

## List of seminar topics

*Area Marketing & Sales*

Below you will find a list of 75 topics for your seminar thesis. The topics are clustered into 10 overarching categories. Please inform yourself about how to apply in the uploaded 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

### Basic Literature for all Topics:

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

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

## I. Marketing Strategy and Management

### 1. **The Multichannel Marketing – Blessing or Curse?\*** (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)

Due to recent developments, many new sales channels emerged, opening up novel ways to approach consumers. In response, developing successful multichannel strategies has become a crucial success factor in marketing practice. However, apart from new opportunities, multichannel marketing also involves numerous challenges for practitioners. The aim of this work is (1) to review existing literature on Multichannel Marketing, (2) to demonstrate the influence of multichannel marketing on consumer behavior and to (3) derive implications for the practice of companies.

### 2. **“I Don’t Need You to Be Myself” – The Dangers of Using Anthropomorphism in Product Communication** (*Chair Prof. Kuester*)

Research suggests that the boundary between human and non-human is not as clear as it might seem. People typically make this distinction intuitively, on the basis of the degree of perceived mind in others. This insight helps explain the increasing focus of researchers on “anthropomorphism” – a term which describes the perception of human aspects in non-human forms, objects or events. Prior research has identified potential benefits for companies using anthropomorphized products in their communication strategy. For instance, customers tend to like products better when they are anthropomorphized. However, more recent work suggests that certain customer needs, e.g., the need for distinctiveness, can also lead to a negative impact of anthropomorphism on customers’ subsequent evaluations. The goal of this paper is to explore the conditions under which anthropomorphism can backfire for companies. This seminar paper shall derive implications for research on product anthropomorphism and for marketing management.

### 3. **The Value of Having a Strong Employer Brand** (*Chair Prof. Stahl*)

This topic is at the intersection between Marketing and Human Resources. The task is to research the various consequences of having a good versus bad employer brand with a special focus on recruiting. Do firms with a good employer brand receive more applications, better applicants, and have a shorter-time-to-hire? Or do applicants base their decision where to apply and work mainly on the salary level? This seminar thesis can lead to a quantitative master thesis where you may analyze 4 Mio employee satisfaction surveys together with data of around 500,000 applications.

### 4. **Marketing’s Response to Turbulent Conditions** (*Chair Prof. Stahl*)

Today’s business environment is characterized by an increasing frequency of different types of crises, be it product-harm or product-performance crises, crises provoked by unethical corporate behavior such as tax evasion or environmental pollution, and crises related to service issues. This master seminar thesis aims at examining how the marketing department functions under stable daily business conditions versus reacts to sudden contractions.

\* Master seminar thesis topic can be prepared both in English or in German

### **5. In-Store Advertisement in Online Stores** *(Chair Prof. Kraus)*

Research has shown that in-store advertisement could be very effective to increase sales and loyalty. Many stores (especially grocery stores) apply to this strategy that they increase in-point sales among many others. In-store advertisement is a strategy that online stores can apply as well. Although many online stores advertise their brands and products in their "stores" and take advantage of this strategy, the researchers have studied this stream poorly. In this paper, we will seek the effects of in-store advertisement in online stores as well as we compare these effects with the effects of in-store advertisement in brick and mortar stores.

### **6. Blame or Fame – The Concept of Error Management Culture and Its Impact on Organizational Outcomes\*** *(Chair Prof. Kuester)*

In their efforts to improve the work climate and to ultimately increase organizational success, managers increasingly focus on the role of the culture within their organization. One important culture that recently has received a lot of attention, is the error management culture. The aim of this seminar paper is to present the status quo of research on error management culture in order to conceptualize this type of culture in detail based on the extant literature. Additionally, the seminar paper shall discuss the impact of an error management culture on organizational success-related outcomes. Implications for research and for practitioners considering to adopt this corporate culture shall be derived.

### **7. The Corporate Philanthropy Ruse\*** *(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

Corporate philanthropy is on the rise. However, not everyone who does good does so with good intention. For example, companies use greenwashing to improve their public image. Is there a dark side to corporate philanthropy initiatives? Against this background, the goals of this thesis are (1) to review and systemize relevant academic literature on the drivers of corporate philanthropy initiatives both with good or bad intentions, (2) synthesize the literature to identify contingency factors for companies engaging in a philanthropy ruse, and (3) outline future research directions.

### **8. Value Exchange within B2B Platforms\*** *(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

Nowadays, B2B products and services are more and more distributed through digital platforms such as Alibaba or Thomas. A key question in this context is: How do suppliers organize value exchange within these platforms? Therefore, the objectives of this seminar paper are (1) a systematic literature review on B2B platforms, and (2) the identification of critical and marketing related success factors for running B2B platforms.

### **9. The “New Oil”: Customer Data as a Resource – Current Research and Future Developments\*** *(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

Companies with business models based on user and customer data are among the most valuable of all, whether it is Google, Facebook or others. In today's reality, data are ubiquitous and available in sheer unlimited amount. With a marketing perspective, this

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paper reviews recent literature on the value of customer data to firms and draws on future applications of customer data in research and practice.

