



Topics for Bachelor and Master Theses for the **Winter Semester 24/25** (June 5, 2024)

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Application

- Your application (in English or German) should include the following contents: A minimum of 5 topic requests with your individual prioritization/ranking of your interest (e.g., B3, B11, B17, B16, B15) including a brief “scientific exposé-style” paragraph outlining why and how you would like to research the topic, an overview of your previous academic performance, a short curriculum vitae, (and optionally your own topic proposal with literature references that we will review to ensure 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. Influencers' impact on movies: An analysis of movie reviews on social media

Movies have successfully found their place in the wide range of entertainment options that consumers use to effortlessly amuse themselves or simply escape the daily grind. The reviews of professional critics can have a significant impact on the success of a movie. With the ongoing digitalization trend, movie reviews are now available anytime, anywhere via social media. Although the role of reviews has been extensively researched on various professional websites, marketing research on social media is still comparatively limited. This Bachelor's thesis aims to address influencers on social media who specialize in professional or semi-professional film reviews, thus filling a research gap. The candidate summarizes existing research findings and extends them through a corresponding empirical study.

Supervisor: Pauline Röhr

B2. Love and hate: Exploring emotional bonds with social media influencers

Brand love and brand hate are established concepts in marketing literature. They describe the emotional bonds that consumers can develop with certain brands, whether in the form of deep affection or strong dislike. These concepts have been studied extensively to understand why consumers prefer or dislike certain brands. With the rise of social media, influencers have become important players in marketing. They can evoke strong emotional responses from their followers, like brands. Therefore, it is of interest to investigate the factors under which influencers are loved or hated on social media. The candidate will analyze the concepts of brand love and brand hate in the context of social media influencers based on literature and examine the factors that lead to influencers being loved or hated.

Supervisor: Pauline Röhr

B3. Mirror of influence: The impact of close persons on consumer behavior

The consumer behavior of individuals is often influenced by their social environment. People tend to adopt the consumption habits of those close to them, such as parents, friends or partners. This can intensify at different stages of life and for different reasons. The question of how strongly and for what reasons one is influenced by the consumption habits of loved ones is an exciting research topic. The candidate will investigate how and why people adopt the consumption habits of those close to them and in which phases of life this influence is particularly strong. To carry out this analysis, the candidate will be active in various disciplines outside of marketing and write exciting literature-based work.

Supervisor: Pauline Röhr

B4. Opportunities and risks in live stream marketing

For younger audiences in particular, user-generated video platforms and live streaming (e.g., Twitch) have become indispensable sources of new entertainment content. At the same time, many companies have recognized their value as an effective marketing channel. Nevertheless, marketing research rarely makes use of the diverse data and associated analysis potential offered by performance indicators such as views, likes, shares, comments, followers, subscriber numbers, bits, or average viewers. The topic



of sponsorship is also becoming increasingly important, particularly in streaming services. The candidate uses the platform Twitch to examine where this lack of research is particularly pronounced and explores how the data obtained can be used for future studies to support marketing management. What valuable insights could be gained by companies striving to use this generated data effectively?

Supervisor: Pauline Röhr

B5. Consumption of negative experiences: The case of horror movies and games

Horror movies and games are among the timelessly popular genres that are not only consumed at Halloween. Although they deliberately evoke negative emotions such as fear, anxiety or suspense, these media are consumed by people intentionally and sometimes even with pleasure. The question that arises is: Why do people consider such products even though they seem to offer no positive or joyful benefits? The candidate aims to examine these aspects and gain deeper insights into the reasons behind the deliberate consumption of horror films and games. The research could thus reveal not only individual behavior, but also broader societal patterns in dealing with negative entertainment content.

Supervisor: Pauline Röhr

B6. "What are we paying for anyway?" - The case of scientific journals and their publishers

In view of the general growing dissatisfaction of scientific journals with the high fees charged by leading publishers such as Elsevier, this bachelor's thesis should examine the business model of publishing houses. Decades ago, the publisher was an important entity in the publishing process (e.g. journals had to be printed and delivered), whereas today articles are uploaded online and found via search engines - so what is the publisher's value proposition that justifies the high fees? In view of the lack of an answer, journals such as the Journal of Neuroimages are turning away from Elsevier. But how does the journal publish now? And what alternatives do journals have to publishing in general? These questions, as well as the existing business model of publishers, should be discussed in this bachelor thesis.

