

Mannheim, January 19th, 2021

List of seminar topics

Area Marketing & Sales

Below you will find a list of **72 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. Sustainability and Profit Maximization - Friend or Foe? (Chair Prof. Homburg)*

It has long been the undisputable status quo that profit maximization is the only responsibility of business. This implies on the other hand, that the interests of any stakeholder group can be a part of a responsible business, if this contributes to long-term profitability. Therefore, the current literature around the shareholder maximization approach has produced multiple theories aimed at defining CSR in terms of specific aspects of company benefits, like competitive advantages, or cause-related marketing. The objectives of this seminar paper are (1) a systematic study overview of how the management of CSR-related risks may relate with the interests of a company, and (2) an evaluation of how the limitation of potential reputation damage from CSR issues might imply short-term costs but better long-term protection of an organization's interests.

2. Marketing Agility in Times of Rapid and Accelerating Environmental Change (Chair Prof. Stahl)

The pandemic brought on by COVID-19 will likely have long-lasting effects on consumer behavior, branding, the marketplace, communication strategies and more. This crisis has again proven that firms and particularly the marketing function need to be responsive to change – both internally and in how organizations interact with the environment. Consequently, this master seminar thesis aims at reviewing research on the role of marketing in helping organizations overcome disruptive events.

3. Hitchhiking Alternative Galaxies: Testing Marketing Strategy with Simulations (Chair Prof. Homburg)*

What if ... an alternative marketing strategy would have been used? Extensive computational power allows computer simulations to explore the universe of what is theoretically possible. Specifically, the use of agent-based models enables practitioners and researchers to grow and study artificial markets (for a visual example see <https://youtu.be/Sr2ga3BBMTc>). The goals of this seminar paper are to (1) review applications of agent-based models in marketing and management research, (2) synthesize the literature to highlight areas where agent-based modeling is underutilized, and (3) explore the limitations of agent-based models and how to overcome these.

4. 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.

5. Do we need Corporate Digital Responsibility (CDR)? (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)*

Digital technologies and related data become increasingly prevalent and, consequently, ethical concerns arise. Consequently, it should be discussed, whether a set of shared values and norms guiding an organization's operations (i.e., Corporate Digital Responsibility) with respect to this issue is needed, similar to the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Against this background, the goals of this seminar paper are (1) to review and integrate relevant academic literature on digitalization issues, CDR, and CSR (2) to develop a framework to answer how an organization's shared values and norms regarding CDR can get translated into actionable guidelines for firms.

6. Research Shopping Phenomenon – How Big is the Problem? (*Chair Prof. Kuester*)

With the proliferation of digital channels by which companies can interact with customers, and due to the rise of multichannel marketing, there have been several accounts of customer behavior referred to as research shopping. Research shopping is used to describe behavior of customers who search and gather information in one channel and then make a purchase on another channel. Research has identified two important research shopping behaviors: showrooming (offline-to-online) and webrooming (online-to-offline). However, most of these studies do not provide any conclusive evidence regarding the potential consequences of research shopping behavior on company-related outcomes. The aim of this thesis is to determine the implications of research shopping for companies and to identify strategies to deal with this shopping behavior by conducting a thorough review of the literature. Implications for academic research shall also be derived.

7. A Stock Market Perspective on Marketing: Event Studies in Marketing Research (Chair Prof. Homburg)*

It is marketing's goal to create and drive value – and, as such, to contribute to a firm's value in terms of stock prices. Event studies, as part of the marketing—finance interface, examine how single events (e.g., product introductions, marketing communications) impact stock markets and firm value. With event studies and beyond, this thesis aims at providing a sound overview of research on how stock markets (e.g., analysts and investors) react to firms' various marketing-related communications and actions.

8. Marketing Mix for Generation Z (Chair Prof. Homburg)*

After focusing on Millennials for quite some time, marketers should start to concentrate on the Generation Z. Digitally savvy, the so-called “Gen Zers” grew up with iPhones and do not remember a time before the internet. Unsurprisingly, this generation needs to be marketed differently in comparison to customers in historic times. Having a digital marketing strategy surely is a good starting point, but certainly not a blanket approach. Against this background, the superordinate goals of this seminar paper are (1) to review and systemize relevant academic literature on Generation Z and its consequences on the marketing mix, (2) to outline a roadmap for future research, and (3) to highlight both the challenges and opportunities these particularities bear for managerial practice.

9. Mass or Class: Marketing to the Haves or the Have Nots? (Chair Prof. Homburg)*

Income and wealth inequality are on the rise. The wealthy are decreasingly economically dependent on labor for income. By contrast, workers have to take up more than one job to maintain a living standard. The increasing imbalance in the income and wealth distribution eradicates the average consumer leading to a rich consumer–poor consumer divide. This seminar paper aims to review the literature on luxury marketing and bottom-of-the-pyramid marketing in the face of these developments.