**10. #Sponsored#Ad – Assessing the Value of Influencer Marketing\*** (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)

Influencer marketing is a specific discipline of online marketing in which companies integrate people with high reach in social media channels into their brand communication. The social authority and trustworthiness of influencers can strongly affect the perception and sale of brands and goods and services. However, this marketing strategy is associated with high costs for companies and can damage the brand image if misplaced or lacking authenticity. In order to prevent these threats, it is useful to (1) point out the strategic approach and success factors of influencer marketing, to (2) consult and summarize results of scientific studies regarding the topic, and (3) evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of influencer marketing in order to identify research needs and implications for practice.

## II. Consumer Behavior and Psychology

### **11. The Impact of Decision Framing on Online Ratings: An Empirical Investigation\***

*(Chair Prof. Kraus)*

While the majority of online sellers ask customers to rate products/services by selecting the number of stars they want to give, whether changing the task to rejecting stars would result in different evaluations of the same product/service remains an open question. If so, it is unclear as to which of both approaches would reflect more accurate evaluations of the product/service. Thus, the goal of this seminar thesis is to summarize existing literature on decision strategies and framing and to design an experimental study that could test the derived propositions.

### **12. The Role of Marketing in Overcoming Organizational Stigma\* (Chair Prof. Homburg)**

Nowadays, people became especially sensitive to any socially unacceptable behavior and violation of social norms. Therefore, it is not uncommon that companies can quickly become socially stigmatized for violation of corporate social responsibility. In order to mitigate or overcome the negative consequences of social stigmatization, victimized companies try their best in employing effective marketing strategies. The goal of this seminar paper is, therefore, to provide an overview of marketing literature which covers the role of marketing strategies in overcoming organizational stigma.

### **13. Individual's Self-Construal as a Driver of Consumer Behavior\* (Chair Prof. Homburg)**

Self-construal represents the extent to which an individual is viewed as being separate from or interconnected with others. Cross-cultural evidence suggests that these two aspects of self vary across cultures – namely, Westerners tend to focus on the personal self, whereas Easterners tend to focus on how the self is related to other people. This finding can be especially useful for explaining cultural differences in consumer behavior. Therefore, the goal of this seminar paper is to deliver an overview of existing research on the role of individual's self-construal in consumer behavior.

### **14. Understanding Context-Dependent Preferences (Chair Prof. Stahl)**

Do you listen to different music when you're on vacation? Have you ever gone grocery shopping when hungry? Does your taste vary across contexts and situations? In this seminar thesis, the student will summarize and review existing findings on the effects of context on preference formation and the implications for marketing strategy.

### **15. Who Can We Trust Today? On Alexa, Anthropomorphism and Fake News\***

*(Chair Prof. Kraus)*

Source credibility has been found to be increasingly important when judging the trustworthiness of news media. At the same time, smart devices (e.g., Amazon's Alexa) have become a common way for consumers to catch up with the latest news. Yet, whether

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consumers treat information that is communicated by smart devices differently than information from traditional news channels (e.g., newspapers) remains an open question. Would consumers be more likely to spread information from Alexa than from a newspaper? The goal of this seminar thesis is to summarize existing literature on human-machine interactions, trust, and fake news.

#### **16. When the Same Boring Task Feels Less Boring: A Case of Managing Expectations?\***

*(Chair Prof. Kraus)*

Consumer boredom is a ubiquitous experience that can result in serious problems for consumers' health. Thus, recent research has begun to develop an understanding of strategies to reduce the experience of boredom. Yet, it remains unanswered whether expectations could help consumers prepare for an upcoming boring task, which could make the same boring task feel less boring. Thus, the goal of this seminar thesis is to summarize existing literature on boredom and to shed light on the underlying mechanism that could make expectations an effective tool to reduce the experience of boredom.

#### **17. The Importance of Matching on Advice-Giving** *(Chair Prof. Kraus)*

Existing research found that a moral message was perceived as more persuasive if the initial attitudes of the message giver were moralized. Based on this finding, the present seminar investigates whether matching the valence of a previous experience (i.e., a positive vs. a negative experience) with advice type (i.e., "Do advice" vs. "Don't advice") can lead to higher persuasiveness of the advice. The aim of the seminar is to summarize existing literature on the matching strategy and advice giving.

#### **18. An Investigation on the Difference Between Advice Seeker and Advice Giver**

*(Chair Prof. Kraus)*

It is common that advice seeker and advice giver have different experiences and therefore emphasize different aspects when they seek vs. give advices. The purpose of this seminar paper is to summarize previous literature on advice giving and develop a reasonable hypothesis.

#### **19. Are Your Benefits My Losses? An Investigation on How People Treat Other's Benefits**

*(Chair Prof. Kraus)*

Self-other differences exist in various contexts. Existing literature shows that people evaluate others differently from themselves. However, it remains unanswered how people treat other's benefits. Do they see other's benefits as their own losses? The goal of the seminar is to summarize existing literature on self-other differences especially for benefits and losses.

#### **20. "I Feel Good" – A Literature Review on the Role of Positive Emotions for Sustainable Consumer Behavior\*** *(Chair Prof. Kuester)*

Companies increasingly attempt to foster sustainable behavior and purchases among customers through an affective approach. More precisely, companies can either appeal to

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customers' negative or positive emotions in their communication. Yet, the activation of customers' negative emotions can backfire so that companies often highlight positive emotions that customers can derive from sustainable behavior. This seminar paper is intended to provide an overview of the literature on the role of positive emotions in fostering sustainable customer behavior. Based on the findings, theoretical and managerial implications shall be derived.

