Topics for Bachelor and Master Theses
for the Summer Semester 2022
(December 11, 2021)

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Application
- Your application (in English or German) should include the following contents: Topic requests with your individual prioritization/ranking of your interest (e.g., B3, B11, B17, B16, B15), overview of your previous academic performance, a short curriculum vitae, (and optionally an own topic suggestion that we will check if it fits to our research expertise and if it is feasible, without guarantee that we will supervise it). Please bundle everything into a single PDF file labeled with your last name only and submit it to: marketing@wifa.uni-leipzig.de
- The application deadlines are:
  - **December 31st for the summer semester** (we will inform you about your topic in January)
  - **June 30st for the winter semester** (we will inform you about your topic in July)
- After successful application, consultation with your supervisor, and confirmation of supervision, you must register the topic with the Admissions Office by the **end of February for the summer semester** and by the **end of August for the winter semester** at the latest so that you can complete your studies this semester.
- Please follow our published guidelines very carefully.
Bachelor

B1. Marketing of video games – New frontiers for research
When people had to stay indoors, video games not only provided a welcome distraction, but also new opportunities for activities that had previously taken place offline. Thus, the pandemic gave a further boost to the already thriving video game industry and brought numerous new opportunities for marketing. For example, Epic Games' Fortnite, with its 350 million users, has the scale and reach to host major attractions that span multiple entertainment genres. In April 2020, rapper Travis Scott performed in the world of Fortnite and over 12 million players watched his virtual show. Recently, video game publisher Ubisoft announced Quartz, an NFT-based service that allows players to trade unique in-game items. While the entertainment industry has recognized video games as an important source of revenue, entertainment research has been slow to turn to analyzing their market dynamics and potential. Therefore, this paper brings together recent publications in relevant marketing, management, and business journals to create a visual model that identifies both research gaps and important insights for the future of video game marketing.

Supervisor: Nicolas Weber

Globally, when seeking funding for a new motion picture, production companies often depend on multiple sources. In contrast, Hollywood blockbusters are often financed by a single, financially strong production company. But does this make them more successful? For multi-source financing, public funding plays a major role. In Germany, for example, various federal and state film subsidies provide over 300 million euros annually to support the creation, production and distribution of feature films. However, the impact of public funding on the national film industry is controversial, and many productions do not generate significant profits. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to provide a comprehensive review of existing marketing research on the role of public subsidies in the commercial success of motion pictures. The candidate collects and analyzes current research findings and derives a conceptual framework to illustrate underlying relationships.

Supervisor: Nicolas Weber

B3. Understanding e-sports marketing
The video game industry has likely exceeded its growth expectations of the last two years thanks to the Covid 19 pandemic, reinforcing its role as an economic force to be reckoned with. However, in addition to their role as a purely recreational product, video games have also developed a more serious side: professional, competitive gaming, or "e-sports." While for younger generations watching professional video game competitions has become a popular activity, e-sports are still a long way from the popularity of, say, soccer, basketball, or American football. Accordingly, research on e-sports marketing is still in its earlier stage. This paper examines the role of e-sports in marketing research, provides a comprehensive overview of existing publications, and derives a conceptual framework for classifying research findings.

Supervisor: Nicolas Weber
B4. Domestic movie marketing
Since all studios that are considered major industry players are US companies, the role of the US in the global film market is evident. Although sales of popular films in different countries are highly positively correlated, individual films have also shown strongly diverging ticket sales across the globe. Entertainment research is often based on samples from different national markets and thus also finds divergent measures of success. The aim of this thesis is therefore to provide an overview of film research based on different countries. The candidate creates a comprehensive overview of country-specific film marketing research. Subsequently, the candidate will derive a conceptual model to identify where film success is well researched and where it remains a mystery.

