

## MKT 7X0 Research Seminar FSS 2026 – Topics

*Area Marketing & Sales*

Below is a list of **63 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. Market Theory and Research Methods
- X. Marketing Analytics

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

### **1. Agentic AI and Marketing: How to Make Agents Choose and Buy Your Product (Chair Prof. Stahl)**

As AI agents begin to make autonomous decisions for consumers, marketers face a new kind of buyer: machines. This seminar thesis should explore how marketing strategies must adapt to appeal not just to humans, but also to AI agents, e.g., by drawing on research related to algorithmic decision-making, search and generative engine optimization, and AI-mediated consumption.

### **2. Marketing in Real Time: Agility, Responsiveness, and Strategic Adaptation (Chair Prof. Stahl)**

This topic focuses on how firms respond once markets start moving. It emphasizes organizational capabilities, speed, and strategic responsiveness.

Digital technologies have accelerated market dynamics, forcing firms to respond to consumer behavior, competitors, and cultural events in near real time. This seminar paper reviews the literature on real-time marketing, marketing agility, and rapid strategic adaptation.

The review should synthesize research on:

- Marketing agility as a dynamic capability
- Real-time decision-making and responsiveness
- Strategic trade-offs between speed, consistency, and control
- The role of data, analytics, and organizational design in enabling real-time marketing

### **3. How Do Governmental Content Moderation Policies Influence Political Polarization on Social Media? (Chair Prof. Stahl)**

In response to rising political polarization and misinformation, governments and supranational authorities have introduced policies aimed at moderating online content, such as hate speech laws, misinformation regulations, and transparency requirements. While they are intended to protect democratic discourse, it is questionable whether state-led content moderation may also trigger legitimacy concerns or further polarization among users.

This seminar thesis aims to conduct a literature review examining how governmental content moderation policies influence political polarization on social media. The paper should review and synthesize empirical findings on the existing governmental content moderation policies and research that examines what potential effects they could have on polarization. Finally, it should identify open research questions and implications for policymakers and researchers.

**4. Impact as a Strategic Asset: Operational Mechanisms within Market-Oriented Business Models**

*(Chair Prof. Kraus)*

This paper conducts a rigorous and structured literature review to examine how “impact” is conceptualized and operationalized within different business models. Synthesizing contributions across strategic business and sustainability literatures, the study identifies core mechanisms through which impact is embedded into value propositions, value creation, and value capture. The review develops an integrative conceptual framework that clarifies definitional ambiguities and categorizes dominant operationalization approaches per impact business model.

**5. Trust That Holds: Authenticity as a Strategic Resource in Marketing Management (Chair Prof.**

*Kraus)*

This paper conducts a rigorous literature review to synthesize how authenticity is theorized as a foundational mechanism for trust in markets. Building on marketing strategy and management research your research integrated diverse insights from psychology, branding, relationship marketing, and organizational authenticity literatures, to systematically identify antecedents, dimensions, and outcomes of authentic trust-building. The resulting framework clarifies conceptual overlaps and inconsistencies, positioning authenticity as a strategic construct embedded in organizational decision-making.

**6. What Contribution Matters Where? Industry-Specific Perspectives on Meaningful Value**

*Creation (Chair Prof. Kraus)*

This paper presents a structured literature review on how “contribution” is defined, theorized, and strategically framed across different GICS industries within marketing and strategy research. By systematically analyzing industry-specific perspectives on value creation, stakeholder relevance, and societal expectations, the study develops a typology of contribution logics aligned with GICS sectors. The review advances theory by offering an industry-sensitive conceptualization of contribution and identifying patterns and tensions in existing strategy literature.

## II. Consumer Behavior and Psychology

### 7. The Green-Feminine Stereotype and Young Men's View of Sustainability: An Exploratory Study

*(Chair Prof. Kuester)*

Sustainable consumption is often seen as something “feminine,” linked to care, morality, and gentleness; a phenomenon also described as the “green-feminine” stereotype. Research shows that this stereotype can discourage some men to engage in sustainable behaviors because they fear these choices might not fit traditional masculine norms. At the same time, younger generations increasingly embrace more open and diverse forms of masculinity. This development raises the question of how young men today think about sustainability in relation to their own identity.

This seminar thesis aims to (1) connect research on sustainable consumption with work on masculinity and gendered stereotypes, (2) collect and qualitatively analyze interview-based accounts of young men discussing their views on sustainable consumption, (3) explore how they make sense of sustainability in light of different ideas of masculinity, and (4) derive implications for sustainability research and gender-sensitive marketing communication.

### 8. Generation Z and Sustainability: Everyday Meanings, Choices, and Ambivalences: A Small-Scale

*Qualitative Study (Chair Prof. Kuester)*

Generation Z is often described as strongly committed to sustainability, valuing environmental responsibility, ethical consumption, and social justice. At the same time, research also highlights gaps between these attitudes and actual everyday consumption, as well as considerable differences within this age group. This makes sustainability a topic that is shaped by personal values, identity, practical constraints, and the trade-offs young consumers face in daily life.

