

## **PhD Studentships for Academic Year 2026-27**

### **Centre for Consumers and Sustainable Consumption (CCSC)**

#### **About the Research Centre**

Our research expertise and interests include:

- Digital Transformation in Marketing (AI, Blockchain, Metaverse, Extended Reality, NFTs, Big Data)
- Ethics, Responsible Marketing and Sustainable Consumer Behaviour
- Services Marketing (Financial Services, Healthcare, Tourism/Leisure/Entertainment services)
- AI Marketing, Online Retailing
- Interpretivist Consumer Research
- Critical Marketing

We currently propose 10 research topics for scholarship applications. Please get in touch with the potential supervisors named below before submitting your application.

Find out more at: [Centre for Consumers and Sustainable Consumption - Durham University Business School](#)

#### **Topic 1**

##### **Title of Proposed Research Topic:**

The Role of Inclusive AI for Responsible Marketing

##### **Potential Supervisors:**

[Dr Chrysostomos Apostolidis](#)

[Professor Zhibin Lin](#)

##### **Description of Possible Research Topic:**

Artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly embedded in daily life, greatly influencing consumers, organisations, and the society (Sahoo et al., 2023). AI technologies,

such as voice assistants (e.g., Alexa), social companions (e.g., Replika), and humanoid robots (e.g., Pepper), are becoming increasingly present in consumers' lives, and offer significant transformative potential for marketers across several industries due to their technological abilities and humanlike attributes (Henkel et al., 2020). For instance, Generative AI tools like ChatGPT are revolutionizing creativity and decision-making, helping marketers generate ideas, promotional content and educational material to communicate and inform consumers more effectively.

For consumers, the benefits of the marketing applications of AI have been documented in extant marketing studies, highlighting the positive effects of AI on consumer well-being, identity, self-esteem, and self-efficacy, showcasing its potential to enhance customer experiences and improve their quality of life (Hollebeek & Belk, 2021; Ameen et al., 2023; Marikyan et al., 2023). Despite these benefits, AI poses significant challenges for consumers, such as misinformation, fake news, inappropriate content and biased decision making. For instance, over-reliance on AI technologies can legitimize discrimination (i.e., gender, age or racial disparities) and possibly worsen discriminatory practices against marginalised consumers and communities (Birkstedt et al., 2023; Wirtz et al., 2023; Bonezzi & Ostinelli, 2021).

Since practitioners and policymakers are becoming increasingly aware of the challenges posed by AI technology (e.g., potential bias risks for consumers, disruption to societies through misinformation), the negative side of AI technology remains a relevant area for marketing and consumer behaviour research (Blut et al., 2021; Filieri et al., 2022; McCarthy et al., 2023). Nevertheless, addressing these challenges requires collaboration between academics, practitioners, and policymakers to mitigate risks and optimize the benefits offered by AI. Opportunities thus exist to advance our understanding of the implications of AI technology in business and marketing and promote dialogue on its role on shaping a better future for businesses and creating long-term positive impact on societies.

The aim of this project is to explore AI's impacts on different stakeholders (i.e., consumers, businesses, frontline employees and society), and explore how responsible and inclusive AI, i.e. AI technologies designed, developed and deployed to ensure that all stakeholders are included throughout all the usage stages (Moon, 2023), can enable the positive impacts of AI-based marketing applications on consumers and the society.

### **Key References:**

Ameen, N., Hosany, S., & Taheri, B. (2023). Generation Z's Psychology and New-age Technologies: Implications for Future Research. *Psychology & Marketing*, 40(10), 2029-2040. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.21868>

Birkstedt, T., Minkkinen, M., Tandonand, A., & Mantymaki, M. (2023). AI Governance: Themes, Knowledge Gaps and Future Agendas. *Internet Research*, 33(7), 133-167. <https://doi.org/10.1108/INTR-01-2022-0042>

Blut, M., Wang, C., Wunderlich, N., & Brock, C. (2021). Understanding Anthropomorphism in Service Provision: A Meta-analysis of Physical Robots, Chatbots, and Other AI. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 49(4), 632-658. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-020-00762-y>