Supervisor: Nicolas Weber

B5. YouTube & Twitch as data sources in marketing research
Four many (younger) audiences the user generated video platforms have become indispensable as source for new entertainment content. Likewise, many companies have recognized their value as marketing channels. Yet marketing research seldomly relies on the raw data and the entailed potential for investigation provided by performance indicators such as views, likes, shares, comments, follows, subscriber numbers, bits or average viewers. Therefore, the candidate collects marketing research that employs either YouTube or Twitch as a data source to examine where the lack is especially prevalent and how the created data could be employed for future studies that help marketing management. What might be the best learnings for companies trying to utilize such data to derive consumer taste segments?

Supervisor: Nicolas Weber

B6. From crosschannel to ominchannel – How technical progress is shaping retailing
Digitalization has greatly changed the nature of retailing over the last two decades. While customers used to visit physical shops to buy products, they now have a variety of ways to engage with companies: Online shops, apps, telephone, or social networks - to name a few. This introduction of additional touchpoints has profoundly changed the relationship between customers and companies, leading to more complex user journeys than before. For example, a customer may search for a product in channel A, buy it through channel B and make a return through channel C. It is therefore a great challenge for companies to develop a channel strategy in which processes interlock and customers find their way around. The task of this thesis is to identify success factors from existing channel literature and to synthesize the results into an overview. From this, recommendations for a multi-channel strategy are to be derived.

Supervisor: Tobias Mayerhofer

B7. Pricing online and offline
We know that pricing can have a bigger effect on sales than advertising. With significant sales shifting to digital channels, companies find themselves in a more complex pricing situation: Continuing to manage pricing strategies holistically or creating channel-dependent concepts? The research field
offers a mixed bag - some speak of price wars online, others of high congruence of online and offline prices. The aim of this bachelor thesis is to shed light on which pricing strategies exist in companies with online and offline distribution channels and how they affect the buying behavior of customers. With the help of a literature review, the most important studies should be identified and compiled into an overview that provides a clear picture of the state of research.

Supervisor: Tobias Mayerhofer

B8. Talking to things – How smart products change our lives
“Hey Alexa, start the coffee machine.” With this slogan amazon draw attention to smart coffee machines and their connection to the company’s own voice assistants. Digitalization makes it possible for formerly analog devices to become intelligent and smart. This not only offers advantages from the customer’s point of view, but also allows companies to gain valuable data about their users. This thesis deals with the development of smart products and the associated advantages and disadvantages from the consumers’ and producers’ point of view.

Supervisor: Tobias Mayerhofer

B9. The motivation behind showrooiming
Searching for products in physical shops and then buying the product online is called showrooiming. With easy access to the internet, this phenomenon is becoming more common. Many businesses struggle with customer churn due to this behavior, as customers can search for the best prices after evaluating products in-store and switch retailers. However, there are also reasons that speak against this behavior: Showrooiming is also more time-consuming, sales staff are only available offline and additional online search costs appears. What drives customers to engage in showrooiming? How can companies counteract this phenomenon or turn it to their advantage? Due to the relevance of the topic, several research papers exist, which should be summarized and analyzed in this bachelor thesis. The aim is to give an overview of the current state of research on showrooiming and to describe the motives.

Supervisor: Tobias Mayerhofer

B10. Reviews in the context of online shopping - Five stars for trustworthiness?
Product reviews have become an instrument used by online retailers to strengthen customers' trust in a product. Reviews can be multimedia (e.g., pictures, videos) or based on a social rankings that identifies particularly frequent reviewers as experts. Although it is widely known that companies abuse reviews to take advantage of their positive impact, they attract a lot of attention from customers. Tech retailers, such as Saturn, display online reviews on digital price tags on the physical sales floor – but what makes reviews so important? What are the factors that can convince customers? Researchers have studied reviews as part of the WOM literature and have come to assessments about what makes reviews more credible than others and what customers look for.

Supervisor: Tobias Mayerhofer
B11. Online vs. offline: How is our food buying behavior changing?
Rewe, Gorillaz, Edeka - food delivery services are spreading across Germany. As more people shop online, the question is whether their behavior is changing too. Do we buy groceries differently online than offline? There could be major differences, especially in the area of sales promotion: Shelf placement is obsolete online, there are no sweets at the checkout, we don’t hear music from the store’s speakers. On the other side costumer can use other features, like wish lists, shopping with receipts or easily buying their last order again. This bachelor thesis is intended to provide a literature overview of studies and papers that have researched online and offline shopping behavior within grocery shopping.

