Durham University
Business School

PhD Studentships 2024/25

Centre name: **Centre for Consumers and Sustainable Consumption**

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

Title of proposed research topic 1

(Un)Identify with the brand through CSA (Corporate Sociopolitical Activisms): The Role of Motivation, Affection, and Authenticity

Potential supervisors (please include web link to those named):
Dr. Hazel Huang

https://www.durham.ac.uk/business/our-people/hazel-huang/

Description of possible research topic with some key references:

This topic taps into both the strategic decision by the firm/brand and consumer psychological mechanism in evaluating Firm's/Brand's CSA engagement. Main methods are expected to be quantitative methods, including analysis of secondary, publicly-available, data and experiments (or surveys).

- Bhagwat, Y., Warren, N. L., Beck, J. T., & Watson, G. F. (2020). Corporate Sociopolitical Activism and Firm Value. *Journal of Marketing*, *84*(5), 1-21. doi: https://doi.org/10.1177/0022242920937000
- Durand, R., Paugam, L., & Stolowy, H. (2019). Do Investors Actually Value Sustainability Indices? Replication, Development, and New Evidence on CSR Visibility. *Strategic Management Journal, 40*(9), 1471-1490. doi: https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.3035
- 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. doi: https://doi.org/10.1177/00222429211044155

Title of proposed research topic 2

Determine influencer charisma via big data analytics

Potential supervisors (please include web link to those named):
Dr. Hazel Huang

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Description of possible research topic with some key references:

Using the methodological foundation of Atalay et al.'s (forthcoming) paper, this research will investigate the extend 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.

- Atalay, A. S., Kihal, S. E., & Ellsaesser, F. (forthcoming). Creating Effective Marketing Messages Through Moderately Surprising Syntax. *Journal of Marketing*. doi: 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. doi: 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

Title of proposed research topic 3

Compensatory consumption and consumer well-being: Activating adaptive compensatory consumption

Potential supervisors (please include web link to those named):
Dr. Hazel Huang

https://www.durham.ac.uk/business/our-people/hazel-huang/

Description of possible research topic with some key references:

Kim and Gal (2014) have already identified self-acceptance as a key mechanism for adaptive consumption. This topic is expected 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.

- 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(August), 526-542. doi: 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. doi: 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(June), 119-139. doi: https://doi.org/10.1093/jcr/ucy064

Title of proposed research topic 4

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

Potential supervisors:

Professor Sarah Xiao: https://www.durham.ac.uk/business/our-people/hong-xiao/
Professor Zhibin Lin: https://www.durham.ac.uk/business/our-people/zhibin-lin/

Description of possible research topic with some key references:

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 (Filieri 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 (Filieri 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.

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*. (In press) https://doi.org/10.1002/jcpy.1393

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.

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.* (In press) 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.

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.

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.

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*, 122830.

Title of proposed research topic 5

Examining the effect of AI-powered technologies in online retail environments on consumer's shopping experience

Potential supervisors (please include web link to those named):

Arezou Ghiassaleh
https://www.durham.ac.uk/business/our-people/arezou-ghiassaleh/

Markus Blut
https://www.durham.ac.uk/business/our-people/markus-blut/

Description of possible research topic with some key references:

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.

Guha, A., Grewal, D., Kopalle, P. K., Haenlein, M., Schneider, M. J., Jung, H., ... & Hawkins, G. (2021). How artificial intelligence will affect the future of retailing. *Journal of Retailing*, *97*(1), 28-41.

Title of proposed research topic 6

An Exploration of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Challenges in the Adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in UK Healthcare Service Sector

Potential supervisors (please include web link to those named):

Dr Chrysostomos Apostolidis, Associate Professor of Marketing, Durham University Business School, UK

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Description of possible research topic with some key references:

The rapid development and adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) applications in healthcare, has been assisting in some of the most pressing problems that healthcare organizations currently face (Tortorella et al., 2022; Bouschery, 2021; Chen & Decary, 2020). To date, research on such application has focused primarily on their technical potential and capabilities, particularly regarding the improvement of the quality of the services offered (e.g., Heising & Angelopoulos 2021; 2022; Bertsimas et al., 2020; Hadid et al., 2020; Singh et al., 2020). For instance, studies argue that AI has the potential to improve the effectiveness of diagnosis, prognosis, and prevention (e.g., Heising & Angelopoulos 2021 and 2022), to support offered services (e.g., Collins & Moons, 2019), and personalised healthcare (e.g., Panch et al., 2019), improve cost efficiency (e.g., Chaieb et al., 2020), and enhance the quality of healthcare in isolated areas (e.g., Guo & Li, 2018). This line of research increasingly directs the discussion towards the ways in which equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) may be affected by AI technologies, and influence trust and acceptance of such technologies as well as the value they can offer to healthcare (e.g., Shareef et al., 2021). In the context of healthcare, EDI issues have drawn considerable attention, due to the related physical, psychological, ethical, and legal repercussions, as they can drastically affect individual and societal wellbeing. The extant literature supports that social bias, minority invisibility and institutionalized discrimination may negatively impact the access to, and quality of healthcare services (Kallus et al., 2021; Daley & MacDonnell, 2011). Furthermore, EDI issues relating to the development and adoption of AI applications and associated biases have been acknowledged widely in the extant literature (e.g., Gante & Angelopoulos, 2022). As AI is increasingly influencing many aspects of people's lives, over-representation of specific groups (or under-representation/bias towards others) in the design, development, and adoption of such technologies may lead to challenges relating to EDI, in some cases even undoing the advances made in ensuring EDI (e.g., Kallus et al., 2021; Wamba et al., 2021). To this end, the increasing adoption of AI technologies may exacerbate or add to the existing EDI challenges in healthcare, which in turn can have a detrimental effect on the value that service providers can create. Therefore, to address that lacuna, it is timely and topical to explore: *What are the potential EDI -related issues that may affect the effectiveness of A.I. in the healthcare sector, what is their impact on the healthcare service provided, and how can this be avoided?*

