Graduate Student Highlight

In this edition of "Graduate Student Highlight," we introduce four dedicated PhD student who are making significant contributions to their fields. Explore the research interests and academic journeys of these promising scholars!

Ja Kyung Seo (jakyung.seo@uga.edu) is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Georgia, specializing in advertising.

Message from Ja Kyung: My research seeks to understand how emerging technologies, including interactive tools on social media and Artificial Intelligence (AI) applications (e.g., AI chatbots and AI social robots), can be harnessed in the advertising field for the betterment of society. Through experimental methods, I investigate the psychological mechanism under which such interactive technologies influence individuals' cognitive and emotional processing of advertising.

To learn more about my academic work, please visit: https://sites.google.com/view/ja-kyung-seo/home

Jin R. Choi (jinrchoi@umd.edu) is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Maryland, specializing in rhetoric, digital media, gender, sexuality, and race.

Message from Jin: I am an advanced Ph.D. candidate and Flagship Fellow in the Department of Communication at the University of Maryland with a graduate certificate in the Digital Studies in the Arts and Humanities. My dissertation takes a critical perspective on the rhetorical formation of heteronormative reproductive citizenship in South Korea amidst its low fertility rate "crisis." I teach at an interdisciplinary digital humanities honors program at UMD and often guest lectures in courses on gender & communication and Asian American gender & sexuality.

To learn more about my academic work, please visit: https://jinrchoi.com/

Seo-Jeong Heo (sjheo2@illinois.edu) is a Ph.D. student at the University of Illinois Urbana Champaign, specializing AI advertising, virtual influencer, and social robots.

Message from Seo-Jeong: I am a Ph.D. student at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, researching AI-driven advertising effectiveness, particularly focusing on virtual influencers, social robots, and generative AI. My current research explores how virtual influencers can build credibility and inspire consumers, drawing on theories such as Theory of Mind, the Persuasion Knowledge Model, and Construal Level Theory. I also teach courses in statistical methods, branding strategy, and advertising innovation.

Heijin Lee (leeheiji@msu.edu) is a Ph.D. candidate at Michigan State University, specializing in influencer marketing, global consumer behavior, and public diplomacy.

Message from Heijin: With experience as a TikTok marketer and social media influencer, my research focuses on international strategic communication and influencer marketing, bridging academia, industry, and government. I am dedicated to multidisciplinary research that connects these fields and delivers actionable insights. I am also passionate about mentoring, equipping students with the latest knowledge and skills to excel in digital strategic communication.

To learn more about my academic work, please visit:
https://heijin942678.wixsite.com/heijinlee