MKT 7X0 Research Seminar HWS 2026 – Topics

Area Marketing & Sales

Below is a list of 61 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. Marketing and Stock Market Performance: Development, Current State, and Future Directions of a Research Field *(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

Research at the marketing–finance interface has expanded considerably over the past two decades, shifting from establishing that marketing affects firm value to explaining the mechanisms and boundary conditions of that effect. The seminar paper traces this development, systematizes the constructs, metrics, and methods that have shaped the field, and works out how the central research questions have changed over time. On this basis, it assesses the current state of knowledge and derives the directions in which the field is developing.

2. 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.

3. Marketing in Times of Agentic AI *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

As AI agents increasingly make decisions on behalf of consumers, marketers may soon need to convince machines rather than humans. How should firms adapt their marketing strategies when autonomous agents search for information, compare alternatives, and make purchasing decisions? How is marketing to agents different from marketing to consumers? When (& how much) should companies allocate marketing efforts to agents vs. consumers? This seminar thesis should review the emerging literature on agentic AI and discuss how marketing activities may need to change. It should also set up an agenda for future research on marketing to AI agents.

* Topics can be prepared either in English or German.

4. AI or Human? Effectiveness of Personalized Recommendations Across Different Sales Approaches: A Systematic Analysis *(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

Personalized recommendations are becoming increasingly common across digital and physical retail environments. While such recommendations have traditionally been provided by human salespeople, advances in artificial intelligence enable firms to offer highly personalized product suggestions through AI-based systems. How do consumers respond when personalization originates from an AI rather than a human source? This seminar paper aims to (1) review and synthesize existing research on AI- versus human-generated recommendations, and (2) examine how the source of personalization influences consumer perceptions, trust, fairness, and behavioral outcomes.

5. Sales Channels Adaptation to Uncertainty and External Shocks (*Chair Prof. Kraus)*

Marketing channels often consist of multiple stakeholders with distinct operating roles, aiming to deliver a product from the producer to the end customer. In an optimal scenario, this business scheme benefits the parties by guaranteeing consistent supply and profitability. However, the business landscape is often challenged by external shocks (e.g., COVID-19 pandemic) which hinder performance and growth. The goal of this seminar thesis is to dive into the details of these dynamics and investigate their effects on sales channels' stability.

6. From Customer Journeys to Agent Journeys *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

The customer journey has long been a cornerstone of modern marketing. But what happens when AI agents take over parts of the consumer decision-making process? This seminar thesis should develop a conceptual framework comparing traditional customer journeys with emerging agent journeys and discuss the implications for marketing managers. It should also identify key research questions arising from this new paradigm.

7. Satisfied, Challenged, or Complacent? Rethinking Employee Satisfaction. *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

Employee satisfaction is usually seen as desirable - but can employees become too comfortable? Satisfaction may arise from meaningful work, autonomy, and stimulating challenges, but also from predictability, low demands, and resistance to change. This seminar paper reviews research on different forms of employee satisfaction and examines whether they foster motivation and creativity or instead encourage complacency. The goal is to show why highly satisfied workplaces may not all function in the same way.

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8. Who Tells Whom What? Information Sharing and Transparency in AI-Mediated Markets
(Chair Prof. Stahl)

Markets depend on the exchange of information between buyers, sellers, intermediaries, and other market participants. Firms reveal some information—such as prices, product quality, demand forecasts, or inventory—while deliberately withholding other information. What gets shared depends strongly on the rules and structure of the market.
As autonomous AI agents increasingly represent firms and customers, these information-exchange decisions may increasingly be made by machines rather than humans. This seminar paper reviews the marketing literature on information sharing, transparency, and strategic disclosure in markets and considers how these insights apply when autonomous agents interact with one another. The review should synthesize research on:

- Information sharing between buyers and sellers
- Strategic disclosure and withholding of market information
- Price transparency and market transparency
- Information asymmetry in market exchange
- Information sharing in marketing channels and supply chains
- Competition versus cooperation between market participants
- Trust, reputation, and relational governance
- The role of intermediaries and platforms in shaping information flows
- Consequences of information sharing for market efficiency, competition, and customer value

A central question is whether greater information exchange necessarily improves market outcomes. Sharing information can improve coordination and reduce uncertainty, but it can also weaken bargaining positions, facilitate strategic behavior, or change competition between firms. The emerging AI-agent context makes this question particularly interesting because market institutions may determine what autonomous agents are permitted, incentivized, or required to reveal to one another.

II. Consumer Behavior and Psychology

9. Made by Humans, Written by Machines: How AI-Generated Communication Shapes Consumer Trust and Perceived Authenticity* *(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

As companies increasingly use generative AI to create advertising messages, product descriptions, and customer responses, consumers must evaluate communications whose human origin is no longer certain. This seminar paper examines how the disclosure of AI authorship affects perceived authenticity, trust, and consumers' willingness to engage with a brand. Particular attention may be given to boundary conditions such as the emotional versus factual nature of the message, brand positioning, and consumers' general attitudes toward artificial intelligence. The paper should derive implications for when companies should disclose, emphasize, or strategically limit the use of AI-generated communication.

