

Potential Thesis Topics

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1. Emotional influences on marketing/consumer behavior in contexts

Emotions can exert strong influences on human behaviors. They may for example motivate supply chain actors to collaborate, may motivate consumers to donate money to charity or to buy a certain product, and may motivate humans to fight or support each other. Ample research has studied how specific emotions motivate supply chain actors or consumers to select one of the presented options (e.g., products), or to engage more strongly or less strongly in certain types of behavior (e.g. making an investment). Yet, none of these studies have taken into account that decisions occur within a certain context, and that emotion influences on decisions may thus depend on the context in which the actor / consumer finds him/herself in. For example, consumers do not immediately run to a jewellery to buy a watch then they feel proud, and retailers do not immediately go to a producer to sign a contract when they feel happy. In this line of research, we will examine how emotions influence decision making, depending on the context in which the actor/consumer finds him/herself. You can choose for yourself which emotion you want to focus on, which type of decision you want to focus on, and which type of actor you want to focus on.

2. Feeling proud of oneself, others, or us together: does it matter?

Multiple studies have shown that pride can influence consumer behavior, motivating consumers for example to donate money to charity, to buy luxurious products, to buy gifts for others, or to engage in sustainable behaviors. All of these studies have focused on consumers feeling proud of oneself. However, recent research has demonstrated that consumers can feel proud of themselves, can feel proud of groups, and can feel proud of others (De Hooge & Van Osch, 2021). It is currently unclear whether these different forms of pride also have different influences on consumer behavior. Does it matter for e.g. product choices or gift giving whether consumers feel proud of themselves or proud of others? When companies want to motivate consumers to act sustainably, donate to charity, or to

eat healthy, can they can best motivate consumers to be proud of themselves, or proud of others?

3. Emotional sustainability

When taking a look at the sustainability literature, it appears that most lines of research focus on how to produce or sell products sustainably, or on how to recycle products once they have been discarded. One overlooked way to move towards a more sustainable society is to motivate consumers to use their products longer, and to repair their products when they are damaged. At the same time, product designers in our society are looking for ways to motivate consumers to develop emotional relationships with their products, such that consumers use their products for a longer period of time, and interact with the designer when the product has become imperfect or obsolete. This ‘emotional sustainability’ may generate completely new supply chain-consumer interactions, such as do-it-yourself repair under guidance of a designer, or designer-customization of broken products. The current research examines potential ways in which designers/supply chain actors may generate emotional sustainability in consumers and emotional consumer-product relationships, whether consumers are interested in such experiences, and how consumers will be influenced by these emotional sustainability actions.

4. Imperfect products

In our society, consumers are used to being presented with perfect-looking products. Supermarkets are filled with perfect looking fruits and vegetables, stores only present products with perfect looking packaging, and consumers mostly purchase products that are completely new and undamaged. At the same time, there are many imperfect or suboptimal products: ugly looking fruits and vegetables, products with damaged packaging, products that have been lent to or shared with other consumers before. In all of these cases, the products’ quality has been unaffected and their usage utility is still up to date, but consumers are mostly unwilling to purchase and consume these products. Consequently, large amounts of imperfect products are being wasted along the supply chain. In this research, you will examine how to improve the situation for imperfect products and how to reduce the loss and waste of imperfect products. You can thereby choose any type

of imperfection, and you can choose whether to focus upon the supply chain or the consumer side.

5. The sustainability of e commerce

Ecommerce has been expanding very rapidly throughout the last couple of years, with more than 80% of Dutch consumers making at least one online purchase per year (CBS, 2020). Many studies have focused on how to develop and improve websites to motivate customers to make online purchases. There is, however, hardly any research on customer experiences of receiving the online orders at home, or on how to improve the sustainability of ecommerce. Considering the huge amount of online packages that are delivered on a daily basis, and considering the large amount of online orders that are returned, there is much to be gained in terms of sustainability. You may think of for example reducing the amount of tertiary packaging in which online orders are delivered, motivating customers to reuse tertiary packaging, charging return costs to reduce the amount of returned products, etc. Online companies in general seem interested in moving towards more sustainable solutions, but this motivation rapidly disappears when it leads to reduced purchases or customer loyalty. In this research, you will develop your own creative, sustainable solutions for ecommerce, and you can examine either online companies' willingness to adopt such solutions, or customer responses to such solutions.