### **21. My Data, Whose Benefit?\*** (*Chair Prof. Kuester*)

Frequently companies request personal information from their customers in exchange for providing products or services. Companies use this data, for example, for personalizing the user experience or to gather ideas for developing new products potentially also leading to customer benefits. This seminar paper should focus on how the intended use of customer data affects customers' willingness to disclose their personal data. For this purpose, a structured literature overview shall be developed to derive implications for research, practice, and policy makers.

### **22. Being More Than Just a Customer – A Literature Review on Customers' New Roles as Prosumers\*** (*Chair Prof. Kuester*)

With the proliferation of platform-based businesses, such as Uber, Couchsurfing or Amazon MTurk, the role of customers is changing: Today, customers no longer only consume services, but also act as service providers themselves and thus become 'prosumers'. But how does being a prosumer shape customers' view of services? This seminar paper sets out to provide an overview of the literature within this field of research to illustrate the underlying motivation of customers to become prosumers and to examine how being a prosumer affects their service experience. Based on the insights generated, important implications for both marketing research and practice shall be derived.

### **23. Sustainable Consumption: A Product Lifecycle Perspective\*** (*Chair Prof. Kuester*)

Sustainable products are becoming more and more relevant in times of climate change, limited availability of natural resources and a growing world population. However, it is unclear when and to what extent customers consider and assess the sustainability of products. It is the aim of this seminar paper to investigate in which phases of the product lifecycle from development, production, use, to disposal, customers pay particular attention to the sustainability of products. Additionally, the seminar paper should explore additional factors influencing customers' inclination to pay attention to sustainability aspects of products. For this purpose, this seminar paper shall provide a structured literature overview to derive implications for research, practice, and policy makers.

### **24. "Is My Device Spying on Me?" – A Literature Review on the Role of Consumer Online Privacy Concerns for Decision-Making** (*Chair Prof. Kuester*)

Internet giants such as Google, Facebook, and Amazon are in control of an increasing amount of personal data. In recent years, there have been growing concerns over the rights

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of companies to collect individual information from customers. This development is particularly relevant in the light of the rise of the Internet of Things (IoT), where devices are able to collect and analyze data, such as Alexa, Amazon Echo or Google Home. Typically, companies claim that collecting data helps them to personalize offers for the benefit of customers. However, recent reports show that people today are more interested than ever in who collects their data and how it is used. If customers perceive that their privacy is being threatened, this may lead to a decrease of trust and can change preferences for products and brands. The goal of this seminar paper is to explore the latest state of research on customer online privacy concerns and derive implications for theory and managerial practice. A particular focus is on investigating the trade-off between the willingness to give away personal data via IoT devices in exchange for value in the form of an individualized experience.

## **25. Let Me Google That for You – A Literature Review on the Illusion of Competence Effect\***

*(Chair Prof. Kuester)*

Smartphones have become customers' constant companions in the shopping journey. Having smartphones at their fingertips, customers can access information at any time and place. At the same time, the immediate access to information might cause customers to overestimate their actual knowledge concerning certain facts or, for example, a company's new product. In this regard, the illusion of competence effect tricks individuals into believing they have knowledge about something, when in reality, they do not. The aim of this seminar thesis is to provide an overview on the illusion of competence effect in the marketing literature. Based on the comprehensive literature review regarding the illusion of competence effect, implications for research and practice shall be derived.

## **26. Personalization vs. Privacy: The Crux of Digitized Products\* (Chair Prof. Homburg)**

The academic literature suggests that customers prefer personalization over privacy, since personalization offers the benefit of addressing unique needs and requirements. When looking at the real world on the other hand, personalization of a product or service requires customers to give up personal information to the company. As a result, there is a privacy and utility tradeoff. The objectives of this seminar paper are (1) a systematic overview of behavioral and psychological theories that look at privacy and security needs on a personal level, and (2) an evaluation of the nature of data that is considered private or personal and how this differentiation might vary across customer backgrounds.

## **27. Spoilt for Choice? The Application of Choice-Tactics to Simplify Purchase Decisions\***

*(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

People make countless decisions every day - many of which are purchasing decisions. However, it is not always easy to make a decision, especially in light of the immense and ever-growing range of consumer products. How do people find their way in this world flooded with offers? Which strategies do they use to make satisfactory decisions? The aim of this work is to answer these and related questions by (1) reviewing existing literature on

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consumer choice tactics and (2) providing a systematic overview of different tactics consumers apply when making purchase decisions.

**28. Purchase Behavior in the Digital Era – How Digital Information Search and Electronic Word-of-Mouth Alter Consumer Decision Making\*** *(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

The rise of the internet drastically changed the consumer's role in the market place. Due to the vast amount of available and easily accessible information, consumers are evermore empowered to make purchase decisions. Against this background, it is the aim of this seminar paper is to (1) provide a systematic overview of research on the effects of online information search and electronic Word-of-Mouth on consumer decisions and (2) to outline future research directions.

