

Topics for master theses – Winter term 2026/2027

Theses can be written in German or English in consultation with the supervisor.

1	Choosing the Right Brand Identity Concept: A Framework for Understanding the Usefulness of Brand Identity Models
Abstract	Marketing research has largely examined how brand image affects consumer perceptions and behavior. Less is known about how brand identities (i.e., the firm-side foundation of brand image) are developed in practice and which concepts help practitioners derive, structure, and articulate them. Existing concepts such as brand archetypes, brand personality, brand purpose, and brand values offer different ways to describe brand identity, yet it remains unclear when and why these concepts are particularly useful. Therefore, the goal of this thesis is to develop an empirically grounded framework that explains the usefulness of different brand identity concepts across different brand contexts, such as young versus established brands and B2B versus B2C brands. This thesis employs qualitative expert interviews with agency professionals.
Method	Qualitative, interviews
Introductory literature regarding topic (T) or method (M)	• T: Aaker, David A. (1996), <i>Building Strong Brands</i>, New York: Free Press. • T: Malär, Lucia, Bettina Nyffenegger, Harley Krohmer, and Wayne D. Hoyer (2012), "Implementing an Intended Brand Personality: A Dyadic Perspective," <i>Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science</i>, 40 (5), 728–744. • M: Arsel, Zeynep (2017), "Asking Questions with Reflexive Focus: A Tutorial on Designing and Conducting Interviews," <i>Journal of Consumer Research</i>, 44 (4), 939–948. • M: Flick, Uwe (2014), <i>The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis</i>, London: SAGE Publications Ltd. • M: MacInnis, Deborah J. (2011), "A Framework for Conceptual Contributions in Marketing," <i>Journal of Marketing</i>, 75 (4), 136–154. • M: Whetten, David A. (1989), "What Constitutes a Theoretical Contribution," <i>Academy of Management Review</i>, 14 (October), 490–495.
Supervisor	Maximilian Bruder

2	Designing Brands: How Agencies Translate Brand Identity into Creative Implementation
Abstract	Marketing research has largely examined how brand image affects consumer perceptions and behavior. Less is known about how brand identities (i.e., the firm-side foundation of brand image) are translated into creative design in practice and which concepts help practitioners guide, structure, and justify this translation. Existing concepts such as brand archetypes, brand personality, brand purpose, and brand values offer different ways to describe brand identity, yet it remains unclear when and why these concepts are particularly useful for creative design decisions. Therefore, the goal of this thesis is to develop an empirically grounded framework that explains how different brand identity concepts support the translation of brand identity into creative design across different design tasks, such as visual identity, tone of voice, and campaign ideas, as well as different brand contexts, such as young versus established brands and B2B versus B2C brands. This thesis employs qualitative expert interviews with agency professionals.
Method	Qualitative, interviews
Introductory literature regarding topic (T) or method (M)	• T: Aaker, David A. (1996), <i>Building Strong Brands</i>, New York: Free Press. • T: Malär, Lucia, Bettina Nyffenegger, Harley Krohmer, and Wayne D. Hoyer (2012), "Implementing an Intended Brand Personality: A Dyadic Perspective," <i>Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science</i>, 40 (5), 728–744. • M: Arsel, Zeynep (2017), "Asking Questions with Reflexive Focus: A Tutorial on Designing and Conducting Interviews," <i>Journal of Consumer Research</i>, 44 (4), 939–948. • M: Flick, Uwe (2014), <i>The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis</i>, London: SAGE Publications Ltd. • M: MacInnis, Deborah J. (2011), "A Framework for Conceptual Contributions in Marketing," <i>Journal of Marketing</i>, 75 (4), 136–154. • M: Whetten, David A. (1989), "What Constitutes a Theoretical Contribution," <i>Academy of Management Review</i>, 14 (October), 490–495.
Supervisor	Maximilian Bruder