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10. “This Is Not Me”: Consumer Responses to Misleading Algorithmic Personalization*
(Chair Prof. Homburg)

Personalized recommendations are designed to reflect consumers’ preferences and identities, but algorithms may also categorize individuals in ways they perceive as inaccurate or undesirable. This seminar paper investigates how incorrect or identity-incongruent personalization influences consumer emotions, self-perceptions, and subsequent behavior toward the platform or brand. Potential psychological mechanisms include identity threat, perceived loss of control, reactance, and feelings of being misunderstood. The paper should discuss how companies can personalize consumer experiences without undermining consumer autonomy or creating resistance.

11. Comparing Consumer and LLM Biases *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

Consumers are known to exhibit numerous cognitive biases that influence their judgments and decisions. Large language models may (or may not) also display systematic biases, although their origins and consequences may differ. This seminar thesis should compare established findings on consumer and LLM biases and discuss their similarities and differences. It should also derive implications for marketing theory and managerial decision-making.

12. 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 trust formation and consumer-brand relationships.

13. Authentic or Performative? How Vulnerability in Social Media Content Influences Consumer Responses* *(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

Influencers and brands increasingly share personal struggles, failures, and emotional experiences to appear relatable and authentic. However, such displays of vulnerability may also be perceived as strategically staged or commercially motivated. This seminar paper examines how consumers distinguish authentic self-disclosure from performative vulnerability and how these perceptions affect trust, parasocial relationships, and engagement behavior. Relevant contingency factors may include the intensity of the disclosure, its connection to a commercial message, the influencer’s previous behavior, and consumers’ persuasion knowledge.

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14. Social Influence Through Engagement Metrics: How Likes, Comments, and Shares Shape Consumer Perceptions *(Chair Prof. Kraus)*

Digital content is often evaluated based on visible engagement metrics such as the number of likes, comments, and shares. These social signals can influence consumers' perceptions of credibility, popularity, and behavioral intentions, even without considering the content itself. This seminar thesis should conduct a structured literature review examining how engagement metrics affect user behavior and perceived credibility. Particular attention should be paid to potential threshold effects (e.g., low, medium, and high engagement levels). The review should synthesize existing evidence on whether these metrics exert distinct psychological mechanisms and identify common benchmark values reported in the literature. Moreover, it should focus whether there is a difference in these phenomena between likes and the pure number of visits/sights.

15. Being Watched: The Influence of Physical and Camera-Mediated Social Presence on Human Behavior *(Chair Prof. Kraus)*

The awareness of being observed can substantially influence human behavior. While research has extensively examined the effects of physical social presence, digital environments increasingly expose individuals to observation through cameras and online audiences. This seminar thesis should review the literature on how physical presence and camera-mediated observation influence behavior, decision-making, and social conformity. The review should compare whether observation through cameras produces similar psychological effects as actual physical presence and identify boundary conditions under which the two forms of social presence differ.

16. Signaling Transparency: A Signaling Theory Perspective on Digital Product Passports
(Chair Prof. Homburg)

Consumers increasingly demand transparent information about the products they purchase, particularly regarding their origin, sustainability, and production processes. At the same time, information asymmetries often make it difficult for consumers to access or verify such product attributes. Digital Product Passports (DPPs) have emerged as a promising tool to address these information gaps by consolidating comprehensive product information. However, it remains unclear whether consumers actually perceive DPPs as credible signals of transparency and which characteristics determine their effectiveness.

This seminar thesis aims to (1) explain Signaling Theory as the central theoretical lens, (2) investigate how consumers perceive DPPs as transparency signals, (3) identify the characteristics of DPPs that strengthen or weaken their effectiveness as transparency signals, and (4) explore how DPPs should be designed and implemented to maximize consumers' perceived transparency. The seminar thesis will provide actionable insights into the role of DPPs as transparency signals and offer recommendations for their consumer-oriented design.

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17. Gen Z's Perception of Luxury: A Small-Scale Qualitative Investigation *(Chair Prof. Kuester)*

The luxury industry is experiencing a significant generational shift as Generation Z emerges as an influential consumer group with distinct values, expectations, and purchasing behaviors. Unlike previous generations, Generation Z increasingly evaluates luxury through the lenses of authenticity, individuality, digital engagement, and sustainability, challenging traditional notions of exclusivity and status. As the first generation of true digital natives and an increasingly important source of purchasing power, Generation Z is expected to account for a substantial share of future luxury spending. Consequently, understanding how this generation perceives and engages with luxury has become a strategic priority for luxury brands seeking to remain relevant and competitive in a rapidly evolving market.

