

Topics for the Master seminar – winter term 2025/26

General information

- Below you will find an **overview of topics** from which you can select your preferred topics for your Master 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 seminar

1. **The Double-Edged Sword: Query Recommenders, Consumption Diversity, and the Risk of Algorithmic Bias in Digital Markets**

This seminar paper will critically examine the literature on query recommender systems, focusing on their dual impact: fostering consumption diversity as highlighted in recent studies, versus the potential for inadvertently creating or reinforcing algorithmic biases (e.g., towards popular items/vendors, or against certain types of content/products). The paper will synthesize and critique research from marketing (potentially borrowing from information systems and ethics) to discuss the nuances, trade-offs, and potential mitigation strategies.

- Literature review: **yes**
- Development of a conceptual framework: **no**
- Development of a study set-up (without testing): **no**
- Empirical testing (data collection & analysis): **no**

2. **Balancing Act: A Critical Review of Strategies for Integrating Product Promotion Seamlessly into Influencer Narratives Without Sacrificing Authenticity**

This seminar paper reviews the delicate balance between effectively promoting a product and maintaining influencer authenticity and narrative integrity. It will synthesize literature from marketing, communication studies, and media psychology on how various product integration strategies are perceived by audiences, which approaches best foster genuine product interest without alienating viewers or diminishing influencer credibility, and the long-term effects on brand-influencer-audience relationships.

- Literature review: **yes**
- Development of a conceptual framework: **no**
- Development of a study set-up (without testing): **no**
- Empirical testing (data collection & analysis): **no**

3. Deceptive Advertising of Product Attributes: A Critical Review of Firm Incentives, Strategic Ambiguity, and the Limits of Consumer Detection

This seminar paper reviews the literature on firms' incentives to engage in deceptive advertising or strategic ambiguity regarding product attributes like quality, safety, or sustainability. It will synthesize research on how market structures, competitive pressures, information asymmetry, and the potential for legal repercussions (or lack thereof) influence these advertising strategies and assess consumers' ability to detect and protect themselves from such practices.

- Literature review: **yes**
- Development of a conceptual framework: **no**
- Development of a study set-up (without testing): **no**
- Empirical testing (data collection & analysis): **no**

4. Advertising as a Personalized Implicit Price: A Review of Ad Experience Personalization

This seminar paper explores the personalization of advertising experiences (e.g., individualized ad load and timing) by first establishing advertising as an implicit price paid by consumers for content or services. Drawing on the broader economic and marketing literature on personalized pricing strategies—including their role in consumer surplus extraction and firm profits—the paper will then analyze how these principles apply to the 'implicit price', i.e. advertising. Students will synthesize research to discuss firms' strategic motivations for such personalization and summarize the literature on the effectiveness of such practices.

- Literature review: **yes**
- Development of a conceptual framework: **no**
- Development of a study set-up (without testing): **no**
- Empirical testing (data collection & analysis): **no**

5. Designing Trustworthy Review Systems for Experience Goods: A Critical Review of Features Mitigating Bias Perception and Enhancing Diagnosticity

This seminar paper reviews the literature on the design of online review systems, focusing on features that aim to enhance their trustworthiness and diagnostic value for consumers evaluating experience goods. It will analyze various design elements (e.g., reviewer identity verification, display of review distributions, tools for filtering/sorting reviews, seller response mechanisms) and their effectiveness in mitigating consumer perceptions of selection bias and improving the communication of true product quality.

- Literature review: **yes**
- Development of a conceptual framework: **no**
- Development of a study set-up (without testing): **no**

- Empirical testing (data collection & analysis): **no**

6. Designing Effective Donation Appeals: A Systematic Review of Message Framing and Emotional Triggers in Non-Profit Communication

This seminar paper systematically reviews academic literature on how communication appeals can be designed to optimize donor responsiveness in the non-profit sector. The focus is on the role of message framing (e.g. gain vs. loss, urgency, identifiable vs. statistical victims) and emotional triggers (e.g. empathy, guilt, hope, moral elevation) in shaping donation behavior. The paper explores which appeal types are most effective across different contexts, such as donation frequency (one-time vs. recurring), donor involvement, and cause type (e.g. humanitarian, environmental, health-related). The aim is to provide evidence-based insights for crafting persuasive and ethically sound donation messages that enhance donor engagement and long-term support.

- Literature review: **yes**
- Development of a conceptual framework: **no**
- Development of a study set-up (without testing): **no**
- Empirical testing (data collection & analysis): **no**

7. The Psychology of Giving: Exploring the Drivers Behind Voluntary Payments

This seminar paper examines the phenomenon of voluntary payments in the contexts of tipping, charitable donations, and pay-what-you-want (PWYW) pricing models. It analyses the psychological, social and economic mechanisms that motivate people to pay money even when they are not obliged to do so. Based on relevant theoretical frameworks – e.g. social norms, reciprocity, fairness, self-image and the theory of effort for payment – it examines how factors such as perceived effort, fairness and social expectations influence voluntary contributions. By comparing tips, donations and PWYW systems, important motivators are highlighted. Ultimately, the study aims to provide insight into how voluntary payments can be ethically and effectively promoted in different environments.