Bonezzi, A., & Ostinelli, M. (2021). Can Algorithms Legitimize Discrimination?. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied*, 27(2), 447-459. <https://doi.org/10.1037/xap0000294>

Filieri, R., Lin, Z., Li, Y., Lu, X., & Yang, X. (2022). Customer Emotions in Service Robot Encounters: A Hybrid Machine-human Intelligence Approach. *Journal of Service Research*, 25(4), 614-629. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10946705221103937>

Henkel, A., Čaić, M., Blaurock, M., & Okan, M. (2020). Robotic Transformative Service Research: Deploying Social Robots for Consumer Well-being During COVID-19 and Beyond. *Journal of Service Management*, 31(6), 1131-1148. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JOSM-05-2020-0145>

Hollebeek, L., & Belk, R. (2021). Consumers' Technology-facilitated Brand Engagement and Wellbeing: Positivist TAM/PERMA- vs. Consumer Culture Theory Perspectives. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 38(2), 387-401. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijresmar.2021.03.001>

Marikyan, D., Papagiannidis, S., Rana, O. F., & Ranjan, R. (2023). Working in a Smart Home Environment: Examining the Impact on Productivity, Well-being and Future Use Intention. *Internet Research*, 34(2), 447-473. <https://doi.org/10.1108/INTR-12-2021-0931>

McCarthy, S., Rowan, W., Mahony, C., & Vergne, A. (2023). The Dark Side of Digitalization and Social Media Platform Governance: A Citizen Engagement Study. *Internet Research*, 33(6), 2172-2204. <https://doi.org/10.1108/INTR-03-2022-0142>

Moon, M. J. (2023). Searching for Inclusive Artificial Intelligence for Social Good: Participatory Governance and Policy Recommendations for Making AI More Inclusive and Benign for Society. *Public Administration Review*, 83(6), 1496-1505. <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13648>

Sahoo, S., Sahoo, J., Kumar, S., Lim, W. M., & Ameen, N. (2023). Distance is No Longer a Barrier to Healthcare Services: Current State and Future Trends of Telehealth Research. *Internet Research*, 33(3), 890-944. <https://doi.org/10.1108/INTR-10-2021-0774>

Wirtz, J., Kunz, W. H., Hartley, N., & Tarbit, J. (2023). Corporate Digital Responsibility in Service Firms and Their Ecosystems. *Journal of Service Research*, 26(2), 173-190. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10946705221130467>

## Topic 2

### **Title of Proposed Research Topic:**

The Impact of AI Adoption on Sustainable Value Co-creation in Services

### **Potential Supervisors:**

[Dr Chrysostomos Apostolidis](#)

### **Description of Possible Research Topic:**

The contemporary business landscape is experiencing fundamental transformation as artificial intelligence reshapes how organisations create and appropriate value. While AI requires business model innovation, it poses persistent operational and strategic challenges that make AI adaptation and value appropriation processes critically important yet highly variable (Roy et al., 2025). This is particularly significant in service contexts, where service-dominant logic emphasises that value is co-created through resource integration among multiple actors (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2016). Sustainability has emerged as a central imperative, as sustainable value co-creation requires internal marketing alignment and organisational commitment embedded within organisational DNA (Brown et al., 2024). Although existing research illustrates how digital technologies can enable resource integration that addresses social challenges while creating economic value through multi-stakeholder engagement (Apostolidis et al., 2021), however, the intersection of AI adoption and sustainable value co-creation remains critically underexplored, particularly regarding how hybrid intelligent service ecosystems impact sustainability outcomes (Chowdhury et al., 2022).

Despite growing attention to AI adoption and sustainable value co-creation as independent phenomena, three critical gaps persist. First, limited empirical evidence exists on how organisations leverage AI adaptation to enable sustainable value co-creation with multiple stakeholders, particularly regarding the strategic human resource management practices and institutional arrangements required (Roy et al., 2025). Second, literature has insufficiently examined tensions between AI-driven efficiency gains and sustainability goals, including how AI systems mediate stakeholder conflicts that can lead to value co-destruction (Brown et al., 2022). Third, research examining how different service sectors shape the AI-sustainability relationship remains notably absent. This PhD research programme aims to develop a comprehensive understanding of how AI adoption influences sustainable value co-

creation in services by examining enabling mechanisms, organisational capabilities, tensions and trade-offs, and context-sensitive frameworks across sectors.

