

# List of Thesis Topics at the DLM Summer Term 2026

Prof. Dr. Jens Högreve



# Bachelor

Topic	Description	Method	Literature
<b>Loneliness in the Context of Service Research</b>	Conduct a comprehensive literature review on the transformation of third places, examining how these spaces evolve to address loneliness in hybrid or online environments. Develop a structured synthesis that identifies gaps and opportunities for future research. Explore existing theories, frameworks, and recent research on consumer loneliness, third places, and service design.	Systematic Literature Review	<p>Parkinson, J., Schuster, L., &amp; Mulcahy, R. (2022). Online third places: supporting well-being through identifying and managing unintended consequences. <i>Journal of Service Research</i>, 25(1), 108-125.</p> <p>Rosenbaum, M. S. (2006). Exploring the social supportive role of third places in consumers' lives. <i>Journal of Service Research</i>, 9(1), 59-72.</p> <p>Song, H., Altinay, L., Sun, N., &amp; Wang, X. L. (2018). The influence of social interactions on senior customers' experiences and loneliness. <i>International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management</i>, 30(8), 2773-2790.</p>
<b>Buy now pay later services</b>	Buy Now Pay Later (BNPL) services are rapidly reshaping consumer finance, yet their growing adoption raises important questions. What drives individuals to use BNPL, and what barriers prevent others from engaging with these services? How do these short-term credit models impact consumer well-being, financial behavior, and broader market dynamics?	Systematic Literature Review	<p>Kumar, A., Salo, J., &amp; Bezawada, R. (2024). The effects of buy now, pay later (BNPL) on customers' online purchase behavior. <i>Journal of Retailing</i>, 100(4), 602-617.</p> <p>Maesen, S., &amp; Ang, D. (2025). Buy now, pay later: Impact of installment payments on customer purchases. <i>Journal of marketing</i>, 89(3), 13-35.</p> <p>Ashby, R., Sharifi, S., Yao, J., &amp; Ang, L. (2025). The influence of the buy-now-pay-later payment mode on consumer spending decisions. <i>Journal of Retailing</i>, 101(1), 103-119.</p>
<b>Unintended effects of dog whistle memes in marketing</b>	<p>Internet memes are now routine tools in marketing and online persuasion. Prior research shows how memes can drive engagement and brand recall, and begins to conceptualize "meme marketing" as a distinct communication form shaped by cultural context and audience participation.</p> <p>The Bachelor Thesis examines a covert subset: dog-whistle memes—seemingly innocuous visuals, symbols, or jokes that carry hidden or coded meanings for insiders. Such content can smuggle political or extremist signals into mainstream channels while remaining deniable to outsiders, raising brand-safety, ethics, and platform-governance concerns. Emerging computational work on harmful/propaganda memes underscores how ambiguity, multimodality (image + text), and community context make these signals hard to detect and regulate.</p> <p>The thesis conducts a systematic mapping what we know about meme marketing and harmful/coded memes, synthesizing antecedents (e.g., symbolism, community norms), mechanisms (e.g., plausible deniability, parasocial signaling), and outcomes. It identifies recommendations for marketers how to deal with an regulate whistle memes and synthesizes research gaps.</p>	Conceptual / Systematic Literature Review	<p>Malodia, S., Dhir, A., Bilgihan, A., Sinha, P., &amp; Tikoo, T. (2022). Meme marketing: how can marketers drive better engagement using viral memes?. <i>Psychology &amp; Marketing</i>, 39(9), 1775-1801.</p> <p>Razzaq, A., Shao, W., &amp; Quach, S. (2023). Towards an understanding of meme marketing: conceptualisation and empirical evidence. <i>Journal of Marketing Management</i>, 39(7-8), 670-701.</p>