Supervisor: Tobias Mayerhofer

B12. Success factors for research articles in strategic marketing – Top 20 of the Journal of Marketing
At first glance, this thesis’ title may not spark high initial interest but upon a closer examination, this thesis attempts to capture what really drives progress in science, which is central to advance our understanding of the world. According to their impact on research, academic journals get ranked. The same applies to researchers, whose impact is measured by the frequency their articles are cited. Evidently, researchers strive to contribute significantly and therefore advance the state of research. Thus, the question arises which characteristics make research articles successful. What makes them gain importance in academic research? What issues do they address? What type of articles are they? The goal of this bachelor thesis is to provide an comprehensive overview of the characteristics of the most successful articles in the Journal on Marketing to give an answer to the questions posed.

Supervisor: Theresa Dünschede

B13. Success factors of research articles in consumer behavior – Top 20 of the Journal of Consumer Research
To indicate the relevance an academic journal has on research, they are ranked. The same applies to researchers, whose impact is measured by the frequency their articles are cited. Evidently, researchers strive to contribute significantly and therefore advance the state of research. Thus, the question arises which characteristics make research articles successful. What makes them that important in academic research? What issues do they address? What type of articles are they? The goal of this bachelor thesis is to provide an comprehensive overview of the characteristics of the most successful articles in the Journal on Marketing to give an answer to the questions posed. At first glance, this thesis’ title may not spark high initial interest but upon a closer examination, this thesis attempts to capture what really drives progress in science, which is central to advance our understanding of the world.

Supervisor: Theresa Dünschede

B14. Brand activism – Effects of taking a stand on socio-political issues
Brand activism represents an emerging marketing strategy that has become incrementally popular in practice. Companies take a public and unequivocal stand on polarizing socio-political issues in order to
appeal to a specific group of consumers. These companies acknowledge the importance of a company not only to generate profit, but also to substantially contribute to society. Well-known examples are Nike, standing up against racism (Colin Kaepernick), Patagonia, advocating pro-environmental actions, and Procter & Gamble, who stand up for feminism (Always) and against toxic masculinity (Gillette). They launched advertisements that convey a clear message by taking a side on a specific socio-political issue. The practice of brand activism has been assumed to be effective if consumers perceive it to be authentic. Only recently, in the wake of the BLM protests, many companies published statements against racism to publicly participate in the political debate. In the scope of this bachelor thesis the student should differentiate the concept of brand activism from corporate social responsibility and propose a framework explaining its diverse impact on consumers.

Supervisor: Theresa Dünschede

B15. The evolution and impact of qualitative research in highly ranked academic marketing journals

Despite their importance in the development of concepts, qualitative methods are increasingly rare in the marketing literature. There have been explicit calls to not neglect this relevance. As an explorative approach, qualitative research is particularly crucial for the generation of theory which can later be statistically tested using quantitative methods. The goal of this bachelor thesis is to shed a light on previous publications on qualitative research in academic journals for strategic marketing (International Journal of Research in Marketing, Journal of Consumer Psychology, Journal of Consumer Research and Marketing Science). The student should provide a comprehensive overview on the qualitative literature and analyze and evaluate its respective and the overall impact within the marketing literature.

Supervisor: Theresa Dünschede

B16. Effects of emotional versus informational cues in laypeople’s purchase decisions

So-called experience or credence products, whose quality and pleasantness can hardly be assessed in advance, take on a special role in the marketing research, since the consumer’s decision making can only be based on external factors in the absence of prior experience. Usually, for such products the consumer does not have the opportunity to try them before purchase and is therefore unknowing about whether he will like it. Thus, the extrinsic dimensions, of which one is the packaging, especially the label, are being consulted to make a decision. Further, depending on the type of product, consumers are rather laypeople that derive little value from the information provided on the label. This bachelor thesis should shed a light on laypeople’s decision-making process for experience goods based on emotional versus informational cues.