**29. Convenience and the Willingness to Pay\*** *(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

Many devices have transformed from just being a product to being both, product and service provider, which is based on the use of the Internet of Things. The provided services tend to be convenient for the device user. The objectives of this seminar paper are (1) a systematic overview of how the convenience and availability of a service influences the customers willingness to pay, (2) an evaluation of underlying theories that could explain an increased willingness to pay, and (3) a definition of feasible and promising product categories for the use of IoT services.

**30. Consumers' Responses to Social Identity Threat in Cross-Cultural Research\***

*(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

According to social identity theory, individuals define themselves in terms of collective attributes of the groups to which they belong. If an individual is associated with a social group to which he or she does not belong, his or her social identity can be threatened. Existing consumer research has shown that depending on the extent of the interdependence of an individual with his or her social group, a response to social identity threat varies. Therefore, the goal of this seminar paper is to deliver an overview of existing cross-cultural consumer research on the influence of individualism/ collectivism (and/ or other cultural dimensions) on consumers' responses to social identity threat.

### III. Price Management

#### **31. Trends in Pricing: How Information Technology Systems Boost Price Decisions\***

*(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

Pricing is one of the most important elements of the marketing mix – without creating substantial costs, it ultimately decides about company success or failure. As for every part of the organization, digitalization has also revolutionized the pricing practice: Dynamic or behavior-based pricing are only some of today's manifold possibilities of employing the "right" pricing strategy. Against this background, the superordinate goals of this seminar paper are (1) to review and systemize relevant academic literature on trends in pricing, (2) to identify the consequences of effective usage of information technology in pricing, and (3) to discuss the implications for researchers as well as practitioners.

#### **32. Valuing the invaluable: Methods to Value Intangible Goods\* (Chair Prof. Homburg)**

Just recently, Amazon released the data market place that puts a price tag to data goods. Data goods or information goods are a subcategory of intangible goods. Historically practitioners and researchers struggle to value intangible goods (e.g., brands, customers, intellectual property). Against this background, the goals of this seminar paper are (1) to review and systemize relevant academic literature on valuation methods for intangible goods, (2) synthesize the literature to provide a framework of when to use which valuation method with a special emphasis on valuing data and information goods, and (3) outline future research directions.

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#### IV. Product and Innovation Management

##### **33. Fail Fast, Fail Often – A Literature Review on the Role of Failures in Innovation**

**Development\*** (*Chair Prof. Kuester*)

Many innovations fail after market introduction and are then terminated. On the one hand, it can be beneficial to stop further investments into an innovation if there is evidence that it will very likely fall short of its goals. Moreover, failures also provide the opportunity to learn for future innovation projects. On the other hand, terminations of innovations can also traumatize the individuals who strongly invested themselves into their development. It is the aim of this thesis to present the status quo of research on how innovation failures affect people involved in their development. Additionally, implications shall be derived on how companies can leverage failures and on how to mitigate their risks.

##### **34. Eco-Innovations – A Literature Review on Customer Adoption of Eco-Innovations\***

(*Chair Prof. Kuester*)

In recent years, eco-innovations have played a crucial role for companies in catering to the growing environmental awareness and changing customer needs. Such innovations aim to reduce or avoid environmental harm during production and use and when disposed. Despite customers' awareness and intention to adopt eco-friendly innovations, many are reluctant to actually adopt them and replace conventional products with these "green" alternatives. The aim of the seminar thesis is to investigate potential causes for customers' reluctance to adopt eco-innovations and review the factors that foster eco-innovation adoption. Based on the findings, theoretical and managerial implications shall be derived.

##### **35. To Label or Not to Label? A Literature Review on the Role of Eco-Labels for Eco-Friendly Purchases\***

(*Chair Prof. Kuester*)

One way of persuading customers to make eco-friendly purchases is to use eco-labels. Eco-labels can be helpful to deal with customers' lack of understanding and knowledge on environmental issues, which might contribute to a low uptake of sustainable consumption behavior. As a result, companies have started to introduce either certified or self-declared eco-labels as one way of informing customers and highlighting eco-friendly attributes of a product. While eco-labels are an opportunity to encourage eco-friendly purchases, companies must be aware of the potential downsides of using eco-labels. The aim of the seminar thesis is to evaluate the role of eco-labels in enabling customers to make better-informed eco-friendly purchases. Based on the findings, theoretical and managerial implications shall be derived.

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## V. Brand and Communications Management

### **36. Evolvement of the Advertising Industry – General Developments and External Shocks**

*(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

The advertising industry and how companies advertise has changed. New technologies like color printing might have changed the way ads are designed; the introduction of completely new channels like the TV might have changed how companies allocated their marketing budgets; external shocks like world wars or the oil crisis might have altered what advertisers emphasize on; constant technological advancements like the smartphone might have increased the speed-of-life – something which advertisers might or might not have reacted to. Your task will be to systematically summarize scientific literature around these topics. This seminar thesis may lead to a quantitative master thesis where you can analyze a dataset of more than 300,000 Mio print ads spanning the last 150 years.

### **37. Advertising Strategy** *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

When designing advertisements, marketers generally consider where and how often to place which type of ads. Is there a systematic difference between the ad strategy of companies competing on price and those competing on quantity? How does product involvement type affect the chosen strategy? These exemplary questions show how an advertising campaign must consider many factors to ensure effectiveness. In this seminar thesis, the student will review existing research on effective advertising strategies for different industry and product types.