Topic	Description	Method	Literature
<p><b>Marketing on Twitch</b></p>	<p>Live-streaming platforms such as Twitch have become important spaces for digital marketing, where promotional messages are closely embedded in entertainment and real-time interactions. Unlike traditional influencer platforms, marketing on Twitch is shaped by ongoing chat communication, shared community norms, and the development of parasocial relationships—emotional bonds that viewers form with streamers. These relationships can increase trust and influence how viewers respond to product endorsements, making Twitch a distinctive and potentially powerful marketing channel.</p> <p>At the same time, the live and community-driven nature of Twitch raises questions about authenticity, transparency, and how viewers perceive commercial intentions in what often feels like a social environment. It remains unclear which marketing strategies are most effective and how streamer–viewer dynamics translate into consumer behavior.</p> <p>This bachelor thesis will address these issues by either conducting a systematic literature review or by developing a conceptual framework that explains how streamer–viewer relationships shape marketing outcomes on Twitch.</p>	<p>Conceptual / Systematic Literature Review</p>	<p>Bründl, S., Matt, C., Hess, T., &amp; Engert, S. (2023). How synchronous participation affects the willingness to subscribe to social live streaming services: The role of co-interactive behavior on Twitch. <i>European journal of information systems</i>, 32(5), 800-817.</p>
<p><b>Using social media for personal finance</b></p>	<p>In the last years consumers increasingly use social media to learn about personal finance topics. This new channel of financial education offers lots of potential, but can it actually increase financial literacy and financial well-being? In a systematic literature review the student should synthesize existing literature and identify gaps for future research.</p>	<p>Systematic Literature Review</p>	<p>Mölders, M., Bock, L., Barrantes, E., &amp; Zülch, H. (2025). Understanding influencers: Roles and strategic partnerships in retail investor engagement. <i>Journal of Business Research</i>, 198, 115462. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2025.115462">https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2025.115462</a></p> <p>Bai, Z., Zheng, S., &amp; Hu, J. (2025). Is Social Media the New Retirement Advisor? Assessing the Impact of Social Media Influence on Retirement Planning. <i>Journal of Consumer Affairs</i>, 59(1), e70005. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1111/joca.70005">https://doi.org/10.1111/joca.70005</a></p>
<p><b>Shadow AI: Disclosure behavior in human-AI collaboration</b></p>	<p>As artificial intelligence (AI) systems, particularly generative AI, become embedded in everyday work practices, many employees begin to use these tools informally and without disclosure: a phenomenon increasingly referred to as “Shadow AI.” This raises important questions for organizations and research alike: when and why do employees choose not to reveal that they relied on AI in creating a work outcome? Understanding the drivers of such concealment, including perceptions of legitimacy, fairness, and shame, is crucial for managing AI adoption in organizations. This thesis can explore the antecedents and implications of Shadow AI, using qualitative or quantitative research methods to shed light on this emerging challenge for knowledge work. A conceptual piece for a Bachelor Thesis is also possible</p>	<p>Conceptual</p>	<p>Schilke, O., &amp; Reimann, M. (2025). The transparency dilemma: How AI disclosure erodes trust. <i>Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes</i>, 188, 104405.</p> <p>Bao, A., &amp; Zeng, Y. (2025). AI disclosure, moral shame, and the punishment of honesty. <i>Accountability in Research</i>, 1-14.</p>