This seminar paper aims to (1) review and systematize relevant literature on generational consumer behavior, luxury consumption, and value perception, (2) collect and qualitatively analyze interview-based accounts of Generation Z consumers explaining their attitudes, motivations, and decision-making processes in the luxury market, and (3) derive implications for luxury brand management and marketing, identifying emerging trends, gaps in the existing literature, and directions for future research.

18. Ideal Selves and Ought Selves: Self-Discrepancy and Self-Optimization Consumption *(Chair Prof. Kuester)*

Consumers spend considerable resources on products that promise personal improvement, ranging from fitness trackers and supplements to productivity tools and cosmetic treatments. Self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987) suggests that such purchases can be understood as responses to perceived gaps within the self-concept, distinguishing between the ideal self, which reflects personal aspirations, and the ought self, which reflects duties and standards defined by others. Whether consumers pursue self-optimization to approach their own aspirations or to satisfy externally imposed expectations carries different implications for product positioning and communication, yet this distinction has received limited attention in consumer research. This seminar paper aims to (1) review and systematize relevant literature on self-discrepancy theory and self-optimization consumption, (2) explore how consumers describe and justify their own self-optimization purchases through semi-structured interviews, with particular attention to ideal- versus ought-based motives, and (3) compare emergent qualitative insights with existing theoretical assumptions and empirical findings to derive implications for marketing practice and future research.

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19. Conservative Consumers and Sustainable Consumption: A Qualitative Exploration of Justification Repertoires *(Chair Prof. Kuester)*

Research on political ideology and sustainable consumption suggests that politically progressive consumers tend to express stronger sustainable preferences than conservative consumers, with explanations typically referring to differing beliefs about climate change or to a perceived mismatch between sustainability and conservative identity. However, this focus on average differences obscures the substantial share of conservative consumers who do engage in sustainable practices. Because sustainability is often associated with progressive values, it remains unclear how conservative consumers explain and justify their own sustainable behavior. This seminar paper aims to (1) review and systematize relevant literature on political ideology and sustainable consumption, focusing on proposed mechanisms and their assumptions about conservative consumers, (2) explore through semi-structured interviews how politically conservative consumers who engage in sustainable practices explain and justify their behavior, and (3) compare emergent insights with existing theoretical assumptions and empirical findings to derive implications for sustainability communication and future research.

20. The Evolution of Word of Mouth: From Consumer Conversations to AI-Mediated Recommendations *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

This seminar thesis reviews how the concept of word of mouth has evolved in marketing research. It traces the development from traditional interpersonal WOM, where consumers exchange product- and brand-related information, to more recent AI-mediated forms of market influence such as Word of Machine and AI-based recommendations. The thesis should identify how WOM has changed as communication has become digital, scalable, persistent, and increasingly mediated by AI systems.

21. Masculinity Norms and Consumer Behavior: Masculine Gender Identity and Product Perceptions and Choice *(Chair Prof. Kuester)*

Consumers often use products and brands to express who they are and how they identify with particular social groups, including gender groups. In this, gender identity, which refers to the degree with which a person identifies with a specific gender, and particularly masculinity norms, which prescribe how men are expected to think, behave, and present themselves, play a crucial role. Both may shape how individuals evaluate products, brands, and consumption practices. Prior research suggests that male consumers may avoid products or behaviors perceived as inconsistent with traditional masculinity norms, especially when these carry gendered product perceptions and are associated with femininity, such as skincare products. This seminar paper aims to (1) review theoretical perspectives on gender identity and masculinity in consumer behavior, (2) collect and qualitatively analyze interview-based accounts of male consumers on how masculinity norms shape their product perceptions and choices, (3) discuss how identity-signaling motives influence conformity to or

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deviation from masculinity norms, and (4) derive practical implications for marketing communications to male consumers and future research on masculinity norms.

22. The “Green-Feminine” Stereotype: Masculinity Norms and Sustainable Consumption
(Chair Prof. Kuester)

Sustainable consumption is often associated with values such as care, gentleness, and environmental concern. These attributes are frequently perceived as more feminine, described as the “green-feminine” stereotype. Prior research suggests that this perception may discourage some male consumers from engaging in environmentally friendly behaviors when such behaviors are seen as inconsistent with traditional masculinity norms which prescribe how men are expected to think, behave, and present themselves. This seminar paper aims to (1) review literature on sustainable consumption and masculinity norms, (2) collect and qualitatively analyze interview-based accounts of male consumers’ views on masculinity and sustainability, (3) examine how differing masculinity norms shape perceptions of sustainable behaviors and products, and (4) discuss implications for marketing communication and future research on masculinity norms.

