

Qiyao Peng

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EDUCATION

- 06/2027 (Exp.) **Ph.D. in Communication (STEM)**
University of California, Santa Barbara, Department of Communication
Areas of focus: health communication, persuasion, computational and experimental methods
Committee: Jiaying Liu (Chair), Robin Nabi, Yingdan Lu (Northwestern University)
- 12/2019 **M.A. in Communication Management**
University of Southern California, Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism
Areas of focus: marketing, management, and computer-mediated communication
- 06/2017 **B.A. Hons in International Communications Studies with German**
The University of Nottingham Ningbo China
Areas of focus: cultural studies, film and media studies, media industry
- 06/2016 **Exchange: B.A. Hons in Culture, Film and Media**
The University of Nottingham (09/2015–06/2016)

PUBLICATIONS

P=PAPER, W=WORK IN PROGRESS

- [P.3] Liu, X., Lu, Y., Peng, Q., Qian, S., Peng, Y., & Shen, C. (2026). Seeing the surreal: Mapping surrealism in photorealistic AI-generated images using large language models. *Computational Communication Research*, 8(2), 1–48. <https://doi.org/10.5117/CCR2026.2.6.LIU>
- [P.2] Peng, Q., Lu, Y., Peng, Y., Qian, S., Liu, X., & Shen, C. (2025). Crafting synthetic realities: Examining visual realism and misinformation potential of photorealistic AI-generated images. In *Proceedings of Extended Abstracts of the CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI EA '25)* (pp. 1–12). ACM. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3706599.3719834>
- [P.1] Hong, J., Peng, Q., & Williams, D. (2020). Are you ready for artificial Mozart and Skrillex?: An experiment testing expectancy violation theory and AI music. *New Media & Society*, 23(7), 1920–1935. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444820925798>

Work in Progress

- [W.7] Rathje, S., Asimovic, N., ..., Peng, Q., ..., & Van Bavel, J. J. Testing the causal impact of social media reduction around the globe. *Nature*. (Stage 1 registered report ACCEPTED in principle) https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/ujtxa_v2
- [W.6] Worsdale, A., ..., Peng, Q., ..., & Liu, J. Depressive symptoms alter the predictive value of neural responses to vaping prevention messages in young adults who vape. (Submitted to *Nicotine & Tobacco Research*)
- [W.5] Peng, Q., Duong, H., Shi, R., & Liu, J. Contradiction disrupts and reinforcement plateaus: The interplay of news and user comments on norm perceptions in the digital age. (Submitted to *Mass Communication and Society*)
- [W.4] Ismail, I.*, Peng, Q.*, Liu, J., & Oh, V. Y. Specific mixed emotional headlines drive online media engagement over and above positivity and negativity. (Submitted to *Media*)

Psychology)

*Equal contribution

- [W.3] Gonzales, A. L., Wang, L. H., Kim, Y. W., & **Peng, Q.** Meso-level theorizing the digital divide: A model of institutional capacity for digital equity. (*Submitted to Communication Research*)
- [W.2] Liu, J., **Peng, Q.**, Malik, M., Wang, Y., Norton, E., Markey, C., Ye, T., & Sweet, L. H. Identifying optimal cognitive, social, and emotional profiles of anti-vaping messages for young adult vapers: Insights from interpretable machine learning analysis. (*Manuscript ready*)
- [W.1] **Peng, Q.**, & Liu, J. Generative AI for scalable message tailoring: Differential persuasive effects across socioeconomic and value-based subgroups. (*Manuscript in preparation*)

Media Coverage

- 04/2026 Cha, A. E. (2026, April 9). Social media addiction? This detox could reverse a decade of damage. *The Washington Post*. [\[Link\]](#)
Coverage of Rathje et al., *Nature* registered report [P.4]