# Master

Topic	Description	Method	Literature
<b>The role of Communication in Human-AI Collaboration</b>	<p>As large language models (LLM) based on artificial intelligence (AI) become central to knowledge workers' task completion, it is important for research and practice to gain insights into designing effective human-AI collaboration systems. The thesis is investigating different communication styles of gen AI systems and their effect on employee outcomes (e.g., willingness to collaborate, well-being). The study can leverage qualitative or quantitative research designs.</p>	Quantitative or Qualitative	<p>Van Pinxteren, M.M.E., Pluymaekers, M. and Lemmink, J.G.A.M. (2020), "Human-like communication in conversational agents: a literature review and research agenda", <i>Journal of Service Management</i>, Vol. 31 No. 2, pp. 203-225. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1108/JOSM-06-2019-0175">https://doi.org/10.1108/JOSM-06-2019-0175</a></p> <p>Vaccaro, M., Almaatouq, A., &amp; Malone, T. (2024). When combinations of humans and AI are useful: A systematic review and meta-analysis. <i>Nature Human Behaviour</i>, 1-11.</p>
<b>Purpose-orientation in organizations</b>	<p>As purpose orientation becomes an increasingly central theme in both academic discourse and managerial practice, organizations are challenged to align strategies and operations with a broader sense of meaning and societal contribution. While research highlights many benefits of purpose-driven organizations, recent studies also point to unintended negative effects and tensions (e.g., skepticism, purpose-washing). This thesis can either study the unintended consequences of purpose orientation or investigate how organizations can effectively transform practices towards purpose orientation, focusing on the required skills, know-how, and tools. The project will potentially be in cooperation with purpose coaches and may adopt a qualitative or quantitative research design and will build on the growing body of literature on organizational purpose</p>	Quantitative or Qualitative	<p>Blocker, C. P., Cannon, J. P., &amp; Zhang, J. Z. (2024). Purpose orientation: An emerging theory transforming business for a better world. <i>Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science</i>, 1-27.</p> <p>Nussbaum, J. A., Henning, E., Ostrowski, P. L., &amp; Kanbach, D. K. (2025). Start (up) with purpose: How goal-and duty-based purpose drive work engagement and performance in startups. <i>European Management Review</i>.</p>
<b>Using social media for personal finance</b>	<p>In the last years consumers increasingly use social media to learn about personal finance topics. In forums like reddit, users discuss many different topics all around personal finance. This unstructured data can offer new insights for academic research. Students will conduct their own analysis of social media content to answer a research question connected to financial literacy or financial well-being, preferably using text mining approaches.</p>	Content Analysis of Social Media Data	<p>Bai, Z., Zheng, S., &amp; Hu, J. (2025). Is Social Media the New Retirement Advisor? Assessing the Impact of Social Media Influence on Retirement Planning. <i>Journal of Consumer Affairs</i>, 59(1), e70005. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1111/joca.70005">https://doi.org/10.1111/joca.70005</a></p> <p>Method: Villarreal Ordenes, F., Packard, G., Hartmann, J., &amp; Proserpio, D. (2025). Using Traditional Text Analysis and Large Language Models in Service Failure and Recovery. <i>Journal of Service Research</i>, 28(3), 382-388. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/10946705241307678">https://doi.org/10.1177/10946705241307678</a></p> <p>Herhausen, D., Ludwig, S., Abedin, E., Haque, N. U., &amp; De Jong, D. (2025). From words to Insights: Text analysis in business research. <i>Journal of Business Research</i>, 198, 115491. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2025.115491">https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2025.115491</a></p>

Topic	Description	Method	Literature
<b>The role of Communication in Human-AI Collaboration</b>	<p>As large language models (LLM) based on artificial intelligence (AI) become central to knowledge workers' task completion, it is important for research and practice to gain insights into designing effective human-AI collaboration systems. The thesis is investigating different communication styles of gen AI systems and their effect on employee outcomes (e.g., willingness to collaborate, well-being). The study can leverage qualitative or quantitative research designs.</p>	Quantitative or Qualitative	<p>Van Pinxteren, M.M.E., Pluymaekers, M. and Lemmink, J.G.A.M. (2020), "Human-like communication in conversational agents: a literature review and research agenda", <i>Journal of Service Management</i>, Vol. 31 No. 2, pp. 203-225. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1108/JOSM-06-2019-0175">https://doi.org/10.1108/JOSM-06-2019-0175</a></p> <p>Vaccaro, M., Almaatouq, A., &amp; Malone, T. (2024). When combinations of humans and AI are useful: A systematic review and meta-analysis. <i>Nature Human Behaviour</i>, 1-11.</p>
<b>Purpose-orientation in organizations</b>	<p>As purpose orientation becomes an increasingly central theme in both academic discourse and managerial practice, organizations are challenged to align strategies and operations with a broader sense of meaning and societal contribution. While research highlights many benefits of purpose-driven organizations, recent studies also point to unintended negative effects and tensions (e.g., skepticism, purpose-washing). This thesis can either study the unintended consequences of purpose orientation or investigate how organizations can effectively transform practices towards purpose orientation, focusing on the required skills, know-how, and tools. The project will potentially be in cooperation with purpose coaches and may adopt a qualitative or quantitative research design and will build on the growing body of literature on organizational purpose</p>	Quantitative or Qualitative	<p>Blocker, C. P., Cannon, J. P., &amp; Zhang, J. Z. (2024). Purpose orientation: An emerging theory transforming business for a better world. <i>Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science</i>, 1-27.</p> <p>Nussbaum, J. A., Henning, E., Ostrowski, P. L., &amp; Kanbach, D. K. (2025). Start (up) with purpose: How goal-and duty-based purpose drive work engagement and performance in startups. <i>European Management Review</i>.</p>
<b>Using social media for personal finance</b>	<p>In the last years consumers increasingly use social media to learn about personal finance topics. In forums like reddit, users discuss many different topics all around personal finance. This unstructured data can offer new insights for academic research. Students will conduct their own analysis of social media content to answer a research question connected to financial literacy or financial well-being, preferably using text mining approaches.</p>	Content Analysis of Social Media Data	<p>Bai, Z., Zheng, S., &amp; Hu, J. (2025). Is Social Media the New Retirement Advisor? Assessing the Impact of Social Media Influence on Retirement Planning. <i>Journal of Consumer Affairs</i>, 59(1), e70005. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1111/joca.70005">https://doi.org/10.1111/joca.70005</a></p> <p>Method: Villarreal Ordenes, F., Packard, G., Hartmann, J., &amp; Proserpio, D. (2025). Using Traditional Text Analysis and Large Language Models in Service Failure and Recovery. <i>Journal of Service Research</i>, 28(3), 382-388. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/10946705241307678">https://doi.org/10.1177/10946705241307678</a></p> <p>Herhausen, D., Ludwig, S., Abedin, E., Haque, N. U., &amp; De Jong, D. (2025). From words to Insights: Text analysis in business research. <i>Journal of Business Research</i>, 198, 115491. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2025.115491">https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2025.115491</a></p>