### **Key References:**

Apostolidis, C., Brown, D., Wijetunga, D., & Kathriarachchi, E. (2021). Sustainable Value Co-creation at the Bottom of the Pyramid: Using Mobile Applications to Reduce Food Waste and Improve Food Security. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 37(9-10), 856-886. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2020.1863448>

Babu, M. M., Dey, B. L., Rahman, M., Roy, S. K., Alwi, S. F. S., & Kamal, M. M. (2020). Value Co-creation through Social Innovation: A Study of Sustainable Strategic Alliance in Telecommunication and Financial Services Sectors in Bangladesh. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 89, 13-27. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2020.06.003>

Brown, D. M., Apostolidis, C., Dey, B. L., Singh, P., Thrassou, A., Kretsos, L., & Babu, M. M. (2024). Sustainability Starts from Within: A Critical Analysis of Internal Marketing in Supporting Sustainable Value Co-creation in B2B Organisations. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 117, 14-27. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2023.12.006>

Brown, D. M., Apostolidis, C., Singh, P., Dey, B. L., & Chelekis, J. (2025). Exploring Multi-stakeholder Value Co-creation as an Entrepreneurial Approach to Survival and Sustainability: The Case of Pennine Pubs. *The International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation*, 26(4), 366-375. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14657503221145101>

Chowdhury, S., Budhwar, P., Dey, P. K., Joel-Edgar, S., & Abadie, A. (2022). AI-Employee Collaboration and Business Performance: Integrating Knowledge-based View, Socio-technical Systems and Organisational Socialisation Framework. *Journal of Business Research*, 144, 31-49. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2022.01.069>

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Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2004). Evolving to a New Dominant Logic for Marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, 68(1), 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.68.1.1.24036>

Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2016). Institutions and Axioms: An Extension and Update of Service-dominant Logic. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 44(1), 5-23. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-015-0456-3>

## Topic 3

### **Title of Proposed Research Topic:**

The Impact of Positioning Strategy on Firm/Brand Performance

### **Potential Supervisors:**

[Dr Hazel Huang](#)

### **Description of Possible Research Topic:**

Positioning strategy is an integral part of brand building; however, empirical research on positioning strategy is limited. This topic attempts to investigate the impact of positioning strategy on firm/brand performance using secondary data from firms' annual reports and practitioners' databases (such as MarketLine Advantage, Euromonitor, etc.). The potential research questions are as below:

- What are the key factors impacting the success of a positioning strategy?
- The extent to which a repositioning strategy should remain consistent to the original positioning strategy in order to avoid alienation from existing customers?
- What are the control variables that would impact the answers to the previous two research questions? For example, firm/brand size, characteristics of the industry (B2B, B2C), etc.

### **Key References:**

Nickerson, D., Lowe, M., Pattabhiramaiah, A., & Sorescu, A. (2022). The Impact of Corporate Social Responsibility on Brand Sales: An Accountability Perspective. *Journal of Marketing*, 86(2), 5-28. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00222429211044155>

Ramani, G., & Kumar, V. (2008). Interaction Orientation and Firm Performance. *Journal of Marketing*, 72(1), 27-45. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.72.1.027>

Swaminathan, V., Gupta, S., Keller, K. L., & Lehmann, D. (2022). Brand Actions and Financial Consequences: A Review of Key Findings and Directions for Future Research. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 50(4), 639-664. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-022-00866-7>

## Topic 4

### **Title of Proposed Research Topic:**

Determine Influencer Charisma via Big Data Analytics

## Potential Supervisors:

[Dr Hazel Huang](#)

## Description of Possible Research Topic:

Using the methodological foundation of Atalay et al.'s (2023) paper, this research will investigate the extent to which an influencer's charisma via his/her video clips and texts. The expected outcome is to develop a methodological model, relying on machine learning algorithms, to predict influencer charism, and therefore, success.