3	AI in Brand Creation: How Generative AI Supports Brand Identity Development and Creative Implementation
Abstract	Agencies and brand managers increasingly use generative AI in creative brand processes. AI may support both the condensation of heterogeneous brand-related information into a clear brand identity and the translation of this identity into implementation. However, it remains unclear at which stages of this process AI is currently used, how practitioners integrate AI into their workflows, which brand models or input formats help guide AI-generated outputs, and how the use of AI changes brand identity development and creative implementation. Therefore, the goal of this thesis is to develop an empirically grounded framework that explains where, how, and why generative AI is used in agency-led brand identity development and creative design implementation. This thesis employs qualitative expert interviews with agency professionals.
Method	Qualitative, interviews
Introductory literature regarding topic (T) or method (M)	• T: Aaker, David A. (1996), <i>Building Strong Brands</i>, New York: Free Press. • T: Grewal, Dhruv, Cinthia B. Satornino, Thomas Davenport, and Abhijit Guha (2025), "How Generative AI Is Shaping the Future of Marketing," <i>Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science</i>, 53, 702–722. • M: Arsel, Zeynep (2017), "Asking Questions with Reflexive Focus: A Tutorial on Designing and Conducting Interviews," <i>Journal of Consumer Research</i>, 44 (4), 939–948. • M: Flick, Uwe (2014), <i>The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis</i>, London: SAGE Publications Ltd. • M: MacInnis, Deborah J. (2011), "A Framework for Conceptual Contributions in Marketing," <i>Journal of Marketing</i>, 75 (4), 136–154. • M: Whetten, David A. (1989), "What Constitutes a Theoretical Contribution," <i>Academy of Management Review</i>, 14 (October), 490–495.
Supervisor	Maximilian Bruder

4	A Taxonomy of LLM Users: An Empirical Investigation
Abstract	Large language models (LLMs) are increasingly used for everyday tasks such as information search, writing, learning, planning, creativity, and decision-making. However, little is known about the distinct user profiles underlying such usage. The goal of this thesis is to develop a taxonomy of LLM users based on their motives, interaction patterns, and perceived benefits of LLMs in consumption contexts. For this purpose, the thesis runs an empirical study and analyzes the data using cluster analysis to identify and describe different user profiles.
Method	Empirical, cluster analysis
Introductory literature regarding topic (T) or method (M)	• T: Grewal, Dhruv, Cinthia B. Saturnino, Thomas Davenport, and Abhijit Guha (2025), "How Generative AI Is Shaping the Future of Marketing," <i>Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science</i>, 53, 702–722. • T: Paul, Justin, Akiko Ueno, and Charles Dennis (2023), "ChatGPT and Consumers: Benefits, Pitfalls and Future Research Agenda," <i>International Journal of Consumer Studies</i>, 47 (4), 1213–1225. • M: Backhaus, Klaus, Bernd Erichson, Sonja Gensler, Rolf Weiber, and Thomas Weiber (2021), <i>Multivariate Analysemethoden</i>. 16. Aufl., Wiesbaden: Springer. • M: Brusco, Michael J., Douglas Steinley, J. D. Cradit, and Renu Singh (2012), "Emergent Clustering Methods for Empirical OM Research," <i>Journal of Operations Management</i>, 30 (6), 454–466. • M: MacInnis, Deborah J. (2011), "A Framework for Conceptual Contributions in Marketing," <i>Journal of Marketing</i>, 75 (4), 136–154. • M: Whetten, David A. (1989), "What Constitutes a Theoretical Contribution," <i>Academy of Management Review</i>, 14 (October), 490–495.
Supervisor	Maximilian Bruder

