

## Topics for the Master thesis – summer term 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. Design variations of PWYW pricing for sustainable business practices

This thesis examines the design variants of “Pay-What-You-Want” (PWYW) pricing models and their application to promote sustainable business practices. By exploring different approaches to the design of PWYW models - such as recommended prices (reference prices) and transparency on how payments contribute to sustainability goals - the study aims to identify how to best influence consumer purchasing behavior. The study draws on insights from behavioral economics, marketing psychology and sustainability management and evaluates the effectiveness of these variants in balancing profitability and sustainability. The findings will provide actionable recommendations for companies seeking innovative pricing strategies that drive consumer engagement and support sustainable development goals.

- Literature review: **yes**
- Development of a conceptual framework: **yes**
- Development of a study set-up (without testing): **yes**
- Empirical testing (data collection & analysis): **yes**

#### 2. The Influence of Non-Profit Marketing Expenditures on Donor Perceptions and Giving Behavior

This thesis examines how the marketing expenditures of non-profit organizations influence the willingness of (potential) donors to donate. The investigation begins with a systematic literature review and the application of relevant theories to derive hypotheses and develop a conceptual study model. Based on this, an empirical experiment is conducted to collect and analyze data on the perception and reaction of individuals to the marketing activities of non-profit organizations. This analysis will reveal the relationships between donors' perceptions of marketing expenditures and their giving behavior.

The results will help nonprofits optimize their marketing strategies, communicate their mission effectively, and encourage donor support and engagement.

- Literature review: **yes**
- Development of a conceptual framework: **yes**
- Development of a study set-up (without testing): **yes**
- Empirical testing (data collection & analysis): **yes**

### **3. Driving Change: Evaluating the Effectiveness of Sustainability Campaigns in Shaping Consumer Behavior**

This thesis examines how sustainability campaigns influence consumer behavior, focusing on their effectiveness in promoting environmentally conscious action and purchasing decisions. By integrating insights from consumer psychology, behavioral economics and sustainability marketing, the key elements that make such campaigns successful are examined. The study includes the design and execution of an experimental study. For example, sustainability campaigns with different messaging strategies, such as emotional appeals, social norms and tangible benefits of sustainable behavior, could be investigated. The results will provide actionable insights for companies and organizations looking to design effective sustainability campaigns that not only resonate with consumers, but also inspire them to behave in environmentally friendly ways, contributing to broader environmental goals.

- Literature review: **yes**
- Development of a conceptual framework: **yes**
- Development of a study set-up (without testing): **yes**
- Empirical testing (data collection & analysis): **yes**

### **4. Authentic Corporate Strategies to Mitigate Greenwashing and Wokewashing Perceptions**

This thesis explores the measures companies can authentically implement to avoid being perceived as engaging in greenwashing or wokewashing. By conducting a comprehensive literature review and drawing from communication and consumer behavior theories, the research identifies key factors that influence stakeholder perceptions of corporate social and environmental claims. The study includes the design and execution of an empirical investigation to collect and analyze data on consumer reactions to various corporate strategies, such as transparency, third-party certifications, and genuine stakeholder engagement. The findings will uncover how organizations can build trust, demonstrate authenticity, and effectively communicate their social and environmental efforts without risking accusations of superficiality or insincerity. Insights from this research will provide actionable recommendations for companies aiming to align their brand purpose with stakeholder expectations while maintaining credibility and fostering long-term loyalty.

- Literature review: **yes**
- Development of a conceptual framework: **yes**
- Development of a study set-up (without testing): **yes**
- Empirical testing (data collection & analysis): **yes**

## 5. Negative Behavioral Labeling

Recent literature (<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/00222429231213011>) found that behavioral labeling - e.g. "Hypeview us on Google" instead of "Hype us with a review on Google" - can induce that behavior, i.e. leads to more positive reviews in the given example. An open question is how such behavioral labeling influences negative behavior. In this thesis, you plan, execute, and evaluate an (online) experiment to investigate this question.

- Literature review: **yes**
- Development of a conceptual framework: **yes**
- Development of a study set-up (without testing): **yes**
- Empirical testing (data collection & analysis): **yes**

## 6. 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.

- Literature review: **yes**
- Development of a conceptual framework: **yes**
- Development of a study set-up (without testing): **yes**
- Empirical testing (data collection & analysis): **yes**

## 7. 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 behaviour 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.