Supervisor: Theresa Dünschede
B17. Can it be a good idea to cater to oppositional customer segments’ demand with one and the same brand?

In the summer of 2021, the well-known fast-food restaurant Burger King converted one of its stores in Cologne into an 100% plant-based pop-up store, selling all their regular burgers exclusively with meatless patties for four days. This world’s first-ever meat-free Burger King store was realized in collaboration with The Vegetarian Butcher. Another company, Rügenwalder Mühle, formerly known for meat products, has also introduced vegetarian and vegan sausages and co. to its product range and sells them under the same brand name. Despite the companies’ outspoken acknowledgement of the environmental benefits of increased plant-based consumption, they continue to sell their regular range of meat products at the same time. This decision may come as a surprising, as a vegan lifestyle contrasts with meat consumption and the products therefore appeal to different customer segments. Overexpansion of a brand and dilution of its profile are common threats to brand extension decisions. In the scope of this bachelor thesis the student should aggregate all relevant concepts that could potentially explain the phenomenon.

Supervisor: Theresa Dünschede

B18. Future prospects of personalized advertising

With digital technology and consequently personalized data ubiquitous in today’s world, personalized advertising is often employed to target customers with individualized offerings. Such offerings can even include having own’s name virtually printed on a product shown to one in an online advertisement. Given that avatars of models virtually wearing a brand’s clothing already exist, for example, depicting a realistic one of oneself in an advertisement virtually enjoying a product could be the near future of personalized advertising. Despite consumers stating their concern about the use of personal information by companies, they still often voluntarily disclose personal information on online platforms and consent to its utilization by using these platforms. In this bachelor thesis, the student will explore the literature on the effectiveness of personalized advertising and evaluate the potential success of such avatar advertising.

Supervisor: Theresa Dünschede
M1. Crossover brand alliances – The case of crossover video games

Today, even fictional characters and stories have become big brands (e.g., the Wizarding World of Harry Potter). When different brands join forces, they form brand alliances. In the entertainment industry, brand alliances break through the boundaries of fictional worlds so that plots and especially characters from independent worlds begin to overlap. Well-known examples from the games industry are “Mario + Rabbids: Kingdom Battle” with the Nintendo brand Super Mario and the Ubisoft brand Rabbids, or “Mortal Kombat vs. DC Universe”. The typical goals of brand alliances are to improve brand awareness and image and ultimately to expand the customer base or target audience. However, a crossover project is not automatically successful. For example, fans of Mortal Kombat and DC were disappointed by the crossover title. Similarly, an appearance of Pikachu in the next God of War installment would likely deter fans. In the digital age there is much better access to customers and information about their brand preferences, but what are the biggest challenges for crossover projects from a marketing perspective? This paper explores the market potential of brand alliances using the example of crossover video games with the help of existing marketing research and subsequent empirical analyses.

Supervisor: Nicolas Weber

M2. Human actors in virtual worlds – Stars as a driver of video game success

The recently deceased actor Michael K. Williams (The Wire, Lovecraft Country, 12 Years a Slave) made one of his last performances in Battlefield 2042, a multiplayer first-person shooter game. Similarly, famous Hollywood stars such as Keanu Reeves (Cyberpunk 2077), Kristen Bell (Assassin’s Creed), Norman Reedus (Death Stranding), or Samuel L. Jackson (GTA San Andreas) have lent their virtual ego to video game characters. That movie productions have adopted motion capture technology to include computer generated characters and video games likewise employ human actors underlines an ongoing convergence of both entertainment media. From a marketing perspective, popular actors serve as product success drivers in various ways. However, while many movie success factors have also received attention as drivers of video game sales, the involvement of star actors/actresses has not been considered in marketing research. This thesis aims to close this gap. First, the candidate will theoretically examine how and if stars might drive game sales as part of a literature review, then, they will empirically analyze how strong this influence could be.

