



# Themenvorschläge Masterarbeiten im Sommersemester 2026

Beachten Sie bitte, dass die Themen auf Deutsch ausgeschrieben sind, aber die Arbeiten auf Deutsch oder Englisch geschrieben werden können.

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## **MA01. The Impact of Chatbot Anthropomorphism on Sustainable and Pro-social Consumer Behavior**

As chatbots become increasingly integrated into digital interactions, understanding their influence on consumer behavior is essential. Anthropomorphism—the tendency to attribute human-like characteristics to non-human entities—has been shown to affect trust, engagement, and decision-making in human-chatbot interactions. While research has explored anthropomorphism in various contexts, its impact on sustainable and prosocial consumer behavior remains underexplored. This master thesis aims to examine the effects of chatbot anthropomorphism on sustainable and prosocial consumption behavior through an experimental approach. Specifically, the study should explore how different levels of anthropomorphism in chatbots may influence e.g., consumers' willingness to engage in sustainable or prosocial actions, such as choosing eco-friendly products or donating to charities. Anthropomorphism will be manipulated primarily through visual elements (e.g., human-like avatar representation) and/or potentially through verbal style (e.g., human-like conversational tone).

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- Epley, N.; Waytz, N.; Cacioppo, J. T. (2007), "On seeing human: a three-factor theory of anthropomorphism," In: *Psychological Review*, 4 (114), 864–886.
- Ketron, S. & Naletelich, K. (2019), "Victim or beggar? Anthropomorphic messengers and the savior effect in consumer sustainability behavior," In: *Journal of Business Research*, (96), 73-84.



- Kirk, R. (2013), *Kirk, Roger E. (2013). Experimental design: Procedures for the behavioral sciences* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Schanke, S.; Burtch, G.; Ray, G. (2021), "Estimating the Impact of "Humanizing" Customer Service Chatbots" In: *Information Systems Research*, 32(3).



## MA02. Real-Time Marketing and Marketing Technologies in B2B

In an increasingly digitalized and data-driven business environment, companies are under growing pressure to deliver timely, relevant, and personalized marketing communications. Real-time marketing, defined as the ability to design, adapt, and deliver marketing activities based on real-time data, has become a key strategic approach in this context. The implementation of real-time marketing is enabled by advanced marketing technologies, such as marketing automation systems, customer data platforms, artificial intelligence–based analytics, and real-time personalization tools. While real-time marketing has been more widely studied in B2C settings, empirical research in B2B contexts remains limited. In particular, little is known about how the use of marketing technologies and real-time communication influences B2B customer relationships, including perceptions of relevance, trust, engagement, and relationship quality. Moreover, the adoption of real-time marketing approaches poses significant technological, organizational, and ethical challenges, such as data integration, privacy concerns, and internal process alignment. The main objective of this thesis is to investigate—through an empirical research approach (e.g., expert interviews)—how B2B firms implement real-time marketing using marketing technologies, which tools and strategies are applied, and how these approaches affect key relationship outcomes such as trust, customer engagement, perceived relevance, and customer loyalty. What organizational, technological, and ethical challenges exist when implementing real-time marketing in the B2B context?

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- Itani, O. S.; Gabler, C. B.; Kalra, A.; Elhajjar, S.; Yunis, M. (2026): Employing big data capability in the face of fierce competition: Exploring the synergy between market orientation, marketing strategies, and innovation capabilities. In: *Industrial Marketing Management* 133, S. 1–19.
- Moradi, M. & Dass, M. (2022): Applications of artificial intelligence in B2B marketing: Challenges and future directions. In: *Industrial Marketing Management* 107, S. 300–314.
- Prior, D. D. & Marcos-Cuevas, J. (2025): Transitioning to artificial intelligence-based key account management: A critical assessment. In: *Industrial Marketing Management* 126, S. 72–84.



### MA03. Almost Human: How Anthropomorphism Shapes the Effectiveness of Virtual Influencers

As social media increasingly shapes how brands are perceived, virtual influencers have emerged as a novel form of influencer marketing. These computer-generated characters resemble human influencers and interact with users on social media platforms. A defining characteristic of virtual influencers is their degree of anthropomorphism, which may influence how consumers evaluate and respond to such digital endorsers. The aim of this master's thesis is to examine the effect of anthropomorphism on the effectiveness of virtual influencers using a quantitative experimental design. As part of the experiment, (1) different levels of anthropomorphism of virtual influencers will be systematically manipulated to investigate their effect on perceived credibility. Furthermore, (2) the extent to which perceived credibility influences the effectiveness of virtual influencers, operationalized through purchase intention, will be analyzed, and whether perceived credibility acts as a mediator between anthropomorphism and influencer effectiveness will be examined. In addition, (3) the moderating role of perceived similarity (homophily) between consumers and virtual influencers will be investigated.

