



## Topics for the Master thesis– winter term 2023

### General information

- Below you will find an **overview of topics** from which you can select your preferred topics for your Master thesis.
- 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 research group 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. Effects of package designs (sustainable vs. conventional) on consumers

Sustainability is becoming more and more important every day. This holds true for companies as well as for consumers. Therefore, companies and researchers try to boost sustainable consumption. A challenge to this goal is the intention-behavior gap of consumers that is the deviance between consumers' attitudes (e.g., liking organic products) and behaviors (e.g., buying non-organic products due to their lower prices). The goal of this thesis is to analyze the perception of package designs, and their impact on important consumer decisions, such as purchase intention and sustainable behavior change.

#### 2. PWYW vs. Fixed Price in the Online Environment

The classic fixed price is no longer the only way for companies to offer their products and services. Participatory pricing models involve the consumer in the pricing process and thus provide a higher perceived control over the price and sometimes also a higher willingness to buy. An example of such a pricing model is pay-what-you-want (PWYW). The aim of this paper is to compare the PWYW pricing model with fixed prices in the digital context and. When are consumers more likely to choose fixed price, when are they more likely to choose PWYW? What could be the underlying mechanisms? What role can sustainability play in this context?



### **3. Are We Being Manipulated Daily? Dark Patterns and Social Influence in Marketing**

Why is it sometimes harder to log out than to log in? What is the idea behind the wording in cookie acceptance popups? Where does this additional item in my basket come from? Those are only some of the possible questions that relate to so called “dark patterns” found in websites, webshops and digital platforms. These patterns refer to specific designs that can indirectly affect the way we use a page and therefore influence our behavior as consumers. The goal of this thesis is to summarize research on this topic and to compare different websites regarding their usage of these patterns. Students interested in the psychological aspects of marketing are particularly well-suited for this topic.

### **4. Usage of generative artificial intelligence in marketing**

The goal of this thesis is to investigate the potential of (generative) artificial intelligence tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Midjourney, deepfake tools, voice AI) in a marketing context. For example, the student can create social media captions or website images and compare their effectiveness through an empirical study. The final focus of the thesis will be discussed with the supervisor.

### **5. Social media data analysis- The state of the art and application on real world datasets**

Engagement with social media posts can be analysed in various ways. For example, data can be coded manually (e.g., content focus) or automatically (e.g., via text analytics or image classification algorithms). The goal of this thesis is to first conduct a brief review of the current state of the art of this field and to apply some of these techniques to real world data. The dataset will be provided with the student and accounts to be analysed discussed with the supervisor.

### **6. Visual Representation of Luxury Products in E-Commerce – An Analysis of Current Presentation Techniques and their Effectiveness in a High-End Retail Context**

This research seeks to dissect the vital role of product imagery in the luxury e-commerce landscape. It will critically examine and assess existing presentation techniques to understand their effectiveness specifically in the high-end retail context. The primary objective is to investigate whether these visual strategies have a distinct impact within the luxury segment compared to other retail environments. This analysis will offer meaningful insights into the intersection of visual marketing and luxury e-commerce.

### **7. Dynamic Website Optimization – Perceived Fit Versus Perceived Persuasiveness**

Nowadays, websites can be personalized and improved through A/B tests and machine learning methods. This is important since it is impossible to know which design will lead to the best results without studying the data generated by website users. Potential questions in this regard could include: How should products be presented? Which information should be shown first? Which button will be clicked more often? Where to position the elements? How to adapt the menu for specific users groups? The goal of this thesis is to structure current approaches for (dynamic) website optimization (e.g. A/B tests or methods using machine learning algorithms) and to conduct an experiment on an experimental / real website (decided via discussions with the research group). Prior experience in webdesign/web



development is not mandatory. However, students should be interested in learning how to program during the course of the thesis. Guidance in this regard will, of course, be provided.

## **8. Integration of Luxury & Sustainability in a digital marketing context**

The masterthesis is important because the integration of luxury and sustainability in digital marketing is a current and challenging concern for luxury brands. It allows companies to future-proof their brand by meeting the growing consumer trends for sustainability and digitalisation while preserving the luxury aspect. The aim of this paper is to conduct an experiment in this area. Either an e-commerce experiment (with a webshop, programming skills are not required) or a social media experiment (content analysis) is conceivable.

## **9. Green, greener, brown. Effects of Greenwashing on Customer Behaviour: An empirical investigation**

This master's thesis aims to investigate and empirically test the impact of greenwashing on customer behaviour. Greenwashing refers to the misleading portrayal of products or companies as environmentally friendly or sustainable, when in fact they follow little or no environmentally friendly practices. Given the increasing consumer interest in sustainable products and companies, there is concern that greenwashing influences customer behaviour and leads to misleading purchasing decisions. The paper will conduct a comprehensive literature review to examine the current state of research on greenwashing and its impact on customer behaviour. Based on the findings, an empirical approach will be developed to measure customer responses to greenwashing practices.

## **10. Can a luxury brand be sustainable? Sustainability in the luxury industry: challenges and opportunities for integrating sustainable practices into a luxury brand**

This master's thesis addresses the question of whether a luxury brand can be sustainable. Given the increasing consumer awareness of environmental and social issues, the challenge is how a luxury brand can integrate sustainable practices into its business model without compromising its exclusivity. The paper analyses current approaches and best practices in the luxury industry with regard to sustainability. It also looks at the potential opportunities that can arise for a luxury brand when it engages in sustainability, such as increasing brand value, reaching new customer segments and fostering innovation, and compares them to the challenges and risks. The results of this research provide insights and recommendations for luxury brands seeking a sustainable focus and highlight possible ways in which a luxury brand can be both exclusive and sustainable at the same time. In the final step, the work aims to create new knowledge and provide new insights through an experiment.