior and Psychology

10. Advertising Layout and Compositional Meaning Over Time *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

This thesis will conduct a literature review on the strategic use of layout and composition in print advertising. It will synthesize research from design theory, visual semiotics, and advertising studies that analyzes the spatial arrangement of multimodal elements. The review will examine how the literature has documented the evolution of principles like visual hierarchy, reading paths (e.g., the Z-pattern), and the use of white space. It will critically assess the theories connecting these compositional strategies to advertising objectives like attracting attention (stopping power), guiding interpretation, and building a coherent brand image from disparate multimodal parts.

Pieters, R., Wedel, M., & Batra, R. (2010). "The stopping power of advertising: Measures and effects of visual complexity." *Journal of Marketing*, 74(5), 48-60.

11. Age Is Just a Number? Exploring the Marketing Needs of Older Consumers Through a Literature Review *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

Despite their increasing economic relevance, older consumers are often overlooked in marketing research and practice. This seminar thesis focuses on understanding the specific needs, preferences, and behaviors of aging consumer segments. By reviewing existing literature, the goal is to examine how marketers can effectively reach and engage older consumers while avoiding outdated stereotypes. It outlines the importance of the older consumer segments. The paper will explore key topics such as media usage, trust in advertising, brand loyalty and value orientation in later life. In doing so, the thesis should synthesize research from consumer psychology and age-related marketing research to highlight what distinguishes older consumers from younger segments.

12. AI Along the Journey: Evaluating AI-Driven Touchpoints in the Modern Customer Journey *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

From awareness to post-purchase engagement, artificial intelligence is increasingly embedded in every stage of the customer journey. Companies use AI for personalized targeting, intelligent product recommendations, dynamic pricing, automated service, and churn prediction. But how do these AI-powered touchpoints influence customer perceptions, satisfaction, and loyalty? This seminar paper explores how AI shapes customer experiences at different journey stages, identifies key success factors, and discusses the trade-off between automation efficiency and human connection.

13. AI vs. Human Creativity: Consumer Perception of AI-Generated Advertising *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

As generative AI tools like DALL·E, ChatGPT, and Sora are increasingly integrated into marketing campaigns, a central question arises: Can AI be creative in a way that resonates with consumers? This paper analyzes consumer perceptions of AI-generated ads compared to human-created ones and explores whether creativity is judged differently depending on the content source.

14. Behavioral Interventions Revisited: Mapping the Spectrum from Nudges to Boosts *(Chair Prof. Kuester)**

In recent years, behavioral interventions have gained prominence for their ability to influence individual choices without relying on mandates or economic incentives. Among these, nudges, nudge plus, and boosts represent distinct approaches with differing mechanisms, ethical implications, and applications. This seminar thesis aims to (1) define and differentiate the core concepts of nudges, nudge plus, and boosts, (2) analyze the underlying psychological and cognitive principles of each intervention type, (3) examine their effectiveness across various domains (e.g., health, finance, sustainability), and (4) derive strategic implications for public policy and marketing practice.

15. Beyond the Product: Symbolic Barriers to Sustainable Consumption *(Chair Prof. Kuester)**

Consumers evaluate sustainable products not only for their functional benefits, such as durability or performance, but also for their symbolic meanings, which can strongly influence acceptance or rejection. In some cases, these meanings act as barriers: eco-friendly products may be perceived as low-status, politically charged, or misaligned with gender identity. For example, the "green feminine" stereotype frames sustainable choices as feminine, potentially discouraging adoption among men. This seminar thesis will (1) define and categorize symbolic barriers to sustainable consumption, (2) review empirical evidence on their influence across product categories, and (3) examine the psychological and social mechanisms driving these effects. Finally, (4) it will outline implications for marketing research and practice aiming to reduce symbolic resistance and foster broader adoption.

16. Browsing in a Crowd: The Subtle Impact of Other Shoppers on Purchase Choices *(Chair of Prof. Homburg)**

The presence of other shoppers in retail environments creates a form of social presence that can subtly influence consumer behavior without direct interaction. This seminar paper aims to review theoretical perspectives and empirical research on how the mere presence of others affects shoppers' emotions, perceptions of store atmosphere, decision-making processes, and purchasing patterns. Furthermore, it is expected to provide insights into how retailers should optimize their retail strategies and what implications arise for multichannel retailers.

17. Capturing and Sharing Experiences: The Impact of Sharing Intentions on Enjoyment and Memory *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

In the digital age, people frequently take photos or videos during experiences, either to preserve memories for themselves or to share them with others. Research suggests that the intention to share—particularly online—can reduce immersion and enjoyment, potentially "ruining" the moment. However, less is known about how different sharing contexts (e.g., online vs. offline, public vs. personal sharing) influence the experience itself. This seminar

thesis could explore how the intention and mode of sharing affect individuals' enjoyment, memory, and sense of connection during and after the event.

18. Consumer Preferences for Providing Personal Information to Firms *(Chair Prof. Kraus)*

This study investigates whether consumers prefer to provide their personal information or let the firm scrape it from other sources, and the reasons behind this decision. What factors (moderators) affect this decision? This study will employ empirical research through interviews and online experiments.