## Key References:

Atalay, A. S., Kihal, S. E., & Ellsaesser, F. (2023). Creating Effective Marketing Messages through Moderately Surprising Syntax. *Journal of Marketing*, 87(5), 755-775. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00222429231153582>

Wieser, V. E., Luedicke, M. K., & Hemetsberger, A. (2021). Charismatic Entrainment: How Brand Leaders and Consumers Co-Create Charismatic Authority in the Marketplace. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 48(4), 731-751. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcr/ucab035>

Tskhay, K. O., Zhu, R., Zou, C., & Rule, N. O. (2018). Charisma in Everyday Life: Conceptualization and Validation of the General Charisma Inventory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 114(1), 131–152. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pspp0000159>

## Topic 5

### Title of Proposed Research Topic:

Compensatory Consumption and Consumer Well-being: Activating Adaptive Compensatory Consumption

### Potential Supervisors:

[Dr Hazel Huang](#)

### Description of Possible Research Topic:

Compensatory consumption suggests that we use consumption practices to compensate our threatened identity. The domains of threatened identity that have been investigated include power, intelligence, social connection, etc. The majority of compensatory consumption research focuses on compensatory approaches that only restored threatened identities temporarily, such as symbolic complication,



escaping, etc. Ways to restore threatened identity *not* at the superficial level are called adaptive consumption, and Kim and Gal (2014) have already identified self-acceptance as a key mechanism for adaptive consumption. This topic aims to investigate whether different information processing mechanisms are able to trigger adaptive compensatory consumption in order to improve consumer well-being. Main methods are expected to be experiments.

### **Key References:**

Kim, S., & Gal, D. (2014). From Compensatory Consumption to Adaptive Consumption: The Role of Self-Acceptance in Resolving Self-Deficits. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 41(2), 526-542. <https://doi.org/10.1086/676681>

Mandel, N., Rucker, D. D., Levav, J., & Galinsky, A. D. (2017). The Compensatory Consumer Behavior Model: How Self-Discrepancies Drive Consumer Behavior. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 27(1), 133-146. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcps.2016.05.003>

Rustagi, M., & Shrum, L. J. (2019). Undermining the Restorative Potential of Compensatory Consumption: A Product's Explicit Identity Connection Impedes Self-Repair. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 46(1), 119-139. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcr/ucy064>

## Topic 6

### **Title of Proposed Research Topic:**

Bonding with Machines: Consumer Psychology in the Age of Emotive AI

### **Potential Supervisors:**

[Professor Sarah Xiao](#)

[Professor Zhibin Lin](#)

### **Description of Possible Research Topic:**

The field of artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly evolving, with a growing focus on developing AI with emotional and social capabilities. This emotive AI holds immense potential to transform various aspects of our lives, but it also raises critical ethical concerns that demand our attention.

AI could revolutionise customer experiences by tailoring interactions based on individual emotions. Notably, emotive AI allows computers to better understand and respond to human emotions and social dynamics, paving the way for more nuanced



interactions (Filiari et al., 2022). However, the ascent of emotive AI necessitates caution. Its influence on human identity, autonomy, privacy, and equality cannot be ignored (De Freitas et al., 2023). This raises profound ethical questions and existential inquiries about the relationship between emotive AI and human well-being (Hollebeek et al., 2024; Zhu et al., 2023).

Studies have explored various aspects of emotive AI's impact, painting a multifaceted picture. From examining customer experience with service robots (Filiari et al., 2022; Pentina et al., 2023) to analysing consumer trust in voice-based AI systems (Pitardi & Marriott, 2021), research delves into how AI can influence electronic word-of-mouth marketing and even emotional responses to AI service failures (Pavone et al., 2023). As emotive AI becomes increasingly integrated into daily life, understanding its potential pitfalls alongside opportunities is crucial for promoting ethical and responsible use.

By fostering interdisciplinary insights, we can gain a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between emotive AI's capabilities and their societal implications, ultimately striving to promote responsible and equitable AI deployment.

The proposed research should demonstrate the potential to make a substantial original contribution to AI-customer engagement research. While any methodological approach is welcome, priority will be given to the use of machine learning and big data analytics as well as traditional lab or field experiments. The following are some examples of suitable topics:

- How AI's emotive and social capacities influence individuals' willingness to follow AI recommendations and guidance in various contexts, such as purchasing decisions, health management, and lifestyle choices.
- The role of emotional resonance and rapport in shaping user interactions with AI systems equipped with emotive capabilities
- Collaborative and co-creative interactions between humans and AI systems, leveraging emotive capacities to enhance user experiences, productivity, and creativity while maintaining human agency and control.