10. Advertising: Information or Persuasion (Chair Prof. Stahl)

When designing advertisements, marketers generally consider whether ads should provide factual information or rather persuade consumers. How does the number of competitors affect the chosen strategy? Is there a systematic difference between the ad strategy of companies competing on price and those competing on quantity? 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, as well as the relative use of information and persuasion.

11. COVID-19: “Hamster Shopping”, Short-Time, and Bankruptcy (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)*

The corona virus certainly affects every company around the world – however, both the direction and the intensity may differ entirely. Whereas empty supermarket shelves made retailers’ dreams come true, short-time work often is the only way to avoid (or delay) company bankruptcies. Against this background, the superordinate goals of this seminar paper are (1) to outline and synthesize the different outcomes companies face(d) due to COVID-19, (2) review and systemize relevant academic literature, (3) and to develop a roadmap for marketers and researchers for the time (a) while and (b) after the pandemic.

12. Living on Different Planets – The Form and Impact of Differences in Thought Worlds Between Marketing and Related Organizational Functions (*Chair Prof. Kuester*)*

While companies typically have a mission and vision that hold across organizational functions, different thought worlds often exist in different departments. Such thought worlds describe differences in, for example, views of the world and goals between organizational functions. One common assumption is that the thought world of marketing is long-term oriented and focused on products, whereas the thought world of sales is more short-term oriented and focused on customer relationships. The goal of this seminar thesis is to provide a comprehensive literature review on departmental thought worlds, with a focus on the differences between marketing and related departments. In particular, the concrete manifestations of different thought worlds, and potential beneficial as well as problematic consequences of differing thought worlds shall be analyzed. Implications for research on departmental thought worlds and for managers who wish to address this phenomenon effectively shall be derived.

13. Sustainable consumption: A pure conscience - but at what price? (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)*

Companies and online shops are increasingly tagging their products with the label "sustainability" in the hope of enticing customers to buy. However, what discourages many customers from buying is the significantly higher price compared to products that are not sustainably produced. Against this background, the questions arise, if prices are really

significantly higher and what price willingness do different customers have for sustainable products, is this different for young people versus older people? The resulting findings from the analysis can help managers to align their marketing strategies more specifically to different customer segments. In order to explore this gap through a comprehensive state-of-the-art review of the academic literature the main objectives of this thesis are to (1) give an overview of studies regarding the willingness to pay in terms of sustainability and (2) identify gaps in research.

14. The More, the Merrier? The Relationship between Cross-Functional Integration of the Marketing Function and Organizational Performance (*Chair Prof. Kuester*)*

The importance of cooperation between organizational functions, also referred to cross-functional integration, has been frequently highlighted over the past decades. The idea is that by working together across departments, organizational silos can be broken up and more differentiated viewpoints emerge. One function that has sometimes been considered in past research on cross-functional integration is the marketing function. The aim of this thesis is to provide an overview of the literature dealing with the cross-functional integration of marketing. In particular, the performance impact of the integration of marketing with diverse other organizational functions should be examined. In this context, different indicators of organizational performance shall be taken into consideration, and relevant moderating variables shall be considered. Implications for research on cross-functional integration of the marketing function and managers thinking about whether and how to integrate marketing with other departments shall be derived.

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

II. Consumer Behavior and Psychology

15. Decision Strategies and Consumer Inferences (*Chair Prof. Kraus*)*

Although choosing the desired option versus rejecting the undesired option is necessarily identical for binary choice sets, consumers have been found to think of both frames in a different way.

Most importantly, research has yet to systematically understand which inferences consumers draw from the decision strategy other consumers adopt. Thus, the primary purpose of this seminar thesis is to summarize the affective, behavioral, and cognitive consequences of adopting different decision strategies.

16. How Consumers Deal with a Product (un)related to a Crisis (*Chair Prof. Stahl*)

Consumer research has evaluated from different angles how consumers react to similar stimuli or environmental cues in their shopping behavior. However, so far there are only few examples addressing how a clearly negative associated event affects consumer behavior. In this master seminar thesis, the goal is to address this shortcoming and elaborate ideas how to deal with such an event in terms of brand communication.

17. Back to the ‘New Normal‘? A Literature Review on Customer Behavior Changes in Service Transactions due to the COVID-19 Pandemic (*Chair Prof. Kuester*)*

The COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing requirements impact customer habits of purchasing products and using services. For using services, customers need to improvise and adopt new routines, such as forming queues before entering service locations or using e-services. While customers could return to their old habits after the pandemic, it is likely that some changes in behavior will stick and will determine the future ways in which customers use services. The seminar thesis aims to investigate the ways in which the COVID-19 pandemic changes customer behavior in service transactions in the long term. Based on the generated findings, implications for research and practice shall be derived.