5	Is Gender on Your Mind? Gender Salience as a Key Mediator for Consumer Behavior
Abstract	Consumer gender salience is a cognitive state that reflects the extent to which individuals perceive their gender as relevant in a given situation. Prior research has shown that the salience of gender increases the likelihood that consumer choices are congruent with their gender. However, the few extant studies on gender salience conclude that there is a need to better understand which contexts or situations can make gender salient, which in turn can influence gender-congruent consumer choices. The goal of this thesis is to investigate in which contexts or situations gender becomes salient, which in turn can influence gender-congruent consumer choices. For this purpose, students shall develop a conceptual model and test it by means of an experimental study.
Method	Conceptual model, experiments
Introductory literature regarding topic (T) or method (M)	• T: Gould, Stephen (1996), "Gender Identity and Gender Salience: A Dual-Path, Person-Situation Approach to Gender Effects in Consumer Research," <i>Advances in Consumer Research</i>, 23 (1), 478–483. • T: Puntoni, Stefano, Steven Sweldens, and Nader T. Tavassoli (2011), "Gender Identity Salience and Perceived Vulnerability to Breast Cancer", <i>Journal of Marketing Research</i>, 48 (3), 413–424. • T: Worth, Leila. T., Jeanne Smith, and Diane. M. Mackie (1992), "Gender Schematicity and Preference for Gender-Typed Products," <i>Psychology & Marketing</i>, 9 (1), 17–30. • M: Backhaus, Klaus, Bernd Erichson, Sonja Gensler, Rolf Weiber, and Thomas Weiber (2021), <i>Multivariate Analysemethoden</i>. 16th ed., Wiesbaden: Springer. • M: MacInnis, Deborah J. (2011), "A Framework for Conceptual Contributions in Marketing," <i>Journal of Marketing</i>, 75 (4), 136–154. • M: Sparrowe, Raymond T. and Kyle J. Mayer (2011), "Publishing in AMJ - Part 4: Grounding Hypotheses," <i>Academy of Management Journal</i>, 54 (6), 1098–1102. • M: Whetten, David A. (1989), "What Constitutes a Theoretical Contribution," <i>Academy of Management Review</i>, 14 (October), 490–495.
Supervisor	Elisabeth Flores

6	AI Risks as Capability Signals: Effects on Consumer Responses
Abstract	Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly discussed as a technology that may create substantial risks for consumers and society. While such risks are often communicated as warnings, they may also signal that AI systems are highly capable. To date, little is known about how consumers respond when AI risks (e.g., risks regarding malicious actors, socioeconomic harm, or system failures) are communicated. The goal of this thesis is to examine whether communication about AI risks increases perceived AI capability and how this affects consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions. For this purpose, students shall develop a conceptual model and test it by means of an experimental study.
Method	Conceptual model, experiments
Introductory literature regarding topic (T) or method (M)	• T: Eisend, Martin (2006), "Two-Sided Advertising: A Meta-Analysis," <i>International Journal of Research in Marketing</i>, 23 (2), 187–198. • T: Slattery, Peter, Alexander K. Saeri, Emily AC Grundy, Jess Graham, Michael Noetel, Risto Uuk, James Dao, Soroush Pour, Stephen Casper, and Neil Thompson (2026), "The AI Risk Repository: A Meta-Review, Database, and Taxonomy of Risks from Artificial Intelligence," <i>Patterns</i>, 7 (5), 101517 • T: Puntoni, Stefano, Rebecca Walker Reczek, Markus Giesler, and Simona Botti (2021), "Consumers and Artificial Intelligence: An Experiential Perspective," <i>Journal of Marketing</i>, 85 (1), 131–151. • M: Backhaus, Klaus, Bernd Erichson, Sonja Gensler, Rolf Weiber, and Thomas Weiber (2021), <i>Multivariate Analysemethoden</i>, 16th ed., Wiesbaden: Springer. • M: MacInnis, Deborah J. (2011), "A Framework for Conceptual Contributions in Marketing," <i>Journal of Marketing</i>, 75 (4), 136–154. • M: Sparrowe, Raymond T. and Kyle J. Mayer (2011), "Publishing in AMJ - Part 4: Grounding Hypotheses," <i>Academy of Management Journal</i>, 54 (6), 1098–1102. • M: Whetten, David A. (1989), "What Constitutes a Theoretical Contribution," <i>Academy of Management Review</i>, 14 (October), 490–495.
Supervisor	Fijon Itzenga