23. Too Much Transparency? A Cognitive Load Theory Perspective on Digital Product Passports
(Chair Prof. Homburg)

Digital Product Passports (DPPs) are designed to enhance product transparency by providing consumers with comprehensive information on aspects such as product origin, sustainability, and lifecycle. While greater information availability may support more informed decision-making, it may also increase the mental effort required to process and evaluate product information. Drawing on Cognitive Load Theory, this raises the questions of whether DPPs create information overload rather than facilitate consumer decision-making.
Against this background, this seminar thesis aims to (1) explain Cognitive Load Theory as the central theoretical lens, (2) investigate whether and how the presence of DPPs influences consumers' perceived mental effort and information overload, (3) identify the characteristics of DPPs that increase or reduce cognitive load, and (4) explore how DPPs should be designed to minimize information overload while maintaining a high level of transparency. The thesis will provide actionable insights into the cognitive challenges associated with DPPs and offer recommendations for their consumer-oriented design.

24. Autonomous AI Agents in Consumer Decision-Making: From Assistance to Delegation
(Chair Prof. Stahl)

The increasing autonomy of AI systems is changing how consumers search for, evaluate, and select products. This seminar paper focuses on the delegation of decision-making to AI systems and examines why, when, and to what extent consumers are willing to transfer decision authority to autonomous AI. Particular attention is given to perceived control, autonomy, reliance, decision responsibility, and the

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conditions under which consumers retain or relinquish control over their decisions. The paper synthesizes current empirical findings, critically evaluates existing theoretical perspectives, and identifies key research gaps concerning consumer delegation to autonomous AI.

25. Understanding Consumer Perceptions of Agentic AI *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

As AI systems become increasingly autonomous, consumers may evaluate them not only as technological tools but also in terms of their capabilities, intentions, and role in the decision process. This seminar paper examines recent literature on how consumers perceive and evaluate autonomous AI systems, considering factors such as trust, transparency, perceived intelligence, competence, autonomy, anthropomorphism, perceived risk, and control. It critically analyzes how these perceptions are formed across different AI contexts, synthesizes current empirical findings, and identifies key theoretical and empirical gaps in the literature on consumer–AI interaction.

26. Responsible Marketing: The Influence of Personalized Marketing on Problematic Consumer Behavior *(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

Personalized marketing enables companies to tailor advertisements, recommendations, and offers to individual consumer preferences and behaviors. While personalization can enhance consumer experiences by increasing relevance and convenience, it may also contribute to excessive consumption and reduced self-control, particularly among vulnerable consumers. This seminar paper aims to (1) review and synthesize current research on personalized marketing and problematic consumer behavior, and (2) examine the psychological mechanisms and boundary conditions through which personalization influences impulse buying, consumption control, and consumer well-being.

27. The New Gatekeeper: How LLM Recommendations Reshape Consumer Choice and Brand Competition *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

Instead of providing ten blue links or hundreds of products, an LLM might say: “For your needs, I would consider Brand A, Brand B, and Brand C.” That makes the AI a powerful intermediary between firms and consumers. The seminar paper should review:

- Recommendation agents and consumer decision aids
- Search costs and consideration-set formation
- Reliance on algorithmic versus human recommendations
- LLM-generated product and brand recommendations
- Whether AI recommendations concentrate attention on a small number of brands
- Brand biases in AI systems
- Prompt sensitivity and personalization
- Consumer trust in AI-curated consideration sets
- Consequences for smaller versus established brands

There is a particularly nice old-literature/new-phenomenon bridge here. Marketing Science was already studying recommendation agents in 2000 and showed that they can reduce search effort and alter the size and quality of consideration sets. The LLM question is what happens when the recommendation agent becomes conversational, generative, and potentially capable of completing the purchase itself.

III. Price Management

28. AI-Based Pricing in B2B Markets: Increasing Performance through Optimizing Pricing Strategies *(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

Firms in business markets increasingly employ machine learning to inform pricing decisions, drawing on transaction data to estimate willingness to pay, segment customers, and adjust prices over time. The seminar paper reviews the relevant literature and systematizes the application areas in which such methods are currently deployed. On this basis, it assesses the conditions under which AI-based pricing improves pricing outcomes in business markets.

29. Outcome-Based Pricing in B2B Markets: Paying for Performance *(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

Under outcome-based pricing, supplier compensation is tied to results achieved in the customer's operations rather than to the products or resources supplied, distinguishing it from the more established value-based approach. The seminar paper reviews the relevant literature on outcome-based pricing, delineates it from value-based pricing, and systematizes its central concepts, findings, and methods. On this basis, it assesses the current state of knowledge and derives open questions for future research.