18. FemWashing: Using Female Empowerment to sell products? (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)*

In recent years, many companies have taken up the trend toward female empowerment, which is gaining momentum (e.g., Dove with its natural beauty campaign). At the same time, women are speaking out on social media and accuse certain brands of “femwashing” (an inauthentic

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version of advertising, where seemingly pro-women sentiments are used to sell products). However, research exploring consumer reactions to “femwashing” is scarce. Against this background, the goal of this thesis is to (1) review and systemize relevant literature on (1) the usage of pro-women claims in a marketing context, (2) compare the relatively new concepts “femwashing” with the established concept of “greenwashing” and (3) outline future research directions.

19. Analytic Thinking and the Binary Bias (*Chair Prof. Kraus*)*

Recent research has highlighted consumers’ tendency to dichotomize continuous data (i.e., binary bias). In the context of online reviews, this significantly influences the interpretation of customer ratings (Fisher, Newman, and Dhar 2018). However, which individual differences may change the strength of this bias remains widely unexplored. Thus, the goal of this seminar thesis is to summarize prior literature and derive hypothesis as to what extent cognitive reflection (the degree that consumers think analytically) undermines the binary bias.

20. The Ethical Marketer? Addictive Advertising for Online Gambling (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)*

Gambling is an old vice. The advent of the Internet, however, moved gambling into the virtual sphere making it broadly accessible. While gambling may be fun for some, it becomes addictive for others—even more so behind the veil of online anonymity. How does advertising for online gambling drive addictive behavior? This seminar paper aims to review the literature on advertising and regulations in the online gambling industry, identify specific consumer behaviors that cause addiction, and discuss how advertising and regulation compete in shaping consumer behavior.

21. Are my symptoms serious, Dr. Google? Consumer’s Health Information Seeking Behavior on the Internet – State of the Art (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)*

Today, consumers are more empowered to participate in their own health care than ever before. The rapid growth in web-based health-related information has transformed the patient into a reflexive consumer, who makes active decisions concerning treatment procedures. These changes are of importance to the marketing discipline since they produce a number of challenges for practitioners such as pharmaceutical companies. The aim of this seminar paper is to provide a state-of-the-art literature review of marketing research that investigates health information seeking behavior of consumers.

22. Biases in Machine Learning Research (*Chair Prof. Stahl*)

The term bias in marketing research generally refers to issues that result in inaccurate conclusions. Thereby, cognitive biases such as people's susceptibility to the framing of certain questions or statements, as well as statistical biases arising throughout the creation of samples or gathering of responses endanger the validity of the work. Compared to more traditional methods, machine learning approaches seemingly promise more objectivity and less bias.

In this seminar thesis, the student will review existing research on potential biases arising in marketing research that makes use of machine learning techniques.

23. The World Wide Web a World Wide Warehouse? Exploring factors that drive online shopping among consumers (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)*

Online shopping turned into a dominant alternative to traditional retail shopping and consequently receives increasing attention from both practitioners and academics. Without a doubt, e-commerce offers a plentitude of new marketing possibilities for firms. However, to understand whether it is a suitable strategy, it is of crucial importance to understand what drives consumers to shop online. Against this background, it is the aim of this seminar paper to examine relevant drivers of online purchase behavior and analyse industry-specific differences based on a systematic literature review.

24. Letting Someone Else Decide on Your Behalf – The Impact of Decision Delegation on the Individual and Its Impact on Consumption (*Chair Prof. Kuester*)*

Individuals make hundreds of decisions daily. Psychology and consumer research have intensively studied how consumers make their decisions depending on the context, the mood they are in, or the characteristics of the product of choice. But what happens when consumers delegate the decision-making to somebody else, such as a husband to his wife or even to a smart device to decide on their behalf? The aim of this seminar thesis is to provide an overview of the literature dealing with this phenomenon from a psychological but also from a marketing perspective. The psychological effects on individuals not making the purchase decision themselves and relevant moderating variables shall be considered. Furthermore, this seminar thesis shall shed light on the impact of this type of decision-making on purchase decisions. Implications for research on consumers using intelligent decision-making systems shall also be derived.

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25. 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, Western cultures tend to focus on the personal self (i.e., independent self-construal), whereas Eastern cultures focus on how the self is related to other people (i.e., interdependent self-construal). 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.