7	The Use of AI in Marketing Research: Current Status and Future Prospects
Abstract	AI is increasingly being used in academic and applied marketing research. It is important for researchers to understand the regulations governing the use of AI, its various applications, best practices, and limitations, and how AI will transform marketing research in the long term. While there are many ongoing discussions and first guidelines in the field, we lack a systematic overview of this phenomenon. The goal of this paper is to develop a framework for analyzing and summarizing the current use of AI and best practices in marketing research, to reflect on the limits of its application, and to theorize how AI might continue to transform marketing research in the distant future. Qualitative interviews with researchers can be used to inform theory development.
Method	Conceptual model, qualitative research
Introductory literature regarding topic (T) or method (M)	• T: Arora, Neeraj, Ishita Chakraborty, and Yohei Nishimura (2025), "AI-Human Hybrids for Marketing Research: Leveraging Large Language Models (LLMs) as Collaborators," <i>Journal of Marketing</i>, 89 (2) 43–70. • T: Yoo, Kiwoong, Michael Haenlein, and Kelly Hewett (2025), "A Whole New World, a New Fantastic Point of View: Charting Unexplored Territories in Consumer Research with Generative Artificial Intelligence," <i>Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science</i>, 53 (May), 723–759. • M: Arsel, Zeynep (2017), "Asking Questions with Reflexive Focus: A Tutorial on Designing and Conducting Interviews," <i>Journal of Consumer Research</i>, 44 (4), 939–948. • M: Flick, Uwe (2014), <i>The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis</i>, London: SAGE Publications Ltd. • M: MacInnis, Deborah J. (2011), "A Framework for Conceptual Contributions in Marketing," <i>Journal of Marketing</i>, 75 (4), 136–154. • M: Whetten, David A. (1989), "What Constitutes a Theoretical Contribution," <i>Academy of Management Review</i>, 14 (October), 490–495.
Supervisor	Michael Paul

8	The Effect of Customer Gratitude on Customer Loyalty: A Meta-Analysis
Abstract	In addition to trust and commitment, gratitude is another key mediating mechanism within relationship marketing. Gratitude, which is a positive emotional response to benefits received, plays an important role in relationships of companies with customers or other businesses. Customer loyalty is a composite or multidimensional construct combining different groupings of intentions, attitudes, and seller performance indicators. Research has already shown that customer gratitude influences customer loyalty in different contexts. The goal of this master thesis is to summarize research results using meta-analysis. Another focus is to identify variables that moderate the effects of customer gratitude on customer loyalty.
Method	Meta-analysis
Introductory literature regarding topic (T) or method (M)	• T: Gelbrich, Katja (2011), "I Have Paid Less Than You! The Emotional and Behavioral Consequences of Advantaged Price Inequality," <i>Journal of Retailing</i>, 87 (2), 207–224. • T: Palmatier, Robert W., Cheryl B. Jarvis, Jennifer R. Bechhoff, and Frank R. Kardes (2009), "The Role of Customer Gratitude in Relationship Marketing," <i>Journal of Marketing</i>, 73 (5), 1–18. • T: Steinhoff, Lena and Robert W. Palmatier (2016), "Understanding Loyalty Program Effectiveness: Managing Target and Bystander Effects," <i>Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science</i>, 44 (1), 88–107. • M: Lipsey, Mark. W. and David B. Wilson (2001), <i>Practical Meta-Analysis</i>. 1st ed., Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications. • M: Hunter, John E. and Frank L. Schmidt (2015), <i>Methods of Meta-Analysis: Correcting Error and Bias in Research Findings</i>. 3rd ed., Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications. • M: Sparrowe, Raymond T. and Kyle J. Mayer (2011), "Publishing in AMJ - Part 4: Grounding Hypotheses," <i>Academy of Management Journal</i>, 54 (6), 1098–1102. • M: Whetten, David A. (1989), "What Constitutes a Theoretical Contribution," <i>Academy of Management Review</i>, 14 (October), 490–495.
Supervisor	Pascal Raczek