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- [C.14] Ismail, I.*, **Peng, Q.***, & Oh, V. Y. (2026, Jun). Specific mixed emotional headlines drive online media engagement over and above positivity and negativity. *76th ICA Annual Conference, Cape Town, South Africa*.
*Equal contribution
- [C.13] Liu, J., **Peng, Q.**, Malik, M., Wang, Y., Norton, E., Markey, C., Ye, T., & Sweet, L. H. (2026, Jun). Identifying optimal cognitive, social, and emotional profiles of anti-vaping messages for young adult vapers: Insights from interpretable machine learning analysis. *76th ICA Annual Conference, Cape Town, South Africa*.
- [C.12] Liu, X., Lu, Y., **Peng, Q.**, Qian, S., Peng, Y., & Shen, C. (2026, Jun). Seeing the surreal: Mapping surrealism in photorealistic AI-generated images using large language models. *76th ICA Annual Conference, Cape Town, South Africa*.
- [C.11] Ye, T., Norton, E., Wang, Y., **Peng, Q.**, Sweet, L. H., & Liu, J. (2026, Jun). Social influence vs. self relevance: Neural correlates of the third-person effect in social appeal anti-vaping messages among young adult vapers. *76th ICA Annual Conference, Cape Town, South Africa*.
- [C.10] **Peng, Q.**, & Liu, J. (2026, May). Generative AI for scalable message tailoring: Differential persuasive effects across socioeconomic and value-based subgroups. *Comm Horizons, Davis, USA*.
- [C.9] Liu, X., Lu, Y., **Peng, Q.**, Qian, S., Peng, Y., & Shen, C. (2026, May). Seeing the surreal: Mapping surrealism in photorealistic AI-generated images using large language models. *Comm Horizons, Davis, USA*.
- [C.8] Liu, J., **Peng, Q.**, Malik, M., Wang, Y., Norton, E., Markey, C., & Sweet, L. H. (2026, Mar). Identifying optimal cognitive, social, and emotional profiles of anti-vaping messages for young adult vapers: Insights from interpretable machine learning analysis. *Annual Meeting of SRNT, Baltimore, USA*.
- [C.7] Norton, E., Markey, C., Wang, Y., **Peng, Q.**, Sweet, L. H., & Liu, J. (2026, Feb). Neurocognitive predictors of vaping reduction: Insights from Public Service Announcement exposure and machine learning. *International Neuropsychological Society (INS), Philadelphia, USA*.
- [C.6] **Peng, Q.**, Duong, H., Shi, R., & Liu, J. (2024, Nov). Congruent and incongruent norms: The impact of news and user comments on norm perceptions in the digital age. *NCA*

(Health Communication Division), New Orleans, USA.

- [C.5] Peng, Q., Lu, Y., Peng, Y., Qian, S., Liu, X., & Shen, C. (2024, Sep). A first analysis of the misinformation potential of AI-generated images: A cross-platform investigation of their content, context, and impact. *Trust and Safety Conference (Poster), Stanford University, USA.*
- [C.4] Peng, Q., Lu, Y., Peng, Y., Qian, S., Liu, X., & Shen, C. (2024, Jun). A first analysis of the misinformation potential of AI-generated images: A cross-platform investigation of their content, context, and impact. *75th ICA Annual Conference, Gold Coast, Australia.*
- [C.3] Peng, Q., Liu, M., & Williams, D. (2020, Nov). The moderating effect of player types: Who doesn't quit? *NCA (Game Studies Division), virtual.*
- [C.2] Liu, M., Lynn, M., & Peng, Q. (2020, Nov). Effectiveness of virtual reality interventions in reducing depressive symptoms: A meta-analysis. *NCA, virtual.*
- [C.1] Hong, J., Peng, Q., & Williams, D. (2019, Jun). Are you ready for artificial Mozart and Skrillex?: An experiment testing expectancy violation theory and AI music. *ICA (Communication and Technology Division), Washington, D.C., USA.*

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

University of California, Santa Barbara

Santa Barbara, CA

03/2024–Present **Communication, Health, and Emerging Media (CHARM) Lab**
Department of Communication
Advisor: Dr. Jiaying Liu
Research on experimental methods, neurophysiological tools (e.g., fMRI), and psychophysiological measures (e.g., eye-tracking)

Computational Multi-Modal Communication (CMMC) Lab

03/2023–Present Principal Investigators: Prof. Cuihua Shen, Dr. Yilang Peng, Dr. Yingdan Lu
Led and participated in research projects using computational methods based on Python/R

Northwestern University

Evanston, IL

10/2024–Present **Computational Media and Politics (COMAP) Lab**
School of Communication
Principal Investigator: Dr. Yingdan Lu

University of Southern California

Los Angeles, CA

01/2019–06/2020 **Game Studies Research Group & CKIDS DataFest**
Annenberg School of Communication & Viterbi School of Engineering
Principal Investigator: Prof. Dmitri Williams

SELECTED WORKSHOPS

08/2025 **Summer Institute in Computational Social Science (SICSS-Stanford)**
Stanford University; IPS funding (\$1,200)

INVITED TALKS & GUEST LECTURES

04/2026 Liu, J., & Peng, Q. Understanding health message effectiveness: Message profiles, neural responses, and behavior change. *Health Communication Symposium, Department of Communication, UCSB.*

- 03/2026 Liu, J., & Peng, Q. Personalizing vaping prevention messages among young people with generative AI: What we learned. *Tobacco Prevention Summit, Santa Barbara County.*
- 01/2026 Peng, Q. Internet, technology & health. *COMM 155 Health Communication, University of California, Santa Barbara.*
- 04/2025 Peng, Q. Digital media in times of well-being. *A Symposium on Digital Media & Well-Being, Department of Communication, UCSB.*