26. Using Consumer Insights to Achieve Profitable Growth (*Chair Prof. Stahl*)

Companies around the world recognize the importance of exploring the motivations, beliefs, and attitudes that drive consumer behavior through the purchase decision journey. In fact, in-depth customer insights are more important than ever in supporting marketing executives improve value propositions and innovate more successfully. Accordingly, this master seminar thesis aims at reviewing the core tools, approaches, and techniques for generating valuable customer insights.

27. Self-Discrepancy as a Driver of Conspicuous Consumption (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)*

Self-discrepancy theory (Higgins 1987) postulates that in order to maintain a stable perception of themselves, individuals monitor the distance between their present state (actual self) and a goal state (ideal self). Inconsistency between one's ideal and actual self is called self-discrepancy. The existing research shows that when self-discrepancies arise in terms of belongingness to a social group, individuals are more likely to increase their levels of conspicuous consumption and to buy products that signal social status. The goal of this seminar paper is to conduct the literature review on the effects of self-discrepancies on conspicuous consumption.

28. Decision making in the Sharing Economy (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)*

Despite the increasing importance of the sharing economy, little is known about its impact on customer decision making. There are various drivers for the participation at the sharing economy such as economic gain, enjoyment of sharing, lifestyle improvement and utility. Thereby, relevant decision-making processes of consumers might alter in contrast to a buying decision, for example the mental accounting of benefits and cost of sharing instead of owning a product might be tracked differently. Therefore, the aim of this thesis is (1) to analyze the drivers of decision-making in the sharing economy, (2) assess how providers of sharing offers

can leverage these processes and (3) finally derive suggestions for further studies in future research.

29. Let me show you how I use it: Gaining insights from customer usage behavior (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)*

Many IoT-/Smart devices enable companies to track customer usage behavior. Academic literature describes the benefits for research and development, new product inventions, as well as improvements for the user interface. The objectives of this seminar paper are (1) a systematic overview of how customer usage behavior can be used in marketing, and (2) an evaluation of best practices in the industry with a categorial overview of devices that are most promising for the marketing field, based on academic literature.

30. How Does Purchasing Device Change The Endowment Effect? (*Chair Prof. Kraus*)

Consumers feel psychological attachment to the product when they own it. This is called the endowment effect in the literature. Although a huge amount of studies have focused on the reasons and results of the endowment effect, purchasing device isn't one of them. In today's world, consumers could prefer to purchase offline, online, mobile, and smart. In this paper, we will seek how the endowment effect changes through different purchasing channels.

31. The Dark Side of Artificial Intelligence in Marketing: The Consumer Perspective (*Chair Prof. Kuester*)*

Artificial intelligence (AI) has become an integral part of consumers' everyday lives. Whether personal assistants, voice-controlled devices or data-driven recommendation systems – AI is ubiquitous. Although AI offers many benefits, for consumers there are also risks involved in its use. It is the aim of this seminar thesis to identify the potential risks, disadvantages, and concerns consumers may experience when using AI. A comprehensive literature review shall identify and conceptualize relevant negative consumer-related outcomes. The seminar thesis shall derive implications for practice and for future research.

III. Price Management

32. Influencer Marketing – How can a Pricing Model be Established? (*Chair Prof. Stahl*)

The effectiveness of influencer marketing is unclear and difficult for marketers to assess. Which key performance indicators are crucial for which kind of marketing objectives and which pricing models could be derived from this? In this master seminar thesis, the purpose is to develop a possible pricing model based on performance characteristics of the influencers.

IV. **Product and Innovation Management**

33. When Choosing Nothing is Better After All – A Literature Review on Choice Deferral in Marketing and Innovation Research (*Chair Prof. Kuester*)*

The literature on the phenomenon of choice deferral argues that customers might make better product choices if they are also offered a no-choice option, that is, the option of not choosing any of the offered product options. However, the literature on choice deferral is both widespread and fragmented and hence in need of consolidation. This seminar paper aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the literature in this research area and to assess the applicability of the choice deferral concept to marketing and innovation. Based on the generated insights, implications for both research and practice shall be derived.

34. Sustainability – the Only USP? (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)*

In modern times, sustainability is absolutely critical for many companies, especially in the food and beverages industry. However, there are dangers in putting too strong the commercial spin on green conscience: For instance, what happens to consumer trust and brand equity when costly sustainability pledges fall by the wayside because they do not deliver a return? Against this background, the superordinate goals of this seminar paper are (1) to review and systemize relevant academic literature with regard to sustainability in its role as unique selling proposition, (2) to outline its potential effects on consumers and organizational performance, (3) to identify possible countermeasures, and (4) to give an outlook for further research in this area.