This seminar thesis aims to (1) connect research on sustainable consumption with generational and identity-based perspectives, (2) collect and qualitatively analyze interview-based accounts of Gen Z consumers discussing sustainability in everyday consumption situations, (3) explore how they talk about their motivations, choices, and ambivalences toward sustainable choices, and (4) derive implications for sustainability research and consumer-oriented policy and marketing interventions.

**9. Political Ideology and Sustainable Consumption Beyond Western Contexts: A Qualitative Exploration of Consumer Perspectives (Chair Prof. Kuester)**

Political ideology has been shown to shape sustainable consumption, with prior research indicating that politically progressive consumers tend to express stronger preferences than conservative consumers. However, most empirical evidence stems from Western contexts, particularly the United States, where sustainability is strongly politicized. As a result, it remains unclear whether these ideological patterns also apply to non-Western cultural contexts characterized by different political systems, cultural norms, and meanings of sustainability. This seminar thesis aims to (1) review and systematize relevant literature on political ideology and sustainable consumption, with particular attention to the assumptions and limitations of Western-based research, (2) collect and qualitatively analyze semi-structured interviews with consumers holding different ideological orientations in a non-Western context, focusing on how they perceive and interpret sustainable consumption, (3) explore similarities and differences between these qualitative insights and patterns documented in Western research, and (4) derive implications for future empirical research on political ideology and sustainability.

**10. Political Ideology and Mental Health App Adoption: A Qualitative Exploration of App Use Intentions (Chair Prof. Kuester)**

Political ideology has been shown to shape attitudes toward health, self-care, and help-seeking behavior, suggesting systematic differences in how individuals evaluate, accept and adopt mental health-related offerings. In recent years, mental health applications, such as meditation, mindfulness or digital therapy apps, have gained prominence as accessible tools to address psychological distress. Yet, adoption of these apps varies considerably across consumers. Emerging research indicates that political ideology may play an important role in how consumers perceive such mental health apps. This seminar thesis aims to (1) review and systematize relevant literature on political ideology, mental health attitudes, and the adoption of digital health technologies, (2) collect and qualitatively analyze semi-structured interviews with politically conservative and progressive consumers to examine how they perceive, justify, or reject the use of mental health applications, (3) identify potential drivers and barriers to mental health app adoption across ideological groups, and (4) derive implications for future research and the design and marketing of digital mental health services.

**11. New Opportunities in Mobile Sensing: The Role of Biometric Synchrony and Haptic Feedback in Mobile Omnichannel Retail (Chair Prof. Homburg)**

This paper offers a novel perspective on how bio-synchrony can reshape omnichannel retail and influence the way consumers perceive digital interventions. It explores how wearable devices can enhance the mobile retail experience by translating biometric signals, such as stress or arousal levels, into haptic feedback. Examining the intersection of body-driven cues and consumer interaction highlights both practical applications for personalized shopping and theoretical questions related to privacy and emotional responses.

**12. Gamification in Mobile Apps: How Personalized Discounts and Mini-Games Influence Consumer Behavior (Chair Prof. Homburg)**

Many companies today incorporate gamification into their mobile apps to enhance customer engagement, loyalty, and sales. Real-world examples include marketplace platforms such as Temu, as well as traditional retailers like dm and REWE. This paper investigates how gamification elements, such as personalized mini-games and discounts, influence consumer behavior. By reviewing the relevant literature, it seeks to examine the psychological mechanisms that drive engagement with these game-like features.

**13. The Emotional Cost of Selling: How Sales Job Demands Shape Salespeople's Well-Being (Chair Prof. Homburg)**

The B2B sales environment is marked by high performance pressure, extended sales cycles, and continuous customer-facing responsibilities. While these demands can stimulate productivity, they also expose sales professionals to heightened stress, emotional exhaustion, and burnout. Despite increasing attention to mental health in the workplace, the distinct challenges inherent in the sales profession remain insufficiently examined in both academic research and managerial practice. Against this backdrop, this seminar paper aims to (1) examine the mental health landscape of sales roles by identifying key occupational stressors, (2) outline organizational mechanisms that support salesperson well-being, and (3) highlight avenues for future research and practical recommendations to promote a healthier and more sustainable sales environment.

**14. Pay at a Cost? How Compensation Shapes Salespeople's Well-Being (Chair Prof. Homburg)**

Performance-based pay is a cornerstone of sales management, widely used to drive motivation, enhance productivity, and reward top-performing sales professionals. While such compensation structures can effectively align individual effort with organizational goals, they can also introduce significant pressure and stress, potentially impacting the mental health and well-being of salespeople. High targets, variable incentives, and dynamic reward schemes may increase emotional strain and create a trade-off between performance achievement and sustainable health. Against this backdrop, this seminar paper seeks to provide a comprehensive examination of compensation in sales by (1) exploring the mental health landscape of sales roles, (2) reviewing and differentiating key compensation schemes and their potential implications for motivation and well-being, and (3) identifying gaps in the literature and outlining avenues for future research to inform both theory and managerial practice.