19. Drivers and Barriers to Sustainable Food Consumption: A Literature Review *(Chair Prof. Kuester)**

Sustainable food choices, such as adopting plant-based diets or purchasing locally produced goods, are shaped by a complex set of factors. While some consumers are motivated by environmental concern, health benefits, or social norms, others face barriers such as higher perceived costs, limited availability, or identity-related resistance. This seminar thesis aims to (1) define and categorize key drivers and barriers to sustainable food consumption, (2) review psychological, social, and situational factors influencing consumer choices in this domain, (3) examine how these factors interact across different consumer segments and product categories, and (4) derive implications for marketing and policy interventions that can promote sustainable dietary behaviors while addressing obstacles to change.

20. Field-Proven Nudges: Behavioral Design in Practice *(Chair Prof. Kuester)**

As behavioral economics continues to influence public policy and commercial decision-making, the use of nudges—subtle changes in choice architectures to influence behavior without restricting options—has become widespread. While many studies demonstrate nudging effects in controlled environments, recent research calls for closer attention to real-world applications. Field studies, which examine nudging interventions under naturalistic conditions with actual consumers, offer critical insights into the practical effectiveness, durability, and contextual sensitivity of behavioral interventions. This seminar thesis aims to (1) define and categorize different types of nudges, (2) review empirical findings from field

studies across domains such as health, sustainability, and finance, (3) analyze methodological strengths and limitations of nudge interventions in real-world settings, and (4) derive implications for policy design, ethics, and behavioral strategy in applied contexts.

21. Incentives That Drive Change: The Role of Government Policy in Electric Vehicle Adoption *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

Governments aim to accelerate the shift from combustion to electric mobility, and public incentives play a central role in shaping this consumer behavior. From purchase subsidies and tax exemptions to charging infrastructure and regulatory mandates, these policies vary widely across countries. But which measures truly work, and under what conditions? While some incentives spark immediate sales boosts, others show more subtle long-term effects. This paper analyzes the effectiveness of different incentive types and explores how national context, policy mix, and timing influence EV adoption rates. The paper aims to identify what works, where, and why.

22. Intersectional Blind Spots in Consumer Research: The Case of Gender and Ethnicity *(Chair Prof. Kuester)* *

Consumer research has thoroughly investigated how gender and ethnicity influence consumer experiences and responses. However, these studies typically consider the role of gender and ethnicity in isolation. Intersectionality refers to a more recent and still emerging approach that examines how multiple identity dimensions overlap and jointly shape consumer behavior, for example how marketing messages are perceived by women of color (PoC) compared to perceptions based solely on gender or ethnicity. Although this perspective is increasingly acknowledged, it remains underrepresented in empirical marketing research. This seminar thesis aims to first (1) provide a concise overview of literature that examines gender and ethnicity as separate factors in consumer research. Next, (2) the growing but still limited body of intersectional research that considers these dimensions in combination shall be reviewed. On this basis, (3) the thesis should derive implications for future research aiming to adopt an intersectional lens on consumer

behavior. Finally, (4) the thesis shall briefly outline how brands can translate these insights into meaningful and inclusive communication strategies.

23. Neurocognitive Influences of Social Environments in Marketing *(Chair Prof. Kraus)*

This paper examines how social networks and environmental cues shape behavior through neurocognitive mechanisms such as mirror neurons. It examines how stakeholders develop attitudes, preferences, and brand perceptions based on the behaviors and emotions they observe in their social networks. The analysis highlights the significance of understanding these subconscious influences when crafting marketing messages designed to evoke social imitation and emotional resonance.

24. Political Ideology and Consumer Behavior: A Research Agenda *(Chair Prof. Kuester)**

Political ideology has gained increasing attention as a factor shaping consumer behavior. Consumer research in this area builds on foundational work in political psychology, which highlights systematic differences between progressive and conservative individuals, for example, in their moral reasoning and cognitive processing. The goal of the thesis is to develop a structured research agenda that helps advance the understanding of political ideology as a driver of marketplace behavior. To this end, this seminar thesis shall (1) briefly introduce essential conceptual foundations and provide a short overview of empirical research on how ideology shapes consumer behavior. Its main objective is to (2) synthesize recent insights from political psychology and derive novel, theory-driven research questions relevant to advancing the field of consumer research. Finally, the thesis shall (3) reflect on the practical significance of these research directions, for example, in terms of market segmentation, targeting, or brand positioning.

25. Price? Range? Charging Networks? Identifying Purchase Criteria in the Transition Phase from ICE to EVs *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

The transition from combustion engines (ICE) to electric vehicles (EVs) is reshaping consumer priorities. What drives purchasing decisions in this new era? Is it the affordability of EVs, their driving range, charging infrastructure, or environmental benefits? While early adopters

prioritized innovativeness and tech-savvy features, today's buyers are placing increasing emphasis on price and total cost of ownership. This paper focuses on the evolving decision-making criteria as automakers balance affordability with performance and discover how these factors shape the pace of the EV revolution.

26. Selling Under Pressure: Exploring the Mental Health Landscape of B2B Sales Professionals *(Chair Prof. Homburg)**

The high-pressure environment of B2B sales is often characterized by intense performance expectations, long sales cycles, and constant client-facing responsibilities. While these demands can drive productivity, they also contribute to elevated stress levels, emotional exhaustion, and burnout among sales professionals. Despite growing awareness of workplace mental health, the unique challenges faced in B2B sales contexts remain underexplored in academic literature and business practice. Against this backdrop the goals of this seminar paper are (1) examining the mental health landscape within B2B sales roles by identifying key stressors, (2) outline organizational support mechanisms and (3) outlines areas for further research and practical recommendations to foster a healthier, more sustainable sales environment.