- Dabiran, E.; Farivar, S.; Wang, F.; Grant, G. (2024), "Virtually human: anthropomorphism in virtual influencer marketing," In: *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 79, 103797.
- El Hedhli, K.; Zourrig, H.; Khateeb, A.; Alnawas, I. (2023), "Stereotyping human-like virtual influencers in retailing: Does warmth prevail over competence?," In: *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 75, 103459.
- Gutuleac, R.; Baima, G.; Rizzo, C.; Bresciani, S. (2024), "Will virtual influencers overcome the uncanny valley? The moderating role of social cues," In: *Psychology & Marketing*, 41 (7), 1419–31.
- Zourrig, H.; Park, J.; Becheur, I. (2025), "How Does Humanoid Virtual Influencers' Appearance Convey Social Presence? The Underlying Process and Path to Purchase Intention," In: *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 49 (1), e70013.



#### MA04. Cold Call or Personalized InMail: Which Approach is More Efficient to Increase the LinkedIn Network?

Using LinkedIn for one's professional life is gaining momentum: Salespeople, for example, build their own digital persona on LinkedIn to increase their chances of acquiring leads, making deals, and earning higher salaries. These activities, commonly referred to as personal branding, are omnipresent on social media nowadays. Besides offering interesting insights, one key success driver is having the right people in one's social media network. Unfortunately, this driver is relatively under-researched. Thus, in this master thesis, one shall empirically investigate which approach is most efficient to intentionally increase one's LinkedIn network: (1) sending a personalized InMail or (2) directly connecting with another person. By doing so, the study should replicate the work by Kühnl & Frank (2019) and investigate whether their results still hold valid today, thereby accounting for different senders.

- Ancillai, C.; Terho, H.; Cardinali, S.; Pascucci, F. (2019), "Advancing social media driven sales research: Establishing conceptual foundations for B2B social selling", In: *Industrial Marketing Management*, 82, 293–308.
- Cortez, R. M.; Johnston, W. J.; Dastidar, A. G. (2023), "Managing the content of LinkedIn posts: influence on B2B customer engagement and sales?", In: *Journal of Business Research*, 155, 113388.
- Kirk, R. E. (2013). *Experimental design: Procedures for the behavioral sciences* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kühnl, C. & Frank, P. (2019), Social Selling - Eine neue Form der E-Kommunikation für Business-to-Business Unternehmen, In: *Transfer – Zeitschrift für Kommunikation und Markenmanagement*, 04/2019, 18-28.
- Labrecque, L. I.; Markos, E.; Milne, G. R. (2011), "Online personal branding: Processes, challenges, and implications", In: *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 25(1), 37–50.



## MA05. Writing Yourself or by GenAI: Which Approach is More Efficient to Increase Social Media Engagement?

Using LinkedIn for one's professional life is gaining momentum: Salespeople, for example, build their own digital persona on LinkedIn to increase their chances of acquiring leads, making deals, and earning higher salaries. These activities, commonly referred to as personal branding, are omnipresent on social media nowadays. While finding and writing meaningful social media content on one's own takes time, the temptation to rely on GenAI as a ghostwriter is high and seems very efficient. Thus, in this master thesis, one shall empirically investigate with an experimental design whether a (1) human or (2) GenAI writer attracts more social media engagement on LinkedIn. When doing so, the thesis should also investigate whether disclosing the use of GenAI helps or hampers the social media engagement.

- Kirk, R. (2013), Kirk, Roger E. (2013), *Experimental design: Procedures for the behavioral sciences* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Radivojevic, K.; Chou, M.; Badillo-Urquiola, K.; Brenner, P. (2024), "Human perception of llm-generated text content in social media environments", [arXiv preprint arXiv:2409.06653](https://arxiv.org/abs/2409.06653).
- Spitale, G.; Biller-Andorno, N.; Germani, F. (2023). AI model GPT-3 (dis) informs us better than humans. *Science Advances*, 9 (26), eadh1850.