

Zheng (Nico) Liao

<https://www.nicoliao.com/> | zheng012@e.ntu.edu.sg | (+65)8039-2100
ABS-03-037, 91 Nanyang Avenue, Singapore 639956

EDUCATION

Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Nanyang Business School, Singapore
Ph.D., Marketing, 2021 – February 2027 (expected)
Dissertation Committee: Sharon Ng, Elaine Chan, Soo Kim, Anirban Mukhopadhyay

Sun Yat-Sen University, School of Business, China
B.A., Marketing, 2019

PRE-DOCTORAL EXPERIENCE

The University of Hong Kong, HKU Business School, Hong Kong S.A.R.
Pre-doctoral student and research assistant, Marketing, 2020 – 2021

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Substantive: Marketplace inclusion; Online communication; Digital privacy.

Methodological: Lab and field experiments; Secondary data analysis; Natural language processing.

PUBLICATION

Liao, Zheng (Nico), Xiangyun Zhang, and Sharon Ng (forthcoming), “Beyond the Bump: Pregnancy Signals Customer-Centricity,” *Journal of the Association for Consumer Research*.

MANUSCRIPTS IN REVISION (*equal authorship)

1. **Liao, Zheng (Nico)**, Elaine Chan, and Sharon Ng, “Aggregate Messages Increase Perceived Thoughtfulness and Preferences in Online Communication,” invited for 2nd round of review at *Journal of Consumer Research*. [Job Market Paper]
2. **Liao, Zheng (Nico)***, Xiangyun Zhang*, Junxian Li, and Sharon Ng, “Beyond Limits: Sensory Compensation Belief and Its Influence on Consumer Perceptions of Service Employees with Disabilities,” invited for 2nd round of review at *Journal of Consumer Research*.
3. Zhang, Xiangyun*, **Zheng (Nico) Liao***, Sharon Ng, and Alison Jing Xu, “The Influence of Cultural Tightness–Looseness on Consumer Privacy Protection Decisions,” invited for 2nd round of review at *Journal of Consumer Research*.
4. Tang, Qing*, **Zheng (Nico) Liao***, and Lijun (Shirley) Zhang*, “Signaling through Kidulting Consumption on Social Media,” invited for resubmission at *Journal of Consumer Research*.
5. **Liao, Zheng (Nico)***, Xiangyun Zhang*, and Sharon Ng, “When Privacy Requests Feel Intrusive: How Cultural Idealism–Pragmatism Affects Consumer Privacy Protection,” invited for 2nd round of review at *Journal of the Association for Consumer Research*.

MANUSCRIPTS UNDER REVIEW (*equal authorship)

1. Moore, Alexander, **Zheng (Nico) Liao**, Raina Zexuan Zhang, Ellie J. Kyung, and Sharon Ng, “The Distance Between Data: A Consumer-Derived Taxonomy and Its Consequences for Privacy Judgments,” under review at *Journal of Consumer Psychology*.

MANUSCRIPTS IN PREPARATION

1. “Consumer Perception of Veteran-Owned Businesses,” with Xiangyun Zhang, Qing Tang, and Sharon Ng, *in preparation for submission to Journal of Marketing Research*.
2. “Information Exchange Orientation: A Resource-Based View of Consumer Privacy Decisions,” with Ellie J. Kyung, Alexander Moore, Raina Zexuan Zhang, and Sharon Ng, *in preparation for submission to Journal of Marketing*.
3. “When Consumers Turn to Kidulting Consumption,” with Qing Tang, Yunhui Huang, and Xiaoyan Deng, *in preparation for submission*.
4. “Chronotype as a Marketplace Signal: How Creators’ Sleep-Activity Patterns Shape Consumers’ Creativity-Relevant Inferences,” with Honghan Qi, Minghao Xu, and Shankha Basu, *in preparation for submission*.