27. Signals That Sell: How Firms Shape Consumer Responses through Strategic Communication *(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

In markets characterized by information asymmetry, consumers rely on signals—such as brand reputation, certifications, product labels, and expert endorsements—to infer unobservable product attributes. Drawing on signaling theory, this seminar thesis explores how firms use strategic signals to shape consumer perceptions, trust, and purchase intentions. The aims are to (1) review and synthesize academic literature on signaling theory in consumer behavior research, (2) categorize different types of signals for shaping different consumer responses, and (3) provide managerial implications for designing credible and impactful signals in marketing communication.

28. The effect of asking 'Why' vs. 'Why Not' *(Chair Prof. Kraus)*

This research question explores the psychological mechanism behind asking 'Why' or 'Why not' in a consumer context. This research will explore a) which defaults get triggered when we ask 'Why' vs. 'Why not', and b) how we can leverage that to improve consumer well-being. This empirical research will employ qualitative (interviews) as well as online experiments to test the research questions.

29. Tracking the Mind: The Use of Event-Related Potentials in Marketing *(Chair Prof. Kraus)*

Event-Related Potentials (ERPs) are brain responses measured by electroencephalography (EEG) that are time-locked to specific cognitive events, such as seeing a stimulus. With their high temporal resolution, ERPs allow researchers to track the brain's activity in milliseconds, making them a valuable tool in marketing and behavioral research. The seminar paper aims to explore the role of ERPs in understanding consumer psychology by comparing different ERP studys. The focus is on how specific ERP components (P3, N400 and Mu suppression) are used to investigate how people evaluate marketing messages or misinformation, especially in social settings.

30. Understanding and Addressing Public Procurement: An Exploration of Public Buyer Behavior and Its Strategic Sales Implications *(Chair Prof. Homburg)**

Governments spend approximately $11 trillion annually on public procurement, representing 13% of the global gross domestic product. Consequently, the public sector offers vast opportunities for private companies. However, selling to public institutions presents unique challenges for firms due to the distinctive characteristics of public procurement, including public buyers who may have different procurement motives and face different conditions than buyers from private companies. This raises questions about the factors driving public buyer behavior and the strategic implications for sellers in addressing these drivers. The aim of this thesis is to (1) review and synthesize relevant academic literature on business-to-government exchanges, (2) to discuss the role and behavior of public buyers within the procurement process, and (3) outline future research directions.

31. Understanding Brand Boycotts: A Literature Review of Drivers and Consumer Reactions

(Chair Prof. Kuester)*

When Bud Light partnered with a transgender influencer in 2023, the company faced widespread calls for a boycott from conservative consumers. Such cases illustrate how brand boycotts have become an increasingly visible form of consumer resistance. Recent studies suggest that these boycotts are driven by a complex interplay of emotional, moral, and identity-based motivations. After (1) laying the conceptual foundations of brand boycotts, this seminar thesis (2) shall review relevant research on the psychological and behavioral drivers of boycotts. It shall also review the forms in which boycott behavior is expressed and sustained, including public signaling, withdrawal, and long-term disengagement. Finally, the thesis (3) should identify promising directions for future research and (4) reflect on the practical implications for brand management and communication in a polarized marketplace.

32. Utility vs. Enjoyment: The Effectiveness of (Gen)AI in Hedonic vs. Utilitarian Product Marketing *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

AI is increasingly used to personalize marketing for both pleasure-oriented (hedonic) and need-based (utilitarian) products. But does AI work equally well in both domains? This seminar paper explores the differential impact of AI-generated recommendations, product descriptions, or ad content depending on the nature of the product, and how consumers perceive authenticity, usefulness, and enjoyment in these contexts.

33. When Bias Fades: The Role of Expertise and Ingroup Membership in Gender Stereotype Attenuation *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

Gender stereotypes frequently affect how individuals evaluate others, especially in domains traditionally associated with one gender. Previous research indicates that such biases may be attenuated when the target is perceived as an expert or as a member of the evaluator's ingroup (e.g., same gender or shared identity). This seminar thesis will investigate whether stereotypical judgments are reduced when individuals assess others who and are experts

versus non-experts, or belong to the ingroup versus outgroup. The aim is to better understand how expertise and group affiliation can mitigate biased evaluations.

34. Will I Make It? Understanding Range Anxiety as a Barrier to EV Adoption *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

As electric vehicles become more mainstream, psychological barriers like range anxiety (the fear of running out of battery before reaching a charging point) remain a key challenge to widespread adoption. While battery technology and charging networks have improved, many consumers still overestimate the risk of being stranded. This thesis explores the psychological roots of range anxiety, and how it differs across user segments. By reviewing existing behavioral and empirical research, the paper aims to understand how range anxiety affects EV adoption and what strategies can help mitigate it.