### **38. Unlocking the Brand Value Chain** *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

The question how brand investments influence the customer “mindset” and, consequently, contribute to the financial health of firms is of major interest to both academics and practitioners. Especially given that consumers’ responsiveness towards branding initiatives appears to decline, understanding the brand value chain has become a major concern for managers. This master seminar thesis aims at reviewing research on the links between the different stages of the brand value chain.

### **39. Positioning Brands for Creating Brand Equity** *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

Given brands’ ubiquity in the marketplace and consumers’ increasing skepticism towards brands, building a successful brand requires thorough consideration of possible brand positioning strategies and tactics. This master seminar thesis aims at examining the most common positioning strategies for building strong brands.

### **40. The Effectiveness of the Employer Brand in the “War for Talents”\***

*(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

Attracting and retaining the right talent is critical to a company's ability to succeed. However, many labor markets currently encounter a shortage of skilled talents, making it

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necessary to create effective instruments to “fight for talents”. Accordingly, the number of companies using social media to position and present themselves as attractive employers is steadily increasing. Concerning this background, the objective of the seminar paper is (1) to review and systemize relevant academic literature on current and future challenges and success factors in employer branding (2) to identify the potential of employer branding strategies in social media and (3) compare the employer branding strategies of corporates and start-ups.

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## VI. Sales Management

### **41. Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence in Sales – A State-of-the-Art Review\***

*(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

Experts predict that Machine Learning (ML) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) will revolutionize the way companies so far operated. Hence, the sales practice in general and the role of the salespeople in particular (will) find themselves in a perpetual state of change. Whereas many employees fear – due to these technological developments – that many jobs might become obsolete, researchers and practitioners agree on its chances to boost productivity by streamlining everyday tasks. The superordinate goals of this seminar paper are (1) to review and systemize relevant academic literature on ML and AI in sales, (2) to identify the consequences these changes have on the tasks as well as on the needed competencies of a salesperson, (3) to outline a roadmap for future research, and (4) to highlight both the threats and opportunities these changes bear for managerial practice.

### **42. Consultative Selling – How New Technologies Upgrade Modern Sales Practices\***

*(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

A salesperson who practices consultative selling develops a holistic and nuanced understanding of the buyer's needs before proposing a customized solution to fulfill those needs. According to this definition, salespeople have to gather and systemize a myriad of information about their customers. New technologies such as Big Data and Predictive Analytics open up brand-new possibilities to win the customer, and therefore constitute one of the major trends in today's sales practice. The superordinate goals of this seminar paper are (1) to review and systemize relevant academic literature on the process of consultative selling, (2) to identify the consequences new technologies have on the selling process, (3) to outline a roadmap for future research, and (4) to highlight both the threats and opportunities these changes bear for managerial practice.

### **43. Selling Together: Cross-Selling and Sales-Incentives\* *(Chair Prof. Homburg)***

Although suppliers and buyers gain significant benefits from cross-selling, most cross-selling initiatives fail. Optimizing sales-incentives for cross-selling is one way to reduce this failures. However, selling shifts away from fighting alone to become a team sport. Against this background, the goals of this seminar paper are (1) to review and systemize relevant academic literature on cross-selling, sales incentives and team incentives, (2) discuss how (team) incentives could influence cross-selling initiatives positively and/or negatively, and (3) outline future research directions.

### **44. Social Selling – The Potential of Salespeople's Social Media Use in B2B Markets\***

*(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

These days, the use of social media is becoming an ubiquitous part of everyday life, increasing the pressure on companies to join their customers' networks. While it seems

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reasonable for consumer brands to be present on social media, one might wonder if there is also a way for business-to-business (B2B) companies to become as successful online as their B2C counterparts. Concerning this background, the aim of this seminar paper is to (1) review and systematize the literature on effective ways in which B2B companies can use social media and (2) identify competencies required by salespeople to leverage social media.

#### **45. Uncover the Secret of Amazon – Insights and Challenges of a Successful Sales Strategy\***

*(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

Amazon became the dominant e-commerce marketplace in the world by offering hundreds of millions of products at competitive prices. How is this possible? Is it the personalized customer approach, the embedding of third party suppliers or the systematically optimized logistical handling of the sales process that underlies the success of the company? This is the starting point of a seminar work, which aims to derive success factors and patterns in Amazon's sales strategy that could be helpful for managers of other growing companies. The main objectives of this term paper are to (1) elaborate the most important aspects for success in Amazon's sales strategy, to (2) provide a comprehensive state-of-the-art review of academic literature regarding these sales strategy aspects, and to (3) process an evaluation of the current state of research vs. practical findings to derive suggestions for future research and implications for practice.

#### **46. Mind the Gap: Is Social Network Analysis Relevant for Sales Research?\***

*(Chair Prof. Homburg)*

Not least because of its interdisciplinarity, marketing research always makes use of existing approaches and methods also from other research areas. It is therefore understandable that methods such as social network analysis, derived from empirical social research, are highly relevant and interesting for marketing areas, such as sales. Although there are some recent studies including the analytical method, its use represents a gap, especially in sales research. In order to explore this gap through a comprehensive state-of-the-art review of the academic literature the main objectives of this term paper are to (1) give an overview of sales studies including social network analysis, (2) classify the investigated topics within the related studies, (3) evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of the study's methodology, and (4) give an outlook for potential further studies.