35. “Time to Say Goodbye?” – A Literature Review on the Determinants of Project Review Decisions in New Product Development Projects (*Chair Prof. Kuester*)*

During new product development, managers must routinely make project review decisions to ensure the best fit of projects with internal feasibility and external market conditions. Therefore, these review decisions are heavily influenced by conditions that originate either from within, such as corporate culture or individual-level biases, or from outside the company, such as information ambiguity, competitive actions, or market turbulence. This seminar thesis aims to investigate the determinants of project review decisions during the development of new products by providing an overview of the extant literature on this topic. Based on the generated findings, implications for research and practice shall be derived.

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V. **Brand and Communications Management**

36. External employer branding – What matters most for job seekers (*Chair Prof. Stahl*)

Each day, an empty desk costs a company. Thus, there is a high incentive to have open positions filled with the right person in a short time. But what makes the right people apply? Is it the offered salary, the fit to the company, the distance to your current location, the average ratings on employer review platforms or even other aspects? Customer Digital Experience is a hot topic, but what about the Digital Applicant or Candidate experience? This seminar thesis involves a literature research about this topic, and should educate the reader about things a company could do to attract the right people.

37. Deceptive Advertising and Advertising Annoyance (Chair Prof. Kraus)*

Consumer psychology, content, context and timing of advertising determine its success. Poor advertising can lead to frustration and annoyance with respect to target customers, which might result in hostile behavior towards the firm. You should present research discussing the possible determinants and adverse effects of annoying or deceptive advertising. Further, you should analyze findings in the context of digitized advertising.

38. Catches Your Ear, Sparks Your Brain! What We Can Learn from Audio Marketing and Radio Advertising and How It Differs from Podcast Marketing (*Chair Prof. Kuester*)*

Podcasts are on the upswing for several years. Marketing managers as well as advertisers are trying to master this communication channel that promises very attentive listeners waiting to be persuaded. However, not many scholars have identified podcasts as a field of study, revealing a knowledge gap from a marketing perspective. The goal of this seminar thesis is, therefore, to consider the related literature streams of radio advertising as well as audio marketing and to provide an overview of research findings on auditory processing that could be relevant for podcast marketing. Further, this thesis shall outline similarities between radio advertising and podcast marketing as well as identify their differences. Implications for podcast producers and marketing managers shall be derived and future research directions on audio marketing shall be outlined.

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VI. Sales Management

39. Selling on the short vs. long leash - Importance of sales-person decision-making freedom (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)*

The behavior and resulting performance of sales employees is not only affected by their personal characteristics but also on formalization and centralization of their organization guidelines. Research shows mixed results on the effect of these characteristics on the selling approach as well as performance. On the one hand, it enables salesperson to refer to the “big boss in the backoffice” who won’t give discounts, on the other hand it may impede the salesperson to act customer-oriented. Therefore, the goals of this thesis are to (1) review and systemize relevant academic literature on selling, (2) classify and evaluate the identified literature, (3) discuss factors which explain the relationship between formalization and centralization on sales performance and (4) give an outlook for potential further studies.

40. The Rise of Omnichannel Promotion and Distribution (*Chair Prof. Stahl*)

Communication channels and retail channels are changing. Specifically, promotions and sales increasingly become omnichannel in that they offer an integrated experience across the online-offline worlds. In this regard, it is important for firms to understand how consumers form channel preferences; how to choose the right channel, right content, and right time to reach a customer; how these factors vary for Millennials, Generation Z, etc. This master seminar thesis thus aims at reviewing existing research on how this omnichannel viewpoint creates new business opportunities for firms.

41. Hunting and Farming: Should Customers Focus on New Customers, Existing Customers, or Both? (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)*

In order to get the most of their available working time, salespeople need to balance their efforts between hunting for new customers and farming existing customers. Thereby, salespeople face the tradeoff between customer acquisition on the one hand and customer retention (including, e.g., up-selling and cross-selling) on the other hand, where potentially exists an optimum. This thesis summarizes the existing literature on salespeople ambidexterity and the issue of “hunting versus farming” as part of salespeople’s daily job reality. The literature overview particularly focuses on future research opportunities and major practical implications.

42. Customer acquisition and retention in B2B markets (Chair Prof. Kraus)*

The thesis should discuss key features of sales/service agents that characterize successful acquisition of customers and successful management of B2B relationships. You should present the variables that determine the profitability of B2B relationships and impact on their duration. In this context you should discuss possible data sources internal or external to the company that could be analyzed in order to enhance customer acquisition and retention.