**15. Strength in Differences: How Sales Team Composition Shapes Outcomes (Chair Prof. Homburg)**

Sales team composition is a critical determinant of both organizational performance and employee experience, with diversity increasingly recognized as a strategic asset. Teams that vary in gender, experience, cognitive styles, and cultural backgrounds can generate richer ideas, improve problem-solving, and enhance customer engagement. At the same time, diversity introduces challenges for collaboration, communication, and cohesion, which can affect both team outcomes and the well-being of individual sales professionals. Against this backdrop, this seminar paper aims to provide a comprehensive examination of diversity in sales teams by (1) exploring relevant literature within and outside the sales profession and (2) identifying gaps in the literature and proposing directions for future research to guide theory development and managerial practice in designing effective, inclusive sales teams.

**16. How Information Spreads. Diffusion Speed, Virality, and Network Dynamics (Chair Prof. Stahl)**

This topic examines how fast marketing information diffuses through networks, focusing on virality, sharing behavior, and structural amplification.

Marketing messages increasingly spread through digital and social networks, sometimes diffusing explosively while other messages spread slowly or not at all. This seminar paper reviews the literature on information diffusion and viral dynamics in marketing.

The review should cover:

- Psychological drivers of sharing and virality
- Network structures that accelerate or inhibit diffusion
- Differences between positive diffusion and negative firestorms
- Measurement of diffusion speed, reach, and persistence

**17. How Does Time Spent on Social Media Influence Political Polarization? A Literature Review on Exposure and Engagement (Chair Prof. Stahl)**

Political polarization has increasingly been linked to social media use, yet research differs in how exposure intensity contributes to polarized attitudes. While some studies suggest that increased time spent on social media amplifies ideological extremity through repeated exposure and reinforcement, others find conditional effects depending on user characteristics and content type.

This seminar thesis aims to conduct a literature review examining how time spent on social media influences political polarization. The paper may synthesize empirical findings on exposure duration, engagement intensity, and frequency of political content consumption, and discuss boundary conditions such as political interest, selective exposure, and platform type. Finally, the seminar thesis should identify open research questions and implications for researchers and policymakers.

**18. In-Group and Out-Group Bias in Gender Gap Perception: How Individual and Group Contexts**

**Shape Beliefs About Gender Differences (Chair Prof. Stahl)**

People often hold beliefs about how strongly men and women differ in their behaviors or abilities. However, research suggests that these perceived gender gaps depend on whether judgments are formed individually or in group contexts, where social identity and group norms become more salient. For example, individuals may privately believe that men and women do not differ strongly in political risk-taking, but perceive a much larger gender divide when participating in group discussions or observing online debates. This seminar thesis aims to review and synthesize research on how in-group and out-group bias shapes gender gap perceptions in individual versus group contexts. Finally, it should identify open research questions relevant for future research and practice.

**19. Country of Origin Effects and Home Bias: Insights from the Electric Vehicle Market (Chair Prof. Stahl)**

Country of origin effects and home bias are well-established concepts in marketing research that shape how consumers evaluate domestic and foreign products. The transition to electric mobility offers a new context in which these theories can be examined, as German automakers increasingly compete with emerging EV brands from the US and China. This paper explores how the academic literature on country of origin and home bias can be applied to the electric vehicle market as a case context. It examines whether traditional country-of-origin advantages are likely to persist during the EV transition and discusses the strategic implications for German manufacturers in an increasingly globalized and technology-driven industry.

**20. The Consumer Is Always Right? AI Sycophancy and Its Effect on Consumer Judgment (Chair Prof. Stahl)**

As AI systems become increasingly involved in marketing and consumer interaction, they often adopt communication strategies that prioritize agreement and affirmation. This thesis investigates how AI sycophancy, the algorithmic tendency to mirror and validate a user's existing biases, alters consumer judgment and how it affects consumer judgement, trust formation, and consumer-brand relationships.

**21. Does Marketing Still Work? Theoretical Limits of Effectiveness in a Saturated Media Environment (Chair Prof. Stahl)**

This thesis explores whether marketing can still effectively influence consumers in an environment characterized by constant media exposure, platform proliferation, and message overload. Drawing on literature from marketing effectiveness, the attention economy, and media saturation, it examines how traditional assumptions about persuasion, engagement, and recall are challenged by current developments in the marketing landscape. The thesis focuses on how marketing theory conceptualizes and measures effectiveness, critically assesses dominant metrics, and explores how consumers' increasing use of avoidance strategies, such as ad-blocking and selective attention, reshapes the limits of marketing communication. By synthesizing different theoretical perspectives, the thesis highlights structural constraints on marketing effectiveness in saturated media environments. Ultimately, it invites a reconsideration of whether marketing's future lies in intensified communication or in more selective, restrained, and context-sensitive approaches.