Supervisor: Tobias Mayerhofer

B7. The Influence of Parents on Consumer Decisions: An Ongoing Impact

Despite the increasing independence and individualism in consumer behavior, the influence of parents on our purchasing decisions remains significant. This Bachelor's thesis will conduct a comprehensive literature review to examine how parental guidance and preferences shape consumer choices across different life stages. The study will explore the extent to which parental influence persists into adulthood, affecting decisions in areas such as financial investments, lifestyle choices, and brand loyalty. Additionally, the thesis will investigate the psychological mechanisms behind this influence, considering factors such as upbringing, cultural norms, and socioeconomic status. By analyzing existing research, this study aims to provide a detailed understanding of the enduring impact parents have on consumer behavior and the implications for marketers targeting different age demographics.

Supervisor: Tobias Mayerhofer



B8. Ideology in consumption

“There is no escaping the spectral hand of ideology. Ideology is omnipresent in people’s lives and manifests itself as a consumption ideology when consumers buy and use marketplace products, services, and experiences.” (Schmitt, Brakus and Biraglia 2022, 89) This Bachelor’s thesis aims to provide a framework on the effect of consciously consuming adherent to one’s ideology on consumers, and to delineate it from religious consumption by researching extant literature about this.

Supervisor: Theresa Dünschede

B9. Emancipated customers

The issue of choice overload has been researched in many regards within the last decades. The paradox states that being presented with too many options can be overwhelming for consumers. One line of research has focused on a consumer’s expertise that might reduce his uncertainty when confronted with many options or information fed to the consumer to support his decision making but was also found to have the opposite effect. This Bachelor’s thesis aims to generate a comprehensive review of existent literature on those “emancipated” customers and the influence of knowledge on choice overload.

Supervisor: Theresa Dünschede

B10. From Hype to Happiness: Transparency and Valuation

Consumers’ post-purchase satisfaction is dependent on whether his previous expectations of the product’s usage could be confirmed. These expectations may be elevated, potentially to an unwarranted level, due to a firm’s advertising efforts, but might have also been misled by the subjectivity of reviews or recommendations. In a long-term perspective, customer satisfaction thus repurchase, and customer loyalty will depend on whether the expectations raised were matched by the product’s performance, hence advocating for a firms’ realistic management of expectations. Emitting information that allows to assess a product’s fit to one’s needs might be helpful in this respect, potentially even increasing a customer’s willingness to pay, due to reduced uncertainty. The connection of findings of previous research and development of a comprehensive model integrating these to explain the interactions is the objective of this Bachelor’s thesis.

Supervisor: Theresa Dünschede

B11. Marketing for peace?

Peace is a complex and multi-layered concept that goes far beyond the mere absence of war and encompasses various levels of human coexistence and the individual psyche. Nevertheless, it is essential that this concept is communicated clearly and quickly. Marketing can play an important role in this. Marketing can be used to promote initiatives aimed at peace. The use of digital platforms and social media can contribute significantly to the dissemination and promotion of peace. Marketing might help build partnerships between organizations and institutions that support peace. Marketing might also use powerful stories and positive narratives to convey the values of living together in peace. These examples show how marketing might help to bring peace into the public discourse, raise



awareness and motivate people to actively engage for a more peaceful world. A central research objective of this thesis is to gain sound insights into how marketing can be used as a tool to achieve peace goals and effect positive social change. The aim is to identify the most effective messages, channels and strategies, evaluate the long-term impact and develop practical recommendations for the implementation of peace marketing campaigns.

Supervisor: Dr. Yolna Grimm

B12. The effect of entrepreneurship on peace and stability

Entrepreneurs are often described as the drivers of change. It therefore makes sense to analyze the phenomenon of the entrepreneur in more detail. The aim of this study is to collect data on the perceptions and experiences of consumers with regard to the effects of entrepreneurial activities on peace and stability. This can be done, for example, by means of a standardized questionnaire to consumers, entrepreneurs and community members. Through the survey, the researcher can gain a comprehensive understanding of how business activities affect peace and stability. This can help to develop targeted policies and programs that maximize the positive impact of entrepreneurship on peace.

Supervisor: Dr. Yolna Grimm



Master

M1. The ad dilemma: How skippable and non-skippable YouTube ads influence consumers

YouTube is one of the world's most widely used platforms for watching and sharing videos. An essential part of YouTube's business model are advertisements that are displayed before, during or after the videos. These ads can be divided into two main categories: skippable and non-skippable ads. The scientific literature has already intensively investigated how these two types of ads are perceived by consumers. Various aspects such as acceptance, impact on brand image and advertising effectiveness have been analyzed. There are indications that non-skippable ads are often perceived as more annoying but may have a higher recall effect. The student will investigate how consumers perceive skippable and non-skippable YouTube ads and whether this perception affects their attitude towards the advertised brand. The analysis will be literature-based in conjunction with an experiment and data analysis.