III. Price Management

35. AI-Based Pricing in B2B Markets (Chair Prof. Homburg)*

This seminar thesis reviews research on AI-based pricing in B2B markets, synthesizing insights from pricing strategy, decision-making, and technology adoption literatures. It examines how algorithmic and hybrid human–machine systems influence pricing approaches, buyer perceptions, and firm outcomes, and identifies conceptual gaps for future research.

36. Consumer Reactions to Dynamic Pricing in Physical Retail *(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

This seminar thesis examines consumer acceptance of dynamic pricing in small and midsize physical retailers. It reviews studies on fairness perceptions, transparency, and trust to identify conditions under which price adjustments foster loyalty versus resistance.

37. Pricing Power in B2B Markets *(Chair Prof. Homburg)**

This seminar thesis examines what enables pricing power in B2B settings. It integrates insights on value-based selling, relationship quality, and industry structure to identify conditions under which suppliers can resist price pressure.

IV. Product and Innovation Management

38. AI as an Innovation Catalyst? Exploring AI's Strategic Value for Innovation Departments *(Chair Prof. Kuester)**

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly recognized as a transformative force within innovation departments across a wide range of industries. Beyond its role in new product development, AI has the potential to enhance a wide range of innovation-related tasks—such as trend forecasting, idea screening, and creative support. This seminar thesis shall explore the strategic and operational relevance of AI within innovation departments, with the goal of identifying where and how AI can meaningfully contribute to more successful and efficient innovation outcomes. The thesis should first (1) outline the core functions of an innovation department and map the points at which AI technologies—such as generative AI, machine learning, or natural language processing—are currently being deployed. Drawing on recent academic literature from marketing and innovation research, the thesis shall (2) analyze which types of innovations (e.g., incremental vs. radical, product vs. service, physical vs. digital) are particularly suited for AI support. Furthermore, the thesis should (3) evaluate both the opportunities and the limitations of integrating AI into innovation practices. Finally, the thesis shall (4) provide actionable recommendations for innovation managers and marketing scholars, identify limitations and outline promising directions for future research on AI in innovation contexts.

39. Communicating the Future: Liquid Innovation in the Video Game Industry *(Chair Prof. Kuester)**

In contemporary innovation environments, the boundaries between development, delivery, and use of innovations are increasingly fluid. The concept of liquid innovation captures this shift by describing innovation as an open, unfolding process that continues beyond product launch and is shaped through ongoing communication and stakeholder interaction. Nowhere is this more visible than in the video game industry. Modern games are rarely "finished" at release. Instead, developers routinely communicate and monetize planned-but-not-yet-realized content—such as downloadable expansions, seasonal updates, or entire live-service roadmaps—at launch. These forward-looking communication practices turn innovation-in-progress into a marketable feature. This seminar thesis aims to (1) conceptualize liquid innovation as it applies to the ongoing development of video games, (2) analyze how studios communicate future updates and content to players, particularly at launch, (3) examine how this shapes player perceptions, expectations and continued engagement, and (4) derive implications for innovation management and communication in dynamic, service-based product ecosystems.

40. Culture by Design: Matching Innovation Profiles to Departments *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

Innovation thrives in certain cultural environments - but which cultural profiles truly foster creativity and breakthrough ideas? This seminar thesis aims to identify and review empirical research on cultural characteristics that support or hinder innovation. Special attention will be given to how these profiles align with different departmental responsibilities within organizations - for example, whether R&D, marketing, or operations benefit from distinct cultural attributes. The goal is to provide a structured overview of which cultural settings best fit which types of teams, offering a roadmap for organizations to tailor their cultures for optimal innovation output.

41. Customer Complaints and Companies – An Overview and Research Agenda *(Chair Prof. Kuester)**

Customer complaints offer valuable insights for improving customer satisfaction, operational efficiency, and innovation. While existing research acknowledges the potential of complaint management systems, important questions remain about the factors that shape how firms respond to, learn from, and benefit from complaints. This seminar thesis aims at (1) synthesizing the key findings and conceptual models from the marketing and service management literature, with particular attention to moderators and boundary conditions such as complaint severity, channel type (online/offline), organizational response, or firm characteristics. Based on this review, the thesis shall (2) identify relevant moderators and mediators potentially influencing complaint management outcomes, such as customer retention, trust restoration, organizational learning, and innovation. (3) The thesis should propose theoretically grounded hypotheses on when and how complaint management is most effective, and (4) outline a comprehensive future research agenda and practical implications for marketing and innovation managers.

42. Hedonic or Helpful? Exploring the Role of Product Category in Personalized Marketing *(Chair Prof. Homburg)**

As personalization is highly relevant, yet its effectiveness may vary significantly across different product categories. This seminar paper aims to investigate how consumers respond to personalization efforts depending on whether the promoted product is hedonic (pleasure-oriented) or utilitarian (function-oriented), and whether it involves high or low consumer involvement. The goal of this seminar paper is to elaborate on suitable theoretical frameworks to explain this theorized relationship and to synthesize existing literature in the field to identify overall implications for personalized marketing strategies across different product segments.

43. One Voice or Many Minds? The Role of Cultural Granularity in Driving Innovation *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

Organizational culture is often seen as a key ingredient for fostering innovation - but should a company aim for one unified culture, or can diverse team-level cultures spark better results? This seminar paper seeks to review and synthesize existing empirical research on the granularity of culture within organizations and its impact on innovation outcomes. By comparing findings on the effectiveness of a single, shared corporate culture versus multiple distinct team cultures - or a hybrid "best of both worlds"-umbrella approach - the paper will critically discuss the advantages and drawbacks of each model, providing insights into how organizations can structure culture to maximize innovation.