**22. When Creativity Becomes Synthetic: Generative AI and the Transformation of Marketing Evaluation (Chair Prof. Stahl)**

In contemporary marketing, a growing share of creative content is conceptualized and produced through generative AI tools. This thesis examines how the rise of GenAI reshapes fundamental assumptions about creativity, originality, and meaning in marketing communication. Drawing on literature from AI-driven marketing and creativity theory, it explores what happens when brand messages, visuals, and narratives are increasingly produced by non-human systems. It further considers the implications of synthetic creativity for brand relationships, consumer interpretation, and trust, questioning whether marketing outcomes are influenced by the change in content authorship.

**23. Emotional and Affective Foundations of Privacy and Information Sharing in Marketing – A literature review (Chair Prof. Kraus)**

This seminar thesis explores the role of emotions—beyond risk cognition—in shaping disclosure and privacy responses. Marketing privacy research is dominated by rational-choice models. This topic centers affective experience, explaining phenomena such as “creepiness” or something else and sudden backlash that cognitive models struggle to predict.

**24. Extreme Response Bias in Survey Research: Mechanisms, Distortions, and Strategies for Mitigation (Chair Prof. Kraus)**

Extreme response bias (ERB) describes a systematic tendency of some respondents to disproportionately choose the most extreme categories on rating scales (e.g., “strongly agree/disagree”), regardless of the underlying content. The seminar paper seeks to explain the nature and causes of ERB and to analyze how it can distort conclusions in quantitative research. Furthermore, it aims to synthesize empirical research on the magnitude of ERB and to identify the conditions under which it is most likely to bias results, including scale design, topic sensitivity, respondent characteristics, and cross-cultural response styles. In addition, the paper should compare and critically discuss key strategies for preventing or reducing ERB, such as questionnaire design choices, survey administration techniques, and statistical correction methods. Finally, it seeks to evaluate the practical implementation and effectiveness of these approaches, highlighting trade-offs between measurement validity, respondent burden, comparability across studies, and feasibility in real-world research settings.

**25. Temporal Dimensions of Privacy and Information Sharing in Marketing – A literature review**

*(Chair Prof. Kraus)*

In this seminar thesis, the student explores how time shapes consumers' privacy expectations, disclosure decisions, and evaluations of data use. Most privacy research is static. This topic treats privacy as a dynamic process, examining how repeated exposure, delayed consequences, and irreversible data accumulation alter consumer behavior and welfare.

**III. Price Management**

**26. From Dynamic Pricing to AI Pricing: How Machine Learning is Transforming Pricing Strategies**

*(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

This thesis will explore the shift from dynamic pricing to AI-driven pricing strategies, focusing on how machine learning enhances pricing decisions. It will examine how AI leverages data to predict demand, optimize pricing, and improve profitability. The study will also address the challenges and opportunities of integrating AI into pricing strategies.

**27. AI-Based Pricing in B2B Markets: Increasing Performance through Optimizing Pricing Strategies**

*(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

This thesis will examine how AI-based pricing models are reshaping pricing strategies in B2B markets. It will focus on how AI enables businesses to optimize pricing through data analysis, trend prediction, and automated adjustments. The study will also explore the challenges and opportunities of implementing AI in B2B pricing.

**28. Priceless or Priceless? Navigating the Complexity of Art Valuation in a Market Without Inherent Value** *(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

This thesis will explore the complexities of art pricing, particularly for both established and emerging artists. It will focus on how art's perceived value is influenced by factors such as market demand, artists' reputations, and future potential, despite the absence of inherent objective value. The study will also analyze how stakeholders determine prices in a market driven by subjective value.

#### **IV. Product and Innovation Management**

##### **29. From Roadmaps to Patch Notes: Temporal Distance of Update Communication in Video Games**

*(Chair Prof. Kuester)*

Live-service video games such as Fortnite evolve through frequent updates, meaning that studios regularly communicate new content long before it exists. Early “roadmaps” typically outline broad themes or goals months in advance, while “patch notes” shortly before release describe concrete features and detailed changes. Construal Level Theory suggests that communication about distant updates is more abstract and vision-oriented, whereas messages close to release become more specific and implementation-focused. Continuous update cycles thus create an ongoing flow of communication where temporal distance, the degree of abstraction, and player expectations influence one another. This seminar thesis aims to (1) connect research on ongoing, post-launch innovation in video games with Construal Level Theory, (2) collect and qualitatively analyze communication episodes along the timeline of a selected game update, (3) explore how abstraction and concreteness in these messages may shape player perceptions, trust, and expectations, and (4) derive implications for the communicating continuous updates in live-service game ecosystems.

##### **30. Adoption and Usage of Innovative Apps in the Food Sector: A Theoretical Perspective** *(Chair*

*Prof. Homburg)*

The emergence of innovative food apps, such as Picnic and Too Good To Go, is reshaping everyday consumer habits and the broader food system. By offering efficient and sustainable delivery solutions while addressing challenges such as food waste, these platforms highlight the practical significance of digital innovation in daily life. Gaining insights into how consumers adopt and use such innovative app concepts holds substantial theoretical and practical relevance for marketers and researchers alike.