HONORS, AWARDS, AND GRANTS

- Singapore Ministry of Education (MOE) Academic Research Fund Tier 1 Grant (with Elaine Chan and Sharon Ng), 2025-present
- Social Mobility Foundation (SMF) Grant (with Sharon Ng), 2026-present
- AMA-Sheth Foundation Doctoral Consortium Fellow, 2025
- Best Paper Award (Marketing Track), Singapore Rising Scholar Conference, 2025
- ACR Sheth Foundation Conference Scholarship, 2024
- Winner, Three-Minute Thesis Competition, Nanyang Business School, 2023
- Nanyang Technological University (NTU) Research Scholarship, 2021-2025

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS (*presenter)

- Liao, Zheng (Nico), Honghan Qi*, Minghao Xu, and Shankha Basu (2026), “Chronotype and Perceived Creativity: Consumers Perceive Night Owls as More Creative Than Early Birds,” *Society for Consumer Psychology*, San Diego, CA.
- Liao, Zheng (Nico)*, Elaine Chan, and Sharon Ng (2025), “Aggregate Messages Increase Perceived Thoughtfulness and Preferences in Online Communication,” *Australian and New Zealand Marketing Academy Conference*, Sydney, Australia.
- Liao, Zheng (Nico)*, Xiangyun Zhang, Junxian Li, and Sharon Ng (2025), “Sensory Compensation Belief and Consumer Perceptions of Employees with Disabilities,” *Australian and New Zealand Marketing Academy Conference*, Sydney, Australia.
- Liao, Zheng (Nico)*, Xiangyun Zhang, Junxian Li, and Sharon Ng (2025), “Beyond Limits: Sensory Compensation Belief and Its Influence on Consumer Perceptions of Service Employees with Disabilities,” *Association for Consumer Research*, Washington, DC.
- Liao, Zheng (Nico)*, Elaine Chan, and Sharon Ng (2025), “Aggregate Messages Increase Perceived Thoughtfulness and Preferences in Online Communication,” *Association for Consumer Research*, Washington, DC.
- Qi, Honghan*, Zheng (Nico) Liao, Minghao Xu, and Shankha Basu (2025), “Chronotype and Perceived Creativity: Consumers Perceive Night Owls as More Creative Than Early Birds,” *Association for Consumer Research*, Washington, DC.
- Zhang, Xiangyun*, Zheng (Nico) Liao, Sharon Ng, and Alison Jing Xu (2025), “Cultural Tightness Increases Consumer Privacy Protection Tendency,” *Association for Consumer Research*, Washington, DC.

Liao, Zheng (Nico)*, Elaine Chan, and Sharon Ng (2025), “Aggregate Messages Increase Perceived Thoughtfulness and Preferences in Online Communication,” *Singapore Rising Scholar Conference*, Singapore.

Liao, Zheng (Nico), Xiangyun Zhang, Junxian Li*, and Sharon Ng (2025), “Beyond Limits: Sensory Compensation Belief and Its Influence on Consumer Perceptions of Service Employees with Disabilities,” *Singapore Rising Scholar Conference*, Singapore.

Liao, Zheng (Nico)*, Elaine Chan, and Sharon Ng (2024), “Aggregate Messages Increase Perceived Thoughtfulness and Preferences in Online Communication,” *Asia-Pacific Association for Consumer Research Conference*, Bali, Indonesia.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Instructor, Nanyang Technological University

- Marketing (Undergraduate), Fall 2023
 - Class size: 2 sections, total 54 students
 - Teaching evaluation: 4.60/5.0 (course median across faculty: 4.44/5.0)

Teaching Assistant, Nanyang Technological University

- Integrated Marketing Communication (Graduate), Fall 2023, Fall 2025
- Branding (Graduate), Spring 2024
- Consumer Psychology (Graduate), Fall 2023

SERVICE

Conference reviewer

- Association for Consumer Research (ACR) Annual Conference, 2026
- AMA Summer Academic Conference, 2026
- AMA Marketing and Public Policy Conference, 2026
- AMA Winter Academic Conference, 2025
- Australian and New Zealand Marketing Academy Conference (ANZMAC), 2024
- Asia-Pacific Association for Consumer Research Conference (AP-ACR), 2024

REFERENCES

Sharon Ng

Professor of Marketing
Deputy Dean, Nanyang Business School
Nanyang Technological University
angsl@ntu.edu.sg

Elaine Chan

Associate Professor of Marketing
Head, Division of Marketing
Nanyang Technological University
echan@ntu.edu.sg

Alison Jing Xu

Professor of Business Administration
Area Chair of Marketing
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
alisonxu@illinois.edu

Ellie J. Kyung

Associate Professor
Peter Black Research Scholar
Marketing Division, Babson College
ekyung@babson.edu

