

## Topics for the Master thesis – summer term 2024

### 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 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. Sustainable Nudges: A Study on Leveraging Behavioral Cues in Digital Marketing and E-commerce

This thesis explores the intersection of behavioral psychology, digital marketing strategies, and sustainability initiatives. It delves into the application of behavioral nudges, subtle prompts or cues, within the realm of e-commerce and digital marketing to encourage more environmentally conscious consumer behaviors. By investigating various nudges—such as default options, social norms, and feedback mechanisms—this research aims to uncover their effectiveness in steering consumer choices towards sustainable products and practices. Through an empirical study, the thesis seeks to provide insights into how nudges can be ethically employed to promote eco-friendly behaviors, reduce environmental impact, and drive a paradigm shift towards sustainability in the digital marketplace.

#### 2. 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.

### 3. Addressing Cognitive Biases: Examining Nudges in E-commerce Implementations

This thesis investigates the role of cognitive biases and their impact on consumer decision-making within e-commerce contexts, specifically focusing on the implementation of nudges. Through empirical research and cognitive psychology frameworks, the study aims to identify prevalent cognitive biases in online consumer behavior and analyze how nudges can be strategically employed to address. This research seeks to provide insights into designing nudges that enhance decision-making quality and align with ethical considerations. The findings aim to contribute practical recommendations for e-commerce platforms looking to leverage nudges effectively.

### 4. The Internet Dilemma of luxury brands

Luxury shops are fundamentally different from standard shops. Luxury shops thrive on exclusive shops where selected customers can view and enjoy high-quality products and unique service. It is sometimes the case that there are waiting lists for products in shops and products can only be purchased by selected customers; this is only possible to a limited extent online. Nevertheless, the strategy consultancy Bain & Company (2023) assumes that 32-34% of luxury purchases will be made online by 2030 and that this could become the most important sales channel (even ahead of brand shops) for luxury companies. However, there are still many unanswered questions, which could be answered by this master thesis (with an empirical study). For example: Are customers willing to spend money on luxury products offline as well as online? Do they find online shopping just as luxurious? How can luxury companies optimize online shopping?

### 5. The role of sustainability in acting as a status mechanism leading to elevated status or exclusivity among peers and group members

This master's thesis delves into the relationship between sustainability and their impact on social status dynamics on other people. The study aims to understand how sustainable products or services achieve elevated status and cultivate a sense of status or exclusivity. An empirical study will be conducted to unravel the intricacies of consumer attitudes towards sustainability practices and how these perceptions impact subsequent social status, exclusivity, and behavioral intentions.

### 6. The impact of sustainable luxury practices on consumer purchase decisions

This thesis aims to investigate the influence of sustainable luxury practices, encompassing fair working conditions, ethical sourcing, responsible use of raw materials, human sustainability initiatives, carbon footprint reduction, recycling efforts or sustainable packaging, on consumer purchase decisions. Prior research suggests that sustainability can have a positive impact on (potential) customers. However, notable findings indicate a nuanced perspective, particularly regarding materials with a history, such as recycled materials, which have been perceived with some negativity (in a luxury context). The research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how these sustainable practices shape (luxury) consumer preferences, shedding light on the complex interplay between ethical considerations and purchasing behavior in the luxury market. Additionally, this study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by conducting an empirical investigation to further expand our understanding of consumer responses to sustainable luxury practices.

## **7. 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.

## **8. 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.

## **9. 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.

## **10. 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.

## **11. 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.