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Standalone Instructor

University of California, Santa Barbara

- 2025 Summer A COMM 89 Communication Theories
Designed syllabus, lectures, in-class activities, and assessments
- 2024 Summer B & 2025 Spring COMM 139 Communication and Emotion
Designed syllabus, lectures, in-class activities, and assessments; delivered in-person lectures

Teaching Assistant

University of California, Santa Barbara

- 2026 Summer B COMM 117 Persuasion (Prof. Robin Nabi)
- 2026 Spring COMM 187 Data Science (Dr. Prateekshit Pandey)
- 2026 Winter COMM 155 Health Communication (Dr. Jiaying Liu)
- 2025 Fall COMM 88 Communication Research Methods (Dr. Amy Gonzales)
- 2025 Summer A INT 93LS Research in STEM: Decoding Bias (Musa Malik)
- 2025 Winter COMM 148 Risk Communication (Dr. Katie Elder)
- 2024 Spring & Fall COMM 89 Communication Theories (Prof. Walid Afifi)
- 2024 Winter COMM 139 Communication and Emotion (Prof. Robin Nabi)
- 2023 Fall COMM 137 Global Communication (Prof. Michael Stohl)

The University of Nottingham Ningbo China

- 02/2017–05/2017 Industrial Marketing and Culture (Dr. Dirk Moosmeyer)

SELECTED WORK EXPERIENCE

NorthKing Information Technology Co. LTD

Beijing, China

09/2020–09/2023 Brand & Marketing Manager

Led integrated brand strategy and corporate communications for a Beijing-based financial-IT services firm serving major banks; designed B2B campaigns spanning earned, owned, and paid media

Directed market and user-experience (UX) research; translated audience insights into messaging, positioning, and public-relations strategy

Managed client and stakeholder relationships, social media presence, and event programming, including industry conferences and executive forums

Recognized as *Outstanding Employee of the Year* for measurable contributions to brand visibility

SEGA Stories International

Los Angeles, CA

05/2018–08/2018 **Branded Entertainment Intern**

Conducted brand and audience research to inform strategic communication and creative-development decisions
Supported cross-stakeholder coordination and industry events that extended SEGA's storytelling presence
Reviewed and provided coverage on creative submissions for brand and audience fit

Los Angeles Chinese Film Festival

Los Angeles, CA

04/2018–11/2018 **Marketing & PR Specialist**

Designed and executed integrated marketing and public-relations campaigns across social media, content production, and earned media
Produced editorial and interview content amplifying festival programming and partnerships

HONORS, AWARDS & SCHOLARSHIPS

2017	Zhejiang Provincial Outstanding Graduates, Ministry of Education
2016	Zhejiang Provincial Scholarship, Ministry of Education
2014–2016	Best Student of the Year, University of Nottingham (Top 1, two consecutive years)
2014–2016	President's Scholarship, University of Nottingham (two consecutive years)
2013–2014	Dean's Scholarship, University of Nottingham (Top 10%)

FUNDING

Internal Funding

2026	Social Impact Award, Department of Communication, UCSB	\$2,000
08/2025	Social Science Research Grant Program (SSRGP), UCSB ISBER Role: Graduate Research Assistant (PI: Dr. Jiaying Liu)	\$7,600
08/2025	Individualized Professional Skills (IPS) Grant Program, UCSB Graduate Division	\$1,200
02/2025	Graduate Research Funding, Department of Communication, UCSB	\$500
06/2019	CKIDS DataFest Research Funding, USC Viterbi School of Engineering	\$3,600

External Funding

2025	TRDRP Predoctoral Fellowship Award, Tobacco-Related Disease Research Program, University of California Office of the President (Shortlisted; full application submitted; not funded)
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ACADEMIC SERVICE

Reviewer

BMC Public Health · *Health Communication* · *Journal of Health Communication* · *International Journal of Communication* · *International Communication Association* (Health Communication Division, Computational Methods Division) · *National Communication Association* · *International Conference on Computational Social Science (IC²S²)*

Mentorship (Undergraduate Research Assistants)

Supervised and trained 10+ undergraduate RAs in the CHARM Lab on data collection, coding, and analysis

Calista Schmidt — recipient of the Steven H. Chaffee Undergraduate Award for Excellence in Research, UCSB Department of Communication (2025)

Mentorship (High School Students)

Vera Lew (paper submitted to ICA 2026) · Yitong Huang

SKILLS

Programming: Python, R, SPSS, Mplus, \LaTeX

Software: Microsoft Office, Excel, Adobe Photoshop, Premiere Pro, InDesign

Languages: Chinese (Native), English (IELTS 8.5/C2), German (B2), Korean (TOPIK 3/B1)

Certificates: Methods and Statistics in Social Sciences Specialization