##### **31. Humans and AI in Action: How Collaboration Shapes Innovation in New Product Development**

*Teams (Chair Prof. Homburg)*

Artificial intelligence is increasingly integral to collaborative work in innovation-driven organizations, particularly within new product development (NPD) teams. By augmenting human decision-making, creativity, and execution speed, AI has the potential to fundamentally reshape how teams innovate.

This seminar thesis aims to (1) systematically review and synthesize academic literature on human–AI collaboration in NPD teams, and (2) examine how such collaboration influences key team outcomes, including decision quality, creativity, and development speed.

### **32. Turning Data into Ideas: How AI Uncovers Market Insights for Smarter Product Innovation**

*(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

The growing availability of data and advances in artificial intelligence have transformed how firms identify market opportunities and customer needs in new product development. AI-driven analytics enable organizations to process large volumes of market and customer data, uncover hidden patterns, and support more informed innovation decisions.

This seminar thesis aims to (1) systematically review and synthesize existing literature on the use of AI for generating market and customer insights in NPD, and (2) explore how AI applications support opportunity recognition, customer understanding, and decision-making in innovation processes. By highlighting opportunities and challenges from the perspective of product development teams, the paper seeks to provide practical implications for leveraging AI to foster more customer-oriented and successful product innovation.

### **33. Breaking Silos, Driving Innovation: Exploring What Makes R&D–Sales Collaboration Work in New Product Development** *(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

Effective collaboration between R&D and sales is widely recognized as a critical factor for successful new product development, yet organizational silos often hinder such integration. Differences in goals, incentives, and knowledge bases can create barriers that limit innovation performance and market success.

This seminar thesis aims to (1) systematically review and synthesize academic literature on R&D–sales collaboration in NPD, and (2) identify key organizational, cultural, and process-related factors that enable or impede effective cross-functional integration.

### **34. Explaining the Diffusion of Electric Vehicles: How Well Do Innovation Theories Apply?** *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

The transition to electric mobility is often described as a technological breakthrough, yet the diffusion of electric vehicles progresses at very different speeds across countries and markets. To explain these patterns, scholars frequently draw on established theories of innovation and socio-technical change,

such as Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations, the Multi-Level Perspective, and related transition frameworks. But how well do these theories capture the specific characteristics of electric mobility? This paper explores how classical diffusion and transition theories are applied in the context of electric vehicles and assesses their ability to explain real-world adoption dynamics. It examines the role of individual decision-making, infrastructure dependence, and policy intervention, and asks whether existing theoretical models are sufficient to understand mobility transitions, or whether the EV case challenges their core assumptions.

## **V. Brand and Communications Management**

### **35. Managing Expectations: Player Perspectives on Video Game Update Communication (Chair Prof. Kuester)**

In live-service games such as Fortnite or League of Legends, ongoing updates are a core part of the player experience, making communication about future content highly relevant. Yet, it is often unclear what players actually expect from update communication: how early they want to be informed, how much detail they value, and how tone, transparency, and honesty influence their trust and engagement. Understanding these expectations is important because update communication can strongly shape how players perceive a game and its developers over time.

This seminar thesis aims to (1) connect research on video game updates with concepts of expectation management in service communication, (2) develop a focused empirical question on what players expect from update communication and why, (3) collect and qualitatively analyze player accounts through a small-scale qualitative data collection, and (4) derive implications for how studios can design update communication that supports trust and long-term engagement in live-service games.

### **36. The Effect of Corporate Scandals on Brand Equity (Chair Prof. Stahl)**

Corporate scandals are commonly assumed to severely damage a brand's reputation. However, not all scandals may be perceived equally. This seminar thesis should provide an overview of how different types of scandals affect brand equity, and under which conditions brands are more likely to recover or suffer long-term losses. It should also summarize key findings from existing empirical studies in this area.

**37. Beyond Likes and Followers: Understanding the Drivers of Effective Influencer Impact** (Chair of Prof. Stahl)

Traditional influencer metrics often rely on surface-level indicators such as likes, comments, and follower counts. This seminar thesis examines deeper drivers of influencer effectiveness, including perceived authenticity, influencer – brand fit, audience trust, and content credibility. By synthesizing existing research, the paper aims to explain why some influencers generate meaningful brand impact while others fail, despite similar quantitative metrics.

**38. Managing Brand Transitions in the Shift to Electric Mobility** (Chair Prof. Stahl)

As automakers transition from combustion engines to electric vehicles, they face the challenge of adapting long-established brand identities to a new technological paradigm. Brands associated with performance, reliability, or engineering heritage must integrate electric mobility without diluting their core identity. This paper explores how the academic literature discusses brand management during technological transitions, using electric mobility as a case context. It examines concepts such as brand consistency, credibility, heritage, and repositioning, and assesses how firms navigate brand change in the context of technological disruption.