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## VII. Digital Marketing

### **47. Digital Business Models – Recent Insights on the Relevance of the Freemium Business Model** *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

Due to fluctuations in revenue, more and more companies opt for more traditional revenue models for digital goods and introduce paid content. One prominent model that is implemented in various industries is the freemium business model, where consumers can use pre-specified content for free, but have to pay a fee in order to get access to the premium content. The freemium model increasingly has gained attention from marketing researchers and practitioners alike over the past few years. The aim of this seminar thesis is to provide an extensive overview of the most recent literature on the freemium business model.

### **48. The Digital Customer Journey – How to Influence the Customer's Digital Path to Purchase** *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

Based on the availability of huge amounts of various types of data, a company that offers digital goods can continuously map the behavior of its consumers. Tracking the consumer journey and analyzing the consumption of digital offers are of utmost importance in order to develop a successful strategy for the profitable management of customers on websites, in apps or online shops. This masters seminar thesis aims at analyzing the possibilities and challenges a company faces when it tries to understand the lifecycle of its customers and aims at outlining potential tools for this endeavor.

### **49. The Importance of Usage Metrics of Digital Products** *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

In its predictions for 2020, Forbes Magazine recently proclaimed product usage metrics as becoming the most important indicator of a digital business's overall health and growth potential. After many tech companies have failed to live up to expectations, metrics like adoption, usage, and retention, all of which are easily quantifiable in the digital sphere, are becoming more and more crucial in evaluating business performance. These metrics are able to clearly define whether customers are happy and engaged versus frustrated and likely to churn. This masters seminar thesis aims at analyzing the possibilities and challenges for managers and investors trying to quantify and leverage product usage metrics as for evaluating a business's health.

### **50. Digital Voice Assistants – A Shopping Revolution?** *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

DVA's are becoming increasingly popular. Nevertheless, users are reluctant to trust payment methods and order procedures via voice. How might purchasing patterns via voice in the near future look like? What will be of importance?



**51. Influencer Marketing** (*Chair Prof. Stahl*)

Influencers are a prominent way for marketing managers to spend their budget. However, there is no conformity about the quantification of the effectiveness of such promotional activities. The economic value of the influencer needs to be evaluated.

**52. Contextual Advertising** (*Chair Prof. Stahl*)

In marketing, there is an abundance of different tools to improve the effectiveness of advertisements. One that is used on a regular basis is digital contextual advertising. Different effects and application scenarios are of interest.

**53. How Does a Smart Voice Assistant Change the Endowment Effect?** (*Chair Prof. Kraus*)

The endowment effect is how much a customer values her own product more than the identical other products. It practically means that a customer overvalues her own product. This effect changes based on some characters such as the time the customer owns the product, how difficult it was to purchase the product, and the income of the customer. In this project, we aim to explore how purchasing over a smart voice assistant such as Alexa changes the endowment effect.

**54. That's Mine! A Literature Review on Psychological Ownership Theory in Online****Contexts\*** (*Chair Prof. Kuester*)

Psychological ownership is the feeling that something is yours with or without legally possessing it. Research shows that these feelings of ownership can have positive (e.g., personal sacrifice) but also negative consequences (e.g., feelings of personal loss) for customers. Psychological ownership might also be relevant in online contexts, where customers interact with digital offerings. For instance, customers might experience psychological ownership with regard to their personal data. The aim of this seminar thesis is to provide a comprehensive overview of the literature on psychological ownership with a specific focus on online contexts. Based on the latest state of research, implications for research and practice shall be derived.

**55. Only One Room Left! The Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) in the Context of Digital Marketing\*** (*Chair Prof. Kuester*)

Digital marketing has made it easier than ever for customers to know about the wide range of opportunities that are available. For example, when booking a hotel room, booking sites inform customers how many rooms are still available and how many other customers are also interested in the specific offer during the search. Individuals are also able to constantly keep in touch with many social events, experiences, and interactions. This transparency of opportunities can cause customers to experience "fear of missing out" (FOMO). FOMO is a personality construct defined as a person's feeling of missing out on rewarding experiences. FOMO might have manifold effects on customer behavior. For example, customers with high FOMO spend more time keeping up with their friends' activities on social media. The aim of the seminar thesis is to provide a comprehensive overview of the literature on FOMO with a

\* Master seminar thesis topic can be prepared both in English or in German

specific focus on the digital marketing context. Based on the latest state of research on FOMO, implications for marketing research and practice shall be derived.

#### **56. What Was First: The Chicken or the Egg? How to Start a Platform Business\***

*(Chair Prof. Kuester)*

Spotify and Amazon are renowned examples of platform businesses that create value by enabling the interaction between two or more groups of market players. However, for a platform's success, these multiple sides with potentially contrary needs have to be built and managed carefully. Here, platform managers are facing the challenge to decide which side(s) to prioritize in their efforts to grow the platform business. The aim of this seminar paper is to provide an overview of research on how to manage the multiple sides of platforms in their starting phase. Based on the latest state of research, implications for marketing research and practice shall be derived.