43. Making salespeople happy to make customers happy? How workplace conditions affect salespeople performance (Chair Prof. Homburg)*

Employees spend a significant portion of their lives at work while performing their jobs. Thus, the workplace environment affects their cognitive and emotional states, behavior, and abilities. However, research examining the role of workplace conditions in influencing salespeople's performance, job satisfaction, and turnover intention is scarce. Drawing on a job demands job resources framework, this paper aims to (1) outline the current state of research on the effect of workplace conditions on salespeople performance and (2) outline future research directions.

44. Digital B2B sales – The new normal in a post-COVID-19 world? (Chair Prof. Homburg)*

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced B2B buyers and sellers to embrace digitalization on a massive scale. What started as a crisis response has now become the “new normal,” with major implications for how buyers and sellers do business in the near future (e.g., a rapid increase of digital sales prospecting and a decrease in face-to-face meetings). Against this background, the objectives of this seminar paper are (1) to review and systematize relevant academic literature on current and future (B2B) sales challenges and (2) to identify how the role of digitalization and the required skills of salespeople have changed over the course of COVID-19.

45. Selling and Cross-Selling: How important is the knowledge about the own firm's product portfolio? (Chair Prof. Homburg)*

There are many possible influences of a salesperson's sales performance. Knowing about the firm's product portfolio is one of them. It enables salespeople to adaptively adjust to the needs of their buyers and create a customer-oriented atmosphere. But are trainings and other measures worth their cost in the long-run? The goals of this seminar paper are (1) to review and systemize relevant academic literature on selling and cross-selling, (2) discuss the pros

and cons of broadening salespeople's product portfolio knowledge, and (3) outline future research directions.

46. Cross-Selling and Cross-Buying in different countries and cultures (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)*

The sale of additional products is very important in both B2B and B2C sales. However, approaching your customers in the correct manner is crucial in order to sell more than just initially wanted products or services. But do these approaches work the same way for customers in different countries and cultures or are there differences? The goals of this seminar paper are (1) to review and systemize relevant academic literature on B2C selling, cross-selling and cross-cultural differences, (2) discuss the pros and cons of using different approaches for different customers, and (3) outline future research directions.

47. Straight to the facts or ego-stroking: What is the commonly most appreciated and successful approach of B2C salespeople? (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)*

Salespeople in a business-to-customer (B2C) context have different approaches to customers. This is needed, since every customer has a different want/need for how they want to be fascinated to buy a certain product. But are all customers different, or are there some approaches that reach a wide range of customers equally well? The goals of this seminar paper are (1) to review and systemize relevant academic literature on B2C selling, sales strategies and how they are perceived by the customers, (2) discuss the pros and cons of using different approaches for different customers, and (3) outline future research directions and practical implications.

48. One step ahead of the opponent? - Digital tools in B2B negotiations (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)*

In the B2B selling process, negotiating constitutes an important component which can have large effects on the financial outcome. In recent years, the digitalization and the ubiquitous availability of data on products, customers and competitors have given rise to the opportunity to support the negotiation process through digital tools. Overall for complex products, this can be a major support during negotiating. Therefore, the goals of this seminar paper is (1) to provide a state-of-the-art review on the academic literature with the focus on giving an overview how digital tools can support the negotiation process in the B2B area, (2) discuss positive and negative impacts of these tools on the behavior of negotiators as well as on the negotiation strategies, process and outcome and (3) derive conclusions on beneficial use cases for the digital tools.

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VII. Digital Marketing

49. Would You Be so Kind and Say “Please” and “Thank You”? When Artificial Intelligence Breaks Social Norms (*Chair Prof. Kuester*)*

Artificial intelligence in different formats and shapes is constantly around today's consumer: Amazon's Alexa telling a joke, Netflix recommending a movie, or Zalando's chatbot helping to find the right outfit. But are these systems intelligent enough to follow social norms? Social norms are a collective evaluation or expectation of behavior that is otherwise not regulated. For example, the use of “please” and “thank you” represents a social norm as much as the proper use of formal or informal language depending on the situation. Against this background, the aim of this seminar thesis is (1) to review relevant literature on social norms from a consumer behavior perspective. In particular, the influence of following or violating social norms on consumers shall be analyzed. Moreover, the objective of the seminar paper is (2) to provide a structured overview of the literature that covers social norms in the context of artificial intelligence. Future research directions and managerial implications at the crossroads of artificial intelligence and social norms shall be derived.

50. The Freemium Business Model – A Successful Monetization Tool for Digital Goods? (*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.

51. Online Reviews and Expertise (*Chair Prof. Kraus*)*

Online Word of Mouth (WOM) is more influential than ever. At the same time, consumers are increasingly motivated to find strategies to reliably assess reviewers' credibility. In contrast, retailers are interested in developing an understanding of the characteristics of reviewer expertise and to measure their persuasive power compared to novices. Therefore, the goal of this seminar thesis is to provide a summary concerning the characteristics of expert reviewers and to discuss strategies to identify them.