IV. Product and Innovation Management

30. Material Innovation in the Luxury Industry: Sustainable Alternatives and Consumer Attitudes *(Chair Prof. Kuester)*

The luxury industry is facing growing pressure to reconcile its commitment to exceptional quality and craftsmanship with increasing demands for sustainability. In response, luxury brands are exploring innovative materials as alternatives to conventional resources such as animal leather or fur. These innovations include bio-based materials, lab-grown leather, recycled textiles, and plant-derived alternatives, which aim to reduce environmental impact while maintaining the exclusivity and quality associated with luxury products. As sustainability becomes an increasingly important consideration in consumer decision-making, understanding how consumers perceive these novel materials is essential

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for the future development of the luxury sector. Questions remain regarding whether consumers view sustainable materials as compatible with traditional luxury values such as prestige, authenticity, craftsmanship, and superior quality.
This seminar paper aims to (1) review and systematize relevant literature on material innovation, sustainability, and consumer perceptions within the luxury industry, (2) collect and qualitatively analyze interview-based accounts of consumers to examine their attitudes toward sustainable material alternatives, including the drivers and barriers influencing their acceptance, and (3) derive implications for luxury brand management and product development, identifying emerging trends, gaps in the existing literature, and directions for future research.

31. AI's Strategic Value for Innovation Departments: A Review and Qualitative Exploration
(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 innovation-related tasks such as trend forecasting, idea screening, and creative support. Yet while the academic debate has begun to conceptualize these possibilities, little is known about how AI is actually adopted and assessed in the daily work of innovation departments. This seminar paper therefore explores where and how AI can meaningfully contribute to more successful and efficient innovation outcomes. Drawing on recent academic literature from marketing and innovation research, the seminar paper should first (1) outline the core functions of an innovation department, map the points at which AI technologies, such as generative AI, machine learning, or natural language processing, are currently being deployed, and analyze which types of innovations (e.g., incremental vs. radical, product vs. service, physical vs. digital) are particularly suited for AI support. Building on this review, the seminar paper shall (2) collect and qualitatively analyze semi-structured interviews with innovation and product managers, focusing on how they employ AI, which tasks they consider suitable or unsuitable for AI support, and which organizational barriers they encounter. The seminar paper should then (3) explore similarities and differences between these practitioner perspectives and the opportunities and limitations discussed in the literature, and (4) derive actionable recommendations for practitioners and scholars, identify limitations, and outline directions for future research.

32. From Creative Employees to Market Success: How Ideas Become Innovation *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

Great ideas do not automatically become successful innovations. Between creativity and market success lie several critical stages, including idea selection, development, implementation, and commercialization. This seminar paper reviews how employee attitudes and working conditions influence this process. Particular attention will be paid to how organizations transform individual creativity into new products, services, patents, and competitive market advantages.

33. Harmony or Healthy Disagreement? Satisfaction Differences in Innovation Teams
(Chair Prof. Stahl)

Is agreement always good for innovation? Differences in employee attitudes may create conflict and weaken collaboration, but they may also encourage critical thinking, employee voice, and the questioning of established routines. This seminar paper reviews these competing effects and examines when satisfaction differences harm innovation and when they help teams avoid groupthink. It will also clarify how attitudinal differences differ from other forms of team diversity.

34. 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 paper aims to (1) synthesize the key findings and conceptual models from the marketing and management literature, with particular attention to moderators and boundary conditions such as complaint severity, channel type (online/offline), or firm characteristics, as well as to relevant mediators and outcomes such as customer retention, trust restoration, organizational learning, and innovation. Based on this review, the seminar paper shall (2) collect and qualitatively analyze semi-structured interviews with innovation and product managers, focusing on how complaints reach their departments, how they are interpreted and prioritized, and under which conditions they are translated into product, service, or process improvements. The seminar paper should then (3) explore similarities and differences between these qualitative insights and the mechanisms documented in prior research, and (4) outline a comprehensive future research agenda and practical implications for marketing and innovation managers.

35. 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.

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36. Brand Extensions: How Existing Brand Associations Shape Consumer Responses to New Products *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

Brand extensions allow firms to introduce new products by leveraging the associations and reputation of an established brand. However, consumers' responses to these extensions can depend strongly on what they already associate with the parent brand and how well these associations fit the new product. This seminar thesis examines how existing brand associations shape consumer evaluations of brand extensions. By reviewing the relevant literature, the paper should identify which types of brand associations are particularly important, how perceived fit influences consumer responses, and under which conditions existing associations facilitate or hinder the successful introduction of new products.

V. Brand and Communications Management

37. The Role of Brand Gender Fit in Co-Branding Alliances: Effects on Consumer Evaluation of Brand Partnerships *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

Co-branding alliances combine the associations of two brands, and their success often depends on perceived fit between the partners. At the same time, brands can carry gendered meanings, which may shape how consumers evaluate brand collaborations. Differences in brand gender fit may therefore influence perceptions of alliance fit, brand attitude, and consumer responses.
This seminar thesis aims to conduct a literature review on the role of brand gender fit in the evaluation of co-branding alliances. The paper reviews research on co-branding, brand fit, gendered brand perceptions, and consumer responses to brand partnerships, and identifies implications for branding theory and practice.