Topic	Description	Method	Literature
<p><b>Loneliness and the Role of Third Places</b></p>	<p>Understanding how service-based “third places”—traditionally offline spaces fostering social interaction—are increasingly transforming into mixed or online third places. Investigate the transformation of third places empirically with a focus on qualitative or quantitative data collection (secondary data is also possible) and analysis. Provide actionable insights into service strategies that can mitigate loneliness through innovative approaches.</p>	<p>Quantitative or Qualitative</p>	<p>Parkinson, J., Schuster, L., &amp; Mulcahy, R. (2022). Online third places: supporting well-being through identifying and managing unintended consequences. <i>Journal of Service Research</i>, 25(1), 108-125.</p> <p>Rosenbaum, M. S. (2006). Exploring the social supportive role of third places in consumers' lives. <i>Journal of Service Research</i>, 9(1), 59-72.</p> <p>Song, H., Altinay, L., Sun, N., &amp; Wang, X. L. (2018). The influence of social interactions on senior customers' experiences and loneliness. <i>International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management</i>, 30(8), 2773-2790.</p>
<p><b>The Potential of Services against Loneliness</b></p>	<p>Chronic Loneliness is becoming a grand societal challenges. How can services help to alleviate feelings of loneliness (for example through high quality relationships)? You will engage with affected individuals, policymakers, networks against loneliness and service provides to identify the role of services in tackling loneliness. Using an integrative multiple stakeholder perspective, you will provide actionable insights into service strategies that can mitigate loneliness through innovative approaches.</p>	<p>Qualitative</p>	<p>Lim, M. H., Eres, R., &amp; Vasan, S. (2020). Understanding loneliness in the twenty-first century: an update on correlates, risk factors, and potential solutions. <i>Social psychiatry and psychiatric epidemiology</i>, 55(7), 793-810.</p> <p>Shrum, L. J., Fumagalli, E., &amp; Lowrey, T. M. (2023). Coping with loneliness through consumption. <i>Journal of Consumer Psychology</i>, 33(2), 441-465.</p> <p>Song, H., Altinay, L., Sun, N., &amp; Wang, X. L. (2018). The influence of social interactions on senior customers' experiences and loneliness. <i>International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management</i>, 30(8), 2773-2790.</p>
<p><b>Emotionally loaded consumption journeys</b></p>	<p>Emotionally loaded consumption journeys, such as those in the wedding industry, are shaped by high financial stakes, deep personal meaning, and intense emotional expectations. How do consumers navigate decisions when budgets, dreams, social pressure, and scarce resources collide? And how do service employees, faced with substantial emotional labour, define and deliver “success” in such high-stakes contexts?</p>	<p>Qualitative</p>	<p>Akaka, M. A., &amp; Schau, H. J. (2019). Value creation in consumption journeys: recursive reflexivity and practice continuity. <i>Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science</i>, 47(3), 499-515.</p> <p>Mende, M., Scott, M. L., Garvey, A. M., &amp; Bolton, L. E. (2019). The marketing of love: How attachment styles affect romantic consumption journeys. <i>Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science</i>, 47(2), 255-273.</p>