44. The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Innovation: A Review of AI-Driven Transformation in New Product Development *(Chair Prof. Homburg)**

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is emerging as a foundational technology of the 21st century, offering vast potential across industries. Its generative and adaptive capabilities have accelerated the identification and exploitation of new opportunities by entrepreneurs and innovators. This seminar thesis aims to (1) systematically review and synthesize academic literature on the role of AI in New Product Development (NPD), and (2) explore the various ways AI is reshaping innovation processes, highlighting practical applications and implications for contemporary innovation management.

V. Brand and Communications Management

45. Customer Engagement in B2B Social Media Marketing *(Chair Prof. Homburg)**

In today's digitally connected landscape, social media has emerged as a critical tool for B2B marketing. Unlike traditional B2B communication channels, social media enables companies to engage with stakeholders in real time and nurture long-term partnerships. The shift from transactional to relational marketing makes customer engagement on social platforms not just a complementary activity but a strategic imperative. As decision-makers increasingly turn to digital sources for information, peer recommendations, and brand insights,

understanding how to effectively drive engagement in the B2B context becomes essential for maintaining competitiveness. Against this backdrop, the objectives of the seminar paper are: (1) to examine the key drivers of engagement through a review of current literature, (2) while also addressing the unique challenges of engaging professional audiences compared to consumer-focused markets, and (3) to outline areas for further research.

46. Fake News in Consumer Markets – Social Context and the Perception of Misinformation *(Chair Prof. Kraus)*

In recent years, fake news has extended beyond politics and entered consumer markets, where it influences how people perceive brands, products, and trends. This seminar paper aims to explore how fake news is perceived in consumer settings, with a particular focus on how the presence of others (being alone versus in a group) influences belief formation and critical thinking. The paper should review and discuss relevant theories and empirical studies as well as how companies and platforms can address the risks posed by fake consumer news. By analyzing how individuals versus groups respond to fake news, the paper aims to shed light on the vulnerabilities of modern consumers - and how social context may either amplify or buffer these effects.

47. Framing and Communicating Sustainability: Strategies for Building Trust and Shaping Customer Perceptions *(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

As sustainability becomes a key differentiator for brands, how sustainability is communicated—both in content and framing—plays a crucial role in shaping customer trust, perceptions of value, and purchase intentions. This seminar thesis investigates communication techniques (e.g., storytelling, certification labels) and framing strategies (e.g., opportunity vs. risk) used to present sustainability efforts in B2C and B2B markets. The aims are to (1) review and synthesize academic literature on sustainability communication and message framing, (2) analyze how different communication approaches affect customer attitudes and decision-making, and (3) provide managerial implications and future research directions for designing impactful sustainability communication strategies.

48. Influencer Marketing: Strategies and Impact on Brand Engagement *(Chair Prof. Homburg)**

In an era defined by digital connectivity and content saturation, influencer marketing has emerged as one of the most powerful tools for brands to cut through the noise and build authentic connections with target audiences. As consumers increasingly rely on social proof, peer recommendations, and relatable content when making purchasing decisions, traditional advertising is losing ground to more personalized, trust-based forms of communication. Influencers, whether niche micro-creators or high-reach macro-personalities, serve as intermediaries between brands and consumers, shaping perceptions, generating engagement, and driving conversions across platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and X. The strategic use of influencer marketing not only enhances visibility but also allows brands to tap into communities, and create tailored campaigns that resonate with specific segments. Against this backdrop, the seminar paper aims to: (1) examine how various influencer marketing strategies impact brand engagement and consumer behavior across digital platforms; (2) identify best practices for brands aiming to optimize the effectiveness and authenticity of their influencer marketing efforts; and (3) outline key areas for future research to address current gaps and guide the continued evolution of influencer marketing.

49. More Than Just Words: Typography as a Visual-Verbal Mode in Advertising *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

This seminar thesis will review the body of literature concerning typography as a persuasive multimodal element in advertising. It will synthesize research that treats typefaces not just as carriers of text, but as visual images with their own personalities and connotations. The review will examine scholarly findings on how font choices (e.g., serif vs. sans-serif, script vs. slab) have evolved and how they are used to build brand identity (e.g., luxury, tradition, innovation). It will critically assess the methodologies researchers have used to measure the impact of typography on consumer perception, brand attitude, and purchase intention. Henderson, P. W., Giese, J. L., & Cote, J. A. (2004). "Impression management using typeface design." Journal of Marketing, 68(4), 60-72.

Doyle, J. R., & Bottomley, P. A. (2004). "Font appropriateness and brand choice." Journal of Business Research, 57(9), 942-950.

50. Nation Branding: A Literature Review on Strategies and Challenges in Global Perception Management *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

In a globalized world, countries increasingly compete for attention, investment, tourism, and talent — and they do so using tools familiar from commercial marketing. This seminar thesis explores the concept of nation branding, focusing on how countries manage their international image. Students will conduct a literature review to examine the theoretical foundations and practical approaches. Key topics may include identity construction, soft power, country-of-origin effects, digital diplomacy, and crisis communication. The thesis should also consider the unique challenges involved in branding entire nations — including diverse stakeholder interests, cultural complexity, and geopolitical influences. The aim is to synthesize existing research and identify opportunities and limitations in current nation branding strategies, with implications for both policymakers and international marketing practitioners.