38. The "Woman-Owned" Label and the Evaluation of Female Founders: Perceived Competence and Trust in Solo versus Team-Based Entrepreneurship *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

Labels such as "woman-owned" can signal ownership and values, but they may also activate gender stereotypes in the evaluation of female founders. These effects may differ depending on whether a venture is presented as being led by a solo founder or by a founding team.
This seminar thesis aims to conduct a literature review on the effects of the "woman-owned" label on perceptions of female founders and entrepreneurial ventures. The paper should review research on gender stereotypes, signaling, and founder evaluations, and discuss implications for marketing and entrepreneurship research.

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39. Waiting on the Roadmap: How Players Interpret Promises Without Dates *(Chair Prof. Kuester)*

Live-service and early-access games announce future content through roadmaps that often describe what is coming in some detail while saying little about when it will arrive. Some items carry dates, others are tied only to a "Season 4" or a "future update," and many carry no timing information at all. For studios this preserves flexibility, but it is less clear how players read such announcements. Do they perceive dated items as firm commitments and undated ones as less certain or credible? Does a missing date reduce trust and credibility, or do players accept it as an honest reflection of development uncertainty? This seminar paper aims to (1) connect research on new product preannouncement and expectation management with roadmap communication in continuously evolving games, (2) develop a focused empirical question on how players interpret temporal commitment in roadmaps, (3) collect and qualitatively analyze player accounts through a small-scale interview study, and (4) derive practical implications for how studios communicate game roadmaps and a future research agenda on launch timing under uncertainty.

40. 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 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.

41. The Roadmap as a Promise: Communicating What and When in Continuously Evolving Games *(Chair Prof. Kuester)*

When publishing game roadmaps, studios must decide how specifically to describe planned changes and how precisely to communicate when they will be delivered. Industry practice suggests these choices come apart. Studios often provide specific dates for near-term updates, while the timing of longer-term plans remains more open or is linked to a future release such as "Patch 2.0. Preannouncement research examines announcement specificity, that is, how much detail firms provide about a future product or change. Research suggests that this level of detail depends on factors such as the product's development stage and the firm's confidence in delivering it on time. However, this research has mainly focused on discrete product launches rather than continuously updated, open-ended plans such as game roadmaps. This seminar paper aims to (1) connect different research strands, such as research on preannouncements and liquid innovation, with roadmap communication in video games, (2) build a small corpus of real roadmaps across different game types, (3) qualitatively analyze how studios communicate what they plan to deliver and when they expect to deliver it, and

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(4) derive implications for how studios communicate future plans while maintaining flexibility and managing player expectations.

VI. Sales Management

42. The Future Salesperson: Competencies for Success in the Digital Age* *(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

The rapid advancement of digital technologies and artificial intelligence (AI) is fundamentally transforming the role of salespeople. Traditional selling skills are increasingly complemented by technology-related competencies, raising important questions about the capabilities required for future sales success. Against this backdrop, this seminar paper aims to provide a structured literature review on the changing competency profile of salespeople. Specifically, the main goals are: 1.) examine which competencies distinguish successful salespeople today, 2.) analyze how AI and digitalization have reshaped skill requirements, and 3.) discuss how organizations can effectively train the sales force for the future.

43. Should I stay or Should I go? Understanding Salesperson Retention and Turnover*
(Chair Prof. Homburg)

Sales organizations frequently face the challenge of retaining talented salespeople, with employee turnover resulting in substantial recruitment costs and reduced organizational performance. While compensation plays an important role, research suggests that a wide range of individual, managerial, and organizational factors influence whether salespeople remain with or leave an organization. Against this backdrop, this seminar paper aims to provide a structured literature review on the antecedents of salesperson retention and turnover. Specifically, it aims to identify 1). the key drivers of turnover intentions, 2). examine the factors that foster long-term salesperson commitment, and 3.) discuss managerial strategies that help organizations attract and retain top sales talent.

44. Seeing is Selling: The Role of Extended Reality (XR) in B2B Sales* *(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

Extended Reality (XR) is increasingly transforming how B2B salespeople interact with customers. By enabling immersive product demonstrations, remote collaboration, and interactive solution presentations, XR has the potential to fundamentally reshape personal selling. Despite growing managerial interest, research on XR in B2B sales remains in its infancy. Against this backdrop, this seminar paper aims to provide a structured literature review on the role of XR in B2B sales. Specifically, the paper aims to 1.) examine current and potential XR applications across the sales process, 2.) analyze how XR influences salesperson effectiveness and customer interactions, 4.) identify barriers to adoption, and 4.) discuss future research opportunities.

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45. The Role of Dealerships in Electric Vehicle Adoption *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

As consumers consider adopting an unfamiliar technology, the local dealership may play a distinct role in shaping that decision beyond the manufacturer's brand alone. This paper explores how academic literature discusses the role of retail intermediaries in consumer adoption of new technologies, using car dealerships as a case context. It examines concepts such as trust, perceived risk, salesperson expertise, and the dealership's function as a touchpoint in the adoption process and assesses how these factors influence consumers' willingness to adopt electric vehicles.