Supervisor: Pauline Röhr

M2. Choice overload: Key factors in streaming service decisions

In the modern world, consumers are exposed to an abundance of information, products and choices. Platforms such as Netflix and Spotify offer a huge number of movies, series, music, and other content. While this variety is attractive on the one hand, it can also be overwhelming and make decision-making difficult. This phenomenon, known as "choice overload" or oversupply, means that consumers have difficulty deciding and are often less satisfied with the option they choose. One way to better understand which features are particularly relevant to consumers when choosing a streaming service is to conduct a conjoint analysis. This method makes it possible to quantify consumers' preferences for different features and determine the relative importance of these features. The candidate should use conjoint analysis to investigate which features of streaming services (such as Netflix and Spotify) are particularly important to consumers and how the abundance of choice influences their decision-making.

Supervisor: Pauline Röhr

M3. Trust Dynamics: Influencers vs. Consumer Opinions

In the digital age, social media influencers play a crucial role in shaping consumer behavior and brand perception. Despite their growing importance, the impact of influencer opinions and word-of-mouth (WOM) on consumer decisions remains an area with many unanswered questions. This Master's thesis will explore the interaction between these factors and their collective impact on industry outcomes such as sales performance and product popularity. The research should employ an experimental approach to investigate the psychological processes that influence the relationship between consumers and influencer reviews. By deciphering these interactions, the study aims to provide a detailed understanding of how these elements affect consumer behavior across various product industries.

Supervisor: Tobias Mayerhofer



M4. Critics vs. Amateurs: Perception of Different Information Sources

In an era where information is abundant and easily accessible, the sources of this information significantly influence public perception and decision-making. This Master's thesis will investigate the differences in how professional critics and amateur reviewers are perceived by the general public. By examining the trust, credibility, and impact of these different sources, this research aims to uncover the underlying psychological mechanisms that shape these perceptions. Through an experimental approach, the student will explore how these perceptions influence consumer behavior and choices across various domains, such as entertainment, products, and services. This investigation seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relative influence of critics and amateurs in shaping public opinion.

Supervisor: Tobias Mayerhofer

M5. "Dr. CarRepair" or "Mr. CarRepair"? The Impact of Academic Titles in Brand Names on Perceived Competence

Anthropomorphism, the attribution of human characteristics to non-human entities, is a common strategy in branding and marketing. This Master's thesis will explore whether the use of academic titles such as "Prof." or "Dr." in brand names affects perceived competence and how this perception varies across different sectors. Employing an experimental approach, this research will examine consumer perceptions, trust levels, and the overall impact on brand credibility and customer decision-making. The findings aim to provide valuable insights for marketers on how to effectively use academic titles in anthropomorphic branding to enhance consumer trust and engagement across various industries.

Supervisor: Tobias Mayerhofer

M6. Imagined Connections: Can Visualizing Others Reduce Loneliness?

In an increasingly digital and isolated world, the phenomenon of loneliness has become a critical issue. This Master's thesis will investigate whether visualizing and imagining interactions with other people can alleviate feelings of loneliness. The study will explore various methods of prompting individuals to mentally picture social connections and examine the effectiveness of these strategies in reducing loneliness and improving emotional well-being. Through an experimental approach, this research aims to understand the psychological mechanisms behind these interventions and assess their potential as therapeutic tools. The findings will provide insights into how mental imagery of social interactions can serve as a powerful strategy to combat loneliness.

Supervisor: Tobias Mayerhofer

M7. Experts vs. Consumers: Whom Do Consumers Trust More?

Despite extensive research on the impact of expert opinions and word-of-mouth (WOM) on consumer behavior, many questions remain unanswered in this domain. This Master's thesis will explore the interaction between these factors and their collective impact on industry outcomes such as sales performance and product popularity. The research will utilize real-world data collected through web scraping techniques and employ a regression model to analyze the influence of expert and consumer



reviews on sales data and product popularity. By examining these interactions, the study aims to provide a detailed understanding of how expert opinions and consumer reviews affect consumer behavior and industry outcomes across various product industries.