**VI. Sales Management**

**39. Digital Product Passports in B2B Sales: Leveraging Compliance for Value-Added Selling** (Chair Prof. Homburg)

Amid growing sustainability expectations and increasing regulatory requirements, transparency has become a crucial element in B2B sales. Digital Product Passports (DPPs) are gaining importance as a tool to foster transparency by providing structured, digital information about a product's lifecycle, origin, and environmental impact. Consequently, DPPs extend beyond compliance mechanisms and can serve as meaningful value propositions within B2B sales processes. Against this background, this seminar thesis aims to (1) explore the current relevance of transparency and DPPs in B2B markets, (2) investigate how DPPs can be strategically positioned and communicated as value-adding sales arguments in B2B selling, and (3) derive practical recommendations for companies on effectively integrating DPP-based transparency into their sales strategies.

**40. Transparency for Accountability: Digital Product Passports in B2B Purchasing (Chair Prof. Homburg)**

As expectations for transparency continue to increase across industries, Digital Product Passports (DPPs) are gaining relevance as a means of providing standardized, reliable, and verifiable product information. For buying firms in B2B purchasing contexts, DPPs can function not only as informational resources but also as accountability mechanisms, influencing purchasing decisions, compliance practices, and relationships with suppliers. This seminar thesis examines the role of DPPs in shaping buyers' accountability within B2B purchasing processes. Specifically, it aims to (1) clarify the concept of accountability in the context of B2B purchasing, (2) assess how DPPs support or transform accountability expectations for buying firms, (3) analyze the impact of DPP-based transparency on buyers' decision-making and supplier assessments, particularly regarding responsibility for upstream practices, and (4) identify how companies can use DPPs to reinforce accountability and strengthen the integrity of their B2B purchasing activities.

**VII. Digital Marketing**

**41. Monetizing Large Language Models: Strategies and User Impact (Chair Prof. Stahl)**

As the use of large language models (LLMs) rapidly expands, LLM providers are exploring how to turn them into sustainable business models. This seminar thesis should review potential strategies for monetizing LLMs, such as advertising, subscriptions, or API access, and assess their impact on user experience and perception. It should also discuss which models show the most promise and how certain monetization types possibly shape future platform use.

**42. Corporate Influencers and Employer Branding: Shaping Young Professionals' Perceptions and Intentions (Chair Prof. Stahl)**

This seminar thesis explores the role of corporate influencers in shaping employer branding perceptions and intentions among young professionals. The focus is on systematically reviewing existing literature to identify how corporate influencers are conceptualized, which perceived attributes and psychological mechanisms drive their effectiveness, and where gaps exist in current

research. The ultimate goal is to develop a conceptual framework and a set of propositions that can guide future empirical studies in employer branding and employee advocacy.

**43. From User-Generated to AI-Summarized Content: Conceptual Insights into Online Review Dynamics (Chair Prof. Stahl)**

This seminar paper examines how AI-generated summaries are transforming the structure and dynamics of online review systems. Moving beyond traditional user-generated reviews, AI summarization reshapes the presentation and organization of information, affecting attributes such as clarity, completeness, and perceived reliability. The focus is on systematically reviewing existing literature to identify the conceptual mechanisms, contextual factors, and system-level implications of AI summarization. This paper seeks to build a conceptual structure and formulate guiding propositions to support future studies on the transformation of online review mechanisms and AI-generated content frameworks.

**44. AI-Driven Personalization in Online Retail: Mechanisms, Contexts, and Consumer Outcomes (Chair Prof. Stahl)**

This seminar paper explores how AI-driven personalization shapes consumer behavior and engagement in online retail environments. Moving beyond generic recommendation systems, AI-based personalization leverages user data to deliver tailored product suggestions, marketing messages, and content experiences. The paper conducts a systematic review of the literature to identify the core mechanisms and contextual conditions through which AI personalization influences consumer outcomes. Building on these insights, a conceptual framework is proposed to explain how personalization features affect consumer engagement, decision-making, and satisfaction, while incorporating key mediating and moderating variables.

**45. Being a Minority Member in Online Environments – A Literature Review (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 the ways in which they express themselves in digital spaces.

**46. Data Ownership, Psychological Possession, and Value Appropriation in Marketing - A literature review (Chair Prof. Kraus)**

This seminar thesis focuses on how consumers understand, experience, and contest ownership of their personal data, and how this shapes value creation and capture in marketing systems. Marketing research often assumes firms' de facto ownership of consumer data, while consumers' ownership claims remain conceptually underdeveloped. This topic reframes data not merely as information, but as a contested asset, revealing tensions between firm value extraction and consumer moral expectations.

**47. Incentivizing Users to Share Online Reviews – A Literature Review (Chair Prof. Kraus)**

This seminar thesis reviews academic literature on the use of incentives to encourage online reviews. Offering incentives such as vouchers or monetary rewards is a common practice among platform operators and sellers. The thesis examines how such incentives affect both the volume of reviews and the nature of what is shared.

**48. Motivation and Costs 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, deriving implications for marketers and platform designers.

**VIII. Customer Relationship Management**

**49. Disruptive Approaches to Managing Existing Customers in B2B Markets: A Small-Scale Qualitative Study (Chair Prof. Kuester)**

In business-to-business (B2B) markets, firms increasingly explore new and sometimes disruptive ways of managing existing customers, going beyond traditional approaches such as relationship marketing, key account management, and customer retention programs. Developments like digital

transformation and data-driven decision-making raise questions about how companies adapt or rethink established customer management practices. Early research suggests that these changes can lead to not only incremental adjustments but also to more fundamental shifts in how B2B customer relationships are managed and developed.