### **Key References:**

De Freitas, J., Uğuralp, A. K., Oğuz-Uğuralp, Z., & Puntoni, S. (2023). Chatbots and Mental Health: Insights into the Safety of Generative AI. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 34(3), 481-491. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcpy.1393>

Filiari, R., Lin, Z., Li, Y., Lu, X., & Yang, X. (2022). Customer Emotions in Service Robot Encounters: A Hybrid Machine-human Intelligence Approach. *Journal of Service Research*, 25(4), 614-629. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10946705221103937>

Hollebeek, L. D., Menidjel, C., Sarstedt, M., Jansson, J., & Urbonavicius, S. (2024). Engaging Consumers through Artificially Intelligent Technologies: Systematic Review, Conceptual Model, and Further Research. *Psychology & Marketing*, 41(4), 880-898. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.21957>

Pavone, G., Meyer-Waarden, L., & Munzel, A. (2023). Rage Against the Machine: Experimental Insights into Customers' Negative Emotional Responses, Attributions of Responsibility, and Coping Strategies in Artificial Intelligence-based Service Failures. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 58(1), 52-71. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10949968221134492>

Pentina, I., Xie, T., Hancock, T., & Bailey, A. (2023). Consumer-machine Relationships in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: Systematic Literature Review and Research Directions. *Psychology and Marketing*, 40(8), 1593-1614. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.21853>

Pitardi, V., & Marriott, H. R. (2021). Alexa, *She's* Not Human But... Unveiling the Drivers of Consumers' Trust in Voice-based Artificial Intelligence. *Psychology and Marketing*, 38(4), 626-642. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.21457>

Zhu, T., Lin, Z., & Liu, X. (2023). The Future is Now? Consumers' Paradoxical Expectations of Human-like Service Robots. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 196. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2023.122830>

## Topic 7

### **Title of Proposed Research Topic:**

Examining the Effect of AI-powered Technologies in Online Retail Environments on Consumer's Shopping Experience

### **Potential Supervisors:**

[Dr Arezou Ghiassaleh](#)

[Professor Markus Blut](#)

### **Description of Possible Research Topic:**

This innovative research aims to investigate the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the online retail environment, specifically focusing on how consumers' behaviours and reactions vary in response to AI implementation. With the rapid advancement of technology, AI has become increasingly integrated into various aspects of online retail, influencing consumers' shopping experiences and decision-making processes. This research seeks to explore the diverse reactions of consumers to AI-powered

features such as personalized recommendations, chatbots, virtual assistants, and automated customer service employed by major online retailers. By employing quantitative research methods, including surveys and experiments, this research intends to identify patterns, preferences, and concerns among different consumer segments regarding AI utilization in online shopping. The findings of this research will contribute valuable insights to retailers, marketers, and AI developers, informing strategies for enhancing customer engagement, satisfaction, and trust in the evolving landscape of online retail. This research helps retailers to better implement Artificial Intelligence and provides scholars novel insights into this exciting and fast-growing research domain.

### **Key References:**

Arora, N., Chakraborty, I., & Nishimura, Y. (2025). AI–Human Hybrids for Marketing Research: Leveraging Large Language Models (LLMs) as Collaborators. *Journal of Marketing*, 89(2), 43-70. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00222429241276529>

Cillo, P., & Rubera, G. (2024). Generative AI in Innovation and Marketing Processes: A Roadmap of Research Opportunities. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 53, 684–701. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-024-01044-7>

Clegg, M., Hofstetter, R., de Bellis, E., & Schmitt, B. H. (2024). Unveiling the Mind of the Machine. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 51(2), 342-361. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcr/ucad075>

Guha, A., Grewal, D., Kopalle, P. K., Haenlein, M., Schneider, M. J., Jung, H., Moustafa, R., Hegde, D. R., & Hawkins, G. (2021). How Artificial Intelligence Will Affect the Future of Retailing. *Journal of Retailing*, 97(1), 28-41. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretai.2021.01.005>