Topic	Description	Method	Literature
<b>Buy now pay later services</b>	<p>Buy Now Pay Later (BNPL) services are rapidly reshaping consumer finance, yet their growing adoption raises important questions. What drives individuals to use BNPL, and what barriers prevent others from engaging with these services? How do these short-term credit models impact consumer well-being, financial behavior, and broader market dynamics?</p>	<p>Qualitative</p>	<p>Kumar, A., Salo, J., &amp; Bezawada, R. (2024). The effects of buy now, pay later (BNPL) on customers' online purchase behavior. <i>Journal of Retailing</i>, 100(4), 602-617.</p> <p>Maesen, S., &amp; Ang, D. (2025). Buy now, pay later: Impact of installment payments on customer purchases. <i>Journal of marketing</i>, 89(3), 13-35.</p> <p>Ashby, R., Sharifi, S., Yao, J., &amp; Ang, L. (2025). The influence of the buy-now-pay-later payment mode on consumer spending decisions. <i>Journal of Retailing</i>, 101(1), 103-119.</p>
<b>GenAI for Service Productivity</b>	<p>Generative AI is transforming how services are produced, delivered, and scaled, yet its rapid integration raises critical questions. How can GenAI truly enhance service productivity without compromising quality, employee well-being, or customer experience? And how do organizations balance automation, augmentation, and human expertise in increasingly AI-enabled service systems?</p>	<p>Case Study/Qualitative</p>	<p>Grönroos, C., &amp; Ojasalo, K. (2004). Service productivity: Towards a conceptualization of the transformation of inputs into economic results in services. <i>Journal of Business research</i>, 57(4), 414-423.</p> <p>Hogreve, J., Hübner, A., &amp; Dobmeier, M. (2024). Optimizing service productivity with substitutable and limited resources. <i>Journal of Service Research</i>, 27(4), 543-558.</p>
<b>Customer Experience with Autonomous Services</b>	<p>The role of Customer experience with autonomous services is becoming a critical frontier in service innovation. As algorithms and intelligent systems take over tasks once performed by humans, an essential question emerges: How does perceived control, especially informational control, shape customers' trust, comfort, and willingness to engage with autonomous services?</p>	<p>Quantitative</p>	<p>Cutright, K. M., &amp; Wu, E. C. (2023). In and out of control: Personal control and consumer behavior. <i>Consumer Psychology Review</i>, 6(1), 33-51.</p> <p>Janotta, F., &amp; Hogreve, J. (2024). Ready for take-off? The dual role of affective and cognitive evaluations in the adoption of Urban Air Mobility services. <i>Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice</i>, 185, 104122.</p>

Topic	Description	Method	Literature
<p><b>Shadow AI: Disclosure behavior in human-AI collaboration</b></p>	<p>As artificial intelligence (AI) systems, particularly generative AI, become embedded in everyday work practices, many employees begin to use these tools informally and without disclosure: a phenomenon increasingly referred to as "Shadow AI." This raises important questions for organizations and research alike: when and why do employees choose not to reveal that they relied on AI in creating a work outcome? Understanding the drivers of such concealment, including perceptions of legitimacy, fairness, and shame, is crucial for managing AI adoption in organizations. This thesis can explore the antecedents and implications of Shadow AI, using qualitative or quantitative research methods to shed light on this emerging challenge for knowledge work. A conceptual piece for a Bachelor Thesis is also possible</p>	<p>Quantitative or Qualitative</p>	<p>Schilke, O., &amp; Reimann, M. (2025). The transparency dilemma: How AI disclosure erodes trust. <i>Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes</i>, 188, 104405.</p> <p>Bao, A., &amp; Zeng, Y. (2025). AI disclosure, moral shame, and the punishment of honesty. <i>Accountability in Research</i>, 1-14.</p>