SELECTED RESEARCH ABSTRACTS

Aggregate Messages Increase Perceived Thoughtfulness and Preferences in Online Communication

Invited for 2nd round of review at Journal of Consumer Research. [Job Market Paper]

Abstract: Online messaging has become a key touchpoint for companies to interact with customers. Reflecting the rapid proliferation of live chat services, a growing body of research has examined what types of content are best suited to these channels. However, effective messaging in these settings is shaped not only by what is communicated but also by how that content is conveyed. When delivering messages online, service providers can vary the format in which content is presented, ranging from a single, consolidated block (“aggregate messages”) to multiple, sequential blocks (“separate messages”). Across seven studies—including analyses of field data and controlled laboratory experiments—we demonstrate that aggregate messages, relative to separate messages, lead to more favorable consumer evaluations, stronger purchase intentions, and greater preferences. This effect is driven by consumers’ perception that aggregate messages reflect greater thoughtfulness on the part of the sender. We further show that this effect is attenuated when separate messages are explicitly framed as thoughtful or when the message is attributed to a chatbot rather than a human sender. Findings from the current research shed light on how message formatting can influence consumer perceptions and decisions.

Beyond the Bump: Pregnancy Signals Customer-Centricity

Forthcoming at Journal of the Association for Consumer Research

Abstract: Pregnant employees are common in customer-facing roles, yet little is known about how consumers respond to visible pregnancy cues in service encounters. While existing research emphasizes negative stereotypes about pregnant employees, we offer an alternative view: pregnancy can enhance perceived customer-centricity. Across six pre-registered studies, we show that consumers perceive a pregnant (compared to a non-pregnant) service employee as more customer-centric and are therefore more likely to use the service. The enhanced perceived customer-centricity occurs because consumers infer that the pregnant service employee is more likely to take their perspective. We further explore situations where this effect may not hold. Our findings challenge the notion of pregnancy as a liability and advance understanding of body-based social inferences in service settings. We offer practical insights for managers and policymakers seeking to foster marketplace inclusion.

Beyond Limits: Sensory Compensation Belief and Its Influence on Consumer Perceptions of Service Employees with Disabilities

Invited for 2nd round of review at Journal of Consumer Research

Abstract: Existing research and marketplace practices often portray people with disabilities as less competent. This paper challenges that perspective by examining consumers’ perceptions of service employees with disabilities and introducing the concept of sensory compensation belief—the belief that a sensory impairment enhances the remaining senses. Through a series of studies, we demonstrate how this belief shapes consumers’ judgment and decision-making. Specifically, when a sensory-based product (e.g., headphones) is recommended by a service employee with a sense impairment different from the focal product attribute (e.g., a blind employee), consumers perceive the product to be of higher quality than when they receive the same recommendation from a non-disabled employee. This higher product quality judgment subsequently increases purchase intentions. The findings challenge the dominant narrative in the existing literature that primarily focuses on the perceived limitations of people with disabilities. The practical implications for marketplace representation and enhancing consumer trust are also highlighted.

The Influence of Cultural Tightness–Looseness on Consumer Privacy Protection Decisions*Invited for 2nd round of review at Journal of Consumer Research*

Abstract: Although concerns about consumer privacy have become increasingly salient worldwide, individuals' privacy protection behaviors differ markedly across cultural contexts. This research investigates the role of cultural tightness–looseness in shaping such behaviors. We theorize and find that individuals from tight (vs. loose) cultures exhibit heightened privacy concerns and are more likely to engage in privacy-protection actions. This effect is driven by greater concerns about social judgment in tight cultures, in which individuals want to avoid being evaluated by others. Consequently, they are more motivated to conceal personal information that may invite unwanted scrutiny. Across eight studies employing a mixed-methods approach, we provide robust evidence for this effect. Specifically, a large-scale secondary survey, a seven-country cross-cultural survey, and a field dataset from real consumer transactions establish the external validity of this phenomenon. Five additional controlled experiments further demonstrate causal relationships, explicate the underlying mechanism, and delineate key boundary conditions. Collectively, these findings contribute to a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of how cultural tightness-looseness shapes privacy-related behaviors. They also offer actionable insights for marketers and policymakers when they design privacy-related policies and interventions.