1. REFERENCES

a) Bouschery, S. G. (2021). Artificial Intelligence in Health Care: Trust, Privacy, and the Acceptance of AI Doctors. In *Academy of Management Proceedings* (Vol. 2021, No. 1, p. 15900). Briarcliff Manor, NY 10510: Academy of Management.

b) Bertsimas, D., Orfanoudaki, A., & Weiner, R. B. (2020). Personalized treatment for coronary artery disease patients: a machine learning approach. *Health Care Management Science*, *23*(4), 482-506.

c) Chaieb, M., Jemai, J., & Mellouli, K. (2020). A decomposition-construction approach for solving the home health care scheduling problem. *Health care management science*, *23*(2), 264-286.

d) Chen, M., & Decary, M. (2020, January). Artificial intelligence in healthcare: An essential guide for health leaders. In *Healthcare management forum* (Vol. 33, No. 1, pp. 10-18). Sage CA: Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications.

e) Collins, G. S., & Moons, K. G. (2019). Reporting of artificial intelligence prediction models. *The Lancet*, *393*(10181), 1577-1579.

f) Daley, A. E., & MacDonnell, J. A. (2011). Gender, sexuality and the discursive representation of access and equity in health services literature: implications for LGBT communities. *International journal for equity in health*, *10*(1), 1-10.

g) Gante, S., & Angelopoulos, S. (2022). Paving the way toward Human-Algorithm Interactions: Understanding AI-CAD adoption for breast cancer detection, *In the proceedings of the European Conference on Information Systems (ECIS)*, Timisoara, Romania.

h) Guo, J., & Li, B. (2018). The application of medical artificial intelligence technology in rural areas of developing countries. *Health equity*, *2*(1), 174-181.

i) Hadid, M., Elomri, A., El Mekkawy, T., Kerbache, L., El Omri, A., El Omri, H., ... & Al Thani, M. H. J. (2022). Bibliometric analysis of cancer care operations management: current status, developments, and future directions. *Health Care Management Science*, 1-20.

j) Heising, L.M., & Angelopoulos, S. (2021). Early Diagnosis of Mild Cognitive Impairment with 2-Dimensional Convolutional Neural Network Classification of Magnetic Resonance Images. *In the proceedings of the 54th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences (HICSS).*

k) Heising, L., & Angelopoulos, S. (2022). Operationalising fairness in medical AI adoption: detection of early Alzheimer's disease with 2D CNN. *BMJ Health & Care Informatics*, 29(1).

l) Kallus, N., Mao, X., & Zhou, A. (2022). Assessing algorithmic fairness with unobserved protected class using data combination. *Management Science*, *68*(3), 1959-1981.

m) Panch, T., Pearson-Stuttard, J., Greaves, F., & Atun, R. (2019). Artificial intelligence: opportunities and risks for public health. *The Lancet Digital Health*, *1*(1), e13-e14.

n) Shareef, M. A., Kumar, V., Dwivedi, Y. K., Kumar, U., Akram, M. S., & Raman, R. (2021). A new health care system enabled by machine intelligence: Elderly people's trust or losing self control. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, *162*, 120334.

o) Singh, J., Nambisan, S., Bridge, R. G., & Brock, J. K. U. (2021). One-voice strategy for customer engagement. *Journal of Service Research*, *24*(1), 42-65.

p) Tortorella, G. L., Fogliatto, F. S., Espôsto, K. F., Mac Cawley, A. F., Vassolo, R., Tlapa, D., & Narayanamurthy, G. (2022). Healthcare costs' reduction through the integration of Healthcare 4.0 technologies in developing economies. *Total Quality Management & Business Excellence*, *33*(3-4), 467-487.

q) Wamba, S. F., Bawack, R. E., Guthrie, C., Queiroz, M. M., & Carillo, K. D. A. (2021). Are we preparing for a good AI society? A bibliometric review and research agenda. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, *164*, 120482.

Title of proposed research topic 7

Consumer vulnerability and stigma in the marketplace

Potential supervisors

Prof Benedetta Cappellini
https://www.durham.ac.uk/business/our-people/benedetta-cappellini/

Prof Gretchen Larsen
https://www.durham.ac.uk/business/our-people/gretchen-larsen/

Prof Helen Goworek
https://www.durham.ac.uk/business/our-people/helen-goworek/

Description of possible research topic with some key references:

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.

Hamilton, K., Dunnett, S., & Piacentini, M. (Eds.) (2015).Consumer vulnerability: Conditions, contexts and characteristics, London: Routledge.

Hill, R. P., & Sharma, E. (2020). Consumer vulnerability. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 30(3):551–570.

Larsen G, Patterson M and Markham L (2014) A deviant art: Tattoo-related stigma in an era of commodification. *Psychology & Marketing* 31(8): 670–681.

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.

Hutton, M. (2016) 'Neither passive nor powerless: Reframing economic vulnerability via resilient pathways',Journal of Marketing Management, 32(3–4), 252–274.