46. Digital Product Passports in B2B Purchasing: An Organizational Information-Processing Theory Perspective *(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

Digital Product Passports (DPPs) are emerging as tools that consolidate comprehensive product information, including their origin, composition, sustainability, and lifecycle. By reducing information asymmetries and increasing information availability, DPPs may fundamentally change how B2B buyers evaluate potential suppliers and make purchasing decisions. Organizational Information-Processing Theory (OIPT) suggests that organizations achieve better decision outcomes when their information-processing capabilities match the information-processing requirements imposed by their environment. However, it remains unclear whether supplier-provided DPPs effectively support buyers' information-processing needs and under which conditions they create value during supplier selection.
This seminar thesis aims to (1) explain OIPT as the central theoretical lens, (2) investigate how supplier-provided DPPs influence buyers' information-processing capabilities and reduce uncertainty during supplier selection, and (3) identify contextual factors that influence the effectiveness of DPPs as information-processing mechanisms. The thesis will provide actionable insights into how DPPs can support organizational purchasing decisions.

47. Let the Agents Negotiate: Communication, Deliberation, and Decision Quality in B2B Markets *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

Important B2B decisions rarely involve a single decision maker. Supplier selection, procurement, pricing, contracting, and negotiations typically involve several actors who possess different information, priorities, and objectives.
As AI agents increasingly represent buyers, sellers, departments, or firms, these interactions may occur through agent-to-agent communication and negotiation. Agents may exchange information, challenge each other's claims, make counteroffers, debate alternatives, and revise decisions.
This seminar paper reviews the marketing and B2B literature on communication, negotiation, and joint decision making between market actors. The review should cover:

- Buyer–seller communication
- B2B negotiation and bargaining
- Information exchange during negotiations
- Persuasion and argumentation

- Conflict, disagreement, and constructive debate
- Joint decision making between buyers and suppliers
- Buying centers and multiple organizational decision makers
- Trust and communication quality in business relationships
- Communication intensity versus decision speed
- Effects on agreement quality, efficiency, relationship quality, and value creation

A central issue is that more communication does not necessarily produce better decisions. Discussion can reveal useful private information and improve coordination, but it can also create redundancy, delay, persuasion bias, conformity, or strategically distorted information. This makes autonomous AI agents a particularly interesting B2B setting: an agent can potentially deliberate with several other agents at almost zero marginal communication cost. The important question therefore becomes not simply whether agents should communicate, but what kind of discourse produces better market decisions.

VII. Digital Marketing

48. Online Review System Design *(Chair Prof. Kraus)*

Online reviews have become a cornerstone of digital marketplaces, strongly influencing consumer decision-making and firm performance. Yet, the way online review systems are designed—through features such as rating scales, question formats, survey length, and review prompts—shapes not only consumers' willingness to provide feedback but also the content and quality of the information they share. These design choices further affect how reviews are interpreted and used by other consumers. This seminar thesis provides an overview of the literature on online review system design, highlighting how review formats influence both the creation of consumer feedback and its subsequent perception and impact.

49. The Role of Data Characteristics in AI-Mediated Product Selection *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

The increasing role of AI agents in product search, evaluation, and selection raises questions about the characteristics of the data on which these systems rely. This seminar paper explores recent research on how data characteristics may influence the processing, evaluation, comparison, and recommendation of products by AI systems. Particular attention is given to the implications for firms seeking to make their products effectively discoverable and evaluable by AI systems. Drawing on research from digital commerce, recommender systems, product information management, information processing, and emerging agentic commerce, the paper critically evaluates the current state of the literature and identifies key research gaps.

* Topics can be prepared either in English or German.

50. The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on User-Generated Content *(Chair Prof. Kraus)*

Artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping the way user-generated content (UGC) is created, shared, and consumed. AI-powered tools enable users to generate content more easily, while platforms increasingly rely on AI to curate and moderate online information. This seminar thesis provides an overview of the emerging literature on AI and UGC, examining how AI influences content creation, consumer perceptions, and the value of user-generated content for individuals, firms, and digital platforms.

51. AI Agents in Marketing: A Literature Review of Foundations and Emerging Applications
(Chair Prof. Stahl)

In contemporary marketing, AI systems are evolving from passive tools into autonomous agents that can search, evaluate, recommend, communicate, and execute tasks on behalf of consumers or firms. This thesis examines how the rise of AI agents reshapes assumptions about marketing decision-making, customer interaction, and market intermediation. Drawing on literature from AI in marketing, generative AI, autonomous agents, recommendation systems, and agentic commerce, it explores what distinguishes AI agents from chatbots, recommender systems, and traditional automation. It further considers implications for customer journeys, buying processes, trust, transparency, and the changing role of human decision-makers in marketing.