#### **57. Be a Good Customer! A Literature Review on Managing Dysfunctional Customer Behavior on Platforms\* (Chair Prof. Kuester)**

Uber and AirBnb are renowned examples of platform business models that create value by enabling the interaction between two or more groups of market players. However, the novelty of these services and a lack of regulation might lead customers to unintentionally or intentionally misbehave during the consumption of these services. This seminar paper is intended to provide an overview of the literature on ways that platform-based businesses can encounter and manage dysfunctional customer behavior to nudge customers towards good behavior. On the basis of the knowledge gained, implications for market research and practice shall be derived.

#### **58. "Free" Applications in Exchange for Consumer Data: A Faustian Bargain?\***

*(Chair Prof. Kuester)*

In the online context, many business models build on providing free-of-charge services or products in exchange for consumer data. For example, Facebook serves as a free-of-charge online social network gathering user data for targeted advertisement. It is the aim of this seminar paper to provide a comprehensive literature review exploring under which circumstances consumers are most likely to provide their data in exchange for using online offerings. Implications for both research and practice (e.g., platform providers or e-commerce) should be given.

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## VIII. Customer Relationship Management

### **59. Much Ado About Nothing – When Customers Complain Illegitimately\***

*(Chair Prof. Kuester)*

Customer complaint management is an important task for firms to prevent customer defection and negative word of mouth. Although customer complaints about product or service-related issues are normally justified, firms sometimes receive illegitimate complaints from customers. In these cases, customers voice complaints although no actual problem has occurred, for example, to receive financial or other compensations. While customer complaints are an important source of information for companies, the handling of these illegitimate complaints represent a challenge. The aim of this thesis is to provide an overview of the literature dealing with illegitimate customer complaints. In particular, the customer motives for illegitimate complaining should be identified. Additionally, the consequences for firms, including potential counter measures, should be discussed. At the end, this seminar paper shall derive implications for customer complaint management research and practice.

### **60. The Use of Artificial Intelligence for Creating Customer (Digital) Experiences** *(Chair Prof. Stahl)*

Technology continues to radically and rapidly change the nature of service, customers' service experiences, and customers' relationships with service providers. How is and how can artificial intelligence change these experiences. In this master seminar thesis you summarize related literature and provide an overview how artificial intelligence is used to personalize the customer journey and to improve the convenience for customers.

### **61. Is Customer Delight Worth It?** *(Chair Prof. Kuester)*

For decades, customer satisfaction has been a strategic imperative for many companies. Research has repeatedly confirmed the positive effects of customer satisfaction on firm performance, and measuring customer satisfaction has become a common practice among marketing researchers and practitioners. However, a lot of marketing programs designed to increase customer satisfaction do not lead to the expected results. This is why some authors suggest that the goal of customer satisfaction should be abandoned as a means to enhance firm performance, while others advocate the re-evaluation of the satisfaction-profit relationship. Prior research suggests that the effect of customer satisfaction on firm performance is asymmetric in nature and non-linear, which opens the door to investigating the threshold points for which a small change in customer satisfaction may lead to a disproportionate leap in the outcome measures, such as customer retention, customer engagement, or company profit. In light of this, the goal of this paper is to identify the conditions under which it is worth or not worth investing effort and resources to move from the stage of customer satisfaction to customer delight. By conducting a systematic review of the state-of-the-art literature, important implications for marketing practitioners and researchers shall be provided.

\* Master seminar thesis topic can be prepared both in English or in German

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**62. The Effects of Digitalization on Customer Value in B2B Markets\*** (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)

Customer value has been a key focus of relationship marketing for decades. However, the increasing digitalization has deeply changed the customers' buying behavior, needs and expectations. Therefore, the objectives of this seminar paper are (1) a systematic literature review on the topic of customer value in B2B markets, and (2) the identification of changing customer value against the background of digitalization.

**63. The Essence of B2B Customer Relationship Management: Current Research and Future Developments\*** (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)

The management of customer relationships (CRM) is core in B2B markets. Therefore, the objectives of this seminar paper are (1) the elaboration of the specifics of B2B customer relationships, (2) a systematic review of the current research in the field of B2B CRM, and (3) the identification of future developments of CRM in the context of B2B markets.

**64. Negative Word of Mouth: If You're Unhappy and You Know it, Clap Your Hands\*** (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)

In times where customers are empowered and well-connected, the spread of information between customers and prospects is quicker and wider than ever. Customers who are dissatisfied may easily let others know – and thus have substantial value consequences for firms. This thesis investigates the state of the art of research on negative word of mouth, integrating business practice examples and implications for firms.

**65. Customer Knowledge Value: How Firms Benefit From What Customers Know and Share\*** (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)

Products and services are created for customers. However, it seems that not all firms always listen to their customers as they should. But what is the value of customers' shared knowledge, e.g., through feedback, online reviews or as part of a co-creation process? This thesis aims to answer the question what this knowledge about products and services can be worth to firms. The thesis consists of a systematic literature review on the state of the art of research on customer knowledge value and related areas.

**66. The Human Touch in a Digital World – When Do Organizational Buyers Still Seek for Human Advice?\*** (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)

Technological advance has placed increased importance on mobile, digitally-driven self-service experiences with face-to-face interactions being on the decline: By 2020, the majority of our interactions with brands is expected to occur through digital channels. Despite its high theoretical and practical relevance, research examining the optimal trade-off of digital self-service and personal channels in a B2B setting remains scarce. Against this background, the goal of the seminar paper is (1) to summarize and categorize relevant literature and (2) provide a sound overview of relevant moderators, focusing on product-characteristics, customer segments and touchpoints in the organizational buyer journey.