51. Operationalizing Purpose-Driven Branding through Performance Metrics *(Chair Prof. Kraus)*

This study proposes a framework for assessing whether purpose-driven brand narratives effectively translate into measurable value. By linking the latent variables of contribution, authenticity, inspiration, and guidance to both qualitative and quantitative KPIs, the paper offers marketers practical tools for bridging the gap between visionary branding and tangible outcomes, underscoring the strategic relevance of measurable KPIs for long-term success.

VI. Sales Management

52. Artificial Intelligence in B2B Sales: Opportunities and Challenges *(Chair Prof. Homburg)**

Artificial intelligence (AI) technologies are increasingly adopted in B2B sales. In recent years, AI applications such as lead scoring and content analytics have become prominent tools in the sales process. By automating routine tasks, enabling data-driven decision-making, and enhancing personalization, AI offers new opportunities for value creation in B2B selling contexts. At the same time, the integration of AI into B2B sales processes presents substantial challenges, including the potential loss of trust in customer relationships. Against this backdrop, the aim of this thesis is to (1) review and synthesize relevant academic literature on the application of AI in B2B sales, (2) identify the main opportunities and challenges associated with its implementation, and (3) derive implications for sales practice and future research.

53. B2B Social Selling: Determinants and Consequences of Social Media Usage *(Chair Prof. Homburg)**

Digital technologies have significantly changed the way B2B selling is conducted. One particularly relevant development in this context is the rise of social selling, a sales approach in which salespeople use social media platforms to identify potential customers, build networks, and foster relationships. While both practitioners and academics have documented the potential of B2B social selling, a deeper understanding is needed of how social selling can be implemented effectively and when it leads to improved sales outcomes. This development raises important questions about key factors that influence the use of social selling in B2B settings and its performance implications. The aim of this thesis is to (1) review and synthesize relevant literature on social selling in B2B markets, (2) analyze key determinants and consequences of social media usage in B2B sales, and (3) derive implications for practitioners and future research.

54. Cultural Differences in Sales: Adapting Approaches to Western, Asian, and Latin American Markets *(Chair Prof. Homburg)**

Cultural variation significantly shapes sales practices across global markets. This seminar thesis aims to (1) review and synthesize literature on cultural influences in B2B and B2C selling, (2) compare how sales strategies, communication styles, and relationship-building differ across Western, Asian, and Latin American contexts, and (3) derive actionable recommendations for culturally sensitive sales management and identify directions for future research.

55. Leveraging Transparency: The Role of Digital Product Passports as Selling Arguments *(Chair Prof. Homburg)**

In the context of increasing sustainability demands and regulatory pressures, transparency has become a critical factor in B2B selling. Digital Product Passports (DPPs) are emerging as a key tool to enhance transparency, offering structured, digitalized information on product lifecycle, origin, and environmental impact. As such, DPPs are not only compliance tools but also potential value propositions in B2B sales processes. Therefore, the goal of this seminar thesis is to (1) examine the current role of transparency and DPPs in B2B markets, (2) analyze how DPPs can be strategically positioned and communicated as value-adding selling arguments in B2B sales, and (3) develop recommendations for companies on how to integrate DPP-related transparency effectively into their sales strategies.

56. Shaping Business Relations Through Transparency: The Influence of Digital Product Passports on Buyer-Seller Relationships *(Chair Prof. Homburg)**

With growing regulatory and market-driven demands for transparency, Digital Product Passports (DPPs) are gaining relevance in B2B industries. By providing comprehensive, standardized product information, DPPs are expected to influence how companies interact with one another, potentially changing the nature and quality of buyer-seller relationships. Therefore, the goal of this seminar thesis is to (1) investigate how increased transparency through DPPs may influence B2B buyer-seller relationships, (2) identify which aspects of

these relationships are most affected and in what ways, and (3) derive implications for how companies can strategically use DPPs to manage and shape their business relationships.

VII. Digital Marketing

57. Design and Communication of AI-Generated Summaries: Insights from Existing Research
(Chair Prof. Stahl)

This seminar paper aims to provide a comprehensive review of the existing literature on the design and communication strategies of AI-generated summaries. The focus is on how presentation elements such as format, level of detail, language style, and contextual factors influence consumer perceptions and responses. The paper should cover key empirical findings and theoretical frameworks, as well as identify current gaps in research. Furthermore, it is expected to discuss practical implications for companies seeking to integrate AI-generated content into their marketing and communication strategies in an effective and ethical manner.

58. Drivers of Sharing Positive vs. Negative eWOM *(Chair Prof. Kraus)*

In this seminar thesis, the student explores the psychological, emotional, and contextual factors that drive consumers to share either positive or negative electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) online. The thesis summarizes anticipated benefits (e.g., social approval, emotional relief) and perceived costs (e.g., retaliation, loss of privacy) associated with eWOM sharing. It further discusses how these drivers differ depending on whether the content is positive or negative, offering implications for marketers and platform designers.