52. The Role of Online Reviews in Consumer Decision-Making: A Literature Review *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

Online reviews have become an important source of information throughout the consumer decision journey. This thesis examines how review characteristics - including ratings, volume, valence, textual content, reviewer characteristics, and perceived credibility - influence consumer attitudes, purchase decisions, and firm performance. An important objective is to also investigate how the effects of reviews vary across products, platforms, and stages of the customer journey.

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

Digital platforms connect people from diverse backgrounds, but they also shape how minority users experience online interactions. Characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, political views, or niche preferences can influence participation, visibility, and engagement in online communities. This seminar thesis provides an overview of the literature on minority experiences in digital environments, examining how minority status affects online behavior, content creation, and interactions on digital platforms.

* Topics can be prepared either in English or German.

54. Brand Personality in Digital Environments: How Communication Influences Consumer Perceptions of Brands *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

Digital environments provide brands with a growing number of opportunities to communicate with consumers and express distinct brand personalities. Through social media, websites, digital advertising, and other forms of online communication, brands can convey human-like characteristics that shape how consumers perceive and relate to them. This seminar thesis examines how digital brand communication contributes to the formation and perception of brand personality. By reviewing existing research, the paper should explore which communication characteristics shape brand personality perceptions and how these perceptions influence consumer responses such as brand attitudes, trust, and engagement.

55. Digital Recommendations and Brand Consideration: How Recommendations Affect Consumers' Consideration of Brands *(Chair of Prof. Stahl)*

Consumers increasingly encounter product and brand recommendations in digital environments, ranging from personalized recommendations on online platforms to recommendations provided by influencers, other consumers, or AI-based systems. Such recommendations may affect not only which products consumers choose, but also which brands they consider in the first place. This seminar thesis examines how digital recommendations influence consumers' consideration of brands. By synthesizing existing research, the paper should identify how different types and characteristics of recommendations can shape brand consideration and explore the mechanisms and contextual factors that strengthen or weaken these effects.

VIII. Customer Relationship Management

56. Personalized Coupons as a Service Recovery Strategy: The Influence of Tailored Compensation on Customer Relationships After Service Failures *(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

Customer complaints represent critical moments in the relationship between consumers and companies. To recover dissatisfied customers, firms increasingly use personalized compensation strategies, such as targeted coupons and discounts. However, it remains unclear whether personalized rewards effectively restore customer relationships or whether they are perceived as merely transactional attempts to compensate for service failures. This seminar paper aims to (1) review and synthesize current research on personalized compensation in complaint management and service recovery, and (2) examine how personalization and compensation strategies influence customer perceptions, satisfaction, trust, and subsequent behavioral responses.

* Topics can be prepared either in English or German.

IX. Market Theory and Research Methods

57. Conceptualizing Credibility in Marketing Research: Definitions, Dimensions, and Measurement Approaches *(Chair Prof. Kraus)*

Credibility is a central construct in marketing research, yet it is operationalized in various ways across different research streams. This seminar thesis should conduct a structured literature review examining how credibility is conceptualized and measured in marketing research, with a particular focus on the dimensions of credibility and accuracy. The review should synthesize common theoretical frameworks, measurement scales, and operationalization approaches, identify conceptual overlaps and distinctions between credibility and accuracy, and develop an integrative overview of how these constructs are assessed across different marketing contexts.

X. Marketing Analytics

58. 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 characteristics, and testing their deployment within real-world business scenarios.

59. Social Media Analytics for Marketing Decision-Making: A Literature Review *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

Social media platforms generate large amounts of behavioral and textual data that firms can use to understand consumers and evaluate marketing activities. This thesis reviews how social media data and analytics are used for tasks such as sentiment analysis, brand monitoring, customer engagement measurement, campaign evaluation, and demand prediction. This thesis further aims to synthesize the analytical methods used in the literature, the marketing outcomes studied, and key methodological challenges associated with social media data.

60. Text Analytics in Marketing: From Online Reviews to Generative AI *(Chair of Prof. Stahl)*

Marketing researchers increasingly rely on unstructured textual data from online reviews, social media, customer service interactions, and other digital sources. This thesis reviews how text analytics has been used to extract marketing-relevant insights from such data. It can examine the evolution from traditional dictionary and topic-modeling approaches toward machine learning, large language models, and other AI-based methods, as well as their applications and limitations.

* Topics can be prepared either in English or German.

61. Marketing Analytics Meets Game Theory *(Chair Prof. Kraus)*

Marketing analysts use a broad set of tools to address business challenges in a data driven manner. One such tool is based on the game theoretic approach, which models the continuous interaction between the business parties and focuses on aspects such as pricing strategies and competition analysis. In a modern marketing analytics pipeline, this method can be combined with machine learning modeling. Ultimately, these two approaches complement each other and provide a robust, multi-layer framework to drive business performance. This seminar thesis explores the intersection of these two techniques and investigates the ways they can complement each other in a real-world setting.