- Literature review: **yes**
- Development of a conceptual framework: **yes**
- Development of a study set-up (without testing): **yes**
- Empirical testing (data collection & analysis): **yes**

## 8. 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 (i.e., users skip a lot of content, too). The aim of this study is to empirically investigate the post characteristics that increase or decrease attention and engagement on TikTok. For example, the student could investigate

how consumers react to AI generated voices or media objects that are used within videos in terms of user reactions (e.g., skipping content more often).

- Literature review: **yes**
- Development of a conceptual framework: **yes**
- Development of a study set-up (without testing): **yes**
- Empirical testing (data collection & analysis): **yes**

## **9. 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, music, humor, or trends and sounds on TikTok.

- Literature review: **yes**
- Development of a conceptual framework: **yes**
- Development of a study set-up (without testing): **yes**
- Empirical testing (data collection & analysis): **yes**

## **10. Persuasion Tipping Points in E-Commerce**

Marketers use various tactics to stimulate purchases. Some may leverage scarcity or social proof cues within webshops, while others may design interfaces in a way to manipulate user behavior (i.e., use dark patterns). While both benefits and risks of these approaches have received great attention from past research, it remains unexplored how to balance persuasion attempts in business practice. The goal of this research is to advance the discipline by exploring “persuasion tipping points”, shedding light on how different persuasive elements are perceived, how users react to combinations of these elements and points beyond which more persuasion attempts backfire. The student is free to choose specific webshop elements for this purpose. Programming expertise is not required for this research.

- Literature review: **yes**
- Development of a conceptual framework: **yes**
- Development of a study set-up (without testing): **yes**
- Empirical testing (data collection & analysis): **yes**

## **11. Broadening the Horizon of Loyalty Program Research**

Loyalty programs are a very popular way to maintain and strengthen customer relationships. The goal of this research is to zoom in on recent research on loyalty programs and to ultimately advance the literature by examining new loyalty program types. For example, the student could study how new formats, such as McDonalds Monopoly points earned via purchases and that are linked to certain as well as uncertain rewards, or loyalty points on the livestreaming platform Twitch earned via subscriptions and chat activity and that differ substantially between streams, shape consumer behavior.

- Literature review: **yes**
- Development of a conceptual framework: **yes**
- Development of a study set-up (without testing): **yes**
- Empirical testing (data collection & analysis): **yes**

## **12. The Impact of Social Proof Signals in E-Commerce on Customer Decision-Making**

Social proof plays a pivotal role in shaping consumer behavior in E-Commerce, influencing how consumers perceive and evaluate products. Forms of social proof, such as customer reviews, star ratings, and endorsements by influencers, act as trust signals, reducing uncertainty and guiding decision-making. This thesis investigates the impact of these signals across various product categories, examining in an own study, their effectiveness in enhancing consumer confidence, increasing purchase intent, and fostering loyalty but also what factors influence the perceived credibility of social proof signals.

- Literature review: **yes**
- Development of a conceptual framework: **yes**
- Development of a study set-up (without testing): **yes**
- Empirical testing (data collection & analysis): **yes**

## **13. Reducing Information Overload in E-Commerce**

Information overload is a major challenge in E-Commerce, leading to decision fatigue and dissatisfaction. Choice overload arises from too many product options, while information overload stems from excessive details and reviews. This thesis will explore different strategies to mitigate these issues. A literature review will identify effective approaches, and an empirical study will test their impact on decision-making, satisfaction, and usability. The findings will offer actionable recommendations to improve user experience in E-Commerce.

- Literature review: **yes**
- Development of a conceptual framework: **yes**
- Development of a study set-up (without testing): **yes**
- Empirical testing (data collection & analysis): **yes**

## **14. Limited Edition: Old Wine in New Bottles**

Limited editions are a popular strategy to imply scarcity and increase sales. Often, the only difference is a modified packaging design or a new product size with the product itself being identical to the default version. This thesis investigates to what extent consumers react to a "Limited Edition" label even if it can be inferred that the product itself is neither new nor limited.

- Literature review: **yes**
- Development of a conceptual framework: **yes**
- Development of a study set-up (without testing): **yes**
- Empirical testing (data collection & analysis): **yes**

### **15. 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.

- Literature review: **yes**
- Development of a conceptual framework: **yes**
- Development of a study set-up (without testing): **yes**
- Empirical testing (data collection & analysis): **yes**

### **16. Status through sustainability**

This master's thesis delves into the relationship between sustainability and their impact on social status dynamics (on an individual and/or their environment). 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.

- Literature review: **yes**
- Development of a conceptual framework: **yes**
- Development of a study set-up (without testing): **yes**
- Empirical testing (data collection & analysis): **yes**