

## Topics for the Master thesis – winter term 2024/2025

### General information

- Below you will find an **overview of topics** from which you can select your preferred topics for your Bachelor seminar.
- Please select at least four topics and prioritize them (→ indicate topic number and title) in your CV together with the usual information.
- We will do our best to consider your prioritizations as much as possible.
- Students who have indicated our chair as priority 1 will be given preference in the allocation of topics.
- **The specific design of the topic will be discussed in the individual meetings with your supervisor.**
- The papers should preferably be written in English – writing in German is also possible.

### Topics for the Master thesis

#### 1. Health Marketing in a Social Media Context

Health communication advertising is one of the most vibrant and multifaceted research areas in advertising and related disciplines. We now face numerous health challenges, including communicable and non-communicable diseases, substance use, mental health, healthy aging, suicide, health inequalities, and climate change, to name a few. This thesis aims to explore how social media platforms can be used to disseminate health-related messages and influence public health behavior. The author should explore strategies that can be used by health organizations and/or influencers to engage audiences and evaluates the effectiveness of these campaigns. It also addresses ethical considerations and challenges, such as misinformation and privacy concerns, associated with health marketing on social media. Through a combination of literature review and empirical research, this study aims to provide comprehensive insights into the intersection of healthcare marketing and social media dynamics.

#### 2. "That's okay, at least you're sustainable" - Does the greenguard effect work for greenfluencers?

This thesis explores whether the Greenguard effect, which suggests that consumers react less negatively to the failure of green products compared to conventional ones (Tezer et al. 2023), extends to influencers. The aim is to find out whether consumers are more forgiving of sustainable influencers ("greenfluencers") when they are criticized or the products they recommend fail than is the case with conventional influencers. An experimental study will analyze consumers' reactions and attitudes towards criticisms and product failures recommended by both green influencers and conventional influencers to gain insights into the effectiveness and resilience of sustainable marketing strategies.

### 3. Consumer perception post brand scandals: Assessing corporate sustainability commitment and its impact on loyalty

This thesis looks at the aftermath of (greenwashing) brand scandals and corporate crises, specifically examining how these events affect consumer perceptions of a company's commitment to sustainability. It examines the extent to which brand crises affect consumers' beliefs about a company's genuine commitment to sustainable practices. An empirical study will be used to uncover the nuances of consumer sentiment following a scandal and how these perceptions influence subsequent loyalty and purchase intentions.

### 4. A paradigm shift – When influencers launch their own products

Social media influencers are increasingly launching their own products or even entire brands and companies. The aim of this study is to empirically examine the differences in consumer perception between influencer posts promoting their own products (or projects) and traditional influencer posts promoting products from other companies. Hereby, distinctions can be made between types of influencers (e.g., nano vs. micro-influencers), media formats, platforms, or product categories.

### 5. Social presence in E-Commerce and advertising

Products within online shops or advertisements can be displayed with or without the presence of a human (face). In practice, both approaches are widely used, even within the same webshops or product categories. The goal of this study is to empirically investigate the perks and pitfalls of these approaches, for example in terms of clicks and purchase intentions across various product types and media designs.

### 6. Attracting and sustaining attention on social Media

Consumers can interact with content (e.g., on TikTok or Instagram) in many ways (e.g., liking, commenting, sharing, saving). However, users see far more posts daily than they can process and interact with. Moreover, only a small number of posts users encounter are viewed until the end. The aim of this study is to empirically investigate the post characteristics that increase or decrease attention and engagement on TikTok. Real data from the platform will be provided for the analysis.

### 7. Viral content on TikTok

Millions of people upload content to platforms like Instagram, Facebook, Twitch and TikTok on a daily basis. Some of these do not receive many reactions in terms of likes and comments while others go viral (i.e., reach engagement levels far beyond the average posts of a specific account). Improving our understanding regarding why some of these posts on social media are (much) more successful than others is the topic of this study. Factors to be analyzed include, but are not limited to, the use of emotions, humor, or trends and sounds on TikTok.

## 8. From store window to website: differences in luxury and mass market presentation in online retail

Conventional and luxury shops are hardly comparable. Both design and product presentation differ significantly. How can this difference be observed in the e-commerce sector? Firstly, this master's thesis aims to provide insights into the current state of research in this area. A benchmark analysis can help to compare websites from the field. The centerpiece of the thesis is an experiment designed to clarify the question of whether it is possible to present a product in a more luxurious way in the e-commerce sector - similar to what is known offline - and ultimately increase consumers' willingness to pay.