52. The Relevance of Social Media for News Consumption (*Chair Prof. Stahl*)

In their everyday lives, people tend to retrieve news articles more and more from their social media news feed. For example, they read the headlines displayed on Facebook, Instagram, and/or Twitter, from which they can access the original newspaper article. What does this imply for newspaper websites and both the breadth and depth of information users get? This seminar thesis aims at understanding consumer behavior across multiple platforms by providing an extensive overview of relevant recent insights.

53. Amazon, Instagram, WhatsApp: A Conceptualization of Platforms (*Chair Prof. Kuester*)*

Platforms such as Amazon, Instagram, and WhatsApp are growing in importance for the global economy. In 2020, seven of the world's ten most valuable companies had a platform business model. The aim of this thesis is to develop an overview of existing definitions and key characteristics of platforms in the existing marketing, management and information systems literature. Based on this overview, a generalizable conceptualization should be developed, which can be applied in future research. Implications for the management of platforms should be derived.

54. The Value of Surprise and Suspense for Paid Content (*Chair Prof. Stahl*)

At the beginning of a e.g. sports season, it is mostly unpredictable which team will be the winner. Whenever a sports tournament is determined in the final rounds before the end of the season or when the winner won very unexpectedly, content websites will observe a surge in traffic. News articles or videos covering the tournament will be highly demanded, especially paid articles that offer exclusive information. Starting from the “measure of unexpectedness” (Baker and Bloom 2013), the aim of this seminar thesis is to provide an extensive overview of recent literature on the value of surprise and suspense for the revenue generation on paid content platforms.

55. Cause related Marketing – Which Strategy is best for Influencer Marketing? (*Chair Prof. Stahl*)

Attention loss and the availability to skip ads makes it difficult for marketers to reach their designated audience. The common seeding recommendation are Macro influencers. Nevertheless, we see more and more industry articles pointing out the value of micro influencers. The common assumption in the seeding literature in marketing is that macro

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

influencers (or hubs) generate a high return. Given the accumulating evidence that this return is not that high does it really pay off to engage influencers?

56. Is the Internet biased? (*Chair Prof. Stahl*)

Ideally, everyone who bought a product, experienced a service or worked at an employer leaves an online review. In that case, there would be a good chance, that online reviews are a fair representation of what the product, service or employer actually is like. However, in reality there can be a bias, that only a certain sort of people engages in the process of writing an online review. This seminar thesis involves a literature research about this topic, what its consequences are and how it could be overcome.

57. Electronic word-of-mouth around the labor market (*Chair Prof. Stahl*)

Users exchange their opinions about almost everything on the Internet. This also involves the workplace. What makes people speak positively or negatively about their employer and workplace online? And do applicants trust these employer reviews and incorporate them in their decision-making? This seminar thesis involves a literature research about both the sender and receiver perspective of employer reviews.

58. Tit For Tat: Network Effects in Platform Economies (*Chair Prof. Kuester*)*

The platform economy is growing in importance with platform firms such as Amazon, Alphabet, and Facebook being among the most valuable companies worldwide in 2020. One of the key properties of most platforms is the existence of network effects. Network effects describe the phenomenon that the value a market participant derives from using a platform depends on the number of other market participants on this platform. For example, the more users Facebook has, the more interesting the platform becomes for each user. On the basis of a comprehensive literature review, it is the aim of this seminar thesis to provide an overview and conceptualization of network effects in platform markets. Implications for future research and the management of platforms should be presented.

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VIII. Customer Relationship Management

59. Customer Experience Management – Definition and Measurement (*Chair Prof. Kuester*)

Customer Experience Management (CEM) is widely regarded as the primary source of firms' competitive advantage in the future. Despite its wide use in practice and academia, the CEM concept is still ambiguous regarding its definition and measurement. While some researchers suggest that CEM is a multidimensional construct consisting of emotional, cognitive, social, sensorial, and behavioral responses of customers, others question its very need, arguing that CEM is "an old wine in a new bottle". Moreover, there is no consistent measurement approach of CEM that has been applied across different settings. By conducting a systematic review of the state-of-the-art literature, this thesis aims to answer two important questions: 1) What is CEM, and how is it different from related concepts?, and 2) How can CEM be measured in different settings? Implications for CEM research and for marketing managers shall be derived.

60. Physical vs. digital touchpoints along the customer journey (*Chair Prof. Kraus*)*

Many companies digitize essential steps of the customer journey. You should present findings that discuss which touchpoints of the customer journey should be conducted in a physical vs. digital environment, under which circumstances. Further, you should outline the role of human interaction and whether there is some predictability for choosing optimal touchpoints.