- Literature review: **yes**
- Development of a conceptual framework: **no**
- Development of a study set-up (without testing): **no**
- Empirical testing (data collection & analysis): **no**

8. Consumer Wellbeing in Sustainable Consumption: A Literature Review of Psychological, Social, and Economic Dimensions

This seminar paper systematically reviews the academic literature on how sustainable consumption influences consumer wellbeing—defined as an individual's overall sense of satisfaction, fulfillment, and functioning in daily life. Moving beyond the ecological impact, the paper focuses on the psychological benefits of sustainable consumption (e.g. a sense of purpose, personal identity, reduced guilt), social outcomes (e.g. social belonging, moral signaling), and economic trade-offs (e.g. higher costs, increased effort). The goal is to identify the key drivers and barriers that shape the relationship between sustainable behavior and subjective wellbeing, and to derive implications for the design of wellbeing-oriented sustainability strategies in marketing.

- Literature review: **yes**
- Development of a conceptual framework: **no**
- Development of a study set-up (without testing): **no**
- Empirical testing (data collection & analysis): **no**

9. AI Acceptance: A Consumer-Centric Perspective

As artificial intelligence becomes increasingly embedded in everyday consumer experiences, understanding how individuals accept and interact with AI systems is more important than ever. Based on a systematic literature review, this seminar paper aims to synthesize the existing literature on AI acceptance from a consumer perspective. By providing a structured overview of the existing body of knowledge, the paper seeks to highlight potential gaps and future research directions in the field.

- Literature review: **yes**
- Development of a conceptual framework: **no**
- Development of a study set-up (without testing): **no**
- Empirical testing (data collection & analysis): **no**

10. User-Generated Content in Modern Branding

In today's digital landscape, user-generated content (UGC) has become a powerful force in shaping brand perception and driving consumer engagement. From social media posts and reviews to unboxing videos and brand-related memes, consumers actively contribute to brand narratives and influence peer decision-making. Based on a systematic literature review, this seminar paper aims to synthesize the existing literature on the role of user-generated content in brand building. By providing a structured overview of the existing literature, the paper seeks to highlight potential gaps and future research directions in the field.

- Literature review: **yes**
- Development of a conceptual framework: **no**
- Development of a study set-up (without testing): **no**
- Empirical testing (data collection & analysis): **no**

11. What is corporate sustainability? A scientific perspective

(Corporate) Sustainability has become an integral part of our lives and a popular buzzword. Some companies endeavor to be sustainable and present themselves as such to their stakeholders. But what exactly is a sustainable company? How is their sustainability defined and measured in science? There are now various ideas and concepts to make sustainability tangible, such as the triple bottom line. There are also concepts that attempt to categorize sustainability at various levels - from economic to legal and ethical to CSR. This literature review should help to shed light on the use and measurement of corporate sustainability in current research and make the term more tangible for future (marketing) research.

- Literature review: **yes**
- Development of a conceptual framework: **no**
- Development of a study set-up (without testing): **no**
- Empirical testing (data collection & analysis): **no**

12. B2B sustainability fundamentals - A theoretical perspective

Scientific theories are the backbone of science and consequently of many scientific articles. Knowing and understanding them is therefore an important basis for categorizing and advancing science. The aim of this systematic literature review is therefore to identify and highlight the most important theories and models in the field of B2B sustainability and thus gain a basic understanding of research in this area. This overview provides orientation and a basis for future research.

- Literature review: **yes**
- Development of a conceptual framework: **no**
- Development of a study set-up (without testing): **no**
- Empirical testing (data collection & analysis): **no**

13. Understanding the Landscape of (Fake) Online Reviews: A Systematic Literature Review

Online reviews have recently become a central element of digital consumer decision-making. Although authentic, user-generated content still dominates many platforms, the increasing prevalence of fake and AI-generated reviews, particularly on social media and e-commerce platforms, raises important questions for marketers and researchers alike. The purpose of this seminar paper is to provide a structured, theory-informed overview of the current state of research on online reviews, particularly fake and AI-generated ones. Students will conduct a systematic literature review according to established guidelines.

- Literature review: **yes**
- Development of a conceptual framework: **no**
- Development of a study set-up (without testing): **no**
- Empirical testing (data collection & analysis): **no**

14. The Role of Visual Content in Online Product Reviews: A Systematic Literature Review

In today's visually driven digital environments, online product reviews increasingly incorporate visual elements, including customer-uploaded images, videos, and platform-curated visual highlights. These visual components, ranging from unfiltered user photos to stylized product demonstrations, play a critical role in shaping consumer perception, trust, and purchase decisions. This seminar paper will conduct a systematic literature review of articles on the visual aspects of online product reviews. The review will focus on how images and videos function as persuasive signals in e-commerce and social media contexts.

- Literature review: **yes**
- Development of a conceptual framework: **no**
- Development of a study set-up (without testing): **no**
- Empirical testing (data collection & analysis): **no**

15. Deception and Behavioral Influence in Online Reviews: A Systematic Literature Review of Linguistic, Symbolic, and Textual Strategies

Online reviews not only inform, but also persuade, nudge, and sometimes manipulate. Subtle linguistic cues, symbolic choices, and stylistic strategies embedded in user-generated content can strongly influence consumer perceptions and behaviors, either intentionally or unintentionally. While these textual elements may enhance credibility and perceived usefulness, they can also obscure deceptive intent. This seminar paper will conduct a systematic literature review of research examining the textual and symbolic mechanisms of persuasion and deception in online product reviews.

- Literature review: **yes**
- Development of a conceptual framework: **no**
- Development of a study set-up (without testing): **no**
- Empirical testing (data collection & analysis): **no**