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**67. Personalization: Is it Helpful to Increase Brand Attachment?\*** (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)

In a digital world, the personalization of products and services is becoming more and more important for companies to incorporate. How do customers perceive this trend to more personalized products and services, and does it leverage the brand attachment? The objectives of this seminar paper are (1) a systematic overview of academic literature to brand attachment and its origins, and (2) an evaluation of psychological and behavioral theories that can be used to explain an increased brand attachment due to more personalized products and services in a digital era.

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

### **68. Approaches to Capture Consumer Opinion** (*Chair Prof. Stahl*)

In the past, researchers and practitioners have mainly used methods such as surveys and interviews to gather consumers' opinions. However, the issue of dishonest or inaccurate responses and a variety of biases, stemming either from the participants themselves or from the observer, has been raised several times. Recent advances show researchers also analyze online user generated content to assess consumer opinion. In this seminar thesis, the student will review and compare different methods used to capture consumer opinion and discuss their suitability and accurateness.

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## X. Marketing Analytics

### **69. Subconscious Influences for Customers in Marketing Contexts** (*Chair Prof. Stahl*)

When users write online reviews for hotels, restaurants, or employers do they really base their assessment on just their experiences or might they in fact be subconsciously influenced by other allegedly unrelated factors as e.g. the current weather when they wrote their review? Your task in this seminar thesis will be to collect scientific research that analyzes if customers and users on the Internet are influenced by certain factors which might influence them in their decision-making behavior perhaps even without them noticing it. This seminar thesis may lead to a quantitative master thesis where you can analyze a dataset of more than 10 Mio online reviews and put them into perspective with other variables.

### **70. Prediction of Consumer Behavior\*** (*Chair Prof. Kraus*)

Predictive models leveraging machine learning and data mining methods can be applied to various use cases. For this thesis it is of interest which models could be applied to the analysis of click data, more specifically generated from self-order terminals. You should give a brief overview of existing models and suggest a fit for the use case at hand.

### **71. Data-Driven Business Models in B2C** (*Chair Prof. Stahl*)

Big data business models of start-ups are changing the value chain of entire industries and larger, more mature companies looking for ways to monetize their own big data in the hope that they can capture new revenue streams (and compete effectively in the future). For example Netflix and Pandora designed big data business models around understanding and creating value for customers in ways that seemed like magic at the time. So, what's behind these business models? And, are there other business models that might help other (mature) companies create, deliver, and capture value using big data at the core? How should mature companies utilize their big data stores to create new business models? In this master seminar thesis you summarize related literature and provide an overview how companies' data can be integrated in the company's value proposition.

### **72. Data-As-Currency in B2B** (*Chair Prof. Stahl*)

Data is not only critical for B2B marketing and sales strategies but also emerges as a new currency when exchanging goods and services in B2B. For example, Rolls Royce, an aircraft and ship engine manufacturer is one of the leaders in big data. Investing in analytics was transformational for Rolls Royce and made a loss-making aircraft manufacturer become the number two player in the aircraft engine industry. Rolls Royce packed its engines with sensors allowing for real-time data analytics to improve performance and safety. The company launched "Engine Condition Monitoring" that sends real-time engine performance metrics when the plane is mid-air to one of the company's R&D centers. The data can be analyzed instantly and any concerns will be communicated to an airline before the plane reaches its destination. Data analytics changed the way Rolls Royce is capturing the value. Previously Rolls Royce would compete on price with other suppliers and profit mostly from

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engine sales. The demand is highly tied to aircraft sales and depends on limited set of buyers (e.g. in commercial on Airbus and Boeing). Now thanks to data analytics the company captures more value. Rolls Royce can monitor every engine, charging customers for engine usage, repairs, parts and additional services. In fact, the company has moved to leasing its engines in the monthly subscription model, with a promise that its data analytics can improve airline's efficiency, in particular for fuel consumption that accounts on average for 40 percent of all cost. In this master seminar thesis you summarize related literature and provide an overview how data transforms the business model in B2B.

**73. Textual Analysis and Marketing-Finance\*** (*Chair Prof. Kraus*)

Natural Language Processing (NLP) has strongly evolved during the last years. Text analytics can also provide added value in the areas of Finance and Marketing. Your task should be to present the state of the art regarding the newest language models. You can choose one model (e.g. BERT), describe it and suggest a potential use case in the area of Marketing-Finance (e.g. analysis of 10-K filings).

**74. Literature Review Marketing-Finance\*** (*Chair Prof. Kraus*)

The intersection of Marketing and Finance has been well examined. Your goal is to conduct a review of related literature. You should structure existing literature and highlight important sub-areas. You might suggest ideas for further research.

**75. Two-sided Markets: The Case of Mobile Games** (*Chair Prof. Kraus*)

The firms who are active in two-sided markets have two types of income: advertising and user (subscription or purchasing). When these firms show too many ads, this decreases the number of users; accordingly the user income. When they show less ads, they have more users; however less ad income. In this case, they should find the optimal threshold. The aim of this paper is doing a literature review on two-sided markets and developing a simple model for the mobile game case. Please pick this topic only if you have an analytical background.