59. From Mass Marketing to Hyper-Personalization: A Systematic Review on the Evolution and Future of Customer-Centric Strategies* *(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

Hyper-personalization is transforming marketing by using technologies like Artificial Intelligence and real-time data to create highly individualized customer experiences. This marks a shift from traditional mass marketing toward more dynamic, data-driven strategies. As consumer expectations for relevance and personalization grow, companies are increasingly adopting AI-driven tools to tailor content, offers, and interactions. This seminar thesis aims to

(1) review the academic literature on the evolution from mass marketing to hyper-personalization, (2) examine the technologies and strategies enabling this shift, and (3) discuss future implications, including ethical and managerial challenges. The goal is to provide a structured overview of how customer-centric strategies are evolving and what this means for the future of marketing.

60. Generative Engine Optimization: How Can Firms Influence LLM-Based Recommendations? *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

As more consumers rely on chatbots like ChatGPT for product and service recommendations, traditional search engine optimization (SEO) faces new challenges. Unlike Google, LLMs generate answers rather than rank links, raising the question of how firms can ensure visibility in AI-generated content. This seminar thesis should explore how LLM-based recommendation mechanisms work and how firms might adapt their digital strategies to remain discoverable in this new landscape. It should also assess whether existing SEO techniques are still relevant or need to be fundamentally rethought.

61. Influencer Branding and Impression Management: The Role of Past Collaborations *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

Influencers often engage in multiple brand collaborations, shaping how followers perceive their authenticity, credibility, and personal brand. Prior research highlights that audiences interpret past partnerships as part of an influencer's impression management strategy, influencing trust and content engagement. This seminar thesis will investigate how the number and nature of previous brand collaborations affect audience perceptions of the influencer and their content. The goal is to explore whether there is an optimal level of collaboration that balances commercial appeal with perceived authenticity.

62. Marketing 4.0: Artificial Intelligence in Business-to-Business Marketing *(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

Artificial intelligence (AI) has the potential to significantly reshape B2B marketing—from lead scoring and customer segmentation to content personalization, pricing, and predictive analytics. As firms strive to navigate increasingly complex buyer journeys and data-rich environments, AI offers new opportunities for enhancing efficiency, precision, and responsiveness. At the same time, many companies face barriers such as limited data quality, lack of AI expertise, organizational resistance, and ethical concerns. This seminar thesis aims to (1) review and synthesize academic literature on AI applications in B2B marketing, (2) analyze the impact of AI on key marketing activities and buyer–seller interactions, (3) examine current challenges and adoption barriers, and (4) explore managerial implications and future directions for the strategic use of AI in B2B contexts.

63. Mitigating Bias in Online Reviews *(Chair Prof. Kraus)*

In this seminar thesis, the student introduces and discusses key biases in online review platforms, such as polarity and selection bias. The thesis summarizes causes and consequences of these biases and discusses ways to reduce them, including incentives and design interventions.

64. Seeing the Signal: The Role of Labeling AI-Generated Content *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

This seminar paper aims to provide an in-depth review of the existing literature on the impact of labeling AI-generated content, focusing on both consumer perceptions and company perspectives. Key areas of analysis include transparency and disclosure strategies, consumer trust and perceptions of authenticity, ethical considerations, and the role of consumer characteristics and contextual factors. The paper will summarize major empirical findings, identify current research gaps, and propose directions for future studies. Practical implications for companies aiming to responsibly implement AI-generated content in marketing and communication will also be addressed.

65. The Experience of Being a Minority Member Online *(Chair Prof. Kraus)*

This thesis explores the experiences of minorities within digital environments, where they frequently encounter discrimination (e.g., workplace, hiring practices, sharing economy). It focuses on how minorities are perceived online, how their content is received, and also the ways in which they express themselves in digital spaces.

66. The Gender Gap in Generative AI *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

As generative AI tools like ChatGPT become widely used, questions arise about whether men and women engage with them differently. Do they use these tools for different purposes, interpret results in distinct ways, or trust the output to varying degrees? This seminar thesis should review existing research on gender differences in technology adoption and information processing, and explore how these patterns apply to the use of generative AI. It should also consider the implications for AI design and marketing strategies.

67. The Impact of Digital Comparison Culture on Consumers Self-Perception and Consumption *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

In today's hyper-curated digital world, consumers are not just bombarded with products, but with idealized lifestyles that are promoted by peers, influencers, and brands. This thesis investigates the 3 social and psychological dynamics behind comparison culture in social media environments. Drawing from research on social comparison theory, identity consumption, and self-perception, this paper explores how curated content and influencer portrayals foster unrealistic standards that impact how consumer's self-perception and decision-making. These comparison processes can influence identity construction, self-regulation, and consumption motives (e.g., status signaling, identity buying). The paper aims to contribute by integrating findings across psychology and marketing and highlighting practical implications for consumers and marketeers.

68. Too Personal to Promote? Personalized Product Recommendations and Consumer Embarrassment in Retail Contexts* *(Chair of Prof. Homburg)*

As digital technologies increasingly blur the lines between convenience and surveillance, privacy-sensitive products pose unique challenges for both marketers and consumers. This seminar paper aims to shed light on the intersection of two literature streams — personalization and embarrassment — by reviewing relevant studies and categorizing findings to derive guidelines for marketing strategies tailored to products with varying sensitivity levels.