This seminar thesis aims to (1) review relevant literature on approaches to managing existing customers in B2B markets, (2) identify core assumptions and potential sources of disruption in established customer management practices, (3) explore managerial perspectives through a small-scale qualitative study based on interviews with B2B managers, and (4) derive implications for future research and managerial practice.

**50. Customer Success Management in B2B Customer Relationships: An Exploratory Study** (*Chair Prof. Kuester*)

Customer Success Management (CSM) has gained attention as a proactive and value-oriented way of managing existing customers, especially in digitally enabled and service-intensive business-to-business (B2B) contexts. Although the concept is still emerging, it challenges traditional approaches such as relationship marketing, key account management, and after-sales service. At the same time, many firms face growing expectations around continuous value delivery and helping customers achieve better outcomes with products and services, raising questions about how managers understand the relevance and applicability of CSM for their own organizations.

This seminar thesis aims to (1) review and systematize relevant literature on CSM and related approaches to managing existing customers in B2B markets, (2) identify core assumptions underlying the emerging CSM approach, (3) explore managerial views on potential benefits and challenges through a small-scale qualitative study based on interviews with B2B managers, and (4) derive implications for future research and managerial practice.

**51. B2C Approaches as Inspiration for Managing Existing Customers in B2B Markets: A Small-Scale Qualitative Study** (*Chair Prof. Kuester*)

Innovative approaches for managing existing customers in business-to-consumer (B2C) markets, such as hyper-personalization, digital loyalty ecosystems, subscription models, and AI-enabled engagement, have changed how companies build and maintain customer relationships. These developments increasingly inspire business-to-business (B2B) firms to consider whether consumer-oriented practices could challenge or enrich established approaches of managing B2B customers. At the same time,

structural characteristics of B2B markets, including complex buying centers and longer relationship cycles, raise questions about how well such B2C practices can be adapted to B2B contexts.

This seminar thesis aims to (1) review relevant literature on approaches to managing existing customers in B2C and B2B markets, (2) identify B2C practices with potential disruptive value for B2B customer relationship management, (3) explore managerial perceptions of these practices through a small-scale qualitative study based on interviews with B2B managers, and (4) derive implications for future research and managerial practice.

## **52. Beyond Economic Exchange: Applying Social Exchange Theory to B2B Buyer–Seller Relationships (Chair Prof. Homburg)**

In business-to-business (B2B) markets, buyer–seller interactions are not limited to transactional exchanges but are also shaped by continuous social and relational dynamics. Social Exchange Theory (SET) provides a useful framework for understanding these processes, particularly in relation to how business relationships are initiated, developed, and assessed over time. This seminar thesis examines the application of SET to the analysis of B2B buyer-seller relationships. Specifically, it aims to (1) outline and explain the core concepts of SET, (2) examine how its fundamental principles are reflected in B2B exchange relationships, (3) analyze the influence of these relational dynamics on relationship outcomes in a business setting, and (4) identify how companies can apply insights derived from SET to enhance the management and long-term effectiveness of their B2B partnerships.

## **IX. Market Theory and Research Methods**

### **53. Who Moves First? Lead–Lag Relationships and Causality in Marketing Dynamics (Chair Prof.**

*Stahl*)

This topic is about temporal ordering and causality in marketing systems: whether prices, sentiment, advertising, distribution, or word-of-mouth lead or follow market outcomes.

Many core questions in marketing concern temporal precedence: Do changes in marketing actions precede changes in demand, or do firms merely react to markets? This seminar paper reviews the literature that investigates lead–lag relationships and causal ordering in marketing phenomena.

The review should focus on studies that use time-series and longitudinal methods (e.g., Granger causality, vector autoregression, state-space models) to examine temporal dynamics between marketing variables such as prices, advertising, distribution, consumer sentiment, and sales.

**54. Digital Twins in Marketing Research: When Can Synthetic Data Replace the Real Thing?. (Chair Prof. Stahl)**

In modern marketing research, access to granular behavioral data - such as clickstreams, CRM records, mobility traces, and transactions - is increasingly restricted due to privacy regulations and corporate confidentiality. At the same time, running large-scale experiments to collect such data can be prohibitively costly. Digital twins offer a promising alternative by simulating realistic, synthetic data in a "safe" environment. But under what conditions can these data support valid marketing insights? This seminar thesis aims to review the current state of research on digital twins as a tool for generating synthetic marketing data. It will explore the types of twins, dominant generative approaches, and how synthetic data quality is evaluated - especially in terms of predictive and causal utility. A particular focus will be placed on the main sources of bias and on developing a best-practice evaluation framework for marketing applications. The goal is to provide a structured overview of when and how synthetic data can serve as a credible substitute for real-world behavioral data in marketing research.