61. 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.

62. 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

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performance, and measuring customer satisfaction has become a common practice among marketing researchers and practitioners. However, a number of marketing programs designed to increase customer satisfaction do not lead to the expected results. For this reason, 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 seminar 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, implications for researchers and marketing practitioners shall be provided.

IX. Market Theory and Research Methods

63. Image Analysis in (Marketing) Research (*Chair Prof. Stahl*)

As an application of machine learning, image analysis has proven useful in various disciplines. For example, researchers have analyzed the faces depicted in print advertisements or assessed the complexity of advertising images. Compared to textual data, images can require a more intricate analysis due to the many dimensions used to characterize each instance. Hence, machine learning approaches could serve as improvements over traditional manual analysis.

In this seminar thesis, the student will review existing (marketing) research using various image analysis approaches, comparing both manual and ML methods and contrasting the findings.

64. 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.

65. Knowledge is Power! The Knowledge-Based View of the Firm and its Application in Marketing Research (*Chair Prof. Kuester*)*

The knowledge-based view of the firm (KBV) considers knowledge as the vital resource determining firms' long-term competitiveness. Knowledge about aspects of the marketing environment, such as customer needs and competitor strategies, can be highly valuable for companies if they manage to leverage the knowledge effectively. The aim of this seminar thesis is to present a general overview of the KBV of the firm. In addition, marketing research that applies the KBV as a theoretical framework shall be discussed in a structured way. Implications for future marketing research opportunities on the basis of the KBV as well as recommendations for applications of the KBV in a management context shall be derived.

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66. Data Mining: Automatic Topic Detection in Marketing Research (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)*

Scientists and managers are constantly on the outlook for current and emerging trends in marketing research topics. Advances in machine learning and data mining methods may help to accelerate the detection of such topics. The goals of this seminar paper are (1) to review and systemize relevant academic literature on automatic topic detection, (2) propose a framework for automatic detection of current and emerging topics in marketing, and (3) automatically detect current and emerging topics in the top marketing journals.

67. Text Analysis in Marketing Research: an Overview (*Chair Prof. Homburg*)*

Within the last decade, machine learning methods have become state of the art in data analysis, particularly for examining large datasets, as they bear a sheer endless range of applications. Text analysis, as one of these methods, can provide valuable insights to both marketing researchers and practitioners and has regularly been applied by marketing scholars. The goal of this thesis is to create a systematic overview of major marketing-related studies using text analysis and applications of text analysis in marketing-related research generally. Thereby, the thesis focuses on both existing literature and possible applications for future research.

68. Daily Diary Data in Marketing Research: an Overview (*Chair Prof. Kraus*)

Daily diary method aims to observe the consumers in their daily lives and analyze how daily activities affect their decisions. It consists of intensive longitudinal data. Although it has been used in psychology research, its usage in marketing isn't wide. This thesis focuses on how to apply to daily diary method and its potential usage areas in marketing research.

X. Marketing Analytics

69. Automatic Understanding of Advertisement (*Chair Prof. Stahl*)

With increased computational power at our hands university researchers are now able to generate knowledge from large sets of data that we had to pass on just a few years ago. Using machine learning and other statistical methods we can now detect patterns and rules in data that are sometimes even counterintuitive. In this seminar thesis the student will review the new field of automated image understanding that can be applied to advertisements.

70. Big Buying Days (*Chair Prof. Kraus*)

Big buying days are certain days throughout a year when retailers offer special discounts. The biggest big buying days are Black Friday, Singles' Day, and Cyber Monday. They can be a treat or opportunity for the retailers. On the one hand, they could create excess demand. On the other hand, some customers could postpone their purchases to spend less money. The rate of discounting takes an important role here. In this paper, we will analyze the big buying days' effect on retailers' profit focusing on the optimal discount rate. The aim of this paper is doing a literature review on big buying days/special discounts and developing a simple analytical model to find the optimal discount rate.

71. Impact of Color on Marketing (*Chair Prof. Stahl*)

Color has an important role in marketing and researchers and marketers keep discovering innovative ways to use color. In this seminar thesis the student will review existing research in the multidisciplinary field of color psychology and marketing.

72. Review of Image Complexity Research (*Chair Prof. Stahl*)

Over the last centuries print advertisements have transformed from plain text paragraphs to magazine size full page empty spaces with a tiny symbol in the middle. To study this aspect of advertisement history we need to measure the complexity of an image. In this seminar thesis the student will review existing research on image complexity in the overlapping fields of both psychology and computer vision. The intent is to find image features that can be used to automatically quantify advertisement complexity.