VIII. Customer Relationship Management

69. Effect of (Active vs. Passive) Transparency About 'Right to Delete' on Consumers' Willingness to Share Data with the Firm, and Their Relationship with the Firm *(Chair Prof. Kraus)*

Privacy regulations have required firms to give consumers the option to delete their data from the firm's databases. This research explores whether actively (vs. passively) offering this option to consumers has any effect on the extent of their information sharing (i.e., how much data they delete), their trust, satisfaction, and loyalty towards the firm. This study will employ empirical research through interviews and online experiments.

70. From Incentives to Partnerships: A Literature Review on Customer Loyalty Strategies in B2B Environments *(Chair Prof. Homburg)***

Customer loyalty programs have long been a key tool in B2C marketing, but their role in B2B markets is gaining increasing attention. In B2B contexts, where relationships are often high-value, long-term, and complex, loyalty programs must go beyond simple rewards to support trust, service quality, and strategic alignment. This seminar thesis aims to (1) review and synthesize academic literature on B2B loyalty programs, (2) examine how they influence customer retention and relationship management, and (3) explore the challenges and success factors unique to B2B settings. The goal is to understand better how loyalty

strategies can create sustainable value in business relationships and contribute to competitive advantage.

71. Global Key Account Management and Artificial Intelligence: Opportunities and Challenges *(Chair Prof. Homburg)**

Artificial intelligence is reshaping how firms manage global key accounts by enabling data-driven insights and automation. This seminar thesis aims to (1) review and categorize existing research on the use of AI in global key account management (GKAM), (2) explore how AI affects coordination, customer interaction, and decision-making in complex international settings, and (3) derive implications for practice and propose directions for future research.

IX. Marketing Theory and Research Methods

72. High-Quality Research Practices in Marketing: Ensuring Transparency, Rigor, and Ethical Integrity in the Age of AI *(Chair Prof. Kuester)**

In marketing research, scientific excellence depends not only on innovative contributions but also on methodological rigor, transparency, and ethically responsible practices. This seminar thesis explores what constitutes "high-quality research practices" in marketing, focusing on open science, traceability, and the responsible integration of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI). The literature review should (1) outline key dimensions of high-quality research, including transparent documentation of data collection and analysis, open access to research materials, and the role of replication and open science initiatives. Moreover, the thesis shall (2) critically evaluate current guidelines and initiatives (e.g., Journal of Marketing Research's Research Transparency Initiative) and assess their relevance for marketing scholars. A further focus will be on the ethical use of AI tools in academic work, such as literature review, text generation, or data analysis. The thesis should (3) highlight both opportunities and risks of these technologies and discuss how marketing research can benefit from their responsible application. Finally, it should (4) develop recommendations for marketing researchers, identify limitations, and suggest avenues for future research.

73. Predictive Evaluation in Marketing: Leveraging the power of Graph Network Analysis *(Chair Prof. Kraus)*

Graph theory is a branch of mathematics examining the structures modeling the relationship between objects. It is a powerful tool for discovering valuable information about relationships in complex data, representing significant business opportunity. In the social sciences, graph analysis been applied within predictive analytics frameworks, in contexts ranging from predicting advertising response or product adoption to forecasting corporate default.

74. The Evolution of Social Influence Theory: Applications and Adaptations in Marketing *(Chair Prof. Kraus)*

Originally developed in the 1950s, Social Influence Theory remains central to understanding how individuals shape and are shaped by the behavior of others in social contexts. Over time, the theory has been extended and adapted to reflect changing societal dynamics and evolving patterns. This seminar paper aims to explore, discuss and compare the theoretical evolution of Social Influence Theory and examine how its core concepts have been reinterpreted in marketing research. By reviewing key adaptations and current applications, the paper should assess the theory's relevance in understanding modern consumer decision-making and social dynamics in market environments.

75. The Evolution of Visual Rhetoric in Advertising *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

This thesis will conduct a systematic literature review on the changing nature of visual rhetoric in advertising. It will examine and synthesize scholarly work that has traced the evolution of visual styles, from illustration to digital imagery. The goal is to critically evaluate existing frameworks for analyzing visual persuasion, to summarize and contrast findings and to identify gaps in the current body of research.

Scott, L. M. (1994). "Images in advertising: The need for a theory of visual rhetoric." Journal of Consumer Research, 21(2), 252-273.

X. Marketing Analytics

76. Innovative Approaches to Marketing Using Recommender Systems *(Chair Prof. Kraus)*

Recommender Systems are used in marketing to personalize consumer interactions. By leveraging advanced algorithms, it's possible to enhance marketing strategies, improve consumer engagement, and optimize campaign effectiveness through tailored recommendations. This thesis investigates the use of recommender systems in the marketing domain, as well as the different types and use cases of these models.

77. Machine Learning Approaches to Predicting Consumer and Retail Metrics *(Chair Prof. Kraus)*

Marketing analytics frequently utilize multiple machine learning models, each possessing unique properties that make them suitable for specific scenarios. Fine-tuning these models is a crucial aspect of data mining processes. In data-driven marketing, the approach involves fitting several models to a given case, tuning their hyperparameters, evaluating their performance, and explaining algorithms' output.