**55. Counterfactuals at Scale: Using Digital Twins to Answer Causal Questions in Marketing. (Chair Prof. Stahl)**

Understanding the effects of prices, ads, or promotions requires answering causal - not just predictive questions. However, restricted access to observational data or limited feasibility of experiments often stands in the way. Digital twins have emerged as a novel approach to simulate counterfactual outcomes, offering synthetic data for causal inference. This seminar thesis reviews how digital twins are used in marketing to estimate causal effects under real-world constraints. It will focus on the types of causal effects being targeted and examine how synthetic data can align with underlying causal structures. Furthermore, the thesis will review protocols for validating the "causal utility" of synthetic data. The goal is to assess the conditions under which synthetic data can be reliably used for causal inference in marketing.

**56. Privacy, Ethics, and Governance: Is Synthetic Data in Marketing Really Safer? (Chair Prof. Stahl)**

Synthetic data is often promoted as a privacy-preserving alternative to using real customer data. Yet, in the marketing domain, risks go far beyond re-identification. Concerns range from sensitive segment leakage and discriminatory targeting to manipulation risks and governance gaps - especially when synthetic data becomes a “proxy reality” used for real decisions. This seminar thesis explores whether synthetic data generated via digital twins truly offers stronger privacy and ethical safeguards. It will review the types of privacy guarantees associated with different synthetic data generation methods, and critically examine how digital twins may shift the ethical landscape. The thesis will also explore current proposals for governance mechanisms in the literature. The outcome will be a structured assessment of what “responsible synthetic data” means in a marketing context, including a proposed checklist of best practices.

**57. Behavioral Experiments in Marketing Research: Design, Implementation, and Social Context**

**Effects (Chair Prof. Kraus)**

This seminar paper aims to define behavioral experiments and to position them within the range of data collection methods used in marketing research. It examines the key advantages and disadvantages of behavioral experiments, particularly with regard to causal inference, validity, and practical feasibility. The paper further outlines common standards in marketing research for planning and implementing behavioral experiments, focusing on experimental design, sample size and selection, and key limitations. Using real-world examples, it places special emphasis on experiments that investigate behavioral differences across varying social conditions, such as social presence, peer influence, and social norms.

**58. Online Surveys in Marketing Research: Advantages, Limitations, and Tool-Based**

**Methodological Considerations (Chair Prof. Kraus)**

This seminar paper examines the role of online surveys as one of the most widely used data collection methods in contemporary marketing research. The paper aims to critically discuss the advantages and disadvantages of online surveys, considering aspects such as cost efficiency, speed, data quality, sampling issues, and respondent behavior. In addition, it compares the strengths and weaknesses of commonly used online survey tools in marketing research, focusing on usability, functionality, flexibility, and data protection. A central part of the paper is an in-depth analysis of the survey tool SoSci Survey, used by the University of Mannheim. This includes the creation of a detailed protocol for

designing a questionnaire under different research requirements and constraints. Based on this practical application, the paper discusses the methodological and technical limitations of SoSci Survey and evaluates its suitability for various marketing research contexts. The overall goal is to assess how tool choice and implementation affect data quality and research outcomes in online marketing surveys.

## X. Marketing Analytics

### **59. Early Signals of Influencer Campaign Success: identifying Predictive Indicators from Social Media Data (Chair Prof. Stahl)**

Brands increasingly seek early indicators to assess whether influencer campaigns are likely to succeed before full outcomes materialize. This seminar thesis explores which early-stage metrics - such as engagement velocity, sentiment, network diffusion, or audience overlap - can serve as predictors of later campaign performance. Drawing on literature from marketing analytics and social media research, the paper evaluates the reliability and practical usefulness of these indicators.

### **60. Predicting Consumer Behavior Through Digital Twins: A Literature Review on Simulation-Based Marketing Analytics (Chair Prof. Stahl)**

This seminar thesis examines the use of digital twins as simulation tools for predicting consumer behavior and market outcomes. Drawing on research from marketing analytics, information systems, and data-driven decision-making, the paper reviews how virtual consumer models can support forecasting, scenario testing, and optimization of marketing actions. The goal is to assess the current state of research and identify limitations and future research directions.

### **61. Explainable AI: Inference, Explainability, Causality and Generalization in Machine Learning (Chair Prof. Kraus)**

Moving beyond the “black box” approach of traditional data mining, this study utilizes recent breakthroughs in causal inference and XAI to enhance marketing analytics. By shifting the focus from simple predictive performance to model interpretability, we’ll develop and evaluate machine learning architectures designed to uncover actionable causal insights. Our methodology prioritizes the

validation of these relationships to ensure the resulting marketing strategies are reliable, robust, and scalable

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

Marketing analysts 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.

**63. Same but Different: Digital Twins in Market Research (Chair Prof. Kraus)**

Marketing strategies have long been shaped by self-reported survey data. However, generative AI is redefining this landscape through the creation of Digital Twins (DTs) of real consumers. This research explores the potential of DTs as a promising analytical tool by examining their conceptual framework, investigating their unique characteristics, and testing their deployment within real-world business scenarios.