## 9. Sustainability Sells: Showcasing Sustainability in E-Commerce

Sustainability is becoming increasingly important for customers and companies. As a result, companies are keen to position and present their products or services as sustainable (sometimes justifiably, sometimes not). In the e-commerce sector, there are a number of explicit options (e.g. texts, labels, sustainability pages) and implicit options (e.g. colors or backgrounds) to transmit such information. The aim of this work is to find out, based on literature, what possibilities there are to make a product appear more sustainable and, in particular, to expand the current state of knowledge with the help of an experiment.

## 10. Greenwashing by Association: Do Consumers Hold Companies Accountable for Supply Chain Ethics?

The Supply Chain Act makes companies responsible not only for their own behavior, but also for the preceding steps in the value chain. But how do consumers view non-ethical behavior on the part of business partners of the companies they want to buy from? Do they - like the law - see the companies as responsible or do they separate them? This master's thesis aims to shed light on and analyze this indirect greenwashing and the reaction of consumers by means of an experiment.

## 11. Happy and Mindless or Angry and Blind? The impact of Mood on Consumer Behavior in the online Context

This master thesis explores the interplay between mood, emotion, and the use of persuasive website elements (e.g. dark patterns) in online context. Dark patterns refer to specific design techniques that subtly influence user behavior, often to the benefit of the platform but potentially at the expense of the consumer. The goal of this thesis is to summarize existing research on mood and emotion in marketing, investigate how these psychological states interact with dark patterns, and compare the prevalence and impact of these patterns across different websites. This topic is particularly suited for students interested in the psychological aspects of marketing and consumer behavior. Initial guidance on the implementation and analysis of the experiment will be provided by the research group.

## 12. Mood Induction: A Comparison of established Research Methods

This master thesis aims to investigate how different mood induction techniques affect consumer reactions to online marketing. The study will involve conducting experiments to induce specific mood states in participants and subsequently testing their reactions to various stimuli, such as advertisements, product packaging, and promotional messages. The objective is to analyze the data to understand the interplay between induced moods and consumer behavior, providing insights into effective marketing strategies that consider emotional states. Additionally, the thesis will include an evaluation of methods to infer emotions from website interactions, known as "mood inferring". Initial guidance on the implementation and analysis of the experiment will be provided by the research group.

## 13. Mood and Social Media Usage

Mood can impact how we react to information we encounter. This study aims to explore how different moods impact social media content consumption. An experiment will be conducted to investigate various account types and content formats like images, videos, and stories. Additionally different scenarios like browsing through a feed or a profile will be investigated. Initial guidance on the implementation and analysis of the experiment will be provided by the research group.

## 14. Anchoring Bias in Donation Intentions: Influencing Charitable Giving

This master thesis explores the impact of anchoring bias on donation intentions and charitable giving. Anchoring bias is a cognitive bias where individuals rely heavily on an initial piece of information (the "anchor") when making decisions. Based on a comprehensive literature review and consumer behavior research, this thesis aims to investigate how different anchoring techniques, such as suggested donation frequencies or amounts, influence donors' willingness to give. The study seeks to uncover the psychological mechanisms behind anchoring effects and provide actionable insights for non-profit organizations to optimize their fundraising strategies.

## 15. The Role of Micro-Influencers in Niche Marketing

This master thesis examines the role of micro-influencers in niche marketing. Based on a comprehensive literature review and consumer behavior research, the thesis explores how micro-influencers can effectively reach niche audiences, build relationships, and influence purchasing decisions. The study aims to provide insights into the advantages of using micro-influencers in niche marketing strategies and offer practical recommendations for businesses on how to identify, engage, and collaborate with micro-influencers to achieve marketing goals in niche markets.

## 16. Exploring the Boundaries of the Decoy Effect: Limitations in Influencing Consumer Decision

### Making

This thesis investigates the boundaries and limitations of the decoy effect, a phenomenon in behavioral economics and marketing where the introduction of a less attractive option (decoy) influences consumer choices between other options. Based on a comprehensive literature review and consumer behavior research, the study critically examines specific conditions and scenarios where the decoy effect may fail to impact consumer decision making effectively. The thesis aims to contribute to a nuanced understanding of the factors that influence the decoy effect and its implications in consumer behavior.