Supervisor: Tobias Mayerhofer

M8. Quantifying synergy – Breaking silos in marketing science

What potentially drives researchers of all kinds is contributing to the expansion of knowledge and therefore adding to a better understanding of the world we live in. Despite management and marketing being rather practice-oriented subjects, the criticism prevails that academic output is often disconnected from the real-world. Even within the discipline, different strands of research formulate their impression of silos within marketing that lack substantial transfer. Qualitative consumer research primarily aims to understand consumption habits in order to develop theories. Quantitative research tests theories of relationships statistically. Ideally, the two should work together to achieve better productivity in the development of knowledge, but do they? In this Master's thesis will examine the interplay of qualitative and quantitative research in assess the extent to which the field of marketing is realizing its full potential. So how far do qualitative findings inspire subsequent quantitative testing?

Supervisor: Theresa Dünschede

M9. Paying the Price of Knowledge? – The Expertise Effect

A consumer's valuation of a purchase might in parts be dependent on his expertise regarding the specific product. Possibly, reduced uncertainty in the purchase decision due to better knowledge will have a positive effect on the consumer's willingness to pay, since he feels more confident in assessing the products utility in fulfilling his needs. At the same time better understanding can also make decisions seem more complicated, as studies regarding the choice paradox have shown. Consequently, there is uncertainty with regards to how knowledge influences a consumer's confidence and lastly his willingness to pay which this master's thesis seeks to answer.

Supervisor: Theresa Dünschede

M10. From Hype to Happiness: Transparency and Valuation

Consumers' post-purchase satisfaction is dependent on whether his previous expectations of the product's usage could be confirmed. These expectations may be elevated, potentially to an unwarranted level, due to a firm's advertising efforts, but might have also been misled by the subjectivity of reviews or recommendations. In a long-term perspective, customer satisfaction thus repurchase, and customer loyalty will depend on whether the expectations raised were matched by the product's performance, hence advocating for a firms' realistic management of expectations. Emitting information that allows to assess a product's fit to one's needs might be helpful in this respect, potentially even increasing a customer's willingness to pay, due to reduced uncertainty. The goal of this Master's thesis is to establish and test a comprehensive model integrating these aspects.

Supervisor: Theresa Dünschede



M11. Decisions and Accountability: The Impact of Belief in Free Will

People attribute a differing degree of self-accountability to their behavioral choices. The question of free will has been a matter of discussion for millennia and at least to some degree, the ability of the individual to make conscious decisions is assumed. As such, the German Federal Constitutional Court derives the principle of guilt from the assumption of freedom of choice. These conscious behavioral choices include decisions within the marketplace. As consumers engage in the market place their perception of the degree to which they are in charge of the decisions they make matters considerably to stakeholders such as companies and policy makers. In the scope of a Master's thesis consumer's ideas about their free will with regards to consumption decisions should be explored by means of a qualitative inquiry.

Supervisor: Theresa Dünschede

M12. Brand backstabbers: Reconciliation when allies become adversaries

Consumers act within the marketplace consciously and unconsciously under the influence of ideologies. Even the simple decision of buying a cup of coffee is imbued with implicit ideology, as the decision in favor of a particular coffee shop and the milk type is based on consumerist ideas and ideals. Brands might embrace such desires and shape their profile accordingly to revolt against certain practices in an industry on the one hand and appeal to certain consumers on the other. However, the narrative often takes an unexpected turn when these revolting brands are eventually sold out to those established companies they claimed to oppose, as exemplified by Ankerkraut, triggering profound disappointment among loyal customers. Likewise, these brands also mature and may eventually become established brands themselves. Hence, to what extent do consumers actually hold expectations for consistency in a brand's values and practices? And which cognitive and behavioral strategies do consumers use to reconcile with the brand or to resolve the perceived dissonance between the brand's identity shift and their personal preferences for the products themselves?

Supervisor: Theresa Dünschede

M13. Bibliographic research on qualitative consumer studies

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 Master's thesis is to shed a light on previous publications of qualitative research in academic journals for strategic marketing (International Journal of Research in Marketing, Journal of Consumer Psychology, Journal of Consumer Research and Journal of Marketing). 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 artificial intelligence (AI).

Supervisor: Theresa Dünschede



M14. Exploring the role of artificial intelligence in enhancing bibliography production in marketing

Bibliographies play a crucial role in academic research, facilitating the identification and the understanding of the impact of relevant scholarly publications. However, the manual process of creating bibliographies can be time-consuming and sometimes error prone. The advent of artificial intelligence (AI) may present opportunities to increase the efficiency of research, thus also the efficiency of bibliography production and enhance their overall quality. This Master's thesis aims to investigate the various ways in which AI can contribute to automate the process of collecting, organizing, and maintaining bibliographic data, as well as how it can enhance the accuracy and relevance of bibliographic information, ultimately benefiting both researchers and the academic community. One or more scientific marketing journals serve as a use case.

Supervisor: Theresa Dünschede