Supervisor: Nicolas Weber

M3. Fear of missing out the perfect room? The scarcity principle on hotel platforms

The scarcity principle has been examined for more than 50 years, but it has not been studied thoroughly in online environments. Time-limited promotions and low stock levels create scarcity and try to increase the purchase rate, especially on hotel booking platforms like booking.com. Although these methods are widely known by costumers, sales trigger like “only 4 rooms left” or “at your booking dates only a few rooms left” still appear there. This master thesis should use online experiments to examine the effectiveness scarcity sales-triggers in the context of the hotel industry and relate them to the experienced fear of missing out.
M4. The effect of the background in product pictures
The visual representation of products is a central element of online shops. Companies use pictures with models, product photographs or renderings to bring customers closer to the product. Besides the differences in the form of presentation, the background is even decisive for perception. Following the study by Yoo and Kim (2014), the master’s thesis should deal with the question of whether product images in natural environments influence consumer response in the context of the cosmetics industry. Alternatively, the influence of rendered product photos in contrast to real photographs on consumer reaction can be investigated. For this purpose, an online experiment should be carried out to record the behavior of test persons in different scenarios.

Supervisor: Tobias Mayerhofer

M5. Can emojis lead to a higher purchase intention?
In recent years, companies have increasingly used emoji in their advertising communications. As Das, Wiener and Kareklar (2019) have found, the use of emojis in ads encourages purchase intent. However, the use of emoji is not always beneficial. Research in the fields of psychology, marketing and computer science shows various effects of using emoji in professional communication. For example, counsellors who used emoji in emails to their clients were perceived as less competent than those who did not. As part of the Master’s thesis, an online experiment will be conducted to investigate whether the use of emoji in product photos and/or product texts can also lead to an increase in purchase intention.

Supervisor: Tobias Mayerhofer

M6. A qualitative assessment of the drivers for lay people's purchase decisions in the case of the experience product wine
So called experience or credence products, whose quality and pleasantness can hardly be assessed in advance, take on a special role in the marketing research, since the consumer’s decision making can only be based on external factors in the absence of prior experience. Usually, for such products the consumer does not have the opportunity to try them before purchase and is therefore unknowing about whether he will like it. Thus, the extrinsic dimensions, of which one is the packaging, especially the label, are being consulted to make a decision. Further, depending on the type of product, consumers are rather laypeople that derive little value from the information provided on the label. This master thesis should shed a light on laypeople’s decision-making process for experience goods based on emotional versus informational cues in comparison to experts by the means of a qualitative research approach.

Supervisor: Theresa Dünschede
M7. A quantitative assessment of the evolution of qualitative research in highly ranked academic marketing journals

Despite their importance in the development of concepts, qualitative methods are increasingly rare in the marketing literature. There have been explicit calls to not neglect this relevance. As an explorative approach, qualitative research is particularly crucial for the generation of theory which can later be statistically tested using quantitative methods. The goal of this bachelor thesis is to shed light on previous publications on qualitative research in academic journals for strategic marketing (International Journal of Research in Marketing, Journal of Consumer Psychology, Journal of Consumer Research and Marketing Science). The student should provide a comprehensive overview on the qualitative literature and analyze and evaluate its respective and the overall impact within the marketing literature using a quantitative method.

Supervisor: Theresa Dünschede

M8. Brand activism — Effects of taking a stand on socio-political issues

Brand activism represents an emerging marketing strategy that has become incrementally popular in practice. Companies take a public and unequivocal stand on polarizing socio-political issues in order to appeal to a specific group of consumers. These companies acknowledge the importance of a company not only to generate profit, but also to substantially contribute to society. Well-known examples are Nike, standing up against racism (Colin Kaepernick), Patagonia, advocating pro-environmental actions, and Procter & Gamble, who stand up for feminism (Always) and against toxic masculinity (Gillette). They launched advertisements that convey a clear message by taking a side on a specific socio-political issue. The practice of brand activism has been assumed to be effective if consumers perceive it to be authentic. Only recently, in the wake of the Black Lives Matter protests, many companies published statements against racism to publicly participate in the political debate. In the scope of this master thesis the student should qualitatively analyze consumer’s perceptions or reactions to such brand communication in social media.

Supervisor: Theresa Dünschede