Huang, M. H., & Rust, R. T. (2024). The Caring Machine: Feeling AI for Customer Care. *Journal of Marketing*, 88(5), 1-23. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00222429231224748>

## Topic 8

### **Title of Proposed Research Topic:**

Consumer Vulnerability and Stigma in the Marketplace

### **Potential Supervisors:**

[Professor Benedetta Cappellini](#)

[Professor Gretchen Larsen](#)

[Professor Helen Goworek](#)

### **Description of Possible Research Topic:**

Consumer vulnerability and stigmatisation are conditions that affect billion of consumers, yet there is a limited consensus about their definitions, characteristics and consequences for consumers (Hill and Sharma 2020). The growing interpretivist field of consumer vulnerability in marketing is moving beyond managerially focussed approaches to represent the experiences of excluded and stigmatised consumers (Hamilton et al. 2015). In critical marketing studies, consumer vulnerability and stigma have been examined through the lens of power dynamics, social inequalities, and cultural norms (Hutton 2016). These studies recognise that certain groups, such as low-income individuals, racial minorities, immigrants, or people with disabilities, may be more susceptible to exploitation or discrimination in the marketplace due to systemic injustices and structural constraints (Yen et al. 2021). Studies also show that stigma can arise from various sources, including societal norms, cultural beliefs, and power dynamics, and it often manifests in the form of social exclusion, marginalization, or devaluation of certain identities or behaviours (Larsen et al. 2014). We welcome interpretivist proposals investigating how vulnerable consumers navigate the marketplace, negotiate their identities, and resist or conform to societal pressures, discrimination and consumer expectations. We also welcome proposals examining the coping mechanisms and identity negotiations employed by vulnerable consumers in response to stigma.

### **Key References:**

Hamilton, K., Dunnett, S., & Piacentini, M. (2015). *Consumer Vulnerability: Conditions, Contexts and Characteristics*. Routledge.

<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203797792>

Hill, R. P., & Sharma, E. (2020). Consumer Vulnerability. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 30(3), 551–570. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcpy.1161>

Larsen, G., Patterson, M., & Markham, L. (2014). A Deviant Art: Tattoo-Related Stigma in an Era of Commodification. *Psychology & Marketing*, 31(8), 670-681.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20727>

Yen, D. A. W., Cappellini, B., Yang, H. P., & Gupta, S. (2021). Coping with Coping: International Migrants' Experiences of the Covid-19 Lockdown in the UK. *British Journal of Management*, 32, 1219-1241. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8551.12512>

Hutton, M. (2016). Neither Passive nor Powerless: Reframing Economic Vulnerability via Resilient Pathways. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 32(3–4), 252–274.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2015.1118144>

## Topic 9

### **Title of Proposed Research Topic:**

Balancing Digital and In-person Networking in the Era of Digital Transformation in Marketing

### **Potential Supervisors:**

[Professor Zsofia Toth](#)

### **Description of Possible Research Topic:**

Networking is a critical component of marketing and professional development, traditionally dominated by in-person interactions. However, the rise of digital transformation, accelerated by technologies such as social media platforms, virtual events, and AI-driven networking tools, has reshaped how people connect. While digital networking offers scalability and convenience, it may lack the depth and trust-building associated with face-to-face interactions. Understanding how to strike the right balance between these modes is essential for optimising relationship-building and marketing effectiveness in a hybrid world.

### **Key References:**

None provided

## Topic 10

### **Title of Proposed Research Topic:**

Managing Digital Servitization Responsibly and with Transparency

### **Potential Supervisors:**

[Professor Zsofia Toth](#)

### **Description of Possible Research Topic:**

Servitization – the shift from selling products to offering integrated product-service solutions – is an important service innovation effort that transforms marketing strategies across different sectors. Digital technologies such as AI, IoT, and blockchain enable firms to deliver personalized, data-driven services, but they also raise questions about consumer trust, ethical and data privacy practices, and sustainable value creation. This research will explore how digital servitization impacts perceptions, and loyalty in sectors like financial services, healthcare, and

tourism. It will also examine how firms balance/stage technological innovation investments with responsible marketing principles to ensure transparency.

**Key References:**

None provided